

EXISTENTIAL ABSURDITY AND ALIENATION IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S WAITING FOR
GODOT AND FRANZ'S KAFKA'S THE METAMORPHOSIS: AN EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my amazing family Mr. John Ndubuisi Edeh, Mrs. Rosemary Chidi Edeh, Mrs. Rose Ofodile, Elizabeth Ngozi Edeh, Ozioma Edeh, Oyinye Edeh, Joshua Edeh Chinwe Edeh and Ekene Edeh who all supported me all my life.

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Abstract

This thesis carries out an existential analysis of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* through the complex lenses of existential absurdity and alienation and analyses how the use of these existential notions reflects relevant existential attitudes essential to the existential discourse. Furthermore, this thesis employs a comparative analysis of *Waiting for Godot* and *The Metamorphosis* as two distinct genres of literature yet, unified by the existential resources used extensively in them. This project problematizes the comparative distinctiveness in Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka's use of existential absurdity and alienation in their works.

Waiting for Godot and *The Metamorphosis* created and advanced absurd characters and alienated protagonists as constructs of the existential spirit and ideal. This study is an essential confrontation into the complex corpus of an absurd and alienated existence portrayed in the existential crisis of Vladimir, Estragon, and Gregor Samsa. Ultimately, through Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka, we can better understand how existential absurdity and alienation were explored and used in both works on review in this thesis. The research revealed that both authors utilized significantly distinct methods and styles in order to bring out notions of absurdity, nihilism, and alienation in their work.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Existentialism stems from a branch of philosophy that orbits around the analysis of existence and of the way human beings find themselves existing in the mundane world. The most important ideal of existentialism starts and ends with the individual and the excruciating predicaments and crisis that confine him to a world devoid of pertinent answers in relation to his own human experience in the world. The individual starting point is characterized by "the existential attitude" or a sense of disorientation and confusion in the face of an apparently meaningless or absurd world" (Solomon 2). The above reference sheds light on the idea that the individual is the focal point of existentialism. Thus, the individual first exists and is subsequently subjected to his own free will to create his own essence in the world and take responsibility for his experiences which encompasses the various existential crises he faces and which accounts for the existential attitudes assumed by him and emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of his experience in a hostile and indifferent universe.

Existentialism is not restricted to the one-dimensional line of thought often applied to philosophical movements. Critics in some quarters dismiss the existential movement as solely a philosophical appendage. Although existentialism is based on philosophy, it also has a far wider reach thus, "existentialists shared the belief that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject—not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling and conscious individual" (Macquarie 14). Rather than stressing orthodox philosophical and logical reasoning, the total subjective experience of "individuality" was the guiding principle of the existential discourse.

Existentialism in the history of thought flourished in the twentieth century at a time when European history, political thought, and affairs appeared to be on the brink of perpetual collapse. Rational science at the time could not prove they were absolute which signified at the time that there was no absolute truth and the most central cause of the emergence of existentialism was the loss of belief in the existence of a divine being, that is God, and on political structures, values conventions and institutions, owing to the cataclysmic aftermath of both wars. Thus, Matosoglu states:

As a direct consequence of long and brutal World Wars, Europe witnessed the destruction of the established values of life. The growing sense of despair and alienation, losing communication with one another were for a long time what people suffered in Europe that changed the whole world. Coupled with the decline in faith in religion and the rise of science with the enlightenment and the social revolution's turning into a totalitarian regime, the world will never be the same for anyone. Now that human beings had to confront their own selves which are however fragmented and largely unknown. (95)

Furthermore, traditional systems and universal structures were perceived as decadent, “abstract and remote from concrete human experience” (Breisach 5). Thus, the post World War II existential philosophy, literature, and existential character were born “as a gesture of protest against established academic philosophy, its anti-system sensibility, and its flight from the “iron cage” of reason” (Crowell par.1). The existential attitude to understand both the human condition and man’s existence in the mundane world dominated post World War II European critical thought, mostly within the discourses in philosophy and literature. The basic critical reasoning of the time was to confront the human self and analyze the human experience through understanding human freedom, condition, and existence. Thus, the human subject and experience were largely regarded as the foundational tenets and core of the existential corpus, spirit, and discourse of the time.

Existentialism overtly explores the human condition, places emphasis on the individual and fosters the idea that man creates his own essence by exercising his freedom, facing the vicissitudes of living authentically and assuming a position of responsibility, regardless of the outcomes of his decisions. Existentialism “became widespread after World War II, and it strongly influenced multifarious disciplines besides philosophy, including theology, drama, art, literature and psychology” (Guignon and Pereboom 13). Existentialism emerged from the writings of several major philosophers, among the most important proponents of the movement were Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, Simone De Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. Thus, a more authoritative analysis is given below:

The term existentialism was explicitly adopted as a self-description by Jean-Paul Sartre, and through the wide dissemination of the post-war literary and philosophical output of Sartre and his associates— notably Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus—existentialism became identified with a cultural movement. Among the major philosophers identified as existentialists (many of whom—for instance Camus and Heidegger—repudiated the label) were Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Martin Buber in Germany, Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel in France, the Spaniards José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno, and the Russians Nikolai Berdyaev and Lev Shestov. The nineteenth-century philosophers, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche came to be seen as precursors of the movement. Existentialism was as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical. (Crowell, *Existentialism* 1)

Despite the various sentiments and conceptual differences amongst the major existentialists, they all emphasized that the human condition was an inextricable structure within the existential discourse, whereby every being through his or her individuation and subjective acumen give his life meaning in a world that eludes comprehension. The human condition, free will, choice, authenticity, alienation, absurdity, and subjectivity are all significant in the appreciation of existential theory. Furthermore, the key tenets of existentialism take their roots and early praxis from a phenomenon which is best described as a movement concerned with finding the-self and the meaning of life through subjective experience and consciousness, choice. Personal responsibility, authenticity, freedom, and choice, anxiety, the absurdity of human life, despair, death, the search for meaning

and alienation were popular themes that were exploited and explored in the literary output of the time which included critical essays, drama, and fiction.

Despite the fact that existentialism was firmly established during the twentieth century, it owes its roots to philosophers who belong to past centuries. Thinkers such as Blaise Pascal from the seventeenth century and Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Simone De Beauvoir from the nineteenth century played major roles as “precursors” of the existentialist philosophy in shaping the ideas and allowing it to strengthen its hold on the collective imagination of important philosophers and this furthered the debate of existentialism within philosophical spaces before the movement gained immense relevance in the twentieth century. Other major existentialist like Martin Heidegger and Soren Kierkegaard, in particular, focused their teachings on the subjective element of thought and emphasized on the ideas of free will, logic, and conceptual objectivity.

In the twentieth-century, Jean-Paul Sartre who championed his own brand of iconoclastic philosophical teachings popularly called the “Sartrean Existentialism” was widely regarded as one of the most notable and prolific existentialists for the fact that he set the tone for critical debates in existential discourse, mostly in his numerous philosophical pronouncements and literary outputs in the twentieth century. Sartre’s immense contribution to the existential discourse is visible in his critical literary essays. He analyzed his own perception of existentialism in *Being and Nothingness* and some other plays and short-short stories, for example, *Nausea*, *No Exit*, and *The Stranger*. Sartre set the tone for such writers and dramatist as Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, and Franz Kafka. Sartre’s assertion that “existence precedes essence” is one of the most proliferated dictums within the existential discourse. Sartre himself elucidates on the meaning of the term:

What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man, first of all, exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterward. If man as the existentialist sees he is not definable, it is because, to begin with, he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it. The man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. (Sartre 4)

The above quote claims that existence is basically a necessity to acquire essence. Sartre emphasized that Man will be nothing other than what he makes himself to be by creating his own subjective essence and recognizes the fact that man invents his own personal meaning for his existence with no external help. Sartre argues that man has no predetermined meaning or purpose instead he opines that humans define themselves because their individual lives come to be as a response to the predicaments and subjective experiences proposed by their existence in the world. Sartre’s theory of existence precedes essence argues that life has no ingrained meaning or purpose unless man creates it himself and this breaks from already established traditional

philosophy, in sharp contrast, to the Aristotelian assumption that essence precedes existence and that man has a set purpose of being achieved in the world.

The conscious-self was closely examined by thinkers in existentialism, and they made numerous assertions regarding the nature of consciousness and life itself. “Existential thought, therefore, differs from the modern Western rationalist tradition extending from Descartes to Husserl in that it rejects the idea that the most certain and primary reality is rational consciousness. Descartes argued that humans could think away everything that exists and so doubt its reality, but they could not think away or doubt the thinking consciousness itself. This reality of consciousness is more certain than any other reality” (New World Encyclopedia 2017). Existential philosophers, however, completely rejected this idea presented by Descartes and instead focused on an ulterior method of examining the nature of reality. “Existentialism decisively rejects this argument. Instead, it asserts that humans always already find themselves in a world. That is, they find themselves in a prior context and history that is given to and situated within their consciousness. The priority, or a priori and a posteriori, therefore, is not thinking consciousness, but according to Heidegger, "being-in-the-world" (2017). This fundamental argument regarding the nature of human existence helped birth the existential movement. Martin Heidegger considered life to spring into existence with human beings been thrown into their lives and are faced with nothingness of such existence unless they find the will to live authentically to able to realize their essence, as he solemnly claims “In anxiety I realize that I have been thrown into the world and . . . , Dasein, that is meaning “Being-there”, finds itself face to face with the nothing of the possible impossibility of its own existence” (Heidegger, 90).

Soren Kierkegaard’s theory of the truism of subjectivity and the single individual and Sartre’s pronouncement that humans choose and create a path for their lives all but conform to the choice of will over reason. The battle of will, over reason, became the primary point of diversion from the traditional school of thought and existential philosophy. “The recognition of human freedom leads existential philosophers to emphasize will over reason. Many of them view action and decision, therefore, as fundamental to human existence. This position is opposed to rationalism and positivism, where reason is the sufficient means of determining “what we should do.” Existentialists argue against definitions of human beings as primarily rational, knowing subjects which relate to reality as an object of knowledge” (2017). A clearer view on choice and life, in general, began to take tremendous shape after this point in history, as the struggle of existence and the burden of choice began to attain greater importance in the eyes of existential philosophers. “Moreover, they deny human actions can or ought to be regulated strictly by rational principles or laws. They also reject the notion that human beings can be defined in terms of their behavior as in empirical science. They stress, then, the ambiguity and risk of life and the anxiety of having to choose in existential situations” (2017). A powerful notion began to take form due to these rationalizations. The meaning of life was closely examined by thinkers

within the sphere and existentialism, and it was determined that life does not inherently possess any meaning based on the situation created by the natural order. These thinkers surmised that meaning has to be derived and created by the individual itself through their own actions and interpretations. Thus, the existential movement began to empower individuals to seek meaning in their personal journeys and transferred power from nature to one's own consciousness.

The key principle that guided the major existentialists was nothing but a penchant for analyzing the human condition while depicting the meaninglessness and hopelessness of human existence and how man authentically strives to create and add meaning to his life. Numerous other philosophers such as Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, and Simone De Beauvoir added to the field as well, and by the end of the century, existentialism was brimming with numerous tangential and inter-connected theories. Mostly the themes of existential absurdity, nihilism, and alienation were densely harnessed and substantiated by authors such as Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett in their works.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Existential themes have been utilized expertly by various authors since the beginning of the twentieth century in order to add greater depth and variety to their works. Although many elements of existentialism have been used over the years to achieve specific desired effects and arrive at multifarious central messages most of them are usually artfully harnessed to investigate the individual and his subjective experience in the world. Absurdity and alienation are two thematic borders of the existentialist theory that has been used by numerous Modern authors and contemporary writers as veritable tools to mirror certain existential lessons to their audience in a variety of ways mostly in drama and prose.

Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus were among the early existentialists that used these existential themes in their literary output, they explored the existential experience and expounded on the notions of existential absurdity and alienation in their philosophical and literary works. Many post-World War II Modern dramatists and fictional writers were influenced greatly by the existentialist movement. Many authors explored existential themes that centered on the sufferings of man and his helpless state, existing in a world bereft of comprehension. Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka are widely renowned Modern authors who explored alienation and absurdity. Most of their works constructed existentially trapped protagonists that helplessly confront a futile attempt to exist in an extremely absurd and alienated world they have been thrust into. This paper will examine the works of Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka by analyzing the similarities and differences

between the styles adopted by the authors in order to show how existential absurdity and alienation have been used in both works.

1.3. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The methodology adopted for this paper is comparative literature. This is a wide medium used to analyze any two texts, but it is limited by the fact that it is solely a singular medium. Thus, the framework of this study is limited to analyzing and comparing the use of absurdity and alienation in the primary texts used in this research. Although Kafka and Beckett are intensely talented writers who have shaped the mediums they practice, they do not represent the entirety of authors who focus on existential themes in their work. Thus, the scope and subject of this study are extremely specific, and the results may be limited to the primary texts used in this research. Furthermore, there are three major conceptual theories being examined in this research while analyzing the works of Beckett and Kafka in “*Waiting for Godot*” and “*Metamorphosis*.” The first concept is existentialism, which has been thoroughly defined in the introduction of this paper. The second and third concepts are absurdity and alienation. Absurdity is an existential theme that usually utilizes elements that are bizarre or do not make any sense. It is often utilized to examine important questions related to life and nature of reality. Alienation, on the other hand, is a tool utilized by an author in order to display the detachment of an individual from a group of people or society in general. It is utilized to showcase the loneliness of existence in a seemingly social world, and it is a concept that has become increasingly relevant in the modern world. A more detailed analysis of these concepts will be addressed in subsequent chapters of this research.

1.4. Objectives and Significance of the Study

The paper will examine the following research questions:

- a. How has absurdity and alienation been utilized by Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka in *Waiting for Godot* and *The Metamorphosis*: An Existential analysis?
- b. Are there any commonalities in the usage of these existential themes by the two writers?
- c. What are the major differences in the manner in which Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka have utilized absurdity and alienation in their work?

Furthermore, the objective of this study is to determine the role of existential elements such as absurdity and alienation in the works of Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka. The two writers belong to different generations and have their own preferred style of writing literature, but they often turn to existential elements such as absurdity

and alienation in order to highlight their major themes. The two writers rely on these elements in unique ways, and the manner in which these elements are executed in their work is highly distinct as well. The following paper will conduct a comparative study on the literature created by Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka by specifically examining their books “Waiting for Godot” and “The Metamorphosis.” In order to determine the role of these elements in their works, the comparative analysis will be utilized to highlight specific sections from both books and conduct a cross-analysis in order to determine the precise role of absurdity and alienation in the works of the two great writers. Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka are perhaps two of the most influential writers of the last century and certainly two of the most important writers in the area of existentialism. Their writing styles have inspired generations of authors who have taken their pioneering methods and adapted them based on different eras and needs. It is important to determine the specific elements that have contributed to the legacy of these authors, and this study asserts that the expert utilization of absurdity and alienation were part of the reasons their works became such renowned existential classics.

While Kafka relies on a heavy-handed approach to absurdity by beginning his story in a highly absurd and nonchalant manner, Beckett relies on greater levels of subtlety in order to drive his point forward. Both writers have tremendously distinct and unique writing styles and are difficult to compare one with the other. The only comparison that can be drawn directly is the utilization of elements of absurdity and alienation and the manner in which these existential values were portrayed in their work. Both the writers are driven to make their audience think deeply on major issues related to life, love, relationships, society, nature, and the face of reality, but the techniques they employ in order to create an impact on the audience is vastly distinct from one another. By analyzing the works of Kafka and Beckett, this study will provide greater guidance to writers, literature enthusiasts, and other academicians in order to navigate their minds through the world of existentialism, and specifically regarding absurdism and alienation.

2. Description of Research Material

The following section will provide a brief description of the research materials being used for analysis in this paper. The purpose of doing so involves providing a background for the research that will follow in subsequent pages, discuss the major themes and motifs of the material, and highlight the importance of analyzing these materials in particular.

2.1. *Waiting for Godot*

Waiting for Godot is a play written by Samuel Beckett that was originally composed during the period 1948 and 1949. The play was first performed on January 5th, 1953 at the Theatre De Babylone in Paris. The play was initially composed in French and was titled *En Attendant Godot*. It is a two-part tragicomedy that features two lead characters, Vladimir and Estragon, as they wait for the titular character Godot. The three leads interact with three other characters during the course of the play, and the final act includes a twist that involves Godot not showing up despite all the hype surrounding the character

The story begins with the spotlight firmly on the interactions between the two lead characters, Vladimir and Estragon. They are found in a remote location by a country road near a leafless tree, and they appear to be waiting for an unknown individual named Godot. The absurd interactions between the two lead characters and the cyclical nature of the two acts barring minor intentional differences form the crux of this play. Vladimir is the philosophical one in the duo while Estragon is often seen to be indifferent and brutish:

VLADIMIR: Sometimes, I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer. (He takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again.) How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time (he searches for the word) appalled. (With emphasis.) AP-PALLED. (He takes off his hat again, peers inside it.) Funny. (He knocks on the crown as though to dislodge a foreign body, peers into it again, puts it on again.) Nothing to be done. (Estragon with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot. He peers inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing, feels inside it again, staring sightlessly before him.) Well?
ESTRAGON: Nothing. VLADIMIR: Show me. (Beckett 3)

The story meanders almost aimless from one section to another in an almost dreamlike fashion, and very little seems to occur from interaction to the next except for the exchange of bizarre dialogue between the characters. Vladimir and Estragon begin to discuss their dreams at one point while waiting for Godot, and these details reveal great insights about the characters in question. They are joined by two secondary characters named Lucky and Pozzo during the first act, and the interactions between these characters begin to get even

more absurd with each passing page. It is revealed that Lucky is wearing a rope that is tied to his neck and is being controlled by Pozzo, who is apparently his master.

Pozzo is portrayed as an arrogant and selfish man, while Lucky is seen to be a submissive simpleton. Vladimir takes offense with the manner in which Lucky is being treated by Pozzo, and an argument ensues between the characters. The first act ends with the departure of Pozzo and Lucky as Vladimir and Estragon are left alone once more. The duo, in a very nihilist manner, discusses committing suicide to beat the mundanity of the situation before they are informed by a young boy that Godot will not be arriving today but will surely make it tomorrow.

The second act is a near mirror of the first barring a few calculative differences in proceedings. The absurdity in the interactions between Vladimir and Estragon continue, but their interaction with Pozzo and Lucky is vastly different. On this day, Lucky is seen to be the master and Pozzo the slave. Even the behavior and mentality of the two individuals are seen to be extremely different from one another. These minor differences across the course of the day make Vladimir conscious of the circular nature of events that are unfolding around him. He, along with Estragon, appears to be in a haze and he is not quite sure how long he has been waiting for Godot at that very spot. The boy appears again at the end of the second act to inform the two leads that Godot will not appear today as well and that they need to wait for him the next day. The two men contemplate suicide yet again and even attempt it but only to fail miserably. They resolve yet again to try committing suicide tomorrow if Godot does not arrive and then make the same statement to find shelter for the night but do not move from the spot, much like the end of the first Act.

The play has been met with widespread critical acclaim and even has a noble prize attached to its name. While the reading is dense and complex, it is also full of hilarity, darkness, intrigue, and absurdity.

The play is certainly not an easy read. But for anyone who is interested in drama, this is one of Beckett's best works. It takes a while to grasp the play in its entirety, but once such a feat is accomplished, the play will provoke much thought and introspection in the reader's mind (Gupta, 2009).

Gupta (2009) continues by noting: "Anyone attempting to read the play should also make sure that he/she is aware of the basics of absurdist drama and philosophies such as existentialism and absurdism. All this will help in enjoying and understanding the play better."

Thus, we see that *Waiting for Godot* becomes the perfect companion to analyze the concepts of existentialism alongside Kafka's work. The complexity in the writing style is able to match and even at times surpass the absurdity levels of Kafka's work. According to Atkinson (1956), "Since "Waiting for Godot" has no simple meaning, one seizes on Mr. Beckett's experience of two worlds to account for his style and point of view. The point of view suggests Sartre--bleak, dark, disgusted. The style suggests Joyce--pungent and fabulous. Put the two together, and you have some notion of Mr. Beckett's acrid cartoon of the story of mankind". Hence we see

that both works share numerous similarities due to their existential themes and can be paired together for comparative literature analysis.

2.2. *The Metamorphosis*

One of Franz Kafka's best works, *The Metamorphosis* is a novella that was first published in 1915. It tells the story of a salesman named Gregor Samsa who wakes up one morning to discover that he has been transformed into a giant insect-type creature. The events of the book follow the fallout of this absurd event and examine Samsa's reactions to his unique situation. The book is widely considered to be an existentialist classic of the 20th century. The story begins with a traveling salesman Gregor Samsa having transformed into a large vermin in his bedroom. The majority of the first act involves Gregor staying in that room in order to avoid revealing to his family members his new fate. During this time, we are introduced to various members of his family, including his father, mother, and sister Grete. The first act also involves Gregor contemplating the nature of existence and pondering about his own situation with his job and finances:

O God,' he thought, 'what a demanding job I've chosen! Day in, day out on the road. The stresses of trade are much greater than the work going on at the head office, and, in addition to that, I have to deal with the problems of traveling, the worries about train connections, irregular bad food, temporary and constantly changing human relationships which never come from the heart. To hell with it all!' He felt a slight itching on the top of his abdomen. He slowly pushed himself on his back closer to the bedpost so that he could lift his head more easily, found the itchy part, which was entirely covered with small white spots (he did not know what to make of them), and wanted to feel the place with a leg. But he retracted it immediately, for the contact felt like a cold shower all over him. (Kafka 4)

During the course of the act, Gregor's voice changes, and he is unable to clearly communicate with anyone. His employer turns up at his home in order to warn him about his tardy behavior and is eventually scared off by seeing Gregor's transformation. The act ends with Gregor being shunned into his bedroom by father and him passing out due to exhaustion. The second act sees Gregor becoming more comfortable with his new skin and the family attempting to make the situation work at home despite his transformation. Grete attempts to feed Gregor fresh food, but he seems only to be attracted by stale or rotten items, thereby indicating that he becomes even more in-tune with his animal instincts. He spends his time moving around his room and overhearing conversations between his family members regarding their situation and the disappointing actions of Gregor. The second act ends with Gregor revealing his form to his mother and scaring her terribly in the process. He is hurt by an apple thrown at him by his father and is gravely injured by the encounter. The final act witnesses the death of Gregor, and we are unsure if the death occurs because of his injuries or his state of mind. Prior to his death, we see Gregor overhear the fact that he has become a burden to his family and they wish that he left them to fend for themselves in peace he even encounters a set of tenants who have been let into the house to ease the existing financial burden. After scaring the tenants and hurting his parents and sister, Gregor passes away, still

transformed as an insect. His family appears to be relieved by his death and quickly go on to make arrangements for a life without their Gregor, including planning Grete's marriage.

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is widely touted as one of the most unique, compelling, and intriguing books of the last century. English explains succinctly what the novella entails: "In *The Metamorphosis*, German novelist Franz Kafka warns that capitalism harbors inevitable changes that will result ultimately in loneliness and horror. He does so with a prophecy that women will replace men in the twentieth-century workforce, to their detriment (Par.1). Hence *The Metamorphosis* deserves to be analyzed for its alienation themes and absurdist content. *The Metamorphosis* is considered by many as one of the greatest novella ever written, and numerous literary critics and scholars alike have commented on the importance of Kafka's work. According to Kelly, "Metamorphosis exemplifies the world Kafka invented on paper – recognizable but not quite real, precisely detailed and yet dreamlike. We call this world "Kafkaesque" (1). Kafka's work is so influential in the sphere of existential absurdist and alienist spectrum that even his style of literature is dubbed– Kafkaesque due to his extensive use of existential themes. *The Metamorphosis* is certainly one of Kafka's most Kafkaesque novellas of all time.

3.1. The framework of the study

The methodology utilized in this paper can be categorized as a comparative approach to literature, and it is one of the most widely adopted qualitative methodologies available while analyzing literature created by two distinct authors. It provides the researcher with the benefit of closely examining the styles utilized in the literature and directly comparing the themes and styles chosen by the artists.

Comparative literature is a tool that is used consistently by researchers in order to be able to accurately understand the differences between the literary styles and motifs employed by two authors in different kinds of literature. Bijay Kumar Dass defines comparative literature below:

The simple way to define comparative literature is to say that it is a comparison between the two literature. Comparative literature analyses the similarities and dissimilarities and parallels between two literatures. It further studies themes, modes, conventions and use of folk tales, myths in two different literatures or even more. (1)

In this paper, the two pieces of literature that will be analyzed using the comparative literature analysis are *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka and *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett.

3.2. A Review of Existentialism

Existentialism is the blanket concept being analyzed in this paper, and alienation and absurdity can be seen as elements of existentialism. It has been a part of literature for over three centuries at this point, and various writers and philosophers such as Rene Descartes, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Soren Kierkegaard can be attributed to the rise of numerous existential concepts. The central query of existentialism is to find meaning within existence, and this concept has been used brilliantly by various writers in the past, including Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett. According to Webber:

Since it gained currency at the end of the second world war, the term “existentialism” has mostly been associated with a cultural movement that grew out of the wartime intellectual atmosphere of the Left Bank in Paris and spread through fiction and art as much as a philosophy. The theoretical and other writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, and Frantz Fanon in the 1940s and 1950s are usually taken as central to this movement, as are the sculptures of Alberto Giacometti, the paintings of Jean Dubuffet, and the plays of Samuel Beckett from this time. (1)

Thus, we see that the end of the Second World War allowed the rise of thinkers who were unafraid of probing deeper into the human psyche to determine the meaning in existence.

Existentialist writers and thinkers managed to deviate from the trend of modern literature by focusing on the self and directing attention towards the inner mind and its struggles. Some of the deepest thinkers of the 19th - 20th centuries hailed from an existentialist school of thought. According to Webber:

The nineteenth-century philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche are usually taken to be the key early Existentialists. One a devout Christian, the other an ardent atheist, these thinkers are united by their emphasis on the individual rather than society as a center of concern and value. Since there are similar themes in the work of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, and more controversially Martin Heidegger, these thinkers are also often found in surveys of existentialism. (2)

The above statement gives us an insight into the predominant themes central to the writings of early major existentialists. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's works highlighted the socio-political problems of his time and explored man's susceptibility to manipulation which is evident in his work *The Eternal Husband*, furthermore; Gabriel Marcel, an avid Christian existentialist, explored the human condition mostly in respect to the human struggle in a modern and technologically driven society while Karl Jaspers explored the subject of human freedom and the problematic borders between empiricism and theology in which he was greatly influenced by the philosophies of both Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Despite their distinctive religious affiliations and philosophical distinctiveness, it is evident that these existentialists explored the human subject as the predominant focus in their works.

Jean-Paul Sartre is notably the philosopher that can be credited to truly proliferating and popularizing the ideals of existentialism around the world. In order to understand the notion of existentialism, it is important to examine the life and work of Jean-Paul Sartre as well. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015):

Sartre (1905-1980) is arguably the best-known philosopher of the twentieth century. His indefatigable pursuit of philosophical reflection, literary creativity and, in the second half of his life, active political commitment gained him worldwide renown, if not admiration. He is commonly considered the father of existential philosophy, whose writings set the tone for intellectual life in the decade immediately following the Second World War.

His ideas helped shape and structure the tenets of existential philosophy and he had numerous ideas that were unique, mostly in the distinctiveness of his brand of existentialism which was firmly tied to his atheistic beliefs and his polemical deviation from other existentialists like Martin Heidegger and Gabriel Marcel in which the latter clearly distanced himself from Sartre's philosophical ideas (Esslin, 2004). Despite Sartre's controversial philosophical standing amongst fellow contemporary existentialists, he was still regarded as one of the best philosophers of his time. Priest describes Sartre as:

One of the greatest French thinkers. A polemical and witty essayist, a metaphysician of subjectivity, a political activist, a revolutionary political theorist, a humanistic novelist, a didactic playwright, his genius lies in his powers of philosophical synthesis and the genre-breaching breadth of his imagination. (10)

Sartre had carefully selected a handful of humanistic ideals to dissect and propound his own brand of existential teachings. Freedom and responsibility are two ideas that were central to his philosophy. According to O'Neill:

It is a well-known fact that Sartre, in his many works regards responsibility as the necessary consequence of inalienable human freedom. This is another reason why he also favors a strict "either - or" between God's existence and human freedom: either God exists or man is free and responsible. There is no third possibility, and all philosophical efforts to find an intermediate way between divine omniscience and human freedom are simply a waste of time. (par. 1)

Thus, Sartre's philosophy emphasized the notion of free will and thrusting greater responsibility in the hands of man, and this makes sense considering the world had gone through such an agonizing period in respect to the aftermath of both wars. The stance taken by Sartre was a far cry from the current standing of Western philosophy on the idea of free will. "We are left alone," the philosopher wrote in his 1946 essay "Existentialism is humanism." "This is what I mean when I say that a person is condemned to freedom." According to Sartre, freedom is a burden; without gods and devils guilty of our actions or any predetermined course of action. Each of us alone is fully responsible for our lives and our choices. Having said goodbye to the consoling delusion that humanity is the center of the universe, realizing that our life is short and devoid of a predetermined goal, we come to existential horror. According to O'Neill

This is a very bold stance, directly opposed to the mainstream of Western philosophy which typically attempts to reconcile human responsibility with the existence of an all powerful and all knowledgeable being. In addition, moral responsibility has been traditionally linked with God as the ultimate guarantor of values and sanctions. (par.2)

As we can see, Sartre's point of view takes a strict departure from the ideas circulating in philosophy at the time, and he is responsible for the evolution of the field and according to O'Neill:

Sartre repudiates both components of the traditional view: in his eyes, God is an impediment for human freedom and responsibility. The tension between human freedom and God is, therefore, insoluble. Sartre is convinced that human responsibility makes sense only if there is no God. (par.3)

Hence, the main idea behind the existential point of view of Sartre is to offer human beings greater strength, control, and power over their own destinies instead of seeking for their lives to be run by a divine hand.

In order to understand the manner in which Sartre utilized the concept of existentialism in his works and inspired future generations of writers, it is important to examine two of his plays that rely heavily on existential themes. In this regard, I will examine the research conducted by Cagri Tugrul Mart in which he reviews existentialism in two plays by Sartre. The two plays chosen by Mart in his analysis of existential themes in the works of Sartre are *The Flies* and *No Exit*.

The Flies was a play written by Sartre in 1943, and it is a call to people in order to make them focus on the freedom given to them naturally at birth. According to Mart:

In the play, Sartre wants to show freedom through the protagonist of the play Orestos. Human freedom is very important, according to existentialism. Sartre has got the idea that people have the ability to create their own world through freedom. Sartre's opinion is that people are free to make a choice and to act according to that choice. (52)

The main character in the play, Orestos, is portrayed as a character that understands and recognizes his freedom and is, therefore, able to focus on his future and make decisions regarding the same. His sister, Electra, however, is the polar opposite in nature and is only stuck in her past through her own mental trappings. Sartre uses the dualistic characters in this play in order to highlight not just the prevalence of freedom in everyone's life, but also about the importance of utilizing it well. In addition, the author is trying to create a contrast between nihilism and dissipation. He wants to show that these concepts are not identical. Moreover, that nihilism is not synonymous with the rejection of all values because of despair. This is the desire to gain freedom.

The second play focused on during the research is called *No-Exit*, and it highlights yet another important facet of the existential teachings in Sartre's work. According to Mart:

In the play 'No Exit', Garcin cannot leave the room where they are together because he needs the others to judge him—Sartre in his 'Being and Nothingness' argues that so as to have freedom, one needs to ignore what others think about him or how others judge him; Sartre calls this "being-for-others". "Ah, if I only knew which path to take! ... Yet this you know: that I have always tried to act aright. But now I am weary, and my mind is dark; I can no longer distinguish right from wrong. (52)

As seen above, one of the three characters trapped in the room called Garcin is faced with a crisis of stagnancy because he lacks the freedom to think for himself and make decisions on the path to take or what to do next. In *No Exit*, Sartre depicts that there is no freedom, essence or responsibility in a trapped soul as it is seen that his three characters Inez, Garcin, and Estelle are not trapped in any tortuous burning furnace but instead are absurdly trapped in the "hell within their own mind" which denies them the mental freedom to achieve their essence. Therefore we see that two of Sartre's most famous works explored existential elements. In *The Flies*,

the audience is made to think closely regarding the notion of freedom and free will, while the point of *No-Exit* is to provide an insight into the mindset one needs to dawn in order to achieve freedom mentally.

3.3. Basic features of Alienation, Absurdity, and Nihilism

Alienation is a concept that is associated as one of the perils of living in the modern world. It is the sense of loneliness and isolation that is created in the personal experience of individuals as they spend life in smaller families and larger cities. Although this is the conventional definition associated with the concept, there are numerous interpretations of this as well. According to Darankolae and Hojjat:

The term alienation has its simple meaning—a condition of being estranged from someone or something, but it also has technical meanings. For instance, in law, alienation refers to a conveyance of property; something is said to be ‘alienable’ if it can be sold. Alternately Thomas Jefferson’s famous rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are so tied to the essence of mankind to be ‘inalienable’ right; in social psychology, alienation refers to a person’s psychological withdrawal from society. (202)

Thus we see that the writer is able to provide a historical overview of the concept in this definition. According to Darankolae and Hojjat:

In this sense, the alienated individual is isolated from other people; taken to an extreme, such psychological isolation expresses itself in neurosis. In critical social theory, alienation has an additional sense of separating the individual from his or herself, a fragmentation of one’s self through work. (202)

Hence, the concept of alienation has several acceptable forms and has been interpreted in numerous ways in literature as well. There have been numerous authors who have been associated with the idea of alienation in literature. Apart from Kafka and Beckett, the one name that comes to mind in this particular sphere is Sam Shepard. His best works *Buried Child*, and *True West* was explored through the lens of man’s alienation in the modern world. The first work under discussion in this research paper is *Buried Child*. According to Darankolae and Hojjat:

Undoubtedly *Buried Child* is one of the most known and quoted plays written by Sam Shepard. The play which brought him Pulitzer Prize in 1979. The moral decline in this story is expressed between parents and their children. In *Buried Child*, every single character except Shelly, Vince’s girlfriend, is suffering from an identity crisis which has caused internal and external malfunctioning including self-dilapidation and social alienation. (205)

We see that Shepard prefers to place his characters in a moral dilemma and endure his characters through ‘identity crisis’ in order to highlight the social alienation being experienced by them.

There are numerous recurring themes between the two works of Shepard being analyzed in the paper. *True West* and *Buried Child* have overlapping characters purposefully written by Shepard in order to highlight the patterns forming between different people in different parts of the country. According to Darankolae and Hojjat:

Like the protagonists of *True West*, Dodge in *Buried Child* is engrossed with TV and attempts to conceal his guilt, irresponsibility, and inauthenticity by means of drinking. Instead of the crops, Dodge seeds his farm with the corpses of the incestuous infant of Tilden and his wife and causes infertility for his following generations. Another similarity between *True West* and *Buried Child* is in that corruption and displacement start from patriarchy or better said the centers of both families. This alienation is clearly perceived when Dodge doesn't accept Bradley as his own child. (206)

Thus, by creating complex social and personal conflicts between characters, Shepard was able to highlight existential themes in his work, specifically related to alienation.

Perhaps the biggest contributor to the field of alienation is Hegel and his philosophy. Hegelian alienation stipulates that the finite-spirit and the human-self doubles itself externalizes and confronts its own another being. According to Sayers:

The concept of alienation is one of the most important and fruitful legacies of Hegel's social philosophy. It is strange, therefore that Hegel's own account is widely rejected, by writers in those traditions which have taken up and developed the concept in the most influential ways: Marxism and Existentialism. (1)

Following Hegel, the biggest name to be linked to the idea of alienation is Karl Marx, and Sayers explains Marx's stance on alienation:

Marx's account of alienation draws explicitly and directly on Hegel's work. He uses the term to refer to a situation in which our own activities and products appear to take on independent existence and to be hostile powers working against us. Marx's main use of the concept is in reference to the form of labor in a capitalist society, but he also talks of 'alienation' in the sphere of social and economic relations. (5)

The excerpt above shows that the Marxist theory of alienation attempts to pitch situations and activities assumed by man to take on an independent existence. These sets of situations have the power of hostility to estrange, overpower, and work against us. Furthermore, Sayers in-depth explains Marx's deviation from Hegel's view of alienation below:

Marx agrees with Hegel in regarding the self as a social and historical creation. He regards self-alienation as a social and historical phenomenon which is destined to be overcome with historical development and progress. Thus in Marx, as in Hegel, the social and spiritual aspects of alienation and

its overcoming are united. However, as mentioned already, Marx rejects the Hegelian view that alienation has already been overcome in present society. He also criticizes Hegel's account of history as the self-development of spirit for its idealism and instead propounds a materialist theory. Present capitalist society is characterized by alienation. This has an economic and social basis. Alienation will be overcome only when this is changed. (5)

Marx emphasized alienation in the capitalist society while also acknowledging alienation in the social and economic fabric of capitalist societies and deviates from Hegelian alienation, on the Hegelian notion that alienation has already been overcome and Hegelian overtly idealistic theory of the history of self-development of the spirit. Marxist theory of alienation instead promulgates a materialist theory of self-development and insists that the alienation in economic and social spheres can only be overcome only if changes occur in the material transformation of the existing capitalist order. Franz Kafka explored the intricate Marxist theory of alienation in the characterization of Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* and Sartre exploited Marxist alienation to depict his distaste of the Bourgeoisie in his play *No Exit*. Marxist writings have often been used as a signal in order to warn developing political parties of the perils of creating a modern world. According to Sayers:

Generalization in this area is particularly difficult. The very claim that Marxism has a theory of alienation is controversial. The term has a shifting meaning in Marx's early writings, and it plays only a peripheral role in his later work. Generalizing about existentialism is even more problematic. Existentialism is not a definite philosophical school at all in Marxist theory, which is contrasted with the opinions of many researchers. At best, it is a loose tradition, and many of the writers associated with it do not explicitly use the concept of alienation. (1)

Thus, Sayers presents alienation as a construct which in itself is a knotty spectrum to delve into and questions the controversy situated in Karl Marx having a theory of alienation in the first place. Sayers expounds further on alienation by connecting the term with existentialism although he stipulates that alienation was not overtly exploited by existentialist, yet it has been explored by modern writers that saw alienation as a veritable literary tool. The likes of Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, and Franz Kafka all explored alienation in their works.

Absurdity in literature has a plethora of definitions attached to the concept, and it is a term that depicts a break from understanding and a lack of meaningful comprehension, which emphasizes a lack of meaning. Eugene Ionesco iterates that Absurdity is simply a condition “devoid of purpose, cut from all religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, Man is lost.” He further elucidates that “all of Man’s actions become senseless, absurd and useless” (4). A more expressive and functional definition is given by Albert Camus below:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in the universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. He is an irremediable exile because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come.

This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity (18).

Camus above painted the picture of abject confusion and a complete feeling of disorientation, disillusionment, and hopelessness, which signifies a profound disconnect between Man, his existence, and his purpose.

The existential theme of absurdity was explored succinctly in an iconoclastic literary movement called “The theatre of the Absurd” also known as the Avant-Garde writers. Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, and literary critic Albert Camus belonged to this elite class of absurd dramatists which came to be known as “The theatre of the Absurd,” and the movement flourished mostly in drama, in the periods between the 1950s and 1960s. Tazir Hussain gives us a detailed exegesis of ‘The Theatre of Absurd’:

The term is useful as “A device to make certain fundamental traits which seem to be present in the works of a number of dramatists accessible to the discussion by tracing the features they have in common.” By ‘Absurd,’ Camus meant a life lived solely for its sake in a universe which no longer made sense because there was no God to resolve the contradictions. In other words, what Camus called ‘absurd,’ Kierkegaard called ‘Despair.’ And it is on this philosophy that Beckett created his famous play ‘Waiting for Godot.’ Before the genre of Absurd Drama gained popularity in the hands of Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, and Gennet, plays were characterized by the clearly constructed story and subtlety of characterization and motivation. However, the absurd plays were characterized by nonspecific unrecognizable characters who are presented almost like mechanical puppets. These dramas speak to a deeper level of the audience’s mind. It challenges the audience to make sense of nonsense, to face the situation consciously and perceive with laughter the fundamental absurdity. (1)

Thus, Hussain above explains that several writers that consisted of the ‘The Theatre of Absurd’ had Absurd as the central message of their works. Hussain further highlighted that the absurd theatre consisted of portraying a life lived in a world which apparently made no sense and was devoid of a higher power or being to solve the ensuing contradictions in existing within the confines of the absurd world. The above statements also highlight the redundant nature of the characters in absurd plays as a means of exposing the audience to a whole new level of the realities absurdity situated not only in the literary work but also in the real world and works like *Waiting For Godot* fits perfectly into this category.

One of the most vocal writers in the space of absurdity Albert Camus stipulates in his work *The Myth of Sisyphus* that human existence revolves closely around confronting its own basic irrationalities which in itself is absurd. Camus expounds on one of the central plights of the modern man- an absurdity. “The absurd,” he accentuates, “is born of this confrontation between the human need for meaning and the unreasonable silence of the world.” (4). He goes further in explaining that man is devoid of clarity of any kind and instead feels alienated. Camus further stipulates, “At this point of his effort, a man stands face to face with the irrational.”(5). More so, Camus depicts that man feels within himself a longing for happiness and for rationality and therefore desires reason, but “this world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said...what is absurd is the

confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart.”(6).

According to The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2019), we can view the term absurd from this sense:

First, many existentialists argued that nature as a whole has no design, no reason for existing. Although the natural world can apparently be understood by physical science or metaphysics, this might be better thought of as 'description' than either understanding or explanation. Thus, the achievements of the natural sciences also empty nature of value and meaning.

Thus, many existentialist believe that our traditional perception of the cosmos and our scientific understanding of it cannot offer us the value or meaning we desire in our lives. For example, Martin Heidegger also believed that offering a framework using our limited understanding of nature will come at the cost of a profound falsification of nature. The absurd is in the fact that knowledge based on science and empiricism does not guarantee humans the purpose and meaning we seek, and this in itself problematizes the perceived achievements of natural sciences by constantly questioning them. One of the principles of the absurd lies in the fact that in the midst of numerous scientific knowledge exist a complete break in understanding the emptiness and utter lack of meaning in the absurd world. The origin of the term Absurd has specific reasoning, and it is important to observe the history of the genre in this section. According to Wegener

The Philosophy of the absurd derives its name and its way of formulating its critical opposition to rationalistic views of reality from the Latin *absurdus*, meaning in a musical context, “inharmonious, out of tune.” In contemporary usage it has come to mean “out of harmony with reason or propriety; irrational, incongruous, senseless, stupid, silly, ridiculous. (151)

Hence, we see that the notion of absurdity is closely tied into events that stray from the ordinary and deviate from the norm. Wegener above accentuates that absurdity encompasses a stray from meaning, senseless, irrational, and devoid of any logical harmony in situations that begs for more answers rather than contradictions. These types of situations are clearly seen in the work of Kafka and Beckett.

Nihilism is basically the philosophical belief that life is fundamentally meaningless and valueless. The internet encyclopedia associates nihilism with extreme pessimism that condemns existence. Therefore, a real nihilist believes in nothing and has no purpose other than the impulse for destruction. The ideology is associated with Nietzsche who claimed that corrosive effects are guaranteed to destroy religious, metaphysical, and moral convictions. According to the Internet Encyclopedia, Nietzsche notes that nihilism impacts culture and values in a pervasive manner. The ideology is common in most of Kafka’s stories including *The Metamorphosis*. The earliest proponents of nihilism were skeptics who refuted the possibility of certainty. Essentially, such ideologists believe that life is meaningless, and the only way to create a better future is to destroy all political, social, and religious order. Existential nihilism entails the idea that existence has no inherent value while ethical nihilism discards the idea of the existence of absolute moral or ethical principles. Therefore, the concept supports cosmic purposefulness as seen in Kafka’s and Beckett’s narratives.

3.4. Absurdity in *Waiting for Godot* and *The Metamorphosis*

The writings of Kafka and Beckett have already been amply analyzed by researchers previously in order to determine existential themes in the works. Tazir Hussain's research, in particular, is highly illuminating while considering absurdist themes in the work of Beckett. According to Hussain:

By Absurd', Camus meant a life lived solely for its stake in a universe which no longer made sense because there was no God to resolve the contradictions. In other words, what Camus called 'absurd,' Kierkegaard called 'Despair.' And it is on this philosophy that Beckett created his famous play 'Waiting for Godot. (1)

Here, Hussain introduces us to the concept of the theatre of the absurd, a novel new sub-genre created due to non-traditional plays such as Beckett's'. According to Hussain:

Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' belongs to the tradition of the Theatre of Absurd. It is unconventional in not depicting any dramatic conflicts. In the play, practically nothing happens, no development is to be found, there is no beginning and no end. The entire action boils down in an absurd setting of a countryside road with two tramps Vladimir and Estragon who simply idle away their time waiting for Godot, about whom they have only vague ideas. (1)

The play consists of two acts. They are almost identical: they meet Pozzo and Lucky — the master and the slave, the boy, who informs them that Godot, will not come; two attempts to commit suicide, which end in failure, at the end of each act they remain in a place. Only the sequence of events and dialogues in each act is different. In constant verbal skirmishes, Vladimir and Estragon show individual traits. Vladimir is more practical; Estragon claims to be a poet. Estragon says that the more he eats carrots, the less he likes it. The reaction of Vladimir is the opposite: he likes everything habitual. Estragon - a dreamer, Vladimir cannot hear about dreams. Vladimir has bad breath, Estragon's feet stink. Vladimir remembers the past. Estragon instantly forgets everything. Estragon loves to tell funny stories; they degrade Vladimir. Vladimir hopes that Godot will come, and their lives will change. Estragon is skeptical and sometimes forgets the name Godot. With the boy, the messenger of Godot, Vladimir leads the conversation, and the boy is addressed to him. Estragon is mentally unstable; every night, some unknown people beat him. Sometimes Vladimir protects him, sings him a lullaby, and covers him with his coat. The dissimilarity of temperaments leads to endless squabbles, and every now and then they decide to disperse.

A characteristic feature of the play is the assumption that the best way out of the situation of the vagrants is to prefer suicide to the expectation of Godot. Getting rid of themselves was their favorite decision,

impracticable because of their incompetence. The fact that suicide every time fails is explained by Vladimir and Estragon as the expectation (or they simulate this expectation).

Waiting for Godot gives rise to a sense of uncertainty, and this is the essence of the play. Some researchers of *Waiting For Godot* see Beckett's quintessence: the inevitable irony appears in the very ugly and honest look of the melancholy and horror of human existence. *Waiting for Godot* is a static play; the events in it go around like a circle: the second action repeats the first with only minor changes. To aggravate the suffocating atmosphere of pessimism, Beckett inserted elements of a musical comedy and several lyrical passages into the play. Samuel Beckett below gives us an overview of his own mechanical manipulation of his characters in *Waiting for Godot* in order to provoke a variety of reactions from his audience which fundamentally, heightens their perceptions and experience of a higher level of absurdity, irrationality, and senselessness in the absurd existence of his stock characters Estragon and Vladimir:

We find it difficult to identify with the characters in absurd drama, but, where Brecht hoped to "activate the audience's critical, intellectual capacities, Absurd Drama spoke to a deeper level of the audience's awareness its staging was usually very funny and very terrifying, pushing the audience forward, then confusing them, compelling a personal assessment of their reactions, and offering opposites that multiply in their minds it challenged the audience to make sense of nonsense, to face the predicament of Life consciously rather than to feel it vaguely and perceive with laughter, its fundamental absurdity. (3)

Given the absurdity of the play and the inconsistency of the images therein, researchers are still trying to understand the essence of the main characters. The road as demonstrated in the text means movement, dynamics, the eternal path, and the tree is static here. This is an insurmountable contradiction of life, inherent in the name. That is, the opposition of motion and statics is key to the meaning of the play. We are all waiting for something or someone; life is waiting. Each of us has a so-called Godot lingering in our minds, some dreams and undying hopes, but human desires are contradictory, just like people themselves. The protagonists in *Waiting For Godot* want to change and add meaning to their lives but they basically do nothing to achieve their aims. In addition, Estragon compares himself with Christ, his shoes are small, but the next one is large, that is, he has a midlife crisis, the age of Christ. *Waiting for Godot* is faith in a god who will not come. The personages are trying to see the signs on the tree, in the sky, in the hat, and in the shoes. However, they come to the conclusion that they just have to wait patiently for their messiah.

3.5. *Alienation in Waiting for Godot and The Metamorphosis*

The concept of alienation in the works of Kafka and Beckett was explored not only as a recurring theme but also as a mechanical motif through which the various characters mirror their own incapacities and a means of escape from their absurd existence. Franz Kafka was an expert in creating characters that were isolated from the world, and this facet has been studied by various researchers in the past. In one particular analysis by Sokel, we see the structure and function of self-alienation being studied in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. According to Sokel:

Kafka's narratives enact not only the metaphors hidden in ordinary speech but also ideals crucial in the history of thought. *The Metamorphosis* is a striking example. Gregor Samsa's transformation into vermin presents self-alienation in a literal way, not merely a customary metaphor becomes fictional fact. (485)

Thus, we see that the researcher not only examines the concept of alienation in Kafka's work but also analyses the notion of self-alienation through the lens of the protagonist. According to Sokel:

The idea of human self-alienation has played a crucial role in modern thought from German classical Idealism to Marxism and Existentialism. The individual is estranged from himself insofar as he is alienated from his essential nature as a human being. (485)

Furthermore, by creating a protagonist who transformed into a giant insect, Kafka literally exploits the concept of alienation and presents an absurd twist to it for his audience to absorb, persevere, evaluate and appreciate his tapestry and blend of existential alienation and absurdity through the lenses of a suffering Gregor Samsa, which heightens the level of anxiety in the consciousness of his readers and consequently provokes his audience mental and emotional participation while witnessing the absurdity of Samsa's reality.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is yet another work that has been explored for its alienation properties yet; it possesses a wide range of avenue through which the harsh realities of existential alienation are exploited and presented in the play. According to Mihalyi (2013),

The theater of the absurd—and certainly Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*—discards the direct approach to reality, preferring to attack it from the angle of myth instead. This theater is bent on exposing the myths that are now empty of validity, untrue, devoid of substance. Rather than advance arguments to refute them, the aim is to demolish these hallowed and devoutly revered beliefs "from within," by exploding the mines of travesty and distorted humor under their feet.

Hence, we see that the work of Beckett is valued for its originality and its ability to contextualize the human experience at a deeper level. While analyzing the work of Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*, Mihalyi (2013) notes the following:

Waiting for Godot trains its guns, first and foremost, on the Christian myth of redemption. It also repudiates the myths of enlightenment, progress, nature, and love—all the myths, in fact, which promise redemption, salvation to mankind in this world or hereafter. What Beckett is doing is probing the farthest limits of negation, replacing the hero with the anti-hero, the race of Prometheus with tramps lingering by the roadside, and substituting for gods, ideals, and faiths the elusive Godot-That-Never-Comes. The vanity of power and wealth, science and service, is symbolized by the Pozzo-Lucky pair; in Beckett's world talk and action become meaningless, reduced to a means of killing time, an antidote to boredom. Nature has turned into a dreary wilderness; on the stage unfolds the vision of an alienated world.

Thus, *Waiting for Godot* subtly presents an exposé into the sacred Christian value of salvation and redemption while also tethering his discomfited protagonists to an eternal quest for absolution while their immediate reality is enshrouded with boredom, inactivity, and penury, leaving them extremely vulnerable to being alienated figures as an integral fabric of their reality. We see here that the vision Beckett possesses for his work is truly profound, and he has managed to convey his distinct point of view while creating a play that is wholly unique and original.

3.6. Nihilism in *Waiting for Godot* and *The Metamorphosis*

In *Waiting for Godot*, nihilism is evident because Beckett notes that nothing can be known, and if that is the case, then human existence is meaningless. Essentially, Vladimir and Estragon do not know anything. Both characters have no knowledge of the time or day that the events happened. More so, they do not know whether they were dreaming or if the events were happening in real life (Beckett 11). In some of the scenes, they have no idea whether the road with the tree was in the right place. More confusion is clear because Estragon does not believe Vladimir, which is seen from the following conversation:

Vladimir: The tree, look at the tree (Estragon looks at the tree)

Estragon: Was is not there yesterday?

Vladimir: Yes, of course, it was there. We nearly hanged ourselves from it. Do you not remember?

Estragon: You dreamt it (Becket 11).

Both protagonists in Beckett's story are unreliable and do not seem to have any purpose because they do nothing substantial. According to the internet encyclopedia, Nietzsche states that suicide is the deed of nihilism, which is the case in the story. There is no meaning in their lives because they are inactive and skeptical, which means that they are nihilists whether voluntarily or involuntarily. The two characters insist on talking about meaningless matters just to pass time. Moreover, Beckett bolsters the nihilist ideology by using nonsensual language that exposes the characters' valueless lives.

In *The Metamorphosis*, the concept of nihilism is depicted in two parts. First, when Grete is removing some items from Gregor's room to create more space, he becomes sad because of his attachment to inanimate objects. In essence, he feels empty without surrounding himself with inanimate items. When a person is increasingly sad when such items are removed, it is apparent that he or she puts little importance to his or her life. Secondly, nihilism is evident from the scene when Gregor is leaving his home. He has been shunned by his family and he is paralyzed by his father. Irrespective of how hard it is to leave his beloved Grete, his mother, and father, he is compelled to abandon them because he was affecting them negatively. Kafka's writes the following parable: "A message from the emperor illustrates the paradoxical nature of nihilism: if something has no meaning, does that not mean something?" (Kafka). In essence, the irony in Kafka's story is that Gregor's life actually improves in some ways after his transformation.

Presentation of Analysis and Findings

4.1. Analysis of Absurdity and Alienation in *Waiting for Godot*

Samuel Beckett presented the main characters Vladimir and Estragon as tramps that have been absurdly abandoned and extremely alienated into the depths of existential oblivion, pandemonium, and confusion to face repetitive spells of woes, meaninglessness, and hopelessness in search for meaning that will never come or ensure them the salvation they both seek (Godot). Thus Innes states:

So life has no transcendental meaning. [...] On a universal scale, civilization is reduced to debris, while material circumstances are irrelevant to the human condition. Birth and death are the defining facts of existence, diminishing the variables of individual experience to insignificance: 'The essential does not change ... Nothing to be done' which forms the recurrent motif of *Waiting for Godot*. (431)

The play *Waiting for Godot* begins in a truly absurdist manner with one of the protagonists Estragon sitting on a low mound and trying to take off his boot. The situation immediately transcends the audience from the progressive flow of perpetual absurdity into a full-blown existential crisis as seen in the dialogue between the two main protagonists:

ESTRAGON: (giving up again). Nothing to be done. VLADIMIR: (advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart). I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.) So there you are again. (Beckett 2)

In the above dialogue, we see Estragon refer to his boots while mentioning the words "nothing to be done." Vladimir, however, believes that Estragon is referring to life in general with this comment, and he agrees with Estragon by stating that he always believed he has much more to do in life, but at this stage in his life, he is starting to believe that there is indeed nothing to be done. Thus we see comedy, tragedy, absurdity, and alienation mechanically exploited by Beckett to reveal how Estragon and Vladimir accept that their reality amounts to abject idleness and nothingness in which Estragon had already given up repetitively before coming to arrive at his grand decision that nothing can ever be done and this hastens the transmogrification from an absurd motif to a full-blown existential crisis amongst the tramps in the opening dialogue of Beckett's play.

As the two lead characters greet each other, the seeds of absurdity are laid by Beckett very early in order to set the foundation for truly bizarre events to unfold during the course of the story. Estragon and Vladimir seem to be stuck in the same day and the same place despite the fact that no one, in particular, seems to be binding them to their fate. This becomes evident in the following dialogue:

VLADIMIR: I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone forever.

ESTRAGON: Me too.

VLADIMIR: Together again, at last! (2)

Above, we see that Vladimir and Estragon share clues with the audience with regard to the strange and absurd situation they are in, and Samuel Beckett absurdly confuses and play on the minds of the audience by making it appear as though the two tramps do not have any memories of their last confabulations or knowledge of their shared activities which indeed is nothing in the first place. Samuel Beckett preyed on the minds of the two tramps altering their cognitive and psychiatric domains to comically induce the audience into experiencing and absorbing existential absurdity in its unblemished form faced by Vladimir and Estragon. The conversation between the two tramps begins to get into various tangents at this point, and this section of the play is extremely absurdist in its nature. The dialogues shifts between various topics in order for the audience to better acquaint themselves with the characters, and we receive glimpses of their personality traits through these interactions. An example of this is the following dialogue below:

ESTRAGON: I remember the maps of the Holy Land.

Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue.

The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go; I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.

VLADIMIR: You should have been a poet.

ESTRAGON: I was. (Gesture towards his rags.) Isn't that obvious? (4)

Thus, we see that Beckett introduces the two lead characters in an unconventional and quirky manner while simultaneously revealing the mood of the setting and the state of the times the play is set in. Through the above-mentioned dialogue, we come to understand that Estragon through an erratic skirmish with Vladimir, declares he was a poet and said this alluding to his tattered clothes – a truly absurdist manner of introducing the profession of a major character. The situational absurdity in the above dialogue also takes a deeper form in revealing to us about the sexuality and marital status of both Vladimir and Estragon in which the audience is absurdly forced to reevaluate and investigate the plausibility of relationships in the face of stark inactivity. Furthermore, existential alienation is clearly perceived in the above dialogue since Estragon and Vladimir are willing to retreat from the reality of their present environment to the pretty pale blue wonder of the Dead Sea. Existentially, the absurdity and inactivity in the lives of the Estragon and Vladimir gives them the perfect alibi to dream of the perfect getaway desperately needed by them to validate their inactive lives but instead Samuel Beckett expertly uses this situation to depict their desperate need of alienation from the current hopeless and meaningless environment that limits their search for essence and fulfillment.

While the interaction between the two characters begins to develop, Beckett introduces a fascinating aspect of this play in the midst of the conversation:

VLADIMIR: Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other (he searches for the contrary of saved) damned.

ESTRAGON: Saved from what?

VLADIMIR: Hell.

ESTRAGON: I'm going.

He does not move. (5)

For the first time in this play, Beckett casually refers to the fact that these characters are destined to be stuck in their current predicament for a long time to come. The fact that neither of the two lead characters is able to escape their current situation and move past this point in their life is introduced at this point of the play. What is left uncertain are the reasons behind the development of this scenario. After a bit more dialogue, Beckett finally introduces the titular character Godot in the play. We are told that the reason that Vladimir and Estragon cannot leave their current location is that they are waiting for Godot. At this point, the dialogue becomes extremely fascinating, and the audience is made to face the truly absurdist nature of the premise:

ESTRAGON: Charming spot. (He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.) Inspiring prospects. (He turns to Vladimir.) Let's go.

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot. (6)

This passage reveals a curious detail for the reader and audience. A few sentences ago, we see that Estragon mentions the phrase: "I'm going," but the narrator tells us that he does not move. This time, however, Estragon is the one initiating a change of scene, but Vladimir mentions that they cannot leave the location because they are waiting for Godot. The word Godot seems to trigger a host of memories within the lead characters, as they suddenly seem to remember exactly why they were at their current location and predicament. The following conversation accentuates this revelation:

ESTRAGON: (despairingly). Ah! (Pause.) You're sure it was here?

VLADIMIR: What?

ESTRAGON: That we were to wait.

VLADIMIR: He said by the tree. (They look at the tree.) Do you see any others? (6)

It is bizarre that someone uses a tree as a landmark as there are millions around in any given city. Strangely enough, Vladimir and Estragon seem to be in the one location where there is no tree except for one lonely piece

of foliage. These interactions form the bedrock of Beckett's absurdist world in *Waiting for Godot*. The conversation continues thus:

ESTRAGON: He should be here.
 VLADIMIR: He didn't say for sure he'd come.
 ESTRAGON: And if he doesn't come?
 VLADIMIR: We'll come back tomorrow. The point is—
 ESTRAGON: Until he comes.
 VLADIMIR: You're merciless. (8)

At this point, it is revealed that Vladimir and Estragon are unsure of where and when they have to meet Godot. They seem even to be unsure of why they have to meet this character. All we know is that they are compelled to wait for him as if they were in some type of limbo, and they had no other choice. This entire premise feels absurd, but it also hints at the alienation being experienced by these two characters from the rest of society for reasons we are still unsure of. The two leads seem to be in some sort of a dazed state, and the following dialogue further reveals in their inner turmoil and confusion:

ESTRAGON: We came here yesterday.
 VLADIMIR: Ah no, there you're mistaken.
 ESTRAGON: What did we do yesterday?
 VLADIMIR: What did we do yesterday?
 ESTRAGON: Yes.
 VLADIMIR: Why . . . (Angrily.) Nothing is certain when you're about.
 ESTRAGON: In my opinion, we were here.
 VLADIMIR: (looking round). You recognize the place?
 ESTRAGON: I didn't say that. (8)

The confusion in the minds of the lead characters becomes extremely evident at this point of the story. We see numerous contradictions creep in between their two accounts. Beckett makes it clear now that both Vladimir and Estragon have no idea how long they have been waiting for Godot at that location and they do not even know why they are waiting for him. It even becomes suspect if Godot is a real person or simply a figment of the minds of the two delusional leads. The absurdist premise of the play thickens by this juncture. This confusion is further amplified by the following lines:

ESTRAGON: (very insidious). But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? (Pause.) Or Monday? (Pause.) Or Friday?
 VLADIMIR: (looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed in the landscape). It's not possible!
 ESTRAGON: Or Thursday?
 VLADIMIR: What'll we do?
 ESTRAGON: If he came yesterday and we weren't here, you may be sure he won't come again today.
 VLADIMIR: But you say we were here yesterday.
 ESTRAGON: I may be mistaken. (Pause.) Let's stop talking for a minute, do you mind? (9)

The above excerpt makes it clear that Vladimir and Estragon have become highly detached with the concepts of space and time. They do not seem to understand where they are in time and where they are in space, and this extreme disassociation is a symptom of alienation experienced by these bizarre characters from the rest of society.

The play, despite being written numerous decades ago, was already ahead of its time in terms of its utilization of dark humor. The fact that these men were able to enjoy such dark and eerie moments between themselves and even get excited about such interactions points to the fact that these men have been alienated from society and are unable to think like the people in that period in time. An example of this is the following interaction:

VLADIMIR: It's for the kidneys. (Silence. Estragon looks attentively at the tree.) What do we do now?
 ESTRAGON: Wait.
 VLADIMIR: Yes, but while waiting.
 ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?
 VLADIMIR: Hmm. It'd give us an erection.
 ESTRAGON: (highly excited). An erection! (10)

Hence, we see that Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is an absurd piece of dark literature that features two characters that are unaware of their place and time in the world and are highly alienated from the normal social constructs around them. The two tramps Estragon and Vladimir while waiting for Godot in the excerpt above explore suicide as a means of escaping the boredom they find themselves in a while waiting for Godot. The tramps are oblivious of the consequence of committing suicide while waiting for the coming of their presumed savior Godot. The senseless appeal of hanging themselves triggers Estragon's sexual fantasy and this action could have been a stray from their inactivity by way of having an erection (which is something that appeal to their minds since their lives of inactivity has denied them of such a wonder) and ultimately triggering a safe space of escape (Alienation) from their immediate reality of waiting for a figure that continually eludes them. Interpretatively, the flirting around with death is also a means of permanent escape this time around from the senseless and frustrating lives the tramps lived and puts an eventual stop to the excruciating experience of waiting for Godot unlike the two tramp's idea of a temporary escape in hanging themselves and having an erection.

The event of the story embarks on further absurdity with the introduction of two new characters, Pozzo and Lucky. For the first time in the play, the stage is shared by someone other than Vladimir and Estragon, and this reveals even greater details about their relationship with the titular Godot.

POZZO: (peremptory). Who is Godot?
 ESTRAGON: Godot?

POZZO: You took me for Godot.

VLADIMIR: Oh no, Sir, not for an instant, Sir.

POZZO: Who is he?

VLADIMIR: Oh he's a . . . he's a kind of acquaintance.

ESTRAGON: Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him.

VLADIMIR: True . . . we don't know him very well .but all the same

ESTRAGON: Personally, I wouldn't even know him if I saw him. (18)

The above interaction reveals the true relationship between Vladimir, Estragon, and Godot. It now becomes crystal clear that the two leads have no idea who Godot is, where he hails from, why they are waiting for him, or even how he looks. This raises the absurdity of the entire event to another level altogether, as the following sections of the story witnesses the leads undertake great pains in order to wait for Godot near the tree. It becomes nearly incomprehensible at this point why they would be waiting ardently for an absolute stranger, thereby taking the play to the extreme depths of existential absurdity.

Interpretatively, the absurd situation the two tramps wallow in can be explored from an allegorical point of view for their hope in achieving purpose and value in their lives. Samuel Beckett artistically explores religious salvation as a dead end and as an unrealistic and unfounded false hope as it is observed in the lives of Estragon and Vladimir excruciatingly waiting for Godot who never shows up at the end despite their absurd wait for him. Beckett also strikes a correlation between the symbolism of an empty life without a higher being or figure with the worthless lives of Estragon and Vladimir which completely empty like the country bare road the entire drama takes place in and ties it up to the absence of Godot hence, necessities the tramp's search for Godot to ensure them salvation. Allegorically in Beckett's world, the character of Godot ultimately mirrors God as the saviour and the only higher being who can assure Estragon and Vladimir the salvation they so desperately need. The reality in the existence of Estragon and Vladimir is the possibility of hope that never arrives, which leads to humour as well as tragedy in *Waiting for Godot*.

Furthermore, Beckett's intention was to pass the message of the absurdity of the human condition and man's meaningless existence in the mundane world, which accounts for his constant alienation and retreat from meaningful social contacts. Estragon and Vladimir made the existential choice of waiting for Godot whom they neither knew nor had met before, hence:

Estragon: Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't.

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.

Estragon: And If he doesn't come?

Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.

Estragon: And the day after tomorrow.

Vladimir: Possibly.

Estragon: And so on.

Vladimir: The point is.

Estragon: Until he comes. (10)

The conversation above depicts the existential choice the two tramps had taken; they decided to squander their already pathetic and meaningless lives waiting for an entity that will never come in other words waiting for nothing. The excerpt above completely seals the lives of the tramps to a fate of earthly damnation with far more eternal consequences of never doing anything in their lives apart from the endless wait for Godot, in fact, their only hope for existing and living a life of purpose is unless Godot arrives. Estragon and Vladimir are embroiled in waiting in an endless circus of the second coming of God himself to redeem them from the empty and frustrating lives they lead and offer them the salvation that only Godot could offer. This clearly depicts the existential crisis of the absurd life Samuel Beckett expertly thrusts his two main protagonists into. Hotaling explains these issues in her essay as follows:

The characters Vladimir and Estragon anxiously wait for Godot to come. Their lives are spent waiting. They think that when Godot finally comes, they will be fulfilled or something. By what? Godot will bring purpose and meaning to Estragon and Vladimir's life, and nothing else seems to have the ability to do this. (11-12)

Martin Esslin further elucidates on this waiting game by Vladimir and Estragon and terms it the purposelessness and nothingness of human existence, and all these allude to the alienation and absurdity inherent in the play. Thus, Esslin asserts that:

Waiting is to experience the action of time, which is constant change. And yet, as nothing real ever happens, that change is in itself an illusion. The ceaseless activity of time is self-defeating, purposeless and therefore null and voids. (52)

The futile exercise of waiting for Godot eventually leads Vladimir and Estragon to a life of alienation, idleness, frustration, despair and eventually contemplated suicide (Death), which are all causal elements of existential absurdity and alienation.

Another instance of alienation portrayed in *Waiting for Godot* is evident in the horrors of anxiety the constant alienation it brings with it. The lives of the two tramps will be about waiting and waiting a whole

lifetime with no end and consequently, will lead to a boring life stuffed with nothing but pain, anxiety and failure and an everlasting search for meaning. This is the exact direction which the lives of the Vladimir and Estragon were heading, and the vagrants waiting for Godot was such a tortuous exercise that they resorted to idle jokes and time-wasting tactics which denotes frustration and alienation:

Vladimir (turning his head). What?
 Estragon (louder). Do you see anything coming?
 Estragon. No no, you first.
 Vladimir. Moron!
 Estragon. That's the idea, let's abuse each other.
 They turn, move apart, turn again, and face each other.
 Vladimir. Moron!
 Estragon. Vermin!
 Vladimir. Abortion!
 Estragon. Curate!
 Vladimir. Cretin!
 Estragon (with finality). Critic!
 Vladimir. Oh!
 He wilts, vanquished, and turns away.
 Estragon. Now let's make it up.
 Vladimir. Gogo!
 Estragon. Didi!
 They embrace. They separate. Silence.
 Vladimir. How time flies when one has fun! (58)

In *Waiting for Godot*, Nihilism is evident through Vladimir and Estragon. Throughout the story, there is a lack of purpose and understanding because both characters insist on conversing about meaningless things. For instance, Vladimir confronts Estragon by telling him that they should come back the following evening to wait for Godot but both know that it was pointless to keep repeating the routine. Another scene that explains nihilism is the confusion about the appearance of Godot (Abedinif 94). Beckett's story induces confusion which makes the characters question their actual existence. More so, when Pozzo's wristwatch stops, there is a mix-up on stage. The stoppage of time is simply a way of presenting nihilism because it is a metaphorical way of noting that life is meaningless. Basically, Pozzo's meaning of life stops. Abedinif claims that Beckett's play depicts nihilism in several topics including human being's futile existence, the impossibility of communication, and boredom (95). Futility in human existence is evident from the fact that Godot keeps sending messengers but he fails to appear in person. He makes the lives of Vladimir and Estragon meaningless as seen in the following dialogue:

ESTRAGON: Let's go

VLADIMIR: We can't
 VLADIMIR: We are waiting for Godot
 ESTRAGON: (Despairingly), Ah!
 (Beckett 14)

From Estragon's reaction, it is obvious that the protagonist is frustrated because he sees no meaning in waiting for Godot. Boredom is also a factor in nihilism because life offers too much time to be filled up, which forces the characters to find any means to escape the horror of existence. In act 63, boredom and meaninglessness are illustrated in the following dialogue:

VLADIMIR: This is awful
 ESTRAGON: I'm tired of breathing.
 VLADIMIR: I begin to be wary of this motif.
 ESTRAGON: What do we do now? (Beckett 63)

Waiting for Godot attempts to depict the deceptiveness and futility of the structures of human existence where the everyday life of a modern human being elapses and stagnates. The futile waiting, constantly repeated cues, frustrated mindset and meaningless moves of the characters in the play have only one purpose, namely to create a feeling of chaos amongst themselves as a form of escape from the harsh realities. *Waiting for Godot* shows the tramps reliance on the existential alienation to escape their immediate predicament. In the above excerpt, Estragon and Vladimir create a general atmosphere of chaos as a deliberate figment of their imagination to bypass the boredom and absurdity of waiting for a saviour that they are not sure of meeting. Notably, the quote above does not only depict the bizarre avenue the tramps have devised for their escape from reality but it also signifies an endless waste of time which spirals into an eternal passing of time devoid of essence and purpose.

Waiting for Godot communicates the endemic existential experience of the modern world where order, harmony, and rationality are being replaced with chaos, absurdity, alienation, hopelessness and never-ending anguish and penury. The play revolves around the existential dynamics of absurdity and alienation.

4.2. Analysis of Absurdity and Alienation in *The Metamorphosis*

The opening paragraph of *The Metamorphosis* dictates the tone of the entire story and establishes this tale as one featuring ample absurdist and alienation related themes. The inception of the novella grants the audience an exposé into the horrific and absurd transformation of Gregor below:

One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed, he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug. He laid on his armor-hard back and saw, as he lifted his head up a little, his brown, arched abdomen divided up into rigid bow-like sections. From this height, the blanket, just about ready to slide off completely, could hardly stay in place. His numerous legs, pitifully thin in comparison to the rest of his circumference, flickered helplessly before his eyes. (Kafka 3)

Thus, we see that the opening lines of the story immediately delve into the major point, which is that Gregor Samsa, the protagonist, has been transformed into a giant insect-type creature. The applying of this overtly horrific technique is purposefully used by Kafka as it allows him to explore the alienation being felt by Samsa long before his transformation into a bug whilst, exposing the absurd nature of his excruciating transformation. He has been burdened with numerous responsibilities and feels the brunt of failure breathing down his neck at most points in his life, and thus this transformation allows Samsa to come face to face with his existential crisis. This grand opening evokes the imagery of not only the painful experience of transforming into a bug but also the extreme absurdity of the metamorphosis. This transformation embodies existential ideas because this change thematically symbolizes man's helpless and hopeless human existence, which reflects the absurdity of Samsa's situation. The transformation of Gregor Samsa did not only alter his physical features; it also incapacitated and alienated him from being an active participant in the two most important social fabrics that defined him as a Man. He is bond with his family and his work as a salesman denying him societal ineffectuality because he could not provide for his family and hastened the pace of his existential alienation, rejection, and death in the long run.

As soon as Gregor Samsa realizes that he has turned into an insect, he takes his new look with interest and curiosity. He remained calm. Gregor's reaction to his extremely unusual and absurd difficulty, which consists of his transformation, instantly turns into detachment, improvisation, and alienation. Thus, in the conversation below with his father, we start to see his systematic withdrawal from his present reality not as a means accepting the new status quo and unique situation he finds himself, but instead as a means of a temporal escape from his current situation which exposes the Gregor Samsa's existential alienation and consequent withdrawal from family and society at large:

'Gregor, Gregor,' he called out, 'what's going on?' And after a short while, he urged him on again in a deeper voice. 'Gregor!' Gregor!' At the other side door, however, his sister knocked lightly. 'Gregor? Are you all right? Do you need anything?' Gregor directed answers in both directions, 'I'll be ready right away.' He made an effort with the most careful articulation and by inserting long pauses between the individual words to remove everything remarkable from his voice. His father turned back to his breakfast. However, the sister whispered, 'Gregor, open the door, I beg you.' Gregor had no intention of opening the door but congratulated himself on his precaution, acquired from traveling, of locking all doors during the night, even at home. (7)

It is absurd that Gregor Samsa does not connect with the magnitude of his problem. We see the following passage best explain his indifference towards his situation:

Why don't I keep sleeping for a little while longer and forget all this foolishness,' he thought. But this was entirely impractical, for he was used to sleeping on his right side, and in his present state he couldn't get himself into this position. No matter how hard he threw himself onto his right side, he always rolled again onto his back. He must have tried it a hundred times, closing his eyes, so that he would not have to see the wriggling legs, and gave up only when he began to feel a light, dull pain in his side which he had never felt before. (4)

Hence, Kafka presents Gregor Samsa as a thoroughly defeated man since he could not mentally come to terms with his current reality of not being capable of walking properly, communicating effectively with his family and the very thought of not being able to provide for his family mentally broke him down. Even the enormity of his metamorphosis is absurdly met with lazy indifference as Samsa only attempts to try and get more sleep despite realizing that he is now a giant insect. The proceeding section peers deeply into the mind of the protagonist and explains the reason behind his current mental state:

O God,' he thought, 'what a demanding job I've chosen! Day in, day out on the road. The stresses of trade are much greater than the work going on at the head office, and, in addition to that, I have to deal with the problems of traveling, the worries about train connections, irregular bad food, temporary and constantly changing human relationships which never come from the heart. To hell with it all!' He felt a slight itching on the top of his abdomen. (4)

Hence, we see that has transformed into an insect is not something that is worrying Samsa at this point in his life. He does not even bring up that issue when he is rummaging through his mind and thinking about his predicament in life. He is clearly unhappy with his job, his relationships in his life, and the burden he feels from all the responsibility. These emotions have been so overwhelmingly strong for Samsa that he has completely alienated himself from his own life, and he is at a point now where he feels detached from his own body. This has become so evidently true that Kafka has chosen to represent this sense of alienation by using an absurdist tool of literally converting the protagonist into a giant insect in order to watch the chaos unfold.

Despite Samsa's ongoing existential crisis, Kafka makes a point to induce humor in the situation and extract the maximum from the absurd scenario concocted by him. He does this in various phases of this book, and at times the humor tends to border on the darker side of things. An example of humor being introduced early in order to aid the absurdity of the situation is the following paragraph:

It was very easy to throw aside the blanket. He needed only to push himself up a little, and it fell by itself. But to continue was difficult, particularly because he was so unusually wide. He needed arms and hands to push himself upright. Instead of these, however, he had only many small limbs which were incessantly moving with very different motions and which, in addition, he was unable to control. If he wanted to bend one of them, then it was the first to extend itself, and if he finally succeeded doing with

this limb what he wanted, in the meantime all the others, as if left free, moved around in an excessively painful agitation. 'But I must not stay in bed uselessly,' said Gregor to himself. (8)

Thus, we see that Samsa's conversion into a giant insect was used superbly by Kafka in order to derive moments of sheer ridiculousness in order to entertain the reader and add variety to the pacing and tone of the title. The story then follows Samsa's attempts to get out of bed and continues to dissect his state of mind during this hilarious phase. The next absurd moment comes up when he is still in bed, attempting to lock himself out of his position. We see that his worst fears have come true and that his superior has indeed come to check up on him due to his absence. The following paragraph details this situation:

Why was Gregor the only one condemned to work in a firm where at the slightest lapse someone immediately attracted the greatest suspicion? Were all the employees then collectively, one and all, scoundrels? Was it really not enough to let an apprentice make inquiries if such questioning was even necessary? Must the manager himself come, and in the process must it be demonstrated to the entire innocent family that the investigation of this suspicious circumstance could only be entrusted to the intelligence of the manager? (11)

The absurdity of this situation comes from the fact that Samsa is not really late for work but even a moment's delay has raised suspicion in the mind of his supervisor, and he has come to check up on him. This is obviously not a normal or accepted situation in any job profile, but Kafka creates this tense situation in order to further highlight the absurdities of Samsa's life and add even greater pressure on the situation currently developing in the storyline. Then we see Samsa undergo further stages of transformation in his metamorphosis. As his manager waits outside his room in order to interact with him, Samsa begins to slowly lose his voice and is barely decipherable with his words. Thus we see the absurd situation gain further layers of absurdity as the writer continues to pay close attention to the transformation being engaged on Samsa's body. The following paragraph highlights Samsa's inverse reaction to the change in his voice:

However, Gregor had become much calmer. All right, people did not understand his words any more, although they seemed clear enough to him, clearer than previously, perhaps because his ears had gotten used to them. But at least people now thought that things were not all right with him and were prepared to help him. The confidence and assurance with which the first arrangements had been carried out made him feel good. (17)

In this bizarre twist of events, Gregor Samsa clearly derives joy from the fact that he is not able to effectively communicate with his manager or his parents. Gregor hides the fact that he has become a giant insect, but the fact that his voice had also changed which gave the impression of him having a temporal fever, allowed him to take cover in his room a little longer without exposing his true situation. Thus we see that Kafka is showing that certain facets of Samsa's transformation are actually helping his situation in life at that point in time. The true charm of Kafka's strength as a storyteller is his ability to narrow down on bizarre situations and approach the

situation with great levels of complexity. We see his ability to dive deep into the absurd while carefully unfolding various stages of metamorphosis that Samsa is undergoing. In the next absurd section regarding his transformation, we see that the writer focuses on Samsa's changes in terms of tastes and preferences:

But he soon drew it back again in disappointment, not just because it was difficult for him to eat on account of his delicate left side (he could eat only if his entire panting body worked in a coordinated way), but also because the milk, which otherwise was his favorite drink and which his sister had certainly placed there for that reason, did not appeal to him at all. He turned away from the bowl almost with aversion and crept back into the middle of the room. (27)

Above we see that Samsa is being offered milk by his sister as it is one of his favorite beverages, but he does not enjoy the taste of liquid any longer because his senses are beginning to morph into that of an insect. The humor in this scene is virtually non-existent, unlike the previous focus of transformation, but it is presented in a somber manner in order to highlight Samsa's plight.

The story devolves from this point as Samsa is continually hurt by his family, both physically and mentally, to a point where he is relieved from his life. The dark and daunting finale of Kafka's story is indeed a far cry from the almost delightful beginning seen in the opening pages. Samsa realizes that he has become a burden to his family, and he even comes to the conclusion that he was always a burden. He was unable to provide the life his sister and parents needed to sustain a happy future, and his incompetence has cost them their happiness. This dynamic was further altered when he turned into an insect, and it would remain a problem for the family for numerous reasons. Anna, for example, needs to be married soon, and Samsa's condition would only make it horribly difficult for her to find a proper suitor. Thus we see Samsa succumbing to emotional and physical wounds towards the end of the story. The transformation from man to insect and from life to death is complete by the end of the story, and this is due to the strains on the relationships in Samsa's life, specifically with regard to his sister.

Existential alienation is well illustrated in the situation below:

He often lay there for long nights, not falling asleep for a single moment, and spent hours on the sofa or sparing no effort, pulled the chair to the window, scrambled up to the doorway and, leaning on the chair, fell to the window sill, which was only some memory about the sense of liberation that enveloped him before, when he was looking out of the window ... he would have thought that he was looking out of his window at the desert, into which the gray earth and the gray sky had indistinguishably merged (10).

From this quote, it is apparent that the protagonist is alienated from the rest of society. Contemporary society demands conformity and refuses to accept the faces of alienation. This fate is evident in Kafka's narrative as seen in the case where he laid all alone for long nights without sleep. Gregor's initial isolation is from his

physical body, but as the writer continues, it is evident that his family feels that he is a nuisance and an inconvenience to their lives (Kafka 10). Consequently, he opts to spend long hours on the sofa or looking out of his window in deep thought. Nihilism is also evident from the way he hates having to travel so much, and with the situation that he was in, he could not help but feel relieved that he could finally quit his routine. More so, his hopelessness is made worse by the fact he could not provide for his family because of his condition. Consequently, he becomes repulsive in the eyes of both his family and the society which makes him feel valueless (Kafka 10). In essence, his family only values the paycheck and once he did not provide, he was considered of no worth to them. Thus, Gregor's family locks him in his room, and they slowly become strangers to him.

Furthermore, alienation is also shown in the scenario below:

The wound on Gregor's back each time began to hurt again when the mother and sister, returned to the living room and sat down side by side, cheek to cheek; when her mother, pointing to Gregor's room, was saying: "Close that door, Greta" - and Gregor found himself in the darkness, and the women shed tears together (41).

Alienation and nihilism are evident from the sentiment by his mother making Gregor realize that his life is meaningless and purposeless. The fact that his family hates Gregor and wants to kill him hurts and further drives him to solitude. Worse is the fact that the protagonist notes that his sister is the one who openly raises the idea to evict him. Although Gregor Samsa misses spending time with his family, he realizes that his presence was unwanted and feels like his life is worthless (Kafka 41). He feels guilty of his inability to support his family and forced to forego an intimate relationship with another human. Eventually, he dies because he was lonely and alienated as he was not needed as a salesman, brother, son, or a member of society. The last time Gregor makes an appearance; his mother and sister are disgusted and slam the door behind him not realizing that he was in excruciating pain. A short moment later, he takes his last breath.

The reason for the death of Gregor is the realization that he is a burden for those whom he loved wholeheartedly. Before our eyes, people turn into insensible insects; they are only important comfort and egoistic peace of serene existence. The insect behaves like a human being, showing delicacy, understanding, forgiveness, and, finally, self-sacrifice. This antithesis embodies all the most disgusting in humans - insects that surround us with the chitinous cover of alienation. A real person is forced to hide under the armor or wait until the parasites in human shells swallow him up. The father from the very beginning shows hostility towards Gregor, the mother is perplexed, the sister Greta tries to show participation. In one of the instances, Gregor's father throws an apple at him causing a permanent injury to his back. However, this difference in reactions turns out to be imaginary: in the end, the family unites in a common hatred of the freak, in the general desire to get

rid of him. The humanness of the insect, animal aggression of people - so familiar concepts turn into their own opposite. This is the absurdity of this story. The death of Gregor raises him over the hostile world: knowing himself, he at least understands the intolerance of his position. Transformation on the insect serves; on the one hand, the verdict issued by the hero of the story, but on the other - morally justifies and tragically exalts him. The alienation of Gregor, which arose within the family and therefore had the character of universality, conveys the features of the personal situation of Kafka, who wrote: "I live in my family as a stranger." The terrible metaphor for the transformation of Gregor Samsa is embodied through the display of the routine and everyday behavior of the hero, but behind him reveals a deep meaning.

Absurdity is one of the key motives of Dadaism as one of the prevailing styles of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* - absurd referring to something impossible and contradictory, something that "bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality, between an action and the world that transcends it" (Camus 30). Absurd, unmotivated relations in Kafka's novella are presented as completely understandable, blurring the line between reality and the impossible. Beyond the realm of Dadaism, which promoted the complete destruction of all traditional values, Kafka shows a fantastic world. His characters are placed in unnatural circumstances and impossible relations. Destruction, revolt, and rebellion against everything existing and logical is an important feature of Dadaism, which can be recognized in the way Kafka uses the absurd motive of a transformation to express the family's relation to the individual, thus showing the position of the individual in society, i.e. the individual's existential loneliness and alienation.

Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning transformed into an insect-like creature, but instead of reacting vigorously upon realizing what he has become, he is nervous because he is late for work, an absurdity Kafka used to emphasize distortion in social relations. The structure of paradox in which absurd relationships are presented as completely understandable and mundane represents the axis of Kafka's novella. Instead of seeing this transformation as something astonishing, it is viewed as normal. Instead of becoming this insect-like creature, Gregor could have experienced a car accident, but then the overall impression would have been different because the reader would feel pity. His transformation, on the other hand, provokes disgust, same as in his family, a motif Kafka used masterfully to depict the alienation of the modern man.

Elements of Surrealism are visible in the way Kafka attempts to connect reality and dream into a new reality. These elements of irrational, subconscious, and hallucinations can be found throughout *The Metamorphosis*. Traces of Surrealism can also be found in the symbols and motifs typical of the fantastic world of dreams and fairy tales. Unlike the world of fairy tales, Kafka's world is not naively imaginative and lacks the moral schematic of fairy tales. This strange interaction of dreaming and waking represents Kafka's vision of the world governed by specific laws, turned upside down, almost mystical. The insect became a fantastic reality, and the possibility of Gregor's transformation into an insect is more important than the very fact that he became one.

This transformation makes him aware of his loneliness and alienation. Through his own metamorphosis, he becomes aware of the fundamental lie of his existence. Fantasy becomes a reality, more concrete than the reality from which it originated. It is a world of the firm and inexorable logic, almost like the logic of common sense. Kafka's world is inexorably consistent and completely subjected to its own logic.

Kafka's story depicts the decay of reality, vanishing of the borders between dreams and reality, possible and impossible, leading to the magical experience of reality. The physical transformation of Gregor Samsa is the result of his alienation from himself because he has long lived as an insect. This "transformation" of his also signifies the transformation of his family, that is, the change in the behavior of the entire society towards those who are not capable of taking over tasks like normal people. As portrayed at the beginning of the work, Gregor is the only one working in his family, the one sustaining the entire family. Pursuant to his transformation, he is no longer capable of providing for his family, it becomes clear that other members of the family are able to work, but unwilling to care for Gregor as before. When Gregor's metamorphosis occurs, he remains completely isolated. The abominable appearance that makes him different from other people, despite his numerous attempts to get closer and to establish communication with them, finally renders him lonely and alienated. Kafka's matter-of-fact, detached tone, particularly in terms of the fantastical events portrays the estrangement Gregor feels and the gap between his animal body and the human mind, as well as the detachment from his family.

The motif of transformation is the central theme of Kafka's prose. The modern man is worried about losing his humanity, which makes the Gregor Samsa's riddle an issue of general concern. The motive or the meaning of transformation have been interpreted in numerous and diverse ways, without any final conclusion. The content of *The Metamorphosis* actually encourages the reader not to visualize an insect, but to think about and figure out a symbolic transformation into an animal. Similar to the ancient Chinese tradition of turning into animals, by turning to something else, people are trying to 'rescue' themselves from their surroundings, and this is the subtle way Franz Kafka infuses his take on existential alienation in *The Metamorphosis*. An attempt to hide in the form of an insect is a vivid sign of alienation. Gregor is suffering from the pressure of the outside world, although he does not want to believe it. Complex work and great responsibility exhaust him. The armor of the insect makes it somehow protected from the head.

At the same time, the process of transformation is an example of absurdity. In addition, the author called his work *Metamorphosis* is no wonder. This name embodies not only the transformation of Gregor into an insect. In this case, he could name his story; let us say "Insect Man." The concept of metamorphosis refers not only to Gregor; it describes changes in the world around him, the mood and behavior of the personages. In essence, Gregor changed only his appearance, and his inner world remained the same. The members of his family are experiencing some emotional degradation. The feeling of fear and disgust is replaced by pity and indifference.

Such a reaction to the problem is absurd. Instead of the support Gregor was waiting for, the family showed disgust and fear.

Absurdity also has the native expectation of Geography that it will be understood. Despite his family's resentment, he believed that they loved him and worried about him. Nevertheless, Emrich (1981) believes that Kafka's protagonist does not want this transformation at all, as he is far from identifying himself with an insect. Kafka's story speaks of an individual who was transformed on the inside and due to this change became unwelcome and alien to everyone around him. Since he could not return to his original condition, his existence became less valuable in his own eyes, which is also the cause of the changed attitude of his family and the interpersonal relations as a whole, all of which leads towards the disappearance of the existence of a weak individual.

In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor transforms into a filthy insect which irritates his family. Nihilism is depicted from the way his family disregards his life as meaningless. The cultural norm is that parents should help their children grow and support them irrespective of their physical deficiencies. However, in Kafka's story, the son's life is deemed meaningless when he stops providing for his family. Another motif in nihilism is emptiness and self-destruction. Kafka uses Gregor's numerous occasions to convey his life as valueless. For instance, Kafka writes that when Gregor was waking up, he would injure himself horribly by banging his head and hurting his jaw when he crushes on the doorknob (Kafka 2). Besides, he receives a scolding from his father and permanently injures himself.

Upon a detailed examination of Gregor's state, it is apparent that his life is valueless because he only works to support his family. In the modern nihilistic society, the problem is common because people only work for money and do not take time to evaluate their passions and focus on what they actually love (Eslin 50). For instance, it is evident that he hated his work as a salesman because of its strenuous nature. The author argues that Gregor complained of having irregular meals, meeting new people, and worrying about making trains. More so, his career was frustrating him because he worked so hard and yet he did not have any lasting friendships. Therefore, his transformation may have been helpful in some way, but he still felt lonely.

4.3. A Comparative Overview of Absurdity and Alienation in *the Metamorphosis* and *Waiting for Godot*

The unknown identity of the mysterious Godot Beckett's protagonists (Vladimir and Estragon) so persistently expect, the theme of uncertain and indefinite waiting, the inconsistency in the sense that the writer does not provide the key to interpretation, the open end, the suggestiveness of the archetypal images that this work invokes have made *Waiting for Godot* one of the most representative works of the theatre of the absurd. The protagonists of the drama, Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo) are killing time with meaningless conversation, 'mannered' jokes and word games while waiting for a certain Godot. On the other hand, as argued by McLuckie, Beckett's play is still to be considered "a dramatic utterance" (423-430). Regardless of the way it escapes rational explanation, a question may be raised as to the existence of communication with no meaning. There is no psychological motivation in this 'tragic farce' (Esslin 39) - amidst fragments of memories from Vladimir and Estragon's past, they are waiting and hoping for some improvement in their difficult situation. On the other hand, Gregor's life (at least, his life as a human) is reduced to two objects – his childhood desk and the picture of the woman in furs, mere fragments of his past.

Considering that the key theme in *Waiting for Godot* is the absurd position of a man in a world in which there is no transcendence that assigns any meaning to it, Beckett uses stichomythia in a unique, often poetic way or as a mere word game with allusions that are somewhat indeterminate. Although the dialogues appear unfinished, they revolve around certain topics such as the identity of the species, hope, salvation, loneliness, suicide, human will, knowledge and art, the destruction of civilization, and so on, additionally accentuating the absurdity of their existence and the aimless waiting of the protagonists. Being written in the aftermath of World War II, *Waiting for Godot* reflects Beckett's doubts about the meaning and purpose of human existence and, primarily, about the existence of God. Driven by Nietzsche's proclamation "God is Dead," and existentialism (similar to Kafka) of Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus, and Ionesco, *Waiting for Godot*, with its motive of 'waiting for nothing' or 'waiting for waiting' represent a manifest of absurdity.

Beckett's drama implies that life after the war became banal and purposeless and that man's over-reliance renders them passive and alienated and ultimately leads to an existential crisis. Similarly, Gregor Samsa's transformation becomes passive, useless, and alienated - "and he really didn't feel particularly fresh and active" after his transformation (Kafka 2). Both Beckett's protagonists (Vladimir and Estragon, primarily) and Kafka's Samsa may be observed as resembling everybody's life – they are alienated and in search for purpose and community, which makes their problems universal. The desolate atmosphere and loneliness are additionally accentuated by Beckett's 'per diem' language and Kafka's use of dark comedy and understatement to highlight the absurdity of Gregor's condition.

Similar to Emrich's (1981) critique of Kafka's world as 'lingering' between dreams and reality, Esslin (22-25) implies that Beckett's play, in the best tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd, rests on dream realities. He argues that *Waiting for Godot* mirrors dreams and illusions rather than actual situations (Esslin 22-25). In a barren place between dreams and reality, Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon wait or, perhaps, live and hope for the future which, actually, does not make them living but expecting death which is why they perceive the moment of death-birth as grisly and forlorn. Nevertheless, their absurd existence, their pointless waiting and, ultimately, their alienation do not make them commit suicide, but, absurdly, revived by death, unlike Gregor Samsa whose life ends in the garbage. As insinuated by Beckett, even the absurd man can be 'invigorated' by the definiteness of death.

4.4. Summary of Findings

After analyzing *Waiting for Godot* and *The Metamorphosis*, we see numerous striking differences in the way Beckett and Kafka have utilized the tools of alienation and absurdity in their literary works. The one major similarity between the two authors is that they waste very little time in establishing an absurd situation for their audience, and we see the setup of the plot being established almost immediately in the opening moments of the story. While this is one commonality between the two great authors, there are numerous deviations in their writing styles from this point on. Beckett illustrated the absurdity that arose from alienation in the book *Waiting for Godot*. According to one of the popular interpretations, Vladimir and Estragon are identifying with a part of society that does not want to go beyond the framework of its world, to know the world around and achieve something in life. (Macquarrie 1972). They just expect that someone (perhaps God) will give them something meaningful, although they do not even know what it is. Their conscious alienation gave rise to many absurd situations. For example, the fact that the circle of communication of the main characters is limited only to each other and the two boys is absurd. The desire to permanently commit suicide provoked by alienation is also an example of absurdity. The strange manner of talking using speech clichés also speaks about alienation and absurdity at the same time. This style of conversation is not typical for ordinary people (absurdity). However, the characters understand each other as they live in their illusory personal space (alienation).

As for Franz Kafka, it can be said that this author demonstrated the opposite situation. The atmosphere of the absurd that sprang up around Gregor Samsa caused him to become alienated. At the very beginning, we learn that he worked hard to provide for a family that was interested only in material benefits. He did not notice the greed of his relatives and loved them with all his heart. Gregor was naive to the point of absurdity. This situation made him alienated against his will, placing his soul in the body of an insect. Being in the new guise,

he did not lose his former moral qualities. However, his family members became more and more brutal and cruel. This behavior can be called absurd. It led to Gregor's isolation, fear, and apathy. These are clear signs of alienation.

The two writers created characters that are at odds with the world, and this form of writing allowed them to inculcate existential themes. The genius in their work, however, shines in the fact that they were able to capture extremely heavy concepts and synthesize it for their audience using novel tools such as absurdity and alienation. Despite the audience being unaware of the nature of these tools, the manner of execution allows the writer to connect constructively with the audience. While both *Waiting for Godot* and *The Metamorphosis* have been thoroughly analyzed and reviewed, every member of the audience is able to draw their own interpretation of events based on their own existential notions. The fate of Samsa as an insect and that of Vladimir and Estragon being stuck in the same location waiting for a stranger reads differently to different members of the audience, simply because the nature of the predicament is truly bizarre and it requires the audience members to be creative in their interpretation while drawing from personal examples.

4.5. Recommendation for Future Studies.

This thesis explored absurdity and alienation as veritable existential tools utilized by both Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka in their work. Existentialism is still regarded as a problematic philosophical construct yet has the potential to be used and explored through multifaceted lenses. This study analyzed existential absurdity and alienation, but further studies can be done utilizing other core existentialist values like authenticity, boredom, freedom, choice, fear, trembling and anxiety all of which contains a wealth of avenues for further studies. Furthermore, the power of language and communication in *Waiting for Godot* and the power of characterization and social economy in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* are great areas for further studies in this space.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has been able to attempt an analysis of *The Metamorphosis* and *Waiting for Godot* as existential works that utilized distinct tenets of existentialism, namely absurdity, alienation, and nihilism. This paper explored existentialism as a philosophical movement which reverberated into the literature and the arts of the time following the aftermath of World War II. This research also studied the central message and core of the existentialist discourse and explored absurdity, nihilism, and alienation through the lenses of Estragon, Vladimir, and Gregor Samsa. This analysis provided an existential interpretation of the texts on review which showed the use of existential absurdity and alienation in both texts and through an analytical comparison of both texts, this paper was able to identify the various situations where Kafka and Beckett utilized the tenets of existentialism on focus in this paper to pass their central message across to their audience.

After careful analysis and comparison of both texts, this thesis showed that both Kafka and Beckett embraced the aesthetic absurd, (Camus, 1991), the human contradiction, and the constant equilibrium between dreams and reality. In their unique take to absurdity, both Kafka's and Beckett's works strongly resemble the absurdity of the modern world. The obsessive need for recognition across *The Metamorphosis*, despite the pettiness of human existence and alienation of the individual, as well as the absolute ignorance of time in *Waiting for Godot*, make this two works the exemplary works of absurdist fiction.

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