

## Time, Waiting, and Entrapment in Samuel Beckett

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### Abstract

*This paper deals with the question of time and entrapment in three of Samuel Beckett's plays: Waiting for Godot, Endgame, and Happy days. The characters in these plays are restricted by the limitations, and nature, of their positions, their capabilities and availabilities. Their dreams, fancies, desires, wishes, and nostalgia for the past of which the audiences, or readers, have no knowledge provide striking reminders of the harsh realities in which they live. Thus their desires, hopes, and intentions to do something establish a kind of self-condolence by which they would gain mental stamina to carry on.*

**Keywords:** Uncontrollable conditions, aspirations and limitations, futility and productivity

### Introduction

It is not an uncomplicated venture for readers, and audiences, to hold clear-cut assumptions on Samuel Beckett's world and introduce thoughts in a way that dares to claim a better understanding of his literature than previous or current ones. Nor would it go without controversy to maintain that Beckett's plays could be better approached on the basis that literature, generally speaking, is allegory, therefore these plays are essentially comprehensible within that literary frame, hence one tackles them and deciphers the philosophical implications in, or highlights the ideology intended by, that allegory. The answer to such assumption comes precisely from what their own author illustrates that his plays are not restricted to a certain philosophy; rather, they are texts widely open to interpretations in many ways. While Beckett renounces limiting the readings of his plays, he did not say a lot about them, their meaning(s) and their backgrounds. His replies to questions on his plays seemed sometimes to have added more embarrassment than giving answers to them, of that is, perhaps, his answer to Alan Schneider, the first American director of *Waiting for Godot*, on the most nagging question of "Who is Godot?" to which Beckett answered "If I knew, I would have said so in the play."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, disappointing many critics who assumed a clear insight of what he intended his stage in *Endgame* to be, he rejected "the idea completely" that "the stage in *Endgame* is a skull" and the action "takes place in the mind of one man."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, critics' imaginations or readings go to different directions from those at which Beckett has aimed. In general, all what we have by Beckett on his plays are general remarks he has made as answers to interviewers', journalists' and critics' questions -about this or that play- which are, more or less, "exclusively denials that there is a philosophical system behind the plays and explicit refusal to reduce them to codified interpretation" rather, he considers his plays to be "attempts to depict the "confusion", "distress" and impotence" of humanity in basic dramatic forms which work effectively on stage."<sup>3</sup>

The readers, or audiences, are left with their interaction with, and reception of, Beckett's plays to observe and examine the enigmatic issues with which humans are encountered. Notwithstanding the lack of sufficient material left by Beckett as vivid, or clear, illustrations of his plays and that we are left with the texts only, the complexity comes not only from what the Beckettian text explicitly says and/or what it does not say but also, and more troubling, from what critics and scholars have made of that very text.

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Levy, "The Long Wait for Godot," *Theatre Arts* XL8(August 1956), p.34.

<sup>2</sup>McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup>Dougald McMillan and Martha Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre* (New York: 1988), p.13.

With Samuel Beckett, analysis exceeds beyond what the text apparently conveys; for enormous writings and critiques were done on his texts, and many productions have been made of his plays. Beckett's works seemed to critics to be more than what can be mostly made of them. But, this is neither adopting this opinion nor repudiating the other way round, i.e. criticism can be sometimes more significant than the literary work it maintains or approaches.<sup>4</sup> In general, critics and scholars can now evaluate the text and the playwright, the text and the criticism on it, and the text and the performance of it.

### ***Stage, Limitation and Interpretation***

At first glance, the Beckettian stage is designed in a way that makes it difficult for the observer to decide whether the characters on it, to a large degree, are free or encircled by uncontrollable factors! But it does not take too long to establish how problematic this environment can be. In fact, it becomes obvious that the expanse (in *Happy Days*), the road (in *Waiting for Godot*) or the outer place (in *Endgame*) are not as they seem for the eye, they turn to be a kind of entrapment where it is difficult, almost impossible, for the characters involved to decide which choice is viable for them: living in these places, or leaving them, this is not to ignore the bitter question of whether living there is an option or obligation (we will come to that soon).

The setting can be practically surveyed, in *Waiting for Godot*, as "a country road," where there is only "a tree," and it is the "evening" time.<sup>5</sup> Though looking simple, this set in *Waiting for Godot* stimulates multiple observations and consequent interpretations, there is just one tree standing on the stage, empty of leaves, void of green. As Helen L. Baldwin says "there is sufficient evidence to constitute a presumption that Beckett deliberately chose the tree to be his setting and symbol."<sup>6</sup> Excluding the tree the setting is a bare stage. This given, almost, naked stage background becomes eventually an inseparable part of the action; it is indicatory surrounding of helpless situation in both time and place. In *Endgame* the stage setting, which is regarded as a "shelter" stage, has raised hard discussions due to the metaphorical indications that can be assumed from this symbolically significant stage. The visual impression one can see is a bare shelter set with its centred wheelchair and off-centred two ash bins, with the two high windows that Clov can reach only by means of a ladder to see the outer world, the world that is seen by Hamm through the eyes of others, and a door leading to an off-stage kitchen, to which Clov can go when required, a place that he describes in measures as "ten feet by ten feet by ten feet," as an illustration of his kitchen quite early in the play, a suggestion to the way he is constrained within these dimensions and proportions, this is not to ignore that Hamm, Nagg and Nell are also restricted in a no less painful way made worse, additionally, by virtue of their physical inabilities and the element of time. It is no less complicated and even ambiguous setting in *Happy Days* where there is detailed portrayal of the spot and the surrounding of where the two characters are located, it is an

"expanse of scorched grass rising centre to low mound. Gentle slopes down to front and either side of stage. Back an abrupt fall to stage level. Maximum of simplicity and symmetry. Blazing light. Very pompier trompe-l'oeil backcloth to represent unbroken plain and sky receding to meet in far distance. Imbedded up to above her waist in exact centre of mound, WINNIE."<sup>7</sup>

The scenery here is almost deadly silent, picturing loneliness and infertility with an unending view, a symbol of the endless expanse amidst which two individuals (Winnie and Willie) are stuck, or perhaps lost. In this barren atmosphere the mound, which "actually occupies the centre of the stage," becomes plainly the tantalizing part where "the 'heap of time' in which Winnie is buried, up to her waist, later up to her neck- the heap which always promises, yet never actually grants, a death, an end."<sup>8</sup>

Although places, and time, seem to be reduced to the allegorically given features existing in the theatrical dimensions, they exceed further, and in some instances it becomes, somehow, difficult to deal with them just as they are or, rather, to see them bluntly as being reduced to what they seem to simply demonstrate.

<sup>4</sup>It had been discussed long time ago of which should be given priority, or which is greater: the literary text or the criticism on it; see, for instance, Mathew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present time" in Albert C. Baugh & George Wm. McClelland, (eds.), *English Literature: A Period Anthology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts INC, 1954).

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Helen L. Baldwin, *Samuel Beckett's Real Silence* (Pennsylvania: 1981), p.108.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days* (London: 1961), P.9.

<sup>8</sup> Richard N. Coe, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: 1964), p.90.

Though partly governable, the stage in the plays is the territory that bears all the conceptual framework of the theatricality of showing the limitations that coerce the characters to be in places that are hardly perceptible, thus their endless suffering, continuous disappointment and consecutive distress, or even compulsion, are encircled specifically within those tiny places. By that, the characters are very much controlled and helpless in their ability not only when attempting to do something against the harsh realities amidst which they find themselves but also, and perhaps more drastic, to succeed in making their cries of frustration and suffering heard outside those specified locations.

Nevertheless, these settings provide unique conditions that play significant roles in making the characters continue coping with what seems an endless state of misery, waiting, and frustration. The bare open stage in *Waiting for Godot*<sup>9</sup> provides a strong image of sad homelessness and isolation. This atmosphere of isolation and loneliness is, perhaps, what furnishes for a special relationship between Vladimir and Estragon. Being in the same boat where there is no apparent rivalry, no competition, living within the same territories and experiencing the same conditions of torment, having similar desires, hopes and aspirations. Being together, the two achieve a lot, and their relationship becomes a sort of homely place.

The way Beckett presents his characters, stage props, themes, dialogues, the preoccupation of his characters and their internal relationships on the one hand, and as characters in connection to everything around on the other hand, strikes the attention to see some sort of what we can call gaps. Nevertheless, the overall picture of Beckett's plays is very instigating to design various interpretations to those plays. Critics have always tried to pick up points or scenes to claim them as the true spirit of Beckett's plays; paradoxically, those opinions stood sometimes in diametrically opposed directions to each other; for some critics tried to find biblical origins in them while many others were speaking of scepticism and uncertainty in this world; others referred the plays to individual experiences, and some others maintained that these plays, actually, express the "endless suffering" of all "human kind", its particular moments represented by the various scenes of the plays. Though there seem to be, in general, no absolute truths in Beckett's plays, there is one dominant, permanent fact in them, it is the state or condition which human beings endlessly experience, it is "waiting." There is no shortage of criticism on this considering it as aimless, endless, hopeless, meaningless absurd waiting. On top of these just-mentioned pessimistic labels, there has always been -though righteous- a negatively implicated "W" question as: Whom for? What for? Where? When? etc. Though difficult to grasp the best awareness that allows the readers, or audiences, to interpret more than what is apparently depicted, "waiting" in the above-mentioned three plays can be conceptualized in a way that enables us to move imaginatively free in, within, by, through viable latitudes in order to designate significance to what appears as motionless, endless and absurd, and to examine the impact of waiting and if it is productive or counterproductive; to see whether it is a choice or an obligation.

### ***Cooperation and Contradiction***

*Waiting for Godot* is, perhaps and on the apparent level of observation, Beckett's most accessible play. In it, the situation seems to be simple enough where two men, Vladimir and Estragon, are joined at a place where they seem to have been before the play began: "Vlad. I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone for ever."<sup>10</sup> And, in the same place they remain also when the play ends. Although it has been very often argued that to Vladimir and Estragon, it is only a situation that necessitates aimless and absurd movements to cope with, it can be, rather, argued that what they play and say give the situation a meaning and signification of its own. If Vladimir and Estragon are there, one can regard that in one of two possibilities, a., their presence in that location should be for a reason which must be "waiting." It is for the promised arrival of "Godot." Or, b., they are there because they have no other place to go to, nor are they capable of moving due to many reasons reasons - including physical, psychological, emotional and above all economical reasons, thus they preoccupy themselves with the self-invented illusion, it is the arrival of Godot and that gives them hope and energy to cope with the difficulties encountering them. If we to scrutinize the overall situation of Beckett's characters in the places where we find them, we clearly remark that they are placed at positions where they are perplexed, confused, lost and uncertain whether the alternatives are better or worse, let alone the question of whether or not the alternative is accessible at all!

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<sup>9</sup>Some critics have argued that this bare open stage stands for what is geographically French.

<sup>10</sup>: Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: 1955), p.9. All other quotations from this text are taken from the same source.

Vladimir and Estragon do not know where that road would lead them to therefore they convince themselves that Godot will come, even when this has been repeated frequently without Godot arriving, they attempt to find excuses by blaming themselves and speaking of uncertainty of the exact days where he is supposed to arrive, or even suspecting that there must be some kind of misunderstanding regarding the tree, precisely whether there is another tree or the very bare tree nearby which they keep waiting!

In *Endgame*, we are with three generations, the old parents Nagg and Nell whose lives have approached their ends owing to time and age factors yet they struggle at a difficult point where they are neither capable of reaching exactly their “end” nor they can move outside the dustbins where they are situated. They can neither arrive nor depart because they cannot “go in”; they can only wait.<sup>11</sup> The same kind of questions that were posed earlier surrounding the characters being in a specific place are aroused, and again the answer is summed up in the word “waiting”; but by contrast to waiting for an arrival, this time “waiting” is made for a promised “departure.” The other generations are represented by Hamm and Clov. Those three generations of characters are instruments working towards the play's paradoxical opening word, “Finished.” They are in a threshold-situation from which there is no quite apparent escape, for each step can only lead further into the ambiguous world. Thus they work on taming the beast of frustration, despair and depression by imagining worlds that are alternative to these realities. Hamm endows himself with characteristics that are strange to him, he is depicted as a “king”, with Clov as his servant, and this dark, or grey, lighted room is described as “my house”, “my service”, and even “my kingdom”, and on one occasion he uses the royal plural to Clov, “You can't leave *us*” [my stress]. Whereas the use of the plural pronoun could be, as well, a reference to both of them (and perhaps he includes Nagg and Nell), it is a reminder of a specific use of the language by people of the royalty indicating a reference to the single self. What the two achieve, despite everything, is their co-operation. When Beckett was once asked to give his interpretation of *Endgame*, he illustrated that it is “interdependency -that man must depend upon his fellow man in some way no matter how awful; a love-hate relationship between Hamm and Clov which exists right through the play”.<sup>12</sup>

A very similar situation the audience meets in *Happy Days* where Winnie's life is almost spent, symbolized by her buried lower half in a mound of earth, still she can neither reach her end nor can she be productive, thus her life is devoted, or rather reduced, to checking her stuff which is gathered in one bag. It is worth stopping at the point of whether the objects Winnie has got in her bag are what actually anchor her mentally and psychologically or rather that is all what she has got of choices to empty the bag and have a look! It is worth asking whether this bag is a symbol for arriving of an individual after a journey or it is the bag that is needed for the beginning of another journey! Still, her way of taking the stuff out of the bag, brushing her teeth and looking at her face in the mirror can be considered a self reassurance when everything else seems to reveal the opposite. Willie, her husband, spends most of his time reading in a newspaper. Willie's full engagement in reading prompts us to be curious about what he is reading; is he reading about other places of the world, places of which he is not aware, therefore he wants to be informed? Or is it about people like him? Are others' stories so significant that he is so curious to learn? What actually makes him turning his back to Winnie? Is it the age over which he has no control? Could it be that he is fed up with her and he wants renewal that he cannot find being with her and he wants to read about in the newspaper? In short, *Happy Days* has got the same Beckettian mode of thinking; Winnie, like other characters in the two other plays we examine, is waiting. Characteristically, waiting, in itself here, can be marked as the same like what is referred to earlier; however, the awaited change is what brings Winnie to a halt: it is death. Despite the similarity in presenting the objectives of “waiting”, Beckett, in one critic words, obviously changes the kind of metaphor he presents where Winnie “alternates between the compulsion to wait and the desire to die.”<sup>13</sup>

Beckett's characters exist in pairs that are clearly in physical, or mental, contrast to each other. In *Waiting for Godot*, one is tall and thin the other is short and fat, one has got a stinking mouth, the other has got stinking feet, one has got a problem with the shoes, the other appears to have a problem with the hat and so on and so forth. In *Endgame*, Hamm cannot stand while Clov cannot sit. These can be categorised as sub-problems that criss-cross each other for the functional theatricality of presenting a broad view of how the architect of those characters wants them to be seen.

<sup>11</sup>Ross Chambers, “An Approach to *Endgame*”. p.75.

<sup>12</sup>McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*. p.173.

<sup>13</sup>Ruby Cohn, *Just Play: Beckett's Theatre* (New Jersey: 1980), p. 9.

Though vary from one to another, the above mentioned sub-problems have some similarities in nature in the sense that they visibly amplify the characteristics of the physical body, in what we might frame as “grotesque” in the Bakhtinian sense, while their broader concerns rest on the body politics.

The contrast between the bodies used is a source functionally highlighted in an exaggeratedly physical appearance such as a fat figure or even obese or notoriously slim. In a word, the characters have diametrically different appearances, and the oscillation is manifested sometimes in violence and aggression towards one another (sometimes biting, or throwing objects at, each other), yet they have a lot in common, and their existence is dependent on each other: they appear in couples and pairs complementing and integrating each other. They attack each other, yet they later embrace each other, they cannot leave each other though they respectively express the need to depart or to be separate; however, and oddly enough, they cannot live without one another, their combination can be described as the love-hate relationship. Although the focus on the physical body brings about laughter very often, there is a considerable seriousness floating around that, this seriousness is sometimes overbalancing the comic to re-present the problem, thus Beckett’s plays address problems by means of what can be described as a tragicomedy making a large use of the physical body, in its appearance, territorial stage movements, and the like. The pairs of contrast and the synthesis of the contradicting elements in Beckett’s plays embarrass, perplex, frustrate, and shock us when they monitor and depict our absurd life; by facing us with the realities and non-realities around us, and by making us aware of our limitations and inability to change the static situation in which we are living. The portrayal of these characters is dialectically counterpoised; for there is interdependency in it. They are different in their social identities -as one dominates the other- but they are together and none of them could cope with “waiting” on his own: and as it has been noticed “they quarrel, get irritable, wonder about separating; as Vladimir says 'One isn't the master of one's moods.' But they have tolerance, understanding, continuing care for each other.”<sup>14</sup>

Vladimir is drawn as more dynamic than Estragon, who is a sort of acted upon character. The act of waiting combines them and makes each one think that the relationship with the other is indispensable. The ambience they create alleviates the fears they have, apart from its other function, which is passing the time while waiting. If we are to look at the apparent daily activities they have, we can summarize that as “Estragon has so many nightmares; he must have someone to talk to. And Vladimir could not bear to be alone, because he cannot find any answers to the questions he is seeking. He hopes Estragon will provide the answer.”<sup>15</sup> With the spontaneous act of mitigating the effects of, loneliness, isolation and the futility in what seems to be an endless time for them, the characters in *Endgame* to talk and tell stories, such as the one told, and over told, by Nagg about the Englishman and the trousers, or Hamm’s readiness to give away a sugarplum after his story is told, or Nell’s longing for a past of which the audiences know nothing. The characters in *Endgame* are, psychologically and physically, encircled with the harsh realities embodied in a long painful present, remote past of which only sketches of memories are left, and *nostalgia* for a future that will never happen the way they want. This can be unmistakably understood as their cry for self-assertion amidst the brutal element of time and physical limitations, their stories become their proof of their existence. Likewise, given the realities within which Winnie exists, her relentless attempt to talk and tell things is, more or less, a kind of self-assertion. Still, it is difficult to be consistent in receiving those characters’ relationships with each other; one cannot establish if we should feel like dragging ourselves to the point where we should see the world around through their eyes or, rather we should be realistic and get depressed out of being encountered with the realities around.

The relationship between Vladimir and Estragon can be labelled as enigmatic in the sense that they are never quietened by what they have nor capable of stepping outside the implicitly permissible. Their communication echoes their relationship with the broader spheres. Thus, words and sentences such as “nothing;” “nothing to be done,” “nothing to be shown;” “boots must be taken off everyday, I often said that” etc are frequently repeated. In the same way, their movements, their gestures all seem to the audience as insignificant. If met elsewhere, such words, dialogues, unfinished sentences would seem trivial.

<sup>14</sup>Katharine Worth, “The Space and the Sound in Beckett's Theatre” in *Beckett the shape Changer*, ed. Katharine Worth (London: 1975), p.188.

<sup>15</sup>Jack MacGowran, “MacGowran on Beckett” . (An Interview by Richard Toscan in *Theatre Quarterly*, July -September, 1973) , p.17

A similar esteem would be given to certain movements and gestures that would seem absurd, abundant or theatrically unneeded (like when Vladimir takes off his hat and peers inside it and feels inside it shakes it and puts it on again).<sup>16</sup>

However, the audience becomes uncertain whether these unfinished sentences would signify a situation in which the same speech, or question, is being frequently repeated by one character therefore, the other would know the rest of it! Or, it is an indication of a total harmony of discussion where one character would understand the full sentence when only part of it is said by the other! Or, it is, rather, a sign of the limitation of their linguistic capabilities or knowledge! Notwithstanding previous possibilities, and no matter how the world of Vladimir and Estragon seems simple and localized to the atmosphere they are in, they seem to have some sort of knowledge of the bigger world, its philosophies, conceptions, etc. they speak of the Bible and about the “two” men who were survived instead of “our saviour”, even the word saviour seems either unusual or unacceptable when it is heard<sup>17</sup>. It could also be expressed that the way both Vladimir and Estragon perceive things is foreign to the normal or average understanding that everyone else does. Estragon's knowledge of religion, or his disagreement with religious stories, is very notorious.

When Pozzo and Lucky appear in the first half of the play, the audience immediately recognizes the nature of the connection between them, which is the Hegelian dialectic of the master-slave relationship: “Lucky carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a gratcoat. Pozzo a whip.”<sup>18</sup> Pozzo addresses Lucky as “pig”, “hog”, etc. Although Pozzo seems more slave owner than anything else, he could be labelled as well, in terms of social classes, as a capitalist figure in whom domination is typically exemplified: “I am bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good prize.”<sup>19</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, they are combined in a dialectically mutual dependency. Pozzo having treated Lucky like the lowest sort of slave reveals that it was Lucky who taught him “all these beautiful things,”<sup>20</sup> “I can't bear it...any longer...the way he goes on.”<sup>21</sup> In the second half of the play, Pozzo's dependence on Lucky is even strengthened due to the fact that Pozzo desperately needs him as he has gone blind, however, the signs of physical aging are manifested on Lucky as well since he becomes “dumb,” the effect of which is to indicate worsening of “communication” between both characters. However, “they remain interdependent.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the inter-reliant relationship between the two figures makes them integrate each other, the implication of which is that Lucky becomes Pozzo's eyes since the latter lost his sight. Nevertheless, Pozzo's blindness might be interpreted symbolically as the lack of vision because he can see nothing but himself. “The condition for the knowledge of all processes of the world is their 'self-movement', in their spontaneous development, in their real life, is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites. Development is the 'struggle' of opposites.”<sup>23</sup> Lenin's statement entails the relationship between the couples in Beckett's plays; they are “opposites,” yet they are essentially recipient of, and to, each other. It is “the unity and struggle of the opposites” that shapes the connections between these characters. In a word, despite all inconveniences surrounding the relationships and the contradictory mental and physical characteristics, they feel the necessity to live with each other.

In *Endgame*, Hamm's relationship with Clov is like the one Pozzo has with Lucky. Clov is likened to a dog, he comes to his master, Hamm, dutifully whenever the latter whistles, and the master wears a whistle round his neck for this purpose. Moreover, among the stage props there is a stuffed dog, and once, using the plural, Clov hands it to Hamm saying “Your dogs are here,” thus referring to himself as a dog. This is embodied even more cruelly in what Hamm tells Clov that he will give him just enough to keep him from dying. Hence the linkage between the two is not that of a man to man level, rather it reveals a kind of enslavement. Their closeness to each other, paradoxically, parallels their remoteness from each other.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*(York Press: 2002), pp.6-7.

<sup>17</sup> Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p.8.

<sup>18</sup> Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p. 21.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.31.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.33.

<sup>21</sup> Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (York press: 2002), p.30.

<sup>22</sup> For a broader discussion on the issue, see McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*. p.67.

<sup>23</sup>V.I. Lenin, “On the Question of Dialectics” in *Collected Works* (Vol.38), p.360.

And, in many respects, they are very similar to the couples in *Waiting for Godot*, they intend to depart from each other but they cannot, this is quite apparent in the very remarkable question Hamm asks quite early in the very first scenes of play “Why do you stay with me?” to which Clov answers by an astonishing question as well “Why do you keep me?” Hamm needs Clov for various reasons, mainly managing tasks that he, *i.e.* Hamm, cannot do on his own such as moving Hamm around the chamber and bringing him to the exact point he wants to be in, watching outside for him, checking on his parents, checking the time for taking his pain killer etc.

The absence of clarity and the presence of incompleteness and incoherence, instead, elicit seeing things as codes and representations. Roger Howard writes that “dialectic is what governs the relationship of actors to objects.”<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the toy dog with three legs that Hamm plays with is there to disclose parallelism to the Hamm-Clov byplay in the sense that one cannot stand without the other's help. The relationship between Hamm and Clov is very astounding, both hate each other and have the will and desire to leave each other, yet they both know they need each other to survive; Clov needs Hamm's store of food to live as it is the only source left for him, reciprocally Hamm needs Clov's help to live as the latter is the only one left for him to help in everything. Absurdly, and oddly enough, Hamm does not acknowledge his need for Clov or tries to change his domineering behaviour towards him, he uses various methods to keep Clov under his control; he tries to use a discourse of convenience for himself which is no less than threatening Clov of the risks of leaving him and going outside:

Hamm: Gone from me you'd be dead.

Clov: *And vice versa*

Hamm: Outside of here it's death.<sup>25</sup>

And other times, blackmailing Clov by inventing a story in which someone has asked for a gardening job at Hamm, and that job-seeker has got a boy who would be brought in. Clov's problem lies in being “caught between the devil and the deep blue sea,” in the sense of what choices he has, thus he, temporarily, chooses the “less evil;” he wants to leave, but outside that shelter, as Hamm reminds him, there is “death,” it is a fact of which Hamm is certain that Clov's choices are very limited. Hamm's success in manipulating Clov and keeping him might be another factor in playing a role to stimulate a delusion of self-aggrandisement. It is manifested in his insistence on endowing himself with characteristics that he, actually, lacks by virtue of being blind and having physical disabilities. Hence we see him imagining himself to be, not only sitting at the centre, but thinking himself to be the centre itself. His insistence on the central position would give us the outer shell of an inner being that is not seen by us and its essence remains a matter of speculation. From his “centre,” Hamm, candidly, perceives the ties with the margin (Clov) as conditioned by what lies in his own interest, although he is “sightless and motionless, but not yet silent; he has shattered the windows of his inner world, but the door remains open and the world of others still exists for him.”<sup>26</sup>

Hamm is separated from the outer world, it is a fact that he often seems to ignore or avoid acknowledging, rather he paradoxically tries to prove the other way round as he insists on being located in his wheel-chair exactly at the centre of the shelter, this occupies a main part of the demands he makes to Clov. This is a socio-psychological positioning, endorsing self-significance, and hierarchy creation within the three generations in *Endgame*, it is constructed by, and based on, some kind of illusion. However, this illusion falls apart not only by the audience's general observation but also by the simple equation whereby Clov is certainly needed by Hamm owing to the need and necessity of the latter's blindness. Clov is not only the servant but also, like Lucky to Pozzo, he is the mind, and/or the “eyes” or “the mind's eyes” to Hamm. Clov, wheels Hamm around the shelter, watches the outside for him through the two high windows, etc. The Hamm-Clov relationship is very entangling in its antithetical nature and in its promulgation of the law of the “unity and struggle of the opposites:” in the prison-like shelter where they are; these characters are on diametrically opposite sides in their actual placement, yet they are very close, they contradict, and quarrel with, each other, still they are unqualified for leaving each other, they act as “wanting to leave each other, at war with each other, and yet dependent on each other.”<sup>27</sup>

In a word, being together is troublesome but the alternative is solitude and silence which they both fear and, simultaneously, desire.

<sup>24</sup>Roger Howard, *Contradictory Theatres*. ed. Leslie Bell (England: 1984), p.178.

<sup>25</sup>Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (London: 1958),p.45.

<sup>26</sup>Chambers, “An Approach to *Endgame*”, p.74.

<sup>27</sup>Martin Esslin, “Samuel Beckett: The Search for the Self”, p. 26.

Clov detests the fact that he is more or less enslaved by Hamm who extensively instructs him, he has no control over the harsh realities he found himself amidst, nor has he the mental or psychological power to step outside his confinement since leaving this enslavement means he is left with nobody and he will go nowhere he is informed of, he only continues to complain of Hamm's treatment and instructions: "do this, do that, and I do it. I never refuse. Why?" Though the relationship between Hamm and Clov is shaped by awkwardness, and despite the will and desire to part, they remain bound to, and stuck with, each other.

Nevertheless, the question of whether or not Clov will leave Hamm creates the dramatic tension throughout the play, as Martin Esslin remarked, if Clov is to leave Hamm, it is not only killing the latter but it is also suicidal on Clov's part: "He will thus succeed where Estragon and Vladimir have failed so often."<sup>28</sup> Due to this some might argue that death which they are, presumably, waiting for is a release to both of them. In the details of their relationship, Hamm seems to be a tyrant, who lives to enjoy the exercise of power over others. From the very beginning of the play, one's attention is directed to the same point of whether Clov will abandon, or will stay with, Hamm.

Clov's intention to depart is met all the time with Hamm's resistance embodied by his call for the need to stay. Only at the end, when Clov informs Hamm that he sees a little boy approaching, the latter spells out his inner self and states that he needs him no longer, it is a bitter implication that he will replace him with the boy, thus revealing his real status in relation to Clov as temporarily determined by profiteering and opportunism. Beckett writes of *Endgame* that it is "more inhuman than 'Godot' and Hamm's cruelty earns the play this adjective."<sup>29</sup>

### ***Communication and isolation***

The ubiquitous sadness or anguish showcased in the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky is demonstrated, mainly, by body language, the only time verbal language is given a role is in the long speech Lucky utters. Lucky's notorious speech discloses a human explosion caused by chronic pressure; Lucky's speech divulges a deep desire coming out of a long imprisoned self to complain and report everything that could not have been otherwise disclosed, in the rush to seize that rare opportunity and speak up everything about his human worries, Lucky fails to coherently point up a single well-expressed question; rather he ends up speaking inconsistently and sweepingly saying a bit of each; Lucky's speech wavers between being utterances that are nonsensical sounds, if taken by their own, and short statements to move sometimes to long sentences that apparently do not lead to any thread related to one single problem, nonetheless, the overall title under which his speech can be categorized is delineating the suffering and compulsion of all humanity. He kept silent for a long time and when he spoke he had more and more to say, he seemed to have got rid of his fears and got, instead, the power to express his mind and protest, and he seemed as if he would never stop talking; only a forceful removal of the hat of his head could silence him. It seemed as if the removal of the hat from Lucky's head were the means to bring him back to the normal position. By having the hat on his head, Lucky loses all sorts of control imposed on him and becomes fashioned with an entirely different personality, one that thinks and complains, while removing the hat is disrobing him off the short-lived mode of thinking and expressing, moreover he could not speak after that and was brought back to his "normalised" position, to which Pozzo comments after snatching the hat from Vladimir, throwing it on the ground and trampling on it "There's an end to his thinking!"<sup>30</sup> Thus forcing his authority over the situation and articulating his fundamental hostility when it comes to listening to the voice of human wretchedness and compulsion. Equally to Pozzo's animosity to Lucky's thinking and speaking, the latter often directs his speech not to Pozzo but rather to the audience. This gap, or lack of common language, is emblematic to Beckett's characters that are remote from each other, despite being positioned together in the tiny places they occupy. Being together, and feeling the need to, and necessity for, each other, is one thing and the nature of the communiqué between them is another. Nag and Nell, who are a couple and, also, generationally close to each other, obviously suffer from the lack of interaction between them, they are geographically close but mentally distant whereby each marches to the beat of a different drum, Nagg is interested in stories while Nell is nostalgic for the times when she was young.

<sup>28</sup>Esslin, "Samuel Beckett: the Search for the Self" p.22.

<sup>29</sup>Antony Easthope, "Hamm, Clov, and Dramatic Method in *Endgame*" in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame*, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny (New Jersey: 1969), p.63.

<sup>30</sup>Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*. p.42.

They are kept hidden in the ashbins – which symbolize tombs - on the stage. Beckett architects a scene in which they both try unsuccessfully to kiss each other: “their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.”<sup>31</sup> They are stereotypes of the Beckettian formula in their “impotence” being paralysed in the bins and half the way in the journey between life and death. They are given anything to keep them just for a while.

Keeping them in the dustbins and giving them the sweets(sugar-plums) would entail the impotence of the older generation who underwent similar experiences to the ones the current generation is going through but with no remarkable advancements; yet they are neither able to “go in” nor fit to reach each other. Their language is similar to that spoken by their fellow Beckettian characters in its apparent absurdity, they ask similar questions to those posed by Vladimir and Estragon:

Nagg. (...) Do you want to go in?

Nell. Yes.

Nagg. Then go in. (Nell does not move.) *Why don't you go in?*

Nell. *I don't know.*<sup>32</sup>

Nell's perplexed answer is not unusual to Beckett's characters. Rather, it asserts the stream of perceiving things where a character seems to say what it does not mean, and where the present reiterates the past in its major characteristics and the future does not loom to be different either, where uncertainty, fear, anxiety, unrealized desires, compulsions are all intermingled and rotate endlessly in a closed vortex, where a character intends to do something but never dares to, where the bitter current conditions are accepted in fear of the one's to come, and the question “Why is it so difficult to 'go in'? [remains] the problem with which the whole play is concerned”.<sup>33</sup>

In *Happy Days*, the audiences are with two typical Beckettian characters that are combined together, geographically close to each other, but their mental preoccupations are distant from each other. Willie, the husband, is most of the time silent and if he talks, that would be reduced to only a few words. Winnie, on the contrary, speaks continuously. Basically, they are husband and wife and, also, they are needed to each other, however they do not have the same interests, they are not bothered in the least about the same things either. The Beckettian audience is not unfamiliar with the way these two characters are connected, they are paired, although they are not matching in reality; or to express the issue differently, it is the unification of the opposites in specific conditions of time and place. Winnie's extreme location is very indicative of the state of helplessness in the sense that she is alone and the closest to her is not sharing anything with her or even understanding her. Willie, the taciturn husband, cannot be simply seen by Winnie, rather, the latter “has to bend back sideways to see him [and] despite everything he is necessary for her; he is the indispensable witness to her own personal existence; without him she would lose her identity.”<sup>34</sup> In *Happy Days*, Beckett uses interdependent response and judgement of the spectator as an important factor in the drama.<sup>35</sup>

The audience is given very little about those two characters, their past, their purpose or any other similar questions of interest; rather everything is left as a matter of speculations and guess resulting from observing them. In the way she is placed, Winnie combines both impotence and effectiveness in one single body, her buried half is encountered with the other in a challenging sort of antithetical bond, and such an assemblage is a refusal to give in. This unification of both the buried and exposed halves is compared with another being Willie who is, though not half buried, not largely different from Winnie as far as activity is concerned; for a comparison of the positioning of this figure to Winnie there is a similar environment where a half-buried character in the mound, hardly active or in the circle of focus, and her husband is in a hole reading his newspaper and occasionally utters a few words.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*. p.18.

<sup>32</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*. p. 16. My italicisation.

<sup>33</sup>Chambers, “An Approach to *Endgame*”. p.75.

<sup>34</sup>Barnard, *Samuel Beckett: A New Approach*. p. 122.

<sup>35</sup>James Knowlson and John Pilling, *Frescoes of the Skull* (London: 1979), p.97.

<sup>36</sup>See G.C. Bernard, *Samuel Beckett: A New Approach* (London: 1970), p.120.

The relationship between Winnie's two opposite parts is as complicated and enigmatic as her relationship, as a unified body, not only to her husband but also to the outer -off stage- world at large. Examining the sight of a half-buried woman in the mould is likely to function as a philosophical indicative of painful realities filtered down to the theatrical metaphor structuring the personalities of the buried-alive and deceased beings.<sup>37</sup> Out of this unusual, or actually shocking, status of Winnie many unanswerable questions have been raised.

It is uncertain if Winnie is a mediator between life and death! Or between movement and silence! Or whether her positioning like that is a suggestion of an ever impossible reaching destination! Or whether she is, simply, the buried alive! Among the stage props in *Happy Days*, there is also a bag in which Winnie rummages very often to take out the toothbrush and other things, among which the most notable one is the revolver which may suggest that she either arms herself with it for a possible violence or she needs protection or she keeps it, as G.C. Barnard thinks, for her weaker moments when she “could contemplate suicide, for on first taking it out she kisses it before putting back again.”<sup>38</sup> Kissing the revolver suggests Winnie’s likeness and closeness to it, if the revolver is possibly her saviour and/or protector, then we are left again with ambiguity surrounding the person/s against whom she is armed, except exasperation, frustration of a never-ending suffering!

### ***Waiting, Time and Productivity***

It is stunning how the minds and thoughts of the examined Beckettian characters freely fly over and move beyond horizons, floating over the elements of time and space, though their bodies are incarcerated within narrow spots. It should be righteous for the audiences accordingly to question the genuine motives for characters like Vladimir and Estragon who are engulfed by endless *Weltschmerz* and have difficulties drawing the difference between a “carrot” and “turnip” to speak fancifully of a supposedly rich past they somehow enjoyed, Vlad. “Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days.”<sup>39</sup> Or what Estragon says while describing the map of the Holy Land and stopping specifically at “The Dead Sea” and stating “That’s where we’ll go, I used to say, that’s where we’ll go for our honeymoon.”<sup>40</sup> Hamm, who is blind, paralysed, groaning in pain, and asking often about if it is time for taking his painkiller, inclines to alleviate his misery by thinking it can be simply changed and he will be able to see, move, wander around, run: “If I could sleep I might make love. I’d go into the woods. My eyes would see... the sky, the earth. I’d run, run, they wouldn’t catch me.”<sup>41</sup> And Nell who is very frail finds a way to live outside the boundaries of her fading health worsened by years when she contemplatively tells of a “one April afternoon”, she “went out rowing on Lake Como”<sup>42</sup> thus finding a way of self-condolence through bringing to mind notorious places such as the Italian lake she proudly mentions. Winnie, whose life is passing with experiencing a type of imprisonment and torture, appears to invoke a commonplace wherewith she can imaginatively convince herself of being competent and free. But she is, actually, just normalising suffering. Her daily routine that starts and ends at hearing the bell is reminiscent, and anticipant, of what Michel Foucault demonstrated in his *Discipline and Punish* about the historical transformation or the re-organization of power where applying power moved from subjecting the physical body of the individuals (torturing and mutilating) to targeting their minds and senses through imposing disciplines and organizing them as norms, this process which took place in a small prison where the disobedient and the dissident were kept in was generalized and extended to the bigger prison where we all live under control and within certain norms and standards. The process of moving the target from body to the mind occurred by training individuals as explained in Foucault’s work. In the chapter entitled “Torture:”<sup>43</sup> “Art. 18 *Rising*. At the first drum-roll, the prisoners must rise ...” and “Art. 28.....at first drum-roll, they must undress, and at the second get into bed.”<sup>44</sup>

<sup>37</sup>See Andrew W. Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett* (Cambridge: 1989), p.83.

<sup>38</sup>G.C. Barnard, *Samuel Beckett*. p.121.

<sup>39</sup> Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979),p.10.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>41</sup> Beckett, *Endgame*. P.25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, P.28.

<sup>43</sup>Resorting to such understanding and linkage here is not anachronistic since *Happy Days* was completed before Foucault’s work was published. It is, rather, a perception of things in line with, and dependent on, the Foucauldian illumination in the field.

<sup>44</sup>Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: 1979),pp.6-7.

This bell becomes unbearable to her:” it hurts like a knife”. And the everyday subjection to torture leads her to think: “I say how often I have said, ignore it, Winnie, ignore the bell, pay no heed, just sleep and wake, as you please...”<sup>45</sup>

One of the most evident troubles with characters like Vladimir and Estragon, Ham and Clov, Nagg and Nell, Winnie and Willie is the sharp contrast between limitations and aspirations, between desirability and availability. They represent their fellow humans not only in distress, confusion and impotence, but also in despair. Yet, the comic accounts the characters make are, more or less, hard attempts and struggling to do something, to change something, to move outside, and beyond, an enclosed circle and above all to act and be productive.

While the formula (let's go/ Why don't we go?) is repeated in *Waiting for Godot* verbally and re-worded and, in one way or another, insinuated at in the other plays, it seems to be a futile embracement of uncertain life with a slight intention to seek another possibility and yet accepting it. It is, in fact, a questioning of everything around and intention to move beyond one's position, yet stumbling between the limitations and the fear of the unknown. Vladimir and Estragon do not actually leave, except in the break between the two acts, but they think of going, and while they are there, their minds inquisitively try to explore everything around and to make the best use of what is there despite the limitations of what they really have on the stage. And, while exploring that in comic, buffoonic whatsoever attempts, they show us our helplessness, exasperation, and limitation. It is precisely an undivided view of other opinions stressing that Beckett's “creative intuition explores the elements of experience and shows to what extent human beings carry the seeds of...depression and disintegration within the deeper layers of their personality.”<sup>46</sup> A sociological perceptiveness of Beckett's characters would not reduce them to just stage tramps, nor would it read the texts as solely absurd; rather the characters are the plausible formation of time and place, and the texts are conveying a message which is functionally present and tightly related to that formation, by such understanding, characters are not totally isolated images, nor are the plays mere nuances made so to meet the characteristics of genres; instead, the characters have much in common with us, they reveal our own selves and the laughable scenes we see them performing are, more or less, amplified demonstrations of our own acts (see above). The Beckettian characters' “waiting” is but an actual sketch of our undeviating condition; we wait, aspire and anticipate a movement or a change to take place eventually, and like them, our life is continuously structured by uncertainty and contradiction; hope shapes the details of waiting together with frustration and compulsion, haphazard movements but we, somehow, tend to view it as productive. Our experience in life helps us trying to regard the possibility that Godot is purely a figment of Vladimir and Estragon's minds; they invented Godot, gave him characteristics and added further super qualities to him, they imagined Godot, and they believed their own imagination. Thus they convinced themselves that he would come and rescue them. Meanwhile, they also persuade themselves that they are making time while waiting for “Him” when they are actually killing time and recognising that “there is nothing to be done!”

In *Endgame*, Clov is being repeatedly frightened of the unknown outer world; therefore he sorely stays with Hamm and the known inside. The equation “outside here” would mean “death,” but the question is still whether the inside is a viable alternative to what is classified as “death,” where everything is “finished,” etc...! In other words, is this inside, where darkness with weak grey light are universal, and nothing is pleasant in this melancholic gloomy atmosphere, really a place where life is desirable? The danger lying in the outside world is one thing and the futility inside the shelter is another, they are, by no means, equal. Nevertheless, the battling to escape one leads to experiencing the bitterness of the other and to effortful attempts to cope with a situation as an accomplished fact. The isolation and the despair accompanying, and resulting from, it are very much reminiscent of Sartre's living room in hell where there is “no way out,” and in Pinter's rooms which are shelters that do neither provide the needed safety nor do they terminate the psychic torment. Rather, the characters are perplexed, tortured, and unable to go out. Still, their relationships with each other are shaped, and structured by, cooperation.

The inclination to argue that the wheelchair on which Hamm sits symbolises a paralysed being - though correct- is, somehow, to ignore the existence of a capable being moving around. Regardless of the difficulties Clov experiences to move Hamm and to inform him of the outer world, the main issue here is that he is moving himself and playing the role of a mediator between the wheel-chaired person and the surrounding.

<sup>45</sup>Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days*, (London: 1961),p. 40.

<sup>46</sup>Martin Esslin, “Samuel Beckett: The Search for the Self”, in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame*, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny (New Jersey: 1969), p. 28.

Therewith, the relationship between the two is dependency and coordination (as mentioned earlier). The physically disabled figure offers a sheltering place to Clov who, in return, gives back the required movement of the former and observes the outer set to report.

*Happy Days* offers a stream-of-consciousness monologue delivered by the middle-aged woman Winnie who is on the stage with her “uncommunicative” husband. Winnie's view of her own world is even darker than the others in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, to her, there is “no better, no worse, no change”<sup>47</sup> and “nothing to break the silence of this place”<sup>48</sup> therefore she wonders whether “Should I happen to see the old joke again?”<sup>49</sup>

The repetition and the long time waiting affect Winnie to whom there is *almost* no more nature. Winnie's days have no nights, and gravity is not what it was. When incidents seem to occur, they do not happen naturally, and natural functions of Winnie and Willie, like objects, are 'running out.'<sup>50</sup>

Winnie's long time speech tells about her misery and it is synchronised with “hellish fire” revealed by the lighting. Willie's world does not appear the same as far as misery is concerned; his presence does not make so much difference to Winnie. While she struggles to pass time by drawing the attention to herself cherishing objects and phrases and trying to find quotations and rummaging for her old tooth brush, her husband, Willie, is engaged in reading silently. Winnie's case has been “seen as variations of “waiting” and “ending” games in Beckett's two full-length plays.”<sup>51</sup> The difference between waiting in the two other plays and the one in *Happy Days* is that in the latter Winnie “shows signs of distress and a growing awareness of the nature of plight.”<sup>52</sup> Winnie's salvation remains her own decision since she is handy with a revolver. Likewise, departure or death in *Endgame* is a change but to take the first step remains much problematized.

No matter how valueless time is for the characters, as some might dispute, time reminder is always there either by one character enquiring about time and the day of the week or by the symbolic presence of an alarm clock as one of the stage props. There is fear of endless time of suffering and torment in the three plays which destroys some sort of forged serenity of the characters. In the nightfall, Vladimir and Estragon see a sort of rest they seek.

Vlad. It'll fall all of a sudden, like yesterday.

Estr. Then it'll be night.

Vlad. And we can go.

Estr. Then it'll be day again (pause. Despairing)

What'll we do. What'll we do!...<sup>53</sup>.

Vladimir and Estragon's pattern is, perhaps, the logical culmination to the state of being which they created for themselves in connection to time, waiting, and changing. It is, therefore, unclear what their real intention is; hence we ask “Will they wait for the 'night to fall'? Or for 'Godot to come'? Or will they struggle to discover a mode of being which would place them in such bearable relation to Time”<sup>54</sup>

Given all the conditions within which characters wait, where hope vanishes and is gradually superseded by despair, the present becomes almost identical with the past, so would the future loom to be, the old is new and the new is old, the plays end with the same problem they began with, and the characters' minds and interests are gradually sized and accordingly resized, the long time waiting affects the characters to the extent that they become “unable to find new words, new gestures, they are reduced to repeating indefinitely the things they have already done and said many times before.”<sup>55</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Beckett, *Happy Days*. p.12.

<sup>48</sup>Beckett, *Happy Days*. p.18.

<sup>49</sup>Beckett, *Happy Days*, p. 18.

<sup>50</sup>Ruby Cohn, *Just Play: Beckett's Theatre*. (New Jersey: 1980), p.26.

<sup>51</sup>Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett*, p.76.

<sup>52</sup>Knowlson and Pilling, *Frescoes of the Skull*, p.98.

<sup>53</sup>Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p. 73.

<sup>54</sup>Edward S. Brinkley “Proustian Time and Modern Drama: Beckett, Brecht, and Fugard”, in *Comparative Literature Studies* 25 (1988),p. 353.

<sup>55</sup>Chambers, “An Approach to *Endgame*”. pp.77-78.

In fact “waiting” is not a practice, conception, or activity to which the audience is introduced at the beginning of a play, rather one senses that it had been going on before the actual start of the plays and what we see is only a very limited span of time confined within the theatrical limitations where a play opens and ends. Beckett starts *Waiting for Godot* with Vladimir and Estragon having already met before, they are on the stage and the first scene to the audience is not actually where both beings maintain that “nothing to be done”<sup>56</sup> because they are kept in a vortex of the boring repetitive actions in life where the way out seems far beyond reaching: “Est. Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!”<sup>57</sup> The phase the audience watches is a “genre,” an abstracted part from a series; questioning its endings is quite justifiable but counterproductive if it is going to be the main preoccupation. If taking off and putting on the shoes seem to be nothing but simply senseless acts that bring about laughter, they, at the same time, show an investment of time. When Pozzo and Lucky play the driver and the driven, they depict a state of human misery and decline (Lucky), the significance of which is not to satisfy a sadistic inclination but rather a call for different possibilities and not strangling ones.

Despite the seemingly awful acts the characters do while waiting, their pastimes are, in many respects, coercive endeavours; they serve to give them the feeling of making time first, and second to explore everything they have around, and above all they function as entertaining elements while they are there, waiting. Among the games Vladimir and Estragon busy themselves with is playing the tree which is, symbolically, the ever permanent milieu within which a change occurs when it, though partially, blossoms. To view this game as playing or drawing upon the paradox where the tree changes -while they do not- is a denial of not only the essence of the human nature but also to the essence of nature itself which contains the “tree” and the “humans,” and it is a denial that nature is ruled by the law of “motion.” Playing the tree has brought some critics forth to see it as compared with the exercise of yoga<sup>58</sup> they suggested that “this is a rendition of exercise 52 in the yoga series, and it is possible that Beckett had this in mind.”<sup>59</sup> If this is true, then it is another way in approaching life which relies on the potential latent, physical as well as mental, capabilities in human being.

Although the claimed promise of Godot's appearance is not made from without but by the characters themselves, the audience is left with the feeling that something is yet to be done since arrival remains an unfulfilled promise in the two acts of *Waiting for Godot*. To this fact, Beckett's *Endgame* has been observed as a third act where waiting is still the main issue and the characters have got the same attitude. Hamm always orders Clov to wait, he says “Nothing you can do about it, just wait for it to come. (Pause) No.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, all characters have the same mode of thinking where their existence, with everything around, is enigmatic and does not enable them to know much about themselves and the world around. Their self-given promise that something is going to happen, or someone is going to materialize, is an attempt to self-comforting together with an inner assumption that some kind of interruption to their imposed way of life embodies fruitfulness; it is the dream by which they reward themselves. But, to talk about the absent is meaningful only when the present is equally regarded. Hamm and Clov think that they nearly said all what they might and “There is nothing to say”<sup>61</sup> and:

This is not very much fun (pause.) But that's always the way at the end of the day, isn't it, Clov?

Clov: Always.

Hamm: It is the end of the day like any other day, isn't it Clov?

Clov: looks like it.<sup>62</sup>

Hamm-Clov's easy way of putting things entails abjuration to the process of history in which two different periods of time can be similar but never identical. Regardless of its slow nature, what happens in general remains the thing to be brought to the foreground in the continuous motion, where impotence is but a *relative* motionless. In spite of all critics' pessimism to depict a motionless status, the Beckettian stereotypes demonstrate the opposite; Clov continuously moves to the kitchen and up to the two high windows.

<sup>56</sup>Beckett. *Waiting for Godot*. p.9.

<sup>57</sup>Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*. p.41.

<sup>58</sup>In yoga series exercise 52 is called the tree position and intended for concentration.

<sup>59</sup>Bert O. States, *The Shape of Paradox*. (London & California: 1978), p. 16.

<sup>60</sup>Beckett *Endgame*. p.40.

<sup>61</sup>Beckett, *Endgame* .p. 50.

<sup>62</sup>Beckett, *Endgame*. p.17.

To this extent, Clov's answer to Hamm's enquiry about the weather "The same as usual,"<sup>63</sup> though might be relatively true and valid for inside the shelter, is an observation that sees things in isolation from each other; for the weather, unlike what is being uttered by Clov, is certainly not the same outside; moreover, the way Clov, in his confused way of preparing himself for departure, is dressed in the last scene, as he is ready to leave, refutes his claim and suggests that he is not prepared for any one single sort of weather since he is not fully dressed for any, it is, in effect, an inner acknowledgement of various weathers, "he is dressed for the road. Panama hat, tweed coat, raincoat over his arm, umbrella, bag."<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps the metaphorical use in *Endgame* of the story of the Englishman and the tailor that invoked speaking of the world that God made "in six days" and the trousers that the tailor made "in three months" is significant enough to draw the analogy between a disorderly world and the other-way-round trousers on the one hand, and on the other hand to stress an important point that rapid and sudden creation or change does not happen in the material world of time and place; it happens *only* in the metaphysical spheres where miracles are created by "God." No wonder, then, when the tailor uses exclamation to point out the difference: "Look (...) At the world (...) - and look- (...) At my TROUSERS!"<sup>65</sup> The time to which there is a reference here has not got the conception spoken of in some primitive societies where there is no value to time, *i.e.* where people believe they make time when they, actually, kill time. Nor is it the view which perceives time like "The Nuer [who] have no expression equivalent to 'time' in our language, and they cannot therefore, ...speak of time as though it were something actual, which passes, can be wasted, can be saved, and so forth."<sup>66</sup> By and large, the time in these literary works is neither that where "God" created the world in six days, nor the one that is made when being killed. It is, rather, time in the material world where everything and everybody are in continuous motions and where "never anywhere has there been matter without motion, nor can there be..."<sup>67</sup> It is the time in which the tree puts few leaves in *Waiting for Godot*, a symbol of renewal and change; and the flea appearing in *Endgame*; and the emmet progressing through the grass in *Happy Days*. The significance of such manifestations might be regarded analogically with those of the human beings in the plays. It is the time when Vladimir and Estragon move, come and go thinking "What'll we do?" And try to leave in the last scene. It is the time in which Winnie thinks that "something must happen, in the world, take place, some change"<sup>68</sup> and, it is the time when it does not take Winnie long to state in a manner of self-realization: "stop talking and do something for a change."<sup>69</sup> It is, as well, the consciousness which motivates Clov to express his desire to see the world of "order" and starts preparing to leave Hamm. It is the attempt to re-"order" his own thinking by asking himself: "I never refuse, why?" The time in the three plays is where silences and pauses are relative and temporary. It is the time that is labelled by change despite the state of hopelessness and the theatrical limitations. Vladimir can notice that "Things have changed since yesterday."<sup>70</sup> Indeed, for decay or renewal, nothing remains the same: in *Happy Days*, "the threads of the three discomforts: the tube of toothpaste is running out; her teeth are in a bad condition, and Willie, her partner for life, has no zest left for anything."<sup>71</sup>

In *Endgame*, when it is time for Hamm to take his pain-killer for which he has been anxiously calling and nagging since the beginning of the play, he hears the shocking news that "there's no more pain-killer." What is missing to Hamm now is the means by which his chronic suffering can be temporarily sedated therefore, like Winnie's permanent situation; he has nothing except misery and suffering. But Winnie's tranquilliser is different in nature; it is a kind of coping, or normalisation, with pain: she "turns to the real business of the day which is to produce the illusion of happiness by killing the time until the bell shall ring again to tell her the day is over and she can sleep."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>63</sup>Beckett, *Endgame*. p.24.

<sup>64</sup>Beckett, *Endgame*. p.51

<sup>65</sup>Beckett, *Endgame*, p.22.

<sup>66</sup>E.E.Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford: 1940),p.103 Quoted in E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,"in *Past and Present* 38 (1967), p.96.

<sup>67</sup>Z.A.Jordan, *The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism: A Philosophical and Sociological Analysis* (London: 1967),p.158.

<sup>68</sup>Beckett, *Happy Days*, p.28.

<sup>69</sup>Beckett, *Happy Days*, p.31.

<sup>70</sup>Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p.60.for decay or renewal

<sup>71</sup>Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett*, p.77.

<sup>72</sup>Barnard, *Samuel Beckett: A New Approach*, p.120.

To tackle the issue of time and waiting from a different side, it is worth asking whether the situations and modes of relations between the characters in each respective play are by any means connected to what is called “waiting.” Are they suffering because they are waiting? Or they are waiting because they are suffering? Or does waiting necessarily condition what simultaneously goes on? Questions of this kind would not be easily answered without controversy. It has been long argued that waiting in Beckett is neither futile nor barren because nothing freely comes to a complete standstill on the pretext of waiting. Waiting does not undermine daily activities, but rather it is part of them. It has been discussed that:

“Waiting is a condition which does not necessarily affect one's daily projects but which underlies all of them- while performing one's job or gardening or even while asleep one could be described as “waiting”, for instance waiting to get married or waiting to die.”<sup>73</sup>

Contrary to such a view is exactly seeing only the upper part of the half-filled glass. Between the two acts of *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon are not merely waiting and the way they talk suggests that their life is not reduced to, or confined within, waiting. Questions about one's self, life, past, present, future, why? Where? When? Who? etc.. will never cease to be mysterious and torturous to one's mind, thus predicting the unknown to come is a distraction by which one lives. However, it would be contradictory to depict the act of waiting in Beckett in purely stoic way and to ignore the fact that time is being killed in vain whereby the expected will never arrive and the future will never be different from the past or present. It would be a deliberate attempt to overshadow the harsh conditions surrounding the trajectory of the characters when the state of waiting seems to be fixed, frozen, trapped and stuck in nowhere, where the time loses its value for those who are waiting; where offstage man is waiting (the poor, the deprived, the sufferer, the ill, etc., etc..) they are all waiting and waiting for someone to come, for something to happen; they are waiting for some kind of change till eventually waiting becomes an aim in itself. In such framing, waiting, in effect, becomes the high walls within, and behind, which we are endlessly imprisoned. Yet, to turn conceptions and perceptions upside down is, more or less, a kind of self-deception which seems necessary to condole ourselves in particular when we are so much limited, sized, when we are surrounded by unresolved puzzles, when our questions are unanswered, when our hopes vanish against the elements of time and limitations, when our aspirations are broken on the rocks that we do not know why they are there in the first place, when our future is so remote and unpredictable.

Whereas the scenes of people “waiting” represent old generations, Beckett's plays eventually present or at least hint to the younger generation. In *Waiting for Godot*, the arrival of the boy symbolises youth and continuity. In the same ethos Beckett portrays that something:

“is taking its course in *Endgame* begins to look like a movement towards birth as well as death; a difficult act of generation. The generations are very much there in the room. ... And outside a small boy. Coming [sic!] late into the play to suggest young life continuing.”<sup>74</sup>

In *Happy Days*, Willie, who has not moved throughout the play, moves at the end crawling on all fours round the mould trying to climb. This is to signify the movement of man in the phase before walking, yet there is a reference to a boy; Willie reads “Wanted bright boy.”<sup>75</sup> Again, despite all optimism just deployed, it remains a tantalizing question related to whether waiting in Beckett's plays is killing or rather making time! And whether Godot or whoever or whatever might be awaited for is absent or present! Nevertheless, seeing a flower does not mean it is spring time, and these manifestations of motions and tiny changes would not substantially alter the overall situation of anguish and agony for the characters in the plays, nor would that be a great source of hope for humans in general.

Despite the fact that Beckett's world is metaphorical, naturalism, as well, has got a considerable presence in his works; yet both elements intermingle in a complex way that makes them completing and integrating each other partly and at the same time it obviates a clear-cut access to what they represent or what is the message behind this or that. There are, for instance, boots, hats, radishes, carrot, rope, bag, revolver, an umbrella...etc.

<sup>73</sup>Lance St. John Butler, *Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being* (Hong Kong: 1984), p. 177.

<sup>74</sup>Worth, “The Space and the Sound in Beckett's Theatre”, p. 191.

<sup>75</sup>Beckett, *Happy Days*, p. 36.

The clearly difficult question here can be summed up in the problem of the boots, they bring about laughter, however the situation is exactly an attempt to escape deciphering a puzzle, and therefore one laughs to be equipped with the feasible resort to coping with the situation. This metaphoric, but also metamorphic, change in Estragon's feet is revealed without a direct reference to any other connected elements in that respect. All what is referred to is that the feet become bigger the next day. Beckett wrote: "the second day boots are no doubt same as first and Estragon's feet wasted, pined, shrunk and dwindled in interval,"<sup>76</sup> the other change in *Waiting for Godot* that happens the next day as well is in the tree whereas it has not any leaves in the first half of the play, it gives four or five leaves in the second half, or more accurately the second day. The two changes offer nothing but more complexity of interpretation; Estragon's change in the feet compared with that of the tree is, somehow, problematic. While Estragon seems to lose what enables him to be standing and walking, consequently losing the means he needs to "go" as an aim he spoke about with Vladimir, the tree seems to be reaching a phase of productivity. Estragon's change happens at his lower part, the tree at its upper. In *Endgame*, the stage props are few in number but they are very significant in their functions; there are a step ladder, a whistle, a telescope, a toy dog, a gaff, and an alarm clock. The connection between these objects to themselves and to the characters on the stage suggests aspiration for moving above and beyond the place. However, the idea of moving remains latent and the characters stick to watching the outside world, and the whistle is believed to be the means of a hard effort to compensate for the frustration resulted from the failure to achieve the aim. Thus Hamm whistles to exercise his local domination over Clov. Yet, time, with the alert of time, is the hammer that strikes heavily; it is symbolized by the presence of the alarm clock. In a sense Beckett is, apparently, choosing his stage objects as a striking reminder of time and the gaps within the world and the limitations of the figures involved.

### **Conclusion**

With some other writers, we have the problems being resolved and the happy endings are expected, while in Beckett there is a *gap* sort of problem that is neither totally filled nor remained without clues for better expectations: the plays begin with a problem and end with the same problem (or a problem of the same nature). Moreover, problematization is certainly a major characteristic of Beckett's plays; besides the main problem which is the characters' preoccupation in a long waiting, their lives remain puzzled and inscrutable. All of the characters in the above-discussed three plays are longing for something to come, to change a situation, to answer some of the puzzling questions they have about themselves and the world around, but this desire remains unrealised. In particular, Winnie wants to change something but she can't, so she stumbles between her desire and her distress and keeps wishing and hoping. In the end, they all get older and, naturally, weaker, and the mysteries of life continue for them and for us.

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<sup>76</sup>McMillan and Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*. p. 62.

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