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Man's Continuous Search for Salvation in Beckett's plays: From Arrival in *Waiting For Godot* to Departure in *Endgame*

ABSTRACT

Following an existential point of view, the absurd theatre depicts ideas that seem to have illogical explanation. As a case in point, Samuel Beckett is the most eminent of the absurdist playwrights, in a sense that he deals with the dullness of routine, the futility of human action, and humans' inability to communicate. Beckett who has experienced so much of life became a man with a prophetic vision, and the creator of new concepts of modern theatre. His journey continues after writing *Waiting for Godot* to write *Endgame*. Both plays share the same view that man is living in a world without a clue and placing in a universe with no purpose.

This study provides a framework of Beckett's two absurd plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* elucidated under the umbrella of both existentialism and absurd theatre. It is divided into two sections and a conclusion. Section one deals with the genre of these two plays and the philosophy of existentialism which has its effect on the writings of the modern age. Also, it explains the main features of the absurd theatre and how the modern tragi-comedy is used synonymously with absurd theatre. Section two deals with the game of waiting in *Waiting for Godot*, and the final stage of life in *Endgame*, and how *Endgame* is depicted as the third act of *Waiting for Godot*. It also shows the idea of seeking salvation which dominates the two plays but in different ways. The last part of this study is the conclusion which sums up the findings of the study.

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البحث المستمر للإنسان عن الخلاص في مسرحيات صموئيل بيكت: من الوصول في مسرحية إنتظار غودو الى المغادرة في مسرحية نهاية اللعبة

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الخلاصة:

وفقاً للحركة الوجودية، يصور مسرح العبث افكاراً بتفسيرات لا منطقية. كمثال على ذلك، يعتبر صموئيل

بيكت واحدا من كتاب المسرح العبثي المرموقين، كونه يتعامل مع بلادة الروتين، عدم جدوى افعال الانسان، وعدم قدرة الانسان على التواصل مع الاخرين. أصبح بيكيت ، الذي عاش الكثير من تجارب الحياة ، رجلاً ذا رؤية تنبؤية ، و مبتكر مفاهيم جديدة للمسرح الحديث .تستمر رحلته بعد كتابته لمسرحية **في انتظار غودو** ليكتب مسرحية **نهاية اللعبة** .تتشترك كلتا المسرحتان في طرح نفس وجهة النظر والمتمثلة بأن الإنسان يعيش في عالم بلا دليل واضح ولا هدف معين.

تقدم هذه الدراسة إطاراً لمسرحيتين من مسرحيات بيكيت العبثية وهما **في انتظار غودو** و**نهاية اللعبة** ، والتي تم تقديمهما تحت مظلة الوجودية والمسرح العبثي. تنقسم هذه الدراسة الى قسمين وخاتمة. يتناول القسم الاول الصنف الادبي لهاتين المسرحيتين بالإضافة الى فلسفة الوجودية التي لها تأثير على كتابات العصر الحديث. كما ويوضح الميزات الاساسية واستخدام الكوميديا التراجيدية كمراصد لمسرح العبث. القسم الثاني يتناول لعبة الوقت في مسرحية **في انتظار غودو**، والمرحلة الاخيرة للحياة في **نهاية اللعبة**، كما وتسلط الضوء على ان مسرحية **نهاية اللعبة** هي الفصل الثالث لمسرحية **في انتظار غودو**. كما وتصور هذه الدراسة فكرة البحث عن الخلاص والتي تهيمن على كلا المسرحيتين ولكن بطرق مختلفة. الجزء الاخير يشمل الخاتمة التي تلخص ما توصلت اليه الدراسة.

1.1 Introduction

War, in general, brings destruction. New ideologies, movements, and philosophical schools emerge in order to change the world. As a result of World War II, absurd theatre appeared to present an illogical world through its philosophy. This theatre has its roots in the existential philosophy, which are combined with the dramatic elements to create a new style, which shows the absurdity of the world. This genre of theatre took somehow a long time to settle because its playwrights' techniques seem to be illogical to the theatre world. However, absurd theatre has accomplished its eventual popularity when World War II highlighted the ultimate instability of human life. It reflects the changes that happened in science, psychology, and philosophy in the twentieth century. In addition to that, absurd theatre appears as a reaction of the broken religion in the modern life (Esslin, 1968: 14).

Waiting for Godot reveals Beckett's sense of temporality and the tragic difficulty of becoming aware of one's own self as a result of the changes that happened at that time. It also depicts the hardship of communication among human beings, the uncertainty of everything in the world, and the borderline between dream and waking. The play also deals with hope of salvation, which could be an evasion of the suffering that springs from facing the reality of human condition. *Waiting for Godot* opens vistas on so many different perspectives, such as philosophical, religious, and psychological interpretation (ibid., 60, 67, 69).

In *Endgame*, the audience is confronted with a very powerful expression of the sense of deadness and hopelessness that are represented through the lenses of deep depression. In deeper analysis, *Endgame* seems to represent a person in a world, the outside, that goes dead, but inside his mind there is a ceaseless argument between parts of his personality that have become autonomous or antithetical entities. This is not to say that Beckett gives clinical description of a psychological state but his creative intuition shows the elements of experience and to what extent all human beings carry the seeds of such depression and disintegration within the deeper layers of their personalities (ibid., 69).

1.2 The Term Absurd and Its Features

Literally, absurd indicates lack of meaning, i.e. the meaninglessness of life. Therefore, it seems that there is no way for a man to establish a significant relationship between himself and his environment, thus, he has to live his own life in an alien universe (Eliopoulos, 1975: 40).

Martin Esslin, the Hungarian-born British critic, established the term “Theatre of the Absurd” —during the 1950s and 1960s which was developed by a number of European playwrights— to bring attention to particular features in the works of

specific playwrights. Those playwrights who were classified as absurdist tried to express their sense of perplexity, anxiety, and curiosity in the inexplicable universe. Esslin states that “Absurd originally means ‘out of harmony’ in a musical context” (Esslin, 1968:23). While in common usage, the term absurd simply means ridiculous. Albert Camus (1913-1960), Algerian born French writer, rejected the idea that absurd means ridiculous. For him, it is the existence’s true state (Tan, 2007: 17). Eugène Ionesco (1909-1994), Romanian playwright who wrote mostly in French, in an essay to Kafka, defines the term as follows: “Absurd is that which devoid of purpose.... Cut off from his religion, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, and useless” (Esslin, 1968: 23). Gene Blocker mentions that in modern literature, meaninglessness is described in extremely negative and tragic terms like absurd, ridiculous, futile, disconnected,...etc. It is the perception of absence of anything that could give life its meaning (1974: 102). The absurd theatre is an attempt to search out precisely the equation between man and the world. As a result, man feels the disparity between what he hopes for and what he seems in fact to be.

As a modern movement of art, the absurd theatre is influenced by non-artistic events such as the two World Wars I and II. People's life is destroyed as a result of these wars. As the Second World War ended, people began to react against the horrors of wars and their belief in the human capacity to understand the world and control it has disappeared (Abd-Alwahed, 2008: 12). The two World Wars affect people's belief in God and religion, they suspect everything even God(ibid.). Absurd theatre does not reflect despair or return to darkness, but expresses man’s attempt to come to new terms with the world that he lives in. There is a lot of pressure in the world that seeks to induce man to bear with the loss of faith and moral certainties.

Absurd theatre is not concerned with conveying information about the characters or presenting their destinies, or events, but instead it deals with the presentation of an individual's basic situation. It is the theatre of situation that stands against the theatre of events in sequence (Esslin, 1968: 393). Thus, the absurdist playwrights try to use new techniques, such as the use of illogical plots and characters. Absurd drama has neither plot nor structure in the conventional sense, i.e. cyclical plot – ending where it began, while a traditional play follows structural patterns in which it has an introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and a closure (Wilson and Goldfarb, 2000, 441). Whereas the traditional theatre tries to present life as it is, absurd theater focuses on a mythological world closely related to the world of dreams.

Language in absurd plays is no more a means of communication, it is rather a means to waste time and fills the emptiness. Therefore, Beckett uses silence, repetition, meaningless phrases and laughter in his plays to limit the use of language since it does not fulfill its main purpose. However, Jean Genet (1961: 100) mentions that “It is poetry that Beckett has written — a jeremiad without definite complaints, poetry of fragmentary physical majesty and the minds of questioning anguish, poetry written in the dark and to be read there.” Most critics agree that the following dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir is poetic.

Estragon: All the dead voices.

Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.

Estragon: Like leaves.

Vladimir: Like sand.

Estragon: Like leaves.

Silence.

Vladimir: They all speak at once.

Estragon: Each one to itself.

Silence.

Vladimir: Rather they whisper.

Estragon: They rustle.

Vladimir: They murmur.

Estragon: They rustle.

Silence.

Vladimir: They make a noise like feathers.

Estragon: Like leaves.

Vladimir: Like ashes.

Estragon: Like leaves. (*Waiting for Godot*, 1956, II: 62-63)*¹

In fact, setting is not normal in absurd theatre. Both time and place are not definite. It is opposite to a traditional one. In *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, the setting is a country road and a bare tree, while in *Endgame* it is a bare room described as an absurd place to live in without any possible way to go out. The atmosphere of the setting in both plays shows that the characters are isolated from the society, they lose the ability of locomotion, for example Hamm in *Endgame* is restricted to his wheel chair without being able to move freely. They also suffer from weaknesses in their personalities. By doing this, Beckett reflects the inner reality of his characters who feel that they are impotent, lost, and abandoned. In fact, Beckett by means of characterization and setting, places the reader in a direct confrontation with the question of being and becoming which is the core of existentialism that absurd theatre seeps into.

1.3 The Philosophy of Existentialism

Existentialism is the philosophy that places heavy emphasis on individual existence, freedom and choice. It stresses the individuality and subjectivity of existence, and the problems that arise with existence. Estragon says: "**We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?**" (*Waiting for Godot*, II: 69). Holman and Harmon state:

The existentialist's point of departure is human beings immediate awareness of their situation. A part of this is a sense of meaninglessness in the outer world; this meaninglessness produces in

them a discomfort, an anxiety, a loneliness in the face of human limitations and a desire to invest experience with meaning by acting upon the world, although efforts to act in a meaningless, “absurd” world lead to anguish, greater loneliness, and despair (1986: 193).

Man is totally free since he/she has the decision to choose; yet, also wholly responsible of the result that comes out from his/her freedom and responsibility. Also, freedom to choose something and responsibility may be the sources of intense and anxiety. However, if man accepts his destiny, he will enjoy his life. In his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus affirms that there is an essential struggle between what man wants from the universe and what he/she truly finds in that universe. Human beings will discover the meaning of life either through a leap of faith or through accepting that life is meaningless. *The Myth of Sisyphus*, is a Greek myth, tells the story of Sisyphus who is punished for all eternity. His punishment is to roll a rock up a mountain and when he reaches the top the rock rolls back down to the bottom of the mountain. Camus claims that this punishment represents the human condition. But, as Sisyphus accepts his destiny, his absurd struggle, he finds happiness in it, as Camus claims (Pasaribu, 2010: 2).

In the twentieth century, Existentialism is associated with the thinker Jean Paul Sartre. He was the father and the leading figure of this movement that became influential after World War II. His belief in this philosophy seems pessimistic because he believes that human beings seek a rational basis for their lives since they are futile because of their inability to achieve it. According to existentialists, Existence precedes Essence. This means that first man exists, turns up, shows up on the scene of life, and then after that he is responsible to define himself. Nothing from the outside can determine what he is and what he is good for (Sartre, 1957: 15). Sartre argues that in order to be free one must desire the freedom for all people. Existentialists believe that using other people as objects to satisfy one's desire is self-

defeating. The one who tries to control other people finds himself a slave of his dependence on others that he tries to enslave (Banach, ND: 8).

Existentialism introduces a lot of freedom in thinking that cannot be found in other philosophies. One can make his conclusions and create his answers freely depending on his choice which makes a difference in one's life. According to Sartre and the Existentialists, choice is the most important theme in their writings. What distinguishes Man from other creatures is the freedom to choose. Since a human being does not have a fixed nature as animals and plants do; he/she can make choices to create his/her nature. Consequently, choice is essential to human existence, and it is inevitable. Even the refusal to choose is choice (Yeganeh, 2010: 595-596).

Death is another common theme in almost all existentialists' writings. This theme is associated with the idea of nothingness. Robert G. Olson reflects the existentialist's idea about death saying that man should accept the consciousness of death, anguish and despair that death entails (1962: 194). There is no escape from death; yet, thinking of it causes anxiety. Accordingly, death is the only way to end this anxiety once and for all.

1.4 Tragi-Comedy

Usually, tragi-comedy is a type of drama in which both comic and tragic elements are incorporated. Modern tragicomedy, in some cases, can be seen as absurd drama, which proposes that the only answer left to human being, when he/she is faced with the emptiness and purposelessness of universe, is laughter, as in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*

Modern absurd playwrights determinedly reject the idea of separating comedy and tragedy. Both of them are equal in significance. The main difference between the two forms is that comedy arouses laughter while tragedy draws tears. Modern tragi-

comedy makes one laugh at the thing which hurts the most and weeps at the most foolish things in man's nature (Oliver, 1965: 5-6). Even laughing over jokes is no longer funny. For instance, in *Endgame* when Nagg laughs at Hamm's phrase "**a heart in my head**"* ² (Beckett, 1958: 19), Nell punishes him by saying: "**Nothing is funnier than unhappiness**" (*Endgame*, 20).

Notably, the absurdist playwrights think of life in the light of a tragic joke or a comic tragedy (Oliver, 1965: 8). Beckett puts away the popular literary forms of drama and implies a careful blend of the two forms of comedy and tragedy. From a theatrical point of view, the king of tragedy and the fool of comedy are brought together in Beckett's plays (Keshavarz, 2012: 138). In his plays, he creates moments that one often does not know whether to laugh or to cry at. At the beginning, he announces a comedy and then he changes it into a tragedy. Therefore, the first expectation as a comedy disturbs the audience as they witness the tragic events underlying the meaning of the play. It is the metatheatre*³ that allows to see how the dramatist places a tragic underlying meaning beneath the comic surface of the play (ibid., 139).

In *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, Beckett tries to take the tragic aspects of these two plays into the power of comic theatre. His plays are classified as tragicomedies since he has created "simultaneous engagement and detachment in his audience by using colloquialism and artifice against one another" (ibid.).

Moreover, he maintains a careful balance between the tragic and the comic elements in *Waiting for Godot*. This play moves and disturbs the audience's feelings because it produces the sadness as well as the pleasure. On the surface, the play reads and acts like a comedy, but the comedy covers over terrifying depth of sadness and despair.

The situation in *Waiting for Godot* is tragic, but the characters' response is comic. In this play, the tragic and the comic produce one another. Thus, when one laughs at what is funny, simultaneously laughing at what is tragic. Beckett defines the interaction between the tragic and the comic events in *Waiting for Godot* by Pozzo's speech that sums up the genre of the play as a tragi-comedy (Foster, 2004: 167-169).

Pozzo: 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.

(Waiting For Godot, I: 33)

The aim of an absurd comedy is to present man in a worse state than in actual life. It is hard to imagine characters depicted in a worse state than Nagg and Nell, human waste confined to dustbin; yet, Beckett does this. Also, while Hamm discusses his chronicle, he admits, "**The whole thing is comical, I grant you that**" (*Endgame*, 40). Moreover, the first interaction between Nagg and Nell is a simple humor.

Nagg: Can you hear me?

Nell: Yes. And you?

Nagg: Yes. Our hearing hasn't failed.

Nell: Our what?

Nagg: Our hearing **(Endgame, 18)**

2.1 The Game of Waiting

Throughout life, people always wait for something. Throughout *Waiting for Godot*, on a country road, by a tree, two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, are waiting someone called Godot Godot is a vague and never-defined being, whose arrival is expected to change their life and bring them salvation or, at least,

something will give direction and meaning to their life. On the other hand, Hamm and Clov are waiting the world to end and thus ends their misery.

No one knows who is Godot exactly even Beckett himself does not know. When asked about the identity of Godot, Beckett replied, "If I knew who Godot was, I would have said so in the play" (Deirdre Bair, 1990: 832). In fact, the subject of the play is not Godot, but waiting, since waiting is an essential aspect of the human condition. While people live in this life, they always wait for something, and Godot simply represents the objects that people are waiting for. Thus, everyone has Godot in his life.

It is in the act of waiting that one experiences the flow of time in its purest form. If one is active, definitely will forget the passage of time, but if one is merely waiting, he is confronted with the action of time itself (Esslin, 1968: 49). Vladimir and Estragon live in hope of meeting Godot whose arrival will stop the flow of time. Since they believe that he will save them from instability of the illusion of time, and find peace outside of it, it is worthy to wait. The hope that Godot might come after all is the last illusion that keeps Vladimir and Estragon from facing harsh condition of human life, and to avoid the anguish and suffering that spring from facing reality.

As for Vladimir and Estragon, the more things change, the more they are the same. Vladimir and Estragon used to play many games in order to pass time and to prevent them from thinking of their condition. Vladimir states this fact by saying **"We're in no danger of ever thinking any more..../ Thinking is not the worst..../ What is terrible is to have thought"** (*Waiting for Godot*, II: 64). When Vladimir is about to realize that he has been dreaming, and must wake up to face the world as it is, the Boy, Godot's messenger, arrives to reestablish his hope and soon returns back to his waiting. The hopelessness of Vladimir's situation after the departure of the messenger is stated by Pozzo's words, which explain that the human life is as a gleam between the womb and the tomb. **Pozzo: They give birth astride a grave,**

the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more (*Waiting for Godot*, II: 89).

If it is so, there is nothing but fruitless repetition and no transition can take place. As they continue their endless waiting, Godot seems to be beyond their reach. The sense of endlessness is conveyed by the structure of the play itself, with its two identical acts, and the song of Vladimir, the links of an endless chain of temporality that gives the play infinite expansion in time. There is no hope for them but to wait for Godot to end their misery and get them rest. The final lines in both acts are identical. Vladimir and Estragon repeat, **"Yes, let's go" (*Waiting for Godot*, I& II: 54, 94),** but they do not move. They will be there tomorrow, and after tomorrow, and the day after that, waiting alone with no past and no future.

2.2 The Final Stage

"Finished, it's finished, nearly finished" (*Endgame*, 12), "Clov paradoxically announces the beginning of *Endgame*" (Eliopulos, 1975: 66). It shows the characters' preoccupation with death. Since life is without meaning and devoid of any significance, the characters are mostly made their peace with the idea of death. As the play opens, Hamm is dying in a world which seems to be coming to its end. The play shows the pain of life, and is symbolized by Hamm's painkiller to reduce that pain. He is convinced by the idea that the whole world may fade to nothing. No matter how people play the game of life, the only final outcome is death. They are uncertain of anything in life except death.

While Hamm and Clov are in the endgame of their lives, with death lurking near to them, Hamm claims that he wants to be finished. The characters of *Endgame* are stuck in eternally rigid routines because there is nothing to do while they are waiting for death. Even the environment around them is extinct, as Hamm describes it **"Nothing stir" (*Endgame*, 25).** Everything outside is zero as Clov often reports **"Let's see. Zero....zero and zero"** (ibid.) and the light is forever

grey as Clov says "**Grey. Grey! GRREY!**" (ibid., 26). For Hamm, even death would be preferable to the continuation of their current situation. When Hamm threatens Clov to give him nothing more to eat, Clov seems happy with the idea of being starving to death.

Hamm: I'll give you nothing more to eat.

Clov: Then we'll die. (Endgame, 14)

Such life is not worthy to live, thus, the characters are trying to find a way out of it. The play raises the same questions concerning the benefit of living and the necessity of life while the world is running down. Hamm and Clov ask each other why do not they kill each other? Why should they live anymore? What is the necessity of this life? The world is running down "**Something is taking its course**" says Clov (Endgame, 17). Now the supplies in Hamm's house are running out, everything is about to finish even Hamm's painkiller (Esslin, 1968:63). Clov watches the light dying in his kitchen. The characters almost have no hope for life since death's shade controls everything.

Nell is the only female character in the play. Her death is something unique, which declares the end of breeding. The death of the female character, who is the source of life, makes death the dominant idea in the play and refers to the end of creation. When the source of life dies, nothing is going to be born. Alan Astro affirms that the characters cannot think of or imagine positive change. Basically there is no suspense in *Endgame*, the only thing they could possibly be waiting for is death (1992: 135).

There is a suggestion that *Endgame* may represent different aspects of a single personality. Clov, who represents the intellect, is obliged to serve the emotions, instincts, and the appetites and trying to free himself from his master; yet, doomed to die if they are separated. *Endgame* may suggest the dissolution of a personality

in the hour of death (Esslin, 1968: 65). Hamm prepares himself for his last move as soon as his mother dies and Clov is preparing to leave him. First he has to supply his father with food, then to face destiny without any kind of help, even the objects that used to comfort him in his final days.

The dominant image in *Endgame* is a game of chess. There are four pieces left, the stage, which represents a chessboard, and the repetitive moves that the players go through. It is not a secret that the outcome in the game of life is death, much like the outcome of a chess endgame. In both situations, chess and life, the players or the characters go through their routines, but the outcome will always be the same, regardless of the results of these routines. James Acheson says that “*Endgame* is, in effect, the last part of an on-stage game of chess... Hamm should be viewed as a king threatened by checkmate, Clov as a knight, and Nagg and Nell as either rooks or pawns. Disagreement arises only over the identity of the side seeking to checkmate Hamm” (1980: 33). The chess motif implies Beckett's vision of life as cyclical and recurrent. The play ends with a stalemate and since no one has won the game, they will play again tomorrow.

When Clov looks out of the window for the last time, he sees something unexpected a 'small boy'.

Clov: Looks like a small boy!

Hamm: A small.....boy!

Clov: I'll go and see. I'll take the gaff.

Hamm: No!

....

Hamm: It's the end, Clov we've come to the end. I don't need you anymore.

(*Endgame*, 49-50).

This moment is a turning point in the play since the play has dealt with death from the very beginning. The unexpected appearance of the boy convinces Hamm that the final stage of the endgame has come. He and Clov must part.

2.3 *Endgame* as a Third Act of *Waiting for Godot*

As far as setting is concerned, Beckett chooses simple places with few objects to emphasize his vision about life's absurdity. On the other hand, time is either evening or unknown. The course of time in both plays shows that the characters are waiting for something, which will end their suffering. In *Waiting for Godot* they wait hope, life, and solutions to their problems, while in *Endgame*, they wait for salvation to end their misery through waiting death.

The characters in *Waiting for Godot* are put into an external set, a country road, with a low mound and a bare tree. Without the tree, it is a bare stage. The tree in the first act was leafless; yet, in the second act it has some leaves. This slight change in the tree indicates many symbols. The leafless tree may refer to death, cold, hopelessness, and futile life. While in the second act, there is a change, which may reverse the equation. The leaves refer to life and hope. Though this hope is the thing that keeps the character from giving up, still it is not strong enough to end suffering and misery. In *Endgame* Beckett progresses to enter an inner set, a room with a wheelchair for Hamm, two ashbins for Nagg and Nell, two windows can be reached by Clov through using a ladder to observe the outside, and a door leads to a kitchen which cannot be seen by the audience. The wheelchair and the ashbins show the characters' inability to move in that shelter, except for Clov who can move but with no less painful complications. This setting can be understood as a continuation of the one in *Waiting for Godot*.

The settings of the two plays seem complementary in a sense that one can see the out of the stage in *Waiting for Godot* while in *Endgame* one can see the inside

of the stage. Beckett is very skillful by doing so because one is excited by the characters' entrance in the same way as they exist. Both ways, in and out of the stage, are very important (Worth, 1975: 185). In both plays, the limitations of setting increase the characters' suffering, continuous disappointment, distress, and their abilities are controlled by other forces. Thus, they are disabled (Shalghin, 2014: 103).

What is left hidden in *Waiting for Godot* is developed in *Endgame*. The experience of transition in the former is the sprouting of a tree, while in the latter is the appearance of a small boy. In *Waiting for Godot*, the one who is expected never comes whereas in *Endgame*, in the world which has come to its end and nothing is expected anymore, the unexpected appears (ibid., 133-35).

Clov always threatens Hamm that he will leave him alone because he feels bored from his life with him. If Clov can achieve his threat and master the powerful will to leave, he will not only kill Hamm, but will also commit suicide because there is nothing outside. To live in Hamm's house is the only way left. Thereby, he will succeed where Estragon and Vladimir have failed so often (Esslin, 1968: 62). Hamm and Clov are successors to Vladimir and Estragon since they have met the same fate as couples. Here with the end of *Endgame* Beckett's inevitable journey is completed (Grillet, 1965: 115).

Marzieh Keshavarze (2012: 193) mentions that the characters in Beckett's plays are the playwright's inventions, which are created by his imagination rather by his observation to the world around him. Martin Esslin (1968: 406) adds that the audiences of the absurd theatre are confronted with characters in constant flux and faraway from rational experiences. Hamm and Clov, Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir and Estragon, Nagg and Nell are not characters in the real sense, but they are embodiments of basic human attitudes (ibid., 75). Beckett always uses symbolic characters. The names of the characters in *Waiting for Godot* are symbolic.

Estragon is French, Vladimir is Russian, Pozzo is Italian, and Lucky is English. These names refer to different nationalities and Beckett has nothing to do with the characteristics of these nations, but he is concerned with the condition of the world in which all humanity is involved (Leventhal, 1965: 49). Moreover, the names of Hamm and Clov in *Endgame* refer to hammer and nail. Through this, Beckett could possibly be trying to refer to the nations participating in the war that they cannot build the world, but destroy it.

From the relationship between the slave and the blind master, some critics suggest that Pozzo and Lucky are in their third act in *Endgame*, since it contains a blind master 'Hamm' and a slave 'Clov' (Schneider, 1967: 43). In some plays, when they come to their ends, the number of characters becomes less. Hence, as Beckett progresses from *Waiting for Godot* to *Endgame*, he lessens the number of his characters from five to four.

Akram Shalghin (2014: 106) explains the resemblance between Pozzo and Lucky to that of Hamm and Clov. He says:

In *Endgame*, Hamm's relationship with Clov is like the one Pozzo has with Lucky. Clov is likened to a dog, he comes to his master, Hamm, dutifully whenever the latter whistles, and the master wears a whistle round his neck for this purpose. Moreover, among the stage props there is a stuffed dog, and once, using the plural, Clov hands it to Hamm saying, “**Your dogs are here**” (*Endgame*, 34), referring to himself as a dog. This is embodied even more cruelly, in what Hamm tells Clov that he will give him just enough to keep him from dying. Hence, the linkage between the two is not that of a man to man level, rather it reveals a kind of enslavement. Their closeness to each other, paradoxically, parallels their remoteness from each other.

The characters in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* show typical characteristics of the postmodernist drama. They represent all mankind and they are outcast. They are always classified into pairs of related couples; their relationship is based on a mutual dependence (Demleitner, 2001: 4). Akram Shalghin also agrees that Beckett's characters appear in pairs; yet, they contrast each other physically and mentally. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir is tall, thin, has a stinking mouth, and has problems with his hat and his kidney. However, Estragon is short, fat, has a stinking feet, and has problems with his boots and his weak memory. "In *Endgame*, Hamm cannot stand while Clov cannot sit" (2014: 104). On the other hand, the same characters are linked and complete each other. For example, both Hamm and Clov are linked together, i.e. if one of them leaves the other, without doubt, will die. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon have complementary personalities. It is so vivid that Vladimir is the more practical of the two and Estragon depends on him in almost everything. He helps him to take his boots off, feeds him, tries to protect him, and sings to him in order to sleep. Being complementary in their natures, they cannot be parted and have to stay together (Esslin, 1968: 47). Vladimir speaks as mind while Estragon as body (Cohn, 1965: 171). Hamm, in *Endgame*, also depends on Clov to serve him in different ways since Hamm is crippled and cannot move from his chair. Thus, Clov watches the outside for Hamm, checks on his parents, the time for taking his painkiller, and moves him to the exact point in the room (Shalghin, 2014: 107). Beckett's characters may lose their ability for locomotion and their senses may decay.

2.4 Salvation

Salvation, in religion, means saving the soul from its sins and eventually their consequences. However, if one has already committed sins, he/she has to repent first and confess those sins.

Human beings, by their nature, always seek salvation either by living a stable life and without suffering or by death. Usually, salvation is related to faith in God. If this faith is broken, somehow, the relationship between Man and God is broken too. In Beckett's plays, salvation means being saved or protected from harm or awful conditions. Martin Esslin believes that what makes Vladimir and Estragon waiting for salvation is their faith. They have an appointment with the saviour. For Esslin this grants them superiority over Pozzo and Lucky who believe in the illusion of reason and wealth, while Vladimir and Estragon see the absurdity of life (1968: 37). Standing on a country road for days and may be weeks just to meet Godot, who supposed to bring solutions and cure their continuous pain, shows Vladimir and Estragon's hope that Godot will come tomorrow. Even the tree in the second act indicates hope with four or five leaves. Lucky in the first act lost his hope because of Pozzo's decision to sell him in a fair. When they come back in the second act, Pozzo is blind and Lucky is dumb, but they are still together. Pozzo could not get rid of Lucky because he needs him more than before. Although the situation is disturbing for both of them, it gives hope to Lucky that his master will never give him up. The sense of patience and hope prove their strength in the second act through Pozzo's speech when Vladimir questions him:

Vladimir: What do you do when you fall far from help?

Pozzo: We wait till we can get up. Then we go on. On! (*Waiting for Godot*, II: 89)

Vladimir, on the other hand, realizes the game of waiting in the second act.

Vladimir: You have a message from Mr. Godot.

Boy: Yes Sir.

Vladimir: He won't come this evening.

Boy: No Sir.

Vladimir: But he'll come tomorrow.

Boy: Yes Sir.

Vladimir: Without fail.

Boy: Yes Sir.

Silence.

(Waiting for Godot, II: 91)

But he knows that they have to wait otherwise Godot will punish them. Jing Wang (2011: 199-200) confirms, “Waiting is a process God added for man’s salvation. Suffering means tasting the life. Human beings learn to love others in this process. Furthermore, the tramps’ help to Pozzo shows the fraternity among people. Human beings are changing towards what God want them to be”.

Vladimir:

Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed.... But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us!

(Waiting for Godot, II: 79)

Salvation in *Endgame*, on the other hand, remains the decision of the characters themselves. Clov decides to take risk and search for his salvation outside the closed room, while Hamm believes that there is no salvation better than death, and death is coming soon. He feels comfortable when he hears Clov saying that everything out side is grey and nothing moves.

Clov: Never seen anything like that!

Hamm (anxious): What? A sail? A fin? Smoke?

Clov (looking): The light is sunk.

Hamm (relieved): Pah! We all knew that.

Clov (looking): There was a bit left.

Hamm: The base.

Clov (looking): Yes.

Hamm: And now?

Clov (looking): All gone.

Hamm: And the sun?

Clov (looking): Zero.

Hamm: But it should be sinking. Look again.

Clov (looking): Damn the sun.

Hamm: Is it night already then?

Clov (looking): No.

Hamm: Then what is it?

Clov (*looking*): **Gray.** (*Lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, louder.*)
Gray! (*Pause. Still louder.*) **GRRAY!** (*Pause. He gets down, approaches Hamm from behind, whispers in his ear.*)

Hamm (*starting*): **Gray! Did I hear you say gray?**

Clov: Light black. From pole to pole. (Endgame, 25-26)

Yet, he feels disturbed by a flea. He is afraid that life may spring again from this flea. Ulrika Maude confirms that Beckett collapses the neat line between man and a parasitic flea (2013: 82).

Clov (*anguished, scratching himself*): **I have a flea!**

Hamm: A flea! Are there still fleas?

Clov: On me there's one. (*Scratching.*) **Unless it's a crab louse.**

Hamm (*very perturbed*): **But humanity might start from there all over again!**

Catch him, for the love of God! (Endgame, 27)

Beckett raises many questions to show how people lost their faith in God, with no definite answer.

The moment of catastrophe, in Beckett's plays, which takes place before the start of the play, is no more than birth itself – for which a life of suffering begins would be just the 'expiation'. "If birth is catastrophic in Beckett, it is not because it initiates 'existence'... but... more precisely because failing to take place properly... birth initiates... something less than life" (Weller, 2005: 113). In both plays, Beckett depicts how life does not offer simple choices to live in. Indeed, it grants failure more than success. Nonetheless, people in the modern era have hope but it is still so faint.

Conclusion

Absurd theatre flourishes in the aftermath of World War II, as a revolt against religious, political, and cultural values where man is alienated, lost, enslaved, and left without any sense of value. Writers of the modern age try to make a difference through portraying the ugliness of life after the war and that no one is safe, even those who live in shelters.

Beckett concentrates, in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, on the existence of human being and the absurdity of life. These plays are considered as the best examples of the theatre of absurd and existentialism in the 20th Century. In both plays life is presented as meaningless and illogical. *Waiting for Godot* visualizes the triviality of the modern age through depicting two tramps standing in nowhere by a bare tree. They are waiting eagerly for something to happen and at the same time realizing that nothing will come out of this waiting, yet they believe that there is no escape from waiting. Beckett uses Godot as a symbol of waiting, salvation, and punishment for non-believers. Also, he uses language smartly in parallel with the characters' situations and personalities. Since they are weak, alone, crippled, and broken, language is broken too. It is full of silence, clichés, mimics, repetition, and incomplete sentences. The plot is cyclical, starts where it ends, and tomorrow will be the same as today, implying that the characters will never change.

In *Endgame* Beckett restricts his characters and imprisons them in a room where they await their final destiny, death. Though Hamm is confined to a wheelchair, he has the power over Clov, his servant, and his parents who are imprisoned in trash cans. The characters lose the ability of locomotion except for Clov, who can move though, ironically, unable to sit. In both plays Beckett's characters are trapped, whether in an open area or in a room. He balances between waiting and disability to show the incompetence of human beings. They are waiting for salvation either through solving their problems and granting them hope, or through death. Thus, there is a continuity of searching for salvation starts with *Waiting for Godot* and ends with *Endgame*, no matter what that end will be.

Though absurd theatre presents the gloomy side of life, man should not restrict himself with what it is given to him especially if it is not suitable. For example, if waiting is what life offers, one should break that waiting and set out to find freedom and search for a better life than the one is trapped in, otherwise

human beings will be just like Vladimir and Clov, without identity, privacy, or self-esteem. Salvation is within one's self.

Margins

¹*Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*. London: Faber and Faber, 1956. All other quotations of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* are from this edition and henceforth are parenthetically cited within the text by the title of the play, Act and page number.

²*Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*. London: Faber and Faber, 1958. All other quotations of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* are from this edition and henceforth are parenthetically cited within the text by the title of the play and page number.

³* Metatheatre is a term coined by Lionel Abel to define “a comparatively philosophic form of drama” of conscious nature. He argues that the hero remains “conscious of the part he himself plays in constructing the drama that unfolds around him” (2003: 167). Richard Hornby explains five techniques that may be shown in metatheatre. These include, “the ceremony within the play, role playing within the role, literary and real life reference, self-reference of the drama, and play within the play” (1986: 32). The device of the play within a play is presented in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, “The Murder of Gonzago”.

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