



## An Investigation of Inaction in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*: A Darwinian Literary Perspective

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### ABSTRACT:

The aim of this paper is to develop a literary Darwinian reading of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The attributes of human nature defined by Joseph Carroll are discussed with regard to characters' inaction. *Waiting for Godot* stages the unstable and uncertain status of modern man, who is entangled in the web of time and lack of communication. Constructive elements of human nature such as the acts towards survival, romance and nurture are further discussed in order to delineate the inactive pattern of the behavior of characters in *Waiting for Godot*. It becomes clear that lack of action in Vladimir and Estragon pinpoints the fall and paralysis of human nature as defined by the literary Darwinists. This article demonstrates that, as a result of uncertainty, anxiety and other disastrous consequences of the Second World War, the attributes of human nature, along with the agency as the power of conscious goal setting and committed action for accomplishing those goals, as defined by the Literary Darwinists, are forgotten, paralyzed or ignored. The central characters in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* appeal to senseless waiting for an uncertain future without appealing to action. Man is staged as a creature incapable of agency that is reduced to inaction because of the post-war catastrophic situation.

*Key Words: Waiting for Godot, Literary Darwinism, Joseph Carroll, Human Nature, Inaction.*

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* yields to a number of different approaches for reading beneath the lines. This paper presents a literary Darwinian perspective which is a new approach to Beckett's famous play. Darwinism in Literature demonstrates strong affiliations with other disciplines such as evolutionary and folk psychology and its main assumptions basically emerge from the Darwinian thought in social sciences in general.

Carrabino (1985) states that it is true and universally agreed upon that modern man is suffering sadness, ennui and void which are experienced in the modern era (66). The core issues staged in *Waiting for Godot* vary from the tramps suffering to their attempts to pass time and to their taking part in an endless process of inaction and waiting for Godot. McDonald believes that for "Vladimir and Estragon life is future oriented, expectation for Godot, they fill their days with routine and habits in expectation of his arrival; rarely stopping to confront the desperate situation in which they live" (qtd in Bloom, 2008, 154). To Sartre, *Waiting for Godot* is a drama in which "nothing really happens" (qtd in Cohn, 1967, 106). Waiting and action are two important concepts presented in the play. Lois Gordon (2002) argues that "Vladimir and Estragon share the singularly most profound life goal; that is, of determining a purpose for living, is clear in the very name of their quest: Godot" (55). However, the obvious inaction and lack of power or agency to accomplish goals is observable through the play.

The inaction staged in *Waiting for Godot* is one of the central motifs of the play: it is not something particular to the French at the time of war, as a historical reading of the play would suggest. Although "Beckett's characters may lose the capacity for locomotion," they are all aware of the common sense of inaction which is their dominant feeling. They do desire to act, but they cannot do anything about

it. "Their awareness of their own self continues relentlessly; and time can never have a stop; the final situations in *Waiting for Godot*, in *Endgame*, or in *How it is* imply eternal recurrence" (Esslin, 1965, 7). Beckett's characters are naturally the external representation of this abstract understanding of life. Ronan McDonald (2006) believes that Beckett's plays bear fundamental meanings about "what it means to be a human; in other word, the play does not simply have to do with particular people at a particular moment. . . it says something about human condition as a whole"(164).

Samuel Beckett's art is rooted in his Avant-guard philosophy in depicting the modern world. The traces of World Wars could be found in all of his dramatic and fictional works. Beckett confuses the audience in an ambiguous world, leaving them alone among the load of unanswerable questions regarding humanity.

In the relentlessness of self-denial, the purity of his dedication to his chosen task, Beckett is akin to Kafka and Kirekegaard, who were equally committed to a life of the most uncompromising self-examination"(Esslin 5).

The inaction and ennui have already been discussed in details in so many critical writings on Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* as well as several of his other plays and even his fiction. Here the motif of action or inaction, is investigated with regard to the features of Darwinist view of human nature with emphasis on survival, finding or keeping spouse, gaining or keeping power and wealth, binding with friends, gaining culture and education and building or making something new, in order to see whether the characters in *Waiting for Godot* prove to demonstrate the necessary agency to accomplish life goals or not. The attributes of human nature attributes defined in Literary Darwinism can be traced back in Beckett's play to delineate how the absence of agency and willingness to act leads to staging the fall and paralysis of human nature.

Carroll defines human nature as the expression of the fact that all humans are common owners of some species-typical dispositions, "basic motives tied closely to the needs of survival, mating, parenting, and social interaction" (27). Arts, in general, and literature in particular are the outward expressions of different ways these dispositions have been shaped by the surrounding culture. He has generalized the features in human nature and explain motives as "the chief organizing principle in human behavior". The features can fall into four major categories: constructive effort, romance, nurture, and subsistence(159).

The behavioral patterns of humanity could be traced back as a set of normal and homogenous motives and expressions which eventually shape the "life-history" of human species. The core concept in this pattern concerns the attributes of social groupings as man is essentially a social being. The sets of motives, described by Carroll, which serve as the primary framework for the present study, have one thing in common: they are all essentially related to movement and action. That is, if the character is to be regarded as a protagonist, he or she might demonstrate the positive movement in line with these motives and attempt to enforce those motives in the course of his or her actions. Agency or the power to accomplish those goals, therefore, plays an important role. "The success or failure of the character in achieving his or her goals is the main action in the story--broadly, the 'plot'. Goals are the end-objects of motives--for instance, the desire to survive, to get married, to make friends, to obtain education, or to assist one's friends" (Carroll, 2004, 217).

Carroll believes that every human being, no matter where or when he lives, shares these motives and demonstrates these attributes in the course of his/her life. Fall of human nature, thus, could be defined as the failure of man to show the agency or the power to act in the way of pursuing these goals. "Constructive effort most strongly characterizes protagonists, both male and female. It consists of two prosocial elements (helping non-kin and making friends) and two cultural elements (seeking education and building or creating something)". (Carroll159). It is further discussed that male protagonists are motivated "by subsistence that is, by survival and by doing routine work to earn a living". In addition to these two categories and the motives which are included in their sub-categories, "mating efforts" are also the third group of human nature attributes which consist of "Romance and Nurture (caring for offspring and other kin)"(Carroll159).

Drama as a "mirror held up to nature" provides the best macrocosm for this trend, but Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* stages the absence of proper attributes of human nature in the modern man living in the catastrophic trauma of the time. In order to present a new perspective on *Waiting for Godot*, the literary Darwinian perspective is chosen. The characters in this play represent a certain state of inaction on the stage. The main argument of the article is that action is paralyzed in the play. Borrowing from the

definition of the attributes of universal human nature provided by Joseph Carroll in his recently published book *Reading Human Nature*, inaction in *Waiting for Godot* is brought under scrutiny from a new perspective. The article is organized by an overall description of the Darwinian literary criticism, followed by the application of Carroll's major categories of the attributes of human nature to the events and characters of *Waiting for Godot* in order to delineate the fall of human nature staged in Beckett's post-war drama.

Act toward survival, Carroll states, is the one which leads to a safer life and include any type of action man does in order to save his life and survive the surrounding dangers. (Carroll, 2012, 24). Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* lacks any coherent action. Two tramps are staged in a bare scene, with only one barren tree, struggling over their boots and other trifling materials. They cannot be sure whether they have already met Godot, or even they know him or not. The two are trying to kill the time, so that with the passage of time a possibly better future would come around. It appears that killing time, talking nonsense and waiting are the only actions these two are capable of doing. Waiting as an action for survival and the passage of time appear to be their only business, and the only thing they are capable of doing. Survival is only possible if they wait for Godot. The only action is waiting:

**VLADIMIR:** Well? What do we do?

**ESTRAGON:** Don't let's do anything. It's safer.

**VLADIMIR:** Let's wait and see what he says.

**ESTRAGON:** Who?

**VLADIMIR:** Godot. (Beckett7)

They have no idea of Godot's identity. When Pozzo comes along with Lucky, they take him for Godot. They do not know whom they are waiting for. In fact, it appears that, somewhat like the activities they get amused by when visiting Pozzo and Lucky, waiting is just what would make them live on their repetitious life. Paradoxically enough, waiting is supposed to give their life a meaning, while it is devoid of meaning in itself.

**POZZO:** You took me for Godot.

**VLADIMIR:** Oh no, Sir, not for an instant, Sir.

**POZZO:** Who is he?

**VLADIMIR:** Oh he's a . . . he's a kind of acquaintance.

**ESTRAGON:** Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him.

**VLADIMIR:** True . . . we don't know him very well . . . but all the same . . .

**ESTRAGON:** Personally, I wouldn't even know him if I saw him.

**POZZO:** You took me for him. (Beckett 9-10)

In the very first act of the play the audience witnesses the struggle of Estragon for taking off the boat, uttering the first line "nothing to be done". After a senseless discussion about a Biblical story, the two come roundly back again to the only action, with which they are concerned, that of waiting:

**ESTRAGON:** Charming spot. (*He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.*) Inspiring prospects. (*He turns to Vladimir.*) Let's go.

**VLADIMIR:** We can't.

**ESTRAGON:** Why not?

**VLADIMIR:** We're waiting for Godot.

**ESTRAGON:** (*despairingly*). Ah! (*Pause.*) You're sure it was here?

**VLADIMIR:** What?

**ESTRAGON:** That we were to wait.

**VLADIMIR:** He said by the tree. (*They look at the tree.*) Do you see any others?

**ESTRAGON:** What is it?

**VLADIMIR:** I don't know. A willow.

**ESTRAGON:** Where are the leaves?

**VLADIMIR:** It must be dead. (Beckett 5)

Waiting turns into their only shared activity, while it is no action. The four people on the stage are all confusingly attempting to search for a meaning in life. The point is that waiting cannot be regarded as a positive dramatic action. Waiting for Godot to come could be viewed also as an act for survival, which is paradoxically enough an act bereft of meaning, signifying nothing. Nothing and non-action are repeatedly seen in their conversations as well as in the stage direction.

**ESTRAGON:** Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!

**POZZO:** Give him his hat.

**VLADIMIR:** His hat?

**POZZO:** He can't think without his hat.

**VLADIMIR:** (*to Estragon*). Give him his hat.

**ESTRAGON:** Me! After what he did to me! Never!

**VLADIMIR:** I'll give it to him.

*He does not move* (Beckett21)

Not only the tramps, but also Pozzo and Lucky are, entangled in the web of waiting. Lucky awaits his master's command in order to dance or even think. The inability to comprehend the commands of a master or the nature of their waiting once more proves the lack of agency and power in the characters to pursue their life goals and attempt to survive. "Their inaction is at once ambiguously imposed on them and a voluntary choosing. They are *ahead-of-themselves*, but in a predicament in which they cannot know the nature of the goal for which they wait (fundamental in transparency)" (Bachakus, 2002, 92).

The action often turns to cruelty and persecution: Pozzo torments Lucky, Estragon kicks Lucky to avenge himself, Vladimir strikes Pozzo to silence him, Hamm nags at Clot (who hits him with the toy dog) and insults his father ('Accursed progenitor!'). Sometimes the action can be almost gratuitous, as in the very fast exchange of three hats between Estragon and Vladimir in Act II, which is pure Laurel and Hardy (Fletcher, 1967, 61-62). The trivial actions, such as struggling over the dance of Lucky or taking off their boots, would have no ultimate future. The action that would lead to survival, as defined by Carroll, would eventually lead to a conclusion. Such banalities are not meaningful enough to be regarded in one category with actions towards survival. It becomes clear that Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo and Lucky are all demonstrating nothing, no such action, suggesting their attempt for survival. "Beckett's imaginative universe in general presents itself as a world where there are only patients, with all the connotations that this word has, and where action itself is simply, as in the original Latin verb *patior*, to undergo experiences passively while waiting for the end" (Barry, 2007, 117).

The second category of human nature attributes presented by Carroll in *Reading Human Nature* concerns the social and cultural elements that constitute constructive efforts by human beings in order to gain a desirable social life. Helping non-kin and making friends are mentioned as the two sub-categories of these efforts. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* shows the absence of these social interactions in the catastrophic post war era. Fall of human nature in this regard is thus of certain eminence. Social interactions are totally out of place in this play. Every little chat would end up in a quarrel and a guest's presence can never be tolerated:

**POZZO:** He can no longer endure my presence. I am perhaps not particularly human, but who cares? (*To Vladimir*.) Think twice before you do anything rash. Suppose you go now while it is still day, for there is no denying it is still day. (*They all look up at the sky.*) Good. (*They stop looking at the sky.*) What happens in that case— (*he takes the pipe out of his mouth, examines it*) —I'm out— (*he relights his pipe*) —in that case— (*puff*) —in that case— (*puff*) —what happens in that case to your appointment with this . . . Godot . . . Godot . . . Godin . . . anyhow you see who I mean, who has your future in his hands . . . (*pause*) . . . at least your immediate future? (Beckett 13)

Beckett's world is that of inaction, ennui and depression, where the only inhabitants are patients, in its true sense of the word, who are not doing anything significant to be relieved from the stagnant situation. The action, as Richard Schechner (1986) believes, is not "what these two characters are after but it is what they most want to avoid" (16). Walter D. Asmus (1986) in his article, "Beckett Directs Godot", reminds us that "if waiting is the play's action, time is its subject" (335).

We witness neither physical nor mental action in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* which is a good example of inaction and idle talk. The tramps insist on passive waiting which are the characteristics of the post-war era when, as Estragon says, "billions of people are waiting" and will to action is paralyzed. The images of boots and hats make the situation clear. Tight boots remind us of Dickens' Little Dorrit in which tight clothes and boots suggest prison and chains. Boots that are too tight, like those of Estragon, are obstacles in the way of physical action and hats that stand for thinking are no longer needed because both body and mind are paralyzed. It is the time when any action seems harmful. When Pozzo and Lucky

return in the second act, they are cruelly deformed by the action of time. Therefore, any action seems disastrous or useless, but waiting is also useless because the arrival of Godot is an illusion.

The play is an attempt to raise significant questions regarding humanity and the ultimate destiny of human species, and Beckett employs an ambiguous tool in order to show the lack of hope in the next generation. He stages pairs of characters in the play, namely, Vladimir and Estragon, as well as Pozzo and Lucky: pairs of characters that are unhappy together but are complementary. The couples in this play fail to show the social interactions proper to communicate a healthy relationship. Thus, fall of human nature is once again traceable in the lack of communication and proper social bonding among the couples in *Waiting for Godot*.

The desire to have children and to nurture a successful generation to continue life has deep roots in the human "life-history". In fact, it is the demand of reproduction that would eventually shape the long term relationship between a man and a woman, so as to grow up the next generation. Literature as the production of an adapted mind is the true representation of human wishes, dreams and desires. Hamlet's relationship to Ophelia is doomed to failure as he fails to construct a long term relationship, sacrificing this for the sake of revealing the truth about his father's murder.

*Waiting for Godot* has no female character in it. There is no direct reference to the theme of any romantic relationship, nor any sign of the hope for reproduction. In the meantime, there are two symbols by means of which Beckett has artistically denoted the universal human nature attribute of reproduction in this play, which is evidently the result of a mind adapted to the harsh, modern wasteland. The tree is in fact the sole stage prop in the play, which is totally barren in the first act. Although in the second act there is apparently a single leaf hanging from the tree, evidently it is too powerless to suggest fertility. There is no female character in the play to signify lack of reproduction. What we witness in this play, according to Gunther (1956) is "no longer real action; for it has no objective (146). When *Waiting for Godot* gained popularity in the 1950s, the two puppet like characters of Vladimir and Estragon left tremendous impact on the English as well as European audience. The twentieth century is more the time of killing and war than that of some bright future hope. The devastating wars have bereft man of all desires for a better future.

Vladimir and Estragon are similar and at the same time, differ in certain aspects. Estragon is more oriented towards his feelings. Simple-mindedness in hope and bitter despair are the natural outcome of his strong emotions. He is rebellious and at times quite dependent as a boy on Vladimir. Vladimir; however, is more dominant and power seeking: he is an older friend, whose long speech in the second act makes him different from Estragon as being more in favor of thinking. Meanwhile, the slight points of differences between the two couples lead them nowhere, not to a productive end, but toward struggle and time-wasting. They are doomed to the killing of time. They do not know why they live together, but they do know that they cannot live without each another:

**VLADIMIR:** Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that.

**ESTRAGON:** (*coldly*.) There are times when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part.

**VLADIMIR:** You wouldn't go far.

**ESTRAGON:** That would be too bad, really too bad. (*Pause.*) Wouldn't it, Didi, be really too bad? (*Pause.*) When you think of the beauty of the way. (*Pause.*) And the goodness of the wayfarers. (*Pause. Wheedling.*) Wouldn't it, Didi? (Beckett 5-6)

Pozzo and Lucky are well-known embodiments of colonization in modern literature. Their relationship is also a male-dominant one in which Pozzo seeks and maintains the status of the master. Though, as the play continues, he proves to be the master of nonsense. Lucky symbolizes the lost intellect in humanity, which is now enslaved and doomed to a chaotic stance, ruled by someone else: "Lucky deserves his name because he has a master who, however cruel, organizes his life for him. . . of his original dancing nothing is left but a slouch and totter, and his thinking has deteriorated into the endless repetition of meaningless word reminiscent of the 'word-salad' of schizophrenics" (Metman, 1965, 122).

Pozzo is a post-war tyrant who owns the mind of his servile servant and has dehumanized him. Lucky's role is that of a dehumanized thinker or artist who has been subjected to terrible servility. Therefore, there is no hope for the post-war generation. The boy who comes to tell the tramps that Godot is not coming belongs to the present time, but his brother who "minds to sleep" and is beaten by Godot

and comes the next day to tell the same news, belongs to the next generation; that is, the tramps are getting older and although their waiting has been useless, they do not get involved in the action of an ignoble society.

Suicidal intentions take the place of giving birth as Beckett artistically juxtaposes the sexual imagery with that of hanging. Birth and death, and what comes in between, are not considered so much as actions as the processes that the subject undergoes, and sometimes, in Beckett's destabilizing world, one finds it difficult to distinguish them from each other. "The mother, often anonymous or metaphorical in the passages about birth, is only a scapegoat for some larger force that impels the subject into and out of existence" (Barry 122).

**VLADIMIR:** It's for the kidneys. (*Silence. Estragon looks attentively at the tree.*) What do we do now?

**ESTRAGON:** Wait.

**VLADIMIR:** Yes, but while waiting.

**ESTRAGON:** What about hanging ourselves?

**VLADIMIR:** Hmm. It'd give us an erection.

**ESTRAGON:** (*highly excited*). An erection!

**VLADIMIR:** With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you not know that?

**ESTRAGON:** Let's hang ourselves immediately! (Beckett6)

The nature of relationship between the characters would make it senseless to expect anything productive to come out of it. The couple's dependence on each other is so overwhelmingly seen in the play that it appears that waiting and their boring life are what they are going to leave for the next generation. No child or family is present in the play. In the second act, Estragon decides to leave the boots: "(*turning to look at the boots*). I'm leaving them there. (*Pause*.) Another will come, just as . . . as . . . as me, but with smaller feet, and they'll make him happy." But Vladimir's response is harshly realistic as he reminds us of their goalless life again and again, making the wish for some "smaller feet" to vanish away. He says: "We've nothing more to do here." In other words, it is possible to agree that in the case of Pozzo and Lucky "Pozzo illustrates the futility of all human tyranny, for he has a morbid need for attention and for the consideration of others, and he takes pleasure in declaiming before an audience of tramps and revealing to them his mawkish attitude to Lucky" (Fletcher50).

Putting emphasis on the theatrical quality of the play, McDonald asserts that Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is interwoven with the idea of a play within a play. The play bears essential meta-theatrical elements, but the fact that these inactive, passive tramps certainly and consciously interact with one another needs more explanation. McDonald brings evidence from Act II, when the pair actually play trivial games. He states that both Vladimir and Estragon are indulged in "many self-conscious performances, the idea that the dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon is a kind of 'game'(91).

The point is that such performativity is pregnant with no result. Nothing new is created and all things are repeated in a cycle all over again. The second act resembles the first one in most details, and no sign of change is ever present, neither in the physical attributes of the characters nor in the progress of the plot. There is no plot to move the characters forward. Concerning Vladimir and Estragon, Metman (1965) states that: "Their incapacity to live or to end life, the opening and concluding theme of the play, is intimately linked with their love of helplessness and of wish dreams which they make no attempt to realize. Altogether their wish dreaming and their playfulness blot out whatever serious moods come over them" (121).

They have to wait again and nothing changes. Thus, such theatricality bears no essential change in their static situation. "There are several suggestions that the two acts are part of an ongoing cycle. At the end of Act I, Vladimir remarks that the appearance of Pozzo and Lucky has changed, as if he and Estragon have met them before" (McDonald33). Nothing new is built or invented and no game is played to ensure the other human nature motif defined by Carroll. The characters in this play resemble the post-war man who is not entangled in the attempt to fulfill the human universal motif.

Human beings have universally been concerned with the search for power, wealth and better social stance. These sets of behavioral attributes, as defined by Carroll in *Reading Human Nature*, delineate the universal human nature. The main characters in *Waiting for Godot* are clearly tramps that only do not have any money, but are not even concerned with financial materials as such. It appears that

wealth and power have lost their meanings in their world and they are concerned only with waiting for Godot to come by and fertilize their barren land. Whether he comes or not, as a result of inaction, the element of destruction is already deep enough in their present situation. Beckett belongs to the twentieth century with all its features, pessimistic or optimistic, which are reasons enough to consider lack of any enthusiasm for wealth or, in a broader term, for power in the characters.

Ronan McDonald links such picturing of the modern man and his dreams in Beckett's fiction and drama to his childhood and teenage years when he "saw the rise of militant Irish nationalism and the subsequent War of Independence and Civil War. He was in Germany during the thirties and the consolidation of Nazi power, and in Paris during the occupation, where he joined the Resistance"(7). The Two World Wars had a more disastrous effect on him who found world too ruined to be rebuilt. Such a situation eventually leads him to find the causes of unhappiness more readily in a pessimistic view of the world or in existence itself. In a world devoid of meaning and enthusiasm for life, seeking power, wealth and education appears as a senseless act. All the characters in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* are bereft of wealth and significant social status and they have no intention to pursue these goals at all.

The twentieth-century man in Beckett is more an anti-hero than a hero. He is bereft of human attributes and suffers as a result. His ennui, depression, inaction, inertia, and passivity are the direct or indirect consequences of the surrounding conditions. Oedipus, Hector, Hamlet Macbeth and the like, are heroes in search of heroic actions. Marlowe's tower figures are typical instances of the insatiable desire in man who is capable of gaining great power ensued naturally by social status and wealth. Modern man, in contrast, is staged as captivated in the extreme web of solidarity. The surrounding is so much devastating that no hope exists and nothing is pursued. Sobosan (1976) believes that "our age is that of . . . anti-hero, the man so completely incapable of significant action that any identification with him means at least a partial abandonment of that ego ideal toward which we all strive, if only in our dreams" (183).

Beckett was assuredly under the direct and indirect influence of important events of the twentieth century as they shaped the society in which he lived. The philosophical arena was filled with pessimistic hollowness followed by some literary movements, such as existentialism or the Literature of the Absurd, which was dominant in Europe during the forties and fifties, and to which Beckett is very often allied. Nietzsche's famous utterance of the death of God brought with it a horrible sense of despair and loneliness to the modern man. It is such a spirit which shapes the barren landscape for the tramps, with just one tree, and a road leading nowhere. When Pozzo, as a post-war man, cries for help, Vladimir talks about "this immense confusion" and Estragon admits that "We are all born mad." This is a sound criticism of the post-war era when people are wandering the Wasteland and all the attributes of human nature as defined by Darwinists are dead or paralyzed, when people are "dead men in life" according to D.H. Lawrence and Godot has nothing to do with what W.H. Auden calls "the Age of Anxiety" when inaction prevails.

The attributes that constitute the core features of universal human nature, as defined by Joseph Carroll in *Reading Human Nature*, require a certain amount of agency to lead to action. The constructive efforts, which are accordingly defined as the characteristic features of protagonists in a literary work, are absent in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Vladimir and Estragon do not show any single attempt towards survival and the only action they can think of is suicide. The paradox is that even committing suicide is an action which is doomed to failure in the hands of these two tramps. The mating efforts are even more clearly not present in the play. The female characters are not only absent but are not even referred to and the only sign of reproduction is a barren tree. Nurture is not also aimed at since there is no single reference to that in the whole play. It is clear that in *Waiting for Godot*, no action is done ever to have the intention of survival; in fact no action is done by the tramps. The absence of any female characters signifies a failure in the actions aimed at reproduction, and the two tramps are apparently bereft of wealth and power.

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