

DECLARATION

Je soussigné, SIAME MUKUNDWE déclare sur l'honneur que ce mémoire de maîtrise représente mon propre travail, et n'a jamais été soumis auparavant dans cette Université ni n'importe quelle autre pour l'obtention du grade de maîtrise, il n'incorpore aucun travail de mémoire publié avant.

Signé -----

Date-----

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APPROVAL

This dissertation of **Mukundwe Siame** is approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts in Literature (French)** by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the notion of the *absurd* as proposed by Albert Camus. The study examines how habit takes root in the lives of characters in the plays *Le Malentendu* by Albert Camus and *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, and how it (habit) eventually leads to the *absurd*. The study also analyses the characters' reactions when they become conscious of the absurd.

The study uses close textual analysis through the Theory of the absurd as proposed by Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, to show how habit leads to the absurd. The two theories have an outline, vis-à-vis the experience of the absurd, in common: the absurd – consciousness of the absurd – revolt.

The study analysed the notion of the absurd and how it is experienced by the characters in the two plays. In *Le Malentendu*, it was discovered that the habit that the mother and Martha develop of killing and stealing the possessions of every traveller who comes to the lodge turns them into an *en-soi*, whose existence is passive and meaningless. They become like an object designed for a specific purpose; kill whoever comes to the lodge. Hence, when Jan, their son and brother, returns home incognito after twenty years, he suffers the same fate. The realisation of the absurdity of their act leads to suicide. Their act of suicide is even more absurd because, according to Camus, if life does not make sense, it is even more absurd to kill oneself.

In *Waiting for Godot*, the habit of waiting by Vladimir and Estragon makes them powerless; they are incapable of action. Like in *Le Malentendu*, habit turns the two tramps into *en-soi*. They exist to wait. When they become conscious of the absurdity of their existence, they contemplate suicide. However, they are unable to act. They decide to continue waiting and see what Godot, who never shows up in the two acts, will tell them. Their decision to continue waiting engenders the two tramps more into the absurd.

The study concludes therefore that the two plays do not go beyond the stage of "becoming conscious of the absurd" to lead to an act which defies the absurd. Hence, the two plays fall under the theatre of the absurd.

DEDICACE

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