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THE PROBLEM OF TIME IN THE PLAYS OF SAMUEL BECKETT

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1. EXISTENTIAL QUALITY OF TIME IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S DRAMA

"The degradation of humanity is a recurrent theme in Beckett's writing, and to this extent his philosophy simply accentuated by elements of the grotesque and of tragic farce, can be said to be a negation that knows no heaven. But Samuel Beckett has a love of mankind that grows in understanding as it plumbs further into the depths of abhorrence"[1]. Karl Ragnar Gierow, the Secretary of the Swedish Academy, who handed the Nobel Prize to Samuel Beckett, also said: "In the realms of annihilation, the writing of Samuel Beckett rises like a Miserere for all mankind, its muffled minor key sounding liberation to the oppressed and comfort to those in need"[2]. These words are true both of Beckett's novels and plays, the two literary kinds he is a master of. His plays are equally important as the novels and, therefore, it seems a misunderstanding to say that the plays form "merely a footnote to what the novels indicate with greater range and force"[3]. It could be argued that while Beckett's drama develops some of the ideas expressed earlier in the novels, the very form of drama solves the problem of adequately presenting the basic preoccupation of Beckett with the past and the future dissolving into the instantaneous present. Beckett's theatre is an extraordinary and paradoxical Dasein, an exemplum of what A. Robbe-Grillet termed Realism of Presence[4]. The concept of the present

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[1] K. R. Gierow, quoted after: J. G r u e n, Samuel Beckett Talks about Beckett, "Vogue" 1969, Vol. 154, p. 210.

[2] K. R. Gierow, quoted after: A. A l v a r e z, Samuel Beckett, New York 1973, p. 132.

[3] F. R. K a r l, Waiting for Beckett: Quest and Re-Quest, "Sewanee Review" 1961, Vol. 69, p. 661.

[4] For the discussion of "Waiting for Godot" from this point of view see: A. R o b b e - G r i l l e t, Samuel Beckett or Presence on the Stage, [in:] R. C o h n, ed., Casebook on "Waiting for Godot", New York 1967, pp. 15-21.

is very important in Beckett's writings. He deals to a great extent with the idea of individual, his changeability in every instant of time and his constant efforts to maintain and preserve his identity. Man is defined in relationship and involvement with humanity and thus Beckett's "heroes", even though always lonely, are hardly ever alone. Presenting them either as inseparable couples or as single individuals witnessed by someone else (be it even an object, the camera in "Film"), Beckett seems to follow Bishop Berkeley and his notion "esse est percipere", and Martin Buber's concept of the necessity of relationship with other human beings to feel real and concrete. Beckett himself has said that sometimes he thinks that perception (or being perceived by the others) is equivalent to existence[5]. At the same time his people, as he calls them[6], try to achieve self-perception. Thus it could be said that one of Beckett's themes is the search of the true nature of the self which tends always to remain elusive.

Samuel Beckett is quite unwilling to illuminate his writings by providing any comment explaining the meaning of his novels or plays or even giving any clues to them. He has said, however, that what matters is the shape of ideas[7]. Yet there is a remark in Beckett which, even though meant to concern form, sheds quite much light on the content of his writing. During his meeting with Harold Pinter in 1961 Beckett insisted repeatedly that none of his writings possessed any form, as if he wanted Pinter to challenge this statement. Pinter disagreed, in fact, saying that Beckett's works seemed to him a constantly repeated courageous attempt to impose order and form upon the wretched mess mankind had made of the world, to which Beckett replied: "If you insist on finding form I'll describe it to you. I was in hospital once. There was a man in another ward, dying of throat cancer. In the silence I could hear his scream continually. That's the only kind of form my work has"[8]. On another occasion

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[5] E. S c h l o s s b e r g, Einstein and Beckett. A Record of an Imaginary Discussion with Albert Einstein and Samuel Beckett, New York 1973, p. 46.

[6] I. S c h e n k e r, Moody Man of Letters, "The New York "Times" 1956, May 6, sec. 2, p. 1, 3.

[7] H. H o b s o n, Samuel Beckett. Dramatist of the Year, "International Theatre Annual" (London) 1956, No. 1, p. 153.

[8] H. Pinter, quoted after: D. B a i r, Samuel Beckett. A Biography, New York - London 1978, p. 528.

Beckett confessed that his works deal with distress: "One does not have to look for distress. It is screaming at you even in the taxis of London"[9]. Thus Beckett is preoccupied with life as constant suffering and distress, as an inevitable punishment for the major sin "of being born"[10].

Human life, as many other things, consists of three elements: beginning, middle and end. Man is born and so the sin for which he will have to repent throughout his whole life is committed. The middle, thus the life as such, is characterized by two aspects: suffering (which may be explained as a sort of punishment for the sin) and waiting (be it the waiting for Godot; medicine and night in "Endgame"; the train to come in "All that Fall"; the bell in "Happy Days" or whatever). Because of these two elements life seems unbearable and the end, the death, very slow in coming. Yet the end is approaching all the time long. Thus it could be argued that to some extent, at least, Beckett's plays present in a metaphorical way life as dying, as always pursuing the desirable yet hardly attainable salvation, release, escape from the burden of living. It is typical that all Beckett's characters are old, with most of their lives behind them, with the end quite close yet so far beyond reach. Their kind of death reminds us of the end of the world in T. S. Eliot's "Hollow Men": their existence ends not with a sudden and quick bang but with a long, drawn out and insufferable whimper.

Beckett once commented that his people "seem to be falling to bits" and that at the end of his work "there is nothing but dust -- the nameable. In the last book "L'Innomable" - there is complete disintegration"[11]. In fact, however, the complete disintegration is denied Beckett's characters: they sense life as dying, always getting closer to it, but never quite reaching it. This idea is stressed at the end of concrete plays as well as in the complete output of Beckett. The sense of eschatological weariness, as of the inexhausible millet heap, mentioned in "Endgame" and visible in "Happy Days", is peculiar to the work of Beckett. As D. Hesla has noticed

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[9] T. F. D r i v e r, Beckett by the Madelaine, "Columbia University Forum" 1961, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 24.

[10] J. G r u e n, op. cit., p. 210; S. B e c k e t t, Proust, New York 1970, p. 49.

[11] I. S c h e n k e r, op. cit., p. 1.

"time in Beckett's universe is running short"[12]. The impression conveyed by the stage image is that of present deterioration of the universe and the menace of imminent end. This has led some of the critics to discussing Beckett's drama from the point of view of the laws of thermodynamics, especially that of "entropy" or the running down of the things from energy to exhaustion, and of the absolute zero which can only be approached asymptotically i. e. got ever closer to without ever being reached[13]. Thus Beckett's people are imprisoned in a situation where all of them can join the Unnamable in saying: "I must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on"[14] or, in other words, they will forever be waiting and suffering like Dante's Belacqua, exemplar of waiting who seems to have impressed Beckett and whose name was given to the main character of the volume of stories "More Pricks than Kicks". Yet, as W. Strauss notices, "Dante's Belacqua is bound to wait out the duration of his life-time in the shadow of the rock; Beckett's characters do not even have that much certitude about their spiritual destination and thus are left in a state of complete disorientation"[15]. There is a scene in "Dante and the Lobster", one of the stories in the volume, when Belacqua, watching the cook put a lobster into boiling water thinks: "It's a quick death. God help us all"[16]. These words are followed by only three words assigned to none of the characters present: "It is not". It is Beckett speaking, in fact, without the usual formalities of introduction. The effect produced is one of disturbing authority. The meaning of this passage is simultaneously simple and complex. No death is quick, especially if it is accompanied by so much

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12 D. H. H e s l a, The Shape of Chaos. An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett, Minneapolis 1973, p. 161.

13 R. M. S u v i n, Samuel Beckett and "Happy Days", "Modern Drama" 1964, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 419; D. S u v i n, Beckett's Purgatory of the Individual or the Three Laws of Thermodynamics. Notes for an Incamination towards a Presubluminary Exagmination round Beckett's Factification, "The Tulane Drama Review" 1967, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 24-25.

14 S. B e c k e t t, The Unnamable, [in:] Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable, London 1980, p. 382.

15 W. A. S t r a u s s, Dante's Belacqua and Beckett's Tramps, "Comparative Literature" 1959, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 251.

16 S. B e c k e t t, More Pricks than Kicks, New York 1970, p. 22.

suffering. On the other hand, Beckett's sentence gets a totally different connotation if we notice the pun it contains. Quick may mean alive. Thus, if the second reading is taken into consideration, the two seemingly contradictory terms, alive and death, are joined. This might be striking at first, but it becomes clear when what has been said earlier is considered. In Beckett's world life and death are not mutually exclusive, his characters live in a state which is a combination of these two and the only thing they long and hope for is the final coming of "real death" which never approaches quickly.

It is a common thing in Beckett that change becomes changelessness, death - life, or, in other words, that ideas which seem mutually exclusive are so intrinsically bound that they constitute one entity. That is why any inquiring about what a given statement, character or object is supposed to denote in Beckett's output is meaningless if one expects to arrive at a concrete, unanimously agreed upon interpretation. What is to be taken account of is Beckett's insistence that his novels and plays mean what they say and his objection of defining what his work is about: "If I could tell you in a sentence I wouldn't have written a play"[17]. Jack MacGowran, an actor and a friend of Beckett said: "Beckett told me that when I came to a passage with several meanings, the obvious one is the right one. He told me he did not create symbols where they did not exist, only where they were apparent. He kept repeating that line from "Watt" - 'no symbols where none intended'. At the same time he was very annoyed with the symbol-hunting scholars who seemed to be breathing down his neck all the time"[18]. This actor, while preparing a show presenting fragments of Beckett's works said: "The key word to my show is one I think is the key word in all Beckett's writing: 'perhaps'"[19]. This opinion would have a full support of Beckett himself who told Tom Driver: "The key word in my plays is 'perhaps'"[20].

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[17] A. R e i d, All I Can Manage, More than I Could: An Approach to the Plays of Samuel Beckett, Dublin 1968, p. 31. Quoted from a programme note by George Devine to the National Theatre production of "Play", at the Old Vic, London, April 7, 1964.

[18] J. MacGowran, quoted after: D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 556.

[19] Ibid., p. 555.

[20] S. Beckett, quoted after: T. F. D r i v e r, op. cit., p. 23.

To conclude, it seems sufficient to say that the strength of Beckett's plays lies not in what they say to the world at large, but in what they do to each spectator individually. Therefore, the sometimes contradictory opinions are fully justified as the author expects each member of the audience to draw his own conclusions, make his own errors and find his own meaning and truth.

One of the inconsistencies in Beckett's drama which becomes quite simple and clear when his outlook is taken into consideration is the problem of time. In his world there are things (like the above mentioned death of the lobster) which, depending on the angle one is observing them from, are either "long" or "short". That is why when one critic assumes that Beckett's plays are about the passing of time[21] and another argues that they present the refusal of time to pass[22] both the views are correct. The same can be said about the three contradictory complaints about Beckett's work: that time does not pass at all but stays around us like a continnum[23], that it passes too slowly[24] and that too much of it passes[25].

In Beckett's plays time cannot be relied on. Conventional measurements of time - years, days, hours are no longer valid or meaningful. Time no longer moves in a rectilinear path - it spins and swerves and recrosses itself. Thus, as J. Killinger has noticed "the Hebraic-Christian view of time has been replaced by a vision of the utter subjectivism and relativism of time"[26]. In other words, the concrete, linear physical time, bringing forth development and change, even though still existent in Beckett's drama, is foreshadowed by subjective, psychological time, the kind of time which is felt and experienced by the characters. What we face in Beckett's

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[21] M. E s s l i n, The Theatre of the Absurd, London 1972, p. 52.

[22] J. B ł o ń s k i, Posłowie, [in:] S. B e c k e t t, Teatr, Warszawa 1973, p. 312; T. F. D r i v e r, op. cit., p. 24.

[23] G. A n d e r s, Being without Time: On Beckett's Play "Waiting for Godot", [in:] M. E s s l i n, Samuel Beckett. A Collection of Critical Essays, New York 1965, pp. 140-151; A. R o b b e - G r i l l e t, op. cit., p. 19.

[24] J. B ł o ń s k i, op. cit., p. 310.

[25] R. S c h e c h n e r, "There's Lots of Time in "Godot", [in:] Casebook on "Waiting for Godot", pp. 175-187, p. 182.

[26] J. K i l l i n g e r, World in Collapse. The Vision of Absurd Drama, New York 1971, p. 133.

drama is a situation rather than development, some decisive action having possibly taken place earlier. The fact of imminent and ever approaching, even though slowly, death, undermines the meaningfullness of here and now, the present situation, which is one of stasis, immobility and limbo. Beckett has reduced the reader's or spectator's confidence in his perception of reality, including time. The plays stress this reduction creating a world of stasis where tiny changes serve only to tantalize the characters, imprisoned in an ever repeating circle. Such a vicious circle, repeated at length, turns exertion into stasis, human existence into an inconsequential nightmare, the passage of time into the effect of timelessness. Time, whose measure is movement and change, has almost come to a stop. But not quite; there is still some rudimentary activity and consequence. This is clearly seen in the structure of the plays where the second act, either present as in "Waiting for Godot", or implied, as in "Endgame", is an intensified repetition of the first. It could be said that the plays illustrate a circular development, in which repetition is the basic factor. It must be noticed, however, that even though the basic impression is that of endless recurrence, there is also another kind of movement discernible. In Beckett's world, where all days seem to be one, there is still some progress but a specific one, of steady loss, repudation and degradation. Therefore, despite the notion of changelessness implied by the circularity, there is a strong image of the lost self, always changing with each moment of time. Beckett's cosmos is built on the awareness of the passing moment. His plays take up a situation and probe into it to uncover the human reality that lies in its depth. They tend to concentrate either on the present situation or to examine not only that but also the process of development that is taking place within the present situation and leading beyond it. As these two aspects are always present, Beckett's plays can be viewed as having a shape which is the result of the combination of two elements: line (development) and circle (repetition, stasis). This shape, whose geometrical equivalent is a spiral, has two elements -- the coils and the distance between them. The relationship between these two adequately conveys the relationship between the circular quality of psychological time and the linear aspect of physical time. The basic structure of time and of the plays being as mentioned

above, there are yet some differences and specific characteristics of concrete plays and thus it is necessary to discuss each play separately to see how these two elements are combined, interrelated and developed. Before doing this, however, it seems justifiable to say a few words about Beckett's two early works, the poem "Whoroscope" and a study on Proust, which shed light on his ideas concerning time.

In 1930 "Whoroscope" won the first prize for the best poem on time in a contest sponsored by Nancy Cunard's Hour Press in Paris and it became Beckett's first separately published work. This poem, presenting "philosopher Descartes meditating on time, hen's eggs and evanescence"[27] deals with a special kind of time, ab ovo to death - a lifetime. Having stressed the punning title suggesting "a cheapened or lying prognostication on the future", Ruby Cohn goes on to say: "The embryonic nature of the egg is its fundamental attribute, but what kind of fowl is in Beckett's mind? My guess, in the shadow of the title "Whoroscope", the ostensible subject Time and the hindsight of Beckett's subsequent works, is that the egg hatches into the fowl of our Time, post-Cartesian time"[28]. This poem seems to be the result of Beckett's interest rather in Descartes than in time as such, whereas the essay on Proust, even though containing some original and shrewd critical insights is, above all, an excuse for Beckett's diagnosis of his own problems. The study on Proust, commissioned by a London publisher, written during Beckett's stay in Paris and published in 1931, does not present literary criticism proper until Beckett has allowed himself a long and not altogether relevant discussion on the "Time cancer and its attributes, Habit and Memory"[29]. Let us start with "the doubleheaded monster of damnation and salvation - Time"[30]. Beckett writes: "There is no escape from hours and days. Neither from to-morrow nor from yesterday. There is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us. The mood is of no importance. Deformation has taken place. Yesterday is not a milestone that has

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27 M. E s s l i n, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 32.

28 R. C o h n, Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut, New Brunswick-New Jersey 1962, pp. 11, 15-16.

29 S. B e c k e t t, Proust, p. 7.

30 Ibid., p. 1.

been passed, but a daystone on the beaten track of the years, and irremediately part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous. We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday"[31]. People are driven along through time on a current of habit-energy, an energy, which, because habitual, is mostly automatic. "The fundamental duty of Habit [...] consists in a perpetual adjustment and readjustment of our organic sensibility to the conditions of its worlds. Suffering represents the omission of that duty, whether through negligence or inefficiency, and boredom its adequate performance. The pendulum oscillates between these two terms: Suffering that opens a window on the real and is the main condition of the artistic experience, and Boredom - with its host of top-hatted and hygienic ministers, Boredom that must be considered as the most tolerable because the most durable of human evils"[32]. Habit, according to Beckett's views, protects us from the whole world of feeling which guarantees only suffering: "The creation of the world did not take place once and for all time, but it takes place every day. Habit then is the generic term for the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects. The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations [...] represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious and fertile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being"[33].

Thus life is a constant shuttle between the dull boredom of a controlling habit and the suffering, intensity of which springs from a clear, immediate perception of things as they are. Most men, preferring boredom to suffering, take refuge in a protective, falsifying habit. Memory as such is strictly connected with and subject to the laws of habit. Since all living is a habit[34], Beckett wants us to be aware that this filters our perception and distorts our view of reality. For Beckett memory becomes conditioned through per-

31 Ibid., pp. 2-3.

32 Ibid., p. 16.

33 Ibid., p. 8.

34 "Breathings is habit. Life is habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals" (ibid.).

ception. Rather than having memory serve as a moment of discovery and contemplation of reality, it becomes distorted through perception. "Strictly speaking we can only remember what has been registered by our extreme inattention and stored in that ultimate and inaccessible dungeon of our being to what Habit does not possess the key"[35]. This kind of memory is called by Beckett involuntary and is contrasted with voluntary memory which "is of no value as an instrument of evocation, and provides an imege far removed from the real"[36]. Voluntary memory "is the memory that is not real memory, but the application of a concordance to the Old Testament of the individual [...]. This is the uniform memory of intelligence; and it can be relied on to reproduce for our gratified inspection those impressions of the past that were consciously formed. It has no interest in the mysterious element of inattention that colours our most commonplace experience. It presents the past in monochrome. The images it chooses are as arbitrary as those chosen by imagination, and are equally remote from reality"[37].

One of Beckett's discoveries was a new theoretical means of representing discontinuity in the existence of the self. The idea of dissolving the individual into a "being scattered in space and time"[38] is relevant to the apparent absent-mindedness of the characters and their irritation when questioned about details of time and space. Beckett's ideas concerning Time, Habit and Memory might help us in understanding the double, seemingly contradictory meaning of time as change and changelessness in his drama. Habit is not so simple as a fixed attitude towards an unchanging world. Rather it is the quality of mind that mechanically adapts the individual's perception to the changes which occur momentarily in reality, and thereby protects him from the shock of change, allowing him to see each occurency separately, generically, and not in its disquieting uniqueness. But by adapting himself so successfully, man cuts himself off from the reality of changing or potentially changing conditions, his "countless treaties" made by Habit obliterate in the

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[35] Ibid., p. 18.

[36] Ibid., p. 4.

[37] Ibid., p. 19.

[38] This is the only sentence quoted by Beckett from Proust, ibid., p. 41.

end the effect of constant change, and for himself, the perceiver, the change ceases to exist: the result is sameness, a dull prophylactic of boredom.

2. "WAITING FOR GODOT"

"Waiting for Godot", written in French in 1951, first produced in 1953, is basically a play about waiting and its subject can be described as a presentation of "what happens in some human beings while waiting"[39] or a concentration "on Being mirrored in the inaction of waiting"[40]. Just as the waiting serves as the focus of the play's action, time is associated with one of its major themes. In a sense, "Godot" is a play about time and the responses to it. The response of Vladimir and Estragon is habit, and it largely determines the structure of the act and the play as such. Their sole reality is the present act of waiting, they exist only in the present moment, in an eternal present, in fact. It can be said that waiting is equal to experiencing the flow of time and the constant changes it brings about. Yet, as the important event, bringing forth the change of their situation, the coming of Godot, does not take place, the more the things change, the more they are the same. That is why the basic situation of waiting being unaltered in the course of the play, Beckett's theatre is a theatre of situation, of what is there, as opposed to the theatre of events in sequence. When we watch the play performed on the stage, accustomed as we are to encounter new situations in the course of the play, to situations which follow one another and lead logically to an end, we are deeply surprised to notice that the scenes repeat themselves, that the second act is but a slightly varied version of the first. We are equally astonished to find that time, even though some of it has undoubtedly passed, has brought no change in the condition of the tramps - change being characteristic of linear, physical time - and that the end of the play may stand for yet another beginning, just as Act Two repeats Act One, all the acts and days being characterized by one constant and eternal, it seems, element: waiting.

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39 E. B e n t l e y, The Talent of Samuel Beckett, [in:] Casebook on "Waiting for Godot", p. 65.

40 I. H a s s a n, The Literature of Silence, New York 1968, p. 176.

The act of waiting is an essential and characteristic aspect of human existence. It is while waiting that we experience the flow of time in its purest, most evident form. If we are active, we tend to forget the passage of time, but if we are passively waiting, we are confronted with the action of time which is constant change. Can the same be said about the waiting of the tramps? According to them, nothing real and important happens and thus there is hardly any change characteristic of the linear, physical time. The few things which do take place do not have any relevance to the situation they are in. Their condition, their waiting, is still unaltered. If there is no change for the tramps, there is no flow of time which results in change. It is not physical time, then, that becomes the burden they must suffer. The time they feel and experience is the subjective, psychological time. While waiting, the only object for them is to wait. They are devoid of any other purpose. While waiting, their action is the waiting itself. Doing something in their situation means doing nothing at all. Action has been replaced by inaction, which has become action itself. Action, however, is only sufferable when it is given at least an illusion of value. Otherwise it is boring; even though, objectively speaking, it may take a short time to complete, the time we feel becomes nearly limitless. The action may last for a concrete, short period of physical time, yet the length of psychological time, that is our feeling of time, may be extremely great. This is the crux of the tragedy of the tramps. Even though physical time hardly exists for them, the pressure of psychological time is great. Feeling the presence (yet not the movement) of time outside them, they do everything to pass the time, not to make time pass (as it passes irrespective of their feelings about it), but simply to pass the time, not to feel its presence. Passing the time is their mutual obsession. "The experience of the play indeed shows us that there is plenty of time, too much: waiting means more time than things to fill it", writes Richard Schechner in his article entitled "There's Lots of Time in 'Godot'"[41]. The time which is abundant is of psychological type. It is not so much that there is a lot of time but rather that there is a lot of awareness of time, of time's pressure on the psyche of the tramps.

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[41] R. S c h e c h n e r, op. cit., p. 182.

In order not to feel the burden of psychological time, the tramps play games: they try on boots and hats, tell stories, make meaningless conversations, contradict and abuse each other, ask questions and finally do breathing exercises. It could be even said that their discussing the possibility of committing suicide is also a way to pass the time, as they start thinking about it while seeking a way of passing the time and make light remarks about it. When the question arises of what they are to do, they are looking at the tree which suggests the inevitable answer: "What about hanging ourselves?[42] Besides, at the beginning of the play, Vladimir says: "We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties" (p. 29) and "Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first ... Now it is too late" (p. 10). According to their opinion, the time when suicide was possible belongs to a remote past. This sentence is a good example of how physical time is distorted by the subjective feelings about it. Objectively speaking, the situation Vladimir is referring to cannot have taken place such a long time ago. While speaking about the period of time that has passed, even though using the terminology of objective, physical time, he refers to the lapse of time he has experienced, thus to psychological time. At one point, talking about their games, Estragon says: "We always find something, eh, Didi, to give us the impression we exist" (p. 69). Only while doing something concrete are they able to escape the burden of psychological time and thus get the impression they really exist. The same idea is expressed when Pozzo falls down. Vladimir and Estragon are shocked to find they are losing time in idle discourse and decide to do something while they have the chance. They are not needed everyday (p. 79). They also realize that "In an instant all will vanish and (they) will be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness" (p. 81). Only at such rare moments do they realize the flow of physical time. In a moment the possibility of change brought about by physical time will be over and they will be left again with the burden of waiting and experiencing psychological time. Those are the moments of enlarged consciousness when they recognize that outside the world of their waiting, characterized

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[42] S. B e c k e t t, Waiting for Godot, Faber and Faber, London 1969, p. 17. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

by the pressure of psychological time, there is another order. They do not understand it, yet they are, at least sometimes, aware of its existence. At such moments the mysterious spell of habit is broken. Habit, according to Beckett, protects us from the whole range of feeling which guarantees only suffering. The tramps' games are thus a Habit protecting them from the suffering or from, at least, feeling unhappy, yet at the same time evoking the feeling of boredom or, in other words, the pressure of psychological time. The periods of transition between consecutive "treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects"[43], those dangerous zones when "for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being"[44] are represented in "Waiting for Godot" by the transition from one game to another, when Estragon repeatedly says: "Let's go" and gets Vladimir's answer that they cannot because they are waiting for Godot. The habit, the game of escaping one's feelings and the pressure of psychological time, must in the end lead to the moment of awareness when the characters become conscious of playing not for the sake of entertainment but only in order not to feel the unhappiness strictly connected with their situation. No matter whether they play or not, physical time passes at exactly the same pace. That is why, then the period of waiting is over with the coming of the night, they realize that a lot of physical time has passed - the evening has come. It would have come irrespective of their desires; but only when not busy with "killing" psychological time, are they able to notice that physical time has moved and brought forth another day to an end.

Those moments of enlarged consciousness are also brought forth by Memory. Human memory, however, is defective and unreliable, because it is voluntary. The images chosen by it are arbitrary and therefore remote from reality. Accordingly, memory failures are typical of all the characters of "Waiting for Godot". These failures, apart from presenting Beckett's outlook on Memory, are also a means of breaking the continuity of linear, physical time. The impression is created that there is no relationship nor any marked difference between the past and the present, and thus all the

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[43] S. B e c k e t t, Proust, p. 8.
[44] Ibid.

phases of time seem to merge into one another to form continuous present. It is, then, because of Habit and deffectiveness of Memory that the tramps live outside physical time.

The basic rhythm of the play is therefore formed by games/Habit, followed by moments of enlarged consciousness of the characters, of their recognizing the flow of time, which, in turn, brings uneasiness and makes the characters escape into the world of Habit again. The characters' confrontation with and awareness of time take place only when there is a stop in their games and they realize they are waiting for Godot. Godot, then, is not time as such, but is associated with time. Waiting brings the notion of psychological time, while Godot, as the direction of this waiting, is linked with physical time. Richard Schechner, even though he does not use the terminology of physical and psychological time, gives the diagram of "Waiting for Godot"[45] (Fig. 1).

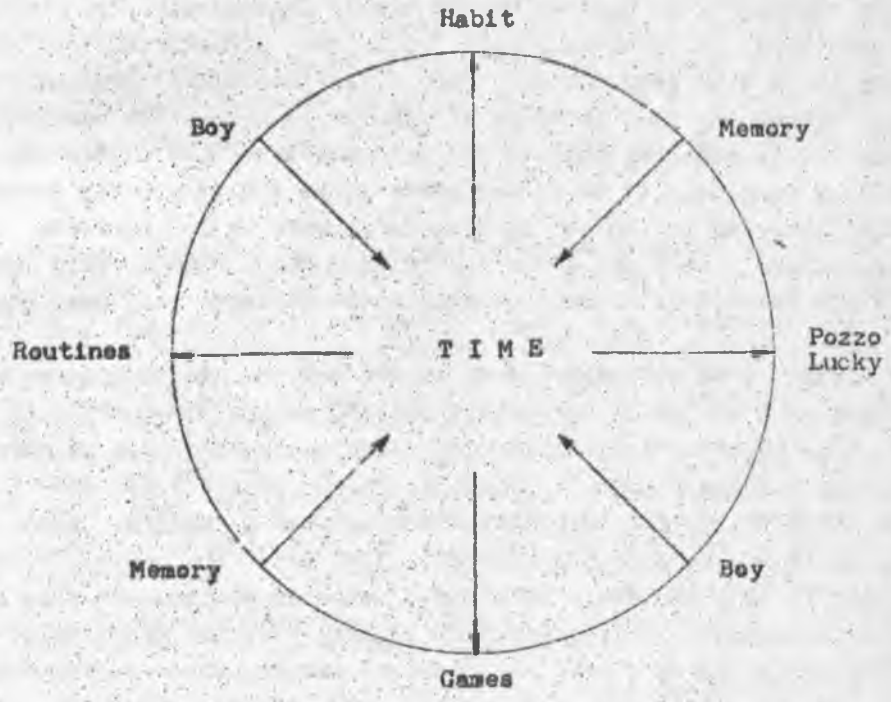

Fig. 1

[45] R. S c h e c h n e r, op. cit., p. 185.

It could be argued that the word "Time" in this diagram stands for psychological time. The rim of the circle, on the other hand, indicates the circular quality of the same repetitive, eternal cycle. It must be noticed that according to Beckett's definition, routines and games belong to Habit because they help the tramps to escape the burden of psychological time. The same can be, perhaps, said of the visit of Pozzo and Lucky, although undoubtedly, the quality of this event is different from the tramps' games. These two activities can be linked, however, if we take into consideration the fact that both of them help the tramps pass the time and forget about their tragic situation. In a similar way, the boy's coming is similar in its meaning to Memory, as both of them make the tramps feel the pressure of psychological time.

The attitude of the two tramps to time is slightly different. Estragon seems to be more successful in escaping into Habit and "safe memories". He forgets things either immediately or never forgets them, as he himself says, he is not a historian (p. 65). There is no time span for him, only a kaleidoscopic present in which everything that is there is forever in focus. His memory is incapable of reaching back to the previous day. Once completed, an event is forgotten. It is he who wants to go and stays only because he is reminded to do so by Vladimir. Later on he converts the conversation "Let's go" - "We can't" into Habit when he says himself the same words as were used in their dialogue so many times (p. 90).

Vladimir, on the other hand, is the one who cannot escape the feeling of time. He is not always able to escape "the suffering of being" by plunging into Habit. Sometimes he is conscious of physical time and the change it brings forth. He is aware of some newness, some change in their little world, even if unsure what to make of it. He notices, for example, that Pozzo and Lucky have changed (p 48), remembers what day of week it is and what they did yesterday evening. For him, Memory exists, at least potentially as an instrument of discovery, a disturber rather than a supporter of Habit. It is also he, not Estragon, who knows that there is a future for them - the coming of Godot, and therefore he repeatedly reminds Estragon that they cannot go because they are waiting for

Godot. Towards the end of the play we witness his nervous breakdown when he says:

Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon, my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? But in all that what truth will there be? (Estragon, having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again. Vladimir stares at him). He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (Pause.) Astride of a grave and difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the gravedigger puts on the forcepts. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (He listens.) But habit is a great deadener. (He looks again at Estragon.) At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping. He knows nothing. Let him sleep on. (Pause.) I can't go on! (Pause.) What have I said? (pp. 90-91).

Questioning the abilities of his memory, which gives him an incomplete image of the past, he stretches this uncertainty to include the future as well. His words about the birth and death are a repetition of what Pozzo said earlier in his outburst about time[46]. Vladimir, explicitly realizing that physical time passes, states that between one's birth and death there is a long way to go, lots of time to pass, time full of suffering intrinsically

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[46] The comparison of these two speeches provides an illuminating example of subjective distortion of physical time. Both these characters perceive time as an endless cycle of birth and death, repeating forever the same eternal moment. For Vladimir, who concentrates on the suffering of being, human life is very long. On the other hand, Pozzo sees it quite differently: "Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time? It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we are born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Calmer) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (p. 89). The time span covered by life has been distorted in both the speeches, in Vladimir's, due to the suffering of being, it has been extended, in Pozzo's - contradicted. This contradicting can be, perhaps, explained by the fact that no matter how long one's life is, measured by the standards of, and compared to the history of mankind or the universe, and thus to the macrocosmic time, it is an affair of but a moment. The same length of physical time in Vladimir's subjective feelings has been extended, in Pozzo's contracted. Birth and death seem to be separated by a mere instant, except for those who have to live through that instant as an interminable wait for Godot. For one concrete period of physical time the two characters have substituted two different distortions typical of psychological time.

bound with the condition of living. The suffering of living can be borne because of Habit, which is a great deadener[47].

The situation Vladimir is in and complains of may be extended to all human beings[48]. While talking about his and Estragon's situation, Vladimir uses a phrase which echoes the famous phrase of Hamlet, "What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this

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[47] It is possible to interpret the word "deadener" in two ways. On the one hand, Habit acts like a sort of exhaustbox of the human mechanism muffling not so much the sounds as the consciousness in not allowing man to feel the burden of life. On the other hand, however, while doing this, Habit prevents man from seeing and perceiving life as it really is and thus makes him half dead. In other words, the positive quality of Habit is its making man unaware of the suffering of being connected with the awareness of the flow of physical time, and thus enabling him get through life - life which is only a substitute for real living with all its joys and sorrows. Having realized what the meaning of physical time and Habit in relation to it is, Vladimir cries: "I can't go on!" He cannot go on living in a world where everything is meaningless because physical time, giving life meaning and direction does not explain reality. Yet the very next sentence is a complete contradiction. Asking himself what he has said he does not remember any longer the moment of enlarged consciousness. He has again come back into the world of routine and Habit.

[48] This effect of the universality of meaning is achieved in several ways, one of them being the use of names. The origin of the names of the four characters, as has been noticed by Ihab Hassan, is Slavic, French, Italian and English, and therefore, according to this critic, "Waiting is the fate of all mankind" (I. H a s s a n, op. cit., p. 178). Pozzo is called by the names of Cain and Abel (p. 83) and Estragon argues his name is Adam (p. 57) and so they all seem to represent the whole mankind. Jan Błoński has stressed that there is only one character in Beckett's plays - - Everyman (J. B ł o ń s k i, op. cit., p. 316). This idea has been also expressed in: F. D o h e r t y, Samuel Beckett, London 1971. p. 91; D. J. G r o s s v o g e l, 20th Century Drama, New York 1961, p. 324; J. G u i c h a r n a u d in collaboration with J. B e c k e l m a n, Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Beckett, New Haven 1961, p. 201; N. A. S c o t t, Samuel Beckett, London 1965, p. 91; B. G a s c o i g n e, op. cit., p. 51; W. Y. T i n d a l l, Samuel Beckett, New York - London 1966, p. 11; M. T r o u s d a l e, Dramatic Form: The Example of "Godot", "Modern Drama" 1968, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 3; E. W e b b, The Plays of Samuel Beckett, Seattle 1972, p. 26. Jerome Ashmore has written: "The bearing of the subject matter is largely philosophical. The drama does not occur at any particular time or place, which is to say it occurs at all times and all places. Likewise, the characters are symbols of men living at any time" (J. A s h m o r e, Philosophical Aspects of "Godot", "Symposium" 1962, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 296).

immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come" (p. 80).

Hamlet, in his soliloquy, ponders the meaning and sense of human existence. Human beings have a choice left - they can either commit suicide or go on living and suffering. Vladimir's question and answer also refer to the sense of human existence. For him there is no choice left, however. The only thing people can do is to wait for Godot to come. Living, then, means waiting. Wallace Fowlie has written that "Waiting for Godot" has given a phrase to the French language: "j'attends Godot", which means that what is going on now will continue to go on for a great unspecified length of time. As he writes: "'J'attends Godot' is really equivalent to saying 'That's what it means to keep living'"[49]. Many critics have agreed that waiting as it is presented in the play is equal to living[50]. Godot's coming may give an end to this waiting but also to living. The only possibility of finishing waiting is to meet Godot, which may symbolically denote death. Thus Godot, the terminus of waiting, may represent death as the only way out from waiting, the inherent element of human life. Obviously it must be stressed that this is only one of the numerous readings of this complex symbol[51].

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[49] W. F o w l i e, Dionysus in Paris. A Guide to Contemporary French Theater, New York 1967, p. 210.

[50] S. C a v e l l, Ending the Waiting Game. A Reading of Beckett's "Endgame", [in:] Must We Mean What We Say?, New York 1969, p. 150; M. E s s l i n, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 49; A. P. H i n c h l i f f e, British Theatre 1950-1970, Oxford 1974, p. 119; F. J. H o f f m a n, Samuel Beckett. The Language of Self, Carbondale 1962, p. 150; J.-J. M a y o u x, The Theatre of Samuel Beckett, "Perspective" 1959, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 151.

[51] The question which has bothered the critics a lot is that of Godot's identity. It has been argued that Godot stands either for God as such (R. N. C o e, Samuel Beckett, New York 1970, p. 93; R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, Princeton 1973, p. 131), Beckett's viewpoint being similar to that expressed in Simone Weil's collection of essays "Waiting for God" (R. S. C o h e n, Parallels and the Possibility of Influence between Simone Weil's "Waiting for God" and Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot", "Modern Drama" 1964, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 427; J. L. J o h n s o n, Samuel Beckett: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Absurd Drama, 1974, p. 99) or that his name is a diminutive of God (R. N. C o e, op. cit., p. 93; R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 131; J. L. J o h n s o n, op. cit., p. 99). Both these interpretations have been denied any validity by Beckett's statements: "Christianity is a mythology with which I am perfectly familiar, and so I use it. But not in this case" (S. Beckett, November 17, 1971, quoted after: D. B a i r,

Vladimir's speech reminds us of Hamlet's not only on account of the meaning of human existence, but also through the appearance of two key-words: life and death. Yet whereas in Hamlet's soliloquy

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op. cit., p. 386), and "If Godot were God I would have called him that" (S. Beckett to H. Hobson, quoted after: D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 382). Apart from the already mentioned book of S. Weil, "Waiting for Godot" has been also compared to Honoré Balzac's "Mercadet", a play where a certain Godeau is also awaited (J. L. J o h n s o n, op. cit., p. 100; S. A. R h o d e s, From Godeau to Godot, "French Review" 1963, p. 261). This interpretation has been also rejected by Beckett, when he insisted that he had not read Balzac's "Le Faiseur", performed as "Mercadet" (D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 383). Godot has been also identified with a French racing cyclist (R. N. C o e, op. cit., p. 93; R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 132). On this point Beckett informed Colin Duckworth "that he was told after writing 'Godot' about the story of a little crowd of bystanders still watching and waiting at the end of a cycle race 'Qu'est ce on'attend?' they were asked. 'On attend Godeau'" (C. D u c k w o r t h, Introduction, [in:] S. Beckett, Waiting for Godot, London 1966, pp. CXV-CXVI). Beckett's friends are fond of a story explaining that Godot came from the time when Beckett, standing in the corner of the rue Godot de Mauroy, a Parisian street notorious for prostitutes, was waiting for a bus and was accosted by one of the ladies. When he refused she supposedly demanded in a huff what special creature he was saving himself for - was he "waiting for Godot"? (D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 382). Beckett himself has not commented on this version, yet he told C. Duckworth that he was aware of the reputation of the street before he wrote the play (C. D u c k w o r t h, op. cit., p. CXIV). Still another group of critics has argued that Godot is Pozzo (V. M e r c i e r, A Pyrrhonian Eclogue, "The Hudson Review" Winter 1955, p. 623; C. C h a d w i c k, "Waiting for Godot": A Logical Approach, "Symposium" 1960, Vol. 14, No. 4, p. 253); a combination of Pozzo and Lucky (R. G r a y, "Waiting for Godot". A Christian Interpretation, "The Listener" 1957, January 24, p. 161) or even that while being Pozzo it is simultaneously James Joyce (L. A b e l, op. cit., p. 139). Again, this kind of interpretation has been contradicted by Beckett, who, while being asked by C. Duckworth whether Godot was Pozzo answered: "No. It is implied in the text, but it's not true" (C. D u c k w o r t h, op. cit., p. LX). Finally, Godot has been also viewed as "Russian 'god', a year, old Father-Time himself" (R. N. C o e, op. cit., p. 93), Time Future, "That which is about to be" (D. H. H e s l a, op. cit., p. 133) or death as such (E. M. S c a r r y, Six Ways to Kill a Blackbird or Any Other Intentional Object: Samuel Beckett's Method of Meaning, "James Joyce Quarterly" 1971, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 282).

While trying to answer the question who or what Godot is, one must first answer another one - whether this idea is a constant or variable, whether it is always one, concrete, specific object, or whether the range of meaning it covers is greater. It seems that the second possibility is more sound, namely that Godot should not be categorically specified if that is only possible, so that each reader or spectator may understand this concept in the way which suits him best. The three following interpretations can thus be accepted: "Beckett's play tells us plainly who Godot is - the

life is contrasted to death, in Vladimir's speech life leads to death which will replace it[52].

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promise that is always awaited and not fulfilled" (R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 132), "Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for the end to come, 'the end' is given the name Godot" (C. D u c k w o r t h, op. cit., p. CXIX) and "Godot is that which gives meaning to Vladimir's and Estragon's waiting" (R. B r e n e r, The Solution as Problem: Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot", "Modern Drama" 1976, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 232). These three answers to the question who Godot is are so unspecific that they leave place for one's own meaning, the meaning which is most important in the play, and in art as such.

Let me finish the discussion of the concept of Godot by mentioning what took place several years after the play had become a success. Samuel Beckett was travelling to London by air, incognito. After he had sat down and hidden behind a large magazine, he heard the pilot welcoming the passangers over the loudspeaker: "Le capitaine Godot vous accorde des bienvenues". As Deirdre Bair, who relates the story, writes: "Beckett said it was all he could do to keep himself from bolting through the door and off the plane. He wondered about a world which would entrust itself to Godot" (D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 389). Had this occurence taken place before "Waiting for Godot" was written, most probably it would have given some more interpretations of the play, as it is, it remains just a funny story and, perhaps, an indication of the fact that Godot and his promises cannot be relied on.

What remains to be stressed here is that Godot has to remain vague and unspecific. Throughout the shaping of the final version of the play Beckett was trying to avoid explicitness and moving towards abstraction, not concrete realities. In the first version of the play, the boy brought a letter from Godot (D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 425). This was later removed, as in this shape the passage presented not an idea of Godot but a concrete, real person, endowned with a physical reality. The ommission indicates that Beckett's intentional vaguenoss is his effort to suggest that alternative solutions are of equal value. Beckett alludes to the object without defining it. In "Waiting for Godot" it is irrelevant who Godot is, for the play's interest is expectation and anticipation, that psychic state that is characteristic of waiting. For if "Waiting for Godot" is "about" anything, it is about waiting as such, not about Godot. Originally the play was called "Waiting" (R. G i l m a n, The Making of Modern Drama, New York 1974, p. 241) and the French title manages an inclusiveness denied to English idiom: "on attendant", not "nous" but "on", the characters and the audience alike. There are, in fact, three real waitings presented: those of the audience, actors and the characters, all are brought together in the metaphorical waiting for Godot, and the time that is filled in the process is the "shape" of the theatrical experience. The waiting and boredom associated with it are meant to be not only the burden of the characters, but also of the audience, which was implied by Beckett when, during a London rehearsal of "Godot", he told one of the actors he was not boring the audience enough (J. F l e t c h e r, Samuel Beckett's Art, London 1967, p. 67).

[52] There is still another similarity between these two speech-

The passage, which expresses Vladimir's enlarged consciousness, ends with his saying: "All I know is that the hours are long, under these conditions and constrain us to beguile them with proceedings which - how shall I say - which may at first sight seem reasonable, until they become a habit. You may say it is to prevent our reason from foundering. No doubt. But has it not long been straying in the night without end in abysmal depth?" (p. 80). The physical time of one's life is too long if one realizes that the end of it is death. Not to go mad, people hide under the cover of Habit and thus escape "the suffering of being". Vladimir, too, will now go on passing the time, helping Pozzo get up and playing endlessly invented games, once more he will plunge into secure and comforting Habit which will make the waiting bearable.

Since waiting contains all of its dimensions at every moment, it is the same whether it lasts for one hour or for fifty years, and what is important is not the physical time but its influence on the psyche of the characters, its subjective realization. Thus the tramps do not pay much attention to objective, physical time. They do not know the day of the week (p. 15), or the time of the day (p. 85), how long they have been together (p. 53), or what their age is (p. 28). These questions do not seem to be important to them. Even Vladimir, who pays more attention to time than Estragon, while trying to specify the concrete, physical time, remarks: "We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties" (p. 10). The concrete, physical time has become squandered in its psychological realization. Another, quite opposite distortion can be noticed at the beginning of the play, when Estragon says: "Together at last" (p. 9) and he seems to imply that a

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es: Hamlet does not think only about himself but extends the meaning of his soliloquy to all human beings. The same can be said about Vladimir's speech. He does not imply the universality of meaning directly in his speech, though, but it is visible in its context. Before the speech is uttered, Vladimir says about Pozzo' crying for help: "To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in my ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not [...]. Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood a cruel fate has consigned us!" (p. 79). Thus they are meant not to be individuals only but they also represent the whole mankind. Later on he remarks: "We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?" and Estragon answers: "Billions" (p. 80). The destiny of waiting is not only their lot: billions of people have lived their lives, waiting for their death to come.

long period of time has passed since their last meeting. This, however, is most probably not true: a relatively short period of physical time has been extended in his imagination and therefore his subjective feeling is that of a long interval between their two meetings. Thus, although the terminology of time has been preserved, it is not used to describe concrete, physical time, but the strict objective categories are applied to "measuring" subjective, psychological time. There are many instances of this phenomenon in the course of the play. When Vladimir says: "How time flies when one has fun" (p. 76), "Time flows again" (p. 77), "That passed the time (p. 48) he does not refer to physical time (which passes at exactly the same pace whether one pays any attention to it or not) but to psychological time, the subjective awareness of time. And this is the kind of time which becomes their mutual obsession and which they "kill" by their games, routines and Habit. There is a lot of time and a lot of talk about it in the play, perhaps even more than the characters themselves and the audience can bear, but it is not the sort of time we are accustomed to. Lawrence Harvey comments on the scene where the sound of Pozzo's watch disappears and that of man's heartbeat is heard instead: "Chronometric time has been replaced by existential time"[53]. The word "existential" points out to the affinities with the human condition. This kind of time, then, is not concrete, physical time but its impact on the characters; in other words, it is physical time as felt by the characters in their concrete situation. It is an element intrinsically bound with their condition of living. Again and again, Beckett has bent apparently "chronometric" time into the static form of the circle, in which the end of one period is just a beginning of another as one day of man's life is followed by another.

Let us have a close look at the structure of the play. The second act/day is a repetition of the first one. What may follow after the end of Act Two may be yet another similar act. Hardly anything has happened in the course of the play. Vivian Mercier has summarized "Godot" as a "play in which nothing happens, twice"[54]. It is true that in the play nearly the same, static situa-

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[53] L. E. H a r v e y, Art and the Existential in "Waiting for Godot", [in:] Casebook on "Waiting for Godot", p. 148.

[54] V. M e r c i e r, The Mathematical Limit, "The Nation" 1958, February 14, p. 145.

tion is presented twice, yet it is also implied that the same meaningless things, however slight they may be, happened earlier. The text of the play begins when Estragon tries again to take off his shoes. We read the first example of the often repeated stage direction: "as before" (p. 9). In his first speech Vladimir talks about resuming the struggle, he also notices that Estragon is there again, he is glad that Estragon is back. During the night Estragon was beaten "the same lot as usual" (p. 9). All of these indicate that the situation presented at the beginning of the play has taken place earlier. The notion of the repetitive quality of what is happening is also visible in the first act, when after the exit of Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir claims they have changed (p. 48), so he must have seen them earlier, before the play began. The present is a repetition of what happened in the past. In the second act Vladimir says: "Always at nightfall" (p. 71). The word "always" implies not only today but in the course of many, many days.

The single repetition of two almost exactly the same acts suffices to represent a sequence stretching to infinity and to evoke the impression of the monotonous recurrence inherent in the condition of the tramps. Their lives do not "lead" anywhere, their activities are meaningless and any progress is impossible. What happens today is merely a repetition of what was yesterday, and will also recur tomorrow. The repetitiveness, characteristic of their lives, is also visible in the structure of time, in which the period of one day repeats itself over and over again. The place of linear, physical time has been taken over by the cyclical repetition which is characteristic of their existence.

Another means of destroying our sense of linear or progressive time is the introduction of the circle which is seen not only in the repetitiveness of certain elements but also in Lucky's speech which resembles a broken record. While talking, he often breaks the flow of his speech to repeat what he has said earlier, so that the same phrases are uttered over and over again. The crux of the tramps' situation, of their imprisonment in the circularity of time, is also symbolically presented in the ballad sung by Vladimir about the dog. This song dramatically represents the repetitiveness of certain elements in the course of time. Time in the song is not a linear sequence, but an endlessly reiterated moment, the content of which is only one eternal event - death. On the other

hand, however, the song deals also with the continuity of life - - the dog comes alive with each repetition, and is killed once more. The song's end is at the same time another beginning, just as the beginning of the day is only the beginning of another one. The circle has been completed to become the beginning of another one, and so on and on, endlessly. Accordingly, the essential movement of time as it is felt by the tramps is circular. It could be argued, therefore, that the movement is very close to stillness - - if today is the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and the same period of time repeats itself an infinite number of times, then infinity becomes the finitude, of this one given day - time stops moving forwards and becomes cyclical, yet it is nothing else than eternal present or static continuum. It is as if at a standstill. It does not move but it is still there - the stream of time has been replaced by the stagnant waters of cyclical time.

Guenther Anders, in his article entitled "Being Without Time: On Beckett's Play 'Waiting for Godot'", sees the play as a negative parable constructed according to the principle of inversion; life does not go on, it does not change and thus it becomes life without time[55]. He writes:

> Although a "stream of time" does not exist any longer, the "time material" is not petrified yet, [...] instead of a moving stream, time has become something like a stagnant mush. The rudimentary activity which can temporarily set this time mush in motion, however, is no longer real "action", for it has no objective except to make time move which, in "normal" active life, is not the aim of action but its consequence. Although this formula may sound paradoxical, if time still survives here, it owes its survival exclusively to the fact that the activity of "time killing" has not died out yet[56].

One objection should be made here, namely that the tramps do not act in order to make time move, but rather not to feel its presence. Physical time cannot be affected by the actions of human beings as it is completely independent of their activity. It is only while playing or passing the time that the tramps forget about the pressure of the stagnant time. Physical time does not move any faster, in fact, but the burden of its psychological realization is felt no more. They do not "kill" physical time, they just stop

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[55] G. A n d e r s, op. cit., p. 146.

[56] Ibid., pp. 146-147.

thinking about it and feeling its psychological impact. What is true, however, is that while not wanting to acknowledge time as it is, the tramps make us notice it. We could be oblivious of time were it not for the tramps, who, while waiting for Godot, suppose that his coming will bring forth a change or at least give a stop to their waiting. His coming will stop the endless cycle of days repeating themselves und their lives will move forwards. It may rescue them from the stagnant quality of time.

When Martin Esslin writes, Godot's "coming will bring the flow of time to stop"[57], he does not notice that for the tramps time is, in fact, at a standstill. Quite contrary to this critic's opinion, the coming of Godot will make time move forwards, will allow the tramps to leave the routine of waiting. If physical time exists for the tramps at all, it is only because it still has a direction, which leads to the future that will be materialized in the moment of Godot's arrival. Till then, the tramps, imprisoned in the mush of stagnant time which is an eternal present, must wait.

The temporal background of the tramps covers the present which is the same as the future and the past. What they call life will fit into an empty interval which is given three different names: today, yesterday, and tomorrow. It can be said, then, that the three dimensions of time can be combined to form a kind of eternal present. This idea is strictly connected with the notion of Habit, which on account of the deffectiveness of Memory blurs the distinctions between the different phases of time. The tramps' waiting has, in fact, become a kind of Habit. If it is not a Habit, why don't they just follow the boy and get to Godot, why don't they give up the waiting and simply leave the place? The central absurdity of their situation is not so much that they are waiting but that they continue to wait, from mere Habit, without even knowing why. The idea of the eternal present is brought forth by Habit, which makes them wait, which, in turn, brings about the pressure of psychological time and the notion of changelessness.

On the other hand, the play also introduces the notion of the flow of objective, physical time. The stage directions tell us explicitly that one day passed between the acts, a day during which some changes have taken place, the most obvious of these being the

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[57] M. E s s l i n, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 52.

tree's acquiring leaves, Pozzo's blindness and Lucky's dumbness. On the one hand, taking into acoount the shortness of physical time specifed, it is very difficult to explain the suddenness of these changes (it is hardly possible that a completely bare tree, without even buds, could become green overnight) yet, on the other hand, the fact that they have taken place is a visible proof of the flow of physical time. These changes, though incredible, seem to express the notion that something is still taking its course in time. They happen so quickly in relation to the world of the tramps, reminding us that objective, physical time proceeds indifferent of their feelings and beliefs about it, and also indifferent to the notion that in the world they inhabit physical time is of little importance. The duality of time structure in the play, expressing also the duality of modes of being, is best visible in the following exchange which takes place after the exit of Pozzo and Lucky:

Vladimir: Haven't they changed?
Estragon: What?
Vladimir: Changed.
Estragon: Very likely. They all change. Only we can't.
Vladimir: Likely! It's certain. Didn't you see them? (p. 48)

For the tramps their situation seems one of eternal sameness, however outside their world of waiting there is still some change characteristic of the flow of physical time. The two acts, instead of two or three, seemed at once the maximum and the minimum structure for the expressing of the idea of sameness in change[58]. In this play Beckett sets up tension between surface stagnancy and dramatic development. Ruby Cohn has noticed: "the monotony is meant to seem cumulative and unbearable, precisely because there are developments in the play"[59]. Originally the play was to be staged in the round to enhance the idea of circularity and to express the infinitely extended waiting of the tramps by means of a visual image. However, this seemed to express too concrete an idea for Beckett, and he insisted that circularity be suggested but not clearly apparent[60]. In "Waiting for Godot" there is an attempt to allow the audience to become aware of the repetitive nature of the

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[58] Beckett, while being accused of Act II merely repeating Act I, said: "One act would have been too little and three acts would have been too much". I. S c h e n k e r, op. cit., p. 3.

[59] R. C o h n, Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut, p. 213.

[60] D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 421.

experience as well as to understand that the development of a sense of experience is a progressive action. The conflict between these two ideas is adequately expressed by the two contrasted plots: the Vladimir/Estragon plot which might potentially go in circles forever and the Pozzo/Lucky plot in which we detect a strict irreversible order of events, the tragic idea of gradual deterioration and decline. R. Torrance writes: "These are the two opposed modes of being which cross paths in 'Godot': that of waiting, where time is a series of disjointed presents and there is no history because there is no true sense of past and future, the mode of sameness and ennui; and that of the chase, where time is downward plummeting through history towards darkness, the mode of retrogressive change and senseless suffering"[61].

Pozzo and Lucky, being emmisaries from the life of society (see, for instance, their master-slave relationship) are entirely subjected to the laws of time characteristic of socio-historical situation[62]. Pozzo, at least in the first act, is the only character who seems to remember and understand what physical time is. He consults his watch four times and wants to stick to objective time, which embodies for him the objective qualities of the objective, external world. Yet this objectivity of physical time, as he understands it, is questioned. When he consults his watch to indicate the number of hours that have passed, we find his action fully convincing and justifiable. When, however, he takes it out in order to check if something happened sixty years ago and is fully satisfied that it was "nearly sixty years ago" (p. 33), we start suspecting something. Our suspicion increases with the following:

> Pozzo: Thank you, dear fellow. (He consults his watch.) But I really must be getting along, if I am to observe my schedule.
> Vladimir: Time has stopped.
> Pozzo: (Cuddling his watch to his ear.) Don't you believe it. (He puts his watch back into his pocket.) Whatever you like, but not that. (p. 36)

Time has not stopped for him because he has the watch, the hands of which are moving and showing him what he wants to know.

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[61] R. M. T o r r a n c e, op. cit., p. 89.

[62] Their being subjected to physical, concrete and objective time has been stressed by J. C h i a r i, op. cit., p. 74; R. G i l m a n, op. cit., p. 248; H. A. S m i t h, op. cit., p. 150.

The real object (physical time) is not important in itself but only in its symbolic representation (the watch). Pozzo does not know the real meaning of physical time, he can only get it as it is given to him by his watch. He does not understand time, yet, in a sense, at least sometimes, still perceives its flow. For him, time is not a series of like moments, not a present assimilating past and future. He still remembers some basic things from the past, that Lucky has taught him many things, for instance. He also seems to know what his future might bring. For him, time is not a continuum, eternal present - things still have a beginning, middle and end. He may not understand physical time well, yet he still perceives change characteristic of it, his speech on the falling of night being the best example of his awareness of changeability brought forth by physical time. These two elements, however, are not combined in his notion of them: physical time is characterized not by the change but only by the movement of the hands of his watch.

When Pozzo loses his watch, he desparately wants to find it because not having his watch to consult, he does not know any longer whether time is still passing. Listening, bent over his watch-pocket, for his lost time-piece, Pozzo hears nothing. When he is joined in his search by Estragon and Vladimir they hear something - not the watch, however, but the tick-tock-like sound of Pozzo's heart. Estragon's remark, "Perhaps it has stopped" (p. 46), seems to refer to Pozzo's watch, but is, at the same time, the exact repetition of Vladimir's earlier remark concerning time. Anyway, for Pozzo time has stopped at this moment - not having his time-piece to consult, he is not able to say whether it passes or not. Now that he is devoid of his watch, physical time does not exist for him at all, he has lost his only touch with it and later on in the play it becomes irrelevant for him what time it is.

Pozzo's attitude to time changes in the course of the play. His initial involvement with time gives way to his indifference to it in Act II when he cries: "Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Calmer). They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (p. 89).

His changed attitude to time may result from the loss of the watch or, perhaps, his loss of sight (even if he regained or found his watch or bought a new one, he would not be able to consult it now he is blind). Moreover, according to Ronald Hayman, "both losses are symbolical of entering a world in which time and space do not have their normal significance"[63]. The watch is of no more use in a world, where physical time has no meaning, a world in which linear, objective time, bringing forth change and progress, no longer exists. His final outburst is the play's purest expression of time where past, present and future are one, time, such as, in the first act, was associated only with Estragon and Vladimir, caught in the eternal present of their endless waiting.

The gradual deterioration of Pozzo is visible not only in his loss of the sense of time and in his blindness. We are, in fact, witnessing his degradation - he has mislaid his pipe and vaporizer, his wip is old and worn out, his memory is defective and he is no longer able to tell his story in such a beautiful way as he used to. Lucky has deterioreted, too. In the past he had beautiful thoughts and danced fine dances, now he can only dance "the net" and his thoughts come forth in a jumbled rush, as from a sped up, broken record-player. His deterioration, unlike that of Pozzo, who changes in the course of the play, took place before the play began, the only exception being the final loss of the ability to say anything. In Act I he is still able to deliver a speech, no matter how inconsistent and deformed it is, in Act II he is totally dumb. His speech, by the way, embodies in its style and sets forth in its statements the concept of human retrogression which clearly torments Pozzo and Lucky, but also, even though to a lesser extent, the two tramps.

The changes Lucky and Pozzo undergo in the course of the play introduce the usual notion of physical time, bringing forth development. We may be born, as Pozzo argues, the same day we die, but still the change indicates that we are born before we die. Pozzo and Lucky have changed from one act to the other, from one day to the next. The amount of time is relative (was it really one day which passed between the acts?) but the direction of physical time is preserved.

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[63] R. H a y m a n, Samuel Beckett, London 1970, p. 19.

Conditions get worse not only for Pozzo and Lucky but for Godot's messengers - in the second day the boy's brother is sick - - and finally for the tramps, even though they seem not to notice any change. Their food supply gets lower (no more carrots) and the wound that Lucky gave Estragon during the first act has begun to fester, so that he might have difficulties in walking. There are also Estragon's boots which were good in Act I, but in Act II are too big. Beckett wrote about this to Colin Duckwroth, making the following comment: "The second day boots are no doubt the same as first and Estragon's feet wasted, pined, shrunk and dwindled in interval. There's exegesis for you"[64]. The only change which seems for better and not for worse is that of the tree. Beckett, however, has rejected the notion that the new leaves on the tree might indicate some improvement when he insisted that it happens "Not to show hope or inspiration, but only to record the passage of time"[65].

Finally, there is also the difference in the structure of the acts. In Act I the expression "We're waiting for Godot" recurs only three times and in Act II twelve times, thus, maybe, indicating an increased impatience as time goes on, which has to be balanced by more frequent self-reminders of the necessity of the wait. The second act is shorter than the first one, which may be caused by the fact that the visit of Pozzo and Lucky is shorter then. The final exchange in both the acts is exactly the same, "Well, shall we go?", "Yes, let's go", but the roles are reversed and different punctuation demands slower delivering of these lines in Act II. Taking into account all these things one is aware that in "Waiting for Godot" a slow decline is shown. However, nothing hints at the possibility of reaching an end as the deterioration is very slow and gradual. Besides, even though some changes concerning the tramps are mentioned, they themselves do not feel any change, for them their situation is one of sameness and ennui. This could lead to the following conclusion: the structure of the play is that of a circle, characteristic of the monotonous and repetitive situ-

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[64] C. D u c k w o r t h, op. cit., p. 99. On another occasion, however, Beckett told Harold Hobson: "One of Estragon's feet is blessed and the other is damned. The boot won't go on the foot that is damned, and it will on the foot that is not. It is like the two thieves on the cross" (H. H o b s o n, op. cit., p. 153).

[65] R. Blin, quoted after: D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 383.

ation of the tramps, and that of a line sloping downwards, typical of the situation of the travellers. Thus two modes of being and two types of time are contrasted. The tramps, waiting endlessly, do not notice any change with a few exceptions only, they do not perceive the flow of physical time and their subjective notion is that of sameness and ever repeated circles/days. The travellers, on the other hand, at least Pozzo in Act I, have a notion of change brought forth by physical time.

Beckett told H. Hobson: "I am interested in the shape of ideas even if I do not believe in them. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine. I wish I could remember it in Latin. It is even finer in Latin. 'Do not despair, one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume, one of the thieves was damned.' That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters"[66]. "Waiting for Godot" is structured in symmetry and contrast between the tramps and the travellers and further contrasts within each pair. This play is exceptional among Beckett's plays as far as the treatment of time is concerned. The two notions of the deterioration and decline brought forth by physical time, and of sameness and repetitive quality of human existence brought about by psychological time, are presented by means of two contrasted pairs of characters. In his later plays these two notions are combined and instead of two modes of being symbolically represented by circle and line, there is one mode of being, that of gradual decline of a repetitive situation which can be best represented by a spiral. Obviously, the shape of the spiral is not the same in all of these plays as the relationship between sameness (coils of the spiral) and development (distance between the coils) is different.

3. "ENDGAME"

Samuel Beckett's next play, "Endgame", was first produced in French in 1957. Let us start with the very title of the play. On the one hand, when the title is treated as one word, an analogy to the final part of chess is implied, on the other hand, however, when the two parts of the title are considered separately, the

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[66] H. H o b s o n, op. cit., p. 153.

ideas of ending and playing are brought forth. These, in fact, are two of the main themes of the drama. The notion of playing is brought about by the chess metaphor as such but also by Hamm resembling not only the king in the game of chess but also a story-teller, and an actor. The play works out the notion of the play being a play and the characters being not only human beings whose story is depicted in the course of the play but also actors playing the parts of those people. Ruby Cohn has noticed: "Of all Beckett's dramas, "Endgame" is unique in its relentless focus upon play as play"[67]. It could be also argued that the element of play or game is brought by the different occupations of the characters, the main purpose of which is to pass the time, occupations which thus resemble the games of the tramps in "Waiting for Godot", who are imprisoned in the world of routine and Habit. On the other hand, the notion of ending is also very important. While Estragon and Vladimir waited for Godot to come, Hamm and Clov wait for an end. And just as in "Godot", the end of the waiting in this play seems also very distant and unattainable. Is it unattainable, however? There is one basic difference between waiting for Godot in the previous play and waiting for an end in this one. Whereas the situation of the tramps seemed unaltered by the passage of physical time, here there is change, "something is taking its course", something is changing; there is development which is noticed by the characters. There is, however, also an awareness of sameness, ennui and stasis. Thus, again, the two notions of time, comparable to line and circle, are combined in the structure and theme of the play, yet their relationship is different from that in Backett's first play.

The two elements of the theme and structure of "Endgame", the notion of playing and sameness, achieved by means of repetition, and that of ending and development, seen as gradual deterioration, were worked out gradually in the process of Beckett's writing the play[68].

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[67] R. C o h n, Play and Player in the Plays of Samuel Beckett, "Yale French Studies" No. 29, p. 44.

[68] Originally "Fin de Partie" was conceived as a two act play. In his letters to Schneider Beckett complained about the original version of the play as he wrote: "It turned out a three-legged gi-

It could be argued that the basic theme of "Endgame" is the presentation of a slow approaching of the end, be it the end of human existence, nature or world as such. Even though, however, the end is so close, it is not there yet, it is forever approaching. Meanwhile, the characters, captured in the slow development towards the end, have to live through a number of stages/days, all of which seem to be so similar to one another that they nearly become a repetition of the same stage, not exactly, however, as there is still some change between the consecutive stages. Let me, then, discuss the way in which these two ideas of stasis and development are worked out and joined to form a coherent whole and how a specific notion of time becomes a means of conveying the ideas of the play.

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raffe, not to mention only the architectionics, and leaves me in doubt whether to take a leg off or to add one" (Beckett's Letters on "Endgame". Extracts from His Correspondence with Director Alan Schneider, [in:] D. W o l f, E. F a n c h e r, eds, The Village Voice Reader, New York 1962, p. 183). Finally he decided to use a one-act form and to stress the notions of sameness and development. On the whole, as fits a shorter version, deletion exceeds additions. In the original typescript there were a few episodes which disappeared in the course of the creative process, The description of the Flood was read to Hamm by Clov, followed by the account of the descendants of Shem, a whole host of long-lived patriarchs who engendered large families. Inspired by the story Hamm decided to engender, too, and ordered Clov to bring him a woman. Then the two Clov scenes followed - in the first he appeared in a disguise of a woman, in the second, of a small boy - the child who was engendered (R. C o h n, The Beginning of "Endgame", "Modern Drama" May 1966-February 1967, No. 9, p. 321). A similar notion of rebirth or resurrection was conveyed by the scene with a small boy, who is only mentioned in the present version of the play (M. E s s l i n, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 72). The hope for change for better, for possible rebirth, is absent from the final version and thus the line of development is strictly that of gradual deterioration. The second theme of the play, the repetitious quality of human existence, has also been underlined more clearly and fully by means of the structure. There are more repetitions in the final version, be it even repetitions of the fact that things are running out or taking their course, and several "as befores" are included into the final version (R. C o h n, The Beginning of "Endgame", p. 323). Finally, the end has been also changed. The original version ended with an image of Hamm, whose wheel-chair was off-center, unfolding his handkerchief but instead of covering his face in recapitulation of the opening tableau, he buried his face in his hands (ibid., p. 320). While arriving at the final version, Beckett worked towards what he mentioned to his cast in Berlin production in 1967: "There are no accidents in 'Fin de partie'. Everything is based on analogy and repetition" (R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 152).

"Endgame", just like "Waiting for Godot", is cyclical and circular in its structure and thus the idea of sameness and stasis is brought forth. The play opens with a "brief tableau" followed by Clov's ritual of beginning the performance and its "day", his toneless chant to the audience, his exit and Hamm's awakening and address to the audience. It closes with Clov's toneless chant to the audience (the stage directions are the same in both the cases: "fixed gaze, tonelessly, towards auditorium")[69] and his exit, Hamm's "last soliloquy" and the elaborate ritual of ending and the end: "Brief tableau". Within this symmetrical frame one stage or day, however one wants to call it, of the characters' lives is depicted. Therefore "Endgame" is a most tightly closed play with the tableaux and rituals of lifting and putting down the handkerchief conveying the notion expressed by Hamm: "The end is in the beginning and yet you go on" (p. 69).

There is a number of repetitions in the play. Sometimes a whole scene is repeated, as in the case of Hamm's move round the room in his wheelchair (pp. 25-27, 62-65), where the fact that the movement is called "a round" implies its circular quality. Sometimes a part of the dialogue is repeated:

Hamm: Forgive me.
(Pause. Louder.)
I said, Forgive me.
Clov: I heard you. (pp. 7, 12-13)

The dialogue of the characters also stresses the notion of the repetitive quality of their situation as, for instance, when Nell complains: "why this farce, day after day?"(p. 14), a remark which is later repeated by Hamm (p. 32), or when Hamm says "It's the end of the day like any other day, isn't it Clov?" (p. 13). Again, exactly the same phrase, "Then it's a day like any other day" (p. 45), is repeated on another occasion. In such a way the repetitive quality of their existence is underlined by the exact sameness of repeated comments about it.

The sameness of the situation occasionally brings forth different reactions of the characters. When, for example, Hamm asks

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69 S. B e c k e t t, Endgame, New York 1978, pp. 1, 80. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

Clov whether he remembers being brought to Hamm's place, he says wearily: "Same answer. (Pause.) You've asked these questions millions of times", to which Hamm remarks: "I love old questions. (With fervour). Ah the old questions, the old answers, there's nothing like them" (p. 38). Clov, on the whole, seems to be less able to stand the situation they are in, keeps on speaking about leaving Hamm and the sentence: "I'll leave you" becomes one of the refrains of the play, being repeated a dozen times (pp. 9, 12, 37, 39, 41, 45 46, 48, 58 68). It has been noticed that whereas "Waiting for Godot" was about an important coming, "Endgame" is about an unimportant departure[70] and even Beckett is rumoured to have remarked that in "Godot" the audience wonders whether Godot will ever come and in "Endgame" they wonder whether Clov will ever leave[71].

There are many more repetitions in the play, this being one of the basic structural principles of the drama. It should be noticed that certain things are repeated not only in the course of one life but are typical of human existence as such and therefore are repeated over and over again in the course of the lives of different generations. V. Mercier has noticed that Nagg and Nell "may represent the hereditary factors present in character or mental endowment, indeed the two ash cans may represent the gonads, in which the past of the human race is waiting to become its future"[72]. Now that Nagg is the victim of Hamm's indifference he wants to return to the days of his own indifference ("We let you cry. Then we moved you out of earshot so that we might sleep in peace" p. 56), or he looks forward to the future when, it seems to him, Hamm will cry to him like when he was a very tiny boy and was frightened, in the dark, and he was his only hope (p. 56). The relationship of Clov and Hamm who is his father (whether natural or by adoption) parallels in some degree that of Hamm and Nagg. There is the same hatred in both, together with the necessity for the son to

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[70] W. F o w l i e, op. cit., p. 215; J. L. J o h n s o n, op. cit., p. 104; L. C. P r o n k o, op. cit., p. 39.

[71] R. C o h n, Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut, p. 241.

[72] V. M e r c i e r, How to Read "Endgame", "The Griffin" 1959, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 12.

look after the father in his old age - for without this inner compulsion neither son would have tolerated his father's presence. It could be also argued that in Nagg and Nell, Hamm's legless parents imprisoned in two dustbins, we see Hamm's own future - like that of an animal, living in sawdust, fed upon biscuits. Besides the three generations visible on the stage there in the possibility of the fourth one - the boy, if he really exists, may be said to represent the possibility that life may be renewable, that in place of the oldest, dying out generation (Nell is already dead and Nagg quite close to it) a new generation appears to take its place in the forever kept balance of life and death and thus even though there is a development (one dies and one is born) the result is that of sameness - the end of one's life is the beginning of another's.

All of these repetitions serve one main purpose of achieving the idea of sameness. An objection should be made, perhaps, by pointing out the repetitions of the kind "something is taking its course" which in fact, seem to imply that something is happening, developing. It must be noticed, however, that this development seems to have something of a repetitive quality in its meaning. This idea, however, will be discussed later on when the second structural element of the play, that of development is analysed. The happenings of the characters' existence have a monotonous sameness. Time is a succesion of meaningless events that merge into one another so imperceptibly that they are almost undistinguishable. The situation they are in seems to them always the same. Life goes on, and on, in infinite monotony, infinite torture and suffering. Everything is gray, as Clov tells Hamm (p. 31) and unchangeable. Hamm is white as "usual" (p. 64), the sea is "the same" (p. 30), the weather is "the same as usual" (p. 27) and finally even time is "the same as usual" (p. 4). Thus the stasis, sameness of the present becomes the stasis of the past and the future - if time is the same as usual it has, in fact, come to a stop, and the difference between the different phases of time is destroyed - everything is the eternal present of psychological time, time typical of the existence of the tramps in "Waiting for Godot". Again, in "Endgame", as in the previous play, the essential theme of the present becomes the focus of interest.

The notion of the eternal present, of stasis and sameness, was brought forth in "Godot" by a specific treatment of psychological time engendered by the working of Habit, Memory and Boredom. Vladimir and Estragon were to a great extent creatures of Habit, hiding into it to escape the "suffering of being". Can the same be said about the characters of this play? One thing must undoubtedly be noticed and stressed, namely that the situation of the characters in this play seems to be moved a step further as compared to that of Estragon and Vladimir. Whereas the suffering of the tramps was of a psychological kind and came only at random moments of full consciousness (to Vladimir more often than to Estragon), the characters in this play are suffering also physical pain - Hamm is blind and unable to move, sentenced to live in a wheelchair and relieved occasionally by his pain killer; Clov is unable to sit down, and the legless parents are imprisoned in the ashbins. Several times, in rare unguarded moments, Beckett has said that Hamm and Clov are Vladimir and Estragon at the end of their lives[73]. The suffering of being is noticed by them quite often. In the very first speeches of the play both Hamm and Clov complain of their sufferings and unhappiness: Clov says, "I can't be punished any more" (p. 1) and Hamm, "Can there be a misery (he yawns) loftier than mine?" (p. 2). Later on Clov says he "had never an instant of happiness" (p. 62). The idea of living as suffering was mentioned in "Waiting for Godot" when to Vladimir's remark that the willow must be dead, Estragon noticed: "No more weeping" (p.14). In "Endgame", when Clov lifts the lid of the bin to see Nagg is still alive and sees him crying, Hamm remarks: "Then he's still living (p. 62). Does it mean that the Boredom of living connected with Habit has been replaced by full awareness of suffering of being? Quite a contrary opinion may be ventured, though it may seem shocking at first. It seems that their constant complaints about their suffering have, in fact, become a kind of Habit. This is the only reasonable explanation of Hamm's yawning while complaining of his misery and Clov's speech: "I say to myself - sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you - one day. I say to myself - sometimes, Clov, you must be there better than that if you want them to let you go - one

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[73] J. Martin, R. Blin, quoted after: D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 468.

day. But I feel too old, and too far, to form new habits. Good, it'll never end, I'll never go" (pp. 80-81). Thus, even though it may seem ridiculous, their suffering and their talk about it seem to be a way of passing time and so a kind of Habit. Clov's repeated remarks about leaving Hamm are Habit, just like the very battle between Hamm and Clov. During the Berlin production in 1967, Beckett told Hamm - Schroder and Clov - Bollman: "Your war is the heart of the play" and he explained further: "Clov has only one wish, to return to his kitchen. That must be always evident, as is Hamm's effort to detain him"[74].

Clov has a few habitual occupations - he spends some time, less than he would wish, in the kitchen where, as he says, he leans on the table, looks at the wall and waits for Hamm to whistle him (p. 2), and then, in the room, he is busy obeying the orders of Hamm and speaking about leaving. He is less involved in Habit than Hamm, he is bored with the old questions and answers, and after pondering why he is obeying Hamm's orders, finally he cannot stand his situation any longer and hits Hamm with the toy dog. It might seem that towards the end of the play he is ready to leave after all, as he has put everything in order and instead of slippers he is wearing boots. Yet whether he will conquer his present habits and really leave the shelter seems highly questionable and rather improbable.

Hamm, on the other hand, is the one who always finds something to keep him busy. For him the nicest and most pleasant way of escaping the reality is to sleep and that is why he wants to go to sleep again the very next minute after awakening (p. 3). He is complaining that his parents are talking as by doing so they keep him awake (p. 18).

However, even during his waking hours he is able to escape the reality by plunging into the story he is telling. When he is not able to keep himself entertained and Clov happens to be in the kitchen, he takes out his whistle and calls his "servant" in. Then he may demand to be given the report about the weather and the telescope scenes follow, during which simple actions of Clov take a long time to complete. It might be argued that Clov makes them last so long on purpose to keep Hamm interested and thus busy and sa-

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[74] R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 153.

tisfied. For instance, while looking out of the window Clov lets his telescope fall so that he has to get down the ladder, pick up the telescope, and then get the ladder up again - meanwhile undoubtedly some time passes. He explains the reason of the falling of the telescope explicitly: "I did it on purpose" (p.29). Hamm may also tell Clov to take him round the room, when, again the putting of the wheelchair right in the middle takes a long time. Or he may keep asking the same questions and getting the same answers for a number of times. He may also suggest laughing (pp. 10, 29, 60) though neither of them ever feels like it. Sometimes he uses conversations as a means of passing time and is very angry at Clov when he does not want to participate in an exchange of meaningless sentences:

Hamm: Open the window.
Clov: What for?
Hamm: I want to hear the sea.
Clov: You wouldn't hear it.
Hamm: Even if you opened the window?
Clov: No.
Hamm: Then it's not worth opening it?
Clov: No.
Hamm: (violently.) Then open it!
(Clov gets up the ladder, opens the window. Pause.)
Have you opened it?
Clov: Yes.
(Pause.)
Hamm: You swear you've opened it?
Clov: Yes.
(Pause.)
Hamm: Well ...!
(Pause.)
It must be very calm.
(Pause. Violently.)
I'm asking you is it very calm!
Clov: Yes.
Hamm: It's because there are no more navigators.
(Pause.)
You haven't much conversation all of a sudden. Do you feel well?
Clov: I feel cold. (pp. 64-65)

Hamm, even though not having anything concrete or interesting to say, is trying desparately to make a conversation because he knows it will pass the time and he is furious at Clov for not wanting to participate in the game. Those numerous games being a kind of Habit, constitute one of the two main thematic motifs of the drama, that of playing. Throughout the play both the characters want the same thing: Hamm wants to die, Clov wants to leave, both

of them want to end the game of their life in the shelter. Either can choose to end the game at any moment. But during the course of the play neither will accept the responsibility of the act and so they play the game of tormentor and sufferer, of master and slave, of passing the time in one way or another, even though the game as such has become associated with great boredom: "Mc - (He yawns.) - to play" (p. 2).

According to Beckett's definition of Habit one of its results is the fusion of different phases of time so that the differences between the past, the present and the future are blurred and what remains is a kind of eternal present. In this context, as has been noticed during the analysis of "Godot", the notion of time brought forth by Habit is of psychological, subjective type and change, characteristic of the flow of physical time, is absent. Do Hamm and Clov live in the eternal present brought about by Habit, and doesn't physical time, bringing development and change, exist for them?

The terminology of physical time is preserved and used quite often yet its meaning seems absent as "Endgame" projects no temporal frame of reference which would allow one to distinguish among the "last million last moments" (p. 83) that constitute the play. Hamm expresses this atemporal quality when he says: "One of these days, I'll show them to you" (p. 4). Days and moments have become identical "moment upon moment of that old Greek and all life long you wait for that to mount to a life" (p. 70). Here Hamm picks up Clov's metaphor from early in the play ("Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap", p. 1) which will again formulate as a conclusion at the end: "Moments for nothing, now as always, time was never and time is over, reckoning closed and story ended" (p. 83). The sameness of all moments and the abstract quality of time are reflected in the vagueness and indeterminacy of the recurrent temporal expressions: "formerly" (p. 2), "once" (pp. 6, 17, 21, 42), even "yesterday" (pp. 15, 20, 43), "soon" (pp. 43, 54) and "one day" (pp. 36, 37, 81). The following conversation of Hamm and Clov is also significant and illuminating:

> Clov: I oiled them yesterday.
> Hamm: Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!
> Clov: (Violently.) That means that bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent. (p. 43-44)

Physical time has lost all meaning to Hamm - being blind, like Pozzo in Act II of "Godot", he has no notion of time. Clov's perception of reality and time is also strange - to him yesterday seems to be a long time ago, thus what he perceives is not physical time, but psychological time in which hours and days have been stretched out and time, having slowed down, seems to be dragging endlessly, always approaching but never quite reaching the desirable end. The phases normally associated with the flow of physical time, still exist, however. The past brought forth by voluntary memory, is fragmentary, obscure but visible. Yet the pursuit of the past of these characters is a futile and irrelevant critical task. The presence of these brief images of time when there was oil and Mother Pegg could have been given enough to maintain her light, exists only to project their incomprehensibility. The obscuring of the past which could explain and identify, is part of the experience those people suffer. What sense of the past exists, in any case, is the invention of the moment, of voluntary memory subjected to the more general laws of Habit. Their past, the reminiscences of which are one of the ways of passing the time and part of Habit, is a period of time they seem to long for and speak in "elegiac" tones (pp. 15, 20), yet whether it was really any better than the present is an open question, as the only information about the past we get comes from the characters and their vision is distorted by the workings of Habit. On the other hand, we have the future - - which, for them, will, one day, bring the desirable end. This future, however, seems very slow in coming and what they have, in fact, is the eternal present of an ever approaching, yet never coming, end.

It can be said, then, that the characters live in a world where physical time has lost its meaning and has been replaced by its psychological realization, its impact on the characters. What time it is has significance only when it may be time for something. Recurrently, Hamm asks Clov whether it is time (for his pain-killer, or his story - which, perhaps, is the same), but it is time no clock can tell. What is alarming is just time itself - that there is always time, that it is never time. Besides, the questions about whether it is time come always when Hamm cannot find anything to occupy himself with, so they are similar to Estragon's sentence: "Let's go" - suddenly, when there is nothing left to be done, those

characters realize the pressure of psychological time and hope that a lot of physical time has passed. To the question: "Is it time for my pain-killer?", asked several times in the course of the play (pp. 7, 12, 24, 35, 48, 71), Hamm always, but on the last occasion, gets the answer: "No". It seems to him that a lot of time has passed but, in fact, this impression is caused by the boredom associated with the burden of psychological time. Thus the breaks in the playing, which are characteristic of Habit and psychological time, bring about the notion of development (be it even seen as insufficient development) characteristic of physical time. It must be stressed here, however, that physical time as such does not have any meaning for the characters, what they perceive is not the flow of time, as to them time seems to have come to a stop and if it is moving at all, it is doing so at an ever slowing down pace. They perceive change and development, no matter how slight these might be, but they do not detect the source of this development in the flow of physical time.

Some of the critics have noticed that when the curtain rises "all the questions have been answered, the decision has been made and the confliot has already been resolved"[75] and that "Endgame" "could equally well have been called 'Stalemate'"[76]. These opinions could be argued with as in a stalemate or in a situation where everything is over there are no more moves/happenings possible and what is perceived is complete immobility and stasis, while here some change, development is still possible, no matter how slow and unimportant it may seem. The same can be said about what might happen after the final curtain - what will follow is still a further development, a dramatization of the situation of man in a world where the end is always near but never quite comes, so that man exists in a state of suspended animation/waiting for what will really happen. It is "the old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing" (p. 82); always the same, always over and finished, only to be begun once more. The absolute end will never come any more than the years will ever become infinity or time eternity. Thus the second structural and thematic element is introduced, that of slow development and unattainable

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[75] Th. B e r b o u r, Beckett and Ionesco, "The Hudson Review" 1958, Vol. 11, p. 272.

[76] V. M e r c i e r, Beckett/Beckett, New York 1977, p. 81.

end, the motif of ending. This theme was already introduced in "The Unnamable": "the question to be asked, off the record, why time doesn't pass from you, why it piles all about you, instant on instant, on all sides, thicker and thicker, your time, others' time, the time of the ancient dead and the dead yet unborn why it buries you grain by grain neither dead nor alive, with no memory of anything, no knowledge of anything, no history and no prospects buries under the seconds, saying any old thing, your mouth full of sand, oh I know it's immaterial, time is one thing, I another, but the question may be asked, why time doesn't pass, just like that, off the record, en passent, to pass the time ..."[77]. On the one hand, time seems not to pass, because the situation of the unaltered present is nearly the same all the time long, yet, on the other hand, moments of time, compared to grains of sand, accumulate and what is left is the hope that "one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap" (p. 1). The grain motif is the basic metaphor for the development brought forth by the passage of time. The increase of the heap, made up by the separate grains, is asymptotic, which means it can be approached in constantly decreasing increments but never quite reached. The metaphor of "the impossible heap", mentioned in Clov's opening speech, is alluded to several times in the course of the play. In his first speech Hamm says: "enough, it's time it ended" (p. 3) and then, towards the end of the play he again refers to it, saying: "Moment upon moment, pattering down, like the millet grains of ... (he hesitates) ... that Old Greek, and all life long you wait for that to mount up to a life" (p. 70). The imprecision of the reference is characteristic of Beckett, but the allusion to the grains of infinitely increasing heap is clear enough for us to understand that the characters are aware of being engaged in a temporal process. Some of the critics have traced the source of the metaphor to the paradox of Zeno the Eleatic, where an infinite number of millet grains never mount up to a whole[78]. Yet Beckett has said that

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[77] S. B e c k e t t, The Unnamable, p. 358.

[78] R. C h a m b e r s, An Approach to "Endgame", [in:] B. G. C h e v i g n y, ed., Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Endgame". A Collection of Critical Essays, New York 1969, p. 76; R.

the reference is not to Zeno[79]. D. Bair and M. Kędzierski trace the source to Eubulides of Miletus[80] and H. Kenner argues that it was Sextus Empiricus the Pyrrhonist who used just this example to "show that the simplest words - words like 'heap' - were empty of meaning, for adding single grains of millet to each other, when to the grains become a heap?"[81] The exact identity of the "Old Greek" is less germane than the fact that this image is reechoed in the course of the play and helps to eleborate the theme of ending which is presented as one of gradual deterioration leading to the desirable but never quite attainable end.

The opening lines of the play, Clov's four "finished's" balanced by the four "end's" in Hamm's first monologue, introduce the play's dominant and simple theme of closing or ending of an action and being. R. Cohn writes: "The many 'finished's' point out to the end of a world. [...] The dramatic action presents the death of the stock props of Western civilization - family cohesion, filial devotion, parental and connubal love, faith in God, empirical knowledge, and artistic creation"[82]. Both outside and inside the house, life is slowly coming to an end. Everything seems to be running out: bicycle wheels (p. 8), pap (p. 9), sugar plums (p. 55), Turkish Delight (p. 56), rugs (p. 67), coffins (p. 77), there are no more navigators (p. 65), tide (p. 62), there is even "no more nature" (p. 11). When Clov looks out of the window he says all is "corpsed" (p. 30) and "the whole place stinks of corpses" (p. 46). The waves are "lead" (p. 31), the light is an even "gray" (p. 31), "Light black. From pole to pole" (p. 32).

C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 144; R. H a y m a n, op. cit., p. 37; D. H. H e s l a, op. cit., p. 244; J. P i l l i n g, Samuel Beckett, London 1976, p. 125; M. R o b i n s o n, The Long Sonata of the Dead. A Study of Samuel Beckett, London 1969, p. 262; S.J. R o s e n, Samuel Beckett and the Pessimistic Tradition, New Jersey 1976, p. 176; E. W e b b, op. cit., p. 58.

[79] J. F l e t c h e r, J. S p u r l i n g, Beckett. A Study of His Plays, New York 1972, p. 73.

[80] D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 465; M. K ę d z i e r s k i, Beckett, gra, koniec, "Dialog" 1981, nr 7, p. 127.

[81] H. K e n n e r, A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett, New York 1973, p. 123.

[82] R. C o h n, Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut, p. 228.

The change, characteristic of the flow of physical time as it is presented in the drama, is that of gradual deterioration. The life of the characters is measured out not so much by the number of years that have passed, as by the distance from the final end -- death. That is why death, as the only escape of the characters from their present situation, is often evoked either verbally by their numerous remarks about it, or visually by means of certain images.

When the play opens, as H. Zeifman argues, what we see is "the set with its death images. Thus the picture with its face to the wall evokes a mood of mourning, in orthodox Judaism, for instance, it is the custom to turn pictures to the wall in the home of someone who has recently died. The two sheets covering Hamm and his parents are likewise death images, recalling the shrouds used to cover corpses. And the two ash cans or dustbins, containing the decaying flesh of Nagg and Nell, are linked with the grave via such religious images as 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'"[83]. An objection should be made here, namely that the placing of the parents in the dustbins was, as Beckett himself explained, the only feasible way to have them make their abrupt but unobtrusive entrances and exits. Originally he had planned to have them in wheelchairs but it was evident before rehearsals began that their chairs would detract from Hamm's mood of magnificent isolation that was to dominate the stage[84]. Besides, when the play begins, the death is implied but no one has died yet (so, according to this critic's argument there is no explanation of the picture being turned to the wall). It is true, however, that the life these characters know is a slow process of dying. The moments pile up "grain upon grain", but the impossible culmination always remains somewhere ahead of them. Meanwhile, they can comfort one another by saying that "something is taking its course", that the deterioration is growing and that the end cannot be far away. Clov's eyes and legs are bad yet he can still walk and see (pp. 7, 35-36), but Hamm's prophesy may come true one day (p. 36) and then Clov will

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[83] H. Z e i f m a n, Religious Imagery in the Plays of Samuel Beckett, [in:] R. Cohn, ed., Samuel Beckett. A Collection of Criticism, New York 1975, p. 86.

[84] D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 469.

be blind and unable to move[85]. Hamm bleeds less (p. 7. Is it an indication that there is not much blood left in him?), Clov has fewer visions (p. 46), Nagg's story about the tailor gets worse and worse (p. 22), the sight and hearing of Nagg and Nell are failing (p. 15) and to be able to look out of the window Clov has to use the steps, the information about which astonishes Hamm, who asks: "Why? Have you shrunk? (p. 28). The gradual deterioration, the final end of which is total annihilation and death, seems natural and obvious: "That old doctor, he's dead, naturally?"(p. 24), and no one's light is on as "Naturally it's extinguished" (p. 42). The light, on the whole, in the landscape of "Endgame" seems to be fading and slowly approaching darkness, yet never quite reaching it. The following exchange between Clov and Hamm illuminates the meaning of light and darkness and connection of this imagery with the theme of ending:

> Hamm: And the sun?
> Clov: (looking) Zero.
> Hamm: But it should be sinking. Look again.
> Clov: (looking) Damn the sun.
> Hamm: Is it night already then?
> Clov: (looking) No.
> Hamm: Then what is it?
> Clov: (looking) Gray.
> (Lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, louder.) Gray.
> (Pause. Still louder.)
> GRRAY!
> (Pause. He gets down, approaches Hamm from behind, whispers in his ear.)
> Hamm: (starting) Gray! Did I hear you say gray?
> Clov: Light black. From pole to pole.(pp. 31-32)

According to Hamm, light should be sinking, night should be approaching, there should be a concrete development visible because then their waiting would be finishing, the end would be approaching. That is why he is so shocked to hear the light is still gray - no visible change has taken place and thus the end is still very disant. Clov, on the other hand, does not wait for the end so very desparately as Hamm does, so he is not so shocked with the

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[85] If this happens, Clov will replace, as it were, Hamm and his life will become a repetition of that of Hamm - the circularity will be seen not only in one life but in the relationship of the lives of representatives of different generations.

unchanged light. Furthermore, to console Hamm, he changes the description from "gray" to "light dark" (which is nearly the same) to show the slight change of colour which, after all, might have taken place. J. Knowlson, in his analysis of light and darkness in the theatre of Beckett writes: "Most obviously, of course, light is evocative of death, both that of the individual and the dying of the world. Mother Pegg, for instance, died of darkness when 'her light was extinguished', for Hamm had insufficient pity to provide oil for her lamp. The earth is extinguished 'though I never saw it lit', comments Clov; 'the light is sunk', and in Hamm's chronicle 'the sun was sinking among the dead'"[86].

There is still another conversation in which extinction of light is suggestive of death, namely when Clov says he has to go to the kitchen as he has got things to do there and Hamm is curious what he is doing there:

> Clov: I look at the wall.
> Hamm: The wall! And what do you see on your wall? Mene? Mene? Naked bodies?
> Clov: I see my light dying.
> Hamm: Your light dying! Listen to that! Well, it can die just as well here, your light. Take a look at me and then come back and tell me what you think of your light. (p. 12)

Hamm mocks Clov's looking at his light dying because it seems to him that his own death is much closer than that of Clov. He expresses the idea at another place when he tells Clov that one day Clov will become blind and lame just as he himself is now (p. 36). This could be an indication of everyone having to pass several stages of deterioration before reaching the end, the process of dying symbolizing the passing of time in man's life. Thus the three generations of the play would represent three successive stages of decomposition in time. On the one hand, while asking Clov whether he sees "mene, mene" on the wall, Hamm seems to expect the kind of answer he gets, though not exactly the kind of wording of the idea. J. Sheedy writes: "'Mene, mene: was part of the message written by disembodied fingers on the wall of king Belshazzar's palace. Asked by the frightened king for an explanation, Daniel, in whom there was 'light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of gods',

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86 J. K n o w l s o n, Light and Darkness in the Theatre of Samuel Beckett, London 1972, p. 30.

replied that because the king had praised false, material gods, and had not glorified 'the God in whose hand thy breath is, [...] the part of the hand was sent for him, [...]. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE, God has numbered the kingdom and finished it'. 'Mene, mene' thus suggests why Hamm's kingdom is in smithereens"[87]. The last sentence of this interpretation seems questionable. It has been stressed earlier that Beckett uses religious references but that his plays cannot be interpreted in religious terms only. To me, the allusion in this passage refers more to the idea of king Belshazzar's kingdom being "finished" than to any religious matters. Hamm hopes Clov may have seen the inscription "mene, mene" because such an inscription would indicate the approaching end, of his and of Hamm's kingdom[88]. That is why he is angry when he gets the answer - instead of an indication of his own end he gets the information about someone else's approaching end. He should not be furious, however, because if Clov sees his light dying, this means that the change is taking place and the end is approaching, the end both of Hamm and Clov. The two central characters proceed towards an ending that may, in fact, be no ending at all, merely a further stage in a gradual process of inexorable entropy.

. "Endgame", even though the partly preserved terminology of time is not quite meaningful, is still set in temporality and the section of time presented on the stage is a limited section near the end, in which the whole process of the slow decline becomes visible. The gradual deterioration is expressed by means of the already discussed imagery of light and darkness, the elimination and reduction of things, which are running out, and the progressive disintegration. The ending theme is further elaborated by the many repeated finished's. When Nagg once more tries to tell the Jewish joke, Hamm starts shouting: "(Exasperated.) Have you not finished? Will you never finish? (With sudden fury.) Will this never finish?" (p. 23). Just before Hamm tells his story, he almost

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[87] J. J. S h e e d y, The Comic Apocalypse of King Hamm, "Modern Drama" May 1966 - February 1967, No. 9, p. 311.

[88] Hamm may, among other things, be seen as the king of a chess game, there is also an allusion to his being a king when he uses a slightly changed quotation of the sentence of Shakespearean Richard III - "My kingdom for a nightman", p. 23.

echoes Clov's opening phrases: "It's finished, we're finished. (Pause.) Nearly finished" (p. 50). All these repetitions refer to an end, but what becomes evident when a close look at them is taken is that the end has not come yet - Nagg has not finished telling his joke and he never will because it is a good pastime for him, neither, for the same reason, will Hamm's story be ended. The toy dog, which Clov is making for Hamm, is not finished, either (p. 39). On all these occasions to finish means to end, to complete. In several other instances, however, this word gets the explicit meaning of killing and thus the notion of end is connected with that of death. Hamm says Clov will "finish" (exterminate) the rat later (p. 54). There is also the conversation between Clov and Hamm:

> Hamm: Why don't you finish us? (Pause.) I'll tell you the combination of the larder if you promise to finish me.
> Clov: I couldn't finish you.
> Hamm: Then you shan't finish me. (p. 37)

In this passage the word "finish" is undoubtedly equivalent to "kill". Clov does not want to kill Hamm, which, however, does not mean that the end will never come to him, because, as Clov says later of the rat: "If I don't kill the rat he'll die" (p. 68). If he does not kill Hamm, his master will die all the same, with the only difference that his death will be very slow in coming.

It must be stressed that the theme of ending, of approaching death, is not restricted to the main characters only. They are very attentive not to allow any other kind of life to go on - they kill the rat and the flea, for instance, because finding that there are still fleas, Hamm is very perturbed as "humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God!" (p. 33). The reaction of Hamm can be interpreted in two ways, as the case with Beckett's work so often is. On the one hand, he might not be able to stand the thought of life going on after his extinction. On the other hand, however, taking into consideration the idea so often repeated in the works of Beckett that life is strictly connected with suffering because it is a kind of expiation for the eternal sin of being born, Hamm might want to spare the others their suffering. This opinion could be supported by the fact that both Hamm and Clov are dismayed when they see the little boy because he might become the "potential procreator" (p. 78). Hamm does

not want to believe Clov really sees the boy. When Patrick Magee asked about Hamm's response to Clov's sighing of the small boy in the London production of 1964, Beckett replied: "Anxiety, Pat. There should be nothing there. There must be nothing there..."[89]. Besides, in the original version of the play the boy did exist and moreover there was the engendering scene and the new generation presented on the stage. At the beginning Beckett envisioned Hamm wanting life to go on; in the final version, however, all Hamm hopes and yearns for is the total annihilation and extinction, the final end of himself, life of any kind and the world as such[90].

Meanwhile, as there is still nature which makes them change, lose their hair and teeth (p. 11), "something is taking its course" towards the final end. The phrase about something taking its course is repeated several times (pp. 13, 32, 42), just like the phrase "We're getting on" (pp. 9, 14, 39, 44, 68). Both of these expressions convey the idea that "life goes on" (p. 66), that there is movement forwards, or rather the downward movement of gradual deterioration. These sentences, however, if considered in the context of the play as such, become slightly shocking. The idea of development is expressed by exactly the same sentence, so by means of a repetition which evokes the notion of stasis. What is happening here after all? Do we encounter a development or a static state of repetition? The truth is that what is presented is a mixture of development and stasis, that the development as such is also a kind of repetition. Things change very slowly and so every next stage is only a slightly altered repetition of the previous one. Thus the development is only discernible when many stages are compared with one another.

One thing more should be mentioned here, namely Beckett's idea of "the curve of tension" in "Endgame". The degrees of temperature mentioned as weather reports four times in Hamm's story (0°, 50°, 100°, 0°) reveal the play's changing levels of tension: "Hamm's story is just about the center of 'Endgame'. Up to that point there seems to be a steady increase, if not of tension (for that a developing plot would be needed), at least of expectation: 0-50-100.

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89 E. B r a t e r, Noah, "Not I" and Beckett's "Incomprehensibly Sublime", "Comparative Drama" 1974, Vol. 8, p. 255.

90 For the discussion of consecutive versions of "Endgame" see: R. C o h n, The Beginning of "Endgame".

The point of culmination is reached in the story. The return to 'zero' forecasts the outcome of the play: in Nagg's curse of Hamm which immediately follows the 'story', the fall to despair is completed. This is the basis, the gray-black level of the play. Hamm establishes the zero point with the words, 'Our revels are now ended'. What follows, the second part of 'Endgame', is undisguised whining away of time, mere procrastination of the end, the imminence of which is constantly being evoked"[91].

Thus the story, being in a sense parallel to the play, also contains the two elements of the drama - those of development and stasis. There is a curve of tension, of progressive development, yet the outcome of it is the return to the point of zero degrees - the same, or nearly the same phase will be repeated once more. Hamm's story, on the whole, is quite illuminating at it presents some basic elements of "Endgame" in a concise and perhaps more clear way than the play itself does. The story, just like Hamm's life, "is finished ... nearly finished" (p. 50). The line of the story, as that of the play, develops, reaching a climax, then to come down again and to end at the beginning so both of them complete a circle and the two elements, of development and circularity or stasis, are present in them. Hamm and Clov are in a kind of shelter which they describe as a hole (p. 39), and the man in the story also came from a hole (p. 52). Outside of these two holes everything seemed to be dead, the seeds do not want to sprout, "will never sprout", as Clov claims (p. 13), there will be no rebirth in spring. The same is true of the landscape in the story, when Hamm reports what he said to the man: "But what in God's name do you imagine?

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91 Materialen zu Becketts "Endspiel". Berichte und Auf saetze, Frankfurt am Main, 1968, pp. 69-70, quoted after: H. P. H a s s e l b a c h, Samuel Beckett's "Endgame": A Structural Analysis, "Modern Drama" 1976, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 27. See Hans Peter Hasselbach's work for the discussion of the division of the play into sixteen smallest units/scenes done by Beckett during Berlin production, the ratio of rising to falling action of the play and also analysis of the two motifs, of ending and playing. As far as the last problem is concerned he sees the first part of the play, the rising action till Hamm's story, as the presentation of the stasis of playing, whereas the second part of the action, the falling one, presents the motif of ending. It seems, however, that these two motifs do not replace each other so neatly.

That the earth will awake in the spring? That the rivers and seas will run with fish again? That there's manna in heaven still for imbeciles like you?"(p. 53). The past Hamm from the story, like the present Hamm on the stage "imagined already that (he) wasn' t much longer for this world" (p. 53). This sentence is very important for the proper understanding of the play. If the story is a "chronicle", as Hamm insists on calling it (p. 58), then it is not merely an invention but a memory of things past, no matter how distorted by Habit they are. Hamm still remembers that his end was approaching then, and it was a long time ago - there are several hints in the play that the boy from the story is, in fact, Clov. If, then, this is the case, the notion of the close end has been felt by Hamm for a long, long time. He has been waiting for it to approach, hoping it would any moment for many years. The same can be said about the end of the story, which relates to Hamm'a life and the play as such. Hamm says: "I'll soon have finished with this story. (Pause.) Unless I bring in other characters" (p. 50). Undoubtedly he will bring other characters, or invent another story. In reality other characters have been brought in - the boy has been detected by Clov. The story becomes, in fact, fused with reality:

Hamm: Before you go ...
(Clov halts near the door.)
...say something.
Clov: There is nothing to say.
Hamm: A few words... to ponder... in my heart.
Clov: Your heart!
Hamm: Yes.
(Pause. Forcibly.)
Yes!
(Pause.)
With the rest, in the end, the shadows, the murmurs, all the trouble, to end up with.
(Pause.)
Clov... He never spoke to me. Then, in the end, before he went without my having asked him, he spoke to me. He said... (pp. 79-80)

Clov does not say anything, besides, he might not be leaving, after all. Yet Hamm, the story teller, reworks the reality of the present to make it become convenient, soothing fiction of the past. Even though distorted, the reality is still present, to some extent,, at least, in the story of Hamm. It seems that the characters try to change, affect the present reality be imposing the ele-

ment of fiction on it. And just like Hamm, by means of relating the nonexistent happening of Clov's saying something to him before leaving finally forces Clov to say a few words, they also keep talking about the end, the terminus, hoping that the fiction of their talk will become the reality. Hamm says: "We've come to an end" (p. 79); he is preparing for the last soliloquy (p. 77), he notices that their "revels are now ended" (p. 56); Clov is looking out of the window for the "last time" (p. 78) and he dreams of a "world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust" (p. 57).

Towards the end of the play the earlier "what's happening" (pp. 13, 32) is replaced by "what's happened" (p. 74). While changing the tense used in the question Hamm seems to want to imply that something really important has happened, that there has been a further development and that finally the end has approached. This hope is destroyed by Clov, who says: "What for Christ's sake does it matter?" (p. 75). Clov knows that even though something may have happened, their situation is basically the same, what is left for them is to wait. Beckett seems to view human life as consisting of three elements: birth, waiting and death. His characters may be waiting for Godot or for an end. The object of their waiting is not so important as the waiting as such. If Hamm and Clov are really Estragon and Vladimir at the end of their lives, they are waiting no more for Godot, who might change their situation but for the final change, an end which seems to denote death quite clearly. If Godot is interpreted as death, then the subject of both the plays is quite similar, "Endgame" being a presentation of a more desperate waiting for death. In both the plays the characters are under the pressure of psychological time. There is, however, one basic difference between these two plays. In "Waiting for Godot" time is perceived by the tramps as totally circular and development, brought forth by physical time, is not noticed by them as they themselves and their situation remain unaltered. In "Endgame", on the other hand, the characters realize two aspects of time: the sameness brought by psychological time and the development (although they do not associate the latter with physical time). Therefore the preoccupations of the characters in the two plays are different. In "Godot" the tramps try to do their best to

pass their time and thus playing becomes their mutual obsession. In "Endgame" there are two activities: playing, reflecting the stasis, sameness, circularity of psychological time and ending, reflecting the development and thus physical time.

The development is very slow, the heap of the "Old Greek" seems never to be completed. Hamm complains: "This is slow work" (p. 12). Hamm, just like the tramps in "Godot", yearns for a "climate where they crucify quick", he could also repeat Belacqua's words: "That's a quick death. God help us all". He expresses exactly the same wish when he cries: "Then let it end! With a bang! Of darkness!" (p. 77). All he gets, however, is what most of the characters of Beckett get - a prolonged dying, or life which becomes associated with death.

There is a scene in the play when Clov asks: "Do you believe in the life to come?" and gets Hamm's answer: "Mine was always that" (p. 49). This conversation may be interpreted in a number of ways, depending on whether the phrase "life to come" is treated as a noun phrase or a noun and infinitive. In the first reading the meaning conveyed is that Hamm's life was always similar to life after death, so that, in fact, his present state is not really life, but a kind of existence after death. This interpretation can be supported by another conversation between the characters, when Hamm talks about seeing a big sore inside his breast but disagrees with Clov's comment: "You saw your heart" by saying: "No, it was living" (p. 32). If, then, he thinks his heart is not living then he cannot be living, either. It is not important here whether we believe him or not, the thing implied still remains the same - he thinks he is dead. The second interpretation of the conversation, the one discussing these two words separately, seems to imply that life could come, which, in turn, could imply that life could be finished, ended. This interpretation, again, could be supported by the text, where the whole idea of ending is of crucial importance. Both these interpretations, however, convey one basic idea - that of suffering. Life, as it is lived by Beckett's characters, is full of suffering and waiting and thus the final end, death, is always very slow in coming; nothing ends with a bang, the end of everything is a prolonged whimper.

One question remains still to be answered, namely what is the basic outcome of the situation presented on the stage. Does the

desired end come at the close of the play? There are, in fact, as R. Chambers suggests, three possible interpretations of the final tableau: "perhaps it means death; or perhaps the repose so long desired; or perhaps the curtain will rise again to-morrow in the unending, repetitive play we have just witnessed"[92]. It seems to me, though undoubtedly the first two interpretations are valid, that the play ends at yet another beginning; one circle has been completed and still another will follow, to put it in Hamm's words: "The end is in the beginning yet you go on" (p. 69). It is not to say, however, that the end of the play will lead to a beginning which will be exactly the same as the one presented in the play. Something has happened, something has taken its course, there has been a development, no matter how slight. To be more precise, both the theme and the structure of the play are a combination of two elements: circularity (stasis, eternal present brought forth by psychological time) and development (characteristic of the flow of physical time). These ideas could be represented graphically by means of a circle and straight line. The two elements are not separate, however, or restricted, as in "Waiting for Godot", to different plots. Unlike either the tramps, for whom time existed as a circle, or the travellers, who perceived it as a line of development only, the characters of "Endgame" perceive time as a combination of these two elements. The best way of presenting their notion of time would be, then, that of a spiral in which one coil would symbolize one phase of their existence (day, the period of time presented on the stage during the performance or however one wants to call it) and the distance between the coils would stand for linear development. Such a presentation would explain why the end is so slow in coming. The characters move along the wire making up the spiral so their journey is a long one compared to the distance between the two coils they have covered. This distance is the physical time which has passed. The coil of the spiral would stand for time as it is perceived by the characters. The amount of psychological time is great, therefore the change sufficient for the small amount of physical time seems inadequate. This explains why the end is so slow in coming - subjectively slow, of course, because objectively speaking physical time passes al-

[92] R. C h a m b e r s, op. cit., p. 81.

ways at exactly the same pace. In "Endgame" the spiral is built in such a way that the consecutive coils of it come very close together so that the amount of physical time seems extremely small as compared to the amount of psychological time. That is the reason why the play seems to present a situation which will repeat forever, where the end is yet another beginning. What remains to be done here is to quote what Beckett has said about it: "Between the beginning and the end is just that bit of difference there is between beginning and end"[93].

4. "ACT WITHOUT WORDS I" AND "ACT WITHOUT WORDS II"

Beckett's two mimes, "Act Without Words I" and "Act Without Words II", both written in French in 1956, are his most explicit artistic statements of the human condition. There is a number of similarities between them, the title as such and the dramatic genre, new for Beckett, being most obvious of them. In both the plays light is very bright, which has been interpreted as an indication that the appearance of the characters on the stage is a symbolic representation or image of birth[94]. These two works can, in fact, be treated as metaphoric statements about human life - their beginning standing for the birth of a human being and the middle for man's life; their end, however, does not bring a solution, a death, but an induction to yet another repetition. Thus, again, the two elements of Beckett's drama are discernible: that of repetition/circle and that of development/line. There are also quite a few differences between the mimes - the number of characters in the second one is twice as big as in the first one. The relationship between the two thematic and structural elements: line and circle, is also different in case of each play and therefore it seems justifiable to discuss them separately.

"Act Without Words I" is a mime for a single actor who is flung onto an empty stage. E. Webb writes: "It is significant that the

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93 Materialen zu Becketts "Endspiel", quoted after: H. P. H a s s e l b a c h, op. cit., p. 29.

94 R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 156; A. P. H i n c h l i f f e, op. cit., p. 120; E. W e b b, op. cit., p. 86.

man is 'flung' onto the stage: Martin Heidegger, a philosopher with whose work Beckett seems to have some familiarity, speaks of Geworfenheit, the stage of being 'thrown' or 'flung' into existence, as the basic existential situation of man"[95]. As the mime starts, the two notions, those of development and repetition, are brought into focus. When the man hears the whistle, for the first three times he obeys it and is "Immediately flung back on stage, [...] falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects"[96]. After the man has fallen three times in succession, his reaction to the whistle changes: "He reflects, goes toward left wing, hesitates, thinks better of it, halts, turns aside, reflects" (p. 125). Now his reaction at first is to obey the whistle, as he has repeatedly done so far, only after a moment of hesitation does he change his mind and in the end he does not do this. Thus only after several repetitions is any kind of development possible. The man's reactions to the various objects which gradually appear on the originally empty stage are also illuminating. He never notices them by himself but only after his attention has been attracted by the sound of the whistle. Each appearance originally seems to bring hope or relief: the tree is the source of shade, the scissors enable him to trim his nails, the carafe promises the soothing of his thirst, the cubes and rope will enable him to commit suicide. The original hopes soon change into complete disillusionment: the palms of the tree close and the shade is gone, neither the cubes nor the rope make the reaching of the carafe any easier, and finally the suicide is also impossible. In the end the man is left alone on the stage, all the props gone. He has stopped reacting to the whistle and the carafe which now "plays about his face" (p. 133) does not make any impression on him. He has learnt his lesson, he has gradually reduced to complete passivity, he has learnt "through movement to reflect and through reflection to stop moving"[97]. It could be said, then, that the action presented on the stage is one of linear development, the best proof of it being the changes the

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[95] E. W e b b, op. cit., p. 86.

[96] S. B e c k e t t, Act Without Words I, [in:] Krapp's Last Tape and other Dramatic Pieces, New York 1978, p. 125. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

[97] R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 157.

men undergoes moving from hope to despair. It could be equally well said, however, that the play has the shape of a circle, the end being yet another return to the despair of the beginning. Besides, the man is flung onto the stage three times at the beginning of the play but also once towards the end of it. It can be undoubtedly said that there is development discernible - he has learnt something in the course of the play - he does not react to the repeated whistle and at the end of the play is flung just once. But this one time is an indication that he still has not learnt very much. He is progressing rather slowly in the knowledge of how to react to the different stimuli. It could be also argued that some other happenings presented in the play will be repeated in the future. It was enough for Beckett to present one kind of repetition (the fact there is a slight change in it is not really important) to suggest the repetitive quality of the other actions. In the end the slightly changed repetitions will lead also to a completely altered situation. Unfortunately this will take a long time, and many coils of the spiral will have to be completed before linear development really becomes visible.

"Act Without Words II" also consists of two structural elements, comparable to a circle and a straight line of development. The notion of the repetitive quality of certain actions is brought in two ways, as it were; A's actions are repeated and B's actions are repeated but at the same time it is implied that the repetitive actions of A in a sense repeat the actions of B. In other words, two notions are brought forth; that each life is a succession of repeated actions, and that the repetitive quality is also visible in the life of humanity as such - no matter how different the individuals might be, their lot is that of constant repetition. Thus, perhaps even more explicitly than in the case of other works, Beckett draws the attention of the audience to the universal quality of the situation presented.

The beginning and end of every segment of the story of A and B is marked by the going out of the sack being forced to do so by the goad and the going back into the sack after having completed the actions of the cycle, which seems to resemble a day to a great extent. The routine actions of A and B are different as they reflect the differences between those two characters. A is "slow,

awkward [...] absent"[98], he often broods, he begins and ends his day with a prayer, he is untidy, leaving his clothes in disorder, he seems to be dissatisfied - the same carrot which is eaten by B with appetite, causes his disgust. He is ill and he keeps taking pills during the day. On the whole, he is not satisfied with what is happening to him and quite unwilling to begin any day - that is why the goad has to sting him twice before he finally gets out of the sack. B, on the other hand, is "brisk, rapid, precise" (p. 137). He never does anything the second best way possible. He has his watch, map and compass always at hand and consults them very often to achieve the best results. It could be, perhaps, said that whereas A pays more attention to his subjective feelings and reactions, B is more concerned with the objective, concrete realities of the world, and in this respect reminds us of Pozzo in Act I, always consulting his watch and keeping the schedule. Like Pozzo in Act I he is satisfied with himself and the world and fulfills all his duties in a reliable and neat way. His clothes are always put in a neat pile and one reminder of the goad is enough for him to get out of the sack and start his day by consulting his watch. As Beckett indicates, the actions of the characters "though B has more to do than A, should have approximately the same duration" (p. 137). The terminology of psychological and physical time does not seem very well applicable in the discussion of the mime, yet, if it is applied, it can be undoubtedly said that, subjectively speaking, for A there is more time to live through than for B; B is always active and lives in the external, objective physical time (that is why he pays so much attention to his watch). A suffers much and does not want to have to get through yet another daily routine which is an ordeal for him - that is why he does not want to get up, just like Hamm, who wants to go back to sleep the very moment he awakes.

The circle in the structure and theme of the mime is visible not only on the level of the individual life of A and B, in which a going into the sack leads to yet another going out, just like the evening prayer (or looking at the watch) is a sort of prelude to the morning prayer (or looking at the watch). A's going back

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[98] S. B e c k e t t, Act Without Words II, [in:] Krapp's Last Tape..., p. 137. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

to the sack is an indication of B's having to go out of the sack and so on and on. It could be said, then, that there are two kinds of repetition in the course of the mime. On the one hand, the single day of A and B is repeated, on the other, the segment of A's day plus B's day also constitutes a repetitive whole. The indication of these two kinds of repetition is, in fact, very important. The one day of a concrete individual is repeated endlessly and no change or development is discernible. If, then, the life of A (or B) consists of a number of days, all of which are the same, it can be said that his life consists just of one day and then Pozzo's sentence comes to one's mind: "One day we are born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you?". This idea is expressed by L. Pronko, who writes: "The meaningless rhythm is not only that of the life of a single day, it is also the rhythm of lifetime, for the sack symbolizes womb and tomb as much as it does sleep"[99]. The life of the separate characters accomplishes nothing, does not bring any change or development, they live in the eternal present, characteristic of subjective feelings of time. Yet there is some development visible, to us, at least. At the end of each day/cycle, each character takes the two sacks and carries them "bowed and staggering" (pp. 138, 140) to put them in another place on the stage. Therefore the mime presents three stages of development - the first one beginning the play before A is woken, when the goad appears near the right wing, where all the sacks are. Then, in the middle of the mime, after A has gone to his sack and B is about to get out of his, the goad enters "on a wheeled support (one wheel)" (pp. 138-139) and gets to the middle of the stage, where the sacks are now. At the end of the play the goad enters "on wheeled support (two wheels)" (p. 140) and has still a longer way to cover because the sacks are now on the left. This has been presented by Beckett by means of the diagram (Fig. 2).

Against the sameness of the cycles/days of A and B, the development and change, characteristic of the flow of objective, physical time, is clearly discernible. Not only does the arrangement of the sacks and their place on the stage change, the goad also "develops", getting a more elaborate support each time, maybe because each time it has a greater distance to cover. The stasis,

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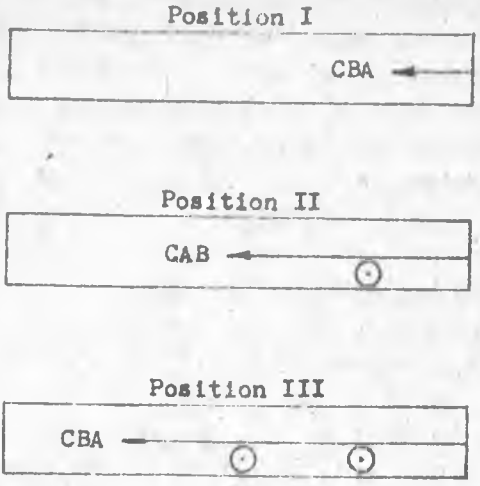
[99] L. C. P r o n k o, op. cit., pp. 48-49.



(p. 141)

Fig. 2

sameness of the situation of the characters is visible in the round of their activities, the development has found its stage image - the imaginary line connecting the three consecutive placements of the sacks, and the concrete, visible line of the goad ended by an arrow which is the concrete sting of the tool but also the symbolic indication of the direction of the flow of physical time which, in turn, is represented by the line of the goad's stick. Thus the two elements, those of development and stasis are symbolically present not only in the theme of the mime but also in the stage imagery.

5. "ALL THAT FALL"

Beckett's first radio play, "All That Fall", was written in English in 1956 and presented on the B.B.C. Third Programme on January 13, 1957. In radio drama existence is equivalent to sound -

- anything which ceases to produce sound becomes nonexistent. Beckett exploits the power of the voice and other sound effects to evoke a transitory presence in a temporal universe. The purely aural medium depends more radically than the stage on temporal extension. The artist manipulates our attention, giving or withholding perceived phenomena moment by moment, stressing the fact that whatever falls silent, disappears, stops existing in the present and belongs to the past. Hugh Kenner has noticed that all the "movements in space are translated by the aural medium into time, where sounds extend themselves and die"[100]. He adds: "Thus the mode in which the play itself exists, as a series of auditory effects in time, sustains its theme of transcience"[101]. The fading of the sound symbolically presents the fading of the existence, the change of being into non-being. This notion, even though undoubtedly true to some extent, is contradicted by what, at times, is happening in the play as, for instance, when Mrs Rooney says: "Do not imagine, because I am silent, that I am not present, and alive, to all that is going on. [...] Do not flatter yourselves for one moment, because I hold aloof, that my sufferings have ceased"[102]. In this speech she objects to the notion of being nonexistent while silent but also brings forth some of the ideas very important for the play, the idea of living as suffering and the very idea of being alive. For, even if her remark is taken into consideration, she, in fact, does not exist for the listeners of the radio piece when she is silent. Her constant movement from being heard/alive to being silent/dead brings about the notion that she is only partly alive, a notion expressed by her verbatim at other places in the play: "Don't mind me. Don't take any notice of me. I do not exist. The fact is well known" (p. 48) and in the scene with Mr Tyler:

> Mr Tyler: What sky! What light! Ah in spite of all it is a blessed thing to be alive in such weather, and out of hospital.

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[100] H. K e n n e r, Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study, Berkeley - Los Angeles 1968, p. 169.

[101] Ibid., p. 170.

[102] S. B e c k e t t, All That Fall, [in:] Krapp's Last Tape..., p. 61. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

Mrs Rooney: Alive?
Mr Tyler: Well half alive shall we say?
Mrs Rooney: Speak of yourself, Mr Tyler. I am not half alive nor anything approaching it. (p. 41)

It could be argued that her life is similar to the purgatory of Dante's "Divine Comedy", the work of art which, as has been stressed earlier, has had a great impact on Beckett. Mrs Ronney seems to support this idea when she suggests going backwards a little, "like Dante's damned" (p.74). Similarly to other characters of Beckett, the people of the play are damned, condemned to live through the sentence of their lives before death finally releases them both from life and suffering. The real interest of the play, therefore, is not the definite and simple action of going to and back from the station, but indicating what time has done both to the woman and her husband as well as to the world surrounding them. Due to the working of time they are now weak, tired, blind, deaf and old, they are not yet dead, however, no matter how much they wish to be.

The passage of physical time and the changes it has brought forth are often mentioned in the course of the play. There are many phrases registering the influence of the flow of time. Mrs Rooney is surprised by Miss Fitt's not recognizing her and wonders whether she has changed so much since last Sunday, she, therefore, urges Miss Fitt to look closely and to "finally distinguish a once female shape" (p. 54, italics mine), Mr Rooney refers to the "remnants of (his) bottom" (p. 71). In both these cases the stress on physical deterioration is undermitting. Unusually for Beckett, the exact time of the action is explicitly stated. We know the time of the day, the day of the week and the time of the year. The explicitness of these data is not coincidental. Everything is past its mid-point. The day is past noon and the working week is finished (we are left with the "week-end"). An even though the month is that of June, the ditch is full of rotten leaves, which have gathered there during many years. In the course of the play the weather deteriorates quite rapidly and the sunny day gives way to "tempest of wind and rain" (p. 91). Also all the vehicles, the bicycle, the car and even the train run down and deteriorate. Everything is slowly moving towards the total decline and annihilation. Minnie,

if she were alive, would be now in her forties or fifties, "getting ready for the change" (p. 42), past the time of her youth. All the characters, or their closest ones, at least, seem to be suffering from illness of one kind or another: Christy's wife is "no better" while his daughter is "no worse" (p. 33), Mr Tyler's daughter has had an operation and will remain childless (p. 38), Mr Slocum manages to keep his mother out of pain (p. 44), Jerry's father has been taken away, so he is all alone now (p. 67), Mr Tully is in constant pain and so beats his wife (p. 78). Mr Rooney himself has never been well, as he tells his wife:

> Did you ever know me to be well? The day you met me I should have been in bed. The day you proposed to me the doctors gave me up. You knew, did you not? The night you married me they came for me with the ambulance. You have not forgotten that, I suppose? (Pause.) No, I cannot be said to be well. But I am no worse. Indeed I am better than I was. The loss of my sight was a great fillip. If I could go deaf and dumb I think I might punt on to be a hundred. Or have I done so? (Pause.) Was I a hundred to-day? (Pause.) Am I a hundred, Maddy? (p. 75)

This passage is revealing not only in supplying information about Mr Rooney's constant illnesses but also, and more interestingly, in the last two sentences, concerning his age. The concrete, physical time of his life is not so important, he does not get any answer to his repeated enquiries, anyway, as the feelings about it, its subjective realization, that is psychological time. He may be only fifty or sixty, but this period of time has been extended in his perception of it and seems to have been much longer. The boredom, connected with living, has made his life look longer than it actually has lasted. At the same time, the end of life may come any moment, which is stressed by Mr Rooney's remark to Jerry, repeated twice in the course of the play: "Come for me on Monday, if I am still alive" (pp. 68, 90). The two elements of human life and of the play, repetition and development, are juxtaposed here. If there is any concrete development for Mr Rooney, if his death finally takes place, he will not be able to perform his habitual, routine, every-day actions or, in other words, repetition of certain actions lasts until the final change, death, destroys the repetitive status quo of living. As the case with Beckett's other plays is, "All That Fall" is again a combination of development, characteristic of the flow of physical time, and stasis, sameness,

evoked by the characters' subjective awareness of time. For them, their lives are a constant repetition of everyday routines and habits, the end of which can be brought by death, eagerly awaited by them.

Thinking about the retirement and the possibility of his changing routines and habit then, Mr Rooney realizes that changing them would not really change much - he would be still left with time to fill in one way or another. Besides, even the habits of home life, as he imagines them, would not be so much different from his present ones - counting is his favourite pastime now and would also be in the changed situation.

Mrs Rooney is no less imprisoned in the standstill of the eternal present of living. She is also ill and she has spent much time in bed recently. She dreams of being able to stay in bed and of dying painlessly. Her wishes, however, cannot be fulfilled. The illness is over and she must get up, move and suffer again. Her situation has not changed very much, however, as staying at home - - "a lingering dissolution" - is not very different from being abroad, which is "a suicide" (p. 39). No matter where one is, one always dies, but his death is very seldom quick and painless - most often it is full of pain and suffering[103]. She rebels against having to move on, against having to go on living and tries to find some kind of explanation for the kind of punishment her life seems to be. One might be reminded here of the conversation of the tramps in "Godot" when they complained of their situation and came to the conclusion that they had to repent for the eternal sin of being born. This explanation could find some support in the

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[103] Mrs Rooney comments on this several times in the course of the play. She would like to stop existing, to be "in atoms", as she puts it when she is cursing her corset (p. 43). She knows she has to keep on living and moving yet, at moments, she rebels against it: "Oh this is awful! (She moves on. The sound of dragging feet.) What have I done to deserve all that, what, what? (Dragging feet.) So long ago... No! No! (Dragging feet. Quotes.) 'Sigh out a something something tale of things, done long ago and ill done' (She halts.) How can I go on, I cannot. Oh let me just flop down flat on the road like a big fat jelly out of a bowl and never move again! A great big slop thick with grit and dust and flies, they would have to scoop me up with a shovel" (pp. 36-37).

play. It could be argued that movement in the play is a metaphor for life[104]. All of the characters keep going somewhere and it is implied by the remark of Mrs Rooney they are all going in the same direction (p. 120), that theirs is the common journey towards extinction and death. They are tired by travelling/living and would like death to come quickly. This idea is voiced by Mrs Rooney when she comments upon the death of the hen, run over by Mr Slocum's car: "What death! One minute picking at the dung, on the road, in the sun, with now and then a dust bath, and then - bang! - all her troubles over. (Pause.) All the laying and hatching. (Pause.) Just one great squawk and then... peace. (Pause.) They would have slit her weasand in any case" (pp. 47-48). This speech points out to several basic concepts of this play and Beckett's outlook on life in general. For the characters, imprisoned in the circular quality of subjective time, living is connected with suffering and pain and that is why death is a release from all the troubles. If the hen had not been killed accidentally by the car, it would have been killed on purpose later on by people just like the rat in "Endgame", about which Clov said that if he did not kill it, it would die. The premature death of the hen is something to be envied - being killed so early, the hen did not have to go on living. It is obvious that the hen did not see its life as suffering and waiting for death, but Mrs Rooney, commenting about it, expresses her own feelings and thoughts - for her, life is something which should end as quickly as possible because it can bring nothing else but pain and suffering[105].

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[104] J. D. A l p a u g h, The Symbolic Structure of Samuel Beckett's "All that Fall", "Modern Drama" May 1966-February 1967, No. 9, p. 327; R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 158; J. L. S t y a n, The Dark Comedy. The Development of Modern Tragic Comedy, Cambridge 1962, p. 229.

[105] This opinion is also expressed by Mr Tyler who curses "The wet Saturday of (his) conception" (p. 39) and tells Mrs Rooney: "Would I had shot by you, without a word" (p. 40). Similarly, it is implied by Mr Rooney's remark about his wishing to kill a child, to "nip a young doom in the bud" (p. 74). The very words he uses imply that life is equal to doom and thus killing a child, as he seems to view this, is not a criminal offense, but a releasing of a young human being from the suffering intrinsically bound with the condition of living.

The whole play becomes a litany of death, in fact. Nearly everything and everybody is deteriorating and slowly approaching the final end and extinction. When they play opens we hear Schubert's "Death and the Maiden", music which Beckett instructed to use because it was his favourite, but what is more important, because he knew of no other" music so heavily imbued with such sorrow"[106]. What is to be noticed here is not only the quality of the music, but also the title of the piece, which contains the words "death" and "maiden". The latter one implies a young girl, yet for her death is something not to be avoided. Strangely enough, the two deaths mentioned in the play are those of young people - the child which fell under the wheels of the train and the young girl spoken about by the mind doctor. Both of these stress certain points of the play. The concrete death of the child is juxtaposed to the mock birth of Dan. Dan, an old man who does not know whether Jerry is to wait for him on Monday because he might die by then, is celebrating his birthday. There is no birth, however, just the celebration of an event which happened a long time ago. Birth, on the whole, seems not to be possible in the play - Mrs Rooney is childless, Mr Tyler's daughter has had an operation and will also never be able to have any children. At the same time, the natural order of things, characteristic of the flow of physical time, seems to have been reversed, as the young ones die unexpectedly and quickly while the old ones, even though waiting for death, cannot die and go on celebrating their birthdays[107].

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[106] Samuel Beckett to John Montague, Maurice Sinclair, Marion Leifh, Bettina Jonic, quoted after: D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 477.

[107] The story of the doctor has been introduced by Beckett under the impression of a series of lectures delivered by Jung in Tavistock, from September 5 to October 4, 1935, and especially his remarks about "a ten-year-old girl who had been brought to him with what he called amazing mythological dreams" (D. B a i r, op. cit., pp. 208-209). The doctor in the play, as Jung in the lecture, tells a story of how once he had to give up the case of a little girl he was treating because he could not find anything wrong with her except that she was dying. In the light of Beckett's plays and life as such, the point seems to be the familiar one that we are all dying because life leads to death, and there is no cure for that. But then, shortly after he stopped treating her, the child died, "the trouble with her was she had never been born" (p. 84). She had never been born because she never felt life as a real living but only as a progress towards death. In this sense, all Beckett's characters are like that girl-they, just as all people, live to die, but they differ from average human beings in realizing it.

In the course of the play slow development can be noticed: there are some incidents which take place, a slight change, characteristic of the flow of physical time, is discernible. It could be argued, however, that this change is visible for the audience and not so much for the characters. Even the main event of the play, the accident on the line, just like the other changes in the world surrounding them, which do not affect them directly, seems not to have influenced them, and what is even still more important, Dan appears not to have noticed it at all, because when asked by Maddie what happened, he answers: "I have never known anything happen" (p. 73). In this respect he reminds us of Hamm, who complained in "Endgame" that everything happened without him (p. 74). Even if the change, characteristic of the flow of physical time, is occasionally noticed by them, they realize that even though something may be happening, their situation is unaltered, remains the same. They live in the present of psychological time, as for them the past means going to and back from the station, the present is exactly the same, and the future, if they are alive, will also be the same. The stasis of the eternal present is realized by means of repetition. Just like the action presented in the play is one of many journeys to the station, which will be repeated in the future, as they were in the past, the very end of the play is a return to the beginning. Maddy's journey to the station and then, already there, up the stairs, is repeated by means of a symmetrical, reversed da capo when she goes down the stairs to go back home. The play began with her being close her house going towards the station, it ends close her house again, the direction of the movement being altered, however. Between these two moments there has been some development, but in the end it led to nearly the same situation. Those two elements, repetition and development, can be also noticed in the music which is heard in the background at the beginning and end of the play. At the end of the drama, when the sound of music dies, Mrs Rooney says: "All day the same old record. All alone in the great house. She must be a very old woman now" to which Mr Rooney comments: "(indistinctly) Death and the Maiden" (p. 87). The woman in the house is very old and all alone, but not that much alone as Mrs Rooney imagines - she has the record to listen to and her death is there - always approaching, but never quite there, so far. The sound of the music has now died. It could

mean, perhaps, that for the woman in the house some change, development has taken place, that she has finally died. It could be argued, however, that the dying of the sound of the music is just the end of one phase. This could be supported by pointing out that at the beginning of the play the music also dies, yet it is heard at the end of the play again. The record ends, the movement from the beginning to the end of the record being completed. What follows, however, is not silence, but repetition. The record will be played in the future and both the development of the musical theme and the stasis of the repetition of the same piece will be discernible. Mrs Rooney will keep on going to the station and coming back home with her husband. Again the two elements: the repetitive quality of human actions - cirle (symbolically present in the shape of the record) and development - line are noticeable. Just as the same record is being played over and over again, Mr and Mrs Rooney will keep going to the station. At the same time, some kind of development, so slow that almost not discernible, will be taking place so that finally there will be no hand to put the record on again, and they will be too bowed to move on and will finally fall down not to be raised again by anyone - the slow development of deterioration and constant repetition, characteristic of life, will be finally replaced by the final stasis of death.

6. "KRAPP'S LAST TAPE"

In "Krapp's Last Tape", written in English in 1958[108], which has been described as a "dramatic poem about old age of the world"[109], Beckett poses very movingly one of the fundamental preoccupations of all his writings, the meaning of the self, by juxtaposing a man, Krapp, and the tape-recorded manifestations of his past. The comparison of the past Krapp, the one imprisoned on the

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108 This monodrama, originally entitled "The Magee Monologue", was written after Beckett had heard a radio broadcast of Pat Magee reading from his fiction. The play was inspired by "the actor's distinctive whispering voice with its evocation of unrelieved weariness" (R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 165).

109 R. B r u s t e i n, Seasons of Discontent. Dramatic Opinions 1959-1965, New York 1965, p. 26.

tapes, and the present Krapp, the one visible on the stage, brings time as such into focus, time both as the destroyer, bringing about change and development which in the Beckettian world is so often equivalent to deterioration, and time the preserver, in which things and people, even though changing, in some respects, at least, remain the same. Thus, once more, the two elements always discernible in Beckett's writings: change and changelessness, line of development and vicious circle of sameness, stasis, are present in this play.

In "Krapp's Last Tape" Beckett made the tape-recorder into a time-machine to present simultaneously two (or even more) different stages of development of the main and only character of this monodrama, Krapp. The play is set in future, not because Beckett intended to write science-fiction of any kind or for any other technical reason, but only because Beckett, always so strict about details, could not allow his character to have begun his recordings in 1913, when a tape recorder did not exist yet. It is no doubt a minor point but it is important as being indicative of Beckett's meticulous attention to details. "Krapp's Last Tape" could seem to be a monodrama, as there is only one characters there, yet, on the other hand, due to the tape recordings of Krapp at earlier periods of his life, the play is robbed of a true monodrama status. The earlier Krapps are, in fact, different Krapps in many respects, and so different characters to some extent. The focus of the play is centered round the problems of memory and the contrast between the lost past and the sour present. "Krapp's Last Tape" explores a monotonous present by recalling of a moment-lit past. Like Proust, Beckett deals with the relation of the self, possessed of Memory and by Habit, within Time. In the play we observe an old man trying to recreate his identity through two kinds of his memories, those recorded by means of the machine and those he stored in his mind. Those two kinds of memories, being quite often different, seem to present the Proustian concepts of voluntary and involuntary memory. Beckett's understanding of these two kinds of memory allows him to present a dramatic study of the changing and the changeless self, addicted to Habit, imprisoned in Time. It is quite clear that the tapes present Krapp with what Proust called involuntary memory, the kind of memory that has special freshness and

force when recalled, because, having been completely lost to consciousness, it has never had a chance to become dimmed in its lines of habituation. A memory of this kind brings not only the past events but also the self that experienced them, quite a different self from the present one. The juxtaposition between the Krapp on the tapes, or, in other words, Krapp preserved by means of involuntary memory, Krapp as he really was in a given moment in the past, and the present Krapp, becomes sometimes clear. Such is the case, for instance, when Krapp is astonished by the word "viduity", so that he has to check its meaning in the dictionary, whereas the word was a coherent element of the past Krapp's diction[110]. The change of Krapp, his constant deterioration, is also visible when one considers his beloved - the place of Bianca with "incomparable" eyes (p. 16) has been taken over by Fanny, "bony old ghost of a whore" (p. 25). On the one hand, then, there are the static images of the past as it was preserved by means of the tapes, concrete manifestations of involuntary memory. On the other hand, however, there is the past as it is remembered by Krapp. Thus the distinction is made between what Krapp thought he was preserving on his tape and what he really was preserving. Proust's voluntary memory "presents the past in a monochrome", Beckett asserts. "The images it chooses are as arbitrary as those chosen by imagination, and are equally remote from reality"[111]. An example of this kind, apart from the already mentioned word "viduity", is the ultimate meaninglessness to the present Krapp of the images of storm and fire, intellectual discovery and equinox mentioned in the recorded description of Krapp's thirty-ninth birthday (pp. 13, 20). The disparity between the rhythm of life lived and life remembered becomes apparent in Krapp's desparate effort to isolate the moments of congruence which punctuated eternities of loneliness and tedium. Thus the distinction between voluntary and involuntary memory has been used by Beckett as a means of presenting the growing deterioration of Krapp, the change which, just as the sameness in other respects, is noticed not so much by Krapp himself, as by the audience who have a rare chance of witnessing nearly simultaneously at least

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[110] S. B e c k e t t, Krapp's Last Tape, [in:] Krapp's Last Tape..., p. 18. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

[111] S. B e c k e t t, Proust, p. 19.

two manifestations of the same self, separated by a concrete amount of time that has passed between. Typically for Beckett's understanding of time as preserver and destroyer, we can notice simultaneous change and changelessness, stasis and development. The very idea of having a fixed, static past should make its contrast with the present even stronger. Yet, on the other hand, as always in Beckett, there are so many things that have not changed at all. Krapp's three obsessions, namely drinks, bananas and women, have remained the same for the Krapp at 69, 39 and the earlier Krapp mentioned on his 39th birthday. The date of the recordings does not change, either. The years pass but the day is still the one when Krapp celebrates this "awful ocassion" (p. 14) - his birthday. This concrete date gets some extra prominence, it seems. The very notion of birth being repeated always on the same day of the year and the retrospective quality of such an occasion make the character (but also the audience) aware both of the sameness, time at a standstill, as it were, and of its inevitable flow bringing forth change and development. Krapp's birthday becomes a celebration of his death, in fact. Thus once more in Beckett the two normally contrasted terms are joined to form a coherent unity. For it is on his birthday when Krapp realizes that through various choices at different times he has made his life a prison. He is driven in old age to realization that he is about to die without having really lived. Beckett himself commented on death in the play when, during the famous Berlin Schiller Theater production of "Krapp's Last Tape" which he directed, he discussed certain problems with Martin Held, playing the part of Krapp[112]. Martin Held recollects:

> He (Beckett) often went into detail. For instance when Krapp looks backward - you remember? [...] I knew just what Beckett meant when he said 'Old Nick's there. Death is standing behind him and unconsciously he's looking for it.' Or when he listens, switches off and sinks away into dreams. But without sentimentality. There's no resignation in him. It's the end. He sees very clearly that he's through with his work, with love and with religion[113].

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[112] Martin Held talks with Ronald Hayman, "The Times Saturday Review" 1970, April 25, p. I.

[113] J. F l e t c h e r, J. S p u r l i n g, op. cit., p. 90.

Held's opinion seems to stress the finality of events presented, the notion that the situation depicted is really the final, last one. This is implied by a number of different ways in the drama. Krapp's song, repeated twice, states explicitly that the day is over and night is drawing (pp. 17, 26). The words of the song express the finality and pastness of the past and the inevitable end, yet the very fact that there is time to repeat the song implies that, after all, time is not yet over. Krapp at 39 ended his tape with the words: "here I end" (p. 22). Again, these words could stress the notion that something has finished, is over. Yet, once more, even though this notion is strengthened by the repetition, the repetition as such negates the very idea. The narration of Krapp ends, yet it is enough for Krapp to rewind the tape to have the beginning once more. The same notion is present in the very title of the play when the word "last" is taken into consideration. On the one hand, it could be argued that it is the last tape of Krapp who is about to die soon and will not be able to record another one. On the other hand, however, it can be equally well said that the word "last" means nothing more than "the latest" and thus the next recordings are possible. The circularity of the situation presented is also implied by the very shape of tapes which are so important in the play. On the one hand, again, the tape before it is put on the spools has a form of a line, not of a circle. It can, therefore, be said that the play, as the case with Beckett's other plays is, is a combination of two elements: line and circle, symbolically presenting development and stasis, which form a spiral. Between two different Krapps there is a similarity, sameness - after all this is the same individual. At the same time, however, there is a difference - he has changed in the course of passing time. The one concrete individual is made up of a sequence of selves, each of them being simultaneously different from and similar to the others. The play poses, among others, the problem of the necessity of being again, of once being not enough (p. 27) and of a self as a sequence of moments (p. 20). Once more, the play is an investigation of the self "...back here to... me. Krapp" (p. 15) and its circular and cyclical motion. The tragedy of Krapp, and of all men, in Beckett's view, is not that we become what we are not, but that we are now and evermore the same. The

basic animal does not change. Krapp at sixty nine is still swilling alcohol, still eating bananas, and still sleeping with whores. What has disappeared is hope and intellect, the non-physical appetites. He must now search in the dictionary for words he used thirty years ago. What has increased is physical disintegration: nearsightedness, deafness, creaked voice, laborious walk, a caugh. He is still the same Krapp even though he is undoubtedly changed. Thus once more the seemingly contradictory notions, these of change and changelessness, development and stasis, are joined in the form of a spiral in which each coil represents the repetitive element and the distance between them - the change, development, which has, after all, taken place.

7. "ROUGH FOR THEATRE I"

The world of A and B, the characters of Rough for Theatre I" (written in French in late 1950s, first published in English in 1976), inhabit is not a world of eternal present, their present being different from the past and the prospects for the future. The present of winter is devoid of distinctions between day and night, but the situation in the past was different. The days ended in due course, the sun set to rise again in the morning, the women attended them, A's woman leading him by the hand and B's getting him out of the chair in the evening and back into it again in the morning. Life was measured out by passing days and by habits strictly connected with concrete times of the day. Now the women are no longer there and the sun is no longer helpful in marking the end of one day and the beginning of another. Such notions as day and night seem no longer valid, as B seems to notice answering A's constant questioning about what time it is: "Day... night... (Looks.) It seems to me sometimes the earth must have got stuck in a sunless day, in the heart of winter, in the grey of evening"[114]. The feelings of the characters about time are quite ambivalent. On the one hand, they seem to realize that time passes, that the past is

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[114] S. B e c k e t t, Theatre I, [in:] Ends and Odds, New York 1977, p. 79. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

different from the present and that the future might bring new developments, too (for example, the potatoes might sprout in the spring, p. 71); perceiving different phases of time they notice physical time as such, then. On the other hand, however, the present seems to be, in a sense, eternal, endless. There are no longer days or nights as there is neither sun to mark the objective flow of time, nor women, who by means of imposing concrete, repeated habits on the lives of the men, would indicate the temporal quality of their existence. That is probably why both the characters argue about the sameness of themselves and the world they live in. B says: "I sit there, in my lair, in my chair, in the dark, twenty-three hours out of twenty-four. (Violently.) What would you have me observe?" (p. 74) and A remarks: "I was always as I am. Crouched in the dark, scratching an old jangle to the four winds" (p. 73). Thus, although perceiving the flow of physical time, they are under the pressure of its subjective realization perceived as statis of psychological time.

The end of the play, as so often in Beckett's drama, does not give a concrete indication of what the future of the two men will be. Will A get up and go with B to take care of him and, then, a new situation will be reached, a development discernible, or will he stay where he is, in the eternal changelessness of his present situation, where physical time does not exist, in fact? Doesn't it, however? It is also hinted in the play that even though he has been playing there for quite a long time, the instrument used by him now is a fiddle, in the past it was the harp and in the future it might be a mouth-organ (p. 80). The core of the situation, the fact of playing is changeless, however the instrument changes, this being indicative of a development, however slight it might seem. The answer as to what the future might be is not given. Once more, however, although not so clearly as in the earlier plays, the notion of change and sameness, of physical time, bringing about development, and psychological time, presenting time as sameness, stasis, is introduced.

8. "ROUGH FOR THEATRE II"

"Rough for Theatre II" (written in French in late 1950s, first published in English in 1976), another short dramatic piece, opens in an office-like atmosphere and with a solitary figure of C stand-

ing at the window with his back to the audience. As becomes clear from the comments of two other characters, A and B, the always mute man contemplates the idea of committing suicide and the two other characters, after having collected many documents concerning his past and prospects for his future have the final look at them to "sum up and clear out"[115].

Physical time gets extra meaning in the play, its use being quite ironic to a great extent. Such is the case with the winning of the watch - compared with the bad luck and unhappiness of human beings the good luck of getting a watch is greatly ironic. So is the date of C's possible suicide - it is the 24th, the day of Our Lady of Succor, as A specifies, having checked in his diary (p. 85). The day may be the day of a helping saint but for C there is no hope but only despair, the only way out of which is suicide. A's attempts to check the time on his watch (p. 83), the date in the diary (p. 84) and the train in the time-table (p. 97) are, in a sense, his attempts to objectify the reality. So is the very idea of getting the objective testimony concerning C, summed up with the conclusion: "a black future, an unpardonable past" (p. 96), the only solution, way out of the situation being suicide. For the first time in Beckettland stress is put on the objective quality of physical time - all the phases of C's life, the past, the present and the future, are concrete, defined and specified. Yet, on the other hand, this very objectivity of the testimony gathered is contrasted with the subjective feelings of C. Thus, although, objectively speaking, he should commit suicide, it is highly questionable whether he will finally decide to end the suffering of his being.

9. "EMBERS"

"Embers", Beckett's next play (written in English in 1959, first produced by the B.B.C. Third programme, June 24, 1959) is explicitly a radio play using the qualities of the medium to the

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[115] S. B e c k e t t, Theatre II, [in:] Ends and Odds, p. 84. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

utmost degree. This play echoes certain ideas and notions earlier expressed by Beckett in his other works - the musing over the past and certain attempts to recover and, if possible, remodel it, retrospection and story-telling being an important element not only of this play but also both of "Endgame" and "Krapp's Last Tape"; the main character's longing for an end and the impossibility of finishing, one of Beckett's themes expressed in "Endgame" is here echoed by Henry's words in his story" I never finished it, I never finished anything, everything always went on for ever"[116]; the theme of "Waiting for Godot", waiting as such and finding various activities as means of passing the time is also brought to mind when Henry pleads with Ada to go on talking as "every syllable is a second gained" (p. 117), a sentence which could be argued to contain an idea similar to that expressed by Vladimir: "How time flies when one has fun" (p. 76); the main idea of "Film" is expressed verbatim by Henry, when he says: "Stories, stories, years and years of stories, till the need came on me, for someone, to be with me, and then, now, for someone who... knew me, in the old days, anyone to be with me, imagine he hears me, what I am, now" (p. 100). This sentence is also important in another way, namely because it stresses Henry's demand to find someone who could be able to compare his present self with that from the past, in other words, Henry's need of an objective evaluation of the changes and sameness of his self, while he himself is able to evaluate these things subjectively. This, in turn, brings us back again to "Proust" and the subjective and objective quality of voluntary and involuntary memory. Another notion expressed in this essay, that of life as suffering leading to death, life as expiation for the sin of being born, is also expressed in "Embers". Henry knows his father wished he had not had him, just as he wishes he had not had his daughter (p. 108). Giving birth to another human being, committing someone to imprisonment in the continuum of living is, for Beckett, one of the unforgivable sins. It can be said, therefore, that the play fits into the Beckettian canon where the author develops and reworks his main interests and preoccupations in the successive works.

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[116] S. B e c k e t t, Embers, [in:] Krapp's Last Tape..., p. 97. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

The title of the play "could be read to refer to (Henry)as the dead ashes left behind by the fire that gave them birth"[117]. Commenting on the title of the drama R. Cohn has written: "Who but Beckett would give the title 'Embers' to a radio play where central image is the sea? Embers and sea are protagonist and antagonist in this play, that ventures into a new domain of drama"[118]. The play, in fact, introduces two central leading symbols - life and fire bound to change first into embers and finally into nothingness as opposed to the infinity, limitlessness and endlessness of the sea. These two elements reflect the relationship between the changing and the changeless, the time-bound and the eternal. In a sense, the notion presented here by means of these two symbols was expressed earlier in "Godot" by Pozzo and Vladimir: "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams for an instant, then it's night once more" (p. 89) - the opposition between the subjective feeling about life as seen as an extremely long period of waiting and suffering and the objective fact that any life, measured in terms of eternity, is very short. This brings us, as always in Beckett, to the two seemingly contradictory notions, those of change and sameness.

Henry has changed due to the constant flow physical time - the tremendous difference between what Henry used to be and what he is now is seen in their conversation when Ada says: "You laughed so charmingly, I think that's what first attracted me to you. That and your smile. (Pause.) Come on, it will be like old times", to which Henry "tries to laugh, fails" and finally, after a few attempts to smile, tries once more and as a result "long, horrible laugh" is heard, even more horrible as Henry asks: "Any of the old charm there?" (pp. 105-106). The deterioration has taken place and nothing can bring the past back again. Slightly later on, in the same conversation, Ada once more compares the past and the present, commenting on the sound of the sea: "It is like an old sound I used to hear. (Pause.) It is like another time, in the same place. (Pause.) It was rough, the spray came flying over us. (Pause.) Strange it should have been rough then. (Pause.) And calm now"

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117 "Embers". Ananymous Review. Samuel Beckett's New Play. Poignant Achievement, "The Times" 1959, June 25, p. 5.

118 R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 172.

(pp. 106-107). One can only wonder whether the past occasion hinted at by her is the same one which is evoked by Henry's memories some time later. Once more the past is contrasted with the present. Ada keeps telling Henry not to do a lot of things and finally her "don'ts" remind him of a past event, of the love they shared on the same spot some time ago (p. 110). If her past coming to the place she mentions is the same event which is recollected by Henry, which can quite possibly be the case, then the fire and ecstasy of their love in the past has been replaced by the boredom and nagging of the present and thus, again, as in the case with the smile, deterioration has taken place. Time passes, brings change, deterioration and finally total annihilation and this is probably the first play of Beckett in which the main character, even though still complaining of the long life and suffering one has to endure before dying, yet realizes that life, after all, finishes, that the end, although slow in coming, will arrive after all. This notion is expressed in Henry's story, where the fire changes slowly, yet inexorably into embers, the sound of fire burning is changed into silence and thus nothingness, as in a radio play if something is silent, it is non-existent. The change is slow and the idea of fire's burning out being equivalent to dying is brought explicitly - at the beginning there is "no sound in the house of any kind, only the sound of the fire" (p. 98). This sentence, as the case in Beckett so often is, is repeated twice. "Outside all still, not a sound" (ibid.). Later on: "Dead silence then, not a sound, only the fire, all coal, burning down now" (p. 99) - the fire is dying out but there is still the sound audible, later on, however, "Silence in the house, not a sound, only the fire, no flames now, embers. (Pause.) Shifting, lapsive, furtive like, dreadful sound..." (ibid.). This notion is repeated again - in Beckett things are not really said or done unless they are said or done twice, "not a sound, only the embers, sound of dying, dying glow" (p. 100). Gradually the sound and the existence of the fire are replaced by embers, silence, nonexistence. This brings us back to the title as such. In Henry's story embers are not exactly the same all the time long. At the beginning, still reminiscent of the existence of the fire, they are characterized by some movement and sound, to become completely silent and immobile only later on. It seems that the embers could be understood to represent Henry. The stage he

is in now is the first one - there is no fire left in him yet what still is important is the evocation of the past fire and life. What he seems to long for is the total annihilation, the nonexistence which is pure nonexistence, not only the outcome of the previous glory and fire of life.

In "Embers", as in Beckett's other plays, it takes a long time before the character grows old and finally dies, a long time characterized by emptiness, repetition, sameness, waiting and suffering. Life in this play is explicitly a timed movement: in Addie's music lesson the notes are "hammered" out (p. 108), and the music master keeps "beating time lightly with ruler as she plays"(p. 107), in her riding lessons the hooves gallop. Strangely enough, when Henry wonders whether "It was not enough to drag her into this world, now she must play the piano", Ada answers: "She must learn. She shall learn. That - and riding" (pp. 108-109). Is it strange, however? Both these activities, playing the piano and riding a horse, evoke the monotonous constant ticking of the clock. Henry even wonders if he could have the hooves "mark time" (p. 96). The same notion of the horse marking time with its four legs comes back to him later on again (p. 105). The rhythmic sounds of hooves and beating time during the music lesson accompany not only Henry but also his young daughter as these are the only two things her mother is set on having her learn. The frequent presence of those two sounds seems to be a kind of memento mori - look out, everybody, time passes, each second, each repetition of the same routine actions brings you closer to death! You will have to go on repeating the same actions for several times, each repetition marking a certain period of time that has passed. Life as such is a repetition of the same meaningless actions. This is expressed by Henry's answer to Ada's question whether he put on his jaegers: "What happened was this, I put them on and then I took them off again and then I put them on again and then I took them off again and then I took them on again and then I -" (p. 104). He repeated the actions of putting and taking them off so many times that in the end he does not know which action has taken place as the last one.

The notion of life as a timed movement, characterized by repetition, brings us to the second element of time as seen by Beckett - repetition, sameness, circle. Even though life as such leads through gradual deterioration to death, the way is long and charac-

terized by repetition - once more, the notion of time as a coil is expressed here. Life of a given individual is characterized by repetition. This is expressed by Henry who says: "(Wildly.) Thuds, I want thuds! Like this! (He fumbles in the shingle, catches up two big stones and starts dashing them together.) Stone! (Clash.) Stone! (Clash. 'Stone' and clash amplified, cut off. He throws one stone away. Sound of its fall.) That's life! (He throws the other stone away. Sound of its fall.) Not this... (Pause.) ...sucking!" (pp 112-113). Just as Vladimir in "Waiting for Godot", he seems to stress the fact that "we have time to grow old" (p. 91). We would like to die quickly, with a "bang", while life is a slow, timed out "whimper". The only way out is committing suicide. It was, maybe, the way out for Henry's father, who might have drowned on purpose, but might have drowned accidentally or even gone away to start living under a false name in Argentine (p. 97); it could have been the way out for Bolton, whose suffering could have been finished by an injection. For Henry there seems no way out - he is too weak to commit suicide. So he keeps coming to the seaside and listening to the sound of the sea. While he is telling the story of Bolton and Holloway he suddenly interrupts it and after having spoken about the dying glow of the embers and the silence, he says: "Listen to it! (Pause.) Close your eyes and listen to it, what would you think it was? (Pause. Vehement.) A drip! A drip! (Sound of drip, rapidly amplified, suddenly cut off.) Again! (Drip again. Amplification begins.) No! (Drip cut off. Pause.)" (p. 100). When Henry tells us to "listen to it" we do not really expect to hear the sound of a drop but either no sound at all (of embers) or the constant sound of the sea. We hear a separate sound of dripping, instead. One might explain it by saying that the sound Henry hears becomes a symbol of his life which is a timed movement, as implied so often in the play - one drip follows another one. This opinion could be supported by the fact that the mentioning of the drip is divided from the earlier story by a pause and is followed by Henry's crying out to his father - he may have started talking about himself and his life. Thus the sentence "Listen to it" would not refer to the embers from the story. It does evoke the sound of the sea, however, at least in the listener's mind. This association would bring us to the notion of grain of sand and the "impossible heap" from "Endgame". It takes a long time for grains to form the

heap. In a similar way, it takes a long time for drops to accumulate to form a sea-life with its suffering repetition and boredom, seems almost endless, it seems to go on forever. This brings us back to the beginning and to the end of the play, both of them being characteristic of the play and of Henry's life. The play begins with Henry coming to the sea and saying: "On! (Sea. Voice louder.) On! (He moves on. Boots on shingle. As he goes, louder.) Stop! (He halts. Sea a little louder.) Down!" (p. 95). These lines at once bring the most important ideas of the play - the necessity of going on as well as the opposite need to stop, and the repetitive quality of all the actions: all the commands are repeated twice. The play ends with Henry getting up and starting to move again:

On! (Pause. He moves on. Boots on shingle. He halts at water's edge. Pause. Sea a little louder.) Little book. (Pause.) This evening... (Pause.) Nothing this evening. (Pause.) Tomorrow... tomorrow... plumber at nine, then nothing. (Pause. Puzzled.) Plumber at nine? (Pause.) Ah yes, the waste. (Pause.) Words. (Pause.) Saturday... nothing. Sunday... Sunday... nothing all day. (Pause.) Nothing, all day nothing. (Pause.) All day all night nothing. (Pause.) Not a sound" (p. 121)

The little almanach anticipates the continuance of the void, of the boredom. The only activity, the coming of the plumber, is noticed by Henry with surprize. The following words about the waste could refer to the workman's job, but could, just as well, refer to Henry's activities and his life devoid of any sense. Seen in connection with the beginning of the play, the end of it indicates the repetitive quality of Henry's existence, his dull life being measured out by the coming to the sea and his hoping that the slow sucking into the sea will finally finish and his life will end at last. Till then, till the last coil of the spiral of his life, he will keep coming to the sea, listening to its sound and musing over his past, filling his empty present with memories of real events or with invented stories.

10. "ROUGH FOR THE RADIO I"

"Rough for the Radio I"(written in French in late 1961, first published in English in 1976), consists of two neatly divided parts. The first part demonstrates the present situation of the "hero" - - it is his need to be there all the time long "without cease"[119] where music and voice go on all the time long without cease, too. From the second part of the piece it can be deduced that he is greatly shocked with the change the voice and music are undergoing.

When the piece ends, the voice and music are "together, ending, breaking off together, resuming together more and more feebly" and the man whispers: "Tomorrow... noon..." (p. 112). Even though the meaning of the play is not at all clear, what is obvious is the man's absolute fear of the change the two are undergoing. Taking into account the earlier plays of Beckett, it could be argued that the man would like to live in an unchanging world, any change of the surrounding which might affect his situation being dangerous if not fatal. Knowing that nothing can be done, the man desparately tries to find a remedy in order to eliminate change, to stop the development, to stop the flow of physical time, as it were. On the other hand, however, he realizes that time passes, his insisting on an instantaneous meeting being indicative of this. Once more, Beckett presents a man who has become a victim of the world he lives in and even though most possibly not satisfied with his present situation yet fears any change time might bring.

11. "ROUGH FOR THE RADIO II"

"Rough for the Radio II" (written in French in the early 1960s, first performed by the B.B.C. in April 1976) demonstrates a typical situation in Beckettland - the characters are again involved in a difficult process of telling "the right story".

Physical time, as the case with "Theatre II" was, has a special

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[119] S. B e c k e t t, Radio I, [in:] Ends and Odds, p. 105. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

stress put on it. The period of time Animator, Stenographer and Fox have been given for another attempt at finding the right story is specified. Stenographer makes it quite clear by her remarks measuring out the time of their work. At the beginning she notices "it is past two"[120], later on she says: "It is getting on for three" (p. 120), to remark still later on: "It is well after three" (p. 125) and finally to conclude: "time is up" (p. 126). Those numerous mentionings of time and also Animator's remark: "that old time is aflying" (p. 120) are ambivalent and misleading to some extent. On the one hand, the flow of physical time is underlined yet, on the other, it is not accompanied by any concrete change and development. This is well discernible when the situation typical of the present is compared with the past and the prospects for the future. The report on yesterday's results "same defficiencies... totally inacceptible... outlook hopeless" (p. 117) and the picture of today's work make it clear that even though hours or even days pass, the situation remains unaltered. The sameness of the situation presented, the repetitive quality of certain elements is easily discernible - Animator and Stenographer know the pang "by heart" (p. 116), Fox has often smiled at Stenographer (p. 119), he has used the term "live I did" (p. 119) several times already, the tear Fox mentions is distinctly remembered by Stenographer as being mentioned before (pp. 126-127). The dialogue accompanying the last occasion is quite telling:

A: That tear, Miss, do you remember?
S: Oh yes, Sir, distinctly.
A: (faint hope) Not the first time by any chance?
S: Heavens no, Sir, what an idea!
A: (disappointed) I might have known. (pp. 126-127)

This passage is important in two respects. On the one hand, it is nearly the exact repetition of an earlier conversation concerning Fox's smile (p. 116). On the other hand, in both the passages the words expressing Animator's reaction are telling - he undoubtedly hopes that the reaction of Fox is not merely a repetition of his earlier reactions but a new development. This problem lies at

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[120] S. B e c k e t t, Radio II, [in:] Ends and Odds, p. 118. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

the core of their situation. They seem to be waiting for a thing that has not been said yet or for a reaction of Fox that has never taken place before - in other words, for a new element in the forever repeating situation.

The end of the play presents despair of Stenographer, who, most probably being exhausted and dishearted by their efforts in vain, has started crying. The words Animator uses to calm her down, the last words of the play, are significant: "Don't cry, Miss, dry your pretty eyes and smile at me. Tomorrow, who knows, we may be free" (p. 128). This utterance expresses Animator's hope that, due to the flow of physical time, the future might bring the solution and thus their situation will be altered. It can be only wondered whether this is really the case. It could be equally justifiable to argue that the situation presented is endless, that the awaited solution is no more expected than the coming of Godot.

Once more, the play is a combination of two elements - stasis and development yet their relationship is different. Time moves forward, hours and days pass, yet even though the flow of physical time is noticed by the characters, it does not affect their situation. Both they themselves and we, the listeners, become aware of a slight change, development, yet the crucial basic situation remains unaltered, today's rehearsals leaving them not at all closer the end than yesterday's. There is, of course, tomorrow, which might solve something, yet it is equally possible that tomorrow's session will end by Animator repeating the words: "Tomorrow, who knows, we may be free". We are presented with w spiral where each rehearsal is a circular coil, the distance between them being indicative of minute development, yet, because of the overwhelmingly repetitive quality of their activity, it is questionable whether, and if so, then when, the distance between the coils will become so great as to enable the noticing of a change big enough to be called solution, the solution they seem to be looking for and desparately awaiting.

12. "HAPPY DAYS"

"Happy Days", first presented on September 17, 1961 in New York, is one of the two two-act plays in Beckett canon. The artist

returned to the two-act structure but in this case to achieve quite different aims than in the case of "Waiting for Godot". Whereas the twofold structure of "Godot" stressed the repetitive quality of human existence and change, characteristic of development, was only hardly discernible, in the case of "Happy Days" the second act marks quite a visible development of the situation presented in the first act and, furthermore, the end of the play may be also indicative of a new development. Thus, even though the two elements, characteristic of Beckett's drama - line of development and circle of sameness, stasis, are present, as always in Beckett's drama, the stress has been shifted - in spite of the fact that things seem to be forever the same, they do change, after all.

The very beginning, the very first glimpse of the stage, as well as the very first words uttered by Winnie, introduce us directly and clearly into the situation and the total meaning of the play. Stage directions are very telling. Winnie is specified as a woman of about fifty - the place of an ageless character has been taken over by a character of concrete age and so physical time has been stressed - one's age is not so much dependent on how old one feels but is rather, or at least also, the outcome of the flow of concrete, physical time. The centre of the stage is occupied by a mound in which Winnie is "imbedded up to above her waist"[121]. The mound is reminiscent of the Zenonian heap of sand mentioned in "Endgame", it becomes "an icon of death-in-life"[122]. The "heap of time" in which Winnie is buried always promises yet never actually grants death, and end. The heap will cover her up to the neck in the second act yet will not have covered her up completely yet. The heap may also remind us of an hour-glass[123]. No matter which is the case (after all the "impossible heap" of finite time and the hour-glass are quite close in meaning) the mound becomes a brilliant stage metaphor for time, physical time, which, however slow its passing may seem to Winnie and also to the audience, finally does pass, after all. It brings about change and some time in the

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[121] S. B e c k e t t, Happy Days, New York 1961, p. 7. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

[122] H. Z e i f m a n, op. cit., p. 35.

[123] J. B ł o ń s k i, op. cit., p. 315; R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, op. cit., p. 179; J. R. H a n c o c k, op. cit., p. 157.

future the whole body of the heroine will be covered by the sand. So much about the setting of the play, the initial image of the stage which explicitly states the terrible situation of Winnie - - who, buried up to her waist in the sands/grains of time, keeps waiting for the end to come[124].

Let us now analyse the aural images of the very first moments of the play. The first sound to he heard (after "a long pause", as always in Beckett, p. 8), is a piercing sound of the bell, repeated twice (again it seems that in Beckett things do not happen if they do not happen twice, repetition being an indispensable element of his theatrical vision). After the bell has woken Winnie up and make her undertake the routine everyday activities guided by the ever present habit of living, she utters her first words: "Another heavenly day" (p. 8). The word 'another" indicates a repetition: it is just one day in a sequence of days which have already passed, are passing and probably, by implication, will pass for some time in the future. What follows next is a prayer. We can be certain that all her "days" are begun in exactly the same way, the prayer being the next routine activity of her life. The words of the prayer she says aloud are also telling, especially the second phrase - "World without end Amen" (p. 8). These words, apart from their liturgical meaning, seem an adequate description of the world she lives in. They get an extra meaning while followed by the next phrases uttered by Winnie: "Begin, Winnie. (Pause.) Begin your day, Winnie" (p. 8). The world may be without end but there is something that ends to bring yet another beginning - her day, which she herself describes as a period of time "between the bell for waking and the bell for sleep" (p. 21). In the endless, it seems, immesurable life, there are shorter, concrete periods of time - days.

The whole beginning of the play is built on the principles of juxtaposition and repetition. Thus the endless world is contrasted to Winnie's "days"; the deterioration, change, seen in the running out of the toothpaste, is contrasted with her own situation - "no better, no worse, no change" (p. 9); the optimism of the beginning of the "heavenly day" gives place to her more true remark about pain: "no pain... hardly any", repeated twice (pp. 10, 11) and finally to her quotation "woe woe is me" (p. 10); "holy light" is

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[124] For the discussion of the possible sources of the notion of the "impossible heap" see pp. 46-47 of this study.

replaced by "blaze of hellish light" (p. 11). The words she uses are taken from Shakespeare and Milton, being quotations they are repetitions of what someone else said at some other time and place. Her whole opening speech is a sequence of quotations and self--quotations, so repetitions. The first sentence ("Another heavenly day") is a repetition of what she said in the past, so a self-quotation, the next two sentences ("For Jesus Christ sake Amen" and "World without end Amen") are quotations from the prayer book, the next one ("Begin, Winnie") again may be treated as a self-quotation (she undoubtedly used the sentence in the past), while the following sentence, repeating it, is undoubtedly a self-quotation[125]. The initial images of the play make us aware of the repetitive quality of Winnie's existence, where one day follows another in this "world without end", her fake optimism trying to cover up the sad fact that her life, even though, maybe, there is not very much physical pain in it, is yet characterized by suffering. This is best visible in her unwillingness to begin her new day - the bell has to summon her to her daily activities twice and she also tells herself twice to begin the day. Her day, although undoubtedly "another" is not so "heavenly", after all.

The beginning of the play brings about not only the notion of the repetitive quality of Winnie's days, the sameness brought forth by routine and habit, the agents of circular, psychological time, but also the notion of change, development, characteristic of the linear quality of physical time. The flow of physical time bringing about change and development, is best discernible in the two act structure of the play. The second act, as its counterpart in "Waiting for Godot", brings a repetition of certain happenings but whereas in the case of "Godot" the main notion derived from this act was that of tediousness, monotony and sameness, in "Happy Days", quite on the contrary, while the same things, situations, utterances are repeated, the repetition is not exact and, therefore, the notion brought about is that of change, no matter how slight it

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[125] R. C o h n, Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut, pp. 253-254; i d e m, Back to Beckett, pp. 180-182; H. K e n n e r, Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett. The Stoic Comedians, Boston 1962, pp. 98-100. Both the critics discuss the numerous lines quoted by Winnie in the course of the play.

might seem. Even though repetition is still important, the reason of its significance has been shifted-it has become, no matter how strange this might seem on first sight, an agent of bringing about the idea of change.

The second act marks a great difference in the situation of Winnie - earlier imbedded up to her waits she was able to find certain manual activities to pass her time (examining the contents of the bag and playing about with the toothbrush being most important of these) now, with just her head protruding from the scorched earth, the only pastime she is left with are her stories. The next stage of development could present the time when there are no more stories, when words have failed, which she already fears. In the first act she tells herself: "But something tells me, Do not overdo the bag, Winnie, make use of it of course, let it help you... along, when stuck, by all means, but cast your mind forward, Winnie, to the time when words must fail - (she closes eyes, pause, opens eyes) - and do not overdo the bag" (p. 32). She realizes that she should not get too attached to the bag. Some time in the future it might stop being helpful in passing the time. What needs stressing here, as well, is the fact that she realizes in the future things might not be the same they are now so, in other words, that she is aware of the flow physical time and the change, development it brings about. Her premonition about the bag becomes true in Act II when it stops being helpful as Winnie cannot touch it any more. One can only wonder whether her premonition about the words failing her, repeated several times in the course of the play, both in the first and second act (pp. 24, 32, 53), will also come true and, then, if the next stage/act would present her both motionless and speechless.

G. Barnard writes: "When the curtain rises on Act II we should realize that some years have passed, for the mound symbolical of the accumulating days of her life, now buries Winnie to her neck"[126]. It is impossible to support a counterargument by any evidence from the text, but it seems rather questionable whether really "many years" have passed. It is difficult to say how long the period of time has been, maybe it is really years, maybe it is just a day, though to speak of days is to speak in "the old style",

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[126] G. C. B a r n a r d, Samuel Beckett. A New Approach. A Study of the Novels and the Plays, London 1970, p. 123.

as Winnie argues (p. 18) and we never know how much time passes between the consecutive bell rings. What is unquestionable, however, is that much has changed in the meantime, not only the size of the heap. Were it the heap only, one could compare it to the leaves which grow overnight in "Godot" and say it could have been just one day. What is important is that the second act, as in "Waiting for Godot", is another scene from the infinite series of "days", to use the only word we have, taken from nearer the end of the series, but not the end yet. The play presents the characteristic downward curve of man's life. The second act, though obviously related to the first, shows an altered situation, a situation which has developed meantime. This act is very short and the bell is more insistent so that the eyes do not close. In the beginning of the first act Winnie was allowed to close her eyes and pray, but immediately she closes them in the second act, the bell shrills her into opening them at once and will keep on insisting on "eyes open" (pp. 51, 53, 58). Willie, too, has fewer responses, no little appearances, no little movements to distract or involve her until his final appearance.

The second act, on the whole, is characterized by a more general, gradual deterioration. It is seen not only in the immobility of Winnie, her impossibility of finding escape from her situation in playing with the bag, but also in often repeated ringing of the bell, the sound of which "hurts like a knife" (p. 54). Beckett has put special stress on the meaning of the bag while directing the production of the play in 1971 in Germany, telling the actress playing Winnie that the bag was her friend, the bell her enemy and that she had to convey this throughout the play[127]. The explanation of the meaning of these two attributes of her existence is quite simple. On the one hand, the bell, calling her to the external reality, is a tool which makes her go on suffering, existing in the inescapability of time. On the other hand, the bag is strictly connected with her everyday routines and so is a habit protecting her against the suffering of being. Therefore the better discernible existence of the bell and the uselessness of the bag in the second act both mark the deterioration of Winnie's situation.

Things seem to be disappearing, diminishing, running out in

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[127] R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, pp. 189-190.

the course of the play. Both toothpaste and lipstick are running out and what is available seems to be a kind of leftover from the earlier abundance. Winnie says: "There always remains something of everything. Some remains" (p. 52). She has not lost her reason - "Not yet. Some remains" (p. 54), a part of one's classics remains (p. 58). Both concrete, material objects and mental components of one's life are diminishing, disappearing. What helps man survive, as Winnie realizes, is his ability of adapting himself to the changing conditions (p. 35) and so in the second act she is still satisfied with her so greatly deteriorated existence.

In "Happy Days" the notion of psychological time is different from that in Beckett's earlier plays. In "Waiting for Godot", for example, the tramps did not seem to notice the flow of physical time and so perceived time as circular and their own situatic seemed to them unaltered. As can be noticed from the above remarks of Winnie she is conscious of change, so time for her is partly linear. It is also circular to a great extent as the same activities are repeated quite often and as she tries on purpose to hide beneath the comfortable habit and by means of routine, repetitive activities to forget about the suffering of being. The sameness, repetitive quality of her existence is expressed by such sentences of hers as, for example: "Normally I do not put things back after use" (p. 22), "Another happy day" (pp. 15, 23, 40, 48, 62, 64), "Another heavenly day" (p. 8). The words which I have underlined stress the repetitive quality of her activities. This notion is also brought about by means of numerous repetitions of phrases such as the already mentioned "happy day" (pp. 15, 18, 23, 34, 40, 47, 62, 64), "heavenly day" (p. 8), "wonderful" (pp. 20, 24, 35, 39, 49), "no pain, hardly any" (pp. 10, 11, 13), "mustn't complain" (pp. 11, 14). When one has a close look at these repetitions one is struck by the optimism which is expressed there to such a great extent that one is bound to begin to wonder if she is really satisfied with her present situation. On a still closer look on the play as a whole it becomes clear that she is not really happy and that by repeating those optimistic expressions she, in a way, hopes to start believing in them. Nevertheless, as she herself puts it: "Sorrow keeps breaking in" (p. 34). Yet the very next sentence is again a return to fake optimism: "Ah well what a joy in any case to know you are there" (ibid.). It becomes obvious that she

says she is happy only because she desparately wants to be happy or, at least, to forget about her unhappiness. Her optimism becomes a tool which enables her to forget about the sadness of her situation, about the suffering of being. She is a creature of habit. Not wanting to admit time is killing her (although partly realizing it) she is desparately trying to kill time, filling it up with senseless activities - she plays about with the contents of the bag, taking out things in the morning and putting them back at the end of the day, she keeps cleaning her spectacles, putting them on and taking them off several times, she wonders whether hair is singular or plural (p. 23), reads the inscription on the brush (pp. 17, 19, 47) or wonders what a hog is (p. 47). And, of course, as all Beckett characters, she has her stories which might be totally invented or might be her authobiography. If, for example, the story about Mildred is the story about herself (her reliving it to such a great extent being indicative of such a possibility) then the name change would not only be a protective and distancing device, but also would be symbolic of the separation, through time, of self into a succession of disjunctive or even fictionalized identities. In such a case, while telling her own story as someone else's experience, she is distancing the past, and, in a sense, reworking it. Winnie, on the whole, plays about, as it were, with the past, the future and the present. She tries to uncreate the past and the present by saying: "And would one day the earth cover my breasts, then I shall never have seen my breasts, no one ever seen my breasts" (p. 38). Unlike other Beckett characters, she thinks about the future and attempts to push time forward by saying on several occasions: "this will have been a happy day" (pp. 34, 40, 47). She is pushing time forward in order to relish the memory of that time as time past, a memory that can be altered according to her wishes, and hence she avoids having to live it. When the present becomes the past only nice things can be remembered, if one chooses to do so, while now the suffering of being cannot be avoided. This sentence marks not only her wish to turn anticipation into memory, the future into the past, but also reflects her efforts to affect the objective reality/time by means of her subjective feelings. Her wish to make time move faster forward is also due to the fact that if it really moved faster, the periods between the bells would become shorter and she would not feel the

pressure of physical time on her psyche and the place of psychological time at a standstill, as it were, would be taken over by the line of development, characteristic of the flow of physical time.

Even though Winnie realizes nothing can be done as there is no alternative, she pretends to be the agent of the situation and not only an object subordinated to the external forces, the bell being the most obvious of these. Therefore she tries to repeat certain activities at concrete moments, as for example, singing her song at the end of the day, although she is the one to decide whether it is the end already or not yet. She tries to be guided by her own feelings about time, which are subjective and quite often she is deceived by her sense of time and it is too late for her song or she has sung it too early and has some more time to fill before the bell for sleep. Both the situations are fatal. She is aware of the ridiculousness of her insistence on order, of using such words as day, night, or die, as they belong to the "old style" (pp. 13, 18, 21, 22, 24, 32, 33, 42, 50, 53) but, wondering whether one may speak of time any longer, she comes to the conclusion that one "simply does" (p. 50). Even though these terms do not have any meaning any more, people use them, just as she does, because they have not invented any new terms which would describe their situation in a more adequate way.

Winnie's wish to affect objective time by her subjective feeling is further illuminated by a sentence of hers, "Ah well, natural laws, natural laws, I suppose, it's like everything else, it all depends on the creature you happen to be (p. 34)[128]. Undoubtedly, objectively speaking, this sentence is not true, one cannot affect nature but one may relish the hope one does, or, in other words, one may notice only that which supports one's hopes and wishes. That is why Winnie, not wanting to acknowledge the fact that life goes on, even though she is dying, argues that everything is approaching an end The Showers, whom she mentions in her story, repeated twice, are "last human kind - to stray this way" (pp. 43-44. My italics). In the beginning of the sentence she ex-

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[128] Edwin Schlossberg quotes Samuel Beckett saying: "In 'Happy Days' I talk about natural laws as being dependent on who you are" (E. S c h l o s s b e r g, op. cit., p. 43).

presses her wish- they should be the last of human kind. Then, however, realizing she is not telling the truth, she adds: "to stray this way" - maybe there are people living somewhere else, after all, but here, at this time and place, she and her husband are the only survivals. She says she knows Willie has died: "Oh no doubt you are dead like the others, no doubt you have died or gone away and left me, like the others, it doesn't matter, you are there" (p. 50). Is he dead, then, or is he still there? Thinking about the deterioration she hopes it is approaching - if Willie is dead then she will die soon. Yet her wish is followed by the statement of truth - he is still alive and so the end, his as well as hers, is not there yet. The signs of approaching end are most welcome and that is why she remarks on another occasion "What a blessing nothing grows" (p. 34). On the other hand, she desparately avoids noticing the fact that, no matter what her situation is, life keeps going on. This attitude of hers explains her reaction to seeing a live emmet carrying eggs - she starts laughing and says: "How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones" (p. 31). Formication, life's going on is a poor joke for her as her thoughts are turned towards death and decay and not towards life any longer. That is also why she comments on the information from the newspaper about the death of Dr Carolus Hunt (p. 15) and does not respond to the newspaper excerpts advertising an opening for smart youth (p. 16 and p. 48) or saying a bright boy is wanted (p. 17 and p. 48). She does not react to the ads as the words "boy" and "youth" stress the fact that life goes on, a fact, a natural law, she does not want to acknowledge, as by doing so she hopes to abolish it.

Winnie does not accept those natural laws which are not in accordance with her wishes and beliefs yet, unlike many Beckett characters, she accepts the flow of physical time and the fact that the movement of time will, some day, bring the eternal change, the end, her death. She keeps speaking both about the changes and about an end, any end, she yearns for. Winnie says: "To have been always what I am - and so changed from what I was" (p. 51). This sentence, which probably could not have been uttered by any other Beckett character, marks her awareness of physical and psychological time. When an individual looks at himself he perceives himself as an entity, as one concrete being, when, however, one compares

this individual as he is now to what he was, say, twenty years ago, one notices the changes he has undergone, one becomes aware of the fact that any human being is not an entity but a succession of different individuals at different, consecutive stages of development. Thus Winnie from Act II, even though the same individual as in Act I, is not the same - she has changed and must find new habits to adapt her altered ego to the altering conditions. Winnie notices explicitly that she is a combination of two elements: change, the effect of the flow of time, and sameness - after all she is the same individual all the time long. It must be, therefore, said that the concept of psychological time in this play has been changed - - Winnie feels time not only as repetition and sameness but also as development. Whereas the coil in the earlier plays was achieved by means of joining the circular quality of psychological time and the linear quality of physical time, in this drama, for the first time, Winnie perceives time as a combination of these two elements and the psychological time has the form of a coil. This accounts for the fact that the future, as she perceives it, as well as the end of the play are exceptional in the Beckett canon, both of these presenting a possibility of a new situation, a new development. The future as such will not be only a repetition but also a new development. In Act I Winnie has manual activities and words to pass the time, in Act II words and the movement of the eyes are left. The third act, if it followed, would undoubtedly present a further development - maybe words would fail. Winnie herself is aware of the fact that the future may and even should be different. She wonders: "Shall I myself not melt perhaps in the end, or burn, I do not mean necessarily burst into flames, no, just little by little be charred to a black cider, all this - (ample gesture of arms) - visible flesh" (p. 38). She perceives future development as being different from the present one - she would be devoured by heat and flames and not by the ever-rising grains of earth, but this end would also take place "little by little". On another occasion, she says: "And if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why then just close the eyes - (she does so) - and wait for the day to come - (opens eyes) - the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours. (Pause.) That is what I find so comforting when I lose heart and envy the brute beast" (p. 18). The associa-

tion of death with darkness comes back towards the end of the play, when she says: "It might be the eternal dark. (Pause.) Black night without end" (p. 60). The last phrase brings us back to the beginning of the play when she spoke of "world without end". Would, then, one endlessness be replaced by another? But in such a case both her present pain and her future relief would be limited and not endless. No explicit answer can be given here. This question, as so many others put forward by Beckett or his characters, remains open-ended, each spectator or reader may, if he wants to, supply his own answer. The same is true of the very end of the play. When Willie appears in full sight, "dressed to kill" (p. 61), what is he about to do, where does he stretch his hand to? Will he touch Winnie and thus the wonderful time of their love, wedding and youth will come back, the past will be reenacted, or will he get the revolver to kill himself and Winnie and a new situation, characteristic of the flow of physical time, will be reached? The answer, once more, is not supplied. What can and must be noticed, however, is that in this play for the first time in the Beckett canon the end might denote a new development. Undoubtedly, as Ruby Cohn has put it, the conclusion of "Happy Days" is inconclusive[129] but what one knows for certain is that the next act/day/phase will not be merely a repetition.

Let us, once more, return to Beckett's "Regiebuch" of the German production: "Relate frequency of broken speech and action to discontinuity of time. (Winnie's) time experience incomprehensible transport from one inextricable present to the next, those past unremembered, those to come inconceivable"[130]. Winnie lives to a great extent in the present of psychological time yet she remembers the past, no matter how incorrectly, and thinks about the future. For her, time is not only the present but a combination of the three phases, it is a repetition, sameness, but also change and development. And this, among other things, is what makes the play exceptional in the Beckett canon.

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[129] R. C o h n. Currents in Contemporary Drama, Bloomington-London 1969, p. 196.

[130] Quoted after: R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 187.

13. "WORDS AND MUSIC"

"Words and Music" (written in English in 1961, first broadcast on the B.B.C. Third Programme on November 13, 1962) can, once more, be discussed as tackling the problem of time, of the influence of the past on the present, the subject for Voice, Music and Croak for the evening being not merely a fiction but a fictional recreation of some element of the artist's past life that is highly charged with emotion for him. Not being satisfied with the attempts of finding his past and bringing it alive in the present creative process, Croak gives a new subject, namely that of old age. Thus their creative process has moved from a subject connected with the past to one connected with Croak's present and immediate future.

The sense of circular quality of man's life, even though not explicit in this play as in Beckett's other writings, is yet present, both in the poem created by Croak, and in the end of the play. The way of man's existence leads through trash and scum of living (could these attributes of life be a different way of describing the suffering of being?) to the glimpse of wellhead which, being an end, is, by its very nature, also a beginning[131]. The same ambivalence is to be found in the poem as such as well as in the play. The poem seems to be finished, ended, when Words says: "Again. (Pause. Imploring.) Again!" (p. 32). The end marks still another repetition, slightly altered now because Words seems to have taken over the place of Croak[132]. The circle has been completed to give place to another one and so on and on till finally the distance between these coils becomes big enough for the end to come.

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[131] S. B e c k e t t, Words and Music, [in:] Cascando and other Short Dramatic Pieces, New York 1978, p. 32. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

[132] Th. E. P o s t l e w a i t (op. cit., p. 106) has written: "but to 'croak' [...] is the dilemma, since 'croak' means both to speak in a grumbly voice, especially of evil things to come, and to die, with or without a rancous and harsh cry. To croak is to anticipate the silent conclusion with words of inconclusive consequence (and inconsequential conclusion)". If this reading is taken into consideration, the very name of the main character becomes a valid description of the state most Beckett characters are in.

14. "CASCANDO"

"Cascando" (written in French in 1962, first broadcast in French by the O.R.T.F. on October 13, 1963, first broadcast in English on the B.B.C. Third Programme on October 6, 1964) presents the process of gradual deterioration, falling, which is visible not only in the title of the play[133] but also in the story related by Voice, where Woburn keeps falling several times. The title is ironic to some extent, however. The situation presented in the narration makes it clear that each fall is followed by another rising to fall again so that the falling is not constant and gradual, as it were, but is divided and punctuated by its counterpoint - rising and being up again. Each fall of Woburn seems to be the last one to deceive and disappoint both Woburn, Voice, Opener and the audience, when he rises again. This makes the meaning of the title and the situation presented more vicious - the falling down of Woburn, the telling the right story by Voice, opening of the story by Opener take place but whenever the end seems almost at hand, yet another beginning issues. The circle is finished and what follows is still another repetition, only a sequence of these making the development visible. Once more, the play presents the two elements of human existence - the circle of repetition and the line of development forming the coil of long life.

The cyclical repetition of the situation is visible in the situation of all the three characters: Opener opens to close in order to open again, Voice tries desparately to finish the story hoping all the time long it will be the right one, and while finish-

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[133] Ruby Cohn has written that "cascando is itself a musical term describing the dying away of sound - slowing down the tempo, diminishing the volume" (R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, pp. 202-203); Eugene Webb traces the origin of the word to the Italian language, where it means "falling, stumbling, falling into ruins, tumbling down" (E. W e b b, op. cit., p. 109); and Louise Cleveland writes: "The title is both a musical direction and a punning image for existence in time as a cascade or 'wordshed'. ('Shed' itself implies both protection and loss.) The word occurs as the title of a poem (1936), printed in 'Poems in English' (London 1961). Along with 'bing', 'cascando' seems to denote the brief fall from brith to the grave in Pozzo's speech" (L. O. C l e v e l a n d, Trials in the Soundscape. The Radio Plays of Samuel Beckett, "Modern Drama" 1968, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 280).

ing he realizes it is not and he will have to start another one, Woburn keeps getting up to fall down again. While on his knees, he makes great efforts to get up again and so on and on, endlessly, it seems. The notion of cyclical development is brought about by the first words of the play uttered by Opener: "(dry as dust) It is month of May ... for me"[134]. The concept of May each year being the time of rebirth in nature, is contrasted with the dryness of his voice, resembling dust and so evoking no idea of rebirth but only that of decay and death. The notion of a season adequate for rebirth is expressed verbatim by Opener who speaks about the "reawakening" (p. 15). Slightly later on, however (pp. 16-17), he does not speak about May being the time of reawakening any more.

Samuel Beckett has told Alec Reid that this play is "about the character Woburn, who never appears"[135]. Woburn, although physically absent, is extremely present all the time long. Opener and Voice are, in a sense, subordinated to Woburn, the one whose appearance never takes place and whose presence is evoked only by means of the words. Both the characters (and the audience, by extention) see, as it were, Woburn, notice his having changed, "not enough", though (p. 9). Both of them hope this story will be the right one (ibid.). What does it mean, however? They hope that after all Woburn will have sufficiently changed, that finally, after falling down, he will not be able to get up. The situation of Woburn develops, changes. He falls several times in the course of the play (pp. 9-10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17), each time a new story is told or the same one repeated. His situation is the same - he falls to get up again, yet it also changes - his face is in the mud (p. 11), sand (p. 12), stones (p. 14), bildge (p. 15). The change, however, seems to mark not only development but also repetition. The bildge from the end of the play is similar to the mud from the beginning, both of them being liquids, and very unpleasant ones, whereas in the middle of the play he is surrounded by solid materials. The situations from the beginning and end of the play are also different from those in the middle - in all the instances which are the core of the play he falls to get up, while as the

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[134] S. B e c k e t t, Cascando, [in:] Cascando and other Short Dramatic Pieces, p. 9. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

[135] A. Reid, quoted after: D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 542.

play begins he is already down not having seen him fall we only see him getting up and the last glimpse of him in the play is when we see him lying in the bildge. The play ends with the first phase of the cycle and it began with the second one. As the play finishes the characters hope they have finally found the right story, that Woburn will not get up again. What we, as the audience, can suspect, however, is that what will follow will by yet another beginning - Woburn's getting up to fall again and so on and on, endlessly. As long as Woburn keeps getting up after having fallen down, Voice will have to go on telling the story and Opener opening the narration. That is why the play is really about Woburn - his end, the change of his situation, will also mark the change for Voice and Opener. All of them are tired with the cycle of repetitions and hope the end will come soon, their situation will be totally changed. What does this change mean, though? If Woburn stays down and does not get up it may very possibly mean he is dead. Thus as much struggle to get up, tell stories and open the narration as life. All the three characters are killing the time, filling their lives with various, quite meaningless activities, waiting for the final "cascando" - dying away and fade out. The final stage is always closer, approaching with each cycle, circle of repetition, yet, as the end of the play indicates, it has not been reached so far. The play could, in fact, end with the words of Voice which open it: "- story ... if you could finish it ... you could rest ... you could sleep ... not before ... oh I know ... the ones I've finished ... thousands and one ... all I ever did ... in my life ... with my life ... saying to myself ... finish this one ... it's the right one ... then rest ... then sleep ..." (p. 9). Another circle has been completed - it makes the end closer but not there yet. The end, as always in Beckett drama, is very slow in coming.

15. "PLAY"

The existence of the characters of "Play" (written in English in 1963), who probably lead a kind of after-life[136], is restricted

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136 "Play", Beckett's next play, seems to abolish the last hope of all Beckett characters that death will give an end to their

not only spatially and physically (their being imprisoned in the urns being indicative of this) but temporarily as well - they exist only when the spotlight is turned on them. Thus, by means of the light, Beckett has presented the visual image of the concept of existing only while being perceived by the other. In the earlier works, especially in "Film", this concept was expressed only verbally.

When the curtain goes up we face a concrete, specified situation - from the urns, all of them identical, as Beckett stresses[137], three heads protrude, the faces "so lost to age and aspect as to seem almost part of urns" (ibid.). The urns as such, bring about funereal associations of boxes containing the ashes of dead people. The faces are "impassive throughout" and "voices toneless" (ibid.), both the faces and the tonelessness of the voices reflect their total subordination to the light which, while playing the role of the ruthless interrogator, is also the instrument of bringing them in and out of existence - the existence, presence of the heads is intrinsically bound with the light - not illu-

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torture. The characters of the play appear to have died in one way or another. Alan Schneider remembers the times of rehearsing "Play" on Broadway: "We discovered they were dead - we worked it out almost like a detective story - who was killed first, who was killed how - I'm sure the audience knew they were all dead" (An Interview with Alan Schneider by Richard Schechner - Reality Is not Enough. "The Tulane Drama Review" 1965, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 129). Beckett himself, while being asked about the possibility of the characters' having committed suicide is remembered to have said he did not know but such a possibility was not out of question (E. F e l i k s i a k, Beckett reżyseruje "Komedię" w Schillertheater, "Dialog" 1979, nr 5, p. 167). Now they probably lead a kind of after-life. This has been noticed unanimously by a number of critics, although they do not agree as to where the two women and the man actually are - whether it is Hell (ibid., p. 166; A. P. H i n c h l i f f e, op. cit., p. 122; H. K e n n e r, A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett, p. 153), Purgatory (K. W o r t h, The Space and the Sound in Beckett's Theatre, [in:] K. W o r t h, ed., Beckett the Shape Changer, London-Boston 1975, p. 204), or, maybe, the Ante-Purgatory of Dante's Belacqua (J. F l e t c h e r, J. S p u r l i n g, op. cit., p. 108). No matter, however, where they exactly are, their existence in this life-after-life is very similar to the life as Beckett's characters know it - it is also characterized by suffering, waiting and spiral-like quality of existence in time seen both as repetition and development.

137 S. B e c k e t t, Play, [in:] Cascando and other Short Dramatic Pieces, p. 45. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

minated by the light they are neither seen nor heard by the audience and while not perceived, they stop existing, as it were. It could be argued that the function of the light is to bring out the objective truth about the past, whereas what the characters do is presenting their subjective versions of it, subjective, as distorted by the deffectiveness of their memory. There is, however, another interpretation possible. The function of the light is not so much connected with the probing of the past but rather in making them aware that they exist, that they go on existing no matter what their wishes and desires are. This reading could be supported by the fact that the light is equally insistent in the second part of the play when they talk about their present situation. Therefore, it could be argued that, even though their speaking is connected with the light, the latter one shines not in order to make them speak but only that they speak because it shines. The obligation to speak is theirs and does not belong to the light. In this context, their speaking would be yet another way of passing the time, filling it with stories, a favourite pastime of all Beckett characters. The hope that the telling of the truth about their past will bring an end of the light's shining would be similar, then, to the hope of the tramps in "Waiting for Godot" that the coming of Godot will bring an end to their waiting.

Discussing the function of time in "Play" one has to notice the formal division of the play by means of internal chorus into two parts, the first one, dealing with the rememberances connected with a typical, trivial, to some extent, suoject of triangle, presenting the past, the second one, consisting of the remarks of the characters connected with their present and also their hopes as to what their future might be. The division of the play into these two parts is clearly marked by means of the collective, and therefore incomprehensible, voices of the three characters, and also by means of the change in light and volume of the voice suggested by Beckett himself during the Schiller Theater production. After two weeks of rehearsals Beckett came to the conclusion that two volumes of speech were to be used - higher in part A (connected with the past) and lower in part B (dealing with the present). The force of the voice was to correspond with the two kinds of intensity of the light - stronger in part A and weaker in part B.

Light grows weaker, tired, as it were[138]. Beckett has explained the function of the light (and volume of the voice, by extension, as these two undoubtedly go together) by remarking that the characters long for darkness and silence and there are moments of both. The "hellish half-light" is a paradox. Half-light is between light and darkness, but it is worse than anything else as there is never any certainty that it will end. There is some hope left, however. And this hope, this waiting for total darkness and silence, is what counts in the play[139].

Is there any hope of an end left to the characters? Beckett seemed not certain about this, either, which is reflected in many versions of the play[140]. Among other problems, these revisions also reflect Beckett's uncertainty about whether the form of the play as a whole should reflect the notion of complete, unaltered repetitiveness of events presented, and thus have a form of a closed circle, or, perhaps, whether the line of development, no matter how slight it might seem in the overall impact of the repetitive element, should be noticed. Therefore two versions came into being. The first version ended with Beckett's direction "repeat play exactly"[141]. An exact repetition had undoubtedly two functions. The first one (also discernible in the second, changed version) was to give the audience more time to grasp the meaning of the piece, just as the second hearing of a musical piece makes it more appealing to the listener. The second function, the one intrinsically bound with the concept of human existence in time, was to indicate the fact that the characters will go on telling their story endlessly, that their imprisonment in the circular quality of time

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138 E. F e l i k s i a k, op. cit., p. 166.

139 Ibid., p. 167.

140 Richard Admussen writes: "The manuscripts of 'Play', translated into French as 'Comedie', demonstrate the care with which Beckett works. The number of drafts alone is indicative; there are ten typescript versions of the play. Many are heavily rewritten, and the corrections give evidence of at least twenty-two separate reworkings. The first dated manuscript, the fourth, reads: 'corrected August 1962', and the tenth and last, conforming with the published version, is marked December 1963. Since three versions already existed before August 1962, we can assume that Beckett worked at the creation of 'Play' for at least a year and a half, two years is probably more accurate" (R. L. A d m u s s e n, The Manuscripts of Beckett's "Play", "Modern Drama" 1973, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 23).

141 H. Z e i f m a n, op. cit., p. 39.

is endless. This notion, however, seemed questionable to Beckett himself, who, while watching the first run-throughs of "Comedie" in Paris, changed his initial concept of the play and wrote to G. Devine:

> According to the text it (the repeat) is rigorously identical with the first statement. We now think it would be dramatically more effective to have it express a slight weakening, both of question and of response, by means of less and perhaps slower light and correspondingly less volume and speed of voice. [...] The impression of falling off which this would give, with suggestion of conceivable dark and silence in the end, or of an indefinite approaching towards it, would be reinforced if we obtained also, in the repeat, a quality of hesitance, of both question and answer, perhaps not so much in a slowing down of actual debit as in a less confident movement of spot from one face to another and less immediate reaction of the voices[142].

It seems to me that the introduction of the repetition, yet not of an exact one, fits better into the Beckett canon. For him, life is a repetition, yet never an exact one, as there is no place for exact repetition in a universe subject to change and entropy. Besides, the inexact repetition gives a brilliant double twofold structure to the play. Just as the second part of the play, with the slowing tempo and lowering the volume both of the voice and the light marks a slight falling movement of getting tired (of the characters and the light, of the questioned and questioning, victims and inquisitor) so, in a similar way, the inexact repetition of the whole play also marks the possibility of change. There is, undoubtedly, repetition but there is also change, change seen, no matter how paradoxically it might sound, in that very repetition. Again a coil, consisting of two elements, can be noticed in the play - by means of slightly varied repetitions the development becomes visible, after all. In this drama, just as in Beckett's other plays, the characters long for an end or, at least, for the present to become a past, as then, being over, it does not have to be lived. This notion is expressed by M, who says: "I know now all that was just ... play. And all this? When will all this -", to

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142 He continues: "The whole idea involves a spot mechanism of greater flexibility than has seemed necessary so far. The inquirer (light) beginning to emerge as no less a victim of his inquiry than they and as needing to be free, within narrow limits, literally to act the part, i. e. to vary if only slightly his speeds and intensities" (Samuel Beckett Exhibition, Reading University Library, 1971, p. 92. Quoted after: D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 567).

continue slightly later on: "All this, when will all this have been... just play?" (p. 54). His remark also sheds light on the title of the drama - the present may be unpleasant or it may be even a torture, once it has become the past it has changed into a mere play. Till then, imprisoned in the spiral-like quality of time, he and the two women have to go on reliving their past, and trying to live in the present.

16. "THE OLD TUNE"

"The Old Tune" (first published in 1963) an English adaptation of "La Manivelle", a play for the radio by Roger Pinget, is the only adaptation in the Beckett canon. This exceptional case can be accounted for by the fact that the subject matter of this short piece is a typical one for Beckett. The old tune referred to in the title, a piece of music issuing forth from a barrel-organ, is one of the leading sound images of this short radio play, others being the roar of car engines, the footsteps of passers-by and the conversation of the two old men - Gorman and Cream, who have met "after all these years, all these years"[143]. The relationship between these sounds and their interplay evokes the notion of the existence of two elements, characteristic of Beckettland - change and sameness, the flow of objective, physical time and its distorted subjective realization. The play becomes a presentation of old people trying to relive their past, escaping from the sour present into the recollections of distant past, which was peaceful and quiet. Both Gorman and Cream are aware of the flow of physical time - while talking about their past experiences they try to fix the exact dates, names and places. Although the past seems "like yesterday" (pp. 179, 181, 182) they find recollecting it exactly difficult. This seems, however, due not so much to the time that has passed since the moments remembered, as to their old age and the deffectiveness of their memory - Gorman, for instance, is not able to recollect properly the article in that morning's paper (p. 182). Their talk, during which they are desparately trying to evoke or even bring back the past, is like the broken barrel-organ and the music it produces. There is a linear development discernible in their conversation and in the piece of music, both of which

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143 S. B e c k e t t, The Old Tune, [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, London-Boston 1984, p. 177. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

progress, no matter how slightly. At the same time, however, there are moments when the conversation stops, when they are at a loss, being misled by their memory, just as there are moments when the mechanism of the instrument jams to start off again after a while. The spiral-like quality is typical of any barrel-organ, even a good one - after a period of linear development the piece of music beginning, progressing and ending, there is yet another repetition. The repetitive, interrupted, broken quality of the conversation and the old tune is juxtaposed to the sound of cars and footsteps of passers-by. The cars roar past them, the passers-by continue their walk and do not react to the men asking them for light twice (p. 181 and p. 184). Both the cars and other people have somewhere to go to, somewhere to hurry to and do not pay any attention to the two old men who are living in the stagnant back waters of life.

The whole play becomes a symphony composed of juxtaposed sounds - the broken, often interrupted conversation and the old tune are set against the background of quickly approaching and receding cars and footsteps. For other people life goes quickly forwards, for them it is nearly at a standstill.

What remains to be discussed still is the end of the piece. The stage directions read: "The tune resumes. The street noises resume and submerge tune for a moment. Street noises and tune together crescendo. Tune finally rises above them triumphant" (p. 189). The street noises, standing for the linear quality of life lived in the flow of progressive, physical time for a moment submerge the tune symbolizing the subjective quality of the existence of the men in the circular quality of psychological time. The objective becomes dominant over the subjective. Then, however, the tune becomes triumphant, as in each man's life the subjective reality, even though often misleading, is more important.

17. "COME AND GO"

The clash between the objective reality and its subjective realization and the relationship between the past and the present are the themes of Beckett's next short piece, a dramaticule "Come and Go" (written in English early in 1965).

This playlet is characterized by ultracompression as it occupies only three minutes of acting time and consists of nine extremely short speeches and twelve silences. Three women of "age undeterminable"[144] try to relive the only portion of their lives which they feel was valid and vital; the short period of their adolescence when, schoolgirls, they used to sit holding hands on a log in the playground, dreaming of love and happiness which they were, as it seems, never to find in reality. The first full line of the dialogue: "When did we three last meet?"(p. 67) echoes, as R. Cohn argues, "three witches of Macbeth. The feeling of fate is evoked. The three weird women are at once agents and victims of coming and going, strutting and fretting their hour upon the stage, which signifies nothing"[145].

They try desparately to relive their past, as if nothing happened after their having left school, as if no time passed and nothing changed. They soon discover, however, that things have changed, that even though for them time may have seemed at a standstill, it has passed, in fact, and brought some change. They first notice it as far as the others are concerned. The same kind of conversation is repeated three times, two women discussing the third one who has left the scene for a moment. The discussing ones, the object of their remarks and the words actually spoken are varied but the sense of the scenes remains the same. Each of the women notices the change the others have undergone yet decides not to tell them, hoping they do not realize how time has affected them. At the same time, it seems quite clear, their exclamations being indicative of this, that they treat the completely normal process of aging as something horrifying, and what is interesting, as a prccess which does not afflict them. What is important is that all of them, waile noticing change of the others, of the external reality, seem not to take into consideration the possibility that they themselves are changing. They think that time affects

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[144] S. B e c k e t t, Come and Go, [in:] Cascando and other Short Dramatic Pieces, p. 67. All the references in the text will be to this edition. Ruby Cohn has written: "the three women are faintly illuminated by their monosyllabic names: Vi, Ru, Flo. They vie for arcane information; they express rue - "Oh!"; life flows on" (R. C o h n, Back to Beckett, p. 211).

[145] R. C o h n, Beckett and Shakespeare, "Modern Drama" 1972, Vol. 15, No. 3, p. 229.

the external reality and the others and not themselves, that is why they hope to find themselves in the world of schoolgirls they once were. Then, however, the shock comes, when they decide to hold "hands in the old way" and Flo says: "I can feel the rings" (p.69). "The old way" is not possible any longer, the rings, which were there not in the past, being symbolic of the time that has passed and the change it has brought. Having met as in the old times they want to talk about the past and relive it while joining hands, hoping that the fact that the others have changed will not be a hinderance. Then, however, they become aware of the rings and probably realize the past cannot be relived, after all (although not necessarily as Beckett characters often do not notice things they do not want to notice).

There is another possibility, however. Beckett stresses in the stage directions that "Hands made up to be as visible as possible. No rings apparent" (p. 70). If there are really no rings then another interpretation comes to one's mind. In the past, while joining the hands, the girls dreamt of their future, of their great love any happy marriages to come. Dreaming about the future they could have said the very sentence, having no rings yet, they could have felt their presence on their fingers just as they could try to imagine their future lives, husbands, families. If this is the case, then their pretending to feel the rings now is ironic to a great extent, as it marks the tragic clash between their glorious future as they imagined it in the past and the sour reality of their present. The overall impression is that of waste, hopes and desires never coming true, of lives lost as the fulfillment never came. Once more, Beckett presents characters, who, even though partly noticing change, hope that time has not passed, pretending that the past can be relived, that time is external and everything still possible. Once more, we encounter people who are lost in the circular quality of time and in spite of the unquestionable reality, find shelter and peace in the illusory world of imagination and memory not wanting to accept the sour reality of time passing and bringing not fulfillment but only sorrow and despair.

18. "EH JOE"

"Eh Joe" (written in English in April-May 1965, first televised on B.B.C. 2 on July 4, 1966) is Beckett's first produced television play. In this short piece the artist presents the subjective world of the protagonist's psyche where the distinctions characteristic of the objective reality are no longer valid. Memory and reality are blended, so is the past (still alive in Joe's remembrances) and the present. Joe, whose age is specified (he is in his late fifties[145]), hears inside him the voices from the past. The place of the voice of his dead father has been lately taken over by a feminine voice telling him about the love he shared with a woman who later on committed suicide. Does the voice speaking belong to the woman whose story is related? It is not clear, it is not important, anyway. What is important is the fact, as the voice notices in the first sentences of the play, if Joe has "Thought of everything?... Forgotten nothing?" (p. 36). He is, in fact, haunted by memories which come back to him in the form of voices in his head. He keeps "throttling the dead in his head" (p. 37). Even though the voices belong to dead people their death has solved nothing, they go on talking and thus, despite being actually, objectively speaking, dead, they go on living and speaking in his head. They are alive in his mind. The voice of the woman we hear is a projection of his thoughts, it exists, just like the voices in "Embers", in his head, the past is alive in the present; the memories of the past and dead people keep them alive in the present. Now he is "throttling the dead in his head" as the concrete, living people stopped existing but they are still alive in his memories and have to be killed for the second time, now to stop existing in his thoughts. The subjective reality of Joe has become more important than the objective reality - the dead people are alive for him and for us, the audience, as he has not forgotten them. So is the past. Again, the present is only a transitory period between the past full of people and things to be remembered and the future "the best's to come" (pp. 36, 37, 39). The best was

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[145] S. B e c k e t t, Eh Joe, [in:] Cascando and other Short Dramatic Pieces, p. 35. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

to come in the past and is to come in the present, which is for Joe, as for other Beckett characters, only the time to remember about the things past and hope for the things to come in the future to be better than those happening in the present. Joe, while thinking about the things which are already behind him, waits for the end that will give a stop to his thoughts about the past, to his living in the past. In this play Beckett does not give any notion of repetition or development but rather concentrates on the present discomfort of a man imprisoned half-way between the past and the future, both of which he longs for. The only development visible in the play is the movement of the camera towards a greater closeup of Joe's face accompanying each pause. The impression thus achieved is that of getting more and more inside the mind of Joe. While being there, we are also able to hear the voices which are the product of his imagination and which do not exist in the objective, external reality.

19. "BREATH"

"Breath" (written in English in 1969) lasts only 35 seconds and dispenses altogether with actors and words[147]. Despite the fact that this piece has been discussed as a mere joke on Beckett's part[148], it seems that this was not the artist's aim, although it is difficult to treat in a standard way a piece (play?) of 35 seconds. Within this period of time, roughly equivalent to that of a few breaths, Beckett telescopes an entire life. The raising and lowering of the curtain establish the temporal boundaries of the drama and also of human existence, as Beckett perceives it. This

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[147] Originally "Breath" was given to Kenneth Tynan to be included in New York production of "Oh! Calcutta!" but as the latter one has changed Beckett's version, among other things introducing naked bodies on the stage, it was not presented during the successive productions of the musical (D. B a i r, op. cit., p. 603). The piece was also produced on the television by the British Broadcasting Corporation in its programme "First Tuesday", April 7, 1970. The play is, as John Calder has pointed out in his introduction to the published "text", a speechless demonstration of Pozzo's words in "Waiting for Godot": "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (J. F l e t c h e r, J. S p u r l i n g, op. cit., p. 117).

[148] J. F l e t c h e r, J. S p u r l i n g, op. cit., p. 117.

piece is his comment on the human condition: a stage empty of everything except a little rubbish, a dim light never intensifying to real brightness, a faint birth cry, a single breath in and out, a second cry, then silence. Silence, as a life-time has left no trace in eternity. No matter how long the life may seem to Beckett's characters and people in general, measured in terms of eternity it is just an instant. Beckett had stressed that it is "Important that two cries be identical"[149] - the end of the play (and of human life) is the same as the beginning, the short period between the natal and death cries, both of them identical, is a mere "breath", an instant, as compared with the eternity of non-existence, with what comes before and after. The end of human life is accompanied by the same attributes of light and sound as the beginning - a circle has been completed. H. Copeland writes about a version of the play, unfortunately not saying whether the piece was ever published or produced in such a form and if so then when and where, when the death cry is followed by yet another birth cry[150]. If this version is taken into consideration, then the two elements of Beckett's writing are discernible: the end of one human life is the beginning of yet another one, the process is an endless cycle of repetition and the development is seen as a succession of repetitions. "Though one man dies, another is always available to take his place. The absurd human situation forever perpetuates itself"[151]. As far as the printed version is concerned, however, it is just a dramatic illustration of Pozzo's sentence, an indication of the fact that, on the one hand, human life ends in the same way it began and, on the other, that human life measured in terms of eternity is extremely short.

20. "NOT I"

In "Not I" (written in English in spring 1972), as in Beckett's recent plays, the stress is put on the past, on what happened, and the present is limited to the narrating of what has happened, to

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[149] S. B e c k e t t, Breath, [in:] First Love and other Shorts, New York 1974, p. 91.

[150] H. C. C o p e l a n d, Art and the Artist in the Works of S. Beckett, The Hague-Paris 1975, p. 50.

[151] Ibid., p. 32.

reliving the past. What constitutes the present is merely the process of talking, the subject of the speech being completely limited to the things past. The shift of the stress to the past seems greater in each successive drama. Whereas in "Play" the characters' comments were greatly connected with the past yet in the second part of the drama the information given by them shed light on their present situation, in the case of "Not I" the second part is missing. We do not know what the situation of the woman in the present is and what might happen in the future. The present seems limited only to the reliving of the past, a repeated effort to grasp the meaning of the past. Such an interpretation, putting stress on the repetitive quality of the memories could indicate that the structure of the story and of the play is that of a circle and the overall impression evoked would be that of stasis. Yet, on the other hand, the idea of development is also discernible. The woman, whose life is narrated, has undergone changes, moving from a speechless infant to a woman of seventy who became the victim of a torrent of words - a specified period of time has passed and brought change intrinsically bound with it. The present situation demonstrated in the play also undergoes changes visible not so much in the woman speaking but in the reactions of the Auditor. The play consists of five parts marked by the occurence of the phrases: "what?... who?... no!... she!..."[152]. Each of these phrases is followed by a movement of Auditor which consists "in simple sideways raising of arms from sides and their falling back, in a gesture of helpless compassion. It lessens with each recurrence till scarcely perceptible at third" (p. 87). Auditor, as light in "Play", grows tired, as it were, with the narrator's not wanting to accept the woman from the story is, in fact, herself. The woman, too, seems to get tired. She says twice: "it can't go on" (pp. 82, 83), hoping "she'll be purged" (p. 83). She uses the word "she" again but it is clear, once more, she means herself. Towards the end of the play she says: "what she was trying... what to try... no matter... keep on... (curtain starts down)... hit on it in the end... then back... God is love... tender mercies... new every moment... back in the field... April morning... face in the grass... nothing but

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[152] S. Beckett, Not I, [in:] First Love and other Shorts, pp. 77, 80, 84, 85, 86. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

the larks... pick it up -" (p. 87). This end seems to be reminiscent of "Cascando", where Voice hoped to tell the right story in the end and went on relating, repeating endlessly the same story. It seems that as Voice in "Cascando", she will go on speaking, both of them will stop only after having told the right story. In her case, all she has to do is to accept the identity of the woman from the story as her own. She is not willing to do so yet, however, and thus she will still have to go on repeating the story. The circle will have to be repeated once more. There is one more thing which should be mentioned here. For the first time in the Beckett canon the insistence on the incessant quality of the torture is achieved by means of the structure of the play. Before the curtain goes up we already hear her speaking, her words being unintelligible, though. The same happens at the end. The performance is over, yet we are left with the awareness of her torture not being over - the curtain goes down but she is still behind it, telling her story endlessly, without cease, without a moment's release, a temporary release, at least, which was granted to the characters of Beckett's earlier plays.

21. "THAT TIME"

"That Time" (written in English between June 1974 and August 1975, first performed on May 20, 1976) evokes associations with music, notably with symphonic structure, as three voices develop separate subjects forming a piece of art whose aim is to present different moments building a human life. In this play, unlike in Beckett's earlier works, there is no indication what the present is like, only the listener's face is described in the stage directions and he does not react even in a slightest way to what the voices A, B and C (one and the same voice of his own) narrate. The present does not count any more, everything belongs to the past, unless, of course, we say that the present is merely a time of reliving the past. Anyway, in such plays as "Play", "Come and Go", or even "Not I", in one way or another the present was contrasted and compared with the past, two phases of time and the characters' lives were shown in them. Here all that remains is the past, the character's ego being totally turned towards it, to the moments he considers worth remembering, thinking about and longing for.

The memories of the past are divided into three voices: A, B, C, each of them dealing with a different sphere of the man's past. A speaks about the ruins the man used to hide in his childhood and the trip to them the man undertook in his grown-up life; B deals with the moments of great platonic love ("not touching or anything"[153]); and C describes the man's hiding against rain inside various buildings. The recollections of each voice cover a variety of happenings belonging to respective groups and so B speaks about "that time on the stone and that time in the sand" (p. 33) and C recollects hiding in a Portrait Gallery (p. 29), Public Library (p. 34) and a Post Office (p. 34). Each of the voices, recollecting a number of happenings, tries to trace different moments belonging to the past and seems to be looking for some kind of overall meaning in the past and in the man's life as such. Each of them seems to be looking for something exceptional and individual in the man's life and all of them are only able to mention moments in the past which, even though important for the man, are trivial and meaningless for an outsider. The attempt to find the real self, hidden somewhere in the memories of the past, now undertaken only by means of recollections, was once, as A mentions, the reason of the man's going to the ruins so strongly connected with his childhood. But even then, in the past, the still earlier period of the past could not be found and recovered and the man, not being able to find peace and shelter, characteristic of that place in his childhood, left the ruins lonely and disappointed. Then, in the past, he must have understood that the past cannot be recovered, that both the place and he himself had changed in the meantime. In spite of that lesson, he still tries to recapture the elusive things belonging to the past.

In the speeches of the voices there is a strong contradiction between their realizing that things have changed and their wanting them to be forever the same. This contradiction is best expressed by C, when he says: "never the same but the same" (p. 31). As Beckett's other characters, the man, even though realizing the change, development (the peace and safety of the childhood could not be regained, the love ended, the rain stopped falling) still wants to

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[153] S. B e c k e t t, That Time, [in:] Ends and Odds, p. 29. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

put the static moments of the past together and build up the image of life as it was. The individual has been changing all the time long due to the flow of physical time but certain elements of the deepest ego remained forever the same. What seems to have always been the same was the seeking of peace and safety, and his loneliness – at certain periods he was able to find these in the ruins, in his love never fully realized, inside the buildings. But then it appeared that safety and peace were not everlasting, the ruins crumbled, love ended and there was closing time in the museum. His life has been a succesion of fake successes and following failures, and now, recollecting it, he tries to find "that time" which was of vital importance, to discover that there was no such single moment, that his life was a succesion of such moments, each of the static and unchangeable in itself and dynamic, bound to bring about a next moment and change. This seems to be the last impression evoked by the play, when C says: "Not a sound only the old breath and the leaves turning and suddenly this dust whole place suddenly full of dust when you opened your eyes from floor to ceiling nothing but dust and not a sound only what was it it said come and gone was that something like that come and gone come and gone no one come and gone in no time gone in no time" (p. 37). This passage brings to one's mind "Breath" as well as "Come and Go". Everything and he himself, too, changes into dust, comes and goes quickly, human life is very short. Human life is a succesion of moments, of "that times", which come and go quickly, which soon change into dust. All that remains are memories. Memories, being static, in a sense, keep life at a standstill, in eternal present or past, whereas life as such changes, develops. Once more, the two notions characteristic of Beckett's concept of time, are discernible, yet in this case they are not really fully developed. The man, the face we see on the stage, inhabits a sphere where both the time and place of the present are irrelevant, he seems in a kind of stasis, what moves and changes are the pictures of the past he evokes. The past was the time of change and development but also of sameness of the very core of the individual, the present seems nonexistent and there does not seem to be any possible alternative for it either now or in the future.

22. "FOOTFALLS"

The title of the next play, "Footfalls" (written in English in 1975, first performed on 20 May 1976), is a telling one - nearly throughout the whole performance "clearly audible rhythmic tread"[154] is heard. May, demanding the carpet be removed from the floor, argued: "the motion alone is not enough, I must hear the feet, however faint they fall" (p. 45). The rhythmic timing of the steps brings back the notion earlier expressed in "Embers", when Henry wondered: "Could a horse be trained to stand still and mark time with its four legs?" (p. 105). In both the instances, the idea evoked is that of a rhythmic sound of a kind of chronometer - an instrument designed for measuring the flow of physical time. Physical time in the play, even though seldom actually mentioned, is yet discernible. The age of the women is specified in the following dialogue, characteristic of Beckett characters:

M: What age am I?
V: And I? (Pause. No louder.) And I?
M: Ninety.
V: So much?
M: Eighty-nine. Ninety.
V: I had you late. (Pause.) In life. (Pause.) Forgive me... again. (Pause. No louder.) Forgive me... again. Pause.
M: What age am I now?
V: In your forties.
M: So little?
V: I am afraid so. (p. 44)

This passage is quite telling in many respects, the sentences "So much?", "So little?" and "Forgive me... again" being worth discussing separately. The mother, being ninety, wonders she has lived so long and her forty-years-old daughter thinks her age unfortunately is not sufficient yet, a remark, the meaning of which is further underlined by Mother's words: "I am afraid so". Again, as in Beckett's other plays, the notion hidden under these lines is that of human life being very long - the mother thinks it is time her sufferings ended, whereas the daughter realizes with sadness that she has not lived enough yet to hope for a quick end. Such a

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[154] S. B e c k e t t, Footfalls, [in:] Ends and Odds, p. 42. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

reading of these lines can be supported not only by Beckett's philosophy of life as a period of waiting for the final solution, end, death, but also by the words: "Forgive me... again". If the closest context of this utterance is taken into consideration, it becomes quite clear that what Mother asks the daughter to forgive her is giving birth to her. People, according to the ideas expressed in "Proust" and in Beckett's other works, have to repent for the eternal sin of being born. If, then, being born is a sin, than the mother, being the agent of childbirth is, in a sense, responsible for it and all she can hope for is the child's forgiveness for bringing it into the world characterized by suffering.

The two women seem to be living in two worlds, that of the mother characterized by suffering, slow, yet incessant passing away, approaching the end of her suffering of being, and that of the daughter filled up with story-telling. It could be only wondered whether the stories May is telling are not a kind of relief from the mental strains of living in a similar way as the injections of her mother are a relief from her physical pain. As the case in Beckett always is, the two elements of human existence, repetition and development, are discernible. The repetitive quality of the existence of both May and Mother is evoked by certain actions and phrases occurring several times and also by the word "again" repeated three times at the beginning of the play. What needs stressing, however, is that repetition is hardly ever exactly the same and that the changes evoke the notion of development, however slight it might seem.

During his Schiller-Theater production, Beckett, as became customary for him, made notes concerning the performance and so the director's copy came into existence. It is quite illuminating as it both sheds light on how Beckett perceived the play on the stage and also enables the reader to notice some minute, yet important details which might otherwise escape his attention[155]. Beckett has divided the play into four parts, the dividing points being each time the sound of the chime and fade out. This division is quite clear in the play itself due to the precise stage directions. So is the fact that each time the chime is heard its sound

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155 Samuel Beckett's notes concerning the Berlin production of "Footfalls" and "That Time" have been published in "Dialog" 1976, nr. 12, pp. 121-124.

is fainter and the light grows dimmer with its each use. The impression thus achieved is that of both light and chime getting weaker each time, tired, as it were, which brings us to a similar notion expressed in "Play". What is not discernible in the play as such and becomes clear in Beckett's notes, is that May grows tired, too, this being visible in the ever diminishing number of steps: 126 in Part I, 90 in Part II, 54 in Part II and none in Part IV where, after "chime even a little fainter still" there is "fade up to even a little less still on strip. No trace of May", as Beckett demands in the stage directions (p. 49). Thus, for the first time in the Beckett canon, the stress has been shifted from repetition, still discernible, though, to development - a completely new situation has been achieved at the end of the play, th main character having vanished. Has she died or gone somewhere else, perhaps, to continue "revolving" the past in her head? The answer, as so often in Beckett, is not given but what is absolutely certain is that for us, the audience, she has stopped existing. For the first time the artist has presented at least the end of stage life if not of actual life as well, so that the stress has been put, after all, on development, characteristic of the flow of physical time.

23. "GHOST TRIO"

In the TV playlet, "Ghost Trio" (written in English in 1975, first televised on B.B.C. 2 on April 17, 1977), there is a notion of repetition introduced, some of the camera shots being repeated in all three parts[156], similarly are some utterances. The second

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[156] This playlet may be divided into three parts. In Part I (pre-action) the "sole sign of life (is) a seated figure" of a man who does not do anything, just sits "bowed forward, face hidden, clutching with both hands a small cassette"(S. B e c k e t t, Ghost Trio, [in:] Ends and Odds, p. 57. All the references in the text will be to this edition). Part II (action) introduces the movement of the man who, as the narrating feminine voice argues "will now think he hears her" (p. 58). Reacting to the voice audible only to himself, the man starts walking around the room, approaches the window and door, opens them but does not find anything or anyone there. The woman he seems to be waiting for does not come to him either now or in Part III (re-action), in which a small boy appears at the end of the corridor and shakes his head "faintly" (p. 64). The wish, the greatest desire of the man does not come true - the one he keeps waiting for never comes.

part, especially, evokes the notion of the repetitive quality of the man's situation - it begins with the Voice saying: "He will now think he hears her" (p. 58) and ends with a nearly exact repetition of the phrase: He will now again think he hears her" (p. 60), the only change in the utterance being the addition of the word "again" and thus the notion of repetition being strengthened. The same idea is also explicitly expressed by the word closing this part: "repeat" (p. 60). What is to be repeated? The whole part or, maybe, its element? It is not clear. The playlet, perhaps even more than any other works of Beckett, is a vague one and the main impression it leaves in the spectator's mind is that of endless waiting for something that is concrete for the man only - we will never know whether he waits for his past to be reenacted in the moment of the woman's coming, or whether the woman is really supposed to come now. Both the notion of intense waiting and the appearance of the boy who, in a sense, announces the waiting is not over yet, make the play reminiscent of "Waiting for Godot". It would be too farfetched in this case, however, to argue that this play is, like "Godot", a presentation of human life as waiting for something that will never be fulfilled. Unlike "Waiting for Godot" with its numerous implications, hints, which, even though might be misleading, yet are still there, "Ghost Trio" remains elusive in its meaning, being a vague impression about a concrete individual rather than a more or less precise statement about human situation as such.

24. "...BUT THE CLOUDS..."

"...but the clouds..." (written in English in 1976, first televised on B.B.C. 2 on April 17, 1977), a short television play, opens with darkness, followed by fade up to a man "sitting on invisible stool, bowed over invisible table"[157]. The man remains seated there, not making a single movement or uttering a single word throughout the whole performance. The main character has been split

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157 S. B e c k e t t, ...but the clouds..., [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, p. 257. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

into three elements - the seated, silent figure (M), the silent, yet moving M1 and V - his voice. Even though these three are meant to be an entity, they behave as if they were three different characters, M being an onlooker, M1 an actor and V a director conducting a rehearsal, and simultaneously the narrator.

V, as many Beckett characters, is a story teller, yet, unlike most of them, he uses the first person and thus confesses he is talking about himself: "When I thought of her it was always night". Immediately, however, after the very first sentence, he comes to the conclusion his story is "not right" and corrects himself: "When she appeared it was always night" (p. 259). Although the sentences differ, the word "always", stressing the repetitive quality of the experience or event, remains in both of them. The time is also specified - it was night, the time when a man is often haunted by memories, the time when ghosts are said to appear. These two sentences present his trouble in a nutshell. He is talking about a woman he once met or wishes to have met. Thus his narration is either an account of a real past, or a makebelieve, an expression of his desires and hopes, an account of a past he wishes it to have been.

While trying to put the things "right" he at first enumerates three possibilities, three cases: she appeared and was gone immediately; she appeared and lingered for a moment; she appeared and uttered a few words. When he contemplates the first two cases, the face of a woman is shown. In the third instance the mouth utters inaudibly a few words, which are said aloud by V. Then he mentions a forth possibility - "by far the commonest" (p. 261), when he begged her to come in vain, and as he says, "busied myself with nothing [...] until the time came, with break of day, to issue forth again, [...] resume my hat and greatcoat, and issue forth again, to walk the roads. (Pause.) The back roads" (pp. 261-262).

The play ends with M1 in hat and greatcoat going out into the roads again; the face of the woman is shown again, her lips uttering inaudibly words spoken aloud by V: "...but the clouds of the sky... when the horizon fades... or a bird's sleepy cry... among the deepening shades..." (p. 262). And then - a fade out, the stage becomes completely dark, just as it was at the beginning of the play. A full circle has been completed. The next night might follow, the man may appear again, think of her again, and hope again

that she will come and then set off to the roads again. The narration uses past tense, seems to refer to the past, yet what we see happening on the stage is a present waiting for the woman and begging her to come. And it is highly probable he will be doing the same thing tomorrow night. Unless, of course, he finally gets his story right, sheds his illusions and accepts his real past and present. Until then, he will behave in the same or nearly the same way each night, his future being a repetition of his past, and he himself being lost "under the deepening shades", forever lost between light and darkness, hope and despair, the past and the future.

25. "A PIECE OF MONOLOGUE"

"A Piece of Monologue" (written in English in 1980, first performed in 1980) is uttered by a man who, even though using a third person, is undoubtedly speaking about himself. This short piece seems to be yet another variation on Pozzo's sentence: "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (p. 89). The idea of being born to die is expressed verbatim in the very first sentence of the play: "Birth was the death of him"[158]. Life for the speaker, as for many other Beckett characters, is an expiation for the "eternal sin of being born", and it seems to be an endless torture of waiting for death, which is always approaching, yet never there yet. In this piece the stress on death can be explicitly seen from the very beginning of the monologue: "From funeral to funeral. To now. This night. Two and a half billion seconds. Again. Two and a half billion seconds. Hard to believe so few. From funeral to funeral. Funerals of... he all but said of loved ones. Thirty thousand nights. Hard to believe so few" (p. 265). This passage brings forth the motifs of the play; the funerals; the loved ones who are dead now and who are mentioned (with slight variations) several times in the course of the play; the repetitive quality of the man's existence; the

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158 S. B e c k e t t, A Piece of Monologue, [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, p. 265. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

passing of time. The half a billion seconds, or thirty thousand nights, making for the period of the life which is behind him, are described as few. This seeming paradox can be explained by the discrepancy between the objective and the subjective. Considered in terms of objective terms of mathematic figures and physical time the period seems long. Considered, however, in terms of his subjective feelings, the number is small as either, due to the waiting and feelings it evokes, the objective time has stretched greatly in its subjective realization, or because, even though much time has passed, the end has not been reached yet. For him, just as the birth was death, the living means dying: "Dying on. No more no less. No. Less. Less to die" (p. 266). He is not living on but dying on, thus life and death have become equivalent. He has "less to die" as, no matter how slow the process might seem to him, the passing seconds and days bring him closer to the end, his death.

The monologue, just as his life, seems to be built on a set of juxtapositions which, contrary to the generally accepted rules, are not opposed but in a sense united to form a new quality. Birth becomes death, living on becomes dying on, repetition becomes progress. There are many repetitions in the play: some of the actions are described several times, such as the lighting of the lamp (pp. 256, 257 - 2 times, 268 - 2 times), his staring out and nothing stirring (pp. 265, 266, 267, 268 - 2 times); some of the phrases are repeated as, for instance: "Once white" (pp. 267 - 3 times, 268, 269). These repetitions, however, are hardly ever exactly the same, the alternations, no matter how slight they appear at first sight, bringing about the notion of development. And so, for example, the description of his lighting the lamp, from being quite long and detailed at the beginning of the play, changes into: "Lights lamp as described" (p. 268), finally to become: "Spill. Hands. Lamp. Gleam of brass. Pale globe alone in gloom. Brass bedrail catching light" (p. 269). By means of the altered description, although the same event is described, a different meaning is achieved. On the one hand, his presence becomes in a sense wiped off - it is no longer him, but just the hands. On the other hand, this also serves a kind of quickening of the tempo - the shortening, condensing of the description could be treated as a way of quickening of the tempo of actions, too, the actions which are "again and again" repeated. In the play the word "again" is used ele-

ven times and the phrase "again and again" - six times. Towards the end of the play, he says:

> Thirty thousand nights of ghosts beyond. Beyond that black beyond. Ghost light. Ghost nights. Ghost rooms. Ghost graves. Ghost... he all but said ghost loved ones. ... Never but the one matter. The dead and gone. The dying and going. From the word go. The word begone. Such as the light going now. Beginning to go. In the room. Where else? Unnoticed by him staring beyond. The globe alone. Not the other. The unaccountable. From nowhere. On all sides nowhere. Unutterably faint. The globe gone. Alone gone. (p. 269)

The lamp-light, according to the stage directions is, in fact, failing, yet there is no hope, whatsoever, that it is going off never to be lit again. Quite on the contrary, taking into account what he said earlier: "Light gone. Gone. Again and again. Again and again gone. Till dark slowly parts again. Grey light"(p. 268), the light is again gone for some time only. He has said several times that there is "no such thing as none" ("light" - pp. 265, 267, "sounds" - p. 266) and "no such thing as whole" (pp. 268, 269). Both the words "none" and "whole" indicate a sense of being ended, completed. For him, even though thirty thousand nights have passed, nothing has finished, everything is in the process of "dying and going" and not in the finished state of "dead and gone". Thus the end of the play, being a slightly altered repetition of the beginning, marks some development but is also a sign of sameness. Many more such nights will probably pass before the coils of the spiral are covered and the end is finally reached.

26. "ROCKABY"

"Rockaby" (written in English in 1981, first performed in 1981) is another short, one character play, in which again the notion of slow development is evoked by means of numerous repetitions, be it just of phrases, such as, for instance, "time she stopped" (pp. 275, 276 - 3 times, 277 - 2 times, 279 - 2 times, 281), "to herself / whom else" (pp. 275, 276 - 3 times, 277, 279, 281), or of whole sequences. The play consists of four movements/sections, each of them beginning with the word "More", said by a "prematurely

old" woman[159] seated in a rocking chair. Then a monologue follows, uttered by V, her recorded voice. The beginning lines of the four monologues are the same in two instances, for movements I and III being: "till in the end / the day came / in the end came / close of a long day" (pp. 275, 278) and for movements II and IV: "so in the end / close of a long day" (pp. 276, 280). In both the cases the words "end" and "close" are used, indicating a kind of finality, solution, terminus. Yet what precedes them is yet another "more", followed by another monologue, each of which is highly reminiscent of the previous one, yet, at the same time is a kind of description of another stage in the woman's life. Her obsession is the need of the other, the need so often expressed by Beckett characters. The first part describes the woman "going to and fro / / high and low" looking "for another / Another living soul [...] another / another like herself / a little like" (p.275). It is not explicity said, hardly any Beckett piece being ever explicit in its meaning, anyway, that she is moving, walking outside, yet such a possibility can be considered. In the second part she is inside her room, goes to the window, sits down there, and starts looking out, hoping to see out there, at another window "another like herself / a little like / another living soul / one other living soul" (p. 277). In part III she is still sitting at the window, waiting "for a blind up / one blind up / no more / never mind a face / / behind the pane / famished eyes / like hers / to see / be seen/ / no / a blind up / like hers / a little like / one blind up no more" (p. 279). Now she does not hope to be able to see anyone any more, she only hopes to notice a sign indicating that her situation is not only hers, that someone else is in a similar position. This seems too much to ask for, however, and in Part IV she is described letting the blind down, going down the stairs and sitting down in the old rocker. So the description of the woman in this part is an account of what we see on the stage. The notion brought forth is that of abandoning hope of finding contact with "another living soul like herself" and accepting a complete solitude. The woman has understood that she herself "was her own other / own other living soul" (p. 281). It could be argued that there

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[159] S. B e c k e t t, Rockaby, [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, p. 273. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

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[159] S. B e c k e t t, Rockaby, [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, p. 273. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

are, in fact, two women on the stage, or one woman seen as a split personality, the seated woman is not alone, therefore, being accompanied by her recorded voice. It is striking that the voice, even though recorded earlier and now only reproduced, undergoes the same changes as the woman does. As the stage directions indicate, both the recorded voice and the woman get tired with what is happening, the voice becoming softer and the woman's eyes closing ever more frequently.

After the discovery of being her own other living soul, the woman is now sitting in a rocking chair, waiting for the end to come. The rocking chair seems to become a kind of symbol here. The title of the play is reminiscent of a lullaby, by means of which a child is lulled to sleep. What she hopes for is not being rocked to sleep but to death:

> down the steep stair
> let down the blind and down
> right down
> into the old rocker
> mother rocker
> where mother rocked
> all the years
> all in black
> best black
> sat and rocked
> rocked
> till her end came
> in the end came [...]
> dead one day
> no
> night
> dead one night
> in the rocker (p. 280)

It took her mother a long time to die, seated between the "rounded inward curving arms" of the rocker, suggesting an embrace (p. 273). The embrace can be reminiscent of a mother lulling a child to sleep but also of the cruel embrace of death, the so much awaited end so far denied the woman. She is sitting there, listening to her own recorded voice, or, if we consider the voice as another aspect of her self, talking to herself, so passing the time, waiting for the final solution.

Her monologues, progressing, as describing slightly changed situation, yet highly evocative of the repetitive, monotonous quality of her existence, become slightly longer in each section, the

cummulative effect being, maybe, indicative of the growing tiredness with waiting. Towards the end of the play she cannot stand it any more and an outburst follows:

> the rocker
> those arms at last
> saying to the rocker
> rock her off
> stop her eyes
> fuck life
> stop her eyes
> rock her off
> rock her off (p. 282)

What follows is a fade out. Thus again, the end is not really an end. What might follow is another repetition, maybe an addition of a fifth part, describing her break-down. Finally, however, the end will probably come. She will be rocked off to death, just as her mother was. The monotonous sameness and repetitiveness of rocking will be followed by a long awaited end, the development will be discernible, her own experience being yet another repetition of what once happened to her mother.

27. "OHIO IMPROMPTU"

"Ohio Impromptu" (written and first performed in 1981) presents two characters "as alike in appearance as possible"[160] the Listener (L) and the Reader (R) who is reading a story of a man from a book. It is highly probable that we have to do here again with the main character reading/narrating his own story, the use of the "he" form in the narrative being reminiscent of "Not I" and the distancing technique used there, and the splitting of the main character into two characters on the stage bringing to mind "...but the clouds...", among others.

The play as such as well as the narrative it presents are based on two principles, nearly always discernible in Beckett: development and repetition. The narrative covers three stages, as it were, between which there are some changes noticeable, and in each

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[160] S. B e c k e t t, Ohio Impromptu, [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, p. 285. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

of which the stress is put on the repetitive quality of the man's actions and experiences. The first stage describes the man moving to a single room from "where they had been so long together", this being "a last attempt to obtain relief" (p. 285), the word "last" being indicative of a number of earlier attempts of trying to forget the dear one, probably a woman whom he once loved. His moving to another place, even though bringing the notion of change, development, is at the same time evocative of a repetition, a circle being completed: "Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared" (p. 285). The mood of repetitiveness or even a kind of stasis, is later on strengthened by such phrases as: "Day after day he could be seen pacing slowly the islet. Hour after hour" (p. 286). The change of the place of abode was not accompanied by starting living in the present - he was still haunted by the past: "his old terror of night laid hold on him again. [...] Now with redoubled force of the fearful symptoms described at lenght page forty paragraph four" (p. 286). Like other Beckett characters he lived through a number of sleepless nights, which did not bring relief but till the slowly coming dawn were filled with ghosts of the past, sad rememberances and the bitter feeling of absolute solitude.

The beginning of the second stage was marked by an appearance of a man who had "been sent by - and here he named the dear name - - to comfort" the man (p. 287). The newcomer took out "a worn volume from the pocket of his long coat", sat down and read till dawn (p. 287). Is the newcomer of the narrative a real person, or just a sign of the split personality of the man? It could be argued that both of them constitute one personality - the newcomer (the present Reader) being reminiscent of Krapp's tapes or V in "Rockaby", this being indicated by the sentence: "With never a word exchanged they grew to be as one" (p. 287). The man kept coming quite often, sitting down and reading "Till the night came at last when having closed the book and dawn at hand he did not disappear but sat on without a word" (p. 287).

Then, in the third stage, as it were, "finally (the newcomer) said - I have had a word from - and here he named the dear name - - that I shall not come again" (p. 287). This sentence could be indicative of a new phase of development, yet, as the narrative argues: "they paid no heed? To light of day. To sound of reawaken-

ing" (pp. 287-288). Maybe this last stage from the narrative is, in fact, the discription of their present situation:

> The sad tale a last time told.
> (Pause.)
> Nothing is left to tell.
> (Pause. R makes to close book.
> Knock. Book half closed.)
> Nothing is left to tell.
> (Pause. R closes the book.) (p. 288)

The book is closed after some hesitance, the words "Nothing is left to tell", as contrasted with "Little is left to tell" from the beginning (p. 285), are indicative of an end, yet the phrase "a last time told" (italics mine) could point to another repetition, "a last attempt to obtain relief" (p. 285) still to follow in the future. Thus the comparison of the beginning and the end of the play, just as the content of the narrative as such, are indicative of the two elements of man's existence - the development and repetition, the repetitive quality of his experiences being a hinderance to a decisive change, solution, end. The awaited end here seems to be the getting rid of the rememberances connected with "the dear name". It can, however, be argued that he will go on thinking of her and remembering her as long as he is alive and that the only escape from the ghost of the past is death as such.

28. "QUAD"

"Quad" (first transmitted in Germany by Süddeutscher Rundfunk in 1982 under the title "Quadrat 1-2", first transmitted by B.B.C. 2 on December 16, 1982) is a short, strange TV play in which no single word is uttered. This play, which is "a piece for four players, light and percussion"[161], presents the players pacing the given area of a square, with the length of side equal to six paces, each following his particular course consisting of eight distances: four of these connecting the adjacent vertices of the square, and the other four the vertical angles. The players enter the stage

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[161] S. B e c k e t t, Quad, [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, p. 291. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

successively, with a different colour of spotlight focussed on them and accompanied by a different type of percussion, so that the empty stage gives way to the presence of the first player, accompanied by say white light and drum, then two players, white and yellow, drum and triangle, to reach the climax with the presence of four players, four different colours of light and four different types of percussion, to decrease again until the presence of one player (the fourth one, who, having entered as the last one, needs still some time to complete his course). After the exit of the last, fourth player, the second series begins with the entrance of the second player, then the third, until the fourth is completed. Then: "Without interruption begin repeat and fade out on 1 pacing alone" (p. 292). This short piece, which is a poetic combination of sound, light and movement, can be treated as a nearly scientific presentation of how difference/development can be, in certain instances, equated to sameness. Although the four characters start their courses at different points of the area, they cover exactly the same course. For instance, if we compare the course of player 1: AC, CB, BA, AD, DB, BC, CD, DA and the course of player 2: BA, AD, DB, BC, CD, DA, AC, CB, the course of the second player starts at the third move of the first player, his first two moves - AC and CB to come at the end. Thus, although it might seemingly appear that the four courses are different, they are, in fact, cyclically considered, exactly the same and the effect thus evoked is that of sameness, despite of the apparent differentiation. The same kind of idea is brought about by the number of players on the stage and their grouping - in each of the series the number of players moves from one to four to descrease again. The notion of repetitiveness is also evoked by the repeat asked for at the end of the piece, when, again, the four series presenting the four players will be shown. Therefore, although there is undoubtedly a development discernible - the players changing their place on the stage and their grouping, the overall impression is that of sameness and repetitive quality of their existence. All of them, or each of them, is forced to walk his route forever, endlessly, as the repeat implies, to continue his meaningless movement in and out of the stage and a similar one on the stage.

29. "NACHT UND TRÄUME"

"Catastrophe" (written in French in 1982, first performed in 1982), dedicated to Vaclav Havel, one of the two plays in the Beckett canon which could be labelled political, is very different from his other pieces, the investigation of the subjective value of human existence being totally absent in it. It was followed by "Nacht und Träume" (written for and produced by Süddeutscher Rundfunk in 1983), yet another Beckett piece with no words spoken, their place being taken up totally and completely by moving poetic images, presenting absolute solitude and forlorness. The Dreamer (A) gradually falls asleep, accompanied by a "softly hummed, male voice" producing the last bars of Schubert's "Lied, Nacht und Träume"[162] and dreams about himself - his dreamt self (B). B is in the same position as A, yet unlike A he is visited by two hands which give him a drink and gently wipe his forehead. Then the dreamt right hand rests gently on his right hand to which "B raises his left hand and rests it on joined hands" (p. 305), his head sinks down to the table and the left dreamt hand rests gently on it. The dream ends - A is alone on the stage. The dream expresses his urgent need for someone to take care of him, be gentle to him, the so often repeated need for the other, as well as the clash between life as he would like it to be and as it is. A short period of being awake passes quickly and once more the dream is presented "in close up and slower motion" (p. 306), the stress being put both on the repetitive quality of the suffering of being, living in absolute solitude, and development, however slight and insubstantial it might seem a first sight.

30. "WHAT WHERE"

"What Where" (first produced on June 15, 1983) presents four characters Bam, Bem, Bim, Bom, and the voice of Bam (V) coming from a megaphone, and is neatly divided into four parts. In all of them V is a kind of director forcing slight changes in the dialogue of the

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[162] S. B e c k e t t, Nacht und Träume, [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, p. 305. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

characters and Bam is the main interrogator on the stage. The first part, "It is spring"[163], Bam is alone on the stage, "In the end Bom appears. Reappears" (p. 311) and the first interrogation starts. Bom was interrogating someone, trying to make him "say it", the suspect was tortured and died without making the confession. Bam is not satisfied with Bom and calls in Bim to interrogate Bom and make him confess "that he said it to him", "And what" (p. 313). In the second part, "It is summer" (p. 314), it appears Bim's interrogation, also full of torture, and ended with Bom's death, brought no result. Bam, dissatisfied again, calls in Bem and orders him to take Bim to tortures until he confesses "That he said where to him", "And where" (p. 315). The third part, "It is autumn" (p. 315), presents Bem's failure at the investigation - the investigated having been tortured to death again. Now Bom himself is about to investigate Bem. In the last, fourth part, "It is winter" (p. 316), Bem is alone on the stage, making it quite clear that Bem, too, has been tortured do death without having confessed anything.

It seems, then, that the play can be treated as a presentation of a ridiculous investigation in which Bam, as the one at power, makes the executors at one stage become victims at the other, and brings about a virtual killing off of all the people. It is implied in the text that Bim, Bom, and Bem are not the only victims of his, as the play begins with the words "We are the last five" (p. 310). The fifth character, never present on the stage, is probably the one Bom was investigating. The sentences: "In the end Bom appears. Reappears" (p. 311) indicate an earlier event - Bom's being told to make the unknown person confess. The absence of this scene in the play might be an indication that the four stages presented in it are but an end of a long series of similar investigations. Thus the second element of Beckett's writing - repetition, becomes also clearly discernible. In any case, the four parts of the play, presenting four interrogations on the stage and referring to four investigations off stage, make it quite clear that we have to do here not only with a development (the interrogated and interrogating changing as well as the confession demanded being each time slightly different) but also with repetition - the interrogation

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[163] S. B e c k e t t, What Where, [in:] Collected Shorter Plays, p. 311. All the references in the text will be to this edition.

being nearly exactly the same in all the instances. Thus, again, the two aspects of human existence, development and repetition/sameness are discernible, their relationship, however, is completely different. This play, unlike the others discussed, does not deal with subjective aspects of human existence, where the objective, linear quality of physical time is subordinated to the subjective reality of each human self. Here, both the development and repetition take place in the objective reality of physical time. It could be then argued that the play can be considered as a presentation of the vicious circle of history, where certain events repeat themselves over and over in the course of passing seasons, years, centuries. Such an interpretation could be considered improbable, or unconvincing, yet many interpretations, even contradictory ones, seem to be possible in case of Beckett's plays. This playwright often poses questions, inviting to investigation and interpretation and simultaneously avoiding explicitness necessary to make the answers always justifiable. And this is exactly what he does in this play, too, its last sentences being:

> It is winter.
> Without journey.
> Time passes.
> That is all.
> Make sense who may.
> I switch off. (p. 316)

After having presented the four interrogations, posed certain question and having made answering them not easy at all, V switches off, ends his narration and the play, the same being done, by extension by Beckett. All is left is darkness and silence and the audience who have been invited to provide their interpretation of the piece, to make sense of it if they may.

31. CONCLUSION

Samuel Beckett's numerous works for the stage, radio and television, divergent and varied as they are, are always marked by the artist's specific vision of the world, his lonely characters live in. The stress being put on those unhappy, forlorn people, Beckett's plays deal with the situation of Man, be he treated as

humanum genus or a more or less concrete individual. When an overall look on Beckett's output is taken, it can be noticed that his works are, in fact, philosophical plays, aimed at discovering the place of human being in the surrounding world and the identity of concrete individuals. On the other hand, it must be stressed that as consecutive works come into being some changes become discernible. In the early plays the characters are not really individualized, the function of the plays being not so much the presentation of concrete individuals but rather of human beings as such. Later on the characters, even though still representing humanum genus to quite a great extent, are endowned with individual features, their fate being specific rather than general, universal. This shift of interest has caused different treatment of one of the problems which are greatly important in Beckett's total output: "the double-headed monster of damnation and salvation - Time". Even though Beckett does not discuss the problem in such a way in "Proust", where he expresses his philosophy of time, it could be argued that the two words "damnation" and "salvation" represent the two different aspects of time which can be perceived in Beckett's works, namely psychological and physical time. On the one hand, Beckett's characters are the victims of the circular quality of subjective, psychological time perceived as stasis, sameness - their lives seem to be an extremely long period of suffering of being, punishment for the eternal sin of being born and damnation. On the other hand, however, time brings also the notion of salvation, objective, physical time moves forward, extremely slowly, as it often seems to the characters, but there is always, however distant, the hope of final rescue, the eagerly awaited conclusion, end of their tortures. These two aspects of time - damnation, connected with the circular quality of psychological time, and salvation, bound with the flow of physical time, form a spiral. The spiral, detectable in Beckett's plays, is differently shaped, reflecting the changed relationship between the two aspects of time. Generally speaking and making necessary simplifications, there are three basic types of Beckett drama as far as this problem is concerned.

The most representative play belonging to the first group is "Waiting for Godot" where the two tramps seem to inhabit a world of eternal present of subjective, psychological time, the stress being put on their repetitive habits and routines. The flow of

physical time and the changes it brings about are totally external, the tramps seem to be forever condemned to waiting in the world which, even though altering, due to the flow of physical time (the change of the tree and the travellers being easily detectable), does not bring a development of their situation. "Endgame" and "Happy Days" also belong to this group, even though the interrelationship between the two aspects of time is slightly different. The changes brought by the flow of physical time are no longer external to the characters - the medicine of Hamm ends, the heap covering Winnie, becomes higher. These changes, even though undoubtedly affecting the characters, do not seem to be capable of bringing about a concrete change in their situation and the characters still seem to perceive the reality as sameness, stasis. Thus in this group of plays the stress is put on the circular quality of psychological time and the linear, physical time, though partly discernible, does not have much importance. The characters live in the eternal present, as it were, and they try to lessen their damnation by means of routines and habits which enable them to go on living.

The most obvious representative of the second, transitory group of plays is "Krapp's Last Tape". On the one hand, this play employs the circular quality of psychological time, on the other hand, however, due to the earlier manifestations of Krapp captured on the tapes, the change of the individual caused by the flow of physical time is clearly visible. This drama becomes an investigation of the two spheres of individual - the changing and the changeless components of the self and thus both the static and the dynamic features of the ego are presented. The change brought about by the flow of physical time is here strictly speaking internal and thus the shape of the spiral is greatly different from that in the first group of plays. Both the circular quality of separate coils and the distance between them are internal parts of the self of Krapp - - he is the same as he used to be in the past in some respects, but in others he is a changed man. This play introduces a new stress in Beckett drama - the past as it was and as it is remembered by the man, the concepts of voluntary and involuntary memory. "Krapp's Last Tape" demonstrates two phases of physical time - the present and the past of Krapp and thus the situation presented does not take place in the eternal present of the first group of plays.

The last, third group is, in a sense, a combination of the characteristic features of the first and second group. On the one hand, the crucial importance of memory as a means of evoking the past and comparing it to the present makes it similar to "Krapp's Last Tape", on the other hand, the stress being put on sameness, stasis, brings "Waiting for Godot" back to mind. The insistence on the sameness is different, though. Whereas in the case of Beckett's first drama the stasis, changelessness of the present was brought into focus, here the same kind of phenomenon refers to the past. The situation of the characters is that of sameness, stasis, changelessness, but these attributes refer not so much to its objective quality but rather depend on the subjective insistence of the characters on reliving the past. Such plays as "Play" and "That Time" make it quite clear that the present of the characters is different from their past and thus the idea of development due to the flow of physical time is evoked; nevertheless the insistence on not paying attention to the present as it is but merely treating it as a period of reliving the past, brings the notion of sameness, stasis. As a result, the present is quite vague and meaningless, what is important and quite clear is the past, the period of time the characters try to escape to and hide in, finding the present important merely inasmuch as it can be another chance of reliving the past. What becomes significant in this group of plays is the characters' denial of their identity - they do not want to accept the changes they have undergone during the flow of physical time and, insisting on the validity of their past selves, they try to live in the eternal past. This group of plays is similar to "Waiting for Godot" in the insistence on the eternal quality of a concrete phase of time perceived as sameness, stasis, yet it as different from "Godot" in the characters' awareness, unwilling acceptance of the fact that time has passed and things have changed, after all. Thus the characters here, even though noticing the spiral-like quality of time and their existence, try to deny the obvious fact and treat their present as merely a repetition of the past which, as they are sometimes painfully aware, cannot be relived and regained.

In all the three groups of plays the two aspects of time - changelessness, typical of the subjective quality of psychological time and development, characteristic of physical time, are combi-

ned to form a spiral. Always using the same kind of symbolic presentation of the complex concept of time Beckett has altered it in order to achieve the different aims characteristic of different plays. The three groups, mentioned above, are not so distinctly different as might seem on the first glimpse. The oversimplification seemed necessary, however, in order to present the development and variety of different treatments of the subject of human fate, so dominant in Beckett drama. It must be noticed and stressed here that, even though dealing with the same basic preoccupations in his total output, Beckett is always able to present some new aspects of his vision. And this is what makes him a master in modern dramaturgy - discussing the same basic problems of human existence, repeating the same subject all the time long, as it were, he never says exactly the same thing twice, his successive creations being always a new development, a new investigation of the eternal mystery of human existence.

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PROBLEM CZASU W DRAMATACH SAMUELA BECKETTA

(Streszczenie)

Celem niniejszej pracy jest zanalizowanie tematycznej i strukturalnej funkcji czasu w dramatach Samuela Becketta i relacji, jaka zachodzi między obiektywnym, konkretnym czasem fizycznym i jego subiektywną realizacją - czasem psychicznym. Specyficzna koncepcja czasu jest niewątpliwie ważkim elementem wizji teatralnej Becketta, która koncentruje się wokół egzystencji człowieka, a której dominującym elementem jest cierpienie, będące nieuniknioną karą i pokutą za "grzech narodzin".

Jeżeli przyjmiemy, że życie ludzkie składa się z narodzin, rozwinięcia i śmierci to, zgodnie z poglądami Becketta w momencie urodzenia się człowieka popełniony zostaje grzech, za który będzie musiał on pokutować przez całe życie. Charakterystycznymi elementami rozwinięcia są cierpienie (które może być traktowane jako rodzaj pokuty za grzech narodzin) i czekanie (na Godota, lekarstwo i noc w "Końcówce", pociąg w "Którzy upadają", dzwonek w "Radosnych dniach" lub cokolwiek innego). W związku z obecnością tych dwóch elementów istnienie jest nie do zniesienia i, w odczuciu bohaterów, śmierć, mimo że bezustannie się zbliża, nadchodzi bardzo powoli. Można więc stwierdzić, że przynajmniej w pewnym stopniu sztuki Becketta są metaforycznym obrazem życia rozumianego jako umieranie, jako dążenie do wybawienia przez śmierć od "ciężaru życia". Prawie wszystkie postaci Becketta to ludzie starzy, mający większą część swego życia za sobą, których śmierć jest już bliska, jednak nadal odległa.

Beckett zauważył kiedyś, że jego postaci "wydają się ulegać rozpadowi" i że na końcu jego utworów "nie ma już nic - tylko popiół". W ostatniej powieści - "L'Innomable" - widoczna jest "kompletna dezintegracja". W istocie jednak całkowita dezintegracja nie staje się udziałem bohaterów scenicznych Becketta - życie jest dla nich umieraniem, ustawicznym zbliżaniem się śmierci, jed-

nak nie jej nadejściem. Wizja taka jest widoczna nie tylko w zakończeniu poszczególnych dramatów, ale również w całym dorobku literackim Becketta. Uczucie eschatologicznego znużenia, metaforycznie uwidocznione w obrazie kopca piachu w "Radosnych dniach" i wspomniane w "Końcówce", jest jednym z podstawowych elementów twórczości Becketta. Impresja wywołana przez ten obraz sceniczny obejmuje zarówno obecną deterioracje, jak i zapowiedź nieuniknionego końca. Niektórzy krytycy rozpatrują jego sztuki z punktu widzenia praw termodynamiki, zwłaszcza entropii, czyli powolnego wyczerpywania się energii, jak i absolutnego zera, do którego można się zbliżać asymptotą. Tak więc wszystkie postaci są uwięzione w sytuacji, w której nie pozostaje im nic więcej ponad powtarzanie słów bohatera "The Unnamable": "Muszę kontynuować, nie jestem w stanie kontynuować, będę kontynuować" lub, innymi słowy, będą oni wszyscy wiecznie czekać i cierpieć, podobnie jak Belacqua Dantego, exemplum czekania, postać, która wywarła wielkie wrażenie na Beckecie i której imię nadał on głównemu bohaterowi zbioru opowiadań "More Pricks than Kicks". Opowiadanie "Dante i homar" zawiera scenę, gdy Belacqua, obserwując kucharza wrzucającego homara do wrzącej wody, mówi: "To szybka śmierć. Boże, dopomóż nam wszystkim". Opinia ta jest skomentowana wypowiedzianymi odautorsko przez samego Becketta słowami: "To nie tak".

Znaczenie tej sceny jest jednocześnie proste i skomplikowane. W świecie Becketta pełnia życia i agonia nie wykluczają się nawzajem, ale są nierozerwalnie związane; egzystencja jego postaci to bezustanne umieranie, a ich jedynym życzeniem jest to, aby możliwie szybko nastąpiła rzeczywista śmierć, przynosząca kres "cierpieniu życia".

Charakterystyczną cechą twórczości Becketta jest jej wieloznaczność, metaforyka i symbolizm; zmiana jest jednocześnie niezmiennością, życie - śmiercią, pojęcia, które w tradycyjnym ich rozumieniu są przeciwstawne łączą się ze sobą, tworząc nową, nierozerwalną całość. Tak więc wszelkie próby jednoznacznego określenia czy interpretacji danej postaci, wypowiedzi lub też sytuacji stają się bezcelowe. Niepowtarzalna wartość przekazu Beckettowskiego polega na jego wieloznaczności - twórca nie mówi tego samego wszystkim odbiorcom, ale osobno każdemu widzowi czy czytelnikowi. Dlatego też sprzeczność opinii dotyczących jego twórczości jest w pewnym sensie zamierzeniem autora, który prag-

nie, aby każdy odbiorca samodzielnie wyciągał wnioski i docierał do znaczenia, jakie mu najbardziej odpowiada.

Jedną z pozornych sprzeczności zauważalnych w twórczości Becketta jest specyficzne potraktowanie czasu. Wykorzystuje on subiektywne odczucie upływu czasu - w zależności od sytuacji pewne rzeczy (jak np. wspomniana wyżej śmierć homara) wydają się jednocześnie "krótkie" i "długie", a więc konkretny, fizyczny czas przestaje mieć znaczenie i nie można na nim polegać. Konkretne, konwencjonalne miary czasu - lata, dni, godziny, odarte zostają ze swego pierwotnego znaczenia. Czas nie biegnie linearnie, w konkretnym kierunku od przeszłości do przyszłości, ale staje się subiektywny i relatywny. Konkretny, fizyczny czas, przynoszący zmianę i rozwój, aczkolwiek widoczny w minimalnym chociażby stopniu w utworach Becketta, został przesunięty na dalszy plan przez subiektywny, psychiczny czas odczuwany przez postaci. Dramaty te przedstawiają raczej statyczną sytuację niż logiczny ciąg wydarzeń znamionujących rozwój, choć nie jest wykluczone, że jakaś ważna akcja miała miejsce przed ich rozpoczęciem. Istnienie nieuchronnej i wiecznie zbliżającej się śmierci podważa znaczenie obecnej statystycznej sytuacji, konkretnego "tu i teraz". Beckett zmniejsza wiarę odbiorcy w umiejętność postrzegania rzeczywistości obejmującej również czas. Sztuki jego ukazują statyczny świat, wszelkie zmiany łudzą jedynie bohaterów uwięzionych w wiecznie powtarzającym się cyklu. Cykl ten zamienia wysiłek w bezsilność, ludzką egzystencję w koszmar bezsensu, czas w bezczasowość. Czas fizyczny, którego miarą jest ruch i zmiana, prawie się zatrzymał. Ale nie całkiem - w dalszym ciągu istnieje pewne, choćby znikome działanie i jego konsekwencja. Widoczne jest to wyraźnie w strukturze sztuk, gdzie drugi akt - albo obecny, jak w "Czekając na Godota" i "Radosnych dniach", albo tylko implikowany, jak w "Końcówce" - jest wzmocnionym powtórzeniem pierwszego aktu. Można zatem powiedzieć, że sztuki Becketta przedstawiają specyficzny, cykliczny rozwój, którego głównym składnikiem jest powtarzalność pewnych elementów. W świecie Becketta, gdzie wszystkie dni wydają się jednym i tym samym dniem, widoczny jest mimo wszystko rozwój - powolna strata, zanikanie i degradacja. Jego sztuki przedstawiają nie tylko niezmienną i statyczną sytuację, ale również, analizując ją szczegółowo, ukazują proces zachodzących w niej, choćby znikomych, zmian. Dramaty jego można rozpatrywać ja-

ko kombinację tych dwóch elementów: linii (rozwój) i koła (powtórzenie, a więc niezmienność). Mają więc one kształt spirali, którą tworzą zwoje i odległości między nimi. Relacja tych dwóch elementów adekwatnie obrazuje relację między cykliczną, kolistą strukturą czasu psychicznego i linearnym aspektem czasu fizycznego. Zarówno kształt tej spirali, jak i znaczenie jej składników dla postaci ulegają pewnym zmianom w kolejnych dramatach Becketta, stąd też można je podzielić na trzy grupy. Podział ten, aczkolwiek w dużym stopniu arbitralny, odzwierciedla jednak podstawowe różnice w potraktowaniu czasu.

Najbardziej reprezentatywnym przedstawicielem pierwszej grupy dramatów, zawierające również "Końcówkę" i "Radosne dni", jest "Czekając na Godota". Vladimir i Estragon przebywają w świecie wiecznej teraźniejszości, charakterystycznej dla subiektywnej świadomości czasu. Upływ czasu fizycznego i zmiany, które on przynosi, są całkowicie zewnętrzne - dwie główne postaci dramatu wydają się skazane na wieczne czekanie w świecie, który częściowo ulega, co prawda, wpływowi czasu fizycznego, jednak z ich punktu widzenia jest niezmienny. Sytuacja w "Końcówce" i "Radosnych dniach" jest nieco odmienna, gdyż czas fizyczny i zmiany, jakie ze sobą niesie jego upływ, w pewnym stopniu rzutują na postaci, jednak są one znikome i nie zmieniają w zasadniczy sposób sytuacji postaci, które w związku z tym traktują czas jako niezmienną, ponadczasową teraźniejszość.

"Ostatnia taśma Krappa", należąca do drugiej grupy dramatów, jest analizą dwóch aspektów ludzkiej osobowości - tego, co zmienne, dynamiczne, i tego, co niezmienne, statyczne. Zarówno dynamiczny rozwój osobowości Krappa, będący rezultatem upływu czasu fizycznego, jak i niezmienne elementy jego psychiki są integralnymi elementami jego osobowości, gdyż odbierając subiektywnie czas zdaje on sobie sprawę z istnienia czasu fizycznego, tak więc obydwa elementy spirali czasu są wartościami subiektywnymi. "Ostatnia taśma Krappa" różni się od poprzednich dramatów Becketta również ze względu na szczególne znaczenie przeszłości. Krapp nie istnieje już tylko w wiecznej teraźniejszości, ale dostrzega również swoją przeszłość. Percepcja różnych faz czasu fizycznego jest jednak podporządkowana jego subiektywnemu odczuciu i dwa rodzaje przeszłości są przeciwstawione - w miarę obiektywny obraz przeszłego Krappa utrwalony przez niego na taśmach nagranych w

przeszłości jest skontrastowany z jego obecną subiektywną wizją przeszłości.

Funkcja czasu w trzeciej grupie dramatów Becketta jest swoistą kombinacją cech grup pierwszej i drugiej. Z jednej strony nacisk położony na pamięć jako narzędzie ewokowania przeszłości upodabnia te dramaty do "Ostatniej taśmy Krappa", z drugiej zaś przypominają one "Czekając na Godota" poprzez nacisk, jaki kładą na niezmienność życia ludzkiego, chociaż tutaj nacisk położony jest nie na teraźniejszość, ale na przeszłość. Postaci takich dramatów, jak "Sztuka" i "Wtedy", negując swoją obecną tożsamość, starają się żyć w wiecznej niezmienności swego przeszłego "ja", ewokowanej przy pomocy subiektywnych wartości pamięci. Postaci te, aczkolwiek dostrzegają zarówno zmiany, jak i niezmienność, a więc obydwa elementy spirali czasu, starają się przeciwstawić obiektywnej rzeczywistości będącej wynikiem upływu czasu i traktują swoją teraźniejszość jako jeszcze jedno powtórzenie przeszłości, a swoje życie jako cyklicznie powtarzający się jeden etap.

We wszystkich trzech grupach dramatów widoczna jest spirala czasu będąca rezultatem połączenia dwóch aspektów czasu - niezmienności, charakterystycznej dla subiektywnego czasu psychicznego, i rozwoju, typowego dla czasu fizycznego. Stosując nieustannie tę samą symboliczną reprezentację złożonej koncepcji czasu, Beckett jednocześnie zmieniał i przeobrażał ją tak, aby osiągnąć odmienne cele w różnych sztukach. Trzy grupy dramatów, omówione wyżej, nie są tak jednoznacznie odmienne, jak mogłoby się wydawać na pierwszy rzut oka. Dokonanie pewnego uproszczenia było jednak konieczne w celu ukazania różnorodności i zmienności potraktowania problemu bytu ludzkiego, który ma przecież dominujące znaczenie w twórczości Becketta. Należy podkreślić, iż mimo że artysta ten obsesyjnie nieomalże powraca ciągle do tych samych zagadnień, wizja przedstawiona w kolejnych utworach nigdy nie jest tylko powtórzeniem, ale zawsze nowym spojrzeniem na człowieka i jego los. I właśnie to sprawia, że jest on mistrzem współczesnej dramaturgii - omawiając te same podstawowe zagadnienia egzystencji ludzkiej, analizując pozornie ciągle ten sam temat, nigdy nie mówi dwukrotnie tego samego, a jego kolejne utwory są zawsze nową próbą zbadania wiecznej tajemnicy ludzkiej egzystencji.

C O N T E N T S

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