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TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Directorial Decisions on Estragon  
in Samuel Beckett's Production Notebooks  
for *Waiting for Godot*

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## ABSTRACT

Samuel Beckett's famous character, Estragon, suffered several variations from the publication of the Faber edition of *Waiting for Godot* in 1965 to its performance in Berlin in 1975. These variations were brought to light in Dougald McMillan and James Knowlson's book *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Waiting for Godot*. My dissertation aims at explaining the changes suffered by the character of Estragon and analyzing the effect that they had on the play.

Keywords: Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon, *Theatrical Notebooks*, James Knowlson

El célebre personaje de Samuel Beckett, Estragón, sufrió varios cambios desde la publicación de la edición de Faber de *Waiting for Godot* en 1965 hasta su representación en Berlín en 1975. Estos cambios salieron a la luz en *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Waiting for Godot*, editado por Dougald McMillan y James Knowlson. Este Trabajo de Fin de Grado proporcionará una explicación sobre los cambios que sufre este personaje y analizará el efecto que tienen sobre la obra.

Palabras clave: Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon, *Theatrical Notebooks*, James Knowlson



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## Introduction

*Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett's theatre masterpiece, was written between October 1948 and January 1949, when the author took a break between the composition of *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, the last two novels in a trilogy that would first make him a recognized author in France. After attending Trinity College, Samuel Beckett had moved to Paris where he joined the intellectual group to which James Joyce belonged. So close was their association that Beckett collaborated with him in the writing of *Finnegan's Wake*. James Knowlson, Beckett's authorized biographer, sums up the affinities between both Irishmen in the following way:

They both had degrees in French and Italian, although from different universities in Dublin. Joyce's exceptional linguistic abilities and the wide range of his reading in Italian, German, French, and English impressed the linguist and scholar in Beckett, whose earlier studies allowed him to share with Joyce his passionate love of Dante. They both adored words, their sounds, rhythms, shapes, etymologies, and histories, and Joyce had a formidable vocabulary derived from many languages and a keen interest in the contemporary slang of several languages that Samuel Beckett admired and tried to emulate. (98)

Many years later, when Samuel Beckett first put his play *Waiting for Godot* on stage, the break with his master was complete. Originally written in French, the play was premiered in January 1953 at the Babylone Theatre in Paris. It was a great success and soon started to be represented all over Europe and translated into several languages. The play was considered a break with the traditional theatre; what some termed 'anti-theatre' was an aesthetic theatre, without action or scenic tricks.

The English written version of the play exists in multiple versions; the 'definitive' English version —the one that is still reprinted today— was published in 1965 by Faber and Faber, the British publisher, but the 1954 Grove Press edition, which boasts a number of variants, still holds sway in the US. As the play was originally written in French, the translation, made by Beckett himself, was a source of changes in the play, but many others would be a result of his personal collaboration in some of the performances. The most renowned instance of this is what is known as 'the Schiller Theater production' of *Waiting for Godot*. In 1975, Beckett decided to direct personally

his play in Berlin, in Elmar Tophoven's German translation, and it is in this performance where he made the largest number of directorial decisions that would affect the text of the play.

These production notes were all collected in several stage notebooks. In 1993, Professor James Knowlson, author of *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* and founder of the Beckett International Foundation, and the late Dougald McMillan, an American literary scholar, joined forces and edited them in the *Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett. Volume I: Waiting for Godot*. The *Theatrical Notebooks* are a collaborative project that undertook the edition of Beckett's notebooks, where he had written all the changes that he did to his plays during the performances in England and in Germany. Each volume presents the resulting 'revised' version of the plays, the list of notes that Beckett made on the standard version, and a facsimile of the notebook(s) that each of the editors —James Knowlson and Dougald McMillan (volume 1), S. E. Gontarski (volumes 2 and 4), James Knowlson (general editor and volume 3)— worked on.

Each volume is organized, in general terms, in the following two-part structure:

1. The first part includes the revised text of the play, each of the editors having marked the several modifications made by Beckett in his production notebooks as either Additions (marked with square brackets), Changes (with pointed brackets), and Cuts (with angle brackets). In the case of *Waiting for Godot*, McMillan and Knowlson have marked these alterations on the standard 1965 English version of the play, which is followed by an enumeration of the modified sections referred to as 'Textual Notes'; some of the entries are briefly discussed, but very seldom.
2. The second section of the book presents a facsimile of the original stage notebooks; in our case, a facsimile of the 1975 German production of the play. The notes, written in English and German, are followed by a section including 'Editorial Notes' and by the list of Cuts and Changes in the Schiller-Theatre Annotated Copies and Production Texts.



The first two volumes in the series to have been compiled were the ones dealing with *Endgame* and *Krapp's Last Tape*. However, in the published collection, the volume labeled number one is *Waiting for Godot*; *Endgame* is number two and *Krapp's Last Tape*, number three; volume 4, published in 1999, brings together 'the shorter plays': *Play, Come and Go, Eh Joe* etc. Mel Gussow, writing on the *Theatrical Notebooks* in *The New York Times* (7 March 1993), confirms that Beckett took an active part in the elaboration of the first two volumes of the series. Stan Gontarski, directly involved in the project, comments on Beckett's reasons for this support:

As Beckett grew increasingly dissatisfied with his plays as published, he decided in 1986, after years of suggesting that theatrical directors not stage the published scripts but follow instead his directorial revisions, to authorize publication of his theatrical notebooks and what he called 'corrected texts' for his plays, that is, texts which incorporated the revisions he made as a director, along with the notebooks in which the rationale of those revisions was worked out. This was an extraordinary decision on Beckett's part, essentially repudiating his dramatic canon as published and available to the public, and offering instead a much more fluid and multiple series of performing texts. (1995: 197)

The resulting volumes are densely documented and have many footnotes to explain all the modifications that Beckett did, the ones that he intended to do, both of which these scholars have recovered and deciphered for us.

Little has been written about *The Theatrical Notebooks*, but there are some interesting essays and articles concerning the matter. In 1986, Walter D. Asmus, Director of the Schiller production in 1975, writes in a journal format on Beckett's daily interventions during the rehearsals for that performance. He quotes Beckett as saying things like "Estragon is on the ground, he belongs to the stone. Vladimir is light, he is oriented towards the sky. He belongs to the tree" (Asmus 282), which will make it easier for us to understand some of the changes that he made. Asmus also transcribes some of Beckett's conversation with the members of the cast and the other direction assistants, in which the writer explained some parts of his play, especially Lucky's monologue (283-85).

Mel Gussow's article "Wipes Dream Away With Hand" (1993) makes a little analysis of the Notebooks, and gives us an insight into how the editions were made. He explains, for example, that the editors did such an intensive work that they looked for changes even in the erasures of the stage notebooks. Stan Gontarski has written "A Hat is Not a Shoe: *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett* and Postmodern Theories of Text and Textuality" (1999) on the problems posed for theorists by Beckett's multiple, changing versions, with the example of *Endgame's* production notebooks as an illustration of this.

"Beckett's *Godot* in Berlin: New Coordinates of the Void", by Ciaran Ross (2001), studies the 1975 German production. Ross focuses on the movements on the play, how they were changed and what they mean. Instead of analyzing a character, as I have chosen to do, he analyzes all those whose movement pattern has been changed. However, he takes a special interest in the character of Lucky. More recently, David Bradby has written "Beckett's Production of *Waiting for Godot* (*Warten auf Godot*)" (2010) where he briefly reviews the writer's production notebook and comments on his handling of actors on stage.

This Bachelor's Thesis will study Volume 1 of the *Theatrical Notebooks: Waiting for Godot*. Beckett was known for the extreme control that he had over his work, therefore I strongly believe that these alterations were not done by chance. I have focused my Thesis on an analysis of the modifications done to the character of Estragon, on why they were done and what effect they produce. Starting with my own analysis of the Textual Notes, and with the support of some scholarly analysis of the play, I intend to make an analysis of the character of Estragon, and how Beckett changed him from the one we were given in the 1965 version, to create a new character with a different personality. My goal, then, is to prove that Beckett created a completely different character in the 1975 version.

The Thesis will be organized around a number of sections, each of them revolving around a trait of this character's personality, where my own selection of Textual Notes will be gathered and analyzed.

To finish this introduction, I would like to point out the close connection between this Bachelor's Thesis and the competences proper to the Degree in English where it belongs. With this Thesis I intend to prove that I have acquired those competences, from the academic use of English to the elaboration of an essay in a second language, including the use of printed and online resources, and the basic skills to carry out the critical analysis of a literary work.



## Samuel Beckett's directorial decisions on Estragon

Estragon's character, I contend, has been radically affected by the changes made by Samuel Beckett on the play. Although Vladimir, Pozzo, Lucky and the Boy have been altered by those changes too, they did not receive a whole new personality, as I hold Estragon did. I believe that it is possible to say that the 1965 Estragon is not the same one that Beckett put on stage in 1975. As he is one of the members of the protagonist couple, he is seldom quiet or steady, and, in comparison to Vladimir, he suffers more and more defining changes, and his changes have a deeper effect on how the play comes across. What follows is a study of those that I consider define the new Estragon. I will point them out preceded by the line number in which they appear.

In my view, the new Estragon is depicted as being a worse person than in the 1965 version. In that version, the audience was left to make their own judgment on Estragon and choose whether they liked him or not. In the German version, Beckett leaves a few hints that could direct the audience into thinking negatively about Estragon. Even the stage indications point in this direction. I will start with them.

### 1 "Estragon belongs to the stone": New stage directions

1 *[A stone]*

The 1965 stage directions indicate that Estragon was sitting on a 'low mound'. The change might not suggest much from the point of view of the disposition, but it tells much about Estragon, especially if we are aware of the quote "Estragon belongs to the stone", that Beckett made during the 1975 performance (Asmus 282).

It is generally accepted that Estragon belongs to the earth, while Vladimir is a dreamer. In the 1965 version, the stage had a tree and a mound. The mound has good connotations, it is life-producing and soft. On the other hand, the rock does not have such good connotations; it is hard, inert, and is frequently used in metaphors referring to cold and heartless people who are insensible and little concerned with the rest. In conclusion, through this change from 'a mound' to 'a stone', Estragon's physical

representation on stage turns from a positive representation to a negative one. It is a little clue about what we are expected to find in this new Estragon.

5 *[downstage left, still, bowed. Long silence. Spell broken by Estragon]*

In the 1965 version, Estragon appeared on stage looking at the ground. The amplification of this section gives the audience a hint about Estragon's mood. The silence was implicit, for although it was not written in the original version's stage direction, it is implied that there is silence until someone starts the action. It will be a recurrent addition in the 1975 stage notebooks, where a number of 'long silences' are introduced. To the normal usage of silence to create tension, Beckett adds that of creating intrigue to capture the audience's attention, creating expectation; hence the use of the word 'spell'. It is a strong start, Estragon is the beginning of the action. Out of stage, Estragon has been bitten up. The new beginning presents a defeated man, who is having a bad day. He is moody from the very start.

6 *[left]*

This clarifies which boot Estragon is taking off. It is going to be repeated several times through the play. It is important because it is the left one. Beckett is Irish, and the Irish are very superstitious. Although Beckett was a well-educated person, most probably free of this type of fears, he grew in a house with maids and a cook and several uneducated people from the countryside who probably taught him about these superstitions. Beckett was aware that the 'left' foot is the 'bad luck' foot. Estragon has bad luck, he gets hit twice in the play, before Act I and Act II begin, and he seems to have a dark past —explained in note Line 2864—. Beckett tells us about his bad luck, or at least represents it, with Estragon's boot.

## 2 **'Grunting', not 'panting': Estragon's bad mood**

The presentation of Estragon continues, and his first actions make us think that he is a bad-humored person. He didn't have an easy character in the 1965 version of the play,

Estragon always had a strong will and was somewhat particular; however in this new version he is bad-humored and difficult to treat.

7 *{grunting} instead of “panting”*  
38 *[grunts]*

The results of Estragon’s attempts to take off his boots are bad humour (‘grunting’) instead of physical effort (‘panting’). He is clearly a more irritable character, his reactions are more negative than in the 1965 version.

201 *[Advances towards Vladimir]*  
202 *[Advances forwards]*  
203 *[Advances forwards]*

Vladimir and Estragon are talking about when they were supposed to wait for Godot. None of them are sure of the present date. The new movement creates a confrontation between the two characters. Estragon is suspicious about Vladimir, he seems to blame him for not knowing the date when they were supposed to meet Godot, and the movement towards him could be considered as menacing. In the 1987 film version of the play done by the San Quentin Drama Workshop with Beckett’s assistance in taking directorial decisions, this modification comes across clearly: Estragon has a cruel expression and is harassing Vladimir, who seems relaxed and unaffected by his actions.

These stage notes contribute to the characterization of Estragon as a disagreeable character. In my view, these additions would make the audience position themselves against Estragon as ‘the bad guy’ of the couple. Before the 1975 version, the audience was allowed to form a personal opinion on the character, but in the German version, they are directed towards what Beckett wants them to feel. Beckett, no longer content with shaping the characters, starts to shape the audience’s feelings towards them.

2608 *<(POZZO:)... but are you friends?*  
*ESTRAGON: (laughing noisily). He wants to know if we are friends!*  
*VLADIMIR: No, he means friends of his.*  
*ESTRAGON: Well?*  
*VLADIMIR: We’ve proved we are, by helping him.*  
*ESTRAGON: Exactly. Would we have helped him if we weren’t his friends?*

VLADIMIR: *Possibly.*

ESTRAGON: *True.*

VLADIMIR: *Don't let's quibble about that now.*

POZZO: *You are not highwaymen?*

ESTRAGON: *Highwaymen! Do we look like highwaymen?*

VLADIMIR: *Damn it can't you see the man is blind!*

ESTRAGON: *Damn it so he is. (Pause.) So he says.*

POZZO: *Don't leave me!*

VLADIMIR: *No question of it.*

POZZO: *What time is it?*

VLADIMIR: *(inspecting the sky). Seven o'clock... eight o'clock...*

ESTRAGON: *That depends on what time of the year it is.*

POZZO: *Is it evening.*

*[Silence. Vladimir and Estragon scrutinize the sunset.]*

ESTRAGON: *It's rising.*

VLADIMIR: *Impossible.*

ESTRAGON: *Perhaps it's the dawn.*

VLADIMIR: *Don't be a fool. It's the west over there.*

ESTRAGON: *How do you know?*

POZZO: *[Anguished] Is it evening?*

VLADIMIR: *Anyway is hasn't moved.*

ESTRAGON: *Tell me you it's rising.*

POZZO: *Why don't you answer me?*

ESTRAGON: *Give us a chance.*

VLADIMIR: *[Reassuring] It's evening, sir, it's evening, night is drawing nigh. My friend here would have me doubt it and I must confess he shook me for a moment. But it is not for nothing I have lived through this long day and I can assure you it is very near the end of its repertory. [Pause.] How do you feel now?*

ESTRAGON: *How much long must we cart him around? [They half release him; catch him again as he falls.] We are not caryatids!*

VLADIMIR: *You were saying your sight used to be good, if I heard you right.*

POZZO: *Wonderful! Wonderful, wonderful sight!*

*[Silence] >*

The first main change that takes place with the omission of this long passage is that in the 1975 version Estragon and Vladimir are not as solicit towards Pozzo as they were in the first version. They no longer carry Pozzo all over the stage just because he wants to move around. Estragon and Vladimir help him, but they keep their pride and don't act as a substitute for Lucky.



Beckett also eliminates the ill-treatment that Pozzo receives from both characters, especially from Estragon. He is no longer presented as a burden that is moved from one place to another. The cut also avoids the anguish that Pozzo feels when Estragon starts to confuse Vladimir —because he doesn't know or because he wants to enjoy himself on Pozzo's account— arguing whether it is sunset or dawn.

This fragment's omission also takes out of the stage the discussion over whether Estragon and Vladimir are friends or not, which might have caused controversy after seeing how Estragon has been treating Vladimir. On the other hand, Estragon has been afraid and acting as a coward, especially in Pozzo's presence, whereas in this fragment, Estragon opposes Pozzo's wishes, which might be contradictory to the audience.

The deletion of this passage also eliminates the 'justification' for Estragon's harshness in the next lines, when he, very rudely, puts Pozzo on the ground and treats him very coldly. So eventually this cut, that initially seems to erase some of Estragon's bad manners, is characterizing him as a worse person.

As we will see next, Estragon's bad humour soon turns into violence. He doesn't attack anyone, but he has very bad reactions, sometimes physical, and frequently against Vladimir.

### **3 “rejecting him with both hands”: A cold and violent character on stage**

18 *[rejecting him with both hands]*

Estragon rejects Vladimir's hug. In the 1965 version, Estragon is only irritated and says that he does not want a hug. It is the prelude to how Estragon is going to behave in this version of the play. He is more violent and he is going to behave badly towards Vladimir. This absolute rejection from one character to the other also helps differentiating the two personas: in the original version Estragon and Vladimir are very similar, they have a very alike character; however, in 1975, Estragon and Vladimir cannot be mistaken.

140 *[throws down the boot violently]*

Once more, Beckett's election when describing the movements on the stage is very interesting. The adjective 'violently' is very revealing, as it describes clearly the new character that Estragon has acquired. In the first script, Estragon, once he has managed to take off his boot, stands up painfully and limps away. Now he shows his bad mood by having a rough reaction.

261 *<Estragon lays his hand on Vladimir's shoulder>*

In the 1965 version, Estragon and Vladimir have argued and Vladimir leaves the stage. When he returns, he doesn't want to talk to Estragon and places himself as far as he can from him. In the revised version, Beckett specifies that he is on the 'left' side of the stage, next to Estragon.

In the original version, Estragon crosses the stage and apologizes to Vladimir; we are told that he "lays his hand on Vladimir's shoulder". This is omitted in the 1975 version, the resulting scene being much colder. Although Vladimir is closer to Estragon and the 'humiliation' of asking for forgiveness is smaller, for Estragon only has to move a few steps, he doesn't. It is not a matter of proximity, but of empathy. The new Estragon is cold and apathetic. It doesn't mean that he dislikes Vladimir, but he is unable to console him.

1384 *{Advances quickly towards the boy} instead of "The boy exits calmly"*

Estragon is intimidating the child. He becomes a bully and needs to feel superior to someone, Vladimir, Lucky or a boy. He is cruel and insensitive and lacks empathy.

1632 *{and looks at Vladimir's chest. Vladimir again stretches out his arms. Estragon holds him away gently. He moves away} instead of "They look at each other, then suddenly embrace, clapping each other's back. End the embrace, Estragon no longer supported almost falls"*

In the 1965 version, Estragon and Vladimir live a very touching scene by showing up their friendship. Estragon is dependent on Vladimir and he almost falls when he lacks his support. However, in the 1975 version, Estragon is cold and rejects Vladimir's hug,

although he is not as insensitive as on previous occasions. With this change, Estragon loses his moment of weakness; he becomes stronger.

2082 *[He pulls his arm free and moves away]*

Estragon, who has had a calmer character in the scenes that precede this one (see for instance our discussion of line 1963), here returns to his own self. He rejects Vladimir's demonstrations of affection, in a rude and unjustified way. He is a non-affectionate person. However, there are moments when Beckett makes the opposite move and decides to humanize Estragon, as witness our next three entries.

850 <VLADIMIR: *Try and walk.*

*(Estragon takes a few limping steps, stops before Lucky and spits on him, then goes and sits down on the mound)>*

By eliminating Estragon's childish reaction, Beckett has also omitted his desire for vengeance towards the helpless Lucky.

2328 <ESTRAGON: *Do you hear him?>*

Pozzo has been crying for help; this line was Estragon's mockery on the subject. By eliminating this line, Beckett creates a less cruel character, though he continues to lack any empathy. In my opinion, Estragon has been depicted as such a harsh character, that making him mock a blind man would have raised him almost to the position of a villain.

2864 *[Let go of hand]*

Vladimir and Estragon have held hands in an emotive scene. However, Estragon lets Vladimir go, as he wants to commit suicide. With this addition about Estragon letting go of Vladimir's hand it looks as if he had a heavy burden he wants to get rid of. He is innocent, but it often seems that he has seen and done things that frighten him, and therefore he treats Vladimir as an inferior. He knows what he wants to do, and doesn't intend to let Vladimir follow as in the first suicide scene. He lets go of his hand and goes away to prevent this from happening. However, he neither says anything nor shows any feelings.

This can also be a representation of the partition between the two characters. Just like the thieves in Golgotha (with which Vladimir and Estragon compare themselves) were placed in a similar position but had a different ending, these two bums have similar characteristics, but they will not have the same end, we can guess.

#### 4 “Moves towards Estragon. Seducingly”: The pseudo-couple

The new depiction of Estragon, his complexity as a character, allowed Beckett to create a cold, harsh and aggressive character, but naïve at the same time and easily seduced by his companion.

384 *[ESTRAGON: Let's go*

*VLADIMIR: Where? (Moves towards Estragon. Seducingly) Perhaps we'll sleep tonight in his loft. All snug and dry, our bellies full, in the hay. That's worth waiting for. No?*

*ESTRAGON: Not all night.*

*VLADIMIR: It's still day. (Silence. Both look at the sky)]*

This is a rather complicated addition, for it has a lot of substance. Six lines before Estragon's "let's go", he and Vladimir thought that they had heard Godot coming; twenty lines before that, they had made an attempt at explaining why they were waiting for him. Why does Estragon want to leave? I find three possible explanations. First, Godot was intending to give a negative answer to a possible request from Estragon and Vladimir. Estragon seems to have realized it, or at least senses it, and therefore he wants to leave, to prevent the humiliation or to avoid wasting time, although time is the only thing that these two characters have. Second possibility: Estragon is a coward, he is afraid of Godot. That is a new side to his character that will be explored when Pozzo and Lucky appear on stage, and this is a little prelude of what we will find later on. The last possible explanation is that Estragon is a victim of his naivety and he doesn't realize what he is saying. He is a simple person that says everything that crosses his mind without thinking or filtering it. He expresses himself as he is, without intending to seem nice.

Estragon's second phrase, "Not all night", is also very controversial. On the one side, it is related to Vladimir's words. Estragon might be referring to the fact that something will prevent them from sleeping all night, or it might be a response to the theory that Estragon and Vladimir are homosexuals and a couple. On the other side, as is recurrent in the play, Estragon is responding to himself, ignoring Vladimir. He pretends to leave and go somewhere, but not all night: Estragon intends to come back later and wait again for Godot, as it indeed happens.

In conclusion, I believe that with this addition Beckett doesn't only depict Estragon's complexity as a character, but plays with the audience too, making the reasons for Estragon and Vladimir's waiting still more obscure.

462 *{Hand} instead of "by the sleeve"*

Estragon prevents Vladimir from approaching Lucky. It is a more personal move. Estragon does care for Vladimir although he has a peculiar way of demonstrating it.

841 <ESTRAGON: *(On one leg) I'll never walk again*  
VLADIMIR: *(Tenderly) I'll carry you. (Pause) If necessary*>

Lucky has kicked Estragon when he approached him. With this cut, Beckett eliminates Estragon's childish reaction. He is now more mature-looking than the 1965 Estragon pretending to be crippled on stage. But also, Beckett has suppressed a scene that could have been taken as a demonstration of love. Vladimir seems to be offering to carry Estragon forever, if needed.

1963 *[Confused. Looking first at the boot, then at Vladimir]*

Vladimir tells Estragon that someone came and changed his boots. In the original version, Estragon only looked at the boots. He did not seem to react to the possibility of someone changing them. Estragon did not answer, because he paid no attention to Vladimir's words, or he didn't give credit to them. With the modification, it is clear that Estragon is paying attention to Vladimir, which is not always specified, and he seems to give credit to what he says. Although the new Estragon is harsher and a little

more violent, he is naive and is easy to deceive. In line 1966 the stage direction is repeated.

2485 *{Extends hands to take Vladimir's, suddenly recoils} for 'recoiling'*

Vladimir has offered his hand to Estragon in line 2484, Estragon seems to think about taking it, but, in the end, he rejects it. However, Estragon's moment of doubt indicates to the audience that he is not as insensible towards Vladimir as all his previous rejections might have seemed to us. He has some affection for him.

2059 *{Croons loudly with arms around him, rooking him} for 'begins to sing in a loud Voice'*

Vladimir has expressed his tiredness and his intention to sleep. This change makes Vladimir and Estragon have a very tender moment. Beckett changed the loud song, which might make the audience confused about Estragon's intentions: instead of calming Vladimir, he would seem to be mocking or annoying him. Estragon clearly proves that he has tender feelings towards his partner.

2310 *[From the left. Vladimir runs to Estragon. They flee to the stone and huddle together.]*

Estragon and Vladimir were stalking Pozzo and he has frightened them away. This line describes a tender moment between Estragon and Vladimir. Estragon is not running to Vladimir's protection as has occurred before; in this moment they are equals, friends (or more than friends) who care for each other and comfort themselves in a 'threatening situation'. Nevertheless, this addition provides a new aspect in Estragon's character: he is a coward.

## **5 "Backwards to the shelter of Vladimir": A servile and cowardly Estragon**

The preceding Textual Notes are mostly taken from parts of the play where Estragon and Vladimir were alone. In my study of all the notes I have observed that Estragon's

character changes when there are more people on stage. Lucky and Pozzo have a big effect on Estragon's behavior, one which can be summed up in his becoming a coward and losing his dignity.

646 *{moves eagerly} instead of "takes a step"*

Pozzo has thrown to Estragon some chicken bones that Lucky has rejected. With this change, Beckett removes an insecure Estragon, who had his doubts about accepting what others have left and thrown away, and replaces him with an avid person who loses his pride and dignity for food leftovers.

1040 *[Jumps up]*

Pozzo offers Estragon and Vladimir economic help. Estragon, who in the first version is happy with the idea, now becomes enthusiastic. Until now, we have seen that Estragon is cold and violent; we can add to this list his lack of pride and a predisposition to do anything for money. Estragon has no consideration for himself or others and accepts any proposal, no matter the conditions or who offers. Pozzo is almost a slave dealer, but Estragon has no objections as long as he obtains some benefit.

961 *[Goes to Pozzo raising his hat and wipes seat of stool with it]*

In the 1965 version Estragon acted with deference towards Pozzo, but in the German version Estragon becomes almost a servant. He intends to take over Lucky's position. Estragon acts in this manner because Pozzo has affirmed that he owns all the land on which they are standing, he has declared that he is rich. Estragon will start to behave with servitude in the following scenes.

1074 *[Stands]*

1080 *[sits]*

Estragon has started to imitate Lucky, as if the money that Pozzo has promised was the money to buy him. He has lost his pride and dignity. Estragon seems to be jealous of Lucky's position.

584 *[First Vladimir then Estragon, having put down his boot, move across the stage on to either sides of Lucky, then gradually approach him as they discuss him]*

Lucky has fallen asleep, so Estragon and Vladimir decide to investigate him, for Lucky has been keeping everyone away from him with his violent behaviour. They are moving as a predator over a prey, slowly, fearful of him waking up. Both of them believe that what they are doing is bad. At the same time, Estragon and Vladimir move the same, act in the same way; the difference between characters that Beckett has created seems to have disappeared.

606 *[They start to close on him]*

610 *[Closer]*

617 *[Closer]*

619 *[Closer]*

621 & 626 *[looking up at him]*

Although their actions do not seem bad, Estragon and Vladimir move as if they were guilty, they advance slowly, trying not to be found out. Estragon and Vladimir are talking to themselves, wondering if Lucky is dead or asleep. In the 1965 version the conversation that accompanies these movements takes place from a distance, but Beckett added this little movement that made the scene flow slowly. Estragon and Vladimir are watching Lucky as if something was about to happen when they finally reach him.

However, Estragon is a coward and is not able to approach Lucky fearing his reaction; lines 617 & 619 only make reference to Vladimir. Estragon waits from a distance to see what happens. In a way, he is using Vladimir as a human shield, something that our next entry confirms.

2207 *[Backwards to the shelter of Vladimir]*

Estragon is being pushed towards the swamp (the audience) by Pozzo. Again, he reveals himself as a coward and runs towards Vladimir for shelter, instead of defending himself. Estragon has no self-confidence and, when he feels attacked, he looks for someone stronger to protect him. Paradoxically, from the beginning of both Acts, we are made to believe that the strongest of the couple is him.



2359 *[Advances towards Pozzo, halts, retreat]*

2379 *[They go a little closer than before towards Pozzo in the heap, halt, then Vladimir initiates retreat]*

2395 *[They go closer to the heap, pushing up they sleeves]*

Vladimir and Estragon are repeating the same pattern than in Act 1 when Lucky was sleeping. They are stalking Pozzo. Estragon is repeating some actions that he performed in Act I. As before, they look guilty, and Estragon's personality is exposed again.

2369 *{They go towards Pozzo in the heap, conspiring in whispers. Pozzo beats the ground with his fist. Estragon initiates the retreat} for "Pozzo writhes, groans, beats the ground with his fists"*

Vladimir and Estragon, finding out about Pozzo's blindness, decide to approach him as two burglars. When Pozzo tries to intimidate them, Estragon retreats immediately proving, again, that he is a coward.

## **6 "Ah yes": The rhythm of repetition and added movement**

The changes, cuts and additions that we have indicated so far seem to have another function apart from that of characterizing Estragon. Some of them are repeated and, I contend, help to give a certain rhythm. As Walter Asmus says, Samuel Beckett was very concerned with the rhythmical elements in his plays (283). Some of the modifications made during the 1975 performance could be a consequence of this preference.

2408 *[Vladimir takes Estragon's arm, leading him in an anti-clockwise circle upstage around the heap.]*

There have been many circular movements throughout the play. This is the last and the most complete one. It can be interpreted as an explicit confirmation on Beckett's part of the circular strategy that he has used on the 1975 version.

154 *[yes]*

In the play, for instance, a large number of Estragon's vocatives and affirmations are substituted by the phrase "Ah yes!" The change is made so often, that it becomes Estragon's pet phrase. I believe that the reason for Beckett to include in Estragon the

use of a pet phrase was to give him rhythm through alliteration. The repetition of the phrase creates a circular structure: each time that Estragon repeats his phrase, the listener remembers all the previous times that he has said it. The audience could perceive it in two several ways, as a joke, or as an annoying tic. Which of them is intended is very difficult to know. In my opinion Beckett intended to bother the audience, it agrees with Estragon's new personality.

6 *[left]*

This addition has been commented before, but it is also of importance in this section. The repeated use of this word also creates a rhythmical pattern, as an alliteration that runs throughout the text.

Verbal alliteration is not the only way in which Beckett created a circular sense in the play; Estragon's behavior is repeated in Act I and in Act II. Estragon starts both Acts rejecting Vladimir vehemently, becoming even violent. His character softens a little with the entrance of Pozzo and Lucky on stage, but, as soon as they leave stage, he turns back to his aggressive self, and bullies the Boy when he enters. Even when the second couple enters the stage, and Estragon 'controls himself', his character in the 1975 version is harsher than in the 1965 version. It is true that there was already a pattern in Estragon's behavior before 1975: for example, at the beginning of both Acts, Estragon is on stage and he has been mistreated by someone out of stage; and in both Acts, Estragon is constantly turning to the rock. The modifications on the play emphasize this circular and rhythmical creation, creating the sense of flow.

At the same time that Beckett adds rhythm, he also adds movement. The 1975 play has more movement on stage but, as there is no moment of stop, there is a sense of steadiness. There are no ruptures, and seldom any stops. Many of the movements are meaningless. The actors frequently cross the stage without any concrete reason. However there are some that convey some meaning.

146 *[He goes to extreme right, gazes into the distance off with his hands screening his eyes]*

It adds unsubstantial action. It is a movement that contributes to making the play more fluid. This type of movement is a recurrent addition, especially in the character of Estragon in opposition to other characters, like Pozzo whose actions are limited.

## **7 “humming the Waltz Duet from the Merry Widow”: The well-educated vagrants**

Another substantial change that Beckett made in the 1975 version of the play was the presentation of a more cultivated Estragon.

2277 [Waltz in a full circle humming the Waltz Duet from *The Merry Window*]

Estragon and Vladimir are dancing and singing a duet from Franz Lehár’s operetta *The Merry Widow* (1905), which means that they have some education in music. They weren’t always tramps. Both of them must have come from a middle class family, for in the early 20th century only the bourgeois were educated in arts, as music and dance, as indeed the Beckett family illustrates.

In this respect, I would like to suggest a parallelism between both Estragon and Vladimir and Samuel Beckett and his own brother Frank. It is a well-known fact that Beckett used real people as models for his characters. *Happy Days* —a play where, incidentally, Beckett also used this same waltz— is quoted by Beckett when evoking memories of his childhood housemaids (Knowlson & Knowlson 5). Even more interesting is Beckett’s admitting that the character of the Smeraldina (Rima) in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932) was based on his cousin and former lover Peggy Sinclair (*ibid.*, 37). Why, then, not suggest this parallelism between the characters in our play and the two Beckett brothers?

Although they were very close, they were also very different. Their relatives and friends depicted Frank Beckett as a pragmatic man. Frank, as Samuel, studied in Trinity College, but he was a science person, so he became an engineer. He was a man of action with a big temper. He was not an intellectual; like their father, Frank was a down-to-earth, realistic person. The similarity of this personality with Estragon’s has led me to believe that Frank was the model for this character. Moreover, Samuel was defined as a

gentle person who was fond of classical music, a visionary (Knowlson & Knowlson 15). He was an intellectual, misunderstood by the people that surrounded him, a dreamer. This is close to Vladimir's description.

The play was written three years after Beckett's seclusion in France, hiding from the Nazis. He must have missed his family, specially his brother, on whose account he left Paris in 1954, right after the premiere of *Waiting for Godot*, in order to take care of him while he was sick; shortly afterwards Frank died. Losing his brother gave Beckett a very hard time. Their mutual affection can be compared to Vladimir and Estragon's: although they argue, although they are very different, they are close to each other. I believe it is reasonable to think that *Waiting for Godot* could have been inspired in the relationship between Samuel and Frank Beckett.

## **8 "Looking down": Rounding up a play**

Beckett continued changing elements in his play down to the very last line. The last change in the play is an added stage direction for Estragon.

2901 [*Looking down*]

It is the last note in the play, the end. Estragon looks at the ground. He looks like a defeated person, sad and as if he has given up hope. On the other hand, let us not forget that Beckett defined him as belonging 'to the stone', as being a down to earth person. In my opinion there is a double meaning in this final posture: Estragon is tired but also he is not allowed to be a dreamer as Vladimir is. This last line is the closure of the circle. The last reference is, in this case, to the beginning. Beckett's last change was to end as he had started. As if nothing had happened.

## Conclusions

The publication of *The Theatrical Notebooks*, although authorized by Beckett, has created a new dilemma. Which is the valid play now that, in these editions, the changes have been incorporated to the standard version? Beckett gave his consent to the publication of this collaborative work. He even took part in it. But he never stated whether the 1954 Grove Press edition of *Waiting for Godot*, or the 1965 Faber edition, or this new revised 1993 edition, was the final one. Concerning Estragon, Beckett never said which version of the character was the real one—or if there was a real one at all.

It is true that the changes made by Knowlson and McMillan on the 1965 version of *Waiting for Godot* were made by Beckett himself in his 1975 production notebooks, and that the editors of the project are some of Beckett's leading scholars. However, does anyone have the authority to change what the keepers of the author's legacy do not want to change? The 1965 Faber edition, considered to be the 'definitive' version, and certainly the one that Beckett used as a basis for his changes, and the 1954 Grove Press edition, the one still available for US readers, continue to be the two standard versions available for the English-speaking audiences. Macmillan's and Knowlson's carefully edited version is solely within the reach of scholars and academics, given the unavailability of a publication which is out of print, and the high prices achieved by such a monument of textual scholarship.

On the one hand, it is acceptable to believe that if Beckett did those changes, it was because he believed that the play would be better with them. He gave a rhythmical flow to the performance, a bigger personality to the character and more complexity to his play. They also provided a glance into Beckett's mind, allowing the reader to discover what was more important to Beckett when writing, and what the essence of the play is. In other words, the revised version gives a different perspective on the masterpiece.

On the other hand, as stated before, the Beckett Estate has never allowed for these changes to be included in his published version. Beckett only directed his own writing and made changes to the script, as many authors do. His documentation works, the notebooks, allow us to have those changes, lost in many other playwrights; and the

devotion of his scholars has given us the possibility of comparing the performance as Beckett wanted it with the 1965 published version. Nevertheless, that those changes have not been included in the published versions of his play turns the notebooks into a script for a one-time performance, different from the rest, with specific actors and scenic constraints, but not into a renewed version.

Therefore, is there a real Estragon? And if so, which one? As I see it, Beckett created two different plays due to the personal moment he was living and the evolution of his directorial techniques. He created two versions of *Waiting for Godot*, each of them analyzable on its own. They are interesting pieces in themselves and in comparison to one another. Hence there is no real Estragon, just two faces of the same character, two versions. Just like we never act in the same way twice, Estragon has also his bad days.

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