

## ABSTRACT

In my thesis I'm going to focus on two different genres of drama, the THEATRE OF ABSURD and the GREEK TRAGEDY, how both the forms of drama are co-related with each other, though apparently it sounds weird, as both the forms of drama belong to entirely opposite time periods in the history of Literature. The Greek Tragedy originated as a religious festival to Dionysus in the fifth century before Christ and the Theatre of Absurd first became popular during 1950's and 1960's, a term coined by Albert Camus in his 1942 essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in which he defines the human existence as basically meaningless, is purely a modern form of drama. In my thesis I'm going to discuss how two entirely different modes of drama make a connection. My contribution in this thesis is that it is purely a new concept and I'm going to bring to light those areas in the two genres, which will prove that these two apparently different forms of drama are co-related with each other; rather the Theater of the Absurd is not a new, meaningless genre of drama. It is basically an extension of the Greek Tragedy.

The Greek Tragedy is the oldest form of drama. According to Aristotle the purpose of Tragedy was to arouse pity and fear through the suffering of a high personage due to *Hamartia*. The Absurd Drama came into existence as a reaction to World War I in which many people died for none of their fault. The world saw bloodshed and chaos and there was a diversion in Man's faith in God. The writers also showed in the plays that this world is a strange place where man is left isolated to survive, with no hope and his efforts of survival and giving a meaning to his life are meaningless. Apparently the Greek Tragedy and Theatre of Absurd seems two opposite poles. The Greek Tragedy emphasizes on God's role in Man's life, whereas in Theatre of Absurd there is no conception of God at all.

Here is the point of twist which I'm going to focus on in my thesis how two apparently different modes of drama are correlated. The Theatre of the Absurd is not a new technique created by modern writers, but it is an evolution of what is already presented by the Greek writers like Aeschylus, Sophocles and especially by Euripides. Camus based his theory of Absurd on the myth of Sisyphus, which has its origin in the Greek Mythology. Sisyphus is known for his punishment he received from Zeus. In Hades Sisyphus is condemned to roll a huge stone up the hill, only to have it roll down again each time. It is the legend that forms the basis of Camus absurdism. The twentieth century writers like Beckett, Pinter and Edward Albee use the legendary character to exempt if how consciously the man confronts the unintelligible universe. Humans yearn to know and yet an absolute knowledge is impossible. Life is cyclic process; man is caught in a web. The only solution is in death. The human life is short, painful and inevitably annihilated. Thus, it is plain that the Theatre of the Absurd is an extension of the Greek tragedy. Its origin is in Greek Mythology.

In my thesis I'm going to develop a bridge between two opposite forms of drama. Starting with the most famous and controversial Absurdist play of Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, it is a play showing the Absurdity of human existence. The characters are puppets in the hands of fate. They are caught in a web, no matter how

much they try; they cannot get out of this web. The play follows a cyclic pattern. The play seems to end in precisely the same condition from where it began, with no real change having occurred. The more things change, the more same they are. Change is only an illusion.

If we look at Oedipus Rex by Sophocles, we see that Oedipus is also a man who is not that much responsible for his sufferings. He is born with a curse and he comes to Thebes to recover them from the plague but he is not aware that he is the plague himself. The play ends from where it begins. There is a chaos when the play opens and it ends in bloodshed and tears. Oedipus is all helpless in the hands of fate, like Vladimir and Estragon are in the Waiting for Godot. The helplessness shown in the Absurdist plays is same as shown in Greek Tragedies.

The Trojan Woman by Euripides also has streaks of absurdity. The scene after the fall of Troy, where every hope has come to an end is a reflection of hopelessness shown in the plays of Pinter and Beckett. In the speech by Hecuba and other ladies it is obvious that God is dead. Their cries and wows are not due to their own faults, instead they are born to suffer and there is no one to pity them. Their only escape is in death. Hope is a mirage, a lie.

The reason for choosing this topic is that many critics criticized Theatre of Absurd for its irrationality and non realistic aptitude. They call it illogical, cyclic, incoherent, a technique of drama lacking meaning and purpose. This is one reason many writers feel that the Theatre of the Absurd died out so early. I feel to opposite, in my opinion Theatre of Absurd originates from the highest form of drama, the Greek Tragedy. It has many elements common with Greek Tragedy, regarding theme, philosophy and theology. Thus, we cannot say that the Theatre of Absurd is an isolated form of Drama.