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Department of Western Languages and Literatures

Senior Thesis

The Elements of Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism in Samuel Beckett's Five Plays:  
Waiting for Godot, Endgame, Krapp's Last Tape, Play, Not I

Şebnem Nazlı Karalı

2008200036

Senior Thesis Advisor Prof. Dr. Aslı Tekinay

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## INTRODUCTION

This study aims to examine how Sartre's existentialism is employed in Beckett's plays: *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Play*, and *Not I*. Throughout, the elements of existentialism in Beckett's world are explored and combined with Sartre's ideology. Philosophy and literature are not such different areas that they are thoroughly intertwined. It would be quite pertinent for philosophy to show and develop its concepts in literature; therefore, analogically, Sartre attempts to find a voice for his views in plays and novels in order to inquire his concepts. The focal point of this article is his *existence* in Beckett's plays.

Traditional philosophy sets its foot on the thinking subject and develops epistemologically while existential philosophy sets off the journey with the existing subject; a particular subject who is involved in a particular situation and develops ontologically. My aim is to get underneath the general statements of the Absurd Theatre, concentrating on the plays of one of the pioneering and influential voices of Absurdism: Samuel Beckett.

The essence of the essay is not only the influences of Sartre's existentialism on Beckett's literature. It aims at *Weltanschauung*, a German word used to embody the differences and resemblances of both fields. Philosophy sheds light on literature while literature brings philosophy out into the open and enlightens it.

The individual turns into himself immediately aftermath of the World Wars which bring about depression and anxiety. The ideology of existentialism concentrates on the discordance

between the individual and the world he occupies. A clear-cut definition of existentialism can not easily be made as the philosophers who are considered to be existentialist deny that they belong to the existentialist ideology and claim that their thoughts differ from each other in every angle. Yet, the starting point of existentialism can be considered as the desire to revolt against the traditional philosophy, the idea of belonging to a certain *école* or *school*. On the contrary, the emphasis is on the utmost individualism. Sevda Şener asserts:

There is not a concordant and systematic consciousness of the universe. Everything is random and purposeless. Human beings observe themselves in a chaos.

Therefore, it is impossible to produce logical explanations about the world. The only thing that a human being does know is his existence. The features of the existence is not predetermined. The human being acts according to his qualifications and realizes himself. (Şener 298)<sup>1</sup>

The so-called existentialists are divided into two groups: clerical and atheistic. The Christian existentialists are Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard, Swiss theologian Karl Barth, German Protestant theologians Paul Tillich and Rudolph Bultmann, German philosopher Karl Jaspers, French philosophers Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Mounier, Pierre Boutroux, and Henri Bergson, Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, British Anglican theologian John Macquarrie, American theologians Craig J. N. de Paulo and Lincoln

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<sup>1</sup> Translation from Turkish

Swain, American philosopher Clifford Williams, and Russian philosophers Nikolai Berdyaev and Lev Shestov. On the other hand, Atheistic existentialism includes French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, German philosopher Martin Heidegger. The masterpiece of the Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, paved the way for the recognition of existentialism with its publication in 1943 and it is the rudimentary reference of this study for the Beckett's plays.

The difference between the Christian and Atheistic existentialists is the former admits the substantial and continuous parts of the traditional philosophy and creates a synthesis between those parts and their ideology whereas the latter completely denies the traditional philosophy. However, either section of existentialists puts an emphasis on the concrete existence of the human being and necessitates departure from this concreteness in order to transcendence one's own existence, alias Ego. The existentialists firmly believe that human being is free in terms of his choices. He is free in the process of realization of his own existence, yet he is responsible for the choices he makes and for the actions he makes in this process, as well. Therefore, the individual carries the uttermost significance for the existentialists. They choose literature, especially theatre for the individual to express himself because the individual should communicate freely while he is actualizing a free existence in his freedom of choice.

The content of Beckett's plays which include existential elements can be *absurd*, yet stylistically they have almost the same structure as classical plays. The characters or the agents always deal with inner conflicts accompanied by self-contradictions and oppositions.

The characters and death sit tête-à-tête. They commit offenses, they are all alone, and they survive rebelling against the values of the world. In this meaninglessness, they search for the ways to realize and justify themselves. Pointedly, the problems are approached individually, however, they all belong to the humanity. They sometimes appear in certain patterns as they are the pioneering voices of a philosophical expression. In order to become more interesting and persuasive, the characters are beset with allegories and the grotesque. Nevertheless, figurative narration does not corrupt the sense of reality of the events.

In the first chapter, the essence of Sartre's existentialism is explored and examined in Beckett's plays. In the second chapter, the production of Beckett's reduction, namely the Irreducible, is discussed in relation to Sartrean world. In the conclusion part, the relationship of Beckett and Sartre is summed up with their striking resemblances and considerable differences.



## 1. Sartrean *pour soi* and Beckett

Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre was born in Paris, France in 1905. He was the only child of an officer of the French navy, Jean-Baptiste Sartre, and Anne-Marie Schweitzer. In the 1920s, he was influenced by Henri Bergson's essay, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Then he began to study philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure, a very famous institution of higher education from which many eminent French intellectuals and thinkers graduate. Influenced by Western philosophy, he adopted ideas from Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Meanwhile, his weekly attendance at the seminars of Alexandre Kojève founded the building blocks of his philosophical strain.

Sartre points out that Existence is prior to essence, which is to say consciousness requires an object to fulfill its function: to be conscious *of*. That is why consciousness is not a being-in-itself but it is more of a being something other than being-in-itself with its movement towards Existence. The question rises: What is a conscious mind conscious of? The answer is: Being.

The Being is something or anything that we can state it *is*. It does not require something other than itself to exist, hence it is positive and self-sufficient. It is in-itself, the *en soi* in French. Logically enough, a conscious mind which is not a being-in-itself and only itself as it requires a being-in-itself, i.e. the *en soi*, is conscious of the *en soi*. So, conscious cannot be a

being at the point it becomes conscious *of* because if it were a being, it would not be conscious of a being. What is the negative of a being? Nothingness. It is the only alternative to a being.

Consciousness is a void, it is nothing, nothing at all, coined as the *pour soi*. Retreating back and likened to Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, Sartre puts a differentiation between the *en soi* and the *pour soi*. As stated above, the *en soi* is the subject of consciousness while the *pour soi* is *ce trou d'être*, i.e. a hole of being. However, it is somehow awkward to think about the way that nothing or a void exists. How can a hole exist if it is a void? It does exist as long as it leans on the *en soi*. The *en soi* is self-sufficient whereas the *pour soi* should use the self-sufficiency of the *en soi* to survive with its self-insufficiency. Mind fills its own void with being-other-than-itself, subject/object of consciousness.

To claim “Here I am” requires the fact that “Here I am, conscious of something, something that it just is”. There would be no mind if there were no existence of something, yet there would still be something if there were not mind which is not something. How can a hole of being be filled? Until the moment of death, it cannot be filled. The moment of finality is a necessity for the *pour soi* to transubstantiate into the *en soi*. Consciousness of mind withdraws to its negativity differentiating from things as well as being conscious *of them*. Withdrawing towards negativity is an action and action is a responsibility of nothingness. Being does not need to act as it is already a being, no condescension to act towards positivity

is realized. Nothingness relates itself to being and creates negative bonds with the *en soi*.

Exemplification by a dialogue:

**Table:** I am a table.

**Mind:** I am *not* the table.

The dialogue shows that the mind dissociates itself from the table and puts the chair in the positive category and itself in the negative category uttering “*not*”. Therefore its relation to the table is in its negation of the table. It makes itself negative while making the chair positive in only one sentence with only one word “*not*”. We should also take into consideration the fact that the *en soi* can exist by itself, yet cannot know itself unless there exists nothingness. Through this, nothingness separates being from being because it is nothingness that introduces the being to itself. “Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being-like a worm”(Sartre 21).

The complication of nothingness increases with the premise that nothingness is not itself.

The *pour soi* exists as a non-being negating the object of consciousness. Nothingness dissociates from itself by itself. A void is divided into two parts by its nothingness.

Nothingness cannot be something. If we defined the *pour soi* as nothingness, it would become the *en soi*. When we turn back to mind, mind knows itself as the *en soi*. It looks at itself as being objectified. Therefore, ego is objectified and mind observes an objectified self. In this way, ego is not consciousness but one’s vision of oneself. Oneself is observed from outside and the acquired observation is what mind takes as itself. Then, what does self-consciousness

mean? It proves itself as a non-being as it tries to be itself more because it becomes conscious of itself. The object of consciousness does not matter anymore as long as there is an *of* after *conscious*. Obviously, consciousness tries to fill its void with itself. Consequently, it differs itself from itself through the process of filling. “Self-consciousness represents a failure on the part of the *pour soi* to coincide with itself, to be itself” (Dobrez 66).

By being conscious of something, mind or consciousness has already announced its own nothingness. By being conscious of itself, it acknowledges its own nothingness being torn apart. If it becomes conscious of itself, it is the *pour soi*. If it becomes conscious of *itself*, it is the *en soi*. As explained above, it cannot be the *en soi* because of its necessity of the *en soi*. Hence, it proves its emptiness once more by making the object of consciousness *itself*.

The activity of the *pour soi* is a total requirement for the *pour soi* to exist, or else it would turn into the *en soi* if it were standstill. It incessantly changes its course, therefore it is nowhere. It escapes from everything and even from itself: it is itself this escape. Sartre coined this as the *contradiction of the pour soi*; the *pour soi*, by its very nature, has no chance to *be*, yet it tries to be leaning on the *en soi* from which it escapes at the same time. If I want to become a teacher, the moment I become a teacher relates myself to my past, not to the present. Hence, it is impossible to make a bridge between the *en soi* and the *pour soi*. We are all trying to be God who is beyond the time and place: we, as the *pour soi*, want to be the *en soi* as well as the *pour soi* because we want to be conscious of. Our attempt is to bring being

and nothingness together, which is a futile aim. God is the one who *is* and *knows* therefore “man is a useless passion” (Sartre 615).

The Irreducible of Beckett is sine qua non of his plays: the part that remains in our hands when we get rid of all the inessential in the plays, and the part that cannot be reduced anymore when all parts are diminished to nothing. Therefore, the remaining part is completely essential and necessarily there. It is a being-nothing which has its roots in Sartrean *néant*. As for the resemblances between the *pour soi* and the Irreducible, they both need to be supported by the *en soi*. The *pour soi* negates its connection to the *en soi* even though it exists thanks to the object of consciousness it denies- remember, “I am *not* the table”. Likewise, the Irreducible sinks in when it realizes it is nothing. The Irreducible and the *pour soi* have only one chance to exist: pretension. They pretend to be as they cannot be something. Ego looks at itself from outside, so it is constituted in bad faith. We are our own attempts to be the *en soi*. If I were a student, I would not be conscious of the fact that I am a student. I just pretend to be a student, to be a student is the role I perform. My self is something when I get the reflection of myself. It is not myself anymore, it becomes the *en soi* to which I try to reach.

The notion of freedom thoroughly exemplifies the worlds of Beckett and Sartre. In Sartre’s philosophy, man is totally free: consciousness is a void, a void is nothing, nothing cannot determine anything. The *pour soi* cannot be determined because it has a spontaneous nature. Existence comes before Essence, that is I exist before I am, I am what I do. The *en soi*

cannot determine the *pour soi* which has negative bonds with it. Likewise, the present cannot be determined by the past. Each and every moment gives birth to a new version of mine, which allows for various opportunities to be free. The future determines the present not the past does so. In brief, freedom is consciousness, consciousness a void, a void nothingness, nothingness freedom which is future, as well. Nonetheless, freedom requires its negative alternative, i.e. barrier otherwise there cannot be a concept of freedom. This is called *facticity of freedom* as Sartre calls. I am to exist, I have to be, I cannot choose not to be. I have to be free. Freedom is not under my control, hence “ma liberté ronge ma liberté- freedom eats away my freedom.” (Sartre 480). It resembles Beckettian world of compulsions: Pozzo’s brutality towards Lucky and the mysterious existence of Godot who makes Didi and Gogo wait in *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm’s unshakable dominion over Clov in *Endgame*, the ‘she’ which urges the mouth to talk endlessly in *Not I*, the quick transition of inquisitive light from one character to another in *Play*. What strikes us is that these characters are not free *not to be* or *not to be free*. Therefore, it does not matter the fact that Vladimir and Estragon decides to stay or to go because what matters is that they are already forced to exist, to be.

Another aspect that is worth to be mentioned is the contempt the characters feel for materiality, reproduction, and flesh. In *Endgame*, flea and rat are trying to be destroyed because of the fear that the humanity will start once again. Also Hamm shouts at Nagg: “Scoundrel! Why did you engender me?”. Ironically, the only character that experiences a

finality is Nell the mother in the whole play:

**CLOV** (returning to his place beside the chair): She has no pulse.

In spite of being a void and fear of reproduction, they are supposed to exist. They, as the *pour soi*, survive leaning on the *en soi*. The facticity of the *pour soi* lies in its need of the *en soi*. As the *pour soi*, consciousness is forced to exist. I was born in a certain place, I have a past, I have a body, I am a teacher etc. These are all the *en soi*. My being a teacher is my facticity as I cannot be reverse or anything else. This indicates that the *en soi* does not necessarily exist, it just exists, it just is. If I lean on the *en soi* which is unwarranted, I feel *de trop*- gratuitous as Sartre calls. This is Sartrean nausea: “a dull and inescapable nausea . . . reveals my body to my consciousness” (Sartre 338). Yet, Vladimir and Estragon feel gratuitous not because they lean on the unwarranted *en soi*, but because they do not want to *be*. The cry is for the attainability of nothingness, which does not occur.

### **1.1. *Not I***

*Not I* (1972), even the title is very telling, represents a deception of oneself repeated four times in the play: “...what?...who?...no!...she!...(pause and movement 1)” (Beckett 594).

The “four brief movements” (Beckett 592) appear after this denial of self and towards the end the mouth utters for the fifth time “...what?...who?...no!...she!...SHE!...(pause)” (Beckett 603) and no movement is observed. The motionless mouth, which belongs to the female

protagonist of *Not I*, urges us to believe what it says: “*Not I am* but *she is* the one who experiences the story that I have told.” Hence, the female protagonist dissociates herself from the experiencer as the mind dissociates itself from the table. The mouth creates the *en soi*, *she* as it calls, and makes itself the *pour soi*.

The disembodied mouth to which a whole body is reduced makes-up to conceal itself, to be far away from what is told, what has happened, what it has been. The *pour soi* of Sartre is the consciousness of mind whereas the Irreducible of Beckett locates itself not even in the field of consciousness but underneath of it. The protagonist *rejects* she is the experiencer, the patient of what has happened, that is she rejects being conscious of the story. If the *pour soi* is the negative alternative of the positive *en soi*, the Irreducible is much more negative than the *pour soi* itself.

One of the striking aspects of *Not I* is the fact that at one point she realizes she is not really suffering:

as she suddenly realized . . . gradually realized . . . she was not suffering . . .

imagine! . . . not suffering! . . . indeed could not remember . . . off-hand . . . when she

had suffered less . . . unless of course she was . . . meant to be suffering . . . ha! . . .

thought to be suffering . . . just as the odd time . . . in her life . . . when clearly

intended to be having pleasure . . . she was in fact . . . having none . . . not the

slightest . . . in which case of course . . . that notion of punishment . . . for some sin



or other . . . or for the lot . . . or no particular reason . . . for its own sake . . . thing  
she understood perfectly . . . that notion of punishment . . . which had first occurred  
to her . . . brought up as she had been to believe . . . with the other waifs . . . in a  
merciful . . . [Brief laugh.] . . . God . . . [Good laugh.] . . . first occurred to her . . .  
then dismissed (Beckett 594-95).

The phrases ‘‘meant to be, thought to be, intended to be’’ are the fundamental ones which  
support the roles we perform in everyday life as well as Sartrean Ego/Self constructed in bad  
faith. We get pleasure from something in our lives. Is it because the thing is pleasurable or is  
it because we are meant to get pleasure from the things which are not pleasurable at all? There  
is an implication of a role put on us. We play at being satisfied, getting pleasure.

Consciousness seems to be its own tormentor as the mouth talks about an eternal  
punishment, which is her eternal speech. This again brings us to the identity of the divided  
voice who speaks in the first person singular, I, for third person singular, she. There is an  
insistence of the mouth that it is not speaking of ‘‘I’’. It is encouraged as a voice of a female  
protagonist and tells her words. It underlines this fact throughout the play claiming its own  
story is not its own story but hers. This is why the voice is unidentifiable. The question  
‘‘Whose voice is this?’’ remains in the audience’s mind and does not bring them to a moment  
of satisfaction.

## 1.2. *Waiting for Godot*

*Waiting for Godot* (1948-49) is a play which is “striving all the time to avoid definition” (Graver and Federman 10). We do not arrive at a certain conclusion just as Godot never arrives at the meeting place. Analogically, Godot and the play itself have the same function: to defer any ending. In this state of suspension, two tramps want to be sure of the existence of the other: i.e. Vladimir of Estragon in their infinite existence: They are condemned to exist within their free choice of waiting. Estragon justifies his existence with the help of his speech and movement. Beckett seems to be influenced by Bishop Berkeley, who is an eighteenth century philosopher and who asserts that “Esse est percipi - To be is to be perceived” (Worton 72). This can overtly be observed in the speech of the characters. Vladimir presents his joy in *Waiting for Godot*:

**VLADIMIR:** So there you are again.

**ESTRAGON:** Am I?

**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 (Beckett 370).

They need each other in their desperate suspension as their appointment with Godot never actualizes in both acts. Ironically enough, they have no idea about Godot with whom they

have an appointment. Supposedly he has a white beard and has sheep and goats as the boy says. However, he has a certain function even though he does not have an action in the whole play: Vladimir and Estragon are endlessly waiting for Godot to arrive. This is the purpose of their life: a life that ends up with futility. The self is made up of shattered pieces of self. Once the desire of one self is fulfilled, there comes that of another self. Apparently, it is an endless journey. To exemplify, the boy does not give an answer when Vladimir says “You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me tomorrow that you never saw me!”(Beckett 473). Furthermore, Estragon does not recognize Pozzo and thinks he is Godot. Hence, we are always confronted with layers of identities, selves, or beings. This makes our future-oriented lives even more worthless and futile. Vladimir and Estragon, departing from their individual anxiety, talk on behalf of the humanity: we are always waiting for our desires to be realized and in order to spend the time during we fill our days with meaningless routines during the process of waiting. However, Godot will not arrive at our meeting place, the reality from which we intentionally avoid to confront. Unconsciously, we kill ourselves while we watch the time passing by. The flow of time is felt in the act of waiting, otherwise we forget that the time is passing if we are engaged with something. Death is an inexorable fact that slaps in our face since the very first moment of our death. Neither Vladimir nor Estragon is aware of this fact, they are already uncertain about anything except Godot, anyway:

**ESTRAGON:** We came here yesterday.

**VLADIMIR:** Ah no, there you're mistaken.

**ESTRAGON:** What did we do yesterday?

**VLADIMIR:** What did we do yesterday?

**ESTRAGON:** Yes.

**VLADIMIR:** Why . . . (*Angrily.*) Nothing is certain when you're about.

**ESTRAGON:** In my opinion we were here.

**VLADIMIR:** (*looking round.*) You recognize the place?

**ESTRAGON:** I didn't say that.

**VLADIMIR:** Well?

**ESTRAGON:** That makes no difference (Beckett 377).

Their problem is how they tackle with being-in-time. Death, as an event, is impossible in the play, but death, as a process, occupies the play because it is our only reality. Pozzo asserts “One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Calmer.) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (He jerks the rope.) On!” (Beckett 470).

As for the relation to Sartre's ideology, Vladimir and Estragon exist and they are conscious of Godot even though “it is mainly Vladimir who voices the hope that Godot will come and that his coming will change their situation, while Estragon remains skeptical

throughout and at times even forgets the name of Godot'' (Esslin 27). Nevertheless, they are complementary figures and have to stay together as they are obviously dependent on each other. Godot is the positive and self-sufficient being, alias the *en soi*. If Vladimir and Estragon are conscious of their meeting with Godot, they cannot be a being at the very moment that they become conscious of Godot. If they were a being, they would not be waiting for Godot of whom they are conscious. Now that the negative of being is nothingness, Vladimir and Estragon end up with nothingness just as their life does so. They wait for Godot whose self-sufficiency makes them wait, hence they attempt to survive with their self-insufficiency:

**ESTRAGON:** Well, shall we go?

**VLADIMIR:** Yes, let's go.

*They do not move* (Beckett 427).

Their freedom of choice brings them to the minimum of action, so-called waiting. Their fear of departure from stasis implies the fact that they rely on the *en soi* to live as the *pour soi*. Movingly, neither death nor Godot seems to never come even closer, thus no transition of the *pour soi* into *en soi* is actualized. They are holes of being and their void will never be filled.

### **1.3. Endgame**

*Endgame* (1957), a play of diminishing cycle, involves the desperate desire of death which is never to come. Death is immediately outside but does not stop by the "claustrophobic

interior” (Esslin 40). Like Pozzo and Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm appears as the king and a ham player whereas Clov as the pawn. Even though Hamm is the so-called master of the household who is socially superior, the tension is all about whether Clov is going to leave Hamm or not. Clov is much stronger than Hamm because Clov is the one who makes Hamm’s existence possible. Hamm’s anxiety and fear of Clov’s absence is implied through his apprehensive questionings:

**HAMM** (violently): Then move!

(Clov goes to back wall, leans against it with his forehead and hands.)

Where are you?

**CLOV**: Here.

**HAMM**: Come back!

(Clov returns to his place beside the chair.)

Where are you?

**CLOV**: Here.

Loquacity demonstrates an unconcealed need for getting and giving a hug under which the notion of pity is implied:

**HAMM**: ... 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 you.

Friendship seems to include a necessity in which both parts surrender each other because of their inevitable dependency on each other: Clov has nowhere to go while Hamm no one to keep. As a consequence, they stay together with no hope in their hearts.

The fact that time exists is undoubtedly agreed as through time the characters become decrepit. However, the notion of time as a continuum is not perceived enough in the plays. Each and every day resembles each other without a sense of finality accompanied by a desire of an end. Godot is expected to arrive at some point, which never occurs. Endgame is not expected to end with a stalemate but with the arrival of death and abandonment of Clov. This creates a need for invention of a constructed past with which the characters find a chance to look to the future. Without a past, neither present nor future can exist and the characters construct their own past and remember it with nostalgia:

**NELL:** Why this farce, day after day?

(Pause.)

**NAGG:** I've lost me tooth.

**NELL:** When?

**NAGG:** I had it yesterday.

**NELL** (elegiac): Ah yesterday.

(They turn painfully towards each other.)

The problem is they do not talk about their experiences in the past, instead they *construct* a

past which they fill with the help of their imagination. Ironically, they themselves do not believe that their story has happened once. To illustrate, Hamm calls his story “he’s been telling himself all his days” “my chronicle”. It is not a matter of remembrance but a matter of reconstruction. With all this suspicion in the *chronicles* told, communication becomes impossible. A torrent of words or sentences carries no meaning, yet they are a means of passing time, filling it with voice.

But, what determines the present is not the past they construct but the freedom of the present to which the future gives way. Sartre points out that man is free. Freedom means consciousness which is a void. Void is nothingness and in this vicious circle nothingness arrives at freedom again. However, the *facticity of freedom* creates a barrier against their freedom: fear of being alone. Nonetheless, neither the silent scream of Hamm nor the hesitation of Clov as to his would-be departure gives any meaning to their present. We are back to the Sartrean world of futility. Even a small kiss is impossible, let alone any finality:

**NAGG:** Kiss me.

**NELL:** We can't.

**NAGG:** Try.

*(Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.)*

Unless death comes in, the *pour soi* never transforms into the *en soi*. Thus, Hamm and Clov are stuck to sitting and walking in this room. The promised departure of Clov never



occurs as well as the non-coming of death. Now that each day is the same, they do not have the sense of time as a continuum. If time repeats itself in a diminishing circle, an end never shows up. Mechanical repetitive moments unearth the harsh reality of impossible finality. “As Clov says, ‘Something is taking its course; this implies that our lives are a series of passive repetitions and that we are merely cogs in a machine that is slowly running down’” (Worton 79).

#### **1.4. *Krapp’s Last Tape***

The eponymous sixty-nine-year-old Krapp is the embodiment of different selves possessed by a human being. He listens to his thirty-nine-year-old voice on the tape and becomes almost a stranger to what he was then:

**KRAPP:** Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that (Beckett 495).

Not only the younger voice he had thirty years ago but the different register he used may be another exemplification of the elusive notion of identity: “Krapp switches off, raises his head, stares blankly before him. His lips move in the syllables of "viduity." No sound. He gets up, goes back stage into darkness, comes back with an enormous dictionary, lays it on table, sits down and looks up the word” (Beckett 489).

The more he gets senile due to the governing force of time, the more the memory fails.

Thirty years have passed since the recording time. What if one year or one hour has just passed? We do not know, yet we are face to face with the decaying power of time. We do not simply spend time, but time does spend us. Krapp now confronts with Krapp then, and the question is whether these identities are the same. If so, how much they look alike? If they are different, what happens to the occupying notion of strict identity? He is more derelict and feebler in his present condition, verifying the fragmented existence of self.

In the play *Endgame*, Nell utters “Ah yesterday.” which gives a sense of nostalgia buried in reflection. Nevertheless, Krapp feels regret rather than nostalgia because “we do not simply have the sepia-tinted past reconfigured to fit the needs of the present” (McDonald 59). The tape is a direct, undistorted record of Krapp’s voice which strengthens the miserable consciousness of the flow of time and strikes the irrecoverable loss of years gone by to his face.

Man proves to be more futile as Krapp listens to his resolutions made forty or forty-two years ago, he laughs at the idealism of his youth:

**TAPE:** Hard to believe I was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus! And the aspirations!

(Brief laugh in which Krapp joins.) And the resolutions! (Brief laugh in which Krapp joins.)

To drink less, in particular. (Brief laugh of Krapp alone.) (Beckett 487).

Both Krapp the middle-aged and Krapp the elder continue to be a failure of his bygone idealism: he still drinks alcohol. There are some other continuities, as well. For example, the

description of Krapp's den stays the same as it was and he still habitually eats bananas. No matter how many years have gone by since those resolutions or love affairs, Krapp appears as a *useless passion*. He intensifies the sense of regret and uselessness of all those years when he does not *condescend* to listen to the vision on the jetty which gave him a literary encouragement which he followed afterwards:

**TAPE:** Spiritually a year of profound gloom and indulgence until that memorable night in March at the end of the jetty, in the howling wind, never to be forgotten, when suddenly I saw the whole thing. The vision, at last. This fancy is what I have chiefly to record this evening, against the day when my work will be done and perhaps no place left in my memory, warm or cold, for the miracle that . . .

(*hesitates*) . . . for the fire that set it alight. What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely--(*Krapp switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again*)--great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propellor, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality--(*Krapp curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*)--unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire--(*Krapp curses loader, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*)--my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without

moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side (Beckett 491-92).

He cares about not the career he pursued throughout his life but the love story he rejects in exchange for a suitable loneliness of a writer. However, he proves to be a failure in his career commercially, as well:

**KRAPP:** Seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade price to free circulating libraries beyond the seas (Beckett 496).

Unfortunately his “farewell to love” for the “memorable equinox” (Beckett 484) which gave him a literary vision brings no profit to his life but loneliness. Unlike Hamm in *Endgame*, Krapp has a control over his life, he freely chooses to reject love for the sake of should-be solitariness of an artist. Yet, Sartre points out the fact that freedom is a responsibility. He cannot blame anybody for his choices, “he himself is answerable for himself” (Dobrez 71). The inescapable responsibility of freedom exacerbates his moribund situation: everything would have been different if he had made another decision. Yet, as Hamm expresses “You're on earth, there's no cure for that!”, there is no relief of Krapp's plight. As a ravage of time, he “motionless stares before him” (Beckett 499).

Krapp's relation to his past lies in his negation of the past. Negation shows itself in the play as laughing at his once idealism, his amnesia and his regret of his decision. If the voice in the recorder is the self-sufficient evidence of his past because it is not reconstructed to provide

the needs of the present, his past is the *en soi*. Creating negative bonds with his past, he makes himself the *pour soi*. The twenty-seven or twenty-nine-year-old Krapp, the thirty-nine-year-old Krapp and the sixty-nine-year-old Krapp are the layers of a being. Krapp the oldest thinks he is not the Krapp the middle-aged or Krapp the much younger. Even this change is an evidence of his negation of the past. Furthermore, the last words implicitly shows the desire to turn into the *en soi*:

**TAPE:** Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn't want them back (Beckett 499).

He is satisfied with the fact that his years are gone and he has reached an age of maturity accompanied by deterioration, loneliness, failure, and obscurity. It is death's turn to come and to transform the last literal immobility to figurative stillness.

### **1.5. *Play***

Set in afterlife, *Play* (1964) takes a very common subject as its plot: love triangle which inevitably includes sexual infidelity. The heads protrude from three funerary urns and very swiftly tell their versions of the story at the bidding of the "unique inquisitor" - the spotlight.

As Pozzo enslaves Lucky or as Hamm commands Clov, light is a figure of compulsion.

Without the light, there would be no play. However, it appears as a means of torture and

victimizes the heads. If the three heads had found any chance to stop their speech, they would have fallen into the darkness and silence they yearn for. However, light decides the end of their speech, turns their talk on an off, and makes them endlessly repeat their miserable stories. Hence, the words they utter become “defence-mechanism” (Lawley 100) for them as they want to get the light off themselves while they response to the light at the same time. Like Godot, words are there not for their meanings but for their abstract function.

“Swivelling at maximum speed from one face to another as required”, the light illuminates the heads and takes out speeches. This “hellish half-light” seems to want something from them. The wife assumes that it is penitence that the light wants. The mistress thinks it is madness it craves for. The answer for the man is love because, like Krapp and his old hag, the man imagines a dinghy in which they all sit and drift together. Unlike the light in *Krapp’s Last Tape* which functions as a regulator, here the regulation is apparently a torture. In the former, “man humanizes machine as he manipulates it” whereas in *Play*, “machine dehumanizes humans as it manipulates them” (Lawley 99).

Sartre shows himself in the torture of compulsion which externally seems to belong to the light. The compulsion does belong to the consciousness of the heads. The *facticity of freedom* comes to the surface because “the attainment of the release from consciousness, from the need to tell oneself the tale of one’s own life is impossible” (Esslin 58). The release comes with the knowledge that one is not conscious any longer. Unaware of each other’s presence,

the heads infinitely repeat their stories of consciousness. The release from this interior compulsion is inexplicably desired, an end is wished for the “obligation to express” leaves off. Unfortunately, the play is repeated once more as if it promises not to give a sense of peace to the heads. “Eternally-fretting cogito worries itself to distraction”(Dobrez 73). The heads are not free not to be there, not to talk. They suffer from consciousness which resembles freedom in its impossibility of escape. Freedom of freedom cannot be attained as they are forced to be free- their freedom eats away their freedom. They cannot choose not to be in their existential situation, not to be conscious. Death is required for them not to know they do not exist any more. With the arrival of death, consciousness ceases to exist and the release from consciousness actualizes itself.

## 2. Beckett's Irreducible

But when the object is perceived as particular and unique, and not merely the member of a family, when it appears independent of any general notion and detached from the sanity of a cause, isolated and inexplicable in the light of ignorance, then and then only may it be a source of enchantment.<sup>2</sup>

BECKETT

What is literature? Literature is obviously a form of expression. From Plato onwards, it has frequently been compared to painting, which is also a form of expression itself. However, when art is observed from Beckett's point of view, it does not necessarily explain or express something even though it expresses the impossibility to express anything. Throughout art history, people have abstained themselves from coming to the visible conclusion: art is non-relational, artist does express neither himself nor anything. Hence, there is not a correlation between the world of the artist and him, likewise between the notion of painting and the result of it. It seems illogical to contemplate a world without its connections and Universals since we are living in a world of relations. Something is meant to be and to do the thing attributed to it: you open a door, you get out or get in, and then you shut the door. To think otherwise, the door does not fulfill the aim of its existence, therefore loses the function of being a door. Consequently, if the door does not fulfill its function, it is not a door, it is *nothing* without

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<sup>2</sup> Beckett, Samuel. 'Three Dialogues'. Proust and Three Dialogues. 1965: 22-23.



being anything. Such an existence cannot survive in such a world: this is utmost illogicality, certain inexplicability and lastly unavoidable *impossibility*. A painting is surrounded by the idea of inexpressive under the notion of non-relational, a play does not say something, hence says nothing. As a result, you cannot define their inexplicable existence because they are already nothing at all. We are just welcomed to Beckett's world of predicaments.

During his years of authorship, Beckett gradually comes closer to a *sine qua non*, an Irreducible which is the essential and indispensable element or condition, which is his first and foremost subject. If we are talking about an art which says nothing, the only and rational subject would be nothing itself. Yet, this nothing does not mean utter silence but a bunch of words which expresses nothing. Moreover, these words are uttered in such a way that nothing can be perceived, therefore what is expressed appears as nothing even if it has had a possibility to be something. In brief, Beckett treats his subject not as a non-existential nothing, on the contrary he accepts its existence and its being *there*. You say something, you keep on saying something in a way you make nothing out of the something you are talking about.

## **2.1. *Waiting for Godot***

The process towards the Irreducible can easily be observed in *Waiting for Godot* composed between 1948 and 1949. The history of the title is very meaningful: Samuel Beckett deleted 'wir' from the German translation *Wir warten auf Godot – We are waiting for*

*Godot*. Similarly, at first he thought that the original title would be *En attendant*, without Godot. In both circumstances, he wants us to focus on the action which is a minimum of action: waiting. Nevertheless, we get rid of our individuality, names, identity by concentrating on the significance of waiting which surpasses the “non-character” (Worton 71) Godot. First of all, the possessions of Vladimir and Estragon are reduced to minimal: boots, hats, carrot, turnip, black radish. Even the names are reduced: Vladimir calls Estragon Gogo, Estragon calls Vladimir Didi. They are estranged – a word reminder of Estragon- from society. Not only physically but also psychologically are they feeble. The latter refers to the fact that they just *wait*. The question would be: What are they waiting for? The answer they give to each other is: for Godot. They wait to do something, to be saved by Godot. Therefore, they wait to do nothing. There are two negatives: Firstly, man’s action or body is reduced to absolute zero: waiting. Secondly, they wait to do something, hence two times negative. Neither Vladimir nor Estragon can act:

**VLADIMIR:** Well? Shall we go?

**ESTRAGON:** Yes, let’s go.

They do not move (Beckett 476).

However, they continue their inaction and inertia. As they wait more and more, they act less and less. We cannot reduce the waiting more. The irreducible motion, in other words the *sine qua non* of *Waiting for Godot* is waiting. They do not need to think to exist. They wait

therefore they are. No escape from the non-event of the action can occur. They neither can nor want to escape from the vicious circle they stuck in: towards the end of every day and moonrise, they are “very near the end of their repertory” (Beckett 465). Michael Worton very pertinently states the fact that “they found it difficult to stay together and impossible to leave each other” (Worton 67). Hence, there is a gradual deterioration which Didi and Gogo diabolically go through in a diminishing vortex. No denouement to this inexorable whirlpool can be found. For the sake of spending time, the characters relentlessly repeat themselves and each other.

The difference between an event and a process is worth to be mentioned in the sense that death as an event is sought, yet death as a process is already being experienced during the time death as an event is desired. “A little heap of bones” can be a petty and easy closure to the life whereas the fact that “one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second” (Beckett 470) is quite strong and hard. We cannot be purged off our sin which is to be born. So, we will not be gifted with the coming of death. Instead, we are to deal with the curse spelled on us: existence in time.

On the other hand, Godot is another sine qua non of the play as the title already suggests. Without Godot, no inaction can be acted. Godot is the utmost requirement for Didi&Gogo to wait and wait and wait. *God* seems to be so far away from these *idiots* that he does not want to leave his throne but wants to make them subside on their hope without realizing the harsh

reality of purposelessness. They cannot escape away from God's fiat: They have to be present, they have to exist. They "found something to give themselves the impression they exist" (Beckett 444): Waiting. "What are they doing there, that is the question" (Beckett 458): Waiting. For Godot.

Who is Godot? What is s/he doing? What does Godot mean? Just as the title places our attention on the act of waiting, Godot creates an image which leans on *function* rather than *meaning*. He can be whatever we like, he can also be whatever we do not want him to be. As long as we align ourselves with the inexorable reality of life, it does not matter who Godot is and what he is doing. He rises as an absence into which we can put whatever we like: death, Pozzo, a landowner etc. The fact that we are in the process of waiting is of significance, not anything else.

## **2.2. *Endgame***

In chronological terms, *Endgame* (1957) follows the journey towards the Irreducible. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon are waiting to *be*, to *exist* departing from their minus nothingness. In *Endgame*, an end is aimed at departing from being/existence to nothingness. However, even in the opening speech of Hamm, an end seems to be an impossible end:

**HAMM:** 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. (Yawns.)

Obviously he wishes death to come but simultaneously he hesitates to finish. The routine Clov and Hamm belong to is an alibi to convince themselves that each and everyday is the same and death seems to be asleep far away. The cyclic nature of existence gives Hamm fright. He wonders about the change in the world, which culminates in “Zero” with Clov’s words:

**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.

(Pause.)

Even the milieu has a static character: “Grey Light” forever. “The light is sunk” when Clov looks out of the window left. It is neither night nor morning: It is *Gray*. No more tides are observed lead waves fill the motionless sea. It will not rain, the seeds will never sprout. On the contrary to Hamm’s belief, nature is not changing not because “nature has forgotten” them but because “there’s no more nature”:

**HAMM**: Look at the ocean!

(Clov gets down, takes a few steps towards window left, goes back for ladder,

carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, turns the telescope on the without, looks at length. He starts, lowers the telescope, examines it, turns it again on the without.)

**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:** No gulls?

**CLOV** (looking): Gulls!

**HAMM:** And the horizon? Nothing on the horizon?

**CLOV** (lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, exasperated): What in God's name could there be on the horizon?

(Pause.)

**HAMM:** The waves, how are the waves?

**CLOV:** The waves?

(He turns the telescope on the waves.)

Lead.

**HAMM:** And the sun?

**CLOV** (looking): Zero.

**HAMM:** But it should be sinking. Look again.

The fusion of beginnings and endings creates a frightful atmosphere over both Clov's and Hamm's heads. No ending is possible because any ending can also be a beginning. There seems to be nothing for them to do while they wait for death to come in vain. That is why Clov does not have enough courage to leave Hamm even though he states three times in the play that he has tried to leave him "ever since he was whelped":

**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's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. (Pause.) I can't be punished any more. (Pause.) I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle me. (Pause.) Nice dimensions, nice proportions, I'll lean on the table, and look at the wall, and wait for him to whistle me.

A heap includes distinct grains, therefore a heap is not a heap as it is impossible for a heap to become a heap with those distinct grains. Likewise, a life is not an accumulation of same but

distinct and sequential moments. These moments are of continuous process therefore there is no end to a life until death cuts the throat of life. Clov, the submissive Knight in the play, cannot end his tenure in this place and pass another. Hamm The King is already afraid to be alone even though he presents a misanthropic posture:

**CLOV:** I'll leave you, I have things to do.

**HAMM:** In your kitchen?

They continue their inescapable routines in order to survive at least one more day and the *game* ends with a stalemate with suggesting a successive match.

As *Waiting for Godot* suggests, death as an event cannot be realized, however, the characters are running down by and by throughout the journey back to their childhood. They become debilitated and defenseless versions of themselves, which can be exemplified by Nagg's speech- insenile meaninglessness in the repetition of oneself:

**NAGG:** Me pap!

**HAMM:** Accursed progenitor!

**NAGG:** Me pap!

Moreover, first the flea from which “humanity might start all over again”, second the rat –halfly- are exterminated by Clov with the fear of cyclic nature of existence. Lastly the boy who is a “potential procreator” is mentioned. Hamm thinks the boy's being will culminate in death or he will come to his house where they cannot end this life. Both Clov and Hamm have



no more endurance for the alive with a capacity of giving birth. They “have had enough”.

Nevertheless, they are again far away from the end even though they are exterminating progenitors. The end of things will never come closer and the further they get the closer they are to the end of *Endgame*. Unfortunately, Hamm learns “there’s no more pain-killer” at the sixth time he asks for his pain-killer.

Additionally, the number of certain words has caught my attention in the whole play. Ironically enough, the verb ‘to end’ is used 27 times, ‘to finish’ 18 times, ‘to leave’ 25 times, ‘to die’ and its derivations ‘dead’ and ‘death’ 13, 11, 2 respectively. Meaning-nothing word ‘zero’ is repeated 8 times. The abundance of words which denote closure and a play which cannot even come closer to a conclusion: Would-be actions are not actions at all if they are not fulfilled. Again unfortunately, they will never know the so-called betterment of nothing and be stuck in “the same inanities all life long”.

### **2.3. *Krapp’s Last Tape***

In *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1958), we encounter a man who has experienced a loss of memory. The consequence of this loss is his failure in connection to his own past. At one point, he even looks up the word ‘viduity’ in the dictionary. The way he attempts to connect to his past is through the Box Three- Spool Five as well as the ledger on the table. Therefore, the play has 2 characters: a thirty-nine aged Krapp and a sixty-nine aged Krapp. Moreover, the thirty-nine

aged Krapp introduces a younger version of Krapp in his speech as he is listening to an old tape which belongs to ‘ten or twelve years ago’ (Beckett 487).

**TAPE:** Just been listening to an old year, passages at random. I did not check in the book, but it must be at least ten or twelve years ago. At that time I think I was still living on and off with Bianca in Kedar Street. Well out of that, Jesus yes! Hopeless business. (Pause.) Not much about her, apart from a tribute to her eyes. Very warm. I suddenly was them again. (Pause.) Incomparable! (Pause.) Ah well . . . (Pause.) These old P.M.s are gruesome, but I often find them--(Krapp switches off, broods, switches on)--a help before embarking on a new . . . (hesitates) . . . retrospect. Hard to believe I was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus! And the aspirations! (Brief laugh in which Krapp joins.) And the resolutions! (Brief laugh in which Krapp joins.) To drink less, in particular. (Brief laugh of Krapp alone.) Statistics. Seventeen hundred hours, out of the preceding eight thousand odd, consumed on licensed premises alone. More than 20%, say 40% of his waking life. (Pause.) Plans for a less . . . (hesitates) . . . engrossing sexual life. Last illness of his father. Flagging pursuit of happiness. Unattainable laxation. Sneers at what he calls his youth and thanks to God that it's over. (Pause.) False ring there. (Pause.) Shadows of the opus . . . magnum. Closing with a --(brief laugh)--yelp to Providence. (Prolonged laugh in which Krapp joins.) What remains of all that misery? A girl in

a shabby green coat, on a railway-station platform? No? (Beckett 487-88)

Apparently he is alone and commenting what he is hearing both physically and psychologically. No matter how much time has passed, there has still been “unattainable laxation” (Beckett 488) from his youth on. What is the Irreducible is *time* in this play. Time prisons itself in such a way that even a being cannot enter into his own being. Penetration into past or even transition from present to past becomes an impossibility for sixty-nine aged Krapp. “Wearish old” (Beckett 480) Krapp does not like the posture that he presents thirty years ago. However, the thirty-nine aged Krapp found “hard to believe he was such a young whelp” (Beckett 487) once. There is always a division between three versions. What he has now, who he is now is not what he had and who he was before:

**KRAPP:** Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. Thank God that's all done with anyway. (Pause.) The eyes she had! (Broods, realizes he is recording silence, switches off, broods. Finally.) Everything there, everything, all the --(Realizing this is not being recorded, switches on.) Everything there, everything on this old muckball, all the light and dark and famine and feasting of . . . (hesitates) . . . the ages! (In a shout.) Yes! (Pause.) Let that go! Jesus! Take his mind off his homework! Jesus (Pause. Weary.) Ah well, maybe he was right. (Broods. Realizes. Switches off. Consults envelope.) Pah! (Crumples it and throws it away. Broods. Switches on.) Nothing to

say, not a squeak. What's a year now? The sour cud and the iron stool. (Pause.)

Revelled in the word spool. (With relish.) Spooooo! Happiest moment of the past half million (Beckett 495-96).

Krapp is divided into his experiences. Time and his failed memory blow him to smithereens. One part belongs to forty or forty two years before, one thirty years before and one at the present. We are back to the inexplicable existence without connections or relations mentioned above. Krapp cannot define his existence because he should give an answer to the question: Who am I? As he is not fond of his earlier version, he has apparently changed. If there is a change in a self, we cannot talk about a static character, therefore we cannot state that we are such and such beings etc. Time and its creation change are such and such beings as they are the *sine qua non* of our lives. We cannot reduce time as in the way we do reduce ourselves to time. A self surrounded by a bunch of characteristics does not express anything. Krapp aspired to quit drinking or drink less but *same* Krapp laughs at what he aspired when he was thirty-nine and when he is sixty-nine. Then what does same mean? How can one talk about having a constant, unchanging character today as he contradicts with lifestyle, thinking, and feeling he experienced yesterday? Each instant produces a discrete self which is never the same as the previous. Maybe almost same, maybe pretty same but never completely and utterly same.

## 2.4. *Play*

*Play* (1963), though talks about an ordinary love triangle which can be easily observed in many other plays, sets off towards the Irreducible with its style. The play begins with unfinished sentences consisting of words meaning nothing. Even M states this fact:

**M:** Yes, peace, one assumed, all out, all the pain, all as if . . . never been, it will come—

[Hiccup.]--pardon, no sense in this, oh I know . . . none the less, one assumed, peace . . . I

mean . . . not merely all over, but as if . . . never been—

So does W1:

**W 1:** If only I could think. There is no sense in this . . . either, none whatsoever. I can't.

At one point, a word unit is cut:

**M:** Why not keep on glaring at me without ceasing? I might start to rave and--

[Hiccup.]— bring it up for you. Par--

[Spot from M to W2.]

**W 2:** No.

[Spot from W2 to M .]

**M:** --don

It is pretty hard to read such a text in the way we read other plays because every character interferes in other's speech and makes other versions of the story meaningless. A story from three perspectives: they all complete each other. But if we really want to understand what is

going on for W1 or W2 or M, we had better read the text picking up a character and finishing him/her till the end. Then we can move to the beginning again and pick up the second character and we can do the same for the third. They all converge at one point and differ all the same. It somehow reinforces the notion of identity and verification of integrity to make others seem ridiculous by giving them no instant for their speech. By cutting their speech, M asserts his existence saying 'Here I am and my story'. So do W1 and W2. From reader's perspective, we talk about *versions* of a standard truth. However, *versions* do not exist for them as everyone lives in and knows about his or her own world. A story is a story for them even if it does not fulfill its requirement of telling a story, therefore not-being a story, therefore culminating in *nothing*. The stream of words comes to nothing as long as they do not produce something comprehensible, which is to say that utter silence exists in utmost loquacity accompanied by "Rapid tempo throughout". Communication has the chance to become a communication when someone hiccups, yet it can never exist by its full meaning consorted by a cascade of conscious revealment in a very complicated manner.

The verbose characters have turned out to be puppets without bodies. On the stage, we observe three heads protruding from three urns. "Faces impassive throughout. Voices toneless except where an expression is indicated." Obviously, we can not talk about them being-something anymore without even deciding their tonation and expression, and proving the remaining part of their body. It is a reminiscent of the lost control over the bodies of

Hamm and Clov in *Endgame* where Clov cannot sit and Hamm cannot stand.

## 2.5. *Not I*

*Not I* (1972) indicates a almost full reduction of a body with the mouth of a woman. It is much more than three heads protruding from three urns in *Play*. As the play proceeds, we witness a story of a “tiny little girl” (Beckett 593) whom the voice apparently denies she is *not* the talking voice but someone else. Sentences are reduced to noun phrases and single words. Even the stage is reduced to utmost darkness: “Stage in darkness but for mouth . . . faintly lit from close-up and below, rest of face in shadow” (Beckett 592). Voice is unintelligible, sex is undeterminable. Mouth is motionless throughout. The play ends with the voice keeping its unintelligence. As for the story, the female protagonist “found herself in the dark . . . and if not exactly . . . insentient . . . insentient . . . for she could still hear the buzzing . . . so-called . . . in the ears . . . and a ray of light came and went” (Beckett 594). Then a Beckettian death occurs.

all silent but for the buzzing . . . so-called . . . no part of her moving . . . that she could feel . . . just the eyelids . . . presumably . . . on and off . . . shut out the light . . . reflex they call it . . . no feeling of any kind . . . but the lids . . . even best of times . . . who feels them? . . . opening . . . shutting . . . all that moisture . . .but the brain still . . . still sufficiently . . . oh very much so!’ (Beckett 596)

No more movements or feelings of any kind are observed even though life goes on for the female, which is called *ekstatis* in Greek. She stays outside herself, looks at herself from outside. After a while, her words return and begins an endless speech:

Lips. . . cheeks . . . jaws . . . tongue . . . never still a second . . . mouth on fire . . . stream of words . . . in her ear . . . practically in her ear . . . not catching the half . . . not the quarter . . . no idea what she's saying . . . imagine! . . . no idea what she's saying! . . . and can't stop . . . no stopping it . . . she who but a moment before . . . but a moment! . . . could not make a sound . . . no sound of any kind . . . now can't stop . . . imagine! . . . can't stop the stream . . . and the whole brain begging . . . something begging in the brain . . . begging the mouth to stop . . . pause a moment . . . if only for a moment . . . and no response . . . as if it hadn't heard . . . or couldn't . . . couldn't pause a second . . . like maddened . . . all that together' (Beckett 599).

Like the trisome in *Play*, a sense of peace does not find a way to enter. As a victim of her consciousness, she endlessly talk till the end of the play.



## CONCLUSION

In this study, Beckett's five plays, namely *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Not I*, and *Play* are approached within the Sartrean world of existentialism. Even though Beckett's plays entertain many elements of Sartre's existentialism, they differ from each other in certain points.

The consciousness, i.e. the *pour soi* is negative with its dependency on the being, i.e. the *en soi*, in Sartrean world. However, Beckett's voice of consciousness carry a positivity. Moreover, the Irreducible of Beckett, which is the essential part that remains when all the inessential is removed, functions as a being-nothing. Hence, it is both positive and negative. Yet, Sartre depends on the distinction between being and nothingness. He firmly believes there is a reciprocal contradiction between the two. In the plays of Beckett, we move to underneath of the consciousness where the opposites gather together. In Sartre's world, man is depicted as a futile passion because he aims at the union of the *en soi* and the *pour soi*. However, only God embodies this mutual contradiction. For Sartre, this union, by default and by definition, is logically impossible because *le néant* and *l'être* are incompatible with each other. This brings the futility of manhood which projects himself towards such a union of opposites. Yet, the Irreducible is impossibly there. It inescapably exists.

Sartre is a philosopher who does not allow the marriages of opposites within his system of logic, whereas Beckett is a writer who legalizes this kind of marriage. Put concisely, what

does not exist for Sartre is what should exist for Beckett, i.e. God- the union of being and nothingness. The characters cannot reach the sine qua non of the plays, the Irreducible, which is inevitably there. Sartre, as a philosopher, does not allow the marriage of opposites whereas Beckett, as a writer, does allow the unity of being and nothingness. Though we cannot see the fulfillment of hopes and aims in Beckett's world, they are not never-to-be-realized unlike Sartre. Beckett creates a mysteriously gloomy atmosphere, Sartre a world with clear-cut divisions illuminated by light of reason. It can be concluded that Beckett's world is open to possibilities entertained by mystery and darkness while Sartre remains in his secure world of light and definite distinctions. Beckett does not live in the borders of what can happen but goes beyond that with his focus on paradoxes and marriage of contradictions. Systematic lifestyles do not apply in the world of Beckett's characters: systems reduced.

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