



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 02. Oct-Dec 2025. Page#.1026-1042

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)

Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)



The Influence of the World Wars on literature with a Focus on Absurdism: A Study of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

Syed Hamza Ali

BS (Hons) in English, Department of English, Government Postgraduate College No. 1, Abbottabad

Ali Abdullah

BS (Hons) in English, Department of English, Government Postgraduate College No. 1, Abbottabad

Fatima Tuz Zuhra

BS (Hons) in English, Department of English, Government Postgraduate College No. 1, Abbottabad

Muhammad Tahir Anjum

Lecturer in English, Department of English, Government Postgraduate College No. 1, Abbottabad

ABSTRACT

*This thesis examines carefully Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in the realm of emergence of the absurdism in the aftermath of world wars. It enlightens the way this play aptly reflects war trauma and the absurdism via the lens of Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*. It works to unfold the analytical, contextual, and philosophical domains of the text. The war trauma is portrayed through the physical, emotional, and psychological crack down of characters, coupled with a sense of extreme terror and exhaustion. Similarly, the post-war absurdist strains also permeate throughout the play in the form of longing for some truth amidst the debris of previously constructed reality. Through close reading and interpretation, this thesis aims to provide a better understanding of Beckett's work and the absurdity it imbibes in it.*

Keywords: Absurdism, World War, War Trauma, Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, Theater of Absurd.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

This section includes the background of the World Wars, their impact on the economy, religion, and particularly literature; the consequent rise of Absurdism, its history and manifestation in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954); and the research questions, objectives, significance, and delimitation of the study.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 World Wars and Their Impact

The 20th-century witnessed two terrible events that altered the entire course of history, profoundly reshaping politics, societal norms, and literature.

1.2.1.1 World War I (1914-18)

The year 1914 marks the initiation of one of the most bloody and costly wars in history, leading to approximately 10 million casualties, 20 million injuries, and 6 million as inmates. The monetary cost has been estimated as in excess of 200 billion dollars. Raged between the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany, Ottoman Empire on one side and Great Britain, Russia, and France

on the other hand, it expanded its devastation to vast areas in Balkan states, Poland, and Belgium, and millions of tons of shipping were lost at sea (Schmitt, 2025). Paris Peace Conferences, nevertheless, tried to mediate this tension by signing the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and establishing the League of Nations (1920), which failed to uphold its purpose, leading to World War II.

1.2.1.1.1 Impact of WWI on Religion

The effect of World War I on religious and anti-religious thoughts is undeniable. On one hand, the iron man of theology was severely stabbed. However, a profound reorientation of the new schools of theology and philosophy was also witnessed. Also, the massive destruction paved the way for despair in the family system, leading the victims to find solace in the realm of religion, even those who had none before (Baron, 1952). Additionally, World War I created an air of doubt among the common masses about the existence of God. People started to disbelieve in God, for if there had been a God, He would have intervened to stop the war (SPERRY, 1949). Moreover, "It was freely prophesied at the end of World War I that we should see a rapid and general collapse of the churches" (SPERRY, 1949).

1.2.1.1.2 Impact of WWI on Economy

World War I profoundly disrupted global economies, dismantling pre-war financial systems and contributing to a pervasive sense of disillusionment. The war's unprecedented scale and devastation led to economic instability, with European nations facing massive debts, inflation, and unemployment. Germany is burdened by reparations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, experienced hyperinflation and economic collapse, eroding public confidence, and fueling existential despair (Keynes, 1919).

Additionally, "The post-war years were characterized by general economic turmoil throughout Europe, as countries struggled to shift away from wartime economies to peacetime, and experienced deep recessions and fiscal crises" (Eichengreen, 1992). Moreover, "In Germany, the early 1920s hyperinflation crisis consumed the middle class's savings, weakening public confidence in the Weimar Republic and fueling political radicalization" (Feldman, 1997).

1.2.1.1.3 Impact of WWI on Literature

From the times of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Hebrew chroniclers epic poetry, drama, and historical accounts have recurrently focused on war (Brosman, 1992).

The flare-up of war in Europe in 1914 ended in a deadlock. The French, English, and German armed forces dug trenches that extended from Flanders to the Swiss Border. Prior to long, it turned obvious that this would be unlike any other fight. Its scale surpassed all previous wars: millions fought, and millions were killed or injured. Victory was acknowledged not on account of human acts of valor, but via the employment of equipment such as artillery, machine guns, and tanks (Ellis, 1976). The trauma of this knowledge formed a central theme in both American and British World War I literature. So monstrous was the loss that it could not be described in day-to-day terms. It called for a new literary mindset. Consequently, the writing developed by war poets and novelists Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graves, and others was several miles apart from that produced previously. Gone were those lofty and overblown vocabularies of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, which extolled battles and consecrated death. War was now viewed as horrifying and inane, and death as harsh and worthless. All of these writings evoked an air of bitterness and outrage. Guy Chapman's sketch of a trooper marching to the Somme front captures this mood:

Hump your pack and get a move on. The next hour, man, will bring you three miles nearer to your death. Your life and your death are, nothing to these fields nothing, no more than it is to the man planning the attack at GHQ. You are not even a pawn. Your death will not prevent future wars, will not make the world safe for your children. Your death means no more than if you had died in your bed (Chapman, 1933).

The huge bulk of literature produced in the 1930s — William March's *Company K* (1930), Humphrey Cobb's *Paths of Glory* (1935), and especially Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun* (1930) — emphasizes the notion that World War I is senseless (Hager & Desmond, 1981). Strangely enough, however, notwithstanding the aims are looked down upon in the 1930s, the spirit of national cohesion and commitment to a mutual goal that it foments in troops and civilians alike is appreciated. The literature, particularly written after 1928, is imbued with a spirit of dejection, forlornness, and even despair (Lundberg, 1984).

1.2.1.2. World War II (1939-45)

World War II stood out as one of the major metamorphic events of the 20th-century, with 39 million casualties in Europe alone. Six years of ground battles and carpet-bombing ensued in the demolition of a profuse amount of physical capital (Kesternich, et al., 2014). Chiefly, World War II was truly “total” in the sense of including the entire populace under the same aegis, with few dichotomies being built between combatants and noncombatants. Though during World War I, civilians were afflicted with food shortages and other material deprivations, they were spared the violence of the battlefield. Long-range bombers and rockets, however, obliterated the difference between civilians and soldiers. To be behind the front lines was analogous to be in them, as demonstrated by the bombings of Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki (Craig & Ertrowa, 1979). Many people had to relocate to new territories and surrender their property without receiving any compensation. Starvation became more habitual even in relatively prosperous Western Europe. Families were separated for long periods of time, and many children lost their fathers. Many, not excluding young children, personally experienced the gruesome reality of war since combats and bombing took place in the very areas where they dwelt. Horrendous crimes against humanity were on the surge. In several nations, the conflict irreversibly changed their political and economic structures.

1.2.1.2.1 Impact of WWII on Religion

World War II greatly influenced religion, resulting in both religious persecution and a revival of religious activities. The war not only led many people to find comfort in religion but also prompted different stances among religious groups, some of which were supporting the war while others were opposing it on moral grounds (Rady-Shaw, n.d.). It marked a pivotal transformation in the relationship between religion and society. On the one hand, it resulted in the peak of secularization and the dominance of this world over everything. Religion was limited to being a force, and a psychological and traditional factor only, rather than governing society. Conversely, an intense spiritual seeking for religion was also witnessed. The relentless destruction and mass suffering of war had dispelled many anti-religious biases (Gurian, 1946).

Likewise, after World War II, soldiers in North America, who had initially shown little interest in church, suddenly became devoted, as noted by John Webster: “What happened in Canada, as in North America generally was so different that it remains to this day a source of wonder. Men and women who had shown no more than a perfunctory interest in the church before going off to war demonstrated on their return an enthusiasm that confounded all prognosticators.” (Grant, 1988).

1.2.1.2.2 Impact of WWII on Economy

In “World History Journal” (2025), the author suggested that the World War II inflicted unparalleled destruction on global economies, dismantling infrastructures and displacing populations on large scale. In Europe, cities like Warsaw and Berlin were reduced to rubble, with industrial capacities severely impaired, leading to widespread unemployment and scarcity of essential goods. Similarly, the author of “The Economic Impact of World War II: A Deep Dive” (2025) noted that the implementation of the Marshall Plan in 1947, which provided over \$13 billion in aid, was instrumental in stabilizing currencies and restoring trade; however, the sheer scale of reconstruction required underscored the fragility of human endeavors.

In contrast, in the article “Impact of World War II on the U.S. Economy and Workforce” (n.d.), the author maintains that the United States experienced an economic resurgence, emerging from the Great Depression through wartime mobilization that retooled industries and significantly reduced unemployment rates. Moreover, the war catalyzed structural transformations in colonial economies; for instance, India's wartime production led to long-term shifts from agriculture to industry and services, reflecting the unpredictable consequences of conflict (Parvathaneni & Yang, 2024).

1.2.1.2.3 Impact of WWII on Literature

The literature of World War II is different from that of World War I. While the ghoulish nature of combat startles the men of letters of the previous war, WWII could not produce a similar strenuous impact, possibly due to the fact that they have read Hemingway or Dos Passos beforehand (Craig & Ertrowa, 1979). Literature following 1945 often questions the critical role of America in the war. Three works set in Italy—*A Bell for Adano* (1944) by John Hersey, *The Gallery* (1947) by John Horne Burn, and *The Girl on the Via Flaminia* (1949) by Alfred Hayes—obfuscate the moral disparities between the Americans and their adversaries, between the conquerors and the conquered, and underscore heinous acts committed against one another (Diggins, 1966). Moreover, Black literature from World War II has received quite little attention compared to that from World War I, notwithstanding the fact that the latter conflict produced novels, stories, and poetry at much larger scale. The superficial opposition of Nazi racial policies by the United States, while deeming a tenth of its populace as racially ignoble, accounts for war's greatest ironies for Black people. Killens's *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (1963), William Gardner Smith's *The Last of the Conquerors* (1948), and Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) all recount this anomalous scenario. In addition, Witter Bynner's *Defeat* (1947) depicts a wartime event in Texas in which German captives sat alongside white passengers on a train while black soldiers were segregated. Black writers focus more on how they are treated at home and in the military than they are on the battlefield. Racism serves as a greater enemy to them than the Japanese or Germans (Wynn, 1975).

Additionally, like many World War I war novels, James Jones's 1951 novel *From Here to Eternity* (1951) spotlights professional military officers by portraying them as barbaric, inept rulers who are indifferent to the needs of the servicemen under their supervision (Miller, 1970). It is no wonder that a large part of the literature written after 1945 envisages war as an essential, enduring aspect of contemporary life and a logical outcome of industrial society rather than as an ephemeral occurrence that can be eradicated. Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) is the most explicit manifestation of this disposition. Craig and Egan contend that in *Extreme Situations* (1979), a study of American and European war literature, Mailer “shows [World War II] not as a freak or bolt from the blue, but as an intensification of peace-time industrial society: that is, a society marked by divided labor, the socialization of work into large units, and gross disparities in material rewards and comfort.” (Craig & Egan, n.d.). Contrarily, two of the most renowned books of the 1960s, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969) and Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* (1961), satirically capture war as savage and absurd. Previously viewed as noble and heroic, it turns into something terrible and pointless in the aftermath of World War I, and it now seems absurd in the present time. Nothing can be said about the nature of conflicts in the future, but if they happen to be nuclear, it is probable that no writers will survive to pen about it (Lundberg, 1984).

1.2.2 Absurdism

Merriam-Webster defines Absurdism as “a philosophy based on the belief that the universe is irrational and meaningless and that the search for order brings the individual into conflict with the universe” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It alludes to the idea that humans are insignificant in the vast universe and every attempt to find meaning is ultimately futile and implausible. Moreover, the

universe is indifferent to human plight. Albert Camus, in his famous book *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955), beautifully constructs his 'theory of absurd'. He maintains, "This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity" (Camus, 1955, p.10). Camus further adds, "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (Camus, 1955, p.25). Similarly, Thomas Nagel describes the absurd in his philosophical essay *The Absurd* (1971) as "the absurd arises because the world fails to meet our demands for meaning" (Nagel, 1971, p.721). He similarly states that "there does not appear to be any conceivable world (containing us) about which unshakable doubts could not arise. Consequently, the absurdity of our situation derives not from a collision between our expectations and the world, but from a collision within ourselves." (Nagel, 1971, p.722).

1.2.2.1 History of Absurdism

The roots of Absurdism trace back to the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who is widely known as a precursor to the concept of 'absurd' as a philosophical problem. He famously asserts; What, then, is the absurd? The absurd is that the eternal truth has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up. etc., has come into existence exactly as an individual human being, indistinguishable from any other human being, in as much as all immediate recognisability is pre-Socratic paganism and from the Jewish point of view is idolatry (Kierkegaard, 1846).

Building on Kierkegaard's ideas, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre further adds to the concept of absurdity in his book *No Exit* (1944), asserting, "The absurd is the concrete concept of man's existence, and the absurd is the factual base of all human being" (Sartre, 1944, p.25). Additionally, in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre maintains, "The absurd is the confrontation between subject and world" (Sartre, 1943, p.123). Moreover, Albert Camus continues the legacy of Absurdism in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955), which stands on a high pedestal owing to its precise and comprehensive treatment of the subject. Camus states, "This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity" (Camus, 1955, p.10). Moreover, Samuel Beckett plays a significant role in taking absurd philosophy to the forefront in his play *Waiting for Godot*, as aptly epitomized by Estragon in the following lines, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (Beckett, 1954, p.44).

1.2.3 Waiting for Godot as an Absurdist Play

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* can be deemed as the quintessential embodiment of absurdist philosophy, reflecting post-war traumas and existential despair. The play's circular narrative, encompassing minimal characters and setting, monotonous actions, and fragmented dialogues, aptly highlights the theme of absurdity in the face of war's ruthless devastation. The two protagonists, Vladimir and Estragon, futilely await the never-arriving Godot, showcasing the aimlessness and uncertainty of human existence.

1.3 Problem Statement

Many researchers have studied the work through the lens of Absurdism, Existentialism, and other philosophical aspects. However, there remains a need to explore how the play delineates absurdity in the aftermath of the two devastating world wars. This research aims to address the gap by connecting war traumas to the ensuing Absurdism, examining how the trauma of the wars leads to the consequent rise of Absurdism.

1.4 Research Questions

The research attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1.3.1 How the trauma and devastation of World War I and II is reflected in the text of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954)?
- 1.3.2 How does Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) reflect the post-war absurdist strains?

1.5 Research Objectives

The research work contains the following objectives:

- 1.5.1 To examine the trauma and devastation of World War I and II on literature, particularly the rise of Absurdism, in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954).
- 1.5.2 To analyze Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) as a representative work of Absurdist literature in the aftermath of World Wars.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research unfolds the path of understanding the impact of World War I and II on literature, essentially the blossoming of Absurdist philosophy. By a careful scrutiny of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954), a representative work of Absurdist literature, the research spotlights how literature reflects and responds to historical traumas. The findings of this research will serve as a valuable resource for academics, playing an important role in literary and political studies. Overall, the study invites readers to mull over the profound influence of war on human lives and the role of literature in capturing the absurdity and nuances of the human experience.

1.7 Delimitation

This study involves an immaculate examination of the blossoming of absurdist philosophy as a consequence of World Wars, and the post-war absurdist strains with special reference to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954). It is confined to the literary and thematic analysis of the elements of Absurdism in the narrative framework of the play, its minimal characterization and symbolism. Moreover, the research is grounded in Albert Camus's 'theory of absurd', laid out in his famous work *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955), only.

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The World Wars have significantly impacted the world, profoundly reshaping history, politics, and literature in unprecedented ways. Consequently, the wars not only disrupted societal norms and reshaped global politics but also left individuals with a profound sense of disillusionment, psychological trauma, and loss of meaning. This turmoil and destruction are aptly manifested in subsequent literature, with the emergence of new literary movements and themes such as Absurdism, which epitomizes the meaninglessness and futility in the face of the wars. Several writers, like Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, and Jean-Paul Sartre, highlight the uncertainty and traumas of the wars, exploring themes of futility and meaninglessness. It discusses the research gap, which is the foundation for this research study.

2.2 Literature Surrounding World Wars

Literature centering on the horrendous experiences of World Wars is of paramount importance, as it delves into the experiences of people and society in the aftermath of the wars. Many authors have attempted to reflect the trauma, loss, and social change caused by these conflicts in their works.

T. S. Eliot, in his *The Waste Land* (1922), written against the backdrop of the First World War, uses fragmented imagery that showcases the disintegration of life in the country at large. A war that was initially supposed to be a sort of adventure turned out to be an unexpected tragedy,

with the death toll alarming a dreadful wave that haunts posterity for generations to come. *The Waste Land* (1922), in this regard, provides a haunting retrospect that is dark and by no means easy to behold. Any effort to undertake a contrasting look at *The Waste Land* (1922) with other war memoirs possesses the capacity to suggest that the very adventure of the First Global War did more harm to humanity than was expected. The contrast could verify the imprint of the war on recent memory, enabling us to understand later the impact memory could have in shaping our understanding of the phenomenon of disillusionment caused by pre-war aesthetics and the post-war world order that resulted in industrialization.

Overall, Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) evokes the transformation of the innocent world before the war, mourns the degeneration of Europe, and ultimately provides remedies for overcoming the disillusionment and horrors of war with the help of powerful memory (as cited by Mathew, 2020).

Additionally, the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) by German author Erich Maria Remarque became one of the world's best-selling books within a few months of its publication. It sparked intense conflict between those who considered it a quintessential manifestation of war experiences and those who criticized it for its perceived propaganda and exploitation of the Great War. Nevertheless, both the novel and the response it generated were emotional expressions of the traumas and disillusionment in the aftermath of the war, leading to a deeper understanding of the war experience (as cited by Eksteins, 1980).

Furthermore, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is essentially built around the Ramsay family before, during, and after World War I. The initial part unfolds at a lovely Edwardian mansion, reflecting pre-war completeness and close familial relations. However, the second part sheds light on the deterioration of the mansion, resulting in the family's migration elsewhere and the loss of the closest family members as well. Finally, the last section illuminates the family's return to the mansion and journey to the enigmatic lighthouse, highlighting the post-war

efforts of reconstructing British society, with some taking solace in pre-war values while others believe that there was nothing left of that world but ruins (as cited by Mathew, 2020).

Moreover, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) highlight the agony suffered by soldiers of war, including Septimus Warren Smith, an English soldier of the First World War, and Tayo, a Laguna Pueblo man who battled in the Pacific Islands during World War Two. The terrible war experience ensued in the psychological breakdown of the two men. Each has seen a loved one die; they all have delusions, blackouts, leading to guilt and self-criticism. Both individuals have confusing urban experiences and a tense relationship with nature. Their resistance or incapacity to yield to the gender norms established by Western culture further complicates the situation (as cited by Czanecki, 2015).

Man's Search for Meaning (1946) by Victor Frankl is a profound work for survival literature. The book embodies autobiographical features as it delineates the account of the author's experiences of imprisonment at Auschwitz and other concentration camps. The initial part of the book deals with the author's observation of the prisoners, leading him to formulate three mental stages of prisoners in the camp. The first stage constitutes the shock experienced by each prisoner upon admission to the camp. The second stage revolves around apathy and emotional death, as prisoners become accustomed to their surroundings. The third stage involves disillusionment, moral depravity, and resentment that can persist even after liberation. Moreover, the second part of the book centers on logotherapy, where the term 'logos' stands for 'meaning'. This theory rests on the concept of creating meaning in one's life (as cited by Chauhan, 2 war torn024).

Besides, Marcel Ophüls' *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969) is a profound film that sheds light on the Occupation years in Clermont-Ferrand, France, during World War II. With the help of interviews and newsreels, it delves into the experiences of the town's people, showcasing famous heroic politicians like Pierre Mendès-France, who played an important role in the Fourth Republic. Furthermore, the film changes the way people view World War II, leading to intense debates in France (as cited by Harsin, 2019).

In the E-book overview (2013) of Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (2000), the author suggests that this work sheds light on the tragedy of modern warfare in new, innovative ways. Fussell delves into the works of Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, David Jones, Isaac Rosenberg, and Wilfred Owen, providing both historical and literary contexts for these writers who vividly captured World War I as a profound experience. Fussell imbues literary texts with the imagery of mud and trenches, revealing how these works highlight the vast transformations in every area, including language, reflecting the traumas of World War I (as cited by E-book, 2013).

2.3 Literature Surrounding Absurdism

The 19th century's intellectual and social turbulence in Europe, notable for thinkers like Kierkegaard, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, paved the way for the 20th-century's absurdity. These crises skyrocketed owing to the mishap of Western societies to address pressing issues like unemployment, capitalism, nationalism, and democracy during the 1930s and 1940s. Playwrights like Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, Edward Albee, Jack Gelber, and Harold Pinter delved into themes of the absurdity and meaninglessness of human existence in their works, often mixing irony and paradox to encounter the uncertainty and illogic of life (Wegener, 1967).

Arthur Schopenhauer, who is one of the earliest nineteenth-century philosophers, observed that the universe is not essentially logical. He maintains that the world in its present state of existence is a constant striving and blind force with no goal in view, bereft of knowledge, anarchic,

completely free, wholly self-determining, and potent. There exists no God to divine in Schopenhauer's image of the world as Will, and the world is deemed as meaningless chiefly. When envisaged through an anthropomorphic lens, the world is portrayed as being in an eternal state of frustration, grappling continually for nothing in particular and ultimately heading nowhere. It is a world that transcends the categories of good and evil. His interest in the absurd worldview runs parallel to that of 20th-century's thinkers also (as cited by "Author Schopenhauer," 2021).

Soren Kierkegaard defined absurdity as something or a state in reality that cannot be put in rational terms. In other words, it refers to a framework that takes place without a hard-headed justification. Thus, for him, the absurd is associated to the breakdown of two contradictory powers, which in his philosophy are the ethical and the religious. This Kierkegaardian Absurdism of action, which cannot be rationally redeemed, foments the "Leap of Faith" from the ethical to the religious. Thus, the individual's incapacity to palliate the two opposing forces of rationality and instinctual faith lands them in a paradoxical state of absurdity (as cited by "Leap of Faith VS Camus: The Absurd | Philosophy," 2021). "The absurd" is Kierkegaard's term for the religious level of existence, as detailed in *Fear and Trembling*, his examination of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. The term points to the incompatibility of logic with religious conviction. Abraham's religious degree of existence, which he attained by fulfilling God's instruction to kill his son while believing the absurd that Isaac would not be lost to him, is marked by a need for stillness, which leads to his seclusion from the world. This serves as an unprecedented embodiment of the absurd faith (as cited by Darrow, 2005).

Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1922) details a man's absurd existence in a world in which he is eventually free. The narrator is plainly tortured by such an existence; according to Dostoevsky (1922), he can only be relieved from this torment by selflessly surrendering himself to God, though this is not explicitly contented in Notes, but in his letter to his brother, Mikhail Dostoevsky, regarding the publication of the aforementioned work. The Underground Man's dilemma serves as a representative of the predicament of the humankind. According to Robert Louis Jackson, "The Underground Man finds man where he finds himself: at the "last wall," without hope or aim, yet--- figuratively speaking --- beating his head against that wall in order to affirm his existence." (as cited by Jackson, 2001). This irrational comeback from the Underground Man illustrates an absurd existence in a futile universe (as cited by Oakley & Dylan, 2011). Moreover, Dostoevsky's characters are not dreadful, amoral, or faithless villains but positive, even vitalizing heroes of the rebellion of the human spirit against the illogicality of life (as cited by Lešić-Thomas, 2006).

Frederick Nietzsche stands as another paramount influence in the arena of the philosophy of the absurd. His conception of life and death, as well as the nihilistic perspectives that accompany it leaves a noticeable impact on Camus's notion of nihilism (as cited by Gordon, 2015). Nietzsche's central idea "God is dead" leads to an air of silence, apathy and nothingness of God in a world whose essential meaning is constituted by Him, though that meaning be torn in dichotomy and the most agonizing paradoxes. Ergo, it calls for a universe that is absurd (as cited by Taubes, 1955).

A glimpse of the absurd can also be witnessed in Franz Kafka's *The Castle* (1930), in which the protagonist is stuck between the earthly village and the transcendental castle. Coerced to reside in the village, he could not make up to his destination to ascend the castle, despite being summoned by it. The incessant desire and the inability to fulfill it imbibes the Sisyphean struggle, yet it deviates in a way that K neither ever gives up and leaves the villages nor does he acquiesces

the futility of his endeavors. K, rather, is sustained by the aimless trip that definitely wasted day and emptied hope (as cited by "Sartre's," 2018).

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), if viewed through the lens of Jean Paul Sartre, exudes an air of absurdity and aimlessness. Sartre is of the view that man has descended into the mire of a chaotic and fragmented world. It is worthless and abortive, from which dawns nothingness. All characters in the poem suffer from disillusionment, despair, and impotence. They are consumed by the mundane, materialistic pursuits. Unfortunately, their world is a war torn society, in no state to proffer any anchorage or shelter. Owing to the collapse of faith, moral and human values, it is reigned by gibberish and spiritual decadence. In short, it has been wiped out by pointlessness, leaving them to erode and die (as cited by Arafat et al., 2022).

Albert Camus's notion of absurdity carries the legacy of Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, Chestov, and Dostoevsky, among others (as cited by Sellin, 1969). His major works *The Fall*, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955), and *The Outsider*, serve as cornerstones in the absurd literature. Absurdity is quite transparent from, specifically, *The Outsider*, in which the protagonist, Meursault, is disinterested and indifferent to the world surrounding him and deems it quite hostile towards him. His consciousness of the cruel and apathetic disposition of life makes him feel alienated; ergo, he prefers to be out of the play (as cited by Ullah et al., 2016).

Needless to say, Jean Paul Sartre's work also embodies the concept of the absurd. Sartre, at the very outset of *Nausea* (2000), explores the philosophical account for man's life divested of meaning and determination. This worldview is backed up by the title given to the earliest draft of the novel. Originally termed *Pamphlet on Contingency*, the novel uncoils the life of Antoine Roquentin, who is deluged by a feeling of insurmountable nausea as he takes in hand a pebble while standing at the shore. No sooner had he held the stone than he was overcome by the agonizing realization of the object's contingency, and refrained to throw it back on the water's surface. His universe is marked by such unsettling and random thoughts that pertain to all beings he comes across, ranging from the lifeless pebble to living organisms. In short, the novel captures the random, absurd world of the protagonist (as cited by Wegener, 1967).

Eugene Ionesco, too, embodies the theme of absurdity in his writings. His plays feature characters that lack real identity; they goof around in a hopeless cosmic vacuum devoid of any set trajectory, giving birth to a sense of estrangement and alienation even in the warmest environments (as cited by Sellin, 1969). *The Chairs* (1958), a tragicomic farce, is perhaps the best realization of the themes of hollowness, agony, despair, and the devaluation of language of the absurd (as cited by Wegener, 1967).

Samuel Beckett's magnum opus, *Waiting for Godot* (1954), serves as a watershed in the field of the absurd theater in the postwar era. The play characterizes a minimalistic plot with quite few characters and without a specific action taking place, except the figures coming and going off the stage or removing a hat or a shoe. The two characters, particularly, are waiting for someone called Godot, who never comes, which lands them in a state of utter helplessness. The play culminates as it begins with no variation in the whole scenario. Through this, Beckett tries to capture the silent, absurd, and apathetic disposition of the universe towards the plight of the mankind (as cited by Sellin, 1969).

Boris Vian is also, as influenced by wars, an advocate of absurdity in his works. The heroes he fabricates strive incessantly to redeem the absurdity and purposelessness of life, but they fail to reach any definite conclusion, which indirectly calls for the victory of the absurd world (as cited by Pruner et al., 2003).

What makes Wolfgang Hildesheimer stand out among the German playwrights of his epoch is his being the essential precursor of the absurd (as cited by Wegener, 1967). His famous play *Plays*

in which Darkness Falls (n.d.) is one of the most characteristic plays of the absurd in Germany (as cited by Hildesheimer et al., 1958).

2.4 Conclusion

The 20th-century literature is a portrayal of a world irreversibly altered through the ruthlessness and magnitude of worldwide conflict. The destruction wrought by the World Wars imposed disillusionment, powerlessness, and moral complexity that deeply influenced literary output. Authors such as T.S. Eliot and Erich Maria Remarque provided intense representations of the shared trauma of and after the wars, projecting a splintered society grappling with loss and destruction of earlier ideals. These texts not only commemorated the human toll of war but also functioned as cultural symbols that assisted societies in facing and working out bereavement, alienation, and historical break.

Furthermore, war literature also placed emphasis on the psychological internal struggles of individuals, particularly veterans, as in books such as *Mrs. Dalloway* (1922) and *Ceremony* (n.d.). Septimus and Tayo are examples of characters depicting the deep individual implications of war, such as mental imbalance and disconnection with both nature and social norms.

In addition, autobiographical writings such as Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946) discuss the process of psychological survival and meaning-making in the face of unimaginable horror. Together, these accounts represent not just external devastation but also inner disintegration of identity and purpose resulting from international violence.

At the same time, the emergence of Absurdism as a literary and philosophical movement arose directly in response to the disruption and illogic of contemporary life. Inspired by existential philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, absurdist literature highlights the futility and contingency of human existence. Similarly, writers such as Beckett, Camus, Sartre, and Kafka create characters that grapple with finding meaning in an indifferent universe, characterized by repetition, stagnation, and unfulfilled ambitions. These motifs reflect the existential fear of a postwar generation and spoke to audiences confronting a reality depleted of certainty and coherence.

Essentially, the intersection of war writing and absurdist fiction captures a common exploration of disillusionment, loss, and the search for meaning within a broken world. From battlefield memoirs to existential drama, these works together highlight the deep effect of historical trauma on the human condition. By placing external events alongside internal conundrums, the literature under review not only chronicles the evolution of 20th-century society but also seeks out the profound philosophical questions regarding being, self, and purpose. This symbiotic relationship between historical fact and existential inquiry is a key axis for grasping the modern novel and its lasting importance.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the research methodology employed in this study. The methodology includes the research design, conceptual framework, and research methodology. The primary focus is to systematically identify, quote, and analyze various instances and symbols from the text of *Waiting for Godot* (1954) that highlight the trauma of wars and the subsequent rise of Absurdism, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of this theme within the text.

3.2 Research Design

The research design for this study is qualitative as it involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. Given the literary nature of the subject matter, a qualitative approach is most appropriate for in-depth analysis of complex themes, interpretations, and textual nuances of *Waiting for Godot* (1954). This research explores the depiction of war trauma and consequent

absurdity in Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* (1954). Through close reading and interpretation of the text, we identified and shed light on instances related to the concerned objectives, providing a nuanced understanding of the play's themes and meanings.

3.3 Conceptual Framework

This research employs a framework to analyze Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) through the lens of Albert Camus's 'theory of absurd', presented in his seminal work *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Contextualized in the aftermath of the world wars, the study explores how Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) reflects the absurdist response to a world stripped of coherence and meaning. The framework is structured around three interconnected axes: historical context, philosophical theory, and literary analysis. Historically, the research situates *Waiting for Godot* (1954) in the disillusionment of the post-war era, marked by the collapse of traditional meaning systems and the trauma of global conflict. The theoretical core includes Camus's concept of the absurd, emphasizing humanity's futile search for meaning in an indifferent universe and the importance of rebellion. Moreover, through close reading and literary analysis, the study explores how Beckett's play reflects the absurd human condition in the aftermath of the world wars, using monotony, illogic, contradictions and uncertainty. By integrating these threads, the research provides a detailed and nuanced analysis of *Waiting for Godot* (1954) as a quintessential absurdist text, illuminating the human condition in the face of trauma, uncertainty, and meaninglessness.

3.4 Research Methodology

To make our research more systematic, we employed a close reading approach, comprising three stages: pre-reading, reading, and writing.

3.4.1 Pre-Reading

Pre-reading involves the collection and selection of relevant data. Relevant data is gathered from the text of *Waiting for Godot* (1954) and *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), supplemented by the secondary sources such as academic articles, reviews of existing critiques, and books related to war trauma and absurdity.

3.4.2 Reading

After collecting the relevant data from the available sources, we proceeded to the reading stage, where important lines, facts, quotes and passages were highlighted, and themes and ideas that supported the research were noted.

3.4.3 Writing

With data collected, read, and highlighted, we initiated the writing process, ensuring that key points were discussed in a logical and organized manner to produce a coherent final product. This collaborative approach enabled us to present our findings throughout and effectively.

3.5 Conclusion

This section has outlined the methodological approach to studying the Absurdism in the context of the World Wars. By employing a qualitative, thematic analysis of the text, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Absurdism is portrayed as a consequence of the World Wars.

4. Book Analysis

4.1 Overview

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) is a timeless literary masterpiece that delves into the absurdity of human existence in the aftermath of horrendous world wars. This section illuminates the psychological and emotional breakdown of characters who are being crumpled incessantly by the aimlessness and apathy of the universe. Their monotonous, perplexed and random actions and dialogues serve to reinforce this theme.

4.2 Wars Trauma in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

The post-war era features such a complex state of existence which is marked by sufferings, fear, physical and mental trauma of war. It tinges the atmosphere with an aura of susceptibility, existential dread and absurdity. This all can be seen in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) in the form of various symbols, dialogues and actions of the characters. Firstly, the allusion to war can be subsumed from the symbol of boots which represents how armed men actually suffered from not taking off their boots as long as they remained in trenches of the war. It is illustrated in the very outset by Estragon struggling to take off his boot, "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. As before." (Beckett, 1954, p. 8). Estragon's struggle with the boots is further depicted as:

"Estragon: Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing. Vladimir: [...] (Estragon tears at his boot.) What are you doing?

Estragon: Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you?

Vladimir: Boots must be taken off every day, I'm tired telling you that. Why don't you listen to me?

Estragon: (*feebly*). Help me!

Vladimir: It hurts?" (Beckett, 1954, p. 9).

"Estragon: Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!" (Beckett, 1954, p. 9).

Moreover, other instances show up in the following dialogues:

"Vladimir: [...] How's your foot?

Estragon: Swelling visibly." (Beckett, 1954, p. 11).

"Vladimir: (*letting go the leg*.) Where are your boots?

Estragon: I must have thrown them away.

Vladimir: When? Estragon: I don't know.

Vladimir: Why?

Estragon: (*exasperated*) I don't know why I don't know! Vladimir: No, I mean why did you throw them away?

Estragon: (*exasperated*.) Because they were hurting me!" (Beckett, 1954, p. 72).

"Estragon: MY feet! (*He sits down, tries to take off his boots*.) Help me!" (Beckett, 1954, p. 101).

The symbols of boots may allude to the giant of civilization which was design to strengthen and advance humankind from the perils of primitive mode of survival but it escalated into a sort of insurmountable burden. Besides Estragon's ill-fitting and painful boots are a metaphor for the discomfort and absurdity of human life. Just as he struggles repeatedly with his boots represents the way humans struggle with daily misery and monotony of existence.

Secondly, the recurring mention of "they" coupled with a sense of fear and horror may indicate the fear inflicted by enemy troops or direct encounter with death, as follows:

"Vladimir: (*hurt, coldly*). May one enquire where His Highness spent the night?

Estragon: In a ditch." (Beckett, 1954, p.8)

Vladimir: (*admiringly*). A ditch! Where?

Estragon: (*without gesture*) over there.

Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?

Estragon: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.

Vladimir: The same? Lot as usual?

Estragon: The same? I don't know." (Beckett, 1954, p.8)

In the following dialogues also, it is reinforced:

"Vladimir: [...] I wouldn't have let them beat you. Estragon: You couldn't have stopped them.

Vladimir: Why not?

Estragon: There were ten of them." (Beckett, 1954, p.62)

"Estragon: They're coming! Vladimir: Who?

Estragon: I don't know. Vladimir: How many? Estragon: I don't know.

Vladimir: (*triumphantly*) It's Godot! At last! Gogo! It's Godot! We're saved! [...]

Estragon: They're coming there too!" (Beckett, 1954, pg.80-81)

"Vladimir: Don't leave me! They'll kill me!" (Beckett, 1954, pg.90)

The above excerpts from *Waiting for Godot* reflect the constant fear of unknown authority or violence, highlighting the themes of psychological trauma, uncertainty and confusion, dependence and desperation. It has been reported that the soldiers who out survived the global wars could not restore to normal life. They were shattered and haunted, even their physical behavior was enough to depict the trauma they were going through. Besides, this terror of opposed factions extends to uncertainty, struggle to return to normal life, and psychological break down of people, who, failed to slough it off their minds.

Another example showcases the casualties in the aftermath of the war, which implies the futility of reason for failing to prevent this massacre on such a large scale, giving rise to absurdity. Human reason tends to facilitate and uplift humankind. But it turned out to be paradoxical in a way that, after maturing for centuries, it only prepared for humans a stage for death, a brutal one. It goes as:

"Estragon: The best thing would be to kill me, like the other. Vladimir: What other? (*Pause.*) What other?

Estragon: Like billions of others" (Beckett, 1954, p.66).

The above instance can also symbolize that the desire to die may illuminate a way to escape the existence entangled in a mire of absurdity through death. Since it is also mentioned by Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* when he recounts the ways an absurdity may look up to; it is either a philosophical suicide or a physical one. Moreover, the absurdity and the longing for death go hand in hand.

Besides, Lucky's speech offers a critique of modern man, who after feeding on the roses of rationality, paved the way for nothing but a carnage of millions paralleled with a sensation of chaos and being alienated by God. Man has earned nothing but chaos, melancholy, and loneliness, notwithstanding the advancements in temporal realms. The subsequent lines underscore the beastly character of war:

"Lucky: [...] those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven..." (Beckett, 1954, p.45).

Apart from a critique of war, Lucky's speech, if taken in totality, captures the framework in which the static and familiar world of organized patterns, both religious and intellectual, has collapsed, dragging man into an abyss of alienation, hopelessness, and countless truths.

Finally, the psychological trauma of the wars can be seen in the characters' fragmented memory and distorted perception of time:

"Vladimir: And where were we yesterday evening according to you? Estragon: How would I know?" (Beckett, 1954, p. 71).

At another point, Estragon asks, "And here we are now? to which Vladimir replies, "Where else do you think? Do you not recognize the place" (Beckett, 1954, p. 65), reflecting the disoriented memory of the characters. Besides, when Vladimir and Estragon watch the sunset, the following dialogues ensue, reflecting the characters' falsified perception of time:

"Estragon: It's rising. Vladimir: Impossible.

Estragon: Perhaps it's the dawn.

Vladimir: Don't be a fool. It's the west over there.

Estragon: How do you know?

Pozzo: (*anguished*) is it evening?

Vladimir: Anyway it hasn't moved.

Estragon: I tell you it's rising" (Beckett, 1954, pg. 95-96).

These dialogues depict the mental trauma and psychological torture inflicted by the World Wars. It is this distorted perception of time and memory that spearheads various movements like Surrealism, Dadaism, and Absurdism that defy conventional norms and create a world of its own marked by disorientation from an idea.

4.3 Absurdity in *Waiting for Godot* through the lens of Camus's theory of absurd

Martin Esslin's significant work, *The Theatre of Absurd* (1961), highlights that this genre varies slightly from the existential theatre of Albert Camus in terms of content. Both Theatre of Absurd and Existential theatre express "a similar sense of senselessness of life, of the inevitable devaluation of ideals, purity and purpose" (Esslin, 1961, p.24). *The Theatre of Absurd* portrays the absurdity of the human condition through "the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought" (Esslin, 1961, p.24).

In this regard, Esslin's analysis fits aptly to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, published in 1954. Now, given the shared features of the Theatre of the Absurd with the existential theater of Albert Camus, as pointed out by Esslin, *Waiting for Godot* (1954) highlights a key concept of absurdity proposed by Albert Camus in his influential work, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955).

The Myth of Sisyphus (1955) commences with the assertion, "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy" (Camus, 1955, p.7). According to Camus, this question is the most significant one, and it outweighs all other philosophical problems.

Likewise, in *Waiting for Godot*, the problem of suicide is illuminated in various instances. An allusion to suicide occurs at the very beginning of the play:

"VLADIMIR: On the other hand, what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties.

[...]

VLADIMIR: Hand in hand from the top of Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were respectable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up" (Beckett, 1954, p.9).

This mention of jumping off the Eiffel Tower, as uttered by Vladimir, serves as a poignant reminder of the characters' entrenched desire to put an end to their absurd existence, also highlighting that they might have considered extreme means to execute it. However, it's too late, and they are now resigned to waiting endlessly. In addition, "They would not even let us up" the Eiffel Tower reflects the notion that even the option of escape seems to be of no avail, leaving them with nothing but waiting.

The play incorporates random and futile actions, accurately depicting the purposelessness of existence. This futility is showcased best when Vladimir asks Estragon to hold his hat, and instead adjusts Lucky's hat on his own head. Estragon takes Vladimir's hat and hands over his own hat to Vladimir, who puts it on his head in place of Lucky's, which he hands to Estragon. They keep exchanging hats and wearing them nonsensically until Vladimir finally throws down his hat. This scene serves as a powerful commentary on the cyclical, illogical, and futile nature of human existence.

Additionally, the play is fraught with contradictions, where characters seem to be puzzled, and their dialogues do not align with their actions. For instance, at one moment, Estragon says, "I'm

going", and "*He does not move*" (Beckett, 1954, p.11). Furthermore, at the end of the first act, Estragon says, "Well, Shall we go ?", to which Vladimir replies, "Yes, let's go." and still "*They do not move*" (Beckett, 1954, p.58). Through these contradictions in dialogue and action, a sense of ambiguity is created, inviting the audience to reflect on reality, truth, and meaning, revealing the nuances of the characters' puzzled states, thereby reinforcing the absurdity of their condition. Likewise, the play contains excessive repetition, highlighting the monotonous existence. Several dialogues and actions recur throughout the play, including, "Nothing to be done" (Beckett, 1954, pg.8, 10), "Why doesn't he put down his bags?" (Beckett, 1954, p.31), "*We're Waiting for Godot.*" (Beckett, 1954, p.13, 51, 73, 94). The repetition in the play serves to highlight the monotony and stagnation of the characters' existence. The recurring dialogues and actions create a sense of circularity, where the characters are trapped in a never-ending cycle of waiting and inaction. The repetition also serves to showcase the characters' inability to escape their circumstances. They are stuck in a repetitive pattern, unable to break free or move forward, epitomizing the absurdity of human existence.

Besides, the characters suffer from short-term memory. They often forget the events and characters that they have met formerly:

"Vladimir: Is it possible you've forgotten already?

Estragon: That's the way I am. Either I forget immediately or never forget. Vladimir: And Pozzo and Lucky, have you forgotten them too?

Estragon: Pozzo and Lucky?

Vladimir: He's forgotten everything!" (Beckett, 1954, p.64).

This inability of characters to remember the events or characters reflects the fragmented nature and uncertainty of their reality.

Moreover, the play is utterly devoid of any rationality, logic or order. It constitutes events, dialogues, and actions that subvert logic, highlighting the irrational and meaningless world. Estragon's comment about radishes being black and his preference for pink ones is a deliberate defiance of logic. Radishes are typically red, white, or purple, but not black, making Estragon's statement a clear subversion of logic that defies understanding. On another occasion, Vladimir is seemed to have a distorted perception of time, as he asserts, "...what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties." (Beckett, 1954, p.9), thereby defying every logic. This defiance of logic highlights the arbitrary nature of human perception and language. By embracing the illogical, Beckett's characters occupy a world where meaning is fragmented and reality is distorted, reflecting the absurdity of human existence. This disruption of logic becomes a powerful commentary on the human condition, revealing the complexities and contradictions that lie beneath our attempts to understand the world.

Apart from that, a meaningless emptiness strikes the daily lives of the characters. Estragon repeatedly says, "Nothing to be done" (Beckett, 1954, p. 8, 10), depicting a deep sense of nothingness. On top of that, a profound boredom dominates the whole atmosphere of the play: "Estragon: In the meantime, nothing happens.

Pozzo: You find it tedious?

Estragon: Somewhat " (Beckett, 1954, p.40).

Subsequently, Estragon asserts, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (Beckett, 1954, p.44). Since they have nothing to do, they keep questioning repeatedly, "What do we do now?" (Beckett, 1954, p.17, 50, 67, 83). Nevertheless, they find certain ways in order to fill up the emptiness of their petty existence. Their first meeting with Lucky offers the same justification:

Vladimir: That passed the time.

Estragon: It would have passed in any case.

Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly." (Beckett, 1954, p.50).

These absurd and irrational situations of the characters are summed up by Camus as:

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity (Camus, 1955, p.10).

These lines quintessentially encapsulate the absurdity that prevails throughout the play. The play's universe is indeed "divested of illusions and lights", owing to which the two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, feel like strangers in an eerie landscape. Their ceaseless waiting for Godot—a figure whose existence and arrival are uncertain—showcases the "divorce between man and his life".

According to Camus, it is primarily out of habit that people keep on living this type of absurd life: "Living, naturally, is never easy. You continue making the gestures commanded by existence for many reasons, the first of which is habit." (Camus, 1955, p.9).

Likewise, the play also sheds light on the role of habit in one's life, as exemplified by: "Estragon: Simply wait.

Vladimir: We are used to it." (Beckett, 1954, p.40).

Supplementing this, Vladimir further enforces the role of habit as:

"Vladimir: [...] But habit is a great deadener." (Beckett, 1954, p.102).

This notion is further given voice by him as, "All I know is that the hours are long, under these conditions, and constrain us to beguile them with proceedings which how shall I say—which may at first sight seem reasonable, until they become a habit." (Beckett, 1954, p.89). These lines highlight the significance of habit in navigating absurd existence. Camus' statement that habit is a fundamental reason for continuing to live an absurd life is given voice in Vladimir's assertion, "We are used to it." This suggests that habit has become a coping mechanism which allows individuals to endure the uncertainty and ambiguity of existence.

Additionally, Vladimir's phrase "Habit is a great deadener" further highlights this idea, conveying that habit can numb the pain and anguish associated with absurdity. Moreover, Vladimir's commentary on beguiling time with habitual proceedings highlights the role of routine in providing a semblance of purpose. By embracing habit, individuals can temporarily escape the crushing awareness of their absurd situation, finding a fragile sense of stability in an uncertain world. Ultimately, habit serves as a double-edged sword, both sustaining and numbing individuals in the face of absurdity.

However, Camus also cautions against the protective cover of habit. When this cover unfolds, one becomes aware of his absurd existence:

"It happens that the stage-sets collapse. Rising, tram, four hours in the office or factory, meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, according to the same rhythm this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the 'why' arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement." (Camus, 1955, p.14).

The monotony of daily existence can numb the underlying absurdity of existence. However, when the veil of habit is lifted, and the "why" arises, the individual realizes the abyss of uncertainty that lurks beneath the surface of their mundane existence. This encounter may be a very unsettling experience, as it reveals the absurdity of one's situation. At that time, the

individual has to choose between following the path of habit or embarking on a journey of self-discovery and confrontation with the absurd. The latter choice is fraught with terrors, as it requires leaving behind the comforts of habit and embracing the ambiguity and absurdity of existence.

Meanwhile, Estragon and Vladimir try their best to avoid this “why”. They try not to think in order to evade their absurd existence, which can be realized only by reflection on self and thinking. As uttered by Estragon, “It's so we won't think” (Beckett, 1954, p.66). The very similar notion is also echoed in Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus* as, “Beginning to think is beginning to be undermined” (Camus, 1955, p.8). This evasion of thought and reflection results in a temporary relief, helping them to momentarily escape the existential dread that accompanies awareness of their absurd situation. However, this evasion also highlights the fragility of their existence, highlighting the precarious nature of their constructed reality. By running away from introspection, they perpetuate a cycle of uncertainty, forever trapped in a transitional state, suspended between the comfort of habit and the horror of absurdity. This delicate balance is shaky, and the threat of its collapse is persistent, threatening to expose them to the realms of uncertainty that lie beneath their carefully constructed facade.

Nevertheless, if the absurdity of one's existence is recognized, it becomes difficult to avoid it. For that reason, Camus offers suicide as one means of escape, as illustrated: “Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering” (Camus, 1955, p.9). This can be seen at various instances in the play. Apart from feeling remorse over not committing suicide from the Eiffel Tower, Vladimir and Estragon think of doing it at several moments as a way of putting an end to their absurd lives. In the first act, Estragon states, “What about hanging ourselves? [...] Let's hang ourselves immediately!” (Beckett, 1954, p.17). Likewise, near the end of the play, Estragon asks, “Why don't we hang our- selves?” (Beckett, 1954, p.105), reflecting their minds to end their monotonous existence. Nonetheless, they fail to accomplish it. Vladimir finds death horrible as he acknowledges the dread of it, “the last moment” (Beckett, 1954, p.9), expressing his fear.

Besides death, Camus presents another solution to the problem of the absurd, i.e. “Philosophical Suicide.” According to Camus, philosophical suicide simply refers to accepting certain dogmas by abandoning rational faculties. Camus mentions:

“[...]starting from a philosophy of the world's lack of meaning, it ends up by finding a meaning and depth in it. The most touching of those steps is religious in essence; it becomes obvious in the theme of the irrational. But the most paradoxical and most significant is certainly the one that attributes rational reasons to a world it originally imagined as devoid of any guiding principle.” (Camus, 1955, p.36).

By embracing any belief systems like religion, ideology, or philosophy, one enforces a false logic or order onto the world. In other words, forging out a reason to live notwithstanding life's absurdity. Camus, in his book, also critiques Kierkegaard for escaping the absurd through the “leap of faith”. He asserts, “Christianity is the scandal, and what Kierkegaard calls for quite plainly is the third sacrifice required by Ignatius Loyola, the one in which God most rejoices: 'The sacrifice of the intellect' ” (Camus, 1955, pg.32, 33). According to Camus, Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" highlights an intellectual surrender, where one forfeits reason and critical faculties to embrace a higher power. This also reflects the importance Camus assigns to reason while encountering the absurd, rather than relying on divine interpretations or explanations. As the two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, are unable to commit physical suicide, they take refuge in philosophic suicide. They build up their hopes in the waiting for an unknown character, naming Godot, a messiah, who

would liberate them from all their sufferings, as they repeatedly say, "We're waiting for the Godot." (Beckett, 1954, p.13, 51, 73, 94), throughout the play. This waiting imbues purpose in their lives and tries to fill the void that surrounds them. This endless waiting curbs their freedom and actions. Throughout the play, they are entrapped by this futile waiting. At various points, Estragon mentions, "Let's go" (Beckett, 1954, p.13, 51, 73, 94), to which Vladimir replies, "We can't" (Beckett, 1954, p.13, 51, 73, 94). Under any circumstances, they stick to the never-ending wait in hope of arriving of Godot:

"Estragon: And if he doesn't come?

Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.

Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.

[...]

Estragon: Until he comes " (Beckett, 1954, p.14).

Their hope in Godot's coming can be aligned with "leap of faith", which is rebuked by Camus as a sacrifice of intellect. Instead of living their life in their own way, they surrender it to Godot, as asked by Estragon, "We've no rights anymore? [...] We've lost our rights?" (Beckett, 1954, p. 19, 20), to which Vladimir replies, "We got rid of them." (Beckett, 1954, p.19, 20). Since they do not have rights anymore, they totally depend on some enigmatic and strong being who can bring them out of the quagmire of their suffering. However, Camus warns against envisioning a purpose because it ultimately leads to the restriction of one's freedom: "[...] to the extent to which I arrange my life and prove thereby that I accept its having a meaning, I create for myself barriers between which I confine my life." (Camus, 1955, p.48). In the play, Vladimir and Estragon are fully entangled in the maze of endless waiting, resulting in the restriction of their freedom, as mentioned:

"Estragon: I'm asking you if we're tied? [...]

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, 1954, p. 21, 22).

According to Camus, the right response to the absurd lies not in either physical or philosophical suicide. Instead of evading the absurd, one should both accept and maintain its truth; constantly facing its reality, which Camus calls a metaphysical revolt:

"One of the only coherent philosophical positions is thus revolt. It is a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity. [...] It is that constant presence of man in his own eyes. It is not aspiration, for it is devoid of hope. That revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it." (Camus, 1955, p.44, 45). Camus views revolt as a primary philosophical attitude, featuring humanity's persistent encounter with its own shortcomings and the absurdity of existence. This revolt manifests as constant awareness and acknowledgement of one's own mortality, uncertainty, and the human condition. It accepts the inevitability of fate without succumbing to resignation by relinquishing any hope and aspiration. In short, it solely rests on the notion of living authentically and confronting one's absurd condition, rather than deluding oneself with false hopes of changing the world or achieving any specific goal. At the end of his book, Camus reinforces his conception of "revolt" through the famous mythical character of Sisyphus. Sisyphus was condemned by the gods to push a boulder uphill only to watch it fall back again each time up till eternity. Instead of deluding himself into false hopes, i.e., embracing "philosophical suicide", Sisyphus accepts his absurd existence, fully aware of his providence. He does not build any hope that one day the boulder will stop, and he will be finally free of his absurd existence. As in Camus' words:

Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition; it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn. (Camus, 1955, p.95).

Sisyphus, aware of his miserable condition, finds a source of strength in this awareness, allowing him to achieve victory in his consciousness, highlighting that even in the face of absurdity, human consciousness and defiance can prevail. Sisyphus affirms his existence by embracing his fate.

Similarly, this notion is reinforced at the very end of the essay, "One must imagine Sisyphus happy." (Camus, 1955, p.96). It suggests that despite the aimlessness of the task, Sisyphus finds joy and fulfillment, which does not stem from achieving any goal, but rather from his rebellion, i.e., accepting his fate. However, Vladimir and Estragon act just contrary to Sisyphus. They try their best to get rid of their absurdity, whether through physical or philosophical suicide, rather than accepting it.

Moreover, Camus suggests, "There can be no question of masking the evidence, of suppressing the absurd by denying one of the terms of its equation." (Camus, 1955, p.41). Camus highlights the futility of attempting to escape or deny the absurd. He advocates for acknowledging the absurd rather than denying it. Nonetheless, in the second act, a subtle revolt can be witnessed in Vladimir's behavior. He figures out at last that the only thing imbuing their life with purpose is, "What are we doing here, that is the question. And are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are *Waiting for Godot* to come—" (Beckett, 1954, p.88). Although this understanding makes him acutely aware of the absurdity of their lives, this revolt doesn't last long. Both of them soon get back to their normal routine of indulging in futile activities and conversations, not to mention their wait for Godot. However, at the very end of the play, an acute sense of realization still seems to prevail over him as he is not able to grasp the truth, "Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today?" (Beckett, 1954, p.101). As in the words of Camus, "The return to consciousness, the escape from everyday sleep represents the first step of absurd freedom." (Camus, 1955, p.48). These lines underscore Vladimir's struggle to grasp the truth and make sense of his existence. He finally becomes aware of his situation/absurd existence. His realization can be deemed as a moment of absurd freedom, where he begins to question the nature of his reality and the meaning of his existence.

Finally, a perfect manifestation of Camus's two responses to the absurd— physical and philosophical suicide—appears at the very end of the play.

"VLADIMIR: We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. (*Pause.*) Unless Godot comes. ESTRAGON: And if he comes?

VLADIMIR: We'll be saved." (Beckett, 1954, p.106).

It is obvious that the two tramps are only considering physical or philosophical suicide. They don't have the courage like Sisyphus, who finds strength in his awareness and acceptance of the absurd. This contrast serves to highlight Camus' notion of revolt, where individuals acknowledge their absurd existence, and the tramps' desperate attempt to evade it.

In short, Beckett's play serves as a quintessential manifestation of Camus' concept of Absurd laid out in his famous essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The characters acutely embody the concept of Camus's absurd through their futile dialogues, actions, and endless waiting for the non-arriving Godot, highlighting the vast cosmic void and the meaninglessness of the universe.

The critical analysis of war trauma in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, along with the application of Camus's philosophical essay, *Myth of Sisyphus*, reveals a profound sense of trauma, anguish and the human condition in an absurd universe. Beckett's play aptly sheds light

on the plight of humankind in the face of World Wars, which resulted in the subsequent rise of Absurdism. Both Camus and Beckett recognize that human beings naturally seek meaning, purpose, and coherence in their lives, yet are met with a silent, indifferent world that offers no clear answers. This collision, which Camus defines as the absurd, is vividly brought to life in *Waiting for Godot*, as a result of the trauma of the wars, through the repetitive actions, uncertain memories, and stalled decisions of Vladimir and Estragon. These characters are not only trapped in a physical state but also in a deeper, existential limbo that reflects the paralyzing effect of confronting the brutal wars. Through this lens, the play is not only limited to a theatrical performance but also becomes a philosophical dialogue. The characters' continuous waiting, lack of progression, and fragmented conversations are not random or meaningless; instead, they dramatize the human tendency to delay action in the hope of eternal salvation, which is represented in the elusive Godot. Camus argues that suicide or blind belief are not true solutions to the absurd. Instead, he champions the idea of revolt, which is an honest recognition of absurdity, rather than evading it. Beckett's characters, however, remain stuck between awareness and denial. They sense the futility of their situation but do not take a step beyond it. This reveals the emotional and psychological difficulty of fully accepting and living with the absurd, which is a central tension in both Camus's philosophy and Beckett's play.

In short, the interplay between Camus's theory and Beckett's expression shows how philosophy and literature can reflect and challenge one another. Camus provides the intellectual structure of Absurdism, while Beckett brings it to life in raw, human terms. The emptiness, the cyclical actions, and the clinging to hope in *Waiting for Godot* (1954) echo the philosophical dilemma laid out in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955). Yet, Beckett does not offer a solution which is only a reflection. His characters exist in the space between thought and action, awareness and surrender, much like many individuals in real life who question meaning but fear change. This shared space of uncertainty, shaped by Absurdism, captures the deep tension at the heart of modern existence, shaped tragically by the heinous World Wars, leaving everyone perplexed and disoriented.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research study provides a precise overview of the impact of wars on religion, economy, and literature, and how it leads to the dawn of Absurdism. It analyzes how wars dismantled, for the most part, religious thought, destabilized the economy and moulded the art and craft of literature, focusing chiefly on aimlessness, dejection, and misery of life. It extends to define the concept of Absurdism via the lens of various thinkers, its history, and the way it originates as an outcome of wars, taking Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* into special consideration.

Furthermore, we explained our study of *Waiting for Godot* as portraying war trauma and following absurdity. We employed a method that carefully looks at the themes and details in the text. Our main focus was to find and decipher passages which reflect the trauma of World Wars and ensuing Absurdism. We used Gover Press, New York publication of the text for being accurate and well-researched. To gather information, we closely examined the dialogues, actions of the characters, and the symbols used that allude to war and absurdity, along with the application of Camus's notion of the absurd as expounded in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955), translated by Justin O'Brien. It is to be recognized that this understanding of the text can depend on subjective interpretations.

For the analysis of the text in the light of the theory, we have sifted out the elements of war via the dissection of the text in terms of its symbols and dialogues. The boots of Estragon hurting him throughout the play bring to focus the experience of soldiers on the battlefield, where this object of comfort turns actually to be an affliction. Secondly, the horror and fear triggered in the

characters by the mention of “they” may stand for the psychological trauma in the aftermath of war. Besides, Lucky's disclosure of the contemporary world is characterized by disorganized patterns, chaos and decadence; and other characters' worn-out memories and perception of existence conjure up the terrific scenario of wars that have produced it. Needless to mention the unprecedented massacre of innocent civilians, which Estragon states in his desire to be killed “like billions of others”. In the latter part, we have applied Camus's concept of the absurdity expounded in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955) to the instances in the play. It begins with suicide deemed as a solution to the absurd, which we can see in Vladimir ruling over for not committing it prior to long. The theory of the absurd also features contingency and the futility of actions, as witnessed in the scene where the hat keeps on vacillating between Estragon and Vladimir until the latter gets rid of it. It is strengthened further by the dichotomy between the characters' sayings and actions, along with the excessive repetition of dialogues and actions that permeate all through the play, indicating a monotonous existence. Additionally, what accounts for the absurd is the subversion of logic and rationality, distorted memory and perception of time, and a sense of futility and boredom, the instances of which have been mentioned before. The play also exudes an air of estrangement, a divorce and an exile from the familiar world. This overwhelming burden, if it cannot be sloughed off through physical suicide, can be upended through a philosophical one, stated by Camus in his work, as done by Gogo and Didi when they try to seek meaning in *Waiting for Godot* who, though never coming, yet equips them with a sort of pseudo aim.

Recommendations

Since we only apply Camus's concept of absurd expounded in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955) on the play *Waiting for Godot* (1954) which is due to several reasons that we restricted our approach such as time constraints and limitation of word count. However, it can be explored through various lenses such as Existentialism, post-modernism, psychoanalytic theory, nihilism, and Sartre's concept of absurdity or Kierkegaard's notion of religious absurdity. It can also be analyzed in comparison with other works that govern the same elements.

Bibliography

- Impact of World War II on the U.S. Economy and Workforce. (2006). Iova PBS.
- Kierkegaard: Leap of Faith VS Camus: The Absurd | Philosophy. (2020). *Thoughts on Thinking*.
- Author Schopenhauer. (2021). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- The Economic Impact of World War II: A Deep Dive. (2025). *Toxigon Infinite*.
- The Economic Impact of World War II: A Deep Dive. (2025). *Toxigon*.
- The Financial Impacts of World War II on the Global Economy. (2025). *World History Journal*.
- The Merriam-Webster dictionary*. (2025). Springfield, Massachusetts: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.
- Baron, S. W. (1952). Impact of Wars on Religion. *Political Science Quarterly*, 534-572.
- Beckett, S. (1954). *Waiting for Godot*. London, England: Grove Press.
- Bennett, M. (2020). *The Roadmap: exploring T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land with World War One literature*. Underground Honors Theses.
- Brosman, C. S. (1992). The Functions of War Literature. *South Central Review*, 85-98.
- Camus, A. (1955). *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Penguin Classics.
- Chapman, G. (1933). *A Passionate Prodigality*. New York: Pen & Sword.
- Chauhan, W. (2024). Meaning And Suffering: A Study of Victor Frankl's Man's Search For Meaning. *ijcrt.org*.
- Craig, D., & Ertowa, M. E. (1979). Literature and the Art of War. *Macmillan London*.

- Czanecki, K. (2015). Melted Flesh and Tangled Threads:. *War Trauma and Modes of Healing in Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway" and Leslie Marmon Silko's "Ceremony."*, pp. 50-77.
- Diggins, J. P. (1966). The American Writer, Fascism, and the Liberation of Italy. *American Quarterly*, 599-614.
- Dru, A. (1938). The Journal of Soren Kierkegaard.
- Egan, D. C. (1979). *Extre,e Situations: Literature and Crisis form the Great War to the Atom Bomb*. Palgrave HE, UK.
- Eichengreen, B. (1992). Golden Fetters: The Gold Standard and the Great Depression, 1919-1939.
- Eksteins, M. (1980). *All Quiet on the Westren Front and Fate of a War*. Journal of Contemporary History.
- Ellis, J. (1976). *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warefare in World War I*. Hopkins Press.
- Feldman, G. D. (1997). The Great Disorder: Politics, Economy, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914-1924.
- Friedman, M. (2025). The Financial Impacts of World War II on the Global Economy. *A Legacy of Free-Market Economics - World History*.
- Fussell, P. (n.d). The Great War And Modern Memory. *VDOC.PUB*.
- Grant, J. W. (1988). The Church in Canadian era. *Vancouver: Regent College Publishing*, 160.
- Gurian, W. (1946). After World War II. *The Review of Politics, JSTOR*, 3-11.
- Hager, P. E., & Taylor, D. (1981). *THE NOVELS OF WORLD WAR I An Annotated Bibliography* (Vol. 232). Now York: GARLAND PUNLISHING, INC.
- Harsin, J. (2019). THE SORROW AND THE PITY (1969), FIFTY YEARS LATER: PART 1.
- Keegan, J. (1976). The Face of Battle. *Jonathan Cape*.
- Kesternich, I., Siflinger, B., Smith, J. P., & Winter, J. K. (2014). THE EFFECTS OF WORLD WAR II ON ECONOMIC AND HEALTH OUTCOMES ACROSS EUROPE. *The Review of Economics and Statistics, JSTOR*, 18-103.
- Kierkegaard. (1846). Concluding Unscientific Postscript. *Hong 1992*, 210.
- Lundbery, D. (1984). The American Literature of War: The Civil War, World War I and World War II. *American Quarterly*, 373-388.
- Miller, W. C. (1970). An Armed American: Its Face in Fiction. *New York University Press*.
- (n.d). *Impact of World WarII on the U.S. Economy and Workforce*. Iowa PBS.
- Nagel, T. (1971). *The Absurd Journal of Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Oakley, D. (2011).) "Notes From Underground: An Examination of Dostoevsky's Solution to the Absurd Dilemma," *Macalester Journal of Philosophy*: Vol. 11. *digitalcommons*.
- Parvathaneni, A., & Yang, D. (2024). War Mobilization and Economic Development: World War II and structural Transformation in India. *National Bureau of Economic Research*.
- Parvathaneni, A., & Yang, D. (2024). War Moblization and Economic Development: World War II and Structural Transformation in India. *National Bureau of Economic Research*.
- Rady-Shaw, J. (nd). *Religion during the Second World War*. University of Toronto.
- Robert A. Darrow. (2005). Kierkegaard, Kafka, and the Strength of "The Absurd" in Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac. *Wright State University*.
- Rockoff, H. (2005). The Economics of World Wor I. *The Digest*.
- Sartre, J. P. (1943). *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Sartre, J. P. (1944). *No Exit*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Schmitt, B. E. (1959). "The First World War, 1914-1918" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Sociaty. JSTOR*, 103, 321-31.
- SPERRY, W. L. (1949). WAR'S IMPACT ON RELIGION. *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 1-17.

- Taubes, S. A. (1955). The Absent God. *The Journal of Religion*. JSTOR, 6-16.
- Thomas, A. L. (2006). The Answer Job Did Not Give: Dostoevsky's "Brat'ia Karamazovy" and Camus's "La Peste." *The Modern Language Review*. 774-788.
- Ullah, I., Iqbal, L., & Rehman, A. (2016). A Study of Absurdity in Samuel Beckett's Play Waiting for Godot and Albert Camus Novel The Outsider. *ResearchGate*, 46-57.
- Vujacic, I., & Arandarenko, M. (2015). The Economic Causes and Conquences of the First World War. *Faculity of Economics*.
- Wegener, A. H. (1967). The Absurd in Modern Literature. *Books Abroad*, 150-156.
- Wicks, R. (2021). Arthur Schopenhauer. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Wynn, N. W. (1975). The Afro-American and the Second World War. *Holmes & Meier Publishing*, 97.