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The figure of the clown and Samuel Beckett's characters

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the similarities between the clown and the characters in Samuel Beckett's plays. Beckett's characters physically resemble the clown and the silent-movie actors that the author was fond of. Both the clown and Beckett's character are similar in the way they are handled by the world they inhabit. They are always frustrated and hindered by the objects, people and what happens around them. Beckett's clownish figures are alienated and cut off physically, metaphysically and spiritually from their environment. They carry on with their life, in spite of the absurdity of the world. Though beaten and rejected, the clown perseveres and never gives up. Beckett's alienated characters share with the clown this kind of perseverance. There is a blending of the tragic and the comic, the sad and the funny, the serious and the farcical in them. Though a comical character, the clown has potentially tragic overtones. The paper aims to show that the clown, often an underrated figure by the highbrow critic, is important for Beckett and that his characters, particularly those of his earlier plays, draw upon the clown tradition.

Key words: *the clown, tragicomic, absurdity of life, Sisyphus, alienation*