

Laughing with Beckett in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*

Mohammad Masoodi Miyanrostaq
and Seyyed Mehdi Mousavi
Semnan University, Iran

*This paper examines the use of laughter as redemption in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. By acknowledging the somatic life of characters, Beckett's humour problematises un-embodied philosophies of life. Challenging Hugh Kenner's claim that Beckett's humour is not redemptive because of the dryness and repetitions involved, it is argued that the foregrounding of fragility and vulnerability is a way of expressing deeply humane laughter in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. While highlighting that the dialectic of lack and excess is one source of Beckettian laughter, the main thrust of the argument emphasises the possibility of transcendence in a comic situation. The play of lack and excess, rather than suspending transcendental redemption, presents the human condition in its existential mundane realities. Accordingly, visceral and repetitive laughter are discussed in the two plays to bring to the fore the ironic and redemptive aspect of the comic, especially in the scenes where some sort of existential humour is implied.*

Keywords

Samuel Beckett; Humour; Redemptive Laughter; Lack/Excess; *Waiting for Godot*; *Endgame*

Introduction

Early Greek philosophers viewed laughter as a threat to order. Plato, for example, viewed humour as an entity that would lead to an unrestrained state of self, which he despised. Plato considers laughter to be a sign of ignorance; those who ridicule others, with the exception of the stupid, are stupid themselves, because they ignore one of the most important Delphic maxims (inscribed on the Temple of Apollo), "know thyself". Plato in his

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