CHALLENGES TO REPRESENTATION
IN SELECTED STAGE PLAYS OF SAMUEL BECKETT

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the ways in which Samuel Beckett challenges representation in certain of his stage plays. Representation is principally associated in this study with three different modes: the mimetic, the reflexive (or self-mimetic), and the ontological. The ontological is considered primarily as a process which problematizes the very concept of representation.

Support for this argument is drawn from the existing body of scholarship on Beckett, and, as well, from the field of philosophy. Aristotle and Plato are cited, as are Nietzsche, Heidegger and Deleuze.

The first chapter evaluates Waiting for Godot as a direct challenge to traditional, Aristotelian mimesis. The aesthetic "canter's" in which Vladimir and Estragon indulge themselves are analysed as reflexive games designed to avoid the ontological condition of "nothingness," which provides a foundation for the play. Chapter Two studies
Endgame as an intensification of the representational challenges initiated in Waiting for Godot. Hamm and Clov are identified as Vladimir and Estragon at a much later time, playing out the ritual of waiting as a last rite. In Chapter Three Krapp's Last Tape is discussed as representing Beckett's most mimetic stage play, the one in which Beckett most closely maintains a stable relationship between the stage world and the external world. Play, the subject of the fourth chapter, is analyzed as a breakthrough play, decisively embracing the ontological mode of presentation. In this play Beckett attacks mimesis at the most foundational level to date. Chapter Five discusses both Not I and Rockaby as representing a final investment in the ontological process, leaving behind them all vestiges of representation. The Conclusion evaluates the evolution of this process, and applies the broad applications of the argument to other genres and mediums.
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INTRODUCTION

"Can the imagination be mimetic under conditions of modernity?" (1) This, presented in the Afterword to Luiz Costa Lima's Control of the Imaginary, constitutes something of a guiding question in this study of Samuel Beckett. Although we might assume that mimesis is a precondition for the theatre, that something is by necessity being "imitated" or "represented" on the stage, it will be considered here that this assumption does not go unchallenged by Beckett. The two dimensions, or modes, of Beckett's dramatic craft that will be explored in order to identify this instability within mimesis will be the reflexive mode, a self-mimesis, one might say, and the ontological mode, a process which, as will be argued, threatens the very concept of representation.

While this study will subsequently focus on Beckett himself, and specifically on certain stage plays written by him, there is merit at this initial stage in considering the question of representation in Costa Lima's terms, i.e., within the broader context of modernity. There is justification to be found for this in Beckett's own critical writing, which itself raises many questions regarding the status of artistic representation within this milieu. While the term modernism obviously has a vast range of connotations, its particular relevance to Beckett's aesthetics will become clear in the following discussion.

Beckett's years as a student at Trinity College in Dublin, beginning in 1923, laid a foundation for the extremely "modernist" Paris that he entered as Trinity's lecteur d'anglais at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1928. At Trinity, as a student of modern languages, Beckett was introduced to Berkeley and Descartes by his tutor, Arthur Aston Luce, and under Walter Starkie, Beckett's Italian professor, and Thomas B. Rudmose-Brown, his French professor, Beckett had studied Dante, and presumably Corneille and Racine as well. (2)

However, while learning the classics, Beckett was also discovering the modernists. Starkie lectured on Pirandello, and Beckett developed an interest in the French modernists Rimbaud, Baudelaire and Apollinaire, translating Rimbaud's Le Bateau ivre independently of his studies. (3)

When Beckett arrived in Paris in 1928, he made his important acquaintance with James Joyce. Thomas McGreevy, Beckett's predecessor as the English lecteur at the Ecole Normale, was a member of Joyce's social circle, and with McGreevy's introduction, Beckett became a somewhat regular visitor and an assistant to Joyce in various projects. (4) In 1929 Joyce asked Beckett if he would contribute an essay to a volume which Joyce was putting together as a reply to the


3 Bair, p. 43; p. 52.

4 Bair, pp. 68-69.
critics of Work in Progress, later titled Finnegans Wake.(5) Beckett's essay, "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce," was the opening entry in the volume titled by Joyce Our Exacmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress. Joyce apparently directed Beckett during the writing of the piece, instructing him to discuss his (Joyce's) debt to Dante, as well as the influence of Giordano Bruno and Giambattista Vico on him.(6) Although it is difficult to determine where Joyce ends and Beckett begins, there are certain statements, particularly the ones regarding Joyce's Work in Progress, that indicate Beckett's familiarity (and perhaps solidarity) with modernist concerns:

> On turning to the Work in Progress we find that the mirror is not so convex. Here is direct expression - pages and pages of it. 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 . . . . Here form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read - or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something; it is that something itself.(7)

Although Beckett later identified many crucial differences

5 Bair, p. 75.

6 Bair, p. 76.

between Joyce and himself (8), he announces here a central condition in Joyce that will be persistently emphasised and problematized in his own work: the relationship between form and content. During the course of this thesis, form and content will be considered in many respects, with particular attention to be given to its manifestation in the relationship between the stage image (the seen) and the spoken text (the said); for the moment, I will simply note Beckett's prescient appeal to the reader of Joyce not only to read the material, but to look at it, listen to it. This advice seems particularly forward-looking for one destined later to master the language of the theatre.

Beckett's treatise on Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, written in 1930 as his M.A. thesis at Trinity, offers rich evidence of Beckett's continued preoccupation with matters of a "modern" nature (9). While the greater part of this essay is directed toward Proust's treatment of time and memory, Beckett again addresses the connection between form


9 Apparently it was assumed that Beckett would write his thesis on Pierre Jouve, the French poet of the modern Unanisme movement, but what he submitted in its place was the monograph on Proust. This is noted in Bair, p. 54; and again in Enoch Brater, *Why Beckett* (London: Hudson and Thames, 1989), p. 26.
and content, once more identifying champions of the modernist cause in this context:

The painter Elstir is the type of impressionist, stating what he sees and not what he knows he ought to see . . . . And we are reminded of Schopenhauer's definition of the artistic procedure as 'the contemplation of the world independently of the principle of reason.' In this connection Proust can be related to Dostoievski, who states his characters without explaining them . . . . For Proust, as for the painter, style is more a question of vision than of technique. Proust does not share the superstition that form is nothing and content everything . . . . For Proust the quality of language is more important than any system of ethics or aesthetics. Indeed he makes no attempt to dissociate form from content.(10)

As he did in his critique of Joyce's _Work in Progress_, Beckett makes a key distinction between the artist who functions as a mediator, and the artist who "states his characters without explaining them." Here, again, art is defined as an act of direct apprehension, an act of capturing something as it is, not as we might want it to be. Though this objective might position Beckett as a "realist," as P.J. Murphy argues he is,(11) it also situates his artistic enterprise within the realm of the ontological. While there is not enough evidence in these early statements to confirm a commitment to the ontological, i.e., being that is free


11 Murphy argues that "Beckett is, in fact, a realist, a realist of a new type whose works are passionately engaged with the issues of referentiality." P.J. Murphy, _Reconstructing Beckett: Language for Being in Samuel Beckett's Fiction_ (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1990), xv.
from referentiality, Beckett's later critical statements suggest that the type of apprehension he is interested in has a goal more primary than "realism" seems to permit.

In "Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit," written in 1949, Beckett seems to weary of the statements made in these earlier essays. Written during an intensely productive period (1947-50), in which the prose trilogy (Molloy, Malone Meurt and L'Innommable) and En attendant Godot were composed, Beckett speaks here of turning away from the supposition that artistic expression, considered to that date, holds any value. Rejecting the accomplishments of even the "revolutionary" Matisse, Beckett insists that the artist must stop pretending "to be able," stop attempting to do "a little better the same old thing," stop "going a little further down the same old road."(12) The paintings of Tal Coat and Matisse, Beckett explains, have "prodigious value," but the only thing disturbed by these works "is a certain order on the plane of the feasible." This disturbance is not enough, however, for truly to revolutionize the form, all that has taken place before must be rejected. When asked, in this dialogue, what other "plane" there can be for the artist, other than that of the "feasible," Beckett offers a radical alternative:

The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to

express. (13)

In a revision of the image of the resplendent artist, full of miracles and metaphors, Beckett here offers the artist stripped of all glory and devoid of a subject matter. The materials of expression are no longer available "outside," in mythology or historical subjects, nor are they to be found in the social or political milieus. Instead, Beckett proposes a timeless art: an art about the dilemma of creating art at all. The inability of his dramatis personae to advance, to change, to resolve their situations, echoes this proposition, as they struggle with the same problems as their author, forever engaged in an aesthetic battle with the terms of their creation.

However, it is not only Beckett's subjects that are in jeopardy in this retreat; more fundamentally, it is the very mechanism of creativity: mimesis. If "there is nothing to express. . . together with the obligation to express," as Beckett states, the artist's task becomes problematic, for with "nothing to express" an impasse is reached at the foundational level, and the only solution, in Beckett's case, is to venture inwards, locating his subject in the internal gaze. Thus, the subject of expression, if we follow this proposition, does not exist outside of its expression of itself; it is interiorly propelled, and interiorly seeking, self-consciously scrutinizing - or simply trying to locate -

13 "Three Dialogues," p. 139.
the elusive terms of creation and presentation. The artist's "obligation," his only choice in this matter, is to make pictures and tell stories that reenact this condition, for there is nothing else. Given the nature of this procedure, Beckett's prevailing methodology, by necessity, is to turn the inside out, pronouncing the difficult act of representation as the guiding principle and subject of the art. Beckett identifies the reflexive nature of this methodology at the end of "Three Dialogues" as he ponders upon this undertaking with an appropriate measure of distress:

No, no, allow me to expire. I know that all that is required now, in order to bring even this horrible matter to an acceptable conclusion, is to make of this submission, this admission, this fidelity to failure, a new occasion, a new term of relation, and of the act which, unable to act, obliged to act, he makes, an expressive act, even if only of itself, of its impossibility, of its obligation.(14)

Beckett's admission here, that the expressive act of the depleted artist will demand entirely new terms, terms perhaps not yet fully understood, underlines this concluding and central statement of "Three Dialogues." Unlike Beckett's more expectant predecessors, the new artist must ply his craft with the knowledge of impossibility, the impossibility of its own premise of expression, but with an obligation to it, nonetheless. Beckett's terms are exacting, excluding not only Matisse, but, if I interpret correctly, even the "spiritual" Kandinsky. If successful art has conventionally

been measured by its ability to identify, embrace and master its subject matter, Beckett's inward-directed "fidelity to failure" must consequently be evaluated by completely different criteria. What is perhaps most significant in Beckett's admission is that the artist must (is "obliged" to) make an expressive act "even if only of itself" (my italics). This allowance, as we will see, is seized upon by Beckett as an organizing principle in the plays studied here.

The concerns voiced by Beckett in these three critical works anticipate many of the representational dilemmas that will emerge in the stage plays. The preoccupation with form and content in "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce"; the insistence upon direct apprehension in Proust; and the stated obligation to make an expressive act, "even if only of itself," in "Three Dialogues," indirectly identify the foundational problematics which the plays attempt to cast in a dramatic form.

The fusion of form and content, as Beckett considers it in relationship to Joyce, is a matter of making words productive on a sensory level: "When the sense is dancing, the words dance."(15) In this relationship we find an internalization of mimesis. Rather than employing the conventional elements of mimesis - a model and a copy-Beckett creates a synonymy between the two terms, a condition of self-identification, rather than one of

15 "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce," p. 27.
imitation. This type of mimesis, internally invested rather than externally founded, will be encountered repeatedly in the plays studied here.

Internal mimesis is discernable in the other critical passages as well. The artist's direct apprehension of his subject, as advocated in Proust, has a direct correlation to the fusion of form and content; for, if the words dance as the senses dance, the words are, in effect, directly apprehending the senses, and vice versa. As well, as the artist is being asked to remove himself as an intermediary between his artistic subject and its representation, we might interpret this as another way of arriving at Joyce's celebrated fusion: the undisturbed coincidence of that which is being represented and the medium in which it is represented.

Lastly, to make an expressive act, "even if only of itself," restates the same principle, but with a particularly reflexive emphasis. If the expressive act takes itself as its subject, we must then consider that the work of art, rather than possessing an external referent, once again seeks a form internally, within itself, as it did in Joyce's Work in Progress. In this case, however, the content is explicitly internalized, in contradistinction to the ideal of direct apprehension noted in Proust, which appears to assume the existence of an external subject.

Within, and perhaps emerging from behind, these terms, looms the ontological. Evoked in Beckett's statement in
Proust that art be directly apprehendable, the ontological nonetheless defies apprehension. Evading the latitudes of representation, the revelation of Being, we might imagine, transcends the anti-mimetic and self-mimetic adventures advocated in these works. One senses its presence in these critical statements, but it is not contained in or captured by the words making up these statements. In this respect it is perhaps unnamable.

While the comparison between these three critical texts merely intimates the representational coordinates of this study, what emerges is a sense that all three of these terms, the mimetic, the reflexive and the ontological, are often dangerously analogous. Within Beckett's stage plays we often discover that a particular moment may, in fact, force to the surface the operation of all three modes simultaneously, creating a startling density of paradoxical possibilities. However, Beckett's strategy as a playwright, I will argue, involves clarifying these boundaries, arriving ultimately at a uniquely ontological site.

There are two final statements worth considering regarding Beckett's status within modernism. The first is Robert Brustein's assertion that the "modern" theatre is defined in terms of its condition of disintegrating values. No longer offering the rituals of "communion" that characterized the theatre of the past ("Sophocles, Shakespeare and Racine"), the "modern" theatre (Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov,
Shaw, Pirandello, Genet, Beckett), is enacted in revolt:

By theatre of communion, I mean the theatre of the past ... where traditional myths were enacted before an audience of believers against the background of a shifting but still coherent universe. By theatre of revolt I mean the theatre of the great insurgent modern dramatists, where myths of rebellion are enacted before a dwindling number of spectators in a flux of vacancy, bafflement, and accident. (16)

Without pondering the existential aspects of Brustein's assessment, it is worth isolating (for later consideration in relation to Beckett) Brustein's sense that the modern stage spectacle operates within a divided environment. Rather than offering a communion between the audience and the performers (through the dramatist), the modern stage remains insular, revolting in a "growing mood of withdrawal." A "breach" between those on either side of the curtain, signaling the artist's reticence to participate in the games of humanity, makes the theatre of revolt "extremely self-conscious and self-involved." (17) The self-conscious terms of this retreat, we might conclude, are very much a part of Beckett's stage vocabulary.

This breach - isolating the stage world from that of the spectators - in turn isolates the stage world from the larger world outside the theatre. Thus, it is not just a rift between audience and actor, but a more fundamental division,


17 Brustein, p. 12.
parting the artist from the world in which he lives. Brustein refers to this level of revolt as "the last stage of the modern drama," "represent[ing] Romanticism turned in on itself and beginning to rot."(18) Brustein's reference to the "last stage of modern drama" might best be imagined not only as a temporal referent, but also a spatial one - as the final platform of enactment. This, perhaps, is the Beckettian stage in its essence: the last place/stage of action.

The final consideration of modernism is Jean-Francois Lyotard's more philosophical definition of modern art, clearly taking us one step closer to Beckett. Engaging questions of a more formal and abstract nature than Brustein does, Lyotard introduces concepts which could well have been articulated by Beckett himself. If modern art is, as Lyotard proposes, intent upon presenting the "unpresentable," then Beckett clearly must be counted among the movement's primary advocates. As Lyotard puts it,

> I shall call modern the art which devotes its "little technical expertise" (sa "petit technique"), as Diderot used to say, to present the fact that the unpresentable exists. To make visible that there is something which can be conceived and which can neither be seen nor made visible: that is what is at stake in modern painting. . . . As painting, it will of course "present" something though negatively; it will therefore avoid figuration or representation. It will be "white" like one of Malevitch's squares; it will enable us to see only by making it impossible to see. . . . One recognizes in those instructions the axioms of avant-gardes in painting, inasmuch as they devote themselves to making an allusion to the unpresentable by means

18 Brustein, p. 27.
of visible presentations. (19)

The problem emphasised here by Lyotard is central in introducing the tenuous, paradoxical terms of Beckett's craft. Although Lyotard, like Beckett in "Three Dialogues," refers to the art of painting, the discussion, in both cases, appears to transcend any particular medium, hence the reference to "modern art," and not simply to "modern painting." Lyotard's contention that painting will "avoid figuration or representation" stresses the foundational level of this undertaking, and if the "allusion" to the "unpresentable" through "visible presentations" is to be the guiding objective, mimesis is surely in perilous straits.

This brief discussion of modernism has opened but a few of many doors. Its purpose, however, is merely to situate Beckett's work within a context that is often difficult to identify in his own works. Because, as Angela Moorjani points out, the "preferred" place of the Beckettian drama is "in the darkness of the mind in which the living are unborn and the dead do not die," (20) we often feel to be adrift in Beckett's stage plays, like Macmann in Malone Dies,


without a rudder. (21) The two concerns in Beckett's critical writing which are perhaps most helpful in providing the navigational tools are, first, Beckett's commitment to internalizing the representational field, and, second, the more difficult act, articulated by Lyotard, of "presenting the unpresentable" - a pivotal preoccupation in The Unnamable, the final novel in the prose trilogy.

In relation to the first point, while we can generally locate a wealth of external references in Beckett's stage plays (the numerous biblical allusions in Waiting for Godot, for instance), these references rarely function in a mimetic manner. Rather than directing us to the real world outside of the text, these references generally function in one of two ways quite differently: at times these references are used as paradigms for the shape of the play, functioning on the formal level, while at other times Beckett conjures up the outside world merely to indicate how extremely incongruous it is within the dramatic context.

The parable of the two thieves in Godot illustrates the first type of external referencing. As Beckett himself stated, this particular parable is more significant in its formal role than its mimetic one. As Beckett told Harold Hobson:

'I am interested in the shape of ideas even if I do not believe them. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine. I wish I could remember

the Latin. It is even finer in Latin than in English. "Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned." That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters.'(22)

When the external referents are not made to serve the formal dimensions of the play, they are often used to measure the dissociative distance between the real world and the one being enacted upon the stage. With the topographical mapping which occurs in Godot in Endgame (Estragon hoping to go one day to "the Pyrenees," Nagg fondly remembering the "road to Sedan"), an emphasis is put upon the absence of these markers within the stage action: they are no longer viable within the context of the representational frame. As Keir Elam puts it,

Emptied of any effective orientational force, Beckett's illusory topography fulfills a purely "poetic" function (as in the consonance of "Croker's Acres"), verging on the comic but at the same time hinting at a nostalgia for the irretrievably lost points of reference in 'this world.'(23)

The second point emphasised in regard to Beckett's critical writing, the modernist commitment to presenting the unpresentable, dissolves all of these aesthetic games being played, deepening the representational crisis to a further


extreme. Articulated most fully in "Three Dialogues," Beckett
states that the terms of artistic expression must be reduced
to a struggle between the artist and his creative materials. No
longer provided with a connection to the external milieux, the
possibility of an extended unbroken silence in art becomes
devastatingly tangible. The only liberation from this
foundational impasse is to evoke that which precedes
representation: "the unpresentable." This, perhaps, for
Beckett, truly is the "something itself."

The three foundational terms in this thesis can now
be considered more specifically in terms of Beckett's own
works. Although the subsequent chapters will deal with
these terms extensively, it is worth first making some
general observations, establishing the form that the
argument will take.

As Elin Diamond states, "Mimesis, from its earliest
and varied enunciations, posits a truthful relationship
between world and word, model and copy, nature and image, or
in semiotic terms, referent and sign."(24) While P.J.
Murphy, as already noted, argues that Beckett, as a writer
of fiction, must be considered as a new type of "realist,
"passionately engaged with the issues of referentiality,"
and that the term "being" is "bound to be a meaningless word"

24 Elin Diamond, "Mimesis, Mimicry, and the True-
if not addressed through the "vexed issues of realism,\(25\) the stage plays, I would argue, hold a different status in this respect. Realism, if considered as a traditional mimetic instrument, appears to be conspicuously absent in the stage plays. As mentioned, the plays contain a considerable amount of external, mimetic, referencing, but these connectors tend to be subverted, servicing the plays' formal designs or being held up as something meaningless to the world being enacted. While it may be argued that by virtue of having actors represent characters, the stage vehicle is inherently, and inescapably, mimetic, we need think only of Beckett's later works, in which the concept of the character is foundationally eroded. As Xerxes Mehta perceptively notes of Beckett's later stage plays, the character as a stage entity no longer maintains its representational function:

The central performance dilemma in these plays, as I understand it, is the necessity for the performer to face the audience without any stable identity to rest upon. The performer does not know whether he or she is an actor, a character, or some form of transparency for an unknowable other. All that can be known with certainty is that a being in front of the stage is looking at and listening to a being on the stage.\(26\)

Under these conditions, the strain on conventional mimesis

\(25\) Murphy, xv.

is terminal, forcing us to consider new ways of understanding the dramatic situation.

Self-reflexivity, or self-mimesis, the second representational mode to be evaluated in this study (although, given the Beckettian stage, a far more primary term than the first, mimesis), is well-documented as a central aspect of Beckett's craft. At its most basic, the reflexive can be identified when Pozzo, in *Waiting for Godot*, asks whether he is at a place "known as the Board?," or when Clov, in *Endgame*, turns his telescope on the audience, claiming to see "a multitude ... in transports ... of joy." This type of self-conscious self-referencing is, by now, a familiar dimension within the field of modern art. However, in *Play*, completed in 1963, Beckett pushes this representational mode to a perhaps unprecedented extreme, dissolving any vestiges of the mimetic frame. According to Ruby Cohn, Beckett achieves in *Play* for the first time a "sustained theatereality."

In "Ghosting Through Beckett" Cohn draws our attention to "theatereality," a term she has used in previous texts, defining it in this instance as a quasi-supernatural force, an everpresent shade haunting its subject: "The most insidious Beckett ghosting is the form of reflexivity that I have neologized as theatereality, with its near convergence of the physical fact of the theatre and the fiction that is

27 See, for example, Cohn's "Growing (Up?) with Godot," *Beckett at 80/ Beckett in Context*, p. 22.
conveyed in stage time."(28) In the case of Play, as Cohn argues, "theatereal" becomes foundational, making the play perhaps more a presentational vehicle than a representational one.

This "near convergence" is taken up by other scholars, such as Hugh Kenner and Linda Ben-Zvi, who describe the merging of physical fact and fiction in Beckett's works as a seemingly complete (rather than "near") phenomenon. Kenner discusses virtually every facet of Endgame in relation to self-reflexivity,(29) and Ben-Zvi points to particular aspects of Hamm's "soliloquy" in Endgame - the possibility of an "underplot," and the reference to an "aside" - as proof that "the play itself becomes object."(30)

As well, Beckett's self-reflexivity is often explored as a mise-en-abyrne.(31) Martin Esslin refers to Vladimir's song of the dog in the kitchen in this way, as representing


31 See, for example, Angela Moorjani's Abysmal Games in the Novels of Samuel Beckett (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Department of Romance Languages, 1982), p. 22; and Carla Locatelli's Unwording the World: Beckett's Prose Works After the Nobel Prize (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), p. 114.
yet "another view of infinity" in Beckett's work. (32) In
the case of Vladimir's song, however, Beckett includes within
the "view of infinity" the image of death (as the dog is
entombed), creating a condition that Vivian Mercier, in another
counterpart, describes in terms of an "asymptote," i.e., something
that recurs indefinitely while being guided by an independent
variable (death, in this case) (33). With these two forces
working against each other, Vladimir's ditty, as we see,
is anything but whimsical:

A dog came in the kitchen
And stole a crust of bread.
The cook up with a ladle
And beat him till he was dead . . .

Then all the dogs came running
And dug the dog a tomb
And wrote upon the tombstone
For the eyes of dogs to come:

A dog came in the kitchen
and stole a crust of bread.
Then cook up with a ladle
And beat him till he was dead.

Then all the dogs came running . . . (34)

The complex impulses in Vladimir's song, combining recurrence
and non-recurrence simultaneously, alert us to a paradox that


"asymptotic formula" as one "that approaches perfect accuracy as the independent variable increases indefinitely."

34 Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot, The Complete Dramatic Works (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 52. All following references to Beckett's plays, unless otherwise noted, will be taken from this volume.
is central to Beckett's reflexivity. The "spiralling" that might appear to be an endgame in itself, an unresolvable condition of enactment as reenactment, is displaced in instances such as this by the supreme image of deenactment: death. Thus, though Beckett's self-reflexivity is sometimes considered as a Derridean labyrinth, a condition through which no sign can ever be discerned as self-evident or actually present,(35) Beckett's reflexive procedures are often made untenable by his own inclusion of dissonant projections, most specifically that of death.

This concept of deenacting reenactment introduces the third mode of this study, the ontological. Ontology has been considered by many of Beckett scholars. Martin Esslin identifies it as central: "Beckett's whole oeuvre could be characterized as an attempt to explore and to capture the essential nature of being; he is the ontological poet par excellence."(36) Emphasised by Esslin is the Heideggerian sense of Being as Dasein, "Being-there."(37) Alain Robbe-
Grillet also compares Beckett's work to Heidegger's, pointing to the phenomenon of "being there" in *Waiting for Godot* as central and inescapable(38). Lance St. John Butler's full-length study, *Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being*, considers Beckett's work in relation to Heidegger, Hegel and Sartre, analyzing Beckett's works as "ontological parables"(39); and, before St. John Butler, Gunther Anders discussed *Godot* as an "ontological farce."(40)

On the basic level, we enter into ontological space whenever we go to the theatre. It is fundamental that we recognize the event as taking place materially in real time; people are present on the stage, and we, the audience, observe them. Beckett, however, doubles this foundation in his stage plays, drawing our attention to this transaction repeatedly. While this, as discussed, has reflexive repercussions, it also, potentially, provides the means for dissolving these "abysmal games," elevating the discourse to an evocation of the actual constituent properties of the event in which we are involved. This, it seems, defines the undertaking in *The Unnamable*, but, because the


words on the page cannot be liberated as ontological artifacts, being denied materiality in actual time and space, the end is inevitably beyond reach. The novel's concluding statement, "I can't go on, I'll go on," decisively drives this point home.

During the course of this study, the stage plays will be evaluated as a liberation from the representational impasse expounded so meticulously in The Unnamable. In the stage plays studied here, an evolution of sorts will be identified in Beckett's manipulations on this level. In the early plays the ontological is somewhat tentatively present, a frightening force disturbing the aesthetic games in which the characters indulge. In the later plays, however, Beckett integrates self-presence fully into the plays' formal designs, transcending the representational field with unparalleled authority.

While the ontological is inherently unachievable on the written page, a most potent evocation of its properties is presented in Jean-Paul Sartre's Nausea, as the "veil is torn away" and Roquentin, the protagonist, names that which knows no name:

So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn't remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface. . . .

. . . Even when I looked at things, I was miles from dreaming that they existed: they looked like scenery to me. . . . And then all of a sudden, there it was, clear as day:
existence had suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost the harmless look of an abstract category: it was the very paste of things, this root was kneaded into existence. Or rather the root, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass, all that had vanished: the diversity of things, their individuality, were only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder - naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness. (41)

* * *

The particular plays chosen for this study were selected in order to identify the pivotal transformations which occur on the representational level during the course of Beckett's career as a playwright. Waiting for Godot is perhaps an inevitable starting point. While Beckett wrote other plays before Godot, including the full-length Eleuthèria in 1947 (published in 1995), Godot represents Beckett's first major statement in the dramatic field. (42) It initiates and focuses the direction of this entire thesis.

Endgame, the second play studied in this thesis, was chosen because of its intensification of the representational dilemmas presented in Godot. Beckett apparently told Roger Blin and Jean Martin during rehearsals for the original production of Endgame "You must realize that Hamm and Clov


42 As Bair notes, Beckett was reticent to have Eleuthèria published because he did not want it performed. Bair, p. 364.
are Didi and Gogo at a later date, at the end of their lives."(43) We feel this to be particularly true in terms of the impacted decay on the mimetic level. If Vladimir and Estragon appear at moments to still be citizens of the world, heroically attempting to conjure up civilized meanings, Hamm and Clov have clearly abandoned this enterprise, brooding instead over the dismal, dysfunctional remains. As well, many of the dramatic strategies introduced in Godot are clarified and developed in Endgame, making the discussion, in many respects, a further elaboration upon the one that occurs in the first chapter.

Of the plays studied, Krapp's Last Tape, the third to be analyzed, stands out as the most mimetic of Beckett's stage works. It was chosen for this reason. Krapp, in his den, drunkenly reminiscing over his past, is the Beckett character most easily placed in the real world. In fact, as will be discussed, Beckett made many revisions in the written text that highlight this very thing. The play also initiates a number of formal innovations which reoccur in the later plays, making it both a play that stands distinctly on its own in Beckett's corpus, and, as well, one which anticipates many later developments.

Play, the fourth play studied, represents a radical breakthrough on the representational level, a development crucial to the shape of the later plays. On the formal

43 As quoted in Bair, p. 483.
level Play initiates a strategy of fragmentation and repetition that, though perhaps foreshadowed in the earlier works, is decisively realized in this particular instance. As well, the narrative in Play, while having a uniquely melodramatic surface, is employed in a manner that will become perfected in the later works. Lastly, Play represents, as Ruby Cohn put it, Beckett's first "sustained" example of "theatereality," and this condition, perhaps above all else, makes it a crucial part of the study.

The last plays studied, Not I and Rockaby, were chosen from the many other later works for their simplicity (in the most positive sense of the word) and their ontological depth. Not I, written in 1972, stands somewhat on its own. After Play, written in 1962-63, Beckett's only stage efforts during the ten year period preceding Not I were Come and Go (1965) and the brief Breath (1966). Thus, the unstoppable Mouth in Not I appears as a force that has been released after a long silence, bringing to the Beckettian stage an unprecedented level of urgency and intensity. The play also represents a significant breakthrough on the ontological level, integrating fully, for the first time, language with the state of self-presence. Rockaby seems the most eloquent of Beckett's final statements on the stage, bringing together with the greatest authority all of the components of the stage world. For this reason, there is no better "close of a long day," V's repeated
invocation as darkness descends.
CHAPTER ONE

"The Thing-in-Itself" in Waiting for Godot

Prior to modernism, Aristotelian mimesis represented a largely uncontested model for expression in the theatre. While we can surely find exceptions, particularly in plays that mix genres,(1) Hamlet's advice to the players expresses what Francis Fergusson calls "the perennial need for a direct and significant imitation of human life."(2) The prince's Aristotelian admonition might thus be thought of as a plea not only to this particular group of players, but a plea to all players, a plea for direct mimesis in art:

... the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature - to show Virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.(3)

Although S.H. Butcher correctly points out that in Aristotle's Poetics there is no question of a "bare imitation,"

1 In the Poetics Aristotle distinguishes between the "constituent parts" of tragedy and the epic, indicating a delineation between the two genres. See Chapter V in Aristotle's Poetics, trans. S.H. Butcher (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 60.


of a "literal transcript of the world of reality,"(4) there is certainly an explicit assumption in the Poetics, as there is in Hamlet's advice to the players, that art is referential, "an imitation of an action," as Aristotle says in his often-quoted definition of tragedy.(5) This assumption - that there is an exterior model or ideal which is mirrored or emulated in the work of art - must be examined. This is, among other things, what Godot forces us to do.

Bert States asks many pertinent questions of representation in his phenomenological study of theatre, Great Reckonings in Little Rooms. One of States's opening remarks brings the matter to a head: "Surely theater's origins and purposes are not exhausted in the idea that man wants to imitate the world, as it is or as it should be . . . ."(6) States acknowledges that it would be "absurd to argue that there is no referential, or mimetic, relation between art and reality," but he questions the "longstanding" obligation in mimetic theory to "define art in terms of what it is not."(7) States cites Heidegger in preliminarily establishing his thesis, and the reference is a useful one, particularly if we


5 Aristotle, p. 61.


7 States, p. 5.
keep in mind Beckett's pronouncement in "Three Dialogues" that the artist must make an expressive act, "even if only of itself." As Heidegger states:

[The Sculpture] is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus is the god himself.(8)

States points out here that Heidegger is not trying to suggest that the god literally becomes present, but that it is a "presence that makes it unnecessary to refer elsewhere for the god." As States says, "It is the truth of the god that arrives on stage and not the stage that refers to a real god beyond it, existing in some unavailable form."(9)

In the following discussion of Godot, States's phenomenological assessment of representation in the theatre will be considered for the most part in its most primary sense: that of the actor. The "truth" that "arrives on stage" is, after all, most literally embodied in the actor. Unlike a figure on canvas, or words on a page, the actor is tangibly ontological. A painting, a sculpture or a book may seem to make a thing or a person present, but the theatre literalizes presence. In a painting, for example, a man is represented by oil pigment on canvas; in a book, a man, perhaps the same man, is represented in words; in the theatre, however, this


9 States, p. 3.
man is represented by another man. Ontologically, the man (the actor) represents himself, a man.

This ontology becomes problematized, of course, once the concept of a character is introduced. A stage character, after all, is representational on two levels: it is both a stage representation and a literary representation, or, more accurately, it is a stage representation of a literary representation. In this respect, the stage character is twice projected: initially an abstract emissary, issued forth from the pages of a written text, the literary representation is then imitated by the actor, a corporeal entity, who is obligated, while on the stage, to theatrically represent the literary representation. While this condition may appear self-evident, an inevitable chain of events within the dramatic medium, Beckett asks that we suspend this assumption in order that the constituent bases be examined. As a consequence, this relationship becomes opaque in Beckett as a kind of discourse. The connection between the written word on the page and the spoken word on the stage becomes, in a sense, a highly interesting text in itself. It is thus not coincidental that, as Enoch Brater points out, Estragon fancies himself a poet,(10) and Hamm, and Krapp, later, each perceives himself in a literary role. A later play, such as Ohio Impromptu, goes a step further, dramatizing a reading of the text that is

being performed. In all these cases, Beckett insists that we observe the representational process.

In the written (dramatic) text, ontology is necessarily limited. In *Not I*, for example, while Mouth's struggle with self-identity is a riveting and intense experience for the reader, it takes on a literal (ontological) meaning only in the theatre. For the reader, Mouth's self-negations can only be understood as a fiction. The difficult, elliptical, narrative, which at every step challenges referentiality, can only be comprehended by the reader in his imagination, the site of reception for all literary works. On the stage, on the other hand, the fiction is no longer a fiction of the same kind: there is a mouth, a real mouth, enacting a character named Mouth. It is an actor performing a role, certainly, but the actor has a mouth, and is using her mouth to express Mouth: Mouth is a mouth. It might be said that while the dramatic text can never achieve self-presence, the performance text cannot escape from it: a true Beckettian dilemma.

11 During the course of this thesis, the written text will be called the "dramatic text," and its staged manifestation the "performance text." This concurs with the usage of these terms in Keir Elam's *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (New York and London: Methuen, 1980), p. 3.

En attendant Godot had its stage premiere at the Théâtre de Babylone in Paris on January 5, 1953. The early reviews, conceived prior to the weighty critical discourse that has by now become something of a third act in this two-act play, are remarkably perceptive of Godot's fundamental qualities, and are worth consideration as primary documents. The first review, written by Sylvain Zegel, is immediately prophetic in pronouncing that the "event" of Godot "will be spoken of for a long time."(13) Zegel was particularly impressed with Beckett's ability to "animate his characters so vividly." For one so new to the stage, Beckett "mastered" its "exigencies": "Each word acts as the author wishes, touching us or making us laugh." The audience, Zegel felt, "identify[d] with" the characters; they "heard people using everyday words":

These two tramps . . . utter remarks that any one of us might utter. These two men are feeble and energetic, cowardly and courageous; they bicker, amuse themselves, are bored, speak to each other without understanding. They do all this to keep busy. To pass time.(14)

Jean Anouilh declared Godot a "masterpiece," claiming that the opening night "is as important as the opening of Pirandello in 1923." The "greatness" of the piece, for Anouilh, was not located offstage, in a debate of ideas, but was "the artful playing, a style - we are 'somewhere' in the

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14 Zegel, p. 12.
theater."(15) Armand Salacrou similarly saw in Godot a significant spectacle, "an unexpected play which we nevertheless recognize; we were waiting for this play of our time, with its tone, its simple and modest language, and its closed circular plot from which no exit is possible."(16)

On August 3, 1955, Waiting for Godot had its English premiere in London at the Art Theatre. With this second premiere (if a premiere can sustain the concept of a double) the British critics appeared prepared for the event. Harold Hobson dissected the play with disarming authority, a skeptic, but an admirer nonetheless: "Mr. Beckett has, of course, got it all wrong." Audiences, according to Hobson, are far too busy "hire-purchasing televisions" to worry about "the millenium, the Day of Judgement" (if, in fact, Godot were about either). Hobson concedes, however, that Beckett has it wrong "in a tremendous way." He recommends that people see Godot: "It is bewildering. It is exasperating. It is insidiously exciting . . . . At the worst you will discover a curiosity . . . . at the best, something that will securely


16 Armand Salcrou, "It is Not an Accident But a Triumph," Arts #400 (January 27, 1953); reprinted in Casebook on 'Waiting for Godot,' trans. Ruby Cohn, p. 14.
lodge in a corner of your mind for as long as you live."(17)

Kenneth Tynan goes further than Hobson, speaking of *Godot*
as a stage phenomenon without precedent:

A special virtue attaches to plays which remind the
drama of how much it can do without and still
exist. By all known criteria, Samuel Beckett's
*Waiting for Godot* is a dramatic vacuum. Pity the
critic who seeks a chink in its armour, for it is all
chink... *Waiting for Godot* frankly jettisons
everything by which we recognise theatre. It
arrives at the customs-house, as it were, with no
luggage, no passport, and nothing to declare... It
doess this, I believe, by appealing to a definition
of drama much more fundamental than any in the
books... His two tramps pass the time of day
just as we the audience, are passing the time of
night. Were we not in the theatre, we should, like
them, be clowning and quarelling, aimlessly
bickering and aimlessly making up—all, as one of
them says, 'to give us the impression that we
exist.'(18)

Although these early critics note certain allusions in the
play, such as the "double-talk of vaudeville" (Tynan), and the
"Day of Judgement" (Hobson), the emphasis in all the reviews
is on the play's impressive force as a stage vehicle. The
play's "message," if there is one, is not taken up as a central
concern (except perhaps by Hobson); rather, it is the radical
force of the stage images and the stage sounds, the sheer
power of what is seen and heard, that seem to bring Tynan,
for example, to conclude, "It forced me to re-examine the

p. 11; reprinted in Graver, pp. 94-95.

reprinted in Graver and Federman, pp. 95-96.
rules which have hitherto governed the drama."(19) Tynan's sense that Godot's tramps "pass the day" in the same way that we, the audience, "pass the night" draws particular attention to the play's anti-mimetic mode of presentation. Vladimir and Estragon are present in much the way that we are present: ontologically.

These early reviews of Godot are important because they were composed in innocence, so to speak. For one well-versed in the modern field, seeing a production of Godot is comparable to seeing Picasso's Guernica; to both we bring a somewhat overdetermined sensibility. With masterworks of this magnitude our critical apparatus threatens our experiential faculties. How can we simply see or hear the piece? Is direct experience of Godot any longer possible? Reference to these early reviews helps to initiate this type of rediscovery.

Prior to En attendant Godot, completed in 1949,(20) Beckett had only dabbled with the stage, writing the unpublished "Le Kid" in 1931, the short fragment Human Wishes in 1936-37, and the posthumously published Eleuthéria

19 Graver, p. 97.

20 According to Colin Duckworth, the first manuscript page of Godot is dated 9 October 1948, and the last 29 January 1949. Between these dates, Duckworth claims, Beckett put aside Malone meurt and wrote the play. Colin Duckworth, "The Making of Godot," Casebook on 'Waiting for Godot,' p. 89.
Most of Beckett's accomplishments preceding Godot had been in prose: four major novels and over a dozen shorter nouvelles had been completed, although Molloy, written before Godot, was not yet published. Later, with the critical successes of Molloy and Malone meurt, published in 1951, the arrival of Godot, published in 1952, was perhaps a surprise: why a play? (22)

If we consider that Godot was Beckett's fourth attempt at a stage work, including the lengthy Eleuthéria just the year before, in 1947, Godot does not appear an anomalous departure. However, because of the immense impact of Godot, and Beckett's continued success in the theatre, there has been considerable interest in Beckett's transition to the stage, attempts to discover a revealing crisis or epiphany that may have sparked the initiative.

In 1965, while discussing a Royal Court production of Godot, Beckett told Colin Duckworth, "Playwriting was a relief from the terrible kind of prose I was writing at that time. I

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21 These dates have been arrived at by cross-referencing the chronology provided by Ruby Cohn, Back to Beckett (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), xiii-xv, with the chronology provided by Rosemary Pountney, Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama 1956-1976 (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe; Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1988), xvii-xxi.

22 As Eleuthéria was written the year before Godot, Beckett's transition to the stage does not appear so sudden, particularly as after Godot Beckett started writing prose again, and in the following years wrote in both genres.
just thought I would try it out."(23) Enoch Brater sheds light in another direction, stating that in 1983 Beckett said, "When I was working on Watt I felt the need to create for a smaller space, one in which I had some control of where people stood or moved, above all a certain light. I wrote Waiting for Godot."(24)

In an earlier statement, made during an interview in 1956, Beckett speaks of his prose as having reached an impasse, a point of no return. While discussing the prose trilogy (Molloy, Malone Dies and The Unnamable) with Israel Shenker, Beckett perhaps implies that his interest in the stage was not merely a "relief," as he later told Duckworth in 1965, but was more a matter of necessity. Revealing considerable despair over his well-being as a writer of fiction, Beckett indicates how very close he was to the brink of dissolution:

In the last book - L'Innommable - there's complete disintegration. No 'I,' no 'have,' no 'being.' No nominative, no accusative, no verb. There's no way to go on.
The very last thing I wrote - Textes pour rien - was an attempt to get out of the attitude of disintegration, but it failed.(25)

In view of this crisis, one can easily imagine how attractive the theatre would seem. Constructed of physical


materials, and occurring within an enclosed space in real time, the theatre offered Beckett a constituent control over corporeality. Being able to determine not only how the bodies are to be arranged in space, Beckett could control the light as well. The importance of "a certain light," as mentioned in his 1983 statement, proves, particularly in his later plays, to be crucial. With the possible exception of Godot, in which the lighting (very artificially) represents the natural movement from sunset to twilight, Beckett makes light a productive factor within the dramatic world. In Play the light is both an external eye and an internal character, diminishing in intensity with the characters' voices. In the later Not I and Rockaby the light is even more "theatereal," becoming integrated, particularly in Rockaby, into the narrative that is brought to life before us.

Michael Robinson amplifies this view of Beckett's shift to the theatre as being a progression necessary and inevitable. As Robinson states it, the theatre "promise[d] a firmer reality than a subjective monologue written and read in isolation . . ."(26) The theatre, with its tangible immediacy, held out an opportunity for self-presence that no other medium could offer. The materiality of the boards represented perhaps the only refuge from the "mad, mad, mad" that had consumed Beckett by this time in his fiction.

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The most eloquent advocate of this *terra firma* view is Alain Robbe-Grillet. In 1953 Robbe-Grillet wrote that Beckett's *Godot* clearly adheres to the notion that the "human condition is ... to be there."(27) Robbe-Grillet states that in *Godot*, while the play "consists of nothing but emptiness," the characters "have no other quality than to be present":

> As for Gogo and Didi, they refuse even more stubbornly any other signification than the most banal, the most immediate one; they are men. And their situation is summed up in this simple observation, beyond which it does not seem possible to advance: they are there, they are on the stage.(28)

Robbe-Grillet continues by reiterating that "sheer presence" is the only real truth in *Godot*; in a universe where "time does not pass . . . only the present situation counts." In fact, Vladimir and Estragon "have no other quality than to be present."(29)

If we follow Robbe-Grillet and Michael Robinson, it is not difficult to imagine the relief this tangibility offered to Beckett. Where *Texts pour rien*, so utterly beyond the pale, failed, *Godot*, with its carrot, stone and tree, perhaps succeeded in reconstituting its ailing author. Beckett's "attitude of disintegration," we might speculate, was artistically checked by *Godot*.

Robbe-Grillet's argument has, of course, many

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27 Robbe-Grillet, p. 115.
28 Robbe-Grillet, p. 115.
29 Robbe-Grillet, p. 114.
important consequences for mimesis. If Didi and Gogo "have no other quality than to be present," does this not terminate Godot's connection to the Aristotelian premise of imitation? If Didi and Gogo are to be understood as merely "present" and not "re-present" what then does this mean in terms of mimesis, which by definition calls for a copy, a representation of an original? Although Godot is more tentative than Beckett's later plays in rupturing transparent mimesis, from the outset it clearly involves itself in its own play, alluding to illusionism only to block its progress.

In an unusually forthcoming remark Beckett told Colin Duckworth, "If you want to find the origins of En attendant Godot, look at Murphy."(30) Though there is no further elaboration here, in a letter he wrote to Sighle Kennedy Beckett makes some key statements about Murphy which perhaps shed light on Godot. The letter to Kennedy begins, "I don't have thoughts about my work." Later, however, Beckett offers this: "If I were put in the unenviable position of having to study my own work my points of departure would be the 'Naught is more real ...' and the 'Ubi nihil vales ...' both already in Murphy and neither very rational."(31)


Beckett's first "point of departure" ("Naught is more real") is a quotation from Democritus which occurs in Murphy at the pivotal point when Murphy has his brush with the "Nothing." This climactic moment occurs late in the novel, just before Murphy's death. Appropriately, it is while playing chess with the ascetic Mr. Endon, who plays for aesthetic points only, that Murphy begins to lose touch with "everyday," reality, flirting briefly with that more primary state, "the Nothing":

Mr. Endon's finery persisted for a little in an after-image scarcely inferior to the original. Then this also faded and Murphy began to see nothing, that colourlessness which is such a rare postnatal treat, being the absence (to abuse a nice distinction) not of percepere but of percipi. His other senses also found themselves at peace, an unexpected pleasure. Not the numb peace of their own suspension, but the positive peace that comes when the somethings give way, or perhaps simply add up, to the Nothing, than which in the guffaw of the Abderite naught is more real. (32)

Murphy's brush with the Nothing, it turns out, is nothing more than a brush. Almost as quickly as he achieves this state of blissful absence, he again returns, back to the "stenches" of the hospital. He is never to come so close again to his personal nirvana.

Murphy's experience here of the "colourlessness" that occurs when "the somethings give way" reminds us of Roquentin's experience at the park in Nausea. Though Murphy is not able to capitalize upon this experience as Roquentin

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does, with continued perception of the world around him, his encounter with the "Nothing" does contain a similar sense of decontextualization. As already indicated, this type of decoding is central to the concept of ontology being developed in this thesis. That Beckett should point us to this reference in Murphy by way of explaining the "origins" of Godot gives us cause to consider the many references to "nothing" in Godot in a particularly ontological light. The "Nothing," so basic to the play's shape, is perhaps that which arrests the representational field, dissolving Vladimir and Estragon's aesthetic "canters" as they are created.

Not surprisingly, "Nothing to be done" begins Godot. This despairing claim of Estragon's at the play's outset is most immediately in reference to his boot, which he is having great difficulty taking off. Vladimir, however, enlarges this reference, responding that he himself has spent his entire life trying to resist this conclusion, and so "resumed the struggle" - presumably the struggle with life itself. If this were an Ibsen play, Estragon's wrestle with his boot would serve as an anchor for the play's action. Nora's entrance in Ibsen's A Doll House, for example, masterfully establishes a forward-seeking life-line, as she puts down her package of christmas gifts and sneaks a macaroon before her husband enters.(33) Estragon's futile

attempt to remove his boot, however, with his too-much-ado-about-Nothing, becomes too awkwardly extended and self-conscious to qualify as an anchor for anything—except perhaps for the increasing futility which soon prevails in the play itself.

A potent stage phenomenon is engaged in this early stage-business. Keir Elam points out that the "first principle" of the Prague School theatrical theory could be called the "semiotization of the object." As Elam states, "The very fact of their appearance on stage suppresses the practical function of phenomena in favour of a symbolic or signifying role, allowing them to participate in dramatic representation."(34) In the case of Godot, however, I would submit that the opposite holds true. Although Estragon's boots are set up at the beginning of Act Two with "heels together, toes splayed," and could thus be interpreted in relation to "cruciform" imagery in the play,(35) it appears that Beckett is, at this early stage of the play, experimenting with a lack of signification: the boot cannot transcend its function; it is a boot. It gathers force not in signification, but becomes significant by remaining symbolically insignificant. Estragon's boot, like Valdimir's carrot, resists the representative or symbolic function of Nora's macaroons.

34 Elam, p. 8.

35 See Dougald McMillan and Martha Fehsenfeld, pp. 106-18.
(secretly indulged), thus defying the process of "semiotization" that Elam sees as so primary. Rather than participating in a semiotic signifier-signified relationship, the boot (like so much in Beckett) resists an exterior referent. If Vlaminir and Estragon are "all mankind," as Vladimir states, then the boot is equally any and all boots. (36)

In Bert States's extended essay on Godot, The Shape of Paradox, States discusses the "generic" quality of Beckett's settings (to which, as part of the setting, I would include props, such as Estragon's boot). According to States, a play such as Godot does not accomplish a generic ("universal, archetypal") effect by "calling for a locale we recognize because we have seen it 'elsewhere'"; rather, it achieves this effect by a "purity of design," by presenting a "clear unchanging shape emerging from all the detail - as in certain paintings [in which] one can readily detect the pure geometric 'archetypes' of all paintings (circle, square, triangle) emerging from the representation." (37)

States's analogy here between Beckett's stage images and nonfiguration (geometric archetypes) in painting seems highly

36 Though Estragon's boots are part of a costume that conjures up the character of a tramp/clown, this persona is more self-reflexive than representational, making the costume a presentational artifact rather than a mimetic one.

relevant. What States indicates about painting here is that geometric archetypes which emerge from certain paintings transcend their representational field, transforming the referential base of the image into an archetypal, generic, one. This raises the important question as to whether such "archetypes" can ever be truly liberated from representation? While in Godot we are confronted with figurative imagery - a man, a boot, a tree - we might, particularly in view of Beckett's expressed interest in "the shape of ideas," briefly consider these figures as a part of a nonfigurative schema.(38)

In Mimesis as Make-Believe Kendall Walton discusses the difficulty of assessing nonfigurative art in relation to representation. Walton uses the example of Kasimir Malevich's Suprematist Painting from 1915. Walton enquires as to whether this painting, which depicts a diagonally positioned yellow rectangular shape in front of a horizontal green line, which in turn appears to be placed in front of a large black trapezoid turned on the opposite diagonal, has mimetic value. Because the yellow rectangle appears to be placed on top of the green line but actually isn't (the green line is merely broken on either side of the rectangle), Walton concludes that

38 Beckett's stage play Quad, for instance, uses figures in a highly nonfigurative way; and Beckett's stage-blocking for his Schiller-Theater production of Godot in 1975 is based upon specifically geometric configurations. Beckett's blocking design for this production is discussed in Fehsenfeld, pp. 87-124.
the painting is indeed representative: "So the painting is a prop; it makes it fictional in games of make-believe played by viewers that there is a yellow rectangle in front of a green one."(39) Walton, however, does make an important distinction between figurative painting, which referentially takes us outside the canvas, and the nonfigurative Suprematist Painting, in which the yellow rectangle is "imagined to be what it is: a yellow rectangle":

We might express this suggestion by saying that figurative paintings "point beyond" themselves in a way that Suprematist Painting does not. [Seurat's] La Grande Jatte portrays people and objects distinct from the painting itself (fictitious ones perhaps), whereas Suprematist Painting merely depicts its own elements in a certain manner.(40)

What Walton suggests here is that the nonfigurative Suprematist Painting does in fact operate within a referential field, but the contact points are internal; they refer to formal arrangements within the painting, not to figures outside. Also, the process of representation takes place in "games of make-believe" played by the viewer, not necessarily in games played by the artist. The artist has merely painted a green strip on either side of a yellow rectangle; the viewer is then free to imagine what the relationship may be. What seems significant here is that regardless of whether one sees the yellow rectangle as being in front of the green line or simply beside it (I actually imagined it beside), all conclusions are

39 Walton, pp. 55-56.
40 Walton, p. 57.
based on internal, formal, considerations, not upon imagining what is beyond the surface.

The nonfigurative, or archetypal, "games of make-believe" played in paintings such as The Suprematist Painting seem particularly analogous to those played in Godot. The fictions created by the viewer in both cases are based upon formal rather than representational associations. These types of considerations corroborate Bert States's concept of the archetypal "purity of design" in Godot's stage set, asserting the same principles. Along with States's comments regarding the setting, I would include the play's characters and stage properties as being equally pure design "functions." Because these elements signify on a generic level, they forfeit their representative status as well. By being "all mankind," Vladimir and Estragon are no man in particular. The boot, equally, is a boot unburdened by association. Like the colour yellow, it is more pigment than figment.

Rather than simplifying the process of interpretation, however, the generic (nonrepresentative) status of the play's physical imagery creates a deep level of indeterminacy. States, Vivian Mercier and Hugh Kenner use the image of the Rorschach blot in relation to Godot.(41) Mercier and Kenner apply the analogy to illustrate, as Mercier says, that most

interpretations of the play "reveal more about the psyches of the people who offer them than about the work itself"; and States uses the term as a "graphic" for the play to suggest that, like "Found Art," the play provokes not as a "created object but a creative one, or better still, no object at all but a concatenation of possibilities." However, if this is a game of chance, as Found Art sometimes is, Beckett is not about to allow a random walk: any appearance of improvisation is an appearance only. In fact, in a paradoxical sense, the Rorschach blot principle tends to tighten the play's focus, bringing us directly in contact with the play's primary form. As States explains it,

... in the blot principle we confront the very algebra of imagination; in a flash of form we bypass the whole realm of factual equivalence and enter a world where structural affinity is the only law governing identity. (42)

Estragon's early struggle with his boot, initiating the play's pattern of mimetic resistance, also presents a platform (literally) for the pure vaudeville that stylistically permeates the play. The vaudeville-inspired routines of Vladimir and Estragon, such as the extended hat exchange in Act Two (pp. 65-66), and the pair's constant verbal "canters," reminiscent of the music-hall, create a primary level of reflexivity within the performance. As is clear from their vexing comedy routines, Estragon and Vladimir play themselves as actors, stubbornly attempting to sustain a routine worthy of the

42 States, Paradox, p. 6.
stage. If Vladimir and Estragon are truly to be considered "all mankind," this is so, in part, by virtue of their playing the roles of actors. If they are "all mankind" ontologically, by virtue of the inescapable fact that they are "just there," they become everyone and no one in particular by virtue of their reflexive histrionics.

Vladimir and Estragon's self-consciousness regarding their theatrical assignment is evident early in the play, alerting the audience to a level of duplicitous role-playing. In the first act, Vladimir claims that the two of them have "waived" their rights as human beings (as all actors must), and that they must accept the restrictive consequences:

ESTRAGON: Where do we come in?
VLADIMIR: Come in?
ESTRAGON: Take your time.
VLADIMIR: Come in? On our hands and knees.
ESTRAGON: As bad as that?
VLADIMIR: Your Worship wishes to assert his prerogatives?
ESTRAGON: We've no rights any more?

[Laugh of VLADIMIR, repressed as before, less the smile.]
VLADIMIR: You'd make me laugh, if it wasn't prohibited.
ESTRAGON: We've lost our rights?
VLADIMIR: We waived them.(43)

In Act Two Estragon expresses some pride in their histrionic virtuosity, suggesting to Vladimir that their recurring artistic digressions are successful in giving themselves the impression that they exist. Having devised yet another diversion to pass the time - trying to get Estragon's boot

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(43) *Waiting for Godot*, p. 19.
on - Estragon is satisfied that they have spent their time profitably:

VLADIMIR: What about trying them?
ESTRAGON: I've tried everything.
VLADIMIR: I mean the boots.
ESTRAGON: Would that be a good thing?
VLADIMIR: It'd pass the time. [ESTRAGON hesitates.]
I assure you, it'd be an occupation.
ESTRAGON: A relaxation.
VLADIMIR: A recreation.
ESTRAGON: A relaxation.
VLADIMIR: Try.
ESTRAGON: You'll help me?
VLADIMIR: I will, of course.
ESTRAGON: We don't manage too badly, eh, Didi, between the two of us?
VLADIMIR: Yes yes. Come on, we'll try the left first.
ESTRAGON: We always find something, eh, Didi, to give us the impression we exist?
VLADIMIR: [Impatiently.] Yes yes, we're magicians.(44)

Rather than creating an "impression" of existence, Vladimir and Estragon's inventive excursions actually block this impression, deferring the frightening realization that whatever meaning they may generate during these flights is solely aesthetic - and rather meagre in this respect, as they stumble and fall over one another. In this way, these excursions are no more than diversions, games played to avoid the utter lack of signification which confronts them on the ontological level. The impression of existence is thus only apprehended in the moments when the act breaks down, when Didi and Gogo lose their characters, as it were, and are at an aesthetic loss, stripped of their representational roles. At

44 Waiting for Godot, p. 63.
these moments, the presence of existence is powerful indeed.

Vladimir and Estragon actually seem aware of this futility at certain moments, acknowledging the absurdity of their actions:

  ESTRAGON: I'll go and get a carrot.
      [He does not move.]
  VLADIMIR: This is becoming really insignificant.
  ESTRAGON: Not enough.
      [Silence.] (45)

Despite these paralyzing moments of ontological revelation, in which Didi and Gogo realize that their only real significance is their utter insignificance, they are, as Vladimir says, "inexhaustible." Having "waived" their rights as human beings, they appear to be essentially autonomous, free to fall as they may, failures by their own design. This nicely conjures up the image of the Rorschach ink blot, mentioned earlier, as Didi and Gogo are constantly having to make something out of the ineffable "Nothing" that surrounds them.

Gunther Anders suggests that the farcical level of Vladimir and Estragon's play-acting aligns them most closely with the circus, for clowns, according to Anders, cannot differentiate between what is (being) and what is not (non-being), and consequently clowns are excluded from the "scheme of the world":

  . . . placing them in a place that is no place at all . . . turns them into clowns, for the metaphysical comicality of clowns does, after all, consist in their being unable to distinguish between being and non-being, by falling down non-existing

45 Waiting for Godot, p. 63.
stairs, or by treating real stairs as though they did not exist . . . Beckett's heroes are indolent or paralyzed clowns. For them, it is not just this or that object but the world itself that does not exist . . . (46)

Anders's observation here convincingly accounts for the circus-like style of Vladmir and Estragon's comic initiatives, but it does not explain the effects of their awareness of themselves as ontological beings. For all of their canters and pratfalls, for all of the ingenious detours they manufacture along the way, Vladmir and Estragon understand only too well that they vainly continue to make a show because once they stop the world comes back, and once more they are merely men, or Man, with nowhere else to be but here, on this earth. Thus, the duo's inability to sustain their (circus-like) routine becomes integral in forcing them to face their ontological condition without an imitation to hide behind. Contrary to what Anders states, these naked and painful moments make it only too clear that the world does exist, but, as Estragon says at the beginning, there's "Nothing to be done."

In Endgame, the next work in this study, Beckett plays once again with his characters as actors. The reflexive results of this aesthetic interplay are, as in Godot, balanced, or grounded, by the force of ontology. Following the pattern of Godot, Beckett never overtly suggests in Endgame that it is a play-within-a-play, but persistently insinuates a level of

46 Anders, p. 142.
reflexivity. In *Endgame*, as we will see, the terms of this interplay become darker, something of a last rite in the ritual of waiting.
Ontology and the Mise en Abyme: 'Endgame' Plays On

*Endgame* reveals a tendency toward lessness in Beckett's dramas. From the relatively spacious country road in *Godot*, *Endgame* takes us inside the claustrophobic "refuge," a space beyond which Being/being is either terminated or approximating termination. Also, after the comparatively elongated two-act structure of *Godot*, *Endgame* is presented in a compressed one-act form — a form that, with the exception of *Happy Days* (1961), will be used in all of Beckett's dramas that follow.

The constrictions of time and space in *Endgame* give the play an intensity not found in *Godot*. Although Hamm and Clov, like Vladimir and Estragon, play games to give themselves the spurious impression that they exist, time no longer permits the extended *lazzi* in which Didi and Gogo indulged; Hamm and Clov are more precise in their playing, digressing with far greater economy, and with a seemingly increased awareness of their predicament. In a 1956 letter to Alan Schneider, Beckett mentions his new "one act," and his comments point towards

1 The concept of approximating while never quite achieving an end is suggested by the term "asymptote." This term was first applied to Beckett's work by Vivian Mercier (see footnote 33 in Introduction above), and has since been used by many others. See, for example, David H. Helsa, *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 218; Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett*, p. 140; Andrew K. Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 23.
some of its differences from *Godot*:

Have at last written another, one act, longish, hour and a quarter I fancy. Rather difficult and elliptic, mostly depending on the power of the text to claw, more inhuman than 'Godot.'(2)

The discussion in this chapter will attempt to locate *Endgame*’s "claw" in the high-stake battle being played on the representational level. Particular attention will be given to the play's reflexive character, analyzing this in terms of the *mise en abyme*. While *Godot*, as was detailed in the last chapter, reflexively brought our attention to "the Board," *Endgame*, in a more tightly structured manner, never allows us to forget it. Constructed as an extended *mise en abyme*, constantly replicating itself in its own image, *Endgame* takes a tougher, jaded, look at the conditions that confronted Vladimir and Estragon, creating a dark, degenerate, sense of decay. It is thus not surprising that Beckett apparently told Roger Blin and Jean Martin, during rehearsals for the original production, "You must realize that Hamm and Clov are Didi and Gogo at a later date, at the end of their lives."(3) It is not so much that Hamm and Clov seem more ancient than Vladimir and Estragon, but that the action seems so. This play appears to have been going on for a long time. Linda Ben-Zvi also points this out, stating that the audience "must assume [it] has been a long battle, one already predetermined

2 As quoted in *Disjecta*, p. 107.

3 Bair, p. 483. Quoted on pp. 25-26 of this study.
from the start but of necessity to be played out."(4)

As Lucien Dallenbach notes in *The Mirror in the Text*, the term *mise en abyme* originates in the work of Andre Gide.(5) Gide perceived in the concept of the *mise en abyme* a possibility for illuminating the subject of a work as a whole by providing it with an inner mirror, or an interior replica. As Gide stated,

> In a work of art, I rather like to find thus transposed, at the level of the characters, the subject of the work itself. Nothing sheds more light on the work or displays the proportions of the whole work more accurately. Thus, in paintings by Memling of Quentin Metzys, a small dark convex mirror reflects, in its turn, the interior of the room in which the action takes place... in literature, there is the scene in which a play is acted in *Hamlet*... None of these examples is absolutely accurate. What would be more accurate... would be a comparison with the device from heraldry that involves putting a second representation of the original shield 'en abyme' within it.(6)

If the *mise en abyme* is to be applied to *Endgame*, a few preliminary questions must first be asked. In the present context, the first question is, what exactly is the relationship between the *mise en abyme* and mimesis? Based on Gide's image of a shield, with an identical miniature shield emblazoned within it, it would seem that the *mise en abyme*

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4 Ben-Zvi, p. 146.


points toward a condition of duplication rather than one of imitation. The abyme on the shield is a reduced image, yes, but otherwise it is identical. Can something that is self-identical be considered mimetic, or is it the nature of self-identification to resist imitation, i.e., exterior reference?

The conclusions reached by Dallenbach on this point are ambiguous, mirroring the mirrors of which he speaks. Trying to determine whether any type of "permanent reflection" or "uninterrupted duplication" can ever really escape from mimesis, Dallenbach presents an enigmatic, and strikingly Beckettian, image in his final remarks:

The problem is, however, to establish whether the rejection of any reflexion has a better chance of breaking with mimesis than the practice of generalized duplication which, for a number of years, has characterized the new nouveau roman. Although we might have reason to doubt this and to agree with Derrida that 'any attempt to reverse mimetologism or to escape from it in one fell swoop by leaping out of it with both feet would only amount to an inevitable and immediate fall back into its system' . . . it is already clear that the future belongs to that 'new type of Narcissus' that haunts Pinget's Fable, a blind Narcissus in search of his own scattered limbs, irredeemably condemned to disintegration.(7)

This eerily ontological image of Pinget's "blind Narcissus," bringing to mind Endgame's chief protagonist, Hamm, perhaps terminates the "generalized duplication" that characterizes the new nouveau roman. Or so Dallenbach indicates. With Endgame, however, we are dealing not with a nouveau roman, but with a stage play, and so, we might reason,

7 Dallenbach, p. 166.
different rules apply. Thus, while Dallenbach's analysis of the *mise en abyme* may be useful when studying *Endgame* as a written text, it may prove misleading when analyzing it as a stage vehicle. This shall be watched for as the discussion unfolds.

Dallenbach divides the *mise en abyme* into three types. First is "simple reflexion," an example of which would be the shield within the shield, "the microcosm and the monad." Next is "infinite reflexion," symbolized "particularly by the reference to mathematics, infinite parallel mirrors . . . [and] the box of Quaker Oats" - on which there is a Quaker holding a box of Quaker Oats on which there is another Quaker holding a box of Quaker Oats, etc. The last type of *mise en abyme* is the "paradoxical reflexion" which creates "an endless spiral." To illustrate this last type, Dallenbach refers to a statement of Jean Wahl's, as quoted by C.E. Magny:

>'One might formulate thus the problem posed by Jaspers's philosophy: what is the philosophical value of the phrase: one cannot philosophize without entering a reality where one cannot say sentences like: one cannot philosophize without entering a reality where one cannot say sentences like, etc.? '(9)

In *Abysmal Games in the Novels of Samuel Beckett* Angela Moorjani discusses Dallenbach's text, and she points out (as

8 Dallenbach, p. 24.

does Dallenbach) that within any particular work there may be instances of all three types of the *mise en abyme*. Moorjani states, however, "it is the infinite reduplication which is Beckett's preferred abysmal game."(10) One of the examples she uses to make this point is Molloy and Moran's "antithetical versions of the same story" in *Molloy*:

The novel's narrator thus sees his reflection broken into two opposing fragments. And then, within each part of *Molloy*, the doubles reduplicate. Just as the unnamed narrator of the preamble is split into two, figuring the schizo-structure of the novel, Molloy in Part I and Moran in Part II narrate in turn their meeting with doubles who then divide before their eyes. The schizo-structure becomes an infinitistic process.(11)

Although I do not contest Moorjani's conclusions here, I do suggest that in *Endgame*, with its halting determination to "end," the third type of *mise en abyme*, paradoxical duplication, is equally prevalent. While infinite reduplication is rampant on many levels in the play, as will be outlined, there is a paradox in that as the play is (perhaps) infinitely replayed, a finality is being achieved. This is ironically suggested in the sour homage paid by Hamm to a stage tradition steeped in the virtues of mimesis. Hamm's "Our revels now are ended," taken from Prospero's speech in *The Tempest*(12), as well as his self-conscious use of

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10 Angela Moorjani, *Abysmal Games in the Novels of Samuel Beckett* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Department of Romance Languages, 1982), p. 22.

11 Moorjani, pp. 40-41.

12 *The Tempest*, Act IV, i.
theatrical devices, such as his final "soliloquy," gestures, albeit scornfully, towards the denouement of a well-made play. On this level, however, Hamm is certainly a pretender, a surrogate tragedian playing a role with baseless pretense.\(^{(13)}\) On a deeper level, though, as the play begins to fragment and erode, a determination appears inevitable. As Hamm is sometimes forced to observe, presumably in the absence of his aesthetic posturing, "something is taking its course."\(^{(14)}\)

Unlike the *mise en abyme* in *Hamlet*, embedded in the middle of the play, in Act III, scene ii, *Endgame* is embedded from the start. The opening stage direction, "Bare interior," while not entirely accurate, suggests a generic environment, one which has not yet been identified as representational. Clov's first action is to inanely climb a ladder and open the curtains which cover two windows on the set's wall. The two curtains covering the windows could well be interpreted as *abymes* for the curtain that divides the stage from the audience, making Clov's actions reflexive, a ritual of the theatre. Thus, with his back to the audience, peering

\[^{(13)}\text{Anthony Easthope states that "Hamm has a double nature, existing both as consciously played role and as real character." Easthope, "Hamm, Clov, and Dramatic Method in Endgame," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969), p. 65.}\]

\[^{(14)}\text{Andrew Kennedy refers to the "law of entropy" in his explanation of the "gradual running down" of people, objects and time in Endgame; Kennedy, Samuel Beckett, p. 53. We may think of the "asymptote" as well, referred to in footnote 1 of this chapter.}\]
backstage, he divisively initiates the performance. His next action is to remove the sheets that cover two ashbins and finally the sheet which covers Hamm. This uncovering also has a reflexive quality. As Hugh Kenner notes, it represents "a removal from symbolic storage of the objects that will be needed during the course of the performance."(15)

Once the scene is uncovered, Clov "turns towards the auditorium" and delivers his opening speech with a "Fixed gaze, tonelessly":

Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. [Pause.] Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. . . . (16)

A number of things are established here. By speaking in direct address to the audience, as Clov appears to here, the naturalistic fourth-wall is immediately punctured. The effect of this threatens any possibility for transparent mimesis, for, by intimating that the stage world does not exist as a representation of an imaginary place, but is rather an aesthetically undefended and undefined space, Clov is able to speak ontologically, as an actor stripped of his character. Unlike Estragon's "Nothing to be done," which was concealed within an aesthetic frame in Godot, Clov's "Finished, it's nearly finished" speaks nakedly. The "toneless" delivery and the "fixed gaze" help to make this clear.

15 Kenner, p. 155.
16 Endgame, p. 93.
Clov's opening speech is, in a sense, a prologue for the final uncovering in the scene, the removal of Hamm's bloodstained handkerchief covering his face. If we had hoped that this anticipated moment might provide us with some insight, our expectation is decidedly thwarted. Hamm is covered not only by his handkerchief, but wears "black glasses" to cover blind eyes. Access to our protagonist's gaze is blocked from the outset.

Hamm presents himself with the studied formality of a tired tragedian. In contrast to Clov's ontological "Finished, it's finished," Hamm leaps straight into the reflexive game, seeming very at home in his aesthetic role:

Me - [he yawns] - to play. [He holds the handkerchief spread out before him.] Old stancher! [He takes off his glasses, wipes his eyes, his face, the glasses, puts them on again, folds the handkerchief and puts it neatly in the breast-pocket of his dressing-gown. He clears his throat, joins the tips of his fingers.] Can there be misery - [he yawns] - loftier than mine? No doubt. Formerly. But now? [Pause.] My father? [Pause.] My mother? [Pause.] My ... dog? [Pause.] Oh I am willing to believe they suffer as much as such creatures can suffer. But does that mean their sufferings equal mine? No doubt. . . .(17)

If Hamm's reflexive playing here represents a mise en abyme, on what level does it operate? Is this simple duplication, (a play within a play), infinite duplication (a never-ending play within a never-ending play), or paradoxical duplication (a play within a play that cannot become a play)? It is perhaps too early to answer this question, as the formal

17 Endgame, p. 93.
character of *Endgame* has not yet been fully realized, but there are indications that the situation, if not paradoxical, is certainly problematic. While Clov's undressing of the set can easily be interpreted as purely reflexive, his ontological protest/plea that it be "finished" ruptures not only the mimetic level, but the reflexive level as well. His wish that it be "finished" is thus not in reference to something outside of the play, but to the conditions of the play itself. Hamm's reflexive ruminations that follow are thus set in a vacuum. Clov's ontological revelation is such that reflexion is undressed and dissolved, making Hamm's opening speech anticlimactic, an escape from the crucial condition presented by Clov.

The interplay between these different levels of representation creates a paradox of a different kind than the paradoxical *mise en abyme* introduced by Dallenbach. Rather than an impossible condition turned in on itself *ad infinitum*, as Dallenbach defined it, *Endgame* creates an impossible situation that is settling down, "taking its course." Instead of turning back on its own statement indefinitely, *Endgame* turns back on itself as it terminates. Death, thus, presumably signifies an end to this condition of perpetually ending.

A possibility that quickly emerges in *Endgame* is that there is no mimesis at all, that the *mise en abyme* has engulfed the play, stranding the characters in a dwindling programmatic
loop. The only respite from this situation, if it can be
called respite, is ontological awareness, as we witnessed in
Clov's opening speech.

In the sequence that follows Hamm's first speech, Hamm
and Clov leave behind their specific references to the theatre,
now speaking as though in "the refuge," as Hamm refers to
their dwelling; but if the refuge is actually meant to
represent a place other than the most immediate one (the
theatre), the distinction is not entirely clear. Both places
appear susceptible to the same laws, as is clear in Hamm and
Clov's discussion regarding the interminability of their
situation:

HAMM: . . . What time is it?
CLOV: The same as usual.
HAMM: [Gestures towards window right.] Have you
looked?
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM: Well?
CLOV: Zero.
HAMM: It'd need to rain.
CLOV: It won't rain.
  [Pause.]
HAMM: Apart from that, how do you feel?
CLOV: I don't complain.
HAMM: You feel normal?
CLOV: [Irritably.] I tell you I don't complain!
HAMM: I feel a little queer. [Pause.] Clov!
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM: Have you not had enough?
CLOV: Yes! [Pause.] Of what?
HAMM: Of this ... this ... thing.
CLOV: I always had. [Pause.] Not you?
HAMM: [Gloomily.] Then there's no reason for it
to change.
CLOV: It may end. [Pause.] All life long the same
questions, the same answers.
HAMM: Get me ready. [CLOV does not move.] Go
and get the sheet... (18)

Clov's assessment that the time is "the same as usual... Zero" seems appropriate for this essentially non-representational space. If this refuge is meant to be understood as an analogue for the generic stage, the only time that really exists is present time. Like Vladimir and Estragon in Godot, Hamm and Clov, to use Robbe-Grillet's words, "have no other quality than to be present." Under such conditions, there is no past or future, only the now: "zero time." As Theodor Adorno puts it, "the temporal is disabled; to say that it no longer existed would be too much of a consolation. It is and is not, like the world for the solipsist, who doubts its existence while conceding it with every word." (19)

Another way of interpreting "zero time" in Endgame is in relation to the chronological interruptions caused by the mise en abyme. Dallenbach notes that the mise en abyme creates a dysfunction within chronology by breaking the sequence of one narrative with the insertion of another, and this phenomenon can be detected in Endgame's "elliptic" progress. As Dallenbach states,

... any 'story within a story' must necessarily challenge the development of the chronology (by being reflexive) while respecting it (by being a segment of the narrative sequence). For it cannot both confirm and conserve its other main

18 Endgame, p. 94.

19 Theodor Adorno, "Towards an Understanding of Endgame," Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'Endgame,' pp. 87-88.
function. Too small to have the same rhythm as the narrative, its only means of rivalling it is by shortening the duration of the story, presenting the content of the whole book in a limited space. (20)

However, in the initial section of *Endgame* that has so far been discussed, the *mise en abyme* has acted with seemingly unchallenged authority. The representational text, thus far, has simply not arrived. The only "text" that has displaced the *mise en abyme* is the ontological one, presented in Clov's opening speech. However, the effect of ontology, offering "unaccommodated man" (although not entirely as King Lear meant it), pushes us even further from the mimetic code: Clov is simply present at that particular moment, representing himself. If there is a representational base in this situation, it is perhaps one that exists only in the viewer's expectation of what the theatrical experience is supposed to be about. Because this base is not provided by the author, there will be, among those intent upon deciphering representations, as many different interpretations of the play as there are people who observe it. When the play was written, and atomic warfare was a real threat, there may have been some merit in perceiving it in this particular historical context. With this no longer a prevailing fear, this particular association is no longer relevant. As Gildas Bourdet puts it,

... today this kind of worldwide catastrophe

20 Dallenbach, p. 60.
seems less imminent, and the postatomical parable of the play has lost some of its relevance. So much the better for the world, and so much the better for the play, which gains in strength and radicality. It is no longer History that it questions but, instead, the soul. The solitude of the characters is no longer a consequence but their ontological condition.

That Beckett intended the play to resist speculation regarding its meaning is suggested in a 1957 letter to Alan Schneider:

> My work is a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended) made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else. If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them. And provide their own aspirin. Hamm as stated, and Clov as stated, together as stated, nec tecum nec sine te, in such a place, and in such a world, that's all I can manage, more than I could.

A discrete *mise en abyme*, of the type referred to by Dallenbach above (as opposed to the generalized one which permeates *Endgame* from the beginning), occurs later in the play, with Hamm's "chronicle," as he calls it. As already mentioned, any 'story within a story' breaks the chronology of the primary narrative, and it is ironic that Hamm should refer to his story as a "chronicle," for the very nature of the *mise en abyme* could be described as anachronicle, i.e., an error in chronology. As we will see, Hamm's chronicle is in itself exceedingly anachronistic, effecting a labyrinth of

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22 As quoted in *Disjecta*, p. 109.

23 There is also Nagg's narrative about the dreadful tailor, which, like Hamm's narrative, ends without ending: the tailor, in three months, cannot complete a pair of pants.
anachronisms.(24) As a productive *mise en abyme* is intended to, the elliptic character of Hamm's chronicle "duplicates" the play rather effectively.

As Ruby Cohn notes, "Hamm's chronicle mirrors his situation."(25) Not only is it a story that, like the play, cannot end, but the narrative reflexively presents its narrator as an autocratic protagonist, like Hamm himself. Also, duplicating the barren environment outside the refuge in the play, the narrative setting is "uninhabited" - except for the suppliant (as well as his son), who comes begging for shelter. Furthermore, the suppliant's son, who is never actually present in the narrative, but referred to only, bears a hinted at resemblance to Clov. Before Hamm begins his narrative, there is a dialogue that plants the seed for this possibility:

Hamm: Do you remember when you came here?
Clov: No. Too small, you told me.
Hamm: Do you remember your father?
Clov: [Wearily.] Same answer. [Pause.] You've asked me these questions millions of times.(26)

Hamm's narrative, the "one you've been telling yourself all your ... days," as Clov refers to it, begins in *medias*

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24 I am thinking here of the numerous conditions Hamm imposes upon his fictional setting: "It was an extra-ordinarily bitter day"; "It was a glorious bright day"; "It was a howling wild day"; "It was an exceedingly dry day." *Endgame*, pp. 117-18.

25 Cohn, *Just Play*, p. 79.

26 *Endgame*, p. 110.
Hamm establishes a "Narrative tone" to begin his story, and the opening diegesis, "The man came crawling towards me, on his belly," is quickly abandoned as Hamm realizes, in one of his many interjections, "No, I've done that bit." Once again assuming his narrative voice, Hamm affects a style strikingly out of place in this desolate domain: "I calmly filled my pipe - the meerschaum, lit it with ... let us say a vesta, drew a few puffs. Aah!" The protagonist is "a busy man." It being "Christmas Eve," he has to attend to "the final touches before the festivities, you know what it is."

Between these embellishments, and Hamm's commentaries on his literary style, there is little in the way of forward-moving action. The suppliant makes a plea for shelter for himself and his son and is left in base servitude as Hamm reflects on his own progress: "I'll soon have finished with this story. [Pause.] Unless I bring in other characters. [Pause.] But where would I find them? [Pause.] Where would I look for them?"(28)

Hamm's chronicle, while duplicating the barren conditions in the play, also includes elements that appear intentionally out of place. The narrator's "meerschaum . . . lit . . . with . . . a vesta" seems anachronistic in precisely the way that

27 As Linda Ben-Zvi notes, this mirrors not only the play itself, but Godot as well. Ben-Zvi, p. 146.

28 Endgame, p. 118.
Pozzo's "Kapp and Peterson" seems out of place in Godot. Like Vladimir and Estragon's references to the "Eiffel Tower," and Lucky's to "Fulham Clapham," Hamm's "meerschaum," as well as Nagg and Nell's references to "the Ardennes" and "the road to Sedan," elicit an outside world that no longer appears to be referentially connected. Thus, instead of producing a nostalgia for the "old style," these places and objects from the existing world are displaced, reduced to insignificant incongruities. Rather than carrying potential as mimetic instruments, they emphasise just how inaccessible the real world has become.(29)

Hamm's cogitation at the end of the narrative carries this a step further. With only an "uninhabited" world outside (in both the play and the chronicle), where indeed could additional characters come from? If the play's action is cut adrift from the human world, it must then, as it does, thrive upon its own internal conditions, constructing itself out of its own materials.

Hamm's narrative presents additional representational dilemmas as well. The primary complexity, of course, resides in the reflexive relationship between Hamm and his narrative protagonist. This relationship, however, represents two quite different things, depending upon whether it is encountered on the page, by a reader, or on the stage, by a member of the

29 As Bert States puts it, "... these names exist unreferentially, as if they had been chosen for their sound alone; they are the interchangable artifacts of a formerly real world, or a real other world." States, Paradox, pp. 36-37.
audience. It is worth, therefore, looking at these two types of reception separately in order to isolate those qualities that are unique to each.

In the dramatic (literary) text, the relationship between Hamm and his protagonist is essentially fluid, one in which the character of Hamm is self-identically reflected in his fictional protagonist, sans distortion. In this case, with little structural interference, the *mise en abyme* achieves an integrated status in the text. This is so, to a great degree, because, in the reception of the play, within the reader's mind, the play's narrative and Hamm's narrative within it are expressed in identical terms: both are literary fictions. While the *mise en abyme* causes a tension in the text's chronology, temporarily halting the main narrative with a discrete, condensed, encapsulation, the effect, ultimately, is one of integration, with the metatext reaching organically into the main text.

On the stage, however, the relationship between the two narratives is not so intrinsically homologous. The chief reason for this is that the stage, existing in the corporeal present, has a very different relationship to story-telling than the literary text. On the stage, real time, or perhaps "zero" time, in the case of *Endgame*, forces our attention to the processes that are actually taking place. A reader, for instance, can finish Clov's entire mime at the play's beginning in a matter of one to two minutes. On the stage it
takes Clov considerably longer. In the first case, the reader, in a sense, has to enact within his mind the role of Clov, whereas on the stage, an actor plays the role. The fiction is thus enacted in two very different ways.

The primary difference in the reception of Hamm's chronicle, is that, for the reader, there is only a minimal incongruity caused by the transition from the text's main action to Hamm's fictional narration. Because the passage of time in the text is experienced in a purely subjective manner by the reader, time being governed by the regulated progress of the word to eye to mind transaction, the textual information is assimilated and organized outside of real time. An audience member in the theatre, on the other hand, will experience Hamm's chronicle as it is intended, as a sudden, and fully-realized, condensation. By virtue of arriving at Hamm's chronicle in real time, in close to forty minutes (as opposed to the approximately twenty minutes it takes in literary time), the effect of the mise en abyme in the theatre is more radical. The stops, starts, hesitations and silences that prepare the ground for the mise en abyme are only tangible when actualized in time and space, and are consequently brought back upon themselves, en abyme, with a force very difficult to duplicate on the page. For the reader, the only access to time-functional movement in three-dimensional space is through the words, but words don't necessarily invoke the stage experience directly, particularly when the words on the page
refer to the periods of time in which words are not spoken on the stage, such as the "pauses" and "silence" which repeatedly punctuate Endgame's text.

The difference between the dramatic text and the performance text is particularly significant in Beckett. Not all playwrights construct plays that virtually need to be seen to be understood, but it might be argued that Beckett's texts are essentially of this kind. One of the distinguishing factors between Endgame and Hamlet, for example, is that the dramatic text of Hamlet is performed in the reader's mind in approximately the same amount of time that the performance text is enacted by the actors on the stage. There is a mimetic relationship between the two as the written text not only represents for us the setting of the play (with very few stage directions), but, more importantly, it adheres closely in time to the events that occur on stage. True, there are often temporal gaps between the scenes, not adhering to Aristotle's prescription that the action "confine itself to a single revolution of the sun,"(30) but these leaps in time must be made by both the reader and the audience. In Endgame, conversely, with the performance text significantly longer than the dramatic one, the strictly mimetic relationship between the two texts is broken. The elliptic rhythm of the performance text, characterized by sudden verbal collisions juxtaposed by extended silences, can only be realized in real time.

30 Aristotle, Poetics, p. 60.
This is not a peripheral issue, for, in fact, it may be said that *Endgame*'s elliptic rhythms represent the "thing itself," the play's bottom line, so to speak. Rather than the words, it is the things between them, the hesitations, the pauses, the halting actions, the long silences, that ultimately define the inconclusive, ontologically pensive, nature of the play. "You ... remain," Hamm says, drawing our attention to the space between what is said.

Thus, the excess time in *Endgame*'s performance text, i.e., the time not temporally "imitated" by the dramatic text, is not preparatory or subordinate time (the time it takes to establish the scene), but, on the contrary, it is prime time, establishing many of the play's crucial conditions. Given the play's construction, however, these moments cannot be defined simply as real time, for they establish both the reflexive conditions in the play, and, at points, more potently, the ontological conditions, which challenge chronological (real) time at root, in the mathematical sense. If we focus on the numerous and extended moments of silence, what is notable is that Clov and Hamm are not simply "present," but, because they are actors, and meant to be understood as such (through the play's reflexivity), their "being there" becomes enacted, resisting and yet participating in the aesthetic fabric of the play. This enacted deenactment makes the characters' stage presence particularly difficult to grasp. It is not, thus, a single gesture, but rather a paradoxical gesture: it
is both a condition of aesthetic abandonment - "I was never there," as Hamm says - and a condition of aesthetic awareness, challenging the pertinency of referentiality from within the referential field of play.

The autonomy achieved by the performance text under these conditions is thus the result not only of extra-time, time not strictly accounted for in the dramatic text, but it is also the result of a-temporality, i.e., time that does not pass - ontological time. As Hamm says, "The end is in the beginning and yet you go on." This concept of time surely dictates that while you "go on" you go nowhere, trapped at each moment in an endless beginning and/or a beginningless end.

With this apparent liberation from the written text, Hamm's reflexive role as a narrative author takes on further significance, empowering him to (appear to) meddle with the shape of the main text as well. Dallenbach refers to reflexivity of this type as the "mise en abyme of the enunciation." This type of reflexivity "bring[s] into focus the agent and the process of production itself." The "feature" of this type of reflexivity, according to Dallenbach (echoing Beckett's statements in "Three Dialogues"), is to "make the invisible visible."(31)

As Dallenbach points out, it is the nature of the literary text to simultaneously "exclude its empirical producer and to

31 Dallenbach, p. 75.
include, in place of this exiled subject, a subject who has no existence beyond the enunciation s/he subtends."(32) This "implicit author," or "productive agency," remains essentially anonymous, for, as an "organizer and reciter of the text, s/he can have no face."

*Mises en abyme* "of the enunciation," however, will challenge the anonymity of the implicit author, by "continually reflecting the adventure of their own generation."(33) While we might think of texts such as *Molloy* or *Malone Dies* as being more representative of this type of *mise en abyme* than *Endgame*, Hamm's chronicle establishes him as an author of a fiction that mirrors the play's fiction, and thus he arguably takes on authorial status. More foundationally, we might, as well, consider the actors in the authorial role, for they more literally make the text their own while on the stage. The tensions between these possibilities emerge forcefully throughout the play, particularly in light of the fact that the characters of Hamm and Clov play continually at being actors themselves, complicating the histrionic modes considerably. As Martin Esslin notes, *Godot* and *Endgame* "lack both characters and plot in the conventional sense because they tackle their subject matter at a level where

32 Dallenbach, p. 76.
33 Dallenbach, p. 77.
neither characters nor plot exist."(34)

While we are certainly talking about appearances here, it is perhaps justified that Hamm and Clov be perceived as appearing to be independent from their incarnations in the dramatic text. As established, the performance text has a significant temporal autonomy from the dramatic text, and, with its pervasively reflexive base, not referring outside of itself for a context, it needs only Hamm's initiative as an author to liberate the stage vehicle from both its empirical author (Beckett) and the outside world. If this is the case, these characters would in effect create themselves, or perhaps be created by the actors. In either event, this type of enunciation is very different than that found in Molloy, as it takes place before our eyes on the stage, making closure a literal rather than a literary dilemma.

In the face of Endgame's pervasive reflexivity, there are two possibilities for mimesis that need to be considered. First, one could argue that, instead of a story within a story, what is presented in Hamm's narrative is a story about the story being told, i.e., a story that represents the story of the play. In this case, rather than the narrative mirroring the play, as a mise en abyme, it would perform as a paradigm, a model, to which the play's action would aspire. This, of course, would not adhere to Dallenbach's definition of the mise

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en abyme as being, strictly speaking, duplicative, and, as well, it would not fulfill Gide's desire (as interpreted by Dallenbach), that the mise en abyme be used for "the reconciliation of . . . vitalism and symbolism, of reality and the ideal, and of life and art."(35) For, even if we argue that, rather than a story within a story, Hamm's chronicle is a story about the story (and therefore mimetic), we are still left in an extremely uncertain position. Because Endgame never establishes a reality base ("vitalism," "reality," "life"), but from the start is involved in games of reflexion, Hamm's chronicle can only reproduce reflections: its subject duplicates the conditions out of which it was produced. To propose a mimetic base for reflection, or, in this case, the reflection of a reflection, would be to defy gravity, placing a foundation atop a fabrication of a fabrication. Surely, it could only collapse. All of the necessary ingredients for a stable mimesis, "vitalism," "reality," and "life" - the factors in Gide's equation - are conspicuously absent.

Another possibility for mimesis in Endgame is to interpret the "refuge" as being imitative of the "zero" that surrounds it. In this situation, the drama in the refuge aspires to match the conditions outside, with the outside representing an ideal form for the inside. This interpretation, of course, negates the possibility that what is being imitated is reality-based, for the uninhabited region outside is surely a fiction.

35 Dallenbach, 33-34.
However, if we accept a fictional referent in the place of a real one, it would, arguably, provide a structural foundation which is mimetic rather than reflexive.

A problem with interpreting the outside space in the play as a referent for the interior space is that it demands that we understand Hamm and Clov to actually be aspiring towards an end. If the uninhabited region outside is an image of the end, i.e., of death, then for it to function as a mimetic base, life in the refuge would have to strive to imitate this, representing the direction that the play actually takes. This, however, appears not to be the case. While the outside (death) encroaches Hamm and Clov's sanctuary, with its more of less, this diminishment is constantly modified by hesitation. In this respect, Hamm's final statement, "You ... remain," presents the ultimate terms of the play. The characters may say they want it all to end, but the final structure of the play insists that they reflect the far more difficult concept of remaining, perhaps indefinitely.
Linda Ben-Zvi describes Krapp's Last Tape as a "transitional play, moving from the stage action of Godot and Endgame to the stasis of Happy Days and Play." While this may be true, Krapp, quite apart from the two previous plays, and the two that follow, is uniquely Beckett's most mimetic stage play. Krapp, in his "den," alone, on his birthday, performing his annual ritual of listening to an old tape, drinking too much booze, and recording a new "retrospect," is very much a citizen of the world. No longer are we on the generic stage of "all mankind," with Didi and Gogo, nor are we on the enunciative stage en abyme, with Hamm and Clov, in dwindling perpetuity. Here, with Krapp, we are on life's stage, with all of its ungainly manifestations. Krapp, in fact, is probably much like someone we know. We may not want to know him, but we do know him. As Ruby Cohn says, "He is as familiar as the California bumper sticker: 'Dirty old men need love too.'" What makes Krapp striking as a stage piece, however, is not the play's mimetic base - the drama of the familiar, "wearish," Krapp - but, rather, it is the way in which this foundation is transformed by the many spatial and temporal incongruities that are brushed against it. The central

1 Ben-Zvi, p. 155.
2 Cohn, Back to Beckett, p. 166.
challenge to Krapp's mimetic structure is provided, of course, by Krapp's mechanically reproduced voice, preserved on tape. Like Hamm's chronicle in Endgame, Krapp's "retrospect," recorded thirty years earlier, functions en abyme, as a mirror. However, rather than duplicating the play's action (as Hamm's chronicle does in Endgame), Krapp's taped voice, in effect, becomes a dialogic partner, an antagonist, defining the older Krapp. The taped voice of Krapp-39, however, is now largely a fiction for Krapp-69, with the result being that the half-remembered images from the past create a surface of fragmented reflections in the present, shards of absence punctuating that which is presented before us. This becomes particularly vivid as Krapp-69 becomes more aggressive in his editing of Krapp-39. The tape, an edited collection of highlights, is edited once again on stage, creating a montage of incomplete pictures and elliptical expressions. Some of these images, specifically the girl in the punt, are sought out, while others, such as the climax at the jetty, are either partially forgotten or rejected, too distant or too tormenting to be fully (re)apprehended. The stage image, at the end, of Krapp "motionless staring before him" is thus one of fractured emptiness. Krapp has become the self-edited man, par excellence.

The editorialized, and hence rather literary, mises en abyme generated by Krapp's retrospects (he is, after all, a man of letters, with a book published), will be outlined later
in this chapter. Before entering into this discussion, however, it is important first to establish the nature of the mimesis achieved in Krapp. This preliminary analysis is particularly important because the play's mimetic base is ambiguously stated, especially in its originally published version. Any attempt to assess the play's other dimensions will depend upon first understanding the play's primary expressive terms.

In the originally published version of Krapp's Last Tape (Faber and Faber, 1959), Krapp, with a "[w]hite face," "[p]urple nose," wearing "too short" trousers, a "sleeveless waistcoat, four capacious pockets," and being "[v]ery near-sighted (but unspectacled)," appears, like Didi, Gogo, Hamm and Clov before him, to be a creature of the stage - yet another character playing the role of an actor or a clown. Krapp's circus-like physical appearance is reinforced by the opening dumbshow, in which Krapp fumbles with a "small bunch of keys," laboriously unlocking one drawer, and then another, until he finally finds what he is looking for: a banana. Taking out the banana, he locks the drawer, "advances to the edge of stage, halts, strokes banana, peels it, drops skin at his feet." After "staring vacuously before him," with the banana in his mouth, Krapp paces, slips on the peel, nearly falling, and "pushes it [the peel], still stooping, with his foot over edge of stage into pit." After unlocking a second drawer, Krapp brings out another banana, relocks the
drawer, peels the banana, "tosses skin into pit," and again stares "vacuously before him." Having "an idea" he puts the banana in his waistcoat pocket, with "the end emerging," and goes backstage as quickly as he can to have a drink and to get the ledger.

In this mime, as printed in the original text, there are many obvious indications of reflexivity. Krapp's stylized appearance, as mentioned, immediately conjures up the image of the circus clown, all exaggeration and excess. The physical comedy in this opening scene is also broadly reminiscent of the circus. Krapp's prolonged effort to unlock the drawers of the table takes from the circus the comedy of physical ineptitude, and Krapp's slipping on the banana peel is pure clowning, and clowning with a reflexive twist as Krapp self-consciously deposits the peels into the theatre's pit. Finally, Krapp's placing of the banana in his waistcoat pocket, with the end protruding, is sexually suggestive in, again, the broad style of the circus.

However, in a revised version of the text, established by Beckett in the light of changes made during many productions, Krapp's costume, the opening mime sequence, as well as many other central elements in the play, are significantly altered, mainly, as explained by Beckett, in an attempt to pare the play down to its essential features, removing all extraneous activity. This revised text, as well as Beckett's Production Notebook for the production of Das
letzte Band (Krapp's Last Tape) at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt, Berlin, directed by Beckett, will now be considered, for these documents reveal not only a decisive change in the direction of the play, but also a great deal about Beckett's interest in the fundamental matters of representation.(3)

In the revised version of Krapp's Last Tape Beckett removed most of the overt references to a performer performing a role. As early as the play's first production in 1958 at the Royal Court Theatre, under the direction of Donald McWhinnie, Krapp's purple nose "was much toned down," and was then "later abandoned by Beckett."(4) In the revised text, Krapp's trousers are no longer too short, the waistcoat no longer has four "capacious" pockets, and though the oversized white boots are still present, Beckett decided against them, favoring "tennis style" shoes in his production at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt.(5) The keys were also rejected in the revised version, and instead of two drawers, there was now just one, thus eliminating the comedy

3 The revised text of Krapp's Last Tape is included in The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Volume III: 'Krapp's Last Tape,' ed. James Knowlson (New York: Grove Press, 1992). This revised acting version of the play is, according to Knowlson, "in the precise form that Beckett finally wanted his text to be performed" (xxvii). The Theatrical Notebooks also includes Beckett's Production Notebook for the Schiller-Theater production.

4 Notebook, xvi.

5 This change is noted in Beckett's Production Notebook for the production at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt. Notebook, p. 193.
contingent upon Krapp's myopic attempts to unlock the two drawers while searching for his bananas.

The banana business was also changed significantly. Krapp's suggestive "stroking" of the banana was dropped, as was the banana protruding rudely from Krapp's pocket. Though Krapp still slips on the peel, he no longer deposits the peels into the pit, now throwing the peels backstage instead. This is a significant revision, as now, with this business eliminated, there are no breaches of the invisible fourth-wall. This, of course, does away with a potent enemy to the process of mimesis, for once the illusory wall is penetrated, the illusion of a separate, private, reality is all but impossible to maintain.

In Beckett's Production Notebook for the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt production many notations further indicate the attention Beckett was now paying to a more mimetically accessible form of presentation. Although there is a general cleansing of extraneous details in the play, designed chiefly to emphasise the work's formal complements, a very significant result of this purification is a reduction of the reflexive elements that were so prevalent in the original text. "Beware of excess stylization," Beckett notes, in regard to the "perplexities" of Krapp's handling of the ledger.(6) This note, however, might be considered as a general one, given the direction the text was taking.

6 Notebook, p. 257.
While it would be too time-consuming to list the many changes made by Beckett in the revised version of the play, those which specifically contribute to reshaping the play's mimetic base (most of which are noted in Beckett's Production Notebook for the Schiller-Theater production), will be identified in order to indicate the shape Beckett was now trying to achieve.

Krapp's watch was eliminated in two productions that followed the 1969 Schiller-Theater production because it was felt to be extraneous. In a French production, directed by Beckett in 1975, the watch was not present,(7) and in the San Quentin Drama Workshop production in Berlin in 1977, again directed by Beckett, the watch was struck once again.(8) In the Schiller-Theater production, however, the watch remained, although used only once, at the play's beginning. In his Production Notebook Beckett includes notations which indicate that in his own mind (as a director, at least) he now perceived the play within a referential frame. Under the heading "Justification" Beckett describes why Krapp consults his watch in the play's opening moment, and the reasoning here is clearly mimetic: "He thinks he knows the time of his birth (let us suppose 23 1/2) and is waiting for the time to

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7 Notebook, p. 15.

come before he starts his birthday ceremony. We might suppose that this ceremony starts with the bananas."

Unlike the clock in *Endgame*, which mocks the concept of the passage of time, Krapp's watch helps to establish existence within time, an essential basis for any mimetic enterprise. Krapp's monitoring of the passage of time, in preparation for the exact moment of his birth - at which time he will allow himself a celebratory banana - clearly places us within a referential frame. In *Endgame*, on the other hand, the clock was an aesthetic toy, like time itself, an instrument to be played (with). When Clov and Hamm compare the ringing of the clock's alarm - Clov pronouncing the end "terrific," while Hamm prefers the middle - it is clear that the clock is no longer significant as a time-keeper. Even though Krapp has great difficulty reading the time (a difficulty played out on many levels throughout the play), his watch is not intended to decontextualize and parody time, as the clock does in *Endgame*. On the contrary, it is meant to assist us in measuring the mimetic process.

It is difficult to imagine any other of Beckett's stage plays warranting referential motivation of the kind provided in Beckett's explanation of Krapp's relationship with this watch (time). This naturalistic type of subtext would certainly present a false note in the earlier plays discussed, and would be inconceivable in application to the plays that

9 *Notebook*, p. 73.
follow. Though both *Godot* and *Endgame* make reference to the outside world, these references, as mentioned in the earlier chapters, are no longer functional as foundational terms. Lacking a context in the earlier plays, the external world signifies only through its absence, its impossibility. Pozzo and Lucky's trip to the market is a case in point. The reason they never make it to the market is simply that the concept of a market has become impossible, an anachronism in this place called "the Board." Like the painkiller, sugar-plums and pap in *Endgame*, there are no more markets in *Godot*. There is only the here, now. In *Krapp*, on the other hand, these referential points must be considered, at least in part, at face value, as primary to the play's specificity. The pathos that is crucial to *Krapp* can only be achieved if a mimetic link with the past remains intact. Without a reality-base, Krapp's remembrances, the vital matter in the play, lose their dramatic potency.

Another citation in Beckett's Production Notebook that demonstrates the play's mimetic base is presented in reference to the play's opening tableau, the still moment before Krapp "shudders" and then looks at his watch. This still moment, with Krapp "sitting at the table, facing front," is explained in The Notebook as being motivated in the same referential way that Krapp's myopic inspection of his watch was, i.e., by a specific reference to the past. During this "stillness" Krapp is, according to the Notebook, "trying to remember
about lake girl. What year, how old . . . "(10) While the audience would not, of course, be aware of what is going on in Krapp's head, it is consistent with the shape that was now evolving that this moment be mimetic rather than reflexive. In order that the pathos in the play function, the world of the "lake girl" must be established as real, even if only for a fleeting instant. Unlike "the road to Sedan" in *Endgame*, and the road to the market in *Godot*, both of which are gone, the eyes of the "lake girl" must be accessible, causing Krapp to react like a man in the world.

Another mimetic "justification" made by Beckett in the Production Notebook is pointed to, literally, by the previously mentioned note regarding Krapp and his watch. On the verso sheet, directly opposite the note about Krapp awaiting his birthday celebration, is an arrow pointing to a note about the "Wine-house" that Krapp frequents (or did, in the past) as a part of his birthday ritual: "The fire in the Wine-House fireplace leads one to believe that he must have been born in winter. Consequences for Krapp's costume? If waistcoat only is kept he could act as though he found it chilly."(11) The possibility that Krapp would act as though he were "chilly" because the reference to the fire at the Wine-house implies

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10 *Notebook*, p. 212. This mimetic justification is suggested earlier in the *Notebook* as well: "At curtain up he is thinking of the story of the boat and trying to remember which year it was (how old he was). Doesn't succeed. Tries again during banana 1." (p. 49)

11 *Notebook*, p. 72.
that his birthday occurs in the winter is unusually causal as a Beckettian connector. The effect of this, once again, grounds Krapp in the unexpected - unexpected in Beckett, that is - world of everyday events.

With the clowning minimized, and the fourth-wall no longer being breached by the banana peels, the scene presented in Krapp is now an essentially private one, a scene which we, unannounced and uninvited, peer into, as voyeurs. Unlike the previous plays, which depended upon a conscious pact between the author, the actor, and the audience, that all parties openly acknowledge the presence of one another as a part of the event, Krapp now, in its revised version, depends upon a denial of this open communication. Krapp's only rapport is with himself. For him, there is no audience, nor is there an actor, there is just himself, Krapp, blindly present.

The revised Krapp suggests two essentially disparate possibilities in relation to Krapp's identity as a stage being. On the one hand, Krapp may now be perceived more purely as an ontological being. Free from the reflexive tension caused by his earlier persona as a clown, and no longer possessing a consciousness which transcends the fourth-wall, Krapp is now more simply himself, unreflective in his acceptance of the base condition that his name implies. On the other hand, unlike Vladimir, Estragon, Hamm and Clov, Krapp's mode of "being there" is characterized by an obliviousness in regard to its (his) presence. In this respect, Krapp acts much like a
character in a naturalistic drama. Instead of challenging the imaginary fourth-wall, Krapp is content to revel in the safety of his secluded sanctuary, unmotivated by, and unconscious of, his theatrical assignment. While the characters in the previous plays were keenly aware of the gaping "Nothing," and busied themselves devising aesthetic strategies to avoid its grip, Krapp does not share this awareness. Krapp's consciousness of Being, which was minimal in the original text, is now consumed by a seemingly comprehensive narcissism. Only the hint of death, lurking in the darkness, disturbs him from himself.(12)

A question that must be asked of Krapp is, assuming the play's base is mimetic, how much of the play is actually concerned with representation? Does the representational base anchor the entire work, or, is this foundation a pretext for a journey into a different type of space, a space created most specifically by Krapp's extended role as a listener to his own recorded voice?

In the Production Notebook Beckett states that the play is "composed of 2 fairly equal parts - listening and non-listening." Listening is equated with "Immobility" and non-

12 In the Schiller production Krapp twice looks over his shoulder into the darkness. Beckett referred to this look as a "Hain", "following the eighteenth century German writer, Matthias Claudius, for whom it is a figure of death." Workbook, p. 38.
listening with "Movement." (13) It does not appear accidental that Beckett designates the immobility of listening as the primary term, and the movement of non-listening as its complement, its formal partner. By endowing the passive act of listening as the positive term in this equation, its complement - the action of non-listening - becomes subordinate. Movement becomes the negative aspect, the "non" of attentive immobility.

The primary status that Beckett ascribes to the act of listening is appropriate for Krapp's Last Tape as it is this unusually passive activity that truly establishes Krapp as a significant and unique play. The "non-listening" Krapp, befuddled by his myopia and drunkeness, could easily be dismissed as a failed creation, a too-recognizable creature failing at his failures. The "listening" Krapp, however, takes us deeply into a fragile and nebulous level of representation that is quite new in Beckett's stage work.

In order to identify the representational properties associated with the "listening" Krapp, Roman Ingarden's The Literary Work of Art will be consulted, with particular attention to be given to Ingarden's analysis of the various types of representational and imaginational objects which occur in the literary text. Although Ingarden's text is primarily intended for analysis of literary texts, it may be that Krapp, with its extended passages of recorded speech

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13 Notebook, p. 201.
(langue), can profitably be examined in this particularly literary light.

The subtitle of Ingarden's text, *An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature*, gives notice that ontology will be a part of the discussion, and, as David Michael Levin points out in the text's Forward, ontology might well be considered a formative pillar for Ingarden's theory. As Levin states, "When Ingarden originates his inquiry with the leading question, 'What is the literary work of art?,' what he has in mind, then, is, first, a descriptive analysis of the mode of being (the ontological status) peculiar to the literary work as such." (14) While each work has its own particular "mode of being," Ingarden's main argument involves identifying the "invariant" characteristics shared by all literary works of art. The essential quality which is common to all literary works of art, according to Ingarden, is constituted in each work's "heterogeneous strata," which invariantly forms an "organic structure whose uniformity is grounded precisely in the unique character of the individual strata." (15) These strata are described as follows: (1) the stratum of word sounds and phonetic formations; (2) the stratum of meaning units of


15 Ingarden, p. 29.
various orders; (3) the stratum of manifold "schematized" aspects, and lastly; (4) the stratum of "represented objectivities."

While I do not propose to follow Ingarden's argument through all of its manifestations, as my focus will be primarily on the last stratum, "represented objectivities," it is worth briefly considering the tenets of Ingarden's broad argument in order to identify the general relevance of his text in relation to the works of Beckett.

Ingarden's analysis of literary art is primarily eidetic. Rather than focusing on what a work is about, Ingarden focuses more precisely on what the work is. This, in a sense, recalls Beckett's early statement in regard to Joyce: "His [Joyce's] writing is not about something; it is that something itself."(16) Ingarden rejects the Formalist doctrine that literature is fundamentally nothing more than a "manifold of graphic signs."(17) His disdain of the Formalist analysis of literature is primarily a response to the narrow range of its focus. As Ingarden puts it, the Formalist approach reduces the literary work to "nothing other than certain 'expressions' provided with meaning, that is, phonetic sounds, words, expressions, sentences, and complexes of sentences that mean

16 Disjecta, 27. Quoted above in the Introduction, p. 3.

17 This is stated by George Grabowicz in his Introduction to Ingarden, lvi.
something." (18) Ingarden's innovation is to add to the
Formalist construct, in which the literary author is merely a
manipulator of language, the stratum of schematized aspects
and represented objects, thus endowing the literary work with
a "represented world," which is absent in the Formalist
concept. (19)

As well, Ingarden dismisses "psychologistic conceptions"
of the literary work. Literary psychologism is defined by
Ingarden as the approach to literature that determines the
meaning of a work solely on the basis of the experiences of
the author and/or the reader. A literary work, in the first
case, presents an act of the author's mental life, one in which
the work may be understood as representing the writer's life
at a certain point in time. (20) The essential work in this
case is in the author's consciousness, consisting of his or her
ideas. The verso side to the psychologistic approach, its
"second life," is the claim that the experience of the text is
solely in the reader's mind. In this case, aside from the
"perceived characters [in the text] . . . everything that would
be directly accessible to us . . . would be only our thoughts,
or possibly, emotional states." It would make no sense,
ingarden asserts, to identify the "concrete psychic contents"

18 Ingarden, lxv.

19 The distinction between Ingarden's theory of the
literary work and that of the Russian Formalists is noted
by Grabowicz in the Introduction to Ingarden, lxv.

20 Ingarden, p. 12.
experienced by the reader with the "already long-gone experiences of the author" and, thus, "the work is either not directly comprehensible, or else it is identical with our experiences," neither of which constitutes a satisfactory reading. (21)

In his quest to reveal the text's "phenomenal visibility," Ingarden thus rejects the identification of the work with either the author or the reader. The essence of the work, conversely, must be sought in the work itself. We may remember that Beckett himself made claims of a similar nature in his letter to Alan Schneider, stating that Endgame exists in its own right, transcendent to his own authorship: "Hamm as stated, and Clov as stated, together as stated, nec tecum nec sine te . . .." (22) Eugene Falk sums up Ingarden's enterprise in concise and penetrating terms by emphasising that the literary work must above all be considered in its two vital aspects: first, as a uniquely pre-aesthetic (ontological) entity, and, secondly, as it is realized in its individual interpretations (concretizations):

We have seen throughout these explorations that the thrust of Ingarden's argument has been to determine the identity of the literary work as an object that exists in its own existential sphere, distinct from that of ideal objects, real objects, and particularly of mental experiences. He has shown that what constitutes the identity of the literary work is its schematic structure, which cannot be equated with any of its inevitably

22 Disjecta, p. 109.
varied concretizations that occur in different readings even by the same reader. (23)

There is, thus, one text, constituted by its "schematic" structure, but there are as many concretizations of the text as there are those who have read it.

Ingarden initiates his discussion of "represented objects," the area of chief concern in this study, by pointing out that represented objects are the "best known" of all the strata, as they are the "first thing that comes to his [the reader's] attention in a simple reading of the work." (24) In Ingarden's analysis, represented objects refer not only to things and persons, but also to "all possible occurrences, states, acts performed by persons, etc."

Ingarden asserts that regardless of whether a literary work presents only one object, or many, the object is "always represented as something existing in an extensive objective whole." (25) He uses the example of Lessing's Emilia Galotti to illustrate this by noting that when we discover the prince in his study perusing petitions, the petitions refer us to a world beyond the walls. The representation thus exceeds the immediately visible space, extending "into the other rooms of


24 Ingarden, p. 217.

25 Ingarden, p. 218.
the palace, into the town, etc."

(26)

The assumption that space is by its nature continuous

is, of course, repeatedly challenged by Beckett. In all the
plays discussed thus far the darkness beyond the "playing"
area is fraught with uncertainty, offering little surety of
continuity. That which is dark may represent death, ontology
in its most residual form, but even death is too specific for
this realm undefined within representation.

Krapp is most ambiguously stated in this respect. We
might assume that because the play's base is more mimetic
than either Godot's or Endgame's, the represented space will
more naturally extend beyond the immediate scene,
uninterrupted by reflexive obstacles or ontological holes.
This, however, is not necessarily the case. Though Beckett
did revise the text to make Krapp more accessible in the so-
called everyday world, his concurrent revisions, which
emphasised formal complements in the play's design, have the
effect of displacing the authority of this foundation. Thus
Krapp-39's reference to the darkness - "I love to get up and
move about in it, then back here to ... (hesitates) ... me" -
presents the possibility that when Krapp leaves the light he is
leaving the parameters of representation, momentarily entering
into uncharted space. The surrounding darkness, anticipating
the blackness which embraces later works such as Not I and
Rockaby, offers little hope of extended representation or

26 Ingarden, pp. 218-19.
continuity, but, on the contrary, conjures up the ontological, forbiddingly unformed.

The effect of discontinuous space is radical in *Krapp*. Without a reflexive base to mirror the stage space in the theatre, *Krapp* must rely on its mimetic base in order to project its messages outside of the immediate pool of light. However, in view of the formal patterning that Beckett has built into the play, the representational field now acquires an unusual self-sufficiency, composed of internal complements that resist reference to the external elements in the world beyond. Rather than offering us assistance in our passage into the world, the darkness that Krapp loves to "get up and move about in" provocatively deters our mimetic projections, causing us to question the constituency of this unknowable substance. Once out of the light Krapp appears to belong to an entirely different realm, one which is perhaps not yet formed, existing in the borderlines of the imagination, not yet realized - potential space, perhaps.

Ingarden distinguishes between two primary types of representational objects: real objects and ideal objects. Ingarden defines these two types by using an example of a mathematician who, as a character in a novel, is represented as working with certain "mathematical objects." Ingarden defines the world of the mathematician as real, or, "quasi-real," and the world of the mathematician's objects as
"ideal."(27) Though both are objects, each has a different horizon, defining a different time-line in the literary work. Real objects "originate at some point in time, exist for a certain time, possibly change in the course of their existence, and finally cease to exist." Ideal objects, on the other hand, are timeless, and consequently "not subject to change."

Ingarden, however, concedes that thus far it is "not clear what the basis of their immutability is."(28)

We may thus ask, as Ingarden himself does, whether a "determinate" literary work, in our case *Krapp's Last Tape*, is ideal or real? Because *Krapp* was written at a specific time, and has since undergone significant changes, it seems certain that it must be considered a real object - subject, as it is, to changes with time. However, the play is made up of a "determinately ordered manifold of sentences," and, as Ingarden notes, "... a sentence is nothing real; as is frequently observed, it is supposed to be a specific ideal sense (*Sinn*) constructed out of a manifold of ideal meanings (*Bedeutungen*)."(29)

While there may be no absolute determination of these values in the literary text, it is surely problematized even further in the performance text, which transforms the idealized inscriptions of *langue* into the time-functional,

27 Ingarden, p. 219.
28 Ingarden, p. 10.
29 Ingarden, p. 11.
concrete parole produced on the stage, thus turning the ideal into the real. While this dilemma may not be the cause of a representational crisis in most dramatic texts, as they are written with an underlying directive that the written words are ultimately meant to be spoken, this application is defied in Krapp through the "ideal" text represented in Krapp's tape.

Like a literary text, the taped voice functions as an ideal object (langue), produced in the past for our examination in the present, rather than actually occurring in the present—as speech (parole) does. Beckett creates a number of ingenious tensions between these two modes, particularly when the taped voice, concretized beyond time, parallels the activities of Krapp-69, present, on the stage. These moments produce what might be called a madeleine effect, a sudden and unexpected confluence of time out of time, a temporal "deflagration" of the kind referred to by Beckett in his monograph on Proust:

. . . when the object is perceived as particular and unique and not merely the member of a family, when it appears independent of any general notion and detached from the sanity of a cause, isolated and inexplicable in the light of ignorance, then

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30 Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 20. Here Hawkes refers to the difference between language and speech by citing an analogy made by Saussure, who centralized the difference between langue and parole: "Saussure's own analogy is the distinction between the abstract set of rules and conventions called 'chess' [langue] and the actual concrete games of chess played by people in the real world [parole]."
and then only may it be a source of enchantment. (31)

The collision between the two texts has precisely the effect of turning an ordinary occurrence into something "inexplicable" by liberating that which is represented from representation. Once an image/object is released from time, as the images on the tape are, they lose their power to represent the present. However, by virtue of this loss, they make themselves available for a deeper, though less stable, presentment, the unique representation that Beckett associates with the involuntary memory aspired to in *Proust*. These moments "represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual," for in these fleeting instances "the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being . . . that is, the free play of every faculty."(32) In Krapp's appetite for ritual and repetition, we witness the constant abutment of these two modes, the real and the ideal, creating a rare, perhaps Proustian, mode of ontological decontextualization. In the play, language and speech (the ideal and the real) meet most dramatically in the instances when Krapp-39 remembers the "eyes" of the various women in his past. At these points it appears that Beckett is clearly attempting to conjoin the ideal and real modes, achieving particular success when Krapp-39 refers back to a prior retrospect, made ten or twelve years

31 *Proust*, p. 11.
32 *Proust*, pp. 8-9.
previously:

Just been listening to an old year, passages at random. I did not check in the book, but it must be at least ten or twelve years ago. At that time I think I was still living on and off with Bianca in Kedar Street. Well out of that, Jesus yes! Hopeless business. [Pause.] Not much about her, apart from a tribute to her eyes. Very warm. I suddenly saw them again. [Pause.] Incomparable! [Pause.] Ah well ....(33)

As was true in Waiting for Godot and Endgame, a great deal of vital information is expressed in the pauses and silences in Krapp. Although these spaces leave a particularly wide opening for the types of concretizations that might occur in our imagination, it might well be considered that with the prompting of Krapp-39, who "suddenly" sees Bianca's eyes again, Krapp-69 is prompted to do the same, and we ourselves the same again. The image is thus transferred from the ideal to the quasi-real (the fiction represented on stage), and then finally to the ontological, on which level her eyes meet our eyes as well. Again, as in Endgame, we find that the vital transference of this information is achieved during silence. It's as though the silence permits our imagination to transgress freely between these representational realms and concretize the image in a mode which transcends both the real and the ideal. The experience, thus, is not of Bianca's eyes being recalled, but of eyes suddenly estranged from a context, a set of eyes mysteriously detached from their owner, like Mouth's mouth in Not I.

33 Krapp's Last Tape, p. 218.
Ingarden continues his investigation by differentiating between "represented" space and "imaginational" space. Here he uses the example of a text which represents the city of Munich to point out that the represented space of Munich could never become a truly real space because the two "are entirely separate kinds of space, between which there is no spatial crossing."(34) It might be considered, of course, that the theatre would be the ideal space in which to represent this real space, given that the theatre, like the city of Munich, exists in time and space.

Imaginational space is presented by Ingarden as far more primary than represented (or representational) space. Imaginational space is not created by external references, but is in itself a "nebulous medium - usually unnoticed by the person imagining."(35) This medium, like the data which appear in it, is intuitively based and is thus constructed by images which are uniquely imaginative, not to be confused with objects found in representational space. While it is considered by Ingarden to be a space, i.e., spatial, it is different from the "structure of perceptively seen space." As Ingarden puts it, "it creates 'space,' so to speak, for the imaginational data."(36)

It might be ventured that ultimately it is imaginational

34 Ingarden, pp. 224-25.
35 Ingarden, p. 226.
36 Ingarden, p. 226.
space that best describes the space created by Beckett in *Krapp*. While there is a representational base, it is, as has been outlined, a representational space subjected to a high degree of formal patterning, thus causing us to become involved in the delicacies of the play's many repetitions and formal balances. The darkness that surrounds Krapp is most evocative of imaginational space, creating, in a sense, space out of itself, allowing us to wander in its "nebulous" matter as Krapp loves to do himself. This kind of intuitive space frees us from the constraints of representation and, as well, it frees us from the self-conscious demands of reflexivity. In his Production Notebook for the Schiller-Theatre production Beckett notes several moments where Krapp "dreams,"(37) and though his dreams may be directed toward the "lake girl," our dreams, peering within the pool of darkness, are far greater, kaleidoscoping through imaginational space as if in a dream as well.

37 See, for example, *Notebook*, p. 113.
CHAPTER FOUR

**Play On**

*Play* represents a bold distillation of many of Beckett's explorations as a playwright to date; of the plays studied thus far, it is at once the most reflexive and the most ontological. While *Play* aggressively engages itself in its own terms of production, reflexively stressing that we are witnessing a process of enactment, it simultaneously abandons its self-referential constructions, piercing the mirror as it dissolves into ontological purity. That these two modes might co-exist, presenting themselves in the same instant, defies the logic of our investigation thus far (which has polarized these two terms), but it must be considered that here, in *Play*, these two opposites - the reflexive and the ontological - are reconciled, coupled as inter-dependent forces. The difficulty in explicating this merger is that once one side of the equation is identified, it is made untenable by the other, forcing us to concede that any conclusions must accommodate a deep internal paradox. During the course of this chapter, as we encounter this problem, perhaps a determinate shape will emerge, a configuration that will contain these competing forces.

As the title suggests, *Play* is about the medium in which it is presented. As W. B. Worthen puts it,

*Play* inscribes the actors' bodies in the performance, but not in the 'drama' of M, W1, and W2, articulating an 'oscillation' between 'character' and actor, dramatic play and theatrical playing,
that is, in a sense, what Play is all about."(1)

While the previous plays clearly share with Play a preoccupation with their primary expressive terms, Play dispenses with any attempt to mask this enterprise with a pretense of verisimilitude or causality. The mechanism of representation in Play is anatomized before our eyes, sabotaging any potential the play may have as a mimetic vehicle. If, as Beckett stated, Endgame is "more inhuman than Godot"(2), Play, then, intensifies this inhumanity, presenting a spectacle in which the expressive foundation is mechanically disassembled and disfigured from the outset. The capricious Light that initiates and organizes speech dictates that this story will be told by not being told, or, at the very least, that it will be told in so fragmented a fashion that the narrative, a banal tale of a love affair gone bad, will be discounted as a deformed plaything.

As in Godot, Beckett devises in Play a structure based on repetition, but here, in Play, the repetition is fully articulated: the text is to be repeated twice in full with the opening chorus repeated a third time, thus presenting, most literally, the possibility of endless repetition. Unlike Godot, which is merely punctuated by recurring phrases and tableaux, Play, at each moment, is a reenactment of a


2 Disjecta, p. 107.
preceding act. It is itself, but only insofar as it duplicates that which came before and that which is yet to come, prompted by the never-tiring light, ad infinitum.

What is most ingenious in Play, however, is not the relentless vigilance of the Light, ever intent upon frustrating our desire for completion and continuity, but, rather, it is the subtle and unexpected shift in representational modes that occurs mid-way through the play, at which point the characters drop their tale of domestic betrayal and turn their focus towards their present condition. This shift from recounting the past to accounting (for) the present offers the most decisive breakthrough into the ontological in Beckett's plays thus far. While the previous works, particularly Waiting for Godot and Endgame, foregrounded ontology (and ontological awareness) in isolated moments, the dominant field of reference in both cases was constructed from reflexive materials, en abyme. In the second part of Play, however, Beckett offers a direct and sustained presentation of the ontological. Though the narrative is not completely abandoned, it shifts from being a referent situated in the past to one which now occurs in the present; thus, instead of distancing us from the enactment on the stage, as the "Narration" did, with its trite tale of adultery, the "Meditation," as Martin Esslin terms
it, (3) focuses our attention on the relationship between the figures and the Light.

This chapter will argue that the two main sections of Play, "the Narration" and "the Meditation," as Esslin defines them, or "the key of Then" and "the key of Now," as Hugh Kenner describes them, (4) demonstrate, with a new intensity, Beckett's commitment to the ontological. Although the first section, with its disconnected accounts of the past, takes the mise en abyme to a new height (particularly as the inquisitorial spotlight, cast as itself, a spotlight, prompts the characters into speech), this reflexivity acts ultimately as an usher for the more primary business of decontextualization. Thus, the dizzying presentation, a combination of rapid delivery and constant fragmentation, carries us beyond the reflexive labyrinth to a disturbance on a deeper level, a level which threatens the status of speech in its foundational capacity as a signifier. This level of the text will be treated as the ontological.

The second section of the play, "the Meditation," or "the

3 Beckett, after listening to an "experimental" radio taping of Play explained, in Esslin's words, that "the text fell into three parts: Chorus (all the characters speaking simultaneously), Narration (in which the characters talk about the events which led to the catastrophe), and Meditation (in which they reflect on their state of being endlessly suspended in limbo)." Martin Esslin, "Samuel Beckett and the Art of Radio," On Beckett: Essays and Criticism, ed. S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1986), p. 372. A longer version of this article, "Beckett and the Art of Broadcasting," appeared in Encounter (September, 1975), pp. 38-46.

4 Kenner, A Reader's Guide, 156.
key of Now," will be analyzed as a refinement of what is presented in "the Narration." This section, in fact, might be thought of as the phenomenal itself, an ultimate manifestation of ontological presence. The situation presented in this section, nakedly concerned with itself and its (lack of) meaning, scorches away any trace effects of the representational battle conducted in the play's first section, achieving a horrific liberation that perhaps transcends even the concept of "theatereality," used by Ruby Cohn to describe the "near-convergence" of a play's narrative fiction and the physical reality of the theatre.(5) This ontological primacy, however, must still be considered in theatrical terms, as it, like the first section of the play, is caught in a cycle of repetition. Like "the Narration," "the Meditation" is both a statement and (simultaneously) a restatement, forcing us to consider the ontological deenactment as a reflexive reenactment. Thus, the sheer, decontextualized, present achieved in the play's "Meditation" is still "ghosting" itself, to use Ruby Cohn's metaphor,(6) as it is carried through repetition. This contradiction, as suggested at the beginning of the chapter, is a condition that must be accommodated when dealing with Play.

In Unwording the World Carla Locatelli argues that

5 Cohn's term "theatereality" was presented in the Introduction to this thesis, p. 19.

Beckett holds an important position in relation to modern philosophy. Beckett himself rejected any affinity with philosophy, stating in a 1961 interview with Gabriel D'Aubarède that philosophy speaks an entirely different language than the one spoken by him:

I: Have contemporary philosophers had any influence on your thought?  
B: I never read philosophers.  
I: Why not?  
B: I never understand anything they write.  
I: All the same, people have wondered if the existentialists' problem of being may afford a key to your works.  
B: There's no key or problem. I wouldn't have had any reason to write my novels if I could have expressed their subject in philosophic terms.(7)

Locatelli, however, considers that Beckett, by rejecting any "systematic" philosophy, in fact aligns himself with, and perhaps even anticipates, the philosophy which is currently prominent. By insisting upon a distance from "traditional" philosophy, Beckett has become, according to Locatelli, a model practitioner of the new philosophy, a philosophy that shares with Beckett misgivings about systematic procedures and evaluation. As Locatelli states, "Systems and concepts are extraneous to his work, but the recent conception of philosophy as hermeneutics, leads me to recognize Beckett as

7 The interview with Gabriel D'Aubarède was first published in Nouvelles Littéraires (February 16, 1961). It is translated into English in Graver and Federman, pp. 215-17. Quotation, p. 217.
one of the major contributors to this field of study."(8)

In order to identify the parameters of the representational field in Play, it is worth outlining the philosophical ideas that appear most active in Play. While the philosophy to be discussed more than likely had no direct effect upon Beckett, and in the case of Nietzsche, is not directly associated with Locatelli's argument, it does, nonetheless, provide us with additional tools for this present study.

Gilles Deleuze, a philosopher perhaps of the "new" type that Locatelli has in mind, presents a model for mimesis which has many significant applications in Play. In fact, the substance of Deleuze's discourse is composed of the very elements which appear most vital in Beckett's discourse - a resistance to traditional aesthetics articulated through strategies of representational deviance.

In "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy" Deleuze asks what it means "'to reverse Platonism'?"(9) Although, as Deleuze notes, this is how Nietzsche defined the task of "the philosophy of the future" (a point that will be discussed subsequently in this chapter), Deleuze suggests that the answer may exist in Plato's own work, and particularly in


Plato's treatment of mimesis.

Deleuze interprets the reversal of Platonism in terms of bringing to light the motivation behind Plato's "theory of Ideas." This will involve, above all else, "distinguishing the 'thing' itself from its images, the original from the copy, the model from the simulacrum." (10) This project only becomes clear, according to Deleuze, as we "turn back to the method of division," which Deleuze sees not as a matter of dividing "a genus into species," but rather, more "profoundly," it is a matter of selecting "lineages," distinguishing the "just" pretenders from the "false" ones, distinguishing "the pure from the impure, the authentic from the inauthentic." (11)

Deleuze notes the irony of this procedure in Plato, for once the process of division "gets down to the actual task of selection," division "renounces its task, letting itself be carried along by myth." (12) The exception to this, notes Deleuze, is the Sophist, which "contains no founding myth." In the Sophist the method of division is "employed . . . not in order to evaluate the just pretenders, but, on the contrary, in order to track down the false pretenders as such, in order to define the being (or rather the nonbeing) of the

10 Deleuze, p. 253.
11 Deleuze, p. 254.
12 Deleuze, p. 254.
simulacrum."(13) Because the Sophist himself is the "being of the simulacrum" it may be perceived that Plato here engages that which is most offensive to his system. As Deleuze states,

... it may be that the end of the Sophist contains the most extraordinary adventure of Platonism: as a consequence of searching in the direction of the simulacrum and of leaning over its abyss, Plato discovers, in the flash of an instant, that the simulacrum is not simply a false copy, but that it places in question the very notations of copy and model. The final definition of the Sophist leads us to the point where we can no longer distinguish him from Socrates himself — the ironist working in private by means of brief arguments. Was it not necessary to push irony to that extreme? Was it not Plato himself who pointed out the direction for the reversal of Platonism?(14)

This assertion leads Deleuze to further outline the two types of images within the Platonic system: there are images which are "well-founded," marked by their resemblance to the original, and then there are those "built upon a dissimilarity, implying an essential perversion or deviation."(15) The "reversal" of Platonism — perhaps inscribed from within, as Deleuze suggests — involves the triumph of the "false pretenders," the "simulacra-phantasms," over the "just ... cop[y]-icons" — a triumph which Deleuze perceives as a forsaking of "moral existence in order to enter

13 Deleuze, p. 256.
14 Deleuze, p. 256.
15 Deleuze, p. 256.
into aesthetic existence."(16) This final point follows clearly back to Nietzsche's pronouncement in The Birth of Tragedy that "existence and the world seem justified only as an aesthetic experience,"(17) a point that will be examined later.

The "vertigo" of the simulacrum is, according to Deleuze, a key feature of most modern art. As he says, "Modernity is defined by the power of the simulacrum."(18) Deleuze also notes that it is an essential characteristic of the modern work of art that "several stories . . . be told at once,"(19) and while he himself does not explain this phenomenon in terms of the simulacrum, it may be that the powers of simulation are responsible for this adventure in diversity. In the case of Play, it is worth considering that the different stories being told are not necessarily narrative in nature, but, instead, are stories about the art of storytelling. One of the distinguishing features of the simulacra is that rather than allowing us to enter inside the fiction, we are forced to observe the features of its construction, ever-aware of its artifice. In Play there is little doubt that this is precisely what Beckett intends.

16 Deleuze, p. 257.


18 Deleuze, p. 265.

19 Deleuze, p. 260.
However, the stories being told in *Play* are little more than adventures in representational strategy, laid bare for our observation. What is at stake, in terms of a final destination, is, I believe, quite open-ended. Rather than indicating a hierarchy of any sort, Beckett is simply evolving the various problematic configurations which invariably emerge when the different levels of representation (the different stories) are told at once. This offers one explanation in regard to the interarticulation of the reflexive and the ontological in the play.

In the first section of *Play* the Platonic ideal of pure iconography is reversed with merciless precision. If simulacra are rejected as "degraded" icons by Plato, this type of degradation must be considered endemic to *Play's* identity. From the outset of *Play*, it is clear that the underlying system of representation has forfeited any claim to essentialism or originality, articulating itself only in a dizzying vortex of derivative fragments caught in repetition. The inferior status of these simulacra, however, is not simply a matter of their being copies of a copy, part of a never ending chain of replication, but, more specifically, as Deleuze points out, once an image becomes twice removed from its original, it loses contact with its source, becoming "an image without resemblance."(20) It is this type of imagery that we are confronted with in *Play*.

20 Deleuze, p. 257.
When we encounter the three characters in *Play*, W1, W2 and M, encased in "three identical grey urns," with faces "so lost to age and aspect as to seem almost part of urns," we experience an uncompromising image of representational degradation, images "so lost to age" that they no longer resemble that which they are meant to represent. We musn't be confused into thinking that it is the human condition that is being exposed here, for this does not appear to be part of Beckett's artistic agenda. Clearly, it is the medium that is on trial here, the process of representation, the articulation of meaning in theatrical space. Lost to its own appearance, and desperately attempting to generate meaning from images and sounds no longer connected to their sources, *Play* is doomed to present its narrative without being allowed to participate in its enactment. The narrative itself echoes this condition; it is merely an assemblage of words no longer connected to the occasion of which it speaks, pointlessly and pathetically perpetuating speech that can only become progressively degraded as it moves ever further from its enactment.

Without proper names, the three characters, with their faces "impassive throughout," and their voices "toneless except where an expression is indicated," present character without the benefit of characterization. This loss, however, rather than diminishing the urgency of the image, actually heightens it, forcing us to dwell intently on the stage picture before
us. As Pierre Chabert puts it, "In Beckett immobility becomes a scenic entity: it introduces force and dramatic tension, if only by contrast with the uselessness and insignificance of movements in most plays." (21)

Not only are the characters "lost" in terms of their physical aspect, but their speech, as well, has been stripped of its potency as utterance, spoken as though inscribed long ago, much like the recorded "post-mortems" immortalized on Krapp's recorded "spools." Furthermore, once the narrative is decoded by us, it becomes clear that the narrative is exceedingly trivial, a deliberately conventionalized melodrama. As Anna McMullan puts it, "The narrative . . . appears as an assemblage of clichés, an exposition of language as corpse or tomb . . . rather than an account which revives or relives something that once 'actually' happened." (22) This, McMullan notes, mirrors the state of the three faces, which, set inside the three identical urns, suggest a state of entombment as well.

Beckett's attitude towards the play's narrative is perhaps most clearly revealed in the way he has dictated that it be presented. First, the "Narration" transcends the phonetic/word-sound level only with great difficulty, being interrupted and redirected some thirty-three times by the


Light in the first section, and eighty-five times in the "Meditation," bringing the total number of interruptions to nearly two hundred and fifty once the play is repeated.

Second, Alan Schneider, who directed Play in New York in 1964, relates that "According to Sam's exact instructions, Play was to be played through twice without interruption and at a very fast pace, each time taking no longer than nine minutes."(23) This would entail performing the play at approximately twice that of normal speed, which, according to Ruby Cohn, is about forty minutes.(24) The effect of the constant interruptions and the extreme speed of vocal delivery deters access not only to the narrative sequence, but to the meaning-units of the words themselves.

In the present, if such a mode is conceptually possible in Play, the words are thus freed from signification, functioning more as sound instruments than as bearers of meaning. In this respect, one may think of the text quite literally as a musical score, a presentation of sound and rhythm, rather than an enactment or a reenactment of a particular text.(25)


Although Aristotle considered music to be the most mimetic of the art forms, stating that in "rhythms and melodies we have the most realistic imitations of anger and mildness,"(26) we might consider the musical effect quite differently in *Play*, as a pre-mimetic, perhaps ontological, phenomenon. Rather than imitating something, the verbal score in *Play* is ultimately designed to block access to a referent, forcing us to consider speech in its most naked aspect, as noise which is issued from a mouth.

Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* argues that there is a profound connection between music and tragedy, and the subtitle, *Out of the Spirit of Music*, as well as the Preface's dedication to Richard Wagner, clearly suggest that for Nietzsche the role of music is by no means peripheral in tragic drama. Nietzsche's discussion of tragedy is pertinent to our discussion here, particularly in terms of his avowed agenda to reverse Platonism (mentioned by Deleuze), and, most centrally, the role music might play in this revolt.

The subject of *The Birth of Tragedy*, however, is not mimesis per se, but rather aesthetics, which Nietzsche argues provide us with a justification for our existence - a concept to which Beckett may not have readily prescribed. Nietzsche's discussion, however, presents music as a "phenomenal" force, pre-mimetic in its powers, and this stimulating perspective

offers much to our analysis of Play.

The primary assertion in The Birth of Tragedy is that language, specifically, in this case, ancient lyric poetry, is born of the spirit of music, and that "... lyric poetry is dependent on the spirit of music just as music itself in its absolute sovereignty does not need the image and the concept, but merely endures them as accompaniments." (27) Nietzsche argues here that language can never "adequately render the cosmic symbolism of music" because music "stands in symbolic relation to the primordial contradiction and primordial pain in the heart of the primal unity, and therefore symbolizes a sphere which is beyond and prior to all phenomena."

Language is thus secondary, and can only imitate music because the "symbol of phenomena ... can never by any means disclose the innermost heart of music." (28)

While Beckett's agenda as an artist/philosopher may be more radical than Nietzsche's, particularly as Beckett challenges the supremacy of aesthetics on a foundational level (by problematizing them through reflexivity and ontology), there is, nonetheless, a striking confluence in Nietzsche's celebration of music in The Birth of Tragedy and Beckett's use of language in Play, as both appear motivated by a desire to uncover and "reverse" Platonic mimesis. This


28 Nietzsche, p. 55.
particular affinity is made vivid in the vision Nietzsche has of music, the soul of tragedy, as a "sensation of dissonance." This image nicely conjures up the verbal cacophony we experience in Play, which might well be described as dissonance on the ontological level. As well, Nietzsche treats music as the essential quality of tragic poetry. Rather than having a merely incidental or ornamental function, it represents the essence of the form. This again calls to mind Beckett's procedure.

Music, being a repetition, or a "recast of the world," thus serves as a basis (a cast) for the symbols of language, and it is through this direct, pre-symbolic, medium that we can grasp our existence, or, as Nietzsche states it, it is through the "metaphysics of art" that "existence and the world seem justified."(29) Nietzsche allows that this phenomenon is difficult to grasp, and he appeals to the pre-mimetic status of music for its explanation:

... there is only one direct way to make it [existence] intelligible and grasp it immediately: through the wonderful significance of musical dissonance. Quite generally, only music, placed beside the world, can give us an idea of what is meant by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. The joy aroused by the tragic myth has the same origin as the joyous sensation of dissonance in music.(30)

Nietzsche's treatment of music, and particularly his sense of it being "prior to all phenomena," and experienced by

29 Nietzsche, p. 141.
30 Nietzsche, p. 141.
us as "dissonance," aptly describes our experience of Play. It is helpful to imagine the sound values in Play as "dissonance," for the representational disruption that is caused by the unsettling delivery of the text is experienced in precisely this way. It is tempting to conjecture further that the dissonance projected on the sound level in Play challenges even Nietzsche's aesthetics; rather than giving justification to the world as an aesthetic phenomenon, as Nietzsche would have it, Play, on this level, perhaps gives justification to the world as an ontological phenomenon, one in which the presence of present beings both precedes and challenges all aesthetic forms.

The first section of Play thus carries forth two very different propositions. On the one hand, there is the mise en abyme, generating a complex system of representational simulacra. This activity, which exposes the theatrical mechanism by enacting the play as its own subject, puts into question the very significance of the stage world, hinting that, ultimately, the enactment is empty: not only is the narrative a tabloid cliché, but its reenactment a simulation, literally dead to its original. On the other hand, however, there is the pervasive presence of ontology, felt most forcefully in this first section through the manic, fragmented delivery of the text. Our difficulty in comprehending the words' meanings transforms the spoken text into a sound score, struggling in its capacity as an image
bearer. With all vestiges of mimesis being swept away by the reflexive simulacrum, the only presence is that achieved through sound - pure sound.

The second section of the play, "the Meditation," is actually introduced to us in the play's opening chorus, before the narrative begins. This is particularly fitting for, if the play is to be repeated in full, the opening chorus, we realize afterwards, is an articulation of the end at the beginning, indicating the rather circular logic of the play's repetitions. The meaning of the words in the opening chorus, which all three characters speak simultaneously, is largely lost on the audience, but for the reader, or the exceptional listener in the theatre, the context of the speeches clearly specifies the three characters' awareness of their own predicament as stage creatures without a role through which to justify themselves. As we see in this opening chorus, the characters experience the very condition the actor does, being prompted, as the actor is, by the directives of the stage light, which initiates and terminates speech and visibility:

W1: Yes, strange, darkness best, and the darker the worse, till all dark, then all well, for the time, but it will come, the time will come, the thing is there, you'll see it, get off me, keep off me, all dark, all still, all over, wiped out -

W2: Yes, perhaps, a shade gone, I suppose, some might say, poor thing, a shade gone, just a shade, in the head - [Faint wild laugh.] - just a shade, but I doubt it, I doubt it, not really, I'm all right, still all right, do my best, all I can -

M: Yes, peace, one assumed, all out, all the pain, all
as if ... never been, it will come - [Hiccup.] - pardon, no sense in this, oh I know ... none the less, one assumed, peace ... I mean ... not merely all over, but as if ... never been - (31)

In this meditation, cunningly placed before the narrative, both the past and the present are vitalized. However, as M says, it's as though the past had "never been," suggesting that the present situation is the one with the potential to yield meaning. The focus of this discourse, which becomes clear later, once the narrative section is terminated by a blackout, is based upon the relationship between the Light and the three characters. The key innovation here is that this relationship between the Light and the stage characters provides the basis for the diegesis, making the subject matter a conspicuous examination of the immediate moment, a reflection on the constituent elements of presentation. While this is not a new concern for Beckett, as all of the previous plays have signified their terms of production, Play is Beckett's first work to construct from these spatial determinants a narrative structure.

What is particularly startling about this situation is that here, in a transcendent stroke, the mise en abyme is made harmonious with ontology. While in Godot and Endgame ontological awareness acted as a foil for reflexivity, periodically puncturing the pretenses of the aesthetic field, in Play a perplexing harmony is achieved, a union between

31 Play, pp. 307-08.
the *mise en abyme* and the ontological, each sharing the theatrical space in a most unusual meditation. Take, for example, the following passage in which the characters draw attention to their aesthetic condition, but do so with an awareness which is not contingent upon any fictional or reflexive preconditions. Here, the only contextualization is provided by the immediate space, which in this instance offers no aesthetic refuge:

M: Down, all going down, into the dark, peace is coming, I thought, after all, at last, I was right, after all, thank God, when first this change.
[Spot from M to W2.]
W2: Less confused. Less confusing. At the same time I prefer this to ... the other thing. Definitely. There are endurable moments.
[Spot from W2 to M.]
M: I thought.
[Spot from M to W2.]
W2: When you go out - and I go out. Some day you will tire of me and go out ... for good.
[Spot from W2 to W1.]
W1: Hellish half-light.
[Spot from W1 to M.]
M: Peace, yes, I suppose, a kind of peace, and all that pain as if ... never been.
[Spot from M to W2.]
W2: Give me up, as a bad job. Go away and start poking and pecking at someone else. On the other hand -
[Spot from W2 to W1.]
W1: Get off me! Get off me!(32)

Although we may be compelled to understand certain references to be (at least in part) connected to the past, particularly W2's fear she may be given up "as a bad job" (bringing to mind her former relationship with M), these

ambiguities do not diminish from the primary referent here, the "Hellish half-light" which directs our reflections towards the ontological present.

Unlike Vladimir, Estragon, Hamm, Clov and Krapp, who all await an uncertain destiny, W1, W2, and M appear to have transcended this threshold: Godot has arrived, the last end has come, condemning Play's generic trio to a fatal liberation. The fact that the play's repetition may be performed with variations,(33) in a constant state of diminishment, adds only to the complexities of the representational abyss that exist before the notion of repetition is even considered, whether diminishing or not.

In conclusion, it is fruitful to consider the representational adventures embarked upon in Play in relation to their philosophical import. That Beckett may have rejected the language of philosophy seems appropriate and consistent with his aims as an artist. However, we must recognise that within this rejection lies the direction that philosophy itself has taken, suggesting that an underlying affinity indeed exists.

33 This is noted by Beckett in an afterword to the play in which he states that in the London and Paris productions the light and voices were diminished in the "repeat," suggesting the possibility of an end. Play, p. 320.
CHAPTER FIVE

Not I and Rockaby: Cutting Through the Circles

In Not I (1972) and Rockaby (1981) there is further exploration by Beckett inside the mechanism of representation. Following the pattern established in Play, in which diegesis and mimesis were internally separated, Not I and Rockaby are constructed for the divided self, designed to illuminate the stage persona in its two modes of presentation: the seen and the said. However, in these plays, the separation of the tale from its teller creates a configuration quite different from that encountered previously in Play. Rather than producing an irreconcilable split, in which the enactor and the enacted are incapable of achieving self-identification, as was the case in Play's first section, "the Narration," the two plays studied in this chapter generate, from this division, an integration, a union similar to that found in Play's second section, "the Meditation," yet going beyond it. The resistance of Mouth in Not I and W in Rockaby to participating in the process of enactment turns out, paradoxically, to be the gesture that ensures their presence, for it is the transfiguration of this internal conflict that turns their fictions into fact.

The dissolving of the sayer and the said into one ubiquitous identity has some precedence in Beckett's earlier plays. This interarticulation, neologized by Ruby Cohn as "theatreality," traces back to Godot, Endgame and Krapp,
evolving through these earlier works into a shared self-consciousness with foundational conditions of production. Vladimir's reflexive "This is becoming really insignificant" (ontologically doubled by Estragon's "Not enough"); Hamm's self-consciously rhetorical "We're not beginning to ... to ... mean something?"; and Wl's anxious meditations on the arbitrary Light, "the thing is there, you'll see it, get off me, keep off me," all explore the representational threshold in order that it may be considered the true site of these characters' stage existence. However, it is with Play, provisionally, and Not I, Rockaby, and other later plays, substantially, that, to borrow a Heideggerian term, the "two-fold of presence"(1) - the "presence of present beings" - is fully integrated and put to work in the most pressing of tasks: the dissolution of the borderline between reflexivity and ontology. It is at this interstice, in the intervening space formed at the cusp of this eroding representational boundary, that the core of these works is most potently revealed. In this most climactic setting, all that stands between the character and the immediacy of self-presence vanishes, opening the way for an uninterrupted revelation of the one reference which, despite the characters' resistance, cannot disappear: the actor on the stage.

1 In Heidegger's On the Way to Language, trans. Peter D. Hertz (San Francisco: Harper, 1971) "Being" is defined as "the presence of present beings, the two-fold of the two in virtue of their simple oneness." p. 30.
It may be argued that this advancement in Beckett's craft represents a process of artistic refinement, a final fruition of all that Beckett had been working towards before. While there is certainly merit in describing Beckett's progress in these terms, as a deepening clarity, a perfecting of the paradigm, there is, yet, in these new plays, a marked departure from his previous endeavors, a significant shift in the representational perspective, causing us to look anew at these recent plays' aural and visual patterns, their phenomenal properties. The most striking and significant innovation is that on the representational level Not I and Rockaby incorporate reflexivity as a primary productive agent. Rather than functioning en abyme as an alter(ior) reflection, an integral, but reactive, expression, the reflex(ive) is now situated inside, a part of the initial, and not the secondary, process. Thus, paradoxically, the reflexive has become foundational, synonymous with that which it reflects, erasing the distance between that which reflects and that which is reflected.

The pro-active powers of reflexivity in Not I offer fresh perspectives in the study of the representational field in Beckett's works. Up to this point it has been basic that reflexivity be interpreted as reactive, a process of reflection that needs a preceding referent in order to function. The initial term may be mimetic, as was the case with the true-to-life Krapp, in his den, drinking and reminiscing, or the
preceding term may itself be reflexive, as was the case in "Endgame," in which the subject, rather than imitating the so-called real world, imitated only itself, referring persistently to the immediate spectacle of self-enactment. While the reflexivity in "Endgame" is, in this sense, already foundational, it is too heavily invested in its metatheatrical dialogue to escape its referentiality. The theatre, in this case, doubles as itself, the theatre, leading us constantly back to the strategies of stage existence. (2) Take, for example, Hamm and Clov's reflexive banter as Hamm prepares for his closing speech:

CLOV: [Imploringly.] Let's stop playing.
HAMM: Never! [Pause.] Put me in my coffin.
CLOV: There are no more coffins.
HAMM: Then let it end! [CLOV goes towards ladder.] With a bang! [CLOV gets up on ladder, gets down again, looks for telescope, sees it, picks it up, gets up ladder, raises telescope.] Of darkness! And me? Did anyone ever have pity on me?
CLOV: [Lowering the telescope, turning towards HAMM.] What? [Pause.] Is it me you're referring to?
HAMM: [Angrily.] An aside, ape! Did you never hear an aside before? [Pause.] I'm warming up for my last soliloquy. (3)

In "Not I," on the other hand, it is not the theatre reflexively doubling as the theatre, but, rather, it is Being reflecting itself as Being, a situation at once more basic and

2 Carla Locatelli discusses the "theatrical double" in relation to Antonin Artaud's "The Theatre and its Double" indicating how for Beckett the "dramatic 'double' . . . becomes a significant means for the reproduction of life . . . ." Locatelli, "Unwording the World," p. 113.

3 "Endgame," p. 130.
more far-reaching. Instead of drawing our attention to the formal intricacies of the theatrical moment, *Not I* draws us into a deeper, more profound, contemplation. With the opaque references to the theatre now eliminated, and the metatheatrical discourse which prevailed in the earlier *Godot* and *Endgame* silenced as well, *Not I* is able to pursue its meanings beyond the strictures of the genre. There is no longer a need to reflexively draw our attention to the genre, for the genre is no longer productive in the way it was in the earlier works. Thus, instead of internally examining (and cross-examining) the representational field, *Not I* examines itself, ontologically. Questions regarding form now become secondary to questions regarding identity. No longer preoccupied with stating what is by now the obvious - that these characters are self-consciously created/creating before an audience - the focus in *Not I* and *Rockaby* turns to presenting the "two-fold" of Being. While still maintaining a stage identity, and responding to the stimuli of the theatre, Mouth and W's narratives take them beyond the reflexive circuitry that confined M, W1, and W2 in *Play*. Their stories are based in the world, "she" in a field one early April morning, and W in a chair, looking out a window. Yet the meaning of these images is not transmitted on the mimetic level, but is significant only in relation to that which is on the stage. Rather than taking us outside the stage image, Mouth and W force our focus directly on it, into it. This
is not, however, a reflexive procedure either, at least not in the sense discussed in relation to *Play*. If the characters in *Play* were prisoners of the stage, Mouth and W are liberated, they have imaginational lives, evoking resonant pictures of the world, unlike the disconnected images projected in *Play's* Narration. The immediacy of the stage image in these late plays is, however, dependent upon a visual and verbal separation, causing a field of opposition on a foundational level. Lois Oppenheim points us towards this division and its relationship to Being in very much this way:

In *Not I* . . . it is Mouth's refusal to unite herself with the first-person pronomial expression of individuality as, in *Rockaby*, it is the woman's search 'for another . . .' that maintains the force of the fiction as an ontological, and thereby non-representational parable.(4)

As in *Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Play*’s "Meditation," the foundation in *Not I* demands that we remain attentive to the process of enactment; however, as reflexivity itself gives way, yielding to a final presentment, the (en)actment of Being, the distance between the image and that which it reflects vanishes. This ineluctable situation, saturated in self-presence, dispenses with all coordinates and topography from the real world, while erasing, as well, all of the ghosting

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apparitions of reflexivity. (5) At these moments, the patterns of circularity, spindled forth with ever greater variety from play to play - "the revolving it all" as M in Footfall's "Sequel" puts it - are finally put to rest. The thing itself, the self-presence of Being, shatters the montage of spirals, presenting images in their most elemental form. A crystal instance of this dissolution is captured in the stage image of Mouth, cutting through the labyrinth of reflexivity with visceral determinism. While at times we may want to interpret Mouth as "the metonymy of a character," as Carla Locatelli suggests as one possible reading of the character, (6) the presence of the lips, teeth, gums and saliva captured in the tightly focused light suspend such imaginings, forcing us to first consider the image before us as representing only itself, and precisely so. Mouth's constant attention to the mechanics of her self-articulation certainly prompt us towards this more phenomenological interpretation, particularly as Mouth explicates the "contortions" which we observe as she speaks:

... gradually she felt ... her lips moving ... imagine!... her lips moving!... as of course till then she had not ... and not alone the lips ... the cheeks ... the jaws ... the whole face ... all those - ... what?.. the tongue?.. yes ... the tongue in the mouth ... all those contortions without which ... no speech possible ... and yet in the ordinary way ... not felt at all ... so

5 Ruby Cohn's "Ghosting Through Beckett" comes to mind at this point in the discussion.

6 Locatelli, Unwording the World, p. 130.
intent one is ... on what one is saying ... the whole being ... hanging on its words ...(7)

Here, more than in any of the earlier plays, we sense that the "whole being" truly is "hanging on its words" for, in Mouth's case, the words are all there is to tell.

In the previous chapters, mimesis has been defined in terms of a model and a copy, and reflexivity, we might say, as an inverted copy, i.e., a reflection atop the copy, with the latter (the copy in mimesis, and the inverted copy in reflexivity), claiming the former as its referent, in a causal chain of command. To imagine a resistance to this order, indulging the possibility that an image's reflection might be present even as the image itself is being generated, is to imagine a representational space that offers its presentation and its self-reception in one and the same process. If this is the case, perceiver and perceived are no longer separable, and, as one enacts the other, the boundaries between the two lose all distinction.

The fusion of the perceiver and the perceived creates a relationship which is vastly complex on the representational level. Rather than bringing about an internal split between the subject and the object, the "She" and the "I," the division between these two personae represents not so much a condition of opposition as it represents one of intersubjectivity. Even when Mouth is most insistent in her

7 Not I, p. 379.
rejection of the "I," she is, nonetheless, the "I" at all

times. This is her fate as a self-perceived perceiver. Thus,
rather than presenting a subject/object dichotomy, Not I,
arguably, is all subject, entirely interreferential. However,
if this realm is purely subjective, with the perceived merely
representing the perceptions of the perceiver, what, we may
ask, is the aim of the drama? While on one level we cannot
help but specify it as the reconciliation of the "I" and the
"she," this perhaps represents only the most visible aspect of
the play's subject. For, if we accept that "she" and "I" are
one, despite Mouth's "vehement refusal to relinquish third
person," what consequently concerns us is how this integrated
entity might be employed as a representational force, and,
thus, how we might better understand the aesthetic principles
governing the intersubjective process of perceiving a perceiver
involved in self-perception.

Locatelli analyzes Beckett's works written after 1970 by
noting that repetition is exploited in a way completely
different than in the past, and the concept noted above
(of the perceiver perceiving the self perceiving) may well
be considered in the light of repetition. In Not I, Locatelli
writes, "mimesis of actions no longer regards specific events,
but expresses events as the result of repetition." In this
respect, "In Beckett the theatrical double doubles life to the
extent that it refuses to illustrate it."(8) Drawing parallels

8 Locatelli, pp. 123, 24.
between Not I and Beckett's earlier film, Film, Locatelli sees Not I as representing a "further variation on the theme of Film."(9) Directing us towards Beckett's introductory remarks for Film, and particularly Bishop Berkeley's maxim, "Esse est percipii" (to be is to be perceived), Locatelli notes that, like Film, Not I "develops the same need to define a subject from the point of view of an observer."(10) This "need," Locatelli suggests, is at the centre of Film, as Beckett's introductory remarks reveal:

Esse est percipii.
All extraneous perception suppressed, animal human, divine, self-perception maintains in being.
Search of non-being in flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception.(11)

This introductory statement continues with Beckett declaring that he attaches "No truth value" to the situation here described, entertaining it merely as a "structural and dramatic convenience." It would appear, however, that much more is at stake here than "convenience." Self-perception, and its contiguous relationship to being, represents a dominating concern for all of Beckett's post-Play stage works, and this focus certainly transcends the rather casual, arbitrary sense of "convenience" that Beckett here suggests. While Not I, ultimately, appears to lack the synthesis achieved

9 Locatelli, p. 130.
10 Locatelli, p. 130.
11 Film, p. 323.
in *Film*, which culminates in a full "investment" of the perceiving Eye (E) and the object it pursues (O), *Not I* more than recovers this ground by never leaving the borderline of this perceptual precipice. More so than *Film*, *Not I* is always in acute proximity to the representational edge, dangerously on the brink of ontological revelation.

As noted, Locatelli states that in *Film* and *Not I* Beckett defines his subject "from the point of view of an observer." While this is accurate, it is important that this point of view include the fact that the observer, in both cases, is the self. In *Film*, E, the eye/camera, is, we discover in the final "investment," O, the object of his pursuit. In *Not I*, while we might consider Auditor as an observer, the more satisfying interpretation, it seems to me, is to include Auditor, "she" and "I" all as part of the intersubjective, the selves observing self.

One of the central representational consequences of the intersubjective base in *Not I* is that reflexivity becomes internalized. With no outside from which to direct a reflexive gaze, the self-consciousness in the play must be achieved from within. While it might be argued that the character of Auditor represents an objective presence, a body, literally, for Mouth, it can also be argued that Auditor is merely a subjective manifestation of Mouth, physicalizing, as she cannot, the hopelessness of her discourse. There is no easy interpretation here, and presumably that is exactly what
Beckett intended, leaving open these elemental questions. Moreover, perhaps what is more important than arriving at any definitive conclusion regarding the exact relationship between the dramatic subjects in the play, is simply that we consider that Mouth's quest, rather than aiming towards a decisive resolution of her identity, in the first-person sense, reveals instead, moment to moment, the true, unedited, workings of the internal voice, mental transmission without impediment, the mind made visible. This, perhaps, is the most basic drama being presented.

The pointed, and, at times, rather obvious reflexivity in the earlier plays is now, in *Not I* and *Rockaby*, seamless, invisible. Rather than disturbing the play's surface with self-conscious ruptures, as he had done in his earlier works, Beckett has graduated in these new works beyond representational space, and, in this new, more sophisticated, mode, the internal frictions that characterized his earlier plays have become foundational, accommodated without any formal disfigurement. The outside of the earlier plays is now the realm within, a place from which the characters, as actors, or simply as characters with a special license, examine their aesthetic endeavors, and the causes of the identity within. If reflexivity was achieved in the earlier works through scrutinizing one's own image from the outside, these later works achieve this without venturing outside. The characters in these later works are both themselves and the
one watching themselves simultaneously. They identify themselves, with some difficulty, at times, as the speaker, and provide themselves, more easily, with the concept of an audience as they intersubjectively articulate their own behaviour without necessarily participating in it. In this conundrum, no action escapes reflection.

Play certainly prepares the way for this new space; however, while its "Meditation" leaves behind the boundaries of representational space in much the way that Not I and Rockaby later do, preparing the way, so to speak, the first section of Play is too heavily invested in its intentionally trite narrative to allow the play's second section to escape its parodic tribute to mimesis. Even though the speech in Play is designed to register for the members of the audience primarily as a sound instrument, with only the more diligent able to put the narrative together, there yet remains a residue of representationalism, even if registering only in isolated bits and pieces. The liberation achieved in the Meditation is thus only partial, as the characters' connection to their melodramatic tale of woe conditions all else that takes place.

In Not I, on the other hand, there is no anchor provided to offer referential safety. While there is certainly a narrative, as well as a sense of development - albeit, mostly lateral - the relationship that the narrative shares with its visual presentation, as well as the relationship that it shares with external reality, is exceedingly fragile. In Play there
was a boldness in the assault on mimesis, a sureness that the contrived enactment of the pseudo-conventional narrative would disassemble all to which it referred, and with a vengeance. Not I, however, with Mouth's tale of "she," the "speechless infant" who eventually came to speak in a "steady stream," like Mouth herself, does not engage in this type of self-conscious attack against a set of tired conventions. Mouth, from the outset, transcends the clichés which provide Play with its shape. Mouth's fleeting evocations of "she," her narrative persona, wandering in a field one April morning, and later, sitting on "a little mound in Croker's Acres" one evening, and later still, spilling it all out, all the words, at the "nearest lavatory" in the winter darkness, are at once more original and more difficult to situate referentially than those in Play. Rather than being fragmented into a mechanically manipulated spray of half finished sentences forced on and off by a mindless eye, as in Play, Mouth's "steady stream" issues forth with no external constraint, a verbal projectile threatening the speed of consciousness as it leaps on and off its subject, halting and accelerating to reflect the process of each mental act, and defined only by the ever-active orifice, all teeth and gums and lips, tightly focused by the beam of light.

Mouth's logorrhoea, however, is not merely an out-of-control stream of consciousness. On the contrary, there is a method to this outpouring, an eye to this storm of pelting
words, providing a shape and a sense of order. Housing these narrative fragments is Mouth's prolonged meditation - part inquisition, part confession - focusing on the causes of her (protagonist's) logorrhoea. The purpose of this meditation, which soon becomes clear, is ultimately to identify Mouth as her own true subject. This is complicated only by the mystifying image of Auditor, whose only actions, the "raising of arms from sides and their falling back, in a gesture of helpless compassion" undo the tidy parameters of Mouth's presence.

Each of the plays studied thus far has prepared the way for the situation we encounter in Not I. It is not, however, simply a progression marked by condensation and reduction, saying the same thing, but saying it smaller, i.e., more economically; on the contrary, the new direction that Not I initiates is, as mentioned above, notable for its total integration of the reflexive, and also for the new relationship Beckett creates between dramatic enactment and narrative enactment, presenting a story being told which tells of the speaker but does not demand that the speaker (or listener, as is the case in Rockaby) be mimetically involved. It is for us to bring it together, as we, outside, concretize this unique integration. As Hersh Zeifman says of Rockaby,

The story V narrates is a lullaby turned threnody, its movement a contraction and descent. . . . On the narrative level, V's monologue is divided into four parts, each section describing a progressive diminution, a cascando, a descent into silence and immobility. And this
is precisely what we see and hear dramatized on stage. As the story winds down, so too does the stage picture: narration and theater image coalesce. (12)

Gérard Genette, in *Figures of Literary Discourse*, devotes a chapter to the "Frontiers of Narrative," and in this discussion he examines the ways in which narrative (diegesis) has historically been treated as both a mode of mimesis (direct representation), and, alternately, as a mode antithetical to it. Genette points out that in the *Poetics*, Aristotle perceives the narrative as one of the two modes of mimesis, with direct representation being the other; however, Plato, in the third book of the *Republic*, "denied to narrative the quality (that is to say, for him, the defect) of imitation," but later "took into account aspects of direct representation (dialogues) that can be included in a non-dramatic poem like those of Homer," and, so, he too found a way to accommodate both forms at once. (13)

As Genette points out, Plato distinguished between diegesis and mimesis by identifying diegesis as that which the poet relates "in his own person," without attempting to persuade us that it is someone else speaking, and mimesis, on the other hand, as that which is achieved when an author attempts to make us think that it is not the author but

12 Hersh Zeifman, "'The Core of the Eddy': Rockaby and Dramatic Genre," *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett*, p. 146.

someone else that is speaking. Genette intervenes at this point with an observation that "does not seem to have concerned either Plato or Aristotle, and which will restore to the narrative all its value and all its importance."(14) Genette argues here that direct imitation is not "strictly speaking representative" because characters, rather than representing speech, "repeat it, literally, and if it is fictitious speech, they constitute it, just as literally. In both cases, the work of representation is nil."(15) The narrative, on the other hand, is "the only mode that knows literature as representation," being the "verbal equivalent of non-verbal events."(16) As Genette explains,

Direct imitation, as it functions on the stage, consists of gestures and speech. Insofar as it consists of gestures, it can obviously represent actions, but at this point it escapes from the linguistic plane, which is that in which the specific activity of the poet is practiced. Insofar as it consists of words, discourse spoken by characters . . . it is not strictly speaking representative, since it is confined to reproducing a real or fictitious discourse as such.(17)

This leads Genette to the "unexpected conclusion" that literary representation is not "narrative plus 'speeches': it is narrative and only narrative." As Genette says, "Plato opposed mimesis to diegesis as perfect imitation to an

14 Genette, p. 130.
16 Genette, p. 132.
17 Genette, p. 130.
imperfect imitation; but . . . perfect imitation is no longer an imitation, it is the thing itself, and in the end, the only imitation is an imperfect one. Mimesis is diegesis."(18)

Genette's contention that diegesis is more mimetic than mimesis provides a new way of examining theatre, in general, and Beckett's later plays, most specifically. If in direct representation the spoken word represents only itself (repeated), while in narrative it represents the actions described, we must determine if Beckett, particularly in these late works, is using the narrative, which by Not I has become the dominant mode, as a way to eradicate representationalism, or if he is using it in the way Genette suggests, as a representational tool.

In Not I a story is certainly being told. However, as has been seen, the narrative, which has here eclipsed direct representation almost entirely, has an extremely acute relationship to the "thing itself." In this case, the "thing itself" is neither the literary text which the narrative represents, nor is it the so-called real world in which we live. Here, the thing itself refers more directly to the phenomenal conditions of expression on the stage, suggesting that the narrative has a profound, ontological relationship to that which it speaks of. Thus, is it, as Genette suggests, a representational mode, or has it, in Beckett's hands, crossed the threshold, leaving its

18 Genette, pp. 132-33.
representational powers on the written page?

There is, I think, no absolute solution here. If Genette's suggestions for diegesis seem radical, Beckett's treatment of diegesis is perhaps even more so, stripping it of the very status Genette argued so carefully to demonstrate. This is not to say that Genette's reevaluation of mimesis is antagonistic to what Beckett is attempting, but, rather, that Beckett's interests carry him further. Thus, instead of trying to replace direct representation with a new form of narrative representation, Beckett is attempting to void the space of all representational structures, offering in their place the patterns which emerge in the process of their falling away.

We might consider the mise en abyme in the earlier works as the genesis for this breakthrough in the narrative, for the reflexivity implicit in the mise en abyme is crucial in achieving the form in Not I and Rockaby. In Godot, the parable of the two thieves is perhaps a starting point for this activity. This brief narrative in the opening moments of the play establishes a paradigm for the play itself, suggesting the balance and shape of the entire play. In Endgame this is taken a step further in Hamm's "chronicle," a more fully integrated narrative which, as was pointed out earlier, functions quite obviously as a mise en abyme for the action in the play. In Krapp the narrative form subtly comes to dominate the play as Krapp listens to his own chronicles,
editing as he goes. As in Hamm's narrative, there is a constant friction between the narrated images that we hear and the material images before our eyes. The interactive space established between that which is narrated and that which is enacted is highly visible in the foundations of these two plays. With Play Beckett then takes a further step. Although the first part of Play, "the Narration," describes events with no attempt to enact them, "the Meditation," which follows, transforms the narrative into an ontological enactment: what we hear is what we see, but without a mimetic pretense. The story is inseparable from its expression, it is not "about something; it is that something itself," as Beckett stated of Joyce in "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce." This concept, of course, questions the very nature of both enactment and narrative, and takes us directly to Not I, of which, in this vein, Enoch Brater says,

Beckett creates for his audience a visual and aural stimulus closely approximating the 'matter' of the monologue itself. The 'buzzing' in the ear is in fact the strange buzzing in our ears; the spotlight on Mouth becomes the 'ray or beam' we ourselves see.(19)

Thus, the progress from Waiting for Godot through to Not I might well be described in terms of this gradual, deepening, erosion of representational space, i.e., the progressive deterioration in the distance separating the actor

from the character. This breakdown appears to achieve a perfection of sorts in Not I, in which, as Brater suggests, the distance between what we hear and what we actually see has evaporated. However, what demands our attention now is the narrative form that Beckett devises for Rockaby, for it is chiefly through this narrative, a perilous adventure in representational inversion, that we can observe reflexivity concretized into sheer ontology, breaking itself loose from all referential constraints.

Rockaby takes many of the precepts in Not I and elaborates upon them, achieving with ease and familiarity what Not I accomplished only through frenzied exploration. If Not I represents something of a new day in Beckett's dramaturgy, a bold emancipation from referentiality, Rockaby, as its title suggests, is a piece for the day's end, a quiet and studied resolution for Not I's loud and nervous beginning.

The narrative form in Rockaby dominates the play almost entirely. Except for W's "More," four times prompting V to continue her story, the spoken text is organized as a narrative, telling the story of W, V's visual persona, in a series of four highly repetitive declensions. As in Not I, the self that speaks is divided from the self that is spoken of, but this time the division is not merely grammatical; it is made tangible as V, the "said" self, is recorded on tape. We might imagine that V represents W's internal voice, which is no doubt, in part, true, but the relationship between the two
is not simply that one is inside the other. Rather, once again, there is a sense here of intersubjectivity, with the two aspects of the self engaged in a reciprocal adventure. W's prompting of V to continue, as well as W's joining in with V on the line "time she stopped," repeated six times in unison by V and W, suggests an interdependence between the two: one must be present in order to bring the other into being. They strive in this to complete each other in a unique dramatic embrace. Also, the fact that the rocking chair W sits in is activated by V's voice establishes a situation which is at once meticulously mechanical and outrageously poetic. Mimesis, in any conventional sense, is most conspicuously absent in these occurrences.

**Rockaby** appears to follow **Film** and **Not I** as representing another étude on the "two-fold" relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. While we may not get the picture at first, once V repeats the image for us, varying it slightly in each of the play's four sections, we come to see the simple stage image of W, motionless except for the mechanical movement of the rocking-chair and the opening and closing of her eyes, as the visual complement of V's narrative. What at first appears to be a rather inert portrait is developed into an intricate pattern of sustained activity, destined, ultimately, for stillness as the narrative sequence puts W to rest, perhaps permanently. While W does not literally imitate V's narrative, enough intersubjective
similarity is created between the two that, in the end, one engulfs the other, creating a stirring, dark harmony. The play's last section concretizes the seen and the said in a series of tightly organized images, bringing into present-time what is said by V to be happening at the "close of a long day":

so in the end
close of a long day
went down
in the end went down
down the steep stair
let down the blind and down
right down
into the old rocker
mother rocker
where mother rocked
all the years
all in black
best black
sat and rocked
rocked
till her end came
in the end came
.
.
dead one night
in the rocker
in her best black
head fallen
and the rocker rocking
rocking away ...(20)

Beckett builds in a number of images here, all of which are vividly actualized in a stage picture in which so very little happens. As Jane Alison Hale points out, the repetition of the word "down" in the play "gives verbal shape and force to the internal descent" that in the passage above is recounted. As Hale says,
The woman is descending into the depths of her self, embarking upon the internal voyage in pursuit of that inaccessible essence where the perceiving 'I' and the perceived 'me' would coincide ...(21)

That W should resemble her mother in such detail - dressed in her "best black," "head fallen" in the rocker - adds but another level of intersubjectivity to the play. True, mother is an "other," but, like the many "others" in Beckett's plays, she is so deeply connected to the dramatic subject that to identify her as an outside force, as an object, destroys the interconnected fabric of the image Beckett is striving to create. Also, it should be noted that the image of descension Beckett is working with here - the blinds coming down, W going down the stairs, falling into the rocker, her head fallen - is re-enforced by the fading of the light, which, at each of the four breaks, coincides with the increasing sense of darkness projected in the narrative.

Genette's radical claims about diegesis having greater mimetic powers than mimesis are strongly demonstrated in Rockaby, particularly as the events and the chronology of the narrative are made to coincide with time-present, making real, i.e., material, a story which initially appeared so far removed from the surfaces of the stage. We might, however, hesitate to use the term mimesis here, for, once the narrative has

21 Jane Alison Hale, "Perspective in Rockaby" 'Make Sense Who May': Essays on Samuel Beckett's Later Works, p. 70.
been fully invested in the stage image, the result is far from a mimetic enactment in the conventional sense. What we are presented with, in fact, is much closer to what has been discussed thus far as ontological. The image of W is productive not in terms of a series of events which occurred elsewhere, but, rather, her image becomes productive only once we have directed our focus on the narrative in its relation to the image directly before us. As becomes clear, it is the image before us which can most potently accommodate the narrative. In fact, it is only through the stage image that the narrative finds its proper subject, each being illuminated by the presence of the other in the instant of presentation. All referentiality disappears in this instance as the "two-fold of presence" (the perceiver and the perceived) enfolds itself before us.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis six of Beckett's stage plays have been studied so as to evaluate their representational properties. The underlying argument has been that in each work Beckett has made the representational field a vital part of his subject. What in traditionally mimetic drama is assumed, but undeclared, as an organizing principle, becomes opaque and visceral in Beckett's stage works; instead of burying the systems which generate meaning, Beckett forces this circuitry to the surface, drawing us into the complexity of each image in its foundational context. "We'll go to the Pyrenees," says the hopeful Estragon in Waiting for Godot; however, later, in what is perhaps the most famous stage direction in the twentieth-century, Vladimir and Estragon "do not move." The duo can generate meaning only in relation to their most immediate situation: existence upon the stage.

The chosen plays have been considered here both as written texts and as performance texts, with the later works, Play, Not I and Rockaby, being discussed most particularly as performance pieces. The reason for analyzing these later works specifically as performance texts is that each depends upon the vitality of direct transmission in order to be made sensible. As Lois Oppenheim says, "a 'representational' reading makes Not I and Rockaby appear seemingly irrational or nonsensical,“(1) and for the reader, there can ultimately be

1 Oppenheim, p. 39.
no reading other than a representational one. It is only on the stage, where an exact coincidence of the stage image and the spoken word occurs that the components in these pieces can be properly coordinated.(2) For the reader of these late plays, it is impossible to apprehend the word and the stage image in precise synchronicity, as intended. The word will always precede the image, giving the word precedence in the reader's apprehension. The audience member, on the other hand, experiences these two sensory modes exactly as they occur, simultaneously. The determining mode of these late works is thus apprehendable only in presentation, depending upon the presence of present beings in the present time, i.e., ontology, as the foundation.

The term "representation" has come in this thesis to be principally associated with three different modes: the mimetic, the reflexive and the ontological. Because the relationship between these forms is rarely a simple one in Beckett's corpus, a summary consideration is useful, particularly in reference to the ontological, which problematizes the very concept of representation.

The first term, mimesis, has been defined in this thesis as an externally based mode of representation. The

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2 Enoch Brater states this succinctly in his discussion of Rockaby: "A striking visual metaphor materializes before our very eyes as we watch a poem come to (stage) life. . . . In a word, it has become real. Sound therefore structures sight in Rockaby, just as sight structures sound." Beyond Minimalism, p. 169.
base, or model, for the mimetic copy may be real, i.e., an event that actually took place, or it may be wholly fictional, an imaginative construction of the author — and subsequently of the reader or the audience member. The fact or fiction that is imitated in the work of art therefore precedes and exists outside that which is represented or enacted, which, under these conditions, is necessarily a fiction.

The stage set for Waiting for Godot, a "country road," at "Evening," may well be interpreted mimetically as a familiar scene from life. Vladimir and Estragon's many references to actual locations, such as their life in the "Macon" or the "Cackon" country (they're not sure which), and Estragon's fantasy of going "to the Pyrenees," function similarly, as external referents which locate and define the action. Endgame, as well, points us towards a number of locations and scenes of a familiar origin. Nell's memory or "Lake Como . . . One April afternoon" is a case in point. Furthermore, Endgame, as Herbert Blau points out, "is a play with a tenacious memory." It reaches back "through the failure of a culture to its most splendid figures: Hamlet, Lear, Oedipus at Colonus, the enslaved Samson, eyeless at Gaza."(3)

These types of external references can be readily identified in the other plays studied as well. Krapp's world is legion with mimetic references. From the objects that surround him, to the memories which he contemplates, mimesis is foundational; the stage world, essentially, is organized by its external referents. In *Play*, the narrative itself is something of a parodic exercise in mimesis, a conventionalized scene from melodrama, replete with adultery and suspected suicide. Though *Not I* and *Rockaby* are more subtle than *Play* in this respect, they too conjure up scenes familiar in life. It is an "early April morning" for Mouch's "she" in *Not I*, and V's narrative in *Rockaby* presents situations immediately understandable to us in the context of our own lives. "She", "at her window/ quiet at her window/ facing other windows," is an image we can readily transfer from the stage to the world outside it. In itself, it is mimetic.

The second level of representation dealt with in this study, the reflexive, jeopardizes all of this. Once we consider the full shape of each of these plays, paying particular attention to the patterns of recurrence upon which each work structurally depends, it becomes clear that the external, mimetic, references are dysfunctional, or non-functional. Estragon's fantasy of going to the Pyrenees, like Nell's recollections of Lake Como, refer us to a world which is no longer accessible to these characters. The
incongruity of these references in relationship to the characters' immediate situations makes these dissociations, if anything, comical. How can one possibly imagine the Pyrenees when one cannot get off the stage?

Hamm's rich ancestry, which includes the titans of the Greek and Shakespearean stage, is subject to the same principle of dissociation. However, while we may marvel at Hamm's audacity in quoting the sublime Prospero, this dissociation actually serves the reflexive mode of the play as well. The history which oozes through *Endgame* is primarily of a theatrical and philosophical origin, with Prospero, Oedipus and Zeno positioned as awkward, ironic icons in the play's self-serving subtext. The presence of such prominent figures, while certainly undercut by the mocking pretensions of Hamm, function nonetheless as internal referents, evoking the genres that are actually on trial in the play itself. The past, in this case, a melange from theatre and philosophy's distinguished history, functions as a *mise en abyme*, with the reflection decidedly distorted through Hamm's blind gaze.

The third mode of representation, the ontological, is the most problematic, for it disrupts the self-sealed closure that the reflexive mode weaves. With the ontological, the reflections created through internal referencing are marred; the whole, so complete in its formal integrity, is disfigured by cracks and holes in the surface, shards of the mirror go missing, a blackness emanates, the orderly relationship of
the other representational modes is threatened. This hole, disturbing the integrity of the representational field, is the ontological.

At the outset of this thesis it was suggested that there may be an important connection between Beckett's work in fiction and his early work in the theatre. Beckett's often-quoted interview with Israel Shenker indicated that Beckett had reached an impasse in his prose, and, at this concluding stage, it is perhaps worth re-entering this discussion, with the benefit of hindsight. (4)

"I'm in words, made of words," states the Unnamable. (5) Although these particular words, like so many other words in The Unnamable, are assigned to another, to one of the many surrogates who enact the Unnamable in order that he himself be (or appear to be) absent, it is only in words, we realize, that the Unnamable can attempt to achieve presence. However, the Unnamable's need to be in the words, the unrelenting endeavor that gives a shape to the novel's amorphous structure, is ultimately a doomed enterprise; being finally cannot be achieved through the written word, and, consequently, the Unnamable must make do with playing at a game in which failure is implicit. In the literary work of art, the mimetic mode may be disrupted by the reflexive

4 A section of Beckett's interview with Shenker is quoted above in Chapter One, p. 39.

5 Beckett, Three Novels, p. 386.
mode, creating a heated friction within the representational field, but the ontological mode, that which shatters the distance between a subject and itself, is inaccessible, unnamable. Thus, the adventures in the novel, connected to one another in a vast maze of "intra-intertextuality," to use Brian Fitch's term,(6) are one by one exhausted and abandoned as each proves untenable in the search for self-presence. The impasse suggested in the novel's closing words, "I can't go on, I'll go on," leaves us hanging upon the impossibility of the entire effort, clearly indicating that achieving ontological presence within the literary medium is unthinkable. Naming the namer as the thing which cannot be named, via negativa, finally becomes the only way to accommodate this condition, providing a tenuous fulcrum for this extended escapade at the furthest reaches of representation.

Although the unnamable cannot be named on the page, as written words must ultimately be considered as representational intermediaries, materially separated from both their namer and that which is named, we might hypothesize that on the stage, where words are made present, uttered in the presence of present beings in the present

6 This term is used by Fitch in Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Status of the Bilingual Work (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 23. Fitch uses the term to refer to Beckett's inter-referencing within his own corpus. In The Unnamable, Murphy, Molloy and Malone, among others, are present, surfacing throughout the novel.
time, Beckett ultimately solves this problem, conjoining that which is named with its namer in an ontological revelation.

As was initially suggested in Chapter One of this thesis, the representational dilemma announced in The Unnamable provides a significant base for Beckett's explorations in the theatrical medium. The first play studied, Waiting for Godot, quickly offers a solution for the Unnamable's dilemma, as Vladimir and Estragon have, as Robbe-Grillet perceived, "no other quality than to be present" - the antithesis of the condition which plagues the Unnamable, for whom presence is impossible. The impasse in The Unnamable also takes us back to the question posed at the beginning of this thesis: "'Can the imagination be mimetic under conditions of modernity?'"(7) At this concluding stage of the discussion, the answer to this question, as it relates to Beckett, is, surely, no. Although, as stressed in the Introduction, modernism is not the subject of this thesis, Beckett's own references to modern art, particularly those in "Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit," indicate that Beckett perceived his artistic task within the context of the modern field, and, consequently, we can best understand certain aspects of his aesthetic within this context.

As was considered in the Introduction, the most relevant

7 Costa Lima, quoted on p. 1 of this thesis.
aspect of modernism in Beckett's work is the presentation of that which evades representation. Succinctly articulated in Jean-François Lyotard's discussion of painting in *The Postmodern Condition*, this condition proves to be the very thing that eludes the Unnamable, but defines the stage characters. As Lyotard stated, modern art must devote itself to "present the fact that the unrepresentable exists."

Subsequently, Lyotard goes directly into the paradox that is so crucial to Beckett's craft, pronouncing that painting "will therefore avoid figuration or representation . . . it will enable us to see only by making it impossible to see."(8)

If Lyotard is correct in his assessment of modernism, Beckett's works must then be thought of as exacting executions, perfect demonstrations of Lyotard's thesis.

If the ontological has a connection to modernism in this fundamental way, what then might its relation be to the theatre in a general sense? While this question has been contemplated here at length in relationship to Beckett's works, might there not be a more general application for this pre-representational mode in the theories of the stage? Some recent studies in semiotics, such as Keir Elam's *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, raise the issue of ontology, but, in Elam's case, it is only a peripheral aspect of his larger concern, which is the codes of signification

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constructed through referentiality. (9) The intertext tends to supplant the possibility for a pre-text.

While it is arguably the fate of all dramatic texts that to a degree they are mimetic, representing something, even if resistantly, a live performance is always something much more than the events being represented. While this is true as well of a dramatic text, which, particularly if excellent, has a greater sum than its parts, the performing arts have a unique relationship to space and time, one which it is impossible to duplicate on a page, a celluloid strip, or a disc, all of which, foundationally, are frozen in time. As was discussed in the earlier chapters, the essential difference between the dramatic text and the performance text is that the dramatic text creates a representational world in the reader's imagination, while the performance text creates its representations in the material world, in present time. Though the audience member may have to exercise a willing suspension of disbelief as the dramatic scene changes from King Lear's palace to Gloucester's castle, for example, and the audience will be asked to accept that a shaft of light from the pipes above represents the sun coming through a

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9 In discussing Pirandello, Handke and Beckett, Elam does indicate that the "dramatic world" can be extended to include "the 'author,' the 'audience' and even the 'theatre'"; however, Elam sees this procedure within a representational context in which these references serve as "surrogates," rather than possibly signifying things in themselves, i.e., the ontological. This particular question is deliberated in Elam's *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, pp. 109-10.
window, the stage performance provides us with concrete materializations: the light coming through the imaginary window is actually a light, the actor playing King Lear is actually a man (in most productions), and the words we hear are actually words being spoken, not inscriptions on a page. Unlike the reader, who must create images in imaginational space, the audience member is given this by the actor, designer and director.

In this respect, the theatre is much like film, which also provides its audience with materializations. Although there are exceptions, the theatre and film generally depend upon a primary representation, a text/score/story-book, in order to make material the original situation upon which the text is based. In representing the text, they are actually attempting to make visible that which the text itself attempts to make visible through words. Both film and theatre, consequently, are closer to and further from the "model" which is represented in the written text. Using the written text as a base, and thus being one representational step further away from the original, film and theatre ultimately reverse this distance by making concrete that which precedes the written copy. Cinematic images, however, are subject to the same temporal laws as the literary text, frozen on a celluloid page. Thus, while film is often thought of as the art form which is truest to life, and, therefore, the most mimetic, its presentation is always separated from its
creation in exactly the way that a written text is. We witness events which were previously recorded. Even when a film's story is meant to be understood as occurring in the present, the film itself was made in the past, distancing it from our immediate situation.

The materializations on the stage, on the other hand, occur in present time. While there is, of course, a great deal of preparation involved in creating and formulating the shape of the theatrical moment, there is nothing, finally, that stands between the actor and the spectator. As Peter Brook stated, all that is necessary for the theatre to come to life is for one person to witness another. (10) This foundation is substantially different from that of either the dramatic text or the film, both of which assume the physical absence of the subject.

Beckett's later plays, as I have discussed, capitalize upon this condition, exploring the coincidence of the image and the word as a foundational relationship. Rather than bringing to life, i.e., making material, a written text, the words bring the stage image itself to life, and the stage image reciprocates by enacting the words. This achievement, as perfected by Beckett, is perhaps without precedence in the history of the theatre. While various modernist playwrights, such as Apollinaire, Artaud and Ionesco, may be thought of as

forbearers in this undertaking, Beckett's rigour in identifying and illuminating the matrices of the medium sets him apart. Jerzy Grotowski, perhaps correctly, assesses that Artaud applied is Artaud betrayed(11); however, we might hypothesize that Beckett achieves the unachievable, naming the unnamable, not as the thing that cannot be named, as he did in his early prose, but identifying it rather as the thing which reveals itself in sheer presence. When we think of the synchronic relationship between the seen and the said in Rockaby, made tangible as the words rock W "to and fro," fusing the aural and visual data in utterance/occurrence, we realize that the logic of representation has been cast adrift, forcing us to reckon with the sensory information in direct relationship to its presentation. Neither the stage-image nor the word precedes or describes the other; they are one, each the other.

The coincidence of image and word can also be thought of as a chance encounter. Chance and coincidence are, of course, etymologically linked, and constitute an ever-present aspect of any theatrical performance. In philosophical terms, as defined by Webster's, chance is "the fortuitous or incalculable element in phenomenal existence," bringing to mind many aspects of the discussion thus far. As the "incalculable element in phenomenal existence" we might

identify coincidence as that which is unnamable, impossible to define outside of its occurrence. This makes it unattainable on the page, and unavoidable on the stage, tied as it is to phenomenal existence. While I would argue that Beckett's goal in *The Unnamable* is to "let being into literature,"(12) this is precisely what becomes impossible.

What is being considered here is not simply what I will call the "presentification" of the theatrical medium, for this, in itself, is finally a reflexive enterprise, a representational *mise en abyme*; what is ultimately at stake is finding a way beyond this treadmill, locating the ground beneath. As V says in *Footfalls*, it is not enough for May to pace the floor "revolving it all," she must "hear the feet, however faint they fall."(13) We too must hear these footfalls. In this respect, rather than the medium being the message, we might think instead of the messenger as the message, with the spoken text providing the means to make the message, i.e., the messenger, ontologically present.(14) If we are forever being brought back to the theatrical frame, conscious of our self-consciousness within the context of

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13 *Footfalls*, pp. 400-01.

14 The concept of the messenger being the message is developed by Heidegger in *On the Way To Language*, p. 29. Heidegger sees this "two-fold" in relation to Hermes, whom Heidegger, "by a playful thinking," relates to hermeneutics, "the bearing of message and tidings."
representation, phenomenal experience will remain beyond our reach. We will be forced, like W1, W2 and M in Play's "Narration", to present a representation \textit{ad infinitum}, trapped by the conventions of the stage.

What has yet to be examined in this study are certain problematic developments in the evolving shape of the ontological dimension itself. From its early presence, as an unstable force, punctuating Vladimir and Estragon's aesthetic "canters," and piercing Hamm and Clov's self-conscious \textit{mises en abyme}, to its later manifestation, as the dominating mode in \textit{Not I} and \textit{Rockaby}, a considerable transformation occurs. In the early plays, the Sartrean model of ontology, offered in Roquentin's fabled description of the chestnut tree in \textit{Nausea}, prevails, presenting the ontological as a mode which emerges as a process of decontextualization. Estragon's boot in \textit{Godot} provided an example of this phenomenon, as did the pervasive silences in both \textit{Godot} and \textit{Endgame}, halting, decisively, the ever-expanding arches of the \textit{mises en abyme}. Indeed, we might also consider the actors' bodies as ontological evidence. Like the boot, the body is merely present, unyielding to the temporal and spatial laws of representation. The only force that the body must obey - one which is keenly present in all of Beckett's plays - is that of death, the most ontological of conditions. Thus, in the early works, it is the most material (boot and body) and the least material (silence) that dissolve the
representational frame, with language situated problematically in between, positioned, most often, in opposition to Being as it attempts to preserve the representational field through vehement self-mimesis, i.e., reflexivity.

In the later works, however, the ontological mode has quite different properties, advancing a startlingly original and newly comprehensive "presentification" of presence. In Not I, and even more so in Rockaby, the language itself is made to serve the ontological, and this new integration creates a completion in the fullest sense. In the early plays, words functioned primarily within the representational framework, being displaced only by the "sheer presence" of material objects (Estragon's boot) and silence - both of which, as mentioned, shattered and decontextualized the referential construct. Rockaby, at first, with its tightly-spun narrative, might appear to represent a return to the mimetic fold, an attempt to create a traditional form of representation hitherto unthinkable in Beckett. However, as was suggested in Chapter Five, and above in this chapter, the narrative component in Rockaby has a unique relationship with the stage image, a relationship in which the two co-operate synchronically, in temporal harmony. In this way, we might say that the language in these late works is mimeticized by the stage image. While this may appear contrary to the previous definitions of mimesis in this study, which have repeatedly explained it as a form of
imitation, a copy of a model, it is worth considering that if there is mimesis in Beckett's stage works, it is of this type. No longer are the coordinates arranged hierarchically, with one term, an original, preceding and determining the shape of the other, its artistic representation; on the contrary, these two terms, in Rockaby, mirror one another. They imitate each other, but one does not necessarily precede and define the other. The written word provides the basis for the stage presentation, but once brought to life on the stage, this distance disappears.

This integration, however, is not without its complications. In fact, in many of Beckett's plays, the problematization of self-identification constitutes the basis of the enterprise. Starting with Krapp's Last Tape, and recurring in Not I and Rockaby (to mention only those plays in this particular study), the relationship between the stage character and his or her spoken text is formally disrupted. In Krapp, the tape-recorded retrospect emerges as the dominant voice in the play, reducing Krapp's live voice to a mere shadow of its recorded counterpart. In Not I, Mouth's voice is mechanically amplified with a microphone, creating an artificial distance between the utterance and its reception. Finally, in Rockaby, W's voice is literally disconnected from her body, presented as an inner voice projected from the outside. In all three cases, the characters' identities are divided.
This division, however, represents the means by which the characters are able to achieve an ontological status. By having the said be perceived by the sayer as an external entity, spoken by "him" (Krapp), "she" (Not I) or "another" (Rockaby), the characters are able to participate in their language as both the one who speaks, the one who is spoken to, and the one who is spoken of. While this procedure might appear to be merely reflexive, it cuts through the circles once the distance between these coordinates is temporally eliminated. Krapp's brooding silence as he once again sees Bianca's eyes, Mouth's horrific scream as she recognizes that her narrative is narrating her, and W's participation with V in the phrase "time she stopped" (which has the very effect of stopping time), all merge the voice outside and the being within. In this way, the separation of the self proves essential in the construction of the self. As Beckett commented to Lawrence Harvey, "Being has a form." (15) This reintegration of the divided self is perhaps such a form.

We might also consider the significance of repetition in this procedure. In each of the plays studied, repetition plays a central role in undermining the mimetic process. Steven Connor, in Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text, emphasises the centrality of repetition in both

15 As quoted in Samuel Beckett: Poet and Critic, p. 249.
Beckett's prose and his dramas, and while Beckett's use of repetition has been carefully examined by other Beckett scholars,(16) Connor considers the role of repetition in relation to Deleuze and Derrida, opening up questions of a specifically representational nature.

As Connor points out, Deleuze presents two extremely different types of repetition. The first type, "naked" repetition, is servile to its original, reproducing it without any changes or distortions. The second type, "clothed," or "disguised," repetition, instead of obediently imitating its original, adds something. As Deleuze puts it,

> The first repetition is repetition of the Same, explicable by the identity of the concept or representation; the second repetition comprehends difference, and comprehends itself as the alterity of the Idea, in the heterogeneity of an 'appresentation'. The first is negation, in the absence of the concept, the second, affirmation, due to its excess over the Idea.(17)

There is little "naked," literal, repetition in Beckett. As stated many times in this study, Beckett's plays cannot be considered mimetic in any conventional sense, and we might conjecture that "naked" repetition, as Deleuze conceives it, is primarily mimetic. None of the plays studied foundationally

16 Cohn discusses Beckett's use of repetition extensively in *Just Play*, and with particular attention in the chapter, "The Churn of Stale Words," pp. 106-139.

depends upon repeating an external model in order to function; in fact, the resistance to such an identification makes them, if anything, anti-repetitive on this level. For instance, it is seldom necessary that we actually believe Beckett's characters. In *King Lear*, we must believe that Lear is actually driven to madness. If this is not repeated faithfully by the actor, Shakespeare's play dies well before Lear does. Likewise, Hedda Gabler's psychic dilemma must be "nakedly" represented, so as to make her suicide effective.

In Beckett, on the other hand, we are usually drawn to deviations from this "illusionistic" type of representation. We are looking instead for failed, or false, mimesis, the duplicitous. Hamm's constant play-acting, deferring any commitment to representation, is a case in point.

While this kind of duplicity provides a "cloth" of sorts for repetition in Beckett's works, the more significant "excess over the Idea" occurs on the formal level, where images and passages of text are recast in variant forms, creating a fabric of echoes spilling atop one another in various patterns of expansion and contraction. *Waiting for Godot*, as John Fletcher and John Spurling point out, "relies heavily on asymmetry, or repetition-with-a-difference.*{18} Though each act has a distinct set of actions, internal recurrence provides the play with a structure. The final

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tableau in the two acts, for example, functions as something of a mirror; one repeats the other, but with a formal sense of inversion. Act One ends with the following exchange:

ESTRAGON: Well, shall we go?
VLADIMIR: Yes, let's go.
[They do not move.](19)

In Act Two, the text is the same, but the speakers are reversed:

VLADIMIR: Well? Shall we go?
ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go.
[They do not move.](20)

In *Endgame*, as Hamm says, "The end is in the beginning and yet you go on."(21) The circularity in this logic, halting, in its conception, the possibility of progression, sets in motion the repetition upon which the play constructed, that of remaining - the definitive consequence of repetition if repetition is to be fully embraced. If the beginning represents the end, and vice versa, there is nowhere to go; one must "remain," as Hamm and Clov do, contemplating the "dying light."

The aspect of Beckett's use of repetition which is perhaps most intriguing has to do with the temporal qualities of repetition itself. Repetition, according to *Webster's*, is "the act or the instance of repeating something that one has already said or done." This, of

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19 *Waiting for Godot*, p. 51.
20 *Waiting for Godot*, p. 87.
21 *Endgame*, p. 126.
course, implies a passage of time, separating the original from its copy, as in the process of mimesis. However, in Beckett's late plays, in which we are confronted with a condition in which the image and the word are synchronically linked, there can be, in theory, no temporal distance between the two: one cannot imitate the other if each exists simultaneously. If the ontological is to be considered as fully functional in the later plays, then the concept of repetition must consequently be redefined. Self-presence must be measured spatially, not temporally.

With this in mind, I return to Deleuze's difficult definition of clothed repetition as being that which "comprehends itself as the alterity of the Idea in the heterogeneity of an 'appresentation.'" The relationship between the image and the word, particularly in Rockaby, might well be considered in this light, i.e., as an idea and its other (alterity), with both providing equal projections of the "two-fold of presence" (to draw once again from Heidegger). This relationship between the two, we might say, is a repetition in precisely this way. Rather than being self-identical, Beckett is asking us to consider two aspects of the same thing, creating a "cloth" for us to assimilate the seen and said as one. While the term "appresentation" may point us in different directions, if we consider it as something which is prior to presentation, determined in the very "heterogeneity" which precedes its integration in space, we
may provide ourselves with a key to Beckett's treatment of repetition in these later works. This perhaps indicates a condition of reflection rather than repetition. A reflection allows us to achieve in space what repetition allows us to achieve in time, and, thus, in reflection we are permitted to remain in the present, experiencing the "two-fold" of presentation. We might hypothesize that this type of reflection finally transcends the mirror, representing an ontological reflection, the presentification of presence.

While there are many areas which could be further explored, there are three which stand out as warranting extensive investigation. First, there is a great deal to study in the relationship between imaginational space and ontological space. This inquiry would open up the entire range of questions regarding the status of the dramatic text and the performance text. While some of these concerns have been addressed in this thesis, there is certainly much left to examine. Second, the proposition that what is most important to ontological presentation is the messenger rather than the medium could be developed into a thesis in itself. If one were to pursue this idea, it would be essential to refer extensively to the field of philosophy, and in particular to the phenomenological hermeneutics of Heidegger. Last, the role of the receiver, the reader and the audience, could be developed into a thesis as well. The entire process of representation that
has been considered in this thesis depends upon our participation as receivers of the information.
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