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Alienation, Nothingness, and Death in Samuel Beckett's Endgame

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Abstract

Some dramatists of the modern age portray the world as a trivial, meaningless and that there is nothing left for the human being but death. Samuel Beckett, the Irish playwright whose works have been translated into over twenty languages and awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, shows how the human being is isolated from the world and obliged to live a life not of his choice. According to Beckett, Man has lost the meaning of living and everyday repeats itself. He believes that the modern man is spiritually disinterested. This is so clear in his play ***Endgame*** where he employed some concepts of existentialism such as death and loneliness.

This paper is divided into two sections and a conclusion. Section one deals with an introduction on the absurd theatre and Existentialism and how they are reflected in ***Endgame***. Moreover, this section shows Beckett's language and how he used the memory of his characters to serve his purpose in depicting the modern world. Section two sheds light on the main themes in ***Endgame*** such as nothingness, alienation, and death.

1.0. Introduction

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), the Irish playwright, is one of the most important dramatists of the twentieth century. He participated in developing modern English drama. In his plays, he depicts the

absurdity of life. It was Martin Esslin (1918-2002), the Hungarian critic, who invented the term 'Theatre of the Absurd' which refers to a kind of play that became popular during the 1950s and 1960s. The term 'absurd' grouped certain playwrights like Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, and Harold Pinter. Later on other dramatists were associated to this kind of theatre such as Tom Stoppard, Edward Albee, and others (Crabb, 2006: 1).

Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), the French existentialist philosopher, playwright, and novelist, is considered the father of existentialist philosophy. World War II brought together Sartre and Albert Camus (1913-1960), Algerian born French writer, to be friends. They share the same beliefs that the universe is away from reason, without divinity and freedom which results in despair, and that there is no God. For Camus ,being one of the absurd theatre's playwrights, absurd is not a synonym for ridiculous, but the existence's true state (Tan, 2007: 17). He believes that human life is irrational and meaningless. According to Martin Esslin, the absurd theatre is seen as a reflection of the modern age (Esslin, 1968: 22-23). Playwrights of the absurd explore ideas as the state of existence, the unreliable language, isolation from the world, and the concept of time.

Martin Esslin (1968: 24) defines 'absurd' as that which " strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought". Albert Camus, on the other hand defines 'absurd' as "the essential concept and the first truth" (http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=absurd). David Mikics (2007: 18) states that " The sense that human existence remains inherently absurd is supremely challenging in its apparent meaningless". Samuel Beckett's ***Waiting for Godot (1954)*** and ***Endgame,*** written in French in 1957 and translated to English by

Beckett himself in 1958, depict "the irrationalism, helplessness, and absurdity of life in dramatic forms that reject realistic setting, logical reasoning, or a coherently evolving plot" (Abrams, 1999: 1). This is what differentiates the modern theatre from the classical one. A classical play follows a pattern in which there is an introduction, rising action, climax, and falling action after which the action resolves itself for better or worse. Moreover, each play has at least one main plot and sometimes with a subplot or subplots.

1.1. *Endgame*

Endgame is one of Beckett's most famous plays next to ***Waiting for Godot.*** In his critical reading Hugh Kenner, the Canadian critic, shows that ***Endgame*** is equal to " Life in a Box" (Byron, 2007: xii). Ruby Cohn, American author, and S. E. Gontarski, specialized in twentieth-century Irish studies, describe ***Endgame*** as a complex journey that is composed before anyone can understand how to read or criticize such a play (Ibid., xi-xii). Theodor W. Adorno (1958: 120) in his essay "*Trying to Understand* ***Endgame***" agrees that understanding ***Endgame*** means nothing but understanding its incomprehensibility. Mark S. Byron's (2007: xii) interpretation of ***Endgame*** shows that the walls stand for a skull, the characters represent memory and brain, and the two windows are the eyes. The action of this skull and eyes is a dramatization of a rational mind, an unconscious, emotions, and memories.

Due to World War II, the world is destroyed and everything lost its identity and meaning. Beckett's ***Endgame*** is an experience or a process through which human beings live in isolation and at the same time they are longing for the past that has been lost, for a sense of meaning, and for identity. Isolation, unsecured universe,

and death cause painful anxieties in the atmosphere where the characters live.

The play opens with a silent show, no words at all. The setting is a small room with two small windows , two covered dustbins, a chair in the centre, and a door. The light in the room is grey. The chair in the middle is covered by a sheet. Clov, one of the characters, holds the ladder, moves from one window to the other to open the arras. Then, he removes the sheet from the only chair that lies in the middle of the room to wake up Hamm, the main character or one can say the master of the game. The main event in the play is the relationship between Hamm and Clov and whether Clov is going to leave Hamm or not. Hamm provides shelter and food, while Clov provides his services through his legs and eyes.

1.2. *Endgame* and Existentialism

Endgame employed some existentialist concepts such as death, loneliness, and meaninglessness of life. The absurd theatre is associated with Existentialism. It is a philosophical movement which assumes that human existence precedes essence, and that Man and other things exist but those things have no meaning for human beings till they find meaning through acting upon these things. The world, for the human beings, is meaningless that produces in them an anxiety, and a loneliness. It is important to say that "human beings are totally free but also wholly responsible for what they make of themselves" (Holman & Harmon, 1986: 193). Freedom and responsibility are the sources of the reasons of their anxiety, and such philosophical thinking results in Nihilism* and hopelessness (Ibid.).

* Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. Nihilism is most often associated with Friedrich Nietzsche who argued

that its corrosive effects would eventually destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions and precipitate the greatest crisis in human history (Pratt, 2005: 1).

The philosophical term Existentialism is associated with the twentieth century thinker Jean Paul Sartre. It is called Existentialism Movement because its members are interested in the nature of existence (Yeganeh, 2006: 533).

> His [Sartre's] philosophy is … pessimistic because he declared that human beings seek a rational basis for their lives. They are unable to achieve it; therefore, human life is a "futile passion". But he denied the charge of pessimism, and regarded his theory as a form of humanism. He held that by confronting radical freedom and responsibility, instead of hiding from them in cowardly "bad faith", human beings can construct a new, more honest morality (Ibid., 536).
>
> Sartre's writings portray the intellectual life and the views of the existentialists immediately after World War II (Tan, 2007: 18).

Existentialists believe that human beings have the right to choose their path. Thus, they must accept the result of commitment and responsibility. By doing this, each person must decide what is right and what is wrong; which belief to accept or reject; what is true and what is not. Hence, the most important thing for the existentialists is that choice is subjective and this is so clear in their writings. As a result, each human being is free as far as he/she makes his/her own choice (Yeganeh, 2006: 536-37). Needless to say that human beings realize that there will be consequences for their choices, and they are ready to accept them and deal with them.

There are some similarities between Beckett's plays and existentialism. Some of his characters "display the existentialist man who is looking for becoming an authentic man" (Tan, 2007: iv).

Endgame shows Beckett's views of existentialism which is similar to that of Sartre (Ibid.). Ronan McDonald agrees that there is a close association of existentialism and Beckett's beliefs that is 'absurdity'. The existentialist concludes that life is absurd, disordered, and meaningless. He adds, "We are an accident of the universe, there is no plan or purpose of our lives and the really big question, which Albert Camus asks in ***The Myth of Sisyphus 1942****, is whether to commit suicide" (McDonald, 2006: 24).

The philosophy of existentialism is not separated from art, and existential themes are discussed in literature of all periods (Yeganeh, 2006: 539). The theatre of the absurd is one of the most vivid and common expressions of existentialist themes. Absurdity is reflected in Samuel Beckett's and Eugène Ionesco's plays. "The absurdity rejected conventional plot, characterization, dialogue-writing, and logic, and used dreamlike metaphors not imitating surface reality" (Ibid., 541). They portray the universe as unfriendly, irrational, meaningless, and absurd. ***Waiting for Godot*** and ***Endgame*** are among the best examples of the absurd theatre (Ibid.).

* ***The Myth of Sisyphus*** is a philosophical essay by Albert Camus. It comprises about 120 pages and was published originally in 1942 in French as ***Le Mythe de Sisyphe.*** In the essay, Camus introduces his philosophy of the absurd: man's futile search for meaning, unity and clarity in the face of an unintelligible world devoid of God and eternal truths or values. Does the realization of the absurd require suicide? Camus answers: "No. It requires revolt." He then outlines several approaches to the absurd life. The final chapter compares the absurdity of man's life with the situation of Sisyphus, a figure of Greek mythology who was condemned to repeat forever the same meaningless task of pushing a boulder up a mountain, only to see it roll down again. The essay concludes, "The struggle itself...is enough to fill a man's

heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Myth_of_Sisyphus).

James Eliopulos (1975: 57) agrees with Raymond Federman (1965: 86) that Beckett succeeded in presenting plays without plot, décor, climax, and eliminated some of human functions. Therefore, Beckett almost neglected the body and depending only on the use of voice (Eliopulos, 1975: 58). J. L. Styan adds:

> They [plays] have no logical plot or characterization in any conventional sense. Their characters lack the motivation found in realistic drama, and so emphasize their purposelessness. The absence of plot serves to reinforce the monotony and repetitiveness of time in human affairs. The dialogue is no more than a series of inconsequential clichés which reduce those who speak them to talking machines. As plays, they do not discuss the human condition, but simply portray it at its worst in outrageous images chosen to undeceive the innocent and shock the complacent (Styan, 1981:126).

Moreover, Beckett's neglection of plot leads him to rely on language to pass time and to avoid the significance change (Eliopulos, 1975: 85). Thus, dramatic situation is used as a substance of plot where there exists a form of static drama that shows the real content of the play which lies in its action (Ibid., 108). John Fletcher said that Beckett's play " tends towards a more and more barren simplicity" (Fletcher, 1966: 249). He reduces scenery to the minimum, empties the stage almost from everything. Beckett substitutes an illusion for reality by presenting a dramatic reality in his plays (Copeland, 1975: 46).

1.3. Language

Usually, language is used to communicate. Beckett's simple language is an aid to help the characters to communicate, yet, what they speak is difficult to understand because words do not describe their conditions (Ben-Ziv, 1980: 196). In modern drama, characters use language for no definite purpose and lack of purpose is one of the major concerns of absurdity (Eliopulos, 1975: 53).

> For Beckett " language is useless … he creates a mythical universe peopled by lonely creatures who struggle vainly to express the inexpressible. His characters exist in a terrible dreamlike vacuum, overcome by an overwhelming sense of bewilderment and grief, grotesquely attempting some form of communication, then crawling on, endlessly" (Hamilton, 2006: 1).

Moreover, Beckett uses the idea of silence and laughter in his plays as the final answers to limit the language that are used by him over and over. "The 'silent howl' over human condition and the despair over the inability to articulate this condition are shared by many Beckettian characters" (Ben-Ziv, 1980: 197). This is also true for laughter. Laugh over jokes is no longer funny. For example, when Nagg laughs at Hamm's phrase **" a heart in my head"** (Beckett, 1958: 19)*****, Nell Punishes him by saying: **"Nothing is funnier than unhappiness" (*Endgame,* 20).** Such characters dream to reach a point where they will be free from using words and have only silence. Beckett believes that each word is "an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness" (www.websophia.com /faces/beckett.html).

Repetition is also used by Beckett in ***Endgame*** to underscore the cyclical stasis in his plays. The play systematically repeats movements and words

(http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/endgame/themes.html). For instance, Hamm repeatedly asks **"Is it not time for my pain-killer?" (*Endgame*: 14, 16, 28, 34, 46)** for five times. The use of repetition strengthens the idea that the life of modern man is meaningless and empty. The characters repeat actions and words just to waste time. It also shows the failure to communicate.

1.4. Characters and Memory

Beckett draws the sketches of four characters in ***Endgame***. To some extent, each one of them has a different personality and definitely different role, yet, the four characters share almost the same pain and suffer from the same things: alienation, loneliness, and waiting their final destiny. It is so clear that the four characters in ***Endgame*** are disabled. Hamm is blind and crippled, Clov suffers from his leg and can not sit, Nell and Nagg (Hamm's parents) have no legs and they live in ashbins.

The main character is Hamm, proud and cruel. He is the owner of the house and the master of the game. He sits in the centre of the room and that reflects his pride and how he sees himself as the centre of the universe. Although he is blind and sits in a wheelchair, he controls the people around him but he can not control himself. He orders Clov to do everything for him and silences his parents. However, his great fear is that life will spring again. He is afraid of the flea and the rat in Clov's kitchen and thinks that humanity might start from there all over again. Clov also shares with him this fear so he tries to kill the flea and the rat.

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

Clov *(anguished, scratching himself)*:
I have a flea!
Hamm: **A flea! Are there still fleas?**
….
Hamm *(very perturbed)*:
But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God!

(*Endgame*, 27)

Clov: There's a rat in the kitchen!
Hamm: A rat! Are there still rats?
Clov: In the kitchen there's one.
Hamm: And you haven't exterminated him?
Clov: Half. You disturbed us.
Hamm: He can't get away?
Clov: No.
Hamm: You'll finish him later. Let us pray to God.

(Ibid., 37)

Clov is the only one who is free to walk and the one who serves all the other three characters. He is like a son to Hamm, the obedient one, who executes his father's orders. He feels alone all the time though Hamm always talks to him. He is just like others spiritually injured and unable to leave because he is afraid of loneliness.

Nagg, Hamm's father, has to beg for food. He is kept in an ashbin which separates him from his wife Nell, Hamm's mother. Nell is nice but she lost her ability to laugh. She is the first one to die in the play.

The four characters rarely trusted their impressions of the outside world because Beckett describes the world according to their inner feelings (Rabinovitz, 1985: 317). "His heroes try to escape from the pain of existence by retreating into their minds. Initially the inner world seems like a pleasant refuge, but eventually it acquires connotations of death or imprisonment…"(Ibid., 321).

Hamm: There's something dripping in my head.

(Pause.)

A heart, a heart in my head.

(Pause.)

Nagg: Do you hear him? A heart in his head!

(He chuckles cautiously.)

Nell: One mustn't laugh at those things, Nagg. Why must you always laugh at them?

…

Nell *(without lowering her voice)*:

Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that.

(*Endgame*, 19-20)

The heart in Hamm's head shows that man thinks and feels by using his reason just to escape from the bitter reality and the shocks of the world. This reflects that modern man is unhappy.

Beckett depicts memory as an obstacle in man's way to live his life (Ben-Zvi, 1980: 191). In ***Endgame*** one can notice that the characters are longing to progress in life but they are trapped in the past and can not move on due to fear or nostalgia (Weighell, 2010: 3). "The nostalgia for past by Nagg and Nell… conflates that past with fictional stories" (Gatewood, 2007: 55). They longed for yesterday, while Hamm and Clov reworking the past, and relied on the present and undisputed what to come (Ibid.).

Jane E. Gatewood states that Beckett " meditates … on the function of memory within human consciousness, arguing that humans are imprisoned by Time" (2007: 49). In ***Endgame*** memory covers the stage by the description of stage directions. When Clov enters and starts to move from one window to the other, he forgets the ladder which he uses to help him to look through the windows. He repeats this process many times, " but each time the space between forgetting and remembering diminishes, linking the physical space of the stage with the mental space of memory" (Ibid.). Hamm tries to control the present through depending on his memory of the past. He changes the details of the story that is constructed in the memory every time to create a "continuity of identity" (Ibid., 60).

2.0. Themes of the Absurd Theatre

There are many themes that are reflected by the theatre of the absurd. Alienation, nothingness, and death are among those themes.

2.1. Alienation

The absurdity of human condition results from the failure to communicate. The failure of communication means isolation. One of the most important features of modern man is that he is isolated from the world. As a result, he lives alone. Thus, alienation is defined as emotional isolation or dissociation from others (http://www.123helpme.com/preview.asp?id= 137538). Edith Kern (1971: 27), in describing Beckett's structure, whether in fiction or theatre, mentions that man is totally alone in the universe. "Man sundered into a consciousness and a *me*. Man, like a child alone in the dark, inventing companions that will listen to him and reassert his existence by their presence". Jean-Jacques Mayoux affirms that " man is alone, and bereft not only of God, but also of the world"

(Mayoux, 1965: 78). For this reason works of Beckett are ruthless criticism of experience (Ibid.).

Beckett's characters suffer from discontinuity and separation form oneself and others (Postlewait, 1978: 490). Through those characters Beckett depicts a society that is spiritually wounded. Nagg and Nell are separated from each other. By living in ashbins that look like shelters for them, they protect themselves from the world and its loss. Moreover, their existence is also painful because it reminds them of being buried alive in coffins. What increases their pain is that Nagg tries to kiss Nell but he can not.

Nagg: Kiss me.
Nell: We can't. **(*Endgame*, 18)**

This shows the life of modern man. In modern society one can not reach the other although they live in the same area. Also this criticizes the feelings of modern man which is ironic where many married couples live together, close to one another, yet, they are totally strangers to each other (http://mywritingexpert.com/userfiles/files/Endgame%20by%20Samuel% 20Beckett.pdf).

Through Hamm and Clove, anxiety of isolation is clearly reflected in ***Endgame***. The relationship between the main characters, Hamm and Clov, is of master-slave or father-son or king-knight relationship. Hamm is the king who always orders his knight to serve him. Each one is obliged to the other, Hamm for Clov's services and Clov for food and shelter. In a moment Clov wants to leave but he feels the obligation to stay with Hamm because he is blind and disabled. They both agree that they are obliged to each other.

Hamm: I'm obliged to you, Clov. For your services.
Clov: *(Turning, sharply).* **Ah pardon me, it's I am obliged to you.**
Hamm: It's we are obliged to each other. (*Endgame,* 51).

Hamm always tells Clov to leave him, but before Clov finds an exit Hamm pulls him back again. Both are wondering why they stay with each other. Definitely, both of them give answers to their questions. Clov can not leave because that room is the only shelter to him, and Hamm needs Clov because without him he is going to die. Thus, each one is dependent on the other to stay alive (http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/endgame/themes.html). They feel that they are isolated from the world, and completely believe that they are the only survivors in the world and their room is the only place left.

Hamm: Why do you stay with me?
Clov: Why do you keep me?
Hamm: There's no one else.
Clov: There's nowhere else. (Endgame, 14)

However, the two main characters seem to be tired of each other. Clov confesses that he is trying to leave his master, but he can not. Hamm also says that he wants to get rid of Clov, yet, he does not let him go. This situation expresses that people lack freedom. They are alienated from each other, but they are not free from each other. They are afraid of loneliness(http://mywritingexpert.com/userfiles/files/Endgame%20by%20Samuel%20Beckett.pdf).

Hamm: I'll give you nothing more to eat.
Clov: Then we'll die. (*Endgame,* 14)

Hamm threatens to kill Clove by starving him, but when he realizes that he will die too he changes his mind.

Hamm: I'll give you just enough to keep you from dying. You'll be hungry all the time. (Ibid.)

Even Nell threatens to leave Nagg.

Nell: Then I'll leave you.
Nagg: …
I thought you were going to leave me.
Nell: I am going to leave you. (*Endgame*, 20)

Moreover, Hamm threatens Clov with isolation. He told him that he will be worse than him because there will be no one to serve him.

Hamm: One day you'll be blind like me. You'll be sitting here, a speck in the void, in the dark, forever, like me.
…….
Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe.
(Pause.)
Yes, one day you'll know what it is, you'll be like me, except that you won't have anyone with you, because you won't have had pity on anyone and because there won't be anyone left to have pity on.

(*Endgame*, 28-29)

Hamm expresses his condition and unfolds Clov's future as blind, empty, and full of loneliness. Being isolated or abandoned is worse than death for ***Endgame***'s characters. They speak harshly to each

other because they realize that if they treat each other softly, then it will be harder to leave.

2.2. Nothingness

The title of the play, ***Endgame***, is attached to the concept of a chess game that is about to reach its end with a checkmate. The audience watch and understand why the players [characters] can not walk away from the chessboard. The action of ***Endgame*** is equal to life inside a brain (Hayman, 1979: 10-11). The two windows represent eyes and the dustbins containing useless memories of the past (Ibid.).

Hamm is dying, as the play opens. For him the world seems to come to its end. He is satisfied with the idea that all existence will vanish. When he asked Clov to report him the whether, Clov looks via the telescope and said **" corpsed"** (***Endgame,* 25**). Hamm's insight confirms that nothing exists outside their room (McDaniel, 2003: 4). There is nothing in the world but death and extinction.

Hamm: Outside of here it's death. (*Endgame*, 15, 45)

The small room is just like a hell but Hamm claims:

Hamm: Beyond is the … other hell. (*Endgame,* 23)

Clov agrees with Hamm in " describing the nature as dead, earth as extinguished and outside world as zero on his repetitive action of looking outside from the window with his telescope" (http://onlineessays.com/essays/arts/samuel-becketts-end-game.php). Among the four characters, the door does not exist for three of them. " No going off-stage to sleep or find another space" (Worth, 1975: 189). The three characters, Hamm, Nagg, and Nell, can not move or feed themselves without Clov's help. He is the only one who is free. Although he can go out of the door, yet, he goes to his kitchen, another box (Ibid.),**"ten feet by ten feet by ten feet" (*Endgame,* 12),** to watch the wall and sees his light dying (Worth, 1975: 189). A powerful speech is delivered by Clov before the play

ends as one of the reasons behind his staying **"I open the door of the cell and go. I am so bowed I only see my feet, if I open my eyes, and between my legs a little trail of black dust. I say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit" (*Endgame*, 51)**. Clov believes that there is nothing outside waiting for him except " the same old extinguished universe without the Sun to provide an animated nature" (http://onlineessays.com/essays/arts/samuel-becketts-end-game.php). Clove wishes to leave everything behind him and open the door to start over again, to be reborn without Hamm and his continuous orders and boring stories. But he reaches to a total belief that there is nothing left outside to start with, nothing but ash.

Beckett's characters repeat questions, looking out of windows, telling the same story, and repeating the same words. These repetitions are symbolic of what human beings do everyday - wake up, go to work, come home, and go to sleep. The absolute meaninglessness of this repetition is part of the human life. Waiting for death is the unavoidable. ***Endgame*** depicts the theme of nothingness through portraying Man's meaningless life - born, lives, then dies. Beckett calls this absurd (Hamilton, 2006: 1).

The Existentialists believe that nothingness is liberating man and makes him free to choose what he wants (Tan, 2007: 4). Beckett's characters are empty and thus, they are confronted by nothingness.

Hamm: the bigger a man is the fuller he is.
(Pause. Gloomily.)
And the emptier. **(*Endgame*, 12)**

2.3. Death

Endgame is similar to ***Waiting for Godot*** in the idea of waiting but the perspective of waiting is different. In ***Waiting for Godot*** the characters are waiting for a salvational arrival, while in ***Endgame*** they are waiting for a salvational departure or death (Astro, 1990: 108).

There are more than one sign of death in ***Endgame***. One may say that the two ashbins resemble two coffins that spread the smell of death in the air. Moreover, the characters are aware of this fact although they tried to ignore it by keeping themselves busy with their daily routines. Alan Astro affirms that " There is basically no suspense in ***Endgame***; the sole thing they could possibly be awaiting will definitely come: it is death" (Astro, 1990: 135). The play starts with the word 'finished'.

CLOV *(fixed gaze, tonelessly)*:
Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished.

(*Endgame*, 12)

Clov repeats the word 'finished' as a sign of conforming the idea of death and that life has almost reaches its end. According to Existentialism, life has no meaning. ***Endgame*** deals with the theme of meaningless life and therefore it shows the characters' obsession with the idea of death.

> They [the characters] can not be certain of anything in life except death. No matter how people play the game of life the only final outcome about which they can be dead sure is death. Death is the central issue around which the whole play moves. Nell is the only female character in the play and she is also the one who dies in the course of the

play. The death of female character who is the source of life makes death the dominant idea in the play (http://www.bachelorandmaster.com/globaldrama/endgame-as-an-absurd-play.html).

Hamm orders Clov to see if Nell is dead, Clov answers positively.

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. **(*Endgame*, 41)**

Nell is the first character to die and her death refers to the death of life itself. Nell's death is a hint to the end of creation. ***Endgame*** is referred to as a great achievement that shows an experience of what it might be to die. It takes the audience " into a world of last things, where life and vigour are being slowly and painfully extinguished: we suffer the end of action, the end of sight and the power to move one's limbs, of hearing… there is a real death in the play…" (Worth, 1975: 190). Nell's death touches Nagg , while Hamm and Clov pay no attention as if they are expecting this moment, and indeed they do. Hamm received his mother's death with carelessness. The tramps in ***Waiting for Godot*** played with the idea of suicide because they were afraid of death. Hamm, on the other hand, learns to meet death, and unlike Lucky, Clov, for a while, finds it possible to leave Hamm to die (Metman, 1965: 133).

Death is sensed inside and outside the room. The room symbolizes a shelter from the outside danger and in the same time it symbolizes a prison of the modern man who can not move freely. " Their movement is highly restricted…. The chess pieces can move only in a given way. The rules of the game impose restriction on

their movements" (http://www.bachelorandmaster.com/globaldrama/style-and-technique-in-endgame. html). As if the characters' movement is programmed and they can not change it.

Moreover, Light can be considered as another symbol of life. Its absence refers to the absence of life. John Fletcher states " light can be a symbol of life and its absence is a symbol of death" (Fletcher and Spurling, 1972: 69). Clov looks with the telescope:

Clov *(looking)***: The light is sunk.**
….
Clov *(looking)***: There was a bit left.**
Hamm: The base.
Clov *(looking)***: Yes.**
Hamm: And now?
Clov *(looking)***: All gone.**
….
Hamm: And the sun?
Clov *(looking)***: Zero.**
….
Hamm: Then what is it?
Clov *(looking)*: **Grey.**
(Lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, louder.)
Grey!
(Pause. Still louder.)
GRREY! (*Endgame*, 25-26)

According to what Clov sees, there is no Sun in the world, no light. Such an idea is fearful. The grey colour may refer to the heavy smoke of the burned earth which covers the horizon and the Sun. Or it may refer to the ash of the things that are already dead.

3.0. Conclusion

World War II brings destruction to the world. Death is smelled in the whole universe. A group of writers try to portray life according to what they see and feel. Samuel Beckett's writings, and many others, are described as being absurd. Through his writings he shows what modern life is. He refuses the conventional structure in writing his plays. As usual, Beckett asks questions and leave his audience to think of the answers. ***Endgame*** is one of the masterpieces of Samuel Beckett.

Those who believe in the absurd theory know the tricks of life. Life is no more than a chess game which will end with a checkmate. Through ***Endgame*** Beckett paints a bleak picture of life. The title of the play refers to the final stage of a chess game with only four pieces left. By making them crippled he gave them no chance to stay alive or resist their suffering and have a sense of hope for tomorrow.

Beckett tries to deliver a message to his audience that the modern age is meaningless and leads to nothingness. People are isolated even among the members of the family. They are like strangers though they live together. In addition to that, life has nothing more to give except death, i.e. life is going to end in one way or another. Nell was the first one to meet her destiny in the course of the play. Hamm also is waiting his time to pass away since the idea of death controls everything and paralyses his mind.

Clov is the only one who, for a moment, gives hope to the audience that he is free to go out of that room. He dresses his suit and walks to the door, but after a while he comes back again to prove that there is no escape, no exit. Such a situation tells the readers that there is no freedom when it comes to the social bond of the house. They need him and he needs them even in their last moments of life.

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