The Failure of Man's Dominance over the World in the Beckettian Drama: Endgame Case Study

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Abstract: This article leads a phenomenological reading towards the dramaturgy of Samuel Beckett and more specifically his Endgame with recourse to the doctrine of Merleau-Ponty. By mapping out a drama that decentralizes subject-ivity, Beckett's Endgame textualizes the subversion of the constancy of identity ("être-pour-soi") of the modern man who holds a dichotomous look on subject and object in his dominating view on the world. From this perspective, Endgame exudes an atmosphere of existential Angst which peaks in a potential way of being that prevails in the hope for an authentic life but yet at the same time falls in a cosmic exile that emanates from man's failure in his dominance over the world. Here, the examples of the Hegelian master-bondage concept and experimental psychology are felicitous reflections of this tragic relegation of man. Accordingly, registering the Pontian phenomenology of disembodiment delineates the characters of the Endgame as (in)human beings lost in a meaningless space that abandons all attempts to influence the progress of the mechanistic material world they live in. Nevertheless, this case study traces the humanistic resonance of man to bestow new methods of exploring Beckett's 'art of failure' as a relevant aesthetic reaction of the destabilized man in the modern world.

Keywords: *failure; identity; (in)humanity; material world; existentialism;*

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1. Introduction

This article contributes to the critical expansions now occurring in what has been termed as absurdist drama in psycho-social studies. Our study extrapolates upon what we call man's "art of failure", a knot of reflexive level-crossing between text and mind as the constituent of lived experience with a transformation of/in Merleau Ponty's phenomenological perception of the world.

Patterns and predicates that take shape under the auspices of man's ability to see and understand the world finally results in the formation of the phenomena of experience. In order to have a systematic set of these experienced patterns and predicates megatheories such as science, politics, religion or culture come into being. This fact is not covered to any retrospective look upon the history of the megatheories that they have boosted man's understanding of the world, but yet a critical examination of these theories reveals the negatives of their efficacy in man's life. As megatheories were at the first hand consented for the salvation they offered, the crucial question is that how far they succeed in keeping the given promise? Why the megatheories have been detrimental inasmuch as they have been constructive? On what ground(s) should a context-limited notion be credited in all of the spatial-temporal conditions? One best way to answer these questions is to have a phenomenological study not upon the megatheories but upon the premises that have given credence to them.

The hypothesis of our study is that the inconsistency between present and past events and the split between reality and imitation leads to a vernacular component of the narrative process that links a state of failure with a successful and authentic contribution. Additionally, the authors of this article decide to exemplify the phenomenological study of the megatheories by means of Samuel Beckett's art of failure in *Endgame*.

2. Methods

Psychologically speaking, the main thing that prompts man to fashion out systematic knowledge is the incessant instability of the world he lives in. Man and his world are always subjected to change. World's renewals arise the feelings of incompleteness, curiosity, and even fear and as a result they push man toward grasping an explanation for the forces thrust upon his world and life. To put this reformation differently, two existential modes of

being are to be defined: 'being-in-itself' (*être-pour-soi*)¹ and 'being-for-others' (*l'être-pour-autrui*). The former explains a mode of existence that simply *is*; one that demonstrates not a scintilla of interest in changing the way it exists. Compared to that, the latter refers to the dynamic and the conscious side of (human) being that shows much predilection for transcendence and achieving full control over the world. However, the matter of fact here is that never can man crown himself in the elusive world he lives in. What is more, reaching the full control over the world places man to the state of *being-for-itself* while it is simply impossible for any entity to experience the two modes of being both at the same time. Therefore, any try to define the world is bound to failure precisely because with the renewal of the world its definition will be inevitably renewed. As time passed by, the credence of megatheories thus began to become diluted so much so that it culminated in the dissolution of values man has long espoused. Man then began to understand that he cannot be a god, a *being-for-itself*, and it is better off to abnegate the life of meaning. In this way, the modern man sets aside all systems of value even at the expense of absurdity of life and proceeds with *being* only in terms of ontology. The phenomenology of this mode of being is subsumed with non-certainty through which the concept of reality becomes superseded by ultra-reality. From this perspective, the arbitrariness of the conventions imposed onto man's life by value systems loses weight and in turn, man lives a life of the formation of re-formation.

The doctrine of the French phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which is a pathological examination of realism, examines the roots of the arbitrary realism the megatheories offer. The concept of the "flesh of the world" is a key notion in his last book, *Visible and the Invisible*. By this term he means the events through which world's patterns and premises (read

¹ However, the failure to comprehend the self will prove that the subject is constantly lacking this *être-pour-soi* which is shifted from one signifier to another but which can totally articulate itself in none of them. This also determines an authentic kind of void of the self or *néant*. This void here, however, does not mean a real absence. It is in fact a self-liberation, a clear non-existence that rejects self-representation. About Beckett's art of failure, Richard Coe (1964) concluded that "[art] is the elucidation of the impossible. The human condition is that of an indefinable Neant within, conscious of a possible relationship with an equally indefinable Neant without, yet invalidating that relationship by the very fact of its consciousness. The artist is driven – by the very fact of being an artist – to realize, to create in art, that which is not, which cannot be, because, as soon as it is realized in concrete terms (paint or words) it ceases to be itself. Consequently, it must fail. Beckett's own art likewise is an art of failure: it is by definition trying to do something that it cannot conceivably do – to create and define that which, created and defined, ceases to be what it must be if it is to reveal the truth of the human situation: Man as a Nothing in relation to all things which themselves are Nothing" (qtd. in Marks, 2014, p.56).

perceptions) come into being not actually as a *relation* between the two poles of constituting subject and constituted object, but instead as a *bound* unit of the two poles. The world becomes perceived and embodied when a set of repeated patterns come into unanimous results and then when alike incidents would have an identical response while examined in the recently set formulae. This procedure which shares much characteristic in common with the natural sciences becomes a milestone in the development of human's perception of his world. This being the case, we "understand perception... in terms of stimuli-response" (Bullington, 2013, p.23). What is significant here is that after registering the formula endorsed by the stimulus-response examinations, a generalization of pattern will occur and rarely there will be a critical re-examination of the stimulus itself. We are told that as a tree becomes one year older, a new line of circle is added to the inner trunk of the tree. This pattern is a true way to know the age of trees indeed, but it is still not the way by which one can judge the age of a tree which is less than one year old or a tree which has become older only nine months than its previous year. Therefore, if we only trust in the established formulae of dendrology (or alike '-logies') and the science-based perceptions, we will be deprived of the *way* by which we can experience the world. And this is exactly what is happening in the life of the modern man. To establish a series of conventions is only tantamount to become deprived of the relation that exists between the constituting subjects and constituting objects, a relation by which each and every pattern could be impressed, diluted or even devalued. This explains the way how reality becomes formed and then reformed in the modern life. Naturally, this ultra-reality and its overflowing reflexive nature become overshadowed on the all sides of the modern life and bring about the demise of the megatheories.

3. Purpose statement

The outlook of our study focuses on the aesthetics of the labyrinthine structure of modern writing within the context of *Beckett's Endgame* with a shift from its modern self-reflection to *postmodern perspectives* with a stress on (de)fragmentation. A significant detail of postmodernism resides in revealing the doubtful modernist belief according to which valued authority becomes fundamentally antagonistic to absolutism and world domination. What must be unquestionably acknowledged here is that there are contrasting and multifarious patterns of manipulating power which is a key value of authority as well as of escape and domination. Therefore, authority must be regarded as an instrument of political

governance due to the insecure employment of power all over society. However, the widespread need of postmodernism is not the dissolution of authority, because it would be grasped as the annulment of power. Undoubtedly, it is the recognition that authority is established by the insecure and contextual employment of power. In our present Beckettian drama, the postmodern concept of power is strongly connected with language. Consequently, the critical issue of this postmodern perspective concentrates on what language can and cannot accomplish in order to make the reader aware of the language reliance and its codifications.

In this respect, this Beckettian postmodern strategy of language shows how characters seek security in the sanctuary of language (*i.e.* Hamm tries to escape from anxiety and isolation by talking alone, to himself). As such, this kind of 'talking' namely, interrogating, commanding, uttering exclamations and quoting – in order to generate inconstancy, discrimination, and chaos – is seen as a strategy to avoid solitude and distress. To support this, we argue that talking in its original meaning is already a game of power, an effective life strategy, so that the metaphor of chess implied by the title augments what is going to happen in the play. Hamm is undoubtedly a man of command – his authority and dominance are inflicted upon Clov by asking questions, giving orders, and bothering/teasing Clov.

This experiential precondition exhibits the fact that Hamm and Clov's (the main characters in our drama) ambiguous relationship is that of master and servant. Therefore, despite the fact that the master enjoys social authority, the servant is really more powerful, because his master is more reliant on him than backwards. All of Beckett's pairs of characters are friendly enthralled which inevitably involves a power-relationship. Significantly, in *Endgame* what is verbally conveyed authorizes the value of the utterances in their context.

In a fully deconstructive approach, every utterance in this drama must be seen of as a rigorous 'move' on the chess board: talking/speaking denotes fighting, in what concerns playing. For example, when such a 'move' which relates to Clov is made, he tries to 'countermove'. So, intrinsically each 'move' entails a particular, reciprocal 'countermove'. Hamm admits that a simple reactional countermove is not a 'good' one; this acts only as an arranged outcome in Clov's strategy and thus hasn't any impact on the balance of power. The result is nothing but the agonistic facet of society where language is emptied of referentiality, minimized to a mere conversation while viciously fighting for power. Hence, at this level of language, *Endgame* mirrors what takes place in real life, *i.e.* an insecure game of power.

Moreover, Beckett possesses the power to critically examine human anxieties by the help of his characters menacing postmodern game of power, challenging contexts he stirs, and the language he employs and produces as well. In *Endgame*, this language manifests a chaotic permanent meaning. Consequently, the Beckettian dialogues authorize the characters to prevail over narrative linearity. Language thus suggests that these dialogues, sometimes even monologues as in Hamm's case, are the only speech acts by which the characters can support their postmodern social connection and thereby legitimating their society. By these apparent incoherent dialogues, Beckett proves to be the master of exhibiting (post)modern corruption: "The whole place stinks of corpses, the whole universe." (Beckett, 2010, p. 46) – (*i.e.* Hamm's suggestive monologue echoes the modern man's abject falseness).

To sum up, given all these postmodernist grounds in *Endgame*, Beckett casts doubt on the Western culture authority on what is unreliable (subjectivism) and what might be reliable (objectivism). This declining of authorial power as well as demand of the authentic contribution of the postmodern reader distinguishes Beckett as one of the most provocateur parodist of postmodernism.

4. Results

Of the two theories of knowledge, *i.e.* objectivism and subjectivism, the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty finds fault with the objective point of view. In his negation of the objective viewpoint, Merleau-Ponty begins by highlighting the space unheeded for long at the moment of meaning constitution in the dichotomy of subject-object relationship. According to him, the concept of something neither exists in the contemplations of mind nor in the thing to which mind attends, but rather it is anchored in an in-between position. Regarding the consideration of the sky as blue, discusses Merleau-Ponty: "As I contemplate the blueness of the sky I am not set over against it as an a-cosmic subject; I do not possess it in thought, or spread out towards it some idea of blue such as might reveal the secret of it, I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery, it 'thinks itself within me'..." (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p.24). Perception takes place when a particular kind of viewpoint, belonged neither to the subject nor to the object, becomes attached to the approach we hold while attending to the world. This attachment of viewpoint to human vision makes out of him an "embodied subject," a key term in Pontian phenomenology which emphasizes that meaning is not exclusively embedded in the poles of the

spectrum of the theories of knowledge. In the following remarks, Merleau-Ponty stresses the weakening positions of the object and subject which have been long revered in the classical worldviews: "Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside of myself" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p.25). In the same vein, the absurd drama movement in general and the Beckettian art of failure (that unfailing deferral) in particular stress the deficiencies of the objective and one-sided meaning constitution. In this regard, Farah Yeganeh corroborates that the writers of the absurd drama "believe that humanity's struggles are in vain to find a purpose and control over his fate" (2010, p.640). This casting of pessimism on man's worldviews is based on the fact that knowledge, as the main product of objectivism, prevents the subjective way of understanding and thinking about the world. It is crucial here to emphasize that by subjectivity we do not mean the disturbing interference of feeling, but rather a transcended alternative (and of course not a counterpart) of the objective view on the world. This transcended stance questions and defies the credence of the premises of the theories of knowledge and encourages the worldview lenses to an in-between position. To hold such worldview as unparadoxical as possible, it is imperative to balance the preponderance of objectivity² over the other parts in the spectrum of the theories of knowledge. The achievements of objectivism are not latent to any critical survey of its history, but the negatives of it lay in the facts that throughout this approach the world is studied in abstraction of man (such as the relegation of man in experimental psychology) and subjectivity becomes a taken-for-granted notion (such as the failure of the master-bondage relationship). About the predominance of objectivity over the other parts of the spectrum of the theories of knowledge, Bullington writes: "According to the objectivistic view, there is a neutral perspective beyond human limitations, independent of human subjectivity and embodiment, a transcendent 'objective' stance outside of the relationship person-world, in which the alleged correspondence between things and what-is-said-about-things can be judged" (Bullington, 2013, p.20). The Pontian phenomenology deconstructs the objective and subjective viewpoints precisely because by

² According to Merleau-Ponty: "The claim to objectivity made by each perceptual act is taken up by the following one, which is again disappointed and in turn taken up. This perpetual failure of perceptual consciousness was foreseeable from its beginning... like the object's first attack upon my senses, the subsequent perception will pass by in turn, because like the subject of perception is never an absolute subjectivity, and also because he is destined to become an object for a later I. Perception is always in the impersonal mode of the 'one'". (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p.287)

considering all parts of the spectrum, not only it becomes possible to study the subject matter of objectivism but also to take one step further so as to have a critical look on and pore over the constitution of meaning. Such deconstructive phenomenology furnishes the context for defying fanaticism; however, countenancing the principles of this transcended alternative of objective thinking is not that incontrovertible. The objective worldview has such rooted in all areas of the modern life that the propounder of its fanaticism and radicalism is regarded as an absurdist, as a Samuel Beckett.

To define the absurdity which comes after holding a skeptic view on objectivism, and the drama movement which comes after its name, it is better to define what absurdity is not. The twentieth century is the age during which viewing the world as an object reached to its culmination. During this century, accoutered with an unparalleled self-reliance, man believed in exploring the world and investigating the reality by his reason. With this in mind he had salient advancements while having no idea that the world is more plenary and elusive than his claim, and while little knowing that this worldview is such perilous that can put him in his most tragic condition. It was not until late than the end of World War II that the demise of objectivism flagrantly turned up. In spite of costing him dear, man gradually began to know that looking at the world as an object would put him into an abject position as all the trust and boast he pinned into reason resulted in nothing, and worse, as he saw that his brutality easily put all the codes of principle into the jeopardy of hollowness. It is precisely at this moment that absurdism not as a radical reaction but as a hopeless strike highlights the ferocities of reasoning and its megatheories. This strike suggests that embarking on the absurd side of life is less detrimental if not better than grasping the fanatic and monologic structures of objectivism. Perhaps the most hospitable stage of the modern life to exercise the notions of absurdity is art. After all, unlike other value systems such as politics, economy, science or religion, art has nothing to lose when coming into absurdity. Exercising the notions of absurdism in literature culminated in the appearance of literary works which were doubtful of their constructive tenets, their own selves as works of literature, and the world they were supposed to reflect. As a result, literary men began to fragment literature from the shackles of the defined rules and led this form of art to an upheaval which vouched subjectivity for the text. Accordingly, the modern literary forms and more specifically the modern drama have disenfranchised themselves from the overbearing objectives of the ready-made rules like the long held tenets that Aristotle established for tragedy. The rationale of this deconstruction was to give literature identity so as to reflect the world as it

really is, not as how it should be. This explains why the absurd drama reflects a sharp contrast against the conventions that have limited the mission of literature. This being the case, how Beckett maintains his drama from the shackles of conventions becomes significant: the identity dilemma of the Beckettian drama is achieved not through a radical deconstruction but simply by means of art of failure. He is well apprised of the fact that an extreme revolution against the freezing rules of the conventional art may itself give way to another set of rules; in consequence, he locks his art in stalemate by highlighting the themes of void and persistent failure so as to give identity to his text and keep them away from any objective examination. To get what we exactly mean by failure in a phenomenological context and how it happens exercises both on the levels of the literary form and content, a textual analysis of his challenging play, *Endgame* becomes imperative.

5. Discussion

Significantly, this section tackles Beckett's emphasis on the failures of man's dominance over the world in Samuel Beckett's perceptual drama *Endgame* as a methodological, essentially literary practice, rather than a metaphysical exploration. This drama is ideal for an examination of the above mentioned theoretical approach because it is largely the product of the devaluation of traditional belief systems and because it focuses on the explorations of man's states of consciousness³ and its mercurial *being-for-itself*.

For the purposes of this study and in developing his ontology of the 'body-subject', the main contribution of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to the phenomenological ontology was to focus explicitly on the world embodiment⁴ as an immediate and necessary fact of existence. Beckett splits the man's (his characters') body on purpose, presumably, aiming to

³ In *Endgame*, this is a perceived thing, confiding upon one of the reflexive characters' state of consciousness. We can 'see' the outside (i.e. the external failures of this world) only through Clov's eyes, just as he can only see it by his telescope: 'One day you'll be blind, like me,' (Beckett, 2010, p.28). And what he sees definitely relies on his own state of consciousness.

⁴ "In contrast to the sharp mind-body dualism of much modern philosophy, in which knowledge is mental representation of an external object, pragmatism holds that our state of embodiment means that knowledge is constantly in process; our beliefs cannot be said to correspond to external objects *as such*, but instead are inductively-formed *habits* of thought, gained through the practice of inquiry, which generate possibilities of further inquiry and knowledge. Such beliefs, or cognitive habits, guide our inquiries into those aspects of the world that we do not yet know; they form the background according to which we judge what we encounter in the world". (Carr qtd. in Palmer & Torevell, 2008, p.126)

substantiate the absurdity of completely perceiving⁵ one's own self (*being-in-itself*). Consequently, his quasi-silent characters are arguing with ghost voices or voices of their former selves, however, their identities are always split and they are unable to reach unity (*being-for-others*). *Endgame* depicts four characters locked in a room, therefore being in a post-apocalyptic state. A blind Hamm, who is a master of sorts; Hamm's halt parents, Nagg and Nell and Hamm's helper/servant, Clov who wants to leave but does not. The whole drama depends on Clov's hidden leaving which would "end" the "game" played between the characters. Within this context, while Hamm's voice expresses the human mind, Clov, the second character, symbolizes the human body. The polyphony is the main focus into this dissection of inner voices. Hamm considers he has always been non-existent because he definitely represents the mind which projects reflections and visions, and devises ideas. When objectifying these ideas, he thinks he has been forgotten offstage, inexplicably isolated from Clov, his own buddy/body.

We consider that this unity may never be attained, since "unity" is a positive strategy per se, and Beckett perceives life as a failure, his characters being made of contrasting failed identities, which are tormented inside one "still living" body.

Therefore, Beckett's failed character is not introduced by or does not emerge from its socio-economic condition, psychological account or personal background, but rather devotes itself in terms of time (temporally subjectivised), space (the *Lebenswelt* or lived-world) and, the Other (*being-for-others*). Within this phenomenological framework, the embodied self/subject (or to adopt Merleau-Ponty's terminology, the 'body-subject') is, moreover, *immediately* sensorial (a conflicting position towards the Cartesian belief of a split *cogito* connected with the concrete, extensive world).

To illustrate this theme of void and intrinsic, persistent failure, we will analyse Clov, the oppressed servant in relationship with his dominating

⁵ According to Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, the perceiving subject's experience is defined by actions that the real, extensive world performs on the embodied/perceiving subject. Merleau-Ponty defines these actions as "motives... the situation as a fact" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p.301–302). The phrase "motive" suggests the existence of two subjects: the motivating agent (the extensive world) and the motivated recipient (the perceiving subject). Merleau-Ponty does not devise the world as a causative mechanism that conveys the perceiving subject with a profusion of actions that have to be carried. What Merleau-Ponty wants to state here is that this subject is definitely exposed to various of objects/situations/events, but it is entitled to make a decision if to respond to them or not. Therefore, a reciprocal/mutual relationship is established between the perceiving subject and the world.

master⁶ Hamm in Beckett's *Endgame*. Each introspection of Clov suggests his ontological⁷ embodied beings and to what extent each embodiment is legitimate and therefore efficient rather than deleterious to his ontological self-knowledge. To be more specific, since Clov embodies his being by his own subjecthood (*being-for-itself*) rather than focusing his ontological efficiency on someone else (*being-for-others*), he manages to achieve a higher level of authenticity and comes to establish a major ontological self-knowledge by the end of *Endgame*. In spite of Clov's frozen stasis at the climax of the drama, and even though this proffers a sense of non-authenticity to his final assessment, if he redeems himself, it is his ontological self-knowledge which enables him to free himself from his authoritative master, Hamm. If this condition implies he fails to escape, he still achieves some authenticity by his assertiveness against Hamm's various demands and his ultimate denial to listen to his master's orders. Due to his intra-conscious split between the helpful and harmful propensities, each character is unstable in ontological terms being forced to dismantle and simultaneously restore his ontological substance. As a result, due to the fact that each character's identity⁸ is so unstable and indefinite, an insight of embodiment and authenticity will support the apprehensive academics grasp that these so-called 'split identities' are some sorts of sequenced variable embodiments.

In this respect, the principle of identity is synthetic not only because it circumscribes its supreme goal to a specific being, but because of its fusion. No characters are actually *in-itselfs*, but *for-itselfs*. According to Merleau-Ponty, the *in-itself* (subject) is absolute, definite and stable in the sense that there is no failure connected with it. So what this means for the present study is that due to Beckett's characters *for-itselfs* (object), they always

⁶ *Endgame* depicts the dissolution of the master-servant relationship, of the human personality in the hour of death signifying the bondage breaking of the spiritual and physical sides of man. Both are part of a circular pattern with two high 'holes' just like inside of a human symbolic skull.

⁷ Here, we refer to the ontological embodiment as that action by which each character adjusts its existence into subsequent self-representations which leads to an identity formation. To reach its authenticity each embodiment can be examined based on other embodiments. The greater the extent to which an embodiment is concerned with the character itself rather than others, the higher the authenticity of that embodiment. The more authentic a particular character's embodiments are, the greater his ontological self-knowledge, that knowledge of the self which allows for independent reflection. This ontological self-knowledge empowers characters to live without the burden of pre-established values and therefore to avoid their failure.

⁸ Bound to reciprocal self-dependence and despising each other's existence at the edge of their situation, each character in *Endgame* is perceived as a distorted identity outcome.

convert themselves. Due to all these fundamental alterations, they are forced to change into either authentic or not embodiments (i.e. Clov manages to achieve a level of authenticity).

In *Endgame*, Hamm is absent-*in-itself*, but it is a poignant and ethereal symbol of someone's background of absence⁹ that, lacking his identity, has not yet been exposed to a failed existence. He thus has no insight on what reality (understood as material world) is *in-itself*: "Absent, always. It all happened without me. I don't know what's happened" (Beckett, 2010, p.144). We thus infer that Hamm looks like willing the *absolute failure* of this physical, modern world, so that he might seek a refuge into self-command.

In this respect, Hamm's effort to consecrate himself as the only inhabitant of an esoteric world is stormed by difficulties as he is forced to defy the reflexive nature (i.e. his parents), and ordinary affairs (i.e. his toy dog), in a world that paradoxically becomes his self-consciousness. The Beckettian protagonist as Hamm's character, perceived as nothingness on the stage of this *material world* of which he is absolutely the domineering master, if not its creator, may be employed to epitomize the Pontian rise of consciousness from the destruction of the material being. Hamm's embodied consciousness comes to an end when its dwelling into this material world is totally damaged. Within this progressive removal, or dissolution, of its extended being (*being-for-others*) at the end of *Endgame*, we grasp something similar to a conversion from the physical world of the drama, to the material world of the novel. The protagonist is convicted to inevitable failure (that failure of consciousness to "grasp" the present moment) until he changes his focus from his physical desires towards his psychical revival; however, he conveys this exchange in consciousness, using the only means available to him: his emphatic body.

In accordance to this, the phenomenological presence of body and mind finds its resonance in Beckett's *Endgame* drama, and although we perceive its characters therein who seem to be fighting against the ordinary affairs of their existential environments that surround them, as they try to escape into their consciousness, they really fail to resist, as consciousness requires a body so as to exist. For example, Hamm's psychological disintegration influences the novel's conclusive pages tracking down to this failure to deconstruct his distorted self. However, the outside world of

⁹ "...the influence of an absent master provides a sense of objectivity for the creatures, which preserves the possibility of meaning and identity. The masters (...) are projected figures that grant a means of avoiding the creaturely subjectivity invested in failure, but ultimately give rise to an alternative subjectivity immersed in melancholy." (Anderton, 2013, p. 59)

Endgame provides no refuge from the residual subject-ivity¹⁰. The inquiring mind surveys inside and outside for a “way in” to the world of *Endgame*, in order to find that Beckett dissolved both ways, hence the atmosphere of existential Angst.

In providing such conditions, *Endgame* invariably alludes to our own consciousness, beyond which nothing real, material exists. Under these circumstances, we could thus appreciate that the physical environment of *Endgame* is an absolute necessity for “staging consciousness”, as it were, “presenting subjectivity”, or empowering being to emerge: the dramatic character is on stage that is his fundamental quality: he is there (*being-for-itself* as well as for others).

However, as an acknowledgement of his absolutely transient existence failure as a fictive character, Hamm states that he “...was never there”, struggling against the mere environment that determined him to come out. We could also advocate that Hamm would refer to consciousness as his “fundamental quality” as he constantly attempts to escape to some esoteric world, and to obliterate and/or manipulate everything that brings him too close to material reality. It is now worth mentioning, however, that if Hamm hadn't been introduced to us as a performing body on the stage world, we would have no access to Hamm's “existential landscape” and the intentional contraction of that body and its “exterior landscape” is maybe the very thing that allows us to “zoom in” on the human embodied consciousness. Hamm thus closed *Endgame*'s all the physical resources so that we should change our focus on the existential authority figure that he acknowledges as its insensitive replication: (self)-consciousness.

¹⁰ Beckett often contrasts each character's consciousness with the substantial self on which it mirrors. It could be claimed that by some “failure”, this reflection lures the *for-itself* into having confidence that it comprises something of the latter's being, despite the fact that what the mirror reflects back to its subject is, eventually, its Derridean absence. By doing so, he introduces subject-ivity as a sort of self-consciousness. For Beckett, the Pontian perception of subject-ivity is a pitfall that can only be escaped only by self-dissolution. Merleau-Ponty rearticulates the subject-object relation in terms of absolute mutual exteriority: “*Endgame* occupies the nadir of what philosophy's construction of the subject-object confiscated at its zenith: pure identity becomes the identity of annihilation, identity of subject and object in the state of complete alienation” (Adorno, 1988, p.128). For Beckett this environment cannot be dispatched but by the mere dissolution of subject-ivity. As such, in Beckett's world, subject-ivity becomes subjected as self-consciousness becomes its own worst opponent through its self-empowerment. In *Endgame*, Clov embodies this self-empowerment as he authorizes himself to be both subjectified and examined by Hamm in a Hegelian master-bondage relationship. By this self-conscious internalization of authority, Beckett employs subjectivity and subjection reciprocally, often concurrently.

The potential harm to Hamm's utopian landscape of his mind derives from an onstage biology that is taunted and abhorred. The terrible consequence of Hamm's egotism is that as he ruins his landscape, first the outside world, and then the claustrophobic inside, he sets up his own *for-itself being*. In searching for an end to consciousness and a reversion to non-existence: "...A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust" (Beckett, 2010, p.57), he understands that he must cut out his natural, material bonds, in order to finally achieve peace, and to end the narrative that is his exclusive activity.

Therefore, Hamm returns to his internal life. His dependence on objects and on Clov only postponed his authorization of both his rise and decay of consciousness. At the enigmatic end of this epistemological drama Hamm heads towards an insecure self-sufficiency. Hamm and Clov's predicted split reveals both the physical and thereby the psychical world ending (definitely for Hamm who cannot feed himself, and likely for Clov who is aware that the world away from Hamm implies death), and performs a suicidal consent on the verge of being accomplished at the end of the drama (i.e. the final game in the hour of death). The protagonist's sheer death reveals the significance of the philosophical attitude (and its failure) for rendering his hidden condition/self. As an evanescent, fictitious being, whose existence is gauged by his time spent as stage embodiment, Hamm closes his drama as he started it; indoor, hidden, mysterious and static, expecting his recurrence to the incorporeal unconsciousness wherefrom he once came thus providing an evident imagery of consciousness' constant movement and on-going ego-failure to wholly reach self-totalisation. The subject must surrender its totality to self-reflectively wrap up of oneself, not in a psychoanalytical way of profound performance, but to achieve the alienated double nature of the subject. To conclude, the main intention of this section was to clarify the hidden meaning of the fractured narrative-self regarding an absent other within.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we aimed to examine the 'embodied consciousnesses' of man's dominance over the world through the aesthetic lenses of Beckett's *Endgame* drama as well as Merleau-Ponty's transcendental theory of perception. If we were to re-embodiment Beckett's characters' inherent failure in the 21st century and to grasp that each character's so-called 'melted' identity is not an identity *in-itself*, but a sequence of embodiments, we could entirely behold that these identities are nothing but joint embodiments deliberately

adopted by his characters based on their strong prerequisites and their own ontological self-knowledge.

The aim of this study, in light of all that has come before it, was to explore the ways in which Beckett's characters offset for their own intrinsic *sense of lack* (a nonsensical effect of the ephemeral, unsatisfied, material being), by showing off behaviors that paradoxically allow to pull them off any specific self-recognition. Even Beckett himself writes of a 'fidelity to failure' as the sign of his calling.

If characters' identities were unaltered and stable, no character would ever develop or change and Clov would never be able to leave. If we appreciate each character as he or she is reflected on in this drama and not how they may catch life on stage, it will become obvious that each fictitious moment challenges each character to deal with as best he can and avoid ego-failure. To reflect on the extra-literary artistic devices directing such as acting and staging and how these connect with the present analysis would open up a entirely contrasting perspective to this investigation. Characters are not constrained to do anything or to act in any authoritarian way. They are empowered to choose their being into their fictional world just like real-life subjects. If the scholarly readers can explore the gaps between subsequent embodiments, they can better understand how and to what end each character embodies his/her failure to the dominance of the world itself.

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