

Samuel Beckett and a New Form of Dialogue

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Abstract

Drama was changed fundamentally with the beginning of post-modernism and due to various multi-dimensional events and these changes included lack of hero and champion, inability of dialogue in formation of oral disputes and so on. Samuel Beckett, Irish playwright, had suitable understanding of social relations of modern and post-modern age based on lack of individual identity and self-alienation and left traditional structure of drama and its triple dimensions that was a sign of dialectic triad (beginning as thesis, middle as anti-thesis and end as synthesis) and gained another arrangement in dramatic elements due to the date conditions of arrangement of drama elements, in which dialectic discourse is gone out of its credit realm. Beckett disagrees with this issue that the drama should have beginning mid and ending or the characters should be fixed and the assumption that the action and plot are two main elements of creating drama. Despite to structure of dialectic discourse of classic drama, something that is tangible in dramas of Beckett is paradox, in which some situations are repeated with unclear beginning and ending. Hence, Beckett has created a free, novel and non-dialectic discourse with the violation of aspects of dialectic discourse in all structural elements of drama, which is aimed crating single thinking and not collective challenge.

Keywords: discourse, dialectic, moderndrama, post-moderndrama, Samuel Beckett

Introduction

With a chronologic attitude, the process of evolution of dialectic issue and its advent in social, cultural and artistic discourses could be found. If discourse is defined inin the words of Fukui and in the communication chain (knowledge, power, truth), the origin of use and function of discourse and its collocation with its dialectic context could found in codified manner in 4 and 5th centuries B.C. where Socrates passed the philosophy before his age and found a different theoretical system, in which the debate and discourse between different attitudes was a way to achieve to hidden and implicit truth. The attitude of Socrates was typically continued in education methods of students like Plato and Aristotle with creative distortions and then, he proved his presence in formation of organic structure of classic drama and its elements and factors such as narrative, character and dialogue and so on. Dialectic discourse in new age gained new concept with Hegel and the new concept was that every creature can grow the denial in its nature. The idea was absolutely contrary to the idea in classic dialectic discourse. Reflection of such attitude and theory affected modern drama and endangered the structure of Aristotle's attitude, so that although authors such as Anton Chekhov, August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen have a glance on Aristotle attitude, they attempt to go away from it in formation of structure of their drama. Since second half of 20th century and with the formation of Avant-gardist schools in art, dialectic discourse in drama faced serious challenge and gone close to violation. Events such as experiencing two world wars, interior wars, and economic, political and social crises could decline previous imagine of human position and dignity and created an isolative and one-dimensional image of human in the words of Herbert Marcuse.

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The attitude is appeared in absurd drama and works of the pioneer of this kind of drama, Samuel Beckett, so that using his philosophical and theoretical supports; he has learnt the origin of meta-dialectic discourse from the surrounding area. Beckett, in fragmental structure of his dramas, has presented a novel concept of function of discourse, man and the space and has generally made achievement of synthesis so difficult for audiences that seems that there is no way to achieve it.

Research hypothesis

Dialectic discourse has proved its presence in drama elements and classic drama through use of humanity and philosophical system of Ancient Greece. This important issue is observable in specific form in Aristotle structure of drama and its sinus process. The structure tends to present a regulated synthesis in its conclusion after involvement of champion as the thesis and different barriers as anti-thesis. In the modern age, although authors such as Anton Chekhov, August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen could cause some creative distortions in generality of Aristotle's structure, all of them have an overview on the narrative arrangement of Aristotle in formation of dramatic dialectic discourse. With the advent of Samuel Beckett in second half of 20th century, the drama lost the realm of its dialectic discourse because of industrial relations and social, economic and political crises and the character has been changed into a one-dimensional man regardless of classic character relations with no capability to communicate others and this has paved the way for inactiveness and isolation. Such isolation has declined it from biodiversity existence to one-diversity and one-dimensional creature and has blocked the way of formation of dialectic discourse.

Research significance

Knowing the manner of implementing process of violation of dialectic discourse in Beckett's Drama and proving it, one can take measure to find contemporary paradox contexts for each drama with these conditions in the modern and post-modern age. This is because; the structure related to Aristotle construction has lost its past credit and fragmental structures have been replaced instead it. Meta-dialectic paradox is new interpretation of all elements and factors of drama such as presentational layout, story, character, dialogue, create space and so on.

Methodology

According to topic's quality, to prove the claims in this study, the author has collected main data from the proses and biography of Samuel Beckett and has tried to use descriptive hermeneutic methods and cluster method to order them and use in framework of content analysis.

Literature review

Samuel Beckett and studying his works from different aspects has been always the main subject interested by students in Drama Major across the world and in Iran, so that it could be claimed that number of theses about Samuel and his works is in equal level with William Shakespeare. Through referring to field and library studies, the study has tried to ensure of novelty if the research topic. Almost no analyst has studied works of Beckett from perspective of dialectic discourse and violating it. Generally, the subjects close to discussion in this study have been in form of short discussions and partial references to deconstruction of Beckett's works. The topics studied in other theses and those similar to this study more and less include pioneering of postmodernism in the dramatic works of Samuel Beckett (L. Eshaghzadeh); genealogy techniques from the perspective of post-modern and postmodern thinking in the works of Derrida, Deleuze and Beckett (R. Rahmani). Also, among English articles, theses and books, following works are referred:

- Samuel Beckett's Postmodern Fictions by Brian Finney (2014), California State University, Long Beach.
- Lucky's Bones: A Sense of Starvation in Watt, Waiting for Godot and Oliver Twist, by John Robert Keller in PSYART (2015): A Hyperlink Journal for Psychological Study of the Arts. A shrink psychoanalyzes Watt, Didi, Gogo, Oliver and others.

Research scope

Time scope of this study is the years 1950-1985 at the same time with publishing dramatic works of Samuel Beckett. This study has tried to mention the social, philosophical, cultural and artistic relations to investigate fields of violation of dialectic discourse in works of Samuel Beckett.

Beckett and the features of his non-dialectic prose

The early dramas of Beckett in second half of 20th century can clear a transitional period. The transition and passage age is from modernism with its interests in self-reflection to postmodern and its emphasis on quoting the statements of others, parody of literary works and segmentation of text. Beckett's dramas have circular structure instead of following traditional method of presenting the issue. In fact, it would be better to call them as spiral and declining works. These works present some pictures of erosion, in which the universe and the people living in it have to go towards collapse and destruction. In drama of Beckett, people refuge to the repetition and to pass time, they repeat the actions and movements and words and behaviors of others. Beckett's characters have been changed into castrated characters with no ability to grow their nature. They are neither heroes nor anti-hero, but also they are heroes that the most important feature in them is being castrated in actions. They are same pairs with surface and transient contradictions and same fate. At the world of Beckett, people have imaginary configuration and have also individual psychology and move out of time and place and in form of caricatures (Husseini, 2010: 51).

His people are not real, but also they are symbols of human behavior at the society. Such presentation of Beckett in field of anthropology has been caused by his vast focus on social relations around him, which has lost its dialectic realm completely and every person as a piece is not involved with another piece. Although philosophers and scholars like György Lukács have charged Beckett for failure in understanding existence of human and have classified him in group of authors who are just involved in face experience; he is informed of importance of "form" in design of his works and has implemented new aesthetic considerations that are significantly similar to theories of Adorno in field of form through drama. From perspective of Adorno, form is the main issue of artistic work, through which a series of elements with disparate pieces as a whole gain unity. Form of Beckett's works, regardless of hierarchical relations, have no construction based on formation of power pyramid and a space based on a kind of turbulence is created using burble (Farhadpoor, 2010: 62). If the message is considered as synthesis in cycle of dialectic discourse, the turbulence caused by the style of Beckett can result in denial of synthesis as third piece of dialectic triad, which is absolutely against writing style of other authors in his age like Bertolt Brecht, who have been tended to create a kind of pedagogic theater (educational) to transfer a message to the audiences.

Beckett's people in all of his dramas can be symbol of people belonged to second half of 20th century with no position for defense because of destruction of the shelter of faith and belief and believe that they have no necessity to have dialectic discourse, since such discourse is used to analyze competent truth and now that all people are same, the truth and reality has lost its deep effect and has been changed into a surface and passing issue that no dialectic discourse is required to find it. In some works dramas (Krapp's Last Tape), (Happy Days) and (Drama), Beckett has written some monologues that show a kind of awareness different from the nature of involvement of thought and consciousness. The monologues of Beckett are not single-voiced, but also because of post-modernist relations and creation of fragmental paradoxes, they have been formed of several voices. For example, recoding Krapp's voice in the drama "Krap's Last Tape" shows different sounds and voices and different instincts in a unit voice. Hence, the character of Krap is fragmental in an unavoidable form. The act of recording has made it being in such situation. Hence, separation is changed into his habit in all fields. Krap stops his voice constantly. He turns the device off, to find meaning of a word. He turns the device on to achieve what he wants and he dismisses some parts and turns the device again and listens to the other side of the tape. On the other hand, it seems that the recorded voice of his young breathing at the end of drama has almost ridiculed him.

Maybe the best years of my life are ended; when it was possible to be happy; but I don't want to go back to those years; not with such a fire in me; no... I never want to return back (Beckett, 2009: 287).

The force on Krap to separate himself from the past and tendency for biological individuation is also another sign of going away from dialectic triad. Such monologue can report the turbulent unconsciousness, which can prevent growth of an independent and linear idea and block the way to the dialectic discourse through this.

Another factor affecting formation of dialectic discourse in Beckett's drama is awareness of people about the background and subjective tones of the issue that is going to be discussed.

Beckett's people are mostly an exception in this field and have no action or interaction based on changing the existing situation and moving towards eternal situation (McDonald, 2011: 38). In the noble "Malone Dies", Malone has lost his interest in the past times and instead of reviewing the memories, he sometimes spends time with making stories and tries to meet the personal suffers.

I could die today, if I wanted just with a little effort; but it would be better to leave me die naturally, gradually with no hurry. Surely something is changed. I would be never worry about balance and whatever can happen. I should be neutral. There is no matter; the problem is just the death throes. I should tolerate the pain; but since the time I came here, I think about that rarely. However, again sometimes I suffer from impatience attacks (Beckett, 2008: 47).

Something that is tangible in Malone and other people in Beckett's dramas is their magnified situation of having no position. They are strange to "authority and power" and they consider no difference between to be and not to be. The certain force of Beckett creates same image of people in his dramas, which the conflict among them plays no role and hence, no dispute would be created in existential poles of self between me and the other one.

From perspective of drama construction, the following indices are tangible in all works of Beckett:

- 1-Deficit in traditional contrast of beginning, mid and ending (Exposition, Complication and Denouement)
- 2-Lack of clear and integrated story with no suitable plot
- 3-Leaving traditional drama techniques and styles

Something that is existed in Beckett's dramas is related to events with no certain beginning and ending, but also they are a series of situations that are repeated to the end. In this type of drama, any kind of progress of idea is cancelled and any kind of effort to create it is also failed. This important issue is also tangible in his sceneries. For example, in first and second screens of the drama "Waiting for Godot", in terms of decoration, just several leafs are displaces and the scene has repeated. The stream of violation of dialectic discourse can be also investigated through focusing on dialogue writing of Beckett's works, since in history of thinking, the term "Dialogue" has been always considered in relation with dialectic. The main question is that whether the proses wrote by Beckett as dialogue of the people in his dramas is on dialectic basis or not? Use of discourse system (dialogue-dialectic) can be considered as one of the characteristics of thankful man, which is used over the history and in all subjective and lingual dimensions of man. The thinkers of Enlightenment of Europe who were similar to philosophers matching their knowledge with social act could found on one hand by having experience of Renaissance Movement and on the other hand, with the review of culture and society of Ancient Greece that through dialogue and dialectic discourses, they can fight against the religious passiveness of church and criticize subjective and ethical taboo values of self and society to create a healthy space, so that the passage from old to new age is lead to a successful process (Hassuer, 1977: 106).

This function of dialogue-dialectic as an intellectual element was continued to the early second half of 20th century less strongly; although exactly with the beginning of second half of 20th century, because of experiencing 2 world wars and tens of domestic wars and also advent of social, economic, cultural and political crises, and advent of humanity and prevalence of biological collapse, it faces serious challenge and lost its credit. Due to such situation, Beckett separated dialogue from dialectic fragmentation and declined it to arrangement of irregular words. Beckett's people, with paying no attention to each other, try to go away from involvement of content of their words and dialogues and they continue their sparse nonsenses. One of the most important features of Beckett's works in terms of content is his focus on concepts of isolation, loneliness and self-alienation. The contents are not ended to a unit main root because of their vast interpretation and are full of secondary roots. Gilles Deleuze and Pierre-Félix Guattari, in opposite point of vertical and hierarchical structure of knowledge, have proposed a completely horizontal and rhizomic and multi-root structure. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the works of Franz Kafka are rhizomic and include secondary and lateral roots. Similar to various holes of tunnels for rats, they are linked in each other and have way to each other (N Paul, 2001: 118).

In view of Deleuze and Guattari, all concepts are rhizomic and they can never achieve certain result. Works of Samuel Beckett can be also analyzed from such perspective. Confusion in sematic holes is a factor against finding the way and destination and can make human in conflict with self instead of others. Existence of secondary rhizoms among subjects presented by Winnie and Willie in drama "Happy Days" against each other is uniquely brilliant. The rhizoms could be extended under social conditions to an extent that they can play important role against the main rhizome and block the ways achieving to it.

According to such process, the issue of finding the truth as the target of dialectic discourse is violated. Samuel Beckett has been able to show the sense of absent existence and instrumentally existence with focus on instability and quasi-ghost nature of people in the drama "Embers" uniquely. Henry has a certain and attached existence; although Ada is ambiguous and has ethereal function. With such intellectual composition, Beckett tends to show lack of certainty and in this case, dialectic discourse aiming in creating a powerful certainty is violated.

As it is clear in this drama, Henry has physical nature and some sounds are created when he sits and stands; although the voice of Ada is low and comes from far distance and no sound is created when Ada sits and stands up (Tavakol, 2009: 50). Aural existence of Henry has a scary state. Ada is suspended between death and life, truth and ambiguity, the outside world and feverish ideas of Henry's mind, inside and outside. The suspension considered by Beckett and processing it in internal and external realm of his people has had no function other than violation of ideology and personal consciousness and knowledge of human and he has been tended to prevent creation of any kind of logical dialogue that can be an introduction to construction of dialectic discourse.

At last, it should be emphasized that post-modernist discourse, despite to classic and modern dialectic discourse, is mostly tended to distort hierarchy of concepts. This may be mostly observed in denial of priority of rhizomic and original issue against copy or forged issue. Repetition or proliferation can destroy the said priority clearly, so that the rhizomic issue loses its credit and with each repetition, it loses its position more than before. In works of Beckett, this important issue is processed brilliantly. Beckett don't fight wisdom, but also he shows only the result of dominance of wisdom and through this, his discourse has gone far from enlightenment dialectic and has been changed into a free and novel discourse, since enlightenment dialectic and the discourse caused by it overcome vastly the instrumental wisdom (Alvarez, 2009: 26). Lack of rhizome and nature, refusing acceptance of any kind of eternity and questioning many metaphysic assumptions of West are tangible in works of Beckett, which could construct his non-dialectic and lean discourse against all past eras and periods.

Discussion

According to the literature and inconsistency of Beckett and his works in terms of origin of discourse, if the dialectic discourse in drama is interpreted as disputing discourse and interpreting conflict of dramatic elements and factors as thesis and anti-thesis to achieve synthesis, due to the explored documents in this study, the beginning point of violation of this type of discourse could be found in works of Samuel Beckett as the creator of a type of post-modern drama, who has omitted synthesis from the arrangement of narrative elements of drama with taking worldview caused by social and biological relations of second half of 20th century and has founded a meta-dialectic and situation-oriented drama based on a nonlinear pattern.

Conclusion

Under social conditions and relations in the second half of 20th century, dialectic discourse was faced serious challenge and showed its first signs in dramatic works. In the most elementary steps of change in perspective of dramatic literature in terms of construction, one can refer to collapse of Aristotle sinus construction. The patter of formation of classic drama based on triangular pattern and including biological concerns, stories and character and plot in form of a macro narrative has been replaced in the new age by theater based on open pattern including biological rhythms and emphasizing the situations and features instead of characters and drama plots. According to the definition, Drama of Samuel Beckett has not emphasis on plot, character, space and dramatic expression of story anymore, since the process of modernist and post-modernist evolutions has distorted entire human identity and has changed it into a one-dimensional and isolated creature. The people in Beckett's drama can't have acts and movements like the hero in Aristotle sinus construction, since it was depended on a discourse based on dialectics and the discussion between him and the opposite point; although by this age, all people are same and the thoughts have been promoted and non-hero is created instead of hero and anti-hero. Non-heroism is same neutral hero. Samuel Beckett as the pioneer of Absurd Drama composers, with his post-history attitude, has released drama from any kind of rules limited to history and as constructor of dialectic discourse and has considered novel interpretation for drama composition. Through interpreting the message and an equivalent for synthesis in cycle of dialectic discourse, denial of synthesis as third segment of dialectic is violated from the beginning as the prerequisite of Beckett's Creation and no sign of it could be found.

Therefore, the drama of Beckett gains a meta-dialectic orientation based on human ecology of second half of 20th century, in which the individual existence is considered and not social life, community and controversy.

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