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The Inner Wasteland in Selected Later Plays of Samuel Beckett

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Abstract

The inner wasteland can be observed in Samuel Beckett's early and later plays. His characters suffer from loss of identity, emotions, and sense of time. They lead a life of failure, repetition, inaction, loneliness, doubt, suffering, and nothingness. The inner wasteland includes many aspects, such as the multi and split identity, the habitual repetitive element of life, the dark sorrowful life the characters lead, lack of communication and relations among them, their unfree, inactive condition, their foggy terrible recollections, loneliness, dryness of love, and uncertainty. The analysis and the illustration of each aspect will show how the inner wasteland is intensified in the selected later plays of Beckett.

Keywords: wasteland, memory, identity, inaction, loneliness.

This paper deals with the presentation of the inner wasteland in selected later plays of Samuel Beckett (1906-1989). Beckett has begun a new stage with his later plays. It is apparent in *Breath* (1970), specifically, where he introduces a stage of reduction that includes the space, dialogue, characters, and even the bodies of the characters. He makes the audience conscious of the limitations of seeing, hearing, speaking, and even perceiving his characters. The inner wasteland includes many aspects, such as the multi and split identity, the habitual repetitive element of life, the dark sorrowful life the characters lead, the lack communication and relations among them, their unfree, inactive condition, their foggy terrible recollections, the notion of time, loneliness, dryness of love, and uncertainty. The analysis and the illustration of each aspect will show how the inner wasteland is intensified in those plays.

The problem of identity in Beckett's later plays is demonstrated centrally through the character's frustration from using the first - person singular "I" to using various pronouns - "he," "she," and "it" - in expressing and describing their own stories and to acknowledge their past and present life. The "I", says Richard Coe, "... bears witness to the essential Self ..." (1964, p. 82); the "I" is the basic reference to the self. In *Not I* (1973), there is a direct and obvious denial of the "I", an explicit denial of the self in other words. This denial is clear from the very title of the play that refutes the I - relations and negates the self. The woman denies subjectivity and runs frantically away from an encounter with the first person singular: "what? ... who? ... no! ... She!" (Beckett, 1978, n.p.) is a repeated formula that denotes the frustration of the self. Mouth, which is the only part that is apparent of the protagonist of the play, resorts to the use of the third person singular "she" instead of the first person singular "I." The "I - she" conflict is significant through the emphasis and the repetition of the "she" while narrating her story. The woman (or Mouth) resists and avoids the "I" because she feels that her story and her voice are strangers to her when she says, "a voice she did not recognize" (Beckett, 1978, n.p.). She cannot understand her own words for they resonate outward from an unacknowledged self (Cohn, 1980, p. 71); they rush suddenly as a stream that she cannot control or stop. She shrinks from her own self that she cannot find or recognize. Beckett shows how man is alienated from himself, and how he feels that his own self is a foreigner to him to the extent that he uses any pronoun except

the “I.” Beckett reduces the identity more in this play by giving the protagonist no name - Mouth speaks through a nameless woman (Cohn, 1980, p. 92). In fact, this is what Beckett usually attempts to do by presenting nameless characters. In *That Time* (1976), the protagonist of the play is an anonymous man who listens to his past life represented by three parts or stages (A, B, and C) that are different and seem to be uttered by different voices although they all belong to the same person - Listener himself. Listening to three different parts by three different voices, Listener normally finds himself listening to a past that he does not conceive. This refers to the confused or the multi - identity for each voice represents a different self that tells a story of its own. Beckett dramatizes here the loss of man who finds himself among many selves that he cannot recognize.

The split identity is more demonstrated in this play by the avoidance of the pronoun “I” and the three voices address Listener using the second person “you.” The play suggests that man from the very beginning of creation has failed to know who he is:

C: when you started not knowing who you were from Adam
trying how that you would work for a change
not knowing who you were from Adam no notion who it was
saying what you were saying whose skull you were. (Beckett,
1977, p. 26)

Beckett in this extract describes man’s failure to know his identity. He tries to find it but he fails and lives in a void from Adam till now.

In *Footfalls* (1976), the theme of the confused identity is indicated by the fluidity of personality between the mother who remembers or the daughter who talks about her past, or whether they are two persons (mother and daughter). The result again is the incomplete or the multiple personality (Gontarski, 1985, p. 156). Beckett negates the self in this play by making May’s existence or being born as a separate person doubtful by itself. May does not know whether she was really born, or whether she really exists in this world. Her mother prefers to use the word “began” (Beckett, 1977, p. 35) instead of the word “born” to refer to May’s state of starting her life. The most explicit image of May’s non- being is the ending of the play where she “[f]ades up to even a little less still on strip. No trace of May” (Beckett,

1977, p. 37). The identity here is hidden keenly by Beckett through the deletion of the subject (Al-Hasani and Al-Ani, 1992, p.8), such as V's speech (the mother's voice off stage) about May when she corrects "[s]he has not been out since girlhood' for "[n]ot been out since girlhood" (Beckett, 1977, p.35) and also in May's speech: "[s]lip out at nightfalls and into the little church by the south door" (Beckett, 1977, p.36). May searches for or creates a fictive self. Through fiction, she tries to give birth to herself. In the third part of the play, she tells the tale of Amy and she identifies herself with Amy and speaks in the third person singular. In other instances, May and the mother use the pronoun "it" instead of "she": "V: why, in the old home, the same where she (pause.) The same where she began. (Pause.) Where it began" (Beckett, 1977, p.35). The same matter with May when she says, "... .A little later, when as though she had never been, it never been, she began to walk" (Beckett, 1977, p.36). Beckett, here, lessens the identity by referring to it using the pronoun of the inanimate "it," this by itself negates May's existence.

If there are hints in the previous plays about the loss and search of the identity, *Ohio Impromptu* (1981) is a play about identity (O'Gorman, 1988, p.110). The play is about Reader(R) and Listener (L) who are nameless as well; they sit around a table and R reads a text to L. This text tells a story of a man who leaves his beloved and resorts to an islet. He paces in this islet seeking comfort and finds it with a man who is sent by the dear one (unnamed also) to read a text to the first man all the night till dawn.

R and L do not exchange a word. They have a similar appearance: "[a]s alike in appearance as possible" (Beckett, 1982, p.29). Even their movements are the same: both sit around the table bowing their heads, and they are propped on their right hands performing no gesture nor act (except R's reading and L's knocking). At the end of the play, "simultaneously they lower their right hands to table, raise their heads and look at each other. Unblinking. Expressionless" (Beckett, 1982, p.32). R is seen as the shade of L (Beckerman, 1986, p. 165). It is obvious from all these indications, and as many critics conceive, that R and L grow to be one person. Thus, they are separate identities that belong to one man i.e. they are halves of a split self (O'Gorman, 1988, p.109).

R and L themselves correspond to the two men who appear in the text. The situation in the text resembles the one of the play indicating that

what R reads seems to be the story of L's life, and the man in the text is L in a younger age (O'Gorman, 1988, p.109), i.e. there is only one person who reads his story and he himself listens to it. The text itself becomes a means of searching for the identity. L sustains his self in his past like Listener in *That Time*. However, the text is narrated in the third person "he" rather the "I;" in other words, this text provides a refuge from selfhood (Mcmullan, 1987, p. 31) because it creates a space between R and L (the self and the other self), i.e. it helps to avoid the self. This play displays man in a state of escapee from his identity. He escapes from it and avoids confronting it because he is not confident that it is his own identity, nor has he the ability and self-confidence to acquire an identity even from his own past.

At this stage of discussing the notion of identity in Beckett's later plays, one can recognize Beckett's "schismatic self" (Mcmullan, 1987, p. 29), the split between the voice and listener or the perceived and perceiver who are eventually one person. This very person is at a loss and has no particular defined identity; that is why he resorts to a text, a fiction, or a past in a hopeless attempt to adopt a certain identity, but, in reality, he creates other selves that are strangers to him. This is applied to *Not I*, *That Time*, *Ohio Impromptu*, and *Catastrophe*.

Catastrophe (1982) is a play within a play. D (Director) and his female Assistant (A) rehearse the final image of Protagonist (P) and who is undergoing changes to produce the final creation of what D terms as "our catastrophe" (Beckett, 1984, p.300), which is an image of suffering and enslavement). Thus, we have two plays and this is Beckett's way of presenting a double identity of directors, assistants, protagonists, and audiences. P can stand for the character and the actor and what is done to him can be applied to the character as well as the actor. Similarly, the audience and its reaction can be applied to the audience of the play within the play and Beckett's play's audience. The same matter is observed with D and A.

Besides the confused personalities displayed powerfully in this play, Beckett also emphasizes the hidden self-represented by the bowed head and hidden face of P. D stresses always that the face be hidden:

D: There's a trace of face.

A: I make a note. [She takes out pad, takes pencil, makes to note].

D: Down the head. [A at a loss. Irritably.]

Get going. Down his head. [A puts back pad and pencil, goes to P, bows his

head further, steps back.] A shade more. [A advances, bows the head further.]

Stop! [A steps back] Fine. It's coming. (Beckett, 1984, pp. 299-300)

A uses the hat also "[t]o help hide the face" (Beckett, 1984, p.297).

In this play, Beckett, as in his other plays, resorts to letters instead of names. He is concerned mostly to give his characters no names to identify them. He is concerned also with giving the "I" the most minimal dramatic character who, like Godot, fails to make an appearance on the boards before the curtain comes down. Without the "I," his characters appear to be indistinguishable. In his mime *Quad*, the four players are "[a]s alike as possible" (Beckett, 1984, p.293), and they wear cowls that hide their faces. They are distinguished through the colours of their gowns because each wears a gown of a different colour, and what distinguishes them also is the light, for each has his particular light that is spotted on him as he enters pacing on the lines of a square on the stage and the light is kept on him until he exits.

What makes Beckett's characters more undistinguishable is their bent bodies that serve to hide the faces, as in the case of the four characters of *Quad*, P in *Catastrophe*, May in *Footfalls*, and R & L in *Ohio Impromptu*. The hidden face serves to diminish the identity and makes the humans as parallels. Beckett emphasizes on diminishing the identity of his characters, by this means he emphasizes that their existence itself is doubtful and proves that man's existence itself is as uncertain and undetermined as his identity. The universe borrows its strength from the ego, the ego lends intention and intentionality, direction and vectoriality (Marcoulesco, 1993, p. 217), i.e. the ego affirms existence and its loss turns the existence into a doubtful fact.

Beckett's characters try another useless attempt to affirm their existence. The incompletely born May paces - she begins pacing since

girlhood - to and fro in order to gain some confirmation of her presence. The steps themselves are made to be heard: "clearly audible rhythmic tread" (Beckett, 1977, p.33) in order to emphasize their importance for May to confirm her existence. She is not really there, and she uses footsteps as an indication of her existence (Gontarski, 1985, p.163).

The same indication is employed in *Quad* where the player's "[f]ootsteps alone [are] to be heard at intervals" (Beckett, 1984, p.292). Beckett leads us in this mime to a silent contemplation of the enigma "to be" (Carey, 1988, p. 148). It is an enigmatic existence; the players' process is destined, and they are unable to know the reason. They avoid the center of the quad and whenever they approach it, they deviate. The cause behind that is unknown and the center remains mysterious. In *That Time*, voice A does not know about his existence: "... not knowing where you were or when you where" (Beckett, 1977, p.28). Listener himself does not show or speak about his existence in the places mentioned by the three voices or about facing the situation described in the scenes. Beckett reveals only Listener's presence not his perception of what these voices display.

This uncertainty of existence makes man or Beckett's character live a ghost - like life; he is not sure of his existence. This mysterious atmosphere is intensified by darkness that governs Beckett's plays. The technique of light and darkness here is seized by Beckett to convey a thematic significance. All his plays selected here open in darkness. In *Not I*, Mouth appears from the heart of darkness, and the old woman also speaks about the darkness of her life: "... found herself in the dark" (Beckett, 1978, n.p.). The other plays open in total darkness as well except shedding light (mostly dim light) on certain parts and usually it fades away quickly e.g. the table in *Ohio Impromptu*, some parts of May's body, and the light that is shed by Luke (the one in charge of the lighting) on P in *Catastrophe*. The emergence out of darkness and the return to it constitute a procession analogous to a journey from birth to death; the womb - tomb darkness (Carey, 1988, p. 147). This is powerfully dramatized in *Breath* where the light is faint at the beginning then it increases to reach a maximum level then decreases within ten seconds (Beckett, 1971, p.11); this is a presentation of the short trip from birth to death also. This trip is displayed also in *Quad*. When one of the players enters from darkness to light, a life begins and when he exits to darkness again after finishing his course, this life ends (death) and a new one

begins with the following entry of the other player and so on. Beckett intends to show that man's life begins and ends in the darkness of mystery; his life is a trip that he does not know its direction, end, or purpose.

The concept of "death" is the main concern in all Beckett's works (Al-Hasani and Al-Ani, 1992, p.4). In *Footfalls*, Beckett alludes to death by the repeated term "sleep"; this sleep is but a waiting for death. Listener in *That Time* is also waiting for death; what we see on stage is but an old man under some extremity of death whose breaths are old faint breaths. He refers to the grave and the final return to dust when he says, "... then suddenly this dust whole place suddenly full of dust when you opened your eyes from floor to ceiling nothing only dust...: (Beckett, 1977, p.30).

In *Catastrophe*, P is reduced to ashes, D gives the order to make P even more ashen. These ashes are the ashes of the dead. D and A focus on rendering P to look like a dead man; they insist on whitening his body and to have him all black: P stands on black block, and he wears black hat and black dressing - gown to ankles (Beckett, 1984, p.297). The same black appearance is found in *OhioImpromptu* and Auditor in *Not I*. This black colour (the colour of death) turns Beckett's characters into dead persons. This concentration on the concept of "death" reveals Beckett's attitude that death always draws near man even the newly born man, man's life is a short one and the death sentence approaches him quickly.

They are dead characters or approaching death, yet their end seems to be endless. *Breath*, which dramatizes birth and death, presents death as indefinable (Cohn, 1980, p.4). The metaphor of life and death is represented in the play by the light against darkness respectively, but the light at the end decreases but is not cut or faded away - it becomes merely faint and dim but is never finished. In *OhioImpromptu*, the sad tale of the text is near its end, but it is not ended and the book itself is never quite closed (Brater, 1987, p.138); it does not finish although it is opened at the last pages, R repeats "[n]thing is left to tell" but he rereads the lines according to L's knocking at the table that slows down the end. Generally speaking, the sad tales of Beckett's characters never reach the end: May does not finish her fiction, Mouth does not finish its story, and A, B, and C do not end their tales. Voice C refers to the frozen state of time: "... year after year as if it could not end the old year never end like time could go on further that time..." (Beckett, 1977, p.28). The same matter in *Catastrophe* where Beckett presents the last

moments of a play that is proceeding toward an end, yet this end is arrested or frozen. This is an indication of the endless inconclusive life of sadness of man that Beckett presents but never provides solutions or conclusions to it. It has a beginning but it does not have an end.

Beckett's endlessness leads us to his concept of time displayed in these plays. Time is illustrated or connected with the heap of Zenon whose end is endless. May's circular movement and the four players' quadrangular repetitive motion establish an infinite endless time. There are no indications of time in these plays; time can be stretched to centuries and the audience cannot guess it: there is no mentioning of clocks in the plays except D's chronometer, the rhythm in *Quad* suggests an intricate clock in which every movement is regulated, and the chimes of *Footfalls* for their sound effects are linked with time. Nevertheless, those chimes grow fainter and fainter causing gradually no significant effect. Time in *Footfalls* appears deceitful; V remembers her past days and laments her eighty - nine or ninety years that have passed quickly and vainly. Reading the title of Beckett's *That Time*, one can immediately think of this play's connection with time, especially that the expression "that time" is repeated many times. The play is short but it conveys duration: each voice presents a stage, voice A presents the stage of childhood, voice B presents the stage of youth, and voice C presents the stage of old age. The words of the three voices accumulate into a long life lived. The combination of the memories and images in this play makes time collapse; there is a swift movement from age to age and from place to place: from a gallery to a library then to apost office. The three stories of the same person are dissimilar; this is what is termed in *Proust* "the poisonous ingenuity of time" (Brater, 1989, p. 112) i.e. time has its own tricks to make man's own life with its different stages disharmonious and disjunctive. It is the tricky time that fills the period between birth and death, and its length could be seventy and ninety years as in the case of the old woman in *Not I* and V in *Footfalls* respectively, or it could be few seconds as in the case of *Breath*. The latter itself illustrates life as a moment, a day and "[f]inally the dust speaks, crumbling human time..." (Cohn, 1980, p. 53). *Breath* summarizes life in the same way Pozzo does in *Waiting for Godot*: "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (Beckett, 1956, p.89).

This is the absurdity of life in Beckett's account; it is merely a travel to death. In *Breath*, Beckett reduces life into a "farce" (Cohn, 1980, p.4) and in *Catastrophe* into a play (Pearce, 1992, p. 83). The final smile in *That Time* is a mocking laughter on this farce. In Cohn's words, *That Time* conveys the totality of a life (1980, p. 73), i.e. Listener after considering and listening to his past life, he concludes it with his ironical smile on this life of nothingness that begins with a lonely child and ends with an old man wandering like a stranger from place to place. The three stages present neither change nor development; in the three scenes, we see the same lonely, wretched man. Similarly, *Not I* presents the totality of a life that begins with a cry and ends with a flow of fragmented words of a seventy - year woman. She was born before her time and then "on" in her life till the age of seventy.

It is an "on" in this life that is shown in *Ohio Impromptu* as an enigmatic life where we are offered a vague present and we learn nothing of what comes before and what comes after in the book. It is shown in *Quad* as an empty life. The spaces in this mime give the design and the players fill these spaces by their pacing i.e. empty spaces are the meaning and form that Beckett manipulates for life.

In *Catastrophe*, as in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Beckett exposes life as a tragedy and that catastrophe is a fragment or the final event of that tragedy as a whole, and "catastrophe" is used here by Beckett partly in the everyday sense of "disaster" (Rosen, 1993, p. 327). In *Catastrophe* Beckett dramatizes images of suffering, isolation, immobility, helplessness, and total subjugation. These very images describe the Beckettian life in general. Suffering in *Catastrophe* is portrayed through the image of P that D asserts to achieve: bowing body, hiding face, joining hands, and shivering because D insists on nudity. The image that D creates through his tortuous processes does succeed, an image of human suffering and P plays the role of suffering humanity (Brater, 1989, p. 124); P is the victim who stoops forlorn and endures powerlessly a chamber of torture where there is neither comfort nor comforter. He is like most of the characters of Beckett's later plays merely a pitiful figure in pain.

In *Not I*, Mouth utters a story of suffering and misery. It begins with the woman's birth before her time; she is denied the safety of the womb for the natural span and forced prematurely into her painful world (Fletcher, 1978, p. 199). Therefore, from the very beginning she gains neither relief nor

peace. She knows no life of pleasure nor joy: "... in her life ... when clearly intended to be having pleasure ... she was in fact ... having none ... not the slightest ..." (Beckett, 1978, n.p.). She leads a life of bitterness and orphanage. Mouth becomes like a wound that screams a desperate soliloquy (Cohn, 1973, p. 2018).

Footfalls presents, similarly, a life of suffering. The mother suffers a long illness and she, additionally, observes her daughter's suffering and seeks a terminus for it. V repeats addressing May: "[w]ill you never have done ... revolving it all ... In your poor mind. (Pause.) It all. (Pause.) It all" (Beckett, 1977, p.34). Obviously from V's statement, May's mind circles around suffering and in correspondence her feet walk back and forth in a circular manner; May keeps pacing continuously and without relief.

In *Ohio Impromptu*, there is no relief as well. L listens to the sad tale in the text without a break or a change. The text itself speaks a story of weariness; the man in the text seeks comfort, and the reader comes as a comforter and what he reads, however, is a sad tale from a worn - out volume. The man's nights themselves are sleepless; he spends them listening to the sorrowful tale of his past life. Hence, this play exposes a sad tale within another sad tale producing a perfect situation of discomfort and anguish. *That Time* is another play of no release; Listener is an old man who does nothing but listening to a trinity of isolated fragments of memories that offer no comfort. He finds neither pleasure nor glory in his past recollections.

Beckett portrays man's life as a weary life in which he gains no relief and even if he seeks or gets comfort, it is simply a false comfort. Pain itself in Beckett's plays is not exclusive to mature or old people; for Beckett, the cry of an infant is but a cry of pain, grief, and lamenting as he displays in *Breath*. The same idea of the safe womb established in *Not I* appears in *Breath* as well, the womb is a safe and warm place and by birth and leaving it, pain and sorrow establish their journey (Fletcher, 1978, p. 191). The cry itself is faint and the breath becomes akin to a sigh.

The other aspect that characterizes Beckett's inner wasteland is isolation. The woman in *Not I* is cut from others and she has led a quiet, static life. She has lived alone and even her present voice cries in wilderness. Mouth appears lonely in spite of Auditor's presence. Auditor is the only character who appears with Mouth, but he remains external and unrelated to Mouth and even his movements of compassion are lessened and stopped.

The two women in *Footfalls* are also lonely persons. May is preoccupied with pacing and caring of her ill mother, she does not leave the house: “V: Not out since girlhood. When other girls of her age were out at ... lacrosse she was already here” (Beckett, 1977, p.35). They live a long life of solitude: May now in her forties and her mother is ninety.

In *That Time*, we see three ages with different solitudes. The child, in the first stage, is alone speaking to himself: “... not knowing ... what for place might have been uninhabited for all you knew like that time on the stone the child on the stone where none ever came”(Beckett, 1997, p.28). In the second stage, he and his lover appear “alone in the same the same scenes ...” (Beckett, 1997, p.28), then without his lover where “... the owl flown to hot at someone else or back with a shrew to its hollow tree and not another sound hour after hour, hours after hour not a sound ...” (Beckett, 1997, p.30). Similarly at his old age: “not a sound only the old breath and the leaves turning and ... [the] dust ...” (Beckett, 1997, p.30). In the three places, the child has visited, he appears isolated and alienated like a stranger and nobody cares about his presence.

Considering L & R in *Ohio Impromptu* one person, this person is another isolated character who appears on stage alone listening to himself, to his own story and past. In *Catastrophe*, D creates also an image of solitude; P finally appears alone completely standing on his pedestal. This image or element of solitude is also presented in the mime *Quad*. Although all the four players walk and complete their courses, they never meet. In fact, they appear avoiding each other; Beckett attempts that by making the center “E” “a danger zone” (Beckett, 1984, p.293) and therefore the players turn whenever they reach it, evoking the impression that they avoid one another. Furthermore, the players “[w]ithout interruption begin repeat and fade out on I pacing alone” (Beckett, 1984, p.292) i.e. each one moves lonely along one line of the square and when he finishes it and turns to the other line, the other player moves at this very line and so on. In other words, each player walks his course and completes it without feeling the presence of the other players.

All these examples indicate that Beckett aims at providing an image of the human loneliness and proving that man is but an isolated being without a friend or a partner to moderate his isolation and what occupies his loneliness is his miserable memories and sad present. Beckett shows how humans live, each in his own world and even avoiding the company of each

other as it is clear in *Quad*. The Beckettian, lonely, and anguished characters accomplish nothing and attempt nothing to handle their miserable condition and to stop their suffering; they are static, enduring passively their dim life.

The protagonist of *Not I* is a woman of inaction. She does nothing throughout her life, and she is motionless even in the simple daily situations like shopping. She spends her life silent and numbed; she speaks no word to anybody nor complains of her agony and suffering. She represses her pain until she bursts and begins involuntarily and rapidly her miserable speech. She is not the only passive inactive character in the play; Auditor himself is also speechless and passive: "..., dead still throughout but for four brief movements ..." (Beckett, 1978, n.p.), and even his movements are merely gestures of helpless compassion that are faint and they lastly disappear.

Auditor's passive listening is also observed in Listener in *That Time* who is again silent. He accomplishes nothing except listening to his past memories and he even does not show any interaction with them. The memories are closed with C (old age) and ended with sad words (dust, grave, and death); however, Listener merely opens his eyes and gives a smile of indifference. The same matter with *Ohio Impromptu* where there is a little physical movement represented by the knock of repetition recommended by L; the two figures are almost immobile. Even R is unable or careless of doing anything against L's knocking that interrupts and obliges him to repeat. In *Footfalls*, expressions such as "deep sleep, sleep so deep, deep sleep" (Beckett, 1977, p.33) mirror the morbid and stagnant way of life for both of these Beckettian characters (Al-Hasani and Al- Ani, 1992, p.4). May mentions injection; it symbolizes the injection of oblivion and numbing (Fletcher, 1978, p.209).

P in *Catastrophe* remains motionless throughout the play. Although he submits to various tyrannical actions and changes by D and A, he endures feebly and obediently. He does not utter a single word and does practically nothing. Even his final look when fixing his eyes on the audience in opposition with D's commands (who insists on the bowing head and refuses to allow P to raise his head) is not a look of power and defiance as it may seem. His final action is simply a silent posture (like that of Listener's final posture), it is a seemingly and silent protest (Jackson, 1992, p. 24). Moreover, this action cannot be explained as a final real rebel or an intention to do something towards his extreme misfortune and cannot be considered

that Beckett ends his play with optimism or victory, because we do not know whether this event is the final one in the scene or whether it is the end of the play within the play. It could be followed by another scene or event (Libera, 1985, p. 337). Furthermore, this protest produces an ambiguity, whether the actor has raised his head or the character has done so.

P is not the only passive figure in *Catastrophe*; A is also passive and silent towards D's tyranny and powerful commands. She also endures, and her few suggestions to D (paying D's attention that P is shivering because of the complete nudity and asking D if P can raise his face for a while, which both have been refused by D) and her sitting on D's chair while he is off stage are not an open defiance but again endurance as P's. Actually, A is as powerless and obedient as P himself; she is silent and she accomplishes no practical objections to D.

Beckett's inactive characters convey Beckett's prospect of man's inertia and hopelessness. They are indifferent to their pain and misery. This reflects and proves that they are completely desperate, and they do not find nor expect any end to their suffering; they merely endure silently and see any action as useless. In *Quad*, Beckett dramatizes the entropy of the motion (Gontarski, 1984, p. 137). The players' movement is for nothing; it is prescribed beforehand for them, and they move their determined patterns of motion repeated from one to four until we see none. They are subjected to these patterns.

Subjection carries us to exploitation, Beckett has always talked about tyrants - the Pozzos. Power and the tyrants appear in *Ohio Impromptu* and, especially, in *Catastrophe*. In *Ohio Impromptu*, authority is represented by L (Lyons, 1983, p. 182) who leads the narrative activity; he directs R with his hand if R falters or stops: L has a control over R who always obeys L's directions. Similarly, authority has its grand and discrete effect in *Catastrophe*. It is represented by D's brutality and tyrannical behaviour with P, A, and even the off stage Luke.

P appears as a heap of clay that D shapes into an image of complete subjugation. D achieves his vision and celebrates proudly his final creation: "Lovely. ... Good. There's our catastrophe" (Beckett, 1984, p.300). The repressed P is an insignia of D's power; he is another Lucky in his submission and docility and D is another Pozzo - both D and Pozzo are obsessed with power and with chronometers and a specific timetable to be

met with the illusion of control. D consults his chronometer and says, "..., I have a caucus" (Beckett, 1984, p.298). He is so indifferent to P's suffering and when A mentions to him that P is shivering, D answers sardonically, "[b]less his heart" (Beckett, 1984, p.299). D practices his tyranny also over A; he directs and commands her concerning the image of P, and she fulfills his orders in the same submission and docility of P; she fears D and whenever he contemplates P trying to see what she has done, she becomes at loss and in an irritable condition, and she makes a note of his comment at once. Luke is another subdued figure; he is the hidden executor who fulfills D's orders concerning the lightning to prepare P's final scene. At first glance, one sees D as the only torturer in the play, but, actually, A is another torturer - a secondary tyrant over P. She suggests to clothe P and to allow him raise his head for an instant, but this is a superficial condolence. She participates in P's torture: she urges D to use a gag to keep P completely silent and to be sure that he will not utter "a squeak" (Beckett, 1984, p.299). A seeks control as well; when D is off stage, she sits on his chair. She seems to be thinking of replacing D and benefiting from the hierarchy - now she is the assistant but tomorrow she can be the director who commands and tortures (Jackson, 1992, p. 27).

Beckett, in this play, describes the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "abstracts", it "masks", and it "conceals" (Jackson, 1992, p. 27). He shows how humanity is condemned and negated by torturers and the modern totalitarianism (Sandary, 1988, p.142) without a named guilt - this totalitarianism may grow between a director and an actor, a manager and an official, a rich man and a poor man, and any master and subordinate. However, Beckett presents power as useless and in vain, and he presents those tyrants as empty people. The commander L in *Ohio Impromptu* is but a sad figure who has lost everything in the past and wandered alone in a secluded islet, seeking a false relief, and, now, he reconsiders this miserable past. D with his cigar and puffing and with his fur and watch is another empty Pozzo. D forgets things and his commands are broken with P's final raising of his head. A, on the other hand, is no more than a fearful figure who dreads D and jumps here and there, trying to satisfy and serve him.

One can conclude from the consideration above that dictatorship and the desire to govern replace love, and the slave - tyrant relation is the

predominant relation that links Beckett's characters. There is not any kind of compassion and love between them. The woman in *Not I* manages a life that is deprived of love. The loss of love is clear and powerful in this play: the woman has no emotional relations, no partner, no family, and no parents to care about and love her. The loss of love also emerges in *Footfalls* the same way in *Not I*. May and her mother spend their days in seclusion establishing no intimate relations with anyone and even the maternal relation and emotions between them faint gradually. First, May appears to take care of her sick mother and the mother, on the other hand, worries about May and her continuous pacing, and they have a little dialogue. Then, May shows no awareness of her mother and begins to narrate the tale of Amy and her mother. May's mother herself after their short conversation pays no attention to her daughter, and she speaks her monologue almost to herself.

The narrative in *Ohio Impromptu* is about a loved one lost. The man in the narrative left his beloved and "[a]cknowledged his error" but he could not return back "to where they were once so long alone together" (Beckett, 1982,p.30). He is now alone in the islet without his lover, establishing a relation with an unknown man, and his relation is represented simply by this man who reads from a book and the protagonist is listening to him. Even this relation does not last for a long time, and that man leaves him at the end of the play. The love- relation in this play is neither described in detail nor does Beckett give a note of the nature of this relation, while in *That Time* he does so by presenting a scene of romance in B's recollection, yet it is a scene of dry love. The two lovers sit side by side "always parallel ... always space between" (Beckett, 1977, p.26) without looking at or touching each other, their love is "just a murmur" (Beckett, 1977, 23) and "every now and then the lips to vow ..." (Beckett, 1977, p.27). After all, this romance could be merely a fiction and not real; it could be composed to fill the time: "just another of those old tales" (Beckett, 1977, p. 25). This means that love is reduced to be something imaginative and fictive; merely, a lie or a tale that is composed as a game to pass the time.

Avoiding one another by avoiding the center, the four players in *Quad* can set no relation at all, and as it is a mime (i.e. a wordless play), communication and conversation cannot be held normally. This mime and the other plays describe the loss of love and the wasteful feeling in Beckett's world; they entail the absence of emotions and intimate relations. For this

reason, communication is deteriorated. Language and conversation are shortened and reduced significantly by Beckett whose characters talk almost to themselves; actually, silence and the act of listening, which are main features in Beckett's later plays, entail that there is no conversation nor communication among the characters. *Breath* is without characters and wordless, although it is a play not a mime. We hear only a voice, a cry of an anonymous being, and the cry itself is recorded and not given by a character that the audience can see on the stage. The woman in *Not I* never speaks throughout her life till her involuntary scream. She has held no conversation with anybody even with the Auditor that appears with her in the play. He, on the other hand, is an absolute listener who responds to Mouths' anguished soliloquy by decreased physical movements and for four times only. Between Auditor and Mouth, there is not any sort of communication, and they exchange no word.

In *That Time* and *Ohio Impromptu*, we see two men who listen to their past memories. In the former, Listener says nothing, and, in the scenes of his listening, there is no hint of conversing or speaking; there are only indications of silence: "no sound not a word" (Beckett, 1977, p.24) and "words dried up" (Beckett, 1977, p.27). Similarly, in *Ohio Impromptu*, L listens to his past life that is recorded in the text. He is speechless and says nothing to R. The kind of communication that grows between them is the interruption and the knock that L performs whenever he wants to stop R or to make him repeat certain lines. The communication between May and V in *Footfalls* is also disturbed and lost. It is established first and then eroded and each speaks her monologue to herself. In *Catastrophe*, P is another silent character; Luke is off stage and he exchanges few words with D and A who are the only ones in the play that have a considerable conversation. Their conversation is like the conversation between Vladimir and Estragon: a conversation to avoid silence and to fill the time; in other words, it is the dialogue that keeps them there (Brater, 1987, p. 149).

Silence is connected with Beckett's characters' passivity. It refers to their inaction, indifference, and hopelessness. In addition, the loss of communication refers, besides the deterioration of relationships among the characters, to the state of loneliness of these characters, whether the external loneliness like Listener in *That Time* who finds nobody to converse with or

the inner loneliness like V and May in *Footfalls* who are together but almost isolated from each other and they exchange only few statements, and this communication is cut quickly. *Catastrophe*, on the other hand, shows how communication is manipulated to fill the time; it reveals how communication is false in Beckett's world and merely a game to fill the void that his characters live in.

Listening, and sometimes talking, fills generally Beckett's characters' time in his later plays besides habits and the futile repetition. Repetition in *Footfalls* is represented by May's pacing, which is circular, metaphorically, though it appears linear. There are repetition of phrases and expressions in the play - as usual with Beckett - to fill the time. Both characters have nothing to do and words are their means to pass the time: the mother is sick at bed and May takes care of her in a habitual routine manner. She, obviously, used to do so years ago, and they become her habits that she performs daily and have become another means to pass the time besides talking and pacing. *That Time* is filled with repetitive phrases as well. The three voices repeat what they say and sometimes they repeat the phrases of one another. Even the scenes and the events they describe are the same. In fact, the play as a whole depends on repetition. Mouth in *Not I* repeats phrases and events in the same manner as well as R in *Ohio Impromptu* who repeats what he reads according to L's knock on the table. Their stories are incoherent; they appear like cycles imitating the repetitive quality of life itself as Beckett often adheres to show. He presents life in *Breath* as a cycle: the play ends with a cry that resembles the first cry, suggesting that the cycle is about to begin again (Worth, 1978, p. 243).

Like in *Footfalls*, Beckett in *Quad* presents a repeated, unbroken movement. The players walk following certain iterated courses, courses of life, a series of life and death like a cycle. Beckett wants to prove that life is a repeated, unchanged, and a meaningless course that is prescribed for man and he does not have the ability to change and direct it.

This habitual, repetitive life offers its people no freedom; they are trapped in this repetition. Mouth cannot even have the freedom to stop the repeated flood of words, and Listener in *That time* is trapped in his head; he cannot but listen obligingly to the voices coming from both sides and above. May is limited in her pacing to one horizontal plane: "length nine steps, width one meter, ..." (Beckett, 1977, p.33). She is trapped, like Lucky, in

some unnamable net that makes her imprisoned at home subjected to pacing all over life. Space in *Quad* gives the players no freedom of movement too; they are limited like May to “square. Length of side: 6 paces” (Beckett, 1977, p. 291). Their movement is predetermined, and they are enforced to it; this mime is an example of the restriction and oppression of mobility as Beckett wants to show: it traps them. P is another trapped character; he is trapped in a drama of menace. He is indeed a prisoner captured on stage like Estragon and Vladimir (Esslin, 1965, pp. 133-114). R in *Ohio Impromptu* has no freedom for he reads what is already written or engraved in the text. The title of the play itself promises an impromptu, i.e. free composition, but it subverts its promise, R follows a text that allows no freedom to compose or extemporize. Beckett shows how man is a prisoner who is trapped in and restricted to his miserable existence. Beckett does not even identify this misery or name the unnamable net in which man is captured. Beckett shows how man is not free in his speech, movements, and even in his recollections.

The memory of these characters is not voluntary; they are unable and unfree to recollect a certain memory coherently and integrally. Their memory is involuntary represented in Beckett’s plays by a tape, a text, or a flow of words. What they remember are merely fragmented inadequate memories that they do not perceive. Their memories are vague and incomplete: “Beckett reveals only enough details about the past to establish a body of material sufficient to be questioned” (Lyons, 1983, p184). The audience and Beckett’s characters themselves question this past and feel doubtful about it.

The characters’ memories are burdened with sorrow and frustration. Proust, on whom Beckett has written his study *Proust*, thinks that each day one lives its effect is forcibly impressed upon him, and that he bears his past painfully within him (Feidelson and Ellmann, 1965, p. 737). This is especially applied to the women of *Not I*. Mouth utters the pale past that she has borne all these years; this past becomes a buzzing in her brain that she has listened to until she bursts into these painful words and memories. In *Footfalls*, *That Time*, and *Ohio Impromptu*, we see characters, or rather voices, who are tormented by their memories of failure and misery. V and May recite the failure of May’s attempt to confirm her presence; her past is an indefinite past that she insists on revolving “it” (Beckett, 1977, p.34) all in her mind, and the “it” that Beckett employs and emphasizes in the phrase

“revolving it all” (p.34) is the indefinite pronoun that has the indefinite reference, i.e. their past is indefinite. What they both recite are strangely disconnected accounts, and their past is like their present, a past of loneliness and emotional bankruptcy.

In *That Time*, Listener’s involuntary memory is represented by the recorded memories of the protagonist. There are three recorded accounts of the past. What these accounts present are but remnant tottered shreds of Listener’s past that appear rather a puzzle that the audience attempts to arrange chronologically and by order; nevertheless, they lead the audience nowhere, and he finds himself in a circle and repeated scenes and the voices amplify what they already have outlined. These memories offer neither meditation nor resolution; they could never be synthesized. They uncover the totality of a past of loneliness and inner loss. The past of the characters in *Catastrophe* is not indicated; none of them has recollected or recited any past incident or memory. What the audience views is a present image of rehearsal that leaves them free to discover or imagine the character’s unknown past. Beckett proves that his characters’ past is not better than their present. His characters live in a wasteland and their whole life appears to be sad, indistinct, and disharmonious. Their past does not moderate their painful present and vice versa; both offer no reformation or resolution. His characters feel that their present does not belong to their past, and they fail even to acknowledge this past and they see it as a stranger.

Before concluding, women need to be considered in this discussion especially that they are known to be the source of rebirth, tenderness, and love. The figure of a woman appears in three plays: *Not I*, *Footfalls*, and *Catastrophe*. In the first two plays, both women have no emotional experience, no spouse, and no children. Beckett exposes in these plays the frustration and the decline of love and emotional fulfillment besides the decline of nurturing. The female Assistant in *Catastrophe* is the slave woman whom D exploits to light his cigar, register his notes, and implement his orders whether she agrees or disagrees with him. She appears weak, fearing to agitate D, and she allows herself to be acted upon. It seems that she is afraid to lose her job and she wants to protect what little false security and control she has (her security from D’s tyranny and not to be in P’s shoes and her control over P himself) (Jackson, 1992, p. 35). This is clear from her serious performance of her work and her concern of pleasing D. On the other

hand, she represents no angel of mercy, and her white cloak of the immaculate means no innocent collaborator. She provides P neither tenderness nor help, and sometimes she appears as another merciless D that aims at making P a perfect sufferer and subdued figure. Thus, the Beckettian woman offers no tenderness or love. She is as sterile as her own life; she bears dry feelings and barren emotions. Through exposing such an image of woman, Beckett dramatizes a world that lacks love and clemency and whose sources of rebirth and nurturing are merely barren sources. This conveys the impression of hopelessness and rigidity that are deepened inside Beckett's characters.

The inner wasteland is critically intensified in Beckett's later plays as it has been shown. Reduction plays a major role in these plays where Beckett presents his prospects with a few words and sometimes even without words but with simple movements. It is explicit that his principal subject in these plays is the absence of the subject and the central reduction of the identity; usually, one equates identity with the human body that appears on stage (Mcmullan, 1987, p.25), but in his later plays the body is presented as fragments in space in a sharp way. The physical reduction is achieved either by the lighting e.g. May in *Footfalls*: "Lighting: dim, strongest at floor level, less on body, least on head." (Beckett, 1977, p.33) or in a direct presentation e.g. Listener's head in *That Time* and Mouth of the woman in *Not I*. Beckett challenges the identification between body and identity in order to give his characters no acknowledged identity and status.

Communication and relations hardly emerge in these plays because most of the characters are lonely listeners (we hardly see the pairs of the early plays) who listen to their grim past, and they even fail to recognize or interact with it. The absence of communication causes an absence of and a reduction in the dialogue. Unlike most of the early plays, the dialogue is hardly observed in the later plays. V and May try, each in her monologue, to lead a fictive dialogue in a false attempt to create a conversation.

The characters' life lacks any cordial relations, love, happiness, and comfort. Their very existence is doubtful and their own birth is equally suspected as in the case of May. Birth appears to be always thwarted by the uncertainty of existence and the imminence of death, as plainly shown in *Breath*. Reduction is highly employed in this play that lasts few seconds, but it holds Beckett's view of the human life. Beckett summarizes this life by a

process from initial darkness to final darkness with no light of truth, certainty, brightness, and hope.

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الارض اليباب الداخلية في مسرحيات لاحقة مختارة للكاتب المسرحي صاموئيلبيكت

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المستخلص

يظهر مفهوم الارض اليباب الداخليه في مسرحيات الكاتب المسرحي صاموئيلبيكت المبكرة واللاحقة حيث تعاني شخصيات مسرحياته من فقدان الهوية والعواطف والشعور بالوقت. هم يعيشون حياة مليئة بالفشل والتكرار والتقاعس والوحدة والشك والمعاناة والعدم. يتضمن مفهوم الارض اليباب الداخلية عدة جوانب مثل الهوية المتعددة والمنقسمة والحياة الرتيبة السوداوية وانعدام التواصل بين الشخصيات وانعدام الحرية والحركة فضلا عن الذاكرة الضبابية والوحدة والشك وجفاف مشاعر المحبة. سيبين شرح وتحليل كل جانب كيف ان الارض اليباب الداخلية ظاهرة بشكل مكثف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الارض اليباب ، الذاكرة، الهوية، التقاعس، الوحدة.