Stain Upon the Silence: Samuel Beckett’s Deconstructive Inventions

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STAIN UPON THE SILENCE:
SAMUEL BECKETT'S DECONSTRUCTIVE INVENTIONS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Communication and Broadcasting
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment of the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Leigh Anne Howard
April, 1991
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STAIN UPON THE SILENCE:
SAMUEL BECKETT'S DECONSTRUCTIVE INVENTIONS

(Honors) Recommended 3 April 91
Judith Hoover
Director of Thesis
Harry Allen
Pat Carr

Date approved 4/30/91
Elsie B. Brey
Dean of Graduate College
I first encountered Samuel Beckett in 1982, when my high school English class listened to Waiting for Godot, performed by Burt Lahr, E.G. Marshall, Kurt Kaznar, and Alvin Epstein. While the play intrigued me, it also confused me. After my instructor explained the play's religious significance, I became even more confused. I resolved to put Beckett's bizarre work behind me.

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

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

This research marks the sixth time I have returned to
Beckett's works. As I reflect upon this journey, I must
acknowledge many people for their time, support, and in-
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and encouragement. Judith Hoover asked the right questions,
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the head of the Department of Communication and Broadcast-
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Last, but not least, I extend my deepest appreciation
to my family for their understanding and patience. Their
support in the last year facilitated a number of goals and
decisions. I dedicate this thesis to each of them.
STAIN UPON THE SILENCE:
SAMUEL BECKETT'S DECONSTRUCTIVE INVENTIONS

Leigh Anne Howard
April, 1991
124 pages

Directed by Judith Hoover, Pat Carr, and Larry Winn
Western Kentucky University

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

Using the early plays of Samuel Beckett, this research explores deconstruction as a method to create messages. This new perspective transports deconstruction from a set of theoretical concepts into basic assumptions that enhance communication. This study suggests that deconstructive inventors use processes previously associated with deconstructive criticism to reveal their own beliefs. Furthermore, this study correlates deconstructive invention with rhetorical tropes—metonomy, synecdoche, metaphor, and irony—to create depiction-based persuasion, which asks the rhetor to suspend logic and evoke emotional response.
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The poem of the mind in the act of finding
What will suffice. It has not always had
To find: the scene was set; it repeated what
Was in the script.

Then the theatre was changed
To something else. Its past was a souvenir.
It has to be living, to learn the speech of the
place.
It has to face the men of the time and to meet
The women of the time. It has to think about war
And it has to find what will suffice. It has
To construct a new stage....The actor is
A metaphysician in the dark....

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Defining Deconstruction Theory of Criticism**

Formal studies of deconstruction start with Jacques Derrida, who first used deconstruction to explain western culture's adherence to social structures and convention. Instead of questioning what society considered True or Correct, Derrida explained that most people accepted ideas without question. Derrida set out to challenge that acceptance. Around 1980 he discarded one postmodern theory of criticism, structuralism, due to structuralism's preservation of the "old commitment to the center, the father, and the law..."; in addition, he discarded humanism for its sole reliance on the autonomous self. To justify his controversial decision, Derrida developed deconstruction as a method of analysis, characterized by his notion of free play, including a mysterious, yet ominous future; a strong affir-
mation of chance and discontinuity and a joyous, humbling expose of human limitations.⁴ Despite the fact that some authors criticize deconstruction's repetition, "bourgeois liberalism," "disgraceful past," and lofty notions,⁵ deconstructive critics built upon Derrida's concepts and applied them to literary discourse.

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

By destroying hierarchy--the one truthful interpretation--deconstruction criticism solidifies the theory's lack of faith in logic, because logic may not provide meaning to every audience member. Connections between actions, lan-
guage, and the reader's or viewer's consciousness assume prime importance, but the sequence of action and language do not. Instead of following a syllogistic pattern leading to a logical conclusion, deconstructionists suggest that rearranging actions and words does not affect meaning. Since the text itself is not all important, and since words or utterances themselves do not make meaning, their arrangement becomes superfluous because they do not instill or prevent meaning.

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

**Postmodern Theories of Literature**

In the early 1900s a new breed of writers, the new critics, hit the literary scene. Breaking away from the stifling, stilted Victorian ethic, this new group also set the literary scene in turmoil. Their style brought a latent learning and verbal wit with a blend of ingenuity that revealed psychological depth, political awareness, and ambivalent detachment. Fragmentation, discontinuity, private symbolism, alienation, and a faint distinction
between external and internal reality combined to create a new literary modernism. Pratt also included intense emotion and time's here-and-now presentness in his description of modern prose. Free from regular meter, modern verse illuminated the concrete immediacy of the image. DeMan suggests that this writing style kindled a resistance to previously accepted theories by advocating literary ambivalence.

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

Existentialism

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

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

Structuralism

Structuralism, on the other hand, relies upon logic and reason. This programmatic method insists that audiences systematically examine the discourse to obtain knowledge, attainable through logic, rational order, and an unshakeable faith in thought. Structuralists use organized, "numberless systems" to demystify the human concept. Since the key to
understanding lies within the text, this view denies the author's background and audience's experiences; establishes one authority, the author, for the play's meaning; and presents only one solution to the problem presented. In this manner, structuralistic drama prevents social reform by creating distance between audience and characters. The distance generates a lack of communication, since the play means little to audiences or to society as a whole if the audience cannot grasp the one meaning.

Deconstruction

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

Deconstructive invention follows few, if any, established literary conventions. Deconstructive authors reverse these conventions, undermine established tradition, and destroy hierarchial order and authority. By utilizing such unconventional methods, deconstructive authors provide thought-provoking material for audiences to interpret, to correlate to their own experiences, and to establish meaning. For instance, a playwright may show a character's mental dexterity by choosing to develop physically immobile
characters. This immobility reduces movement; therefore, audiences must attend the character's dialogue and mental capabilities. Thus, like deconstructive criticism, deconstructive authors undermine the obvious focal point or message in order to explore covert messages that remain obscured from easy view.

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

**Drama as Communication**

Generally, descriptions of communication involve mechanical processes, such as message transmission, reception, feedback, noise, barriers, breakdowns, leverage, or even wavelengths. Furthermore, these mechanical processes often eliminate human choice and creativity. Dennis Smith challenges this method of understanding human communication by illustrating the implications of choosing appropriate models
to explain human communication. Furthermore, these mechanical processes eliminate human choice and creativity. The social system model provides one alternative to the mechanical system. The social system's approach to communication recognizes people as living systems that grow, change, and deteriorate through interactions with their environment. This system recognizes that humans promote and control meaningful transactions. As Kenneth Burke writes, humans make and use symbols to explain motivation and relations.

Literature provides one method to demonstrate and conduct interaction, needed for communication. As Sharpham, Matter, and Brockriede note, the connection between interpretative literature and rhetoric has been a general issue within the communication discipline for many years. Furthermore, they explore interpretation as a rhetorical transaction by explaining literature's communicative ability to offer creative symbols that present a "slice of the writer's worldview and experience." Just as audiences and speakers communicate through speech, mass media, and organizational interaction, dramatic audiences assimilate the performance, create a symbolic experience, and modify the transaction to fit their own lives in meaningful ways. Drama and literature bridge gaps in human understanding by structuring beliefs; humans use drama and literature as communication tools to make "private stories public and personally adopt public stories (such as cultural myths and
Thus promoting interaction, literature can serve to unite groups of people and to affect change. Becoming the author's voice and commentary, literature reveals social, cultural, and political problems and calls for reform. Writers, observing world problems and humankind's lack of initiative, can not only identify problems, but also stimulate action to rectify problems. With this capacity, literature maintains an aesthetic value and becomes an effective channel to reach a public capable of reform.

The Post World War II Rhetorical Situation

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

The dichotomy between carefree human actions and socio-political problems of the postwar decade fascinated and frustrated writers of the period. In addition, they re-
responded by attempting to draw attention to these actions in hopes that people would realize that life would not improve without changes. This dichotomy created what Lloyd Bitzer calls a "rhetorical situation."^25

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

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

Thus, upon observing the world's problems and human-kind's lack of initiative in recognizing and halting an
increasingly deteriorating human condition, postwar writers attempted to reveal the discrepancies they observed. Moreover, by illustrating the lack of human reaction, writers hoped people would recognize and acknowledge society's predicament and take action needed to alleviate the situation. They hoped people would modify human behavior and resolve cultural conflicts that existed throughout the world.

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

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

Although critics traditionally use an author's own words or life experiences to explain or verify incidents about that author's creative works, this process is not particularly valid with Beckett. Beckett neither discussed his life nor explained his works. Beckett's infrequent interviews consisted of informal talks with friends, family, other artists, and his biographer Deirdre Bair. In addition, his literary criticism encompassed only two works: "Dante...Brune.Vico..Joyce," an essay about James Joyce, and Proust, both numbering among his first published works.

Reluctant to grant interviews, reticent to reveal his intentions or thoughts, and refusing to engage in literary criticism, Beckett provided few clues outside his works about his personal philosophy. Faced with this deficit of personal information, the researcher seeking to explore Beckett's worldview--deconstructive or otherwise--must turn to his works.

Usually, critics analyze Beckett according to existential and absurdist schools of thought. Indeed, solitude, failure, chaos, tension, and the deteriorating human condition, as well as agony, disharmony, and death form themes that pervade Beckett's works. However, the paradoxical nature of his works reveal the applicability of deconstruction techniques. Furthermore, additional examination suggests that Beckett can be described as a deconstructive
playwright. Although his works predate formal studies of deconstruction by nearly thirty years, Beckett's devices parallel the subversion or undermining, characteristic of deconstructive criticism.

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

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

However, as Beckett's writing style matures, he develops his own techniques that do not evoke images of Joyce. As his works progress, Beckett relies less and less on
allusion and convention and more upon archetype and unconvention. His works become more abstract as he recoils from the modern tradition established by James Joyce. Beckett frees himself from Joyce's influence by combining universal conditions with stylistic production techniques and unconventional shape and form.

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

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

Beckett, however, forces his audience to form meaning by refusing to make his meanings readily perceivable. He neither accepts the role of authority for his own works, nor
does he impose his intentions upon audiences. For instance, when American director (and Beckett's close personal friend) Alan Schneider questioned the identity of "Godot" in *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett replied that had he known he would have put it in the play. In fact, as Martin Esslin wrote, "no writer of our times has more consistently refused to comment on or to explain, his own work than Beckett." Hence, like deconstruction theory, Beckett empowers his audience and validates diverse, individual interpretation.

Samuel Beckett may have been philosophically prophesying deconstruction when in his own works he pulled farther and farther away from tradition. Perhaps he unintentionally developed a nameless creative technique that took critics decades to unravel through deconstruction criticism. Furthermore, this reasoning would establish deconstruction as a philosophical assumption, which illuminates Beckett's faith in audiences to understand and subsequently, to act in order to affect social change.
CHAPTER 2
Clues and Correspondence:
Retracing Beckett’s Life and Literature

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

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

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

An Uneventful Childhood

In July, 1902, May's and Bill's first child, Frank was born followed by Samuel four years later. Despite his mother's emotional scenes and his father's dark depressions, Beckett described his childhood as uneventful: "You might say I had a happy childhood...although I had little talent for happiness. My parents did everything they could to make a child happy...My father did not beat me, nor did my mother run away from home." Beckett loved his father, but he avoided his mother. May Beckett sought to control her son, to shape him into her notion of success. (Despite these instances, Beckett incorporated May into his works several times with characters who
share her name. Although May and Bill entertained different ideas about their sons' upbringing, both parents insisted upon an excellent education for Frank and Samuel.

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

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

When he entered Trinity College in 1923, Samuel enrolled without honors due to low grades. In fact, he showed little interest in studies of any type except for a composition he wrote in 1921 that defended women's emancipation. He spent his first two years at Trinity "dabbling in various courses" and "composing complicated, doodle-decorated lists
of how many times [Shakespeare professor Wilbraham] Trench would say 'at all'' in a single lecture. Soon Beckett enrolled in modern language courses—one of the few males in these classes—where he met Thomas B. Rudmose-Brown, a French professor who became Beckett's mentor. Demanding excellence and dedication from his students, Rudmose-Brown inspired Beckett, whose record improved until he ranked fourth in his class.

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

When Beckett's studies concluded at Trinity, he received a fellowship to Paris' Ecole Normale Superieure. Upon arrival, he found his rooms still occupied by the previous lecteur, Thomas McGreevy, who became Beckett's closest friend and lifetime confidant. McGreevy brought people together, arranged other people's affairs, and talked to everyone. All liked him and his fast-paced life.
Under his tutelage, Beckett entered an enchanted circle of brilliant writers and literary exiles. During this time, Beckett met James Joyce.

**Beckett Discovers Paris**

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

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

In 1929, a critical anthology about Joyce's work in progress, *Finnegan's Wake*, appeared. In addition to essays by McGreevy, Eugene Jolas, William Carlos Williams, and probably Joyce pseudonymously, *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* contained Beckett's first published work,
"Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce." In this essay, Beckett outlined several ideas central not only to Joyce's work, but also to his own. For instance, he warned against neat identities, stating that the desire for clarity and order causes people to develop false perceptions. Beckett questioned, "Must we wring the neck of a certain system in order to stuff it into a pigeon hole...?" He concluded his introduction, "Literary criticism is not book-keeping."

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

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

This essay also contains Beckett's ideas about the cyclical nature of death and birth. He connected the "unborn infant" with the "lifeless octogenarian" and the "inevitable character of every progression or retrogression." Beckett described human progress and history as a "formless structure" based upon the achievement of individual agents; furthermore, this structure lacked reality apart from and independent of the individual. Beckett ended his discussion by differentiating life's
continuous nature, a "vicious circle of humanity" he called Purgatory, and the "static lifelessness" found in Hell, where neither resistance nor eruptions exist.  

**The Writing Begins**

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

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

**Uncovering Proust**

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

The seventy-two page volume described Proust's belief
in the nonlogical order and perception of people. Instead of depending upon rational thought and logic, Proust, according to Beckett affirmed the value of intuition.  

Proust described an unknowable void at the center of human experience, denounced "piteous acceptance of false values," and solicited no facts. Furthermore, Proust believed that people used time, memory, and habit to "deform the days by altering pictures of past actions...."  

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

**Homeward Bound**  

When Beckett completed Proust, he returned to teach at Trinity's modern language department. However, Beckett did not enjoy his homecoming. After Paris, Ireland's strict nationalism disturbed him, Dublin's family feuds and narrow-minded thinking disgusted him, and his own family's hopes for him depressed him. Moreover, he did not enjoy teaching subjects that he felt he did not understand to those who cared little about knowing. In 1931, shortly after receiving his Master of Arts degree and before completing his
three-year appointment, Beckett wired Trinity officials his resignation. Beckett said he "spent the following years 'not knowing what to do,'" because when he left Trinity he "'lost the best.'"  

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

**Beckett the Novelist**

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

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

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

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

**Times to Remember?: World War II**

Spring 1939 brought Murphy's publication. Since the
year also brought Hitler's forces to Czechoslovakia, people began to leave Paris. Beckett, too, boarded a train heading south, but after deciding that no imminent danger existed, he re-entered Paris. He soon discovered that German soldiers had killed many of his Jewish friends. Beckett realized he could no longer remain neutral as his adopted country faced destruction; he joined the French Resistance in October 1940.

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

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

After the war, Beckett attempted to re-enter Paris only to discover that the French government no longer permitted
resident aliens. He found himself stranded until the French Ministry of Reconstruction asked the Irish Red Cross to establish a hospital in Saint-Lo. Beckett volunteered. With his fluency in French, Beckett obtained a position as a storekeeper-interpreter; and once again, he journeyed to France. After six months, he resigned his position and returned to his apartment in Paris. At the age of forty years, Beckett still had not established his literary career.

While Waiting to Write Fiction

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

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

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

Slowly, scholars as well as the press and critics sought Beckett, an author deemed unworthy by the academia until the 1960s. When one researcher succeeded in tracking Beckett to his home, Beckett answered after several hard knocks. "'Does Samuel Beckett live here?' the intrepid
researcher asked. 'He's not here, I'm his brother,'" Beckett replied as he slammed and bolted the door.36

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

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

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

Throughout the 1980s Beckett's health deteriorated, as
he fell prey to Dupuytren's disease, which had crippled many of his relatives. In 1988, a fall precipitated his move to an undistinguished room in a nursing home, which he left only once to attend his wife's funeral in July 1989. Six months later, Beckett himself died as quietly as he had attempted to live.

As with many authors, Beckett's death called forth additional study of his life and works. In recent years dramatists and scholars planned special reviews, books, and festivals to honor him. Today, many insist that Beckett ranks first among the greatest writers of the twentieth century. With his own brand of irony, wit, and humor, Beckett's works depict humanity and courage, which contribute vitality to theater, communication, and human existence.
CHAPTER 3

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

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

Beckett's innovative dramatic achievements form the basis of this study. In using space creatively, establishing audience rapport, and experimenting with modes of expression, Beckett dispensed with "bourgeois theatrical conventions" of commercialized theater.\(^2\) Until Waiting for Godot appeared, playwrights adhered to convention, since the public demanded convention. Beckett jolted audiences from familiar patterns and purposes and frustrated audiences by compelling them to experience drama, not rationalize it.
Beckett once said that his plays were not about abstract ideas; instead, they discussed situations and revealed how people experience and live.³

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

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

This study explores Waiting for Godot (1948), Endgame (1956), Krapp's Last Tape (1958), Happy Days (1961), Play (1963), Breath (1966), and Not I (1972). Generally, scholars divide Beckett's plays after Breath and place Not I with
his later works. However, inclusion of Not I with earlier works, reveals Beckett's vision of the the birth-death circle. Not I begins the regression again. Although the "frequent recurrence of recognizable elements through Beckett's canon leads the reader to hypothesize that all of the characters are the same character living over and over the same anguishing experience," stepping back to explore these plays as an entire cycle for humankind provides a broader base for human communication and understanding.

Waiting for Godot

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

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

Waiting for Godot tells the story of two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, who are stranded on an empty road and waiting for a person named "Godot." Critics have suggested that Godot symbolizes hope through religion, despite Beckett's assurances that his plays carry no religious significance. Beckett often disclaimed his belief in religion: "Once I had a religious emotion." Godot's potential visit forms the pretext for Vladimir's and Estragon's friendship and explains why they return day after day. Vladimir says, "He didn't say for sure he'd come." Estragon questions, "And if he doesn't come?" Then Vladimir replies, "We'll come back to-morrow." While they wait, the two engage in an increasingly meaningless round of activities: they tell stories, play games, reminisce, munch carrots, contemplate suicide, pull their boots on and off, talk to Pozzo who owns a slave named "Lucky"—all routines recognizable in early acts by Charlie
Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, and the Marx Brothers. In *Waiting for Godot*, these actions become mirrors of reality.\(^{11}\) By having Vladimir and Estragon complete these routines, Beckett indicates that people participate in their own round of fun and games to ward off a meaningless existence, filled with solitude, hopelessness, and chaos.

To convey his message, Beckett shocks the audience to realization by defying conventional rules of drama.\(^{12}\) *Waiting for Godot* disrupts the audience's beliefs about dialogue by showing the disintegration of language; it challenges ideas about plot and theme by suggesting purposeless action and illogical meaning; and it strips away technical manifestations of drama, such as location and time. Thus, by examining these three ideas in *Waiting for Godot*, one can see that the play becomes a persuasive comment upon postwar lifestyles of people as they attempt to remain ignorant of social problems.

Beckett's use of untraditional dialogue illustrates that even reducing language to its simplest form does not guarantee effective communication. Infantile speech patterns, ceremonious conversation, colloquial dialogue, and repetition indicate the superficiality, and subsequent disintegration, of language. Infantile speech patterns include slow enunciation and stuttering. Estragon's speech exemplifies these characteristics: "Gogo light--bough not break--Gogo dead. Didi heavy--bough break--Didi alone" (WG p. 381). Later in the play, unable to articulate the appropriate words, Estragon stutters, "Pozzo...no..I'm afraid...I
don't seem to..." (WG p. 387). Although more intelligent than Estragon, Vladimir also develops a susceptibility to stuttering: "Wait...we embraced...we were happy...go on waiting...waiting... waiting... let me think...it's coming..." (WG p. 439).

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

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

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

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

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

As Estragon attempts to clarify the messages he sends and receives, he too repeats himself. For instance, during the hanging scene he mentions several times that the evening resembles a circus (WG p. 403). Repetition transcends
language to form an integral part of the action as it highlights the overall meaninglessness of Vladimir's and Estragon's lives.

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

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

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

Estragon opens the dialogue of the play by saying, "Nothing to be done." Vladimir agrees, "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything" (WG p. 370). This dialogue establishes the hopelessness the characters feel and forms the basis for the series of actions, which serve to pass time and prevent them from thinking. Storytelling forms one way to pass time. For instance, Estragon asks Vladimir to tell the
The story about a brothel and an Englishman. Already knowing the story, Estragon possesses no logical reason to ask Vladimir to tell it, unless the storytelling activity functions as a device to maintain a steady stream of conversation. This illogical event—like other activities such as fighting and apologizing (WG p. 379), eating although they are not hungry (WG p. 385), and pretending to be Pozzo and Lucky (WG p. 449)—frustrates logically thinking audiences.

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

To reinforce the lack of communication, Beckett strips
away traditional technical, dramatic elements such as setting and time:

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

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

Furthermore, an empty stage emphasizes the openness of the space and the loneliness the characters feel; the set consists of a single tree. Any other clues regarding location emanate from the action. For instance, the audience assumes that the play takes place next to a road due to Pozzo's and Lucky's entrance and exit (WG p. 386). The audience also assumes that the action takes place in France, although the only clues consist of Vladimir's and Estragon's memories of making wine (WG p. 435). However, during that same conversation, the characters themselves cannot agree on
the specific location. Estragon says, "No I was never in the Macon county! I've puked my puke of a life away here, I tell you! Here..." (WG p. 435).

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

Beckett defies conventional dramatic rules in Waiting for Godot in order to show how people use meaningless games to cope with their environment. He questions the audience's beliefs about dialogue by showing the disintegration of language, challenges our ideas about plot by indicating
purposeless activity, and strips away technical manifestations of drama to emphasize his point. Critic Martin Esslin writes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nevertheless, compared to *Waiting for Godot*, the characters face an even more depressing world. The two acts of *Waiting for Godot* become one long act in *Endgame*: the expansive, barren, exterior scene changes to a tighter, barren, one-room shelter. Now, the characters do not move. The
blind Hamm remains confined to a wheelchair, while two ashbins confine his parents, Nagg and Nell. Only the third generation, Clov, can move; however, even Clov's motions resemble a "staggering walk."31

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

In another scene, Clov pushes Hamm's wheelchair toward centerstage. Hamm asks, "Am I right in the center?" and Clov responds by measuring the distance with his eyes (EG p. 933). Then, Clov moves the chair slightly and states that Hamm sits more or less in the center of the stage. Hamm, however, must be absolutely certain that he sits in the center; therefore, he requests Clov to "get the tape" and put him "bang in the center!" Clov follows instructions, but Hamm still insists that he "feels too far to the left." After Clov repositions the wheelchair, Hamm indicates that he feels too far to the right." Clov re-adjusts the chair a fifth time only to place Hamm too far forward. The next time, of course, Hamm believes he sits back too far. While these adjustments accomplish very little--Clov only moves the chair an inch or less each time--they underscore the precision of Hamm's and Clov's thoughts and actions.
While Vladimir and Estragon engage in mindless, meaningless pursuits and instinctively coexist without thought beyond a surface level, Hamm and Clov exhibit much more deliberation in their actions, even though the action serves no logical purpose; thus, one sees why a logically thinking audience might reject *Endgame*. By conducting trivial activities, Hamm and Clov can forget their grim existence. These characters possess the mental ability to resolve problems; yet they do not apply their precise thinking to the most important problem they face: impending doom and death.

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

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

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

Not only does Beckett require audience members to examine the covert messages contained in the characters' dialogue and actions, he also requires them to decipher the production's technical elements. Like Waiting for Godot, the play entails few props and little sound, and the plain costumes suggest a hobo-like existence for all four charac-
ters. Although light and set designs follow simple no-nonsense rules, they seem steeped in ironical significance. The bare interior does not utilize traditional use of color and texture to heighten drama and stimulate senses; yet its severity captivates the audience instead of repulses it. Moreover, plain and dark, the set does not depict an optimistic atmosphere; yet the characters see their residence as a shelter or haven, not a prison that prevents them from escaping to a world they can only see through a telescope. As a barren interior, the set makes visible the characters' inner turmoil and isolation, which also parallel the fears and confusion that existed after World War II.

Beckett's lighting design adds another new twist to *Endgame*'s interpretation. Generally, dark sets or low lights accompany grim, sad, or frightening stage scenes. Then, as the situation improves, the intensity of the lights increases to visually emphasize progress and prosperity. In Beckett's plays, as the human condition worsens, the set becomes lighter. The set of *Waiting for Godot* is dark, suggesting a less than ideal world; in *Endgame*, the situation deteriorates, but the set's lighting becomes a soft gray, not darker; and in his next play, *Happy Days*, the situation becomes even more grim, yet the lighting changes to a bright, hot red. The lighting in all three plays does not change from scene to scene, which suggests that as life gets worse, human response to the situation remains the same: nothing really changes.
Endgame depicts a more brutal, unyielding world than Waiting for Godot. Vladimir and Estragon represent mindless, ignorant clowns, unconcerned with thought, philosophy, and life. On the other hand, Hamm and Clov possess the capabilities to think, but they do not utilize these abilities to decelerate their environment's mutation. Instead, they remain unaware of their ability to change their situation. Hamm and Clov handle detail and order, but they ignore larger issues, including their frugal existence. Furthermore, they couple precise thinking with precise actions to prevent themselves from contemplating important problems.

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

Krapp's Last Tape

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Krapp personifies the tapes, which he calls "little rascals" and "scoundrels" (KLT p. 12). He also treats them
as listeners or "sounding boards." For example, Krapp-at-39 finds them useful "before embarking on a new...(hesitate)...retrospect" (KLT p. 16). The tapes also assist audiences in determining Krapp-at-69's character. In contrast to the younger, "strong voice, rather pompous" tone of voice (KLT p. 14), Krapp-at-69's voice crackles (KLT p. 10), quavers (KLT p. 17), and at times, remains silent though his lips continue to move (KLT p. 18, 28).

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

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

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

When Krapp begins to record the present, however, he loses control again. After he begins to record, he pauses as he thinks about the events the tapes describes. The stage directions indicate that Krapp "broods, realizes he is recording silence, switches off, broods," then finally speaks (KLT pp. 24-25). Unfortunately, he forgets to start the machine. A few minutes later, he belatedly realizes his mistake and begins to record (KLT p. 24). This sequence continues until Krapp abandons the recording, exclaiming, "Nothing to say, not a squeak" (KLT p. 24). For Krapp, speaking seems an "all or nothing" process. He either speaks too much or too little.
This lack of compromise surfaces several other places in *Krapp's Last Tape*. For instance, Krapp sees events as right or wrong, famine or feast, and decision or indecision. To emphasize this conflict, Beckett contrasts light and dark. First, Beckett segregates light and dark by lighting only a small portion of the stage—the table area—with a strong light; darkness cloaks the remainder of the stage (KLT p. 10). Although Krapp prefers the light, he fears it, and he often retreats into the dark. Since he listens to the tapes/memory in the light, the light represents his consciousness. Ironically, in the light he confronts the dichotomy between his youthful, emotional foolishness and the stagnant and impersonal thinker he has become. To escape this realization, Krapp flees to the mysterious darkness backstage. This dark area, therefore, comes to represent unconsciousness, or his refusal to think. Unlike Beckett's early characters, Krapp has the ability to think, and he recognizes his problems. But fear, not awareness or ability, prevents him from taking action.

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

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

**Happy Days**

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

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

As the play progresses, the characters' environment worsens. In Act II the heat increases, and Winnie's collapsed parasol ignites (HD p. 674). Winnie, now buried from the neck down and deprived of her props, relies exclusively
on words to pass the time. Furthermore, her ability to
distinguish past from present has deteriorated even more.
Winnie, however, seems more aware of this problem than
other Beckettian characters, such as Hamm, Clov, Vladimir,
and Estragon. Like Krapp, Winnie knows that the situation
looks grim. Unlike Krapp who takes no action, Winnie ac-
tively seeks to forget. At the end of the play, Winnie pro-
claims, "Oh this happy day, this will have been another
happy day! (Pause.) After all. (Pause.) So far" (HD p.
682). The bell rings, the two gaze at each other and smile.
After a long pause, the curtain falls. Like other Becket-
tian characters, Winnie and Willie struggle to deny a seem-
ingly solutionless situation and a hopeless future.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thus, despite the seemingly unconscious nature of her actions, Winnie realizes what she does and why she acts. She says, "I used to think--that all these things--put back into the bag too soon--could be taken out again--if necessary...and so on indefinitely...until the bell went" (HD p. 678). Furthermore once Winnie stops these actions, her thoughts turn to death, which she feels lurking around the
corner. Manifesting death, her revolver, "Brownie," rests on the mound (HD p. 678). She picks it up and turns with a broad smile to place it back in her bag. Perhaps she smiles in relief because the day's end approaches, and she has not had to confront death or to commit suicide instead of being killed. Abruptly, she changes her mind and places Brownie back on the mound. After all, the day is not over, yet. By subverting Winnie's obvious immobility, audiences discover new meanings in the actions the characters do take.

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

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

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

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

Happy Days involves audience members with the power of Winnie's confinement, the suspense of Willie's banishment, and the contrast between sound and silence, action and stillness.49 On the other hand, critics often experience hostile reactions to the play. Although some describe Happy
Daya as Beckett's most extended dramatic image, others deplore his use of cliche. One critic called Happy Days "obvious," "flat and prosaic," "too predictable," and "ambiguous." Perhaps the discrepancy between audience and critic stems from the fact that critics routinely examine plot, characters, language, and scenery according to Aristotelian standards. When a playwright deletes these anchors, critics may feel lost, since they cannot find dramatic conventions. Audience members, however, do not feel this need for dramatic convention; they attend the theater for the dramatic experience.

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

Play

Three identical urns stand on a dark stage. Heads protrude from the tops, and faces "lost to age and aspect" grab audience members' attention. One by one they speak tonelessly as a piercing spotlight illuminates their impassive features. Unaware of the other characters on stage, each tells impersonalized fragments of their love triangle.
and their subsequent deaths as a result of that triangle. Webb writes that the characters lock "themselves into a vicious circle of passions that will not let them respond to the call of clarity...."54 **Play** begins.

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

In **Play**, Beckett continues his regression by placing even more restrictions on gesture and movement, by isolating the characters, by replacing coherent narrative with fragmented speech, and by using a spotlight to compel speech. Furthermore, Beckett emphasizes this cycle when the play ends by repeating the play verbatim. The second "end" calls for a third repetition, terminated only by the falling curtain. This lack of coherent thought and closure illuminates the "dreary banality" of the characters' and audience
Play exploits theatrical possibilities of physical movement even more than Happy Days. Concerned lest the characters move too much, Beckett explicitly describes the position of the urns and actors who occupy them. He insists that the actors do not sit since that position requires "urns of unacceptable bulk" (P p. 63). The urns touch even though the characters themselves do not interact or converse.

The characters, however, do talk even though speech does nothing to relieve their isolation and immobility. Paul Lawley notes how Beckett uses cliches to emphasize this immobility. For example, the characters use physical actions and body parts, which no longer exist for them, to describe past events. W₂ tells how W₁ burst in and flew at her (P p. 46); W₁ reveals how M falls on his knees and buries his face in her lap (P p. 48); and M explains how he made a "clear breast" of the entire sordid affair (P p. 49). Thus, active physical characteristics ironically underscore their current immobility. Only talk remains for the characters and for the motionless, setless, costumeless, propless production.

The characters' language overlaps, shifts, and fragments as the play continues. Audiences, however, need that shifting to obtain an overview of the circumstances, since no one character presents a cohesive description of their relationships. While the overlapping helps unify the ac-
tion, it also separates by presenting different perceptions of that action. As each character presents his or her side, audience members must shift their own responses to three different characters and frames of reference.

Disjointed language encourages this confusion. For instance, at the beginning of the play, longer sentences and passages coalesce. Toward the end, a stream-of-conscious-like narrative prevails. W2, for example, says, "And you perhaps pitying me, thinking, Poor thing, she needs a rest" (P p. 58). These words do not connect to anything said before or after them. As the language deteriorates, the pace increases. In addition, the volume decreases, implying that however long the play continues, the action gets faster and softer without ever ceasing. Instead of ending in silence like Beckett's three previous plays, Play exhausts speech, but never eliminates speech.

Compelled by the spotlight, the characters speak non-stop everytime it finds them. The light demands that the characters speak, search for the Truth, and recognize the reality of their endlessly immobile situation. The spotlight acts as a silent interrogator that seeks its "victims" one at a time (P p. 62). Just as the bell in Happy Days governs Winnie's actions, the spotlight governs the lives of M, W1, and W2. Each relates to the light in different ways. While M contemplates what the light might want, W1 fights the light and orders it to leave her alone (P pp. 54, 53). Only W2 tries to understand the light. She asks, "And you know I am doing my best. Or don't you" (P p. 55).
This inquisition forces the characters to reflect upon their situations. The "hellish light," carried over from Happy Days, demands self-knowledge, while the darkness allows them to forget and deny the situation. Darkness brings peace (P p. 53). However, darkness also causes confusion. Each time blackouts occur, the characters confuse themselves about who speaks first. Instead, they speak in a jumbled chorus when the light returns (P pp. 46, 52, 61). Moreover, W1 mentions "dying for dark--and the darker the worse" (P p. 60), a phrase which suggests that the more peaceful their minds become, the worse their existence becomes. They all die because they wished for peaceful oblivion. The analogy between light and consciousness and dark as unconsciousness continues Beckett's earlier experiments with rational and irrational thinking and experience.

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

Lasting only forty-minutes, Play attracted much attention, though little warmth, from audiences and critics upon its debut. The London Times called Play a "depressing no
man's land of the afterlife. However a year later enthusiasm increased. Harold Hobson, Beckett's first and foremost champion, led the way by commenting about Play's complicated emotional intensity.

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

**Breath**

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

Either treated as a weak joke or taken too seriously, Breath originally belonged to a series of anonymous contributions to Kenneth Tynan's erotic review, Oh Calcutta. Other contributors included Edna O'Brien, John Lennon, and Tynan, himself. Beckett wrote the thirty-five second play, which he called a "farce in five acts," on the back of a postcard and assumed that Tynan would stage it as directed. Tynan and company, however, deemed the work unsuitable and
added nude people to the rubbish-strewn stage that Beckett described. To add insult to injury, the program identified only Beckett after Tynan agreed that all contributors would remain anonymous. Furious, Beckett denounced Tynan and sought to cancel the production. He dropped the issue only when Tynan threatened him with a libel suit.

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

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

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

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

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

Breath culminates Beckett's most minimalist experiment. Despite its brevity, Breath illustrates Beckett's increasing
simplification and reduction, which calls forth a new dramatic form. He brings audiences to a pivotal point of life's cyclical nature. He compares birth and death through simple techniques in order to produce one of his most complex theatrical images.

**Note**

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

As house light dim, silent and rapid movements begin behind a curtain. After ten seconds of darkness, the curtain rises to reveal a gaping red mouth, surrounded by the black hole of the stage. As Mouth, the main character, becomes audible, audiences scramble during the next twelve minutes to unravel the story. They soon discover that until she reached seventy-years-old, Mouth could not speak. Then, as she wanders in a field, the lights suddenly burn out, and she finds herself trapped in her present situation. All at once, Mouth discovers that she can speak. Words tumble from her mouth, and they make a "buzzing" noise that startles her. At first, she thinks someone punishes her:
"...she did not know...what position she was in..." (NI p. 594). Gradually, she realizes she does not suffer. Mouth begins remembering the birth of a girl whom parents abandon. The girl, of course, is Mouth. She traces her life in a "fragmented, staccato piece of prose." Then the cycle continues as she retraces her life from birth.

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

The physical limitations Beckett places upon his characters become more poignant in *Not I*. Hamm relies upon his wheelchair and Winnie remains buried; the characters in *Play* live in urns. Beckett reduces the character to a single mouth that requires minimal movement. Each dramatic picture gets smaller. Using metonomy, Beckett focuses the audience's attention to the character's trapped situation. For some unimportant reason, she cannot recall the past, nor shape her future. Physically trapped, Mouth is also mentally trapped. Now, she can only speak.
Silent her entire life, speech amazes Mouth. But now that she speaks she cannot be silent; she cannot control or connect the words she utters. She says, "words were coming...a voice she did not recognize...at first...so long since it sounded..." (NI p. 597). The rambling continues until she actually describes "something begging in the brain...begging the mouth to stop...pause a moment" (NI p. 599). Audiences see that Mouth lacks the control to decode and to terminate her own words. Her involuntary speech contrasts with the voluntary speech seen in Beckett's early plays. Unlike Krapp who controls his tapes and Winnie who struggles at all costs to maintain speech, Mouth struggles to end emotionless, therefore meaningless, words.

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

As Mouth frantically speaks, a mysterious, sexless, robed figure occupies part of the stage. Alan Schneider asked Beckett if the Auditor symbolized death or a guardian angel. In response, Beckett mimed the Auditor's movements: he "shrugged his shoulders, lifted his arms and then enigmatically let them fall in a gesture of helpless
compassion." Since Auditor detracted from Mouth, most productions eliminate this role; however, when Beckett produced the Paris revival in 1978, he increased Auditor's importance. At the end of the production, Auditor uses his or her hands to cover the head in helplessness and torment. Nevertheless, Auditor impersonally mirrors Mouth's helplessness and provides a silent witness to Mouth just as Willie serves as Winnie's listener in Happy Days.

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

**Beckett's Later Drama**

After Not I, Beckett's drama moves in new directions. Esslin describes this drama as "almost of a new art form." Audiences make no sense of the works; this experience creates drama with "pure images" and "poetical metaphor" that converge to reveal a "moving and sounding picture." Beckett continues to present further examples of dramatic less-is-more, and to experiment with the limited use of personal pronouns which imply impersonalization and a flight
Moreover, his new works strive to extinguish the self, moving toward "existential and verbal extinction." 89

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

Samuel Beckett's dramatic productions entice audiences to immerse themselves in the action--and nonaction--taking place before their eyes. Beckett exploits the senses and capitalizes upon audience emotion. He demands audience involvement that requires suspending logic and experiencing the dramatic moment. Furthermore, Beckett encourages audiences to transcend the work and to establish their own meanings for the dramatic moment.
CHAPTER 4
Repetition and Reinforcement:
Themes and Effects of Beckett's Early Drama

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

Beckett's Recurring Themes

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

**Beckett's Semi-Personal World**

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

Beckett, however, undermines this notion. Beckett creates an increasingly semi-personal world which denies
meaningful interpersonal communication in a deteriorating environment. His characters become more closely related as his plays progress, but communication between characters regresses.

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

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

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

With Play and Happy Days characters should establish closer interpersonal relationships as Beckett presents married couples. Yet, even though marriage should bring the characters closer, they become even more silent and more isolated than Beckett's earlier characters. In Happy Days, the conversation mainly stems from one source, Winnie. Her monologic chatter emphasizes Willie's silence. As previously noted, Willie maintains the ability to respond, but he chooses to remain silent. In addition, the mental isolation of the characters in this relationship is materialized by the characters' physical isolation. Winnie's mound effectively keeps her separated from Willie, who remains hidden as much as possible. One source dominates the conversation. Even though audiences may want to see the characters' fleeting concern for the other at the play's end, when the characters silently smile and look at each other, Winnie and Willie interact less than the previous characters. In Happy Days, Beckett undermines one of society's most basic relationships, marriage, to show a non-communicative world.
With *Play*, Beckett depicts a completely impersonal world containing self-centered characters. Still focusing on married couples, Beckett’s production notes emphasize the isolation of these characters, who do not touch each other—physically, mentally, or emotionally. Each lives in a world that revolves around his or her own needs and desires. Each gives the other characters no consideration or acknowledgement. Again, Beckett subverts society's traditional ideas about marriage to depict a very impersonal world.

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

Beckett presents another interesting perspective of relationships in *Not I*. First, even though he moves audiences back to a two-character world consisting of Mouth and Auditor, he does not define the relationship between these two characters. Audiences assume that Auditor forms an "ear" for Mouth, yet they cannot absolutely know what connects the two or how one affects the other. Thus, audiences turn to a less obvious relationship, the one Mouth forms with herself. *Not I* offers a poignant illustration of a person’s intrapersonal relationship and communication. Mouth’s monologue reflects her innermost thoughts and fears. Mouth cannot control the new situation she has been thrown
into any more than she can control her thoughts or words. Beckett calls for a fragmented voice to echo the manner in which the brain shifts from subject to subject.

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

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

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

**Space, Psyche, Stability**

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

Bachelard also indicates that shelters provide illusions of stability and order based upon their size, complexity, and shape.⁴ The larger the house, the less personal or intimate the space. Because of its ambiguity, a simple house, furthermore, fires the imagination more than a complex house. Houses, Bachelard concludes, shape the rationality or irrationality of the dweller's thoughts. He suggests that occupying higher levels of houses produces ra-
tional thought and experience. For example, near the roof (and also closer to the sun's light), a person can look down, see the strong framework of the house, and obtain a rational overview of the scene. This concept inversely implies that near the ground (and also farther from the sun's light) thought becomes muddled; as people approach the ground and sink into the earth, they revert to primitive conditions, which generate irrational and/or uncontrollable thought.

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

In Waiting for Godot, for example, action occurs in the dark desolate outdoors. But in comparison to his other works, Waiting for Godot contains a more specific stage set than many others. Audiences know that action takes place at a specific meeting point, marked by a road and a tree. This definition orients characters enough to let them know where
they stand, but the location is ambiguous enough to confuse them about why they stand there. Regardless of their reason for staying by the tree, the characters refuse to move from the place. The place gives them purpose and strengthens their resolve to wait for Godot. This specific location "protects" them from thoughts about their empty actions, thoughts, and future.

Endgame's location in a one-room shelter also protects the characters. The location of a window indicates that the shelter actually forms a house's basement. Physically separating them from potential harm outside, the shelter's underground location also forms a barricade that prevents them from potential fun and pleasure. In addition, Nagg and Nell live in ashbins, which create tighter, smaller "prisons." Their confinement foreshadows the restrictions Beckett places upon M, W₁, and W₂.

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

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

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

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

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

From *Waiting for Godot* to *Not I*, Beckett experiments with the combination of space, thought, and stability. With each play, the characters' worlds become smaller. Less concrete, these worlds spur imagination and speculation. In
addition, although he limits actual stage space, he provides no boundary for the vast void that surrounds the action. These unlimited margins create additional instability, since neither audiences, nor characters know what exists in those margins. Instead of providing less to contemplate, small places provide more to consider as imagination satisfies the deficit of information. Hence, small spaces do not create stability.

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

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

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

Thus, modern society presents a dilemma for successful artists. Is a successful artist one who appeals to popular culture, or does the successful artist remain true to his or her own vision? Since Waiting for Godot's revival sold out, the play seems successful in modern society. Yet, Beckett would not have enjoyed the production or wanted this commer-
cialized success. Early in his career, he believed in maintaining a work's integrity, even if maintaining that integrity resulted in an unpopular work. Thus, a serious author, who refuses to succumb to the commercialized glitz and glamour of a Broadway or West End production, faces failure by popular standards. These artists do not obtain success, as measured by massive crowds who passively seek a good time. These artists make their mark by affecting those who do attend productions, including succeeding generations of artists, who imitate and perpetuate visions.

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

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

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

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

Eric Gans describes traditional drama that adheres to Aristotelian canons as the "imitation of action" and modern drama as the "imitation of inaction that reveals the ulti-
mate insignificance of all dramatic action." Beckett's works conform to this definition and set the tone for succeeding generations of writers. Often regarded as forbidding, dense, and inaccessible, Beckett's works will never be fully explained to the audiences' satisfaction, because Beckett's works defy explaining and require experiencing. As Beckett said, "writing is not about something; it is that something itself."
CHAPTER 5

Expression and Experience:
Deconstructive Invention as Depiction-based Persuasion

When a person attends a play, he or she brings certain expectations based upon preconceived notions about what constitutes a play. If a play does not fulfill these notions, then the audience member often calls the work "formless." Critics also use this word to describe Beckett's plays. However, closer examination of Beckett's dramatic works reveals a method to his seemingly mad manner of expression. Deconstructive invention explains this manner. By rejecting a traditionally key dramatic tool (i.e., plot and dialogue), Beckett experiments with other dramatic elements to form messages. This experimentation allows him to express freely his thoughts, to withdraw from the completed work, and to allow audiences the opportunity to experience the work without the author's influence. Thus, Beckett empowers the audience and encourages audience members to experience the work and to take action. Deconstructive invention, furthermore, allows Beckett to adopt a depiction-based persuasion, which constitutes Bitzer's fitting response to the social problems Beckett recognizes.

Searching for Expression

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

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

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

Relying Upon Rhetorical Tropes

Despite their wordless and actionless characteristics, Beckett's plays do contain guideposts which assist audiences in making connections. He uses rhetorical tropes or devices, such as metonomy, synecdoche, metaphor, and irony, to form frameworks for uncovering the differences between the literal language and action and the figurative messages and experience. Michael Osborn writes that these devices serve "to animate whatever rhetorical reasonings" develop out of specific thought structures and goals. While Osborn explains the success of the tropes due to their "perspective by congruity," these tropes also become successful in Beckett's works by revealing incongruities that converge to
create the total performance. As rhetorical tropes highlight incongruities, they allow Beckett as well as audience members the freedom to invent what Tom Bishop calls the "poetic depiction of our fate."  

**Metonomy**

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

**Synecdoche**

Beckett also utilizes synecdoche when he uses a part of an object to represent that entire object. The most obvious examples of synecdoche involve the use of a mouth in *Not I*
to represent Mouth's intrapersonal voice, heads in *Play* to represent entire characters, and "Brownie" the revolver to represent death and destruction. However, synecdoche can also be seen in *Krapp's Last Tape*, where Beckett reduces forty-odd years of memory to several audio tape reels. In addition, Beckett restricts dramatic action to a small part of the stage instead of utilizing the full stage area.

Although critics consider synecdoche a traditional rhetorical device, Beckett experiments with this trope in untraditional ways. He creates incongruous images that seize audiences and leave them unsatisfied and confused. This confusion prompts audience members to continue to explore the work.

**Metaphor**

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

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

Irony

Of all rhetorical tropes, however, irony seems appropriate for deconstructive inventors, and Beckett in particular, as they construct incongruous images. Since irony assumes the role of "all-purpose, slot filler" or "vague words," this rhetorical trope becomes useful whenever people do not want to use strong, clear terms or whenever they dare not use words that are too clear.11 Kenneth Burke also sees
Irony as a way to rationalize the author's simultaneous feelings of humility and superiority. He explains that the author's humility (his or her recognition that people would not exist without ideas) counterbalances the author's feelings of superiority for creating the work. Furthermore, Burke adds, the author neglecting irony becomes sacrificed to the literal.

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

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

Acknowledging that irony may or may not be intentional, Booth illustrates irony's role in literature when he describes two genres of irony: stable irony and unstable irony. According to Booth, stable irony depends upon the audience sharing norms with the author and other readers, requires a definite message that the audience must reconstruct, and does not encourage the audience to elaborate
upon that reconstruction; unstable irony suggests that readers cannot share interpretation by reconstructing messages. Instead, audience members individually must build upon the information presented to construct their own individual meanings.

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

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

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

**Seeking Audience Experience**

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

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

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

Furthermore, by placing faith in audience experience and action, Beckett formulates a fitting response to the carefree, actionless society he sees. For even when audience members cannot directly identify with stage events, they can experience the drama at hand, and they can build interpretation based upon that experience. This interpretation helps audience members to bridge the gap between their lives and the characters' lives. By enticing audience
members to participate actively in the drama, Beckett initi-
ates audience action. As he fine tunes ironical tensions
between action and nonaction, monologue and dialogue, space
and psyche, Beckett uses deconstructive invention.

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

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

Art, especially forms that elicit many human senses and
that incorporate direct audience involvement, requires audi-
ences to yield to experience. No longer the recreation of
an elite, upper class, art can reach all people as it becomes increasingly diverse in form and easily accessible through the mass media. Furthermore, many recognize the social, political, and economic benefits of art.

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

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

Chapter 1


4Edmundson, p. 631-32.


8Culler, pp. 110-11.


10deMan, p. 6.


12deMan, p. 6.


15 Web, p. 23.

16 Wood, p. 623.

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


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


22 Sharpam, Matter, and Brockriede, p. 145.

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


26 Bitzer, p. 6-8.

27 Bitzer, p. 10.


31 Dearlove, p. 121.


Chapter 2


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

3 Bair, p. 8.
4 Bair, p. 10.
5 Bair, p. 14.
7 Bair, p. 29.
8 Bair, p. 29.
9 Bair, pp. 37-38.
10 Bair, p. 64.
11 Bair, p. 73.
12 The ellipses in this title reflect the correlation between each author's style. For instance, Beckett believed Dante's style differed from Bruno's by a three-century jump in thought; hence, he marked this difference with three ellipses between the names in the title. He thought Bruno differed from Vico by a one-century jump, so the separated these names with one ellipsis. Finally, Beckett believed that Joyce differed from Vico by a two-century jump. See Samuel Beckett, "Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce," in I Can't Go On. I'll Go On, ed. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press,
Inc., 1976), pp. 105-106. For this subtitle, I add Beckett to Joyce sans ellipses since Beckett's writing during this period closely resembled Joyce's (i.e., no jump in thought, therefore, no ellipses).

16 Ben-Zvi, p. 23.
17 Beckett, "Dante...", p. 117.
22 Bair, p. 104.
23 Bair, p. 108.
27 Beckett, Proust, p. 64.
28 Bair, p. 137.
29 Bair, p. 219.
30 Bair, p. 234.
31 Bair, p. 309.
32 Bair, p. 328.
33 Bair, p. 361. Cited from a letter Beckett wrote to Bair on 13 April 1972. He also made this remark to a number of friends and scholars, such as Ruby Cohn, John Fletcher, John Montague, and Alan Schneider.
35 Ruby Cohn attempted to publish her dissertation in
1958, ten years after Waiting for Godot appeared, but editors told her, "We like your criticism, but we don't feel your author merits publishing space." See S.E. Gontarski, "Critics and Criticism: 'Getting Known,'" in On Beckett: Essays and Criticism, ed. S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1986), p. 3.

36 Bair, p. 443.


Chapter 3

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


3 Webb, p. 132.


9 Driver, p. 23.


the senses.


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


19 Ben-Zvi, p. 209.


21 Webb, p. 41.


24 Ben-Zvi. p. 150.

25 Fletcher, et al., p. 83.
26 Fletcher, et al., p. 83.


30 Robinson, p. 261.


32 Fletcher, et al., p. 90.

33 Noguchi, p. 105.

34 Ben-Zvi, p. 152.


36 Fletcher, et al., p. 119.


38 Mary F. Catanzaro, "The Voice of Absent Love in Krapp's Last Tape and Company," Modern Drama, 32 (September, 1989), 402.

39 Knowlson, p. 243.

40 Webb, p. 66.

41 Catanzaro, p. 403.

42 Webb, p. 67.

43 Reid, p. 70.

44 Samuel Beckett, Happy Days, in The Drama: Traditional and Modern, ed. Mark Goldman and Isadore Traschen (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968), p. 661. All subsequent references to this work appear within the text.
45 Knowlson and Pilling, p. 98.

46 Ben-Zvi, p. 156.


48 Worth, p. 185.

49 Knowlson and Pilling, p. 98.

50 Lyons, p. 128.

51 Knowlson and Pilling, p. 98.


54 Webb, p. 113.


57 Fletcher, et al., p. 178.

58 Blackman, p. 89.


60 Fletcher, et al., p. 173.

61 Worthen, p. 407.

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


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

65 Bair, p. 512.
66Webb, p. 67.

67Knowlson and Pilling, p. 127.

68Knowlson and Pilling, p. 127.


73Knowlson and Pilling, p. 127.

74Beckett wrote *Not I* for actress Billie Whitelaw; therefore, most productions cast a female for the role of Mouth.


76Knowlson and Pilling, p. 198.

77Lyons, p. 153.


81Knowlson and Pilling, pp. 195-98.


84Fletcher, *et al.*, p. 192-93.

85Taylor, p. 110; Fletcher, *et al.*, p. 197; Margaret Rose, "A Critical Analysis of the Nonverbal Effects in


89 Kennedy, p. 30.

Chapter 4


2 Bachelard, p. 6.

3 Bachelard, pp. 8-9.

4 Bachelard, pp. 15-29.

5 Bachelard, p. 19.


10 MacGowran, p. 224.

11 MacGowran, p. 224.

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


115
14 Cohn, "Growing (Up?) With Godot," p. 23; Ben-Zvi, p. 211; Whitaker, pp. 214, 222.

15 Ben-Zvi, p. 211.

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


Chapter 5


6 Bishop, p. 27.


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


18 Ben-Zvi, p. 32.

19 Bachelard, pp. xi-xxxiii.

20 Bachelard, p. xii.


23 Bair, p. 640.
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Cuniff, Heidi, public relations department at Warner Brother Productions, a telephone interview, 13 April 1990.


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