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Mehmet Akif BALKAYA * 

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE FAMILIAR AND THE EERIE: THE REPRESENTATION OF FREUD'S UNCANNY IN BECKETT'S *ENDGAME*

ABSTRACT

This article examines the interaction between the familiar and the eerie, as theorized by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in his essay "The Uncanny" (1919), and to what extent such an interaction may have been represented in the barren and post-apocalyptic setting of Samuel Beckett's (1906-1989) *Endgame* (1957). Freud's concept of the uncanny reveals it as a phenomenon that arises from the unsettling revival of what was once familiar, now transformed into something strangely unfamiliar. By conducting an analysis of Freud's uncanny and its representation in Beckett's play, this research aims to explain the existence of the eerie in human consciousness and its influence on the existential challenges represented by the actions and dialogues of the characters, the setting and the repetitive, seemingly pointless exchanges between Hamm and Clov. The play's representation of reliance, isolation, and the ongoing struggle because of the inescapable nature of death puts forth the idea of the uncanny. Therefore, the play has parallels with Freud's concept of the uncanny since it represents the uncanny as an element of the human experience, marked by an ongoing struggle that takes place between existence and nonexistence, actuality and deception.

Keywords: Freud, Beckett, Uncanny, Endgame, Eeriness.

TANIDIK İLE ESRARENGİZ ARASINDAKİ ETKİLEŞİM: BECKETT'İN *OYUNSONU* ESERİNDE FREUD'UN TEKİNSİZ KAVRAMININ TEMSİLİ

ÖZET

Bu makale, Sigmund Freud'un (1856-1939) "Tekinsiz" (1919) adlı makalesinde tanımladığı tanidik ile ürkütücü olan arasındaki etkileşimi ve bu etkileşimin Samuel Beckett'in (1906-1989) *Oyunsonu* (1957) adlı eserinin çorak ve kıyamet sonrası ortamında ne ölçüde temsil edildiğini incelemektedir. Freud'un tekinsizliği incelemesi, onu bir zamanlar tanidik olanın şimdi tuhaf bir şekilde tanidik olmayan dönüşerek tedirgin edici bir şekilde yeniden canlanmasından kaynaklanan bir fenomen olarak ortaya koymaktadır. Bu araştırma, Freud'un tekinsizliğinin ve Beckett'in oyunundaki temsilinin bir analizini yaparak, ürkütücünün insan bilincindeki varlığını ve karakterlerin eylemleri ve diyalogları, teatral mekân ve Hamm ile Clov arasındaki tekrarlayan, görünüşte anlamsız söz alışverişleri tarafından temsil edilen varoluşsal zorluklar üzerindeki etkisini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Oyunun güven, izolasyon ve ölümün kaçınılmaz doğasıyla süregelen mücadeleyi temsil etmesi, tekinsizlik fikrini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu nedenle oyun, Freud'un tekinsizlik kavramıyla paralellikler taşır çünkü tekinsizliği, varlık ve yokluk, gerçeklik ve yanıltma arasında süregelen bir mücadelenin öne çıktığı insan deneyiminin bir unsuru olarak temsil eder.

Anahtar kelimeler: Freud, Beckett, Tekinsiz, Oyunsonu, Tekinsizlik.

* Assist. Prof. Dr., Selçuk University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature, Konya/Türkiye. E-mail: mehmetakif.balkaya@selcuk.edu.tr / Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Selçuk Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, Konya/Türkiye. E-posta: mehmetakif.balkaya@selcuk.edu.tr

Introduction

This article examines how and to what extent the Freudian interaction between the familiar and the eerie is represented in the barren and post-apocalyptic setting of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) through relating the play to Sigmund Freud's essay "The Uncanny". Freud examines the concept of the uncanny, and the domain between the familiar and the unexpected, where the ordinary undergoes a sudden and unpleasant transformation. However, Beckett's *Endgame* represents Freud's idea of the eerie by means of its desolate, post-apocalyptic setting, and the immense existential anguish faced by the main characters. The play represents a complex relationship between the known and unfamiliar to let the audience/reader consider the different aspects of human cognition, and the essential nature of existence. To this end, the article examines how *Endgame* embodies Freud's concept of the eerie to emphasize the play's role in conveying the general feeling of unease that defines the human experience in an indifferent universe.

Freud's Concept of the Uncanny

Freud believes that the uncanny falls within "the realm of the frightening" that triggers fear and dread, yet "not always used in a clearly definable sense" (2003, p. 123). In his examination of the uncanny, as Fenichel remarks, Freud challenges the task of defining reality beyond the limits of unchanging existence (2013, p. 665). For him, the uncanny is tied to what was once familiar and has since become estranged. The German term 'unheimlich', which is central to understanding the uncanny, is equivalent to the English 'unhomely' which refers to something well-known that has transformed into something "eerie" and frightening (Freud, 2003, p. 124). Freud notes that while 'unheimlich' is the opposite of 'heimlich', not all that is new and unfamiliar is uncanny. In this context, as Freer states, Freud's uncanny "combines the familiar with the unfamiliar" (2013, p. 331). The German term 'heimlich', with a complex meaning, describes something that is familiar, not strange, and belongs to the home, conveying a sense of trust, comfort, and intimacy. 'Heimlich' relates to being tame or not wild, associated with the family, and includes examples such as "die Heimlichen", meaning the members of the household, or "der heimliche Rath", which refers to a private councillor (2003, p. 126). The term also implies something hidden or kept away from others; therefore, this double meaning indicates that 'heimlich' holds within it the potential to shift towards its opposite, 'unheimlich', when that which is familiar becomes hidden (2003, pp. 126-127).

The term 'heimlich', within such a context, stands for a sense of comfort and familiarity, as in "As quiet and dear and homely a place as they could wish to rest at" (Freud, 2003, p. 128). Such uses express the ease associated with the home, and the heart. Yet, 'heimlich' also conveys secrecy, with expressions like "He did not feel at all at ease in all this", that remarks a hidden, almost shadowy side; therefore, the term gets the duality of being both known and familiar, as well as hidden or concealed, hinting at something lurking beneath the surface (Freud, 2003, p. 128). However, the hidden aspect of 'heimlich' may even suggest unreliability or deceptiveness, as illustrated by questions like "What do you mean by mysterious?" (2003, p. 129). Thus, 'heimlich' encompasses both the coziness of the familiar, and the potential unease of the concealed (pp. 128-129). It can also refer to watching secretly, like "to watch with hidden glee" or "concealing emotions, such as "to weep secretly" (p. 130). Related to that, Marynowsky remarks that it also touches on concealed love affairs or sins and places meant to be kept from view, to hint at actions performed away from the public eye (2012, p. 483). However, 'heimlich' is not solely about

concealment, as it conveys a sacred secrecy in actions deemed necessary to keep private, such as “a sacred, secret force at work” (pp.130-131). As Hillman states, the hidden aspect of any familiar thing generates “the uncanny otherness of the supposedly self-same” (2013, p. 39). Therefore, while ‘heimlich’ can be comforting, it also has a side that is not meant to be seen or found out. The term can even mean something new and unexpected, a sense of ‘uncanny’ when referring to something “intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open” (Freud, 2003, p. 132). Freud supposes that ‘heimlich’ and ‘unheimlich’ are closely linked, with ‘heimlich’ evolving to include elements of danger and secrecy, making it somewhat ‘unheimlich’. Therefore, things familiar to us can also be eerie, as when “every corner seems to him eerie and frightening” (p. 134). As Mattis has put it, the uncanny is like “a familiar thing that’s been twisted into something strange” (2012, p. 235). For Freud, exploring cases of the uncanny helps to understand this complex relationship. For instance, E. Jentsch believes that when we are unsure if something that seems alive is animate or just lifeless, it can create a strong sense of the uncanny, and this feeling is enhanced by things like wax figures or dolls, which might look real but are not, making us feel uneasy (pp. 134-135). Within the examined play, although Hamm’s parents are not made of wax, the fact that they live in ashbins makes them feel less real and contributes to the disturbing, and eerie atmosphere that “creates anxiety, fear and insecurity” (Sağiroğlu, 2016, p. 141).

Freud examines E. T. A. Hoffman’s (1776-1822) short story “Sand-man” (1816). In Hoffman’s story, Nathaniel, a student, cannot forget a terrifying figure from his childhood, the Sand-Man, who he was told “is a bad man who comes to children when they won’t go to bed and throws a handful of sand in their eyes, so that their eyes jump out of their heads, all bleeding” (2003, p. 136). This fear is linked to the mysterious death of Nathaniel’s father, whom he believes was killed by the Sand-Man. Later, Nathaniel sees a lawyer named Coppelius, whom he fears, as he thinks that he is the Sand-Man. This fear affects Nathaniel deeply, and when he sees an Italian man named Coppola, he associates him with Coppelius. Coppola sells him a pocket spyglass, leading to a tragic passion with a lifeless automaton named Olimpia. He falls in love with her, not realizing she is not a human. Eventually, Coppola is revealed to be the Sand-Man, and Olimpia is just a doll made by Professor Spalanzani (pp. 136-137). Despite his love for Olimpia, who turns out to be an automaton with eyes provided by Coppola, Nathaniel’s fear overwhelms him. As Bailar remarks, “the uncanny element is ... the fearsome eye doctor” (2016, p. 36). Therefore, Nathaniel’s madness is triggered again when he sees Coppola and believes Olimpia’s eyes are calling to him. He falls to his death after a final confrontation with his fear, which reveals that the Sandman, Coppola, and the lawyer Coppelius are all the same person. This short story illustrates how psychological fears, like the fear of losing one’s eyes, can affect us, as fears symbolize anxieties (Freud, 2003, pp.138-139).

Freud, however, believes that the fear of losing one’s eyes is related to the fear of castration, which is a “precious organ as the eye should be guarded by a commensurate anxiety” (2003, p. 140). This fear is not only about losing the eye but can extend to other organs. When Nathaniel replaces the Sand-Man with his father, who Nathaniel expects to punish him, the story’s eerie elements become meaningful, as the element of the uncanny is connected to the fear of castration from childhood (Freud, 2003, pp. 140-141). However, Freud connects the idea of ‘the double’ to themes of immortality and the fear of death. He suggests that the double serves as a protection against the fear of one’s own end, offering a way to deny death and give one a sense of the ongoing life. Over time, however, the double begins to induce fear, acting as an eerie sign of death’s

approach. For Coburn, Freud's uncanny is exemplified by the recurrent repeating of identical incidents, features, actions, and/or even names (2015, p. 882). The double involves self-examination, self-critique, and functions as a kind of internal control within us (2003, p. 142). The double can also symbolize self-absorption, as it comes to be seen as foreign to one's own identity that leads to a sense of eeriness. Nevertheless, the repetition of anything, including the concept of the double, triggers this eerie feeling (2003, pp. 142-143), and "a war...is signified in miniature in the struggle between doubles" (Humbert, 2013, p. 257).

An unexpected repetition makes ordinary things seem connected to fate or destiny, transforming potential change into something uncanny (2003, pp. 144-145). For Freud, the uncanny, often associated with haunted houses and the return of the dead, relates to mysteriously familiar yet disturbing things (p. 148). However, the uncanny, or "the unhomely", often arises when a familiar thing has been repressed and then resurfaces. Silent, dark, and isolated settings often found in children's fears also contribute to feelings of the uncanny (Freud, 2003, pp. 154-155). Such an isolated, and dark atmosphere is given within Beckett's *Endgame*, as the setting of the play is largely undefined and vague (Garrard, 2011, p. 391). For Freud, however, when something in a story is too close to reality, it can make us feel uncanny because it mixes our logical world with things that should only be in tales. Therefore, a writer may manipulate the reader's emotions and make things seem different from what one expects. As Freud puts it, he displays the capacity to evoke emotional responses within individuals, directing their reactions from one result to another, and often generating diverse reactions using the same material (2003, p. 158).

The Uncanny, and the Eerie Atmosphere within Beckett's *Endgame*

Waiting for Godot and *Endgame* gave Beckett way to revolutionize drama, and the theatre stage, as the two plays transformed perceptions of what drama/theatre is and can be (Berlin, 2009, p. 402). Mysterious similes and ambiguity in setting are among the main differences featured within these two plays. For example, in *Endgame*, the representation of the master-servant dynamic in the characters Hamm and Clov can be likened to a chess game, wherein Hamm assumes the role of a king and Clov assumes the double role of both a king and a pawn. However, as Pearson has put it, "Hamm and Clov's perpetual co-dependency is what keeps *Endgame* going as a play" (2001, p. 217). In Salisbury's words, Clov and Hamm's situation "seems like a master-slave dialectic of violent hatred and mutual dependence" (2012, p. 113). Therefore, as Worton remarks, the play exemplifies the subject of reliance on others for one's survival, as Beckett's characters are involved in interpersonal relationships centred around power, where their activities serve as evidence of their existence (1994, p. 71). As Morin has put it, apart from the existentialist philosophical movement, "Beckett's plays... have received much attention from philosophers of different convictions and formations" (2015, p. 116). However, as Olk states, "Beckett popularizes nihilism and existential angst" within *Endgame* and his other plays (2011, p. 393).

The introductory scene in Beckett's *Endgame* presents a minimalist setting featuring two ashbins, a wheelchair-bound Hamm, and various furnishings, all illuminated by a "gray" light (Berlin, 2009, pp. 404-406). The setting contributes to the uncanny atmosphere within the play, as Clov states, "Gray! Light black. From pole to pole" (2006, p. 109). Clov's description of the world as uniformly gray, or "light black", features the setting as an uncanny landscape, where the familiar world has been transformed into something unrecognizable and threatening. Freud suggests that the uncanny often involves a transformation of the familiar into something fearful, and unsettling.

Such a greyness represents the elimination of known markers of time and space that confronts characters and audience alike with the uncanny realization of a world stripped of its familiar forms. Also, the gray and gloomy setting remains “an uncanny space that is always connected to the outside world and is constantly shifting between the real and imaginary spaces of the present and the past”. It functions as “a static, anonymous container where social and historical responsibility is transcended” (Zimmermann, 2015, p. 90). Therefore, the uncanny setting functions to explore the unknown depths of human consciousness and despair, as the setting reflects Freudian notions of the uncanny by manifesting internal anxieties and fears in the external world, challenging the characters—and through them, the audience—to confront the unsettling familiarity of the existential fears.

The presence of greyness and the title of the play suggest a world that is fading and an account that has reached its conclusion, which is represented through Clov’s utterance: “Finished, it’s finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished” (Beckett, 2006, p. 93). How the ending unfolds and its connection to the beginning remains a mystery; yet this uncertainty is the central, recurring “quest(ion) of the play” (Horowitz, 2004, p. 122). The mystery of the beginning also generates a sense of uncanniness, as “the uncanny comes to remind us that there is no obvious beginning” (Punter, 2007, p. 132). There and then, the play brings forth the idea of finality and resistance to it through the interactions between Hamm and Clov: “It’s finished” (2006, p. 93), and it presents a tension between acceptance and a hold to existence. Hamm, however, reveals an instability between artificiality and a tragedy, therefore reflecting the Freudian doubleness between the familiar and the unknown (Berlin, 2009, pp. 404-406). The exaggerated performance of Hamm, along with his statement “Can there be misery... higher than mine?” followed by a self-pitying “No doubt”, exemplifies Freud’s concept of the eerie, which involves the blending of familiar elements with the frighteningly unusual, so challenging the conventional expectations (Beckett, 2006, p. 93).

The setting of the play alters what is typically familiar, as it generates an uncanny feeling. Freud discusses how the uncanny arises from “something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light” (2003, p. 134): as the setting is “Bare interior. Grey Light. Left and right back, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn” (Beckett, p. 93). The post-apocalyptic environment, meant to be a home, becomes a place of isolation and despair, estranging it from its usual connotations of comfort and safety. The setting, therefore, is “neither entirely private nor public, that confuse secure notions of interior/exterior and homely/unhomely space, and that are inhabited by individuals who have nowhere else to belong” (Zimmermann, 2015, p. 75).

However, the dysfunctional dynamics between Hamm and Clov, and the presence of Hamm’s parents, Nagg and Nell, in ashbins, present a perversion of familial relationships, parallel with Freud’s analysis of family structures as sites of psychological conflicts represented through Hamm and Clov’s dialogue: “Hamm: Why do you stay with me? / Clov: Why do you keep me?” (2006, p. 95). Almost in each and every interaction, silence precedes language, and meaning is deferred. Regarding the relationship between language, silence and meaning, Mete remarks, “language cannot be trusted to ensure the expression of meaning, it has necessarily to be replaced with silence” (2019, p. 363). However, such an exchange reflects Freud’s theory on the family as the nucleus of individual psychopathology, where love and dependency coexist with resentment

and a desire for autonomy, thus rendering the family setting both familiar and uncannily oppressive (2003, pp. 151-152).

However, living in the ashbins is not an ordinary thing for anyone; therefore, the reality and fantasy are mixed through the parents' condition, as "an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred" (Freud, 2003, p. 150). Once that boundary is blurred, it may be realized that "there's no one truth or reality in this chaotic world but many" (Özçelik, 2023, p. 67).

According to Freud, the uncanny evokes fear due to its lack of familiarity and a sense of security (p. 124). He argues that the shift from the familiar to the uncanny comprises not only the introduction of unfamiliar elements, but also an associated feeling of intellectual uncertainty and disorientation seen in the interaction between Hamm and Clov. Whether Clov "gains awareness into their hollow life deprived of human feelings and emotions" remains to be a mystery (Çelik, 2022, p. 181). Therefore, their interaction may stand for a departure from the previously established conventions of their connection, which represents Freud's notion that the uncanny arises from the exploration of the new and the unsettlingly unfamiliar. Furthermore, the shift in Hamm's responses—from astonishment to relief and then to detachment—following Clov's confirmation of Hamm's pain, "Yes!" in reply to Hamm's question, "I haven't caused you excessive suffering?", emphasizes the uncertainty in their eerie connection (2006, p. 96). The observed uncertainty can be considered a symbol of the shift from the "Heimlich" (a state of being homely and familiar) to the "unheimlich" (a state of being unhomely and unfamiliar), a transition that Freud thinks gives rise to a sense of alienation and unease (2003, pp. 124-125). The play, in this sense, represents this dichotomy through moving the spectator/reader from a state of disconnected laughter to one of emotional engagement (Berlin, 2009, p. 405). The interplay between the hysterical and tragic aspects of the characters' predicament parallels Freud's concept of the eerie. The hesitations exhibited by Hamm, his denial and affirmation all serve to intensify the uncanny tension that exists between the surface and depth meanings, as well as between performance and reality.

However, the moment Clov pulls the handkerchief from Hamm's face results in Hamm's reaction of "Me? (he yawns) to play" (Beckett, 2006, p. 95) which exemplifies Freud's notion of the eerie by means of its disturbing ambiguous generation of an unexpected sensation of familiarity (Berlin, 2009, p. 405). For Clov, Hamm's "frightening eyes and their final unreadability suggest the ghostliness and terror of the uncanny" as his eyes remain to be "familiar and strange, homely and wild...the locus of referentiality that remains inaccessible" (Nadal, 2016, p. 183). However, the ambiguity and lack of clarity around Hamm's intention to "play" 'what and why' evokes a feeling of anxiety, as it is unclear if he is referring to engaging in a game, assuming a role, or something else different. In other words, "a persistent anxiety... harasses both of" them (Altunsoy, 2017, p. 7). The presence of ambiguity, in conjunction with the act of uncovering, which serves as a symbolic representation of the shift from concealment to exposure, generates a sense of unease. Such a representation generates an eerie atmosphere, as it presents a merging of the familiar and the mysterious. Therefore, this suits the requirement of uncanniness by connecting the domains of the familiar and unknown (Freud, 2003, p. 152).

Beckett's representation of the "war" between Hamm and Clov underlines a major dispute between the longing for "order" and a tendency towards "disorder" (Weller, 2010, p. 139).

Specifically, as the play approaches its end, Clov utters his desire for “order” with great intensity, declaring, “I love order. It is my dream” (Beckett, 2006, p. 122). Clov exhibits a strong inclination towards maintaining order within the kitchen; however, his departure brings forth an important shift and possible dangers for individuals who may divert from their usual habits (Levy, 2002, p. 268). Clov as the “dreamer” is the “most susceptible to the uncanny” (Shuttleworth, 2015, p. 85). The relationship between Hamm and Clov may be characterized by both hostility and intimacy, which can be comprehended by using Freud’s concept of the uncanny. The interdependence between Hamm and Clov generates a tension that bears resemblance to Freud’s exploration of the uncanny, which arises from uncertainties regarding the existence of an apparently living being or, conversely, the lack of life in an object. This conflict is exemplified by Hamm’s need on Clov for both movement and social engagement, despite their common enmity. The despotic control imposed by Hamm as a “master” over Clov, together with the subsequent abusive dynamic, reflects Freud’s concept of the eerie by distorting the conventional master-servant relationship into a disturbing state. Their conversation, characterized by a sequence of inquiries and responses that expose their pathological reliance, intensifies this impact (Berlin, 2009, pp. 407-408). The master-servant dichotomy strives to find approval by relying on the other, but ultimately that relationship leads to a paradoxical situation where neither can exist with nor without the other, as Hamm and Clov fluctuate between being objects of love and hatred within an eerie paradoxical interdependence (Baroghel, 2010, p. 127).

Moreover, Hamm’s parents, Nagg and Nell in ashbins, may represent the paradoxical animation of the lifeless as a fundamental aspect of the eerie. As Freud remarks, “severed limbs”, as is the case for Nagg and Nell, “have something highly uncanny about them” (2003, p. 150). Nagg and Nell simultaneously emerge from their ashbins, generating a sense of mechanical precision in their actions that may represent the characters’ confinement within their surroundings (Cohn, 2012, p. 225). Their state evokes an unusual combination of amusement and sorrow that Freud links to experiences with the “double”—a notion that offers an “assurance of immortality”, but which gradually transforms into a “ghastly harbinger of death” (Freud, 2003, p. 142). Therefore, the condition of the parents may be regarded “as very uncanny themes” (p. 153).

The inclusion of “yesterday” and the characters’ contemplation of previous occurrences evoke an unsettling sense of longing and an encounter with mortality, revealing the unsettling recognition of the double as both a familiar echo and a foreshadowing of death (Berlin, 2009, pp. 407-408). The recurring cycles of antagonism and attachment exhibited by Hamm and Clov illustrate the duality of the double and the narcissistic stage of development as the foundation of the eerie. At first, the doubles lack a feeling of uncanniness, and uneasiness; rather, they generate a sense of familiarity, similar to familial bonds, offering safety among the oddities of the unfamiliar environment and its strange inhabitants (Coburn, 2015, p. 883). Nevertheless, this sense of secure familiarity gradually undergoes a transformation, as the actions and dialogues between Hamm and Clov become more and more eerie each time, as the two seem to repress an ambiguous past “that was once familiar and then repressed” (Freud, 2003, p. 154).

Within the play, however, existence is represented as limited to fixed routines, where characters are isolated from both their surroundings and their inner beings to represent a sense of detachment and self-reflection. The concept of the uncanny, therefore, extends beyond the fear evoked by the unfamiliar that covers the quality of eerie which arises from the repression and

exposure of the familiar. What lies beneath the surface of perceived reality—whether it be the repetitive nature of existence or the repressed familiar—holds the power to unsettle and disturb. The uncanny, with its roots in the hidden and repressed, presents life's mechanistic and predetermined nature, suggesting that the uncanny lies in the confrontation with what was meant to remain obscured (2003, p. 153-154). This confrontation challenges Hamm and Clov's perceptions of familiarity and fear that generates an uncanny atmosphere. Therefore, the uncanny within the play represents the complexities of the human condition, and the boundaries between the known and the unknown.

Clov's seemingly mundane yet ritualistic actions, however, may also represent Freud's concept of the uncanny, through the unsettling nature of repetitive compulsion, as Freud notes that such a behaviour "arouses an uncanny feeling because it recalls primitive mental states and the repetitive compulsion inherited from them" (2003, p. 144). Such actions, driven by unconscious desires or traumas, manifest in ways that appear both familiar and alien that induce discomfort (Zilcosky, 2013, p. 478). Clov's precise activity: "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" (2006, p. 93), stands as a representation of this idea. Devoid of any clear purpose, such actions may represent the idea that the uncanny arises from the familiar turned mysteriously unsettling through repetition. The interaction between Clov's actions and Freud's theory on the uncanny emphasizes the Freudian discomfort rooted in behaviors that make the ordinary feel eerily unfamiliar.

Freud, however, relates sight and blindness to the uncanny, relating to fears of castration and loss of power (2003, p. 150). Hamm and Clov's impairments stand as metaphors for their inability to perceive or escape from their situation, for example, Hamm's concern with vision: "Did you ever see my eyes?... It seems they've gone all white" (2006, p. 95). This preoccupation with sight and the subsequent revelation of blindness may be related to Freudian anxieties about loss and the uncanny fear associated with the unseen or the inability to see the familiar world. The eyes here conceal "the secret ... which ... is unable to [be] decipher[ed]" (Nadal, 2016, p. 182). Therefore, Hamm's "desperate and failed attempts to unravel the meaning of their expression highlight the unbridgeable gap between past and present" (Nadal, 2016, p. 182). Related to the loss of eye, Freud remarks that psychoanalytic observations indicate that children frequently experience a fear of eye injury or loss, which often continues into adulthood and exceeds the anxiety associated with any other physical hurt (2003, p. 139). Hamm's loss of eyes can also be linked to the "fear of the dark to the loss of familiar surroundings" (Shuttleworth, 2015, p. 90). His loss of eyes extinguishes "the world of visible things"; therefore, a feeling of "strangeness and of loneliness, of banishment from all that he knows and loves" may lead him the sense of uncanny (Sully, 1896, p. 215).

The dialogue also brings forth Freud's notion that the uncanny emerges from the confrontation with something immovable and eternal, particularly the fear of death: "Enough, it's time it ended, in the refugee, too... And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to... to end" (p. 94). Hamm's uncertainty towards ending their suffering underscores the uncanny tension between the desire for change and the terror of the ultimate change, death: "Hamm: It's the end of the day like any other day, isn't it, Clov? / Clov: Looks like it" (2006, p. 100). Each day is familiar for both Hamm and Clov yet it has an alienating, and uncanny effect for both. Also, the repetitiveness as suggested in Hamm's and Clov's dialogue, represents this Freudian uncanny, emphasizing the inescapable cycle

of their lives: “Clov: I see my light dying. / Hamm: Your light dying! Listen to that!” (2006, p. 99). The dying light may refer to Clov’s repressed desires and his past, as “uncanny feelings can arise in response to the realization that an experience that was previously repressed has once again come to light” (Schlippacke, 2015, p. 164). Also, Clov’s acknowledgment of his diminishing “light” metaphorically reflects the fading of life and hope, which from a Freudian perspective would be regarded as an uncanny confrontation with the familiar turned strange and menacing—the familiar light of life, now receding, transforms into a source of existential dread. Also, Nell and Nagg’s interaction in the bins set forth the distortion of familial relationships, a significant aspect of the uncanny according to Freud, who explored how repressed familial conflicts resurface in distorted forms within their interaction Nell: “Why this farce, day after day? / Nagg: I’ve lost me tooth” (2006, p. 100). Their interaction may be related to the Freudian uncanny, as the “theory of the uncanny...is based on the return in adulthood of repressed experiences” (Shuttleworth, 2015, p. 85).

Hamm’s existential questioning and Clov’s vague response bring forth a Freudian uncanny, and unease with the unknown forces governing their existence. Freud posits that uncanny feelings often arise from situations where animate beings are rendered inanimate, as in death, reflecting the anxiety surrounding the loss of control and identity—themes central to Hamm’s and Clov’s plight. Therefore, as put forth, the play employs repetition, the erosion of the familiar, dysfunctional familial relationships, and existential angst to evoke the uncanny, as described by Freud. The uncanny and post-apocalyptic atmosphere is also represented through this dialogue: “Hamm: Last night I saw inside my breast. There was a big sore. / Clov: Pah! You saw your heart. / Hamm: No, it was living” (2006, p. 109). This dialogue reflects an existential dread that goes parallel with Freud’s concept of the uncanny, where internal conflicts and fears manifest in external forms. Hamm’s vision of a “big sore” within him, which he insists is something alive, externalizes his internal desolation and fear of mortality as elements that Freud identifies as connected to the uncanny experience due to their ability to bring repressed anxieties to the forefront of consciousness.

However, Hamm’s fleeting hope for meaning in their existence, dismissed by Clov, goes parallel with Freud’s discussion of the uncanny as arising from situations where familiar concepts, like significance and purpose, become estranged: “Hamm: We’re not beginning to... to... mean something? / Clov: Mean something! You and I, mean something! Ah that’s a good one!” (2006, pp. 109-110). That Hamm asks the meaning of their actions and Clov dismisses the idea in a scornful manner serves as a representation of Freud’s concept of the eerie, as this exchange falls into the topic of existential significance within the context of absurdity. Their utterance of “beginning to mean something” represents a disturbance, and from a Freudian perspective, “the uncanny manifested itself as a sign of psychological disturbance” (Freer, 2013, p. 332). The concept of the uncanny becomes evident in this context, as it emerges from the conflict between the pursuit of significance and the recognition of its probable nonexistence that refers to the reemergence of suppressed fears or desires. This instance, in which individuals simultaneously seek and reject significance, reflects the distinctive merging of the familiar and the frighteningly unfamiliar within the uncanny, which serves to underscore the absurdity of the human situation and the unnerving pursuit of meaning within an indifferent universe.

However, Clov's statement "I have it! I set the alarm. You whistle me. I don't come. The alarm rings. I'm gone. It doesn't ring. I'm dead" (2006, p. 117) may be regarded as a sign of his presence or absence that calls attention to the futility and absurdity of attempting to impose order or certainty in a chaotic and indifferent world. This goes parallel with the Freudian uncanny's emphasis on the return of repressed fears and desires, as the characters' efforts to manage their existential anxiety highlight their impotence and the irrationality of their condition. Their "repressed concerns reshape the" dialogues between the two "in a continuing process of revision and construction" (Rumble, 2011, p. 180). However, Clov's existence and actions are characterized as a revolt against Hamm's manners; nevertheless, he is unable to break his connection with Hamm or maintain an autonomous existence. Clov is represented as eternally bound to a subordinate position, lacking the ability to communicate or behave independently without Hamm's assistance. Both characters get caught in their positions within a cyclical dynamic to maintain the qualities of their relationship that they appear to oppose (Menke, 2005, pp. 197-200).

Besides such a cyclical dynamic, the decaying nature of living is also represented through Hamm's utterance: "You stink already. The whole place stinks of corpses. / Clov: The whole universe" (2006, p. 117). Hamm's observation about the omnipresence of death and decay reflects the inescapable cycle of life and the universal condition of mortality. Freud's concept of the uncanny often involves the confrontation with something familiar yet repressed, such as death, that has returned in an *unheimlich* (unhomely) form, as Hamm's statement underlines the play's exploration of the uncanny through the representation of the transient and decaying nature of life. The idea of unhomely and decaying nature of universe is also exemplified by Clov's statement: "The end is terrific!" (2006, p. 118). His remark about the alarm's end being "terrific" juxtaposes the end of their mundane actions with the existential end they both anticipate. Freud's uncanny involves the unexpected return of what is familiar in a strangely altered form that suggests even in their repetitive, static existence, the inevitability of change is the only constant thing to emphasize the absurdity of human efforts to find stability or meaning. Therefore, Hamm and Clov's statements seize the human desire for recognition, purpose, and the fear of nothingness, themes that have parallels with the Freudian uncanny through the unsettling realization of our own insignificance in the vastness of the universe. In this context, Beckett "blurred the boundaries between reality and fantasy, evoking uncanny confluences" (Owen and Crawford, 2020, p. 13).

Hamm's utterance, "It must be very calm. I'm asking you is it very calm!" (2006, p. 126), points out the search for peace in a world where "calm" has become an alien concept, evoking Freud's uncanny through the familiar yet distant notion of tranquillity in life. Hamm's insistence on knowing about the "calm" outside reflects a desire to find a trace of normality or end within the immobility of their existence, representing the uncanny feeling of being stuck between the known and the unknown. Therefore, Hamm and Clov become "the uncanny, the twin, the double, the Other" for one another (Nadal, 2016, p. 187). Within such uncanny feelings, as Freud believes, the familiar act of conversation becomes a source of discomfort and alienation that focuses on the breakdown of human connection and communication within the existential despair. The play also represents the inevitability of death, and the unknown, once Hamm says, "The dead go fast. What's he doing?" (2006, p. 127). Hamm's comment on the departure of the dead, followed by his inquiry about Nagg's actions, represents the uncanny intertwining of life, death, and the eerie cycle of existence. In this regard, uncanny stands as an "emotional engagement with vague feelings of anxiety" (Schlippacke, 2015, p. 163). However, even if the characters wait for death, the play

features something unique, as Beckett represents what the bare minimum for living in a very strict manner is (Halpern, 2014, p. 744). The contrast between the finality of death and the ongoing, unchanging routines of the living evokes Freud's concept of the uncanny as something deeply unsettling since death is a known inevitability that remains mysterious and disturbing.

Conclusion

According to Freud, the concept of the uncanny arises from the uncomfortable return of repressed fears and desires, which - as this paper has examined - is exemplified in the post-apocalyptic setting of *Endgame*, where the familiar is repeatedly contrasted with the disturbingly unknown. Hamm and Clov undergo endless and often purposeless dialogues that question the ambiguous boundaries between existence and nonexistence. Such a questioning reveals an eerie representation of the uncanny. Their recurrent desires and the depiction of the sensation of existential indifference share similarities with Freud's assertion that the uncanny arises from the encounter with something that was once familiar but has now become unfamiliar. The setting, and the dialogues intensify the uncanny quality of the plot, where ordinary things get intertwined with repulsive elements, both living and non-living. This blurs the line between reality and illusion.

Within this framework, the play shares similarities with Freud's concept of the eerie, since it represents the essence of the uncanny in human existence, especially when faced with an indifferent universe. The challenges faced by the characters in relation to their sense of self, objectives, traumatized bodies, and the inescapable progression towards death emphasize the absurdity of human efforts to seek significance or comfort in an aimless state of being. *Endgame* also represents the human misery and the contradictory desire for and apprehension towards the unfamiliar, employing the concept of the uncanny to convey the nature of the human experience. This research, therefore, has established connections between Freud's theoretical construct of the uncanny and Beckett's representation of the uncanny, which explores the unnerving familiarity of an individual's fears and desires. Hence, the uncanny examined throughout the play offers an insight into the alienation and disappointment that define human existence, which reflects the complexity of life and the impact of the uncanny on shaping consciousness.

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