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A Ray of Light in Samuel Beckett's Plays: *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days*

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of my thesis is to reveal a ray of light in a world of death, suffering, and decay in Samuel Beckett's plays: W*aiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days*. In the thesis, I argue that Beckett shows how human beings can have hope, joy of life, and courage to go on in a world of void.

The Introduction focuses on the time the plays were written. I discuss the impact of the post-World War II spirit on western drama and in particular Beckett's plays. Then *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days* are examined in terms of suffering, human persistence, and hope.

In the discussion of the three plays, first, I show how Beckett portrays a gloomy, and dark atmosphere through a bare stage, and plot. The harsh living conditions that the characters have to endure are explained.

Second, I explain that hope is an essential aspect of human nature. No matter how desperate characters' condition seems to be, they maintain their strength and courage to resume the struggle. Despite poverty, solitude, and boredom, they do not yield to death. The characters have an untiring hope that their living conditions will improve one-day.

Finally, I conclude that Beckett himself should have had the belief in life in order to write his plays, novels, and poems.

ÖZET

Tezimde, Samuel Beckett'in *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, ve *Happy Days* oyunlarındaki acı, ıstırap ve ölümle dolu karanlık dünyasında aslında bir umut ışığı olduğunu göstermeye çalıştım. Beckett bu oyunlarında insanların en kötü şartlarda bile umutlarını, yaşama sevinçlerini, ve hayat mücadelelerini sürdürdüklerini gösteriyor.

Giriş bölümünde oyunların yazıldığı dönem ve yirminci yüzyıl olaylarının Beckett'in oyunlarındaki etkisini inceledim. Giriş bölümünden sonra ise *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, ve *Happy Days* oyunlarındaki acı çekmek, dayanıklılık ve umut temalarını işlemeye çalıştım.

Oyunları ele alırken önce Beckett'in dekor ve konu yardımıyla çizdiği kasvetli tabloyu ve karakterlerin içinde bulunduğu kötü hayat şartlarını anlattım. Sonra, karakterlerin en ümitsiz koşullarda bile nasıl güçlerini ve cesaretlerini koruduklarını ifade ettim. Fakirlik, yalnızlık, ve sıkıntıya rağmen karakterler ölüme boyun eğmemektedirler. Çünkü hala bir gün hayat şartlarının düzeleceğine dair bitmek tükenmek bilmeyen ümitleri vardır.

Sonuç olarak Beckett'in de, yaşamış olduğu acı ve sıkıntılara rağmen yarattığı karakterler gibi yaşama sevincini ve ümidini yitirmemiş olduğu kanısına varabiliriz.

CHRONOLOGY OF BECKETT'S LIFE

1906 Samuel Barclay Beckett born at Foxrock, a suburb of Dublin on April 13, comes from a Protestant Anglo-Irish middle class family. He is the second son of William Frank Beckett, a quantity surveyor and his wife Mary.

1920-1923 Educated at Portora Royal School, Ulster.

1927 Received his B. A. degree in Modern Languages (French and Italian) from Trinity College, Dublin.

1928 Worked as an English Teacher at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris for two years. Met James Joyce and became a member of his circle.

1929 First essay "Dante…Bruno, Vico…Joyce" in *Our Exagmination*; and first short story, "Assumption," are published.

1930 Published his first book *Whoroscope*, winning an award of ten pounds for the best poem in a poetry competition. Taught French at Trinity College for two years.

1931 Published *Proust*. Received his M. A from Trinity College.

1932 Traveled to Germany, France, England, and Ireland. Began writing a novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Woman*.

1933 Father died of a second heart attack on June 26.

1934 His depression and insomnia got worse and he underwent psychoanalysis in London. Published *More Pricks Than Kicks*, a collection of short stories.

1935 *Echo's Bones*, collection of poems were published.

1937 Settled in Paris.

1938 Published *Murphy*. Met his future wife, Suzanne Deschevaux-Dusmesnil.

1939 Visited his family. Returned to Paris with the outbreak of World War II. Remained in France during the war.

1941 Joined the French Resistance with his friend Alfred Peron.

1942 Germans arrested Alfred Peron. Beckett and Suzanne left Paris and took refuge in the south of France in order to hide from Gestapo. They settled in the village of Roussillon near the Spanish border where Beckett worked as a farmer and started to write his novel *Watt*.

1945 Received a Croix de Guerre and the Medaille de Resistance for his contributions to the French resistance. Finished *Watt*. Worked at the Irish Red Cross Field hospital in St. Lo. as an interpreter and storekeeper. Returned to Paris and began writing in French.

1946 Wrote his first novel in French, *Mercier et Camier*, and *Nouvelles*.

1947 Wrote his first and unpublished play *Eleutheria*.

1948-49 Wrote *Waiting for Godot*.

1950 Beckett's mother died of Parkinson disease.

1951 *Molloy* and *Malone Dies* published.

1952 *Waiting for Godot* published.

1953 First production of Godot at Theatre de Babylone, Paris, January 5, by Roger Blin Also published *The Unnamable* and *Watt*, his last novel written originally in English.

1954 Death of Beckett's brother Frank.

1957 *Fin de Partie* is published and produced in Paris and London at the Royal Court Theatre in London by Roger Blin. *All That Fall* published and broadcast by BBC.

1958 *Krapp's Last Tape* is published.

1959 *Embers* broadcast on BBC. Received his honorary degree of Doctor of letters from Trinity College.

1961 Married Suzanne Deschevaux-Dusmesnil. *Happy Days* staged and published in New York by director Alan Schneider.

1963 *Play* is finished and first performed in West Germany. *Cascando* broadcast in France.

1964 *Film* produced, directed by Alan Schneider. *Play* is published in London with *Words and Music* and *Cascando*.

1965 *Imagination Dead Imagine* published.

1966 *Eh Joe* is filmed by BBC.

1967 Published *Eh Joe*, and *Come and Go*, in London.

1968 *Poémes*, collected French poems published in Paris.

1969 *Lessness* and *Breath* are published. Awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

1972-76 *Not I*, *Still*, *That Time*, *Footfalls* and *Ghost Trio* are written.

1981-82 Wrote and translated *Rockaby*, *Catastrophe*, and *Ohio impromptu*. *Worstward Ho* begun.

1989 Death of Beckett's wife, Suzanne. Samuel Beckett died on 22 December. Buried in Montparnasse Cemetery.

INTRODUCTION

Literature, its function, its significance in human life, and its criteria of evaluation change in time. Art reflects the philosophy and the spirit of its age. As Eric Bentley states, "drama shows human existence in its relation to an age."[1] Samuel Beckett's three major plays, *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days* are taken within the context of the historical period they were written and discussed in relation to the impact of the post-World War II spirit on Beckett's drama.

The twentieth century was the age of expanding economy, globalization, and industrialization. Science and technology reached their peak. Man went to moon and dominated nature with science. Machines replaced workers in the factories. Airplanes, radio, telegram, and automobile improved communication. Cities grew. Living conditions of men improved. It was easier to provide water, food, shelter, and transportation. The twentieth century seemed to be the golden age of humanity.

However, progress led to a world war in 1914. Accordingly, belief in science, progress, and human rationality was questioned. People witnessed how science and technology were used as an instrument to destroy nations. The Second World War in 1939 brought more death and destruction to people's lives. Men created gas chambers and nuclear bombs to kill people. The violence of the war dissolved the world's beauty, and harmony. Truth was not the beauty anymore. Death, violence, and despair were the truth. Romantic belief in future failed with the slaughter of the wars.

The failure of the mottos of the twentieth century--science, industry, and technology--cultural heritage, and religious belief led to a sense of waste and despair. The myth of golden age was replaced with a dark and gloomy vision of the world and men. People felt lonely and isolated in the industrialized world. Grief, discontent, spiritual loss, and uncertainty characterized the modern world. Martin Esslin reflects the attitude of post-World War II era.

> […] the certitudes and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have been swept away, that they have been tested and found wanting, that they have been discredited as cheap and somewhat childish illusions. The decline of religious faith was masked until the end of the Second World War by the substitute religions of faith in progress, nationalism, and various totalitarian fallacies. All this was shattered by the war.[2]

Depression years that followed the war had a tremendous impact on theatre. In accordance with the spirit of the times, like the other artists, playwrights' conception of the world and human existence also changed. As a result of the social and cultural changes in post-World War II era, modern playwrights had a different vision of life from their ancestors.

Greek tragedies are based on the belief that there is an unchangeable, universal order that shapes our imperfect world. The tragedies are designed in such a way that the audience witnesses the inevitability of god's order and power of the design. In realistic drama, for example in Henrik Ibsen's plays, it is also taken for granted that there are universal truths and ultimate certainties. Martin Esslin explains the philosophy of the traditional theatre: "The basis of the well-made play is the implicit assumption that the world does make sense, that reality is solid and secure, all outlines clear, all ends apparent."[3]

Accordingly, the structure of these plays, reflect a rational, unified and harmonious order. Plot is an organic structure that has a complete whole, with a beginning, middle, and an end. There should be causal necessity, probability, inner coherence, and ordered interconnection in a well-constructed plot. Action should be self contained, interlocked, and completed. The plot does not begin and end haphazardly. As Esslin points out:

> The pattern of exposition, conflict, and final solution mirrors a view based on a recognizable and generally accepted pattern of an objective reality that can be apprehended so that the purpose of man's existence and the rules of conduct it entails can be deduced from it.[4]

Besides plot, character should also be logically constructed. Character should be true to type, consistent, and proper.

However, world wars and political crises in the twentieth century shook the myth of rational, meaningful, and perfectly ordered universe. We see the collapse of the ethical and cultural values of the western civilization. Even scientific theories and formulas cannot be regarded as the valid and stable explanations of the laws of nature. Esslin writes, "Scientific attitude accepts the view that we must be able to live with the realization that large segments of knowledge and experience will remain for a long time, perhaps forever, outside our ken […]."[5] Man can never have absolute knowledge, and definitions that will make his life meaningful. Without a unified structure, coherent order, and religious belief, modern world became senseless and absurd. Life seemed futile and purposeless in a meaningless world. Esslin explains the new perception of the world:

> Suddenly man sees himself faced with a universe that is both frightening and illogical-in a word, absurd. All assurances of hope, all explanations of ultimate meaning have suddenly been unmasked as nonsensical illusions, empty chatter whistling in the dark.[6]

Since the world has lost its ultimate truths and principles, unified, harmonious and meaningful representation of the world on stage seemed artificial. Traditional drama based on worn out beliefs that have lost their validity, was not adequate to represent man's position in the universe anymore. In the age of uncertainty, senselessness, and decay, absurd drama emerged in France after World War II (1950-1960). Absurd drama includes writers such as Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Edward Albee, and Harold Pinter. The dictionary definition of "absurd" is: "out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical."[7] Ionesco defines the meaning of "absurd" in an essay on Kafka:

> Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose….Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless.[8]

In contrast to conventional plays that confront man with unchanging fixed realities, Absurd plays present the senselessness of life, purposeless existence, and lack of universally held firm

truths. Watching an absurd play on stage, the audience is confronted with a world without harmony, rationality, and a unifying principle.

Since the world lacks ultimate realities and everlasting truths, playwrights believe that life cannot be reduced to ready-made slogans and clear-cut definitions. They are neither concerned with explaining the ways of God to man, nor defend a certain way of political thinking. Instead of moral lessons, ideological issues, and neat resolutions there are original, suggestive, and complex images that involve psychological realism in absurd plays. Through the poetic images, the playwright expresses his vision of the human condition in an absurd world. Esslin gives an example from Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*: "things happen in *Waiting for Godot*, but these happenings do not constitute a plot or story; they are an image of Beckett's intuition that nothing really ever happens in man's existence."[9] The leafless tree in *Waiting for Godot*, the mound of sand in *Happy Days*, and the funerary urns in *Play* are the other examples of poetic images that Beckett uses.

We should note that the existential dramatists like Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus also presented senselessness of life, and absurdity of human condition in their plays. Charles Lyons writes how Camus defines absurdity in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "the idea that man is estranged from his universe because he no longer believes in any of the rational schemes that explain it."[10] There is no God to resolve the problems of human beings.

However, the existential playwrights relied on the forms of traditional theatre to express their philosophy. They used well-constructed, consistent characters and logical discourse to discuss the absurdity of human condition. What made the absurd playwrights innovative was not the existential perspective that they represent in the plays, but the fact that they violated the conventions of realistic drama. Absurdists created a form that complements their subject matter. Esslin explains the difference between the absurd playwrights and the existential thinkers:

> They present their sense of the irrationality of the human condition in the form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning, while the Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought. While Sartre or Camus express the new content in the old convention, the Theatre of the Absurd goes a step further in trying to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions and the form in which these are expressed.[11]

Compared to the existential thinkers, the absurd playwrights were successful to reveal the absurdity of human life not only with the content of the plays but also with the structure that they used.

The structure of the absurd plays contributes to the incomprehensible, and messy image of the world represented in the play. Esslin writes, "many established critics condemned the play for its lack of plot, development, characterization, suspense, or plain common sense."[12]

There is hardly any plot left in most of the plays. There is no linear story line. There is neither a proper beginning nor an end. The plays end exactly as they began. There is no cause and effect link between the events. The reason why the absurd playwrights dismiss plot is that they believe that there is no central action in life. Their purpose is neither to tell a life story nor discuss man's place in the universe. On the contrary, the absurd playwrights dramatize human condition and portray life as it is. Instead of focusing on actions of a particular character, they embrace the whole of human existence with the symbolic images they present.

With respect to characterization, "if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization, and motivation, these (absurd plays) are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets […]."[13] The dialogues of the characters are without logic and sense. Conversation becomes a meaningless babble full of clichés. Most of the time, language structure and sentences do not follow a pattern. Here is an example from Lucky's speech in *Waiting for Godot*.

> God quaquaqua with white beard quaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown…what is more that as a result of the labors left unfinished crowned by the Acacacacademy of Anthropopopometry of Essy in possy of te-Testew and cunard… (1, 28)

Besides lack of plot and characterization, critics condemned the absurd plays for not having "common sense." In contrast to traditional plays that reveal universal truths and produce a cathartic effect on the audience, absurd plays puzzle the spectator with its original images, reflection of dreams, and incoherent dialogues. Esslin discusses the effect of realistic and absurd plays on the audience:

> In Greek tragedy, the spectators were made aware of man's forlorn but heroic stand against the inexorable forces of fate and the will of the gods-and this had a cathartic effect upon them and made them better able to face their time. In the theatre of the absurd, the spectator is confronted with the madness of the human condition, is enabled to see his situation in all its grimness and despair.[14]

The spectator is bewildered to see the characters speak "to an ever growing number of empty chairs" in Ionesco's *The Chairs*.[15] In Ionesco's *Amédéé or How to Get Rid of It*, we witness how a husband and wife can live with giant poisonous mushrooms growing at the foot of the walls and a growing corpse in their bedroom for fifteen years. The corpse grows so large that his head smashes the window. Who the dead man is, whether the murderer is *Amédéé* or not, and the cause of the crime are not certain. The corpse is a poetic image that is open to interpretations. Without conventional characterization, plot, and dialogue, absurd plays both surprised and fascinated the audience.

We have seen that the absurd playwrights present the world without meaning, God, universal truths, and order. Esslin argues that although the plays are pessimistic, the aim of the absurd plays is not to lead man to anxiety and depression but encourage man to accept the world as it is.

> It is a challenge to accept the human condition as it is, an all its mystery and absurdity, and to bear it with dignity, nobly, responsibly; precisely because there are no easy solutions to the mysteries of existence, because ultimately man is

> alone in a meaningless world. The shedding of easy solutions, of comforting illusions, may be painful, but it leaves behind it a sense of freedom and relief.[16]

Human beings should come to terms with the reality that they live in. We must learn to live without certainties, and valid system of values. However, it is not easy for human beings to accept that life is absurd and meaningless.

Sartre, the leading figure of French existentialism, declared that although we live in an irrational universe, human beings require a rational basis in their lives. Human beings have universal urge to have faith in an unchanging, ideal, perfect, universal order that shapes our stormy imperfect world. Right reason, justice, harmony, beauty, and logos define the universal order. We believe in the inevitability and power of god's grand design. There should be certainties, ultimate truths, reason, and meaning in the world we live in. It is reassuring for people to believe that all accidental, irrational events in life have meaning with respect to the grand design. According to the existential and the absurd playwrights, since life is absurd, search for meaning and logic is also futile.

However, lack of meaning and order is a source of anxiety for the individual. Human beings cannot bear to live in a chaotic universe devoid of divine presence, absolute laws, justice, and reason. In order not to fall into despair and void, human beings are forced to define their own meanings, and truths. According to Sartre, human beings have capacity to impose meaning and pattern on their chaotic lives. Living in a universe without an inherent meaning, human beings create their own order, and meaning. They cannot accept the bitter truth that life is just nothing. They try to rationalize and explain their existence in a senseless universe. This is the only thing that can keep them going.

If one is not successful to make his life meaningful, he feels helpless, insecure, and unconfident. In this case, death becomes an alternative. Martin Esslin states: "By 1942, Albert Camus was calmly putting the question why, since life had lost all meaning, man should not seek escape in suicide.[17] Suicide indicates that one has lost all his hope in life. The only way

for us to preserve our integrity and joy of life is to have everlasting hope in a universal order that gives meaning to our lives.

Our faith in a universal order and grand presence enables us to endure our sufferings and predicaments. In times of crises, people search for something to hang on. We need to believe that God is watching us and will help us whenever we need him. There should be certain scientific theories, and principles that will make our life more comfortable. We hope that medicine finds treatments to diseases. Hope in God's power or existence of absolute universal truths enable us to go on come what may. Despite sickness, death, old age, and poverty human beings cling on to life hoping that their living conditions may improve one-day.

Samuel Beckett is one of the great names of the absurd theatre. His plays, *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days* depict the basic need of human being that is hope. Beckett portrays human beings faith in a grand design, and hope that their sufferings will end and expectations will be fulfilled one-day. His characters live with pain, and suffering, but never lose their hope and strength to go on.

Every Beckett play is a picture of human decay. As the curtains go up, the audience is faced with a barren landscape. The stage is like an infinite nothingness. Human beings are reduced to crawling, and crippled old creatures that are living in the borderline of life and death. We hear their uneasy, troubled voices. Their movements are reduced to a minimum. Their world is reduced to zero. Eva Metman writes that in Beckett's plays, "We are aware of the spiritual void of our time. There is dread of the void behind the feelings of doubt and bitterness."[18]

Behind the seemingly dominant motif of void, bitterness, and grief, Beckett subtly provides a ray of light in his plays. With respect to Beckett's plays, I use the term "light" in two aspects. First is the light in the characters' lives. Beckett lays bare an essential aspect of

human nature. Human beings preserve their joy of life and hope, come what may. We have power to endure even the worst aspects of life like wars. In Beckett's plays, characters have strength, and courage to battle against their predicaments and get on with their lives. They never yield to their sufferings but continue to struggle for survival. None of Beckett's characters commit suicide or die in any way. No matter how harsh their living conditions are, the characters hope for improvement in their lives. Hope is the only thing that brightens the life of the characters.

In *Waiting for Godot*, on a country road, by a leafless tree, we are introduced to Vladimir and Estragon. We pity the tramps, who suffer from poverty, solitude, and boredom. Without food, friends, family and home, their lives seem empty and futile. No matter how chaotic their lives seem to be, the tramps are successful to impose meaning to their wilderness by waiting for Godot. Vladimir says, "in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come-" (2,51) The tramps have not seen Godot before. They are not even sure of the time and place of their appointment. Despite the uncertainty, they desperately hope that Godot will come. The continuous wait for somebody who has not promised to come may seem senseless and absurd. However, having an expectation--arrival of Godot--enables them to endure their sufferings and prevents the tramps from committing suicide. The belief that Godot will come someday and save them from the void is what makes their lives meaningful.

The tramps represent all humanity who waits for something that will improve their present circumstances. This can be an exam-result, promotion, money, or marriage. As soon as one wait is over, another one starts. Life consists of waiting. Even though Godot does not come, we will keep on waiting. The hope that one day our expectations can be granted by a grand presence makes our lives meaningful.

In *Endgame*, we clearly see that human beings have universal urge to believe in the existence of a universal order. Beckett represents a chaotic universe without nature, order, and meaning. Universe has lost its system and order because of a deadly catastrophe. There is no more nature. Beckett portrays a world without its essentials--sun, moon, atmosphere, ozone layer--and without a sign of life. The only survivors of the disaster, blind and paralyzed Hamm, his parents Nagg and Nell, and his servant Clov live in a prison like room.

Despite death, void, and bitterness, the characters still hope that their lives are meaningful, long for a universal order, and existence of nature. Even though there is nothing but death outside, Hamm hopes that nature is taking its course. Since he is blind, he asks Clov whether there is a sign of life outside. He hopes to hear the sound of the waves, and feel the sunshine on his face. He has faith that the universal order will assert itself, overcome the chaos, and put everything back into order. He also wants to believe that their sufferings, and pain is not futile and senseless. Hamm wonders, "We're not beginning to ...to...mean something?" (108). Hope gives them courage and strength to endure their predicaments. Ironically, they even laugh at their unhappiness. "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness," says Nell (101). Hope for survival, and belief in a grand presence keeps them from ending the game.

Beckett, through the mound image in *Happy Days*, reveals his philosophy of life: "life is an 'intolerable imprisonment' spent 'between the compulsion of birth and the worse compulsion of death.'"[19] Winnie, the protagonist of the play, is embedded up to her neck in a mound of sand under an everlasting blazing light. Her situation is against the laws of nature. Earth is killing her with a murderous mound, and hellish light and heat. There is no moon, rain, or change of whether. However, she has faith that the universal order and nature has not completely diminished. Although Winnie is gradually sinking into her grave, she hopes that the earth may let her go one-day. She prays for everlasting darkness and perishing cold that

will make her tragedy more bearable. Ironically, she tries to make her day happy by wearing make up, combing her hair, and singing songs. The audience pities Winnie as she acts as if she has a normal life like any middle aged woman. Her struggles to make her life meaningful and worth living enchants the audience. The characters' hope in the midst of their tragic situation intensifies the irony in the plays.

Second is the "light" that Beckett provides in these three plays. He is careful not to completely depress his audience. As the audience is about to fall into despair as they witness the tragedy of the characters, Beckett hints a ray of light. There is an implicit suggestion that the desolate conditions of the characters may change for the better. Beckett balances despair and hope with the word "perhaps." Beckett, in his interview with Tom Driver, explains why he brings the two opposites--darkness and light-- together.

> If life and death did not both present themselves to us, there would be no inscrutability. If there were only darkness, all would be clear….But where we have both dark and light we have also the inexplicable. The key word in my plays is "perhaps."[20]

If the plays only consisted of darkness, we would not enjoy them. If we really believed that there was no room for change for the better in characters' lives, we would not read the plays until the end. It is the uncertainty that makes us read the plays over and over again. Watching the plays, we think that perhaps Godot may come, perhaps Hamm can witness the rebirth of nature, and perhaps Willie climbs up the mound to kiss not to kill his wife, Winnie. In these three plays, with open-ended finals, Beckett subtly hints that characters' hopes are not for nothing. Ben-Zvi also remarks that Beckett, instead of representing a futile and meaningless universe, he "provided illuminations through the dark."[21]

Beckett, like the characters he created, did not have a smooth and comfortable life. He had hard times in his career until *Waiting for Godot* became an instant success. He had financial problems. His earlier works gained little attention compared to *Waiting for Godot*. He also witnessed the death of his mother, father, and brother. Throughout his life, he

suffered from depression, and insomnia, and had psychiatric treatment. Despite poverty, sickness, and death, Beckett never gave up writing. He must have had joy of life and hope to be successful in order to write his plays, novels, and poems.

As Ben-Zvi states, "His plays are human since they are concerned with the most basic of experiences: life lived with uncertainty, with repetition, and with hope."[22] The human psychology and emotions that Beckett conveys are not time and culture specific. In watching Beckett's play, the audience is confronted with his own expectations, fear, hope and courage to get on.

Notes to Introduction

[1] Eric Bentley, "Drama From Ibsen to Beckett," *The Concise Encyclopedia of Modern Drama*, 1964 ed.
[2] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Woodstock, The Overlook Press, 1969) 5.
[3] Martin Esslin, introduction, *Absurd Drama*, ed. Martin Esslin (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965) 12.
[4] Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* 365.

[5] Ibid. 374.
[6] Esslin, *Absurd Drama* 13.
[7] Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* 5.
[8] Ibid. 5.
[9] Ibid. 354.
[10] Charles R. Lyons, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1983)16.
[11] Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* 6.
[12] Ibid. 3.
[13] Ibid. 4.
[14] Ibid. 364.
[15] Ibid. 7.
[16] Esslin, *Absurd Drama* 23.
[17] Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* 5.
[18] Eva Metman, "Reflections on Samuel Beckett's Plays," *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Martin Esslin (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965) 127.
[19] Qtd. in J. L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*, vol. 2. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 125.
[20] Qtd. in Kim 15.
[21] Linda Ben-Zvi, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1986) 19.
[22] Ibid. 141.

CHAPTER 1

WAITING FOR GODOT

Waiting for Godot takes place on a country road by a tree. The stage is bare except for a tree and a low mound. It is evening. The stage is covered with gray light.

As the curtains go up, we see two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, who are waiting for somebody called Godot. They address each other as Didi and Gogo. While waiting for Godot, they meet Pozzo, a local landowner, who is going to the fair to sell his slave Lucky. Pozzo and Lucky leave after chatting with the tramps for a while. Towards the end of act 1, a boy, the messenger of Godot appears. The boy informs the tramps that Godot will come tomorrow. The tramps decide to go, but do not move as the curtain falls. Act two repeats the first act. The setting is the same. Vladimir and Estragon are still waiting for Godot. Pozzo and Lucky pass once more. However, this time Pozzo is blind, and Lucky is dumb. The boy comes again and delivers the same message. The tramps agree to leave but do not move as the play ends.

The bare stage of *Waiting for Godot* represents the futile, and empty lives of the characters. Vladimir and Estragon lack everything that constitutes a "civilized" being. They do not have friends, family, home, food, and job. They seem to be excluded from the rest of the world. Their living condition is heartbreaking. Estragon's boots are too tight. Vladimir has bad breath, and Estragon has stinking feet. They do not have anything to eat except carrots, and turnips. Estragon even eats the bones that Pozzo has already sucked. Vladimir remarks that they have lost their respect, and they would not even let them up to the Eiffel Tower. "All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud!" says Estragon (2, 39). They do not even have a memory. Estragon does not remember who beat him yesterday.

The first sentence we read in the play is "Nothing to be done," which is repeated throughout the play. Vladimir is about to share the same opinion with Estragon: "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle" (1, 7). We pity the helpless wanderers who have struggled together all their lives but failed. Without respect, home, money, and memory, it seems that their lives are reduced to zero. They are stuck to the country road, where nobody comes and goes. They have no place to go, and no one to ask help from.

No matter how desperate their lives seem to be, the tramps do not despair but resume the struggle. Vladimir gloomily remarks that the suffering he has endured is "too much for one man," but then cheerfully continues: "On the other hand what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say" (1, 7). Instead of thinking about his helpless situation, and feeling pity for himself, he still believes that there is something to be done to change their bitter existence. Waiting for Godot, friendship, messenger of Godot, the tale of the two thieves, and the sprouting tree are the rays of light in the tramps' lives that gives them hope, and courage to resume the struggle.

Waiting…

Estragon and Vladimir are waiting for Godot, with whom they believe they have an appointment. Before discussing the importance of the act of waiting in the lives of the tramps, let us dwell on the nature of Godot.

We never see Godot on the stage. As Vladimir, Estragon, and the boy talk about Godot, we try to figure out who Godot is. As the reader follows up one reference and establishes a sense, he comes across with another sentence, which suggests something else,

and leads the reader to modify his expectations about the nature of Godot. Estragon thinks what they expect from Godot is a kind of prayer. As the reader starts to attribute religious or supernatural forces to Godot, Vladimir says that Godot could not promise anything because he has to consult his family, friends, correspondents, books, and his bank account before taking a decision. There is a gap between the divine nature of Godot, and the fact that he has to consult his bank account.

Actually, the tramps do not know about Godot more than the audience. They are not even sure about his name.

> ESTRAGON. His name is Godot?
> VLADIMIR. I think so.
> ESTRAGON. Fancy that. (1, 14)

Estragon thinks that Pozzo has represented himself as Godot.

> ESTRAGON. Is that him?
> VLADIMIR. Who?
> ESTRAGON. ER…
> VLADIMIR. Godot?
> ESTRAGON. Yes.
> POZZO. I present myself: Pozzo.
> VLADIMIR. Not at all!
> ESTRAGON. He said Godot.
> VLADIMIR. Not at all. (1, 15)

They do not know what Godot looks like. Estragon says: "Personally I wouldn't even know him if I saw him" (1, 16). Vladimir also inquires about Godot's physical appearance

> VLADIMIR. (softly) Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?
> BOY. Yes Sir. (1, 59)

The tramps argue about where, and when they are supposed to wait for Godot.

> ESTRAGON. You're sure it was here?
> VLADIMIR. What?
> ESTRAGON. That we were to wait.
> VLADIMIR. He said by the tree. (They look at the tree.) Do you see any others.
> [. . . . . .]
> ESTRAGON. You're sure it was this evening?

VLADIMIR. What?
ESTRAGON. That we were to wait.
VLADIMIR. He said Saturday. (Pause) I think.
ESTRAGON. You think. (1, 10)

Arrival of Godot is not certain either. Godot has not promised to come. Vladimir: "He didn't say for sure he'd come" (1, 10). Nobody comes, nobody goes. The boy, the messenger of Godot, does not even remember having seen the tramps before.

The tramps are not even sure what to ask from Godot when he comes. From their dialogue, we see that they are confused about what they should wish from him.

ESTRAGON. What exactly did we ask him for?
VLADIMIR. Were you not there?
ESTRAGON. I can't have been listening.
VLADIMIR. Oh…Nothing very definite.
ESTRAGON. A kind of prayer.
VLADIMIR. Precisely.
ESTRAGON. A vague supplication.
VLADIMIR. Exactly.
ESTRAGON. And what did he reply?
VLADIMIR. That he'd see.
ESTRAGON. That he couldn't promise anything.
VLADIMIR. That he'd have to think it over. (1, 12-13)

Sylvain Zegel remarks that the tramps may have different dreams about Godot. "And in any case, this myth hasn't the same form, the same qualities, for each of them."[1]

Godot's arrival cannot only be interpreted as hope of salvation but also damnation. The tramps' lives are so barren, futile that there seems to be no way out. They have no one to go, nothing to change their desolate lives. They seem to be stuck to the country road. The only thing that they can do is to wait for a miracle to change their faith. Godot is the name for that miracle. They hope that Godot will improve their present circumstances. Godot is referred to as the "savior."

VLADIMIR. We'll hang ourselves to-morrow. (Pause.) Unless Godot comes.
ESTRAGON. And if he comes?
VLADIMIR. We'll be saved. (2, 60)

Vladimir thinks Godot is finally coming in the second act. He triumphantly exclaims that they are saved, and wants to meet him. Towards the end of the play when Vladimir learns that Godot has a white beard, he exclaims, “Christ have mercy on us” (2, 59).

However, our assumption that Godot is a savior is challenged in the play. The boy, a goatherd, informs the reader that Godot does not beat himself but his brother who minds the sheep. Godot’s justness is unpredictable. We can think that Godot may also favor Estragon or Vladimir over the other.

It seems that the tramps are also not sure of Godot’s justness. Vladimir is curious to hear what Godot has to offer:

> VLADIMIR. Let’s wait and see what he says.
> ESTRAGON. Who?
> VLADIMIR. Godot.
> ESTRAGON. Good idea.
> VLADIMIR. Lets wait till we know exactly how we stand.
> ESTRAGON. On the other hand it might be better to strike the iron before it freezes.
> VLADIMIR. I’m curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we’ll take it or leave it. (1, 12)

Vladimir is not sure whether Godot is the remedy for their misery. There is a chance that they may refuse his offer. In the first act, Estragon and Vladimir hear some voices, and assume that Godot is coming. When they understand that they are wrong, there is a sign of relief. They relax. Estragon says that he is in hell, and his only hope is to disappear. He tries to hide behind the tree. He fears from Godot’s coming. Godot has not promised them anything. They can be disappointed when Godot comes. We cannot be certain whether Godot is a savior or a threat.

We see that everything about Godot is uncertain. Vladimir and Estragon do not know Godot’s exact name, what he looks like, the place, and time of their appointment, and what Godot will offer them. They are not even sure whether Godot will come or not.

The fact that they are waiting for Godot is the only thing that the tramps are sure of. Actually, the physical appearance, gender, and the name of Godot are not important. Godot can be God, death, a benefactor, or just a farmer. According to Martin Esslin, the role of waiting in tramps' lives is more important than the nature of Godot.

> Yet whether Godot is meant to suggest the intervention of a supernatural agency, or whether he stands for a mythical human being whose arrival is expected to change the situation, or both of these possibilities combined, his exact nature is of secondary importance. The subject of the play is not Godot but waiting, the act of waiting as an essential and characteristic aspect of human condition.[2]

Esslin believes that the act of waiting is an integral part of human nature. Throughout our lives, we wish for something. This can be job, money, love, or faith. The most important reason that keeps the tramps from despair, and binds them to life is that they still have something to expect.

> ESTRAGON. So long as one knows.
> VLADIMIR. One can bide one's time.
> ESTRAGON. One knows what to expect.
> VLADIMIR. No further need to worry.
> ESTRAGON. Simply wait. (1, 25)

Ruby Cohn states that Godot is "the expectation that brings two men to the board night after night."[3] There is no need to worry because there is still chance that their bitter existence might change. Living on a country road by a tree, without food or home is not their only alternative anymore. There is still something to be done to change their desolate circumstances. All they have to do is to wait for Godot, and listen what he has to offer them. Waiting for Godot gives the tramps a reason to be on a country road. The fact that they still have something to wait for gives them courage and patience to endure their desolate circumstances. If they had really believed that there was nothing to be done, they would have committed suicide, or cried helplessly. Sylvain Zegel believes that waiting for Godot "gives them the strength to live on."[4]

Having the strength to live on, Vladimir and Estragon do not complain about their endless waiting. They do not seem to believe that "hope deferred maketh the something sick" (1, 8). The tramps are not sure about the date, and time of Godot's arrival. Godot said that he would come tomorrow. The fact that he did not come today does not mean that he will not come tomorrow.

> ESTRAGON. And if he doesn't come?
> VLADIMIR. We'll come back to-morrow.
> ESTRAGON. And then the day after to-morrow.
> VLADIMIR. Possibly.
> ESTRAGON. And so on.
> VLADIMIR. The point is-
> ESTRAGON. Until he comes. (1, 10)

Their hope for Godot's arrival is untiring. Vladimir hopes, "Tomorrow everything will be better" (1, 13). Hwa Soon Kim argues that the tramps' hope in "tomorrow" prevents them from despair. "Naturally, their ultimate despair can be deferred infinitely. Tomorrow will be different and thus, ultimate despair is deferred-they can never abandon their expectation that Godot will come."[5] Neither Estragon nor Vladimir can put an end to their waiting for Godot. The tramps will wait for Godot forever.

Vladimir has more faith in Godot's arrival than Estragon. Vladimir does not want to listen to Estragon's nightmares that remind him of their present misery, and discourage his belief in waiting for Godot.

> ESTRAGON. I had a dream.
> VLADIMIR. Don't tell me!
> ESTRAGON. I dreamt that-
> VLADIMIR. DON'T TELL ME!…Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that. (1, 11)

Hwa Soon Kim explains why Vladimir cannot bear Estragon's dreams: "Estragon's dream of falling produces the ominous feeling that they might never meet Godot, and that their waiting merely wastes their lives."[6]

In contrast to Vladimir, Estragon is more apt to despair and give up waiting for Godot. He does not believe in the myth of Godot as strong as Vladimir.

> ESTRAGON. What exactly did we ask him for?….A kind of prayer…What did he reply?
> VLADIMIR. That he'd see.
> ESTRAGON. That he couldn't promise anything. (1, 13)

We see that Estragon is not hopeful as his friend. We read that he threw himself into the Rhone River once. It was Vladimir who "fished him out" (1,35). Vladimir always tries to change his pessimistic mood, and encourages him to presume.

> ESTRAGON. I can't go on like this.
> VLADIMIR. That is what you think. (2, 60)

Although Godot does not come, the act of waiting is significant for Vladimir. He is proud of himself and Estragon, because they keep their promise. Vladimir asks: "We are not saints but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?" "Billions," Estragon answers (2, 51). Estragon cannot be so positive as Vladimir.

We have seen that waiting for Godot gives the tramps courage and reason to endure their predicaments. The hope that Godot will come tomorrow defers the tramps' despair. Having discussed Vladimir and Estragon's waiting for Godot, let us see Pozzo and his slave Lucky's relation to Godot. Instead of waiting for Godot, Pozzo and Lucky continue their endless journey. Unlike the tramps, they do not have a Godot to wait for.

We witness the malevolence of Pozzo in the play. Pozzo has tied a rope around Lucky's neck to have absolute power over his servant. Pozzo makes him carry the whip with which he is beaten. Pozzo orders Lucky to dance, think, and carry his baggage for him. He gives Lucky the chicken bones that he has already sucked. Vladimir remarks: "To treat a man…(gesture towards Lucky)…like that…I think that…no…a human being…no…it's a scandal" (1, 18). Despite Lucky's obedience, Pozzo wants to get rid of

his faithful servant. Vladimir remarks, “After having sucked all the good out of him you chuck him away like a…like a banana skin. Really…” (1, 22).

Pozzo believes that he can continue his journey without the assistance of his slave. He is very confident of himself. “Do I look like a man that can be made to suffer?” (1, 23). Pozzo thinks he is the thief that is saved. “Remark that I might just as well have been in his shoes and he in mine. If chance had not willed otherwise. To each one his due” (1, 21).

Pozzo does not have an expectation because he feels like the king of the universe. Eva Metman states: “No other will than his own exists. Whatever he does or says means: the universe is Me.”[7] He already has everything he wishes. He is a rich landowner with a submissive slave.

Pozzo illusions that his power is permanent. He is blind to think that he is already saved and there is nothing left to expect for. He does not realize that human beings cannot be self-sufficient. Ironically, in the second act, he is blind and has to depend on Lucky’s sight for survival. He cannot live without his slave. We pity him as he lies helplessly on the ground and asks help from the tramps. He becomes a “decayed master,” as John Fletcher states.[8]

Lucky’s existence also depends on Pozzo. According to Metman, “Lucky deserves his name because he has a master who, however cruelly, organizes his life for him.”[9] He is lucky, because he is not alone. He has a master to lead him wherever he goes. He always has something to do: obey the orders of Pozzo, dance, and think for him. He has a job and even a title. He is the “slave” of Pozzo. This makes his life meaningful. He would not be able to bear life alone. He never puts down the bags of Pozzo and carries them to impress him, so that he will not leave him. Pozzo states: “He imagines that when I see how well he carries I’ll be tempted to keep him on in that capacity” (1, 21).

We see that the tyranny of Pozzo is futile. His situation is worse than Didi's and Gogo's. He does not even have a Godot to wait for. "…I myself in your situation, if I had an appointment with a Godin…Godet…Godot…anyhow you see who I mean, I'd wait till it was black night before I gave up…" (1, 24). Pozzo lacks an essential aspect of human nature that is hope. Both Pozzo and Lucky are tied to one another. They have no other chance to go on with their lives. Nathan A. Scott states: "…for so completely is the one dominated by malevolence and the other by despair that having lost something essential to their humanity, all hope in them is dead."[10]

Waiting for Godot with somebody…

Another reason that gives Vladimir and Estragon courage to resume the struggle is that they are not alone. To have somebody to talk to, and share their experience with, makes them feel more secure and confident. Pozzo and Lucky also assist the tramps in their waiting for Godot. Vladimir and Estragon would not be able to bear their boredom and misery alone. They need one another to go on and endure their frustrations.

Vladimir and Estragon cling to one another with affection and love. From the beginning of the play, the reader feels compassion and tenderness in their relationship. They miss, embrace, and help each other.

> VLADIMIR. I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone forever.
> ESTRAGON. Me too.
> VLADIMIR. Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? (He reflects.) Get up till I embrace you. (1, 7)

There are moments when they cannot stand one another. Estragon complains that Vladimir stinks of garlic. Vladimir sleeps better without Estragon. He cannot bear to listen to Estragon's dreams. Despite their different characters and resentfulness, they care for each

other. For example, when Vladimir gets angry because Estragon does not stop telling his nightmare, Estragon consoles his friend until Vladimir softens and they embrace.

> ESTRAGON. You're angry? (Silence. Step forward.) Forgive me. (Silence. Step forward. Estragon lays his hand on Vladimir's shoulder.) Come, Didi. (Silence.) Give me your hand. (Vladimir half turns.) Embrace me! (Vladimir stiffens.) Don't be stubborn…(1, 12)

When Lucky kicks Estragon's shins, he exclaims that he will never be able to walk again. Vladimir tenderly proposes that he will carry his friend if necessary.

Vladimir and Estragon are so much bound by love that they cannot bear to live without one another. Whenever they attempt to leave each other, they give up the idea. According to Eva Metman, the tramps are "like an old married couple who always want to separate and never do so."[11] Every time Estragon thinks that he would be better off alone and decides to leave, he changes his mind and comes back.

> ESTRAGON. You see, you feel worse when I'm with you. I feel better alone too.
> VLADIMIR. (vexed) Then why do you always come crawling back?
> ESTRAGON. I don't know. (2, 38)

Vladimir and Estragon need each other to endure their predicaments. They know that they do not have the energy to bear the bitterness and unhappiness alone. Vladimir knows that Estragon needs protection and care. "When I think of it…all these years…but for me…where would you be…(Decisively.) You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it" (1, 7). He cannot even take off his boots without the help of Vladimir. Estragon cannot face with the harshness and brutalities in life alone. He has a bad memory. Estragon does not even remember that he was at the same place yesterday.

> VLADIMIR.…So there you are again.
> ESTRAGON. Am I? (1, 7)

Estragon has forgotten that they tried to hang themselves and met Pozzo and Lucky. He does not know who beats him. He is not sure where his boots are. "That's the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never forget," Estragon says (2, 39). Vladimir is the "memory" of Estragon in a way. He constantly reminds Estragon of the things he has forgotten.

Vladimir also needs Estragon. When the tramps argue about who should first hang himself from a bough, Vladimir states: "I remain in the dark…You're my only hope" (1, 12). He is not strong enough to bear their cruel circumstances. Vladimir never lets Estragon depart because he feels lonely without him. Vladimir wants Estragon to say that he is happy to be back with him even if it is not true.

> VLADIMIR. You must be happy too, deep down, if you only knew it.
> ESTRAGON. Happy about what?
> VLADIMIR. To be back with me again.
> ESTRAGON. Would you say so?
> VLADIMIR. Say you are, even if it's not true.
> ESTRAGON. What am I to say?
> VLADIMIR. Say, I am happy.
> ESTRAGON. I am happy.
> VLADIMIR. So am I.
> ESTRAGON. So am I.
> VLADIMIR. We are happy.
> ESTRAGON. We are happy. (2, 39)

Vladimir tries to assure his friend that they are happy together. He does not want Estragon to leave. Estragon's presence and affection gives him strength.

Pozzo and Lucky also bring comfort to tramps' wilderness. The more people share the tramps' waiting, the happier they are. According to Geneviéve Serreau, "Even though they are terrified of the Pozzo-Lucky couple, their entrance is godsend, since the burden of entertainment will no longer fall on them alone."[12]

> VLADIMIR. We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting for…waiting. All evening we have struggled, unassisted. No it's over. It's already to-morrow. (2, 50)

Pozzo's and Lucky's presence assures the tramps that they are not alone on a country road. Having friends to chat with makes their grief easier to bear. In act two, we see that the blind Pozzo needs the assistance of the tramps to get up. Vladimir is proud of being needed. Being addressed, and asked for help is an honor for Vladimir:

> Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! (Pause. Vehemently.) Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. (2, 51)

Presence of Vladimir and Estragon also gives confidence to Pozzo. He misses Vladimir: "You didn't see by any chance-. (He misses Vladimir.) Oh! He's gone! Without saying goodbye! How could he! He might have waited!" (1,23). Towards the end of the first act, Pozzo decides that he must go. We see that he does not want to leave the tramps. They have talked to him, have been "civil" to him as Pozzo states, listened to him as he explained the twilight and encouraged him that his speech was good.

> POZZO. Adieu.
> VLADIMIR. Adieu.
> POZZO. Adieu.
> *Silence. No one moves.*
> VLADIMIR. Adieu.
> POZZO. Adieu.
> ESTRAGON. Adieu.
> *Silence.*
> POZZO. And thank you.
> VLADIMIR. Thank *you*.
> POZZO. Not at all.
> ESTRAGON. Yes yes.
> POZZO. No no.
> VLADIMIR. Yes yes.
> ESTRAGON. No no.
> *Silence.*
> POZZO. I don't seem to be able…(long hesitation)…to depart.
> ESTRAGON. Such is life. (1, 31)

He cannot leave behind the affection and friendship that he feels. In act 2, Pozzo is blind. We read that Lucky and Pozzo fall down and lie helplessly. After Vladimir and Estragon

help Pozzo to get up, Pozzo exclaims: "Don't leave me!" Vladimir assures him that there is no question of it (2,54). Pozzo becomes vulnerable. He needs the attention and consideration of the tramps.

The fact that Vladimir and Estragon are not alone helps them to pass time easier. Martin Esslin states:

> Moreover, it is in the act of waiting that we experience the flow of time in its purest, most evident form. If we are active, we tend to forget the passage of time, we pass the time, but if we are merely passively waiting, we are confronted with the action of time itself.[13]

The tramps do everything they can to be active in order to forget the passage of time. Although the tramps state that there is "nothing to be done," they always find something to do. As Ruby Cohn states, the tramps do everything they can to "kill the time of waiting."[14] They talk, try to hang themselves, tell dreams and tales, pick on one another, and play Pozzo and Lucky.

They keep on talking to forget their predicaments. Estragon: "In the meantime let's try and converse calmly, since we're incapable of keeping silent" (2, 40). In act 1, Vladimir tells the story of two thieves to pass time. They cannot stop talking because silence reminds them of their desolation.

> *Long silence.*
> VLADIMIR. Say something!
> ESTRAGON. I'm trying.
> *Long silence.*
> VLADIMIR. (In anguish). Say anything at all! (2, 41)

Estragon suggests that they should sing, contradict each other, or ask each other questions to break the long silence. They even abuse each other to have fun. They call each other "Moron, vermin, sewer-rat, crritic" (2, 48). Vladimir remarks: "How time flies when one has fun!" (2, 49). In act 2, Estragon suggests that they should call Pozzo with different names to pass time. Time passes more quickly when they converse with Pozzo and Lucky.

VLADIMIR. That passed the time.
ESTRAGON. It would have passed in any case.
VLADIMIR. Yes, but not so rapidly. (1, 31)

According to A. Alvarez, "Nothingness is what they are fighting against and why they talk."[15]

The tramps also create activities to busy themselves. They play Pozzo and Lucky. Vladimir imitates Lucky and Estragon pretends to be Pozzo. Vladimir even suggests that he should try Estragon's boots in order to pass time. "I assure you, it'd be a good occupation" (2, 44). Even when there is nothing left to do, they remember that they are waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON. What do we do now?
VLADIMIR. I don't know.
ESTRAGON. Let's go.
VLADIMIR. We can't.
ESTRAGON. Why not?
VLADIMIR. We're waiting for Godot.
ESTRAGON. (despairingly). Ah! (1, 31)

The tramps do their best to occupy themselves and get on with their lives. When they have nothing to do, nothing to say, they suffer. They start to think about their life and future. There are moments when they despair. Estragon desperately exclaims: "What'll we do, what'll we do!" (2,46). Waiting becomes unbearable. On the other hand, when they are busy, they tend to forget their misery and endless waiting. Martin Esslin remarks, "Vladimir and Estragon's pastimes are, as they repeatedly indicate, designed to stop them from thinking."[16] As they talk, sing, and play Pozzo and Lucky, they do not think about Godot, their living conditions, and the future.

ESTRAGON. We don't manage too badly, eh Didi, between the two of us?
VLADIMIR. Yes yes. Come on, we'll try the left first.
ESTRAGON. We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist? (2, 44)

All the activities of the tramps that seem to be trivial, enable them to keep on waiting and forget their boredom. If the tramps had been lonely and unassisted on a country road, they would not have been able to kill the time of waiting.

Beckett provides hope…

We have seen that waiting for Godot, and friendship, enable the tramps to endure their sufferings. Beckett is also careful not to lead the characters and the audience into extreme despair and suffering. No matter how desperate the circumstances seem to be, Beckett signals a glimpse of light. We do not feel that there is no way out. The following words of Pozzo show that there is room for joy in Beckett's world:

> The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh. (He laughs.) Let us not then speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. (1, 22)

Human beings not only weep but also laugh. Woe and happiness coexist in the universe.

Beckett balances human suffering and hope for survival in *Waiting for Godot*. Despite the bare and desolate tableau that Beckett portrays, we think perhaps Godot may come, perhaps the tramps may be saved like the thief in the tale of two thieves, and perhaps the blossoming tree is the sign of tramps' salvation.

Beckett encourages readers and the tramps to hope for Godot's arrival. In the play, nobody comes, nobody goes, nothing happens. The reader stars to believe that Godot does not exist, and his arrival is out of question. Arrival of the boy, messenger of Godot, leads the reader to go back and recheck his assumption that Godot does not exist. The boy says: "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow" (1, 33). Towards the end of the play, the boy comes again and says that Godot will come

tomorrow. The play is not totally bleak and dark. Beckett leaves an open door. The reader cannot be certain that Godot does not exist. Eric Bentley writes:

> A lot of comment on Beckett goes wrong in taking for granted a pessimism more absolute than Godot embodies, in other words, in taking for granted that Godot will not come. This philosophical mistake produces a mistake in dramatic criticism, for to remove the element of uncertainty and suspense is to remove an essential tension. […] in this waiting, there is not only an adjustment to desolation, there is a rebuff to desolation […] it is not certain that Godot won't come. And what Beckett's work ultimately embodies is this hope [...]. For whether they should or not, people do continue to hope for Godot's arrival.[17]

Another light that Beckett provides for the characters is the tale of two thieves. Much has been talked about the significance of the tale of the two thieves told by Vladimir:

> Two thieves were crucified at the same time as our Savior. One is supposed to have been saved and the other damned. […] How is that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. The four of them were there and only one speaks of a thief being saved. […] Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him. […] The Savior. […] because he wouldn't save them […] from death. (1, 9)

The reader identifies two thieves with the tramps. Only one of the thieves is saved. Vladimir thinks that this is a reasonable percentage. When we think that only one of the Evangelist mentions a thief being saved, we see that the percentage is not so reasonable as Vladimir thinks. No matter how the probability of being saved is low, there is still hope of salvation. They do not despair but hope that they will be saved. Vladimir points out that everybody believes in the witness who states that one of the thieves is saved. Estragon comments, "People are bloody ignorant apes" (1, 9). It is the only version people know because this is what they want to believe in. People prefer the stories with happy-endings.

The sprouting tree is another source of light in the play. Vladimir and Estragon believe that they are supposed to wait for Godot by the tree. They cannot decide what the tree looks like. Vladimir first calls the tree a willow than a shrub whereas it looks like a bush for Estragon. We read that the tree has no leaves.

ESTRAGON. Where are the leaves?
VLADIMIR. It must be dead. (1, 10)

The tree has many functions in the play. In the first act, it is a hiding place for Estragon. They also try to hang themselves from a bough of the tree.

The dead tree comes back to life in the second act.

VLADIMIR.[…] The tree!
ESTRAGON. The tree?
VLADIMIR. Do you not remember?
ESTRAGON. I'm tired.
VLADIMIR. Look at it.
They look at the tree.
ESTRAGON. I see nothing.
VLADIMIR. But yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now it's covered with leaves.
ESTRAGON. Leaves?
VLADIMIR. In a single night.
ESTRAGON. It must be Spring. (2, 42)

We can interpret the appearance of four or five leaves as a sign of optimism. At the end of the play, Vladimir says that everything is dead but the tree. He still has something to hope for.

Hope prevents Vladimir and Estragon from taking any action...

We have seen that the myth of Godot enables the tramps to get on with their lives. However, many critics argue that hoping for Godot's arrival prevents the tramps to change their lives. In the untiring and endless waiting, the tramps become "tied to Godot."

ESTRAGON. We've lost our rights?
VLADIMIR. (distinctly). We got rid of them.
Silence. They remain motionless, arms dangling, heads sunk, sagging at the knees.
ESTRAGON. (feebly). We are not tied? (Pause.) We're not- (1, 13)

ESTRAGON. I'm asking you if we're tied.
VLADIMIR. Tied?
ESTRAGON.Ti-ed
VLADIMIR. How do you mean tied?

ESTRAGON. Down.
VLADIMIR. But to whom? By whom?
ESTRAGON. To your man.
VLADIMIR. To Godot? Tied to Godot! What an idea! No question of it. (Pause.) For the moment. (1, 14)

Beckett uses a visual image to clarify this idea. As Estragon questions Vladimir whether they are tied to Godot or not, Lucky enters the stage followed by a rope. We read that: "Lucky is the first to enter, followed by the rope which is long enough to let him reach the middle of the stage before Pozzo appears" (1, 15). The tramps cannot see who is holding the rope until he comes to the middle of the stage. According to Linda Ben-Zvi, "A man held by an invisible power, tied to an unseen element, is a visual concretization of the very question Estragon has been trying to ask."[18] Vladimir and Estragon are also tied to Godot symbolically. Hwa Soon Kim also writes that Lucky's physical rope is the emblem of the invisible rope binding the tramps and Godot: "Like Lucky, who has to carry Pozzo's heavy belonging all the time, Vladimir and Estragon have to carry the burden of waiting for Godot."[19] In addition, we learn that Lucky calls his dance "The Net." Pozzo states: "He thinks he's entangled in a net" (1, 27). The tramps are also in a net. They have lost their rights. Pozzo remarks that Godot has their "future in his hands" (1, 19). Their appointment with Godot prevents them from committing suicide, moving, and parting.

The hope of Godot's arrival keeps Vladimir and Estragon from taking any action. Death seems to be an alternative to end their boredom and pain. However, the tramps fail to commit suicide. They do not have a rope or courage to do it. Vladimir: "Let's wait and see what he says…Let's wait till we know exactly how we stand…I'm curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we will take it or leave it" (1,12). They also delay death at the end of the play.

ESTRAGON. You say we have to come back tomorrow?
VLADIMIR. Yes.

ESTRAGON. Then we can bring a good bit of rope.
VLADIMIR. Yes
Silence
ESTRAGON. Didi.
VLADIMIR. Yes.
ESTRAGON. I can't go on like this.
VLADIMIR. We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. Unless Godot comes.
ESTRAGON. And if he comes?
VLADIMIR. We'll be saved. (2,60)

"Tomorrow" is the magic word. The chance that Godot may come tomorrow stops them from hanging themselves. We see that they are "tied" to Godot. As long as they believe in the myth of Godot, they will never be able to end their lives. Kim remarks, "death turns out to be a game to play in their tendium of waiting."[20]

The hope of Godot's arrival defers Vladimir and Estragon's departure. Nobody comes, nothing happens. They believe that he will surely come tomorrow. Act I ends:

ESTRAGON. Well, shall we go?
VLADIMIR. Yes, let's go. (1, 35)
(They do not move)

Act II repeats the same pattern and ends with the same dialogue, but this time Vladimir suggests they should go. They do not move because they still hope that Godot will come tomorrow. They trust the boy. At one point, Vladimir promises that they will go to Pyrenees and will never come back. The audience knows that the tramps will be there waiting for Godot tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, and so on.

The tramps are so much tied to Godot that they cannot even help Pozzo. In act two, we see that Pozzo and Lucky slip and fall down to the ground. Poor Pozzo asks help from the tramps to get up. Although they hear the screams of Pozzo, they do not go and help him immediately. Estragon wonders why they do not help him and asks, "Then why don't we? What are we waiting for?" (2, 54). They waste time with talking.

Hoping seems to be negative in this respect. It prevents the tramps from finding other solutions for their predicaments or accepting their tragedy as it is. Martin Esslin states:

> In fact as a Jungian psychologist, Eva Metman, has pointed out that 'Godot's function seems to be to keep his dependents unconscious.' In this view, the hope, the habit of hoping, that Godot might come after all is the last illusion that keeps Vladimir and Estragon from facing the human condition and themselves in the harsh light of fully conscious awareness.[21]

Metman believes that hoping prevents them from facing reality and despair. Towards the end of the play, Vladimir questions his faith in Godot. He realizes that he has been dreaming and it is time to get up and face the reality. In fact, nobody remembers what has happened except Vladimir. Estragon does not recognize Pozzo and Lucky. Neither Pozzo nor the boy remembers having seen the tramps before. Maybe it is all dream. Everything takes place in the mind of Vladimir. From the following speech, we understand that he is about to wake up and face the reality.

> Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? To-morrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of to-day? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with is carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be?…He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot… the air is full of our cries. But habit is a great deadener. (2, 58)

At this point, he is coming round to the opinion that there is nothing to be done. The arrival of Godot's messenger enables Vladimir to put it from him and resume the struggle. He continues to wait for Godot, and hope that he will improve his present circumstances. After a brief moment of awakening, he goes back to his dreams and illusions.

The endless waiting for Godot may seem futile and empty. Instead of daydreaming, we should face the harsh conditions of life. According to Peter Boxall, "The promise of the

play is found in the moments when Vladimir and Estragon come closest to comprehending the naked actuality of existence, shorn of all illusions and all comforting myths."[22]

On the other hand, we cannot live without dreams and wishes. Human beings believe in the myths they have created since the ancient times. No matter how helpless our situation seems to be we continue to presume. For example, we witness how the old or sick people who do not have much time left enjoy life. Nobody can say, "There is no use struggling, I'm going to die anyway." It is the hope, joy of life that makes our predicament bearable. Günther Anders argues that human beings cannot be nihilist even in a most desolate situation.

> Vladimir and Estragon conclude from the fact of their existence that there must be something for which they are waiting; they are champions of the doctrine that life must have meaning even in a manifestly meaningless situation. To say that they represent nihilists is, not only incorrect, but the exact reverse of what Beckett wants to show. As they do not lose hope, are even incapable of losing hope, they are naïve, incurably optimistic ideologists. What Beckett presents is not nihilism, but the inability of man to be a nihilist even in a situation of utter hopelessness. Part of the compassionate sadness conveyed by the play springs not so much from the hopeless situation as such as from the fact that the two heroes, through their waiting, show that they are not able to cope with this situation, hence that they are not nihilists.[23]

In conclusion, Beckett shows that no matter how awful life is we keep on trying. Like Vladimir, whenever we despair and think that there is nothing to be done, we console our selves that we have not tried everything yet and resume the struggle. Vladimir remarks "One is what one is…The essential doesn't change" (1, 14). Human nature does not change. So, human beings will continue to hope. Hwa Soon Kim confirms this idea: "One's hope is inherent in one's existence."[24] The reason why we love the play is that Beckett portrays an essential aspect of human nature.

As we read or watch the play, we realize that we also spend our times waiting for Godot. Hugh Kenner states:

> We have all waited, perhaps not by a tree at evening or on a country road, but waited [...] Each of us has had his Godot, if only someone from whom, for several days, we have expected a letter. The substance of the play in short, is as common a human experience as you can find.[25]

We wait for promotion, marriage, money, a person, or a letter. As the reader understands that Godot will never come, he asks the question: If there is no use in struggling, then what will happen to me? The reader will question his existence, and his purpose in life. The reader wonders if his Godot will come one day. Beckett makes us feel that even though Godot does not come, we shall continue to wait forever.

Ruby Cohn tells us what she felt while she was watching the play: "I came to Godot with no background. And yet, I knew almost at once that those two French-speaking tramps were me; more miserable, more lovable, more humorous, more desperate. But me."[26] We empathize with the characters as we share their misery, pain, struggle, and hope.

Notes to Chapter 1

[1] Sylvain Zegel, "The First Review At The Theatre De Babylone: *Waiting for Godot* By Samuel Beckett," *Casebook on* Waiting for Godot, ed. Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press Inc, Random House, 1967) 12.
[2] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Woodstock, The Overlook Press, 1969) 29.
[3] Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973) 132.
[4] Zegel 12.
[5] Hwa Soon Kim, *The Counterpoint of Hope, Obsession, and Desire for Death in Five Plays by Samuel Beckett* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996) 13-14.
[6] Ibid. 30.
[7] Eva Metman, "Reflections on Samuel Beckett's Plays," *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Martin Esslin (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965) 122.
[8] John Fletcher, *Samuel Beckett's Art* (London: Chatto&Windus, 1967) 52.
[9] Metman 122.
[10] Nathan A. Scott, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: Hillary House Publishers Ltd., 1965) 86.
[11] Metman 122.
[12] Genevieve Serreau, "Beckett's Clowns," *Casebook on* Waiting for Godot, ed. Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press Inc, Random House, 1967) 174.
[13] Esslin 29.
[14] Cohn 135.
[15] A. Alvarez, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973) 78.
[16] Esslin 38.
[17] Eric Bentley, "The Talent of Samuel Beckett," *Casebook on* Waiting for Godot, ed. Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press Inc, Random House, 1967) 66.
[18] Linda Ben-Zvi, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1986) 143-144.
[19] Kim 18.
[20] Ibid. 28.
[21] Esslin 37.
[22] Peter Boxall, ed., *Samuel Beckett* Waiting for Godot, Endgame (Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd., 2000) 26.
[23] Günther Anders, "Being Without Time: On Beckett's Play *Waiting for Godot*," *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Martin Esslin (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965) 144.
[24] Kim 34.
[25] Hugh Kenner, *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1973) 32.
[26] Cohn 128.

CHAPTER 2

ENDGAME

Like *Waiting for Godot*, the stage of *Endgame* is illuminated with gray light. *Waiting for Godot* shows the transition of twilight to darkness, whereas *Endgame* takes place in a gray, half-lit room. However, the settings of the two plays are completely different. From the country road in *Waiting for Godot*, we move to a living room in *Endgame*. When the curtains go up, we see a bare interior, a room that is almost unfurnished. There are two high but small windows, which can only be reached by a ladder. One of the high windows looks out on the land and the other on the sea. Curtains are drawn. Hanging near the door, there is a picture with its face to the wall. There are two ashbins, "touching each other," and covered with an old sheet. As Ruby Cohn states, "*Endgame* takes place in a spare interior that is the living-and dying- room of a family."[1]

In the center of the stage, we see Hamm sitting in an armchair and covered with an old sheet. Motionless by the door, there is Clov with his eyes fixed on Hamm. After a "brief tableau," Clov prepares the stage for the performance. He removes and folds the sheets, draws back the curtains, and uncovers Hamm.

The inhabitants of the house are not healthy, strong, or "living." Hamm, master of the house, a blind and paralyzed man, cannot stand on his feet. He holds a handkerchief for his bleeding wounds over his face. There is a whistle hanging from Hamm's neck to call his servant Clov, and ask for painkiller. Clov is also sick. He cannot sit down. Hamm's parents, Nagg and Nell, are legless and they live in ashbins. Occasionally, they push the lid of their bins and as their heads emerge, they ask for food.

From the stage light, setting, and the physical condition of the characters, we understand that Beckett again takes us to an empty, futile, and a barren world. This time, Beckett portrays a darker tableau. Beckett represents the decline of humanity and the world. However, no matter how dark and bare Beckett's vision of the world seems to be, there is room for hope. Beckett leaves a possibility that the characters' lives may change for the better. We will witness the endless persistence of characters against an "end."

I will start my discussion of *Endgame* by presenting the dead planet that the characters live in. Then, I will explain the game that the characters play in the midst of their wilderness. Structure of the play, roles, and movements of the characters will be discussed. We will see that no matter how Hamm and Clov are fed up with the game, they cannot end it. Neither death nor departure takes place on the stage. I will conclude that the character's inability to end the game and face death shows that they still have hope and spirit of life to go on. The factors that cling Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell to life will be discussed.

Let us first examine the "corpsed world" that Hamm, his parents, and Clov live in, and discuss Hamm's role in the death of humanity and nature.

The World is dead…

In *Endgame*, Beckett represents an appalled world after a catastrophe. A. Alvarez suggests that the disaster can be an "atomic holocaust."[2] Hamm and his family seem to be the only survivors of the catastrophe. The house is the only shelter that can save them from the death outside. There is no place to go, no one to ask help from. They are locked in a cell. There seems to be no way out.

Since Hamm is blind, Clov provides information about the environment. Clov looks outside with a telescope and reflects the barren world that he sees:

> CLOV. Let's see. (He looks, moving the telescope.) Zero…(he looks)…zero…(he looks)…and zero.
> HAMM. Nothing stirs. All is-
> CLOV. Zer- (106)

What Clov sees from the windows is only a desert. There is no sign of life in the planet. "All is corpsed," Clov remarks (106). The whole universe stinks of corpses. Earth is reduced to zero. "There is no more nature," as Clov states (97). "No more" seems to be the key phrase in the play. The food in the larder is about to finish. There are no more sugarplums, and pap for Nagg and Nell, and no more rugs, bicycle wheels, and painkillers for Hamm.

The world's atmosphere and ozone layer are also destroyed. The world is "light black. From pole to pole" (107). Clov remarks that there was a bit light left before but now all is gone. There is no more sunshine or moonlight. Unlike in *Waiting for Godot*, moon never rises in *Endgame*. The temperature is zero. Weather does not change. It does not rain anymore. There is nothing on the horizon. There are no more gulls. Waves are lead. Sea is calm. They cannot even here the sea when the windows are open. There are no more navigators.

There is suggestion that Hamm can be responsible for the catastrophe. Throughout the play, we hear deaths caused by Hamm.

> HAMM. […] That old doctor, he's dead, naturally?
> CLOV. He wasn't old.
> HAMM. But he's dead?
> CLOV. Naturally. (Pause.) *You* ask *me* that? (104)

Clov implies that Hamm is guilty of the doctor's death. Mother Pegg who was "bonny once, like a flower of the field," is another victim of Hamm.

CLOV. When old Mother Pegg asked you for oil for her lamp and you told her to get out to hell, you knew what was happening then, no? (Pause.) You know what she died of, Mother Pegg? Of darkness.
HAMM. (Feebly.) I hadn't any.
CLOV. (As before.) Yes you had. (129)

Martin Esslin suggests that Pegg can be Hamm's lover.[3] Hamm deprived Pegg from light because of his stinginess.

Hamm tires to convince Clov that he is not responsible for the disaster.

HAMM. Do you know what it is?
CLOV. (As before.) Mmm.
HAMM. I was never there. (Pause.) Clov!
[. . . . .]
CLOV. Lucky for you. (He looks out of window.)
HAMM. Absent, always, It all happened without me. I don't know what's happened. (Pause.) Do you know what's happened? (Pause.) Clov! (128)

Hamm pretends not to be guilty. However, Hamm knows that he could have prevented the disaster and helped the ones that begged him for help: "All those I might have helped. (Pause.) Helped! (Pause.) Saved. (Pause.) Saved! (Pause.) The place was crawling with them!" (125). He is self-centered and without empathy. He did not take any action to save people from death. Now, Hamm suffers because of his crime. Esslin also remarks, "Hamm is burdened with a great load of guilt."[4]

In order to lessen the burden of guilt, Hamm tells us how he saved a father and son from hunger and death. On a Christmas Eve, a man whose face is "black with mingled dirt and tears" came begging for bread for himself and his son. Hamm took the father and his son in his service. It seems that what Hamm is telling is how he first met with Clov. John Fletcher also believes that function of the story is to make Hamm feel better about himself. As Hamm tells the story of the father and son, he consoles himself that he has helped people pleading for help.

Hamm tries telling himself a story to exorcize the worry at the back of his mind: that, one day in the past, he reasoned complacently with a starving man

> who had begged bread for his son, the very boy who grew up, in all probability, to be Clov.[5]

We have seen that Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell are stuck in the bare interior and surrounded by death and void. Now, we can discuss how the characters play the "game of survival" in the midst of an infinite space. The structure of the game, characters' movements, and their roles in the game will be examined.

The Game of Survival…

The title of the play informs us that this is a play about a game. It is a play on play. As Alvarez states, "Beckett's actors are aware of their false position as objects in a work of art."[6] Hamm's first sentence is "Me to play" (93). It is his turn to talk and act. Clov turning his telescope on auditorium says, "I see…a multitude…in transports…of joy" (106). In addition, Hamm and Clov use the terminology of drama like dialogue, aside, soliloquy, underplot, and exit.

> CLOV. What is there to keep me here?
> HAMM. The dialogue. (121)

Near the end, Clov wonders whether Hamm is referring to him or not. Hamm angrily replies: "An aside ape! Did you never hear an aside before? (Pause.) I'm warming up for my last soliloquy" (130). Getting ready for departure, Clov says: "This is what we call making an exit" (132).

The game has a rational and carefully planned structure. Peter Boxall explains how Hugh Kenner draws parallels between the play and the structure of chess game:

> Kenner suggests that the structure of Endgame, like that of chess, is based on a number of inflexible but arbitrary rules that have relevance only to the game in hand. None of the character's moves may make sense with relation to the big world that the audience share, but in terms of the play's internal economy, each move is finely tuned to have its desired effect.[7]

There is balance, proportion, and structural control in *Endgame*. Even from the first speech of Clov, we feel how the game is carefully measured. "I'll go to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle to me. Nice dimensions, nice proportions […]" (93). A wrong move in the play may destroy the game. Players are careful not to make a mistake. Let us see how "finely tuned" Hamm and Clov's movements are.

In the opening of the play, we see Hamm sitting in the center. Hamm is obsessed with being in the center. Whenever Clov takes Hamm for a little turn in the room, Hamm makes sure that he is back to his place, right in the center.

> HAMM. Am I right in the center?
> CLOV. I'll measure it.
> HAMM. More or less! More or less!
> CLOV. (Moving chair slightly.) There!
> HAMM. I'm more or less in the center?
> CLOV. I'd say so.
> HAMM. You'd say so! Put me right in the center!
> CLOV. I'll go and get the tape.
> HAMM. Roughly! Roughly! (Clov moves chair slightly.) Bang in the center.
> CLOV. There!
> HAMM. I feel a little too far to the left. (Clov moves chair slightly.) Now I feel a little too far to the right. (Clov moves chair slightly.) I feel a little too far forward. (Clov moves chair slightly.) Now I feel a little too far back. (Clov moves chair slightly.) (105)

Hamm wants to maintain his dominance in the game by being in the center. As Hwa Soon Kim states, "Hamm's center symbolizes absolute power."[8] Since Hamm is blind, he needs Clov to assure himself that he is in the center.

In contrast to Hamm, who is sitting, Clov is standing motionless by the door in the opening of the play. He changes his position throughout the play. Occasionally, Clov looks from the window, goes to his kitchen, and tours Hamm in the room. Hugh Kenner comments on the movements of Clov.

> Clov, with his arbitrarily restricted movements (I cant sit) and his equestrian background (And your rounds? Always on foot? Sometimes on horse.) resembles the Knight, and his perfectly cubical kitchen (ten feet by ten feet by

> ten feet, nice dimensions, nice proportions) resembles a square on the chessboard translated into three dimension. He moves back and forth, into it and out of it, coming to the succour of Hamm and then retreating.[9]

Hamm and Clov do not want to change their positions on the chessboard. At the end of the play Hamm is sitting in the center. Clov stands by the door motionless, his eyes fixed on Hamm. They turn back to the place where they have started the play. Since Nagg and Nell are crippled, they do not have any chance to change their positions.

Having observed the controlled and measured movements of Hamm and Clov, let us see how Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell stand in the game of survival.

Hamm is the "King" of the play. The first sentence we hear from Hamm is "Me-to play" (93). He behaves as the one and only master of the game. Hamm constantly reminds the family that he is in charge of the game. Everybody should depend on his mercy. Hamm even imagines that the toy dog is gazing at him begging for a bone. "Leave him like that, standing there imploring me" (112).

Hamm wants people to suffer. Hamm is cruel to Clov and he is proud of it.

> HAMM. I've made you suffer too much. (Pause.) Haven't I?
> CLOV. It's not that.
> HAMM. (Shocked.) I haven't made you suffer too much?
> CLOV. Yes!
> HAMM. Ah you gave me fright! (95)

We learn that Clov wept and crawled at Hamm's feet to have a bicycle once. Hamm ignored Clov and told him to go to hell (96). Now, he curses Clov:

> In my house. (Pause. With prophetic relish.) One day you'll be blind, like me. You'll be sitting there, a speck in the void, in the dark, forever, like me. (Pause.) One day you'll say to yourself I'm tired, I'll sit down, and you'll go and sit down. Then you'll say, I'm hungry, I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up…Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe. Yes, one day you'll know what it is, you'll be like me, except that you won't have anyone with you because you won't have had pity on anyone and because there won't be anyone left to have pity on. (109)

Ironically, towards the end of the play, we see that there is someone to pity Clov. The prophecy of Hamm may not come true. The small boy may stay with Clov and look after him.

Hamm is also hateful and brutal towards his parents. “Oh I am willing to believe they suffer as much as such creatures can suffer” (93). When Nagg refuses to eat biscuits, he orders Clov to push him back to his bin and “sit on him” (97). He calls them “accursed progenitor.” He cannot stand listening to their parents chat. “Silence…Have you not finished? Will you never finish? […] (He whistles. Enter Clov.) Clear away this muck! Chuck it in the sea!” (103). He orders Clov to “screw down the lids” so that they cannot poke up their heads from bin. Hamm hopefully asks to Clov: “Go and see is she dead.” Nell also hates his son. She urges Clov to leave Hamm and go to the desert (103).

A. J. Leventhal informs us that Hamm is an abbreviation of the English word hammer and draws an association between his name and his cruelty. “[...] we feel the sadistic side of Hamm, wielding his hammer like the northern god Thor as he commands the lids of the bins to be shut down on his truncated parents or whistles for attention from Clov.”[10] Ruby Cohn writes, “When Irish actor Pat Magee asked Beckett what Hamm looked like, he replied: ‘A bit of a monster. Yes, the remains of a monster’.”[11]

Clov plays the servant who helps Hamm survive. Hamm depends on Clov’s hands, eyes, and legs to keep on playing the game. Hamm keeps the food in the larder and does not tell the combination of the larder to the other members of the family. Since Hamm is blind, he needs Clov to feed him. Another function of Clov is that he serves as the eyes of Hamm. Clov is Hamm’s only contact with the outside world. Throughout the play, Clov gets up on a larder, looks from the window, and reports what he sees to Hamm. Hamm asks to Clov: “How are your legs?” “How are your eyes?” (96). He is not interested in rest

of Clov's body and health. Since Hamm and his parents are crippled, only Clov can move Hamm. He always wants Clov by his side. Hamm questions where Clov is and orders him to come back to his place beside the chair (95). He is sometimes afraid that Clov might kill him. He feels uncomfortable when Clov stands behind him. "Don't stay there (behind the chair), you give me the shivers" (105). Alvarez also points out the importance of Clov in Hamm's life. "Clov-a slave who performs for him the bodily actions necessary to keep life going, who gets him up, does his chores, provides biscuits, tonics and pain killers […]"[12]

Hamm and Clov's relationship is based on physical needs. Hamm cannot dismiss Clov because there is nobody to take his servant's place. Clov cannot leave Hamm because there is death outside. Their desolate circumstances keep them together.

> HAMM. […] Why do you stay with me?
> CLOV. Why do you keep me?
> HAMM. There's no one else.
> CLOV. There's nowhere else. (95)

Since Hamm and Clov are the only human beings on earth, they need each other to survive. Hamm knows the password of the storage but depends on Clov to feed him. Clov is healthy and does not need the assistance of another to eat. Unfortunately, he does not know the password of the larder. Hamm's job is to open the larder and Clov feeds him in return. Hamm gives just enough food to keep Clov alive.

> HAMM. I'll give you nothing more to eat.
> CLOV. Then we'll die.
> HAMM. I'll give you just enough to keep you from dying. You'll be hungry all the time.
> CLOV. Then we shan't die. (Pause.) I'll go and get the sheet. (He goes towards the door.)
> HAMM. No! (Clov halts.) I'll give you one biscuit per day. (Pause.) One and a half. (96)

Without Clov, Hamm will die. There is no one else to feed him. If Clov leaves, he will also starve.

HAMM. Gone from me you'd be dead.
CLOV. And *vice versa*. (126)

They have no other choice but stay together. When Clov is getting ready to make an exit, Hamm remarks, "It's we are obliged to each other" (132). If one of them gives up the game, everybody will die. Hamm and Clov are inseparable like Pozzo and his slave Lucky.

However, with the appearance of the little boy towards the end of the play, Hamm dismisses Clov: "It is the end, Clov, we've come to the end. I don't need you any more" (131). Since the boy can take the place of Clov, Hamm does not need Clov anymore. The boy is younger and healthier.

Nagg and Nell have a passive role in the game. Kenner suggests, "Nag and Nell in their dustbins appear to be pawns."[13] In chess, pawn is one of the 16 pieces of lowest value. We pity the crippled couple living in ashbins. They have no power to control the rules of the game. They depend on Hamm's mercy to spare them pap and sugarplums.

Nagg can be a pawn, but he has an important role in Hamm's life. Hamm needs Nagg as his audience. Hamm wants to be heard and listened to by his father.

HAMM.…Father! (Pause. Louder.) Father! (Pause.) Go and see did he hear me.
(Clov goes to Nagg's bin, raises the lid, stoops. Unintelligible words. Clov straightens up.)
CLOV. Yes.
HAMM. Both times?
(Clov stoops. As before.)
CLOV. Once only.
HAMM. The first time or the second?
(Clov stoops. As before.)
CLOV. He doesn't know.
HAMM. It must have been the second.
(Clov stoops. As before.)
CLOV. He doesn't know. (124)

Hamm orders Clov to wake Nagg up and ask if he wants to listen to his story. Nagg does not want to listen to Hamm. Hamm bribes his father to make him listen.

> HAMM. I'll give him a bon-bon.
> (Clov stoops. As before.)
> CLOV. He wants a sugar-plum.
> HAMM. He'll get a sugar-plum.
> (Clov stoops. As before.)
> CLOV. It's a deal. (116)

Presence of an audience assures him that he is not alone and talking to himself. This makes Hamm feel comfortable. We remember Estragon's statement to Vladimir: "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?" (2, 44).

We see that the title, structure of the play and the movements of the characters remind us of the chess game. The stage is the chessboard and the characters are the players. They need each other to continue the game. During the game, they tell stories, bitter jokes, hurt each other's feelings, and insult one another to pass time. Most of the time, they prefer to keep silent. We frequently read "Pause" as a stage direction. Hamm and Clov realize that there is nothing left on the board. The food in the larder is about to finish. Nature is dead. The universe stinks of corpses. There are no more tales, jokes to tell. One day is not different from the other.

> CLOV. Why this farce, day after day?
> HAMM. Routine. One never knows. (107)

They are used to their monotonous lives. They remind themselves of the bitterness of their situation. Isolated from the rest of the world, they watch their light dying in an empty room.

However, neither Hamm, nor Clov put and end to their misery. It is ironic that the title of the play is *Endgame*. Linda Ben-Zvi explains the significance of the title of the play: "The title is taken from the last section of a chess game and indicates that time when

two basic options are still open to the players: checkmate-entrapment of the king-or stalemate-a draw."[14] It is a game that will never end. Neither Hamm, nor Clov can draw from the game or accept defeat. Hamm and Clov cannot say, "game over." Play starts with Clov saying: "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished […]" (93). We see how the word "finished" gradually loses its firmness. Linda Ben-Zvi writes:

> How a line is written becomes an indicator of what is meant. In *Endgame*, we don't need three forms of the verb "to finish" in order to understand what Clov says, but the repetitions do indicate the characters' hesitation about finality, and the ordering of the forms-from the isolated "Finished" to the conditional and predicate forms-also points to Clov's careful stepping back from the thought of cessation and his grasping at language to militate against closure.[15]

Like "Tomorrow" in *Waiting for Godot*, "Nearly" is the magic word in *Endgame*. The time of Godot's arrival is not definite. The tramps believe that Godot will come tomorrow. There is always a "tomorrow" to wait for. Both Hamm and Clov state that the game is "nearly finished." It is clear that they have come towards the end of the game but the exact time of departure is blurred. They are stuck in the time phrase "nearly." It defers the ending of the game. They will always be "about to" end the game. Hamm and Clov reminds us Vladimir and Estragon talking about parting and leaving each other but giving up the idea. Nobody moves.

There are moments when both Hamm and Clov are fed up with the game. Hamm is bored of playing the game over and over again. Clov is tired of his role in the game. The dialogue is always the same. They keep on asking each other the same questions and getting the same answers.

> HAMM. Have you not had enough?
> CLOV. Yes! (Pause.) Of what?
> HAMM. Of this…this…thing.
> CLOV. I always had. (Pause.) Not you?
> HAMM. (Gloomily.) Then there's no reason for it to change.
> CLOV. It may end. (Pause.) All life long the same questions, the same answers. (94)

Although Hamm and Clov have always been thinking of ending the game, nobody takes any action. This is why Hamm gloomily states that there will be no change. They will keep on thinking of ending the game but will never be able to do it.

Hamm remarks, "the end is in the beginning and yet you go on [. . .]" (126). It is evident that Hamm is dying. He is blind, paralyzed, and his head does not stop bleeding. He does not have strength to endure the game anymore. There is no Godot to rescue him from his sufferings. Hamm knows that it is time that the game should end. However, he cannot make up his mind to end the game. "[…] And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to…to end. Yes, there it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to-(he yawns)-to end […]" (93). He cannot commit suicide and give an end to his misery. Ruby Cohn also points out that Hamm delays the end. "As Hamm falters, his servant-son falters, his story protagonist falters."[16] Despite his physical decay, he still wants to continue the game.

Hamm cannot finish his story either. He stops telling just before the ending of the story.

> CLOV. Do you see how it goes on.
> HAMM. More or less.
> CLOV. Will it not soon be the end?
> HAMM. I'm afraid it will.
> CLOV. Pah! You'll make up another.
> HAMM. I don't know. (Pause.) I feel rather drained. (Pause.) The prolonged creative effort. (122)

If Hamm ends the story, there would be nothing left to talk about. He is afraid that "there'll be no more speech" (116). The audience would lose its interest in Hamm. He does not have courage to face the ending. He will always be "about to" end the story. According to Ben-Zvi, "Hamm cannot finish his story because it is the story of his life, and while living it he cannot end it."[17]

Clov seems to be anxious to end the game. He wants to be released from the game. He cannot stand Hamm's orders anymore. All he does is to get on the ladder with the telescope, look outside, and report what he sees to Hamm. He feeds Hamm, drives his wheel chair, listens to his stories, and always stays by his side. "I'm tired of our goings on, very tired," says Clov (129). He waits for the day when he cannot be punished anymore (93). Clov only seems to be happy in the kitchen without Hamm and his parents. Beckett remarked, "Clov has only one wish, to return to his kitchen. That must always be evident, as is Hamm's effort to detain him."[18]

Throughout the play, Clov frequently states his wish to leave. However, the time of departure never comes. Hamm thinks that Clov is leaving him. "Oh not just yet, not just yet," Clov responds (96). Sometimes Hamm pretends not to hear Clov.

> CLOV. I'll leave you.
> HAMM. Have you had your visions? (112)

As we see, Hamm changes the subject. Whenever Clov mentions his departure, Hamm starts to tell his story, or ask an irrelevant question. Sometimes he takes the subject seriously and wonders, "If you leave me how shall I know?" (114). Clov finds a solution: "You whistle me, I don't come. The alarm rings. I'm gone. It doesn't ring. I'm dead" (115).

Hamm knows that Clov will not be able to leave him. Clov does not seem to be determined about his departure.

> CLOV. So you all want me to leave you.
> HAMM. Naturally.
> CLOV. Then I'll leave you.
> HAMM. You can't leave us.
> CLOV. Then I shan't leave you. (110)

Clov knows that there is death outside. Even if he leaves, he will not be able to go very far. Kim writes: "Hamm and Clov are like two chessmen on the chessboard. A movement

of the one induces another movement of the other. Thus, Clov's deferral of his departure is connected to Hamm's deferral of "the end."[19] Clov cannot end the game without Hamm's consent. Clov prepares to abandon Hamm only after Hamm states that it is the end of the play. Hamm: "It's the end, Clov, we've come to the end. I don't need you any more" (131).

After Hamm dismisses his servant, Clov gets ready to leave. He wears his panama hat, takes his raincoat, umbrella, and bag. From his last soliloquy, we understand that Clov will not leave his master.

> I say to myself-sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you-one day. I say to myself-sometimes, Clov, you must be there better than that if you want them to let you go-one day. But I feel too old, and too far, to form new habits. Good, it'll never end, I'll never go […] (132)

Clov is right to say that the game will never end and he will never be able to go. No matter how boring the game is, Clov is used to playing it. He has food and somebody to talk to. Clov cannot face hunger and solitude outside. He does not have courage to make a new start in his life.

Clov goes towards the door but cannot make his exit. He "stands there, impassive and motionless, his eyes fixed on Hamm, till the end" (133). After his last soliloquy, Hamm covers his face with his handkerchief. We feel that the director has rewound the play to the beginning. When the curtain falls, everything is same as the starting of the play. The characters are in their original positions. Hamm is in the center, Clov is standing by the door, and Hamm's parents are in their bins as in the beginning of the play. The final stage of the play is not different from the beginning. The stage is ready for the next performance. The audience knows that Clov is ready to uncover Hamm and the bins. Ross Chambers states:

> But as the play ends there is nothing to indicate that the curtain could not rise again on a scene in all essentials the same as the opening of the play, thus setting the whole play moving again in virtual repetition of itself, like Godot. Beckett mirrors the situation of people whose lives are over but still going on […].[20]

Like in *Waiting for Godot*, departure does not take place in *Endgame*. Neither Hamm nor Clov can leave. This shows that, like Vladimir, Hamm, his parents, and Clov have hope and strength to continue the struggle. Now let us consider what Hamm, Nagg and Nell, and Clov hope for.

Hamm watches his life fade away. He is blind, paralyzed, and depends on his servant to survive. Yet, he does not lose his strength to presume his predicament. Despite the catastrophe and his physical decay, Hamm is naïve enough to ask "No phone calls?" (97). He still has spirit of life. "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" (100). Hamm's search for a sign of life in nature, quest of meaning, and presence of Clov are the factors that help Hamm endure his predicament.

Hope in Nature…

Hamm tells the story of a painter who thought that the end of the world had come. He had seen nothing but ashes in the world. The painter was considered mad and put into an asylum. Hamm had great fondness for him and visited him. Hamm used to drag the painter to the window and tried to show the beauty in the world. "Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring feet! All that loveliness!" (113). Unlike the madman, Hamm did not think that the end of the world had come.

The mad painter's vision has become real. The characters seem to be the only survivors from a deadly disaster. Outside there is death. There is no more pap, or

painkiller. They are living in the middle of a desert. Every time Clov looks at the earth, he assures Hamm that "all is zero." Nothing moves. Nature is dead. Light is sunk.

However, Hamm still hopes for beauty in the midst of ashes. Hamm does not want to believe that the earth is corpsed.

> HAMM. Nature has forgotten us.
> CLOV. There's no more nature.
> HAMM. No more nature! You exaggerate.
> CLOV. In the vicinity.
> HAMM. But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!
> CLOV. Then she doesn't forgotten us. (97)

Hamm believes that nature is not dead but has forgotten them. They still can breathe, and get old. His head is continuously bleeding. This shows that nature is taking its course. If nature is not dead, there must be a sign of life outside.

Since Hamm is blind, it is Clov's duty to find an evidence. Throughout the play, Hamm orders Clov to look outside with a telescope and report what he sees to Hamm.

> HAMM. Look at the earth.
> CLOV. I've looked.
> HAMM. With the glass?
> CLOV. No need of the glass.
> HAMM. Look at it with the glass. (105)

Hamm wants Clov to see as far as he can. That is why he insists that Clov should look with a telescope. Hamm inquires Clov about weather, a ray of sunshine, rain, sound of sea and growth of seeds to prove the existence of nature.

Hamm is curious about the weather forecast. Clov states that the weather is "the same as usual" (105). Hamm orders Clov to bring him under the window. He wants to feel the light on his face. "That's what I call light! (Pause.) Feels like a ray of sunshine. No?" "No" Clov says (123). The weather does not change anymore. There is neither sunshine nor rain.

HAMM. (Gesture towards window right) Have you looked?
CLOV. Yes.
HAMM. Well?
CLOV. Zero.
HAMM. It'd need to rain.
CLOV. It won't rain. (94)

Night does not fall either. Clov states that the sky is gray. "Light black. From pole to pole" (107). Color gray can also be interpreted as a sign of hope. It is a neutral color. It can change to black or white. We know that light is extinguished, and there is no sunshine anymore. However, the earth is not completely dark either. There is possibility that sun can shine.

Hamm asks Clov to open the window. He wants to hear the sea.

CLOV. You wouldn't hear it.
HAMM. Even if you opened the window?
CLOV. No.
HAMM. Then it's not worth while opening it?
CLOV. No
HAMM. (Violently.) Then open it. (Clov gets up on the ladder, opens the window. Pause.) Have you opened it?
CLOV. Yes….
(Pause.)
HAMM. Well…! (Pause.) It must be very calm. (Pause. Violently.) I'm asking you is it very calm?
CLOV. Yes.
HAMM. It's because there are no more navigators. (124)

We see that Hamm has still hope that nature exists. He is disappointed because he cannot hear the sound of the sea. He does not want to think that the sea does not exist anymore but that the sea is calm. He asks Clov to look at the sea, ocean, and the horizon. He still has hope that maybe there are few gulls left.

Hamm asks Clov whether his seeds have sprouted.

HAMM. Did your seeds come up?
CLOV. No.
HAMM. Did you scratch round them to see if they had sprouted?
CLOV. They haven't sprouted
HAMM. Perhaps it's too early.

> CLOV. If they were going to sprout they would have sprouted. (Violently.) They'll never sprout. (98)

If the seeds sprout, Hamm will prove the existence of nature. Hamm does not want to admit that seeds will never sprout. He wants to believe that it is too early for the seeds to come up.

Even though the weather does not change, there are no gulls left, and seeds do not come up, Hamm does not despair. "That here we're down in a hole. (Pause.) But beyond the hills? Eh? Perhaps it's still green. Eh? (Pause.) Flora! Pomona! (Ecstatically.) Ceres! (Pause.) Perhaps you won't need to go very far" (111). Hamm evokes the classical goddesses of nature. Perhaps catastrophe did not destroy the whole world. Maybe there is nature beyond their eyesight. Hamm even suggests Clov to go to the South together. "Let's go from here, the two of us! South! You can make a raft and the currents will carry us away, far away, to other…mammals!" (109). He hopes that there are currents and sharks. He seems to be sure that life goes on. Hugh Kenner also suggests that the desolation may not be universal: "As Hamm is both chess man and chess player, so it is conceivable that destruction is not screened off by the shelter but radiates from it for a certain distance."[21]

Beckett also hints that the universe may not be completely dead. Beckett provides hope of regeneration to his readers. There are uninvited guests in the house. We see that there are still fleas. Clov is scratching himself. Hamm: "But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God!" (108). If humanity starts over again, Hamm will not be the king of the game. Humanity should not be born again. He orders Clov to kill it. Another sign of life is the rat in the kitchen. It does not have much chance to live long. If Clov does not kill him, it will die outside.

The last unexpected survivor is the small boy. Towards the end of the play, Clov assures Hamm that this is the last time he is looking "at this filth since it is an order" (130).

He is dismayed to see a small boy outside. A. Alvarez informs us that in the French version of the play, child is sitting on the ground, and staring at his navel.[22] As Clov sees the boy, he gets down the ladder and takes the gaff.

> HAMM. No!
> (Clov halts.)
> CLOV. No? A potential procreator? (130)

We have mentioned that Hamm ordered Clov to kill the flea and the rat. This time, Hamm prevents Clov from killing the child. Arrival of the boy assures Hamm that nature is not dead. Perhaps the crisis is over. Hamm and his family are not the only survivors of the disaster. There is another human being that will share their bitter experience. The boy brightens the game. According to Alvarez, "It may be, in fact, that life does go on, despite appearances, and that there is another game of chess still to be played. The play ends with a tiny flicker of light in the otherwise unrelieved gloom."[23]

Martin Esslin explains how the arrival of the boy can be interpreted as hope. In the French version, Hamm compares the boy to Moses: "The lifted stone. [Pause] Your eyesight is getting better. [Pause] No doubt he is looking at the house with the eyes of Moses dying."

> […] the references to Moses and the lifted stone seem to hint that the first human being, the first sign of life discovered in the outside world since the great calamity when the earth went dead, is not, like Moses, dying within sight of the promised land, but, like Christ the moment after the resurrection, has been newly born into a new life, leaning, a babe, against the lifted stone.[24]

The boy is a sign of future. Clov may take the place of Hamm, and the boy may be the new servant of the house.

As we see, despite the disaster, death, and dearth, nature is "taking its course." We have seen that there was a sprouting tree in *Waiting for Godot*, now there is an appearance

of a human figure. Both the tree and the boy signify that no matter how desolate the circumstances are life goes on. Sign of life in nature lightens up the both plays.

Search of Meaning…

According to Andrew K. Kennedy, "The end of the body, and the end of Nature are accompanied as well they might be, by the end of all existential and metaphysical comforts: the end of meaning, the death of God; the end of time."[25] The world is without meaning, and there is no faith in God anymore.

However, Hamm hopes that their unending game is meaningful. Even though Hamm and his family have to face death sooner or later, Hamm does not want to think that the game of survival is for nothing. His life should not be totally empty and absurd. If humanity starts all over again, the next generation should remember Hamm's family with respect. Perhaps, Hamm wants to have a significant role in the world history.

> HAMM. We're not beginning to ...to...mean something?
> CLOV. Mean something! You and I, mean something! (Brief laugh.) Ah that's a good one!
> HAMM. I wonder. (Pause.) Imagine if a rational being came back to earth, wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough. (Voice of rational being.) Ah, good, now I see what it is, yes, now I understand what they're at! (Clov starts, drops the telescope and begins to scratch his belly with both hands. Normal voice.) And without going so far as that, we ourselves...(With emotion)...we ourselves...at certain moments...(Vehemently.) To think that perhaps it won't all have been for nothing! (108)

Hwa Soon Kim explains Hamm's hope of meaning.

> Until one's own inevitable death, one may not be able to abandon the quest-this endless search for the meaning of existence emanates from the desperate with that one's life is not for nothing. Thomas Postlewait points out that Beckett reveals "life as an unfulfilled quest for meaning.[26]

People always search for meaning for their lives however absurd and impossible it may seem.

Hamm not only searches for meaning, but also hopes that God may save him from death. Although Hamm states that God does not exist, he still wants to pray to God. Clov mocks Hamm: "What a hope!"

> HAMM. […] Let us pray to God.
> CLOV. Again!
> NAGG. Me sugar-plum!
> HAMM. God first! (Pause.) Are you right?
> CLOV. (Resigned.) Off we go.
> HAMM. (To Nagg.) And you?
> NAGG. (Clasping his hands, closing his eyes, in a gabble.) Our Father which art-
> HAMM. Silence! In silence! Where are your manners? (Pause.) Off we go. (Attitudes of prayer. Silence. Abandoning his attitude, discouraged.) Well?
> CLOV. (Abandoning his attitude.) What a hope! And you?
> HAMM. Sweet damn all! (To Nagg.) And you?
> NAGG. Wait! (Pause. Abandoning his attitude.) Nothing doing!
> HAMM. The bastard! He doesn't exist!
> CLOV. Not yet. (119)

We see that Clov too has hope that God will exist one day. Life would have been unbearable if we really had believed that life is for nothing and there is no benevolent God to save us from our troubles. Hamm's hope to have a meaningful game to play is another factor that keeps him from despair.

Hope of love…

Love is an important factor that helps the family cope and endure their sufferings. Hamm and Clov, Nagg and Nell persist their predicaments through love. Need of love and care keeps the family together.

We have seen that Hamm destroyed the world, and refused the people who pleaded him for help. Hamm is obsessed with being in the center and having absolute power over the inhabitants of the house. He is also cruel and sarcastic towards his servant and parents.

Hamm has created a world without love and human touch. He mocks love. “Get out of here and love one another! Lick your neighbor as yourself” (125).

However, power does not bring Hamm happiness. Now, his heart is bleeding. “There’s something dripping in my head. (Pause.) A heart, a heart in my head” (100).

> HAMM. …Last night I saw inside my breast. There was a big sore.
> CLOV. Pah you saw your heart.
> HAMM. No, it was living. (Pause. Anguished.) Clov! (107)

Hamm needs love and care to cure the sore in his heart. He longs for love that he has dismissed from his world.

Hamm hopes to re-establish the love and feelings that Clov once had for his father. Hamm is aware that he has always been hateful towards Clov and made him suffer too much. As a result, Clov meets the physical needs of his master like a robot, without any love and care. Clov seems to have lost his feelings and ability to love. Hamm tries to surpass the master-slave relationship, and have an emotional bound with Clov. Hamm reminds Clov that he is the surrogate father of him.

> HAMM. It was I was a father to you.
> CLOV. Yes. (He looks at Hamm fixedly.) You were that to me.
> HAMM. My house a home for you.
> CLOV. Yes. (He looks about him.) This was that to me. (110)

Clov is careful not to use the words, “home,” or “father.” Hamm still regards Clov as his son. Hamm tells us what he will do if he is left all alone in the refuge. “I’ll have called my father and I’ll have called my...(he hesitates)…my son” (126).

Hamm hopes to see a sign of affection in Clov. Hamm asks: “Did you never have the curiosity, while I was sleeping, to take off my glasses and look at my eyes?” (94). Clov’s answer is “no.” Unfortunately, Clov has lost his love for Hamm. He does not “pull back the lids.” Clov avoids any physical contact with Hamm.

> HAMM. Kiss me. (Pause.) Will you not kiss me?

CLOV. No.
HAMM. On the forehead.
CLOV. I won't kiss you anywhere.
HAMM. (Holding out his hand.) Give me your hand at least. (Pause.) Will you not give me your hand?
CLOV. I won't touch you. (125)

If Clov decides to leave one day, Hamm wants him to come and kiss him good-bye "Oh I shouldn't think so," answers Clov (114).

HAMM. Before you go…(Clov halts near door)…say something.
CLOV. There is nothing to say.
HAMM. A few words…to ponder…in my heart.
CLOV. You heart!
HAMM. Yes. (Pause. Forcibly.) Yes! (Pause) With the rest, in the end, the shadows, the murmur, all the trouble, to end up with. (Pause.) Clov…He never spoke to me. Then, in the end, before he went, without my having asked him, he spoke to me. (131)

Even a look, touch, or a few nice words may stop the bleeding in his heart. According to Kim, "Echo of the word "heart" increases the atmosphere of the emptiness of the heart in the development of the speech. In other words, through its repetition, the heart becomes a signifier without a signified and the mystification of the word turns out to be a dreadful joke."[27]

We see that Clov shows no interest in Hamm. He refuses to touch Hamm and utter emotional words. On the other hand, we see signs of compassion in Clov for Hamm. First, although Clov states, "If I could kill him I'd die happy," he backfires his chance to get rid of Hamm (105). Hamm proposes Clov to tell the combination of the ladder, if Clov promises to finish him. "I couldn't finish you," answers Clov (110). This shows that Clov does not hate Hamm.

Second, Clov never refuses the orders of Hamm. Clov is a faithful servant like Lucky.

CLOV. There's one thing I'll never understand. (He gets down.) Why I always obey you. Can you explain that to me?

HAMM. No...Perhaps it's compassion. (Pause.) A kind of great compassion. Oh you won't find it easy, you won't find it easy. (129)

Hamm relates Clov's obedience to compassion. Clov obeys Hamm's orders because, without Hamm, Clov can neither be a servant nor a son. If he leaves, he will have nobody to talk to. He would not be able to bear the silence and solitude. Kim remarks, "In his obedience to Hamm, Clov makes himself a useful and meaningful being to Hamm as servant/son."[28]

Another sign of care is that Clov has his "eyes fixed on Hamm" both in the beginning and by the end of the play. Kim argues that Clov is not only physically but also psychologically dependent on Hamm.

Having discussed Hamm's hope to maintain his son's love, let us see how Nagg and Nell are bound by love.

Nagg and Nell are lucky because they have the love and care that Hamm longs for. Nagg tells us the unfortunate accident. "When we crashed on our tandem and lost our shanks" (100). They had an accident while cycling on their way to Sedan. They live in ashbins full of sand like rubbish. We see how they decay with old age. They are without legs, without food, and their eyesight is almost gone. They can hardly see each other. Nagg has lost his tooth. They check whether their hearing has failed or not. Compassion keeps them alive. Nagg knocks the lid of Nell's bin. Nell lifts the lid and asks:

NELL. What is it, my pet? (Pause.) Time for love?
NAGG. Were you asleep?
NELL. Oh no!
NAGG. Kiss me.
NELL. We can't.
NAGG. Try. (Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.) (99)

The ashbins separate the couple. We see that Nagg is fond of his wife. He spares the three quarters of his biscuit for Nell. When Hamm bargains with Nagg to make him listen to his story, Nagg wants an extra sugarplum for Nell. “One for me and one for-” (116).

Unlike Hamm, Nagg and Nell have happy memories to remember. One April afternoon, the day after their engagement, they were rowing on Lake Como.

> NAGG. You were in such fits that we capsized. By rights we should have been drowned.
> NELL. It was because I felt happy. (102)

Nagg thinks that Nell was laughing at the story of the Englishman and his tailor. Nell corrects him and remarks that she was laughing because she was happy. Nell is fortunate because, unlike Clov and Hamm she has happy days to remember.

> HAMM. …Did you ever have an instant of happiness?
> CLOV. Not to my knowledge. (123)

We see that Nagg and Nell are happy when they remember past. According to Kim, “To these old parents of Hamm, “yesterday” is an elixir that lets them forget their repulsive present in the ashbins.”[29] On the other hand, recollection of their happy days makes their present situation more tragic. They used to row on Lake Como and cycle. Now, they cannot even kiss.

Nagg also hopes that Hamm will need him one day. We learn that Nagg was not a loving father. Nagg and Nell used to move Hamm out of earshot, so that they could not hear him cry at night. They slept in peace. Nagg wishes that Hamm will need his care once again.

> I hope the day will come when you’ll need to have me listen to you, and need to hear my voice, any voice. (Pause.) Yes I hope I’ll live till then, to hear you calling me like when you were a tiny boy, and were frightened, in the dark, and I was your only hope. (119)

Nagg wants to have a significant role in his son's life. Actually, Hamm still needs his father to listen to him. Hamm promises to give him sugarplums if he listens to his story.

John Fletcher and John Spurling tell us how Beckett described the play in a letter to American director Alan Schneider: "More difficult and elliptical, relying as it does chiefly on the power of the text to carry one along, more inhuman than Godot."[30] Ironically, the play is human as much as Godot. We see the need of affection and love between the characters. There is hate, cruelty together with love and affection in Hamm and Clov's relationship. Hamm's hope for love keeps him alive. Nagg and Nell are bound by romantic love for years. Compassion and care make the characters' lives bearable.

Clov's hope of order…

Compared to Hamm, Clov seems to have a bleaker and darker vision. He gloomily states, "I see my light dying" (98). He curses on the universe: "Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that! […]" (118). He prefers not to have been born.

> HAMM. Oh way back, way back, you weren't in the land of the living.
> CLOV. God be with the days! (114)

He thinks it is impossible to find a meaning in their bitter existence. He laughs at Hamm's hope of meaning.

No matter how pessimistic Clov is, he still has a little hope that everything will change for the better. As Hamm dreams of nature, Clov's dream is order. Esslin states that Clov is "fanatic of order."[31] Unlike Clov, Hamm is untidy. He throws away the whistle, gaff, and the toy dog. We read that Clov picks up the toy dog that Hamm threw away on the ground. Hamm asks him what he is doing:

CLOV. Putting things in order. (He straightens up. Fervently.) I'm going to clear everything away! (He starts picking up again.)
HAMM. Order!
CLOV. (Straightening up.) I love order. It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust. (He starts picking up again.)
HAMM. (Exasperated.)What in God's name do you think you are doing?
CLOV. I'm doing my best to create a little order.
HAMM. Drop it!
(Clov drops the objects he has picked up.) (120)

Ironically, Clov, by creating an order, he gives meaning to their chaotic lives. Order is structure. He laughs at Hamm's search of meaning but he also tries to establish meaning.

Another sign of hope in Clov is that he inquires Hamm about the life to come. Just before Hamm tells his story Clov asks: "Do you believe in the life to come?" (116). This explains why he does not want to face the death outside. Deep inside he thinks that there is hope of survival. The "life" Clov is mentioning can be the life after death, or the rebirth of whole nature and generation. If there is life to come, Clov's dream of order can come true.

Many critics believe that *Endgame* shows the end of the universe and there is no expectation of a savior to come. Peter Boxall states: "In *Endgame* there is no such uncertainty about the outcome of history, and sickness is a permanent condition. Critics claimed *Endgame* is Godot wound down, defeated and unremittingly bleak."[32]

I have tried to show that *Endgame* is not dark, and bleak as critics claim to be. No matter how desolate the characters' circumstances seem to be, they resume the struggle like Vladimir and Estragon. Even though there are no more painkiller, Turkish delight, and food in the larder, they continue to play the game of survival. They are getting on. They sleep, get up, eat, and tell their jokes and stories. Nagg and Nell continue to live in their bins, eat their biscuits, and talk about their happy memories. "Life goes on" as Hamm remarks (125).

Ruby Cohn remarks, “The play’s dialogue opens with the word “finished” and closes with the word “remain.”[33] The inhabitants of the house remain in the shelter that protects them from death outside. Nobody wants to finish the game and face death. They still have expectations in life. Hamm does not want to believe in the death of nature and meaning in life. As Beckett stated, “Hamm says No to Nothingness.”[34] Clov dreams of a perfectly ordered universe. Nagg wishes that Hamm will need to hear his voice one day. Beckett again shows us that despite suffering, pain, and boredom in life, human beings have strength to go on.

Notes to Chapter 2

[1] Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973) 140.
[2] A. Alvarez, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973) 93.
[3] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Woodstock, The Overlook Press, 1969) 42.
[4] Ibid. 42.
[5] John Fletcher, *Samuel Beckett's Art* (London: Chatto&Windus, 1967) 54.
[6] Alvarez 94.
[7] Peter Boxall, ed., *Samuel Beckett* Waiting for Godot, Endgame (Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd., 2000) 75.
[8] Hwa Soon Kim, *The Counterpoint of Hope, Obsession, and Desire for Death in Five Plays by Samuel Beckett* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996) 45.
[9] Qtd. in Boxall 76.
[10] A. J. Leventhal, "The Beckett Hero," *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Martin Esslin (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965) 50.
[11] Cohn 152.
[12] Alvarez, 93.
[13] Qtd. in Boxall 76.
[14] Linda Ben-Zvi, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1986) 146.
[15] Ibid. 6-7.
[16] Cohn 156.
[17] Ben-Zvi 148.
[18] Qtd. in Cohn, 153.
[19] Kim 52.
[20] Ross Chambers, "Beckett's Brinkmanship," *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Martin Esslin (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965) 160.
[21] Qtd. in Boxall 78.
[22] Alvarez 94.
[23] Ibid. 95.
[24] Esslin 50.
[25] Andrew K. Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 52.
[26] Kim 39.
[27] Ibid. 55.
[28] Ibid. 49.
[29] Ibid. 43.
[30] John Fletcher, and John Spurling, *Beckett: A Study of his Plays* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972) 69.
[31] Esslin 42.
[32] Boxall 18.
[33] Cohn 142.
[34] Ibid. 152.

CHAPTER 3

HAPPY DAYS

In *Endgame*, Nell advises Clov to "go away, into the desert" (1, 103). It seems that *Happy Days* is "set in that desert."[1] In contrast to the prison-like stage of *Endgame*, *Happy Days* takes place in an infinite space. Beckett uses a backcloth to "represent unbroken plain and sky receding to meet in far distance" (1,138). The stage is simple and almost empty. There is only a mound, "an expanse of scorched grass rising center to low mound," and "gentle slopes down to front and either side of the stage." The light black sky and dark interior of *Endgame* is replaced with everlasting light in *Happy Days*. The sun never sets, and the night never falls. Ironically, light does not illuminate the characters' lives. The "blazing light" turns out to be a "hellish light." Beckett shows that not only cell-like rooms and grayness, but sunshine can also be a source of one's predicament.

Like the tramps in *Waiting for Godot* and the players of *Endgame*, the characters of *Happy Days*, Winnie and Willie, have a tough life to face. The title of the play becomes ironic as we witness the living conditions of Winnie and Willie. Beckett describes his female protagonist as, "about fifty, well-preserved, blonde for preference, plump, arms and shoulders bare, low bodice, big bosom, pearl necklace" (1,138). Winnie, exposed to a blazing light, in an "unbroken plain," is embedded up to above her waist in exact center of mound. Right behind Winnie, we see Willie, her husband, lying asleep on the ground, hidden by the mound. Willie is almost invisible, silent, and mostly sleeping throughout the play. He spends his days by reading the same newspaper, sleeping, and crawling into and out of his hole. He is not interested in his wives tragic situation at all. He neither tries to save Winnie from the mound, nor shows any care. Although he is aware that she is eager

to see and talk to him, he does not make any effort to please her. The audience and Winnie cannot fully see Willie until he comes to the front of the stage towards the end of the play.

Like *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, *Happy Days* represents human persistence and hope in a dying universe. Winnie's life seems unbearable because of the mound swallowing her, everlasting heat and light, and the prompter's bell. In the midst of her tragedy, she ironically starts her day by saying, "Another heavenly day" (1, 138). Winnie maintains her spirit of life with the help of her bag, props, husband, and her continuous monologue. Like her predecessors, Vladimir, Estragon, Hamm, and Clov, Winnie does not despair and resumes the struggle.

Let us first observe her physical state, and the harsh conditions that Winnie has to cope with.

Earth is Winnie's most dangerous enemy. We witness the gradual decay of Winnie as she progressively sinks in a mound of sand. In the second act, the mound comes up to Winnie's neck. She can still move her eyes but can no longer turn, bow or raise her head, and clasp her hands.

Being captive to a mound, Winnie not only loses her mobility but also her health. She has mild migraine occasionally. Her teeth are in bad condition. She panics that she might be going blind when she cannot read the writing on the toothbrush. In act 2, Winnie violently remarks, "My neck is hurting me!" twice (2, 166). In the course of gradual decay, she is also afraid to lose her mind one day. If the mind were to go. (Pause.) It won't of course. Not quite. Not mine. (Smile.) Not now. (Smile broader.) No no. (2, 161) However, she convinces herself that she has not lost her reason yet.

The "blaze of hellish light" is another physical torture for Winnie. There are moments when she cannot stand the heat. She thinks she might "burst into flames" or be "charred to a black cinder."

> With the sun blazing so much fiercer down, and hourly fiercer, is it not natural things should go on fire never known to do so, in this way I mean, spontaneous like. (Pause.) Shall I myself not melt perhaps in the end, or burn, oh I do not mean necessarily burst into flames, no, just little by little be charred to a black cinder, all this-(ample gesture of arms)-visible flesh. (1,154)

Winnie is afraid that she will be scorched from the heat like grass. Since she cannot move, she has no chance to avoid the sunshine. Mound prevents Winnie to see the "darkness of shade." Winnie only has a parasol and a hat on her head to save her from the deadly light. Unfortunately, parasol cannot prevent the sunshine because she does not have the strength to hold it properly. "Holding up wearies the arm," Winnie says (1, 153). Later on, the parasol bursts into flames and is restored in the second act.

Winnie, fed up with the sun, is "asking for the moon" (1, 149). Hamm hopes to feel the sunshine on his face whereas Winnie waits for the day when "the night of the moon has so many hundred hours" (1, 144). Winnie says, "It might be the eternal dark. Black night without end. Just chance, I take it, happy chance" (2, 166). Unlike the tramps in *Waiting for Godot*, Winnie has no chance to see the sun go down. Only darkness and "everlasting perishing cold" can save her from her predicament. Ironically, eternal cold and darkness can only come with death.

The moon and the perishing cold she is waiting for never come. Nature is not on Winnie's side. Nature is swallowing Winnie, and killing her with "hellish sun." We see that nature does not signify fertility, growth and abundance but bareness and death. Fertile mother earth is transformed into scorched earth. As Winnie watches the parasol burning

she says, “Ah earth you old extinguisher” (1, 153). The earth referred to as an “old extinguisher,” and “bleeding ground.”

Another form of torture besides mound and the heat is the bell that orders her to begin and end her day. According to Paul Lawley, Winnie is “herself regulated in a basic but increasingly harsh way by another meta-theatrical feature; the bell which signals performance.”[2] There is no more day and night. Winnie has a bell-bound day between the bell for waking and the bell for sleep. She cannot sleep or wake up whenever she wishes. We hear the bell whenever she closes her eyes during the performance. The bell does not let her wake up when it is time for sleep. She hates to be regulated by a bell. “It hurts like a knife,” Winnie says.

> One cannot ignore it. How often…I say how often I have said, ignore it, Winnie, ignore the bell, pay no heed, just sleep and wake, sleep and wake, as you please, open and close the eyes, as you please, or in the way you find most helpful. (2, 162-163)

Winnie envies her husband who can sleep whenever he wants. “poor dear Willie…sleep for ever…marvelous gift…” (1, 139).

We have seen that Beckett represents an extraordinary, and horrifying state of human condition. Audience is shocked as they witness the merciless fate of Winnie. As Ruby Cohn states:

> The image is immediately arresting, but its cruelty only slowly etches itself upon our consciousness, as our eyes begin to ache in the unrelieved brightness, as we learn that this sun never sets, we watch it victimize Winnie, sinking into her grave.[3]

The audience pities Winnie who is sinking into her grave under a hellish light, and regulated by a cruel bell. The audience not only feels pity, but is also surprised to see Winnie’s hope for survival, courage to go on, and a happy expression on her face. Having

discussed the harsh conditions that Winnie has to endure, let us see how Winnie maintains her hope, strength, and optimism in the midst of her tragic situation.

Winnie witnesses her gradual death as she sinks deeper and deeper into the mound. There is no way for Winnie to escape from her grave. However, Winnie still hopes that the earth may let her go one-day. "And that perhaps some day the earth will yield and let me go, the pull is so great, yes, crack all round me and let me out" (1, 151-152).

Beckett, in *Endgame*, provides a hint that Winnie's dream may come true. At the first sight, mound seems destructive and deadly. However, "dropping grains" in *Endgame*, brightens the play.

> CLOV. (Fixed gaze, tonelessly.) Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. (Pause.) Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there is a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. (93)

Ruby Cohn informs us that Zeno, one of the best-known Eleatic philosophers, showed that "Grains of sand or millet grains can never quite make a heap."[4] The dropping of grains is an infinite process. The grains will never make up a heap. Heap can never be completed. Michael Worton also refers to the grain image in *Endgame.*

> One of Zeno's followers, Eubulides of Miletus, established the sorites (or heap) paradox in which he proposed that there can be no such thing as a heap of sand, since one grain does not make a heap and adding one grain is never enough to convert a non-heap into a heap.[5]

In *Happy Days*, we see the heap in its concrete form. Mound represents the dropping grains. Since the dropping grains can never complete a heap, we may conclude that the mound will never be high enough to cover Winnie completely. Worton draws the same conclusion. "Unlike her predecessors, Winnie would like to go on living and talking, so Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the tortoise would comfort her in that it suggests that she will never be completely covered."[6] Winnie is perhaps right to claim, "some remains." There is a chance that Winnie will not be swallowed completely into the earth.

Winnie not only wishes to be saved from the mound but also prays for a world without an end. She wonders whether the earth has not lost its atmosphere completely. "The earth ball. I sometimes wonder. Perhaps not quite all. There always remains something. Of everything. Some remains" (2, 161). An emmet encourages Winnie's hopes that the world has not come to an end. Winnie, bending her head to the ground exclaims, "Looks like life of some kind!" She looks closer with the spectacles and notices that there is an emmet. "Willie, an emmet, a live emmet!" She inspects it through the glass. "Where's it gone?…Ah! (Follows its progress through grass.) Has like a little white ball in its arms. (Follows progress. Hand still. Pause.) It's gone in" (1, 149). If there are still remains of life and atmosphere in the world, Winnie thinks something will also remain from her.

Besides Winnie's hope, the spectator admires her courage and strength to endure her sufferings. Winnie is aware that her living condition worsens everyday.

> I used to perspire freely. (Pause.) Now hardly at all. (Pause.) The heat is much greater. (Pause.) The perspiration much less. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful. (Pause.) The way man adapts himself. (Pause.) To changing conditions. (1, 153)

However, Winnie is successful to accommodate herself to her changing conditions. She encourages herself to start her day. "Begin, Winnie. (Pause.) Begin your day, Winnie" (1, 138). Despite her dreadful condition, she forces herself to cling on to life: "Keep yourself nice, Winnie, that's what I always say, come what may, keep yourself nice" (1, 156).

Winnie's happy expression, despite her predicament, bewilders the audience. She is mostly cheerful and tries to fend off the sense of bitterness throughout the play. It is ironic that she uses the words "happy," "fine," or "heavenly" to describe her bell-bound day in a blazing light. "Floats up, one fine day, out of the blue" (1, 144). Winnie frequently repeats, "That is what I find so wonderful," "great mercies," and "on."

Winnie neither despairs nor questions her fate. Instead, she believes she has much to be thankful for. She consoles herself that she must not complain because there are "many mercies-great mercies." She hardly ever has pain, only a slight headache. She believes that her living conditions could have been worse. Winnie thinks she is fortunate because she can still speak. Ruby Cohn remarks, "Even as her flesh is baked and buried, Winnie counts her blessings."[7]

It seems that she has been using medicine to maintain her optimism. She brings out an empty bottle of red medicine from her bag and reads the label.

> Loss of spirits…lack of keenness…want of appetite …infants …children …adults…six level…tablespoonfuls daily…before and after…meals… instantaneous…(looks closer)…improvement. (1, 141)

Winnie unscrews the cap of the bottle, swigs it off head, and throws the cap and the bottle towards Willie. She is successful to preserve her strength and courage without the medicine throughout the play. Willie needs the medicine more than Willie does. Unlike his wife, Willie has lost his spirit of life. "-poor Willie-(Rummages in bag)-no zest-(rummages)-for anything-(brings out spectacles in case)-no interest-(turns back front)-in life" (1, 139). Willie rarely crawls out of his hole, reads newspaper, and lies out in the sun.

We see that Winnie is doing her best to endure her tragic fate. She successfully overcomes her predicament and maintains her optimism. Kim draws attention to Winnie's cheerfulness.

> She is a courageous human being who eventually transcends her own predicament in which she is helpless: "No, one can do nothing. That is what I find so wonderful, the way things…things…so wonderful." In the Beckettian, male dominant world, she is a remarkable female character who does not lose liveliness despite her tragic predicament. The conflicts out of her ontological condition cannot disorient her […] her cheerful image in the mound is that of a human being who accomplishes one's best in the midst of one's tragic plight.[8]

We are surprised to see how Winnie can preserve her faith, courage, and joy of life on her way to death. Esslin agrees with Kim, "Winnie's cheerfulness in the face of death and nothingness is an expression of man's courage and nobility."[9]

We should also note that Winnie has different tactics to cope with her tragedy. Winnie endures her sufferings through the items in her bag, Willie, memories, stories, and prayers. Now let us see how she makes her day happy with the help of her resources for survival.

Props…

Winnie relies on her bag and props to endure her bell-bound day. She uses the items in her bag to keep up her looks. Winnie rummages the bag and uses toothbrush, toothpaste, spectacles, hat, mirror, lipstick, comb, brush, mirror, and nail file in order to look beautiful. Living in a mound under a hellish light, in the midst of an unbroken plain, Winnie brushes her teeth, makes up, and inspects herself in the mirror.

As Winnie wakes up with the piercing bell, she takes out the toothbrush and a flat tube of toothpaste from the bag. Beckett describes the way Winnie brushes her teeth in detail in order to show how an ordinary activity like teeth-brushing fills her minutes. "…unscrews cap of tube, lays cap on ground, squeezes with difficulty small blob of paste on brush, holds tube in one hand and brushes teeth with other" (1,139). Winnie tests her upper front teeth with thumb and inspects gums in mirror.

Spectacles, lipstick, hat, and hairbrush also provide Winnie scope of activity and speech. After brushing her teeth, she puts on spectacles, takes the mirror, and paints her lips. According to Andrew K. Kennedy, "The mirror and the lipstick with the poetic names, Ensign Crimson, and pale flag poignantly remind Winnie and the audience of her

faded physical beauty and of the persistence of vanity in his desert."[10] We also notice that she wears a pearl necklace, and a small ornate brimless hat with crumpled feather. While Willie reads the newspaper, she keeps on taking off and putting on the spectacles and the hat. She files her nails, brushes, and dies her hair. She is blonde for preference. Winnie is also concerned about her weight. "The earth is very tight today, can it be I have put on flesh, I trust not" (1, 149).

The things in Winnie's bag can be found in any middle-aged woman's bag except for the revolver.

Ruby Cohn remarks that the revolver signifies a "dark hint of death."[11] Willie gave her the revolver to keep himself from committing suicide: "Take it away, Winnie, take it away, before I put myself out of my misery" (1, 151). The audience also wonders whether Winnie will kill herself. Looking at the revolver Winnie says, "Oh I suppose it is a comfort to know you're there, but I'm tired of you" (1, 151). Death is an alternative to her "happy days" under a hellish light. However, Winnie maintains her cheerful spirit. Like Vladimir and Estragon, who take the rope but do not hang themselves, Winnie plays with the revolver but does not kill herself.

Revolver, a tool for death, becomes just one of the props that Winnie busies herself. As Andrew K. Kennedy states, "revolver has become just another domesticated object, affectionately addressed as "Brownie"-punning on the name and optimism of the poet Browning."[12] Winnie brings out the revolver and weighs it in her palm. "You'd think the weight of this thing would bring it down among the…last rounds" (1,151). She is afraid that she would sink faster with the revolver. Winnie decides to leave the revolver out of her bag and lays it on the ground to her right.

We see that toothbrush, toothpaste, spectacles, lipstick, hat, brush, comb, and revolver accompany Winnie through the day. Now let us see how Winnie regulates the usage of her props and saves the bag for the times when she cannot continue her monologue.

Winnie's greatest fear is to do something too much or too soon. She is afraid that there will be nothing left to do before the day is over.

> Sometimes all is over, for the day, all alone, all said, all ready for the night, and the day not over, far from over, the night not ready, far, far from ready. (Smile.) But not often. (Smile off.) Yes, the bell for sleep, when I feel it at hand, and so make ready for the night-(gesture)-in this way sometimes I am wrong-(smile)-but not often. (Smile off. Resumes tidying) I used to think-I say I used to think-that all these things-put back into the bag-if too soon-put back too soon-could be taken out again-if necessary-if needed-and so on-indefinitely-back into the bag-back out of the bag-until the bell-went. (1, 157)

Winnie is aware that she should not spend her resources extravagantly. She has to allocate the usage of her props and regulate her activities in such a way that there is always something left to do before the bell for sleep.

Winnie reminds herself not to "over do the bag" (1,151). She saves the bag for the times when "words will fail." When there is nothing to say, the bag comes to Winnie's aid and prevents her from despair. The existence of the bag is a blessing for Winnie.

> What now? (Pause.) Words fail, there are times when even they fail. […] What is one to do then, until they come again? Brush and comb the hair, if it has not been done, or if there is some doubt, trim the nails if they are in need of trimming, these things tide one over. (1, 147)

Even though there is nothing to talk about, Winnie is sure that the bag will never fail her. As Winnie busies herself with her hair and nails, she forgets her predicament. The items assist Winnie in her bitter existence.

As we see, commonplace activities of Winnie are juxtaposed with her pathetic physical state. Ben-Zvi remarks, "While her habitual activities are all too familiar and real,

they take place in a setting of surreal horror, a horror Winnie fully recognizes."[13] Winnie tries to convince herself and the audience that there is nothing wrong in her physical state. She acts as if she lives in a normal house with her husband like any other middle-aged married woman. The spectator is amazed to see Winnie concerned with her teeth-care, and make up, while she is stuck in a mound of sand. As Winnie loses her mobility in the second act, she is deprived of her major resource, the bag. She only has Willie and words to occupy herself.

Need of company…

Presence of a company is another factor that helps Winnie endure her sufferings. Like in *Waiting for Godot*, "nobody comes, nobody goes." However, Winnie consoles herself that she is not all alone in the middle of a desert. Even the sounds she hears make her feel that she is not alone in an indefinite place. "Sometimes I hear sounds….But not often. They are a boon, sounds are a boon, they help me…through the day...Yes, those are happy days, when there are sounds" (2, 162).

We see that even sounds can save Winnie from loneliness. We can imagine how important Willie's presence is for Winnie. Her contact with Willie rescues Winnie from her wilderness. Willie is to "her right and rear, lying asleep on the ground, hidden by mound" (1, 138). In the first act, we see the back of his head and his hands. The first thing she does as she begins her day is to call out to her husband with a tender smile: "Hoooo! (Pause. Lauder.) Hoo-oo!...Poor Willie..." (1, 139).

Naturally, Winnie wants her husband to be beside her.

> Do you know what I dream sometimes? What I dream sometimes, Willie. That you'll come round and live this side where I could see you. (Pause. Back front.) I'd be a different woman. Unrecognizable. (Turning slightly towards

> him.) Or just now and then, come round this side just every now and then and let me feast on you. (Back front.) But you can't, I know. (1, 158)

Winnie will be happier than ever if her husband would change his position so that she can see him. She would not feel lonely and isolated if she could see her husband occasionally. Unfortunately, Willie is completely invisible in act two. Since Winnie can no longer turn her head, she has no chance to see her husband until he comes to the front at the end of the play.

Winnie not only wants to see Willie, but also wishes that her husband would look at her.

> Can you see me Willie, do you think, from where you are, if you were to raise your eyes in my direction? (Turns a little further.) Lift up your eyes to me, Willie, and tell me can you see me, do that for me, I'll lean back as far as I can. (Does so. Pause.) No? Well never mind. (Turns back painfully front.) …Oh I can well imagine what is passing through your mind, it is enough to have listen to the woman, now I must look at her as well. (1, 149)

Unfortunately, Willie makes no attempt to look at her wife before the end of the play. He never notices how Winnie makes up, and combs her hair. Willie is not interested in what his wife is doing or talking about. Winnie illusions that Willie cares for her. "Someone is looking at me still. (Pause.) Caring for me still. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful" (2, 160). Ironically, Willie acts as if his wife is not there, stuck in a mound of sand.

Willie neither looks at her wife, nor shows any interest. Even though she cannot see Willie, she is comforted by the fact that her husband is there within earshot. Willie's presence ensures her that she is not talking to herself in the wilderness.

> Ah yes, if I could bear to be alone, I mean prattle away with not a soul to hear. (Pause.) Not that I flatter myself you hear much, no Willie, God forbid. (Pause.) Days perhaps when you hear nothing. (Pause.) But days too when you answer. (Pause.) So that I may say at all times, even when you do not answer and perhaps hear nothing, something of this is being heard, I am not merely talking to myself, that is in the wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do-for any length of time. (Pause.) This is what enables me to go on, go on talking that is. (1, 145)

Even though Willie does not always hear her and talk to her, she is happy that she is not alone. This is what enables her to continue her performance.

There are times when Willie responds to Winnie's speech. Even a slightest movement or response from Willie is enough to make her happy. Even though Willie is mostly silent and sleeping, Winnie feels the presence of her husband. When Winnie drops the parasol, Willie immediately restores it back. He gives her his filthy pornographic card to look at. After Winnie tosses the medicine bottle in Willie's direction, Willie interrupts her speech. Winnie notices that his baldhead is trickling blood. Winnie has a happy expression on her face as she looks at him and advises, "slip on your drawers, dear, before you get singed" (1, 142). Willie even follows the instructions of Winnie as he crawls into his hole. "Not head first, stupid, how are you going to turn? (Pause.) That's it…right round…now…back in" (1, 147). This shows that Willie has been listening his wife.

Winnie gets even more cheerful when she hears Willie's voice. When Winnie asks him whether hair is singular or plural, Willie responds "it." "Oh you are going to talk to me today, this is going to be a happy day!", says Winnie (1, 146). It is a joy for Winnie to hear him laugh with her. Her happy expression increases while she hears a "brief burst of hoarse song without words from Willie" as the musical-box plays the Waltz Duet 'I love you so' from the Merry Widow. Willie also provides information for Winnie. Towards the end of act 1, Willie makes her wife happy just by explaining what a "hog" is, "Castrated male swine. Reared for slaughter" (1, 159). Ruby Cohn mentions that toothbrush "slowly leads toward a kind of damnation."[14] The last word we hear from Willie is "Win." Winnie is extremely happy to hear him call her name. She stars to sing: "It's true, it's true, you love me so" (2, 168).

We see that a certain response from Willie makes Winnie's day happy. She is cheerful when he talks to her. On the other hand, we feel that Winnie wants more than that. Deep inside, she wants to be pretty and desirable in the eyes of Willie. Winnie wonders whether her husband ever found her attractive. "Was I lovable once, Willie…Do not misunderstand my question, I am not asking you if you loved me, we know all about that, I am asking you if you found me lovable-at one stage" (1, 150). Winnie knows that Willie never fell in love with her. She states that she does not inquire Willie about love. Nevertheless, Winnie still wants to draw the attention of her husband.

Towards the end of the second act, Willie comes round to the front of the stage. For the first time, he appears in full view of the audience. Willie's "head appears to her right round corner of mound. He is on all fours, dressed to kill" (2, 166). He advances towards the center and looks up at Winnie. This is an unexpected pleasure for Winnie. She remembers the day when Willie came whining for her hand.

> I worship you, Winnie, be mine. (He looks up.) Life a mockery without Win. (She goes off into a giggle.) What a get up, you do look a sight! (Giggles.) Where are the flowers? (Pause.) That smile today. (Willie sinks head.) …Where were you all this time? (Pause.) Changing? (Pause.) Did you not hear me screaming for you?…Are you thinking of coming to live this side now…for a bit maybe? No? (2, 166-7)

This seems to be the only romantic instant in their marriage life. From that moment on, there has been no sign of love and care from Willie. In *Endgame*, we see that Nagg and Nell can still talk about their happy days and even try to kiss each other. Unfortunately, Winnie cannot communicate with Willie.

Now that Willie is crawling towards her, Winnie hopes that Willie will worship her once again. Winnie is surprised to see him looking at her with a happy expression. "Ah! (Pause. Shocked.) What ails you, Willie, I never saw such an expression…" This is the first time he looks at her with a happy expression since the day in the lake. Winnie's hope

heightens as he starts to crawl up mound towards her. “Is it me you’re after, Willie…or is it something else? (Pause.) Do you want to touch my face…again? Is it a kiss you’re after, Willie…or something else?” (2, 167). Winnie is also afraid of him. She thinks Willie is looking at her for the last time before he kills her. She vehemently says, “don’t look at me like that! Have you gone off your head, Willie?” (2, 167).

As Willie utters Winnie’s name, her happy expression appears again. “Win! Oh this is a happy day, this will have been another happy day! (Pause.) After all. (Pause.) So far” (2, 168). Winnie starts to sing the sentimental waltz from Merry Widow. After the song, Winnie closes her eyes but the bell wakes her up. Her day is not over yet. She closes her eyes to recall her happy days with Willie. Perhaps she does not want to see Willie killing her.

At the end of the play we see them staring at each other. Willie is still on his hands and knees looking up to her. Why does Willie come over to Winnie’s side of the mound? We are not sure whether Willie will kill or kiss her. Maybe Willie wants to say farewell before he commits suicide. The word “so far,” mentioned in the quotation above, also brings note of cynicism and ambiguity to the play. So far, Winnie is happy, but she does not know what is going to happen next. Like *Endgame*, *Happy Days* is ambiguous and open-ended. We will never know whether Willie is trying to get the revolver or reach Winnie. The play “ends in stillness,” as Ruby Cohn remarks.[15] Whatever Willie’s intention is, it is evident that he makes Winnie’s day happy by crawling up towards her.

Words…

Paul Lawley argues that words have the same function as the bag. Like the items in her bag, words also help Winnie occupy herself. Winnie does not use words just to express herself but also as a means to fill the minutes until the bell for sleep.[16] Since Winnie cannot move in the second act, she neither can rummage the bag nor turn her head and see Willie. The bell rings so frequently that it does not let Winnie sleep. Winnie relies completely on her ability to talk. She tells us her memories, and sings song. We see that Winnie's speech is fragmented and often incoherent. It is punctuated by pauses and silences. However, talking is the only thing she can do to pass time.

Winnie needs words not only to busy herself, but also to prevent silence. Silence reminds Winnie of her loneliness. She forgets her solitude and predicament as she talks. In order to break the silence, she continuously talks. Winnie reminds us the tramps in *Waiting for Godot* who cannot stop talking.

> ESTRAGON: In the meantime lets try and converse calmly, since we're incapable of keeping silent.
> VLADIMIR: You're right, we're inexhaustible. (2, 40)

Like Vladimir and Estragon, Winnie is also "incapable of keeping silent." "Something says, stop talking now, Winnie, for a minute, don't squander all your words for the day, stop talking and do something for a change will you?…Do something!" (1, 155). Winnie files her nails for a time in silence but then starts talking again. She attempts to keep silent in act 2, but fails. At one point, there is a long pause while she compresses her lips but gives up the idea. Words are Winnie's and tramps' only weapon against the void. Winnie cannot play Pozzo/Lucky or take off/put on boots like the tramps. Talking is the only activity Winnie can do to assure herself of her own existence.

However, there is nothing much to talk about and no one to have conversation with. The words she can utter are limited. Winnie says, "There is so little one can say, one says it all. (Pause.) All one can" (2, 161). Winnie is afraid that the words will fail her. She is worried that she will have nothing left to say or do before the end of the day.

> Ah yes, so little to say, so little to do, and the fear so great, certain days, of finding oneself…left, with hours still to run, before the bell for sleep, and nothing more to say, nothing more to do, that the days go by, certain days go by, quite by, the bell goes, and little or nothing said, little or nothing done. That is the danger. To be guarded against. (1, 152)

We have mentioned that Winnie has to regulate the use of her props in such a way that she always has something to take out from the bag and busy herself. Winnie also has to regulate the use of her words, so that there will always be something left to say. Winnie always reminds herself that she should not dry up all her resources before the bell for sleep. "the day is now well advanced. (Smile.)…And yet it is perhaps a little soon for my song. To sing too soon is a great mistake, I find" (1, 151). She must always find something to say to resume the struggle. "I can do no more…Say no more…But I must say more... Problem here" (2, 166). Winnie brings up any topic that comes to her mind. "There is so little one can bring up, one brings up all. (Pause.) All one can" (2, 165). She relies on her memories, stories, classics, and prayers in order to continue talking.

Winnie's past is the major resource that keeps her talking. Winnie tells us her memories and her past experiences. This reminds us the "dead voices" in *Waiting for Godot*. Vladimir wonders what the dead voices talk about.

> VLADIMIR. What do they say?
> ESTRAGON. They talk about their lives
> VLADIMIR. To have lived is not enough for them
> ESTRAGON. They have to talk about it.
> VLADIMIR. To be dead is not enough for them
> ESTRAGON. It is not sufficient. (2, 40)

According to Antonia Rodrigues-Gago, "For Winnie, as for "the dead voices" of Godot, living is not enough; she has to talk about it. In a certain sense, their talking is their living."[17] Winnie does not keep her secrets and stories to herself but shares them with the audience. We cannot be sure whether her stories are recalled or invented. Now let us listen to her memories with the Cooker couple and Mildred story.

Winnie tells us her experience with the Cooker couple, "last human kind-to stray this way" (1, 157). Mr. and Mrs. Shower or Cooker approach "hand in hand" and gaze at Winnie who is swallowed by the earth. "The husband voices the audience's objections, the wife gives the author's replies."[18]

> What's she doing? He says- What's the idea? He says-stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground-coarse fellow-What does it mean? He says-What's it meant to mean?-and so on-lot more stuff like that-usual drivel-Do you hear me? He says-I do, she says, God help me-What do you mean, he says, God help you? And you, she says, what's the idea of you, she says, what are you meant to mean?…Why doesn't he dig her out? he says…What good is he to her like that?…Good! she says, have a heart for God's sake-Dig her out, he says, dig her out, no sense in her like that- Dig her out with what? She says-I'd dig her out with my bare hands, he says-must have been man and-wife. (1, 156)

The husband gives voice to the questions and thoughts in the audience's mind. His concern with meaning reminds us Hamm's quest for meaning:

> I wonder. (Pause.) Imagine if a rational being came back to earth, wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough. (Voice of rational being.) Ah, good, now I see what it is, yes, now I understand what they're at! (108)

The Cookers represent the rational beings that Hamm is talking about. Unfortunately, the husband cannot understand why Winnie is half buried in the mound.

The husband is interested in Winnie's physical appearance. "Can't have been a bad bosom, he says, in its day. Seen worse shoulders, he says, in my time" (2, 165). He wonders whether Winnie can feel her legs, and wears underwear. Winnie for a moment wants the couple to leave her alone but abandons the idea. "Drop dead! But no. No no" (2,

165). No matter how vulgar the couple is, Winnie needs them. Then, the couple leaves hand in hand.

In the second act, Winnie tells the story of Mildred. The audience cannot be sure whether this is fictive or real. When Mildred is four or five years old, she has a "fully clothed" new doll. The doll has a straw hat and china blue eyes like Willy. One morning, Milly rose "descended all alone the steep wooden stairs, backwards on all fours, though she had been forbidden to do so, …entered the nursery and began to undress Dolly…Scolding her…the while" (2, 163). Suddenly a mouse climbs up to Mildred's thighs and she screams. Winnie too screams three times as if the mouse is climbing to her things.

Ruby Cohn suggests that Winnie is talking about her own life. Cohn states that Mildred is "Winnie's own name in an earlier draft of *Happy Days*."[19] Before she starts to tell the story of Mildred she says:

> There is my story of course, when all else fails. (Pause.) A life. (smile.) A long life. (Smile off.) Beginning in the womb, where life used to begin, Mildred has memories, she will have memories, of the womb, before she dies…(2, 163)

"Mildred nevertheless reflects Winnie, with whom she shares a taste for clothes and props. Winnie endows Mildred with Willie's mobility, and her dolly with his china-blue eyes."[20] Mildred story adds moments of horror and violence to the play. Ironically, through her stories we see how "happy" Winnie's days are.

Besides memories and stories, classics are also a great resource to find subject to talk about. Winnie likes to allude from her classics. However, she neither exactly remembers nor indicates the source from which she is quoting. She cannot remember her classics word by word. "one loses one's classics. (Pause.) Oh not all…A part remains. That is what I find so wonderful, a part remains, of one's classics, to help me through the day"

(2, 164). We see that she has a defective memory. Winnie's quotations are fragmented like the memories she tells us. Winnie never mentions the author or title of a poem or play. She refers to the literary allusions as wonderful, unforgettable, or exquisite lines. She quotes from Shakespeare, Milton, and Yeats.

As we see, Winnie has different things to do until the bell for sleep. She occupies herself with her bag and props. She has memories to tell, and classics to quote from. Willie's presence is also comforting because she does not feel alone. However, props, words, and her husband are not enough to cover up her desolate situation entirely. There are times when Winnie cannot maintain her cheerful spirit and continue her monologue. Winnie pauses, lowers her head down, and her voice breaks whenever she remembers the days she was young.

> …when I was young and…foolish and…(faltering, head down)…beautiful …possibly…lovely…in a way…to look at. (Pause. Head up.) Forgive me, Willie, sorrow keeps breaking in. (1, 152)

We even see Winnie's eyes with tears once. Sadness keeps breaking in as she witnesses her gradual death. "To have been always what I am-and so changed from what I was," she says (2, 161). Winnie loses her body as the mound sucks her up. Winnie says, "And should one day the earth cover my breasts, then I shall never have seen my breasts" (1, 154).

"The old style" is another reason for the sadness to break in. Whenever Winnie mentions "the old style," she stops smiling.

> What is one to do? (Head down do.) All day long. (Pause. Do.) Day after day. (Pause. Head up. Smile. Calm.) The old style! (Smile off. Resumes nails.) (1, 156)

According to Hwa Soon Kim, "she desperately yearns for some change in her quotidian routine. The old style reminds her of the immutable monotony of her days, which she has to embrace behind her happy smile."[21]

Literature that Winnie quotes from also indicates the sorrow in her heart. Kim states:

> Although she is obsessed with the "happy day" and displays her desperate efforts to be cheerful, she cannot negate the dreadful "something gnawing at" her heart. In fearful solitude, she has to think of death because her mound will eventually become her tomb. In this context, her quotations may be an appropriate emotional outlet.[22]

Winnie's quotations connote woe and grief. Ruby Cohn in *Back to Beckett* provides us the source of Winnie's classics. From *Hamlet* she remembers, "Woe woe is me...to see what I see" (1, 140). She quotes from "Paradise Lost" as she is doing her make up. "Oh fleeting joys-(lips.)-oh something lasting woe" (1, 141). She also refers to "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," "Something something laughing wild amid severest woe" (1, 150). The theme of the quotations and the title are in sharp contrast. The title *Happy Days* becomes more ironic as we read her quotations that imply her tragic life in the mound.

Winnie seems to lose her optimism, and hope in the second act. She no longer can move her hands, and her resources are running out. Winnie used to start and end her day by praying. She thinks "prayers perhaps not for naught" (1, 140). Winnie hopes that God is listening to her. Perhaps prayers can save her from her tomb. Winnie no longer prays in the second act. "I used to pray. (Pause.) I say I used to pray. (Pause.) Yes, I must confess I did. (Smile.) Not now. (Smile broader.) No no" (2, 161). Winnie seems to have lost her faith in God. Her head is full of cries.

> Faint confused cries. (Pause.) They come. (Pause.) They go. (Pause.) As on a wind. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful. (Pause.) They cease. (Pause.) Ah yes, great mercies, great mercies. (2, 164)

Although she lives in a tragic world, she continues to repeat the expressions as, "This is what I find so wonderful," "Another happy day," and "great mercies."

In conclusion, we admire Winnie's strength to endure her physical and mental deterioration. Winnie is gradually sucked down into her tomb. She has nothing to protect herself from the "hellish light." It seems as if she is in an overheated oven. As the mound gets higher, Winnie loses her mobility. The prompter's bell orders her to wake up and sleep. However, she is undaunted by her desolate situation. She is brave enough to face her predicament. She never gives up struggling and loses her spirit of life. "One keeps putting off-putting up-for fear of putting up too soon-and the day goes by-quite by-without one's having put up-at all" (1, 152). Winnie busies herself with her "capacious black bag, shopping variety." She sings, brushes her teeth, and combs her hair with the utmost naturalness. She also consoles herself that she is not alone and talking to herself. Props, Willie, and her memories accompany her in an infinite emptiness. Winnie copes with her harsh and intolerable situation with a smile on her face and cheerfulness. She is successful to make her day happy. The spectator sympathizes with Winnie who is "laughing wild amid severest woe" (1, 150). Hugh Kenner states that *Happy Days* is "Beckett's ambiguous celebration of human persistence [...]."[23]

Notes to Chapter 3

[1] Linda Ben-Zvi, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1986) 155.
[2] Paul Lawley, "Stages Of Identity: From *Krapp's Last Tape* To *Play*," *The Cambridge Companion To Beckett*, ed. John Pilling (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 96.
[3] Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973) 178.
[4] Ibid. 144.
[5] Michael Worton, "*Waiting For Godot* And *Endgame*: Theatre As Text," *The Cambridge Companion To Beckett*, ed. John Pilling (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 80.
[6] Ibid. 80.
[7] Cohn 192.
[8] Hwa Soon Kim, *The Counterpoint of Hope, Obsession, and Desire for Death in Five Plays by Samuel Beckett* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996) 73-4.
[9] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Woodstock, The Overlook Press, 1969) 59.
[10] Andrew K. Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 78.
[11] Cohn 183.
[12] Kennedy 79.
[13] Ben-Zvi 157.
[14] Cohn 183.
[15] Ibid. 178.
[16] Lawley 95.
[17] Antonia Rodriguez-Gago, "Molly's 'Happy Nights' and Winnie's 'Happy Days'," *The Theatrical Gamut: Notes for a Post-Beckettian Stage*, ed. Enoch Brater (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1995) 38.
[18] A. Alvarez, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973) 108.
[19] Cohn 183.
[20] Ibid. 183.
[21] Kim 68.
[22] Ibid. 69.
[23] Kenner 152.

CONCLUSION

Beckett reflects a pathetic vision of man in *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days*. As the curtains go up, the spectator is faced with a bare and stark tableau. The setting and the living conditions of the characters contribute to the gloomy atmosphere of the plays. The crippled, lonely, and helpless characters play their parts in an almost empty stage. Like the mad painter in *Endgame*, all Beckett represents in his plays seem to be ashes.

Waiting for Godot is set on a country road by a tree. Vladimir and Estragon have no family, home, and nothing to eat. The stage of *Endgame* is illuminated with a gray light. It seems that a deadly catastrophe has killed nature and humanity. There is neither sun, nor rain. The gray light and the empty room that the characters live in signify the monotonous, and futile life of the characters. Hamm is blind, and bound to a wheelchair. Clov cannot sit. Hamm's parents, Nagg and Nell, live in garbage cans. They may die of famine because the food in the larder is about to finish. In contrast to *Endgame*, *Happy Days* is full of sunshine. This time, Beckett uses sunshine as a tool of torture. Winnie, imprisoned in a mound, is exposed to an everlasting hellish light. Beckett's characters represent all humanity who suffers from solitude and pain in a chaotic world.

However, Beckett also hints that life would be unbearable if we really believed that there was nothing we could do to overcome the pain and the difficulties we face. As Winnie says, "There is so little one can do. One does it all. All one can. 'Tis only human. Human nature" (1, 145). In the interwar years, Beckett witnessed how human beings do all they can to survive the wars, poverty, and death. Beckett portrays human persistence through his characters. We admire the strength and courage of Beckett's characters to

endure their predicaments. They manage to get through life despite boredom, and pain. They never yield to their tragic fate. We never see death on Beckett's stage. They neither give up their struggles with their predicaments nor commit suicide.

This shows that they still have hope that one day their pain will end. In these three plays, Beckett shows that human beings do not lose their spirit of life, and hope to survive even in the worst circumstances. Even though Godot does not come, Vladimir and Estragon do not lose their faith in him. If not today, he may perhaps come tomorrow. They have nothing left but a hope that Godot may enlighten their lives. As Worton states, Godot "represents hope in an age when there is no hope."[1] Waiting for Godot gives the tramps courage to endure their solitude, poverty, and boredom.

The fact that Hamm and Clov cannot finish the game also shows that they still believe there is chance to win the game. No matter how much Clov insists that the world is dead, Hamm has still hope that nature exists. Living in ashbins, without legs, Nagg and Nell try to kiss each other. In the midst of famine and death, Clov can still dream of an ordered universe.

In *Happy Days*, Winnie tries to live like any other middle-aged women in a mound of sand. It is ironic to see Winnie brushing her teeth, wearing an ornate hat, and filing her nails as she gradually sinks to her grave. She still prays for everlasting darkness and cold. She hopes that the earth may let her go one-day. Winnie is a remarkable female character, who does not lose her liveliness despite her physical situation.

We see that all the characters cling to the hope that their living conditions will change for the better one-day. As Vladimir states, human beings are magicians; they always find something to hope for. This hope keeps the characters from committing suicide. Despite their tragedy, they still have the joy of life to go on come what may.

Beckett mirrors human life in his plays. As we identify with the characters, we suffer and laugh with them. As Zegel states, "Each word acts as the author wishes, touching us or making us laugh […]."[2] It seems that we are watching our own lives full of pain, struggle, hope, and happiness. If all Beckett had seen were nothing but ashes in the world, he would not have created his wonderful works. He must have noticed the loveliness in the world in order to provide a glimpse of light in his plays. The last words of Beckett's novel *Unnamable* summarize an essential aspect of human nature represented in the three plays that have been studied within the scope of this thesis: "I can't go on, I must go on, I'll go on."[3]

Notes to Conclusion

[1] Michael Worton, "*Waiting For Godot* And *Endgame*: Theatre As Text," *The Cambridge Companion To Beckett*, ed. John Pilling (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 71.
[2] Sylvain Zegel, "The First Review At The Theatre De Babylone: *Waiting for Godot* By Samuel Beckett," *Casebook on* Waiting for Godot, ed. Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press Inc, Random House, 1967) 12.
[3] Qtd. in A. Alvarez, *Samuel Beckett* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973) 109.

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