

PSYCHIC SPACES IN THREE PLAYS BY SAMUEL BECKETT  
THE ABJECTED SEMIOTIC INTRUDING INTO THE SYMBOLIC

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THE ABJECTED SEMIOTIC INTRUDING INTO THE SYMBOLIC**

submitted by **BETÜL DEMİR** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts in English Literature, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI  
Dean  
Graduate School of Social Sciences

---

Prof. Dr. Çiğdem SAĞIN ŞİMSEK  
Head of Department  
Department of Foreign Language Education

---

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M SÖNMEZ  
Supervisor  
Department of Foreign Language Education

---

**Examining Committee Members:**

Prof. Dr. Nurten BİRLİK (Head of the Examining Committee)  
Middle East Technical University  
Department of Foreign Language Education

---

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M SÖNMEZ (Supervisor)  
Middle East Technical University  
Department of Foreign Language Education

---

Assist. Prof. Dr. Özlem KARADAĞ  
İstanbul University  
Department of English Language and Literature

---



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**Name, Last Name: Betül DEMİR**

**Signature:**

## ABSTRACT

### PSYCHIC SPACES IN THREE PLAYS BY SAMUEL BECKETT THE ABJECTED SEMIOTIC INTRUDING INTO THE SYMBOLIC

DEMİR, Betül

M.A., The Department of English Literature

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margaret J-M SÖNMEZ

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This thesis examines the intrusion of the abjected semiotic into the symbolic in *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett. A survey of studies in drama finds that the recent spatial turn has largely ignored spaces of drama, and that the current state of spatial criticism alone cannot adequately explain spaces in the drama of Beckett. Spatial binarism and the imagery of death, being relevant in these plays, are used as the initial steps for investigating psychic spatiality in the drama of Beckett and provide the analytical tools of this thesis. Furthermore, these elements of the plays also repeatedly demonstrate the very concerns that Kristeva refers to in her theory of the symbolic, the semiotic and abjection. According to Kristeva, the subject-to-be becomes a subject in the symbolic and the semiotic no longer exists after the thetic break. There may still be, however, vestiges or residues of the semiotic that may appear as abjected elements such as death. The hypothesis of this thesis is that in the aforementioned plays Beckett shows the intrusion of the abjected semiotic into the symbolic, and this is done through the following three steps: firstly, a spatial binarism is created between the onstage and offstage spaces at the beginning of each play; secondly, gradual information is

provided through language and actions of the characters about the offstage space that is depicted with images of death throughout the plays; thirdly, the imagery of death or the abjected semiotic initially abjected to the offstage space intrudes into the onstage space and the order in the onstage space is broken at the end of each play. Therefore, it is suggested that, in the drama of Beckett, the abjected semiotic intrudes into the symbolic but that this has no outcome, because the symbolic cannot deal with these abjected semiotic vestiges.

**Keywords:** Beckett, the semiotic, the symbolic, abjection, psychic space

## ÖZ

### SAMUEL BECKETT'İN ÜÇ OYUNUNDA ZİHNİ MEKÂNLAR SEMİYOTİĞİN SEMBOLİĞE ZORLA GİRİŞİ

DEMİR, Betül

Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Edebiyatı Bölümü

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Bu tez Samuel Beckett tarafından yazılmış *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* ve *Happy Days* oyunlarında iğrençleşmiş semiyotiğin sembolığe zorla girişini incelemektedir. Tiyatro yazını incelendiğinde mekân konulu çalışmalara artan akademik ilginin tiyatro yazınında mekânı büyük ölçüde göz ardı ettiği ve günümüzdeki mekân çalışmalarının Beckett tarafından yazılmış tiyatro yazınındaki mekânları tek başına yeterli düzeyde açıklamaya yetmediği sonuçlarına ulaşmıştır. Beckett tarafından yazılmış tiyatro yazınında ilk olarak, bu oyunlarda belirgin bir şekilde görülen, mekânsal ikilik ve ölüm imgesi eserlerde bulunan psişik mekânları incelemek için kullanılmıştır ve mekânsal ikilik ile ölüm imgesi bu tezin analitik araçlarını oluşturmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, oyunlardaki bu iki unsur Kristeva'nın semiyotik, sembolik ve iğrençlik (abjection) konularında sıklıkla değinilmiştir. Kristeva'ya göre özne-olacak-kişi ancak sembolığe girdikten sonra özne olmaktadır ve semiyotikten sembolığe ayrılıştan (thetic break) sonra semiyotik artık yoktur. Ne var ki semiyotikten geriye arta kalanlar ya da kalıntılar olabilmektedir ki bu kalıntılar ölüm benzeri iğrençleşmiş öğeler olarak ortaya çıkabilmektedir. Bu tezin hipotezine göre Beckett'in yukarıda bahsi geçen oyunlarında iğrençleşmiş semiyotiğin sembolığe zorla girişi işlenmiştir ve bu şu üç adım ile yapılmıştır: ilk olarak, oyunların başında sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışındaki

uzam arasında mekânsal bir ikilik yaratılmıştır; ikinci olarak, oyunlar ilerledikçe karakterlerin konuşmaları ve eylemleri yoluyla sahne-dışı uzam hakkında kademeli olarak bilgi verilmiştir ki sahne-dışı uzam ölüm imgesiyle tasvir edilmiştir; üçüncü olarak, ölüm imgesi ya da başlarda sahne-dışındaki uzama itilmiş iğrençleşmiş semiyotik sahnedeki uzama zorla girmektedir ve sahnedeki uzamda yaratılan düzen oyunların sonuna gelindiğinde kırılmıştır. Dolayısıyla, öne sürülmektedir ki Beckett tarafından yazılmış tiyatro yazınında iğrençleşmiş semiyotik sembolige zorla girmektedir fakat bu bir sonuç doğurmaz, çünkü sembolik bu iğrençleşmiş semiyotik kalıntılarıyla başa çıkamaz.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Beckett, semiyotik, sembolik, iğrençlik, psişik mekân

*To me*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

If, following Beckett's example, one can banish from a play various elements, such as movement, or even dialogue, the element that must remain constant and be retained in any text written for theatrical performance is, of course, space.

- Michael Issacharoff, "Space and Reference in Drama"

The connection between space and drama studies is significant as plays are written to be performed and more importantly, to be seen by their audience. However, the importance of space in a play seldom attracts any attention. This introductory chapter aims to look into the importance of space in theatre plays, especially in plays by Samuel Beckett. In this chapter, an overview of the gap in research on spatial analysis applied on 20th century British drama will be given. After the gap in the research is discussed, literature review on studies indirectly related to spaces of Beckettian drama will be briefly summarized and the unique representation of space in Beckettian drama will be explained. Consequently, this chapter will try to answer the question of why this study may prove to be significant within the field of drama studies analysing Beckettian drama.

In his notable study, Esslin uses the term "absurd theatre" and discusses it in relation to plays by the following five playwrights: Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Harold Pinter, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet. Esslin writes that originally the word meant

“out of harmony” in a musical context” and Ionesco had stated that “[a]bsurd is that which is devoid of purpose. ... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless” (Ionesco qtd. in Esslin 23). While some believe that the term Absurd Theatre, or Theatre of the Absurd “had been rightly or wrongly applied to the entire corpus in question”, it has immensely influenced the direction of research on texts by the aforementioned playwrights and shaped the way scholars analyse their plays (Elam 54; Bennett *Reassessing* xii). “The scholarship surrounding the major writers traditionally affiliated with the theatrical absurd [...] has generally worked under, or alongside, the rubric of absurdism” (Bennett *The Cambridge* 128). Chambon discusses a similar effect of early criticism on Beckett and writes that “Blanchot’s illuminating essay on Beckett’s Trilogy had unfortunately become a *doxa*; and as any *doxa*, it prevented most critics from taking into account what Beckett’s writings – and especially his dramatic works – could mean for our common experience” (169). Accordingly, with few recent exceptions, the majority of criticism on plays that have become acclaimed as by the aforementioned playwrights focusses on existential subjects, while other research areas seem to be not looked into as much. As Bennett writes, the term was “thrust upon” the writers and it does not suffice to understand their texts in their entirety (*The Cambridge* 47). Although using different theoretical methods, studies exploring absurdist theatre even feminisim, semiology, phenomenology and recently ecocriticism tend to ask similar research questions.

Very few studies ask questions related to issues such as the unique way plays by the aforementioned playwrights depict space. In fact, there has been almost no interest in space within 20<sup>th</sup> century British drama using any theoretical framework available in literary criticism, even after the recent spatial turn. Even when 20<sup>th</sup> century British drama is set aside, spatial studies investigating theatre plays have been “most consistently overlooked” except for some studies such as Helen Heusner Lojek’s *The Spaces of Irish Drama* (2011) and Chrish Morash and Shaun Richard’s *Mapping Irish Theatre: Theories of Space and Place* (2013) (Tompkins “Space” 537). A renown scholar working on literary space, Westphal discusses the creation of imaginary spaces using narrative, but interestingly, although their lines are written

specifically to be spoken, Westphal's discussion of space creation through *parole* in addition to words and narrative seldom includes theatre plays as Westphal's study does not make an open distinction between different forms of literature and their relation to literary space (73). Notwithstanding the fact that, with the recent spatial turn, space is no longer being viewed as a passive vessel where events unfold, and that scholars such as Marvin Carlson, Una Chaudhuri, Anna Ubersfeld, Peter Brooks have contributed greatly to interest in space within theatre and drama studies, there is a gap in spatial research on plays by the aforementioned playwrights. All of these playwrights share similar minimalistic domestic settings enveloped and threatened by a chaotic space right outside, but as this is most evident in the following plays, this thesis will look into *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett. This study aims to examine the unique spaces of Beckettian drama in selected plays and this will be a post-Cartesian reading of these plays. Characteristics of such spaces in Beckettian drama will be discussed in detail later.

When these texts have been studied, it has been noticed that these texts overridingly depict space in spatial binarism (between the onstage space and the offstage space) at first and then remove the separation later by letting imagery of death initially associated with the offstage space leak into the onstage space initially associated with life and routine. In *Waiting for Godot* no form of physical violence is shown in the onstage space and physical violence is initially warded off to the offstage space, but this changes; for instance, physical violence is openly shown in the onstage space after the entrance of Pozzo and Lucky from the offstage space into the onstage space. At the beginning of Beckett's selected plays, the audience/reader is presented with a limited inside area that suggests the presence of an outside/open area. Gradually, through the dialogues of the characters, there is a feeling that the characters are on a safe zone that is surrounded by an immediate area of danger and that the characters try to keep themselves protected from that danger by staying where they are on that safe inside/closed area. The characteristic of the onstage space in Beckettian drama indicated to be a safe zone at first and disrupted later lead us to question the initial spatial binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces. This feeling of two separate spaces, the onstage and the offstage spaces, lead us to think about spatiality in

Beckettian drama in binary terms and as a result, we move to what spatial theory offers that may explain spaces in Beckettian drama. Spatial theory offers explanations for different types of spaces. Lefebvre believes space should be understood in triadic terms – influenced by Hegel according to Elden et al - and argues that space has three components that are separate yet conflated with one another, which he names the spatial triad<sup>1</sup> (Elden et al 16). The stress of Lefebvre’s study, however, is on the Marxist understanding of space as being both a product and a producer of social life. Arguing that Bachelard’s *La poétique de l’espace* – translated into English as *The Poetics of Space* by Maria Jolas- “primarily concern[s] internal space”, Foucault believes that “external space” should be discussed in addition to space as an internal image in a person’s mind and he suggests the concept of heterotopias<sup>2</sup>. However, while there is spatial binarism in the aforementioned plays that may be looked into from the vantage point of Lefebvre’s spatial triad or Foucault’s heterotopias, these plays also defy the initial spatial binarism that they create at the beginning and later on reveal that one space, the offstage space, intrudes into the other, the onstage space, through dialogues and actions of the characters. Accordingly, spatial theories do not suffice in explaining the research question of this thesis: why do these plays begin in a domestic onstage space that is surrounded with an unknown, mysterious and perhaps even dangerous offstage space present inside the onstage space through the dialogues and actions of the characters? Although this question has not been answered, studies indirectly looking into space in Beckettian drama get close to the answer.

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<sup>1</sup> Lefebvre refrains from giving definitions of these terms and is believed to be ambiguous in his discussion of them by some, but according to Martin et al “Perceived space, or spatial practice, encompasses the material spaces of daily life where social production and reproduction occurs [...] Conceived space is tied to those relations of production [and reproduction] and to the ‘order’ which those relationships impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes [...]” (Martin et al 146). Representational spaces are “directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols” and they “tend toward more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs” (Lefebvre 39).

<sup>2</sup> Foucault explains heterotopias as “counter sites” and he emphasizes them “by way of contrast to utopias” (4). Some argue Foucault’s explanation needs further detail and that “Foucault’s formulation assists little either in analysing theatre or how theatrical space comes to represent potentialities” (Tompkins *Theatre’s* 5).

## 1.1. Studies of Space in Beckett's Drama

Although not on the contrasting spaces in Beckett's theatre, there are studies on Beckett's spaces. Most scholars who write about spatiality in Beckett connect his writing to his personal life. Writing in French and then translating his work into English, Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906-1989) is a playwright who can live in different spaces. His Irish identity and his choice to move to France and even to write in French instead of English have been discussed greatly, and some argue that "Beckett's rejection of the national boundaries of identity and history was informed [...] within the context of a hegemonic social structure [...] and the symbolic systems which legitimized and sustained that structure" (McMullan 98). Examining Beckett's work from a postcolonial perspective, McMullan's argument is that "Beckett's work performs a dislocation of the frames of nation, identity, or theory", indicating that Beckett's work cannot be easily pinned down to a specific location (107). As Boxall argues, writing about Beckett's first play *Eleuthéria*, that even the title of the play "inform[s] the restless movement of the drama from one register and location to another", Beckett's work avoids a connection with a specific location that comes with its cultural associations and hence, his settings are borderless, nationless and perhaps even universal with universal characters (250) (Yüksel *İbsen'den* 32; *Samuel* 42). As Cohn similarly writes discussing *Endgame*, "[c]alculatedly mysterious is the geographic location of Hamm's shelter", as any other location is in Beckettian universe (*Just* 21). For some scholars, "they [Beckett and Ionesco] seemed to lack even minimal points of reference to the world outside the theater" (Gilman et al 72). Beckett's placeless settings therefore may be explained as a universal structure and are not just limited to any nation such as Irish or French, but this thesis will find that his settings are not entirely placeless as will be discussed later. Although settings in Beckett's plays are "constantly eluding any attempt at placing and fixing the play in some understandable and coherent world", these settings are choices made on purpose and they are depicted the way they are for a reason as Beckett's strict rules during performances and his theatrical notebooks suggest (*The Cambridge* 57).

While studies investigating space in drama studies are rare, research indirectly examining space in drama has been conducted, strengthening the idea that space is crucial for theatre plays in general, as Issacharoff suggests (211). Published in 1978, Brater's study draws attention to Beckett's choice of one visual element in *Footfalls*: the image of moving footsteps that are heard but never seen on a tiny stage ("A Footnote" 35). Highlighting Beckett's usage of sound in creating a particular atmosphere, Brater also notes that "The entire action consists of the greatest number of permutations and combinations within the framework of a large square blocked on the same stage floor" ("A Footnote" 36). Brater discusses Beckett's spaces as narrow, but his study points to the direction of space's significance in Beckett's theatre. Other indirect studies on space in absurdist theatre focus on emptiness. Literary criticism on negativity/nothingness in Beckett scholarship is invaluable to a spatial understanding of absurdist theatre, although no connection between spatial theories and studies on empty space in Beckett's theatre has been analysed or made explicit in published scholarship to date. According to Abbott, criticism on Beckett and nothingness can be divided into two: while some scholars argue that Beckett's nothingness is an absolute end; other scholars claim that Beckett's nothingness is a beginning for newer things to come ("A Footnote" 9). "Any full treatment of the theme of nothing in Beckett must credit both of these arguments – the Levy/Rick argument and the Barker/Wolosky argument, nothing as ending and nothing as beginning" (Abbott 9). Hence, following the application of negativity in Beckett's texts, when empty space on Beckett's stage is to be taken as nothingness, these studies may provide answers for some spatial questions on Beckett's drama. However, although physically empty, the spaces of Beckett's plays are not entirely empty: floating signifiers, regardless of a lack of visible signifieds on stage, exist and are communicated through lines, gestures and stage directions. As a result, although previous research on Beckett and nothingness is promising, this thesis will not interpret Beckett's stages as empty spaces. As Abbott suggests, "Beckett's willed austerity as an artist [. . .] has much to do with crafting spaces that are anything but empty" (15).

Other notable studies of the spaces of Beckett's drama focus on its representations or references to the spaces of physical land. Ackerley and Gontarski mention a certain

similarity between paintings by Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and Samuel Beckett's landscapes and draws attention to the unique spaces of Beckett by writing that "[. . .] his creatures peopled what critics began to recognize as a distinct terrain, *the Beckett country*" (Ackerley and Gontarski 15; emphasis added). In an M.A. thesis by Valcourt, the similarities between this "distinct terrain, the Beckett country", Dutch "minor key" landscape painting and Friedrich's paintings are noted (Valcourt 3; Ackerley and Gontarski 15). According to Valcourt, "setting becomes more atmospheric than topographical" in Dutch minor key landscape paintings and he claims that in "Friedrich's relatively empty canvases" landscapes resemble a "void that will ultimately consume the figure" (3; 69). What makes Valcourt's study interesting to this thesis is that his statements about Friedrich's paintings, as he claims, can be interpreted as applicable to the plays of Beckett, as well. Accordingly, the following statement can be interpreted as appropriate to Beckett's plays: "rather than a celebration of prosperity and a sense of communication between fellow man and nature as found in the Dutch landscapes, in Friedrich we identify a lamentation of loss and a sense of profound human solitude in *inhospitable terrain*" (3; emphasis added). Neither Ackerley and Gontarski nor Valcourt continue working on this idea of the "inhospitable terrain" found particularly in Beckett's drama, meaning that the pursuit of his concept is original to the research here presented (Valcourt 3).

More closely tied to the spatial study of 20<sup>th</sup> century British drama is İnan's work, which examines the unique way landscapes are portrayed in Pinter's theatre and looks into "the social space beyond the rooms in which Pinter's plays take place" (*The City and Landscapes* 9-10). Also using terms such as "no-mans land" and "urban decay", alluding to space in Pinter's plays, İnan's research is an exploration of space in 20<sup>th</sup> century British drama that views space as barren, and her study also, indirectly, draws attention to the imagery of death within Pinteresque space (*The City and Landscapes* 11; 16). Similar to İnan's study on Pinter's landscapes, White writes on Beckett together with his decaying landscapes and argues that these landscapes imply how the characters feel:

If we look closely at the Beckettian world we fail to locate the beautiful summer days often located in Romanticism for example. Warmth and vitality

rarely exist within these landscapes, and the sterility, which has become dominant, offers no hope of renewal. Everything appears to be in decline, as Beckett presents the natural world in a state of degradation. Inside these landscapes, which appears, at times, apocalyptic, the reality of the void becomes even more apparent. The ruination of buildings and the representation of corpses, forces one to view the Beckettian world as almost horrific, where corrosion takes precedence over vitality. Beckett uses these physical images to represent decay and essentially emphasize the erosion of human life. The environment is therefore confirmation about how these characters feel internally, and we question how life could possibly get any better for them, when the world in which they exist is itself degenerating, with the external erosion emulating their inner decay. (White 33)

Perhaps, as White suggests, these landscapes represent the way the characters feel, but they may serve other purposes as will be discussed later. Similarly, scholars such as Lamont, Tönnies and Dobrez also note the theme of “inhospitable terrain” in Beckett’s drama examined together with Eugène Ionesco’s drama (Valcourt 13). Lamont notes the unique portrayal of space in addition to spatial similarities between Beckett and Ionesco and writes that “Beckett’s *Endgame* bears an amazing similarity to *The Chairs*. Here again we find the last survivors from a world cataclysm. They live in a barren room, lighted by two small windows, one of which comes out on the sea, the other on the earth” (Lamont 324). By the same token, Tönnies highlights the feeling of being stuck inside a closed area that one gets from Ionesco’s plays and refers to *The Chairs* as having a “claustrophobic atmosphere” (164). Similarly, Dobrez repeatedly discusses Ionesco’s texts as having a basic pattern that is “an enclosed, claustrophobic situation, with the protagonist in their small flat, cut off from outside contact” (132). More importantly, Dobrez also notes that Ionesco’s writing has “the experience of sinking into darkness and mud so familiar in the plays [of Ionesco]”, alluding to the imagery of death present in Ionesco’s drama (156). With the similarities shared by Beckett and Ionesco’s drama, it is significant to this thesis that these scholars have noted a unique depiction of space in Beckettian drama. Although they do not directly focus on the spaces of drama, these scholars suggest that plays by Beckett and Ionesco have resemblances in terms of their spatial application and are similarly depicted as inhospitable. In fact, Dobrez’s study draws attention to the opposing interior versus exterior spaces in Ionesco’s theatre. However, although similarities between Beckett and Ionesco’s dramas have been discussed by these scholars, the issue of their spaces

is not furthered and their discussion is not supported with a theoretical framework, forming the gap in the research that this thesis aims to fill. While they have noted the similarities between Beckett and Ionesco's drama and, indirectly, noted the unique depiction of space in Beckett's drama through their discussion of the similarities between the two playwrights, their studies do not focus on spaces in the drama of either playwright. Furthermore, while Beckett's drama does present its space as inhospitable and with close association to death as noted by other scholars, as well, his spaces are presented not entirely as inhospitable as will be discussed later.

## **1. 2. Spaces of Beckett's Stages**

Beckett's drama is known for its barren settings that seldom give any clues about themselves, but although Beckett's drama is comparatively emptier, its settings are not completely empty and they are made the way they are with deliberate choices. "The more that the stage space is emptied of objects the more signifying weight is carried by those that remain" (Morash 72). Selected plays by Beckett nearly always begin with stage directions that give limited information on their settings: an onstage space that is depicted as either inside of a house or a spot on which the characters live during the events of the play and an offstage space unseen throughout the play, but it is nevertheless apparently felt by the characters as their dialogues and actions indicate. The spatial contrast between the onstage and offstage spaces influence the characters, as well, and the characters are depicted as if they were aware of this difference between these two spaces, but would not fully acknowledge it. Hence, the plays indicate that the characters deliberately avoid the offstage space as while the onstage space does not create the best living conditions for them, it is hinted to be comparatively safer. The offstage space, on the other hand, is associated with death as indicated by the dialogues of the characters and the characters are depicted as protecting themselves from its dangers by repeating the same routine over and over and by avoiding acknowledging the significance and effects of the offstage space on them as will be discussed in detail in the following analytical chapters with examples from each play.

In addition, Beckett's drama is known to be minimalistic, to say the least and the theme of "nothingness" has been studied, as discussed earlier. Although "nothingness" as a general theme in Beckett's oeuvre is acknowledged, nothingness is only a theme at the beginning of his plays. Nearly all plays by Beckett reveal their settings through dialogues. The initial near empty onstage space is slowly filled with information on the offstage space and it is communicated to the reader/audience that the characters are not in the middle of nowhere at all. Instead, the characters are somewhere significant for them and the distinct feature of that space(s) is first narrated through binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces: the former associated with safety, while the latter is affiliated with danger. Thus, this contrast between the two spaces, the onstage and offstage, creates spatial binarism (between the onstage and offstage spaces) in Beckett's drama and gives the reader/audience the feeling that while the characters are located in the onstage space with associations to a routine, they are still inside the offstage space and are influenced by it as the onstage space is enveloped by the offstage space. Initially, this is done by creating almost an uncanny contrast between the onstage and the offstage spaces through the dialogues and actions of the characters as will be discussed later.

This initial spatial binarism at the beginning of Beckett's plays, sometimes gradually and sometimes intermittently, is strengthened with diegetic references to the offstage space that is closely associated with imagery of death. While the characters in the onstage space are depicted as busy with their routine and unbothered by the chaotic atmosphere surrounding them, the plays give additional information on the offstage space. As indicated through the imagery of death associated with the offstage space in contrast to the imagery of life associated with the onstage space, the characters seem to have warded off everything unsuitable to their routine in the onstage space into the offstage space to perhaps protect their lives in the onstage space. In other words, while the onstage space is associated with an orderly and stable routine, the offstage space is suggested to be its opposite with disorder and instability. After a while, however, this initial spatial binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces are no longer continued and the plays present the two separate spaces as intermingled. Accordingly, Beckett's drama 1) initially creates a spatial binarim between the onstage and offstage

spaces; 2) gives more information about the offstage space later on; 3) breaks the initial separation between the two spaces so that the offstage space is presented inside the onstage space, and as a result, the order in the onstage space is disrupted by the offstage space leaking its imagery of death into the onstage space. Accordingly, this thesis attempts to understand the unique way Beckettian drama depicts its spaces as first separate and then one with the aforementioned three steps.

### **1.3. Features of Space(s) in Beckett's Drama**

With no direct study on space in Beckett's drama, in this part the spatial features of Beckett's drama will be examined in greater detail. Beckett's dramatic settings have the following features: 1) the settings portray spatial binarism in the form of binaries such as inside versus outside, dangerous versus safe, seen versus unseen; 2) while only the onstage space is shown in these plays, additional information through the dialogues and actions of the characters depict the offstage space with an imagery of death; 3) the initial spatial binarism is broken with the imagery of death associated with the offstage space intruding into the onstage space and disrupting its order.

#### **1.3.1. Spatial Binarism**

The settings in Beckett's drama are shown through binary presentation. Simply put, Beckett's plays depict spaces as in binary contrast: inside versus outside, safe versus dangerous, visible versus invisible. Before moving on to the importance of Kristevan theory in relation to spatial binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces in Beckettian drama, some notable studies on spatial binarism should be noted.

Although these studies do not discuss spaces in Beckettian drama as separate first and together later, they do note spatial binarism in space in general or in spaces in drama. Firstly, there is Tuan's explanation that may be useful in understanding spatial binarism in Beckettian drama. The contrast of spaces in Beckettian drama may be explained with the difference between space and place. According to Tuan, space is "more abstract" when compared to place and that "[w]hat begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (6). Hence, the onstage space can be said to be "place" in Tuan's terms

because it is “endowed” with value, while the offstage space can be taken as “space” because it is “undifferentiated” and does not have value for the individuals: or to put it the other way around, “place” is familiar to the characters and hence it can be likened to the onstage area, and “space” is unfamiliar to the characters and hence it can be likened to the offstage area (Tuan 74). Furthering Tuan’s argument on space and place, Morash examines Irish drama and claims that “[t]he theatre is a machine for making place from space” as it turns unfamiliar (space) into familiar (place) and that it is possible [...] to equate the zone A of realism with place—known, defined, lived—and the zone non-A of the offstage with space—open, undefined, free, but also threatening” (75; 104). However, while Tuan’s distinction between space and place can explain the unique depiction of space in Beckettian drama, binarism plays a more significant and perhaps even different role in such plays as although Beckett’s spaces are indicated to be separate at first, later it is revealed that there is no separation between them as will be discussed in the following chapters.

In addition to Tuan and Morash studying spatial binarism, there are studies looking into binarism as a general feature in Beckettian texts. Binarism through Cartesianism has been discussed in relation to criticism on Beckett’s oeuvre, for instance by Pattie, who argues that “Firstly, there is the notion of Beckett the Cartesian: His work demonstrates and expands on the idea, crucial to Descartes’ thought, of a split between the mind and the body” (231). Another scholar, Kenner, argues that Beckett’s texts portray Cartesianism, while some other scholars disagree and believe that a complete separation between the two opposites is not entirely true (Kenner 131-132). Ben-zvi claims that “the central given in Beckett’s works can be said to be the very recalcitrance of the body against dismissal and its gross insubordination in *refusing to assume its place in the Cartesian hierarchy* where mind holds ultimately sway” (137; emphasis added).

On spatial binarism applied to theatre and drama studies, Ubersfeld categorizes stage space in terms that may be applied to Beckettian drama: zone A (visible onstage space) and zone non-A (invisible offstage space). In addition, Ubersfeld adds that “[b]inary opposition can be created between two sub-sets that are intended to be part

of the totality of the staging” (117). Discussing Ubersfeld’s opposing zones, Inan writes:

Zone A is produced by bodies, and by physical objects in space, interacting through language, zone non-A, by contrast need not be visible at all, and can be produced purely through diegetic references. A spatial division occurs between the zone A and the zone non-A, between that which is visible and that which is produced diegetically. If onstage zone A is the site of recollection, then the offstage, zone non-A is the site of absence, the pure loss that is being memorialized onstage. (Inan “Fluorescence of Place” 80)

When plays by Beckett are concerned, it can be said that in zone A, there is nearly always a visible/onstage domestic area while zone non-A is invisible/offstage, but in addition, zone non-A in these plays is depicted with the imagery of death. The characters in these plays seem to be portrayed as caught between these two seemingly opposing spaces: onstage zone A and offstage zone non-A. These seemingly opposing spaces of zone A that is associated with domestic themes and zone non-A that is associated with imagery of death can be found in nearly every major absurdist play, but it is more striking in plays by Beckett than in plays by Ionesco, Pinter, Adamov and Genet.

Furthermore, Ubersfeld refers to “two zones of meaning, an A zone and a non-A zone” in the following manner and strengthens the feature of spatial binarism frequently found in spaces of Beckettian drama (115). It should be noted that according to the following paragraph by Ubersfeld, zone A can be likened to Kristevan symbolic, while zone non-A resembles her semiotic as will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

In one zone they belong to everyday life and obey the regular laws of existence, the logic according to which they live in society; the other zone is the locus of a different social practice, a place where the laws and codes that normally govern their behaviour, while remaining in force, no longer govern them as individuals living out their particular socio-economic lives. They are no longer in the game (or victims of the game?). They can allow themselves to observe the laws that govern them in all of their constricting reality. This justifies the continuing presence of mimesis in theatre. There is imitation of people and their actions, while the laws that govern them appear, in that imaginary world, to be suspended. (Ubersfeld 24-25)

### **1.3.2. Imagery of Death in the Offstage**

Concerning the first point mentioned above, stage directions in these plays mostly include a few pieces of old furniture at best and the stages are almost always barren, but this emptiness becomes filled with a powerful imagery of death. Although there are occasional city and country names, these names rarely refer to where the play is set. The imagery of death is inferred by readers and audiences from the characters' words and actions. Noted for the similarities to Beckett's drama, it is interesting to this thesis that Eugene Ionesco acknowledges the imagery of death in his drama. Discussing *The Bald Soprano*, Ionesco (qtd. in Dobrez) states that: "Overcome by a proliferation of corpse-like words, stunned by automatism of conservation, I almost gave way to disgust, unspeakable misery, nervous depression and positive asphyxiation" (140). The words "corpse-like" may be used to describe nearly all invisible spaces of Beckett's drama, as the imagery of death that seems to be hanging in the air in almost every play by Beckett is evoked most powerfully in the selected plays. Scholars mention the repetition of Beckett's spaces and it has been said that "It is a cliché of Beckett commentary that all his places are alike", but these places are alike precisely because of a specific and characteristic use of space to evoke, among other things, death (Cohn *Just* 17). In fact, Beckett's three plays share constant references to death and the imagery of disgust. Writing on disgust rather than death in Beckettian drama, Moorjani believes the imagery of disgust is a political choice attacking bourgeois values such as cleanliness ("Diogenes" 26).

### **1.3.3. Death Comes into the Onstage Space**

With the initial spatial binarism and the depiction of the offstage space with the imagery of death given through dialogues and actions, Beckett's drama, especially the three selected plays, disarranges the binarism and separation between the two spaces. While the onstage space is presented as a space of forced routine in contrast to the chaos in the offstage space closely associated with death imagery, these two initially separate spaces mix in the end and the routine in the onstage space is disrupted by the offstage space's imagery of death leaking into the onstage space. In

other words, Beckettian spaces are eventually not separate, but together as one of the spaces intrudes into the other.

All three parts of the depiction of Beckettian spaces in his drama will be discussed in detail in the analytical chapters.

#### **1.4. Methodology**

Due to the unique depiction of space(s) as initially separate – the routine space of the onstage space and the chaotic/inhospitable space of the offstage- and then together as most evident in *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett, these plays will be examined. Although *Eleutheria* is Beckett's first play and it represents its setting in spatial binarism with a stage split in two, it does not share the inhospitable terrain and minimalistic visual/auditory characteristics with the other plays by Beckett as written by Yüksel and this thesis therefore begins with *Waiting for Godot* instead and ends with *Happy Days* that is the third and last long play written by Beckett as stated by Yüksel (*Samuel* 39; 92; 99).

In the analytical chapters, the principle of selection in spaces of selected plays by Beckett are analysed as space(s) that are depicted through the stage directions, the actions of the characters and the dialogues of the characters in relation to both the onstage and the offstage spaces. Different performances interpreted by various directors are not included in the analysis. Although ideally all versions of these three plays should have been looked into, due to the difficulty in obtaining textual data on the grey canon, i.e. Beckett's theatrical notebooks on his plays and various versions of his plays, only one textual version of each play is examined. Furthermore, while the characters discuss their experiences or tell stories, the space of those experiences or stories are taken as part of the character's understanding of space and may also be referred to as part of the spaces of the plays.

When discussing space(s) with close reading of stage directions, this thesis will refer to space(s) using the following terms: “the onstage space” will be used for what is seen by the audience or depicted to be seen/imagined by the reader in the stage

directions and “the offstage space” will be used for the unseen and diegetically referred to area outside of the onstage space. Memories of the characters in the offstage space will be referred to through their connection to the offstage space as they are outside the onstage space.

Briefly, this thesis attempts to discuss Beckett’s spaces in three selected plays by him. Chapter one presented the introduction. In chapter two, I present the key analytical tools and Kristeva’s explanation of her theories in relation to Beckettian drama. Chapter three analyses these plays with respect to the spatialised binarism that results from and at the same time creates the particular sense of a spatialised nowhere-ness of the offstage space that is associated with the semiotic and with the forced routine in the onstage space that is associated with the symbolic while chapter four analyses the imagery of death as it intrudes from the non-represented offstage spaces into the onstage spaces through the dialogue, thoughts and actions of the characters in the represented (staged) spaces of the plays. Chapter five examines the offstage space as felt inside the onstage space and chapter six, the conclusion, draws attention to the main findings of the research, and indicates promising areas for future study.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter discusses Julia Kristeva's understanding and theorization of the symbolic, the semiotic and abjection because of the resemblance between the relationship of the semiotic-symbolic and the relationship of onstage-offstage spaces. It also draws attention to the suitability of Kristevan theory in answering the research question of this thesis focusing on Beckettian spaces, thereby explaining why spatial theory has not been used as the major parameter of analysis in this thesis, and Kristeva's theory has been more conducive to significant results instead.

Before explaining Kristevan understanding of the terms the symbolic, the semiotic and her theory of abjection, a distinction between what Kristeva means and what psychoanalytic theory claims has to be made. According to Kristeva, "all signification is composed of two elements, the symbolic and the semiotic" (Oliver xiv). In other words, the symbolic and the semiotic are viewed as elements of signification and all signification happens with an oscillation between the symbolic and semiotic elements of signification. Oliver further notes that in the Kristevan understanding of the term, "[t]he symbolic element of language should not [...] be confused with Lacan's notion of the Symbolic, which includes the entire realm of signification whereas Kristeva's symbolic is one element of that realm" (xiv). However, although Kristeva does not use these terms to refer to the stages in a theory of developmental psychology, she defines these terms in similarity to these developmental stages. Accordingly, these two elements of signification have resemblances to the Lacanian Symbolic and Imaginary registers, but they are in no

way interchangeable with them, even though some critics who write about the Kristevan symbolic and semiotic assume a close relation to these registers. More importantly, this thesis will focus more on the relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic.

## **2.1. The Symbolic and The Semiotic**

In her discussions Kristeva explains her understanding of the symbolic and the semiotic in contrast to one another, and hence it is impossible to discuss the terms separately. In other words, the symbolic gains its meaning from its contrast to what the semiotic stands for and vice versa. McAfee notes that this interrelation between the symbolic and the semiotic is described by Kristeva as similar to “the distinctions between nature and culture, between body and mind, between the unconscious and consciousness, and between feeling and reason” (16). Nature is recognised as what it is because there is culture in contrast to it and, similarly, the symbolic can be understood better with respect to the semiotic. On a side note, however, one must not take this contrast as definitional: a Kristevan understanding of the symbolic and the semiotic may be mistakenly understood in binary terms, but while the two may seem to be binary opposites of one another, the distinction between the two is “by no means an oppositional one”, as will be discussed later both in this theoretical background chapter and in the following analytical chapters where the theory is applied to textual evidence (Söderbäck 1). The symbolic and the semiotic (in its abjected form, not the semiotic before the thetic break) are not separate entities; they coexist. Such a coexistence does not mean that the subject has access to both the symbolic and the semiotic as the semiotic is gone after the subject-to-be becomes a subject by entering the symbolic.

According to Kristeva, the semiotic element of signification is defined as similar to the developmental stage before the infant begins to understand and make use of signs. In her understanding, that the subject-to-be has begun to separate from its mother before learning how to use language and signification means that the subject-to-be has moved from the semiotic into the symbolic (Acker 703). Kristeva’s definition of the term *the semiotic* is as follows, but it should be noted that Kristeva

begins her definition of the term with the absence of signification rather than explaining what the semiotic is in itself:

[...] this signifying disposition is not that of meaning or signification: no sign, no predication, no signified object and therefore no operating consciousness of a transcendental ego. We shall call this disposition *semiotic* (*le sémiotique*), meaning, according to the etymology of the Greek *sémeion* [...] – in short, a *distinctiveness* admitting of an uncertain and indeterminate articulation because it does not yet refer (for young children) or no longer refers (in psychotic discourse) to a signified object for a thetic consciousness [...] (Kristeva *Desire* 133).

Kristeva thus defines the semiotic with the absence of signification. The infant does not have a consciousness separate from the mother and it is one with her. In other words, the distinctiveness that is defined by the subject-to-be as a pre-signified object through which the infant views itself together with the mother and hence the infant is “not yet differentiated from her [the mother]” (Söderbäck 1). In other words, “[t]he mother and the body as such in fact go together for Kristeva” (Lechte *Julia* 129).

Further details need not be explained here, because they do not immediately concern this thesis, which does not apply a psychoanalytic analysis of the characters. The thesis, rather, presents analyses predicated upon a noted set of similarities between Kristevan theory and Beckettian spaces. As such, the semiotic element of signification will be likened to Beckettian offstage space as the offstage space is presented to the audience/reader with its absence in contrast to the onstage space’s presence. That is to say, Beckettian offstage spaces have, like Kristevan semiotic, “no sign, no predication, no signified object” (Kristeva *Desire* 133). Absence or nothingness in Beckettian texts has been noted and studied by scholars before, but Kristevan semiotic’s absence does not equal to emptiness or nothingness as discussed in the previous chapter. In other words, it is pre-ontological, prelinguistic. It is closer to Beckettian offstage space that is both a physically absent meaning that it is outside signification, but also somehow part of the onstage space in its abjected form, as will be discussed with examples in the following analytical chapters.

In addition to her understanding of the semiotic as a space of pre-signification, Kristeva also notes the connection between the infant and the semiotic. As noted earlier, the infant does not yet have a separate consciousness and is viewing itself as one with the mother. “In her psychoanalytic account of subject development, Kristeva associates the semiotic with the early *symbiotic* relation between mother and child” (Söderbäck 12; emphasis added). The relationship between the infant and the mother is crucial as it implies the relation between the subject-to-be and the semiotic. The semiotic is likened to a space of joy and happiness before the thetic break that means the separation of the infant from the semiotic into the symbolic (see below). While Kristeva does not openly claim that the semiotic is a celebrated space, both her texts and secondary resources on her theories imply Kristeva’s view of the semiotic as cherished by the subject-to-be before the thetic break, indicating that what comes after the thetic break may cause disappointment or a sense of loss when the subject-to-be becomes a subject. For instance, in a discussion of one of Bellini’s artworks Kristeva concluded with the following words: “for Bellini, motherhood is nothing more than such a luminous spatialization, the ultimate language of a *jouissance* at the far limits of repression, whence bodies, identities, and signs are begotten” (*Desire* 269). Although Kristeva was writing about Bellini’s understanding of motherhood and the way the infant views the mother through his artwork, some critics believe Kristeva’s explanation implies that “the artist [...] recognizes that a mother is also an unrepresentable body (*chora*), a *locus of jouissance* because she is both other and inseparable from the subject’s own self” (Lechte *Julia* 132; emphasis added). Thus art, through the artist, is a vessel that can go beyond the signification and into the pre-thetic break, according to Kristeva. Through art, the subject can express unexpressable feelings towards a different space with either no signification or perhaps a different form of signification. Although she does not openly claim that the semiotic is a celebrated space, Kristeva’s discussions of the semiotic together with art indicate that the subject is happy as a non-subject before the thetic break. Similarly, McAfee likens the Kristevan semiotic *chora* to a “warm cocoon” and her choice of wording implies a similar cherished space of the semiotic (22). Accordingly, Kristeva’s understanding of the semiotic implies that the semiotic is understood in connection with *jouissance* and as the mother is “the empirical

evocation of the maternal chora”, the mother/maternal has a similar association (Lechte *Art 27*).

Another indication of the semiotic being perceived as a cherished space can be found in Kristeva’s discussion of the thetic break, a concept that will be extremely useful and significant in analysing Beckett’s uses of onstage and offstage spaces as being, themselves, signifying elements in his dramas. According to Kristeva, the thetic separation is explained as a “break, which produces the positing of signification, a *thetic* phase” and the positing or “positionality” is the distinguishing element of the semiotic from the symbolic (*Revolution 43*). Briefly, “All enunciation, whether of a word or of a sentence, is thetic. It requires an identification; in other words, the subject must separate from and through his image, from and through his objects” (*Revolution 43*). McAfee believes what Kristeva calls the thetic break is when the infant “begins to realize its own difference from its surroundings”, “becomes aware of the difference between self (subject) and other (object)” and “comprehends that language can point to things outside itself, that it is potentially referential” (20-21). The major indication of the semiotic as a celebrated space in Kristevan thought is that this separation is associated with pain. “From the very beginning of its unfolding, separation is psychically painful. A sense of loss, or emptiness comes to exist where once there was a satisfying union with the mother” (Lechte *Art 29*). As a result of this painful separation, the infant is forced to adapt to its life in the symbolic and become a subject. In other words, signification or adapting to life in the symbolic is indicated to be like a space of separation from the joy of being one with the mother. While Kristeva believes a total separation of the semiotic and the symbolic is impossible due to the fact that the abjected semiotic may remain or leak into the symbolic, the thetic break from the semiotic into the symbolic and the loss of connection to the semiotic nevertheless induces pain. If the offstage space is to be taken as a space of pre-signification, it may be said that the image of birth as being pulled away from pre-signification (the offstage space) into signification (the onstage space) in some plays in Beckettian drama is painful because the subject-to-be is forced to become a subject, as will be discussed later in the following analytical chapters.

With the semiotic implied to be a cherished space outside the realm of signification, the symbolic is indicated to be its opposite as the semiotic is pre-signification and the symbolic is signification. According to Kristeva, the symbolic comes after the thetic break from the semiotic. Kristeva defines *the symbolic* in the following way: “The symbolic (*le symbolique*), as opposed to the semiotic, is this inevitable attribute of meaning, sign, and the signified object for the consciousness of Husserl’s transcendental ego” (*Desire* 134). The symbolic is where the subject-to-be uses signification and becomes a subject. For Kristeva, this process begins before the acquisition of language:

These sounds, rarely manifest without any form of control whatever, thus constitute the pre-symbolic *signifiante*. *Signifiante*, Kristeva argues, is always present in the operations of the symbolic – such as in the everyday language of communication. For in all such speech-acts, timbre, rhythm, gesture, etc., are perceptible, but rarely noticed due to the dominance of the communicative function of language (Lechte *Julia* 129).

Thus, the infant’s painful separation from the semiotic begins “when before its inscription in language the subject (or rather subject-to-be) begins to separate from the mother” subsequent to physical birth (Acker 703). After this separation from the original self, the subject-to-be enters into the realm of signification and becomes a subject. While the semiotic is likened to the offstage spaces in Beckett’s selected plays, the symbolic is likened to the onstage space as the onstage space.

As the indicated painful separation from the semiotic into the symbolic has been discussed, it should be noted that the recurring themes and images of suffering in Beckettian texts imply a similar pain of ordinary separation. Suffering in Beckettian texts has been much studied, and the image of a man crawling in the mud can be frequently found in his writings and is clearly related to the idea of man suffering through life. By the same token, in *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon summarizes his life in the following words: “All my lousy life I’ve crawled about in the mud!” (Beckett *Waiting* 57). The way the characters talk about their life as subjects in relation to constant suffering, pain and sickness and the way Beckett likens birth to death

indicate that the characters are painfully separated from the space of non-signification and are forced to suffer through life in the space of signification.

## **2.2. The Onstage as The Symbolic and The Offstage as the Semiotic**

In Kristeva's explanation, the semiotic is abjected in order for the subject/subject-to-be to live in the symbolic, and in Beckettian drama, as already intimated, the onstage space can be interpreted as the symbolic while the offstage space may function as the semiotic. The onstage space in these plays is often a physically interior place as discussed in the previous chapter, and even if it is not depicted as an interior area (as is the case with Beckett's *Happy Days* and *Waiting for Godot*), it is nevertheless a constrained space in which there are signs of order and everyday routine and the plays are involved in "the concrete issues of every day – what to eat, when to go to sleep, how to spend the day - [...]" (Gordon 32). In the onstage space, everything is visible and known, either through its appearance as indicated by stage directions or through the actions of the characters, and these onstage things and physical features are usually named; the offstage space remains unknown and mysterious and often unnamed. Morash discusses a similar spatial binarism in *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and strengthens the association of the onstage space with the symbolic and the offstage space with the semiotic by writing that "the offstage (zone non-A) may be the space of death; but it is also the space of freedom and of transformation, produced by its contrast with an onstage place (zone A) that is an unchanging hell of sameness" (46). In other words, Morash looks into Irish drama and notes the representation of the offstage space as a space of pre-signification and the onstage space to a space of signification that will be discussed in this thesis in relation to Beckettian drama (46).

Identifying the onstage and offstage spaces with the Kristevan symbolic and semiotic also indicates the potential intrusions of one into the other, since none of these plays depict borders where the offstage space starts and ends. It should be noted it is not implied the subject has access to both the symbolic and the semiotic as this is not possible with the subject already in the symbolic. It seems as if the onstage space is surrounded with an infinite chaotic offstage space and their separation is unclear or incomplete and often somehow threatening. More importantly, the offstage space is

an open or undefined space, a space of freedom that is thus differentiated from the constraints, order and routine of the onstage space. Morash writes that “in the spatial formation that had dominated the Irish stage over the twentieth century, the tension between onstage and offstage, zone A and zone non-A, was between place and space, between the *oppressively familiar* and *terrifying freedom*”; a similar spatial tension can be seen in Beckett’s drama (121; emphasis added).

Accordingly, under the light of Kristeva’s theory of maternal abjection, Beckett’s particular usage of space wherein the offstage space is associated with images of death, where the drama’s spaces are presented at binary contrasts of inside versus outside, safe versus dangerous, and where an existential loop is strongly evoked, implies a separation of spaces.

### **2.3. Kristeva’s Theory of Abjection**

While the semiotic and the symbolic are similar to Beckettian representation of space in his drama, the most important connection between Kristevan theory and Beckettian texts, especially Beckettian drama, is the Kristevan theory of abjection. After the thetic break, the subject-to-be has to break away from the symbiotic relationship with the mother in the semiotic and, according to Kristeva, this is done through abjecting everything related to the semiotic/the maternal. Kristeva is not the only theorist to argue that the subject needs to abject its connection to a space of pre-signification, but her theory differs from those of Freud and Lacan in arguing that abjection can never be complete. According to Kristevan understanding, the subject’s “repression [...] is not total: for the semiotic can still be discerned as a kind of pulsional pressure within language itself, in tone, rhythm, the bodily and material qualities of language, but also in contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, silence and absence” (Eagleton 163). The importance attached to the relationship between the symbolic and the semiotic, together with the regression into abjection in Kristevan theory, forms the basis of the similarity between spaces in Beckettian drama and Kristevan theory. While Beckettian spaces are presented to the audience/reader in spatial binarism as some parts of the subject have been abjected into the offstage space, the plays later present the abjected (that is characteristically

part of the offstage space) leaking into the onstage space, as will be discussed in the following analytical chapters.

According to Kristeva, what is abjected is certain to return. In psychoanalytic theory, it is claimed that the subject represses some parts of itself from the pre-thetic break in order to be able to live in the symbolic and Kristeva explains that repression as abjection. The subject, once in the symbolic, has to actively abject/other/repress or suppress things related to the semiotic that is the space occupied before the thetic break. Only through the act of abjecting things related to the semiotic is the subject able to survive in the symbolic, but while the subject has to abject the semiotic, the Kristevan understanding of abjection is that abjection may not be complete and that the semiotic is doomed to come back into to the symbolic in its abjected form. As Söderbäck notes, “the semiotic *chora* (and its associations with maternity) [...]” can be described “as always already integral to the symbolic order or symbolisation” (2). Czarnecki, a scholar examining Beckett’s *Molloy* in relation to Kristevan theory of abjection, believes that abjection is both repulsive – as the subject is forced to abject it – and attractive as it is part of the subject. Czarnecki writes that “the revulsion of being that is inherent in abjection, [is] conceived of by Julia Kristeva as the repulsion and attraction felt for that which menaces our sense of order, threatening the boundaries we try to construct between psychosis and ourselves” (52). In other words, due to the attraction the subject feels towards what has been abjected, the sense of order created in the symbolic is under constant threat from the abjected that is doomed to return and disrupt the order. Furthermore, what has been abjected is not entirely abjected and is part of the subject in the symbolic. Perhaps art may present an oscillation between the symbolic and the semiotic as Albayrak claims in his PhD dissertation on Keatsian poetry in the light of Kristevan theory (1). In Beckettian drama, however, the relation between the symbolic and the semiotic is different, and instead of an oscillation between the two the texts indicate that the abjected semiotic leaks into the symbolic, as will be discussed in the following analytical chapters. This is because in Beckettian drama, it is only the imagery of death associated with the offstage space that leaks into the onstage space and there is no indication in any

of the plays that the imagery of routine associated with the onstage space similarly leaks into the offstage space.

The connection between the Kristevan theory of abjection and Beckettian spaces in the plays is made with constant references to death that is closely associated with the offstage space. With the symbolic likened to the onstage space and the semiotic likened to the offstage space in Beckettian drama, abjection of the semiotic is implied through abjection of the imagery of death to the offstage space in order for the characters to continue their enforced routine in the onstage space. According to Kristeva, death “is the utmost of abjection” (*Powers* 4). Explaining this, Kristeva writes about a border that separates life from non-life and here the depiction of death is similar to its depiction in Beckettian spaces in his drama:

The corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death—a flat encephalograph, for instance—I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardy and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. (Kristeva *Powers* 3)

The semiotic, “the place where I am not”, is the offstage space where the characters in Beckettian drama are not (Kristeva *Powers* 3). In ways remarkably similar to this explanation, Beckettian drama represents death, decay, bodily smells and waste through the dialogues and actions of characters. Although the onstage space has some such associations, most direct associations to death, waste and decay are warded off into the offstage space, as will be shown in the analytic chapters below. Beckettian drama is indicated to be set on a border between life and death, and while death is constantly being abjected to the offstage space, life is feebly represented in the onstage space with the presence of death lurking around it in the offstage space.

More importantly, death does not simply stay in either side of the border. It “encroaches upon everything” as Kristeva writes, but it is initially abjected so that the ego, the subject can protect its place at the center in opposition to the “other” and that abjection later on breaks down with the offstage space’s presence felt in the onstage space and the order is disrupted in the onstage space (*Powers* 3).

After thethetic separation, the subject needs an object to create a dichotomy to be able to place it at the center in contrast to that object that is abjected (Kristeva *Powers* 14). Although the symbolic actively represses the semiotic and the subject must abject things related to the semiotic, the abjected is still the twin of the dichotomy, the other leg of the binary opposition, and although the abject may be seen as things that are not “integrated with a given system of signs”, it is also found in the given system of signs (Kristeva *Powers* 14). Just like Molloy (in Beckett’s novel *Molloy*) who “evinces abjection in being drawn toward his mother yet associating her at once with waste and decay”, the characters in selected plays by Beckett are caught inside an attraction and a repulsion towards the offstage space that will later be replaced with the death imagery associated with the offstage space overpowering the forced routine and order in the onstage space (Czarnecki 56). “The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object” (Kristeva *Powers* 4). In Beckett’s drama, while the characters try to continue with their daily routine, this routine is momentarily disrupted by the chaos and death that surrounds the onstage space, as the offstage space.

In Kristevan terms, the imagery of death associated with the offstage space is a result of abjection as the offstage space is associated with the semiotic and the onstage space with the symbolic and hence abject space is created. Beardsworth explains the difference between these two spaces as borders, in the following manner:

At the psychoanalytic level of Kristeva’s thinking, abjection is the most unstable moment in the maturation of the subject because it is a struggle with the instability of the inside/outside border, that is to say, with spatial ambivalence that turns on the need of a place for the “ego” to come into

being [...] Where Kristeva differs from this is that, long before the imaginary shows up, the primitive ego is in a struggle with the instability of the inside/outside border in relation to the mother's body, where the latter remains a vital necessity and is not parted from. Abjection of the mother's body, the attempt on the part of the *infans* to deal with spatial ambivalence, therefore shares in the instability of the inside/outside border that abjection belongs to and is barely distinguishable from. No wonder, then, that Kristeva claims that abjection is above all ambiguity. For *Powers of Horror* presents the most confusing aspect of the narcissistic structure, one, let us say, that reveals the moment of subjectivity closest to irrationality. (Beardsworth 81-82)

Thus, in a way similar to the process of abjecting the semiotic to continue living in the symbolic, in Beckettian drama the offstage space can be interpreted as the semiotic that the characters abject in order to live in the onstage space. As the transition is never fully completed, the characters remain in a loop because the onstage and offstage spaces are interconnected.

#### **2.4. Kristeva's Abjection and Spatiality in Beckett's Drama**

In summary and as discussed earlier, binary spatialisation, the imagery of death in the offstage space and representations of the imagery of death in the onstage space through dialogues in these plays can be interpreted with reference to Julia Kristevan understanding of the semiotic, the symbolic and abjection. The abject, "a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate", is an important part of the relation between Kristevan symbolic and semiotic, as already indicated (Kristeva *Desire* 6). According to Acker "[...] when before its inscription in language the subject (or rather subject-to-be) begins to separate from the mother" (703). What connects Kristeva's theory of abjection to the selected plays is that in plays of Beckett there is an active process of visualising what is outside the onstage space (the visible zone A), and that visualisation is achieved through references to corpses, death, fire and similar imagery. However, the outside is never shown onstage or depicted through stage directions and, hence, it is never truly known if the way the characters depict the offstage space is correct; instead, the characters who are inside the onstage space seem to be distancing themselves from the offstage space whether or not it really is destructive. This leads to the hypothesis of this thesis, which is that in *Waiting for*

*Godot*, *Endgame* and *Happy Days* by Beckett, the characters abject/other the offstage space in order to be able to stay in the onstage space, and thus create an abjected/othered offstage space: an abject space. Arguing that “the abject is the equivalent of death”, Kristeva’s abjection is achieved through references to death and thus the characters distance themselves from the offstage space and live inside the onstage space (*Powers* 26). Briefly, in the process of making place from space in the ways that Tuan explores, Beckett’s plays first create a familiar onstage space at the beginning of each play and then they create an unfamiliar offstage space through the dialogues. What is important is that things such as the imagery of death that threaten the routine in the onstage space are warded off to the offstage space. Rather than the creation of an abject space, however, Beckett’s drama shows how what has been abjected to the offstage space forces its way into the onstage space and returns from where it has been abjected to.

## 2.5. Beckett and Psychoanalysis

The connection between Kristevan theory and Beckett, in addition to psychoanalytic theory in general<sup>3</sup>, has been noted by other scholars and Kristeva herself wrote on a short story by Beckett, *First Love*, in a book chapter titled “The Father, Love, and Banishment” (*Desire* 152). After discussing resistance to psychoanalytic criticism in academic circles, Moorjani notes that “the Beckettian text (after *Murphy*) repeatedly tries and fails to effect a birthing into death in a rapturous celebration of the always deferred return to nothing” (“Beckett” 174). Examining Kristevan abjection in Beckett’s *Molloy*, Czarnecki notes the importance of separation of the subject-to-be in order for the subject-to-be to achieve subjectivity: “[...], since separating from the mother rather than merging with her is paramount to achieving subjectivity within

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<sup>3</sup> Some argue that Beckettian texts were close to a psychoanalytic understanding of the subject, as Beckett himself was familiar with psychoanalysis. Beckett is known to have “sought treatment at London’s Tavistock clinic for increasingly debilitating symptoms” and “he remained in therapy for two years with Wilfred R. Bion, then a fledgling psychotherapist” as discussed by Moorjani in detail (“Beckett” 173). “Beckett’s notes [on his readings on psychology and psychoanalysis], discovered [...] after his death, reveal the depth of his interest and the intensity of his personal involvement” (Knowlson 197). His treatment at the Tavistock clinic “while in mourning for his father who died in 1933” indicate that Beckett was aware of psychoanalysis (possibly before or during his first writings) and may have been using these methods/theories on his texts (Moorjani “Beckett” 173).

patriarchy” (55). Through this separation, the subject is able to live in the symbolic and separation is crucial for its survival in the symbolic. Czarnecki also discusses the lure of the semiotic together with the impossibility to regain it while still at the symbolic as she writes:

Once there, recovering the semiotic is impossible; we cannot go back. Because our capacity for language—our existence within the symbolic—is what allows us to conceive of and therefore desire a prelinguistic condition in the first place, however, we face the unbearable and endless task of finding a language to express our longing for prelanguage. (Czarnecki 55)

Although we as subjects living in the symbolic cannot go back, the semiotic may return to us in different forms, not as the semiotic itself.

### **2.5.1. Ends as Beginnings in Beckettian Texts in Relation to Psychoanalysis**

Beckett’s obsession with ends and beginnings as interchangeable supports the idea that humankind is forcefully taken from the semiotic and forced to become a subject in the symbolic as the semiotic, pre-signification, is the beginning while the symbolic, signification, is the end that follows that beginning. Beginnings, however, may be interchangeable with ends as Beckettian drama suggests, because death may be viewed as a space outside signification just like the space of pre-signification. Beckett’s tendency to present ends as one with beginnings is seen by some as “the impossibility of catastrophe. Ended at its inception, and at every subsequent instant, it continues, ergo can never end” (Harmon qtd. in Gontarski “Greying” 148). The image of a man crawling in the mud that has already been mentioned as frequently occurring, (this image has more implications than its previously-mentioned meaning), is also an example of how ends are mere beginnings and beginnings are actually ends. The adult subject, no longer able to walk, returns to an infant-like form of motion. Gontarski notes a similar endlessness, a feature of Beckettian drama in which one character is the earlier version of another, and writes:

Dramatically, the theme is developed with Clov’s sighting, or his feigning sight of, a small boy, who potentially can enter the shelter to replace Clov, who may replace Hamm, who may replace Nagg: something, in short, is taking its course. (Gontarski “Greying” 152)

According to Gontarski, the small boy may end up being Clov who in return may end up being Hamm who in return may end up being Nagg, but the play gives all of these possibly different versions of the same character in the same space. In other words, there are no ends, as endings are simply beginnings. “The key word is *fin*, which is echoed in the repetitions of Clov’s opening sentence” (Cohn *A Beckett* 227). Yüksel examines Beckett’s novels and notes a similar recurring feature. According to Yüksel, man is represented as gradually losing everything. In the first book of Beckett’s trilogy, *Molloy*, the man can go to different places using his bicycle; in the second book, *Malone Dies*, the man is crippled and in the third book, *The Unnamable*, the man no longer exists, there is no longer a subject and as the character is gone, the book depends on abstraction and at the end of the trilogy, the process of reducing the man into consciousness is complete (Yüksel “Samuel”; *Samuel* 35). Accordingly, Beckett’s novel trilogy narrates the process of a subject disappearing into a realm outside the realm of signification.

### **2.5.2. Fragmented Language**

In Beckettian drama, the usage of fragmented language towards the end of each play suggests a similar imperfect separation from the semiotic, “from the mother (began as an expulsion of an object by the drives, and completed by the entry into language)”, which is another way of looking at the well-known presentation of the inadequacies of language in Beckett’s drama (Lechte *Art* 29). Beckett’s drama is known for using phrases that are fragmented and used out of context “[t]hat is to say, there is language, but it does not ‘speak’ – does not produce meaning in the subject for another subject”, as Beardworth writes (83). In Kristevan terms, the semiotic is associated with the maternal figure, before the subject learns to speak and thus takes on language, as the law of the father. By using language/signification, the subject is believed to have left the semiotic and stepped into the symbolic. However, as the characters use a fragmented version of language towards the end of each play, it hints that towards the end of each play, the symbolic is fundamentally disrupted.

In addition to the fragmented language of the characters towards the end of these plays, Beckett's characters are depicted as yearning for the good old days of the past, which is a temporal offstage space (because it is not directly represented on the stage --indeed, in spite of many references to it by characters, the question of the past remains problematic in Beckett's plays). As the characters cannot achieve a full abjection of the semiotic that is represented through the offstage space in the plays, in some parts of these plays the characters remind themselves of a beautiful nature either in their memories or far away from where they are.

## **2.6. Spatial Representation in Beckettian Stages**

In Beckettian drama, as will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, space is presented in binary terms and there are initially two separate spaces: the onstage and offstage spaces. The characters abject the imagery of death outside their immediate space that has a certain order, but it keeps coming back to them and prevents them from attaining their order in the onstage space. The offstage space's presence is felt in the onstage space mainly through associations with death. Bennett alludes to a similar feature with a different depiction in another play by Beckett, writing that "*Act without Words I* shows a cruel game between the offstage presence that controls, presumably, the objects on the stage" (*The Cambridge* 53). In fact, after a time, the characters are unable to talk about anything but death -- that has been strongly associated with the offstage space --, and although they force a routine on themselves, that routine is frequently disrupted and as a result, the characters are unable to continue with it. In this sense, it is argued that the semiotic the characters have abjected in order to stay in the symbolic, finds them in the symbolic not in its pre-thetic form but in its abjected form, as the characters are still in the symbolic. In other words, as the characters are inside a forced symbolic, the semiotic can only come back in the form of an abjected semiotic that is closely associated with death. The abundance of references to death along with a meaningless routine that the characters force on themselves can be explained, as this thesis argues, with Kristeva's theory of maternal abjection and it finds that Beckett's plays depict the semiotic in its abjected form instead of its pre-thetic break form as frequently remembered by the characters in their nostalgic yearnings. As Czarnecki notes, in

Beckett's *Molloy*, "[t]he semiotic and the symbolic duel" in Beckett's texts (Czarnecki 55). The characters are presented as caught in between the symbolic and the abjected semiotic. "It is in this sense, therefore, that the subject is also a rhythmic reverberation in the symbolic, a reverberation which is connotative of both union with, and separation from, the mother" (Lechte *Art* 27).

Beckett's theatre creates its offstage space diegetically, and from the beginning of his plays, the offstage space is verbally there in the onstage space, but its presence becomes even more obvious towards the end of the plays. Slowly, as more is known about the offstage space, spatial binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces is strengthened and death associated with the offstage space starts to become a part of life in the onstage space. In other words, life in the onstage space intermingles with associations to death in the offstage space through the dialogues and actions of the characters. The symbolic represented through the onstage space is invaded by the abjected semiotic represented by the offstage space.

## CHAPTER 3

### A SAFE SPACE OF FORCED ROUTINE

This chapter investigates the way the onstage space in the selected plays by Beckett is depicted with a close association to routine. For unknown reasons, all of the selected three plays are set in a single setting and as the physicality of the onstage space is a minimalistic or a naked world as Yüksel puts it, in other words, as there are little to no objects to tie the onstage space to a place – perhaps due to an intentional move by the playwright or perhaps not -, the character's actions are the only clues for the reader/audience to get an understanding of that space and its importance for the characters (*Samuel* 29). Accordingly, the characters in the onstage space are presented to the reader/audience as keeping busy with a routine of their own, also for unknown reasons, and as people caught up in their routine, it is indicated that the characters are not paying attention to their whereabouts or their living conditions. This will be even more evident as additional information about the offstage space presented as a space of death will later be revealed through dialogues as will be discussed in chapter four, but this chapter looks into the initial depiction of the onstage space as a space of routine with hints that the characters may be forcing this routine in order to avoid acknowledging the reality of their surroundings.

#### 3.1. Almost Empty: The Onstage Spaces of the Plays

All three plays by Beckett begin in similar minimalistic settings and while it is not openly admitted being so in the stage directions, the onstage space is depicted as a living space through some items in it and the actions of the characters. Written in French with the title *En Attendant Godot* in 1952, its English version first performed

in 1955 and first published in 1956, *Waiting for Godot* is a “tragedy-comedy in two acts” with five characters: Estragon, Vladimir, Lucky, Pozzo, A Boy (Beckett *Waiting* 7-8). The first act begins with the following words: “*A country road. A tree. Evening.*” (Beckett *Waiting* 11). That is all the play provides about its setting as a “modest but highly flexible landscape” (Brater “Talk” 504). *Waiting for Godot* is Beckett’s second play, and it is his first play to be set in a very minimalistic setting. Gordon believes the props on stage in *Waiting for Godot* indicate that “Beckett is dealing with basics: the men, animal; the tree, vegetable; and the rock, mineral” (36). The limited stage directions about the stage may suggest that the characters are connected to others through the road and they are not entirely alone, that there is a tree hence there is nature, and that the day is nearing its end. “What the play shows us is how much dramatic energy can be derived from a simple landscape, no matter how minimal the set may initially appear to be” (Brater “Talk” 504). Although seemingly empty, the stage is not inhospitable at all at the beginning of the play, but it is also not a living spot yet. Later on, there will be additional information on the onstage space as a featureless open area through references such as “that bog”, “gestures towards the universe”, “the mound”, “the sky”, “zenith” and it will be indicated that the characters will live there while waiting for Godot to come and meet them (Beckett *Waiting* 16; 17; 33; 78).

A play in one act with four characters - Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell -, *Endgame* comes after *Waiting for Godot* and it is similarly minimalistic in its setting, although it has a different onstage space as not an outdoor but an indoor space. First performed in French “as *Fin de partie* on 3 April 1957” and published in English with Beckett’s translation in 1958, *Endgame* is another play with not much information on its setting at first, but when compared to *Waiting for Godot*, its stage directions provide more information (Beckett *Endgame* 90). Other than the fact that it is set inside a small room, its location is unknown like *Waiting for Godot* except for the information in the latter that it is set in the evening. The play begins with the following stage directions and instead of giving detailed information on the physical stage space, the directions create a featureless, almost empty space. The first part

gives information on the onstage space and on the few pieces of furniture inside the room.

*Bare interior.*

*Grey light.*

*Left and right back, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn.*

*From right, a door. Hanging near door, its face to wall, a picture.*

*From left, touching each other, covered with an old sheet, two ashbins.*

*Centre, in an armchair on castors, covered with an old sheet, HAMM.*

*Motionless by the door, his eyes fixed on HAMM, CLOV. Very red face.*

*Brief tableau. (Beckett *Endgame* 92)*

The stage directions begin with “bare interior” and the other part of the stage directions only refer to two small windows high up, a door, a picture near the door that is not discussed again later in the play, two ashbins and an armchair, both of which covered with an old sheet (Beckett *Endgame* 92-93). According to the stage directions, there is nothing else. This little information, however, may similarly mean more. Commenting on the room, Byron believes that one popular interpretation of *Endgame* is “its walls and windows standing in for skull and eyes, and its action a dramatization of a rational mind, an unconscious, and its emotions and memories [...]” and Gontarski discusses a similar tendency for early critics to interpret *Endgame* adding that the characters may be “aspects of a single consciousness” (Byron xii; Gontarski “Greying” 154). In addition to the small room the characters are indicated to be living in, some scholars have likened the outside area to “the suburbs of hell” noting that there is “[o]nce again [...] a man without a local habitation” in the play (Blau 47). The more obvious interpretation, however, is that this may well be a living space no matter how odd the ashbins are and hence, compared to *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days*, the setting of *Endgame* reveals its function with only the setting and the items on it right at the beginning while the other two will reveal it later through dialogues and actions of the characters. The characters live inside that room or shelter<sup>4</sup> as Gontarski refers to it (Gontarski

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<sup>4</sup> While Gontarski, like Cohn in *Just Play* when discussing Beckett’s *Endgame*, refers to the interior area as a shelter, stage directions depict that area in the onstage space as a room with two windows and a door and hence, when I discuss the physical directions, the shelter will be referred to as the room. Perhaps Gontarski refers to the whole building as a shelter with the room, the kitchen and the larder due to its function as protecting the characters from an unknown literal or metaphorical danger outside of it, as he implies, but as this thesis conducts a textual analysis of *Endgame* and as its stage

“Introduction” 9; Gontarski “Greying” 143-155), perhaps with the exception of Clov who seemingly sleeps in the kitchen. “The stage is a temporary shelter from death – at least for its human inhabitants” (Cohn *Just* 8). By the same token, Shields believes the characters to be “four survivors in a small shelter” (299). In addition, there is also a locked larder in the offstage space. The play opens with where the characters live, and this is the case with *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days* as will be discussed later.

Although it was performed and published after *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, *Happy Days* has a setting like a more intense version of *Waiting for Godot* with an open area that is depicted as uninhabitable right at the beginning. “First performed in New York in English on 17 September 1961” and first published in the same year, *Happy Days* also has that similar singular, barren setting that does not strike one as a habitat at first like *Endgame*, but it is also not as barren as *Waiting for Godot* as will be discussed later (Beckett *Happy* 137). According to the stage directions, there is “*Expanse of scorched grass rising centre to low mound. Gentle slopes down to front and either side of stage. Back an abrupt fall to stage level. Maximum of simplicity and symmetry*” (Beckett *Happy* 138). Stage directions in *Happy Days* provide more information on its physical setting than *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, but the atmosphere created is the same: a featureless nature with an almost empty space. Weiss connects “[t]he destitute landscape” described in the stage directions together with Winnie doing her best to look good with lacking materials to the aftermath of Saint-Lô bombings, but although there may be resemblances, there is no direct reference to any location in the play (“Beckett’s” 42; 45). The play has two characters to whom, unlike the other two plays, Beckett provides explanatory stage directions: Winnie – “Beckett’s first leading lady”, “a woman of about fifty” and Willie, “a man of about sixty” (Weiss *The Plays* 39; Beckett *Happy* 137).

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directions depict that interior area more like a small room, it will be referred to as such even though it may be a shelter as a concept. Shelter, however, is very appropriate in a more abstract way in *Endgame* and also in connection with all of the onstage spaces in the other two plays by Beckett discussed in this thesis.

Although *Happy Days* was written after *Endgame*, its onstage space is similar to that of *Waiting for Godot* as a relatively featureless open outdoor space that is “an unrecognizable wasteland”, yet it also has characteristics that tie it to *Endgame*’s small room with everyday items (Weiss “Beckett’s” 37). *Happy Days*’s onstage space is like a combination of the onstage spaces in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*: it does not strike one as a living space at first but has features/items creating an image of a living space where the characters at least spend some time on. The play begins with the following stage directions:

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

*Blazing light.*

*Very pompier trompe-l’oeil backcloth to represent unbroken plain and sky receding to meet in far distance.*

*Embedded up to above her waist in exact centre of mound, WINNIE. About fifty, well-preserved, blonde for preference, plump, arms and shoulders bare, low bodice, big bosom, pearl necklace. She is discovered sleeping, her arms on the ground before her, her head on her arms. Beside her on ground to her left a capacious black bag, shopping variety, and to her right a collapsible collapsed parasol, beak of handle emerging from sheath.*

*To her right and rear, lying asleep on ground, hidden by mound, WILLIE.*

*Long pause. A bell rings piercingly, say ten seconds, stops. She does not move. Pause. Bell more piercingly, say five seconds. She wakes. Bell stops. She raises her head, gazes front. Long pause. She straightens up, lays her hands flat on the ground, throws back her head and gazes at zenith. Long pause. (Beckett *Happy* 138)*

The play is set in the middle of a wide-open area that gives the feeling of going on until infinity as the above directions suggest. Nature is dead as the grass is “scorched”, and the “blazing light” hints an unusual weather that is perhaps too hot for any flora (Beckett *Happy* 138). Tangible nothingness is disrupted only by the characters, one half-buried in the sand and the other lying on the ground, both asleep as if they were not in the middle of nowhere under a hostile sun.

Unlike other plays by Beckett (although Gordon writes that there are detailed instructions in Beckett's notebooks on the disheveled and unfitting clothes of Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, there is no such information in the play's stage directions) *Happy Days* provides quite a lot of information on one of its characters: Winnie (36). Winnie's age range is given in the directions; she is "preferably blonde", "plump", has even "a pearl necklace" and all this information strikes the reader/audience to be very different from the image of a pale thin man crawling on the ground for food for a little child back at home in *Endgame* that will be discussed later (Beckett *Happy* 138). "She's a bit mad. Manic is not wrong, but too big... A child-woman with a short span of concentration – sure one minute, unsure the next" (Beckett qtd. in Knowlson 687). It is indicated that they do not starve in *Happy Days*' onstage space and instead look quite comfortable. The bell is a mystery and serves the purpose of waking Winnie up. After Winnie wakes up, she does not attempt to take her legs out of the sand, and it is indicated that she is not just sunbathing but is stuck where she is as she does not attempt to stand up anytime in the play and her legs remain hidden in the ground. After the bell, she wakes up and starts her day.

While *Happy Days* has additional information on its characters, all three plays share similar minimalistic settings that are the living spaces of the characters as will be revealed later in the plays, through their actions. With their minimalistic settings, it is only through the actions of the characters that the settings are revealed to be where the characters live. While *Endgame*'s setting as an interior space is a more obvious living space, the settings in *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days* also happen to be a habitat for the characters as will be discussed later.

### **3.2. An Unexpected Home: The Onstage Space as a Habitat**

With the little information provided through the stage directions, and with the following actions and dialogues of the characters, it is indicated in the selected plays that the onstage space, specifically the spot they occupy in *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days* together with the room in *Endgame*, serves as the habitat of the characters. In *Waiting for Godot* Vladimir and Estragon are not depicted as living on

that particular spot in the onstage space as powerfully as Willie and Winnie in *Happy Days*, but while they are waiting for Godot to come and meet them, the characters are forced to spend time there and, in a way, live there waiting. While it is impossible to talk about any particular spot throughout both acts as even the characters themselves cannot be certain whether the tree is the same tree as before, the setting does not change except for some details such as the tree suddenly having leaves on it in the second act (Beckett *Waiting* 53). The play's setting stays a featureless, relatively empty open area where the two main characters repeat doing similar things while waiting. They meddle with boots, sleep in interesting places, eat similar vegetables from their pockets and talk endlessly, but not once do they stop waiting and go looking for Godot, and hence they continue with "reflections of life" on the stage with their routines (McDonald 35). What the reader/audience read about or see on stage is a representation of life's endless routines. On routines in the play, Gordon writes:

The very act of waiting – the busy-ness of waiting – becomes Beckett's image, his vision, of the games and *routines people construct* in order to pass the hours and years. [...] Vladimir and Estragon's relationship is similarly geared toward survival – to distract them from the boredom, depression, and paralysis that most people fall into without a structured life. (Gordon 37; emphasis added)

Vladimir and Estragon simply accept that spot as their new habitat and pass the time with their constructed routine while waiting for Godot. Although it was Godot who told them to wait by the tree, as it could be any tree, the spot seems to have been chosen perhaps by mistake, as Vladimir asks Estragon: "What are you insinuating? That we've come to the wrong place?" (Beckett *Waiting* 16). Meanwhile, the play does not provide any information on why the two stay loyal to Godot and why they do not just leave that spot by the/a tree. Life is "as before" as "ESTRAGON, *sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before. Enter VLADIMIR*" (Beckett *Waiting* 11).

*Endgame*'s living space, quite like *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days*, is unusual. As the characters are hidden beneath sheets, it is difficult to make out a living space out of that small room but compared to the open spaces of *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days*, *Endgame*'s onstage space as a living space is clearer. In *Endgame*, through the setting in the onstage space as a small room with two high up windows, it is indicated that the visible interior setting is where the characters live. Judging from the fact that the two small windows are high up, the room gives the feeling of being half-underground and it may be similar to the ditch in which Estragon sleeps in *Waiting for Godot*. Perhaps there is "grey light" due to the curtains being drawn, but perhaps that light will not change after Clov opens the curtains as the windows are too small and too high up. The ashbins are unusual pieces to be inside a room and the only furniture suitable for such a space is the armchair and the picture across the door. "The shelter [room] is a residual living-room set at the edge of earth and sea in a depopulated world. At the same time it is itself a world" (Cohn *Just* 22). Later on, however, the stage directions indicate the daily routine of Clov waking everyone up at the beginning of their day by taking an interestingly bloody hankerchief from Hamm's face and the sheets on the ashbins. Whether it is the morning is unknown, but the characters seem to force this routine whenever they feel like it as will be indicated later in the play when Hamm orders Clov: "Get me ready, I'm going to bed" right after Clov wakes him up at the beginning of the play (Beckett *Endgame* 93-94). At the beginning of the play, however, that is all the reader/audience knows about the onstage space: a small room with barely enough furniture to accommodate one person. The stage directions continue as follows:

*CLOV goes and stands under window left. Stiff, staggering walk. He looks up at window left. He turns and looks at window right. He goes and stands under window right. He looks up at window right. He turns and looks at window left. He goes out, comes back immediately with a small step-ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes six steps [for example] towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes three steps towards window left, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, looks out of window. Brief laugh. He gets down, takes one step towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it, looks out of window. Brief laugh. He gets*

*down, goes with ladder towards ashbins, halts, turns, carries back ladder and sets it down under window right, goes to ashbins, removes sheet covering them, folds it over his arm. He raises one lid, stoops and looks into bin. Brief laugh. He closes lid. Same with other bin. He goes to HAMM, removes sheet covering him, folds it over his arm. In a dressing-gown, a stiff toque on his head, a large blood-stained handkerchief over his face, a whistle hanging from his neck, a rug over his knees, thick socks on his feet, HAMM seems to be asleep. CLOV looks him over. Brief laugh. He goes to door, halts, turns towards auditorium. (Beckett Endgame 92-93).*

What happens in this second part of stage directions is that Clov performs some actions as if they were part of his daily routine - if the play's time is divided into days - and from this routine, we get more information about life in the onstage space: the small windows are really high up as Clov needs a small step-ladder to reach the curtains, the room must be small as Clov takes six steps<sup>5</sup> to go from one window to the other, the blood-stained handkerchief raises questions, the thick socks on Hamm and the rug over him gives the impression that the room is cold. Gontarski examines Beckett's theatrical notebooks and notes Beckett's following words about the opening of the play: "For opening discover Cl [Clov] in perplexed position—then he looks" (Beckett qtd. in Gontarski "Greying" 149). On this part, Gontarski argues "he [Clov] inspects the room before beginning a series of unveilings, moving only his head, in the usual clockwise order: Hamm, Nagg and Nell, sea window, earth window" (Gontarski "Greying" 149). Gontarski writes that after Clov's unveilings - his opening the curtains of the windows, uncovering the ashbins and Hamm in his armchair- are complete, (a series of actions mimicking "the raising of the theatre curtain"), Clov retreats to "the safety, seclusion and harmony of his kitchen" (Gontarski "Greying" 150).

The performances of the play vary on their settings and while the windows are sometimes side by side in some performances, in other performances the windows are placed in opposite walls. Hence, the steps Clov takes may not give much away

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<sup>5</sup> Clov taking six steps at first and three steps later to travel the same distance may have significance. One performance is checked, the actor does not use the same number of steps, perhaps other performances should be checked, as well. Also, some performances put the windows side by side while some others put them on opposite walls, making the number of steps Clov takes between the windows irrelevant as discussed in this chapter.

about the setting, but it is certain from the stage directions that the room is small and dark. With all this information provided in the second part of the stage directions, the atmosphere inside the room is far from that of a cosy home but the characters seem unbothered. Perhaps the characters have a good reason to stay and perhaps that reason will be revealed later, but the atmosphere in the onstage space in *Endgame*, unlike *Waiting for Godot*, is inhospitable. In addition, unlike *Waiting for Godot* with a featureless open space, the walls in *Endgame* that hide the offstage space behind immediately raise questions about it. The question of what lies in the offstage space could have been answered if, instead of laughing<sup>6</sup> briefly, Clov could narrate what he sees outside the two windows, but his laugh only increases the emphasis on the offstage space and at this stage of the play, nothing is known about it except for the emphasis on its presence through the spatial binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces. Gradually, it is revealed that the room is the only living space of the characters Hamm, Nagg and Nell, although there is also a kitchen that is “ten feet by ten feet by ten feet” off stage that they never visit either because they cannot or because they choose not to (Beckett *Endgame* 93). The armchair Hamm sits on is implied to be his bed and Nagg and Nell never leave or cannot leave the ashbins for unknown reasons. Cohn believes that “Nagg and Nell were engaged at Lake Como, and their legs are amputated in an accident on the road to Sedan”, but there is no textual evidence suggesting anything in any of Beckett’s three plays as any information provided is only a mere hint (*Just* 21). Accordingly, similar to *Waiting for Godot*, the characters in *Endgame* continue living inside the onstage space clinging to their routines. Hamm wakes up, orders Clov to look outside, asks for painkillers, orders Clov to ride his armchair around the room and take him back to the center. Clov, as the loyal servant to Hamm, also takes part in this routine and the only other routine of his seems to be looking at the walls in the kitchen that is in the

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<sup>6</sup> Laughter can be taken as an absurd response and it is repeated. Perhaps Clov’s laughter is meaningless and hence it is associated with absurdity, but it can also be examined with psychoanalysis. In *The Laugh of the Medusa*, laughter means the subject rejects communication through language and instead communicates outside language/signification with laughter. As the play is set in limbo between the semiotic and the symbolic, it may be argued that Clov laughs because he is already influenced by the vestiges of the abjected semiotic inside the symbolic. His laugh may support the thesis statement of this thesis and may indicate that the abjected semiotic, the offstage space, does leak into the symbolic, the onstage space. The way the play begins outside signification with Clov’s laughter may be looked into in further studies.

offstage space (Beckett *Endgame* 98). Nagg and Nell seem to have their own routine intermingled with that of Hamm and Clov. The characters do nothing about the horrors of their space for unknown reasons both in the onstage and offstage spaces, “though in this stricken place, their [Hamm’s and Clov’s] suffering and aggression towards each other grow everyday, they continue with their routine” (Karadağ 23).

On a side note, with regards to its walls, *Endgame* depicts its onstage space with features that highlight its being unfitted for the characters to reside in it. All this information on the onstage space referring to its being uninhabitable makes the reader/audience growingly curious: why would they keep living in these horrible living conditions and not just go outside? What lies in the offstage space? The suspense and lack of information on the offstage space is thus created through the depiction of the onstage space and the emphasis on the presence of the offstage space right outside it. Every bit of information on the onstage space and the living conditions of the characters comes with questions on the offstage space. Similar to the way Kristeva defines the semiotic as pre-signification and the symbolic as signification, the offstage is defined with the absence of performance and language that are present in the onstage space. The onstage space is there through the absence of the offstage space and although Beckett’s *Endgame* seems to be set in a single room that is its onstage space, it is actually set in a room surrounded by a mysterious offstage space. Through the emphasis on the presence of the offstage space that is absent but is still felt by the characters inside the onstage space, the play is set within a spatial binarism between these two spaces. In other words, the onstage space is inseparable from the offstage space’s invisible presence and the offstage space is made possible through the dialogues and actions of the characters in the onstage space. Therefore, it is indicated that one space cannot exist without the other, and hence the spatial binarism is formed more powerfully in *Endgame* than *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days* with the help of the walls separating the room from what is outside.

The most significant item that tie the onstage space of *Happy Days* to daily routine and a habitat is the black bag with its contents, and there is also a parasol with its

sheath (Beckett *Happy* 138). At the beginning of the play, the sleeping of the characters and the items in the onstage space indicate that the characters are enjoying a sunny day on the beach and no hint is given that in fact, the characters live on that spot. The capacious black bag, as is indicated by the directions, is where they keep their belongings. Later, it is revealed that the bag contains the following items: a toothbrush, a tube of toothpaste, a small mirror, spectacles with a case, a revolver, a bottle of red medicine, a lipstick, an ornate brimless small hat, a magnifying-glass; all usual objects except for the revolver (Beckett *Happy* 140-142). Winnie also seems to have a handkerchief hidden inside her bodice that she uses to clean her few belongings (Beckett *Happy* 139-140). Weiss discusses a musical-box as one of the props in the play that may be the source of the bell at the beginning, but the stage directions does not mention it in this later version of the play (*The Plays* 39). In addition to these items, the bell wakes Winnie up so that she can begin the day and she begins it with a prayer and a brushing of her teeth.

Similar to *Endgame*, the area/spot where the characters live in *Happy Days* is far from a cosy home (similar to *Endgame*), and the characters in *Happy Days* seem to be unbothered by these unlivable conditions in this inhospitable space and they go on with their daily routine as if everything was fine. Bennett calls this “(lack of) self-awareness of Beckett’s theatrical characters” and gives Winnie as the best example “who seems to be essentially unaware, or at least mentally unaffected, that she is buried in the ground” (*The Cambridge* 57). It is unknown as to why the characters do not leave that area/spot and find a better home, similar to the characters’ lack of reaction to their habitat in *Endgame*. The onstage space with that living area/spot and the offstage space that continues after the plains meet the sky create a separation between the two spaces in *Happy Days* as is the case in *Endgame*: life surrounded by non-life. In fact, the onstage space is already there, closely tied up to the offstage space, as there is no separation such as walls between the two, but the characters still choose to ignore it and continue with their routine. As will be discussed later, death is there with them through sickness, aging, pain, suffering no matter how loyal they are to this routine. It is not only through the everyday items discussed above, but also through Winnie’s actions of using these items in the following stage directions that

tie the area/spot in *Happy Days* to a habitat. The following directions depict

Winnie's routine:

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. [...] Begin, Winnie. [*Pause.*] Begin your day, Winnie. [*Pause. She turns to bag, rummages in it without moving it from its place, brings out toothbrush, rummages again, brings out flat tube of toothpaste, turns back front, unscrews cap of tube, lays cap on ground, squeezes with difficulty small blob of paste on brush, holds tube in one hand and brushes teeth with other. She turns modestly and back to her right to spit out behind mound.*] [...] (Beckett *Happy* 138-139)

From Winnie's actions, it is revealed that they actually live here, that the spot they sleep on is their home. Instead of walls, windows and a door as is the case in *Endgame*, their habitat is marked with that black bag and the parasol on that area/spot. In addition to the bag with its contents, another connection these items make to a habitat is the way these items are used and hence it is both their presence and the way the characters utilise them turn that area/spot into a living space. Just like Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*, the play begins with the routine, but instead of a clear living space in *Endgame*, the characters are out in the open like Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*. The idea that Winnie and Willie actually live where they are, and they are not just sunbathing on the beach near an unseen sea is strengthened even more in the following instance. Addressing Willie, Winnie says: "Are you thinking of coming to live this side now... for a bit maybe?" (Beckett *Happy* 167). Furthermore, it is later indicated that Willie has a hole where he spends his time protected from the sun (Beckett *Happy* 147). That spot functions for them in a way similar to that small room with two windows in *Endgame*. Ignoring the fact that she cannot use half of her body and it is buried in the ground, Winnie is as cheerful and talkative as can be. She is actively ignoring her condition, the scorched grass around her and the hostile sun. The parasol is not even open to protect her from the sun and once, she even discusses her ability to survive under that blazing sun as a success of human adaptation "[t]o changing conditions" (Beckett *Happy* 153). Willie's routine is reading his newspaper, sometimes out loud to Winnie and

sometimes in silence. It is indicated that the characters may be aware of the horrors of the offstage space as Winnie's discussion of human adaptation to high temperatures suggest, but regardless, they keep on with their daily routines like Hamm and Clov do in *Endgame*. Sometimes the dialogues hint that perhaps the characters are not able to cope with their living conditions as once Winnie mentions Willie has no interest in life hinting a possible suicide attempt by Willie and she adds that she "mustn't complain", perhaps indicating that although there are things to complain about, she should ignore them (Beckett *Happy* 139-140; Weiss "Beckett's" 44). She indeed does that skillfully. She is half-buried in the ground, but she constantly cleans her belongings with that handkerchief and does her best to look good. Both Willie and Winnie continue with their routine, ignoring their condition under a blazing sun and acting as if everything was fine, just like Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* and Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*.

Although the onstage space is depicted as a space of routine, as the habitat of the characters, it is through the dialogues and actions that it is indicated that the characters protect themselves from something unknown by continuing with their routine in the onstage space. In addition to the characters depicted as hiding inside the routine and repetition, their psychology is also similar in nature as is acknowledged by Beckett himself, as Gontarski argues quoting from Harmon writing on Beckett's correspondence with his director, Alan Schneider (Harmon qtd. in Gontarski "Greying" 146). In his detailed discussion on Beckett's grey canon, i.e., Beckett's theatrical notebooks and letters about his texts, Gontarski believes Beckett's notes "expose the richness of psychological connection among these characters" ("Greying" 146). Accordingly, the characters in these plays are depicted as actively alienating themselves or "projecting away from it [life]" (Harmon qtd. in Gontarski "Greying" 146). To endure life in the symbolic and clinging to the known instead of facing the unknown even though it means they need to numb themselves inside an ever-repeating routine: "Clov [copes with the help of] outwards towards going, Hamm [copes with the help of] inwards towards abiding" (Harmon qtd. in Gontarski "Greying" 146).

Briefly, the characters in all three plays by Beckett are depicted as ignoring the offstage space by keeping busy with a forced routine in the onstage space. In addition to the emphasis put on the routine in the onstage space, there is also the absence of the offstage space. While the onstage space is a space of signification, the offstage space remains outside of it. The condition of the offstage space might have been unimportant as the characters are located in the onstage space and they could have continued living inside that onstage space without thinking on the offstage space, but it is indicated that they cannot do so. The characters constantly talk about the offstage space and its absence does not lessen its influence on them. Gruber believes “The deliberate withholding of important characters from sight is common in twentieth-century drama” (127). Working on twentieth-century theatre plays that are centralized on the absence of a major character, Gruber claims, by the absence of these male or female characters, “what is to be stressed is that important and dramaturgically powerful characters in all these plays are not merely hidden but instead are represented in terms of their hiddenness (129). Gruber’s example is discussed with reference to *Waiting for Godot* in relation to Godot’s absence in contrast to his importance for the play, but the absence created through a featureless nature has a similar effect as its absence serves to stress its importance for spaces in Beckett’s theatre (127). Thus, while the plays first present the onstage area as a space of routine and as a habitat, the absent offstage space will be diagetically filled and the offstage space will be depicted as a space of death as will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE OFFSTAGE SPACE REVEALED

After a spatial binarism is initially created between the onstage space that is indicated to be a living space where there is signification and the offstage space that is indicated to be “the place where [the characters] are not” as discussed in the previous chapter, the plays start to give information about the offstage space through diegetic references by the characters and this chapter will examine the information provided about the offstage space throughout these plays (Kristeva *Powers* 3). In other words, this chapter will discuss how additional information on the offstage spaces of these three plays is provided through the dialogues and actions of the characters and the contrast between the onstage space as a safe space of routine and the offstage space as a dangerous space of death is strengthened.

With all three plays, there is a certain beginning in which the characters are depicted as powerfully clinging to their routines and actively avoiding acknowledging their living conditions in the onstage space and the horrors of the offstage space. There is no food, they are in inhospitable spaces, they are suffering but none of the characters try to do something to better their conditions and instead, they go on with their routine in the onstage space, if there is time and if it is divided into days in the plays. It is as if the scenes of suffering that has been present throughout the play *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles constitutes Beckettian theatre (Yüksel *Ibsen'den* 30). The most powerful depiction is through that of Winnie in *Happy Days*: a woman - half-buried in the ground with a deadly sun over her – brushes her teeth, does her make up and talks cheerfully. The depiction is strong in *Endgame*, as well. Unable to leave

Hamm, Clov is a servant to Hamm as well as to his routine of serving him. Other than serving Hamm, Clov's only other activity is to look at the walls in the kitchen. Hamm, as the master in this pair, has his own routine to stick to. Even Estragon and Vladimir who temporarily wait for someone on a spot in the onstage space and try to pass the time in the meantime, are caught up with a routine of their own. In fact, Beckett himself admitted to a similarity between the spaces of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* once. Discussing *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, Beckett tells Jean Martin who played Clov, "You must realize that Hamm and Clov are Didi and Gogo at a later date, at the end of their lives" and hints that he may be presenting similar spaces in his drama (MacMillan and Fehsenfeld qtd in Gontarski "Greying" 152). In other words, the connection of the characters together with the spaces in Beckett's drama is evident as suggested by the playwright himself. These old, crippled and powerless characters are depicted as if they were similarly portrayed on that thin line between life and death (Yüksel *Samuel* 19).

All the characters in these three plays are depicted as living inside a safe bubble of some sorts that helps them avoid the horrors in the offstage space through the routine. In this sense, these three plays by Beckett firstly create a spatial binarism in the form of what is known, the onstage space and what is unknown, the offstage space. The onstage space is a visible living space in which the characters actively avoid bettering their life and they instead keep busy with routines. The image Beckett creates is similar to a bell jar through which the characters see outside, but they continue to stay there as if an inhospitable offstage space was not there surrounding them. Beckett's plays may be written in the aftermath of disasters such as war and famine and as Karadağ argues about *Endgame*, it shows "closeness to its historical background" giving "hints that it is written after the Holocaust", but what makes these plays unique is the lack of reaction, knowingly or unknowingly, from the characters as victims of such disasters (6). In a way, for the characters in all these three plays, the onstage space functions as a safe area where the routine continues/is continued and hence it is indicated that it protects them from what lies hidden in the offstage space. Briefly, while the onstage space is depicted as a safe space of routine as discussed in the previous chapter, the depiction of the onstage space as a safe

space creates a contrast with the surrounding space that is the offstage space. This spatial binarism is furthered in degrees and the question of what the characters protect themselves from is slowly answered when the plays start to provide information on their offstage spaces. In other words, after the beginning of these three plays, it is asserted that the characters are inside a routine and are actively ignoring their condition and the offstage space starts to get visualised in the minds of the reader/audience through the dialogues and actions of the characters. With this revelation, it is indicated that the offstage spaces in these plays are even worse than the onstage spaces in which the characters live and the offstage space is associated with death. While *Waiting for Godot* gives information on its offstage space and the horrors in it right at the beginning of the play, the process is slower in *Endgame* and *Happy Days*. In between their safe, stable routine in their onstage spaces, the characters talk about the offstage spaces with association to death.

#### **4.1. *Waiting for Godot***

##### **4.1.1. The Offstage Space as A Space of Death in *Waiting for Godot***

In *Waiting for Godot*, the offstage space is depicted as a space of physical violence. Similar to *Happy Days*, *Waiting for Godot* is set in an open area and while there are no stage directions clearly stating that the sky meets the plains in the horizon as is the case with *Happy Days*, it is indicated that the open featureless area continues in the offstage space. *Waiting for Godot*, unlike the other two, gives hints in between the dialogues about how painful life is in the offstage space starting from the first page. The play's references to a life of suffering begins immediately in the first page with the ditch Estragon spent the night in (Beckett *Waiting* 11). Talking to Vladimir, Estragon reveals that he did not get a comfortable sleep. Answering Vladimir's odd question "And they didn't beat you?", Estragon answers "Beat me? Certainly they beat me" (Beckett *Waiting* 11). In addition to the way these beatings are evoked through dialogues, it is interesting to note the way they talk about beating. Vladimir asks his question in negative form, as if expecting a miracle, the miracle of a night without beating and Estragon answers with a rhetoric, as if he was surprised Vladimir was even thinking a night without beating could be possible. Nothing is

certain in Beckett's theatre and one can never know whether Estragon was just having a bad dream at night and just imagining things, but the choice of beating is important and, whether the beating is real or just imagined by the characters, it is indicated that life in the offstage space is a life of pain and violence. In another similar instance hinting at the frequency of physical violence, after seeing Estragon unable to stay standing up, Vladimir quickly assumes he got beaten while sleeping as if that was the only viable explanation (Beckett *Waiting* 54). Again, just like the issue of whether the area/spot they spend time on is the same in both acts, the characters' account of events is not reliable as when Vladimir thinks he heard Godot, Estragon tells him it was just "The wind in the reeds", but the choice of the topic of beating as happening frequently in the offstage space is significant in the depiction of the offstage space as a space of physical violence (Beckett *Waiting* 21).

Physical violence as a threat to life continues with other characters, as well. Vladimir and Estragon are not the only characters accepting physical violence as a usual part of their life and there are others like them. Visiting them to pass a message from Godot, a boy gives the two main characters some random information on his life as he answers to Vladimir's unending questions about it (Beckett *Waiting* 50). According to the boy, he and his brother sleep in the hay; they are fed "fairly well" that may indicate that they have food enough to keep them alive, and while the boy does not get beaten, it is indicated Godot beats the boy's brother (Beckett *Waiting* 50). Perhaps the boy, like Estragon, is imagining things as there is no textual evidence proving the boy's account to be true, but the boy himself starts talking about physical violence, like Estragon and Vladimir discussing physical violence frequently. That is to mean that the characters refer to the offstage space as a space of physical violence through beating. In addition, Vladimir never asks the right questions and we never learn much about Godot. That may be explained with their unwillingness to solve the problem of waiting for Godot by just finding him themselves and by getting out of their safe routine to face what there is in the offstage space. Instead, the two main characters choose to pass the time by asking random questions to the boy and stay in the routine in the onstage space.

In addition to physical violence, there are also hints at suffering in general in *Waiting for Godot*. Creating an image of a man crawling in the ground similar to the one in *Endgame* as will be discussed later, Estragon summarizes his life in the following words: “All my lousy life I’ve crawled about in the mud!” (Beckett *Waiting* 57). There are hints that the characters are not very different from the generation before them who were also unhappy, indicating that people have been unhappy in the offstage space for long. In the following instance, Pozzo says: “Let us not then speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors” hinting that their life has been the usual way of living for everyone (Beckett *Waiting* 33). There are sick people, like the woman in Gozzo family in which “The mother had the clap” (Beckett *Waiting* 24). There are also references to starvation as is the case with the boy who is fed “fairly well” (Beckett *Waiting* 50). As depicted through dialogues, the offstage space in *Waiting for Godot* is a space of physical violence, suffering, sickness and unhappiness. Perhaps the onstage space is no different than the offstage space in terms of physical violence or suffering for that matter, but the characters seem to be able to ward off the darkness in the offstage space through their routine in the onstage space. In other words, it is indicated that the characters protect themselves from death, darkness and anything life-threatening with the offstage space by staying in the safe space of the onstage space.

#### **4.1.2. Abjected Fertility in *Waiting for Godot***

In addition to the binary representation of the onstage and offstage spaces, there are hints that indicate the characters have been warding off fertility-related imagery to the offstage space through associating them with death. In *Waiting for Godot*, representations of fertility can be found through the tree and the mother in Gozzo family, but both are presented not through their fertility but through their association to death. In other words, the fertility-related imagery is replaced with imagery of death and it is indicated that the semiotic, closely related to the maternal and thus to fertility as symbolized by the female body, has been abjected and warded off to the offstage space. While the mother in Gozzo family is in the offstage space, the tree is in the onstage space from the beginning of the play, but its association to death comes later.

Nature in all three plays by Beckett is featureless, especially in *Waiting for Godot*. The only representation of nature is that one tree in the stage directions. Until the characters start talking about why they wait where they are, the tree is not referred to. In the instance of its referral, Vladimir mentions Godot telling them to wait “by the tree” that is, according to Vladimir, “a willow” (Beckett *Waiting* 15). Although the willow tree is viewed as a symbol of the moon, water, grief, healing and everlasting life, the characters are quick to associate the only representation of nature in the onstage space with death, as Vladimir immediately says: “it must be dead”; so, the tree is no longer a representative of a nurturing nature, but of a dead nature similar to the scorched grass in *Happy Days* as will be discussed later (Beckett *Waiting* 15). In addition to this, its association to death is strengthened when Estragon suggests to Vladimir: “What about hanging ourselves?” and they later decide to postpone hanging themselves to another day (Beckett *Waiting* 18; 88). The tree, the only reference to nature, is far from representing a giving nature and instead it is viewed as a tool for taking lives. Through referring to hanging themselves from the tree, it is indicated that the tree is also associated with the crosses upon which Christ and two thieves were crucified and killed, which was the topic of the main character’s earlier discussion. Perhaps the hanging suggestion is just a joke, or perhaps the characters are eager to hang themselves because it would provide them with an experience they might enjoy: Vladimir believes it would give them an “erection”, but still, the characters of *Waiting for Godot* connect the only representation of nature in the onstage space to death, and the image of a dead nature will be even more powerful in *Endgame* and *Happy Days* as will be discussed later (Beckett *Waiting* 18). Nature is more generally understood, within Western and other cultures, as having and being characterized by a generative power, in which respect it is often represented by or associated with a fertile woman; this leads to a feminizing of depiction of nature and phrases such as “mother nature”; it is also related to Kristeva’s fundamental feminizing of the concept of a semiotic state or phase in developmental psychology, because in her writings the surrounding maternal body is “the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*” (Kristeva *Revolution* 27). In other words, Kristeva associates “her notion of the *semiotic chora* [...] with the maternal body and early heterogeneous drives” (Söderbäck 1). When Beckett depicts nature, perhaps the most

important representative of life-giving and sustaining (as well as of the semiotic) as dead or in close association with death, this is a forceful abjection, not just of nature but of the semiotic and all that it is related to (including the female and fertility).

In addition to the depiction of nature closely associated with death, the representation of female characters in *Waiting for Godot* is important. In the play, there are no female characters, and women in the offstage space are referred to only twice: once in the story of the Englishman and once through the mother in Gozzo family. The story of the Englishman is very short and the women in that story are objectified and are offered to him to choose from for sexual intercourse: “The bawd asks him if he wants a fair one, a dark one, or a red-haired one” (Beckett *Waiting* 18). Here the women are represented as sexual objects and the act of sexual intercourse, that has the power of life-giving, is reduced to the man’s temporary sexual need.

Interestingly, this representation of women lies parallel to the protagonists’ following discussion (and dismissal) regarding the nature of the tree (where it does not seem, actually, to matter whether it is a tree or a bush or a shrub, whether it is a willow or not), and it is potentially useful only as an object from which to hang themselves and perhaps achieve a temporary sexual sensation (Beckett *Waiting* 18).

The other female figure mentioned in the play’s dialogues is a mother, the mother in the Gozzo family. While the women in the brothel are sexualized by their profession, this time we have another female figure who is only referred to through her sexualized function of motherhood. The Gozzo mother is referred to in sexual terms too, for “[t]he mother had the clap”, which thus associates the female with a sexually transmitted disease that can also be transmitted to a child in childbirth (blighting the newborn’s health), male urinary and genital pain of the type that afflicts Vladimir, and female infertility (Beckett *Waiting* 24; Watson et al 889). Thus this woman’s gender and sexual nature, like Nature itself in these plays, represent not generation but inability to generate, not life-giving but life-blighting, as well as being dangerous to men.

The focus on fertility not as having life-giving power but as being associated with death is indicated in another instance, in *Waiting for Godot*, as well. In this play, even birth is discussed together with death. In a way, perhaps as Yüksel writes on Beckettian drama, human beings are born to die, and their only crime is that they are born (*Ibsen 'den* 33). Right after the discussion of hanging potentially giving them erections, Vladimir says that where semen falls on the ground, “mandrakes grow” and offers this as the reason for mandrakes to “shriek when you pull them up,” perhaps their being pulled from the earth being likened to an infant being pulled from the womb (Beckett *Waiting* 18). It can therefore be said that figures of fertility in the play: prostitutes, a mother, a tree, and semen falling on fertile ground leading to a metaphorical birth, are all closely associated with death and are examples of how Beckett’s characters see them as vestiges of the abjected the semiotic in the form of connecting nature and fertility (essentially semiotic elements) with death in *Waiting for Godot* just like in *Endgame* and *Happy Days* as will be discussed later.

#### **4.1.3. Yearning in *Waiting for Godot***

In *Waiting for Godot*’s reference to the death of hanged men resulting in a metaphorical fertility through the birthing of mandrakes, their “shrieking” indicates pain or anger at being born. The choice of the word *shriek* is significant because such a sound indicates far more agony or fury than the words *cry* or *scream* which are more commonly used for natural births. Shrieks are the sounds associated with terror and the unnatural. Here, then, while Vladimir indirectly likens the earth to a mother’s womb, he chooses to show its reluctant offspring as being so reluctant and terrified to be born – indeed they have to be pulled out -, or the process to be so agonizing that they shriek (Beckett *Waiting* 18). This is the infant’s challenge to the symbolic as it is being removed from the chora (a fully semiotic existence); in Kristevan terms it is the thetic break; Beckett’s mandrake uprooting accompanied by shrieking indicates that the separation of the infant from the semiotic into the symbolic is excruciatingly painful. This Beckettian birth metaphor can thus be used as an illustration of the Kristevan idea that the subject-to-be’s connection to the semiotic is cut and the subject-to-be is taken away from the semiotic to become a subject in the symbolic. McAfee writes about this painful break, referring to Kristevan chora, and

states that “[w]ith these events, the child is no longer in the warm cocoon of the *chora*; it becomes dimly aware of its distinctness from its surroundings – that what surrounds it is *other* than itself” and that is painful for the subject (22).

*Waiting for Godot* provides other instances that refer indirectly to the thetic break, in addition to the reference to birth as painful. For instance, as briefly mentioned above, characters yearn for a past space of happiness and joy, or at least pretence at happiness and joy. Making a comparison between Lucky’s sad attempt at dancing onstage, and his performances in the offstage past, Pozzo says that Lucky “used to dance the farandole, the fling, the brawl, the jig, the fandango, and even the hornpipe. He capered for joy”; implying that before Lucky’s suffering in the symbolic, he was joyful (whether that was before or after the thetic break) (Beckett *Waiting* 39). In other words, it is indicated that the characters used to be joyful before their life of suffering in the onstage and offstage spaces and thus, it is implied that perhaps the characters, by yearning for a distant past, are yearning for the semiotic before the thetic break, but as they do not have access to the semiotic because they are subjects in the symbolic now, their yearning remains unfulfilled. Beckett’s plays are thus shown to create a similar image to the one Kristeva uses when discussing the semiotic and the symbolic before the “[t]he thetic phase [that] marks a threshold between two heterogenous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic”, and while the characters are in the symbolic, they remember the times before the thetic break (*Revolution* 48). Similarly, Vladimir and Estragon talk about past days when they were grape-harvesting, hinting that there were days when they were employed, were able to feed themselves and the nature was not featureless or inhospitable as Estragon talks about throwing himself “into the Rhône” and drying his clothes “in the sun” (Beckett *Waiting* 51).

## 4.2. *Endgame*

### 4.2.1. The Offstage Space as a Space of Death in *Endgame*

The offstage space in *Endgame* is depicted through dialogues in similar terms of chaos and destruction. Slowly, through the bits of information given by the dialogues between the characters, the offstage space starts to be visualised as a space of loss. The following exchange between Hamm and Clov is the first dialogue between the characters on life in the offstage space:

HAMM: Go and get two bicycle-wheels.

CLOV: There are no more bicycle-wheels.

HAMM: What have you done with your bicycle?

CLOV: I never had a bicycle.

HAMM: The thing is impossible.

CLOV: When there were still bicycles I wept to have one. I crawled at your feet. You told me to get out to hell. Now there are none. (Beckett *Endgame* 96)

The dialogue does not reveal much, but it refers to Clov's memories, to a time when "there were still bicycles", but the emphasis is on the fact that now there is none (Beckett *Endgame* 96). The dialogue also gives information on the relationship between Hamm and Clov. Perhaps a younger Clov who asked for a bicycle and was rejected, meaning that even though the master-slave relationship, as Yüksel suggests, between the two was present then, as well, times were better (*Samuel* 65). Still, not much is known about the offstage space, but it is gradually asserted that the offstage space is worse than it was before and that may explain why the characters stay where they are instead of going out as if they were better off inside, as if the onstage space was protecting them from the dangers of the offstage space. Furthermore, it is also right after this exchange between Clov and Hamm when Hamm says, "outside of here it's death", but he does not explain this statement and they continue with their routine as if Hamm did not just associate the offstage space with death (Beckett *Endgame* 96). Similar dialogues on the state of the offstage space as an inhospitable space are exchanged during the routines of Hamm and Clov. The dialogues between Hamm and Clov indicate that "nature has been extinguished and nothing grows any longer" (Adorno 123). The image of a dead nature will be discussed later, but both Hamm and Clov continue to refer to the offstage space with implied ends that imply

death as the nature they refer to cannot give life to anything. The reference Hamm makes to the offstage space as “death” is furthered later on when Hamm and Clov, again through their dialogues, reveal that nature is dead and there are no plants or living creatures outside as Clov’s line “They’ll never sprout” indicates (Beckett *Endgame* 98). “This desolate landscape resembles a post-apocalyptic scene, prompting some commentators to speculate on whether some of the anxieties of the Cold War, with the threat of nuclear extinction, can be felt in this play” (McDonald 43). The following pages reveal that there is also a food problem inside the house. The characters mention a locked larder, but later on it is hinted that they may be out of food and painkillers as Clov continuously rejects Hamm’s request for painkillers (Beckett *Endgame* 95; 97). At one instance, as there are no biscuits left, Clov gives a dog biscuit to Nagg as food (Beckett *Endgame* 97).

While *Endgame* creates a feeble separation between the onstage and offstage spaces, death initially associated with the offstage space thus begins to be more present in the onstage space. Hamm and Clov, for example, start discussing Clov dying in the kitchen without Hamm knowing and Clov reminds Hamm that his corpse would stink so that Hamm would be able to know Clov was dead:

HAMM: But you might be merely dead in your kitchen.

CLOV: The result would be the same.

HAMM: Yes, but how would I know, if you were merely dead in your kitchen?

CLOV: Well... sooner or later I’d start to stink.

HAMM: You stink already. The whole place stinks of corpses.

CLOV: The whole universe. (Beckett *Endgame* 114)

The way the two talk about Clov’s corpse left unnoticed in the kitchen for so long and suggesting that the smell of the corpse invisibly spreading everywhere of that room, i.e. death being everywhere, only then does Hamm assume Clov is dead. In addition, the connection between the kitchen which is associated with food/life and a stinking corpse inside it is another powerful imagery of death encroaching life. Although later, through the character Nell being assumed to be dead, death will be right under the characters’ noses in the onstage space, the characters gradually discuss death with more confidence and references to it increase both in number and power. In fact, in

most cases in Beckett's theatre, the characters rarely discuss anything but death, especially towards the end of the play. Hamm also refers to the offstage space directly as death as he says "[o]utside of here it's death" and hints that inside the room stands life, indicating that he is aware of the spatial binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces (Beckett *Endgame* 96). Hamm and Clov continue discussing the absence of nature outside, with no animals or plants that may be interpreted as death of nature, with nothing to see but greyness, "[l]ight black. From pole to pole" as Clov puts it, not even a tree to hang themselves from as is the case with *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett *Endgame* 107).

Beckett uses the metaphor of light frequently and in one of his letters to his director, he explains that in *Endgame*, Hamm gets angry at Clov because Hamm has already lost his light and Clov is not allowed to come to Hamm because his light is "fading" (Harmon qtd. in Gontarski "Greying" 145). Again, the binarism between light and dark is in parallel with the spatial binarism within the play in the form of the onstage and offstage spaces. In this sense, when someone's light is gone, it can either be that person is "extinguished", meaning dead, or that person is no longer able to perform his duty or routines in the symbolic as is the case with Hamm. In other words, as the symbolic no longer functions, the vestiges of the abjected semiotic cannot be dealt with.

Looking into violence in *Endgame*, Karadağ argues the play presents its violence in three different forms and contributes to the effect of the play on the audience:

The three levels of violence – symbolic, verbal and physical – are existent in **Endgame**: the first derives from the setting and the atmosphere of the play, which suppresses both the characters and the audience and creates aggression, and from the invisible rules of relationship between the characters like being in a master/slave relationship. The second is the verbal violence, the tone of their voices, the words they use for each other, and even the silences create and demonstrate violence. The third is physical violence. In this case, it is not only the physical attempt to hurt another that is suggested, but also all the physical actions that create tension, aggression or even suffering either in the characters or the audience. All these levels mingle with each other and work upon the audience. (Karadağ 21)

With violence showing itself in the onstage space in these three forms, its influence on the audience is significant but it should also be noted that the play does not present violence visibly in the onstage space, especially physical violence that will be implied in the onstage space towards the end of the play. *Endgame* presents violence with increasing dosages as the play reveals itself and while violence at its beginning is controlled at some level so that the characters are able to continue their routine, they can no longer do so near the play's end.

#### 4.2.2. Abjected Fertility in *Endgame*

Similar to *Waiting for Godot*, lack of nature and fertility is a regularly emphasized feature in *Endgame*. In one instance, Clov says that there is no more nature “in the vicinity” and in another instance, Clov mentions some seeds that will “never sprout” (Beckett *Endgame* 97-98). Interestingly, as discussed earlier, the characters are addicted to the offstage space and to the featureless nature in it as Hamm orders Clov to look outside (Beckett *Endgame* 105). Seemingly used to seeing nothing outside, Clov is able to make jokes about the offstage space and according to him, there is only “zero” in every direction he surveys from the window as there are not even any natural features as discussed earlier: “[t]he light is sunk”, all the gulls are gone; there is no sun, and it is “[l]ight black. From pole to pole” (Beckett *Endgame* 106-107). “All outside, if we are to believe the testimony of Clov and his telescope, is grey, deserted and lifeless” (McDonald 43). Gontarski writes that:

Critics have noted the anti-creation or anti-re-creation themes in *Endgame*; Hamm, an echo of Ham, the cursed son of Noah, fears that the whole cycle of humanity might restart from the flea, and so all this suffering—his own and humanity's—may have come to naught but a repetition, his suffering a rehearsal. And the setting, the shelter, takes on the qualities of Noah's ark, from which, according to Christian mythology, humanity was resurrected, repeated, as if the antediluvian period were mere rehearsal. Although Hamm fears an actual end, the greater fear is that what *appears* to be an end may signal only a new beginning. (“Greying” 153)

The treatment of Beckett's female characters in both onstage and offstage spaces, together with the depiction of an infertile and dead nature do not just create a space without fertility, they actively ward it off, and the examples from the plays that have

been discussed above present a Beckettian statement about existence that is well expressed in Hamm's fear of humanity coming back from that flea in the play, as that would mean that humanity would have to suffer again. Nell, for example, who is the only female character in *Endgame*'s onstage space, is presented only from above the waist and, together with Nagg, is believed to have lost her legs in an accident by Cohn as discussed earlier (*Just* 21). Her body's fertile regions are hidden and it is indicated that she can no longer have sexual intercourse with Nagg (whose lower half is similarly hidden): she has lost her life-giving power and later in the play she is thought to have died. Furthermore, similar to the mother in Gozzo family in *Waiting for Godot*, the female figure associated with motherhood in *Endgame* is Mother Pegg and she is similarly associated with death, as shown above in the discussion of female characters in *Waiting for Godot*. Both nature, the so-called mother of all life on earth, and human mothers are either infertile or dead in Beckett's plays. In other words, if existence for humankind is an endless struggle of life in the symbolic as constantly under threat from the abjected semiotic, threatening the entire dissolution of all structures of life, especially of the forced routine in the onstage space, and the struggle of dealing with the vestiges of the abjected semiotic to keep the symbolic at bay, human life is shown to experience that painful separation from the semiotic into the symbolic (which is why, metaphorically speaking, the mandrake screams as it is uprooted). The plays and the onstage dialogue and actions show the characters clinging to the symbolic (rituals of actions, speech, thought) while the vestiges of the abjected semiotic intrudes in all their thoughts and perceptions in the onstage space as well as in their physical deterioration that is presented in the form of being buried deeper and deeper (both metaphorically and literally in the case of Winnie in *Happy Days*) and becoming more and more infirm as the symbolic begins to lose its function.

#### **4.2.3. Yearning in *Endgame***

*Endgame* has similar references to a past happy space as Nagg and Nell also talk about a recent past that is ironically referred as though it were a distant time that they long for:

NAGG: I've lost me tooth.  
NELL: When?  
NAGG: I had it yesterday.  
NELL [Elegiac.] Ah yesterday!  
[They turn painfully towards each other.] (Beckett *Endgame* 99)

The magic of yesterday is painful to remember for each character, even when represented in ironizing or absurd contexts. In addition to Nagg and Nell, Hamm also remembers what he talks about as good old days (which appear to have been happy only as in his imagination at the time) when he would visit a madman, a painter and engraver “who thought the end of the world had come” (Beckett *Endgame* 113). He talks about himself trying to drag the man to the window<sup>7</sup>, to show him “[a]ll the rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness!” (Beckett *Endgame* 113). Although all the mad man could see was ash, Hamm’s memory of the scene depends upon the idea that what is now the offstage space, the view seen from the window, was once lovely and not dead at all. The implication of this apparently false memory is that there is a human need to imagine the distant past as having been paradisaical (at least in some respects) while in fact it may never have been ideal. In other cases, references to the distant past are not so evidently ironized and indicate both the deterioration of ongoing existence and the fact that the past of people and of nature were indeed better than the present, and when thinking of nature in the past characters may be full of happy memories. Mother Pegg in *Endgame* is an example of this, for she “was bonny once, like a flower of the field”, indicating that female characters were not always associated with death and infertility. Nevertheless, as it is suggested that Mother Pegg is not buried now, it is hinted that her corpse is out in the open and that “flower of the field” is now the embodiment of death (Beckett *Endgame* 112).

CLOV: But naturally she’s extinguished! [Pause.] What’s the matter with you today?  
HAMM: I’m taking my course. [Pause.] Is she buried?  
CLOV: Buried! Who would have buried her?

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<sup>7</sup> There can be a comparison between Clov looking out of the small windows and seeing nothing, or seeing just a destroyed world, while here Hamm similarly makes the madman look outside a window which has a lovely nature outside. These two similar looking-outside-the-window scenes and seeing different landscapes may be looked into in further studies.

HAMM: You.

CLOV: Me! Haven't I enough to do without burying people? (Beckett *Endgame* 112)

### 4.3. *Happy Days*

#### 4.3.1. The Offstage as A Space of Death in *Happy Days*

Just like *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, *Happy Days* presents its onstage space slowly through dialogues and actions of its characters. With an already inhospitable ground and one of its characters half-buried as if half-dead, the information on the onstage space first comes from the news Willie reads. Hinting that a doctor committed suicide, the offstage space is indicated to be similarly deadly in *Happy Days* (Beckett *Happy* 142). Brushing the news of the doctor's suicide off, Winnie immediately starts talking about the two of them, about the day when Winnie was sitting on the doctor's knee, inside a garden, in a completely different space and it is indicated that Winnie actively ignores the suicide story and the offstage space around her (Beckett *Happy* 142). Like in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, it is uncertain whether the time of death-related events in the offstage space is the same with the time of the play as an unmoving Willie indicates that the newspaper is old, but the depiction of the offstage space does not change except for occasional moments of nostalgia similar to the ones in the other two plays. Unlike *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, however, the transition of the offstage space getting inside the onstage space is relatively quick as the characters start discussing flesh melting under the blazing sun near the beginning of the play (Beckett *Happy* 144). Furthermore, one of the items visibly – and oddly near the daily items- present in the onstage space right from the beginning is a revolver. *Happy Days*, like the other two, gives additional information on the offstage space with close association to death in between the routine of the characters. Death is already partly there in *Happy Days* and the two main characters are depicted as able to ignore its presence for a while in the play.

#### 4.3.2. Abjected Fertility in *Happy Days*

Although it does not connect nature to infertility as is the case with *Waiting for Godot*, the presentation of nature in *Happy Days* is similar to that of *Endgame* as

both depict nature, and fertility which is closely related to nature, as dead as the grass in the play is “scorched”, and a “blazing light” hints at unusual weather that is perhaps too hot for any flora, in other words, any life form (Beckett *Happy* 138). As Winnie speaks for the most part of the play, it is both through the stage directions and her depiction of the offstage space that it is indicated the offstage space in *Happy Days* is associated with death. Winnie’s account of the offstage space does not contradict the information provided in the stage directions and in the following instance, Winnie uses the word “blazing” that was used in the stage directions at the beginning of the play: while polishing her spectacles, she says: “blaze of hellish light” and right after that line she looks up at the sky (Beckett *Happy* 140). Her utterances include allusions to Shakespearean tragedies, and quotations from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, that add poignancy and referential irony to the play. The way Beckett makes use of quotations in *Happy Days* has been much studied and discussed by Beckett critics such as Yoshimura, who notes the above-mentioned lines and writes that:

[i]mmediately after using some Shakespearean language [“woe is me”], Winnie then quotes from Milton’s ‘The Prologue to Light’ in *Paradise Lost*, III, which begins: ‘Hail, holy light, offspring of Heaven first-born!’ As Winnie polishes her spectacles, she utters the borrowed words in a wholly different tone: ‘holy light – (polishes) – bob up out of dark – (polishes)- blaze of hellish light’ (p.11). Contrary to Milton’s grave and solemn tone, Winnie’s becomes somewhat ironic, dissembling, and self-mocking. (Yoshimura 22)

From these lines together with the stage directions, it is indicated that the sun is no longer a source of comforting warmth but is now regarded as a source of fire and even death, as discussed earlier. In addition, the connection made to *Paradise Lost* also indicates the loss of a green paradise-like nurturing nature, and that humankind is stuck inside the opposite of what paradise represents. Furthermore, the depiction of Winnie as half-buried in the sand – later she is buried entirely except for her head – indicates that (like Nell’s generative organs in *Endgame*) her generative organs are hidden and buried (dead) in the ground, and useless. Winnie cannot reproduce life and just like the women in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, she too is infertile.

### 4.3.3. Yearning in *Happy Days*

*Happy Days* has similar tendencies to present a distant past when everything was different. After Willie reads out a report of a doctor, Charlie Hunter, found dead in tub, Winnie's first reaction is to talk about her memories with that doctor. She does not say anything about his death and avoids the fact that he might have killed himself:

WINNIE: [*Gazing front, hat in hand, tone of fervent reminiscence.*] Charlie Hunter! [*Pause.*] I close my eyes – [*She takes of spectacles and does so, hat in one hand, spectacles in other, WILLIE turns page*] – and am sitting on his knees again, in the back garden at Borough Green, under the horse-beech. [*Pause. She opens eyes, puts on spectacles, fiddles with hat.*] Oh the happy memories! [*Pause. She raises hat towards head, arrests gesture as WILLIE reads.*] (Beckett *Happy* 142)

In another instance, when Willie reads out the job announcement “opening for smart youth”, Winnie again remembers the good old days, her first ball and her first kiss (Beckett *Happy* 142-143). Similar to the characters in the other two plays, Winnie remembers a time and place where things were much better.

### 4.4. The Offstage Space Revealed in All Three Plays

After initially presenting spatial binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces, the selected plays by Beckett slowly reveal information on the absent offstage space with association with death. The initial contrast between the onstage and offstage spaces are strengthened with the added information on the offstage space as it is, unlike the onstage space with the characters in it, described with death, violence and decay. The characters, while forcing themselves to live in the onstage space, a space of signification, through their routines, they do not have access to the offstage space, a space of non-signification. Nature in all three plays by Beckett is featureless, especially in *Waiting for Godot*. Furthermore, in addition to the characters telling stories before the presence of the vestiges of the abjected semiotic becomes powerful which will be discussed in the following chapter (especially in *Endgame* and *Happy Days*), the three plays depict nature as a mostly dead nature, instead of a nature with

the power of giving life. The stage directions at the beginning of the plays indicate that the featureless nature in the onstage space continues in the offstage space and all three plays by Beckett depict nature as dead, instead of a nature with the power of giving life. Nature is associated with death rather than life. The characters, when forcing themselves to live in the symbolic through their routines, actively ward off things related to the semiotic to the offstage space.

The characters in Beckett's plays do not just ward off things associated with the semiotic, they also remember a distant past where there was fertility. All of the selected plays by Beckett indicate the characters' yearning for a different space, concurrent with a dread of it: this may be read as the pre-thetic break semiotic, but they cannot fulfill it as the connection to the semiotic is lost when the subject is in the symbolic. In all three plays by Beckett, the characters are well-aware of a past when things were better. Just like Molloy "[s]ensing the tension between his desire for a semiotic space free of signifiers and his entrenchment in the symbolic space of subjectivity", the characters in these plays by Beckett attempt "to erase the latter and burrow into the former" (Czarnecki 56).

What happens next is that the revelation of the offstage space as a space of death and decay in contrast to the life and routine in the onstage space is slowly replaced with the revelation that what has been warded off in the offstage spaces starts to leak to the onstage space. With the onstage space invaded by death associations of the offstage space, the onstage space becomes a darker space as will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE OFFSTAGE IN THE ONSTAGE SPACE

After the increasing additional information on the offstage space with references to death, to sickness and to violence, things initially associated with the offstage space starts to become a part of the onstage space by leaking into it. In all three plays by Beckett, the characters' forced routine is disrupted by a powerful imagery of death that was initially associated with the offstage space and the initial order inside the onstage space is gradually replaced with disorder coming from the offstage space. "The abject [in the offstage space] emerges when exclusions fail, in the sickening collapse of limits" (Ellmann 181). This chapter will discuss how the imagery of death associated with the offstage spaces of these plays intrudes into the onstage spaces in the selected three plays by Beckett.

#### 5.1. *Waiting for Godot*

##### 5.1.1. Violence in the Onstage Space of *Waiting for Godot*

Unlike *Endgame* and *Happy Days*, *Waiting for Godot* presents its onstage space as already mixed with its offstage space and its depiction of the offstage space leaking into the onstage space does not happen gradually and instead its offstage space presents itself in different degrees. Physical violence is suggested in the first page in *Waiting for Godot*, but later on in the play the degree of violence increases. While the characters discuss violence starting from the beginning of the play, it is only shown in the onstage space after Lucky and Pozzo enter. In one instance, Lucky, in response to Estragon approaching to wipe Lucky's tears, suddenly "*kicks him*

*violently in the shins*” as written in the stage directions and Estragon, according to what Vladimir says, “is bleeding” as a result of Lucky’s kick (Beckett *Waiting* 32). Vladimir may not be telling the truth as the stage directions do not mention any blood, but the act of physical violence is clearly shown in the onstage space and the possibility that there might be blood as a result of such violence is different from unseen physical violence when Estragon gets beaten up by perhaps imaginary people at night at the beginning of the play as his account of getting beaten may not be reliable. This time, violence is not just diegetically referred to, but happens visibly in the onstage space and this indicates a change in the play’s depiction of space(s). In another instance, Vladimir inflicts violence on another character and strikes Pozzo after Estragon’s suggestion to “[k]ick him [Pozzo] in the crotch” (Beckett *Waiting* 77). In addition to the fact that the characters kick the reproductive male organ of one another as if that would be the first place to attack, these instances directly show violence in the onstage space. In both instances, violence that was initially part of an unseen offstage space has now leaked into the onstage space. The beginning of the play with diegetically-referred-to physical violence associated with the offstage space has thus been replaced with physical violence in the onstage space. Furthermore, while both Estragon and Vladimir are presented as inside the onstage space from the beginning, Lucky and Pozzo come from outside the onstage space and bring violence with them, a literal intrusion of the offstage space into the onstage space: “the intrusion of strangers” that “disrupts their equanimity” (Gordon 37). Accordingly, it is indicated that the separation between the offstage and the onstage spaces is not clear anymore and that something has changed. Furthermore, the sentence “something is taking its course” may also refer to the transition of the offstage space into the onstage space (Beckett *Endgame* 107). Perhaps the biggest sign of the offstage space transitioning into the onstage space is through Lucky’s visible suffering and the violence Pozzo inflicts on him as will be depicted in the following part:

VLADIMIR: But will he be able to walk?  
POZZO: Walk or crawl! [*He kicks LUCKY.*] Up pig!  
ESTRAGON: Perhaps he’s dead.  
VLADIMIR: You’ll kill him.  
POZZO: Up scum! [*He jerks up the rope.*] Help me!

VLADIMIR: How?

POZZO: Raise him up!

[VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON hoist LUCKY to his feet, support him an instant, then let him go. He falls.] (Beckett *Waiting* 44)

While physical violence has been part of the unknown in the offstage space and has been doubted as there was no information in the stage directions about violence in the beginning of the play, now physical violence is experienced/seen by both the characters and the reader/audience in the onstage space. The two main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, have been in the onstage space from the beginning of the play, but physical violence was shown right in the onstage space after the literal intrusion of Pozzo and Lucky who came from the offstage space out of the blue. In other words, physical violence came into the onstage space from the offstage space and violence, though there from the beginning of the play, intensifies after the intrusion of Pozzo and Lucky<sup>8</sup> into the onstage space. Gordon writes that “Pozzo and Lucky function as agents releasing Vladimir and Estragon’s frustration and hostility, muted during their games of camaraderie” (44). The pair of Pozzo and Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* is similar to that of Hamm and Clov in *Endgame* as both pairs have a master and servant relationship. In this instance, the master visibly inflicts violence on his servant when he “*cracks his whip*” according to the stage directions (Beckett *Waiting* 44). In this sense, what Estragon and Vladimir have been saying about the offstage space as a space of violence must be true as there are people inflicting physical violence on others that are coming from the offstage space. In addition to Pozzo inflicting physical violence on Lucky, the image of Pozzo pulling the rope around Lucky’s neck is another powerful image of physical violence. Lucky’s suffering is surely emphasized here, but another significant emphasis is put on Pozzo’s violent nature when Lucky is concerned. As the stage directions indicate, Lucky has been walking for six long hours on that country road carrying a lot of weight with a rope around his neck that has been held by Pozzo who has also been holding a whip to use it on Lucky (Beckett *Waiting* 25). Again, while violence has

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<sup>8</sup> The idea of Pozzo and Lucky literally intruding from the offstage space and introducing physical violence in the onstage space is suggested by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margaret J.M. Sönmez during a discussion of this chapter.

initially been diegetically referred to as part of the offstage space, the entrance of Lucky and Pozzo creates the image of a man inflicting violence on another, it is suggested that what has been initially associated with the offstage space has made its entrance to the onstage space quite like Pozzo and Lucky entering the onstage space from the offstage space disrupting the routine of Estragon and Vladimir.

In addition to physical violence, hunger was also initially presented as part of the offstage space and slowly became part of the onstage space. While the two characters are unable to find anything to eat other than some vegetables – namely carrots, turnips and radishes- it is not strongly indicated that the two are starving in the dialogues or the stage directions (Beckett *Waiting* 21; 63). Later in the play, however, after the entrance of Pozzo and Lucky, Estragon and Vladimir's situation is emphasized. Seeing Pozzo eating, the two characters bargain for the bones of the chicken Pozzo has been eating and it is hinted that the bones have been Lucky's usual dinner in the offstage space (Beckett *Waiting* 38). Perhaps, by making the two main characters beg for some bones that are Lucky's usual dinner, the play hints that Estragon and Vladimir are in worse condition than Lucky as they have no masters to offer them any bones. Their hunger, however, is highlighted after the entrance of Pozzo and Lucky with their bargain for the bones. In addition to hints at famine and starvation, the characters talk about being cold towards the end of the play. After Pozzo and Lucky's entrance, similar to Hamm and Clov discussing how cold they are towards the end of *Endgame* and Winnie in *Happy Days* as will be discussed later, Vladimir and Estragon also refer to being cold (Beckett *Waiting* 51-52). Furthermore, the dialogues and actions of the characters reveal the deteriorating physical condition of the characters towards the end of the play. Although death or physical deterioration is there in the onstage space right from the beginning of the play, the stage directions do not give any information on them and it is indicated through the dialogues and actions of the characters. Thus, it is not gradual, or it does not come from the offstage space, but as it is not specified in the stage directions, the dialogues and actions of the characters highlight the bad conditions in the play. Estragon, for example, tells that his "left lung is very weak" and there is a wound "beginning to fester" in one of Estragon's legs (Beckett *Waiting* 40; 62). Depicted as

being able to see in the first act, Pozzo is somehow blind in the second act (Beckett *Waiting* 80). It is indicated Vladimir may be having trouble while urinating as the stage directions say at the beginning of the play, he “[a]dvances with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart” (Beckett *Waiting* 11). In another instance where a character quickly makes an association between sickness and death, Estragon tells Pozzo to sit down or he will “get pneumonia” and then warns him again with similar words by saying “you’ll catch your death (Beckett *Waiting* 36-37). None of this information on the character’s physical well-being deteriorating has been provided at the beginning of the play when the characters have been trying to pass the time through a certain routine of their own as indicated at the beginning of the play. When routine and order in the onstage space that represents the symbolic is disrupted, it is hinted that death initially associated with the offstage space representing the semiotic leaks into the onstage space in its abjected form. In other words, the abjected semiotic comes back to the characters with its close association to death and hence, the characters in the play become more violent and more obsessed with death as the abjected semiotic slowly takes over the order and stability in the onstage space representing the symbolic and the symbolic is unable to deal with the vestiges of the abjected semiotic any more.

The characters, unable to deal with the abjected semiotic in the onstage space, talk about death even more frequently. Even figures of speech are about death now. “POZZO: [*Sobbing.*] [...] ...and now...he’s killing me” (Beckett *Waiting* 34). Nobody kills anyone, but the choice of words indicates death seeping through language as the vestiges of the abjected semiotic cannot be dealt with in the symbolic. In another similar instance, Estragon talks about either Pozzo or Vladimir with the following words: “He’ll be the death of me!” (Beckett *Waiting* 35). Even when talking about the only object, the tree, the characters are unable to avoid the topic of death as discussed earlier. Talking about why they wait on that spot, Vladimir mentions Godot telling them to wait “by the tree” and the two characters start talking about that tree that, according to Vladimir, is “a willow” (Beckett *Waiting* 15). The two are quick to associate the only representation of nature in the onstage space with death as Vladimir immediately says that “it must be dead” and

the tree is no longer a representative of life-giving nature, but of a dead nature similar to the scorched grass in *Happy Days* as discussed earlier (Beckett *Waiting* 15). In addition to the tree being thought to be “dead” by Vladimir, its association with death is strengthened when the characters discuss hanging themselves on that tree. So, the tree is far from giving them comfort with its shade or food and instead it is just a tool for them to hang themselves from. Still trying to find things to do to pass the time while waiting, Estragon suggests to Vladimir: “What about hanging ourselves?” and then the two discuss the prospects of hanging themselves from the tree a second time (Beckett *Waiting* 18; 88). Although the tree has been discussed before in relation to the representation of nature as dead, here the significance of a mostly dead nature is important as the characters were able to ignore the tree at the beginning of the play, but as the vestiges of the abjected semiotic can no longer be dealt with towards the end of the play, the characters seem to notice the dead nature which indicates the offstage space leaking into the onstage space. Perhaps it is just a joke, or perhaps the characters are eager to hang themselves because Vladimir believes it would give them an “erection”, but still, it is interesting to note the way the characters keep talking about death more towards the end of the play (Beckett *Waiting* 18). Even when referring to the good old days, they say “all dead and buried” instead of gone (Beckett *Waiting* 51). The routine can no longer be continued in the onstage space as now everything is dead, just like the dead voices and the dead leaves as the characters refer to them with the word “dead” (Beckett *Waiting* 58). In other instances where the characters suddenly start talking about death, they do so without giving a context to their discussion of death and they simply use words that are associated with death. In one instance, the characters mention “a charnel-house” for no apparent reason (Beckett *Waiting* 60). In other words, in *Waiting for Godot*, instances where death is referred to, such as “the skull in Connemara” in Lucky’s monologue/soliloquy, can be interpreted as a direct reference to death, and words like “skeletons” and “a charnel-house” are frequently uttered perhaps due to the vestiges of the abjected semiotic’s growing presence felt by the characters in the symbolic (Beckett, *Waiting* 43; 60). In Lucky’s speech, Roche believes “[i]n his English translation of Lucky’s speech, Beckett has revealed a more complex geocultural background than the monolingual focus of the French version”, but the

associations with death are present in both versions (201). Through this strong imagery of death, it is indicated that the characters, initially able to pass the time with a forced routine of their own, can no longer avoid the subject of death and as a result they keep adding it into their language with no apparent reason for doing so as they are unable to deal with the vestiges of the abjected semiotic. Even when there is nothing dead, death is still there through the characters' fear of it as Vladimir does when he says: "Don't leave me! They'll kill me!" (Beckett *Waiting* 76). If somebody doesn't answer when called, the characters quickly think of death and they just assume that person is dead, as will be discussed later in *Endgame* and *Happy Days* as a similar occurrence (Beckett *Waiting* 81). Just like the charnel-house, Vladimir talks about graves and grave diggers, again out of nowhere and with no context and death starts to become multiplied and perhaps even likened to the death of Christ (Beckett *Waiting* 84).

ESTRAGON: The best thing would be to kill me, like the other.

VLADIMIR: What other? [*Pause.*] What other?

ESTRAGON: Like billions of others.

VLADIMIR: [*Sententious.*] To every man his little cross. [*He sighs.*] Till he dies. [*Afterthought.*] And is forgotten. (Beckett *Waiting* 58)

### 5.1.2. The Characters as Narrators in *Waiting for Godot*

In addition to the initial routine in the onstage space being disrupted by the imagery of death and physical violence coming from the offstage space, *Waiting for Godot*, like the other two plays, has a tendency to position its characters as narrators through telling stories with the influence of the offstage space in the onstage space. In addition to talking to one another, Vladimir and Estragon tell stories to pass the time on that spot of waiting in *Waiting for Godot*. The first story is the story of the two thieves from the Bible who are crucified next to Christ, and the second is about an Englishman. In the first story which Vladimir starts telling to pass the time, the discussion quickly comes to hell, abuse, damnation and death while the second story is set in a brothel as discussed earlier on fertility and death connection (Beckett *Waiting* 14-18). Although stories are limited in *Waiting for Godot*, the other two plays give more detail in their stories and hint that these stories are narrated with the influence of the offstage space inside the onstage space.

Although it may not be a story, what the boy tells the two main characters may be a made-up narration of his own in *Waiting for Godot*. After claiming that it is his first time seeing them and indicating that the boy in the first act was not himself, the boy mentions that he has a brother with the following words as an answer to Vladimir: “He beats my brother, sir” (Beckett *Waiting* 49). As nothing is certain in the play, nobody can be sure whether what the boy claims is true but as an answer to Vladimir asking “[h]e [Godot] doesn’t beat you?”, the boy immediately talks about a brother who gets beaten up (Beckett *Waiting* 49). Perhaps the boy does not want to accept the fact that he gets beaten and as an answer to Vladimir curious about whether he is a victim of physical violence, the boy creates a brother in his imagination. There are no textual references to this assumption that the boy is lying in order to distance himself from his trauma and the only clue is that every character in the play comes in pairs, but the way the boy starts talking about a brother right after someone asks him whether Godot beats him is similar to Winnie talking about her own -perhaps- traumatic experience by alienating herself from the experience and referring to herself as Mildred as will be discussed later (Beckett *Happy* 165). In addition to the assumption that the characters come in pairs, Beckett in one of his letters explains the red faces of Hamm and Clov and the white faces of Negg and Nell in one production and says that the color in their faces “serves to stress the couples and keep them apart” (Harmon qtd. in Gontarski “Greying” 145).

These examples in *Waiting for Godot* indicate that the play’s initial depiction of the characters forcing a routine of their own inside a nearly empty onstage space cannot be continued as death initially warded off to the offstage space comes into the orderly onstage space and disrupts its order. In this way, it is suggested that the offstage space leaks into the onstage space. The other two plays by Beckett have a similar disruption of the forced order in the onstage space by the offstage space, as well.

### **5.1.3. Fragmented Language in *Waiting for Godot***

Towards the end of *Waiting for Godot*, Pozzo (similar to Hamm towards the end of *Endgame* as will be discussed later) starts talking in a way that his words are no

longer fully comprehensible and, more importantly, his use as communicative tools and conveyors of rational thought no longer function properly says: “[...] one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, [...] They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more” (Beckett *Waiting* 83). Vladimir recites a poem<sup>9</sup>, like Mary does in Eugène Ionesco’s *The Bald Soprano*, about a dog coming to the kitchen to get bread but he gets beaten up till he was dead” (Beckett *Waiting* 53; Ionesco *Kel* 42). When forced to it, Lucky breaks his silence with a linguistic performance, but his language is the nearly complete breakdown of the conventional link between the signifier and the signified in language in his monologue/soliloquy with references to death such as “the skull in Connemara” (Beckett *Waiting* 43).

## **5.2. *Endgame***

### **5.2.1. The Presence of the Offstage Space in the Onstage Space in *Endgame***

*Endgame* has a similar transition from the image of people keeping busy with their routine in the onstage space and ignoring the clear associations to referential death in the offstage space. After a while, just like the characters in Beckett’s other two plays, the characters can no longer ward off the associations of death in the offstage space and the offstage space begins to creep into the onstage space disrupting its stability and order. In addition to the dialogues and the actions of the characters indicating a change, Beckett himself writes about a change towards the end of the play in his theatrical notebooks as he writes “C [Clov] perplexed. All seemingly in order, yet a change. Fatal grain added to form impossible heap” (Beckett qtd. in Gontarski “Greying” 150). Perhaps this change Beckett discusses is the vestiges of the abjected semiotic leaking into the symbolic and disrupting the forced order of the characters inside the symbolic as the symbolic does not function properly.

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<sup>9</sup> Perhaps poems can be taken as a method of communication outside signification as they have similar features to laughter or music, and are closer to the semiotic than the symbolic. Accordingly, this may explain why the characters start communicating using poetry or music towards the end of the plays as the presence of the vestiges of the abjected semiotic inside the symbolic is felt more strongly towards the end of each play.

The disruption of the routine in the onstage space in *Endgame* is more gradual compared to *Waiting for Godot* as the beginning of the play depicts the characters as characters who keep busy with a certain routine of their own in a shabby interior space. While the dialogues of the characters refer to the offstage space as a space of death as in Hamm stating: “[o]utside of here it’s death”, the characters are depicted as being unable to take their eyes off of the offstage space (Beckett *Endgame* 96). As a blind old man about whom it is suggested he cannot stand up and walk, Hamm is addicted to see the offstage space. Right after Clov helps Hamm do his round that it is indicated to be Hamm and Clov’s routine consisting of Clov pushing Hamm’s armchair and taking him back to the center of the room, the first thing Hamm asks about is the offstage space as he wants to know about the weather and orders Clov to look outside with a telescope (Beckett *Endgame* 105). Clov looking outside and telling Hamm what he sees might be part of their routine, but it is interesting for Hamm to be interested to know about the offstage space. As Clov is implied – through his dialogues – to be someone who is used to seeing nothing outside, he is able to make jokes about the offstage space and according to him, there is only “zero” in every direction he looks from the window as discussed earlier (Beckett *Endgame* 106). “The light is sunk”, all the gulls are gone, there is no sun, and it is “[l]ight black. From pole to pole” (Beckett *Endgame* 106-107). “All outside, if we are to believe the testimony of Clov and his telescope, is grey, deserted and lifeless”, but somehow Hamm wants to be updated on the offstage space (McDonald 43). Hamm could have continued his round and Clov could have kept himself busy serving Hamm, but the characters are unable to distance themselves from the offstage space and it is as if they were being drawn towards death lurking outside in the offstage space. Slowly, the offstage space’s presence outside the walls of the room starts to be felt inside the onstage space with associations to death. Similar to *Waiting for Godot*, the offstage space begins to creep into the onstage space and to disrupt the order in it with its associations to death. In one instance, Hamm and Clov start discussing Clov dying in the kitchen and as Hamm cannot go to the kitchen and see Clov, he can only assume Clov is dead if Clov does not come to him when Hamm uses his whistle. Furthermore, just like Hamm smelling the corpse of Clov in the kitchen, it is also indicated that the two characters can smell the corpses of other

people coming from the offstage space. Accordingly, it is indicated that death, like an unseen smell of a corpse, comes into the living space of the characters unnoticed and makes its presence known. In the following part, Hamm and Clov discuss the possibility of Clov dying in the kitchen:

HAMM: But you might be merely dead in your kitchen.

CLOV: The result would be the same.

HAMM: Yes, but how would I know, if you were merely dead in your kitchen?

CLOV: Well... sooner or later I'd start to stink.

HAMM: You stink already. The whole place stinks of corpses.

CLOV: The whole universe. (Beckett *Endgame* 114)

Now that the offstage space has permeated into the onstage space, the characters talk with more direct references to death. At this stage when the “ray of sunshine” is gone, the play gets closer to darkness (Beckett *Endgame* 123). Discussing aging characters in Beckett’s writing, Rehm writes:

We confront character after character in Beckett’s writing who have failing memories, failing bodies, decreasing capacities, increasing debilities; who demonstrate *a growing dependency on habit and daily ritual to survive*; who betray a desperate (albeit often suppressed) need for company, companionship, an answering voice, another pair of eyes to verify their existence; who express *a yearning for lost time*; who *sense the encroaching dark*; who admit a fear of – and sometimes desire for – an ending that arrives, rather than one that is ever impending. (Rehm 167; emphasis added)

Hamm is “freezing” as the onstage space is slowly filled with the death associations of the offstage space and he asks for a rug, but there are no more rugs that indicates there is no way for the characters to warm themselves up; death and its coldness is inescapable (Beckett *Endgame* 125). At this stage when the “ray of sunshine” is gone, the play gets closer to darkness (Beckett *Endgame* 123). Hamm is “freezing” (Beckett *Endgame* 125). Although the characters’ dialogues indicate that all around them is death and every living being is dead, there is an interesting exception to it as Clov finds a flea inside his trousers. The two main characters jokingly discuss the possibility of the whole universe coming into life from that flea and Hamm urges Clov, as indicated through the insecticide Clov uses on it, to kill it immediately (Beckett *Endgame* 108). “Flies may have been of interest to Beckett not just because

of the possibility they held out for anthropomorphic identification, but more particularly because humans and flies were analogously anomalous” (Connor 49). Flies and humans, according to Connor, live off of each other and in this sense they are our “fellow-travellers” (Connor 49). Like flies, flea has similar connotations and is similar to human beings on earth. Through the flea in *Endgame* discussed in relation to its death, perhaps it is indicated that death of humans is similarly instantaneous and sudden and through the imagery of small insects, it may be indicated that humans, just like flies and fleas, are small and insignificant creatures whose lives, just like their deaths, do not make a difference. Discussing the flea in *Endgame*, Gontarski similarly likens the life of the flea to the life of a human and writes that “Nell dies and a flea appears, one life simply—symmetrically—replacing another” and his understanding of the flea indicates that the characters in *Endgame* may be equally insignificant (“Greying” 153). Now that the imagery of death has leaked from the offstage space into the onstage space, even the lives of the characters are likened to the lives of small, insignificant creatures. Life is accompanied with death.

In the offstage space, no human or living creature is left; nature is dead. The only living creature other than the characters is a flea and fleas are associated with dirt<sup>10</sup> and a general uncleanliness, rather than a lively nature and “[t]he only woods left now are in Hamm’s dreams” (McDonald 50). Even the dog Hamm believes to be with them is a broken toy dog. Just like the tree in *Waiting for Godot*, the moment Hamm and Clov find a representation of nature and life, they immediately associate it with death and even try to kill it themselves. After the flea discussion, Clov mentions that there is a rat in the kitchen and although Clov may be hallucinating as Harmon suggests, it is interesting how he is quick to associate the rat with death right after he mentions it (Beckett *Endgame* 125; Harmon qtd. in Gontarski “Greying” 146). Rat, like the flea, is a significant choice of an animal as together with its association with uncleanliness and poor living conditions, rats are also associated

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<sup>10</sup> As dirt and uncleanliness arouse disgust, the flea may connect the play closer to Kristeva’s theory of abjection. At this stage of the play, the flea may mean the vestiges of the abjected semiotic is leaking more into the symbolic and that the symbolic is unable to ward them off.

with eating corpses. Harmon doubts the existence of the rat together with the boy at the end and argues that Clov's escape mechanism is his visions and "[w]hen Clov admits to having his visions less it means that his escape mechanism is breaking down. Dramatically this allows his perception of life (the boy) at the end and of course of the rat to be construed as hallucination" (Harmon qtd. in Gontarski "Greying" 146). Hallucination or not, everything in the play is there for a reason and I believe the rat indicates the increasing amount of the offstage space inside the onstage space. Like a cloud covering the sun and killing its light, the offstage space gradually covers the onstage space with its associations of death, darkens the daily routine of the characters and gets the characters closer to their death in the space of signification. "CLOV: [*Harshly.*] When old Mother Pegg asked you for oil for her lamp and you told her to get out to hell, you knew what was happening then, no? [*Pause.*] You know what she died of, Mother Pegg? Of darkness" (Beckett *Endgame* 129).

From this point onwards, death will be present in the dialogue of the characters even more vividly than before. In the following instance, Hamm openly asks Clov to kill him after Clov throws the toy dog to Hamm in anger. Although there are instances where Hamm wishes to die peacefully, this time he wants Clov to murder him brutally. "HAMM: If you must hit me, hit me with the axe<sup>11</sup>. [*Pause.*] Or with the gaff, hit me with the gaff. Not with the dog. With the gaff. Or with the axe" (Beckett *Endgame* 130). As if visualising Clov killing Hamm with an axe or gaff was not enough, in the following instance Clov makes a suggestion of killing "a small boy" outside with a gaff right after telling Hamm about the boy (Beckett *Endgame* 130). Towards the end of the play, Clov looks into the ashbin that Nell occupies and says Nell "looks like" she is dead, thus making death not a reference anymore: death is literally inside the onstage space now as the only female character is supposedly

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<sup>11</sup> From the beginning of the play, Hamm has been presented as the master while Clov is presented as the servant who keeps obeying him no matter how he hates to do so. The way Hamm asks Clov to kill him with an axe may be a reference to Dostoyevski's *Crime and Punishment* and the scene where the protagonist kills the pawnbroker, the master in a way, with an axe.

dead<sup>12</sup> (Beckett *Endgame* 122). The two characters continuing to talk while there might be a corpse in the onstage space and the increasing references to death both indicate that the onstage space can no longer be separated from the offstage space. In other words, death cannot be separated from the characters and stay abjected/othered in the offstage space; it is finished.

### 5.2.2. The Characters as the Narrators in *Endgame*

Like Pozzo in *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm in *Endgame* wants to be the narrator towards the end of the play as the influence of the offstage space inside the onstage space increases. Hamm demands an audience to tell a story<sup>13</sup> and bribes his father to listen to him. While telling his story in which it is indicated that he was perhaps a rich landowner with resources others did not have, Hamm makes constant references to the offstage space and to death. Initially, the characters would talk about their past – if there can be any past, present and future in Beckett’s plays - as lovely, but now Hamm, while telling his story, remembers the past differently. His first reference to a past that is not as ideal and beautiful as initially narrated in the play is hinted through the following lines, if not through his first words being before the story is “finished”:

“[t]he man came crawling towards me, on his belly. Pale, wonderfully pale and thin, he seemed on the point of – [*Pause. Normal tone.*] [...]” (Beckett *Endgame* 116). He does not verbalise it, but perhaps, judging from the paleness and thinness of the man, the man was on the point of death. Furthermore, the man is crawling on his belly and although he may be likened to Hamm who is unable to walk, the image of a man crawling on his belly indicates a closer connection to the earth and to the body. As the offstage space is slowly felt more in the onstage space, the characters, as is indicated through the image of the crawling man, get closer to the remnants of the

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<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that, out of the four characters, the only female character is the first one to die. Also, Mother Pegg, another female character that is unseen, is mentioned with her death.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that at the beginning of the play, it was Nagg telling a story, the story of the tailor, and now his son Hamm tells a story and replaces his father. They are the only characters telling stories and both are powerful male characters. Nell is a female character and Clov serves Hamm, both Nell and Clov are, hierarchically speaking, beneath Nagg and Hamm. Similarly, both Nagg, father to Hamm and Hamm, a possible father figure to Clov, are fathers and these two fathers are the only characters who are able to use the power of language to tell their stories.

abjected semiotic in the symbolic. Hamm's story continues with other references that are similar to the offstage space of the play. "It was an extra-ordinarily bitter day, I remember, zero by the thermometer" and quickly adds that it is usual since it was Christmas Eve, but the word "zero" and Clov's usage of that same word to depict the offstage space looking outside the window with a telescope connects the two spaces together and perhaps indicates that now even their memories/stories have the imagery of death associated with the offstage space: Hamm is under the effect of the abjected semiotic. "Seasonable weather, for once in a way" says Hamm and again hints that the weather has not been normal for a while (Beckett *Endgame* 117). He then continues and tells that the man "raised his face to me [to Hamm], black with mingled dirt and tears" (Beckett *Endgame* 117). With the depiction of an unknown man who comes crawling on his belly, who is very pale and thin and whose face is "black with mingled dirt and tears", the story is no longer a story of an ideal past (Beckett *Endgame* 117). Perhaps it was fine for Hamm as Hamm, together with his claim in the story that the man came to him, that he "calmly" fills his pipe, his "meerschaum", that he is a busy man and wants the unknown man to be quick as there is little time before "the festivities", is depicted as a rich landowner, but even with that detail of Hamm living comfortably, the story continues with references to a bleak space (Beckett *Endgame* 117). Even if Hamm was living comfortably, it is indicated the others did not and Hamm's story is quick to have death associations from the beginning as can be exemplified in the following lines: "It was a glorious bright day, I remember, fifty by the heliometer, but already the sun was sinking down into the...down among the dead" (Beckett *Endgame* 117). While Weiss believes these references to meters "reflect Hamm's attempt to create an accurate and precise story, much like Pozzo's references to time", Cohn notes that Hamm consults all these devices, "but no clock" (Weiss *The Plays* 28; Cohn *Just* 43). Gatewood, however, argues that "while Hamm seeks an ordered telling, stories from the past evade such order" as "the descriptions of the day on which the story takes place change according to the measuring device used" (59). In addition, Hamm verbalises death with likening sunset to the sun dying with everyone else. Hamm's story comes towards the end of the play and narrates, with no conclusion, how the man begs Hamm to take him and his boy in so that they won't starve, but it is interesting to

note the way Hamm depicts the space in his story similarly to the offstage space with associations with death. Hamm's story may be made-up, and it may have no connection to Clov's past at all, but the way Hamm depicts the space in the story is significant due to the imagery of death in it.

### 5.2.3. Fragmented Language in *Endgame*

In the last pages of *Endgame*, Clov says that “the earth is extinguished, though I [Clov] never saw it lit” and his speech is fragmented and is out of context, similar to Hamm's monologues/soliloquy at the end (Beckett *Endgame* 132). Just like in Hamm's last monologue/soliloquy when his speech is out of context such as “[d]ig my nails into the cracks and drag myself forward with my fingers” that is unrelated to the larger dialogue and is fragmented, Hamm starts drifting apart (Beckett *Endgame* 126). Now his language turns into a chant as he says that “[y]ou cried for night; it falls: now cry in darkness” and then he says “speak no more<sup>14</sup>” (Beckett *Endgame* 133). The last sentence Hamm utters, while Clov is there “dressed for the road”, is “[y]ou...remain” (Beckett *Endgame* 132; 134). As the offstage space becomes one with the onstage space, language starts becoming fragmented and the characters use more fragmented language towards the end. In other words, the change in the language used by characters from its initial version at the beginning into a more fragmented version indicated the presence of the vestiges of the abjected semiotic inside the symbolic that is unable to ward them off in the play.

In another such instance, Hamm's language gradually becomes more fragmented when he narrates his story about that man crawling on his belly. In the story, it is revealed that the man wanted “bread” for his “little boy”, but coincidentally, as death leaks into his story coincidentally with the increasing presence of the semiotic inside the symbolic towards the end of the play, Hamm's words begin to be contradicting. In addition to “[...] an extra-ordinarily bitter day, I remember, zero by the thermometer [...]”, now there is “[...] a glorious bright day, I remember, fifty by the heliometer [...]” and “[...] a howling wild day, I remember, a hundred by the

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<sup>14</sup>Again, towards the end of the play, as the presence of vestiges of the abjected the semiotic inside the symbolic is gaining power, Hamm chants.

anemometer [...]” and “[...] an exceedingly dry day, I remember, zero by the hygrometer” (Beckett *Endgame* 117). His language starts to change as he mentions “dead pines” swept away by the wind exaggerating the power of the wind in unrealistic terms, referring to where the man and the boy lived as a “hole”, indicating that he is sick, he has “lumbago”, imagining that he would die “a nice natural death, in peace and comfort” out of context and in fragmented, contradicting words (Beckett *Endgame* 117-118). The story is about the man and the little boy, but Hamm keeps talking about other things that are associated with death as his language is fragmented, distracted or otherwise disturbed in language patterns. Later on, Hamm offers to take the man into his service and the man asks Hamm if he would take in the boy as well, and right at that moment, when Hamm verbally remembers thinking about/considering giving his consent to take in the child although he does not mention what he did; he cuts the story short: his story has no conclusion (Beckett *Endgame* 118). The play does not give any further clues regarding the boy or Clov’s past, but the way Hamm tells his story with increasing references to death and the parallel fragmentation and disturbing lack of consistency of his language indicates that the abjected semiotic is disrupting the symbolic order and that the law of the father, that is so intimately tied to language, is being broken down and can scarcely function properly. Perhaps, as the offstage space gradually takes over, the characters are growingly unable to deal with their past traumatic experiences that have initially been abjected to the offstage space and towards the end of the play, when the imagery of death initially abjected into the offstage space is more present in the onstage space than ever, the characters start verbalising these previously abjected experiences as traumatic haunting. Their narration is a form of verbally calling the offstage space’s death imagery into being inside the onstage space. The characters are unable to deal with the vestiges of the abjected semiotic.

### **5.3. *Happy Days***

#### **5.3.1. Death Inside the Onstage Space in *Happy Days***

Similar to *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, *Happy Days* begins with a depiction of the routine in the onstage space. With Winnie waking up, praying, brushing her teeth

and putting on her lipstick and with Willie reading his newspaper while Winnie talks endlessly about every little thing, the scene looks like a lazy Sunday morning and at first, nothing is unusual other than the space the two main characters occupy as in the middle of nowhere with scorched grass. Slowly, this starts to change. The first disruption is provided by Willie through his newspaper as he reads one headline out loud: “His Grace and Most Reverend Father in God Dr Coralus Hunter dead in tub” (Beckett *Happy* 142). This is the first death, and it is also a suspicious one. Willie does not go into detail, but “dead in tub” suggests a suicide. Suicide is mentioned again later in the play as indicated to be attempted by Willie. In the following instance, Winnie takes out the revolver and addressing it as “Brownie”, she hints that Willie begged for Winnie to take the revolver away so that he wouldn’t be able to “put myself [himself] out of my [his] misery” (Beckett *Happy* 151). Winnie also tells that “it’s a comfort to know” the revolver is here with them and perhaps she, too, sees suicide as an escape from a possible melting of her flesh under a blazing sun (Beckett *Happy* 151). In fact, she openly wishes for such a death. In the following instance Winnie discusses a violent and painful death by describing it as happy with the following lines: “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.*] [...]” (Beckett *Happy* 144). The transition from the busy routine into the constant death associations is a lot faster in *Happy Days*, but it is similar to the one in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*: the play begins with routine and ends with a disrupted forced routine overflowing with associations with death. In fact, Beckett himself discusses the play with the word “interruption” and says: “One of the clues of the play is interruption. [...] She’s [Winnie is] constantly being interrupted or interrupting herself. She’s an interrupted being” (Beckett qtd. in Knowlson 687).

Unlike the characters in the other two plays, Winnie is depicted as too cheerful to be aware of anything bad in her life. “Instead of evolving towards a better state of mind, Winnie desperately clings to the past and to her routines while her days wind down and she sinks into the earth” (Weiss *The Plays* 39). Even Winnie, however, admits to

the leakage of the offstage space into her orderly onstage space, somehow. Her dialogues and actions suggest her attempt “to sustain her humanity in a situation of inevitable decline” (Chambon 168). In the following instance while again trying to keep a positive attitude, Winnie admits “sorrow keeps breaking in” and right after that line she continues to avoid complaining as she says: “What a blessing nothing grows” (Beckett *Happy* 152). The text does not provide any explanation on why the fact that nothing grows is a blessing for Winnie. She cannot stand up and get food for herself, but regardless, she believes nothing growing is something good. “The most interesting thing here is of course that Blin both assumes that Winnie is unaware of the tragedy of living, and yet at the same time that she feels disgusted by life” (Chambon 172). Even with her forced optimistic attitude, however, things don’t go well. In the following instance, right after Winnie says: “Oh yes, great mercies”, her parasol catches fire. “[*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<sup>15</sup>” (Beckett *Happy* 153). This scene is very interesting as Winnie does not notice the fire at first and is just in the onstage space half-buried to the ground and unknowingly holding a parasol on fire. In another instance, Winnie thinks Willie is unresponsive to her and immediately jumps into the conclusion, just like Hamm assuming an unresponsive Clov to be dead, that Willie is dead, and she asks Willie to raise a finger so that she will know he is alive (Beckett *Happy* 154). These instances grow in number towards the end of the play. In the following instance, Winnie again refers to a possible death caused by the blazing sun right above her:

With the sun blazing so much fiercer down, and hourly fiercer, is it not natural things should go on fire never known to do so, in this way I mean, spontaneous like. [*Pause.*] Shall I myself not melt perhaps in the end, or burn, oh I do not mean necessarily burst into flames<sup>16</sup>, no, just little by little charred to a black cinder, all this – [*ample gesture of arms*] – visible flesh. [...].  
(Beckett *Happy* 154)

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<sup>15</sup> Winnie’s choice of word is interesting as Hamm and Clov also talk about dying as extinguishing in *Endgame*.

<sup>16</sup> The contrast of places that are either very hot or very cold in Beckett’s spaces is interesting.

While saying these lines, Winnie gestures to her arms as if she wanted the reader/audience to imagine her arms as burnt. Slowly, the initial image of Winnie keeping herself busy with her routine is replaced with an image of her painful and violent death. The image of melting human flesh or human arms burned black thus turns the initial beachy scene into something completely different and it is in this way the offstage space makes its presence known in the onstage space.

In addition to the dialogues, one of the items taken from the black bag also indicates the closeness of death to the characters: the presence of the revolver right next to Winnie (Beckett *Happy* 158). Another image of death is a brutal one about death of animals as in the first act Willie refers to pigs as “[c]astrated male swine. [...] Reared for slaughter. [...]” and the first act ends as it began: with their routines (Beckett *Happy* 159). Interestingly, Pozzo refers to Lucky as a hog in *Waiting for Godot* and in this sense, Lucky is indicated to be reared for slaughter as his only purpose is to keep serving his master while also being a victim of all kinds of violence in his hands: Lucky too may be reared for slaughter in the hands of his master (Beckett *Waiting* 31).

The influence of the offstage space messing with the characters inside the onstage space becomes more vivid in the second act. In the following instance, Winnie wonders whether Willie has been crying for help all this time he was unresponsive, and she mentions she hears cries inside her head, a crucial information indicating that her initial cheerful and talkative optimism in the first act was forced/fake (Beckett *Happy* 163-164). Another instance where Winnie remembers a man and a woman running into her implies physical violence. Thinking again of the day when the man-Mr. Shower if she remembers correctly – asks questions to the woman with him whether Winnie has any clothes on underneath the sand indicating that he might have raped her if she was not half-buried in the ground (Beckett *Happy* 165). With the indication that the man might inflict violence on Winnie, the woman with him is also suggested to be victim of his violence. All this time, the man might have been holding the woman without her consent as the woman, Winnie remembers, says: “Let go of me, for Christ’s sake and drop! [*Pause. Do.*] Drop dead! [*Smile.*] [...]”

(Beckett *Happy* 165). The woman with the man would wish the man to be dead and, in a way, let her free as a result. The initial image of Willie and Winnie as perhaps comfortably sitting on a beach, happily keeping busy with their routines at the beginning of the play is now being replaced with the imagery of death and violence leaking into that safe spot in the onstage space. At this point, Winnie can no longer avoid her living conditions. Her initial chatty voice is replaced with her talking with violence: “[*Pause. With sudden violence.*] My neck is hurting me!” (Beckett *Happy* 166). This is very different from the Winnie in the first act, sweet and patient. Originally, she would even avoid complaining and would try to be content with whatever she has, but now her vocabulary has changed as she says: “It might be the eternal dark. [*Pause.*] Black night without end. [...]” (Beckett *Happy* 166). “By the second act of *Happy Days* Winnie is no longer able to occupy herself with her souvenirs” (Goldman 51-52).

Even with the offstage space’s presence in the onstage space, the characters are able to force their routine and escape into that safe spot of order and stability. In other words, “Even if we can understand Winnie and Willie as two aspects of the same self, Beckett does not let us forget that they also dwell in the mundane world of conjugal life” (Chambon 170). As if they did not just talk about human flesh slowly burning into a black cinder or animals reared to be murdered, now Willie reads the headlines of his newspaper out loud while Winnie checks the way she looks once again (Beckett *Happy* 159). “Winnie, in other words, goes about her day, repeating her daily habits – but does so mechanically, as unconscious acts perhaps to keep a more unpleasant thought away” (Weiss *The Plays* 42). Furthermore, while Clov looks outside from the two small windows and gives information about the offstage space on Hamm’s demand, all Winnie does is to look at herself in the mirror and even when Willie talks about someone else, Winnie instantly talks about that person in connection to herself<sup>17</sup>. She avoids looking out and looks inside instead perhaps as an attempt to avoid looking right into the problem. Winnie talks about death referring to an unanswering Willie when she says: “...Oh, no doubt you are dead, like the others, no doubt you have died...” addressing an apparently dead Willie (Beckett

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<sup>17</sup> This idea is suggested by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margeret J.M. Sönmez during a meeting discussing this chapter.

*Happy* 160). It is unclear whether Winnie refers to the fact that Willie and Winnie have been the only people left alive and the rest of the world is dead except for a man and a woman passing by, but the effect is similar: the characters are surrounded by death and their space is depicted as dead. Later on, Winnie asks questions to an unanswering Willie and that scene itself indicates a dead Willie lying on the ground before Willie shows himself again at the end of the play. The scene hints that Winnie is nearly wholly buried in the ground next to the corpse of Willie. While half of her body was buried to the ground in the first act, the second act opens with Winnie buried to her neck and it is indicated that her condition is degenerating physically in the case of her burial and mentally as she is no longer able to keep her positive attitude and continue with her routine amidst all. Winnie's physical conditions deteriorate as more of Winnie's body disappears into the offstage space and the characters being consumed by the imagery of death associated with the offstage space. The offstage space means death for the actors as performance dies in the offstage space and as more of Winnie's body disappears into the offstage space, less of her remains in the symbolic, the space of signification<sup>18</sup>. Weiss believes, as she is buried up to her neck, Winnie can no longer "entertain herself with other habits to distance herself from the pain of the past" ("Beckett's" 47). Moreover, Winnie notes a similar coldness at the end of the play, like Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot* and Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*. The coldness of death, as opposed to the warmth of life, has taken over the onstage space now as Winnie's words addressing Willie suggest in the following part: "Do you think the earth has lost its atmosphere, Willie? [...] It might be the eternal cold. [*Pause.*] Everlasting perishing cold. [...]" (Beckett *Happy* 161). Now Winnie "hear[s] cries" (Beckett *Happy* 166). The play ends with Willie "dressed to kill" and on all fours looking at Winnie's head on the ground (Beckett *Happy* 166-168). While Winnie thinks that perhaps Willie is after a kiss, he may be also after that revolver near Winnie and as she cannot use her buried arms, Willie may use the revolver to kill her. Perhaps the way Willie is "dressed to kill" as noted in the stage directions and also Willie saying "win" to Winnie at the end refers to Willie finally getting rid of Winnie (Beckett *Happy* 166-167).

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<sup>18</sup> This idea was suggested by Assist. Prof. Dr. Özlem Karadağ.

### 5.3.2. Winnie as A Narrator in *Happy Days*

Similar to *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, Winnie in *Happy Days* tells a story towards the end of the play with the increased influence of the offstage space inside the onstage space. Instead of the setting of the story as a space full of associations with death, Winnie's story is traumatic due to what happens to the protagonist in the story. Just like the story of Hamm, this story may be made-up, but with such a minimalistic play, the choice of the story must matter to both Winnie and the play. Now her whole body except for her head buried in the ground, Winnie is getting closer to being outside the space of signification completely and it is only then does she stop her routine and encroach herself with associations with death through her story. Whether she is talking about her past life, Winnie refers to herself/the persona in the story as Mildred and says: "Beginning in the womb, where life used to begin, Mildred has memories, she will have memories, of the womb, before she dies, the mother's womb. [...]" (Beckett *Happy* 163). Dreaming of the womb, Mildred/Winnie is partly aware of her life as nearly over in the symbolic. Later on, Winnie continues her story and says: "Suddenly a mouse ran up her little thigh and Mildred, dropping Dolly [a doll] in her fright began to scream – [WINNIE gives a sudden piercing scream] – and screamed and screamed – [WINNIE screams twice] – [...]" (Beckett *Happy* 165). Although it is not certain whether the story is mere fiction or is about Winnie's past as Yüksel claims that Beckettian characters' memory is far from being reliable, Weiss believes that the pronoun "my" in the story "testifies that Winnie is closer to the tale than she wishes to admit" (Yüksel *Ibsen'den* 33; Weiss *The Plays* 45). In fact, Weiss believes "Winnie is a victim of molestation" ("Beckett's" 37). In addition, the mouse in the story may signify the fear of rats eating dead bodies and as Winnie is buried in the ground except for her head, she might be afraid of being eaten by rats. She also talks about seeing an emmet that indicates her body buried under the ground is in danger of being eaten by insects (Beckett *Happy* 149). Perhaps, as rats signify death, she may even be afraid of being raped by a rat. In this sense, Winnie's story indicates that the offstage space is within the onstage space and the vestiges of the abjected semiotic, in the form of death, has taken Winnie's mind over as she is unable to protect herself with

continuing her forced routine in the onstage space and ward off death to the offstage space. Perhaps Winnie is keeping her distance from her trauma by referring to herself as Mildred. “Winnie is winding down, becoming slower and increasingly trapped by her trauma” (Weiss “Beckett’s” 37). Stories in *Endgame* and *Happy Days* are narrated towards the end of the plays when the offstage space’s permeating into the onstage space is evident and they indicate that the characters are closer to death. As Tuğlu argues on a main character in Beckett’s novel *Malone Dies*, “Malone’s identity is correlated with a Freudian death instinct which influences him to create stories in an attempt to explore his self” and Winnie may be doing the same (Tuğlu 308).

### **5.3.3. Fragmented Language in *Happy Days***

Similar to *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, language in *Happy Days* towards the end of the play starts to change. Unlike the other two, however, the fragmentation of language in *Happy Days* is indicated by Winnie being unable to express herself using language. Instead of communicating through language, Winnie screams and her scream is similar to Clov’s laugh at the beginning of *Endgame* as discussed earlier. Her positive attitude and ability to ignore the presence of death that has been warded off to the offstage space is not working anymore as discussed earlier, and as she cannot use language to communicate her feelings, she starts to communicate outside language. Something has changed and Winnie, knowingly or unknowingly, is aware of it.

As discussed earlier, Winnie tells a story about a little girl and whether that girl is herself or just a character in a made up story, it is strongly indicated that the story has a powerful effect on Winnie as her screams begin with the screams of Mildred, the little girl in the story. In other words, Winnie screams for the first time when Mildred screams in the story and the image of a woman passing her time on the beach, unbothered by the inhospitable terrain she is in, is destroyed. The following part is when Winnie screams while telling the story:

[*Long pause. Narrative.*] Suddenly a mouse...[*Pause.*] Suddenly a mouse run up her little thigh and Mildred, dropping Dolly [a doll] in her fright, began to scream – [*Winnie gives a sudden piercing scream*] – and screamed and screamed – [*Winnie screams twice*] – and screamed and screamed and screamed and screamed till all came running [...] (Beckett *Happy* 165)

Now at the end of the play, the association to death initially warded off to the offstage space has a clear impact on the characters as they cannot continue their routine and the order in the onstage space is gone, just like in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*.

#### **5.4. Death Felt In the Onstage Space in All Three**

All three plays by Beckett change their initial onstage space of routine into a disorderly space with close associations with death and as death has initially been warded off to the offstage space, it is argued that the imagery of death associated with the offstage space leaks into the routine in the onstage space later in these plays. In addition to the associations of death disrupting the routine in the onstage space, the methods are also similar. Like death imagery initially associated with the offstage space slowly becoming a part of the onstage space through imagery of death in the characters' dialogues, the selected plays by Beckett also share a similarity of their characters telling stories and becoming narrators themselves. "In *Endgame*, *Happy Days* [...] such back stories become increasingly elaborate, providing Beckett's audience with pictures from the past that both energize and destabilize the material presence of the *mise en scène* [...]" (Brater "Talk" 508). With the onstage space invaded by the offstage space's associations with death, the onstage space becomes a darker space.

Language has been taken by Lacan and all his followers (including Kristeva) as a defining part of the symbolic; and as the subject enters into the symbolic, he or she actively uses language in the symbolic as the law of the father. Towards the end of these three plays, however, especially in *Endgame* and *Happy Days* as the transition is gradual in them, the characters start to lose the ability to talk coherently. In addition to increasing references to death, the language of the characters starts to

become fragmented and some of the characters are unable to communicate through language at all once the offstage space has crept into the onstage space and the associations with death disrupt the order in the onstage space.

Briefly, some scholars discuss Beckettian texts with “the double bind of maternal-paternal laws and a male-female engendering”, but this thesis finds that the double bind in selected plays by Beckett is presented in the form of the paternal law abjecting the maternal at first and being overcome by its return later (Moorjani “Beckett” 184). The selected plays by Beckett indicate that the vestiges of the abjected semiotic is felt by the subject as the symbolic is unable to ward them off.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

As discussed in Chapter 1, studies examining space in literature, especially in plays that have been critically acclaimed as absurdist, are found to be largely ignored. To fill the gap in the research, this thesis has examined representation of space(s) in *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett in relation to the Kristevan theory. Accordingly, by analysing space(s) as presented in the selected plays by Samuel Beckett, this thesis has traced Beckettian space(s) and found the following characteristics of space(s) in the selected plays by Beckett: 1) spatial binarism that is found at the beginning of the plays - each play represents space in spatial binarism and an opposition between the onstage space, the known and seen, and the offstage space, the unknown and unseen; 2) imagery of death in the onstage space that is found as each play evolves - the initial spatial binarism between the onstage (now a space of life and routine) and offstage spaces (now a space of death and violence) starts to collapse with the additional information about the offstage space; 3) death coming into the onstage space that is found as each play gets closer to its end - the spatial binarism between the onstage and offstage spaces collapses and the imagery of death initially warded off to the offstage space leaks into the onstage space and disrupts its order. The representation of spaces in this way in Beckettian drama is explained with Kristevan theory.

In Chapter 2 Kristevan theory in relation to space(s) in Beckettian drama is looked into. Like Beckettian spaces, the Kristevan symbolic and semiotic are indicated to be separate from one another but are also believed to be inseparable. Kristeva

“consistently describes the semiotic and the symbolic as co-dependant, co-existing, intertwined” and, spaces in Beckettian drama, like the co-dependant semiotic and symbolic, are intertwined at the end of the play and the subject is indicated to be in limbo (Söderbäck 6). Kristeva describes the semiotic as pre-signification, and the symbolic as signification. After the thetic break, the symbiotic relationship between the infant and the mother is cut, and the infant finds itself forced to live in the symbolic. As the infant or subject-to-be has to become a separate subject in the symbolic, the semiotic is abjected for the subject-to-be to adapt to its life in the symbolic. However, according to Kristeva, there may be vestiges of the abjected semiotic.

In Chapter 3 the initial spatial binarism in Beckettian drama is explored. Spatial binarism in Beckettian drama is formed with the representation of the onstage and offstage spaces as different from one another. While the onstage space is presented as the living space of the characters in the selected spaces, the offstage space is left as a mystery. In *Waiting for Godot*, although “the set [is] simplicity itself”, it is indicated that the main characters live on the spot while they are waiting for Godot to come and meet them (Bradby 339). As they wait, they keep themselves busy with a routine of their own and avoid exploring the offstage space that surrounds the onstage space. Accordingly, while the onstage space in *Waiting for Godot* is thus a living space that is seen and known, the offstage space is indicated to be its opposite as it is unseen and unknown. Similarly, in *Endgame*, it is indicated that the main characters live in the small room in the onstage space and the stage directions do not provide any information about the offstage space and thus a similar spatial binarism is formed: the onstage space, the seen and known versus the offstage space, the unseen and unknown. This time the characters keep breaking away from their routine and looking outside from the two windows into the offstage space and one of them, Clov, even tries to go outside into the offstage space, but he does not. The spatial binarism at the beginning of the play is formed in *Endgame* in similarity to *Waiting for Godot*. In addition to these two plays, *Happy Days* together with “[t]he stark simplicity of [its] set”, also presents its onstage space as a living space and the offstage space as a mystery (Hutchings 308). The two main characters of *Happy*

*Days* live on a spot in the onstage space while an unseen, unknown offstage space surrounds them.

In Chapter 4 the way additional information on the offstage space reveals the offstage space to be closely associated with death. As each play presents its offstage space as a mystery at first, it is found that the dialogues and actions of the characters provide additional information on the offstage space. Through this information, it is implied that the offstage space is closely associated with death, violence and sickness. All three plays refer to the offstage as a space of death. In *Waiting for Godot*, the characters constantly talk about physical violence in the offstage space. Similarly, the main characters in *Endgame* directly refer to the offstage space as the embodiment of death as Hamm says “[o]utside of here it’s death” (Beckett *Endgame* 96). In *Happy Days*, the offstage space, through diegetic references, is indicated to be equally full of death. In addition to diegetic references to the offstage space as closely associated with death, it is indicated that fertility is abjected in the selected plays. In *Waiting for Godot*, nature that is associated with fertility is nearly always referred to in close association with death and there are “countless references to death” (Bradby 330). Furthermore, there are no female characters in the play and even when female characters are mentioned in the dialogues, they are mentioned either as giving sexual pleasure to men or with infertility related sickness. While there is one female character in *Endgame*, half of her body is hidden inside a trash bin. The other female character (never seen and is only mentioned in the dialogues) is referred to in close relation to her death. Nature in *Endgame*, just like in *Waiting for Godot*, is constantly referred to as dead. Unlike the other two, *Happy Days* has a female main character, but half of her body is buried under the ground and as such her fertility is hidden, as well. Lastly, the characters in all three plays yearn for a space that is very different from the space they live in and is not associated with death at all. In *Waiting for Godot*, the two main characters refer to a distant past when the nature was not dead, and they were employed. In *Endgame*, all characters except for Clov talk about a distant past when the nature was not dead like it is where they live. In *Happy Days*, Winnie talks about her distant past where there were

“gardens” instead of scorched grass (Beckett *Happy* 142). Death of nature and lack of fertility imply that they have been warded off to the offstage space.

In Chapter 5 how the imagery of death initially associated with the offstage space leaks into the onstage space is discussed. In *Waiting for Godot*, physical violence initially warded off into the offstage space is openly shown in the onstage space. In *Endgame*, the only female character dies and the main characters start to talk about violence openly in the onstage space while that was not the case at the beginning of the play. In *Happy Days*, the main character Winnie gets nearly wholly buried under the ground and her ability to ignore associations with death is indicated to be gone. Furthermore, towards the end of each play, the characters start to narrate stories with associations with death in them. In *Waiting for Godot*, the main characters talk about the mother in Gozzo family closely associated with sickness. In *Endgame*, Hamm tells a story with strong imagery of death. In *Happy Days*, Winnie talks about a little girl associated with death. Briefly, the order at the beginning of these three plays is indicated to be disrupted towards the end of each play after the associations with death that have been initially warded off to the offstage space is felt in the onstage space. Discussing T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Ellman writes “[t]his is the game *The Waste Land* plays, and the nightmare that it cannot lay to rest, as it stages the ritual of its own destruction” and similarly, the selected plays also stage the ritual of their own destruction: a destruction of the routine in the onstage space by the associations with death intruding from the offstage space (Ellman 198).

For further studies, it would be recommended to look into spaces in Beckettian drama in every written and/or published version of each play. Bradby writes that Beckett has made considerable changes to his plays in his work as a director and one such change is made in the initial stage directions of *Waiting for Godot* (330). Beckett expanded the initial stage directions from “[a] country road. A tree. Evening” to “[a] county road. A tree. A stone. Evening” and with this change Estragon was seated on a stone instead of a low mound at the beginning of the play (Bradby 330). This change in the stage directions is important for an analysis of Beckettian spaces, but as it is difficult to acquire each version of the play, this was

not possible in this thesis. Furthermore, Bradby mentions that Samuel Beckett has had two notebooks housed at the Reading University archive: “a preliminary version” that is known as the “green” notebook and “a final version” that is known as the “red” notebook (331). Neither these notebooks, nor studies on these notebooks are easily available and this difficulty leaves researchers no choice but to examine one version of Beckett’s plays without his notes on his plays. Some academic studies cited as “qtd. in” in this thesis are examples of such studies that have been difficult to obtain in Turkey.

Furthermore, the way the vestiges of the abjected semiotic intruding into the symbolic in these three plays by Beckett may be viewed as his reaction to modernity. Perhaps Beckett emphasizes that in the modern world, the symbolic cannot function properly. In other words, due to the bankruptcy of the symbolic in the modern world<sup>19</sup>, the abjected semiotic leaks and epistemologically, these plays depict the bankruptcy of the symbolic unable to deal with the leakage of the abjected semiotic. While the characters are subjects fully functioning inside the symbolic, as the symbolic gradually loses its function, the vestiges of the abjected semiotic disrupts its order. Due to this bankruptcy of the spiritual cultures, the abjected semiotic cannot be translated into the symbolic and perhaps this leaves the characters in a limbo situation. As the symbolic no longer functions, it cannot continue to abject the semiotic and the abjected semiotic intrudes into the symbolic. When the reality of the characters are not organized in the symbolic, it is very much like the mud and even the audience is implied to be part of that mud-like existence in the non-functioning symbolic invaded by the semiotic as is depicted in these three plays by Samuel Beckett.

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<sup>19</sup> This idea was suggested by Prof. Dr. Nurten Birlik.

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu çalışmaya göre Samuel Beckett'in *Godot'yu Beklerken* (*Waiting for Godot*), *Oyun Sonu* (*Endgame*) ve *Mutlu Günler* (*Happy Days*) başlıklı eserlerinde sıkça rastlanan iki farklı psişik uzam (sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışındaki uzam) arasındaki ilişki, Julia Kristeva'nın teorileri ışığında incelenmiştir. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma yukarıda bahsi geçen üç tiyatro oyununu incelemekte ve Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında sıkça görülen uzamı/uzamları irdelemektedir. Çalışmada uzam kuramının (spatial theory) tiyatro yazınında, özellikle de Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında, diğer dönem eserlerine kıyasla daha az uygulandığı – hatta kimi araştırmacılara göre mütemadiyen görmezden gelindiği- tespit edilmiş, buradan hareketle literatürde bulunan bu boşluğu doldurma amacı güdülmüştür (Tompkins "Space" 537). Uzam kuramına Henri Lefebvre, Michael Foucault, Yi-Fu Tuan gibi önemli isimler katkıda bulunmuşsa ve Bertrand Westphal gibi coğrafi uzamı edebi eserler üzerinde analiz eden araştırmacılar olsa da, bu kuramlar çalışmanın araştırma sorusunu ve Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında görülen uzam temsilini açıklamaya uygun bulunmadığından, çalışmada uzam kuramları kullanılmamıştır.

Beckett'in tiyatro yazını içerisinden temsil ettikleri psişik uzamın/uzamların birbirleriyle benzer özellikler göstermesi nedeniyle seçilen *Godot'yu Beklerken* (*Waiting for Godot*), *Oyun Sonu* (*Endgame*) ve *Mutlu Günler* (*Happy Days*) başlıklı eserlerinde uzam şu şekilde yansıtılmaktadır: 1) oyunların başında sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışındaki uzam arasında uzamsal bir ikicilik oluşturulmaktadır ve bu ikicilikte sahnedeki uzam karakterlerin bilinen/görülen yaşam alanı olarak temsil

edilmekteyken, sahne-dışındaki uzam ise ölüm imgesi ile ilişkilendirilen bilinmeyen/görülmeven olarak seyirciye/okuyucuya verilmektedir; 2) oyunlar ilerledikçe karakterlerin konuşmaları ve eylemleri aracılığıyla sahne-dışındaki uzam hakkında bilgi sağlanmaktadır ve sahne-dışındaki uzam ile ilişkilendirilmiş ölüm çağrışımları bu yolla sahnedeki uzama sızmaktadır; 3) oyunların başında sahne-dışındaki uzam ile ilişkilendirilmiş olan ölüm çağrışımları sahnedeki uzama sızmaya başladıkça sahnedeki uzamda yaratılmış yaşam alanında kendi rutinlerine göre yaşamakta olan oyun karakterlerinin bu zoraki rutini bozulmaya başlamakta ve sahnedeki uzamda bulunan düzen algısı kırılmaktadır. Kısaca, seçilen bu üç oyunda görüldüğü üzere Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında birbirlerinden ayrı olan sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışındaki uzam, oyunların başında ve devamında karakterlerin diyalogları ve eylemleri aracılığıyla sahne-dışındaki uzamdan geriye kalanların sahnedeki uzama sızması ve oyunların sonuna gelindiğinde ise sahnedeki uzamda bulunan öznenin bu kalıntılarla başa çıkamamasıyla sonuçlanmaktadır. Çalışmanın ilk bölümünde yukarıda da bahsedildiği gibi tiyatro yazınında uzam konusunda yapılmış akademik çalışmalardaki eksikliklerden bahsedilmiştir ve Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında temsil ettikleri uzam/uzamlar açısından birbirlerine çok benzedikleri için seçilmiş üç oyunda bulunan psişik uzamın/uzamların ortak özellikleri anlatılmıştır.

Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında psişik uzamın/uzamların yukarıda bahsedildiği şekilde bir ilişki ile okuyucuya/seyirciye aktarılmaktadır. Kristeva dil üzerine çalışmış ve anlamlama (signification) hakkındaki çalışmalarında dilde bulunan iki öğeden, semiyotik ve sembolik, bahsetmiştir. Kristeva semiyotik kavramını anlamlama öncesi olarak tanımlarken, sembolik hakkında ise semiyotik sonrasında gelen ve anlamlamanın gerçekleştiği düzlem olarak bahsetmektedir (*Desire* 133-134). Kimi araştırmacılar Kristeva'nın bu iki kavramı aslında dili anlatmak için kullandığını ve Kristeva'nın kullandığı sembolik kavramının psikanalizdeki Sembolik olmadığını öne sürse de, kimi başka araştırmacılar bu iki kavramı psikolojik gelişim evresine benzer bir şekilde ele almıştır; fakat çoğu araştırmacı semiyotik ve sembolik arasındaki ilişkiden özellikle bahsetmektedir (Oliver xiv; Acker 703; Lechte *Julia* 129; Söderbäck 1; Moorjani "Beckett" 181). Bu bağlamda, anlamlama (signification) ve anlamlama-öncesi (pre-signification) evreleri arasında bir ayrı olma hali söz

konusudur. Kişi sembolige girdikten sonra özne halini almaktadır ve artık sembolikte olan özne için semiyotik yoktur. Ne var ki artık sembolikte olan özne için iğrençleşmiş semiyotikten geriye kalıntılar kalmış olabilmektedir.

Özne, anlamlama sürecine yani sembolige girmeden önce özne değildir ve bu yalnızca özne sembolige girdikten sonra gerçekleşmektedir. Kristeva semiyotik kavramının semboligin bir nevi zıttı olarak, anlamlama dışında kalan ya da anlamlandırılmayan olarak ele almaktadır. Özne sembolikte yaşayabilmek için semiyotiği iğrençlik ile ilişkilendirmekte ya da iğrençleştirmektedir (“abject” etmektedir); fakat Kristeva’ya göre semiyotikten geriye kalanlar iğrençleşmiş bir şekilde sembolikte bulunabilmektedir (Kristeva *Powers* 3; 14). Bu nedenle kişi semiyotikten kopup sembolige girdikten ve özne halini aldıktan sonra semiyotikten arta kalanları iğrençleşmiş, ötelenmiş halleriyle algılayabilmektedir. Çalışmanın teorik arka planını anlatan ikinci bölümünde Julia Kristeva’nın semiyotik, sembolik ve iğrençlik kavramları hem tek başlarına, hem de Beckett’in tiyatro yazınındaki uzam/uzamlar bağlamında irdelenmiştir.

Beckett tarafından kaleme alınmış seçili üç oyunun başlarında sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışındaki uzam arasında oluşturulan ikicil ayrılık çerçevesinde, sahnedeki uzamın rutin ile ilişkilendirildiği öne sürülmüştür. Yüksel’in de yazdığı gibi “Beckett’in kişileri yüzeysel gerçeklerin ‘en az’a indirgendiği, ‘çıplaklaşmış’ bir dünyada yaşarlar”, ama bu çıplak dünyada okuyucuya/seyirciye bu dünya hakkında bilgi veren semboller bulunduğu gibi, oyun karakterlerinin eylemleri de sahnedeki uzam hakkında bilgi vermektedir (*Samuel* 29). Seçili üç oyunda da sahnedeki – boş gibi görünen ama aslında boş olmayan - uzamda bulunan karakterler zoraki bir rutin içerisinde kendi kendilerini meşgul eder halde verilmekte, daha da önemlisi içinde buldukları koşulları bu zoraki rutin içerisindeyken görmezden gelir şekilde temsil edilmekte ya da okuyucuya/seyirciye bu şekilde yansıtılmaktadır. *Godot’yu Beklerken* oyununun başındaki sahne direktiflerine göre dış mekân olarak anlatılan sahnedeki uzamda yalnızca bir yol ile bir ağaç bulunmaktadır ve akşam vaktidir (Beckett *Waiting* 11). “Oyunun ‘uzam’ı ‘kimsenin gelip kimsenin gitmediği’, hiçbir olayın yer almadığı ıssız bir yol kenarıdır” ve oyun “[o]rta yerdeki kuru bir ağaçtan

başka hiçbir şeyin bulunmadığı bu boşluk ve yalnızlık ortamında” geçmektedir (Yüksel *Samuel* 48). Bu aşamada oyunun geçtiği sahnedeki uzam hakkında sahne direktiflerinde oldukça az bilgi sunulmuştur. Benzer bir şekilde *Oyun Sonu* oyunundaki sahne direktifleri de bir iç mekân olan sahnedeki uzam hakkında olabildiğince az bilgi paylaşmıştır. Oyunun başındaki sahne direktiflerinde paylaşılan bilgilere göre oyunun geçtiği küçük odada perdeleri kapalı iki yüksek pencere, bir adet kapı, kapının yanında ters asılmış bir resim (ki bu resimden bir daha bahsedilmemiştir), üzeri çarşaf ile örtülmüş bir koltuk ve iki adet çöp kovası/kutusu bulunmaktadır ki bu oyun diğer oyunların aksine iç mekânda geçmesine rağmen çöp kovaları/kutuları gibi garip eşyalar barındırmakta ve bir eve pek benzememektedir (Beckett *Endgame* 92). *Oyun Sonu* oyunu *Godot’yu Beklerken* oyununa kıyasla sahnedeki uzam hakkında daha fazla bilgi verse de, *Endgame* oyunundan sonra gelen *Mutlu Günler* oyunu da tıpkı *Godot’yu Beklerken* gibi başta boş gibi görünen bir dış mekânda geçmektedir. *Mutlu Günler* oyununun başındaki sahne direktiflerine göre yanmış/yanık çimlerle kaplı sahnedeki uzamda mümkün olan en basit ve en simetrik görsellik öğeleri kullanılmıştır (Beckett *Happy* 138). Bu üç oyunda da sahnedeki uzam başta boş gibi görünse de oyunlar ilerledikçe sahnedeki uzamın karakterlerin yaşam alanı işlevi gördüğü ima edilmiştir. Her bir oyundaki karakterler farklı sebeplerle de olsa sahnedeki uzamı yaşam alanları olarak kabul etmekte ve o alanda kendilerince bir rutine göre yaşamaktadır. *Godot’yu Beklerken* oyunundaki ana karakterler olan Estragon ve Vladimir, Godot’un onlara söylediği gibi onu bir ağacın yakınlarında beklemektedir ki hiçbir şeyin kesin olmadığı bu oyunda Godot’nun bahsettiği ağacın sahnedeki uzamda görülen ya da sahne direktiflerinde bahsi geçen ağaç olup olmadığı belli olmasa da, Godot gelene kadar sahnedeki uzamda konumlandırıldıkları alanın Estragon ve Vladimir için bir yaşam alanı olduğuna işaret edilmiştir (Beckett *Waiting* 16). Karakterler bu alanda uyumakta, yemek yemekte ve konuşarak zaman geçirmektedir. Benzer olarak *Oyun Sonu* oyununda da sahnedeki uzam başta pek yaşam alanı gibi görünmese de aslında Hamm, Nagg ve Nell karakterlerinin – Clov bahsi geçen mutfakta yaşıyor olabilir - uyuyup uyandığı ve yemek yediği, yani yaşamlarını sürdürdükleri bir alandır ki kimi araştırmacılar da karakterlerin içinde bulunduğu küçük odadan bir *barınak* olarak bahsetmekte ve böylece karakterlerin sahne dışındaki uzamdan kendilerini korumak için bu küçük

odada bulduklarını ima etmektedir (Gontarski “Introduction” 9; Gontarski “Greying” 143-155; Cohn *Just* 22). *Oyun Sonu* oyunundaki küçük odadan barınak olarak bahsedilmesi belki de sahne-dışı uzamda bulunan çorak dünyanın savaş sonrası olması ihtimaline işaret etse de, barınak fikri sahnedeki uzamın karakterlerin yaşam alanı olduğunu doğrular niteliktedir. Aynı şekilde *Mutlu Günler* oyununda da oyundaki ana karakterler olan Winnie ve Willie yanmış/yanık çimlerle çevrili boş gibi görünen bir alanda yaşamakta olarak yansıtılmıştır ki bu da çoğunlukla Winnie karakterinin büyük siyah çantasında tuttuğu nesnelere (bunlar diş macunu ve diş fırçası gibi oldukça gündelik ve her evde bulunan nesnelere) ve eylemleri üzerinden verilmiştir (Beckett *Happy* 138-140). Bu bağlamda, seçilen üç oyunda da sahnedeki uzam zoraki bir rutin ve bir yaşam alanı olarak okuyucuya/seyirciye verilirken, sahne-dışı uzam bambaşka bir şekilde anlatılmıştır. Çalışmanın üçüncü bölümünde seçili oyunlarda sahnedeki uzamın bir yaşam alanı olarak ele alınması irdelenmiştir.

Seçili üç oyunda da başlarda sahnedeki uzam zoraki bir rutin ve bir yaşam alanıyla ilişkilendirilirken sahne-dışındaki uzam ise – karakterlerin replikleri aracılığıyla – ölümle ilişkilendirilmiş olarak verilmiştir. Bu oyunların her birindeki karakterler sahnedeki uzamda yarattıkları rutine bağlı bir şekilde yaşamlarını sürdürürken, aynı zamanda aktif bir şekilde sahne-dışındaki uzamdan kaçınır olarak gösterilmiştir. Sahnedeki uzam oyun karakterleri için ideal yaşam koşulları oluşturmasa da tüm karakterler sanki sahne-dışı uzamda çok daha kötüsü varmış gibi davranmakta ve sahne-dışı uzamdan olabildiğince kaçınmaktadır. Bir diğer deyişle Beckett’in tiyatro yazınındaki bu karakterler “ölmeye yatmış, yaşlı, sakat, güçsüz kişinin, kapalı bir uzamda, yaşamla ölüm arasındaki ince çizgide sanki sonsuza dek sürecekmis izlenimi uyandıran ‘tedirgin’ sesi...” ile hareket etmektedir ve sanki bu ince çizgi üzerinde son nefeslerini sahnedeki uzamda kalarak sahne-dışı uzamdan korunmaktadırlar (Yüksel *Samuel* 19). Yüksel’in “yaşamla ölüm arasındaki ince çizgide” ibaresi ise Beckett’in tiyatro yazınındaki ikicil ayrılık üzerinden anlatılmış sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışı uzam farklılığını ima eder nitelikte olabilir ve karakterler de bu iki farklı uzam arasındaki ince çizgidedir belki de (*Samuel* 19). Yukarıda bahsi geçen sahnedeki uzamda kurulan zoraki rutin ve yaşam alanı, sahne-

dışı ile ilişkilendirilen ölüm imgesi ile büyük bir tezat oluşturmakta ve böylece sahnedeki uzam içerisinde bulunan düzen, sahne-dışındaki uzamda bulunan düzensizlik algısını daha da güçlendirmektedir.

*Godot'yu Beklerken* oyununda sahne-dışı ile ilişkilendirilen ölüm imgesi ile olan bağlantı en fazla fiziksel şiddet üzerinden kurulmaktadır. Godot'nun gelmesini bekleyen Vladimir ve Estragon birbirleriyle konuşurken konu bir şekilde sürekli dayak yemeye gelmektedir ve ikili fiziksel şiddetin varlığını değil, yokluğunu tuhaf karşılar ve hatta bu ihtimale şaşırır olmuştur (Beckett *Waiting* 11). Oyundaki ana karakterlerin yanı sıra diğer karakterler de mütemadiyen fiziksel şiddeti konuşmaktaysa da tüm bu konuşulanlara rağmen fiziksel şiddet sahnedeki uzamda gösterilmemekte ve hep sahne-dışına ötelenmekte, sanki her şey sahne-dışında olmuş ya da oluyormuş gibi konuşulmaktadır (Beckett *Waiting* 50). Bu durum daha sonra değişmekte ve oyun ilerledikçe sahnedeki uzamda doğrudan fiziksel şiddet gösterilmeye başlanmaktadır; fakat bu değişim çalışmanın beşinci bölümünde ele alınacaktır. Fiziksel şiddete ek olarak *Godot'yu Beklerken* oyununda doğurganlık iğrençleştirilmektedir ki bu da doğurganlık ile ilişkilendirilebilecek kadın karakterlerin ya da doğanın her zaman ölüm ile bir arada bahsedilmesiyle yapılmaktadır (Beckett *Waiting* 15; 18; 24; 88). Bunlara ek olarak oyunda bir de doğanın olduğu eski günler yad edilmektedir. Benzer bir şekilde *Oyun Sonu* oyununda da sahnedeki uzam zoraki rutin ve yaşam ile özdeşleştirilmişken sahne-dışındaki uzam ölüm ile ilişkilendirilmiş, ölüm imgesi karakterlerin yaşadığı küçük odanın dışında kol gezmekte olarak aktarılmıştır (Beckett *Endgame* 96; 98; 114). Diğer iki oyuna kıyasla *Oyun Sonu* oyununda sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışındaki uzam arasındaki fark o kadar net çizilmiştir ki karakterlerin içinde buldukları odanın dışında bulunduğu ima edilen cesetlerin kötü kokusu karakterlerin yaşam alanı olan, yaşamı temsil eden odaya sızmaktadır ve dolayısıyla duvarlar cesetleri gizlese ve yaşam alanını çevrelese de ölüm yaşamın içine sızmaktadır bir nevi (Beckett *Endgame* 114). Tıpkı *Godot'yu Beklerken* oyununda olduğu gibi *Oyun Sonu* oyununda da doğa ve kadın bedeni üzerinden anlatılan doğurganlık ölüm ile iç içe olarak ele alınmıştır. Oyunda doğa, yaşam kaynağı olarak temsil edilmek şöyle dursun, yaşamın yitip gittiği gri bir sıfırdır: doğa yoktur (Beckett *Endgame* 106-107).

Kadın bedeni ise belden aşağısı, doğurganlığı bastırılmış ya da saklanmış şekilde sahnedeki uzamda gösterilmekte ve diyaloglarda da ölüm ile beraber anılmaktadır (ilk ölen karakter oyundaki tek kadın karakterdir). Diğer oyunlarda görülen daha güzel bir geçmişi anma bu oyunda da vardır ve karakterler (Nagg, Nell ve Hamm) yaşadıkları uzamın bambaşka olduğu zamanları hatırlamaktadır (Beckett *Endgame* 99; 113). *Mutlu Günler* oyunu da diğer oyunlar gibi sahnedeki uzamda bir yaşam alanı yaratmışken, sahne-dışı uzamı ölüm ile ilişkilendirmiştir (Beckett *Happy* 142). Diğer oyunlardan farklı olarak bu oyunda Winnie karakterinin kendini, kendi yarattığı rutine vererek sahne-dışındaki uzam ile ilişkilendirilen ölüm imgesini ısrarla görmezden gelişini daha güçlü bir şekilde sahnelemektedir. Yine benzer bir şekilde doğurganlık bu oyunda da diğer oyunlarda olduğu gibi hem doğa hem de kadın bedeni üzerinden bastırılmış ya da saklanmış ve ölüm ile ilişkilendirilmiştir (Beckett *Happy* 138). Bu oyundaki karakterler de diğer oyunlardaki karakterler gibi farklı bir uzamda oldukları zamanları hatırlamaktadır (Beckett *Happy* 142). Çalışmanın dördüncü bölümünde bu konular ele alınmıştır. Bu bağlamda sahnedeki uzamda yaratılan düzen Kristeva'nın sembolik kavramı ile benzerlik göstermekteyken, sahne-dışındaki uzam Kristeva'nın semiyotik kavramı ile benzerlik göstermektedir. Özne artık semboliktir ve semiyotik artık yoktur, fakat semiyotikten geriye kalanlar iğrençleştirilmiş olarak sembolikte bulunabilmektedir ve benzer bir şekilde Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında oyunların başında sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışındaki uzam arasında ikicil bir ayrılık yaratılmış gibi görünse de, aslında bir ayrılık yoktur ve sahne-dışı uzam ile ilişkilendirilen ölüm imgesinden kalıntılar bulunmaktadır. Bu kalıntılara rağmen oyun karakterleri sahnedeki uzam içerisinde zoraki rutinlerini sürdürür ve yaşamlarına devam eder şekilde gösterilmiştir ve kurdukları bu düzen algısı bu kalıntılardan başta etkilenmemektedir.

Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında bu şekilde oluşturulan sahnedeki uzam ile sahne-dışındaki uzam arasındaki ikicil ayrılık, oyunların sonlarına doğru bozulmaya başlar ve ortadan kaybolur. Oyunların başında her bir karakter tıpkı sembolikteki özne gibidir ve iğrençleşmiş semiyotik kalıntılarını görmezden gelerek yaşamlarına sahnedeki uzamda devam etmektedirler. Ne var ki oyunlar ilerledikçe bu durum değişmektedir ve özne giderek iğrençleşmiş semiyotik kalıntılara karşı kayıtsız

kalamaz hale gelmektedir. Bu şekilde hala sembolikte olan öznenin içinde bulunduğu düzen kırılmaya başlamakta ve özne bu iğrençleşmiş semiyotik kalıntılarıyla başa çıkamaz olarak ele alınmaktadır. Sahnedeki uzam düzen ve yaşam ile ilişkilendirilirken ve sahne-dışındaki uzam ölüm ile ilişkilendirilmiş olmasına rağmen, bir süre sonra sahne-dışındaki uzama ötelenen ölüm imgesi sahnedeki uzama da yansıtılmakta ve sahne-dışına ötelenen iğrençleşmiş (“abject” edilmiş) ölüm imgesi, sahnedeki uzamda bulunan düzeni bozmaya başlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda Beckett’in tiyatro uzamında sahne-dışındaki ölüm imgesi, sahnedeki uzama sızmaktadır ve sahnedeki uzamın düzenini sekteye uğratmaktadır.

Bu değişim *Godot’yu Beklerken* oyununda daha önce de bahsedildiği gibi önce fiziksel şiddet üzerinden aktarılmaktadır. Başta sahnedeki uzamda bahsi geçse de hiçbir şekilde gösterilmeyen ve sahne-dışı uzama itilen fiziksel şiddet, sonralarda sahnedeki uzamda doğrudan gösterilir olmuştur. Sahne-dışı uzamdan sahnedeki uzama birden giren Pozzo ve Lucky ile sanki sahne-dışına itilen fiziksel şiddet de sahnedeki uzama girmiş ve kendini göstermiştir ki Pozzo ve Lucky sahneye girerken – kimi araştırmacılar bu durumdan yabancıların işgali diye bahsetmiştir - Pozzo’nun Lucky’ye şiddet uygulamakta olduğu sahne direktiflerinde açıkça belirtilmiştir (Beckett *Waiting* 22-23; Gordon 37; 44). Tıpkı sahne-dışındaki uzama ötelenenlerin sahnedeki uzama girişi gibi Pozzo ve Lucky beraberlerinde fiziksel şiddeti sahnedeki uzama taşımış ve diğer karakterleri de bu yönde etkilemiştir ki karakterler birbirlerine karşı fiziksel şiddet uygulamaya başlamıştır (Beckett *Waiting* 25; 32; 44; 77). Benzer bir şekilde, başlarda karakterler açlık ve hastalıktan sadece söz eder ve bunlar sahnedeki uzamda gösterilmezken, sonraları sahne-dışındaki uzama ötelenen açlık ve hastalık gibi durumlar sahnedeki uzama sızmakta ve sahnede açıkça gösterilmektedir (Beckett *Waiting* 11; 35-38; 51-52; 40; 62; 80). Bunlara ek olarak Pozzo karakteri oyunun sonlarına doğru anlatıcı konumuna getirilmiştir ki bu hikayelerde de ölüm imgesi kol gezmekte ve kullanılan dilin yapısı da yavaş yavaş parçalara ayrılmaktadır (fragmented). Oyunların başında sahnedeki uzamda net bir şekilde gösterilen zoraki rutin ve yaşam ile sahne-dışındaki uzama ötelenen ölüm imgesi oyunların sonlarına gelindiğinde artık ayrı değil tektir ki Kristeva da ötelenen

semiyotikten geriye kalanların iğrençleşmiş bir şekilde sembolikte bulunabildiğini savunmaktadır.

*Oyun Sonu* oyununda da benzer bir şekilde başta sahne-dışındaki uzama ötelenenler yavaş yavaş sahnedeki uzama sızmakta ve sahnedeki uzamda yaratılan düzen algısını bu şekilde kırmaktadır. Başlarda yaşam alanlarında belli bir rutine göre yaşayıp gitmekte olarak gösterilen karakterler, oyun ilerledikçe ve sahne-dışındaki uzama ötelenen ölüm imgesi sahnedeki uzama sızdıkça bu imgesi görmezden gelerek rutinlerine devam edemez hale gelmiştir. O kadar ki Clov'un Hamm'in emriyle teleskobunu kullanarak pencereden dışarı baktığı ve ışığın battığı bir yer olarak tanımladığı sahne-dışındaki uzamı betimleyen bu karanlık yavaş yavaş sahneye de sızmıştır ki dışarıyı McDonald'ın deyimiyle cansızdır ve bu cansızlık yaşamın olduğu alan olan sahnedeki uzamdır (Beckett *Endgame* 106-107; McDonald 43). Dışarıda yitip giden ışık içeride de yok olmuş olmalı ki karakterler oyunun sonlarına doğru donuyor olmaktan yakınmaktadır (aynı durum *Godot'yu Beklerken* ve *Mutlu Günler* oyunlarında da görülmektedir: karakterler oyunların sonlarına doğru üşüyor olmaktan yakınmaya başlamaktadır) ve eğer Clov doğru söylüyorsa Nagg karakterinin cesedi – ölüm- karakterlerin yaşam alanındadır (Beckett *Endgame* 123; 125). Nagg karakterine ek olarak diyaloglarda adı geçen bir diğer kadın karakter - Mother Pegg- ise *karanlıktan* dolayı ölmüştür (Beckett *Endgame* 129). Tıpkı *Godot'yu Beklerken* oyununda Pozzo karakterinde olduğu gibi bu oyunda da Hamm karakteri anlatıcı rolünü üstlenmekte, ölüm imgesiyle sarılı hikayeler anlatmakta ve giderek daha parçalarına ayrılmış bir dil yapısı kullanmaktadır (Beckett *Endgame* 116-117; 126; 132-133). Diğer oyunlarla benzer bir şekilde sahnedeki ve sahne-dışındaki uzamlar birbirinden ayrı olsa da sahne-dışı uzamın kalıntıları sahneye sızmış ve özne bununla başa çıkamamıştır.

*Mutlu Günler* oyunu da tıpkı diğer oyunlar gibi sahne-dışındaki uzamdan geriye kalanların sahnedeki uzamda kalıntılarının kaldığı ve sahnedeki uzamda bulunan öznenin bununla başa çıkamadığı bir oyundur. Diğer oyunlardan farklı olarak bu oyunda ölüm imgesi oyunun başından itibaren sahnedeki uzamda – gerek bedeninin önce yarısı, sonra neredeyse tamamı kuma/toprağa gömülü Winnie karakteri

üzerinden, gerekse gündelik eşyaların arasından birden çıkıveren ve hep Winnie'nin yakınlarında duran tabanca üzerinden – açıkça gösterilmekte ve Winnie başarılı bir şekilde tüm bunları görmezden gelip kendi rutinine göre yaşamını sürdürebilmektedir (Weiss *The Plays* 39; Chambon 168). Oyun ilerledikçe bu durum değişir ve Winnie sahneye sızan ölüm imgesine artık kayıtsız kalamamakta ve yavaş yavaş bu kayıtsız kalamama hali oyuna yansıtılmaktadır (Beckett *Happy* 152; 154). O kadar ki etrafı yanmış/yanık çimlerle kaplı ve bedeninin yarısı/yarısından fazlası kuma/toprağa gömülü olan ama buna rağmen aynasını çıkarıp her şey yolundaymış gibi makyajını tazeleyen Winnie, kafasının içinde çığlıklar duymakta olduğundan bahsetmeye ve - sahne direktiflerine göre – ani bir *şiddetle* boynunun ağrıdığından yakınmaya başlar (Beckett *Happy* 163-164;166). İkinci perdeye gelindiğinde Winnie artık kendini hatırası olan eşyalarıyla oyalayamamaktadır (Goldman 51-52). Tıpkı *Godot'yu Beklerken* oyunundaki Pozzo ve *Oyun Sonu* oyunundaki Hamm gibi Winnie de oyunun sonlarına doğru anlatıcı rolüne bürünmekte ve travmatik bir hikaye – belki kendi geçmişi hakkında, belki de değil – anlatmaya başlar ki artık kullandığı dil de parçalanmaya başlamıştır (Beckett *Happy* 163; 165; Yüksel *İbsen'den* 33; Weiss *The Plays* 45). Böylelikle *Mutlu Günler* oyununda da başta sahnedeki uzamda kurulan düzen, sahne-dışına ötelenmişlerin sahnedeki uzama sızmasıyla bozulmaya başlamıştır. Sahne-dışına ötelenenlerin sahneye sızması ve sahnedeki düzeni bozması da bu çalışmanın beşinci bölümünde ele alınmıştır.

Sonuç olarak, seçilen bu üç oyun üzerinden Beckett'in tiyatro yazınında sıklıkla görülen uzamlar arasındaki ilişki, Kristeva'nın kavramları ile incelenmiş ve metinsel kanıtlarla desteklenmiştir. Çalışmanın altıncı bölümünde çalışmada elde edilen bulgular tekrarlanmış ve konuyla ilgili gelecekte yapılabilecek çalışmalar için tavsiyeler paylaşılmıştır.

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### YAZARIN / AUTHOR

**Soyadı / Surname** : Demir  
**Adı / Name** : Betül  
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