In Samuel Beckett’s absurdist play *Waiting for Godot* the protagonists present a psychological damnation that limits them from creating coherent thoughts. Their lack of pensiveness is noteworthy as they engage in and appropriate ceaseless suffering, by existing as a couple. This essay will view the implications that choosing to be in a relationship in *Waiting for Godot* carry on the perpetual physical and psychological suffering of the characters, and will argue that Beckett suggests relationships are intrinsically negative due to their dependent nature. The paper will utilize research stemming from the psychoanalytic perspective, analyzing the psychological trauma(s) that caused Beckett to posit the negativity inherent in a relationship. Additionally, it will compare the contrasting basis of the play’s two relationships, Vladimir and Estragon’s and Lucky and Pozzo’s, and their imminent suffering. Estragon’s bad foot limits them from physically and metaphorically going anywhere in life, while his lack of time notion and memory causes their journey to stagnate. Pozzo’s demanding nature creates self-inflected psychological suffering while Lucky’s slave condition causes him to become physically disfigured and abused. Ultimately, they suffer together as Pozzo becomes blind and Lucky turns retarded. Vladimir and Estragon suffer due to their dependence on one another, caring nature, and their psychological/physical issues, while the symbiotic relationship of Pozzo and Lucky suffers due to its narcissistic and sadist basis.
Annotated Bibliography


Cagle explores the role of the male in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot, Endgame*, and *Krapp’s Last tape*. She analyzes how the male attempts to identify himself, and confirm his existence throughout these texts. This desire leads the characters to become dependent on others, to remind themselves they exist.

This journal can be used to portray the existence and suffering of relationship from another perspective, dependence as a form of existence. The repetitiveness and troubling action or inaction that characterizes the protagonists is employed in order for each character to understand what they are.

“The Irish male must attempt to confirm his existence and the existence of humanity through the only available option besides isolation, other men.” (56)

“The characters in Waiting for Godot, Endgame, and Krapp’s Last Tape illustrate the absurdity of man’s condition and the futility and helplessness of a humanity removed from itself.” (79)


“Is Nothing to be Done?” is an article of literary analysis on *Waiting for Godot*. It looks at the theme of suffering throughout the play. The author argues suffering is inevitable due to the condition of endless waiting the characters encounter themselves in.
The journal will be used to view the suffering of a character at an individual level allowing for the comparison of (psychological) self-inflected vs. relationship-based troubles.

“If there is meaning to his plays, it is the fact that human beings cannot live without meaning, ultimate or not, and our suffering is always made worse by life's apparent meaningfulness. But this, in turn, is made worse by our attempts to give suffering meaning, attempts that always fall short of the suffering itself. The hope for meaning becomes a source of suffering.” (60)

“The true end of human suffering, however, is extinction. The thought of death, even if it represents the end of suffering, seems to cause even more suffering, and one would rather face meaningless suffering than face death.” (80)


This journal looks at the problems of each character, such as Vladimir’s bladder issue, Estragon’s foot pain, Pozzo’s inability to recognize the fact that he is suffering, and Lucky’s mistreatment and fear. It portrays how the character’s pain leads them to exist as a couple. In their battle against futility, time, and pain the characters look for a partner to depend on.

This journal will be used to evaluate how the character’s self-inflected pains transcend into relationship-based suffering due to the dependent nature of a relationship.

“The relationship between the two tramps is somewhat that of body and soul, with Vladimir representing the soul and Estragon the body, both of whom cannot exist
without the other. Their relationship seems to be based on genuine mutual need and relative equality. They make use of each other to fight off the fear of loneliness or the unknown. But they also share each other’s fears.” (72)

“Since most of the play is spent trying to find things to do to pass the time, Lucky is lucky because his actions are determined absolutely by Pozzo. Pozzo, on the other hand, is unlucky because he not only needs to pass his own time but must find things for Lucky to do. Pozzo declares himself owner of all the land about, conceding others may pass through on the road but it’s “a disgrace”. He isn’t self-possessed, for he depends on Lucky for his place in the world, but he proclaims to have power over others.” (856)


The author evaluates Beckett’s Waiting for Godot and what elements have made it a critically acclaimed play, despite presenting no plot or action. The article highlights the success of the play stemming from the careful dealing of the two couples, and their actions by Beckett. The author analyzes these relationships in the play and assesses what Beckett intended to communicate through them.

The journal is useful as it denotes the differences in the suffering of both couples, comparing the friendly relationship of Vladimir and Estragon to that of master-slave in Lucky and Pozzo. The aforementioned sheds light on the fact that Beckett believes relationships are inherently damaging, despite the health or goals of each member.

“They are inseparable, for the conceited, well-fed, selfish Pozzo has harnessed his
servant like a beast of burden and whips him in to obedience. This master-servant relationships shown, in the play, to bring about an increasing degeneracy in the people involved. Lucky, whose task it had been to amuse his master, becomes progressively more ugly and beast-like.” (7)

“Each needs the other as a comrade, a sounding board, an echo of his complaints, his dreams, his thoughts and his fears. And while each finds the other's presence, at times, unbearable, and resents his interference and even his physical closeness, neither can get along for any length of time without the other's tenderness which is alone capable of breaching momentarily the gap of loneliness that separates man from man.” (78)


This journal looks at Samuel Beckett’s life and its events. By analyzing two books which critique Beckett’s work the journal attempts to highlight common elements throughout Beckett’s work, such as faulty relationships, incoherent acts of characters, and the absence of women in his texts. It specifically points out how these elements relate to his life and turbulences.

The journal can be utilized to analyze Beckett psychologically. Such analysis will create a clearer view of as to why Beckett chose to include certain element in *Waiting of Godot*. Particularly the journal portrays how Beckett’s fraudulent relationships shaped his ideology of them, and how such ideology is reflected in his writing, predominantly the imminent suffering created by relationships.
“He claims an artist will necessarily sever, to some extent, his relationships or dependence upon other individuals in order to create great art.” (67)

“First it introduces the theme of the search for personal identity, which the editors link to the driving force behind Beckett's artistic production, and by extension, the driving force behind all artists' production.” (22)


In this academic article the author explores the time in Beckett’s life in which he had to hide from the Nazi army. He hid in the south of France in Roussillon with his then partner. The author describes the hard times Beckett encountered in hiding. This article once again denotes the connection Beckett made between suffering and a relationship. However, this is not a suffering caused by the fact of being in a relationship. Rather, it is suffering created by the situation that Beckett and his partner encountered themselves in. This can be utilize in the context of Vladimir and Estragon’s suffering, as they suffered do to the condition they were in, not because of pain they caused to the other.

“The previous six years- the years leading up to his most productive period-had been an elaborate war nightmare- a nightmare Beckett never wrote about directly, although allusions to it are, as we shall see, everywhere in the texts of postwar decade.” (50)

“Beckett’s biographers agree that the stay in Roussillon was in many ways even worse: a mixture of boredom and danger. As an alien identifiable by his Irish
accent, Beckett had to avoid Nazi patrols coming through the area, by hiding, sometimes for days at a time, in the fields and woods.” (122)


The author of the article views how the maternal figure is represented in Carlo Gadda’s and Samuel Beckett’s texts. The mother is handled as a figure that emits hatred and pain to the characters in their literature. The author argues that the desolation she causes brings about an ongoing dissolution of the self to the characters of Beckett and Gadda’s literature.

Beckett’s first relationship, that with his mother, was plagued with dependency and antagonism. This journal allows the evaluation of the psychological effects his faulty relationship with his mother had on the representation of relationships in his literature.

“Beckett’s maternal figures prevalently distinguish themselves by their physical absence. Their lack of commitment to motherhood is clear from the very moment of procreation.” (12)

“Whereas in Beckett’s works the killing of the mother does not occupy a central position as such in the plot, matricidal desires, be it in sublimated or unsublimated form, surface on various occasions.” (235)