

EXISTENTIALISM AND SAMUEL BECKETT'S TWO PLAYS:  
*ENDGAME* AND *HAPPY DAYS*

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## ABSTRACT

### EXISTENTIALISM AND SAMUEL BECKETT'S TWO PLAYS: *ENDGAME AND HAPPY DAYS*

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This thesis carries out an analysis of the plays by Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* and *Happy Days*. It achieves this by exploring how the playwright's characterization, setting and use of language in these plays display his tendency to employ some existentialist concepts such as despair, anxiety and thrownness on the way to authenticity. This study argues that there are some similarities between Beckett's two plays and Existentialism, and some characters in both plays display the existentialist man who is looking for becoming an authentic man. In other words, although there are some differences, these plays show that Samuel Beckett's view of Existentialism is quite similar to the Sartrean view.

Keywords: Existentialism, Samuel Beckett, authenticity

## ÖZ

### VAROLUŞÇULUK VE SAMUEL BECKETT'İN İKİ OYUNU: *OYUN SONU VE MUTLU GÜNLER*

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Bu tez Samuel Beckett'in *Oyun Sonu* ve *Mutlu Günler* oyunlarının bir analizini yapmaktadır. Bunu, oyun yazarının bu oyunlardaki karakterlerin yaratılması, sahne ve dil kullanımında, nasıl kendi eğilimini sergilemek için, sahilik yolunda, umutsuzluk, endişe ve fırlatılıp atılmışlık gibi bazı varoluşçu konseptleri kullandığını inceleyerek başarmaktadır. Bu çalışma Beckett'in bu iki oyunu ile Varoluşçuluk arasında benzerlikler olduğunu, ve her iki oyundaki bazı karakterlerin sahil olmayı arayan varoluşçu insanı sergilediklerini savunmaktadır. Diğer bir deyişle, bazı farklılıklar olmasına rağmen, bu oyunlar Samuel Beckett'in Varoluşçuluk görüşünün Sartre'in görüşü ile oldukça benzer olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Varoluşçuluk, Samuel Beckett, Sahilik

To My Parents

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## CHAPTER I

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis will be an attempt to explore how Samuel Beckett's characterization, setting and use of language in his two plays, *Endgame* and *Happy Days*, reveal his tendency to employ some existentialist concepts such as despair, anxiety and thrownness on the way to authenticity.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement which focuses on individual existence rejecting the absolute reason. There are some reasons for the appearance of Existentialism in the history of thought. First of all, rational sciences could not prove that they were absolute, and thus, there was no absolute truth. Next, and the most important cause of the emergence of existentialism was that people had lost their belief in the existence of a divine being, that is God, owing to the wars and losses in these wars. Beforehand, God was a reference point. However, with the disappearance of God, the first signified got lost for people. The blurred understanding of the world resulted in a change in the idea that language is transparent; they perceived that words serve only as representations of thoughts or things, and do not have any function beyond that. The modern societies depended on the idea that signifiers always point to signifieds, and that reality resides in signifieds. In postmodernism, however, there are only signifiers. The idea of any stable or permanent reality disappears, and with it, the idea of signifieds that signifiers point to. Therefore, for the existentialist view, there are only surfaces, without depth; only signifiers, with no signifieds. This means that language has no function of conveying meaning to provide communication, and man has no trustable reality, which will provide a basis

for the existentialist in his search for being. Existentialism places the individual in the centre and questions his existence in the absence of the first signified.

The reason why Samuel Beckett's works are usually discussed in an existentialist context is that he is one of the ineffable leading playwrights of the twentieth century drama, and the actor of the radical digression from the conventional notions of writing, representing and directing a play. Having adopted Sartre's existentialism as the philosophical basis for his approach while creating his masterpieces, Beckett has become the founder of the Absurd Drama in British Literature. When his plays were first performed, people who were accustomed to the traditional theatre were hostile to his drama. However, particularly after World War II, their losses and fears have made them feel close to Beckett's characters.

In his plays the playwright wants the theatregoers to perceive the idea of being afraid of being nothing in the world. Consequently, he accentuates such themes as loss of identity, loss of independence, loss of religion, futility of life, isolation, unreliable memory, uncertainty of time, identity, existence, reality, past and indifference. In order to represent these themes in his plays, Beckett constructs characters that are tramps or amputees. When Beckett's style is traced, it is clearly seen that there is a poignantly represented vision of diminishing human faculties in texts of diminishing language with increasingly fewer words. These may stem from "the raw ideas from Descartes to Sartre that Beckett undoubtedly gathered and cooked" as Andrew K. Kennedy states in the introduction of his book (3).

Despite the fact that he expresses in his writings a lot of unconventional ideas, beliefs and feelings in a new manner, this study does not aim to subordinate Beckettian drama to any particular system of thought; finding the junctures where his writing and the existentialist ideas connect is the real purpose while displaying how his characters are experiencing authenticity in an existentialist query of being.

In this chapter, first the terms of existentialist views to be used throughout the study will be defined in respect to the related philosophers. Subsequently, in Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement Chapter, in order to clarify Existentialism as a tool to uncover meaning in literature, with which the Beckettian drama will be related throughout the study, firstly the history of this philosophical approach and its main concerns will be explained, and then the ideas of some

philosophers like Sartre and Heidegger, who are the exponents of the Existentialist philosophy, will be analysed. This will lead to the thesis statement regarding some existentialist elements like despair, anxiety and thrownness to be explored in a close reading of *Endgame* and *Happy Days*. Hence, Chapter 3 will deal with the relation between structural elements -characterization, setting and language use- and existentialist views in *Endgame* and *Happy Days* successively to reveal existentialist tendencies in detail. It is assumed that the employment of the existentialist elements within the structural components of Beckett's writing will lead to the experience of a struggle for attaining authenticity by the characters. The Conclusion will summarise the findings and discuss what additional research would be of value.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

Sartre's frequently repeated statement, 'Existence precedes essence' constitutes the basic understanding of the Existentialist thought system. The claim, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself is built upon this understanding. Such is the first principle of Existentialism," says Sartre in *Existentialism and Humanism* (28). "What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards" (Sartre, 1948:28). This quote claims that existence is a necessity to have essence. Sartre also states "He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself" (1948:28). As Bohlmann points out, for existentialists, "the world is utterly without absolute meaning, and man is left to invent his own personal meaning for his existence" (14). In contrast to the Aristotelian assumption that essence precedes existence and in the world man exists to achieve a purpose, the Sartrean existentialism argues that man has no predetermined purpose or meaning. Rather, humans define themselves because their individual lives come into being as a response to the challenges proposed by their existence in the world. As Sartre states, "life has no meaning *a priori*. Before you come alive, life is nothing" (1957: 49). Thus, life has no ingrained meaning or purpose unless man creates it himself.

In addition, this study will also be concerned with non-being, which is nothingness or no-thing-ness. Sartre delineates being-for-itself as a kind of nothingness, a sort of aperture in being, and this no-thing-ness brings negation into the world. “Through absolute nothingness the great silence of being is broken” (Ellis 14). Thus, in existentialism, nothingness is necessary to constitute being. Moreover, human consciousness is a sort of no-thing-ness surrounded by the denseness of being. As a nothingness, human consciousness is liberated from determinism, ending up in the difficult situation of our being ultimately responsible for our own lives, which signifies the unbearable pain of existing under this condition. That is why, “Man is condemned to be free” and “...without any support or help whatever, is condemned at every instant to invent man” (1948:34).

Anguish is a consequence of the dread of the nothingness of human existence and the meaninglessness of it. Ellis regards “Anguish as the manifestation of freedom...” (15). That is because the recognition of nothingness, according to existentialists, is considered as something liberating since man realizes that he is free to choose what he will make of himself due to the fact that he has no ready-made essence. As it is known, Existentialism is “the doctrine ... [which] confronts man with a possibility of choice” (25) as Sartre states in *Existentialism and Humanism*. That is to say, “this freedom, which brings anguish, springs from our recognition of Nothingness” (Hinchliffe 25), and this naturally brings anguish owing to the great responsibility it requires. Anguish leads a person to confront his own nothingness (Dreyfus 205). In other words,

Sartre sees the origin of anguish in the feeling of a being which is not responsible for its origin or the origin of the world, but which, because of its dreadful freedom to choose one form of action over another, is responsible for what it makes of its existence (Bohlmann 35).

Anguish then takes its source from the claim that in choosing for oneself, man chooses for all humanity. The result of this act is a profound feeling of responsibility, which makes human beings anguished. Anguish especially appears when one has to choose and act having no proof that the action is right because the state of anguish does not guarantee the aptness of that particular act; it, on the contrary, clearly displays that there are many possibilities open to be realized in this specific action.

“Consciousness in one stroke opens up a world of possibilities, yet at the very moment poses their annihilation: this, says Sartre, is our anguished lot” (McCulloch 46).

Atheistic existentialists like Sartre and Heidegger are in agreement about the non-existence of God and religion. That is why they believe that there is no absolute meaning in life and man is necessarily expected to create his own meaning and values. Since God does not exist, then, man is absolutely alone while attributing his own meaning to life and shaping his values. Therefore, man is thrown into the world. “We are left alone, without excuse” (Sartre, 1948:34). Furthermore, man has no control over this. Facticity, being another major theme of existentialism to be seen in Beckett’s plays, is the fact that human beings have no control over their existence. For example, man’s birth is a physical circumstance of his being-in-the-world. If so, being in the world is facticity even if it can be seen as unbearable or joyful. In Heidegger’s existentialism, man, in his state of “thrownness,” has to bear the whole responsibility of his existence since he has no excuse in a Godless universe. Therefore, for existentialists, “man ... is thrown into the universe and into desolate isolation” (Kern 169), so he is indisputably in exile.

Existentialists have believed that man does not have a fixed nature, or essence, as other animals and plants do. Each human being makes choices which define him. Choice is, therefore, central to human existence as consciousness is open to infinite possibilities, and it is inescapable. In the view of most existentialists, a man's primary distinction is the freedom to choose and this is an absolute freedom. Since man has got absolute freedom, it is impossible to justify his actions by referring to anything outside himself, and he has no excuses for anything he does. He is thrown into the world as a free being. For Sartre, “man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being” (1957: 52). Even the refusal to choose is accepted to be a choice. And freedom of choice entails commitment and responsibility. That is to say, absolute freedom brings with it a deep and absolute responsibility. What existentialism proposes is that one must show commitment and dedication to be free and undertake the risks which will come attached with freedom. “There is no choice without decision, no decision without desire, or desire without need, no need without

existence” (Winn, 1960:15). With respect to this statement, existence is the basis of choice. Apart from that, the nature of freedom is that “Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free” (Ellis 14-15). Then, “man is free, man is freedom” (Sartre, 1948:34).

Being thrown into the world is not man’s choice. Similarly, death is not either. Existentialism is preoccupied with the theme of death because existentialists believe that man can develop an understanding of life only if he faces death. When he becomes aware of his mortality, he might first try to ignore its reality by keeping himself busy with the activities of daily routine. Nevertheless, this attitude fails as avoiding death means avoiding life at the same time. “Death is a pure fact as is birth; it comes to us from outside and it transforms us into the outside” (Sartre, 1956: 545).

Subjectivity over objectivity is another basic theme of existentialism always adjoined in the Beckettian drama. The basic point is that one makes himself what he is through his free choices, rather than by being what he is. Sartre explains what subjectivity means according to existentialists and states, “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism. It is also what is called subjectivity” (1957: 15). There is nothing objective about what a human being is. So, everything starts from the inside, from the side of the man or subject. As Sartre points out in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, “subjectivity must be the starting point”. “In any case ... existentialism, in our sense of the world, is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity” (Sartre, 1948:24). On the other hand, an argument against subjectivity comes to the surface when the subjectivity of the foundation of an action is thought to preclude objectivity and universality. In response, Sartre claims that subjectivity does not degrade human beings; on the contrary, it gives man dignity for two reasons. One is that subjectivity is uniquely owned by humans. The other is that, if man makes himself what he thinks he ought to be, then he is making himself in accordance with what he thinks a human being ought to be. In other words, in making choices, human beings are also choosing what is good for all. For example, if one chooses a monogamous type of marriage, then he chooses monogamy as the type which ought to be good for all humans. For Sartre, then, a choice made is a choice that involves all mankind when

one assumes responsibility for that particular choice. Consequently, subjectivity is the part of human nature which provides each human being with the ability to understand another man's individual experience as if he himself possessed the same.

Heidegger states that there are two types of being, coining their names as authentic being and inauthentic being respectively: "authentic being [is] rooted in the explicit sense of my situation ... ; and inauthentic being, moving automatically in the established ruts and routes of the organized world" (Blackham 92-93). And both Sartre and Heidegger think that one can achieve authentic existence only by realizing one's possibilities and constituting one's own values and meaning in life. This is in fact what existentialist commitment is. "The existentialist says that the coward makes himself cowardly, the hero makes himself heroic; and that there is always a possibility for the coward to give up cowardice and for the hero stop being a hero. What counts is the total commitment..." (Sartre, 1948:43). What is indispensable for existentialism related to authenticity is "to translate the meaninglessness of absurdity into a meaning for existence" (Critchley 149). This transformation can be taken as commitment in the sense that Sartre explains in his work *Existentialism and Humanism*:

What is at the very heart and centre of existentialism, is the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realises himself in realising a type of humanity – a commitment always understandable, to no matter whom in no matter what epoch – and its bearing upon the relativity of the cultural pattern which may result from such absolute commitment. One must observe equally the relativity of Cartesianism and the absolute character of the Cartesian commitment. In this sense you may say, if you like, that every one of us makes the absolute by breathing, by eating, by sleeping or by behaving in any fashion whatsoever. There is no difference between free being – being as self-committal, as existence choosing its essence – and absolute being (1948:47).

Thus, authenticity is not an essence of consciousness or of human reality; man attempts to attain authenticity by committing himself not as essence, but as freedom. Nonetheless, like being-for-itself, authentic existence is not easy to attain

since it requires courage and strength necessary for rejecting society's morals and values, and not conforming to the existing taken-for-granted norms. Furthermore, Sartre poignantly claims that to behave authentically for the sake of authenticity or for being declared as an authentic person is not to behave authentically at all. "To attribute authenticity to someone is to acknowledge the 'nothingness' (the consciousness) in that person's being and the fact that she does not try to disguise it in bad faith" (Golomb 150). So, if one is seeking authenticity for only authenticity's sake, this act cannot be considered as commitment as it destroys the authenticity of the person (Golomb 151). If a human being denies his full humanity, that is, his being-for-itself, then his denial is called inauthenticity. And man who is living inauthentically is not any longer "becoming", he is only "being". Hereby, authenticity means being able to be honest to one's own essence. Also, to be able to live authentically, man ought to be aware of his freedom and his task to create himself with its inevitable anxiety. This awareness is of self-affirmation, which requires commitment.

'Bad faith' is also called 'self-deception' and it refers to one's failure to follow his or her own essence. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre presents the notion of bad faith. According to him, the concept of 'bad faith' consists of the individual consciousness possessing a false notion of self. For him, if it is said that a person owns the signs of bad faith, it means that he lies to himself somehow. That is, it implies self-deception. However, while it is easily understood when someone lies to another person, to lie to oneself means that one knows the truth about which one is lying to oneself. As Sartre puts it,

I must know my capacity as deceiver for the truth which is hidden from me in my capacity as the one deceived. Better yet I must know the truth very exactly in order to conceal it more carefully – and this not at two different moments, which at a pinch would allow us to re-establish a semblance of duality – but in the unitary structure of a single project (1956: 89).

Another point to be made is that self-deception is not a state of consciousness, but a willing state of acceptance of what one knows is objectively misleading. Similarly, Sartre tells, "A person can live in self-deception, which does

not mean that he does not have abrupt awakenings to cynicism or to good faith, but which implies a constant and particular style of life” (Kaufman 303).

Being forlorn is another mood found in Beckett’s plays and emphasized by existentialists besides anguish. The source of forlornness, which is a Heideggerian term, lies in the claim that human beings face the consequences of God’s non-existence. “When we speak of forlornness, ... we mean only that God does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of this” (Sartre, 1957:21). Indeed, God’s existence has been very significant to man as it was accepted to be the ultimate source of all values which are shared by humanity. The existentialists proclaim that the lack of absolute and divine behest is discomfoting as this situation forces human beings to face their own subjectivity. Then, it is assured that humans are free to do whatever they like knowing that there exists no God to check their deeds’ rightness.

Another mood of interest to existentialist philosophy is despair, which most of the time haunts the audiences of Beckett’s plays. It is the consequence of uncertainty related to the effects of one’s own activities and the unpredictability of the acts of other people. Thus, human beings have no control over the possibilities which they may confront, although they can devote serious and sustained effort to the conditions of the future so as to adjust themselves to the way they wish to follow.

All themes and concepts of existentialism mentioned above have a great relation with the Beckettian drama. When analysed, it is seen that Samuel Beckett primarily focuses on the themes of existentialism like facticity, despair, freedom and especially authenticity. In his plays, audiences are depressed with nothingness as the playwright attempts to bring them closer to reality and help them authenticate themselves while seeking their own meaning in life. By the help of his characters, the basic existential anguish of the human condition is revealed on the stage. Especially *Endgame* and *Happy Days* are significant because they reach down to the bedrock in the existentialist sense; that is why, they are worth investigating in respect with the Sartrean existentialism.

## CHAPTER II

### 2. EXISTENTIALISM AS A PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

This chapter will begin with information about the history of Existentialism. This will serve as background to a discussion of how Beckett relates to this philosophical system.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement which rejects the idea that the universe offers any clues about how humanity should live and focuses on individual existence, freedom and choice. It basically came into being as a reaction to the Age of Reason. The philosophers of that age like Spinoza, Leibniz, Hobbes, Hume, Locke, Voltaire, Bacon and Rousseau, regarded reason not only as man's highest faculty which is capable of solving all problems and providing him with complete knowledge in the end, but it was also seen as completely positive, with which the quality of being flawless is meant. In other words, reason was considered to be absolute, which explains why those philosophers, who were proud of being reasonable and rational, overstated their case.

The word absolute has got two meanings in this context. The first one is that "reason is an ultimate part of reality, underived and not determined by anything else"; and the second meaning of it is that "... the powers of reason are unlimited" (Roubiczek I). However, unlike these attributes of reason, human experience shows that reason is just a part of human nature and it is limited. Therefore, it is irrational to consider that reason is absolute. This claim for an absolute reason, in turn, generated reaction and produced Existentialism.

What gave way to the irrational in the Age of Reason was that neither physics nor biology nor modern psychology was able to prove absolute reality, which was to show the power of reason to be a limitless and all-embracing way of solution to all problems. For instance, despite the fact that Lamarck claimed that organisms adapt themselves gradually to new surroundings and new living conditions, thus postulating a process of evolution long before Darwin, Lamarck's theory of evolution had to be rejected by Darwin and replaced with a new theory of evolution, which is today most widely accepted, based on mutations, sudden accidental changes in organisms, and instead of linear, bush-like or branching developments in species. If one theory can be undermined by another, then it becomes open to the attacks which question the attributes of absolute reason. Thus, no matter how hard they tried in biology, it did not help to prove the absoluteness of reason.

In addition, the discovery of the subconscious in modern psychology undermined the powers of reason since the Age of Reason identified man with his consciousness. However, according to modern psychology, the existence of subconscious saps the objectivity of science; moreover, it was proved that science is prone to its own subjectivity. Hence, science, which was stuck in its own subjectivity, lost its reliability, and thus absoluteness of reason was weakened. Then, if the reality of the subconscious is taken for granted, then simultaneously it is seen that reason has limitations, which proves that reason can never be absolute.

These and other disappointing human experiences following the discoveries in natural sciences signal a need for a new perspective suggesting that it is not enough to know all about the truths that natural sciences might tell. Then, human beings can be understood neither as atomic subjects primarily interacting with a world of objects, nor as substances with fixed properties. Besides taking the validity of scientific and moral categories into consideration, in order to grasp human existence Existentialism claims that there should be other categories ruled by the norm of authenticity. In this way, existence emerges as a problem of philosophy. And this is how Sartre defines it: "existentialism, in our sense of the word, is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity" (1948:24).

## **2.1 MAJOR EXISTENTIALISTS**

The major Existentialists are Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. They can be put into two categories: 1. Pure philosophers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger and. 2. Literary figures of existentialist philosophy like Sartre and Camus. Of the five influential figures “Sartre is the clearest and most systematic. Consequently, detailed illustrations of existentialist themes are more often drawn from the works of Sartre” (Olson VIII). Consequently, this thesis will base its arguments on Sartre, by whom Beckett was most influenced while referring to other philosophers too.

### **2.1.1 Søren Kierkegaard**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Kierkegaard appeared as a figure who wanted to defend his faith and his belief in an ethical self, in the reality of moral law grasping the notion of truth inside of the evolving self. He claimed that subjectivity is the truth, which prefigures the existential concept of authenticity. To him, subjectivity should start from the person in order to clarify personal experience, and he refers again to the person aiming to achieve the right type of subjectivity. In contrast, most of the non-existentialist philosophers start from things, and then include the person as an abstract thinker so as to gain objective knowledge. So, Kierkegaard clearly shows the difference between the traditional philosophy of the time and Existentialism. However, proposing such a different approach caused the birth of “absolute paradox” (Roubiczek 9) in European thought whose trust in an absolute reason has remained the major element of their thought system. The “absolute paradox” for Kierkegaard can be understood best in this way: Trusting reason alone prevents people from understanding God and keeps them away from the feeling of grasping this faith. Thereby, for him, it is high time people had a leap into the unknown first abandoning reliance on reason. “Without risk there is no faith, and the greater the risk the greater the faith; the more objective security the less inwardness (for inwardness is precisely subjectivity), and the less objective security the more profound the possible inwardness” (Kaufmann 117). Kierkegaard underlines inwardness, and states, “all interpretations of existence take their rank in relation to the qualification of the individual’s dialectical inward deepening” (1992:571). This means taking the risk “to give up all the results of rational thinking,

of scientific reasoning, and to surrender to the inner voice which tells us that there is a different reality, a sphere of a different kind, transcending reason” (Roubiczek 10). Kierkegaard believes that doing so will help people reunite with the welcoming arms of God. In addition to this claim and change of emphasis, what makes him the first figure representing this new philosophical movement is that he is the one who coined the word ‘Existentialism’.

In the sense of Kierkegaardian thought, thus, “Existentialism is a rejection of all purely abstract thinking, of a purely logical or scientific philosophy; in short, a rejection of the absolute reason” (Roubiczek 10). Instead, Existentialism, in its fundamental and original meaning, requires connecting philosophy with the individual’s own life and experience. It attempts to be able to be lived by individuals rather than being mere accumulations of speculations. That is to say, for Kierkegaard, the personal experience turns out to be real. For example, what an individual knows is not regarded as of the external world, but it is accepted as the inner knowledge of his or her own experience. He attacks certain conceptions of Christianity, which were taken for granted. To illustrate, he argues that the so-called Christians of Christendom are actually living in the way of the "heathen<sup>1</sup>," which is the way of empty mimetic selfhood. The idea implied is that the biblical texts have a great potential for transforming human thought and life; but this potential has been impaired during the history of Christianity, as the biblical message has been changed and made to conform to the pre-existing mimetic psychology of the collapsed world. He also focuses on revising the idea of self. “The self is essentially intangible and must be understood in terms of possibilities, dread, and decisions” (Kaufman 17). That is why, in the Kierkegaardian sense, the word ‘existence’ houses all this subjectivity and authenticity in itself.

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<sup>1</sup> The person described as the "heathen" in Christian Discourses is now the despairing individual: He [the person in despair] now acquires a little understanding of life, he learns to copy others, how they manage their lives--and he now proceeds to live the same way. In Christendom he is also a Christian, goes to church every Sunday, listens to and understands the pastor, indeed they have a mutual understanding; he dies, the pastor ushers him into eternity for ten six-dollars--but a self he was not, and a self he did not become. (1983, 52)

### 2.1.2 Friedrich Nietzsche

The eminent characteristics of Nietzsche are his opposition to the existing philosophical systems, and an easily noticeable dissatisfaction with the traditional philosophy as he considered it to be superficial and remote from life, which resembles the views of Kierkegaard and links him clearly with existentialist philosophers like Heidegger and Sartre. He is known to replace the God of Christianity, with the 'will to power' which, according to him, is the soul of the world and is scattered among individual men. Each man is a centre of the 'will to power', and his existence can be represented as the will to govern the whole universe. The human will knows no obstacle; there are no limits for him. However, while existence emerges as a philosophical problem in the struggle to think of the paradoxical presence of God for Kierkegaard, for Nietzsche it emerges from and in the reflections of his frequent statement 'God is dead; we have killed God; God has died'. This is apparently not an atheistic utterance. Rather, it refers to the loss of faith.

Nietzsche recognizes that Christianity has lost its hold over the majority of the Europeans, especially over the majority of intellectuals ... For, as European civilization had been based on the Christian concept of God, the disappearance of faith must necessarily leave a void at the very heart of our civilization; instead of God there is nothing ... (Roubiczek 39).

Nietzsche ponders over the reasons why this sense of nothingness is fraught with danger. He indicates that this sense of emptiness, which constantly grows, destroys man by discarding more and more values, beliefs, convictions and concepts. Consequently, "In the end we are confronted by nothingness as the core of our existence" (Roubiczek 39).

Unlike many philosophers who believe that everything can be explained rationally, "... Nietzsche remains aware that, despite all the problems which may be solved, the fact of existence still represents an insoluble mystery" (Roubiczek 54). The reason why he thinks so is that he knows that, as well as the disappearance of the Christian concept of God, most other concepts have lost their meaning. He is a philosopher who tries to think again all thoughts used by man in terms of immanence, within the limits of possible experience or knowledge. That is because,

Nietzsche's principal concern is to be able to find a way to take the measure of human life in the modern world. What is learned from Nietzsche is the understanding of why Kierkegaard had been despairing at the starting point of his positive philosophy. Thus, Nietzsche arrived at Kierkegaard's idea that the so-called autonomous self-willed individual is nothing as he conforms to the universal standards of morality.

### **2.1.3 Martin Heidegger**

Besides Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, another significant central figure of the Existentialist movement is Martin Heidegger, who particularly tries to justify the absoluteness of Existentialism, the exclusion of essence and objectivity, the attempt to make the subjective method all-inclusive by trying to break down the barriers between the objective and the subjective in different ways from Nietzsche. Furthermore, after seeing *Waiting for Godot* on the stage many critics have thought that he is the philosopher whom Samuel Beckett might have read. His lifelong project was to answer the question of Being. In *Being and Time*, in order to understand Being, Heidegger argued that man must first understand the human kind of being: Dasein, that is "Being-there", the kind of Being who questions his Being. Despite these, Heidegger himself denies that he is an Existentialist because he is mainly interested in the nature of being, that is fundamental ontology.

Heidegger is mainly interested in describing existence and he, then, attempts to make people question even the simplest things and deeds that have been already taken for granted, as Beckett does in his plays. He points out that men are what men can become. Therefore, to him, becoming is a process towards the future, which subordinates the past and the present.

He also coined many new words, "which he himself considers as his main merit" (Roubiczek 130). Two of his inventions are the words which Heidegger uses to distinguish two ways of living, two types of existence: the unauthentic for the inferior, the authentic for the superior. To him, unauthentic existence is an uncritical participation in the world; whereas, authentic existence involves an analysis of self. Authentic existence, or living authentically, is a conscious return to oneself, which dissolves into nothingness. In Heideggerian existentialism, nothingness surprisingly does not have a negative task; "by destroying that which exists, the actually existing

things, it produces a clearing through the wood of these things and in this clearing existence can lay bare essentially and reveal itself” (Roubiczek 131). Heidegger states, “my questioning of the nothing, which arises from the question concerning the truth of be-ing, has nothing at all in common with all of that. The nothing is neither something negative nor is it a “goal”; rather it is the essential enquiring of be-ing itself and therefore is *more-being* than any beings” (Heidegger: 1999:187-188). Then, the result is that existence provides man with an ultimate insight with the help of nothingness. It is clear that he affirms that human existence cannot have a relationship with being unless it remains in the midst of nothingness (Heidegger, 1993:93-110). This sense of nothingness brings ultimate insight together with anguish, that is dread of nothing in particular, and in the book *Basic Writings* he goes into details on the definition of anguish. Heidegger searched for “a particular mood that would disclose something essential about man’s existence as a whole” (Heidegger, 1993:90). Eventually, “... he [man] found it in anxiety, ... a malaise at once less identifiable and more oppressive” (Heidegger, 1993:90). He adds “In anxiety I realize that I have been “thrown” into the world and ... . In anxiety, Dasein finds itself face to face with the nothing of the possible impossibility of its own existence” (Heidegger, 1993:90).

#### **2.1.4 Albert Camus**

Albert Camus, like Beckett, is another playwright as well as a novelist who turned out to be the spokesman of Existentialism when he wrote his famous essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which depicts a vivid picture about the absurdity of human existence from the useless labour of Sisyphus. So, this essay is accepted as the source of inspiration for many existentialists as it became the prototype of this point of view. Sisyphus was condemned by gods to roll a rock up to the top of a mountain, only to have it roll back down again, which displays an absurd hero with a meaningless existence and monotonous everyday life without any purpose. For this reason, the situation of Sisyphus implies that though people are dissatisfied with the world they live in, they feel isolated and helpless to change it. Camus used the Theatre of the Absurd so as to describe the situation of humankind seeking meaning in a universe which does not provide it. Similarly, “You’re on earth, there’s no cure for that!” (68) says Beckett’s Hamm in *Endgame* to emphasize the burdensome

everyday life of many Sisyphusses in this futile world of pointlessness with many rocks to roll up and down.

Albert Camus and Sartre were friends, whom World War II brought together. They shared the same ideas and beliefs. First of all, both claimed that the universe is cruelly apart from reason. Moreover, there is no God. In this brute universe without a divinity, freedom results in a basic despair. Being one of the playwrights of the absurd theatre, Camus had his own comments on it. For Camus, the absurd was not a synonym for the ridiculous, but the true state of existence. He accepted that life is absurd and the absence of universal absolute logic reigns.

As seen in the example of Camus, Existentialism is not only a philosophical but also a literary tendency which displays a devaluation of abstract theories that seek to disguise the disorderliness of actual human life and underlines the subjective realities of individual existence, choice and freedom.

### **2.1.5 Jean-Paul Sartre**

Although the viewpoints of the existentialist philosophers mentioned above will be referred to, Sartre will be the basic source of this thesis as the Beckettian philosophy can find its best expression in the Sartrean Existentialism. Jean-Paul Sartre is commonly regarded as the father of Existentialist philosophy. His writings set the tone for intellectual life and the foundations for the Existentialist view significantly in the decade immediately after the Second World War. In addition to making Existentialism accessible to the people all around the world through his stories, novels and plays, Sartre also created a great deal of serious non-literary work in philosophy.

Sartre seeks to describe and analyse the relationships between different modes of Being. He portrays three modes of being, being-in-itself that is self-subsistent being, being-for-itself which is conscious being, and being-for-others. To illustrate, a person's 'being-for-others' is how he appears to other people. Everyone this person meets makes up their own minds about him, and he has limited control over their opinions. Of course, how he is perceived by others is influenced by what he does and others' opinions of him influence his behaviour. For instance, in the simplest sense, if a person gets a reputation for lying, then no one will believe him even when he tells the truth. Reciprocally, if people think he is a liar, when he is not,

he might be tempted to become one. Then, there is nothing more hurtful than being condemned for something you did not do or choose.

Gregory McCulloch states that Sartre holds that modes of being are strongly interdependent and adds, “Being-for-others requires being-for-itself, being-for-itself is ‘founded’ on a relationship to being-in-itself, and being-in-itself in turn has at least some of its experienced characteristics in virtue of this relationship” (4). Since in all this interdependency the focus abides in the nature of consciousness, it is necessary to dwell on Sartre’s view on consciousness. To begin with, Sartre’s inquiry into consciousness has been regarded as the modern man’s existential plight, and it is frequently asked, “how consciousness could be made an object of philosophical inquiry” (Ellis 2). Then, consciousness is condemned for just being an “absurd hope of endowing being with necessity and thereby saving man from contingency” (Ellis 8). Despite these, Sartre argues that consciousness cannot be studied in isolation; the only way to study it is in and through its relation to the object of which it is conscious. Ellis states that, “Sartre calls the being of which consciousness is conscious ‘being-in-itself’” (13). And “in-itself, consciousness is a pure intentionality” (Ellis 11). Thus, for Sartre all consciousness is consciousness of something, and that is because, the things which we think about, see, imagine and hear are intentional objects. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre describes how our consciousness of ourselves undergoes a radical transformation due to the recognition of the existence of other conscious beings besides ourselves. Awareness of the look of another person, that is ‘gaze’, marks a fundamental change in our consciousness leading to intentional consciousness which is aware of other conscious beings. Sartre also describes consciousness of things as a kind of nausea produced by the recognition of the contingency of their existence and the realization of the situation that this results in is Absurdity. The reason for this nausea according to Golomb is: “one of Sartre’s main ontological contentions is that nothing can be, or have, both sorts of being at once: nothing can be ‘being-for-and-in-itself’. This is the impossible sort of being to which our consciousness unremittingly aspires. We are condemned to be free because from the moment we exist we are, and cannot escape being, makers of choice” (150).

Apart from intentionality, a Sartrean thesis, the possibility of interpreting one's existence, is worth mentioning since it holds great importance in his philosophy. In *Existentialism and Humanism* Sartre says "... man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards ... He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself" (28), and ends up by attributing the responsibility of a man to himself: "... man is responsible for what he is" (29). However, for Sartre there are not a lot of people who are courageous enough to take the risk of attaining being-in-themselves, or authenticating their existence. "Not many are capable thus of authenticating their existence: the great majority reassure themselves by thinking as little as possible of their approaching deaths" (1948: 14, 15).

Further, the choice of action, for Sartre, is also a choice of oneself; however, in choosing oneself one does not choose to exist as existence is given and one has to exist in order to choose. This means choice is necessary to exist as man determines his existence. For Sartre "what we choose is always better" (1948:29). Therefore, to exist in order to choose precedes to choose so as to exist. However, for man choice is to confront his existence owing to the fact that there might be no reason for choosing whatever one does since the choice remains unjustified and groundless in a godless universe. This is the perpetual human reality and unbearable pain of existence, which is expressed best in Beckett's plays.

Another important concept in the Sartrean existentialism is 'bad faith'. To act in bad faith is to turn away from the authentic choosing of oneself and to act in conformity with a stereotype or role. Sartre's most famous example in *Being and Nothingness* is that of a waiter:

Let us consider this waiter in the café. His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes towards the patrons with a step a little too quick .. his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer .. he gives himself to the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things .. the waiter in the cafe plays with his condition in order to realize it (1956:81).

The waiter in Sartre's example moves erratically so as to realize his condition. However, for Sartre authenticity is not a notable visible action; rather, it stems from the basic project of self-choice. He claims that to behave authentically just for the sake of authenticity or being an authentic person is not authenticity at all. He expresses this in his work *Notebooks for an Ethics*: "if you seek authenticity for authenticity's sake, you are no longer authentic" (6). It is understood that, for Sartre, to want authenticity for its own sake is the same with to want to be defined in the mode of being, which is impossible, being-for-itself-in-itself. "Thus the essential structure of sincerity does not differ from that of bad faith. ... Total, constant sincerity as a constant effort to adhere to oneself is by nature a constant effort to dissociate oneself from oneself . . ." (1956:68).

When such is the case, Lavigne, the writer of the book *From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest* says:

What then is Existentialism? There exists now a widely accepted definition of existentialism. It is that existentialism is the philosophic standpoint which gives priority to existence over essence. What is meant by this is that existentialism gives priority in significance to existence, in the sense of my existence as a conscious subject, rather than to any essence which may be assigned to me, any definition of me, any explanation of me by science or philosophy or religion or politics. Existentialism affirms the ultimate significance, the primacy of my existence as this flickering point of consciousness of myself and of objects of which I am aware, my existence as this conscious being against all efforts to define me, to reduce me to a Platonic essence, or to a Cartesian mental substance, or to a Hegelian carrier of the spirit of my culture, or to a scientific neurological mechanism, or to a social security number. Whereas classical and modern rationalism have regarded rational essences or self-evident ideas as having primacy over individual existence. Whereas rationalism claims that the individual existence can be comprehended by the concept or essence or by any conceptual system (328).

## 2.2 SAMUEL BECKETT'S EXISTENTIALIST STAND

Samuel Beckett's literary output is filled with the absurd and tragic emptiness of human condition. His drama is haunted by an absence of meaning at the centre. Within this meaninglessness, Beckett's characters desperately struggle for finding a meaning for themselves. They are born into an irrational world. They live out their lives waiting for an explanation that never comes, and even the existence of this explanation might be only a product of their imagination. Beckett's drama is based on his perception of human condition, that is, being born and mostly living in pain, suffering ordeals, a short rough and unpleasant existence. Man's needs and desires are all reduced. Therefore, "All Beckett's work comprises a unity in which certain attitudes are expressed in different ways with much force and rare imagination: life is cruel and painful; failure is no worse than success because neither matters; what is important is to avoid giving pain to others and to share misfortune" (Chambers 78). That is to say, for Beckett, there is neither meaning nor explanation; there is and there remains only nothingness, which puts him close to the Existentialists. Within this context, human relationships in his plays are reduced to cruelty, hope, frustration and disillusionment revolving around the repetitive themes of birth, death, and human emotions like anxiety and despair, and physical obstacles.

Existentialism has emerged as a reaction against the traditional philosophies of the time. Likewise, Beckett's plays are the antithesis to the mainstream drama of his time because they reject realistic settings, characters, situations and conventional flow of logic, and instead offer meaninglessness, isolation and the breakdown of language. The mainstream realistic drama against which Beckett reacts shows life as it is or should be. In other words, it is the reproduction of life, in particular, as it appears to the eye and ear. It is usually didactic and entertaining, peopled with ordinary men in ordinary situations. The setting is realistic. The characterization of a realistic play is more important than the plot structure, which is linear and chronological. Further, the dialogue comes closer to what human senses perceive. That is why realistic plays avoid soliloquies, remarks which are not part of the main subject, and declamations. However, Beckett appears as a figure committing himself to the representations of a reactionary drama, which contributes to reflecting the

playwright's view of human condition, which is very similar to Existentialism. This type of existentialist drama is also called the 'Theater of the Absurd'. "Although 'absurdist' were never really a coherent movement, their plays did share a rejection of realistic settings, characters and situations, along with conventional logic, and offered instead portrayals of meaninglessness, isolation and the breakdown of language" (Chambers 76).

The Absurd Theatre is the drama of such writers as Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett in France and Harold Pinter in England. It imitates the absurdity of human existence. The Theatre of the Absurd presents a powerful and vivid view of the absurdity of the human condition and the absurdity results mainly from the failure of communication. Man is insistently reminded that his existence in general is essentially absurd. Among the basic themes are loneliness in a Godless world, inability to communicate owing to the corruption of language, dehumanisation due to mass media, and devaluation of relations. Although the plays of the Absurd Theatre are serious due to the themes, they might contain extravagantly comic scenes to be able to depict a reality that is illogical, senseless and absurd. A world of futility, meaningless acts and the ruthless situation of human beings are also observed in such plays.

## CHAPTER III

### 3. EXISTENTIALISM AND BECKETT'S TWO PLAYS: *ENDGAME* AND *HAPPY DAYS*

#### 3.1 *Endgame*

“... a portrait of desolation, lovelessness, boredom,  
ruthlessness, sorrow, nothingness.”

(Atkinson, 1958, 32).

*Endgame* originated in Beckett's mind in 1953 to 1954 and was written in French between 1955 and 1956. It is Beckett's one of the most discussed plays, and “... it is perhaps his critics' favorite, as well as its author's, and many have written very well on it” (Murphy et al., 1994, 48). However, “James Acheson ... argues, “that the play is deliberately designed to resist even the most ingenious of explications”” (Murphy et al., 1994, 49).

Knowing that it is awkward, or maybe impossible, to explicate *Endgame*, it is still tempting to analyze it because of some reasons: First of all, *Endgame*'s thematic undertow is about the insistent obsession with dying or ending, which is the basic anguish of man related to his condition. Moreover, Beckett's characters in this play do not employ sufficient language; and therefore, their dialogues always depend on what has already been uttered for a meaningful sense of wholeness. As a combination of these characteristics and the pessimistically-drawn picture in terms of both the characters and the language, it offers no more than nothing to its readers and spectators. After watching one of the productions of *Endgame* in the London Theater, in 1958, perceiving that it gives nothing to the spectator, Bonamy Dobree

saw the necessity to question how Beckett's *Endgame* changes one's notion of what a play is, when it is not even a copy of life. Dobree says, "Nothing is given us; nothing is added to our sense of life. We do not even enjoy vicarious living for an hour or two. The piece being deliberately stripped of any human quality lacks either delight or any sense of glory" (146).

Samuel Beckett in *Endgame* primarily focuses on the importance of depicting an existence with few words in an era when the importance of existence is incessantly challenged by the recognition that man's life can end anytime, which means the lives of men are mere insignificant no-thing-nesses. Although it includes comic elements, what Beckett shows the audience is that the play is parodying a residual quest for meaning "with ruthless glimpses of 'nothingness' beyond the surface puppetry" (Kennedy 47).

It has been very often claimed that *Endgame* carries certain aspects of *Waiting for Godot* to further points of ferocity and condensation. When the similarities between the characters and the act of waiting, for Godot in *Waiting for Godot* and for an ending in *Endgame*, are compared, the latter one seems to be affirming life less and diminishing human faculties more by means of a decaying language:

He wanted to distil a darker vision, 'more inhuman than Godot' . . . , in a one-act structure that gradually closes in like the final scene of a traditional tragedy. The open road of Godot is replaced by a prison-cell-like room that has two tiny windows with views of an almost dead universe. The relatively mobile Estragon and Vladimir give way to a couple whose mobility is limited in the extreme: Hamm, pushed in his chair, can only hug the walls of his minuscule stage kingdom; and Clov, who cannot sit, can only run to and fro from wall to wall, from centre to circumference. In Beckett's most famous stage image, Nell and Nagg spend the entire 'action' confined to dustbins – legless, in perfect immobility. The cyclic rundown and the exhaustion of all physical and psychic resources is intensified (Kennedy 47).

Very similar to *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* is an example of the Beckettian universe in which "... the characters take refuge in repetition, repeating their own

actions and words and often those of others in order to pass the time” (Worton 69). Then, there is a peculiar universe created by Beckett with characters thrown onto the Beckettian stage. Furthermore, in one of the reviews in *The Dublin Magazine*, his new type of drama is considered to be a ‘hell’, a Beckettian hell:

we are in a hell à la Beckett ... creatures suffering from physical disabilities, cripples whose locomotion is either unbelievably difficult or nonexistent, whose life is limited to involuntary as well as voluntary memory, or a frantic ratiocination as the impulse to live or not to live burns into thought in a wretched remnant of a brain” (Anon., 1957).

If so, it is necessarily required that Beckett should have some means to convey his hell to the audience, and to force everyone to reckon his own existence and the meaning of life while watching and being exposed to the cruel and irritating situation in this ‘hell à la Beckett’. Some of those means can be setting, time, situation, and primarily the characters and the language, which are the elements used by the playwright to bring about the harmony of nothingness to *Endgame*.

### **3.1.1 Setting, Stage and Context in *Endgame***

In *Endgame* Samuel Beckett as setting employs the image of a confined dim room, which is not surprising as “his plays are produced in out-of-the way places” (Butler, 1993:67). Hamm is seated in a wheelchair and covered with a sheet when the curtain opens. Barrenness prevails in the “bare interior” (E 1). Two ashbins stand on the left stage, which later turn out to be the containers of Hamm’s legless parents. Also, there are two high and tiny windows, facing both earth and sea, curtained. Other objects displayed on the stage either at the opening of the curtain or later on in the play are a picture, whose face is interestingly to the wall, hanging near the door, a toy dog, lacking one of its legs, a telescope, the flea in Clov’s trousers, and an alarm clock. Throughout the play, nothing else appears on the stage confirming the idea of proceeding within certain limits of time and space, and keeping the sphere of necessity or material utility outside.

Concerning the setting and its location in *Endgame*, there are some different comments. The commonest one is that it is the representation of a skull located in the

middle of a destroyed environment, that is some kind of collapsed and extinct external space created after a world-striking disaster. On the other hand, there is another outstanding explanation of the place in *Endgame*, which keeps that place away from any type of interpretation: Hugh Kenner answers his own “where is this place?” and declares, “it is here, that is all we can say, here before us, on stage. The set does not represent, the set is itself” (121).

In *Endgame* “Grey light” (E 1) which illuminates the room remains the same. Its being constant without any change underlines the frozen zero point of time and place. However, Clove reports the increasing loss of light in the world outside of the windows of the room.

**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. (E 30).

Apart from the bare interiority of the room on the stage, the space or the scene beyond the windows draws attention by being repetitively mentioned. Hamm sitting motionless in his chair is curious about what is seen out of the window. When he first asks Clov to describe the land, through Clov’s communicating his perception of out, it is understood that outside is also as bare as inside.

**CLOV** (*after reflection*):

Nor I.

*(He gets up on ladder, turns the telescope on the without.)*

Let's see.

*(He looks, moving the telescope.)*

Zero...

*(he looks)*

...zero...

*(he looks)*

...and zero.

**HAMM:**

Nothing stirs. All is—

**CLOV:**

Zer—

**HAMM** (*violently*):

Wait till you're spoken to!

(*Normal voice.*)

All is... all is... all is what?

(*Violently.*)

All is what?

**CLOV:**

What all is? In a word? Is that what you want to know? Just a moment.

(*He turns the telescope on the without, looks, lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.*)

Corpsed. (E 29-30).

Adorno in *Trying to Understand Endgame* suggests a contextual interpretation to 'corpsed' external world. He says,

After the Second World War, everything, including a resurrected culture, has been destroyed without realizing it; humankind continues to vegetate, creeping along after events that even the survivors cannot really survive, on a rubbish heap that has made even reflection on one's own damaged state useless (43).

For him, the damaged state of the world is finished by humanity; and that is why, there is nothing worth seeing outside other than zero for the last survivors like Clov. This is quite ironic because Hamm can see nothing as he is blind; Clov can see nothing as nothing exists out. There is no difference between the two characters' visions.

As Clov says, the Beckettian space is 'corpsed', which embodies the sense of nothingness, and even the sky is a persistent grey. Hamm's second attempt to

investigate the outside comes late in the play. This time Clov reports that there is precisely 'nothing':

**CLOV:**

I warn you. I'm going to look at this filth since it's an order.

But it's the last time.

*(He turns the telescope on the without.)*

Let's see.

*(He moves the telescope.)*

Nothing ... nothing ... good ... good ... nothing... (E 78).

Although it is not certain whether Clov is deliberately not communicating what he really sees outside or he really sees nothing, *Endgame* appears to be taking place after "some kind of apocalyptic event (probably, an atomic war): the stage is empty because the world it represents has been emptied" (Buning et al., 1988, 309). In the play when Clov utters "Light! How could anyone's light be on?" (E 41), it becomes clear that he is speaking as if a dreadful event had happened and extinguished life on Earth. Also, Hamm's crying out "A rat! Are there still rats?" (E 54) well supports this speculation about a catastrophe. Hence, it can be said that Beckett is particularly concerned with stripping away all external encumbrances to expose the bare zero. That is because he attempts to exhibit the pure existence of man in the absence of material externalities and away from the beguiling projections of the multitude of objects on being. In other words, the naked, unaccommodated images on the stage, both the characters and the objects, well reflect Beckett's existential apprehension and straightforward display of what is placed there: being-itself. Exhorted to play along, he responds with parody, parody both of philosophy and of forms. Existentialism itself is parodied; nothing remains of its invariant categories but bare existence (Adorno 42-43).

The use of the objects, preference of chilly images and a deliberately designed dreadful external scene out of the windows of the room are all convenient for creating a bare atmosphere which is very similar to the 'bare existence' Adorno mentions. Both 'bare existence' and 'bare setting' are peculiar; and due to this, frightening for man.

### **3.1.2 Time Concept in *Endgame***

In *Endgame* another component, though invisible, is the notion of time. Beckett likes to play with the existence or non-existence of it frequently throughout the play. There is indeed no notion of time in the comprehensible sense of the worldly usage. Beckett, very similar to the ‘corpsed’ world by humanity, incapacitates the concept of time. Going further, saying that time does not exist any more might be a more appropriate statement because “the nature of the ‘course’ that is taking place in *Endgame* remains undefined ...” (Lyons 69). This is clear through the dialogue between Hamm and Clov:

**HAMM:**

One of these days I'll show them to you.

*(Pause.)*

It seems they've gone all white.

*(Pause.)*

What time is it?

**CLOV:**

The same as usual. (E 4).

Likewise, as can be seen via the exchange between the characters below, nothing changes in *Endgame* such as the weather condition and the colour of Hamm’s face. All are signifying that time is really incapacitated:

**HAMM:**

What's the weather like?

**CLOV:**

As usual. (E 27).

Further,

**HAMM:**

Am I very white?

*(Pause. Angrily.)*

I'm asking you am I very white?

**CLOV:**

Not more so than usual. (E 64).

Bored, on a number of occasions, the characters affirm that nothing alters including time. 'Undefined and corpsed time' is approached with suspicion, as there is no clue what time of the day it is:

**HAMM:**

This is not much fun.

*(Pause.)*

But that's always the way at the end of the day, isn't it,  
Clov?

**CLOV:**

Always.

**HAMM:**

It's the end of the day like any other day, isn't it, Clov?

**CLOV:**

Looks like it.

*(Pause.)*

**HAMM** *(anguished):*

What's happening, what's happening?

**CLOV:**

Something is taking its course. (E 13).

Then, the best explanation for time can be that "... time can be lost because time would contain hope" (Adorno 46). The lost, incapacitated and frozen time of the play implies that there is no hope on the stage, which is a feeling that may irritate a reader or an audience by triggering anxiety. This function of the Beckettian time is accompanied by existential despair.

Furthermore, the time concept in *Endgame* signals that there is no need for a change and time will never end, which reveals despair more:

**HAMM:**

Have you not had enough?

**CLOV:**

Yes!

*(Pause.)*

Of what?

**HAMM:**

Of this... this... thing.

**CLOV:**

I always had.

*(Pause.)*

Not you?

**HAMM** *(gloomily):*

Then there's no reason for it to change.

**CLOV:**

It may end.

*(Pause.)*

All life long the same questions, the same answers. (E 5)

To begin a play with the word 'finished' and to repeat it many times again and again in the play illustrate that "ending is a process, at every level of action (character and language, vision and structure), [and] might be thought to contradict all the known elements of traditional drama" (Kennedy 48). In addition, this process is a "slow, painful, drop-by-drop ..." (Kennedy 48) one as Clov tells at the very beginning of the play: "Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap" (E 1). It signifies an endless ending, a forever stopped time in the Beckettian universe despite the calls of Hamm and Clov repetitively for an end to pain. The opening words of Clov can illustrate this plight: "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" (E 1). What is more, Hamm's soliloquy is almost the imitation of the same desperate wish to end the time he has, though he hesitates, which shows that he has some hope:

Enough, it's time it ended, in the shelter, too.

*(Pause.)*

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.)* (E 3).

By means of the sense of endlessness, "Beckett conveys a sense of extension in time through carefully placed references to deterioration, consumption and loss that build the image of a slow and painful movement through the past up to this precise

moment” (Lyons 58). Then, when Hamm says, “But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!” (E 11), change does not stand for a time concept which is capable of passing and becoming exhausted. In contrast, it is the time which deteriorates everything, and takes the characters to the point of loss.

### **3.1.3 Characterization and Language in *Endgame***

#### **3.1.3.1 Characters**

Beckett designs four characters in *Endgame* stylising them in terms of role, speech, physical appearance and the ability of movement. Hamm is a blind and paralysed master who sits in a wheelchair, and Clov is a servant. Nagg and Nell, legless immobile characters living in ashbins, are Hamm’s parents. Those four characters’ relationships are ambiguous, and thus the interpretation is complex. Yet, Beckett’s characters are distinct from ordinary people living in the world. They are extraordinarily different and they seem to have been placed on the stage after being taken from another planet.

Each of his characters is a deteriorated and damaged figure whose image suggests a present immobility in contrast to a past vitality. Instead of witnessing the image of a person actively engaged in life, we watch the remnant of an individual whose consciousness reviews a narrative that may relate to past, seeing himself and the objects that surround him as the residue of an earlier time (Lyons 58).

Two central figures are Hamm and Clov. Hamm is the master who wants to control everyone in the play although he has absolutely no control over himself, over the on-going process of waiting for an ending, and even his own pain. He apparently bosses Clov and orders him to do whatever he wants; what is more, Hamm is the decision-maker on behalf of Clov as it can be clearly seen in the case of Clov’s vision. Although Hamm himself is visually-impaired and cannot operate his eyes, he tries to rule Clov’s sense of vision as the absolute master on the stage:

**CLOV:**

I’ve looked.

**HAMM:**

With the glass?

**CLOV:**

No need of the glass.

**HAMM:**

Look at it with the glass.

**CLOV:**

I'll go and get the glass.

*(Exit Clov.)*

**HAMM:**

No need of the glass!

*(Enter Clov with telescope.)*

**CLOV:**

I'm back again, with the glass. (E 28).

In the play, "Hamm's behaviour is an existential performance" (Lyons 68). This is because the Beckettian character Hamm goes through a series of practices on the way to constitute his being.

Hamm's mastery over his parents, Nell and Nagg, is quite observable by the reader and audience because he is the party which governs the relationship between his parents and himself. If his parents are speaking or rarely laughing, whenever he wants to speak, he silences them harshly. For instance, while his parents are laughing about the story of a tailor told by Nagg, Hamm shouts: "Silence!" (23), and the stage direction says that Nagg cuts his laugh short. Therefore, he resembles the King in a chess game, the mightiest piece which is served by all others, but which is also the most unshielded. As it is apparent in the dialogue between Clov and Hamm, Hamm reveals that what he most needs is to be accompanied and shielded against loneliness and lovelessness:

**CLOV:**

I'll leave you.

**HAMM:**

No! (E 58).

Being vulnerable, he is dependent on Clov, and afraid to stay alone. This reverses the situation revealing that he himself is the servant, not Clov.

Clov is a character that is the submissive and obedient servant of Hamm in spite of the fact that he feels some oppositions and resistance to his kingpin. He

virtually lets Hamm exploit and manipulate him. For example, whenever Hamm asks him to push the chair round the space, he does. Or whenever he is ordered to look out of the window and report on the landscape, he does it mechanically in the way Hamm wishes. Throughout the play Clov questions his own absolute obedience and reacts against Hamm, though he still does not refuse to obey the commands:

**CLOV:**

Do this, do that, and I do it. I never refuse. Why?

**HAMM:**

You're not able to. (E 43).

The other rebellious articulation comes towards the end of the play:

**CLOV:**

There's one thing I'll never understand.

*(He gets down.)*

Why I always obey you. Can you explain that to me?

**HAMM:**

No. ... Perhaps it's compassion. (E 76).

Despite questioning his absolute obedience only twice, Clov is courageous enough to stand up for himself at times, even going so far as to hit Hamm with his toy dog. Also, he repetitively asks questions about why he stays with Hamm and why he has a life-long sense of obligation:

**CLOV:**

Why do you keep me?

**HAMM:**

There's no one else.

**CLOV:**

There's nowhere else. (E 6).

Clov feels that Hamm is keeping him, which implies that he is not willingly staying with Hamm. However, he knows the dreadful fact that this place is the only shelter for him to take refuge in. Consequently, it is apparent that Clov is also dependent on Hamm due to every man's fear of loneliness.

Both of these central figures are bound together in various acts of connivance and fellowship. They both depend on each other. Hamm seems to derive his authority over Clov from his role in the past, and only the remnants of this power appear on

stage. Now that Hamm's absolute authority is weakened, Clov can get his freedom. However, as Charles Lyons explicates "both Hamm and Clov perceive freedom as freedom from the constraints of their relationship", and this is the basic reason why they cannot manage to split up: "each has difficulty in moving towards the dissolution of their unequal partnership" (60). Although it seems that there is a potential to end their relationship and to end the play, they remain together, which poses an image of potential separation due to both departure and death. And thus, it never ends turning out to be 'a game of ending'.

In Clov and Hamm's relationship, it is not only master and servant roles that are emphasized. Beckett also attaches the relationship of a father and son: "Beckett complicates the basic image of Hamm and Clov as master and servant with suggestions that their relationship also functions as that of father and son" (Lyons 56).

**HAMM:**

Do you remember when you came here?

**CLOV:**

No. Too small, you told me.

**HAMM:**

Do you remember your father?

**CLOV** (*wearily*):

Same answer.

(*Pause.*)

You've asked me these questions millions of times.

**HAMM:**

I love the old questions.

(*With fervour.*)

Ah the old questions, the old answers, there's  
nothing like them!

(*Pause.*)

It was I was a father to you.

**CLOV:**

Yes.

(*He looks at Hamm fixedly.*)

You were that to me. (38).

Hence, it is evident that “While Clov always seems to maintain an ironic distance from Hamm’s rhetorical declamations, he knows the words to speak to assist his master in sustaining the routines the blind man plays” (Lyons 51).

The other two characters are Nagg and Nell, who are Hamm’s parents. They are legless amputees doomed to live in separate ashbins. They are in a helpless situation and the most despairing characters for being immobile on the stage compared to Hamm, who can move when wheeled, and Clov, who can walk despite the pain in his legs. They are strangely “bottled” many times by Hamm’s order, which displays a peculiar treatment towards parents. The situation appears to be cruel, especially while “Clov pushes Nagg back into the bin, closes the lid” (E 10).

Hamm thinks that Nagg and Nell are guilty of bringing him to life and responsible for his existential pain. As he blames them for all his sufferings, he treats them in anger. He calls, for instance, his father an “accursed fornicator” (E 10), and “accursed progenitor” (E 9). He even goes so far as to question his father: “Scoundrel! Why did you engender me?” (E 49). All these blameful statements of Hamm stem from the existentialist fact that he is, like all other men, thrown into “desolate isolation” (Kern 169) with the contribution of his parents. Whatever the reason, there is a deep hostility in Hamm and his father’s relationship, which is present in their exchanges.

Nell and Nagg, like Clov, are dependent on Hamm. In particular, Nagg seems so because he has to plead for food and favours, which are sugarplums. Furthermore, their sand in the ashbins is also changed with the order of Hamm. On the other hand, Hamm is also dependent on his parents since he needs listeners to prove his existence.

**HAMM:**

It's time for my story. Do you want to listen to my story?

**CLOV:**

No.

**HAMM:**

Ask my father if he wants to listen to my story.  
*(Clov goes to bins, raises the lid of Nagg's, stoops, looks into it. Pause. He straightens up.)*

**CLOV:**

He's asleep.

**HAMM:**

Wake him.

*(Clov stoops, wakes Nagg with the alarm.*

*Unintelligible words. Clov straightens up.)*

**CLOV:**

He doesn't want to listen to your story.

**HAMM:**

I'll give him a bon-bon.

*(Clov stoops. As before.)*

**CLOV:**

He wants a sugar-plum.

**HAMM:**

He'll get a sugar-plum. (E 48).

In the search for a listener, being rejected by Clov, Hamm makes his father listen to his story. He achieves this after telling that Nagg will get whatever he wants, that is a sugar-plum, in consideration of listening to his story.

No matter how much Hamm needs his parents as the listeners of his literary story, which seems to be unfinished forever, from time to time, Nell and Nagg are indeed quite valueless for him. It is evident from the fact that they can only appear on the stage, and thus in Hamm's life, when allowed by Hamm. Furthermore, when Nell dies, Hamm is hardly disturbed and never feels sorrow for her mother.

**HAMM:**

Go and see is she dead.

*(Clov goes to bins, raises the lid of Nell's, stoops,*

*looks into it. Pause.)*

**CLOV:**

Looks like it.

*(He closes the lid, straightens up. Hamm raises his*

*toque. Pause. He puts it on again.)*

**HAMM** *(with his hand to his toque):*

And Nagg? (E 62).

Mother-son relationship and the sensitivity it should bring appears dead. Death does not lead to any feelings of affection owing to the loss of belief in any type of

relationship, whereas no one can help feeling sorry normally for the death of even an ordinary person.

All the characters in *Endgame* represent figures who are just exercising particular physical gestures, exchanging, or most probably incapacitating, some “patterns of language that hold an equivocal and puzzling relationship to our previous notions of drama and narrative” (Lyons 61). As a result, the actions and words of the characters are difficult to interpret or to subordinate to one single interpretation which may work temporarily, because they bear potential possibilities: “*Endgame* plays with interpretation or, rather, with various processes of provoking interpretation” (Lyons 61).

### **3.1.3.2 The Use of Language and its Role in *Endgame***

Besides the weird characterization that is close to nothingness since it lacks detailed depiction and clues related to the characters, language is a complementary to the characters in order to achieve and reveal the existentialist tendencies of the playwright in *Endgame*. Very similar to the characters on the stage, language is peculiar since it looks paralysed, immobile, purposeless, and filled with repetition, which is sometimes absurd. Despite language’s having very little function of communication, and thus engendering difficulty in interpretation, it is a fact that a lack of action in *Endgame* intensifies the interest in and forces concentration upon the dialogues between the characters. Raymond T. Riva, in his essay “Beckett and Freud” states “Beckett seems to be communicating in an essentially symbolic language, one which is quite capable of communication while seeming to say nothing and of going nowhere” (160). This is what the Beckettian language is: telling some-thing in no-thing-ness.

The fundamental characteristics that reflect the Beckettian use of language are the extensiveness of the stage directions – compared to dialogues –, repetitions, abrupt exchanges of trivial talk and quick shift of subjects, lack of purpose and meaning, chains of association, short sentences, frequent use of pauses and deliberate choice of third person plural in Clov’s utterances. In addition to all these attributes employed in *Endgame* and clear through the text, there are basically two effects of them to the clarification of the play. The first one is that language sometimes decides what is real for the characters due to the fact that what they utter can determine the

reality in which they live and the objects with which they are in contact, though it has no purpose of communication. Secondly, language has a role of affirming the existence of the characters because they still continue to speak so as to convince themselves that they are alive.

To begin with, in reading *Endgame*, there are lengthy and thus detailed stage directions concerning the actions of the characters. At the very beginning of the play, a long stage direction about the actions of Clov is placed which depicts precisely what he does, how he does it and how long these actions take one after the other. The reason why stage directions for the actions of the characters are given in detail can be that the dialogues are not extended, and, in fact, even compressed. So the insufficiency of the dialogues is compensated for by directions in nuts and bolts. In addition, they guarantee the continuity and a certain measure of coherence, which are normally provided by a series of events or the meaningful exchanges of the characters, since they are excluded from the play in an extraordinary manner and on purpose by Beckett. However, this does not mean that the stage directions become a part of the characters' memory. That is to say, although the gestures and movements are governed by a definite stage description, this is not enough to enable the characters to perform the same action when repeated. This is very intentional and clear in the example of Clov's movements. Clov, the servant, attempts to see out of the two windows of the confined cell-like room which restricts the space of the theatre play. In order to do this, he brings a ladder on which he can climb up to the high windows. After climbing up to the left window, he attempts for the right one, but he notices that he needs the ladder only after a few steps towards right. Hence, it is obvious that language does not provide the necessary experience for the servant character even in similar situations. "Thus, experience ceases to be a guide and cannot even serve to connect identical situations" (Iser, 1993:146). A further instance of repetition comes later:

*(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.) (E 30).*

Clov's movements prove that he cannot connect identical situations, and Beckett achieves repetition through the use of mechanical repetitive stage directions.

The form of expression that is in a cyclic pattern of repetition throughout the play represents a zero point, which seems to be stopped or frozen, or a linear progression towards no-where, towards nothingness. Clear from the dialogues, change is resisted or avoided by the characters and thereupon repetition becomes unavoidable being a signifier of no change in an anguish-stricken universe.

In order to have a better understanding, it is needed to examine the concrete examples of repetition in the dialogues. Throughout the play many times, Clov repeats his plan to leave Hamm: "I'll leave you, I have things to do" (12), "I'll leave you" (41), "I'll leave you" (48), "Then I'll leave you" (68) etc. Other forms of expressions parody the repetition of ending the relationship further. In the episode concerning the alarm-clock, Clov signals and repeats his idea of leaving: "You whistle me, I don't come. The alarm rings. I'm gone. It doesn't ring, I'm dead" (47). All these phrases of repetition concerning leaving emphasize that this is "a long but inconclusive farewell" (Kennedy 58).

Another frequently repeated phrase belongs to Hamm and it is concerned with his pain-killer. His repetitions involve using the question form of expression. Hamm wants to learn "Is it not yet time for my pain-killer?" (35), and he repeats it many times in the play, and Clov always responds negatively whenever the question is asked. Hamm most probably knows the answer he will get to his question, and thus he just asks his rhetorical question in order to convince himself that he is there and existing. Also, this repetition implies that there is always pain, that is pain of existence, but nothing to cure it.

Interestingly the characters are able to notice the repetition and monotonous routines of their life in the play, and they insistently articulate this:

**NAGG:**

Were you asleep?

**NELL:**

Oh no!

**NAGG:**

Kiss me.

**NELL:**

We can't.

**NAGG:**

Try.

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

**NELL:**

Why this farce, day after day?

*(Pause.)* (E 14)

Nell shows that she is aware of the fact that they are living days that are imitations of each other, and she is not happy about it. It is understood that she is complaining about those days of repetition through the choice of the word 'farce'. 'Farce'<sup>2</sup> means a comic play or film where the characters become involved in unlikely situations; thus, it is a very suitable definition to describe the situation in which the characters of *Endgame* are surviving.

Consequently, repetition of language patterns provides a convenient ground for the Beckettian darkly comic characters: "*Endgame* articulates itself as a series of repetitions" (Jeffers 44).

The language in *Endgame* is employed to display that there are sudden exchanges of trivial talk and quick shifts from one subject to the other, which quite well reflect that language is needed only to affirm that the characters are alive, not for an effective communication. As each character articulates what he wishes without waiting for a comprehensive reply, this situation results in independent utterances in the same dialogue.

**NAGG:**

You were in such fits that we capsized. By rights  
we should have been drowned.

**NELL:**

It was because I felt happy.

**NAGG** (*indignant*):

It was not, it was not, it was my STORY and  
nothing else. Happy! Don't you laugh at it still?  
Every time I tell it. Happy!

**NELL:**

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<sup>2</sup> Meaning of "farce" from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Third Edition, (1995, 500).

It was deep, deep. And you could see down to the bottom. So white. So clean. (E 21).

In the case of Nell and Nagg's dialogue, both characters are talking about the same experience concerning their going out rowing on Lake Como. However, each is verbalizing just his/her own perspective and understanding regardless of the other.

Similarly, while Hamm is trying to silence his parents after Nagg tells his story about the tailor, Nell suddenly bursts out and says, "You could see down to the bottom" (23). Her utterance is irrelevant to the dialogue and lacks in context. That is why, it is difficult to grasp the meaning or significance of it.

Another example of inconsequential dialogues takes place between Hamm and Clov:

**CLOV:**

If I could kill him I'd die happy.

*(Pause.)*

**HAMM:**

What's the weather like? (E 27)

No sooner is Clov talking about killing him, that is Hamm, than Hamm suddenly asks what the weather is like. Another one happens when Hamm says "Let us pray to God", and Nagg says "Me sugar-plum!". Shift of the subjects is incredibly fast and common. These examples, which are given above, show that there is a dissolution of the relationship between the speeches and the speakers. Phrases are articulated one after the other, but they are not meaningfully connected and comprehensible. "The independence of language is proof that the characters are intent upon neither expression nor communication. Since all purpose is absent from their conduct, they really do not need language, which thereupon begins to free itself from them" (Iser, 1993:149). Moreover, topics in the dialogues are all trivial. There seems to exist nothing which is meaningfully worth communicating.

The basic reason why the dialogues are independent of each other and subjects are all unimportant is that language lacks purpose.

**HAMM:**

What month are we?

*(Pause.)*

Close the window, we're going back.

*(Clov closes the window, gets down, pushes the chair back to its place, remains standing behind it, head bowed.)*

Don't stand there, you give me the shivers!

*(Clov returns to his place beside the chair.)*

Father!

*(Pause. Louder.)*

Father!

*(Pause.)*

Go and see did he hear me.

*(Clov goes to Nagg's bin, raises the lid, stoops.*

*Unintelligible words. Clov straightens up.)*

**CLOV:**

Yes.

**HAMM:**

Both times?

*(Clov stoops. As before.)*

**CLOV:**

Once only.

**HAMM:**

The first time or the second?

*(Clov stoops. As before.)*

**CLOV:**

He doesn't know.

**HAMM:**

It must have been the second.

**CLOV:**

We'll never know.

*(He closes lid.) (E 65-66).*

The dialogue above between Hamm and Clov lacks a verbalised purpose. They are jumping from one topic to the other, and spending time and effort on trivial details and questions that will change nothing even if answered, such as which time Hamm's father heard him. So, they are exchanging words just to pass the time. Hence, "the swift sequence of subjects appears as a shrinking of reality, not to the characters but to the spectators" and "this impression is intensified by the fact that the characters do

not react to one another's words, and this is presented as perfectly normal behavior" (Butler, 1993:148).

Being purposeless, language does not have the function of communication. The loss of meaning and purpose invades the language in *Endgame*. To illustrate the meaninglessness of the words clearly, the dialogue below can be helpful:

**HAMM:**

Perhaps it's a little vein.

*(Pause.)*

**NAGG:**

What was that he said?

**NELL:**

Perhaps it's a little vein.

**NAGG:**

What does that mean?

*(Pause.)*

That means nothing. (E 20).

The characters use words meaning nothing and phrases going nowhere. Then, this type of use of language announces that the purpose of language is demolished, deviated and lost. Its only purpose turns out to be to verify the characters are still alive and able to exchange remnants of an incommunicable language. Nell is the only character who questions the existence of language and the need for it. When Nagg asks her whether he will tell her the story of the tailor, she abruptly refuses it and asks: "What for?" (E 20). Beckett reveals his questioning through Nell. The question 'what for language should be used' signals the lack of sufficient ability, or power of language.

However, Hamm and Clov mock the inability of language to communicate:

**HAMM:**

We're not beginning to... to... mean something?

**CLOV:**

Mean something! You and I, mean something!

*(Brief laugh.)*

Ah that's a good one! (E 32-33).

When Hamm asks Clov with fear if they are beginning to mean something, Clov takes it just as a good joke and laughs. So for the characters it is impossible to 'mean

something'. Thereupon, functionlessness of language is inevitable and funny, though it is not so funny as unhappiness according to Nell: "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness" (E 18).

The exchanges of irrelevant topics in the dialogues are sometimes provided by means of 'chains of association'. Some characters, who are even lacking in the ability to connect their past experiences to the identical situations later, pose a potential to associate one word with another experience that is extraneous to the context:

**NAGG:**

It always made you laugh.

*(Pause.)*

The first time I thought you'd die.

**NELL:**

It was on Lake Como.

*(Pause.)*

One April afternoon.

*(Pause.)*

Can you believe it?

**NAGG:**

What?

**NELL:**

That we once went out rowing on Lake Como.

*(Pause.)*

One April afternoon. (E 21).

Taking the dialogue between Nagg and Nell, it is seen that while Nagg is speaking about the effects of his story on Nell when he told it for the first time, Nell apparently connects his words with the day when they went out rowing on Lake Como. This chain of association makes the dialogue ungraspable and provides the writer with the possibility of changing the topic. While Nagg is trying to tell his story to Nell at the beginning of the dialogue, he finds himself talking about the day they spent rowing on Lake Como. Therefore, "the stimulus quality of language experienced by the characters reveals that there is no effort at a logical-rational association of the speeches; at this point meaning and stimulus of language begin to be mutually exclusive" (Iser, 1993:150).

Other important features of language used in *Endgame* are the use of short sentences and a few number of words, frequent use of pauses, and lastly the deliberate use of third person plural evident in the speech of Clov towards the end of the play. From the beginning, the play is full of short sentences, in particular, in the dialogues.

**HAMM:**

How are your eyes?

**CLOV:**

Bad.

**HAMM:**

How are your legs?

**CLOV:**

Bad.

**HAMM:**

But you can move.

**CLOV:**

Yes.

**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. (E 7-8).

The questions are all one-sentence formations, and their answers are even shorter; they are only one word. Language seems to be condensed. The reason why there is economy of words in *Endgame* is very similar to the reason why fewer objects are placed on the stage, and why there is a limited number of acts and movements: There is a deprivation of purpose for existing.

Meaning is confined to single-word explanations, which indeed restricts a real communication. In one of the occasions out of many, Clov looks out of the window and reports on what he sees. When Hamm attempts to find the suitable word concerning the depiction of the external space, Clov says “What all is? In a word?” and some time later he answers “Corpsed” (E 30). Beckett’s obsession to use one-word explanations leads to the use of a compressed language in the play. Although it is known that he has an extraordinary vocabulary and impressive command of several languages, Beckett deliberately circumscribes the number of the words of *Endgame*, charging each word with an enormous burden. Language is reduced to bare simplicity in terms of quantity.

The language is broken by pauses in *Endgame*, and Beckett manipulates the pauses between speeches with great precision. Its effect may well enhance “the painfulness of waiting, the emptiness of existence, the expectancy of collapse, of a manifestation of total despair” (Fowlie 214). The countless pauses between speeches when the stage is silent underscore the anguish in each of the four characters and the barrenness of the words themselves when they are spoken. Also, the pauses in the play are significant since they allow Beckett to exhibit: “silences of inadequacy, when characters cannot find the words they need; silences of repression, when they are struck dumb by the attitude of their interlocutor or by their sense that they might be breaking a social taboo; and silences of anticipation, when they await the response of the other which will give them a temporary sense of existence” (Worton 75).

Towards the end of *Endgame*, when Hamm calls upon Clov to say a few words from his heart, the servant answers him by giving his longest speech in all the play:

**CLOV** (*fixed gaze, tonelessly, towards auditorium*):

They said to me, That's love, yes, yes, not a doubt,  
now you see how—

**HAMM**:

Articulate!

**CLOV** (*as before*):

How easy it is. They said to me, That's friendship,  
yes, yes, no question, you've found it. They said to  
me, Here's the place, stop, raise your head and look

at all that beauty. That order! They said to me,  
Come now, you're not a brute beast, think upon  
these things and you'll see how all becomes clear.  
And simple! They said to me, What skilled attention  
they get, all these dying of their wounds. (E 80).

In this speech Clov lists friendship, beauty, order and love, which can be a prescription of consolation for a man in Hamm's situation. However, the use of third person plural is interestingly piquant. This kind of use of third person plural "means that these words do not express the feelings of Clov's heart; rather, they seem to be whispered by a voice through which what is spoken loses any connection with the person speaking" (Iser, 1993:148). This puppet-like speech of Clov indicates, "neither human ties nor the particular form of expression are enough to give true meaning to Clov's speech" (Iser, 1993:149).

Language takes over the control from time to time in *Endgame*, and it starts to tell and decide what is real for the characters.

**HAMM** (*his hand on the dog's head*):

Is he gazing at me?

**CLOV**:

Yes.

**HAMM** (*proudly*):

As if he were asking me to take him for a walk?

**CLOV**:

If you like.

**HAMM** (*as before*):

Or as if he were begging me for a bone.

(*He withdraws his hand.*)

Leave him like that, standing there imploring me. (E

41).

Hamm cannot see the toy dog, but has some preferences over it. For instance, he wishes the dog to ask him to take him for a walk, or to beg him for a bone. Once he articulates these, language rules and comprises his reality. Approving the power of language, Clov tells "If you like" (E 41). So, what is possible according to language becomes real. Another instance of 'language rules' takes place when Clov gets up on the ladder, raises the telescope, and it falls on the ground. In order to avoid being told

off by Hamm, Clov says “I did it on purpose” (E 29). When he explains the situation telling him that he let it fall deliberately, he manages to manipulate Hamm’s reaction. This again illustrates that language tells what is real for the characters, in this case for Hamm, because he believes his servant’s explanation. Also, the repeated phrase “They said to me” (80) in Clov’s longest articulation reflects that what Clov is talking about from his heart has a potential of being the product of the contingency of language. Consequently, the frame of their language determines their reality, and most of the time the characters just speak to know that they themselves are real.

In short, the Beckettian language in *Endgame* achieves “those familiar problems” which Walter Kerr cited in Herald Tribune: “an aura of smugness that always hovers around a private language, the defiant treadmill of directionless conversation, the knowledge that the author is deliberately playing blindman’s buff, the emotional aridity of a world without a face” (qtd. in Butler, 1993:64).

### 3.2 *Happy Days*

“Samuel Beckett’s *Happy Days* ...  
is a poem of despair and forbearance  
it is to be seen and suffered.”  
(Clurman, 1961, 233)

Samuel Beckett wrote *Happy Days* in English and it was first published in 1961. When it was performed for the first time on stage at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York on 17 September 1961, Taubman reflected, “With *Happy Days* Samuel Beckett has composed a song of rue that will haunt the inner ear long after you have heard it” (NP). In other words, despite the fact that the play is very Beckettian in the sense that it demonstrates “living death” (Kennedy 85), this play of Beckett is mostly known for its poetic and artistic effect of despair and endurance on the audience.

In *Happy Days*, the playwright again pursues his sustained search for the meaning of existence. Peculiar to Beckett, once again, he strips the art of theatre to its barest essentials. In terms of the number of the characters, *Happy Days* contains only two: Winnie, a woman of about fifty, and Willie, a man of about sixty, and most probably Winnie’s husband. In the first act, Winnie is buried up to her waist in a mound of earth, and she constantly addresses her husband who is barely present and

visible on the stage. Winnie retains a monologue because Willie seldom speaks and responds. Winnie owns some earthly belongings and she goes through her day with the help of those objects. A bell controls her sleeping and waking up by interrupting the ordinary course of time. In the second act, Winnie is sunk further up to her neck into the mound of earth, and she cannot even move her head. Towards the end of the play Willie appears from behind the mound, and Winnie sings her song, the 'Merry Widow' waltz. The play ends in a long pause: Winnie looking down at Willie.

*Happy Days* is Beckett's furthest move so far in the direction of absolute stillness, of a kind of motionless dance in which the internal agitation and its shaping control are described, through language primarily and through the spaces between words (Clurman 236).

Therefore, it ends in a tableau of standstillness, which totally agrees with this statement.

Unlike the gloomy and depressing atmosphere invading *Endgame*, though it offers elements of comedy as well, *Happy Days* can be interpreted as a "mockery of unhappiness" (Iser, 2000:222). In comparison with many other Beckettian works of drama including *Endgame*, *Happy Days* is certainly different because pessimism is only implicit in the play. The characters do not talk and think about their unpleasant and irritating 'death-in-life' situation. Rather, especially in the case of Winnie, there is an optimistic air. For instance, Winnie is comforted by both her own voice and Willie's, and the objects in her bag, and she says:

What would I do without them? (*Pause.*) What would I do without them, when words fail? ... They are a boon, sounds are a boon, they help me ... through the day. (*Smile*) The old style! (*Smile off.*)  
Yes, those are happy days, when there are sounds (HD 40).

Despite such a precarious situation, and maybe because of it Winnie sends optimistic messages through her smiles and life-praising happy words or sentences, which might be considered as a means of warding off unhappiness or cutting herself, thus man, off from dismal feelings, and avoiding the anxiety of existing. What Beckett seriously achieves in *Happy Days* is no less than what Stephen Spender writes in his essay 'Lifelong Suffocation': "He [Beckett] never lets the reader forget for a moment that man is an isolated, decaying, self-deluding, un-selfknowing, death-sentenced, rutting,

body and mind” (Spender 5). So *Happy Days* poses a cruel portrait of man in the middle of an inescapable corruption. This act of eluding the anxiety of existence is also a conscious one. Winnie, being a Beckettian self-aware individual, is well aware of her situation and she is longing for escape from the painful effects of change. Besides these existential tendencies reflected in the play, when Kott states, “consciousness is a gap in existence, a bottomless pit” (144), it is clear that Winnie’s is the example of this existentialist attribute to consciousness in this bare Beckettian universe created in *Happy Days*. While she is trying to avoid the threat of nothingness, she is trapped in her own consciousness, which is indeed nothingness. As there is no bottom, her journey in her consciousness seems to continue forever. This is the existentialist void.

### **3.2.1 Setting, Stage and Context in *Happy Days***

In *Happy Days*, Samuel Beckett designs a strange setting which does not resemble any place in the real world. The play is performed in a barren outdoor setting in which a female character around fifty, Winnie, is buried up to her waist in a mound of earth. There is another character around sixty, who is Willie, hidden behind Winnie’s mound. Therefore, although it is known by the audience that he is there on the stage during the two acts of the play through Winnie’s monologue in which she addresses Willie, he is barely visible to the audience.

At the opening of the play, Winnie’s extraordinary situation first attracts attention due to its being strange. However, as Winnie herself accepts, ‘here all is strange’. Setting is then all strange to the normal eye although Beckett’s description of the place sounds simple and clear:

*Expanse of scorched grass rising centre to low mound.  
Gentle slopes down to front and either side of stage. Back an  
abrupter fall to stage level. Maximum simplicity and symmetry.*

*Blazing light.*

*Very pompier-trompe-l’oeil backcloth to represent  
unbroken plain and sky receding to meet in far distance. Imbedded  
up to above her waist in exact centre of mound, WINNIE. (HD 9)*

There is a hellish light, a ‘blazing light’ that never turns into dark. “She [Winnie] seems suspended at a point of infinite noon” (Lyons 124). The light is so

strong that the parasol, which Winnie raises up, burns up, and more interesting than the incident, Winnie takes it for granted as an ordinary happening of ‘this’ world:

*(Maximum pause. The parasol goes on fire. Smoke, flames if feasible. She sniffs, looks up, throws parasol to her right behind mound, cranes back to watch it burning. Pause.)* Ah earth you old extinguisher. (HD 28)

After she continues her monologue for some time further, she articulates her comment upon her parasol’s burning:

With the sun blazing so much fiercer, is it not natural things should go on fire ... spontaneous like. (HD 29)

Thereupon, there is a purposefully designed place in which unlikely incidents are taken for granted and as natural in the play.

The stage is offered to be open to infinite space in *Happy Days*, which is in contrast with the setting of *Endgame*, in which the space is a closed prison-cell-like place. And, “... the open expanses of space may point only to infinite emptiness”, states Kennedy (76).

Apart from a never-changing relentless light in a space open to infinity, there are a number of objects on the stage, which are significant to the play. On the left side of Winnie, there is a big black bag, on her right a collapsible parasol with a long handle to be pulled out. The capacious bag contains a toothbrush, a tube of running out toothpaste, a mirror, a running out lipstick, a hat, a music box, spectacles, a medicine bottle and a revolver. She improvises an existential rite to pass the time and her day with the help of those objects. Every day she begins with prayers when she wakes up, and Winnie’s ‘heavenly day’ sets off incorporating a series of ceremonies which are filled with those objects. She brushes her teeth first, and then she takes her lipstick out of her big bag, and does her lips. Later, she combs her hair with her comb and looks in the mirror. Next, she puts the parasol up, uses her spectacles and magnifying glass in order to read what is written on the toothbrush or medicine bottle. That is to say, objects are a means of getting through so as not to confront the silence and emptiness of existence.

For Charles R. Lyons, the objects on the stage have a relationship with the past concerning their functions which they possessed once: “... she [Winnie] has the resources of a multitude of objects at her disposal in combination with a sense of time

that encompasses the idea of a past in which these objects played meaningful roles” (119). In other words, his statement implies that the objects connect Winnie to the memories of the past and the significant incidents that took place at those dates. In short, objects stimulate Winnie’s memories.

Another important aspect of the objects on the stage in *Happy Days* is that they are independent, or controlled by an external force. Winnie has no control over them. Although they are all ‘running out’, which signifies a heading towards an end or an exhaustion, they are, in contrast, able to reappear on the stage:

(*Pause. She takes up mirror.*) I take up this little glass, I shiver it  
on a stone – (*does so*) – I throw it away – (*does so far behind her*)  
– it will be in the bag again tomorrow, without a scratch, to help  
me through the day. (HD 30)

There may be two interpretations for the reappearance of the objects: One may be “the world of Winnie and Willie is not a closed one”, and the other might be that “the world is easily reduced, not to a man’s own self, but to what surrounds it” (Kott 142).

In this world created by Samuel Beckett, similar to *Endgame*, nothing grows on earth. There is neither a tree nor some kind of evidence which belongs to a living thing. Moreover, owing to the hellish heat and light, there is an “expanse of scorched grass” (HD 9). This underscores that there was life some time ago in the past that has diminished, and does not continue any more.

In terms of context, *Happy Days* depicts one which is strange and beyond rational explanation. In other words, there is no context in a comprehensible sense. Unlike *Endgame*, which allows speculations and predictions about what must have happened before the play starts, in *Happy Days*, there are no windows to look out of and provide clues for the spectators to comment on. This time space is itself external, outer space. However, it lacks in any evidence of a coherent context.

To some extent, on the surface, one may attempt to claim that Winnie’s memories, and the incidents which took place in that past, might help figure out a context. However, all her stories are unreliable both because she does not utter any definite date and they can be all just inventions of Winnie. “While she [Winnie] is able to discuss these incidents from the past in detail, Winnie cannot hold on to them or place them within a context” (Lyons 121). Thus, unsure of dates due to the lack of a context to hold on to, her each memory or speech ends with a pause, which means a

time allocated to re-think over the subject, and a hopeless question follows the pause ‘What day?’:

Golden you called it, that day, when the last guest was gone –  
(*hand up in gesture of raising a glass*) – to your golden ... may it  
never ... (*voice breaks*) ... may it never ... (*Hand down. Head  
down. Pause. Low*) That day. (*Pause. Do.*) What day? (HD 20)

Another example comes when she is talking about her getting closer with Willie:

That day. (*Pause.*) The pink fizz. (*Pause.*) The flute glasses.  
(*Pause.*) The last guest gone. (*Pause.*) The last bumper with the  
bodies nearly touching. (*Pause.*) The look. (*Long pause.*) What  
day? (*Long pause.*) What look? (HD 45)

Although she well remembers, or at least, articulates the details easily about the events, she is uncertain, and she cannot hold on to the context, which is extracted from the play. The basic reason for her disbelief is that Beckett does not locate his place in a historical setting. In traditional drama, there is always a world with direct or indirect references to the objective reality of the world, and thus, the audience has the opportunity to recognize the context and identify with the aspects of the performance. However, in *Happy Days* there is a subjective demonstration which the spectator sees through the perception, words and deeds of a character named Winnie. This makes a contextual understanding of the Beckettian setting in *Happy Days* impossible since Beckett purposefully avoids it. What can be presupposed is that what is observed on the stage is the context, and looking for an implied hidden historical setting and context will be in vain. Therefore, Dong-Ho Sohn is right when he states in his article named ‘The Concept of Time and Space in Beckett’s Dramas *Happy Days* and *Waiting for Godot*’, “the strangeness of the world [is] presented on the stage” (Sohn NP).

Consequently, the repetitive and ritualistic employment of words, actions, sounds, and songs demonstrates that the world in which Winnie and Willie live does not have any blanks, any empty spaces since it is tightly filled by the playwright. There is a non-stop flow throughout the play. However, “all these voices, memories, objects are loose; they intermingle haphazardly, to no purpose, like necessary and unnecessary trifles crammed together in a big plastic bag” (Kott 158). Then, despite the strangeness and unique absurdness of the straightforward but terrifying setting,

*Happy Days* is created in order to arouse the audience and encourage them to face the human condition in a space which eludes any inessential elements of decoration purpose.

### 3.2.2 Time Concept in *Happy Days*

In *Happy Days*, no evidence for a historical background to the play is given. The background concerning temporal clues is fuzzy and unclear. Related to time-demonstrating signifiers, in the play Beckett employs only a bell and a simple unchanging light together with Winnie's confusing utterances of past memories in her long monologue. In the Beckettian universe designed for *Happy Days*, neither the alarm clock nor the sunlight helps the audience figure out the temporal background. Furthermore, Winnie never articulates a definite date. While she is telling a story or a memory, its date is never revealed because whenever she tells a memory of her, she ends up in the same phrase 'what day?'. What is more, Winnie's memory does not provide the audience with a coherent temporal order. Whatever she tells about is all in fragments. Thus, her memory is not reliable.

The sunshade you gave me ... that day ... (*pause*) ... that day ...  
the lake ... the reeds. (*Eyes front. Pause.*) What day? (*Pause.*)  
What reeds? (HD 39)

From the excerpt, it is apparent that it is impossible to be sure of dates, and thus of time, through the subjective perception of a character who herself is not sure of her own memories.

In addition to the existence of a decaying world of objects and Winnie's sinking into the mound of earth, when the constant light shed on the stage is considered, one is likely to agree with this interpretation: "They [Winnie and Willie] are trapped in static time. ... She [Winnie] is a creature trapped within an undefinable moment called the present, between the past and the future. Beyond the present in which she resides, the void reigns" (Sohn NP). Although there is a bell to underscore the shifts from sleeping acts to waking up acts, these characters are still trapped in a frozen time since they are not really aware of the time of the day, and experience it accordingly. This points to a concept of cyclical time unlike the dominant linear time in the plots of conventional drama. Related to this kind of time scheme, Beckett, in his "Schiller Theater direction notebook", writes that Winnie's time experience is an "incomprehensible transport from one inextricable present to

the next, those past, unremembered, those to come, inconceivable” (qtd. in Knowlson 150).

Despite the absence of a time marker in the worldly sense, there exists a piercing bell which rings arbitrarily, and somehow acts as a determiner to define the segments of time. It divides time in *Happy Days* into random days and nights; though it is never dark, nights are understood when Winnie closes her eyes. According to the bell for waking up and the bell for sleeping, Winnie organizes her activities. This can be explicated by a repeated phrase of Winnie: ‘in the old style’. Lyons states, “... the bell is sounded by some external agent who marks the time and Winnie senses its hostility” (119). Therefore, Winnie regards the bell, and thus time, as hostile, malevolent and irritating. And she says,

The bell. (*Pause.*) It hurts like a knife. (*Pause.*) A gauge. (*Pause*)  
One cannot ignore it. (*Pause.*) How often ... (*Pause*) ... I say how  
often I have said, Ignore it, Winnie, ignore the bell, pay no heed,  
just sleep and wake, sleep and wake, as you please, open and close  
the eyes, as you please, or in the way you find most helpful.  
(*Pause.*) (HD 40)

As she is unable to ignore it, she is obliged to cope with it. Otherwise, she will be left with endless time during which she will have to dwell on the meaning of her existence, and thus, she will get closer to nothingness; that is, what she calls ‘wilderness’. In order to avoid this horrifying confrontation, she tries to do her best when she is “allocating her activities in such a way that they are distributed throughout the day so that she is not left with ‘hours still to run, before the bell for sleep, and nothing more to say, nothing more to do’” (Lyons 119). At the same time, she herself is aware that the time imposed by this hostile bell is just an invented segment of time, and may not comprise what a day means really. She reveals this when she says,

or go away and leave me, then what would I do, what could I do,  
all day long, I mean between the bell for waking and the bell for  
sleep? (*Pause.*) (HD 18)

After uttering the word ‘day’, she feels that she needs to explain what she means by it. This proves that there is a difference between the meanings of ‘day’ in Winnie’s language and the one used in the spectator’s world.

Furthermore, the external agent that is controlling the bell keeps the days long, and nights extremely brief. This prevents Winnie from consolidation and having a rest at least for some time, which overstrains Winnie and she gets tired. As she is exhausted due to weary time-filling tasks and long days with short nights, towards the end of the play, the length and the frequency of the pauses and silences become more in comparison with the beginning. Therefore, the only time marker, that is the bell, turns into an enemy of Winnie, and it becomes a source of a relentless suffering and anxiety.

What is more, Winnie is well aware that time has a deteriorating power, and it inflicts both physical and psychological damage. The most visible to the eye is that Winnie sinks up to her neck in the second act although she was embedded in the mound of earth up to her waist in the first act. Also, she is afraid of any physical change in her appearance as it signals deterioration heading towards an ending. When Winnie says “My arms. *(Pause.)* My breasts. *(Pause.)* What arms? *(Pause.)* What breasts? *(Pause.)*” (HD 38), she illustrates the cruel act of her shrinking body, which refers to decay day by day. Her physical possessions, her arms, breasts, and all are ‘once upon a time’ type of entities. Being victimized by time, Winnie herself articulates this change in Act II:

Then ... now ... what difficulties here, for the mind. *(Pause.)* To have been always what I am – and so changed from what I was. *(Pause.)* I am the one, I say the one, then the other. *(Pause.)* Now the one, then the other. *(Pause.)* There is so little one can say, one says it all. *(Pause.)* All one can. *(Pause.)* And no truth in it anywhere. (HD 38).

As repeated in Winnie’s statement above, time defeats her at certain moments, and her fictional invention of happiness fails, because she notices that she cannot hold the past; she can only speak about it; that is all she can do. As a result, time is very like birth and death in the sense that they are all out of man’s control. Faced with the power of time, everything is sentenced to be ‘running out’, Winnie’s lipstick, toothpaste, and even her words.

In conclusion, the concept of time is cyclical, uncontrollable, deteriorative and an anxiety-raiser in *Happy Days*. And it is designed in such a shape and form that it turns out to be a resource for the existential questioning of one’s being. Time is to fill

in, and to pass for the characters and especially for Winnie in this play. That is why, she gets through by dealing with the objects in her bag, telling the memories which belong to an indefinite date in the past, and quoting from the classics. For Beckett, time in *Happy Days* is one of the necessary means to provide the convenient ground for questioning the meaning of existence. However, Winnie is afraid of this confrontation, and she is busying herself and filling her each day up in order to avoid her non-being.

### **3.2.3 Characterization and Language in *Happy Days***

#### **3.2.3.1 Characters**

In the Beckettian world, characters are all suffering creatures, and they are overpowered by the heavy burden of existing. Besides the reduced number of character attributes, the number of the characters on the stage is also lessened: there are only two characters in *Happy Days*. One is a female, Winnie who is dominant in language and in action despite her immobility. The other one is Winnie's mute husband, Willie. They can be examined in terms of their physical appearance, situation and disabilities.

Winnie is the female heroine of the play, and she is most probably "Beckett's most extended dramatic image of character" (Lyons 128). Then, she is the unique example of the richest portrayal of a single character in Beckett's works. Moreover, *Happy days* is the single exceptional Beckettian play in which the focus is on a woman. It is "a 'Female Solo' (Beckett's original working title for *Happy Days*)" (Worth 9). There is an intensified concentration on her monologue and performance.

Winnie's physical appearance is stressed in the opening stage directions: "about fifty, well-preserved, blonde for preference, plump, arms and shoulders bare, low bodice, big bosom, pearl necklace" (HD 9). These visual elements suggest that despite her advanced age, Winnie is well-groomed and she is still taking good care of herself since she is interested in a life full of 'heavenly' days, which explains why she criticizes Willie's lack of interest in life and pities him: "poor Willie – (*rummages in bag*) – no zest – (*rummages*) – for anything – (*brings out spectacles from case*) – poor dear Willie" (HD 11). She is intensely concerned with the well-ness of her appearance in contrast to the barren and unpleasant setting of the play. As soon as her day starts with the bell, she first brushes her teeth, and then inspects her teeth in the

mirror, and even she tests her upper front teeth with her thumb. Next, she checks her gums. Then, she brushes her hair, makes up her face using her lipstick and puts on a chic hat which seems to belong to 'old style'. Her hat is not only a plain protection against the fierce light of the day since it is decorated with a feather to provide elegance.

No matter how much emphasis is placed on Winnie's appearance, the audience, who watch her performance, are expected not to invent a biography for this woman imagining a background to her marriage. Instead, Lyon states that the nature of her present dilemma only as the co-ordinates of the play itself define it needs to be concentrated on (129).

The situation in which Winnie appears on the stage is quite weird and strange, which is a peculiar aspect of the Beckettian characters: "In any case, we must accept the fact that Beckett's characters do not live and die as do ordinary mortals" (Riva 167). She is embedded in a mound of earth up to her waist in Act I, and up to her neck in Act II. Around her on the mound, there is a bag of left-over objects, with which she passes the time, thus gets through the day.

On the surface, she seems so optimistic because of her statements that "the play might well have been called 'The Optimist'" (Clurman 234). In the morning she wakes up hearing the deafening bell, and she exclaims, "Another heavenly day" (HD 9). Or in another instance, reflecting a "*happy expression*" on her face, which the stage direction states, she articulates, "Oh this is going to be another happy day!" (HD 14). When Willie utters only one word 'it', she becomes very joyful and says,

Oh you are going to talk to me today, this is going to be a happy day! (*Pause. Joy off.*) Another happy day (HD 19).

She has an ironic life-praising point of view. Her attitude in the play is ironic because behind the repeated and polished grimy happiness, there is a sort of hidden and consciously repressed anxiety and tenderness. This tender mode is revealed once very clearly. She breaks the chain of playing the game of happiness, and cries out in anxiety once:

No, something must happen in the world, some change (HD 28).

However, unlike her plight, nothing changes in the way she dreams. Everything continues happening in the same route with all its weary and depressing heaviness.

What is more, she is fond of quoting some lines of old classics though she misquotes them. To illustrate,

– what are those wonderful lines – (*wipes one eye*) – woe woe is me – (*wipes the other*) – to see what I see – (*looks for spectacles*) – ah yes – (*Takes up spectacles*) – wouldn't miss it – (*starts polishing spectacles, breathing on lenses*) – or would I? (HD 11)

This is her first quotation from the classics and it comes from *Hamlet*. When the correct and full version of the quotation in the original play is considered, it is easily noticed that there is a “shocking difference between things as they were and as they have become: ‘I, woe is me T’have seen what I have seen, see what I see’” (Worth 42). This means that Winnie does not keep the meaning of the quotation in the original text; she changes its meaning besides its wording. What is more, her quoting from a classic while she is doing an insignificant job, that is cleaning her spectacles, undermines the magnitude of the original quotation.

Winnie also likes listening to her music box playing ‘The Merry Widow’ waltz, which is a plea for love, and she herself sings this song at the end of the play. The song is again employed so as to help Winnie keep the void at bay, and keep away from any type of unknown and the pain of existence.

It is apparent that Winnie is disabled like the other amputees created by Samuel Beckett in his other plays, too. However, this time the disability of the character is too strange for the audience to comprehend and attain a meaningful logical explanation. Unlike Hamm, who is paralysed and blind, Winnie cannot walk because her feet are buried in earth. Later in the play, she cannot move even her body apart from the changes in her facial expressions. She is totally immobile. Thus, despite the fact that she is not in a confined place, and out in the external space, she is again imprisoned. Her prisoner situation never changes for the better throughout the play, but she dreams of being free and able to walk one day again:

Yes, the feeling more and more that if I were not held – (*gesture*) – in this way, I would simply float up into the blue. (*Pause.*) And that perhaps some day the earth will yield and let me go, the pull is so great, yes, crack all round me and let me out. (HD 26)

In contrast, she decays, her situation diminishes, and the earth goes on swallowing her, restricting her movement more.

What is more interesting is that she is conscious about what is waiting for her later in the flow of her living. Even at the very beginning of the play she already knows that one day she will not be able to put on and take off her hat:

To think there are times one cannot take off one's hat, not if one's life were at stake. Times one cannot put it on, times one cannot take it off. (*Pause.*) (HD 20)

Thereupon, it is clear that she is aware of the fact that one day she will fail, her words will fail, and her endurance will not stand against time. Now that she knows that she will confront the undeniably unpleasant facts of existence, her efforts to struggle against them and to ignore them are all futile and just exhausting. For her, the aim of enduring by resisting in tenderness turns out to be the source of all her pain, anxiety and suffering in the end. Therefore, unlike what she reports verbally, it is difficult to believe that she is happy and living 'happy days, heavenly days'. Instead, she is deeply aware of her own human condition of existence, and unhappy about it while waiting for an end.

When it comes to examining the other character of *Happy Days*, Winnie's husband Willie, it is seen that Willie lives out of sight behind her wife's mound of earth. Understood from Winnie's sentences, he lives in a hole, which is invisible to the audience. Winnie tells Willie:

Do as I say, Willie, don't lie sprawling there in this hellish sun, go back into your hole. (*Pause.*) Go on now, Willie. (WILLIE *invisible starts crawling left towards hole.*) (HD 21)

He rarely emerges to read a yellowish old newspaper, and he murmurs reading from the paper, 'Wanted bright boy'. At the closing of the play he appears crawling in a full evening dress towards his wife Winnie. Most of the time he sleeps, and seems to have a negligent role in comparison with Winnie's. The reason for Willie's being on the stage can be best explained with Winnie's presence: "In *Happy Days* Willie's presence serves Winnie as one of the poles of her address and the distant source of her sorrow and joy" (Gilman 237). He is extremely inactive, impotent, mute and invisible. He is like a symbol of negation. However, his characteristics should not undermine his significance in the play, and the portrayal of Winnie. Charles Marowitz in his review of *Happy Days* states, "the role of Willie, despite its brevity, is

strategic” (121). In this way, he is very important in demonstrating the barest minimum of the play.

Like all the other characters of Beckett, Willie in *Happy Days* is again an extremely reduced character. First of all, he is physically incapable because he cannot walk properly. He just crawls on four, very similar to crawling animals. “Indeed, Beckett has said that he wishes to portray impotence in his works” (Riva 168). So, he is a good example of Beckett’s achievement of his aims. However, though he just crawls, he is better off than Winnie since he has at least a limited facility of movement.

Besides Willie’s limited ability to move, his language is also reduced to the minimum. He almost never utters a word, which results in a play of one character’s constant monologue, a ‘female solo’. Willie is muted by Beckett. He displays just frequent instances of grunts and groans with occasional guffaws, which are the fragments through which he can communicate. That is why, when *Happy Days* is analysed in terms of the characters, Winnie’s ‘voice’ but Willie’s ‘sounds’ can be mentioned. Despite his rare utterances, he is necessary since Winnie asserts and exercises her existence by addressing Willie. That is because; he is there on the stage not as a speaker but as a listener to Winnie:

WINNIE: (*Now in her normal voice, still turned towards him.*) Can you hear me? (*Pause.*) I beseech you, Willie, just yes or no, can you hear me, just yes or nothing.

WILLIE: Yes.

WINNIE: (*turning front, same voice*). And now?

WILLIE: (*irritated*). Yes.

WINNIE: (*less loud*). And now?

WILLIE: (*more irritated*). Yes.

WINNIE: (*still less loud*). And now? (*A little louder.*) And now?

WILLIE: (*violently*). Yes!

WINNIE: (*same voice*). Fear no more the heat o’ the sun. (*Pause.*) Did you hear that?

WILLIE: (*irritated*). Yes.

WINNIE: (*same voice*). What? (*Pause.*) What?

WILLIE: (*more irritated*). Fear no more. *Pause.*

WINNIE: (*same voice*). No more what? (*Pause.*) Fear no more what?

WILLIE: (*violently*). Fear no more!

WINNIE: (*normal voice, gabbled*). Bless you Willie I do appreciate your goodness I know what an effort it costs you, now you may relax I shall not trouble you again unless I am obliged to, by that I mean unless I come to the end of my own resources which is most unlikely, just to know that in theory you can hear me even though in fact you don't is all I need. (HD 21-22)

This longest dialogue between Winnie and Willie very well demonstrates that Winnie is testing her husband's hearing but not his ability in speaking. Winnie's need and expectation from Willie is just to have him listen to her so as to be able to continue her monologue.

All in all, both Winnie and Willie reflect the Beckettian characterization in terms of their appearance, the situation in which they are living, the suffering due to existence which they are exposed to, their lessened relationship, reduced mobility and language. Very similar to *Endgame*, *Happy Days* is a play which is an amputee because of its characters' incapacitating and distressing attributes. With no clues related to a historical background for the characters, the play is closer to a void in a reduced universe. The characters are only exercising particular acts and words repeatedly, very like Sisyphus rolling a rock up and down. Therefore, in *Happy Days* the characters Winnie and Willie are there on the stage to mirror the futility of man's existence.

### **3.2.3.2 The Use of Language and Its Role in *Happy Days***

The language Beckett used in *Happy Days* is an important component of the Beckettian composition in this play, and it is vital in order to create the convenient ground to question the meaning of existence. The language in this play again displays some sort of Beckettian symptoms. The playwright's employment of repetitions, quick shift of subjects, meaningless and purposeless speech, short sentences with often-used pauses underlines that Beckett's dramatic expression of language is against the conventional understanding of drama, and thus quite peculiar. In addition to this, unlike *Endgame*, in *Happy Days* there is a female solo, which means that there is a constant monologue of a female character that is interrupted by

a few utterances of the other character. All these efforts put forward in these unusual characteristics of language are designed to achieve the removal of the incident of existence from ordinary daily context, which can be well backed up by the use of language in the sense of traditional use of words.

It is language that must delineate the special quality of this incident [incident to be removed from ordinary context] as well as its significance. Incomplete events, personal self-expression, peculiarities of communication, and reciprocal influence of characters must all be bound together in such a way that the spectator can grasp the total intention that is to be fulfilled by the combination of the separate functions (Iser, 2000:145).

*Happy Days* is definitely dominated by Winnie's feelings and perceptions whose importance and correctness remain unclear for the audience and the reader. There is little use of language as a means of influence. Its reason is that Winnie lacks purpose in her speaking, even while addressing Willie. Having no purpose while talking to someone implies that there is no underlying aim to impress the interlocutor. Thus, it is evident that while in *Endgame* characters are exchanging words without communicating any feeling or opinion and their experience is being revealed to be incommunicable, this time in *Happy Days*, there is a reduction of the dialogue to an incommunicable and incomprehensible monologue. Therefore, there is a step towards lessness which is very characteristic of the Beckettian situation. Needless to state, stunning characteristics which mirror Beckett's use of language in this play are the thorough and lengthy domineering stage directions, a ruling monologue of one character with her quotations from the classics, stories and talks to herself, repetitions, unanticipated shifts from one subject to the other, meaningless and aimless speech demonstrating the chains of association, short sentences and frequently used pauses which are lengthened towards the end of the play. Likewise, in *Happy Days* language rules though it is not any more a means of communication, and also it has the role of affirming the existence of the characters.

When the stage directions in *Happy Days* are only read, not watched at the theatre, the order and the importance of the actions may not be understood and missed due to the difficulty of visualising these acts in one's mind. For example, the most important stage direction is the one telling:

WINNIE embedded up to neck, hand on head, eyes closed. Her head, which can no longer turn, nor nod, nor raise, faces front motionless throughout act. Movements of eyes as indicated. (HD 37)

This stage direction depicts the change in Winnie's situation, and comes at the beginning of Act II. And thus, the people who see the play become advantageous because "the physical diminishment of Winnie between the two acts is the main experience of those who *see* the play" (Kennedy 84). However, when a reader of *Happy Days* only reads the same instructions, it is really difficult to keep in mind the image of a woman who is embedded more than in the first act. Thus, this means that the effect of the visual image of a buried woman is also diminished.

Furthermore, Beckett writes detailed and long stage directions to reflect the acts of the characters on the stage properly to the audience. To illustrate, timing in his directions can be examined. The playwright provides an absolutely precise timing for the acts of the characters. This is indeed quite observable in the text, in Winnie's prayer at the beginning:

WINNIE: (*gazing at zenith*). Another heavenly day. (*Pause. Head back level, eyes front, pause. She clasps hands to breast, closes eyes. Lips move in inaudible prayer, say ten seconds. Lips still. Hands remain clasped. Low.*) For Jesus Christ sake Amen. (*Eyes open, hands unclasp, return to mound. Pause. She clasps hands to breast again, closes eyes, lips move again in inaudible addendum, say five seconds. Low.*) World without end Amen. (HD 9-10)

In this quotation, there are instructions telling the allocated time 'say ten seconds', 'say five seconds'. This means that "the rhythm is being controlled as if it were a piece of music Beckett were writing" through the use of the stage directions (Worth 37). In other words, in Beckett's stage instructions, there is a constant order. He writes a short utterance for the character and then it is followed by a stage direction which may sometimes consist of single-word expressions. After praying in fragments, Winnie starts her solo in the first act, which exemplifies this case:

Poor Willie – (*examines tube, smile off*) – running out – (*Looks for cap*) – ah well – (*finds cap*) – just one of those old things – (*lays down tube*) – another of those things – (*turns towards bag*) – just can't be cured – (*brings out small mirror, turns back front*) – ah

yes – (*inspects teeth in mirror*) – poor dear Willie – (*testing upper front teeth with thumb, indistinctly*) – Good Lord! – (*pulling back upper lip to inspect gums, do.*) – good God’ – (*pulling back corner of mouth, mouth open, do.*) – ah well – (*other corner, do.*) – no worse – (*abandons inspection, normal speech*) – no better, no worse – (*lays down mirror*) – no change – (*wipes fingers on grass*) – no pain – (*looks for toothbrush*) – hardly any (HD 10)

Owing to the short utterances interrupted by the stage directions, *Happy Days* can at first even be a difficult text to read. However, when it is seen on the stage, it can be followed more easily.

There is a dominant and constant ‘female solo’ in *Happy Days*. Winnie is the character who is always speaking from the beginning till the end. She gets through her day by speaking, addressing Willie despite the fact that she knows he will not reply, telling stories, talking to herself, and quoting from well-known classics though usually they are misquoted or incomplete. The function Beckett attributes to Winnie’s monologue is that this pattern can well illustrate language is not for communication but for passing the time, and cherishing it in an over-heated world. Also, the dominance of soliloquising provides the play with a deeper questioning of the character’s being. In a way, exclusion of dialogues results in self-conversing, and communicating with the inner being of one’s existence.

The character that is carrying the monologue further and further throughout the play indeed attempts to communicate with the other. Winnie tries to exchange words with Willie; she even begs her mute husband to talk to her. However, she cannot get what she expects out of Willie’s answers or silences. For example, when Winnie asks, “what would you say speaking of the hair on your head, them or it?” (HD 19), Willie’s answer is both funny and weird since he only articulates a two-letter word: “It” (HD 19). A further example can be given related to Willie’s dialogue-resisting attitude:

WINNIE: Don’t you ever have that feeling, Willie, of being sucked up?

WILLIE: Sucked up? (HD 26)

In this instance, it is clear that Willie not only refuses to speak but also does not know the meanings of the words to use in the dialogues. After Willie’s question, for almost

fifteen minutes Winnie goes on speaking and reflecting on what her husband wants to learn. Till the end of Act I, Willie remains silent, which proves that even if he learns the meaning of a word, he is not much interested in using it and joining the conversation.

Meanwhile, it is noticeable that Winnie's reaching out for an interlocutor does not prevent her from speaking even though she is rarely responded:

Not that I flatter myself you hear much, no Willie, God forbid.  
(*Pause.*) Days perhaps when you hear nothing. (*Pause.*) But days too when you answer. (*Pause.*) So that I may say at all times, even when you do not answer and perhaps hear nothing, something of this is being heard, I am not merely talking to myself, that is in the wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do – for any length of time. (*Pause.*) That is what enables me to go on, go on talking that is. (HD 18)

Thereupon, it can be said that she is very well aware that Willie will never participate in her speech. Knowing that her husband is there to listen to her is what comforts Winnie's self. And consequently, she even becomes happy and perceives existence tolerable when she is only being heard.

The minimal exchanges between Winnie and Willie including replies like 'It', 'Sucked up?', definition of the word 'hog' as 'castrated male swine', all show that there is a decay in language, and thus in words. And "Beckett uses mechanism to expose the comicality and poverty of dialogue that accompanies the decay of flesh, mind and words" (Kennedy 88). If so, language is not different from the characters who are amputees. Language is diminished and compressed pointing to decay in the world as well.

Apart from Winnie's desperate attempts to start a dialogue with her husband, she helps herself through the day by telling stories of some unknown people to the audience. Her telling stories is a way to cope with the day for Winnie like all other speeches in the play. Most of the time Winnie's stories include elements of horror and violence, which contradicts the happy mood in which Winnie tries to live, such as the story of Mildred and the mouse. In this story, Winnie enacts Mildred's scream when the mouse rushes up her nightgown. There is certainly a prevailing sense of tenderness and horror which arises directly with Winnie's high-pitched scream. More

than the story she tells, the effect of the scream, and the image of a frightened human being dominate the moment of acting. Its reason is that this moment of screaming contrasts with “the carefully nurtured superficial optimism of Winnie’s speech-flow” (Kennedy 89).

Another story told by Winnie is about the Showers or Cookers, that is the “last human kind to stray this way” (HD 33). Even the idea of the last remnants of human kind achieves a sense of irritation and anxiety. This story enables the audience to see Winnie’s situation and her diminishing body in earth through a perverse perception, which belongs to Winnie’s impersonalised self:

What’s she doing? He says – What’s the idea? He says – stuck up  
to her diddies in the bleeding ground – coarse fellow – What does  
it mean? He says – What’s it meant to mean? – and so on. (HD 32)

In this story, ‘the woman stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground’ is Winnie. So, by quoting this impersonal talk she is talking about her own situation.

The use of soliloquy is also common in *Happy Days*. Most of the time in the play Winnie finds herself soliloquising, and talking to herself, which is a significant element of her continuous flow of speech. Talking to herself is, in a way, the other way of thinking aloud:

How often I have said, in evil hours, Sing now, Winnie, sing your  
song, there is nothing else for it, and did not. (*Pause.*) ...  
Something says, Stop talking now, Winnie, for a minute, don’t  
squander all your words for a change, will you? (*She raises hands  
and holds them open before her eyes. Apostrophic.*) Do something!  
(HD 31)

A further instance pops up when Winnie continues her solo concerning her appearance:

Keep yourself nice, Winnie, that’s what I always say, come what  
may, keep yourself nice. (*Pause. Resumes filing.*) (HD 32)

Even ‘Her happy day’ starts when Winnie instructs herself to do so:

Begin, Winnie. (*Pause.*) Begin your day, Winnie. (HD 10)

Through the use of ‘talking to oneself’ the character starts to reveal her inner world, and questions her own existence as well as the purpose of her being, which is otherwise a closed box for the spectators.

The last component of ‘female solo’ in *Happy Days* is Winnie’s quotations taken from well-known classics. Normally she has an ordinary and simple language, but when she incorporates quotations into her verbal expression, they also become a part of her normal speech. This is not in terms of the quotations’ comprehensible and coherent insertion into her common monologue, but in terms of their being a habit of language for the character like her pattern of ‘talking to herself’. One of her quotations is the misquotation of Ophelia’s famous classic words in *Hamlet* as mentioned in characterization:

What are those wonderful lines, (*wipes one eye*) – woe woe is me – (*wipes the other*) – to see what I see – (*looks for spectacles*) – ah yes – (*takes up spectacles*) – wouldn’t miss it – (*starts polishing spectacles, breathing on lenses*) – or would I? – (*Polishes*) – holy light – (*polishes*) – bob up out of dark – (*polishes*) – blaze of hellish light. (HD 11)

In *Hamlet*, in the book *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Ophelia articulates the original and the correct version of this quotation of Winnie:

*Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,  
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!* (689)

Another one is:

(*Takes up mirror, starts doing lips.*) What is that wonderful line?  
(*Lips.*) Oh fleeting joys – (*lips*) – oh something lasting woe. (*Lips.*  
*She is interrupted by disturbance from WILLIE.*) (HD 13)

These quotations are the means of passing the time, and enriching ‘her day’. Also, they are helpful to Winnie while she is acclaiming her resistance to deterioration until the day “when words must fail” (HD 25).

Consequently, Winnie’s monologue and thus language is absolutely “an arbitrary exercise of language” (Lyons 126). Besides its arbitrariness, it provides consolation for Winnie, which doubles its significance:

Well I don’t blame you, no, it would ill become me, who cannot move, to blame my Willie because he cannot speak. (*Pause.*)  
Fortunately I am in tongue again. (*Pause.*) That is what I find so wonderful (HD 28).

What is important and fundamental for Winnie is then not communicating with Willie, or conveying any feeling or opinion, but just ‘being in tongue’, and sustaining her monologue. Holding on to the language, even if it is meaningless and incommunicable, is necessary for the characters to survive, to live on despite the tension that stems from the approaching end.

Samuel Beckett retains a cyclic pattern of repetition in *Happy Days* as in *Endgame*. Throughout the play, there are remnants of dialogue, and Winnie’s articulations are all repeated many times. Repetition stands for the poverty of language, which means language is not adequate to express what is in the mind. Also, repetition of the same acts and phrases from the beginning through the end underpins a motif of repetition that is fundamental to the play. So, repeating may operate as emphasizing, too. For instance, Winnie repeats some familiar phrases and sentences many times, such as ‘Another heavenly day’, ‘Another happy day’, ‘great mercies’, ‘No better, no worse, no change’, ‘old style’, ‘And now, Willie?’, ‘That is what I find so wonderful’, and the list goes on.

Even in Act II, when she is much more deprived, her life-praising thankful phrases stay with her till the end. Katherine Worth states, “repetition is in itself a comfort, so we may deduce [her comforting her self] from her use of phrases like ‘I always find’ and ‘the old style’” (41). Repeated words are then really heavenly and thus life-guards for Winnie when there is nothing left to articulate or no time allocated to improvise new ones. They are substitutes waiting all ready in Winnie’s reservoir.

All and above, these forms of expression parody the repetition of eternal ‘happy days’, by emphasizing that Winnie’s experience in her situation is a long but inconclusive and ironically happy one. On the other hand, repetition has the role of diminishing the meaning of what is verbalized. If the experience of an ordinary man who repeats the same words one after the other at a fast pace is considered, the use of repetition can become more understandable. When this man repeats the same word many times consecutively, the word loses its importance and meaning. Man starts to question its meaning, and why it is named in this way etc. Likewise, when Winnie repeats ‘Another heavenly day’ or ‘happy day’, the audience is directed to question their days of happiness, thus their existence. Another oft-repeated word is ‘strange’,

which looks as if placed in the play on purpose to reflect and underline the strangeness on the stage. Beckett stresses this keyword using it repetitively. For instance, when Winnie calls on Willie to speak, and she fails to get a response, she says, 'I sometimes find your attitude a little strange'. Or when she remembers the story of Showers and Cookers, she again articulates the same word, and even comments on it:

Strange thing, time like this, drift up into the mind. (*Pause.*)

Strange? (*Pause.*) No, here all is strange. (HD 31)

The bizarreness of the situation she is in is explicated through the use of the word itself, that is 'strange'. Therefore, the pattern of repetition is certainly in Beckett's service in order to demonstrate his existential concerns and tendencies.

Like *Endgame*, *Happy Days* is also filled with a lot of sudden shifts from one subject to the other, which means that there is a lack of context and meaningful ground for communication. Furthermore, this time there are not two characters who are exchanging words and losing the track of coherence while replying. There is only one person who is speaking, and even though she is the only speaker who may well be capable of keeping track of the topics, Winnie cannot achieve a coherent flow of speech. She in her solo many times changes the topic, and in the same unit of speech this pattern of shifts causes independent utterances from the same person:

WINNIE: Yes love, up into the blue, like gossamer. (*Pause.*) No? (*Pause.*) You don't? (*Pause.*) Ah well, natural laws, natural laws, I suppose it's like everything else, it all depends on the creature you happen to be. All I can say for my part is that for me they are not what they were when I was young ... foolish and ... (*faltering, head down*) ... beautiful ... possibly ... lovely ... in a way ... to look at. (*Pause. Head up.*) Forgive me, Willie, sorrow keeps breaking in. (*Normal voice.*) Ah well what a joy in any case to know you are there, as usual, and perhaps awake, and perhaps taking all this in, some of all this, what a happy day for me ... it will have been. (*Pause.*) So far. (*Pause.*) What a blessing nothing grows, imagine if all this stuff were to start growing. (*Pause.*) Imagine. (*pause.*) Ah yes, great mercies. (*Long pause.*) I can say no more. (*Pause.*) For the moment. (*Pause. Turns to look at bag. Back front. Smile.*) No no. (*Smile off. Looks at parasol.*) I suppose

I might – (*takes up parasol*) – yes, I suppose I might ... hoist this thing now. (*Begins to unfurl it. Following punctuated by mechanical difficulties overcome.*) One keeps putting off – putting up – for fear of putting up too soon – and the day goes by – quite by – without one’s giving put up – at all. (HD 26-27)

In this unit of speech, which is lengthy owing to the stage directions, Winnie starts speaking about her fiction of flying up into the blue sky, then goes on mentioning her beauty in her youth, and then apologising to Willie for interrupting him, and ends up in talking about her fear of a day which is put off. Her abrupt shifting indeed takes its source from the chains of association in her consciousness. One word reminds her of the other, and that one causes her to recollect another subject, and it goes on. In the same soliloquy, Beckett’s usage of short sentences can be seen. As Worton states, “sentences are very short, almost telegraphic” (85) throughout the play. Then, all of Winnie’s speech is at the barest. The sentences she forms are either few-word or single-word utterances, not longer than this. Similarly, when she feels the hellish heat on her head, she articulates many short sentences to explicate her opinion related to heat:

(*Raising parasol.*) That is the danger. (*Turning front.*) To be guarded against. (*She gazes front, holding up parasol with right hand. Maximum pause.*) I used to perspire freely. (*Pause.*) Now hardly at all. (*Pause.*) The heat is much greater. (*Pause.*) The perspiration much less. (*Pause.*) That is what I find so wonderful. (*Pause.*) The way man adapts himself. (HD 27-28)

Although these short sentences can all be connected by using necessary linkers between them, keeping them as short and separate units of language is deliberately preferred by the playwright. Then, this speech of Winnie does look like a broken long sentence. Thereupon, fragmented and broken sentences interrupted by pauses resemble man’s existence, disjunctive and all in fragments. In this way, Beckett forces the audience to question their life through the fragmented language in the play. Cohn’s statement illustrates the situation in which Winnie speaks:

“One of the clues of the play [*Happy Days*] is interruption. Something begins, something else begins. [Winnie] begins but she doesn’t carry through with it. She is constantly interrupted or interrupting herself. She is an interrupted being” (187).

Therefore, the unexpected and sudden shift of subjects is due to interruption, or the character's being 'an interrupted being', which results in fragmentation, meaninglessness, and incoherent lines of sentences, whatever the reason is.

The often-used pauses are significant in *Happy Days* respecting the use of language. The frequently-scattered pauses in varying lengths have an important role in illustrating that language is not enough, and one day 'words must fail' when silence invades the sphere of speech, and thus when non-being invades the domain of being.

Pauses are like the breaks which a sportsman takes between tiring training sessions. During those breaks, man finds an opportunity to dwell on his deeds and words, their meaning and results. However, in Winnie's case, pauses are bits and pieces of silence which is her biggest fear: her enemy. This is evident from her unceasing efforts to fill her day by speaking and futile repeated tasks lest she might confront silence. That explains why she needs to speak all day long without allowing pauses to expand their length. When compared to the previous play of Beckett, *Endgame*, in *Happy Days* there are more pauses, and there is more intensified emphasis on them:

I say I used to say, Winnie, you are changeless, there is never any difference between one fraction of a second and the next. (*Pause.*) Why bring that up again? (*Pause.*) There is so little one can bring up, one brings up all. (*Pause.*) All one can. (*Pause.*) My neck is hurting me. (*Pause. With sudden violence.*) My neck is hurting me! (*Pause.*) Ah that's better. (*With mild irritation.*) Everything within reason. (*Long pause.*) I can do no more. (*Pause.*) Say no more. (*Pause.*) But I must say more. (*Pause.*) Problem here. (*Pause.*) No, something must move, in the world, I can't any more. (*Pause.*) A zephyr. (*Pause.*) A breath. (*Pause.*) What are those immortal lines? (*Pause.*) It might be the eternal dark. (*Pause.*) Black night without end. (*Pause.*) Just chance, I take it, happy chance. (*Pause.*) Oh yes, abounding mercies. (*Long pause.*) And now? (*Pause.*) The pink fizz. (*Pause.*) The flute glasses. (*Pause.*) (HD 44-45)

In the part above taken from Winnie's monologue, the extensive use of pauses is notable due to their being written twenty-two times in this short section. These pauses

either provide Winnie with some time to think what to say next, or demonstrate the symptoms of the approaching longest pause, which means the end of Winnie, the last point of decay. Whatever the reason is, it is for certain that countless pauses between shortened sentences and even between the words of the same sentence emphasize the mood of anxiety and tenderness, and the inadequacy of the language to express these moods.

It is a fact that the sense of anxiety and tenderness hidden behind the superficial happiness of Winnie accelerates throughout the play. She goes on soliloquising more about her inner confrontation of the cruel questioning. Parallel to the increasing tension word by word, the number, frequency, and the length of the pauses do increase, too. In the beginning, Beckett most of the time writes 'pause' in his stage directions, but towards the end, the quality of these pauses changes. He begins to write, 'maximum pause', 'long pause' and 'longer pause' more often. From page number 33 till the end of the play, in Faber and Faber edition, it is very likely to read 'long pause' words in his instructions on each page. And ironically the play ends in a 'long pause'. Therefore, language broken by pauses in *Happy Days* reflects its insufficiency resulting in anguish.

To sum up, "the language and the anti-language (one of Beckett's chief supports, as well as one of his main themes is the tension produced by the struggle between speech and silence ...) do most of the work" (Gilman 236). Then, the use of language in *Happy Days* presents the Beckettian problem of a private defiant and deviant language with all its attributes.

### **3.3. Existentialist Themes in *Endgame* and *Happy Days***

#### **3.1.4.1 'Existence precedes essence' and 'Man creates himself'**

After World War II, most human beings have recognized that they have invalidated the existing values. The existentialist says that man has no innate nature or being. Then, not provided by particular clues and meanings concerning the world, man must make meanings for himself, which requires the burden of responsibility. Then, this means "The world is utterly without absolute meaning, and man is left to invent his own personal meaning for his existence" (Bohlmann 14). Since human beings are abandoned in the world, they need to take responsibility for what they do.

However, human beings are aware that they must live on and they will die one day, and so, they find no sense in clinging to life when they feel anxiety. All assuring promises of hope, and all explanations of ultimate meanings turn out to be nonsensical illusions. Now that there is no essence to define the existence of man, in fear of being nothing, he investigates the emptiness of his existence in anxiety and suffering.

Likewise, the Beckettian characters in *Endgame* are clearly after defining themselves, and affirming their own selves. According to the existentialist movement, as their existence precedes their essence, Hamm needs to create Hamm, Clov to create Clov, and the other characters to do the same. Lance St. John Butler in *Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being* remarks, “Beckett’s characters create their worlds” (94). In accordance with the Sartrean existentialism, which proclaims that humans have no predetermined purpose or meaning, Beckett’s characters pursue their beings as a response to the challenges posed by existence in the world. In the case of *Endgame*, the characters’ disabilities employed by the playwright are the most visible challenges to existence. For example, Hamm, although both blind and paralysed, tries to achieve his being and power through ordering Clov for moving him in the room or looking out to the external space. His mastery over his servant and his parents is his means to shape himself, and invent his being; and this act of asserting his existence comes into being as a rejoinder to the challenges proposed by a taken-for-granted life.

Similarly, in *Happy Days* existence continues to precede essence, thus the Beckettian character Winnie attempts to invent herself. She tries this by asserting her existence through language and the presence of another character, Willie. Her affirmation of her own being is better realized in accordance with the situation in which she is exposed to difficulty and experiences suffering. In the Sartrean existentialism, man is proclaimed to have no pre-determined purpose or meaning. What constitutes the convenient ground for man to discover his existence is his confrontation with the difficulties and challenges of his own existence in the world. This is very much like Winnie’s situation. She has no pre-determined meaning in her life. Thus, she is deprived of purpose. Also, she has a big challenge posed by her existence, that is, she is buried in earth and is completely immobile. Under these

conditions, she finds herself questioning herself although she tries to avoid this to some extent.

Jaspers explains the condition of man and his existence with this utterance: an “over-deepening ignorance of the real nature of human existence” (82), which obviously parallels the situation of the characters in *Happy Days*. This is modern man’s situation and plight. There is an intensified emphasis on the assessment of an over-deepening ignorance of man’s existence, accompanied by a hopeless mode of living in the play.

Furthermore, many existentialists proclaim that there is no reality except in action as Sartre does (1948:41). On the way to the discovery of being, action is required. Beckett, however, depicts such a confusing situation and characters in both plays that action becomes difficult, painful and even impossible. Hence, what the playwright applies in both his plays in terms of reduced or purposefully ignored action clearly shows that he is presenting an existentialist challenge to both the characters and the audiences. Although Beckett formulates more difficulties and challenges for his characters when compared to the ones existentialists talk about, all the characters in the two plays are aware that they need to pass the time and fill it with some meaningless and aimless activities and routines in order to save themselves from eventuality. In the book *The Tragic Pursuit of Being*, Robert Richmond Ellis states that man is desperately aware that what he is experiencing is the “... absurd hope of endowing being with necessity and thereby saving man from contingency” (8).

It is apparent that ‘despite’ and ‘due to’ the challenges posed by the existence of the characters, and Beckett of course, all his characters are trying to furnish themselves with the being which they lack in both *Endgame* and *Happy Days*. In the midst of dense meaninglessness, the characters are left, or even more cruelly abandoned, to invent themselves. The fear of being nothing sometimes outweighs the wish to investigate the depths of their existence by leaving them desperate. However, despite their profound tenderness, they are all made to know that ‘Man creates himself’.

As Heidegger points out “there’s nothing beyond man himself that can solve the problem of man’s existence” (qtd. in Sartre, 1948:11). If so, what Beckett does as

a playwright is just demonstrating this existential problem of man. All his characters are there to solve their problem of existence in the Beckettian universe, or at least suffer from this obligation. Therefore, it is likely that “Beckett is probing into what today seems the elementary structure of our interpretation of reality as the simplest, basic modes of our being in the world” (Murphy 236). Hence, the basic modes of the characters in both plays are designed to help the audience confront the cruel responsibility of creating themselves. This will force the audience to complete their existence with their essence.

### **3.1.4.2 Pain of existing**

Existing requires taking responsibility in order to build up authenticity, which puts a heavy burden on the shoulders of man. And this burden rooted in existence results in pain and suffering. Moreover, when being confronts nothingness in an attempt to see the deeper self of being, the denseness of no-thing-ness is present to give man the unbearable pain of existing again. The fact that “man is condemned to be free” (Sartre, 1948:34) reveals itself in the characters as pieces of pain since freedom leaves them alone with decision-making and choosing for themselves. So, this unbearable pain becomes an endless distress for them.

Hamm complains about his depressing suffering and curses his being born. He asks his father angrily, “Scoundrel! Why did you engender me?” (E 49). His displeasure at being born stems from this unendurable suffering, which shows that confrontation with nothingness brings about anxiety and pain, and these existential dismal moods cause him to prefer not being born to facticity.

The more the characters are exposed to existential pain, the more they feel tired, seeing that the world is too incomprehensible. This signifies decay to some extent. And for human beings the puzzle of man’s existence remains complicated, impenetrable, and unfathomable, which makes characters feel tired of the same unbearable world. At the beginning of *Endgame*, although Clov has just got Hamm up, Hamm says:

Enough, it's time it ended, in the shelter, too.

*(Pause.)*

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.)*

God, I'm tired, I'd be better off in bed.

*(He whistles. Enter Clov immediately. He halts beside the chair.)*

You pollute the air!

*(Pause.)*

Get me ready, I'm going to bed. (E 3).

From these statements it is understood that Hamm is designed to convey the gloomy life he, and most probably all humanity, including Clov, suffers. Human existence involves unbearable waiting and is painstaking. Furthermore, Hamm articulates his suffering in comparison with that of others, acknowledging that every man is suffering:

Oh I am willing to believe they suffer as much as such creatures can suffer. But does that mean their sufferings equal mine? No doubt.

*(Pause.)*

No, all is a—

*(he yawns)*

—bsolute,

*(proudly)*

the bigger a man is the fuller he is.

*(Pause. Gloomily.)*

And the emptier. (E 2-3).

While suffering an existential pain, Hamm notices that there is no end to it, and hope of getting fuller is not sufficient for him to endure his suffering since he is well aware of the fact that 'the fuller he is' means 'the emptier'. This statement echoes Hamm's well-known and often-repeated sentence: "You're on earth, there's no cure for that!" (E 53). So, there is no cure for being on earth, and for 'being condemned at every instant to invent' oneself despite the severity of pain. Therefore, the characters, apart from Nell who is presumed dead, appear to have been sentenced to decay into eternity in pain. Thus, their suffering is endless like Sisyphus rolling the stone up and down without an end.

The existential pain of man can again be observed in Beckett's *Happy Days*, too. In the play, Winnie is the one who is exposed to, and thus, concerned with this pain of existing no matter how well she enacts a happy woman passing through 'heavenly' and 'happy' days. This is especially obvious as Winnie tries to cling to language in order to escape from this great unbearable pain. She superficially continues her happy mood, whereas, the pain caused by her existence invades her being more and more in the course of the play. For instance, while there are more utterances and references to happy days in the beginning, their number of usage decreases towards the end of the play. Also, the number of pauses and silences accelerates from the beginning towards the end as if she was about to be defeated by this intolerable pain. Furthermore, even though she accepts the strangeness of the situation in which they are, and even the attitude of her mute husband towards life and speaking, she cannot succeed in retaining her dignity of being happy. Her fear and pain owing to her existence find a way to the surface, and fluctuate. This is in particular evident when she is in tears. Another significant proof of Winnie's existential pain comes in Act II.

There is a problem here. (*Pause.*) One cannot sing ... just like that, no. (*Pause.*) It bubbles up, for some unknown reason, the time is ill chosen, one chokes it back. (*Pause.*) One says, Now is the time, it is now or never, and one cannot. (*Pause.*) Simply cannot sing. (*Pause.*) Not a note. (*Pause.*) Another thing, Willie, while we are on this subject. (*Pause.*) The sadness after song. (*Pause.*) Have you run across that, Willie? (*Pause.*) No? (*Pause.*) Sadness after intimate sexual intercourse one is familiar with of course. (*Pause.*) You would concur with Aristotle there, Willie, I fancy. (*Pause.*) Yes, that one knows and is prepared to face. (*Pause.*) (HD 42-43)

In this excerpt, Winnie expresses that the sadness that comes after singing is like the one after sexual intercourse. After asking Willie whether he has ever run across that, her statement hits the target: 'Yes, that one knows and is prepared to face'. This means Winnie knows the pain of existing, and she is well aware that she is also prepared to confront it. All in all, "so little to say, so little to do, and the fear so great, certain days, of finding oneself" (HD 27). As Winnie articulates, there is great fear and there is no cure for it as Hamm states.

It is obvious that Beckett has an intensified “concern for modes of being and suffering” (Kennedy 12). He inserts this concern into his plays particularly through his weird characters because they are all suffering. Apart from the characters, the playwright’s other target to make the pain of existence be felt is the audience, as stated by one critic: “The author lets the audience permeate with the atmosphere about numbing the pain of existence with words” (Gaensbauer 32). In *Endgame*, Hamm asks for a pain-killer many times. However, as there is no cure for the pain of existence, he is not given a pill to make the pain go away. Likewise, throughout the plays both the audience and the reader of *Endgame* and *Happy Days* are obliged to inhale the air that is full of unavoidable existential pain.

### **3.1.4.3 Anguish**

The source of the sense of anguish is nothingness or the void because man finds no meaning in life, and this makes him exhausted, anguished and hesitant despite his being free. “Anguish is the manifestation of freedom...” (Ellis 15). The mood of anxiety is another existential theme to be observed in *Endgame* and *Happy Days*. Therefore, the dreadful consequence of meaninglessness in the play, that is anguish, springs from the sense of responsibility to choose for the Beckettian characters.

Furthermore, anguish involves the realization that the choices and decisions which an individual makes not only affect the self, but also they affect everyone. A person must make his decisions and choose for himself, while, at the same time, looking at the society as a whole since anguish is concerned with the impact of one’s decisions on others. Therefore, dealing with responsibility is just one form of anguish. A person must be responsible for himself and others. Sartre in his essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* gives the example of a military officer. He states that all leaders and military officers feel anguish because they have the responsibility to themselves as well as others. A military officer preparing to send his troops into battle must fulfil his responsibilities to himself, his superiors and his troops. He realizes that his interpretations of the orders from above have a direct impact on the fate of his troops. The fact that he continues to make decisions even when faced with anguish shows that a military officer feels responsible. All leaders know this anguish, but they continue to make decisions. The anguish that they feel does not dissuade them from

their action, on the contrary, it makes them stronger, 'it is the very condition of their action'. The anguish that a military officer feels is what makes him responsible. Therefore, Sartre saw anguish as a necessary component of life. Then, anguish is what makes a person aware of his choices and responsibilities.

Also, anxiety makes human beings feel irritated due to the fact that there is no one, like a deity, to check the validity of man's deeds. The feeling of this discomfort most of the time creates characters who wish to end the tension to get rid of anxiety. "Modern man is living in a state of anxiety which at times is close to intolerable: non-being, a return to an earlier, tensionless state is therefore devoutly to be wished" (Butler, 1993:164). Similarly, Hamm and Clov want to end what they are suffering owing to the anxiety they are exposed to. At the opening of the play, Clov's words well illustrate the situation:

**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. (E 1).

Suffering anguish and being obliged to live on in the same way accelerates his wish to finish it. Also, he considers that having to live anguished itself is a pure punishment.

Surprisingly the characters are not able to end their suffering and cease to be anguished. Indeed they are afraid of ending it. For example, Hamm orders Clov to work on a raft and build it to go from there far away, but when Clov tells that he will start straight away to do it, Hamm stops him. This act resembles the existentialist idea that anguish leads a person to confront nothingness, which is necessary to make sense of one's existence. So, Beckett's characters are on the correct track. They are in the process of inventing themselves.

Another exchange between Hamm and Clov openly exemplifies that they want to end it, but do not dare it:

**CLOV** (*impatiently*):

Let's stop playing!

**HAMM**:

Never!

(*Pause.*)

Put me in my coffin.

**CLOV**:

There are no more coffins.

**HAMM**:

Then let it end!

As understood from the dialogue, they cannot stop playing, which means that this anxiety-stricken situation will last forever no matter how violently they suffer. This is the deliberate product of Beckett. "Rather he [Beckett] prefers his lame and halt creatures, less man than walking/crawling/supine but always talking bundles of anxiety states" (Butler, 1993:165).

In *Happy Days*, Winnie is 'less man than walking/crawling/supine' but she is still talking bundles of anxiety states according to Butler's assessment of the character. She is already in such a reduced state that she cannot even crawl. So one can say that she is in the worst state, and there can occur nothing worse than it. However, she still reveals anxiety in her words. There remains a tension despite the pitifulness of her situation. For instance, she is certainly worried about having no words to articulate one day, and to be entrapped by silence in wilderness. And whenever she is in trouble with making her solo go on, she asks Willie's help, and says 'And now, Willie?'. This exemplifies how much anxiety she bears, too. Moreover, she explicitly verbalizes that she is obliged to go on speaking, which she regards as a problem:

I can do no more. (*Pause.*) Say no more. (*Pause.*) But I  
must say more. (*Pause.*) Problem here. (HD 44)

That is to illustrate that Winnie is very often verbalizing her anxiety states. This shows that she is then filled with anxiety, and her being anxious is verbally reflected in the play.

What the Beckettian characters experience seems to be a strange dependence on anxiety. Tillich diagnoses man's dependent condition by showing the similarity between the existential man and the characters' situation on the stage:

He flees from his freedom of asking and answering for himself to a situation in which no further questions can be asked and the answers to previous questions are imposed on him authoritatively. In order to avoid the risk of asking and doubting he surrenders the right to ask and to doubt. He surrenders himself in order to save his spiritual life. He "escapes from his freedom" in order to escape the anxiety of meaninglessness. Now he is no longer lonely, not in existential doubt, not in despair. He "participates" and affirms by participation the contents of his spiritual life. Meaning is saved, but the self is sacrificed. (1959:49)

According to the existentialist understanding of Tillich, nothing has the power to soothe man's fundamental existential anxiety: "The basic anxiety, the anxiety of a finite being about the threat of non-being, cannot be eliminated. It belongs to existence itself" (1959:39). This statement strikes the Beckettian chords when Hamm's striking words are considered: "You're on earth, there's no cure for that!" (E 53).

Tillich continues giving a description of man's condition related with anxiety, and this evokes the Beckettian characteristics of drama:

Most of our life continues on the surface. We are enslaved by the routine of our daily lives. ... We are more often driven than driving. We do not stop to look at the height above us, or to the depth below us. We are always moving forward, although usually in a circle, which finally brings us back to the place from which we first moved. We are in constant motion and never stop to plunge into the depth. We talk and talk and never listen to the voices speaking our depth and from our depth. We accept ourselves as we appear to ourselves and do not care what we really are. (1959:39)

It is not difficult to recognize the Beckettian characters from this description. "They too are trapped in a meaningless spiral of mechanized routine, ferociously guarding against those "voices from the depth"" (McCandless, 1993:346). That is to say, Beckett's characters in *Endgame* are anguished because they are scared of the 'voices

from the depth'. And this explicates why Winnie talks in a trivial manner while repeating her insignificant routine acts, and never lets her speech rest. Her constant speech and efforts to busy herself help Winnie elude 'those voices from the depth'.

The depths in particular, who knows what treasures. (*Pause.*) What comforts. (*Turns to look at bag.*) Yes, there is the bag. (HD 25)

She knows that there are 'the depths', but escapes them by busying herself with her capacious bag, which is a means of comforting her. It is interesting that when she mentions those depths, she needs comfort and consolidation. This shows that the unknown depths' voice is a source of anxiety for Winnie.

Consequently, it cannot be a coincidence that so many of Beckett's characters display the effects of a great anxiety, which might be the consequence of a severe emotional shock or pain caused by birth, destruction of civilization, and maybe life itself.

#### **3.1.4.4 Facticity**

For existentialists human beings are absolutely alone when attributing their own meaning to life, and inventing themselves. Sartre points out "We are left alone, without excuse" (1948:34). What is more, man has no control over his existence, which applies to Beckett's characters. This is what existentialists call facticity. In the Heideggerian sense, thrownness of man is the source of facticity, and every man faces the fact that man is left alone on earth. Likewise, the Beckettian characters in *Endgame* and *Happy Days* confront facticity, which can be traced in Beckett's plays as one of the major themes of existentialism.

The human condition presented on the stage in Beckett's plays demonstrates that man accepts that he does not have power over what he already has. For example, in *Endgame* Hamm is well aware that he is disabled and he lacks in the ability to move and see. However, he continues being-there despite the fact that it harms him by contributing to his decay towards nothingness. Similarly, Clov experiences facticity as well.

**HAMM:**

Sit on him!

**CLOV:**

I can't sit.

**HAMM:**

True. And I can't stand.

**CLOV:**

So it is.

**HAMM:**

Every man his specialty. (E 10).

A further example demonstrating facticity takes place when Hamm and Clov are talking about 'light':

**CLOV:**

I see my light dying.

**HAMM:**

Your light dying! Listen to that! Well, it can die just as well here, your light. Take a look at me and then come back and tell me what you think of your light. (E 12)

Clov notices that he has no power to control his light dying at the moment of speaking, and articulates this. Hereupon, Hamm reacts harshly, and says, "look at me and then come back and tell me what you think of your light" implying that his light has already been extinguished. As an instance of facticity, he knows that he can do nothing to change this fact. Having no power over what has been given to them, the characters go on exposing themselves to nothingness, in spite of the existential pain and anguish, in order to authenticate themselves. In *Happy Days*, Beckett continues inserting this existential theme facticity into his play clearly through Winnie's monologue. First of all, Winnie is so accustomed to facticity that she thinks nothing strange exists and happens on the stage. Even though the burning of a parasol on an extremely hot day is extraordinary for an ordinary man, her parasol's burning down in a hellish heat becomes ordinary for her, which makes her such an extraordinary character. Indeed its basic reason is that she already knows that she cannot change this oddity which has already come into being. That is what existentialists call facticity.

In another instance, Winnie again reveals that both Willie and she are disabled, and obliged to live on in this state. When Winnie asks her husband to speak, and she cannot get what she has demanded, she says:

Well I don't blame you, no, it would ill become me, who cannot move, to blame my Willie because he cannot speak. (*Pause.*) (HD 28)

Winnie's acceptance of their disabilities demonstrates that Beckett is employing facticity in *Happy Days*, too, as he does in *Endgame*.

In addition to the characters' self-knowledge and acceptance of what has been already given to them in *Happy Days*, Winnie in the play has a soliloquy concerning the theme of facticity and humanity in general:

There is so little one can do. (*Pause.*) One does it all. (*Pause.*) All one can. (*Pause.*) 'Tis only human. (*Pause.*) Human nature. (*She begins to inspect mound, looks up.*) Human weakness. (*She resumes inspection of mound, looks up.*) Natural weakness. (HD 18-19)

In this speech to the audience, she reveals her disbelief in man's ability to change his situation, and relates it to human nature. Hence, man has to accept what has been given to him, and confront its challenge on his own. This exemplifies facticity in *Happy Days* as explained in detail in the book *Existentialism: For and Against*:

... we find ourselves 'thrown into' ... a world which we cannot choose. But this 'being-in-the-world' is not seen by Heidegger as enabling us to grasp the world as such. ... The possibility of interpreting facts, which Sartre emphasized, now even determines existence itself. In other words: it is an intensely personal facticity: the individual faces the world in his own way and in isolation. (Roubiczek 134)

Therefore, facticity differs from one man to the other, even though it prevails in both of Beckett's plays. This continual process of living and knowing the dismal fact that they can do nothing to change what they already have is definitely the evidence of facticity in *Endgame* and *Happy Days*.

With vivid examples of existential concerns, Beckett stands as an important literary figure of the existentialist philosophical movement. The reason for this is that he knows how to insert the moods of being and feelings of existential quest onto the stage. "His dramatic work, precisely by virtue of its restriction to an exploded facticity, surges out beyond facticity" (Adorno 43). Then, he explodes the theme of

facticity in order to succeed in giving the sense of facticity to the audiences and the readers of *Endgame* and *Happy Days*.

#### **3.1.4.5 Choice**

Existentialism is a philosophy characterized by despair, anguish and freedom that charges human beings with absolute accountability in the face of absolute choice. Similarly, Beckett's hellish universe of freedom for man is filled with numerous instances of choice with which comes responsibility. Sartre proclaims in *Being and Nothingness*, "I am absolutely free and absolutely responsible for my situation" (509). Sartre's explanation of this responsibility resembles the situation of the Beckettian man: Hamm and Clov are coefficients of adversity as Sartre asserts, "Our freedom itself creates the obstacles from which we suffer" again in *Being and Nothingness* (495).

Despite the distressing constraints of choice, it is central to human existence since man has to fill in the blank of his essence knowing that he does not have a fixed nature. Taking the responsibility for the invention of being, man needs to choose. "There is no choice without decision, no decision without desire, or desire without need, no need without existence" (Winn, 1960:15). In other words, existence means choice because as Winn's statement asserts there is no existence without choice for human beings.

In *Endgame* existence becomes a matter of choice, very similar to that of the man depicted in existentialism. For example, Clov has a chance to leave on condition that he decides. In order to make up his mind, he needs to desire leaving Hamm and Hamm's confined room. However, he does not desire it, and thus he cannot go away. He attempts to leave many times, but he then changes his mind. This is also a choice: the choice of staying there. He is well aware that he will undergo sufferings together with the torture of orders from Hamm. Similarly, Hamm strives to actualise the 'leaving' of Clov. He asks his servant to go away and leave him alone. However, straight after it, he stops Clov. This is a choice: keeping what is owned. That is why every action becomes a process such as the process of leaving, the process of ending. This use of processes reflects that there is difficulty in deciding and choosing to do or not to do it. Then, man must choose and then he can never surrender responsibility

for his decision. This is the expression of the almost constant condition of the Beckettian man.

In *Happy Days* the way of choice is different from *Endgame*. While the characters are able to move, though in a limited way, in *Endgame*, in the other play there is an intensified immobility. This means that the characters in the latter play cannot make a choice requiring movement, such as leaving a place. This dominant characteristic of lack of movement draws attention to Winnie's language to look for clues of 'choice' as a theme of existential movement. Winnie, the only female character in Beckett who is allowed to express herself dominating all the play, brings the meaning of existence to a matter of existence like the characters in *Endgame*. For example, her preference to speak over silence is a choice which can free her. Similar to the concern of choice in the first play, Winnie chooses not to change anything and keep everything the same because she believes that there is no pain when there is no change. However, she has to pay for her choice of speech by bearing the distressing frames of responsibility and the outcomes. That means she has to speak and speak till eternity though it is difficult. Its continuity is her responsibility since she has chosen this. Indeed, she suffers and feels anxious because of the consequence of choosing freely. Having no divine being to check the correctness of her deeds doubles her anxiety. As a result, Beckett reflects his existentialist tendency by including the theme of choice in both his plays.

#### **3.1.4.6 Death**

Death is a preoccupying concern of existentialism since death provides man with a better understanding of his non-being, which is the negation of being. Then, man must face death according to existentialists. In *Endgame* there are many signs of the theme of death. Characters become aware of their mortality, and at first they try to ignore it by busying themselves with trivial daily routines. However, what is to be done is not to avoid death since it means avoiding life.

For the characters in the Beckettian hell, life is a slow process of dying like the process of leaving. "Something is taking its course" (E 13) says Clov, which implies death is taking its course outside and inside the room. They obviously lead a miserable life. They would like to end this type of life, but they still continue living like before. Hamm extends the same feeling of death when he articulates these words:

And the emptier.

*(He sniffs.)*

Clov!

*(Pause.)*

No, alone.

...

Enough, it's time it ended, in the shelter, too.

*(Pause.)*

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. (E 3).

He verbalizes that he hesitates to end; he cannot decide whether to confront his non-being immediately or not. In the end, from the dialogue it is clear that he avoids death, avoiding life too according to existentialism.

The sense of death invades not only the inside but also the outside of the room. “Corpsed” (E 30) utters Clov. The life outside is dead; it is already dead. He informs that there is death outside their enclosed place. The same idea of death is repeated and revealed in the dialogue between Hamm and Clov again and again: “Outside of here it’s death” (E 9) and “beyond is the ... other hell” (E 26).

The pervasive feeling of death in the play is apparent in the lack of material things, too. There are no bicycle wheels, no pap, no painkiller and no sawdust. In the end, there are even no coffins, either. It is evident that the characters have been stripped of their worldly possessions slowly and different categories of objects are meagre. This is a definite sign of creeping towards death. Given this fact, the play can be seen as life which is dying, going to non-being.

Furthermore, “light can be a symbol of life and its absence is a symbol of death” (Fletcher 69). When Hamm asks “Is Mother Pegg’s light on?”, Clov answers “Light! How could anyone’s light be on?” (E 41). Hamm responses gloomily, “Extinguished” (E 42). Clov also reminds Hamm of the death of old Mother Pegg in darkness. It is a type of situation that will forever repeat itself, so the sense of death is always pervasive for Beckett’s characters even in their shelter. The image of death becomes so pervasive that life appears too miserable and unbearable. They feel

anguished. That is why, they wish to die. As Hamm says: “Why don’t you kill him?” (E 8) and “Why don’t you finish us?” (E 37). These all signal a wish for death, which is never accomplished in *Endgame*. It is at the same time a wish for existence because, as T. Riva Raymond states, “death instinct is in no way an I-shall-kill-myself-in-the-morning sort of thing, but rather a drive toward an easier existence free of tensions” (qtd. in Riva 162-163). When the play approaches the end, there appears a small boy who may symbolize the hope of new life. Therefore, it presupposes that life will continue; and suffering, due to death, will continue afflicting the characters forever.

There are different attitudes towards death in the play from different characters. This reflects their different views about existence, and the level of affirming their beings, too. For example, Hamm perpetually delays the end. He does so by refusing to declare that he himself is beaten in the play of ending, though he knows that he will be defeated in the end. This attitude of Hamm’s can be explained by Raymond’s statement: “the death instinct ...[is] certainly more complex and therefore considerably more difficult of acceptance” (qtd. in Riva 162). However, unlike Hamm, Clov sees death as an end of punishment. And that is why, he is closer to death in comparison to his master.

*Happy Days* is another play about filling time, and waiting for the arrival of an end, which is most probably death. However, unlike *Endgame*, in *Happy Days* Winnie still has an appetite for life:

That is what I find so wonderful, that not a day goes by – (*smile*) – to speak in the old style – (*smile off*) – hardly a day, without some addition to one’s knowledge, however trifling, the addition I mean, provided one takes the pains. ... And if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why then just close the eyes – (*she does so*) – and wait for the day to come – (*opens eyes*) – the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours. (*Pause.*) That is what I find so comforting when I lose heart and envy the brute beast. (HD 16)

While Hamm and Clov are longing for an ending even though they hesitate, Winnie seems less willing to finish, and to witness the ending. There is another evidence which supports the idea that she does not wait for death: It states, “Winnie is not

awaiting death, for death is a thing of the past” (Mercier 176). This becomes clear in Winnie’s words, too, when she says ‘whereas if you were to die ... to speak in the old style.’ If death belongs to the past, this means that it will never arrive in the Beckettian universe. On the other hand, there are frantic moments when Winnie implicitly talks about death as given above. Death, for Winnie, is then ‘some strange reason’. She is aware of it, but she does not see any necessity for awaiting it.

All in all, death is implicitly or explicitly mentioned in both plays of Beckett, and is inserted into his universe in order to provide man with a better understanding of non-being. As a consequence, in this way, a better and deeper comprehension of the existence of being can be attained.

#### **3.1.4.7 Authenticity**

Authenticity for man means creating his own comprehensive meaning for existence. This is attaining authentic projects of being according to the existentialist movement of philosophy. When man re-centres and re-integrates his life around freely-chosen objectives, he becomes authentic. Authenticity finds itself under different definitions in different philosophers. While for Camus, authenticity means rebelling against the Absurd and translating the meaninglessness of absurdity into a meaning, for Heidegger it is confronting existential anguish and death. In the sense of the Sartrean existentialism, it is defined to be the process of ‘inventing meaning in a meaningless world’. That is to say, authenticity is wilful self-definition: ‘Man defines himself’. Taking these points related to authenticity into consideration, in Beckett’s characters it is possible to trace different trials of man’s attempt at becoming authentic.

To start with, Beckett’s characters exhibit that they all know too well that they are in a hopeless situation. They confront nothingness in despair. Their confrontation with the void has a devastating effect: “it is only when the picture that we have of ourselves breaks down completely ..., only when an earthquake shakes and disrupts the surface of our self-knowledge, that we are willing to look into a deeper level of being” (Tillich 55). After they are exposed to a violent earthquake-like experience, the Beckettian characters’ perception of a deeper level provides meaning for their existence. They learn to go on without hope, without chimera, without refuge from the hideous knowledge that the purpose of their being-there must forever evade them.

They turn into characters who do not any more adhere to an illusion of purpose. Rather, by refusing to end, finish or quit what they are doing, they learn to be purposeless like Clov and Hamm. They resist the void. By this way, they acquire an authentic purpose and avoid being inauthentic. Therefore, the characters in *Endgame* exhibit not 'bad faith' but wilful self-definition. This is 'the courage to be'. In other words, "the courage to be signifies the fearless affirmation of self in the face of universal non-being. One accepts the essential meaninglessness of life without surrendering to despair" (McCandless 349). The only difference between Beckett's characters and the authentic man defined by the philosophers above is that Hamm and Clov are in despair, they cannot elude it, which is the only point that puts suspicion over the authenticity of these characters. On the other hand, Winnie avoids despair, at least on the surface, and becomes more authentic in *Happy Days*.

Apart from Hamm and Clov, Nell and Nag create their own meaning of life by means of telling the same story and the accident that happened in the past. In fact, they do what they can do best: they quarrel and reminisce about happier days. They know that life is full of sufferings, and so they live as happily as they can. To some extent, they manage to learn how to live without despair and delusion, which displays that Nell and Nagg have more authentic, more unified and defined beings compared to the other two on the stage. They demonstrate that man has the right to choose what kind of life he wants to live or what kind of person he wants to be if he is authentic enough. Surprisingly, Hamm's parents succeed in authenticating themselves despite the fact that they are already in a dreadful situation: confined in ashbins.

Winnie, who appears as a happy character in *Happy Days*, very much resembles Nell in *Endgame*. One is in the mound of earth, and the other in an ashbin, but both are incapacitated, though Winnie is more. It can be said that if Nell was given enough opportunity, she might well act like Winnie. Hence, Winnie is a character who is more authentic, a more defined being than Hamm and Clov, because she knows life is filled with suffering, and so she tries to live as happily as she can. What stimulates her authenticity is her being "bitten by the meaninglessness bug" in a mound of earth (Park np).

As a result, the people of the world, and similarly the characters in Beckett's plays, are very busy with doing trivial things. Surprisingly, they do not usually notice

the ultimate futility of their deeds. If they realize this dismal fact of their life, they can attain authenticity, but they need something dreadful enough to shake their very grounds of being:

However, when we are bitten by the meaninglessness bug, this can stimulate us to put ourselves into gear toward creating our own meanings in a world initially devoid of meaning. We create meaning by moving away from 'bad faith' (trying to become identified with our roles or temperaments) and creating our own comprehensive projects (Park NP).

### **3.1.4.8 Forlornness**

Forlornness, the state of being forlorn, means “only that God does not exist and that we have to face the consequences of this” (Sartre, 1957:21). The mood of forlornness stems from a man’s realization that he is alone in the world and unable to rely on anything absolutely. According to the sense of forlornness, the mere fact of coming into the world is set wrong. Likewise, in the Beckettian universe, the mere fact of being there, on the stage, is set wrong. Therefore, Beckett is very much concerned with the feeling of forlornness, and he reflects his interest in his plays.

There are four disabled people in *Endgame*, but it is not revealed how they have become what they are; what has happened to them or where they have come from. It is just like the idea that human beings are forlorn and thrown into the world. Furthermore, the characters in the Beckettian world are not placed in a normal environment, and are obliged to face their own situation alone. Butler explains the similarities between the Beckettian universe and the world, noting, “the situation is illustrated by physical limitation – amputation, paralysis, blindness” (1984:15). In *Endgame* Hamm demands that Clov and Nagg pray to God together, but right after the prayer he cries out, “The bastard! He doesn’t exist!” (E 55). His anger stems from his knowing that they are alone and have to confront this, which is an instance of the forlorn attribute of the characters.

In Beckett’s world, the characters are forsaken in the cruel world of existence due to their being forlorn, which is very similar to beginning to play a game of chess being aware that if the first step is played wrong, then the player is foredoomed to lose in the end. Besides, the life physically-impaired people need to face gets worse and worse in the play. Thereupon, life for Hamm, Clov, Nell and Nagg becomes

terrible and even unbearable. However, to struggle against their situation is meaningless in this unyielding setting. This is the situation of the chess player who is destined to lose eventually. Following the analogy of the game of chess, Ruby Cohn gives a more detailed description of the situation in *Back to Beckett*:

everything in his play is balanced, and each movement, action or speech depends on another. Hamm is a king in this chess game lost from the start. From the start he knows he is making loud senseless moves. That he will make no progress at all with the gaff. Now at the last he makes a few senseless moves as only a bad player would. A good one would have given up long ago. He is only trying to delay the inevitable end. Each of his gestures is one of the last useless moves which put off the end. He's a bad player. (152).

So it is clear that the lack of an absolute deity discomforts the characters who know that they are doomed to lose from the beginning. What is worse, they have to face the dreadful consequences of forlornness, being left alone in the world. In other words, the feeling of forlornness pervading in Beckett's play *Endgame* demonstrates that he is one of the literary figures of existentialism.

The fact of coming into the world is shown in *Happy Days* as wrong as in *Endgame*. The characters Winnie and Willie are forlorn beings due to the fact that they are thrown onto the stage, and trapped there. Besides the heaviness of being in such a weird situation of a barren externality and being in a mound of earth keeping her tied, she is also obliged to face her painful situation alone, on her own, without any help or guidance. There is no one or nothing, no divine being to help her, other than a Godless Beckettian world in *Happy Days*. God is 'in the old style' for Winnie, which means God belongs to the past, not the present.

At the opening of *Happy Days*, Winnie has an inaudible prayer in her lips, and says 'Amen' for the 'world without end'. This ritual seems to be too mechanical to be taken seriously and sincerely because it is directed by the stage instructions with sharp time limits like 'ten seconds', and 'five seconds'. Or this may be the continuation of an old habit. Otherwise, she could call on God for help and consolidation while she is crying out because of the pain in her body caused by swallowing earth. However, she never talks about God or His comforting existence

although she talks to herself “pray your old prayer, Winnie” (HD 36) even at the closing of Act I. In Act II, when tension arises, and her questioning becomes more cruel and intolerable, she openly states that she has lost her belief in God:

I used to pray. (*Pause.*) I say I used to pray. (*Pause.*) Yes, I must confess I did. (*Smile.*) Not now. (*Smile broader.*) NO no. (*Smile off. Pause.*) (HD 38)

Both the characters in *Endgame* and in *Happy Days* are forlorn as seen in the examples. They are in a universe where there is no God but a lot of sufferings. And they are obliged to face this fact and its consequences.

### **3.1.4.9 Despair**

Despair is the outcome of uncertainty and the unpredictability of man’s daily life. Matthey notes “We can deal only with the probabilities of various alternative possibilities. We have no control over what these possibilities are, either. So although I might count on a person I know well not to inflict harm on me, he might still do that, just as a reliable trolley might nonetheless jump its tracks and harm me” (NP).

Uncertainty has its root in World War I. So it can be said that despair was born after this devastating big war. People faced deep despair owing to the collapse of many certainties in their world. Human beings were disillusioned with the optimistic possibilities of scientific and technological development. Also, they started to lose their belief in God. All these reasons made man alienated from God, and feel that everyman is alone. The feeling of despair invades the atmosphere in the Beckettian universe, and the shadow of despair is visible on the characters via either their hopeless situation on the stage or the language they use in *Endgame*.

First of all, the Beckettian setting in *Endgame* is just like a place deprived of life and vitality due to a probable catastrophe. The characters are trapped in a restricted space and timelessness. Losses prevail, such as loss of hope, loss of belief in God, loss of personal sincere relationships, loss of identity, and even loss of material possessions. These strengthen the mood of despair on the part of both the characters and the audience. That is why, as pointed out, “Life for characters, then, has been like life for Schopenhuer; it is a pendulum that swings between pain and boredom” says Lori Hall Burghardt (qtd in Butler, 1993:360).

According to Philip Toynbee's article, the characters, which are deprived of communication with God, carry a heavy burden of desperation because of the playwright's feeling of despondency. Toynbee states,

Within the strict limitations of their author's desperation there is a rise and fall in the heavy tide; voices do at least address each other, and are partially heard, forgotten emotions are tried but again, and sometimes are almost felt again; there is conscious suffering (qtd. in Butler, 1993:66).

**HAMM:**

Have you not had enough?

**CLOV:**

Yes!

*(Pause.)*

Of what?

**HAMM:**

Of this... this... thing.

**CLOV:**

I always had.

*(Pause.)*

Not you?

**HAMM** *(gloomily):*

Then there's no reason for it to change.

**CLOV:**

It may end.

*(Pause.)*

All life long the same questions, the same answers. (E 5).

This exchange between Hamm and Clov is explicit enough to show that the characters are exhibiting a conscious suffering and despair. They have all life long been hopeless. When Clov articulates "I say to myself – sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you", it becomes clear that he is despairing, and he is well aware of his continual distressing condition. Also, towards the very end of the play, Hamm continues telling his story and in his narration he explicates "Moments for nothing, now as always, time was

never and time is over, reckoning closed and story ended” (E83), and further, he says, “Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing”(E 82). These examples of dialogues from the play are explicit enough to shed light upon the point.

Now that despair is the consequence of the unpredictability and uncertainty of man’s life, and the absence of probabilities, it is evident that in *Happy Days* there is despair. Contrasting with its title ‘Happy Days’, despair invades both acts of the play. No matter how well Winnie tries to veil her despair, Samuel Beckett exhibits it in the course of the play in an implicit way. First of all, there is loss of belief in God, loss of personal human relationships, and even the loss of objects owned by the characters, which creates a strong mood of despair, since there is an often repeated distinction between ‘the old style’ and the one which may counteract it. While everything is ‘running out’, and annihilation pervades every moment of the play, it cannot be possible to keep. So, despair is a natural outcome in *Happy Days*, which is a play doomed to experience ‘running-outs’. For a character, whose “head was always full of cries” (HD 42), nothing is more natural than being desperate.

All things considered, there is definitely a tremendous and inescapable sovereignty of existential despair evident from a life filled with nothing, a game doomed to be lost, and something wished much to be ended one day in *Endgame* and *Happy Days*.

#### **3.1.4.10 Nothingness or Non-being**

For existentialists, nothingness, or no-thing-ness, or non-being is necessary in order to be able to generate ‘the courage to be’, and to achieve authenticity by affirming one’s being. This means nothingness is needed to affirm its positive. Man must confront non-being, notice his mortality, and then invent his positive being. That is to say:

When through proximity to death or to ultimate meaninglessness, one descends to the abyss of absolute negation and empties himself of all inessential finite preoccupations, he reaches a state of “ultimate concern”, Tillich’s redefinition of “faith”. In this state one is emboldened to embrace nonbeing through the power of the being negated, for in embracing nonbeing one simultaneously engages the universal ground of being. (McCandless 350)

This is just like Tillich's explanation about nothingness, "no actual negation can be without an implicit affirmation. ... The negative lives from the positive it negates" (Tillich 175). Then, in order to 'break the silence of being', there has to be absolute nothingness as the counterpart of being.

Likewise, Beckett has an intensified concern about reducing everything to the level of non-existence including characters, setting, and the language used. This is best described in the statement of McCandless: What Beckett does is "stripping away all external encumbrances and laying bare the essential self, the positive zero, the ground of being for which there are no more names or conceptualizations" (350). Beckett's images that are very close to nothingness by their characteristics of nakedness and reducedness demonstrate Kennedy's "subtle negative way of the exploring self" (3).

In *Endgame* there is always a suggestion of ending and reducing everything to non-existence. "The end of the body and the end of Nature are accompanied, as well they might be, by the end of all existential and metaphysical comforts: the end of meaning, the death of God, the end of time" (Kennedy 52).

**HAMM:**

We're not beginning to... to... mean something?

**CLOV:**

Mean something! You and I, mean something!

*(Brief laugh.)*

Ah that's a good one! (E 27)

**HAMM:** (Whose prayer has not been answered):

The bastard!! He doesn't exist. (E 38)

**HAMM:**

Moments for nothing, now as always, time was never and time is over ... (E 52)

The examples related with ending suggest “a parable of non-generation” says Kennedy (53). Therefore, embodiment of uncertainty and equivocation takes the Beckettian characters closer to nothingness.

In *Happy Days* even though there is not an endeavour to end and reduce everything to non-existence, the play displays Winnie’s discomfort, tenderness and anxiety due to the existence of nothingness. She knows that there is nothingness, but seems to escape it. Nonetheless, her ignorance of no-thing-ness does not prevent her from waiting for annihilation. This is the other way of nothingness. “In the long run, then, Winnie awaits annihilation and regards the day of its coming as a happy day” (Mercier 176). Then, it can be said that in the short run, she is just waiting standstill for some sort of lifeguard to save her.

What Winnie experiences and even suffers from is her own consciousness. This is quite different from the situation in *Endgame*. In *Happy Days* the female character’s consciousness turns out to be an important figure since it forms Winnie’s own nothingness from which she has been escaping. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre uses the word ‘nothingness’ as a name for ‘consciousness’. Kamber in his book *On Sartre* explains why Sartre calls consciousness ‘nothingness’, and he states, “because it is through consciousness that negations of all kinds enter the world. It is consciousness that introduces the comparisons, expectations, and values which make negations arise” (Kamber 57). Hence, man’s consciousness is nothingness, which is open to many possibilities to turn up. And, the inescapable captivation of Winnie’s consciousness is revealed through her internal conflict of self. She regards total silence, which refers to her not ‘being in tongue’, as “the wilderness” (HD 18). So, in Winnie’s language ‘wilderness’ can have the same meaning with nothingness. Her speaking-being is struggling with her non-being, and she is very determined not to let her non-being in since she constantly continues her speech. Moreover, she is apparently thankful when she does not know about or confront nothingness: “Ah well, not to know, not to know for sure, great mercy, all I ask” (HD 38).

Apart from Winnie’s consciousness which is housing non-being, nothingness can also be observed on the stage in terms of setting. There is almost nothing to be seen in an earthly sense. The fewness of the objects reminds the reader and the

audience of 'nothingness' since the setting looks like a symbol of reducing all to the level of nothingness.

Consequently, not only *Endgame* but also *Happy Days* investigates the theme of nothingness through the existentialist perception of Samuel Beckett. The playwright certainly demonstrates that negation of being is necessarily required for the constitution and affirmation of being. For the affirmation of existence, Beckett's characters need to go closer to non-being.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. CONCLUSION

This study attempted to examine how Samuel Beckett's characterization, setting and use of language in his two plays, *Endgame* and *Happy Days*, illustrate his tendency to apply in his plays some existentialist concepts such as despair, nothingness, facticity and anguish on the way to authenticity. It was argued that the elements that Beckett includes in his plays display similarities with the existentialist notions, which gained prominence in Europe after the Second World War in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, both Samuel Beckett and the leading figures of Existentialism, primarily Sartre, portray man in despair and in struggle due to the fact that he is experiencing a number of losses, such as loss of God, in a world devoid of necessary attributes. This leads man to search for his own being. In other words, man is longing for his existence to constitute his being in both the Beckettian Universe and the Existentialist world. However, it is seen that there is some difference between these two worlds because Beckett's characters do not succeed in attaining perfect authenticity, and inventing themselves. Although his characters cannot become authentic men, Beckett does seem to aim at creating characters who do their best to achieve their essence.

In Chapter 2, the basic attributes of Existentialism as a philosophical movement and the views of major existentialists were given. Then, Samuel Beckett's existentialist stand was discussed. It was seen that there are similarities between the significant figures of the Existentialist movement and Samuel Beckett's existentialist viewpoint. Firstly, Beckett sees men as characters who are devoid of meaning, and thus, desperate at 'encountering themselves, surging up in the world, and defining themselves afterwards' as Sartre points out (1948:28). According to Sartre, since

'existence precedes essence', man finds himself in a continuous quest, which is usually into his consciousness. In this sense, Samuel Beckett's dominant female character Winnie in *Happy Days* can constitute a good example of such characters. She clearly delves into her consciousness although she tries to avoid this painful search for her being. Then, she encounters nothingness or her non-being, which is a common concern of Existentialism, and she is exposed to anxiety. At this point, Beckett again underscores his existentialist tendency by means of Winnie's encounter with nothingness. He asserts his view about the nature of anxiety as Tillich states, "anxiety is the state in which a being is aware of its possible nonbeing. ... [then] anxiety is the existential awareness of nonbeing" (1959:35).

Furthermore, Beckettian reduction of setting, language, characters and even the physical capabilities emphasizes Existentialist disillusionment and frustration. These themes in Beckett's plays reveal his Existentialist tendency. For instance, the physical obstacles of Beckett's characters in both *Endgame* and *Happy Days* reflect the sense that man is desperate, and his painful condition is clearly inescapable.

Consequently, "life is cruel and painful; failure is no worse than success because neither matters" (Chambers 78) for Beckett's characters. Thus, within this context, it is observed that Beckett's employment of the elements of the theatre of the Absurd in both plays displays the playwright's stand that is in a considerably close touch with Existentialist figures like Sartre. To illustrate, in *Endgame* Hamm has physical disabilities and he exhibits futile acts in a meaningless universe. This is because, both Beckett and the Existentialists place man in a world of futility, meaningless deeds and a merciless situation.

In Chapter 3, first of all the plays *Endgame* and *Happy Days* were analysed in terms of setting, stage and context, time concept, and characterization and language. It was seen that in both plays Beckett depicts man as comfortless, cynical, and unable to comprehend the universe which the playwright designs as irrational. To illustrate, in both plays all the characters are in a weird context, which is quite extraordinary to the men watching the plays. In *Endgame* which takes place in a small room, Hamm is paralysed and blind while Clov is unable to sit. Nagg and Nell are in two separate ashbins. Similarly, Winnie is buried in a mound of earth and cannot move, while Willie is reduced to a man who makes sounds instead of using words and has

difficulty in movement. Thus, they are all sharing this common but absurd situation of being a Beckettian character that is obliged to bear the traces of the existentialist viewpoint. That is to say, the only thing they have in common is “to share misfortune” (Chambers 78).

Secondly, Existentialist themes of ‘existence precedes essence’, pain of existing, anguish, facticity, choice, death, authenticity, forlornness, despair and nothingness in both *Endgame* and *Happy Days* were explored in Chapter 3. To start with, the theme of ‘man creates man’ is examined in both plays. According to Existentialists, as there is no essence to define the existence of man, man investigates the emptiness of his existence in anxiety, and suffers for fear that he might be nothing. Beckett’s characters are in this Existentialist state. Both Hamm and Winnie are anxious and in suffering because of the extreme strangeness of the setting they are in, and the emptiness of their existence. However, there are instances in which some characters attempt to affirm themselves by means of either mastery over the others as in the case of Hamm, or a need for a listener as in the case of Winnie. Besides, Beckett’s characters exhibit ‘man with his challenges to exist’. There are some challenges like physical obstacles taken for granted; however, the characters are after creating their beings as a response to those challenges. Also, for characters language and the presence of another character become tools to invent themselves knowing that existence precedes their essence. Characters, especially Hamm and Winnie assert themselves in these ways. Consequently, it is seen that Beckett’s characters well comply with the being that Ellis describes as “[in] absurd hope of endowing being with necessity and thereby saving man from contingency” (8). Then, all the characters are there to solve their problem of existence, or at least are exposed to the suffering of this obligatory condition.

As Sartre states, “man is condemned to be free”, and Beckett designs characters who are liable to the pain of existing since they are alone and free. There is no deity or anyone else to help them. These result in an infinite distress for the characters, which means life-long suffering. Hence, it seems that, like Sartre, Beckett is intensely concerned with “modes of being and suffering” (Kennedy 12). In addition to the unbearable pain of existing, the sense of anguish haunts Beckett’s characters. The mood of anguish stems from either there being no deity to check the

correctness of man's deeds or his choosing and deciding for both himself and all humanity. Moreover, the anxiety in Beckett's characters seems to be the sort that is the result of being aware of the 'voices from the depth', and eluding them. Tillich states, "we walk and talk and never listen to the voices speaking our depth and from our depth" (1959:39). To illustrate, Winnie seems to intend to listen to her depths, but then she prefers to turn to her bag. As a result, anxiety increases due to the fact that she is afraid that one day she will fail to continue in the same way. This means that Beckett's characters are exposed to the knowledge that they are in "anxiety in its nakedness, [which] is always the anxiety of ultimate nonbeing" (Tillich, 1959:38).

For Heidegger man is thrown into the world and left alone. And man has nothing to change this state. Similarly, all the characters in *Endgame* and *Happy Days* are thrown onto the stage as onto the earth, and abandoned there. In this way, Beckett manages to insert the existentialist theme of facticity into his plays. For instance, Winnie accepts her situation, and many times states that she is obliged to live in the way she is given. There is no chance for her to change this. Beckett also includes the subject of choice in his plays. For Existentialists, choice is required to exist. Similarly, for Beckett's characters existence becomes a matter of choice as revealed in Clov's choice for leaving or staying with Hamm. Or in *Happy Days* Winnie's choice for speech over silence is a way for her to exist, or at least to try to assert her being. Apart from facticity and choice, death is a preoccupying theme of both Existentialism and Beckett. For Sartre, death is the concern that can provide man with a better comprehension of non-being. In a way, it is the negated form of being. That is why the playwright establishes the feeling of death in both plays. This is achieved either through a waiting for an end or increasing reducedness and level of anxiety. This means two different attitudes towards death: one regards it as an end of punishment, as seen in the cases of Hamm and Clov, the other as a source of distress as Winnie still has an aptness for life. As a consequence, death is present in Beckett's plays in order to help man get a better understanding of non-being, and thus being.

Man's inventing his own grand meaning for existence suggests authenticity in an existentialist sense. That is to say, when man re-unites and re-organizes his life in accordance with independently-chosen objectives, he becomes authentic; otherwise, he is inauthentic. The wilful self-definition of man for authenticity is another major

theme to be observed in Beckett's two plays. Firstly, the playwright provides the hopeless ground for the characters necessary to be able to perceive a deeper level of meaning for their existence and for their self-definition. However, all of the characters cannot completely succeed in defining their selves. Then, they fail to be authentic despite the convenient conditions created by the playwright in the plays. But Beckett makes his characters access authenticity to some extent in some instances, in the sense that they at least try to avoid becoming inauthentic. To illustrate, these characters refuse to end, finish or quit what they are doing, and thus they seem to have re-centred their lives around the new objectives of being purposeless and resisting the void to bear the heavy burden of anxiety. They are authentic in a way, but in despair different from what Existentialism demands, which involves accepting the basic meaninglessness of life without yielding to despair. This may be Beckett's way to attain authenticity. Beckett makes somewhat authentic characters out of Nell and Nagg, too. They live as happily as they can despite their dreadful situation of being confined in ashbins. In this manner, they re-centre their lives around living without despair and delusion. Lastly, in *Happy Days* Winnie is aware that life is full of suffering, and like Nell she tries to be happy since she has already been 'bitten by the meaninglessness bug' in a mound of earth. Consequently, it is necessary for man to realize how futile it is to busy himself with some dismal deeds to attain authenticity in a condition which has shaken his very ground of being. In a full Existentialist sense, authenticity is not attained by Beckett's characters in his two plays. However, in Beckett authenticity takes another shape, and is achieved by his characters to some extent. In other words, it is suggested that being at least on the way to authenticity might be regarded as becoming authentic.

To Sartre, man is forlorn, which means man knows that "God does not exist and that ... [man has to] face the consequences of this" (1957:21). Beckett agrees with this existentialist point of view upon forlornness, and in his two plays his characters are all forlorn. They are well aware that they are thrown into a world without God and are obliged to face its results. The inescapable fact of coming into such a world is itself displayed as an example of being forlorn for all the characters. They all have to confront the ruthless fact that they are in the world with no God, and they have to confront the consequences of this situation. Naturally being forlorn also

leads to anger and despair. And despair appears as an outcome of uncertainty and incomprehensibility in man's life. Beckett creates such settings in both plays that there seems to be few vestiges of life after a possible catastrophe. Besides, all the characters are devoid of the many attributes of an ordinary man. For instance, they lack the ability of complete communication with either the other characters or God. Then, these give an air of despondency to the plays, which approximates Beckett to the existentialist despair.

Lastly, nothingness or non-being has been investigated through *Endgame* and *Happy Days*. Nothingness is a necessity for man to define himself for the existentialists. As Tillich points out "the negative lives from the positive it negates" (175). Likewise, Beckett reduces everything in his two plays like setting, characters and language to the level of non-existence. In this way, he opens a door for his characters, and also for the people who read or watch them, so as to 'explore self' through the negative. Apart from these, Beckett plays with consciousness as a potential nothingness in *Happy Days* in the case of Winnie. Winnie's consciousness becomes her own probable nothingness although she evades it by avoiding listening to 'the voices of and from her depths'. Consequently, the more nothingness is approached by the characters, the more self-exploration becomes probable for both Beckett and Existentialists.

Both *Endgame* and *Happy Days* have some existentialist points in common. However, when compared with each other in terms of their relation and closeness to the view of Existentialism, *Happy Days* is likely to be seen as more existentialist. That is because, *Happy Days* is more reduced and barren than the other play in terms of the number of the characters, the physical abilities of the characters, setting, the number of the objects on the stage, and lastly the language, especially the shortened dialogues, besides intensified suffering. All these mark *Happy Days* as much more existentialist in comparison. Similarly, the character Winnie in *Happy Days* might be the most existentialist character with respect to her inability to move, her deeds to busy herself and her self-questioning, which she often escapes.

Samuel Beckett has an existentialist stand in his two plays *Endgame* and *Happy Days* due to the fact that the playwright employs some existentialist themes such as nothingness, anxiety and choice in his works; however, he differs from other

existentialists because of some reasons. Reduced language, characters which are not developed, weird setting and lack of a conventional plot are the characteristics which make Beckett different from the other existentialists. To illustrate, Sartre, who is a prominent philosophical and literary figure of Existentialism, uses a proper plot with beginning, development and ending, clearly defined characters and places, and lastly a proper language as a means of communication unlike Beckett. That is to say, Beckett is an existentialist in his ideas, but his works display some differences compared to the other existentialists like Sartre and Camus.

Evident from the Beckettian characterization, setting and use of language in *Endgame* and *Happy Days*, Samuel Beckett writes on some existentialist themes like despair, nothingness, facticity and anguish, which discloses his existentialist inclination. In this way, the Beckettian characters in both plays display a state of suffering in which they are indeed experiencing a difficult journey to authenticity although both plays are almost reduced to immobility. None of his characters can attain full authenticity in the plays since Beckett's plays are closed to change. However, the frozen pictures of extraordinary characters, who are exposed to the unbearable tiredness of the way leading to authenticity, and the weird setting in addition to a reduced language of less communication have an impact on both the readers and the audiences of *Endgame* and *Happy Days*. While Beckett's characters fail to be authentic men, the playwright manages to show what sort of a thing to exist is, and the fact that man is obliged to attain authenticity in order to avoid nothingness, and thus, he has to invent himself. In a way, Beckett makes use of Sartrean negation in his characters. It is known that positive can only come from negative; the characters are like the negations of the audiences and the readers. Consequently, putting the experience of existence by means of his characters on the stage is what Beckett does so as to make authenticity accessible to the audience and the reader.

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