



Samuel
Beckett
(1906-89)

<http://samuel-beckett.net/>

Theater of the Absurd

- A form of drama that emphasizes the absurdity of human existence by employing disjointed, repetitious, and meaningless dialogue, purposeless and confusing situations, and plots that lack realistic or logical development.
<<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/theater+of+the+absurd>>



<http://theater2.nytimes.com/2008/05/02/theater/reviews/02endg.html>

Endgame (1957)

- Synopsis: The protagonists of the play are Hamm, an aged master who is blind and not able to stand up, and his servant Clov, who cannot sit down. They exist in a tiny house by the sea, although the dialogue suggests that there is nothing left outside—no sea, no sun, no clouds. The two characters, mutually dependent, have been fighting for years and continue to do so as the play progresses. Clov always wants to leave but never seems to be able. Also present are Hamm's legless parents Nagg and Nell, who live in rubbish bins upstage and initially request food or argue inanely.
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endgame_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endgame_(play))>

Question

- What's the setting of the play? Who are the characters? Why are they here? What is their physical and emotional condition? What kinds of disabilities afflict them? Are those disabilities significant, by themselves, in relation to each other? What are the characters waiting for? What has happened outside?

Question

- Who is Hamm? Given the play's reference to a game of chess, is Hamm conceived of as a king? If he is, what is the role of Clov? What kind of a person is Hamm? From his behavior and assertions, what can be inferred about his character, his activities, his business, his social and economic status? Is he likeable? Do we sympathize or feel sorry for him or his situation? What does he own? How does he relate to his property? How does he see himself? How does he see others? How does he relate to Clov? How does he relate to his parents, Nagg and Nell? What do we know about his past and former actions? How do those actions determine and/or influence his present situation?

Question

- Why does Hamm repeatedly say, "Me to play"? Play what? With toys? In other senses of the word "play"? Does he see himself as an actor or performer in a play? Why does he want to tell a story? What story is it? Does he see himself as a sort of writer/storyteller? Does he consider himself an artist? What does he create? For what reasons? What may Beckett be satirizing by means of Hamm's thoughts of himself as an artist? Is such an understanding of himself accurate? Why or why not?

Question

- What is the nature of the relationship between Hamm and Clov? What may that represent? Is their relationship based on reciprocal friendship or the exercise of power? What are the implications of that relationship and how may it be connected to the current situation of the characters? How did the two meet each other? What were the circumstances of the beginning of their association? Why doesn't Clov just leave? What holds him back? What about the relationship between Nagg and Nell? Do they love each other? Why are they still (sort of) together? What is the significance of the characters being bound in pairs? How does that relate to Berkeley's postulate, "to be is to be perceived"? What do the characters want or derive from each other?