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Stain Upon the Silence: Samuel Beckett's Deconstructive Inventions

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STAIN UPON THE SILENCE:
SAMUEL BECKETT'S DECONSTRUCTIVE INVENTIONS

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by

Leigh Anne Howard

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PREFACE

I first encountered Samuel Beckett in 1982, when my high school English class listened to <u>Waiting for Godot</u>, performed by Burt Lahr, E.G. Marshall, Kurt Kaznar, and Alvin Epstein. While the play intrigued me, it also confused me. After my instructor explained the play's religious significance, I became even more confused. I resolved to put Beckett's bizarre work behind me.

A few years later, however, I found <u>Endgame</u> in my course readings in a junior dramatic literature class. In addition, <u>Endgame</u> appeared as one of three plays we acting students could explore for our final project. I enjoyed this play more than <u>Waiting for Godot</u>, but I still avoided it as my final project. Indeed, the joke circulating the class implied that I would perform anything except <u>Endgame</u>.

Yet, nearly ten years after a somewhat dubious introduction, I turn to Beckett's work as my thesis topic. My own unwillingness to abandon Beckett seems to support the case this thesis presents: Beckett grips audience members and forces them to experience his drama and to form their own interpretations and meanings of his works. In addition, his works advocate theater as a collaborative act, because not only do audiences engage in the drama at hand, they also seek action external to the dramatic experience. Moreover,

his works entice the reader or viewer to return to his works time and time again.

This research marks the sixth time I have returned to Beckett's works. As I reflect upon this journey, I must acknowledge many people for their time, support, and insight. First, I thank my thesis committee for their efforts and encouragement. Judith Hoover asked the right questions, Pat Carr suggested the right wordings, and Larry Winn knew the right sources to ground my topic and research. Each challenged my thinking, increased my own self-confidence, and influenced me to accept only the very best.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge Randall Capps, the head of the Department of Communication and Broadcasting, as well as other faculty, staff, and graduate students for their interest in this project and my other endeavors in completing my Master of Arts degree. Lydia Reid, in particular, contributed several suggestions to earlier drafts.

Last, but not least, I extend my deepest appreciation to my family for their understanding and patience. Their support in the last year facilitated a number of goals and decisions. I dedicate this thesis to each of them.

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In recent years, deconstruction theory has emerged as a key method for exploring public address, organizational culture, and literary discourse. Deconstruction theory encourages tearing apart hierarchy and established order to gain insights about the artifact being studied. Furthermore, the theory questions surface or superficial messages and encourages the reader to explore signals hidden below the surface. Deconstruction discounts context and places faith in experience.

Using the early plays of Samuel Beckett, this research explores deconstruction as a method to create messages. This new perspective transports deconstruction from a set of theoretical concepts into basic assumptions that enhance communication. This study suggests that deconstructive inventors use processes previously associated with deconstructive criticism to reveal their own beliefs. Furthermore, this study correlates deconstructive invention with rhetorical tropes--metonomy, synecdoche, metaphor, and irony--to create depiction-based persuasion, which asks the rhetor to suspend logic and evoke emotional response.

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                    ---Wallace Stevens
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CHAPTER 1

Theory and Philosophy:
Deconstruction as Creative Invention

In recent years deconstruction theory has emerged as a key critical method for analyzing public address, organizational cultures, and literary discourse. This method encourages tearing apart hierarchy and established order to gain insights about the artifact under examination. Furthermore, the theory questions surface or superficial messages and encourages the reader to explore signals hidden below the surface. Deconstruction discounts context and places faith in audience experience.

Until now, however, deconstruction theory has been regarded as an open, imaginative genre of critical theory. Critics utilize deconstruction to analyze a work already created. But upon further examination, deconstruction also appears as a method communicators can utilize to send messages. Thus, authors can --intentionally or unintentionally--use the same tools of deconstruction theory to create the message that critics use to interpret that message. This reasoning implies that there are deconstructive authors as well as critics, and that the use of deconstruction techniques provides new methods to explore communication and persuasion.

For instance, deconstruction theory of criticism dis-

counts context. If a deconstructive author also discounts context, then this type of author jeopardizes figurative language, such as metaphor, synecdoche, metonomy, and irony. Irony, in particular, requires a context that provides a base from which the reader can determine a communicator's message. Without context, irony reduces to literal language, often without depth, insight, or the ability to persuade.

This new viewpoint transforms deconstruction from a series of theoretical concepts used to explain discourse into basic assumptions that assist an author in communicating. This method directly incorporates the author's knowledge, values, and experiences. It acknowledges the author's background and history, but still insists that audience interpretation plays the most important role in deciphering meaning. Deconstruction becomes a set of philosophical assumptions rather than merely theoretical concepts that must be tested and explained.[1]

This research will explore deconstruction as a method communicators and authors may use to attempt to transmit messages. If this type of creative invention through deconstruction exists, then communicators gain additional methods to enhance communication processes, including persuasion. This study will examine deconstruction as a philosophical perspective by exploring deconstructive invention. Deconstructive invention suggests that authors use processes akin to those in deconstructive criticism in order to reveal

their values, attitudes, and beliefs.

The works of Samuel Beckett form the basis of this case study in invention through deconstruction. Since the project includes interactions between diverse topics--such as philosophy and theory, literature and communication, and creation and criticism--an eclectic methodology will provide critics with a "battery of searchlights" from which they may chose devices that can best illuminate the "rhetorical experience."[2] Thus, the researcher intends to incorporate concepts from rhetoric, drama, literature, and philosophy in order to examine Beckett's worldview as reflected in his dramatic works.

Defining Deconstruction Theory of Criticism

Formal studies of deconstruction start with Jacques Derrida, who first used deconstruction to explain western culture's adherence to social structures and convention. Instead of questioning what society considered True or Correct, Derrida explained that most people accepted ideas without question. Derrida set out to challenge that acceptance. Around 1980 he discarded one postmodern theory of criticism, structuralism, due to structuralism's preservation of the "old committment to the center, the father, and the law..."; in addition, he discarded humanism for its sole reliance on the autonomous self.[3] To justify his controversial decision, Derrida developed deconstruction as a method of analysis, characterized by his notion of free play, including a mysterious, yet ominous future; a strong affir-

mation of chance and discontinuity and a joyous, humbling expose of human limitations.[4] Despite the fact that some authors criticize deconstruction's repetition, "bourgeois liberalism," "disgraceful past," and lofty notions,[5] deconstructive critics built upon Derrida's concepts and applied them to literary discourse.

Deconstruction theory explains that a text--created by an author who has definite, personal involvement with the text--must be reconstructed by audiences. Furthermore, this reconstruction obviously differs from the author's construction; hence, audiences become active participants in the work. Deconstructivists place meaning, not within the text, but within audience members who must base interpretation of the entire production upon their individual experiences. In addition, the deconstructive critic declines the authority position; therefore, one "truth" or meaning does not exist. To understand and to take action, audiences complete the work, examine what happens on stage and what characters say, then transcend the work to understand how the work affects them.[6] Audiences must learn to "read" the pictures in a dramatic work,[7] submerse themselves in the dramatic experience, and let their imaginations create the message instead of relying upon someone else for understanding.

By destroying hierarchy--the one truthful interpretation-- deconstruction criticism solidifies the theory's lack of faith in logic, because logic may not provide meaning to every audience member. Connections between actions, lan-

guage, and the reader's or viewer's consciousness assume
prime importance, but the sequence of action and language do
not.[8] Instead of following a syllogistic pattern leading to
a logical conclusion, deconstructionists suggest that rear-
ranging actions and words does not affect meaning. Since
the text itself is not all important, and since words or
utterances themselves do not make meaning, their arrangement
becomes superfluous because they do not instill or prevent
meaning.

As Cheney and Tompkins note, "In recognizing the potent
ambiguities surrounding the notions of text and in specify-
ing our own use of them to advance human communication
research,"[9] deconstruction theory generates a vigorous,
mind-provoking method of critical analysis. Deconstructive
theorists thrive on paradox. They shatter readers' percep-
tions and refuse to declare meaning, although they insinuate
that meaning exists. These theorists turn ideas upside-down
and inside-out.

Postmodern Theories of Literature

In the early 1900s a new breed of writers, the new
critics, hit the literary scene. Breaking away from the
stifling, stilted Victorian ethic, this new group also set
the literary scene in turmoil. Their style brought a latent
learning and verbal wit with a blend of ingenuity that
revealed psychological depth, political awareness, and
ambivalent detachment.[10] Fragmentation, discontinuity,
private symbolism, alienation, and a faint distinction

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between external and internal reality combined to create a new literary modernism. Pratt also included intense emotion and time's here-and-now presentness in his description of modern prose.[11] Free from regular meter, modern verse illuminated the concrete immediacy of the image. DeMan suggests that this writing style kindled a resistance to previously accepted theories by advocating literary ambivalence.[12]

Using these qualities as a foundation, postmodern theories continue to resist established theory by taking modernism one step away from previous literary theories. Postmodern literature, first established in the 1950s and 1960s, "questions consistency and continuity. It self-consciously splices genres, attitudes, styles....It disdains originality and fancies copies, repetition, the recombination of hand-me-down scraps."[13] Previous to this study, postmodern literature encompassed three branches: existentialism, absurdism, and structuralism.

Existentialism

Existential literature explores humankind's chaotic existence, lack of choice, and meaningless actions. By depicting austere, and often dreary scences, authors offer their audiences little hope of redemption. While authors ask audiences to interpret what they see and hear on stage, they discourage audience action by offering no resolution to the situations they present. Instead, they encourage awareness of problems without hopes or suggestions to initiate

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reform.

Absurdism

Absurdist theater takes the existential angst and austerity one step further. It illustrates the ridiculous actions of people who attempt to establish meaning in life by bridging the gap between individual hopes and the world's realities.[14] The theater of the absurd expresses the resulting states of minds of isolated people living in a fragmented world.[15] Thus, this kind of theater directly encourages audiences to correlate stage actions with their own lives. This genre impells people to understand dissonance through rational thought and attempts to encourage action by capitalizing on audience-character dissimilarity. Unfortunately in making this distinction, these absurdist authors unintentionally encourage audiences to speculate upon the play's meaning rather than immerse themselves in the action. Audiences become entangled in decoding the play's meaning; therefore, they forget to experience the entire dramatic transaction. Audiences either fearfully recoil or vehemently deny the situation; this denial prevents problem solution.

Structuralism

Structuralism, on the other hand, relies upon logic and reason. This programmatic method insists that audiences systematically examine the discourse to obtain knowledge, attainable through logic, rational order, and an unshakeable faith in thought. Structuralists use organized, "numberless systems" to demystify the human concept.[16] Since the key to

understanding lies within the text, this view denies the author's background and audience's experiences; establishes one authority, the author, for the play's meaning; and presents only one solution to the problem presented. In this manner, structuralistic drama prevents social reform by creating distance between audience and characters. The distance generates a lack of communication, since the play means little to audiences or to society as a whole if the audience cannot grasp the one meaning.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction describes a fourth postmodern genre of literature. The characteristics heretofore associated with deconstruction theory of criticism also apply to deconstructive literature. However, instead of analyzing a work by reversing convention, denying authority, and enhancing individual experience, a deconstructive author creates the work with these techniques.

Deconstructive invention follows few, if any, established literary conventions. Deconstructive authors reverse these conventions, undermine established tradition, and destroy hierarchial order and authority. By utilizing such unconventional methods, deconstructive authors provide thought-provoking material for audiences to interpret, to correlate to their own experiences, and to establish meaning. For instance, a playwright may show a character's mental dexterity by choosing to develop physically immobile

characters. This immobility reduces movement; therefore, audiences must attend the character's dialogue and mental capabilities. Thus, like deconstructive criticism, deconstructive authors undermine the obvious focal point or message in order to explore covert messages that remain obscured from easy view.

Furthermore, deconstructive authors resist becoming authorities on their own works. They refuse to explain the meaning of their works and suggest that no true answer to the dramatic riddle exists. This type of author self-deprecates in order to defend the reader's or audience's position; to overthrow an overbearing, authoritarian tyrant (i.e., traditional rules); and to condemn publically literary convention. Like other postmodern literature, deconstructive inventions, regardless of whether the audience knows or recognizes the fact, reflect an author's experience, grounded in "historical and political actuality."[17] Thus, deconstructive invention poses another genre of literature and implies new ways to convey meaning and ideas.

Drama as Communication

Generally, descriptions of communication involve mechanical processes, such as message transmission, reception, feedback, noise, barriers, breakdowns, leverage, or even wavelengths. Furthermore, these mechanical processes often eliminate human choice and creativity. Dennis Smith challenges this method of understanding human communication by illustrating the implications of choosing appropriate models

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to explain human communication.[18] Furthermore, these mechanical processes eliminate human choice and creativity. The social system model provides one alternative to the mechanical system. The social system's approach to communication recognizes people as living systems that grow, change, and deteriorate through interactions with their environment.[19] This system recognizes that humans promote and control meaningful transactions. As Kenneth Burke writes, humans make and use symbols to explain motivation and relations.[20]

Literature provides one method to demonstrate and conduct interaction, needed for communication. As Sharpham, Matter, and Brockriede note, the connection between interpretative literature and rhetoric has been a general issue within the communication discipline for many years.[21] Furthermore, they explore interpretation as a rhetorical transaction by explaining literature's communicative ability to offer creative symbols that present a "slice of the writer's worldview and experience."[22] Just as audiences and speakers communicate through speech, mass media, and organizational interaction, dramatic audiences assimilate the performance, create a symbolic experience, and modify the transaction to fit their own lives in meaningful ways. Drama and literature bridge gaps in human understanding by structuring beliefs; humans use drama and literature as communication tools to make "private stories public and personally adopt public stories (such as cultural myths and

ideologies)."[23]

Thus promoting interaction, literature can serve to unite groups of people and to affect change. Becoming the author's voice and commentary, literature reveals social, cultural, and political problems and calls for reform. Writers, observing world problems and humankind's lack of initiative, can not only identify problems, but also stimulate action to rectify problems. With this capacity, literature maintains an aesthetic value and becomes an effective channel to reach a public capable of reform.

The Post World War II Rhetorical Situation

The period following World War II provided writers with fertile material for new works. The war unveiled new technologies that stimulated horrors that previously only existed in human imagination. To free themselves from their own experiences and imagination, many people submersed themselves into a happy-go-lucky, prosperous world of sockhops, cream sodas, and color television. Tired of war, people pieced together their lives, continued to seek fun and pleasure in all aspects of life, and turned their backs on postwar atrocities and problems. These people did not communicate; instead, they ignored problems and remained silent. These actions created a "speechlessness,"[24] that only increased problems.

The dichotomy between carefree human actions and sociopolitical problems of the postwar decade fascinated and frustrated writers of the period. In addition, they re-

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sponded by attempting to draw attention to these actions in hopes that people would realize that life would not improve without changes. This dichotomy created what Lloyd Bitzer calls a "rhetorical situation."[25]

According to Bitzer, rhetorical situations arise from people, events, objects, or relations and demand immediate responses that appropriately address the situation. Bitzer outlines three main constituents of the rhetorical situation.[26] He defined the first, the exigence, as an imperfection marked by an urgent need. The second component involves an audience who can effect change. This group consists of more than "hearers"; this group can take action needed to resolve the exigence. The last element includes constraints--people, events, or objects that prevent or promote action needed to modify the exigence. Furthermore, a rhetorical situation, Bitzer writes, demands a "fitting response" that appropriately addresses the situation.[27]

Richard Vatz, however, disagrees with Bitzer.[28] He states that the rhetor not only responds to the situation, but he or she shapes the situation and becomes the guiding force in creating the situation. In addition, the rhetor now serves as a catalyst who enlists appropriate measures and people to resolve the problem. The rhetor's role as creator allows him or her more power than someone who merely responds to the situation at hand.

Thus, upon observing the world's problems and humankind's lack of initiative in recognizing and halting an

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increasingly deteriorating human condition, postwar writers
attempted to reveal the discrepancies they observed. More-
over, by illustrating the lack of human reaction, writers
hoped people would recognize and acknowledge society's
predicament and take action needed to alleviate the situa-
tion. They hoped people would modify human behavior and
resolve cultural conflicts that existed throughout the
world.

Writers such as Samuel Beckett highlighted their need
for social and political reform by extending modern literary
methods, introduced by writers such as James Joyce and
Virginia Woolf, and by establishing their own methods to
capture audience attention. By jarring audiences from a
complacent existence, writers like Beckett revealed the need
for action and sought to initiate reform. Deconstructive
invention forms one postmodern method used to accomplish
this goal.

Deconstructive invention, predating deconstruction
theory of criticism, forms Samuel Beckett's method to convey
his own philosophical worldview, which suggests that human
conditons need modification. Thus, Beckett not only reveals
a rhetorical situation through his works, he also attempts
to provoke people to action. By examining Beckett's dramat-
ic works, this research will identify techniques of decon-
structive invention and will examine these concepts to make
inferences about Beckett's world view. Furthermore, this
research will describe the implications of this study on
human communication.

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Beckett as Prophet

Although critics traditionally use an author's own words or life experiences to explain or verify incidents about that author's creative works, this process is not particularly valid with Beckett. Beckett neither discussed his life nor explained his works. Beckett's infrequent interviews consisted of informal talks with friends, family, other artists, and his biographer Deirdre Bair. In addition, his literary criticism encompassed only two works: "Dante...Brune.Vico..Joyce," an essay about James Joyce, and Proust, both numbering among his first published works. Reluctant to grant interviews, reticent to reveal his intentions or thoughts, and refusing to engage in literary criticism, Beckett provided few clues outside his works about his personal philosophy. Faced with this deficit of personal information, the researcher seeking to explore Beckett's worldview--deconstructive or otherwise--must turn to his works.

Usually, critics analyze Beckett according to existential and absurdist schools of thought. Indeed, solitude, failure, chaos, tension, and the deteriorating human condition, as well as agony, disharmony, and death form themes that pervade Beckett's works.[29] However, the paradoxical nature of his works reveal the applicability of deconstruction techniques. Furthermore, additional examination suggests that Beckett can be described as a deconstructive

playwright. Although his works predate formal studies of deconstruction by nearly thirty years, Beckett's devices parallel the subversion or undermining, characteristic of deconstructive criticism.

For instance, although early in his career Beckett maintained some traditional elements of literature, he also sought to debunk the literary discipline's foundation. His early works, in particular, demonstrate this dichotomy. Gontarski describes Beckett's art as "aesthetic compromise" by citing Beckett's rejection of mimesis along with his unwillingness to abandon representation completely.[30] Gontarski also explains that while autobiography and self-disclosure repelled Beckett, the creative process's effect upon art interested Beckett. The last evidence of "aesthetic compromise" Gontarski reveals involves Beckett's rejection of artificiality and previous literary forms, which contrasts with his elaborate network of pattern and allusion.

Perhaps the reason for the last contradiction stems from the influence of James Joyce, Beckett's mentor. Joyce's influence becomes particularly evident in Beckett's early works. Like Joyce, Beckett emphasizes devices such as pattern and allusion. In addition, both Joyce's characters and Beckett's early characters seem very concrete and stable.

However, as Beckett's writing style matures, he develops his own techniques that do not evoke images of Joyce. As his works progress, Beckett relies less and less on

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allusion and convention and more upon archetype and unconvention.[31] His works become more abstract as he recoils from the modern tradition established by James Joyce.[32] Beckett frees himself from Joyce's influence by combining universal conditions with stylistic production techniques and unconventional shape and form.

Beckett's ideas about shape and form explain one of his recurring themes: his concern about the human condition. In a rare interview Beckett said, "confusion is not my invention...it is all around us and our only chance now is to let it in. The only chance of renovation is to open our eyes and see the mess."[33] For Beckett, plays do not represent abstract ideas, but they describe ways in which people experience and live; he presents the formlessness of human experience in the twentieth century.[34]

For instance, Beckett expresses his concern about formless or carefree human actions by utilizing irony in his plays to portray characters who take no action. He adopts a depiction-based persuasion, which encourages audiences to outguess him in order to solve the dramatic riddle forming, not unfolding before their eyes. The riddle becomes less tangled as audiences deconstruct the action and base their interpretations not on the obvious action seen on stage, but on what those actions might mean.

Beckett, however, forces his audience to form meaning by refusing to make his meanings readily perceivable. He neither accepts the role of authority for his own works, nor

does he impose his intentions upon audiences. For instance, when American director (and Beckett's close personal friend) Alan Schneider questioned the identity of "Godot" in Waiting for Godot, Beckett replied that had he known he would have put it in the play.[35] In fact, as Martin Esslin wrote, "no writer of our times has more consistently refused to comment on or to explain, his own work than Beckett."[36] Hence, like deconstruction theory, Beckett empowers his audience and validates diverse, individual interpretation.

Samuel Beckett may have been philosophically prophesying deconstruction when in his own works he pulled farther and farther away from tradition. Perhaps he unintentionally developed a nameless creative technique that took critics decades to unravel through deconstruction criticism. Furthermore, this reasoning would establish deconstruction as a philosophical assumption, which illuminates Beckett's faith in audiences to understand and subsequently, to act in order to affect social change.

CHAPTER 2

Clues and Correspondence:
Retracing Beckett's Life and Literature

Just as mystery and confusion shroud Beckett's literature, ambiguity, contradiction, and unanswered questions characterize Beckett's life. For instance, Beckett's birth certificate recorded May 13, 1906, as his date of birth. Yet, he insisted that his birthday fell on Good Friday, April 13, 1906,[1] a date even more ironic given Beckett's own views about the similarities between birth and death. In addition, Beckett's Protestant upbringing in an obviously predominately Catholic Ireland provided another paradox. Moreover, when he left Dublin in 1937 to establish permanent residency in Paris, Beckett reversed the seventeenth century migration, which brought his French Hugenot ancestors to Ireland.[2]

By the nineteenth century, Beckett's grandfather had ammassed quite a fortune; subsequently, he relocated the family to an upscale house in Ballsbridge, Ireland. Here, Beckett's father, Bill, lived until he married Mary Jones Roe, his nurse at Adelaide Hospital, where physicians treated him for severe depression. Bill Beckett often said that "When the forceful and determined May barged into Bill's hospital room and ordered him to stop malingering, he was immediately smitten."[3] In the fashionable Dublin suburb of

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Foxrock, the two built Cooldrinagh, a house they would inhabit for the next forty years.

According to Beckett's biographer, Deirdre Bair, Bill and May Beckett settled into a "comfortable, superficially companionable life."[4] While sharing a fondness for nature and unintellectual pursuits, they had very little else in common and caused unpleasant scenes and a tense atmosphere for the entire family. A private person, May did not enjoy the social gatherings on which Bill seemed to thrive. Evenings spent entertaining became stilted and unbearable; therefore, Bill restricted socializing to weeknights at one of his clubs. Thus, the family saw little of him during the week.

An Uneventful Childhood

In July, 1902, May's and Bill's first child, Frank was born followed by Samuel four years later. Despite his mother's emotional scenes and his father's dark depressions, Beckett described his childhood as uneventful: "'You might say I had a happy childhood...although I had little talent for happiness. My parents did everything they could to make a child happy...My father did not beat me, nor did my mother run away from home.'"[5]

Beckett loved his father, but he avoided his mother. May Beckett sought to control her son, to shape him into her notion of success. (Despite these instances, Beckett incorporated May into his works several times with characters who

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share her name.[6]) Although May and Bill entertained different ideas about their sons' upbringing, both parents insisted upon an excellent education for Frank and Samuel.

When Samuel Beckett turned five, he followed Frank to a private academy and then to a preparatory school. Both institutions demanded strict obedience and ruled with an "iron fist." However, neither Beckett experienced corporal punishment, because Frank never misbehaved and Samuel never was caught. At any rate, these early schools and instructors did not endear education to the young Becketts.

At thirteen, Samuel left Dublin to attend Portora Royal School. In addition to receiving a solid education, the Beckett's developed an active interest in team sports. Like Frank, Samuel joined the varsity cricket team. Noted at the time as a "brilliant" but "flashy" player, "Beckett is probably the only Nobel Prize winner to be listed in Wisden the cricketeers' Bible.[7] Unlike his brother, however, Samuel Beckett never really fit into the schoolboy atmosphere. Charming and witty, he could also retreat into his own private world; this habit puzzled his classmates. Furthermore, while Frank accepted authority and conformity, Samuel struggled to maintain his individuality.

When he entered Trinity College in 1923, Samuel enrolled without honors due to low grades. In fact, he showed little interest in studies of any type except for a composition he wrote in 1921 that defended women's emancipation.[8] He spent his first two years at Trinity "dabbling in various courses" and "composing complicated, doodle-decorated lists

of how many times [Shakespeare professor Wilbraham] Trench would say 'at all'" in a single lecture.[9] Soon Beckett enrolled in modern language courses--one of the few males in these classes--where he met Thomas B. Rudmose-Brown, a French professor who became Beckett's mentor. Demanding excellence and dedication from his students, Rudmose-Brown inspired Beckett, whose record improved until he ranked fourth in his class.

Also during this time, Beckett's personality changed. Highly regarded academically, Beckett no longer visited his parents, he abandoned team sports, and he avoided all social gatherings. He gravitated toward an artistic set of people, those isolated from the Sunday teas, tennis parties, and business talk, characteristic of his parents' home. He began to smoke, drink heavily, and keep late hours--habits he kept his entire life. In addition, Beckett attended the theater and the cinema. He developed diverse interests in the experimental works of Pirandello and the vaudeville slapstick of Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, and the Marx Brothers.

When Beckett's studies concluded at Trinity, he received a fellowship to Paris' Ecole Normale Superieure. Upon arrival, he found his rooms still occupied by the previous lecteur, Thomas McGreevy, who became Beckett's closest friend and lifetime confidant. McGreevy brought people together, arranged other people's affairs, and talked to everyone.[10] All liked him and his fast-paced life.

Under his tutelage, Beckett entered an enchanted circle of brilliant writers and literary exiles. During this time, Beckett met James Joyce.

Beckett Discovers Paris

Beckett knew about Joyce through the scandalous gossip circulating throughout Dublin society. Joyce awed him, and he intrigued Joyce. Despite the vast age difference between the two men, they became close friends--though they called each other "Mr. Beckett" and "Mr. Joyce" until their last meeting. Beckett joined the circle of young writers who performed errands and research for Joyce. This informal arrangement did not mean, however, that Joyce hired Beckett as a secretary. In spite of stories to the contrary, Beckett performed these services gratis to show Joyce his respect and devotion.

Furthermore, Beckett began to imitate Joyce. Beckett's appearance, mannerisms, writing, defensive silence--all echoed Joyce's own. In 1969, Beckett finally admitted Joyce's "'moral effect'" which made him realize the importance of his own "'artistic integrity.'"[11]

Dante...Bruno.Vico..JoyceBeckett[12]

In 1929, a critical anthology about Joyce's work in progress, Finnegan's Wake, appeared. In addition to essays by McGreevy, Eugene Jolas, William Carlos Williams, and probably Joyce pseudonymously, Our Examination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress contained Beckett's first published work,

"Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce."[13] In this essay, Beckett outlined several ideas central not only to Joyce's work, but also to his own. For instance, he warned against neat identities, stating that the desire for clarity and order causes people to develop false perceptions. Beckett questioned, "Must we wring the neck of a certain system in order to stuff it into a pigeon hole...?"[14] He concluded his introduction, "Literary criticism is not book-keeping."[15]

Beckett's essay explained connections between form and content, denied the importance of rational thought, rejected absolutes, and labeled existence as "unrelieved perpetuity."[16] He argued that writers maintained the right to create an opaque text that often makes it difficult for the reader who cannot accept that "form is content, content is form.[17] Beckett wrote:

> And if you don't understand it, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is because you are too decadent to receive it. You are not satisfied unless form is so strictly divorced from content that you can comprehend the one almost without bothering to read the other.[18]

This essay also contains Beckett's ideas about the cyclical nature of death and birth. He connected the "unborn infant" with the "lifeless octegenarian" and the "inevitable character of every progression or retrogression."[19] Beckett described human progress and history as a "formless structure" based upon the achievement of individual agents; furthermore, this structure lacked reality apart from and independent of the individual.[20] Beckett ended his discussion by differentiating life's

continuous nature, a "vicious circle of humanity" he called
Purgatory, and the "static lifelessness" found in Hell,
where neither resistance nor eruptions exist.[21]

The Writing Begins

Shortly after publishing "Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce,"
Beckett wrote Whoroscope for a contest sponsored by the
Hours Press. He discovered the contest only hours before
the midnight deadline and jotted the poem on three sheets of
Hotel Bristol stationery. Beckett loosely based the "witty,
superficial exhibition of esoteric knowledge" upon the life
and philosophy of Rene Descartes.[22] Much to his delight
since he had spent his allowance and stipend, Beckett won
the prize of ten pounds sterling, or $48.

Critically acclaimed in France, the poem caused much
consternation at home in Dublin. His parents neither ap-
proved nor comprehended the poem, and the Catholic society
shunned a work with such a risque title. Nevertheless, the
poem led to his next work, a commissioned essay about Marcel
Proust.

Uncovering Proust

Although Beckett eagerly accepted the Proust assign-
ment, he found it a difficult task, which he soon hated.[23]
Just as his essay about Joyce outlined some of Beckett's own
philosophy, Proust revealed the embryonic stage of Beckett's
own ideas as seen in his later novels and plays. Today,
people read Proust more for its information about Beckett,
than for its information about Proust.

The seventy-two page volume described Proust's belief

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in the nonlogical order and perception of people. Instead
of depending upon rational thought and logic, Proust, ac-
cording to Beckett affirmed the value of intuition.[24]
Proust described an unknowable void at the center of human
experience, denounced "piteous acceptance of false values,"
and solicited no facts.[25] Furthermore, Proust believed that
people used time, memory, and habit to "deform the days by
altering pictures of past actions...."[26]

The artist's role also encompassed much of Beckett's
discussion. Style entailed a question of vision, not tech-
nique, because a work is "neither created nor chosen, but
discovered, uncovered, evacuated, pre-existing within the
artist...."[27] Clarity required viewing the whole vision,
not just twisting a phrase. Beckett later clarified this
statement by explaining that the artist reveals the image,
and the critic or writer translates the vision.

Homeward Bound

When Beckett completed Proust, he returned to teach at
Trinity's modern language department. However, Beckett did
not enjoy his homecoming. After Paris, Ireland's strict
nationalism disturbed him, Dublin's family feuds and narrow-
minded thinking disgusted him, and his own family's hopes
for him depressed him. Moreover, he did not enjoy teaching
subjects that he felt he did not understand to those who
cared little about knowing. In 1931, shortly after receiv-
ing his Master of Arts degree and before completing his

three-year appointment, Beckett wired Trinity officials his resignation. Beckett said he "spent the following years 'not knowing what to do,'" because when he left Trinity he "'lost the best.'"[28]

Now, Beckett could rely only on his own wits and skills to survive. With little money, he began to write in earnest. After a short visit to relatives in Germany, Beckett attempted to launch his writing career in London. He began a play about Samuel Johnson, but he could not satisfactorily complete it. Abandoning this work, he started Murphy, his first major work.

Beckett the Novelist

Murphy, "Beckett's most carefully crafted novel," took three years to complete.[29] Publication escaped Beckett for several years, and forty-two publishers rejected Murphy before Routledge and Son accepted it in late 1937. Murphy's rejection hurt Beckett; and as late as 1973, he could barely discuss it. [30] Moreover, until his death, Beckett kept a list of those who had rejected him as justification for his own self-confidence in his works and abilities. Yet, during this period, Beckett suffered the same depression that his father had suffered in previous years. He considered abandoning his career to become a commercial pilot even though he had never flown in a plane. Finally, Beckett decided to leave London for an environment more conducive to literary achievement. Beckett returned to Paris.

Reunited with Joyce, Beckett began to write an assort-

ment of poems, stories, and translations, many published in transition, a modern literary magazine. Other works ended up as "trunk manuscripts," those Beckett could neither publish nor discard. Later, he gave away many of these works to friends who needed financial assistance.

Beckett also resumed his late-night carousing in Parisian cafes. Early one morning as he made his way home, a thief --ironically named "Prudent"--accosted Beckett, who explained that he had no money. Prudent answered with a near fatal stab in the chest. His friends rushed him to the Hospital Broussais and notified Suzanne Duschevaux-Dumesnil, a pianist with whom Beckett had recently started an affair.

Just as his father's hospitalization resulted in marriage, Beckett's accident also resulted in a lasting relationship. Deschevaux-Dumesnil took charge of his treatment just as May had organized Bill Beckett's life. Beckett and Deschevaux-Dumesnil made an odd pair, but both appreciated the privacy and autonomy required by the other. Neither demanded time nor attention which would detract from the other's pursuits. Seven years Beckett's senior, she became his companion, literary agent, and at times, financial provider. Although they lived together for a number of years, they often went their own ways and did not marry until 1961, more than twenty years later.

Times to Remember?: World War II

Spring 1939 brought Murphy's publication. Since the

year also brought Hitler's forces to Czechoslovakia, people began to leave Paris. Beckett, too, boarded a train heading south, but after deciding that no imminent danger existed, he re-entered Paris. He soon discovered that German soldiers had killed many of his Jewish friends. Beckett realized he could no longer remain neutral as his adopted country faced destruction; he joined the French Resistance in October 1940.

Although Beckett dismissed his "Boy Scout stuff"[31] role, as well as the medals he received from Charles de-Gaulle, he actively assisted the Allied Forces by transporting and translating valuable material. Several times he narrowly escaped discovery. On one occasion, soldiers visited his home only to discover Mein Kampf, which ironically Beckett studied to create propaganda. With Deschevaux-Dumesnil's help, Beckett continued his work until a German spy infiltrated his circle in August 1942. Thanks to a warning from a friend, both escaped a few hours before the Gestapo located their apartment.

The couple spent the next several years on the run, and they finally settled in Roussillon, a mountain village in southeastern France. Here, Beckett began a new novel, Watt, in which he used fiction to "create order from the chaos of his life."[32] Before long, the war ended, and Beckett traveled to Ireland to visit his mother and to settle business affairs in London.

After the war, Beckett attempted to re-enter Paris only to discover that the French government no longer permitted

resident aliens. He found himself stranded until the French
Ministry of Reconstruction asked the Irish Red Cross to
establish a hospital in Saint-Lo. Beckett volunteered.
With his fluency in French, Beckett obtained a position as a
storekeeper-interpreter; and once again, he journeyed to
France. After six months, he resigned his position and
returned to his apartment in Paris. At the age of forty
years, Beckett still had not established his literary ca-
reer.

While Waiting to Write Fiction

In the ten-year period after the war, Beckett experi-
enced his most productive period. He produced four novels,
four short stories, six poems, two plays, thirteen texts,
and assorted critical essays. However, the period started
slowly for Beckett. With little income from sales of Murphy
and no publishers interested in Watt, he abandoned his
current project, Mercier and Camier, and started a trilogy
of stories, his first works written in French: Molloy,
Malone meurt (Malone dies), and L'Innommable (The Unname-
able). Yet, Beckett stumbled into another severe bout of
depression. In response, he turned away from fiction, which
he always considered his important works, and turned toward
drama. In 1972, Beckett explained this action: "'I turned
to writing plays to relieve myself from the awful depression
the prose had led me into...Life at that time was too de-
manding, too terrible, and I thought theater would be a

diversion.'"[33]

Beckett the Playwright

Beckett's first play, _Eleutheria_ (meaning freedom),
involved three acts, seventeen characters, and three stage
sets. Of his works, only this one remains unpublished,
because Beckett did not wish it performed due to its confus-
ing complexity. When he started writing his next play in
1948, he chose a more simple structure and story. That
story, _Waiting for Godot_, of course, made him famous
throughout the world.

Waiting for Godot transported Beckett from obscurity to
curiosity. The drama signaled the end of his career as a
novelist and the beginning of his career as a playwright.
Again, the cyclical nature of birth and death form key
turning points in Beckett's life. Despite this success,
Beckett lived simply and quietly in the same apartment for
twenty-three years. The only lifestyle changes he made
after his success included purchasing a small car in 1959
(Beckett loved to careen wrecklessly down the narrow French
streets) and installing a telephone.[34] Otherwise he contin-
ued writing, translating, producing plays, and avoiding
attention.

Slowly, scholars as well as the press and critics
sought Beckett, an author deemed unworthy by the academia
until the 1960s.[35] When one researcher succeeded in track-
ing Beckett to his home, Beckett answered after several
hard knocks. "'Does Samuel Beckett live here?' the intrepid

researcher asked. 'He's not here, I'm his brother,'" Beckett
replied as he slammed and bolted the door.[36]

Actors, directors, and producers sought commissions
from Beckett and broadcasting companies asked for permission
to adapt dramas for radio and television. These requests
initiated Beckett's additional exploits in mass media. In
1959, Trinity College asked him to receive an honorary
doctorate of letters, which he accepted graciously. Charac-
teristically, Beckett told only Deschevaux-Dumesnil about
his award. Likewise, she was the only one he told when he
received the Prix International in 1961.

Immediately, speculation regarding Beckett's candidacy
for the Nobel Prize proliferated among literary and critical
circles. Beckett did not receive the award, however, until
1969 at the age of sixty-three. In presenting the award,
Dr. Karl Gierow of the Swedish Academy stated, "In the realm
of annihilation, the writing of Samuel Beckett rises like a
miserere from all mankind, its muffled minor key sounding
liberation to the oppressed and comfort to those in need."[37]

Shortly after receiving the award, Beckett's eyesight
dimmed. In 1971, successful surgery removed the heavy film
coating his eyes and encouraged a new creative period,
during which he published several books and two new plays.
He spent the years after 1978 working closely with his
dramatic productions and writing for several festivals in
his honor.

Throughout the 1980s Beckett's health deteriorated, as

he fell prey to Dupuytren's disease, which had crippled many
of his relatives. In 1988, a fall precipitated his move to
an undistinguished room in a nursing home, which he left
only once to attend his wife's funeral in July 1989. Six
months later, Beckett himself died as quietly as he had
attempted to live.

As with many authors, Beckett's death called forth
additional study of his life and works. In recent years
dramatists and scholars planned special reviews, books, and
festivals to honor him. Today, many insist that Beckett
ranks first among the greatest writers of the twentieth
century. With his own brand of irony, wit, and humor,
Beckett's works depict humanity and courage, which contrib-
ute vitality to theater, communication, and human existence.

CHAPTER 3

Criticism and Controversy:
A Rhetorical Analysis of Beckett's Drama

A critic studying Samuel Beckett's works faces several prob-
lems. First how does one attempt to examine such a large
compendium that includes twenty-seven fiction works, thirty-
three plays, and assorted poems, criticisms, and tranla-
tions. Even concentrating upon one category of his litera-
ture (i.e., selecting either fiction, drama, or poetry)
still leaves the critic much framing and focusing since his
works consistently appeared and evolved over a fifty-five
year period. As audiences, the author, and the nature of
literature change over time, so do audiences' perceptions of
the work and the work's function in society. This certainly
applies to Beckett's case. As Beckett, himself, maintained,
the "early plays were not 'seen' clearly enough...and in
production he has always changed numerous details...."[1]

Beckett's innovative dramatic achievements form the
basis of this study. In using space creatively, establish-
ing audience rapport, and experimenting with modes of ex-
pression, Beckett dispensed with "bourgeois theatrical
conventions" of commercialized theater.[2] Until Waiting for
Godot appeared, playwrights adhered to convention, since the
public demanded convention. Beckett jolted audiences from
familiar patterns and purposes and frustrated audiences by
compelling them to experience drama, not rationalize it.

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Beckett once said that his plays were not about abstract ideas; instead, they discussed situations and revealed how people experience and live.[3]

Linda Ben-Zvi notes that "no modern creative artist is more fully identical to his creation" than Beckett; his works resemble "his person: both are lean, spare, infinitely sad, and unbelievably humorous."[4] Realistic sources and experiences from the war and his own family life pervade his early plays in particular. Alan Schneider describes these early productions as plays that "stay in the bones. They haunt me sleeping and waking, coming upon me when I am least aware."[5] Today, Beckett's drama still offers audiences a kaliedoscope of emotion and experience, causing critics to examine and re-examine these early dramatic works.

Another problem in studying Beckett stems from the fact that his works--particularly Breath, the most minimal--avoid summary. Containing no major plot or events, these plays face compartmentalization through recurring images and elements. Critics must avoid compartmentalization. Instead, they must explore the images as a collective whole. For instance, viewed as single characters, the works depict experiences of individuals; viewed as a collective whole, they depict the situation of humankind.

This study explores Waiting for Godot (1948), Endgame (1956), Krapp's Last Tape (1958), Happy Days (1961), Play (1963), Breath (1966), and Not I (1972). Generally, scholars divide Beckett's plays after Breath and place Not I with

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his later works. However, inclusion of Not I with earlier works, reveals Beckett's vision of the the birth-death circle. Not I begins the regression again. Although the "frequent recurrence of recognizable elements through Beckett's canon leads the reader to hypothesize that all of the characters are the same character living over and over the same anguishing experience,"[6] stepping back to explore these plays as an entire cycle for humankind provides a broader base for human communcation and understanding.

Waiting for Godot

Written in 1948 and produced in 1953, Waiting for Godot made its debut at Theatre de Babylone, an offbeat, Left Bank playhouse in Paris. With the tiny, half-full house, its reception included hesitant laughter, polite applause, and rousing controversy. This controversy insured its success. Supported by the critics, Waiting for Godot dazed audiences. One critic wrote, "Theatre lovers rarely have the pleasure of discovering a new author worthy of the name...who can animate the characters so vividly...who desires comparison with the greatest...Samuel Beckett's first play, Waiting for Godot, will be spoken of for a long time."[7] Estimates indicate that nearly 50,000 people saw the first production, including tours; today, nearly everyone in Paris between January 5, 1953, and October 30, 1954, claims to have seen it.[8]

Routinely, critics and scholars explain Waiting for Godot as an antiwar protest, including the senseless de-

struction of war; an allegory for problematic relationships; or humankind's inhumaity toward other humans. As a social commentary, Waiting for Godot illustrates a life without meaning and hope. However, this analysis suggests that the play depicts people remaining oblivious to human problems and adopting frivolous, playful lifestyles and attitudes. The characters become victims with no control over their own destinies; survival depends upon their tenacity to remain oblivious to problems by upholding materialistic, superficial values.

Waiting for Godot tells the story of two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, who are stranded on an empty road and waiting for a person named "Godot." Critics have suggested that Godot symbolizes hope through religion, despite Beckett's assurances that his plays carry no religious significance. Beckett often disclaimed his belief in religion: "Once I had a religious emotion."[9] Godot's potential visit forms the pretext for Vladimir's and Estragon's friendship and explains why they return day after day. Vladimir says, "He didn't say for sure he'd come." Estragon questions, "And if he doesn't come?" Then Vladimir replies, "We'll come back to-morrow."[10]

While they wait, the two engage in an increasingly meaningless round of activities: they tell stories, play games, reminisce, munch carrots, contemplate suicide, pull their boots on and off, talk to Pozzo who owns a slave named "Lucky"--all routines recognizable in early acts by Charlie

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Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, and the Marx Brothers. In <u>Wait-</u><u>ing</u> <u>for</u> <u>Godot</u>, these actions become mirrors of reality.[11] By having Vladimir and Estragon complete these routines, Beckett indicates that people participate in their own round of fun and games to ward off a meaningless existence, filled with solitude, hopelessness, and chaos.

To convey his message, Beckett shocks the audience to realization by defying conventional rules of drama.[12] <u>Waiting</u> <u>for</u> <u>Godot</u> disrupts the audience's beliefs about dialogue by showing the disintegration of language; it challenges ideas about plot and theme by suggesting purpose-less action and illogical meaning; and it strips away tech-nical manifestations of drama, such as location and time. Thus, by examining these three ideas in <u>Waiting</u> <u>for</u> <u>Godot</u>, one can see that the play becomes a persuasive comment upon postwar lifestyles of people as they attempt to remain ignorant of social problems.

Beckett's use of untraditional dialogue illustrates that even reducing language to its simplest form does not guarantee effective communication. Infantile speech pat-terns, ceremonious conversation, colloquial dialogue, and repetition indicate the superficiality, and subsequent disintegration, of language. Infantile speech patterns include slow enunciation and stuttering. Estragon's speech exemplifies these characteristics: "Gogo light--bough not break--Gogo dead. Didi heavy--bough break--Didi alone" (WG p. 381). Later in the play, unable to articulate the appro-priate words, Estragon stutters, "Pozzo...no..I'm afraid...I

don't seem to..." (WG p. 387). Although more intelligent than Estragon, Vladimir also develops a susceptibility to stuttering: "Wait...we embraced...we were happy...go on waiting...waiting... waiting...let me think...it's coming..." (WG p. 439).

Not only do the protagonists ineffectively relay messages, they also deliver messages with little content. Beckett portrays the emptiness of their dialogue by using ceremonious conversation. For instance, as Pozzo drives Lucky away in Act I, Pozzo, Vladimir, and Estragon engage in polite conversation that closely resembles the exaggerated style of the Walt Disney cartoon characters, Chip and Dale. Each says "adieu," but neither moves. They repeat the round, and more silence follows. Pozzo breaks the silence by saying, "Thank you," and he, too, enters the round. Eventually, the characters begin to contradict themselves (WG p. 418). Thus, the characters create dissonance between what they say and what they do. Furthermore, this series delays further action (i.e., the departure of Pozzo and Lucky).

Although this scene includes formal actions and polite language, the characters' speech indicates less eloquence than what the upscale French audience might expect. In fact, until Waiting for Godot, French playwrights continued to write very formal and stilted dialogue. Beckett became one of the first playwrights to use common vernacular. His characters use informal contractions, trade insults, and

often indulge in colorful language.

For instance, "we're" for "we are" (WG p. 439) and "you've" for "you have" (WG p. 467) list among the many informal contractions, scattered throughout the characters' speech. In addition, Pozzo constantly refers to Lucky as "pig" (WG p. 397), "swine" (WG p. 401), "hog," (WG p. 409), and "scum," (WG p. 416)--all simple and common insults, but not what the audience expected to hear. Colorful language begins as early as when the characters consider hanging themselves. Estragon "gets highly excited" when Vladimir lists an erection as a consequence of suicide (WG p. 380).

The characters in Waiting for Godot also develop speech patterns and repetitive actions; both become central elements in interpretation. One of the most obvious examples of repetition occurs in Lucky's monologue. As a conditioned slave, Lucky acts only upon Pozzo's orders. Once Pozzo tells him to think, Lucky launches into a three-page monologue, filled with repetitious phrases, words, and syllables:

> Given the existence as uttered forth in the
> public works of Puncher and Wattman of a personal
> God quaquaquaqua outside time without extension
> who from the heights of divine apathia divine athamba
> divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions
> for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers
> like the divine Miranda...(WG p. 403).

As Estragon attempts to clarify the messages he sends and receives, he too repeats himself. For instance, during the hanging scene he mentions several times that the evening resembles a circus (WG p. 403). Repetition transcends

language to form an integral part of the action as it high-
lights the overall meaninglessness of Vladimir's and Estra-
gon's lives.

Perhaps of all elements surrounding Waiting for Godot,
the lack of plot has caused--and continues to cause--more
criticism than any other. After its London debut, Harold
Hobson wrote:

> It is hardly surprising that English audiences
> notoriously disliking anything not immediately
> understandable...received [many lines] on the first
> night with ironical laughter....[13]

Other critics, such as John Chapman of the New York Daily
News, called Waiting for Godot a mere stunt due to its
meaningless action.[14] However, as Michael Robinson writes
in Long Sonata of the Dead, the action signifies the most
important element of the play because it "promises [the
audience] a firmer reality than the subjective monologue
written and read in isolation...."[15] In looking at Waiting
for Godot, one must examine all actions as they form one
collective action.

Estragon opens the dialogue of the play by saying,
"Nothing to be done." Vladimir agrees, "I'm beginning to
come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put
it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet
tried everything" (WG p. 370). This dialogue establishes
the hopelessness the characters feel and forms the basis for
the series of actions, which serve to pass time and prevent
them from thinking. Storytelling forms one way to pass
time. For instance, Estragon asks Vladimir to tell the

story about a brothel and an Englishman. Already knowing the story, Estragon possesses no logical reason to ask Vladimir to to tell it, unless the storytelling activity functions as a device to maintain a steady stream of conversation. This illogical event--like other activities such as fighting and apologizing (WG p. 379), eating although they are not hungry (WG p. 385), and pretending to be Pozzo and Lucky (WG p. 449)--frustrates logically thinking audiences.

As single acts, these actions convey little meaning; however, collectively viewed, they become habits developed by the characters in order to cope with their existence as they wait for Godot. As Vladimir says, "I get used to the muck as I go along" (WG p. 385). These actions represent delaying tactics; the characters find life easier when they maintain status quo by doing what they have always done and by avoiding decision-making. For example, they discard contemplations about suicide because one of them might outlive the other and because they find it easier to do nothing than to take action: "Don't let's do anything. It's safer" (WG p. 381). Affirmation of their decision to take no action comes at the end of each act, when the characters agree to leave. Neither moves as the curtain falls (WG p. 427, 476), audience members know that come what may, day after day, Vladimir and Estragon return to the same place, play the same games, tell the same stories, and hope that Godot will come.

To reinforce the lack of communication, Beckett strips

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away traditional technical, dramatic elements such as set-
ting and time:

> No stage directions can ever have been more spell-
> bindingly explicit than Beckett's...He uses stage
> directions as a sculptor uses tools, to create a
> dynamic relationship between the seen and unseen areas
> of the stage, making the unseen a vital element in the
> dramatic experience.[16]

To convey the open and empty feeling of Vladimir's and
Estragon's world, directors often stage Waiting for Godot
"in the round"[17] and diminish the intensity of the stage's
lighting to match the shadowy gray of that in which the
audience sits. This production style leaves the actors
vulnerable to observation from all angles at all times, and
maximizes the correlation between the situation of the
characters and the situation of the audience members. In
addition, the stage draws the audience closer to the action
by placing the characters in the center of the audience.
Vulnerabilty and proximity encourage the audience to experi-
ence the action, rather than remain aloof.

Furthermore, an empty stage emphasizes the openness of
the space and the loneliness the characters feel; the set
consists of a single tree. Any other clues regarding loca-
tion emanate from the action. For instance, the audience
assumes that the play takes place next to a road due to
Pozzo's and Lucky's entrance and exit (WG p. 386). The
audience also assumes that the action takes place in France,
although the only clues consist of Vladimir's and Estragon's
memories of making wine (WG p. 435). However, during that
same conversation, the characters themselves cannot agree on

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the specific location. Estragon says, "No I was never in the Macon county! I've puked my puke of a life away here, I tell you! Here..." (WG p. 435).

The set is not the only element Beckett refuses to define. In addition, he gives few indicators of time. In Act I, the audience finds little means to determine time; in fact, Vladimir and Estragon do not even know: "And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? (Pause.) Or Monday? (Pause.) Or Friday?" (WG p. 378). On the other hand, time in Act II seems simple to determine, because audience members know that the characters plan to return the very next morning. Unfortunately, the set deceives them when the tree develops leaves overnight. Again, a logically thinking audience becomes confused. Moreover, the characters become confused. Estragon asks, "Was [the tree] not there yesterday?" Vladimir replies, "Yes of course it was there. Do you remember? We nearly hanged ourselves from it..." (WG p. 433). The audience, realizing that days or months or years could have passed, slowly begins to understand the single tree, purposeless action, and the disintegrated language. Regardless of time, scene, plot, or action, one day looks much like another, and each day segues into the next.

Beckett defies conventional dramatic rules in Waiting for Godot in order to show how people use meaningless games to cope with their environment. He questions the audience's beliefs about dialogue by showing the disintegration of language, challenges our ideas about plot by indicating

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purposeless activity, and strips away technical manifestations of drama to emphasize his point. Critic Martin Esslin writes:

> ...no writer of our time has provoked a larger volume of critical comment, explanation, exegesis in so short a time...It was only after the sucess de scandale of Waiting for Godot that Beckett's name impinged on the consciousness of a wider public....[18]

Waiting for Godot shocked audience members and forced them to examine their own lives. The play's clear connection to reality offered "fragments of life, but the fragments were not random shots at the jungle, but a cohesive picture of a life of chaos."[19] Waiting for Godot continues to have impact today.

When prisoners at San Quentin recognized themselves in Vladimir and Estragon, they established an annual production of a Beckett play. When Beckett directed San Quentin's 1980 production of Waiting for Godot, the production marked only the second time he ever directed that play. In 1988, Robin Williams and Steve Martin revived the play at New York's Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater. Although this production, for obvious reasons, emphasized the comical elements and although critics generally denounced the "demoralizingly average production,"[20] the production played to sold-out houses.

In Waiting for Godot, the characters go on and on in the same rut of disorder.[21] The play leads nowhere, because the characters do not aspire to go anywhere. Instead they prefer to just wait for something to find them.

Endgame

Beckett's second major work, Endgame, caused as much consternation within Beckett as he wrote it, as with theatrical circles upon production. While Beckett wrote Waiting for Godot in a matter of weeks, he struggled to complete Endgame, written between December 1955 and October 1956. Upon completion, Endgame still did not satisfy Beckett. He wrote Alan Schneider, "I did finish another [play], but I don't like it. It has turned out a three-legged giraffe, to mention only the architectonics, and leaves me in doubt to take a leg off or add one on."[22] By June, he had reduced the play to one act, and Beckett later counted Endgame his favorite play.[23] Beckett explained his reason in another letter to Schneider by comparing Endgame to Waiting for Godot; he called Endgame "rather difficult and elliptic; mostly depending on the power of the text to claw, more inhuman than Godot."[24]

However, Parisian theaters rejected Endgame. After several unsuccessful attempts to launch a production in France, French director Roger Blin brought the play to London, where the Royal Court Theatre staged the play's first production (in French) on April 3, 1957.[25] Just as European theater managers avoided Endgame, critics and audiences also shunned the production. One critic, Kenneth Tynan summarized all reactions, "Last week's production, portentously styled, piled on the agony until I though my

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skull would split."[26]

On the other hand, American audiences enjoyed the show. Unlike the unwelcome reception American audiences gave the first _Waiting for Godot_ production, _Endgame_'s reception overwhelmed its director Alan Schneider. At one point the theater's steam pipes clanged and echoed throughout the theater. This occurrence irritated and frightened Schneider at the same time. The audience, however, thought the sound effects a "wonderful touch, though a trifle loud."[27] The critics proclaimed the American production a hit, and _Endgame_ became "generally regarded as one of the serious highlights of the season on or off Broadway."[28]

Perhaps one reason for _Endgame_'s repeated rejection stems from the apocalyptic existence the play presents. Visual production techniques encourage an interpretation involving death, holocaust, destruction, and a meaningless existence. After _Waiting for Godot_, audiences viewed _Endgame_ as a step closer to death.[29] Others interpret the play as a conflict between generations or the perpetual struggle against time.[30] And, if one considers the surface or overt values of Beckett's work, then these interpretations remain sound.

Nevertheless, compared to _Waiting for Godot_, the characters face an even more depressing world. The two acts of _Waiting for Godot_ become one long act in _Endgame_; the expansive, barren, exterior scene changes to a tighter, barren, one-room shelter. Now, the characters do not move. The

blind Hamm remains confined to a wheelchair, while two ashbins confine his parents, Nagg and Nell. Only the third generation, Clov, can move; however, even Clov's motions resemble a "staggering walk."[31]

Despite their obvious physical immobility, these characters possess the ability to think, to solve problems. Unlike Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot, these characters engage in deliberate routines. For instance, they do not merely munch biscuits as Vladimir and Estragon munch carrots. Instead, they examine all sides of the biscuit, feel its texture, then sniff it. Only after this thorough examination do they eat the biscuit.

In another scene, Clov pushes Hamm's wheelchair toward centerstage. Hamm asks, "Am I right in the center?" and Clov responds by measuring the distance with his eyes (EG p. 933). Then, Clov moves the chair slightly and states that Hamm sits more or less in the center of the stage. Hamm, however, must be absolutely certain that he sits in the center; therefore, he requests Clov to "get the tape" and put him "bang in the center!" Clov follows instructions, but Hamm still insists that he "feels too far to the left." After Clov repositions the wheelchair, Hamm indicates that he feels too far to the right." Clov re-adjusts the chair a fifth time only to place Hamm too far forward. The next time, of course, Hamm believes he sits back too far. While these adjustments accomplish very little--Clov only moves the chair an inch or less each time--they underscore the precision of Hamm's and Clov's thoughts and actions.

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While Vladimir and Estragon engage in mindless, mean-ingless pursuits and instinctively coexist without thought beyond a surface level, Hamm and Clov exhibit much more deliberation in their actions, even though the action serves no logical purpose; thus, one sees why a logically thinking audience might reject Endgame. By conducting trivial activ-ities, Hamm and Clov can forget their grim existence. These characters possess the mental ability to resolve problems; yet they do not apply their precise thinking to the most important problem they face: impending doom and death.

The irony between Hamm's and Clov's physical immobility and mental dexterity causes tension that shocks the audi-ence. However, the characters' dialogue also contributes to the play's ironical tension. All characters engage in verbal battles with each other, rather than joining effort to combat their predicament. For instance, throughout Endgame, Hamm asks endless questions and makes endless demands. In fact, in the first forty exchanges Hamm asks Clov twenty-seven questions.[32] Hamm seeks control; as Rei Noguchi points out, Clov refuses to play by countering these questions with solicits and challenges.[33] For instance, when Clov half-extinguishes a rat that hides in the kitchen area, Hamm orders, "You'll finish him later. Let us pray to God" (EG p. 942). While Nagg and Nell clasp hands and begin praying, Clov challenges Hamm and subverts Hamm's attempt to establish order and control.

Clov also uses indirect responses to keep their world

imbalanced. Instead of answering Hamm's questions, Clov often makes a statement that relates to the topic, but does not answer the question. In one scene Hamm asks, "Is it light?" and Clov responds, "It isn't dark" (EG p. 944). A few lines later Hamm asks, "Am I very white? (Pause. Angrily.) I'm asking you am I very white!" (EG p. 944). Clov responds, "Not more so than usual." These ambiguous responses contribute to the uncertain times with which the characters live everyday.

Furthermore, the characters' actions do not always match their dialogue. For instance, Nagg and Nell emerge from their ashbin-homes to discover the shelter's cool temperature. Nagg says, "I'm freezing. (Pause.) Do you want to go in?" (EG p. 930). Nell says yes, but she neglects to move. Another example of behavior not matching words occurs when Nagg asks, "Could you give me a scratch before you go?" (EG p. 931). Nell says no, but after a long pause, she asks, "Where?" The dichotomy between the characters' words and actions emphasizes similar experiences in post-war society. Some groups call for change and reform, some groups do not realize the problem, and others hear the message and see the problem, but they neglect to act.

Not only does Beckett require audience members to examine the covert messages contained in the characters' dialogue and actions, he also requires them to decipher the production's technical elements. Like Waiting for Godot, the play entails few props and little sound, and the plain costumes suggest a hobo-like existence for all four charac-

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ters. Although light and set designs follow simple no-nonsense rules, they seem steeped in ironical significance. The bare interior does not utilize traditional use of color and texture to heighten drama and stimulate senses; yet its severity captivates the audience instead of repulses it. Moreover, plain and dark, the set does not depict an optimistic atmosphere; yet the characters see their residence as a shelter or haven, not a prison that prevents them from escaping to a world they can only see through a telescope. As a barren interior, the set makes visible the characters' inner turmoil and isolation, which also parallel the fears and confusion that existed after World War II.

Beckett's lighting design adds another new twist to Endgame's interpretation. Generally, dark sets or low lights accompany grim, sad, or frightening stage scenes. Then, as the situation improves, the intensity of the lights increases to visually emphasize progress and prosperity. In Beckett's plays, as the human condition worsens, the set becomes lighter. The set of Waiting for Godot is dark, suggesting a less than ideal world; in Endgame, the situation deteriorates, but the set's lighting becomes a soft gray, not darker; and in his next play, Happy Days, the situation becomes even more grim, yet the lighting changes to a bright, hot red. The lighting in all three plays does not change from scene to scene, which suggests that as life gets worse, human response to the situation remains the same: nothing really changes.

Endgame depicts a more brutal, unyielding world than Waiting for Godot. Vladimir and Estragon represent mindless, ignorant clowns, unconcerned with thought, philosophy, and life. On the other hand, Hamm and Clov possess the capabilities to think, but they do not utilize these abilities to decelerate their environment's mutation. Instead, they remain unaware of their ability to change their situation. Hamm and Clov handle detail and order, but they ignore larger issues, including their frugal existence. Furthermore, they couple precise thinking with precise actions to prevent themselves from contemplating important problems.

Endgame illustrates Beckett's concerns about the carefree lifestyle of post-war society. By presenting characters who represent humankind, developing ironical tensions between actions and dialogue, and subverting traditional dramatic techniques, Beckett encourages audience action and forms Bitzer's "fitting response" to a rhetorical situation. He does not induce audience distance or avoidance, prevalent audience reactions to many contemporary plays. Beckett encourages audience members to examine the characters' actions and immobilty to establish their own meaning of Endgame, and to transcend the play to take action before the final game, life itself, draws to a resounding end.

Krapp's Last Tape

Shortly after writing Endgame, Beckett received a tape

recording of All That Fall, a radio play he wrote for the
BBC. Beckett thus discovered the tape recorder, or more
accurately for him, the "memory recorder."[34] The gadget
intrigued Beckett; it impersonalized the personal by sepa-
rating a person's thoughts from the person's body. Two
years later in 1958, Beckett wrote Krapp's Last Tape for
Patrick Magee, an Irish actor who had performed some of
Beckett's other works.

Unlike the period's other playwrights who wrote realis-
tic plays set in the past or present, Beckett placed Krapp's
Last Tape in the future.[35] Beckett needed to forestall any
disbelief about the impossibilty of a sixty-nine-year-old
man listening to forty-year-old tapes in 1958.[36] Thus by
ignoring conventional time frames, Beckett utilized the
then-new tape recorder to create one of his most technologi-
cal plays.

Action begins with a "wearish old man" sitting motion-
less at a table piled with a tape recorder, microphone, and
several cardboard boxes containing reels of tape (KLT p. 9).
Each tape represents a slice of Krapp's life, since he
conducts this ritual of recording and listening to the tapes
every birthday. Like Beckett's characters in Waiting for
Godot and Endgame, Krapp performs a series of methodical
motions. He sighes, looks at his watch, takes out an en-
velope then puts it back, unlocks the table drawer to exam-
ine a reel of tape before replacing it in the drawer, which
he relocks.

After several minutes, Krapp "goes with all speed he

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can muster backstage to the darkness" (KLT p. 11). A cork popping suggests that he fixes a drink, although the stage directions, which comprise one-third of the text,[37] do not indicate this action. Krapp returns with a ledger, consults the entries, places a reel on the recorder, and listens to a tape he recorded thirty years ago. The performance continues as Krapp listens to various tapes and remembers earlier events in his life.

The past, represented by the tapes, binds Krapp; yet he also stands isolated from the past. He relies on the tapes to remember, even though he denigrates those memories of "that stupid bastard" he took himself for thirty years ago (KLT p. 24). At sixty-nine, Krapp sneers at his thirty-nine-year-old-self, just as his thirty-nine-year-old-self sneered at the "young whelp" he was at twenty (KLT p. 16). Krapp gradually replaces love and living with "controlled and patient deliberation."[38] Thus, with Krapp, Beckett presents audiences not with a character who thinks too little, but with one who thinks too much. Krapp-at-69 has forgotten human emotion and experience. Moreover, even though he thinks, he cannot remember. The play concludes much as it begins. Krapp sits quietly at the table piled with tapes. He stares motionlessly into the darkness as the "tape runs on in silence" (KLT p. 28).

Like all of Beckett's plays, Krapp's Last Tape involves several interwined themes. Krapp's meaningless routine and reliance upon the recorded tapes exemplify the futility of

thought and human memory. The reliance emphasizes Krapp's loneliness and desire to establish some relationship, even if it is an intrapersonal one, through his recorded voice.[39] Eugene Webb describes Krapp's Last Tape as a study of the one left behind; Krapp realizes that he made life a prison by existing without really living.[40] Krapp's Last Tape also communicates mental and physical pain, "centered in the guises of love: family and domestic life, romance, but particularly sexual love, where people are most sensitive...."[41] By examining Beckett's use of the tape recorder as character, of the recordings' layering effect to conceal, and of light and dark images, Krapp's Last Tape continues to communicate Beckett's vision of society.

Generally pre-recorded and played through the theater's sound system, the collected tape recordings comprise Krapp's verbal autobiography, as they merge to compose Krapp's past. Thus, the tapes transcend their obvious physical presence and purpose to become vital agents in the production's success; the tapes establish themselves as characters. Production crews, therefore, take great care in amplifying and timing the taped voices. Of course, the ideal theatrical situation would allow the actor to control the recorder on stage, just as Krapp controls the voices he hears. Potential technical problems prevent this staging. After all, without Krapp's tapes, the production cannot take place.

Krapp personifies the tapes, which he calls "little rascals" and "scoundrels" (KLT p. 12). He also treats them

as listeners or "sounding boards." For example, Krapp-at-39
finds them useful "before embarking on a
new...(hesitate)...retrospect" (KLT p. 16). The tapes also
assist audiences in determining Krapp-at-69's character. In
contrast to the younger, "strong voice, rather pompous" tone
of voice (KLT p. 14), Krapp-at-69's voice crackles (KLT p.
10), quavers (KLT p. 17), and at times, remains silent
though his lips continue to move (KLT p. 18, 28).

Although the tapes seem immortal, physical objects,
they, like Krapp have a lifespan, which depends upon Krapp.
Krapp-at-69 gives the tapes life, since as Krapp gradually
grows silent and dies, the tapes also die with no one left
to record or play the existing recordings. While they both
exist, Krapp and the tapes form scant dialogue that borders
monologue; this dialogue paves the way for Winnie's mono-
logue in Happy Days, Beckett's next play. As characters,
the tapes have names, relationships, and life spans. More-
over, unlike Krapp, the tapes can recall events and people,
which Krapp-at-69 cannot remember without the tapes' help.

Memory and time, therefore, serve as essential elements
in understanding the relationship between Krapp and the
recordings. Like other Beckettian characters, Krapp cannot
voluntarily recall or describe the past. He cannot remember
words from the past; at one point he consults a dictionary
to understand words he hears (KLT p. 18). His only link to
the past consists of the tape reels, which form a voluntary
memory that stays fresh, since Krapp has completely forgot-

ten the events.[42] Though Krapp cannot rewind and fast
forward his own memory, he can control the tapes; he winds
them forwards and backwards as he wishes.

Krapp's demonstration of control helps him conceal
emotions. He manipulates the tape/memory as self defense.
If he does not want to remember, he locates something else.
This shifting creates a layering effect that presents frag-
mented memories to the audience. For instance, Krapp-at-39
explains that he records thoughts "against the day when my
work will be done and perhaps no place [remains] in my
memory, warm or cold..." (KLT p. 21). Krapp-at-69 does not
wish to acknowledge memory loss; therefore, he winds the
tape forward (KLT p. 20). As he locates more pleasant
memories, he listens, then plays the tape again (KLT pp. 20-
23). Thus, Krapp achieves some scant degree of control over
the past and his "memory."

When Krapp begins to record the present, however, he
loses control again. After he begins to record, he pauses
as he thinks about the events the tapes describes. The
stage directions indicate that Krapp "broods, realizes he is
recording silence, switches off, broods," then finally
speaks (KLT pp. 24-25). Unfortunately, he forgets to start
the machine. A few minutes later, he belatedly realizes his
mistake and begins to record (KLT p. 24). This sequence
continues until Krapp abandons the recording, exclaiming,
"Nothing to say, not a squeak" (KLT p. 24). For Krapp,
speaking seems an "all or nothing" process. He either
speaks too much or too little.

This lack of compromise surfaces several other places in Krapp's Last Tape. For instance, Krapp sees events as right or wrong, famine or feast, and decision or indecision. To emphasize this conflict, Beckett contrasts light and dark. First, Beckett segregates light and dark by lighting only a small portion of the stage--the table area--with a strong light; darkness cloaks the remainder of the stage (KLT p. 10). Although Krapp prefers the light, he fears it, and he often retreats into the dark. Since he listens to the tapes/memory in the light, the light represents his consciousness. Ironically, in the light he confronts the dichotomy between his youthful, emotional foolishness and the stagnant and impersonal thinker he has become. To escape this realization, Krapp flees to the mysterious darkness backstage. This dark area, therefore, comes to represent unconsciousness, or his refusal to think. Unlike Beckett's early characters, Krapp has the ability to think, and he recognizes his problems. But fear, not awareness or ability, prevents him from taking action.

The realistic Krapp's Last Tape links Waiting for Godot and Endgame, to Beckett's next play, Happy Days. By using the tape recorder as character he reduces dialogue as well as the number of actors on stage, circumstances which prepare audiences for Winnie's monologue. He layers Krapp's recordings to suggest confusion about time and memory. Furthermore, he uses images of lightness and darkness to increase the situation's desperate atmosphere and to exem-

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plify the rational/irrational schism.

In addition, Beckett experiments with the character's consciousness. Whereas Vladimir and Estragon remain oblivious to problems, and Hamm and Clov do not acknowledge their connections with problems, Krapp knows and fears the problem. Nevertheless, he does not take action to remedy his situation. He just accepts it. Krapp-at-39 says, "Perhaps my best years are gone...But I wouldn't want them back now. No I wouldn't want them back" (KLT p. 28). Even though he fails to outline how he can make his life better, this younger Krapp optimistically looks toward the future by denying the "good old days." Krapp-at-69 makes no response to this recording. Realizing he lost his opportunity, he accepts his present and what little future remains for him. He sits and stares bleakly into the dark as his last tape ends in silence.

Happy Days

Of all of Beckett's plays, Happy Days has provided more diverse interpretation than all but Waiting for Godot.[43] Written and produced in 1961, Happy Days tells the story of a middle-aged couple who strive to maintain a relationship in spite of the deteriorating environment. Winnie, whom Beckett describes as "about fifty, well-preserved, blond for preference, [and] plump" sleeps on the scorched grass that forms the mound burying her from the waist down.[44] Hidden by this mound, Willie, her husband and the only other char-

acter, also sleeps.

Action begins when the piercing ring of a bell attempts to rouse them from their slumber. The audience soon learns that the intense heat and light characterize both day and night, and the bell signifies the beginning and the end of the "days." In spite of the hellish environment, the incurably optimistic Winnie exclaims, "Another heavenly day," and begins the rituals that pass time. After finishing one ritual, she moves to the next, all the while maintaining a monologue that supposedly forms a play-by-play description of her movements and thoughts. Meanwhile, Willie cannot be seen or heard. In fact, Willie utters less than fifty words in Act I, only one word in Act II, and makes one full stage appearance which occurs at the end of the play.[45] The rest of the time, Willie hides behind the mound, reads the newspaper, and occasionally shows his hand. Although he might be considered peripheral to the play, Willie serves as a foil for Winnie's chatter by implying a stereotypical husband who hides behind his newspaper. Despite the fact that he rarely speaks, he can hear; therefore, Willie can provide Winnie some type of audience. Until Ohio Impromptu appears twenty years later, Winnie and Willie portray Beckett's last, on-stage speaking and listening characters; the rest alienate others and speak only to their own selves.

As the play progresses, the characters' environment worsens. In Act II the heat increases, and Winnie's collapsed parasol ignites (HD p. 674). Winnie, now buried from the neck down and deprived of her props, relies exclusively

on words to pass the time. Furthermore, her ability to distinguish past from present has deteriorated even more. Winnie, however, seems more aware of this problem than other Beckettian characters, such as Hamm, Clov, Vladimir, and Estragon. Like Krapp, Winnie knows that the situation looks grim. Unlike Krapp who takes no action, Winnie actively seeks to forget. At the end of the play, Winnie proclaims, "Oh this happy day, this will have been another happy day! (Pause.) After all. (Pause.) So far" (HD p. 682). The bell rings, the two gaze at each other and smile. After a long pause, the curtain falls. Like other Beckettian characters, Winnie and Willie struggle to deny a seemingly solutionless situation and a hopeless future.

Likewise, audiences struggle to comprehend Happy Days. Beckett's complex and paradoxical nature suggests that audiences should look for meaning below the surface. For instance, by viewing Winnie as a symbol for society, seeing her environment as a symbol for the world, and restructuring or subverting dramatic conventions, audiences can begin to decode Happy Days's mystery. Key elements in understanding this play arise not from the character's obvious immobility, but from the actions they do take. In addition, by interpreting not what the characters say, but what the characters leave unsaid, the audience obtains an active, observer-participant role. Furthermore, rather than concentrating on the bright set, audiences should consider the alternative, darkness, insinuating gloom and despair. Therefore by

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disrupting logical sequential action, dialogue, and set, Beckett once again illustrates his view of a distorted world.

One of the most striking elements of Happy Days evolves from Winnie's immobility. Her immobility marks the first instance of total physical immobility in Beckett's works. In Waiting for Godot, mobility presents a slight problem as the characters sit, remove their boots, and massage sore feet. Hamm and Clov move with even more difficulty as a wheelchair confines one, and the other relies on a crutch. The complete immobility of Winnie prepares audiences for subsequent Beckett productions, in which gesture of any type becomes more difficult and eventually impossible.

Unlike these other characters, however, Winnie's obvious physical immobility does not concern audiences as much as her mental immobility. Physical immobility symbolizes her not-so- obvious mental incapacity. This state of mind manifests itself in Winnie's repetitive action. For instance in the opening scene, Winnie rummages through her handbag, extracts her toothbrush and paste, then examines them with a ritualistic determinism. Then, she proceeds to brush her teeth. When she finishes, she lays these down, rummages through her handbag again, then "rediscovers" her toothbrush (HD p. 662). Afterwards, she finds her spectacles and goes through a similar process. Throughout the play, this type of repetition occurs suggesting that Winnie always has and always will perform these tasks. The repetition signals the character's unending cycle of experience.

Trapped in this cycle, Winnie's physical immobility symbol-
izes the mental circus of her existence.

Winnie's actions also include storytelling, singing,
and reminiscing about the happy past. She remembers a
story, then changes her mind about nearly every element in
the story. The person's name, the place, the event--all
converge forming a pattern of inconsistency (HD p. 665).
Her actions and rambling stories provide ways to pass time
and to keep herself distracted. Inactivity scares her. As
Winnie completes tasks, she frantically searches for another
to keep herself busy before the bell rings and the day ends.
At the end of Act I, Winnie says:

> It is perhaps a little soon--to make ready--for
> the night...and yet I do--make ready for
> the night...feeling it hard--the bell for sleep--
> saying to myself--Winnie--it will not be long now,
> Winnie--until the bell rings for sleep (HD p. 677).

As the play progresses, Winnie finds it increasingly diffi-
cult to find distractions. Yet, she continues to search;
she "clings so she will not "float upward into the blue" (HD
p. 673).

Thus, despite the seemingly unconscious nature of her
actions, Winnie realizes what she does and why she acts.
She says, "I used to think--that all these things--put back
into the bag too soon--could be taken out again--if neces-
sary...and so on indefinitely...until the bell went" (HD p.
678). Furthermore once Winnie stops these actions, her
thoughts turn to death, which she feels lurking around the

corner. Manifesting death, her revolver, "Brownie," rests on the mound (HD p. 678). She picks it up and turns with a broad smile to place it back in her bag. Perhaps she smiles in relief because the day's end approaches, and she has not had to confront death or to commit suicide instead of being killed. Abruptly, she changes her mind and places Brownie back on the mound. After all, the day is not over, yet. By subverting Winnie's obvious immobility, audiences discover new meanings in the actions the characters do take.

Another dramatic convention open to subversion includes dialogue. This technique suggests a fundamental difference between utterance and language. For instance, rather than trying to piece together Winnie's empty dialogue, audiences can look at what Winnie leaves unsaid. That is, Winnie's dialogue does not represent what she truly thinks or believes. Words become defense mechanisms that ward off unthinkable alternatives. Instead of using words to reveal her ideas, she uses a tangled discourse to hide them. Winnie's conscience, therefore, contains the real language; silence, not words, forms the incentive that encourages or suppresses expression.[47]

Several times Beckett entices the audience into believing that Winnie will admit what she thinks. She asks, "What is the alternative? (Pause.) What is the al--" (HD p. 667). In the nick of time she distracts herself from her circumstances by berating Willie. Winnie uses words as defense mechanisms to pass the time, to ward off silence, and more

importantly, to prevent thought.

Not only does Beckett demand that the audience demystify the two characters, their actions, and their words, but he also requires them to decipher the production's technical elements. For instance, the only props consist of Winnie's handbag and contents, as well as Willie's newspaper. The set--totally bare except for the mound of earth and a backcloth, representing "unbroken plain and sky"--requires no changes (HD p. 661). Likewise, other than the piercing bell and Winnie's music box, all sounds emerge from the characters. Beckett's "spell-bindingly explicit" stage directions particularly emphasize light plots.[48] This emphasis, combined with his use of the unseen, intimates that the audience of Happy Days compares the advantages and disadvantages of the intense light and heat to the alternative, a dark, cool environment that eventually leads to death.

With Happy Days, Beckett begins to vary pace, rhythm, and volume. In Act I, Beckett describes the delivery as low, slow speech with garbled words. In Act II, the pace slows even more, while the volume increases, providing a distinct contrast to Act I. Moreover, Act I is twice as long as Act II. Even this reduction foreshadows his later experiments in Breath and Not I.

Happy Days involves audience members with the power of Winnie's confinement, the suspense of Willie's banishment, and the contrast between sound and silence, action and stillness.[49] On the other hand, critics often experience hostile reactions to the play. Although some describe Happy

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Days as Beckett's most extended dramatic image,[50] others deplore his use of cliche.[51] One critic called Happy Days "obvious," "flat and prosaic," "too predictable," and "ambiguous."[52] Perhaps the discrepancy between audience and critic stems from the fact that critics routinely examine plot, characters, language, and scenery according to Aristotelian standards. When a playwright deletes these anchors, critics may feel lost, since they cannot find dramatic conventions. Audience members, however, do not feel this need for dramatic convention; they attend the theater for the dramatic experience.

Beckett encourages his audience to experience Happy Days. He provokes them into understanding the play, examining the characters' action and nonaction, establishing personal significance for the play's meaning, and transcending the production to take action. Through Happy Days, Beckett indicates that although happy days may be here again, the glamour will soon wear off, and where will society stand? Will it be too late?

Play

Three identical urns stand on a dark stage. Heads protrude from the tops, and faces "lost to age and aspect" grab audience members' attention.[53] One by one they speak tonelessly as a piercing spotlight illuminates their impassive features. Unaware of the other characters on stage, each tells impersonalized fragments of their love triangle

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and their subsequent deaths as a result of that triangle. Webb writes that the characters lock "themselves into a vicious circle of passions that will not let them respond to the call of clarity...."[54] Play begins.

Completed in 1963, Play continued to evolve over a two-year period. By this stage in his career, Beckett actively directed and produced his plays, and so throughout Play's first rehearsals in Germany, he changed the staging and shifted emphasis.[55] He continued his search for "total theatre" that placed audiences into the theatrical spectacle.[56] With Play, Beckett reached a new level in minimalist drama, characterized by the "less is more" shape of the productions. He also established audience members as additional characters of the play. Like those characters on stage, audience members remained encased in seats, making them relatively immobile in the dark theater. Invisible to others, audience members also faced the light. Yet, since they sat outside of the play, they could see and know what the actors on stage could not.

In Play, Beckett continues his regression by placing even more restrictions on gesture and movement, by isolating the characters, by replacing coherent narrative with fragmented speech, and by using a spotlight to compel speech. Furthermore, Beckett emphasizes this cycle when the play ends by repeating the play verbatim. The second "end" calls for a third repetition, terminated only by the fallyng curtain. This lack of coherent thought and closure illuminates the "dreary banality" of the characters' and audience

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members' situation.[57]

Play exploits theatrical possibilities of physical movement even more than Happy Days.[58] Concerned lest the characters move too much, Beckett explicitly describes the position of the urns and actors who occupy them. He insists that the actors do not sit since that position requires "urns of unacceptable bulk" (P p. 63). The urns touch even though the characters themselves do not interact or converse.

The characters, however, do talk even though speech does nothing to relieve their isolation and immobility. Paul Lawley notes how Beckett uses cliches to emphasize this immobility.[59] For example, the characters use physical actions and body parts, which no longer exist for them, to describe past events. W_2 tells how W_1 burst in and flew at her (P p. 46); W_1 reveals how M falls on his knees and buries his face in her lap (P p. 48); and M explains how he made a "clear breast" of the entire sordid affair (P p. 49). Thus, active physical characteristics ironically underscore their current immobility. Only talk remains for the characters and for the motionless, setless, costumeless, propless production.

The characters' language overlaps, shifts, and fragments as the play continues. Audiences, however, need that shifting to obtain an overview of the circumstances, since no one character presents a cohesive description of their relationships. While the overlapping helps unify the ac-

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tion, it also separates by presenting different perceptions of that action. As each character presents his or her side, audience members must shift their own responses to three different characters and frames of reference.

Disjointed language encourages this confusion. For instance, at the beginning of the play, longer sentences and passages coalesce. Toward the end, a stream-of-conscious-like narrative prevails. W_2, for example, says, "And you perhaps pitying me, thinking, Poor thing, she needs a rest" (P p. 58). These words do not connect to anything said before or after them. As the language deteriorates, the pace increases. In addition, the volume decreases, implying that however long the play continues, the action gets faster and softer without ever ceasing.[60] Instead of ending in silence like Beckett's three previous plays, Play exhausts speech, but never eliminates speech.[61]

Compelled by the spotlight, the characters speak non-stop everytime it finds them. The light demands that the characters speak, search for the Truth, and recognize the reality of their endlessly immobile situation.[62] The spotlight acts as a silent interrogator that seeks its "victims" one at a time (P p. 62). Just as the bell in Happy Days governs Winnie's actions, the spotlight governs the lives of M, W_1, and W_2. Each relates to the light in different ways. While M contemplates what the light might want, W_1 fights the light and orders it to leave her alone (P pp. 54, 53). Only W_2 tries to understand the light. She asks, "And you know I am doing my best. Or don't you" (P p. 55).

This inquisition forces the characters to reflect upon their situations. The "hellish light," carried over from Happy Days, demands self-knowledge, while the darkness allows them to forget and deny the situation. Darkness brings peace (P p. 53). However, darkness also causes confusion. Each time blackouts occur, the characters confuse themselves about who speaks first. Instead, they speak in a jumbled chorus when the light returns (P pp. 46, 52, 61). Moreover, W_1 mentions "dying for dark--and the darker the worse" (P p. 60), a phrase which suggests that the more peaceful their minds become, the worse their existence becomes. They all die because they wished for peaceful oblivion. The analogy between light and consciousness and dark as unconsciousness continues Beckett's earlier experiments with rational and irrational thinking and experience.

Play also contains the repetition evident in his previous plays. While the characters cling to specific patterns, the most interesting repetition appears at the end of the play when stage directions indicate to "repeat play" (P p. 61). After a five-second blackout, the characters launch a repeat verbatim performance, which keeps them alive. The repetition entrenches them even deeper into a never-ending pattern of exhaustion and presents a tenuous escape from emotion.

Lasting only forty-minutes, Play attracted much attention, though little warmth, from audiences and critics upon its debut. The London Times called Play a "depressing no

man's land of the afterlife."[63]   However a year later en-
thusiasm increased.   Harold Hobson, Beckett's first and
foremost champion, led the way by commenting about Play's
complicated emotional intensity.[64]

Using Play, Beckett makes audience members uncomfort-
ably aware of the similarities between themselves and the
characters.   No longer do audience members spectate.   They
participate.   Audience members suffer as the characters
suffer.   All wait for the play to end.

Breath

"The best possible play is one in which there are no
actors in the text.   I'm trying to find a way to write one,"
Beckett told Deirdre Bair.[65]   Detesting "squabbles between
vision and authority," he believed that the author's duty
included searching for the perfect actor...having the abili-
ty to annihilate himself totally."[66]   Although Happy Days
begins reducing the actor's motions and physical presence,
this vision did not materialize until Beckett wrote Breath
and Not I.

Either treated as a weak joke or taken too seriously,[67]
Breath originally belonged to a series of anonymous contri-
butions to Kenneth Tynan's erotic review, Oh Calcutta.
Other contributors included Edna O'Brien, John Lennon, and
Tynan, himself.   Beckett wrote the thirty-five second play,
which he called a "farce in five acts,"[68] on the back of a
postcard and assumed that Tynan would stage it as directed.
Tynan and company, however, deemed the work unsuitable and

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added nude people to the rubbish-strewn stage that Beckett described.[69] To add insult to injury, the program identified only Beckett after Tynan agreed that all contributors would remain anonymous. Furious, Beckett denounced Tynan and sought to cancel the production. He dropped the issue only when Tynan threatened him with a libel suit.

Breath deliberately failed to satisfy any of the audience members' notions about drama. The one-hundred people at one of the first productions in 1969 stood in the dark, heard faint sounds, saw rubbish and changing light, then left the theater. After that production, Goldman wrote that audience members, including himself, came totally unprepared for Beckett's work; after the show concluded, "our minds went on working, feeding on the short and teasing experience."[70] Like Beckett's other plays, Breath puzzled and confused audiences who could not extract logical order and action--much less rational, identifiable meaning--from this new play.

Beckett continued to explore theatrical possibilities in Breath by creating a dramatic experience that "works on the nerves, not the intellect."[71] He continued to engage audience emotions by commanding every element at his disposal to transform importance to the most ordinary events. Once again, he provoked audiences to experience drama.

Breath offers audiences yet another picture of human existence. The curtain raises as a faint light reveals a "stage littered with miscellaneous rubbish" (B p. 8). After

five seconds, audiences hear a brief cry and inhalation as the light slowly increases intensity for ten seconds. After a five second "silence and hold" (B p. 8), exhalation begins as the light decreases to its original level. Ten seconds later, another cry sounds before a five-second silence, which preceeds the falling curtain. Beckett's stage directions detail the cry as an "instant cry of recorded vagitus" and request that the "two cries be identical, switching on and off strictly synchronized light and breath" (B p.9).

By creating a wordless, characterless play, Beckett strips away what he considers extraneous dramatic variables to isolate or contain the audiences' experience. He describes human existence by selecting some of the most basic elements to humans--breath and light--as images and actions of Breath. Thus, he reduces life to a piercing cry, accompanied by a spectacular light show.

Although some critics explain the cry as a baby's cry at birth, others explain it as a cry of death that indicates life's nothingness.[72] However, in view of Beckett's other works and motifs, the cry signals both. With Breath Beckett's work approaches full circle to depict the entire span of human life. He seeks closure to Waiting for Godot's statement regarding "birth astride of a grave" (WG p. 470). Beckett also indicates that characters form expendable parts of drama, since drama's importance lies within experiences created by human imagination and emotion.

Breath culminates Beckett's most minimalist experiment. Despite its brevity, Breath illustrates Beckett's increasing

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simplification and reduction, which calls forth a new dramatic form. He brings audiences to a pivotal point of life's cyclical nature. He compares birth and death through simple techniques in order to produce one of his most complex theatrical images.

Not I

Breath seems the logical dividing point in Beckett's writing.[73] Breath's interplay of light, sound, and silence grounds images Beckett adopts in his later plays, such as Footfalls and That Time. However, as this research has demonstrated thus far, Beckett does not deal with what people generally consider logical. Not I provides a more appropriate point to distinguish his early plays from his later plays.

As house light dim, silent and rapid movements begin behind a curtain. After ten seconds of darkness, the curtain rises to reveal a gaping red mouth, surrounded by the black hole of the stage. As Mouth, the main character, becomes audible, audiences scramble during the next twelve minutes to unravel the story. They soon discover that until she reached seventy-years-old, Mouth could not speak.[74] Then, as she wanders in a field, the lights suddenly burn out, and she finds herself trapped in her present situation. All at once, Mouth discovers that she can speak. Words tumble from her mouth, and they make a "buzzing" noise that startles her.[75] At first, she thinks someone punishes her:

"...she did not know...what position she was in..." (NI p. 594). Gradually, she realizes she does not suffer. Mouth begins remembering the birth of a girl whom parents abandon. The girl, of course, is Mouth. She traces her life in a "fragmented, staccato piece of prose."[76] Then the cycle continues as she retraces her life from birth.

Once again, Beckett stretches drama to new limits in Not I, quickly written between March 20, and April 1, 1972.[77] The powerful and economical monologue begins where it ends--like Play--as it continues to illustrate Beckett's fascination with repetition. Stark lighting--particularly characteristic of Waiting for Godot, Happy Days, Play, and Breath--reduces to one small speck of light in the darkness; Mouth seems to hang into space and to change size and shape throughout the play.[78] Beckett, furthermore, utilizes anatomical reduction, involuntary speech, and a silent auditor in Not I to create yet another dramatic experience, requiring imagination over intellect.

The physical limitations Beckett places upon his characters become more poignant in Not I. Hamm relies upon his wheelchair and Winnie remains buried; the characters in Play live in urns. Beckett reduces the character to a single mouth that requires minimal movement. Each dramatic picture gets smaller. Using metonomy, Beckett focuses the audience's attention to the character's trapped situation.[79] For some unimportant reason, she cannot recall the past, nor shape her future. Physically trapped, Mouth is also mentally trapped. Now, she can only speak.

Silent her entire life, speech amazes Mouth. But now that she speaks she cannot be silent; she cannot control or connect the words she utters. She says, "words were coming...a voice she did not recognize...at first...so long since it sounded..." (NI p. 597). The rambling continues until she actually describes "something begging in the brain...begging the mouth to stop...pause a moment" (NI p. 599). Audiences see that Mouth lacks the control to decode and to terminate her own words. Her involuntary speech contrasts with the voluntary speech seen in Beckett's early plays. Unlike Krapp who controls his tapes and Winnie who struggles at all costs to maintain speech, Mouth struggles to end emotionless, therefore meaningless, words.

Throughout the incoherent narrative, however, Mouth addresses herself as a third person, which dissociates her person from her words as well as the actions she describes. For example, she explains how "she survived" (NI p. 598), knows not what she says (NI p. 599), and waits to "be led away...glad of the hand on her arm" (NI p. 601). As the title suggests, she seems to say "not I," thereby disclaiming her future and the past that confines her.

As Mouth frantically speaks, a mysterious, sexless, robed figure occupies part of the stage. Alan Schneider asked Beckett if the Auditor symbolized death or a guardian angel. In response, Beckett mimed the Auditor's movements: he "shrugged his shoulders, lifted his arms and then enigmatically let them fall in a gesture of helpless

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compassion."[80] Since Auditor detracted from Mouth, most
productions eliminate this role; however, when Beckett
produced the Paris revival in 1978, he increased Auditor's
importance. At the end of the production, Auditor uses his
or her hands to cover the head in helplessness and
torment.[81] Nevertheless, Auditor impersonally mirrors
Mouth's helplessness and provides a silent witness to Mouth
just as Willie serves as Winnie's listener in Happy Days.[82]

Even with its blatant ambiguity, Not I received en-
thusiastic responses from both critics and audience, who
responded to a "new exhilarating experience" without really
knowing why.[83] Esslin called Not I an "immensely important
work," containing "substance which lesser writers would have
needed three or four hours to accomplish."[84] Critics today
call Not I Beckett's best and most unforgettable work.[85]
Not I ends Beckett's first series of plays and foreshadows
his later works, which begin to increase in dramatic detail
and in complex use of performance space.

Beckett's Later Drama

After Not I, Beckett's drama moves in new directions.
Esslin describes this drama as "almost of a new art form."[86]
Audiences make no sense of the works; this experience
creates drama with "pure images" and "poetical metaphor"
that converge to reveal a "moving and sounding picture."[87]
Beckett continues to present further examples of dramatic
less-is-more, and to experiment with the limited use of
personal pronouns which imply impersonalization and a flight

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from self perception.[88] Moreover, his new works strive to
extinguish the self, moving toward "existential and verbal
extinction."[89]

Beckett wrote That Time in 1974, although the first
production occured in 1976 to commemorate Beckett's seventi-
eth birthday. Footfalls premiered in 1976, and A Piece of
Monologue appeared two years later. In 1979, the Royal
Court Theatre in London staged a revival of Happy Days, and
Beckett announced his farewell to theater. Despite this
claim, he wrote two plays in 1981: Ohio Impromptu for a
Beckett symposium at Ohio State University and Rockaby for
Billie Whitelaw to perform at a festival at the State Uni-
versity of New York. In addition, he assisted producers
with a 1982 production of Rockaby.

Samuel Beckett's dramatic productions entice audiences
to immerse themselves in the action--and nonaction--taking
place before their eyes. Beckett exploits the senses and
capitalizes upon audience emotion. He demands audience
involvement that requires suspending logic and experiencing
the dramatic moment. Furthermore, Beckett encourages audi-
ences to transcend the work and to establish their own
meanings for the dramatic moment.

CHAPTER 4

Repetition and Reinforcement:
Themes and Effects of Beckett's Early Drama

Each Beckett play provides a wealth of information for
audiences to absorb and for scholars to explore. Changing
social norms, as well as Beckett's own growth as a dramatist
cause diverse interpretations and experiences by all who
read or attend a Beckett play. Likewise, interpretation and
experience change when one examines each play in relation to
those it preceeds and succeeds. This type of -
indepth analysis reveals recurring themes which suggest that
the author's own values, attitudes, and beliefs exist be-
tween the work's lines and actions. By acknowledging con-
textual importance, audiences can transcend the context and
text to achieve their own meanings and visions. This knowl-
edge, contrary to logical reasoning which might suggest that
the author's vision becomes diluted, strengthens the au-
thor's vision by stimulating thought. Audiences perpetuate
the dramatic work when they reconstruct the action and
personalize the experience. Hence, this type of stimulation
validates the author's work and vision.

Beckett's Recurring Themes

Throughout his early plays, Beckett uses deconstruc-

tion's notion of subversion to illustrate two particularly important themes. First, he undermines audience members' ideas about interpersonal relationships. Second, he minimizes stage space while surrounding the characters with a dark, boundary-less void. As he reduces stage space he experiments with rational and irrational thought, as well as with the characters' abilities to control thought. These two concepts strengthen Beckett's vision of society and his position as one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century.

Beckett's Semi-Personal World

As Beckett's plays progress, the characters experience increasingly closer relationships. The relationships become more intimate as they move from friends in Waiting for Godot, to family in Endgame, to married couples in Happy Days and Play, and finally to an intrapersonal relationship in Not I. Thus as the plays continue, the characters have fewer people with whom they may interact, and the level of intimacy between the characters increases. Deductive reasoning suggests that as the characters' realm of social contacts decreases, the amount of communication between these characters should increase. After all, as their world shrinks and they have fewer people with whom they interact, the depth and degree of communication should become greater.

Beckett, however, undermines this notion. Beckett creates an increasingly semi-personal world which denies

meaningful interpersonal communication in a deteriorating environment. His characters become more closely related as his plays progress, but communication between characters regresses.

For example, Waiting for Godot offers two pairs of friends. Each interacts with the other, and one pair interacts with the other set of friends. Not only do they talk to each other, they express concern for each other. They ask questions and seem interested in the answers. In sum, all four work to establish some meaningful connections between one another. Even Lucky and Pozzo form a codependent bond that offers protection and comfort to each. The characters in Waiting for Godot do not think profound thoughts, but they do stay attuned to the feelings and needs of others.

Like Waiting for Godot, Endgame has four characters, but this time Beckett intimates that they form a family. In addition, although he divides them into pairs, he allows little or no interaction between the pairs. Hamm and his son Clov speak only to each other; rarely do they address the grandparents, Nagg and Nell, nor do Nagg and Nell address Hamm and Clov. Furthermore, the characters care little about each other; they remain concerned with what lies outside the shelter and with minute detail, such as the exact locations of chairs. Thus, even though Beckett suggests "blood" relationships between the characters, he moves them farther away in terms of interpersonal communication.

In Krapp's Last Tape, Beckett reduces the cast to one

person and a machine, which ironically enough "talks" more than Krapp. Beckett uses a non-personal device to develop dialogue. Krapp responds to the machine's messages, and the machine clarifies Krapp's own memories by giving feedback of its own. Thus, although Beckett teases audiences by depicting a relationship between Krapp and the machine-as-character, he continues to decrease the quality of interpersonal relationships and communication.

With Play and Happy Days characters should establish closer interpersonal relationships as Beckett presents married couples. Yet, even though marriage should bring the characters closer, they become even more silent and more isolated than Beckett's earlier characters. In Happy Days, the conversation mainly stems from one source, Winnie. Her monologic chatter emphasizes Willie's silence. As previously noted, Willie maintains the ability to respond, but he choses to remain silent. In addition, the mental isolation of the characters in this relationship is materialized by the characters' physical isolation. Winnie's mound effectively keeps her separated from Willie, who remains hidden as much as possible. One source dominates the conversation. Even though audiences may want to see the the characters' fleeting concern for the other at the play's end, when the characters silently smile and look at each other, Winnie and Willie interact less than the previous characters. In Happy Days, Beckett undermines one of society's most basic relationships, marriage, to show a non-communicative world.

With _Play_, Beckett depicts a completely impersonal world containing self-centered characters. Still focusing on married couples, Beckett's production notes emphasize the isolation of these characters, who do not touch each other--physically, mentally, or emotionally. Each lives in a world that revolves around his or her own needs and desires. Each gives the other characters no consideration or acknowledgement. Again, Beckett subverts society's traditional ideas about marriage to depict a very impersonal world.

Breath, on the other hand, offers a world with no characters; therefore, no on-stage relationships exist. Beckett defies traditional convention and presents audiences with a devastating view of a peopleless world. He moves from _Play_'s impersonal world to a completely apersonal world in _Breath_.

Beckett presents another interesting perspective of relationships in _Not I_. First, even though he moves audiences back to a two-character world consisting of Mouth and Auditor, he does not define the relationship between these two characters. Audiences assume that Auditor forms an "ear" for Mouth, yet they cannot absolutely know what connects the two or how one affects the other. Thus, audiences turn to a less obvious relationship, the one Mouth forms with herself. _Not I_ offers a poignant illustration of a person's intrapersonal relationship and communication. Mouth's monologue reflects her innermost thoughts and fears. Mouth cannot control the new situation she has been thrown

into any more than she can control her thoughts or words. Beckett calls for a fragmented voice to echo the manner in which the brain shifts from subject to subject.

As Beckett's plays develop, his characters move through various types of relationships. In Waiting for Godot, the characters form friendships. Endgame depicts family relationships. Krapp's Last Tape offers a mechanical relationship. Play and Happy Days illustrate marital relationships, while Breath offers no relationships. Finally in Not I, Beckett's character forms an intrapersonal relationship. As his plays move through these stages, his characters' worlds shrink. This situation should provide opportunity for more intimate communication; instead, Beckett's characters communicate less and less with each other.

Inversely, as Beckett decreases communication between characters, he increases audience involvement. Beckett destroys barriers of conventional drama and incorporates audience members as characters. For instance, his first plays, such as Waiting for Godot and Endgame, keep audiences somewhat distanced by presenting them with action. Production techniques, including presenting his plays "in the round" and utilizing small theaters, draw audience members to the action, but they keep audience members as spectators. But with the later plays, Beckett forces audience members to participate actively. In Play and Not I, for instance, audience members become inquisitioners and confidants to the on-stage characters. And as characters, audience members

listen and empathize with the characters. They become a part of the on-stage action and dramatic experience going on before them.

Thus, Beckett undermines conventional drama by destroying the notion that only on-stage, textual relationships matter in drama. In addition, he breaks traditional barriers between stage action and audience reaction by encouraging audience members to become vital elements within the action. As they participate, they create new, individualized dramatic experiences.

Space, Psyche, Stability

In The Poetics of Space Gaston Bachelard describes the house as a "priviledged entity" that forms a person's "corner of the world."[1] The house helps define those people who live in the house since it encompasses the essence of the person. Furthermore, the house protects a person by allowing that person to dream in peace.[2] Houses also spark memories, compress time, and keep both stationary.[3]

Bachelard also indicates that shelters provide illusions of stability and order based upon their size, complexity, and shape.[4] The larger the house, the less personal or intimate the space. Because of its ambiguity, a simple house, furthermore, fires the imagination more than a complex house. Houses, Bachelard concludes, shape the rationality or irrationality of the dweller's thoughts. He suggests that occupying higher levels of houses produces ra-

tional thought and experience.[5] For example, near the roof (and also closer to the sun's light), a person can look down, see the strong framework of the house, and obtain a rational overview of the scene. This concept inversely implies that near the ground (and also farther from the sun's light) thought becomes muddled; as people approach the ground and sink into the earth, they revert to primitive conditions, which generate irrational and/or uncontrollable thought.

These theories provide interesting insights to Beckett's early plays. As Beckett experiments with space, he experiments with his characters' ability to control thought and with the stability of his characters' world. As he reduces space, his characters develop the mental capacity to modify their increasingly deteriorating position. That is, his characters recognize that they face problems. Yet, as he continues to write, his characters lose control over their thoughts. Whereas his early characters could not identify problems, his later characters can identify problems, but physically they can do nothing to modify the problems. Eventually, this inability to act frustrates them until thought controls them.

In Waiting for Godot, for example, action occurs in the dark desolate outdoors. But in comparison to his other works, Waiting for Godot contains a more specific stage set than many others. Audiences know that action takes place at a specific meeting point, marked by a road and a tree. This definition orients characters enough to let them know where

they stand, but the location is ambiguous enough to confuse them about why they stand there. Regardless of their reason for staying by the tree, the characters refuse to move from the place. The place gives them purpose and strengthens their resolve to wait for Godot. This specific location "protects" them from thoughts about their empty actions, thoughts, and future.

Endgame's location in a one-room shelter also protects the characters. The location of a window indicates that the shelter actually forms a house's basement. Physically separating them from potential harm outside, the shelter's underground location also forms a barricade that prevents them from potential fun and pleasure. In addition, Nagg and Nell live in ashbins, which create tighter, smaller "prisons." Their confinement foreshadows the restrictions Beckett places upon M, W_1, and W_2.

All of Endgame's characters cling to their space without questioning why. Like Waiting for Godot, Endgame's conclusion provides the opportunity for them to leave, but no one seizes the opportunity. Furthermore, these characters seem to think clearly, but they think about unimportant problems instead of ways to improve their existance. The shelter protects Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell from social reality by clouding their thoughts and lulling them into a safe, secure world.

Krapp's Last Tape also takes place inside. Beckett uses light and dark to help define space. He limits stage

action to a small specfic area. This area's proximity to light also lulls Krapp into a secure state. It entices him into believing that he controls the situation; furthermore, he demonstrates this control by turning the tape recorder on and off. Yet, audiences see Krapp escape rational thought and memory by fleeing the specific area. He realizes that he does not control the situation when he stands there; thought and memory control him. Therefore, to "regain" control he flees to the dark where he permits his irrational thoughts to construct a new reality, which convinces him into thinking that he controls his fate.

Just as Beckett reduces Endgame's one-room shelter to an even smaller area in Krapp's Last Tape, he reduces Waiting for Godot's open outdoors to a specific hill in Happy Days. The mound shelters Winnie, but it also binds her to the earth. As the play develops and she sinks into the earth, Winnie begins to think less about her routines and distant(?) past and more about her current predicament. As the conclusion approaches, she becomes less able to turn her thoughts and words to insignificant items and events. Winnie loses control. Her mound, like Endgame's shelter, forms a pseudo-protection that keeps her physically safe, but it spurs her to abandon a comfortable mental state by forcing her to contemplate her bleak future. Winnie cannot control speculation about her future.

Play continues to immobilize the characters. First, all three live in urns, surrounded by a black void that welds the stage area to the theater's house. While Beckett

minimizes the characters' space in Happy Day, audiences could still see the mound and surrounding stage area. In Play audiences only see the characters' heads and urn's upper "throat" when a spotlight finds them and forces them to speak. The urns represent their self-constructed reality, which fuels their self-centered, irrational thoughts. As the characters attempt to rationalize their perspective of their situation, the urns keep their dreams intact. Each believes that his or her own view is the "correct view." The individual urns solidify their faith in their individual beliefs; their small, lonely space in the dark exemplifies their isolation and ethnocentricism.

Of all of the plays in this first phase, Breath and Not I take place with the most minimal of space and light and create intimacy between audiences and characters. In Not I Beckett abstractly defines space with a small patch of light. Due to its ambiguity and lack of definition, this small stage space creates room for imagination instead of promoting rational facts and thoughts. This ambiguous space, therefore, exemplifies the instability Mouth feels. After years of silence and sun, she now lives a dark world and speaks uncontrollably. These words, of course, represent her uncontrollable thoughts.

From Waiting for Godot to Not I, Beckett experiments with the combination of space, thought, and stability. With each play, the characters' worlds become smaller. Less concrete, these worlds spur imagination and speculation. In

addition, although he limits actual stage space, he provides
no boundary for the vast void that surrounds the action.
These unlimited margins create additional instabilty, since
neither audiences, nor characters know what exists in those
margins. Instead of providing less to contemplate, small
places provide more to consider as imagination satisfies the
deficit of information. Hence, small spaces do not create
stability.

In his early drama, Beckett undermines traditional
notions of interpersonal relationships and communication.
As his characters' worlds become smaller, communication
becomes more difficult instead of easier. Beckett also
explores the relationship between space, psyche, and stabil-
ty. In his plays with definite locations or sets, his
characters think in seemingly rational, but superficial
ways. Characters existing in less definite locations think
about more profound or serious subjects. Unfortunately, they
can neither physically affect change nor can they control
their thoughts; thoughts control them. Beckett challenges
the notion that small concrete areas provide less stimula-
tion for thought or questions. Finally, Beckett validates
the audience members' roles by encouraging them to partici-
pate in the drama and to become characters themselves.
Instead of inducing avoidance or distance, Beckett demands
involvement. This type of involvement paves the way for
other playwrights in the 1970s, when audience participation
extends to audience members joining actors on stage, forming
sound effects, and throwing properties to actors.

In Beckett's Footsteps

Jonathan Kalb explains that Beckett occupies an unusual place in literary history.[6] Too young and innovative to belong to the Joyce crowd, his age and diverse life experiences prevent him from joining the host of young contemporary writers, such as Edward Albee, Harold Pinter, and Peter Shaffer. Furthermore, today's society demands a different type of art. Take a nice song, add some pretty lights, and Broadway producers have a multimillion dollar hit. Today, society demands commercialized entertainment.

Society's notions about art and entertainment present a problem for Beckett's plays. Most extend beyond cliche and easy coherency; their very nature forces audience members to work, not remain passive. Thus until recently, commercialized producers avoided Beckett's works because his plays defy "the slightest compromise that would denature his intention."[7] However, in the 1988 production of Waiting for Godot, Williams and Martin adopted unnatural mannerisms and slapstick motions, which made the play more accessible to popular culture.

Thus, modern society presents a dilemma for successful artists. Is a successful artist one who appeals to popular culture, or does the successful artist remain true to his or her own vision? Since Waiting for Godot's revival sold out, the play seems successful in modern society. Yet, Beckett would not have enjoyed the production or wanted this commer-

cialized success. Early in his career, he believed in
maintaining a work's integrity, even if maintaining that
integrity resulted in an unpopular work. Thus, a serious
author, who refuses to succumb to the commercialized glitz
and glamour of a Broadway or West End production, faces
failure by popular standards. These artists do not obtain
success, as measured by massive crowds who passively seek a
good time. These artists make their mark by affecting those
who do attend productions, including succeeding generations
of artists, who imitate and perpetuate visions.

Samuel Beckett is one such author who has succeeded in
generating diverse emotions from people in all walks of
life. One Beckettian actor, Jack MacGowran, called Beckett
"the greatest realist I know of in this generation. He's an
extreme realist."[8] In 1964, teenagers laughed as they
enjoyed reading Murphy,[9] while students all over the world
caught Beckett's message even if the older generation did
not.[10] "Slightly before his time," Beckett influenced a
number of writers and dramatists.[11]

For instance, in honor of Beckett's sixtieth birthday,
Harold Pinter said that the farther Beckett takes drama the
more good it does his own works. Calling Beckett the "most
courageous, remorseless writer going," Pinter said that
without Beckett he would not be writing. Pinter continued,
"the more he grinds my nose in the shit the more grateful I
am to him."[12] Pinter, however, is not the only modern
dramatist Beckett has influenced. Many have imitated Beck-

ett's style and images.

Tom Stoppard's <u>Rosencrantz</u> <u>and</u> <u>Gildenstern</u> <u>Are</u> <u>Dead</u>
contains entire sections that practically repeat <u>Waiting</u> <u>for</u>
<u>Godot</u>. And as Thomas Whitaker notes, Stoppard's <u>Jumpers</u>
reverses Beckett's notion of "birth astride of a grave":
"'At the graveside the undertaker doffs his top hat and
impregnates the prettiest mourner. Wham, bam, thank you
Sam.'"[13] Sam, of course, refers to Beckett. Others affect-
ed by Beckett's works include American director Joseph
Chaiken and playwrights Sam Shepard, David Mamet, Edward
Bond, and Peter Brooks.[14] Furthermore, Edward Albee ac-
knowledged Beckett when he incorporated Beckett directly
into a work. Albee's character says, "'It's hopeless, then.
What did Beckett say? I can't go on, I'll go on?'"[15]

Beckett's influence in the last few years can be seen
in the 1988 revival of <u>Waiting</u> <u>for</u> <u>Godot</u> and the 1990 Berk-
shire Festival, where the Unicorn Theatre closed its season
with a collection of Beckett's works. The show, "Come and
Go: Short Plays by Samuel Beckett," included <u>Act</u> <u>Without</u>
<u>Words</u>, <u>Play</u>, and <u>Come</u> <u>and</u> <u>Go</u>. In addition to serious artis-
tic endeavors, additional evidence of Beckett's impact can
be extracted from the ABC television series, "China Beach."
The show's cast of characters contains a black soldier who
works in the facility's morgue. Producers named this char-
acter Samuel Beckett after the playwright.[16]

Eric Gans describes traditional drama that adheres to
Aristotelian canons as the "imitation of action" and modern
drama as the "imitation of inaction that reveals the ulti-

mate insignificance of all dramatic action."[17] Beckett's
works conform to this definition and set the tone for suc-
ceeding generations of writers. Often regarded as forbid-
ding, dense, and inaccessible, Beckett's works will never be
fully explained to the audiences' satisfaction, because
Beckett's works defy explaining and require experiencing.
As Beckett said, "writing is not about something; it is that
something itself."[18]

CHAPTER 5

Expression and Experience:
Deconstructive Invention as Depiction-based Persuasion

When a person attends a play, he or she brings certain
expectations based upon preconceived notions about what
constitutes a play. If a play does not fulfill these no-
tions, then the audience member often calls the work "form-
less." Critics also use this word to describe Beckett's
plays. However, closer examination of Beckett's dramatic
works reveals a method to his seemingly mad manner of ex-
pression. Deconstructive invention explains this manner.
By rejecting a traditionally key dramatic tool (i.e., plot
and dialogue), Beckett experiments with other dramatic
elements to form messages. This experimentation allows
him to express freely his thoughts, to withdraw from the
completed work, and to allow audiences the opportunity to
experience the work without the author's influence. Thus,
Beckett empowers the audience and encourages audience mem-
bers to experience the work and to take action. Deconstruc-
tive invention, furthermore, allows Beckett to adopt a
depiction-based persuasion, which constitutes Bitzer's
fitting response to the social problems Beckett recognizes.

Searching for Expression

Early in his career, Beckett stated that he did not trust words, because he felt that words restricted his own expression. He said, "there is nothing to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express."[1] Many critics interpret this quotation to mean that Beckett struggles to escape the meaninglessness that surrounds words; however, this statement could also refer to the overwhelming power of language. Language wrestles the ability to shape ideas and action from the hands of the person. Words assume a voice of their own; they do not always precisely reflect the author's intention and voice. Beckett rejects language, because it maintains this intensity to describe a person, place, or event in an autonomous manner that ignores the author.

Perhaps Beckett seeks to escape his distrust and to retain more artistic control over audience experience by abandoning fiction with its sole reliance on language to communicate, and by adopting drama that also incorporates sound and sight. After years of questioning and struggling to express, Beckett says, "I glimspsed the world that I had to create in order to be able to breathe."[2] With drama, therefore, Beckett obtains tools in addition to words to shape messages more accurately and to capture audience attention.

By relying on drama's shape and form rather than information and language, Beckett encourages audiences to experience the work. "I am interested in the shape of ideas even

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if I do not believe them," he says. "It is the shape that matters."[3] Beckett requires audiences to suspend logic and reason. They must refrain from unraveling the play's details and absorb the total dramatic experience. Only by becoming totally absorbed can audiences really experience the work. As Kenneth Burke writes, once people know the information (or how the story ends), they are less ready to experience and repeat the work.[4] Conversely, when audiences do not completely understand a work, they eagerly continue to explore the work until they find connections between stage life and real life. Only by exploring the work and by connecting stage life to real life can audiences formulate their meanings and understandings of the play.

Relying Upon Rhetorical Tropes

Despite their wordless and actionless characteristics, Beckett's plays do contain guideposts which assist audiences in making connections. He uses rhetorical tropes or devices, such as metonomy, synecdoche, metaphor, and irony, to form frameworks for uncovering the differences between the literal language and action and the figurative messages and experience. Michael Osborn writes that these devices serve "to animate whatever rhetorical reasonings" develop out of specific thought structures and goals.[5] While Osborn explains the success of the tropes due to their "perspective by congruity," these tropes also become successful in Beckett's works by revealing incongruities that converge to

create the total performance. As rhetorical tropes high-
light incongruities, they allow Beckett as well as audience
members the freedom to invent what Tom Bishop calls the
"poetic depiction of our fate."[6]

Metonomy

Metonomy often appears when authors substitute concrete
words, images, and ideas for abstract words, images, and
ideas. Like many playwrights, Beckett produces concrete on-
stage actions to describe the abstract concept of life and
existence. Vladimir and Estragon represent all humans who
remain unaware of their situations; Hamm and Clov represent
humans who refuse to take action. Krapp symbolizes those
who deny, and Winnie symbolizes those who ignore. Through
metonomy, authors can represent people and actions off-stage
through characters and actions onstage. In addition, audi-
ence members recognize their own actions, problems, and
situations in the on-stage actions, problems, and situa-
tions. As characters refuse to recognize and to resolve
their dire circumstances, they face a bleak future. Audi-
ence members soon realize that they, too, face a dismal
existence unless they take action to rectify social prob-
lems. By presenting problems through drama, Beckett helps
define the world's human condition and spur audiences to
action.

Synecdoche

Beckett also utilizes synecdoche when he uses a part of
an object to represent that entire object. The most obvious
examples of synecdoche involve the use of a mouth in Not I

to represent Mouth's intrapersonal voice, heads in _Play_ to represent entire characters, and "Brownie" the revolver to represent death and destruction. However, synecdoche can also be seen in _Krapp's Last Tape_, where Beckett reduces forty-odd years of memory to several audio tape reels. In addition, Beckett restricts dramatic action to a small part of the stage instead of utilizing the full stage area. Although critics consider synecdoche a traditional rhetorical device, Beckett experiments with this trope in untraditional ways. He creates incongruous images that seize audiences and leave them unsatisfied and confused. This confusion prompts audience members to continue to explore the work.

Metaphor

Beckett experiments with metaphor in plays. Osborn describes metaphor as a tool that "causes the mind to pause in its normally efficient processing of sense-data to visualize the symbolic abberation presented to it."[7] He adds that metaphor organizes and influences perception as well as disturbs the patterns constituting what humans accept as reality.[8] Moreover, Osborn identifies light and dark images as powerful archetypal metaphors, characterized by universal appeal, embodiment of human motivation, unchanging pattern, and prominence in features of human experience.[9] Beckett capitalizes on the light-dark family of archetypal metaphors to shape an unstable world that needs change and reform.

For instance, in _Waiting for Godot_, Beckett uses dark-

ness to echo the ignorance of his characters. Vladimir and
Estragon, lacking the mentality to recognize the problems
they face, live in a dark world. His characters think more
as his plays progress, and Beckett increases his stage
lighting to emphasize this progression. After Happy Days,
however, his characters continue to think, but that thought
becomes insular or self-centered. The characters do not
consider the problems facing all humans (i.e., a deteriorat-
ing world and superficial existence); instead, they reflect
upon their own petty grievances and circumstances. Beckett
uses a spotlight to underscore the isolated, self-centered
thought. As a character speaks, the spotlight focuses only
upon that character. Otherwise, the characters live in
gloomy, bleak darkness with no chance to escape. Further-
more, audiences recognize that the characters perpetuate the
darkness by not considering their situation. As Tom Driver
writes, "The walls that surround the characters of Beckett's
plays are not walls that nature and history have
built....They are the walls of one's own attitude toward his
[or her] situation."[10]

Irony

Of all rhetorical tropes, however, irony seems appro-
priate for deconstructive inventors, and Beckett in particu-
lar, as they construct incongruous images. Since irony
assumes the role of "all-purpose, slot filler" or "vague
words," this rhetorical trope becomes useful whenever people
do not want to use strong, clear terms or whenever they dare
not use words that are too clear.[11] Kenneth Burke also sees

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irony as a way to rationalize the author's simultaneous feelings of humility and superiority.[12] He explains that the author's humility (his or her recognition that people would not exist without ideas) counterbalances the author's feelings of superiority for creating the work. Furthermore, Burke adds, the author neglecting irony becomes sacrificed to the literal.[13]

Irony, therefore, requires the audience to extract a valid message from words by requiring the reader or audience member to participate actively in the work's covert and overt messages.[14] Irony enhances the communication process by forcing the audience to perform "intellectual somersaults" and by transmitting the message with utmost economy of words.[15] As a language tool, irony helps shape symbolic action and calls for change.

Beckett uses irony to create images and motifs. Often, he juxtaposes incongruous images to create tensions that solidify and heighten the audience's dramatic experience. Furthermore, irony allows Beckett to "withdraw behind an editor's mask and refuse to dictate the story."[16]

Acknowledging that irony may or may not be intentional, Booth illustrates irony's role in literature when he describes two genres of irony: stable irony and unstable irony. According to Booth, stable irony depends upon the audience sharing norms with the author and other readers, requires a definite message that the audience must reconstruct, and does not encourage the audience to elaborate

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upon that reconstruction; unstable irony suggests that readers cannot share interpretation by reconstructing messages. Instead, audience members individually must build upon the information presented to construct their own individual meanings.

Beckett uses unstable irony to abdicate a single, truthful meaning and reason. Beckett encourages infinite elaboration of his works in order for audiences to uncover numerous interpretations.[17] Thus, Beckett asks readers or audience members to build upon the information he supplies, not to reconstruct what he writes. Beckett, moreover, opens all statements and actions to subversion by suggesting that nothing audience members see and hear really means what they think it should mean.

Beckett uses irony to empower the audience to experience his plays. Audience members control their own perceptions of potentially ironical words and images. They can choose to examine covert meanings and ironies, which add new dimensions to the drama. For example, audience members may choose to speculate about Hamm's and Clov's interest in the world outside of their shelter. The characters seem fascinated with actions they see through the window, but they elect to remain indoors. Nevertheless, even though the characters suppress their curiosity, audiences can satisfy their own curiosity through their own speculation.

Beckett abandons traditional notions of dramatic convention. His experiments encourage audiences to think and experience the play before them. As seen in his early

dramatic works, thought becomes a way of meaning for Beck-
ett. Without thought, the characters make neither progress
nor change. Beckett uses rhetorical tropes to shape the
cliche-strewn, predictable, self-centered world in which any
redemption seems futile. Yet, Beckett possesses hope for
redemption since he places faith in audience members.
Audience members, after all, can affect change even if his
characters cannot. Beckett uses traditional rhetorical
devices-- such as metonomy, synecdoche, metaphor, and
irony--in untraditional ways to reveal incongruities in on-
stage and off-stage actions and words. In this manner,
Beckett forces audiences to examine his characters' behav-
ior, to determine their mistakes, to resolve the disruption,
and to correlate messages and pictures with their own lives.
With this picture, audience members can change and reform
society.

Seeking Audience Experience

To be an artist, Beckett writes, is to fail, since the
artist strives to leave the logical world, "the domain of
the feasible" and to embrace the imagination without compro-
mise.[18] Beckett calls upon audience members to embrace his
imagination, then to abandon his imagination by creating
their own vision. He encourages audience members to out-
guess him to interpret the dramatic riddle he places before
them. Audience members must bring their own experiences to
the theater, and they must relate to the stage action or

nonaction before transcending those connections to create an entirely new experience.

Beckett encourages audiences to become active elements in his dramatic works. As his style develops, Beckett incorporates the audience as character and establishes a real relationship between on-stage characters and audience members. Although the characters cannot solve problems, audience members can. Beckett, therefore, encourages interaction so that audiences actually take action to resolve conflict and turmoil.

This type of interaction forms an integral part of deconstructive invention. Deconstructive inventors, like Samuel Beckett, call upon what Bachelard calls the "poetic imagination."[19] Poetic imagination, in contrast to reason and science, looks toward the future by describing the "threshold of being" and "reverberation of experience."[20] Beckett demands this type of experience in his drama by creating awareness of social problems and by requesting audiences to rectify these problems.

Furthermore, by placing faith in audience experience and action, Beckett formulates a fitting response to the carefree, actionless society he sees. For even when audience members cannot directly identify with stage events, they can experience the drama at hand, and they can build interpretation based upon that experience. This interpretation helps audience members to bridge the gap between their lives and the characters' lives. By enticing audience

members to participate actively in the drama, Beckett initiates audience action. As he fine tunes ironical tensions between action and nonaction, monologue and dialogue, space and psyche, Beckett uses deconstructive invention.

As a philosophical framework, deconstruction becomes an effective means of persuasion that relies upon rhetorical tropes. Deconstruction supports the notion that rhetorical tropes and figurative language do not exist as mere decoration. The tropes, in turn, help deconstructive inventors shape and define audience experience. They comprise definite tools a rhetor may use to tap into audience members' emotions in order to extract a response or action--whether the action consists of awareness, investigation, or active reform. Metonomy, synecdoche, metaphor, and irony shape audience experience.

Furthermore, deconstruction helps to illuminate persuasion theory. Deconstruction underscores the idea that persuasion does not always require an appeal to reason, logic, or intellect. Deconstruction suggests that thinking and searching for an answer often detracts from the discourse, because sometimes understanding discourse requires more than searching and thinking. Neither does deconstruction pose a puzzle that audiences must solve in order to obtain meaning. Understanding requires yielding to experience.

Art, especially forms that elicit many human senses and that incorporate direct audience involvement, requires audiences to yield to experience. No longer the recreation of

an elite, upper class, art can reach all people as it becomes increasingly diverse in form and easily accessible through the mass media. Furthermore, many recognize the social, political, and economic benefits of art.

Artists throughout the world have joined forces to promote social development and change through drama, literature, art exhibitions, films, and music videos and recordings in recent years. As Lawrence Harvey writes, art does what science, theology, intellect--in whatever forms--fails to do.[21] Art prompts the reader or audience member to join the action, to stand where the character stands, then to react.

Postmodern and contemporary dramatists construct a new stage for audience members to explore. They help audiences rediscover a world they thought they knew. These writers indicate that "against and inspite of the harshness and uncertainty," human will, spirit, and humor provide a "'glimmer of hope'" in the dark abyss that humans find themselves.[22] Like Samuel Beckett, these writers feel compelled to describe the world they see. As Beckett remarked, "I couldn't have done it otherwise. Gone on, I mean. I could not have gone through the awful wretched mess of life without having left a stain upon the silence."[23]

Chapter 1

[1]Wayne Brockriede differentiates philosophical assumptions from theoretical orientations in response to a symposium sponsored by the Western Journal of Speech Communication. See "The Research Process," Western Journal of Speech Communication, 42 (Winter, 1978), 3-11.

[2]Wayne Brockriede, "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 60 (April, 1974), 165-179.

[3]Mark Edmundson, "The Ethics of Deconstruction," Michigan Quarterly Review, 27 (Fall, 1988), 624.

[4]Edmundson, p. 631-32.

[5]Peter Shaw, "Devastating Developments Are Hastening the Demise of Deconstruction in Academe," Chronicle of Higher Education, 28 November 1990, pp. B1-B2.

[6]Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 22.

[7]Paul deMan, "The Resistance to Theory," Yale French Studies, 63 (1982), 10.

[8]Culler, pp. 110-11.

[9]George Cheney and Phillip K. Tompkins, "On the Facts of the Text as the Basis for Human Communication Research," Communication Yearbook 11, ed. J.A. Anderson (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988), p. 457.

[10]deMan, p. 6.

[11]William Pratt, "Imagism and Irony: The Shaping of the International Style," South Atlantic Quarterly, 83 (Winter, 1984), 1.

[12]deMan, p. 6.

[13]Todd Gitlin, "Postmodernism and beyond...," Utne Reader, July-August, 1989, p. 52.

[14]Eugene Webb, The Plays of Samuel Beckett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), pp. 13-15.

[15]Webb, p. 23.

[16]Edmundson, p. 623.

[17]Linda Hutcheon, "'Circling the Downspout of the Empire': Post-Colonialism and Postmodernism," _Ariel_, 20 (October, 1989), 150.

[18]Charles J. Stewart, Craig Allen Smith, and Robert E. Denton, _Persuasion and Social Movements_ (2nd edition; Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1989), p. 104.

[19]Stewart, Smith, and Denton, p. 105.

[20]Kenneth Burke, _Rhetoric of Motives_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 43.

[21]John Sharpham, George Matter, and Wayne Brockriede, "The Interpretative Experience as Rhetorical Transaction," _Central States Speech Journal_, 22 (Fall, 1971), 143.

[22]Sharpham. Matter, and Brockriede, p. 145.

[23]Stewart, Smith, and Denton, p. 193.

[24]Jan Bruck, "Beckett, Benjamin and the Modern Communication Crisis," _New German Critique_, 26 (Spring-Summer, 1982), 159-171.

[25]Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," _Philosophy and Rhetoric_, 1 (Winter, 1968), 5.

[26]Bitzer, p. 6-8.

[27]Bitzer, p. 10.

[28]Richard Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," _Philosophy and Rhetoric_, 6 (Winter, 1973), 154-161.

[29]Webb, pp. 13-15; J.E. Dearlove, "Allusion to Archetype," _Journal of Beckett Studies_, 10 (1985), 121-33; P.A. McCarthy, "Samuel Beckett: The Sense of Unending," _The Carrell_, 23 (1985), 1-24.

[30]S.E. Gontarski, "The Intent of Undoing in Beckett's Art," _Modern Fiction Studies_, 29 (Spring, 1983), 5.

[31]Dearlove, p. 121.

[32]Gontarski, "The Intent of Undoing in Beckett's Art," p. 10.

[33]Tom Driver, "Beckett by the Madeline," _Columbia University Press_, 4 (Summer, 1961), 22.

[34]Webb, p. 24.

[35]Alan Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett: A Personal Chronicle," The Chelsea Review, (Autumn, 1958), 7.

[36]Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York: Anchor Press, 1969), p. 1.

Chapter 2

[1]Linda Ben-Zvi, Samuel Beckett (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), p. 8.

[2]Deirdre Bair, Samuel Beckett (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 4. Despite questions concerning this biography's reliability, Bair's book provides the only detailed description of Beckett's life and works, and scholars continue to utilize her research. Bair supports her study with Beckett's personal letters and manuscripts; interviews of Beckett's family and friends, as well as Beckett, himself; and surveys of critical essays and reviews, written over the last forty-two years.

[3]Bair, p. 8.

[4]Bair, p. 10.

[5]Bair, p. 14.

[6]Rei Noguchi, "Style and Strategy in Endgame," Journal of Beckett Studies, 9 (1984), 13.

[7]Bair, p. 29.

[8]Bair, p. 29.

[9]Bair, pp. 37-38.

[10]Bair, p. 64.

[11]Bair, p. 73.

[12]The ellipses in this title reflect the correlation between each author's style. For instance, Beckett believed Dante's style differed from Bruno's by a three-century jump in thought; hence, he marked this difference with three ellipses between the names in the title. He thought Bruno differed from Vico by a one-century jump, so the separated these names with one ellipsis. Finally, Beckett believed that Joyce differed from Vico by a two-century jump. See Samuel Beckett, "Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce," in I Can't Go On, I'll Go On, ed. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press,

Inc., 1976), pp. 105-106. For this subtitle, I add Beckett
to Joyce sans ellipses since Beckett's writing during this
period closely resembled Joyce's (i.e., no jump in thought,
therefore, no ellipses).

[13]Beckett, "Dante...," p. 105.

[14]Beckett, "Dante...," p. 107.

[15]Beckett, "Dante...," p. 107.

[16]Ben-Zvi, p. 23.

[17]Beckett, "Dante...," p. 117.

[18]Beckett, "Dante...," p. 116.

[19]Beckett, "Dante...," p. 111.

[20]Beckett, "Dante...," p. 110.

[21]Beckett, "Dante...," p. 126.

[22]Bair, p. 104.

[23]Bair, p. 108.

[24]Samuel Beckett, _Proust_ (New York: Grove Press, Inc.,
1931), p. 66.

[25]Beckett, _Proust_, pp. 24, 46, 61.

[26]Beckett, _Proust_, p. 24.

[27]Beckett, _Proust_, p. 64.

[28]Bair, p. 137.

[29]Bair, p. 219.

[30]Bair, p. 234.

[31]Bair, p. 309.

[32]Bair, p. 328.

[33]Bair, p. 361. Cited from a letter Beckett wrote to
Bair on 13 April 1972. He also made this remark to a number
of friends and scholars, such as Ruby Cohn, John Fletcher,
John Montague, and Alan Schneider.

[34]Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett: A Personal Chroni-
cle," p. 6.

[35]Ruby Cohn attempted to publish her dissertation in

1958, ten years after <u>Waiting for Godot</u> appeared, but editors told her, "We like your criticism, but we don't feel your author merits publishing space." See S.E. Gontarski, "Crritics and Crriticism: 'Getting Known,'" in <u>On Beckett: Essays and Criticism</u>, ed. S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1986), p. 3.

[36]Bair, p. 443.

[37]<u>New York Times</u>, 24 October 1969, p. 32.

Chapter 3

[1]James Knowlson, "Beckett as Director: The Manuscript Production Notebooks and Critical Interpretation," <u>Modern Drama</u> 30 (December, 1987), 452.

[2]Alain Robbe-Grillett, "Samuel Beckett, or 'Presence' in the Theatre," in <u>Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays</u>, ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 132.

[3]Webb, p. 132.

[4]Tom Bishop, "Samuel Beckett," <u>Saturday Review</u>, 15 November 1969, pp. 26, 59.

[5]Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett: A Personal Chronicle," p. 19.

[6]Thomas J. Taylor, "That Again: A Motif Approach to the Beckett Canon," <u>Journal of Beckett Studies</u>, 6 (Autumn, 1980), 108.

[7]Ruby Cohn, <u>Casebook on Waiting for Godot</u> (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 11.

[8]Ruby Cohn, "Growing (Up?) with Godot," in <u>Beckett at 80/Beckett in Context</u>, ed. Enoch Brater (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 17.

[9]Driver, p. 23.

[10]Samuel Beckett, <u>Waiting for Godot</u>, in <u>I Can't Go On, I'll Go On</u>, ed. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1976), pp. 376-477. All subsequent references to this work appear within the text.

[11]Aristotle, <u>The Poetics</u>, Chapter 3. In <u>European Theories of Drama</u>, ed. Barrett H. Clark (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1965). Although Cicero coined the phrase "mirror of life," Aristotle referred to drama as <u>mimesis</u>, imitating an image through a medium that can be perceived by

the senses.

[12]Aristotle, The Poetics, Chapter 6. Aristotle defines drama as a combination of mythos (plot), dianoira (theme), lexis (language), melos (sound), ethos (character), and opsis (scenery/look).

[13]Harold Hobson, "An English Review," Sunday Times (London) 7 August 1955, New York Daily News, in Casebook for Waiting for Godot, ed. Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), p. 27.

[14]John Chapman, "Waiting for Godot a Fantastic Stage Stunt, if You Like Stunts, in New York Critics Review-1956, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Review, Inc., 1956), XVII, 25, p. 322.

[15]Michael Robinson, The Long Sonata of the Dead: A Study of Samuel Beckett (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1969), p. 230.

[16]Katharine Worth, "The Space and Sound in Beckett's Theatre," in Beckett the shape changer, ed. Katharine Worth (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 185.

[17]When drama is produced "in the round," the audience surrounds the stage on all sides. This setting contrasts with the traditional box-like proscenium stage, which allows the audience to see only one side of the action.

[18]Martin Esslin, "Introduction," Samuel Beckett: A Critical Collection of Essays, ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 1.

[19]Ben-Zvi, p. 209.

[20]Sylviane Gold, "Theater: Still Waiting for Godot" in New York Theatre Critics' Review--1988, ed. Joan Marlow and Betty Blake (New York: Critics' Review, Inc., 1988), XXXXIX, 16, p. 105.

[21]Webb, p. 41.

[22]B. Fletcher, et al., A Students Guide to the Plays of Samuel Beckett (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 83.

[23]Alec Reid, "From Beginning to Date: Some Thoughts on the Plays of Samuel Beckett," in Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Criticism, ed. Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1975), p. 67.

[24]Ben-Zvi. p. 150.

[25]Fletcher, et al., p. 83.

[26]Fletcher, _et al._, p. 83.

[27]Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett: A Personal Chronicle," p. 17.

[28]Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett: A Personal Chronicle," p. 18.

[29]Frederick Hoffman, _Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self_ (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1964), p. 154.

[30]Robinson, p. 261.

[31]Samuel Beckett, _Endgame_, in _Stages of Drama_, ed. Carl H. Klaus, Miriam Gilbert, and Bradford S. Field, Jr. (Glenview, IL: Scott Foreman and Company, 1981), p. 154. All subsequent references to this work appear within the text.

[32]Fletcher, _et al_, p. 90.

[33]Noguchi, p. 105.

[34]Ben-Zvi, p. 152.

[35]Samuel Beckett, _Krapp's Last Tape_, in _Krapp's Last Tape and Other Dramatic Pieces_ (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960), p. 9. All subsequent references to this work appear within the text.

[36]Fletcher, _et al._, p. 119.

[37]SueEllen Campbell, "_Krapp's Last Tape_ and Critical Theory," in _Drama in the Twentieth Century_, ed. Clifford Davidson, C.J. Giana-Kari, and John Stroup (New York: AMS Press, 1984), p. 241.

[38]Mary F. Catanzaro, "The Voice of Absent Love in _Krapp's Last Tape_ and _Company_," _Modern Drama_, 32 (September, 1989), 402.

[39]Knowlson, p. 243.

[40]Webb, p. 66.

[41]Catanzaro, p. 403.

[42]Webb, p. 67.

[43]Reid, p. 70.

[44]Samuel Beckett, _Happy Days_, in _The Drama: Traditional and Modern_, ed. Mark Goldman and Isadore Traschen (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968), p. 661. All subsequent references to this work appear within the text.

[45]Knowlson and Pilling, p. 98.

[46]Ben-Zvi, p. 156.

[47]Lacan indicates that the unconscious is, in effect, the true language. Words are a series of symbols based upon linguistics. In John Hollwitz, "The Performance Psychology of Jacques Lacan," Literature in Performance, 4 (November, 1983), 29.

[48]Worth, p. 185.

[49]Knowlson and Pilling, p. 98.

[50]Lyons, p. 128.

[51]Knowlson and Pilling, p. 98.

[52]Virginia Cooke, ed., Beckett on File (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 32.

[53]Samuel Beckett, Play, in Cascando and Other Short Dramatic Pieces (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1970), p. 45. All subsequent references to this work appear within the text.

[54]Webb, p. 113.

[55]Maurice Blackman, "The Shaping of a Beckett Text: Play," Journal of Beckett Studies, 10 (1985), 89.

[56]W.B. Worthen, "Playing Play," Theatre Journal, 37 (December 1985), 404.

[57]Fletcher, et al., p. 178.

[58]Blackman, p. 89.

[59]Paul Lawley, "Beckett's Dramatic Counterpoint: A Reading of Play," Journal of Beckett Studies, 9 (1984), 27.

[60]Fletcher, et al., p. 173.

[61]Worthen, p. 407.

[62]Webb, p. 115; Lawley, pp. 26, 32.

[63]Fletcher et al., p.169. Cited from the London Times, 24 June 1963.

[64]Fletcher et al., p. 169. Cited from the London Sunday Times, 12 April 1964.

[65]Bair, p. 513.

[66]Webb, p. 67.

[67]Knowlson and Pilling, p. 127.

[68]Knowlson and Pilling, p. 127.

[69]Samuel Beckett, _Breath_, in _Gambit_, 4 (1970), 8-9.

[70]John Russell Brown, "Beckett and the Art of Nonplus," in _Beckett at 80/Beckett in Context_, ed. Enoch Brater (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 36.

[71]Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, ed. _Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage_ (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 36.

[72]Ben-Zvi, p. 164; Knowlson and Pilling, p. 127; William Hutchings, "Abated Drama: Samuel Beckett's Unbated _Breath_," _Ariel_, 17 (January, 1986), 88.

[73]Knowlson and Pilling, p. 127.

[74]Beckett wrote _Not I_ for actress Billie Whitelaw; therefore, most productions cast a female for the role of Mouth.

[75]Samuel Beckett, _Not I_, in _I Can't Go On, I'll Go On_, ed. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1976), p. 594.

[76]Knowlson and Pilling, p. 198.

[77]Lyons, p. 153.

[78]Fletcher, _et al._, p. 193.

[79]Metonomy refers to a figure of speech that substitutes a term closely related to an object to represent that object. See C. Hugh Holman, ed. _Handbook to Literature_ (4th edition; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1980), p. 268.

[80]Enoch Brater, "Dada, Surrealism, and the Genesis of _Not I_," _Modern Drama_, 18 (March, 1975), 57.

[81]Knowlson and Pilling, pp. 195-98.

[82]Fletcher, _et al_, p. 198.

[83]Fletcher, _et al_, p. 192.

[84]Fletcher, _et al_, p. 192-93.

[85]Taylor, p. 110; Fletcher, _et al_, p. 197; Margaret Rose, "A Critical Analysis of the Nonverbal Effects in

Beckett's Dramatic Works," <u>ACME</u>, 33 (September-December, 1980), 521.

[86]Martin Esslin, "Visions of Absence: Beckett's <u>Foot-falls</u>, <u>Ghost</u> <u>Trio</u>, and <u>...but the clouds</u>," in <u>Transforma-tions</u> <u>in</u> <u>Modern</u> <u>European</u> <u>Drama</u>, ed. Ian Donaldson (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Publishers, 1983), pp. 121-22.

[87]Esslin, "Visions of Absence," pp. 121-22.

[88]Esslin, "Introduction," p. 4; Andrew Kennedy, "Mutations of the Soliloquy: <u>Not</u> <u>I</u>, to <u>Rockaby</u>," in <u>'Make</u> <u>Sense</u> <u>Who</u> <u>May'</u>: <u>Essays</u> <u>on</u> <u>Samuel</u> <u>Beckett's</u> <u>Later</u> <u>Works</u>, ed. Robin J. Davis and Lance St. J. Butler (Totona, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1988), p. 30.

[89]Kennedy, p. 30.

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[1]Gaston Bachelard, <u>The</u> <u>Poetics</u> <u>of</u> <u>Space</u>, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 3-4.

[2]Bachelard, p. 6.

[3]Bachelard, pp. 8-9.

[4]Bachelard, pp. 15-29.

[5]Bachelard, p. 19.

[6]Jonathan Kalb, "The Question of Beckett's Context," <u>Performing</u> <u>Arts</u>, 12 (January, 1988), 25-26.

[7]Bishop, p. 26.

[8]Jack MacGowran, interviewed by Richard Toscan in <u>On</u> <u>Beckett</u>: <u>Essays</u> <u>and</u> <u>Criticism</u>, ed. S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1986), p. 222.

[9]"Talk of the Town," <u>New</u> <u>Yorker</u>, 8 August 1964, p. 23.

[10]MacGowran, p. 224.

[11]MacGowran, p. 224.

[12]Ben-Zvi, p. 211; MacGowran, p. 222.

[13]Thomas Whitaker,"'Wham, Bam, Thank You Sam': The Presence of Beckett," in <u>Beckett</u> <u>at</u> <u>80/Beckett</u> <u>in</u> <u>Context</u>, ed. Enoch Brater (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 214. Cited from Tom Stoppard's <u>Jumpers</u> (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1972), p. 87.

[14]Cohn, "Growing (Up?) With Godot," p. 23; Ben-Zvi, p. 211; Whitaker, pp. 214, 222.

[15]Ben-Zvi, p. 211.

[16]Heidi Cuniff, public relations department at Warner Brothers Productions, a telephone interview, 13 April 1990.

[17]Eric Gans, "Beckett and the Problem of Modern Culture," Substance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism, 34 (1982), 6.

[18]Beckett, "Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce," p. 117.

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[1]Samuel Beckett and Georges Duthuit, "Three Dialogues," in Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 17.

[2]Samuel Beckett, interviewed by Charles Juliet, 29 October 1973, in "Meeting Samuel Beckett," trans. and ed. Suzanne Chamier, Tri-Quarterly, 77 (Winter, 1989-90), 18.

[3]Samuel Beckett, quoted by Harold Hobson in "Samuel Beckett: Dramatist of the Year," International Theatre Annual, 1 (1956), 153.

[4]Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 29-44.

[5]Michael Osborn, A New Rhetorical Theory for Metaphor, a paper presented at Eastern Speech Communication Association convention (March, 1976), p. 3.

[6]Bishop, p. 27.

[7]Osborn, A New Rhetorical Theory for Metaphor, p. 6.

[8]Osborn, A New Rhetorical Theory for Metaphor, p. 7.

[9]Michael Osborn, "Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-dark Family," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 53 (April, 1967), 239-248.

[10]Driver, p. 24.

[11]Wayne Booth, "The Empire of Irony," Georgia Review, 37 (Winter, 1983), 721.

[12]Burke, A Grammar of Motives, pp. 503-12.

[13]Burke, A Grammar of Motives, pp. 512-516.

[14]Vaheed K. Ramazani, "Lacan/Flaubert: Towards a Psychopoetics of Irony," Romanic Review, 86 (November, 1989), 558.

[15]Wayne Booth, A Rhetoric of Irony (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 115.

[16]Donald Wehrs, "Irony, Storytelling, and the Conflict of Interpretation in Clarissa," English Literary History, 53 (Winter, 1986), 759.

[17]Booth, A Rhetoric of Irony, p. 233.

[18]Ben-Zvi, p. 32.

[19]Bachelard, pp. xi-xxxiii.

[20]Bachelard, p. xii.

[21]Lawrence Harvey, "Samuel Beckett on Life, Art, and Criticism," Modern Language Notes, 80 (December, 1965), 553.

[22]Schneider, "A Personal Chronicle," p. 19.

[23]Bair, p. 640.

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