BETWEEN STORIES AND STAGE:

NARRATIVE PRESENCE IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S DRAMATIC ART

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Thesis Abstract

Dilek Öztürk, "Between Stories and Stage: Narrative Presence in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Art."

This study intends to analyze drama and narrative on Samuel Beckett's stage within the context of storytelling. Narrative theory is taken as a departure point here, for Beckett's drama with its actor-narrators, never-ending stories and idiosyncratic performances lends itself easily to storytelling. While storytelling as a familiar motif in Beckettian fiction has been widely discussed by many scholars, Beckett's drama within the context of narrative theory has not received much critical attention. This study tries to show how the two fields, narrative and drama meet at converging paths as one gets to explore narrative presence on Beckett's stage.

Various stories on Beckett's stage, which are open-ended, self reflexive and fragmented, reshape our notion of "drama" and "narrative." As soon as one steps into *Beckettland* permeated by idiosyncratic narrations and performances, the line between narration and performance gets blurred. "Narrative" becomes "drama," "narrating" takes the place of "acting;" every single word, sound and silence on the stage forms the dramatic atmosphere of the play. At that moment, any particular talk, be it significant or insignificant, between the characters, comes to be perceived as the real dramatic action of the play.

Tez Özeti

Dilek Öztürk, "Hikâyeden Sahneye: Samuel Beckett Tiyatrosunda Anlatı"

Bu çalışma, hikâye anlatımı bağlamında Samuel Beckett'in sahnesinde drama ve anlatıyı beraber ele almayı hedeflemektedir. Beckett'in draması oyuncu-öykücüler, sonu gelmeyen hikâyeler ve kendine özgü performanslar sayesinde hikâye anlatıcılığına yatkın olduğundan, bu çalışmanın çıkış noktası anlatı kuramı olarak belirlenmiştir. Beckett'in yapıtlarında sık rastlanan bir motif olarak hikâye anlatıcılığı pek çok yazar tarafından derinlemesine incelenmişken, anlatı kuramı bağlamında Beckett'in draması gölgede kalmıştır. Bu çalışma, Beckett'in sahnesine ışık tutuldukça bu iki alanın, anlatı ve dramanın yollarının nasıl kesiştiğini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Beckett'in sahnesindeki, açık uçlu, özdüşünümsel ve paramparça öyküler "drama" ve "anlatı" kavramları anlayışımızı şekillendirir. Kendine özgü anlatılar ve performansların yer aldığı *Beckettland*'e adım atılır atılmaz anlatı ve performans arasındaki çizgi bulanıklaşır. "Anlatmak" eylemi "rol oynamak" eyleminin yerini alırken, "anlatı" da "drama"nın kendisi olur. Böylece sahnedeki her bir sözcük, ses ve sessizlik oyunun dramatik dokusunu oluşturur. O sırada karakterler arasında geçen kayda değer ya da lüzumsuz her konuşma, oyunun gerçek dramatik aksiyonu olarak algılanır.

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The largest debt that I have, next to that owed to Samuel Beckett himself for being "there," is to my family, who watched the difficult birth of this study and patiently endured its competition. Without their continual support and warm encouragement I would not have accomplished what I have done so far. I dedicate this study to my parents who years ago wished for a daughter, wished for me, and named me "Dilek." Now they are proud of the daughter I have become; and long for being proud of the academic I am to become.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> "If you don't know the trees you may be lost in the forest, but if you don't know the stories you may be lost in life." (Siberian Elder)

Narrative is all around us like a web spun out of stories and memories, songs and sagas. Every day of our lives is encircled by a sequence of events in the form of narratives. Surrounded by this web of narratives we all become narrators with a strong passion to narrate and express ourselves. This is not an activity that we are unfamiliar with, because we start building up narratives almost from the moment we begin putting two words together and making meanings. So begins our roles as storytellers in the world which is already populated by prominent tellers.

Narrative is universal in the sense that it stands on a plane where everyone, in one way or the other, finds himself engaged in its activities, since narrative is "a human phenomenon that is not restricted to literature, film, and theatre, but is found in all activities that involve the representation of events in time" (Abbott xii). Just as communication is an essential need for human beings, narrative is so. The more we intercommunicate, the more we indulge into stories. The more we try to present ourselves, the more we need stories. This mutual dependence indicates that narrative is

inherent in all kinds of activities that we come across in daily life. In the words of H. Porter Abbott, it is "something that is built into us through our genes" (3).

Then, what is it that gives narrative such a crucial role in our lives? In his renowned article "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" Roland Barthes provides us with an insightful approach to narrative:

> The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances - as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's Saint Ursula), stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (79)

Barthes' statement illustrates the fact that narrative is present in all kinds of literary genres as it appears in some way or another in our course of life. Conveyed through various means, narrative makes its presence felt in every different branch of art, every different phase of human life and history. In line with Barthes' approach this study is based on the premise that narrative cannot be something limited to the text only, or something that can be simply categorized and defined accordingly. What is meant by narrative is a broader concept which manifests itself both in and beyond the text and includes character, actor, narrator, plot, time, space, setting, decor, narration and action. Thus, narrative serves as an umbrella term within the scope of the study and paves the way to different worlds, including that of storytelling. Now that the concept of narrative

provides a starting point for many reflections and value judgments in literature and in this study, it is essential to clarify the term focusing on the etymology of the word "narrative" and its various definitions.

The famous historian in the tradition of literary criticism, Hayden White provides us with a brief but an invaluable analysis of the word "narrative" in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation.* White points out that the word "narrative" has its roots in the ancient Sanskrit language and Latin. He explains that "the words "narrative," "narration," "to narrate," and so on derive via the Latin *gnarus* ("knowing," "acquainted with," "expert," "skilful," and so forth) and *narro* ("relate," "tell") from the Sanskrit root *gna* ("know")" (215). White's definition illustrates that the word narrative is multi-functional in the sense that it serves as a tool for both "knowing" and "telling." This role of narrative in life and in literary studies puts it to a highly favourable place and the term embodies various definitions. There is no doubt that these various definitions enrich our understanding of the term, yet most of the time it becomes really hard to reach a consensus on the nature of narrative. Perhaps, Marie-Laure Ryan is right in saying that "few words have enjoyed so much use and suffered so much abuse as *narrative* and its partial synonym, *story*" (22).

Recent studies on narrative theory show that there are various definitions of the term "narrative" which are "unstable and still up for grabs," in Martin McQuillan's phrase (323). As is known, narrative affects one's way of reading, listening and viewing; therefore, people with different backgrounds, experiences and interests offer different definitions, interpretations and assessments of the term narrative. For this reason, in

literary studies "narrative" is regarded as an "elastic" term available to anyone who wants to tackle its complex nature (McQuillan 323).

For instance, Gérard Genette defines narrative as "the representation of an event or of a sequence of events" (127). Gerald Prince, the author of *A Dictionary of Narratology*, defines narrative as "the recounting (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictitious EVENTS communicated by one, two or several (more or less overt) NARRATORS to one, two or several (more or less overt) NARRATEES" (58). In another definition, Prince suggests that a narrative must be composed of at least two events "neither of which presupposes or entails the other" (*Narratology* 4). Some narrative scholars focus on the necessity of the sequence of events in the definition of narrative: William Labov and Joshua Waletzky define narrative "as one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events that actually occurred" (12). It can be argued that these old-time definitions of narrative usually take plot into centre and require that a text should have a proper plot and a series of events in order to be defined as narrative. This categorization of texts as narrative and non-narrative appears most explicitly in Gerald Prince's definition of "narrativity" in *A Dictionary of Narratology:*

> The degree of narrativity of a given narrative depends partly on the extent to which that narrative fulfils a receiver's desire by representing oriented temporal wholes (prospectively from BEGINNING to END and retrospectively from end to beginning), involving a CONFLICT, consisting of discrete, specific, and positive situations and events, and meaningful in terms of a human(ized) project and world. (65)

Prince's definition like many other approaches to narrative from Aristotle onwards limits the corpus of narrative to the texts which have event sequences and a proper initiation

and resolution to the text. Therefore, unfortunate as it might be considered, drama, ballet, dramatic monologue, film or cartoons appear to be excluded from narrativity.

On the other side, Mieke Bal introduces "causality" to the definition of the term and explains that narrative is "the transition from one state to another state, caused or experienced by actors" (182). H. Porter Abbott does not pay attention to the number of events in narrative or their being causally related, for he thinks that "the field of narrative is so rich that it would be a mistake to become invested in a more restrictive definition that requires either more than one event or the sense of causal connection between events" (13). Therefore, he provides a broader definition of the term in his *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* explaining that "narrative is the representation of events, consisting of *story* and *narrative discourse;* story is an *event* or sequence of events (the action); and narrative discourse is those events as represented" (19). Abbott here touches upon one of the basic narratological axioms "story" and "discourse," and builds his definition of narrative on this distinction.

There are such diverse views on the definition of narrative. Most of these existing definitions put emphasis on certain characteristics and review the concept of narrative in a limited corpus. However, distinguished narrative scholars, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg in *The Nature of Narrative* treat the concept of narrative in a different way and offer a larger definition of narrative, which is in line with the study in question:

> By narrative we all we mean all those literary works which are distinguished by two characteristics: the presence of a story and a story-teller. A drama is a story without a story-teller; in it characters act out directly what Aristotle called an "imitation" of such action as we find in life. A lyric, like a drama, is a direct presentation, in which a single actor, the poet or his surrogate, sings, or muses, or speaks for us to hear or overhear. Add a second speaker, as Robert Frost does in

> "The Death of the Hired Man," and we move toward drama. Let the speaker begin to tell an event, as Frost does in "The Vanishing Red," and we move toward narrative. For writing to be narrative no more and no less than a teller and a tale are required. (4)

This view provides illuminations for the complex nature of narrative and makes us question some points. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, like many other scholars of narrative believe that a narrative requires a narrator. Then one might ask; should plays be considered narratives? Plays normally rely on characters to convey their point rather than using narrators. For instance, a character on stage can be presented in various ways– "visually or verbally and that what they say can be enacted/quoted ("scene" or "mimesis") or rephrased by a narrator ("summary" or "diegesis")" as in the words of Wallace Martin (109). However, the case is not the same on Beckett's stage. Beckett's characters are naturally all narrators. Indeed, on Beckett's stage anything can be an instrument for representing events - be it a narrator or a camera, a painting, a voice, a puppet, a tape recorder. Besides, in Beckett's drama "stage narrative is possible without a director, without designers, even without a dramatist; it requires only the circuitry linking performer and spectator" (Garner xvi). Beckett as the author of the text leaves the stage to his narrator-characters, who carry the whole dramatic and narrative potential of the play, passing the time of day with the other characters and the audience. This approach takes the readers a bit further from the classical approaches to narrative and brings them to a plane where their basic conceptions about narrative are put under discussion. As will be seen in the following chapters, Beckett undermines the readers' narrative expectations and thus challenges the basic elements of conventional narration.

This study aims to offer a theoretical analysis of the use of narrative in Samuel Beckett's plays within the context of storytelling. There is a large body of scholarship on the workings of narrative theory in fiction but narrative in drama is not widely worked on. This inadequacy of the scholarship on narrative and drama probably stems from the fact that narrative is often associated with fiction itself, and "our view of literature is almost hopelessly novel-centred" in Robert Scholes' and Kellogg's words (8). Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg claim that Western narrative tradition is so novel-based that people tend to see novel as only one of a number of narrative possibilities when they try to consider the nature of narrative. There is no doubt that such a restrained view limits the readers' critical and aesthetic concerns. Therefore, in an effort to offer an alternative to such narrow views on the nature of narrative, this study aims to provide a different understanding of the concept of narrative, treating it as a broader, overarching term, and tracing its relation to Samuel Beckett's dramatic art.

Located on the premises of stories and storytelling, narrative on Beckett's stage articulates itself disrupting the boundaries between the page and the stage. His one ordinary man, or a mere voice, a simple stage prop suffice to reveal the touches of narrativity. Beckett's character, standing alone on stage recounting and acting out his stories creates a world of discourse before us. As the characters take their turns in narrating, different discourses mingle into one another, all surrounding the main story-line and then blossoming into sub-narratives in the main frame. Once all the stories are told, secrets are shared, the events acted out, one traces the footfalls of Beckett's ghostly figures on stage, all wandering around and blubbering all day long.

The second chapter of the study is an introduction to the theory of narrative, which starts with identifying the nature of narrative and basic components of narrative to provide a context for the study, and then moves on to explaining the relevance of these basic elements to Samuel Beckett's drama. The first section of this chapter gives a brief insight into narrative theory and its development within the years. Critical views of theorists such as Aristotle, Plato and Gustav Freytag; Gérard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov, and Seymour Chatman, as well as the approaches of some prominent narrative scholars like Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtin, and H. Porter Abbott are foregrounded. Needless to say, narrative is itself a slippery term and hard to pin down. Therefore, a brief explanation of key concepts related to the term "narrative" such as *fabula*, *sjuzhet, story, discourse* and *narration* is given in order to clarify the focus and the scope of the thesis.

The second section of this chapter discusses the nature of narrative, its basic constituents and narrative discourse. It starts by drawing the distinction between narrative and discourse and continues with exploring the principal components of narrative including that of story, plot, narration, character, time and space. The concept of discourse used in this study refers not to the central dramatic discourse but to the discourse of the characters, which produces meaning, represents the stage and itself as a way in which story, character and text are constructed. It is worth mentioning that in this chapter Seymour Chatman's book *Story and Discourse* together with Roland Barthes' *Image, Music, Text* provides invaluable insights.

Next chapter opens with a discussion on the role of stories and storytelling in life, and draws a map of the function of storytelling within drama. The focus then moves on to sudden transformation of narrative into drama and the issue of "narrative presence" on

Beckett's stage. The intention here is to show that Beckett's drama easily lends itself to narrative analysis and provides us with a better understanding of both narrative theory and the poetics of drama.

The term "narrative presence" has been used by Kristin Morrison in her influential book *Canters and Chronicles: the Use of Narrative in the Plays of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter*. What Morrison argues in this book is that Beckett displays an exploration of narrative styles on stage "through a mere suggestion of story" (13). More recently, Rosana Herrero-Martin has published an article entitled "Narrative Performance of the Word in Beckett's Early Theatre." Martin, building upon Morrison's arguments, suggests that Beckett's characters usually prefer narrative to life and prove to be unique storytellers with their strong urge to narrate. These characters on stage experiment with many different narrative techniques. They resort to various kinds of narratives to give a meaning to their life and to reconstruct their fragmented identities. Most of the time their narratives appear in the form of dialogues and then lend themselves to monologues and to mere stories which in turn take the form of parables, chronicles, anecdotes, jokes, memories and dreams. This discursive characteristic of the narratives together with the idiosyncratic performances of the characters constitute the focal points of this chapter in particular and the whole study in general.

The plays for this chapter are stylistically chosen: *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. In both plays the action is based on the storytelling performance of the characters who prove to be ardent tellers. The discussion of the two plays within the context of storytelling is followed by an overview of the "dialogue" as a style which Beckett experiments with on stage. In these two plays "dialogue" acts as the centre of

gravity, and serves as a vehicle to carry the real dramatic action of the play. At that point, what becomes important is the body of the text rather than the physical bodies of the performers, as the characters on stage perform almost in an immobile way, having reduced their gestures down to minimal movements.

This approach has its roots in Belgian dramatist Maurice Maeterlinck's theory of "static drama."[1] Maeterlinck points out to a drama where there is no movement, no event but only speech and silence. His "theatre has been variously labelled: a theatre of silence, of stasis, of darkness, of the dream" as in the words of Bettina Knapp (3). His plays, quite like Beckett's plays, are loaded with prose dialogues broken by long pauses and with immobile characters in immobile scenes. They are made upon "a theme from the simplest daily life, an action where nothing happens, a dialogue where the only words of value are the meaningless ones" (Hale 185). Maeterlinck's "death drama" is also said to have its relation with the French marionette theatre. Maeterlinck thought that the human actors were not efficient enough to convey the relationship between man and his fate. Therefore, he turned to the world of the marionette. What caught the attention of Maeterlinck in this world was the inactive, distant and machine-like nature of the marionette. This marionette theatre is considered to be a favourite of Samuel Beckett on which he dwelled to achieve a certain economy and elegance of movement.

The second part of this chapter traces the theory of "static drama" and the "marionette theatre" as well as their applicability to Samuel Beckett's dramatic art. Maurice Maeterlinck's early plays *The Blind* and *The Intruder* are discussed in relation to

[1] Materlinck's theory of static drama first appeared in an essay of 1896 "The Tragic in Daily Life" in his collection of essays *The Treasure of the Humble*.

Beckett's two plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, in the light of the theory of static theatre. In this second part as a possible approach to Marionette Theatre, Heinrich von Kleist's essay "On the Marionette Theatre"[2], which is often a point of reference for Beckett to cite in directing his actors, is taken as a departing point.

Chapter four deals with a different form of narrative, the "memory play," and it intends to untangle the relationship between "memory" and "narrative" as a means towards defining the self and giving a voice to it. This relationship between memory and narrative presents itself as life-writing in Beckett's drama, especially in the plays *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days* and *Play* which are the focal points of this chapter. Both *Play* and *Happy Days* epitomize traces of memory, yet it is *Krapp's Last Tape* in which *memory* and *narrative* are handled and staged in its entirety. Therefore, in this chapter a special attention is paid to *Krapp's Last Tape* being the play in which "Beckett's Augustinian Memory" is revealed through Krapp's monologue and his tape. As a possible approach to the act of recollecting and the art of narrating on Beckett's stage, in this chapter certain references to St. Augustine's *Confessions* are made. Augustine's *Confessions* standing as a masterpiece in the field of life-writing, in a way establishes the grounds for the process of Beckettian recalling and narrating. In addition to St. Augustine's *Confessions*, James Olney's distinguished book *Memory & Narrative: the Weave of Life-writing* is regarded as a reference source throughout the chapter. Olney's book has its roots in a paper called "Autobiography and the Narrative Imperative from St. Augustine to Samuel Beckett" in which he focused on the similarities between St. Augustine's *Confessions* and Samuel Beckett's *Company* (xi). In this book, exploring the relationship between remembering

[2] The essay "Uber das Marionetten Theater" was first published in four installments in the daily Berliner Abendblatter from December 12 to 15, 1810. Kleist was editor of the newspaper.

and the act of narrating, Olney compares the two authors' compulsion to narrate. He explains that "with Beckett, the impulse to narrate, which could be and was given rational analysis and logical explanation by Augustine, has become irrational and illogical, compulsive, obsessional, repetitive, unwilled and often unwanted and not to be denied" (2). There is no doubt that narrative is an essential need for Krapp, for Winnie and for the urned characters of *Play* who are endowed with the capacity to weave together the moments of their lives, yet this strong need of articulation, this "narrative imperative" often falls prey to the tricks of memory, which is a rather detrimental faculty in Beckett's case.

Krapp's Last Tape is significant in the sense that it is Beckett's first play to be written in the form of first-person monologue. While *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* are mainly considered dialogue plays, *Krapp's Last Tape, Happy Days* and *Play* are principally characterised by monologue. Therefore, the chapter ends by a review on "monologue" and its relation to the plays in question. The "monologue" in these plays is interpreted as a device which transforms the stage into a narrative plane where time and space are transgressed and the act of recalling and narrating become the main dramatic action.

Chapter five deals with a different form of representation: radio play. In this chapter, the sounds and silences of the stage transformed into the sounds and silences of radio medium echo in the ears of the reader who has already experienced all the variances of Beckett's stage. Beckett was at first not certain about writing for radio when BBC invited him to write a radio play in 1955. In a letter to his friend Nancy Cunard, Beckett wrote: "Never thought about radio play technique but in the dead of t'other night got a

nice gruesome idea full of cartwheels and dragging of feet and puffing and panting which may or may not lead to something" (qtd in Frost 361). It led to five plays specially written for radio: *All That Fall, Embers, Words and Music, Cascando* and *Rough for Radio,* none of which has received as much public acclaim as his stage plays. However, it should be noted that Beckett's radio plays are also landmarks in the history of drama as *Waiting for Godot* was in stage history.

There has been a considerable amount of discussion on Beckett's radio drama, especially by prominent critics like Martin Esslin and Clas Zilliacus (Kalb 129). However, little has been said on his motives lying behind his foray into radio drama. Taking this into consideration, this chapter discusses Beckett's first undertaking of writing for radio. The major points addressed here are the limitations and possibilities offered by radio drama as well as the way in which these plays are able to present certain narrative qualities to give a shape to sounds and silences. In this chapter, *The Way How to Write Radio Drama* by William Ash, the prominent script editor of BBC Radio Drama Department, provides a good insight into the issue of "drama" and "narrative" discussing the way how verbal is envisioned in Beckett's radio plays. In this chapter *Embers, Words* and *Music, Cascando* are discussed in relation to music and narrative. These plays are noteworthy in the sense that they offer the reader a chance to hear the story expressed by music and sounds. At that point, the readers are required to give heed to the narrative melodies these plays present, and to the story of Samuel Beckett's long-time passion for music.

This chapter ends with a brief section on music and narrative both of which permeated Beckett's life and his art. Exploring the roots of Beckett's interest on music is

a topic of another discussion; therefore, this part of the chapter is the outcome of a modest effort in tracing the relevance of music to Beckett's art of narrative and dramatic art. Edited by Lois Oppenheim, *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts, and Non-Print Media* stands as an invaluable book in the field and provides insights into Beckett's relation to music. Similarly, Mary Bryden's book *Beckett and Music* throws much light on the undiscovered area of "Beckett and music" clarifying the discussed points in this chapter.

The last chapter of the study intends to trace Beckett's preoccupation with voice and narration in his shorter plays *Not I* and *Footfalls*. Beckett continues his experiment with narrative styles in these later plays, in which "Voice" becomes the main medium of representation. These plays share a common feature: both dramatize a woman voice recounting fragments of memories in the form of stories. The voice in these plays is significant in the sense that it has a "performative" power which carries the whole performance. The term "performative voice" has been used by Enoch Brater in his book *The Drama in the Text: Beckett's Late Fiction.* Brater in this book argues that Beckett's language is "performative" in the sense that it constantly seeks words to articulate, a voice to sound and a listener to be heard. He says that "those moments we remember" from Beckett's writing "are remembered precisely because they are so wonderfully speakable: they are written for the performative voice, a resonant human voice, and they attain their full spontaneity only when spoken aloud" (4). This chapter intends to show how this voice carries on the dramatic action of the stage and turns the utterance into a pure storytelling performance. Voice in these plays does not necessarily have a certain location or source, but may appear anywhere within the text, forming a bridge between

the text and the author; between the character and the audience, creating drama on stage. This Voice might issue from a body, from the head of a character or from an undefined source. It might appear as a character in its own right. There might be a single voice operating through the text; or it might be multiple, polyphonic; and there might be many voices coming from somewhere off-stage. All in all, the situation in these later plays indicates that leaving its place to Voice, Beckett's character gradually retires from the scene; the body disappears from the stage, yet the story goes on. A mere mouth and a ghostly voice are left to tell the ongoing story.

Beckett's stage is rich in narrative units which manifest themselves in the form of stories, memories, songs, anecdotes and jokes. Functioning in various areas from passing time to identity construction and making sense of the world, these narratives play pivotal roles in Beckett's drama. These narratives are central for the Beckettian character who tries to assert his identity and give a meaning to his existence by the stories he spins. Very much like the Cartesian thought "Cogito ergo sum," the Beckettian character has his stories, therefore he is. Treading the web of life through the stories, Beckett's character lives upon words, silences and sounds which all together sustain drama on Beckett's stage.

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS A THEORY OF NARRATIVE

> No one knows how long man has had speech. Language is probably even older than man himself, having been invented by some "missing link," a creature in the phylogenetic chain somewhere between man and the gibbon. It may have been as many as a million years ago that man first repeated an utterance which had given pleasure to himself or to someone else thereby invented literature. In a sense, that was the beginning of Western narrative art. (Scholes and Kellogg 17)

It seems to be one of the hardest tasks to trace the subject of narrative to its origins, as the theory itself strands its readers and scholars with its variety of definitions, interpretations and models. The quotation above by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg provides both a departure point to this complex issue and a driving force into further research, which the study in question aims to undertake.

Narrative scholars have often attempted to tackle the complex nature of narrative from different perspectives as the theory does not have a certain set of principles or models but a variety of them. The diverse nature of the narrative theory has aroused questions in the minds of scholars. In his article "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" Roland Barthes, concerning the miscellaneous forms of narrative theory, asks: "How we are to master [. . .] these varieties, how are we to justify our right to differentiate and identify them? How is novel to be set against novella, tale against myth, drama against tragedy (as has been done a thousand times) without reference to a

common model?" (79-80). Barthes asserts that narrative theory puts scholars into a difficult position, as it offers a diversity of standpoints and narrative styles. He, therefore, thinks that a theory is necessary to classify and describe these various kinds of narratives; that one should look for the "structures of narrative" in narratives themselves (81). Barthes believes that composing a narrative requires a reference to a certain set of principles. Hence, he proposes that linguistics should be considered a "founding model" for the structural analysis of narrative (82). Undoubtedly, Barthes' idea of the association of structural analysis of narrative and linguistics has provided a new impetus for narrative studies; from then on there has been a burst of interest in the theory. Many theorists of narrative working in quite different disciplines have come up with certain frameworks for the theory of narrative and the concept of narrative has proceeded to various fields such as psychology, education, social sciences, health sciences, law and theology. This "travelling" of narrative as Matti Hyvärinen identifies it in this way in his article "An Introduction to Narrative Travels," together with the development of structuralist theories of narrative in French in the 1960s has lead the way to great advancements in the study of narrative theory (4).

In 1969, the term *la narratologie* (narratology) was proposed and coined by the famous literary critic and philosopher Tzvetan Todorov in *The Grammar of the Decameron*, who together with other structuralist theorists of story - Roland Barthes, A. J. Greimas, Gérard Genette - helped to construct narrative as a kind of science which originated from Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics. These structuralist theorists also dwelled upon the works of Russian formalist literary scholars to throw a new light on narrative theory and to enhance it (Herman 5).

As it has already been mentioned, tracing narrative to its origins is a difficult task. In an attempt to square the circle, this chapter primarily aims to provide a brief introduction to the nature of narrative and narrative discourse as well as basic components of narrative theory.

A Survey of Narrative and its Constituents

The study of narrative is like a “tangled web” which gets more and more complicated as one tries to grasp its meaning and define its basic constituents (Abbott 25). There is not a set of principles that can tell us to what extent narrativity is present in a text nor is there a key criterion to refer to while approaching a text. As the theory does not have certain, ready-made schemes and formulas but various usages and elements drawn from different genres, it leaves the scholars in the lurch. The diversity which narrative theory offers brings ambiguity with itself which in turn opens up “gray areas” in the field of narrative as H. Porter Abbott indicates (25). Roland Barthes, in an effort to operate on such “gray areas” and to somewhat clarify them, talks about three different levels that appear in a narrative work, and thus helps the readers and scholars in the field of narrative.

In his “Introduction to Structural Analysis of Narratives” Barthes determines three levels of description in narrative: “the level of "functions", the level of "actions", and the level of "narration"” (88). These three levels are clearly related to each other, and each of them has meaning only in relation to the next level. Functions gain meaning as long as they are integrated into another level, actions. In turn the actional level attains significance only when combined with the final level, narration. The level of “actions” refers to the characters, that is, characters in narrative are determined according to their participation in actions. The level of “narration” on the other hand refers to the relation between the narrator and the reader; and includes narrative communication and narrative situation. The “functions” refer to the smallest units of narrative that usually carry the meaning, while a “unit” is defined as any section of the story that can have different

relations with its components. Functions may be of help to the narrative situation in turn, on any level, yet it is still questionable that the narrative "units" in some way or another lead to certain meanings. Then, one might ask as Barthes also does "Is everything in a narrative functional? Does everything, down to the slightest detail, have a meaning?" (89). Barthes answers this question while opening new ones:

> This is not a matter of art (on the part of the narrator), but of structure; in the realm of discourse, what is noted by is notable. Even were a detail to appear irretrievably insignificant, resistant to all functionality, it would nonetheless end up with precisely the meaning of absurdity or uselessness: everything has a meaning, or nothing has. To put it another way, one could say that art is without noise (as that term is employed in information theory): art is a system which is pure, no unit ever goes wasted, however long, however loose, however tenuous may be the thread connecting it to one of the levels of the story. (89-90)

Barthes indicates that even the details which seem to be quite insignificant in a narrative text should not be taken for granted, as every little detail may add to the value of the text in some way or another. It may show up anywhere and anytime, and play an important role within the matrix of the story. A narrative unit in general includes clues concerning the elements of the story, the psychology of the characters, or the mood and the atmosphere of the story; are thus necessary to the meaning of the whole story. On the other hand, there may be some units that merely fill in the narrative space, are not much necessary to the story itself. Barthes calls these unnecessary units "catalysers," and the "nuclei" as the essential part of the story which contributes a lot to the forward movement.

Barthes's determination of nuclei and catalysers is only one third of the extensive classification that narrative scholars have made. There is of course Chatman's "kernels" and "satellites," Aristotle's "exposition, crisis and denouement;" Propp's "functions and

roles," Greimas' "types of actants" and various notions of character, action and setting. Narratologists have often tried to establish the elements of narrative or to divide it into constituents. Each time they attempt to define the basic units of narrative theory, they end up coming up with completely different narrative units. This is indeed not to say that narrative cannot be divided into its constituents. It is rather to say that narrative evokes such diverse meanings that they cannot be categorized that easily.

Marie-Laure Ryan in her article "Toward a Definition of Narrative" talks about a different approach to the texts, which she herself calls "transcategorial reading" and relates this to the concept of "narrative:"

> According to speech-act theory, you can perform different communicative acts with a proposition like "the cat is on the mat": assert it, ask about it, or make it the content of a command. Now if texts, like propositions, lend themselves to various games depending on the rules selected by their users, it should be possible to read them against the grain, that is, use the texts in games for which they were not necessarily intended. I call this transcategorial reading. (25)

Marie-Laura Ryan's transcategorial reading enables the reader to approach the text from different perspectives and evaluate it accordingly. This kind of reading requires adding so many different characteristics to the content of the text that it cannot be read it as a combination of rules, units, or definitions, as it offers more than the reader can expect. It enriches the content of the text and provides the reader with new insights. Ryan regards "narrative" as "the best candidate" for this transcategorial reading, as it can be put into many different uses from telling a story, a joke, life account to confessing one's sins to a priest or testifying in court (25).

If narrative is put into a variety of different uses and if it is a means of conveying a story, there is no doubt that its definition should focus on "story" together with the other major aspects of narrative identified by different theorists: plot and narration; time and space; and character. Following is the exploration of "story" - one of the "three principal components of the overarching category narrative" (Abbott 40).

Story versus Discourse

As it has already been stated, story first came into use through Ferdinand de Saussure's study in linguistics, in his influential work *Course in General Linguistics*. Saussure's distinction between the signifier and the signified prompted the rise of story in the 1915s, which was followed by the studies of Russian Formalists in the 1920s. Russian Formalists introduced a distinction between "fabula" and "sjuzhet" which are used as synonyms for "story" and "discourse" respectively. Later on Tzvetan Todorov worked on these terms and coined their French equivalents as "historie" and "discours" (Herman 3-21).

Apparently there is a distinction between story and narrative discourse which is the telling or presenting of a story. Narrative discourse is the means through which the story is communicated. However, story is a "chronological sequence of events involving entities" in the words of H. Porter Abbott (241). Abbott in his article "Story, plot, narration," clarifies the distinction between these two terms, story and narrative discourse, stating that the story can never be realized directly but always picked up through narrative discourse, "mediated" by it and expressed by its means (21). Therefore, narrative discourse plays a major role in the construction of the story and its deliverance. It is the means through which the story comes into surface and gains its whole meaning.

Seymour Chatman puts this distinction in simpler terms and offers a fruitful explanation: "The story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*" (19). In a sense, discourse is more related with the form whereas the story is related with the content of narrative representation. In his prominent work *Story and Discourse,*

Seymour Chatman explains that the story is expressed through two kinds of statements: "process" and "stasis" – "according to whether someone did something or something happened or whether something simply existed in the story" (31). According to Chatman "process statements are in the mode of DO or HAPPEN" while "stasis statements are in the mode of IS" (32). In other words, process statement refers to either narrating or acting out an event, whereas a stasis statement refers to a statement which is either direct, that is, it reveals, or indirect, that is, it presents.

Chatman's discussion of process and stasis can actually be traced back to classical times, to Plato's discussion of *mimesis* and *diegesis* in Book III of *The Republic.* Plato, in *The Republic* distinguishes between *mimesis*, which is the imitation of actions and *diegesis*, the deliverance of the speech by the poet or a persona. Plato in a way addresses the possibility of representation through the poet's own voice, "own person," *diegesis*, and through the imitated voices of the character, *mimesis*. (132) At this point there appears another contrast to be taken into consideration between events and their representation. This distinction also takes its cue from classical times, from Aristotle's *Poetics:* Is it actually representation or presentation that one experiences in narrative?

H. Porter Abbott provides a fruitful answer to this ongoing question "representation or presentation?" in his *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (15). He explains that the scholars who stick to Aristotelian distinctions employ the term "presentation" for enacted stories, and "representation" for narrated stories. Abbott putting his view into an example states that in a theatre hall, the story is realized within the performance through acting; however the case is not the same when the story is

narrated through a narrator. This view actually stands as a counter-argument to the whole thesis which tries to unravel the never-ending stories of Samuel Beckett's stage, either told or enacted by narrators.

This distinction between mimesis and diegesis later on has been renamed as "telling" and "showing" by Henry James, whose ideas on this debate set off from his New York edition to *Daisy Miller* in 1909. It is said that in the preface to this 1909 edition of "Daisy Miller," Henry James left a pencil-mark in the margins of his notes, reminding himself to "Dramatise, dramatise!" (Hathaway 1). Many novelists, from then onwards, taking James' views into consideration, prioritized showing over telling, thus giving the reader an opportunity to judge the events and the characters. This motto-based debate "Show, don't tell" has stood as a powerful departure point and served writers well within literary studies. For, in the process of "showing" the author, rather than presenting the reader with all the crucial details of his text, gives him a chance to codify the meaning he has just put into the heart of his work. Thus, the reader takes the opportunity to observe the character from different point of views as the character takes action in the course of the events. As in the words of the distinguished editor Kirk Polling, the difference between showing and telling is the "difference between actors acting out an event, and the lone playwright standing on a bare stage recounting the event to the audience" (423). Here is where the scope of the thesis converges with the view cited above and calls forth Beckett's art of storytelling within drama.

Beckett brings his characters to stage not only to make them act but also to narrate. They are there not to act all the time but to stand still sometimes, or just to talk, to recall and recount. It is not the playwright to be regarded as "lone" but his characters.

They are lonely creatures, only accompanied by various narratives, stories, songs and anecdotes.

As has been stated earlier, story should not be confused with narrative discourse. The two terms bear certain different qualities to be taken into consideration. It is worth quoting at length Abbott's views on the distinction between story and narrative discourse, for it provides a fruitful insight to the discussion:

> Narrative discourse is infinitely malleable. It can expand and contract, leap backward and forward, but as we take in information from the discourse we sort it out in our minds, reconstructing an order of events that we call the story. The story can take a day, a minute, a lifetime, or eons. It can be true or false, historical or fictional. But insofar as it is a story, it has its own length of time and order of events that proceeds chronologically from the earliest to the latest. The order of events and the length of time they are understood to take in the story are often quite different from the time and order of events in the narrative discourse. (17)

Abbott explains that a story can be limited to one sentence or can take pages and pages. It can be told backwards but still convey the order of events. One can still deal with the same story even if narrative discourse has been changed. That is, a story can be treated in many different ways in the hands of its narrator. This illustrates the fact that there is reader-response theory acting in narrative to a great extent, since narrative always requires active readers who will construct the story from the discourse, and colour both the reading and the interpreting. Narrative process certainly expects readers who will add their own taste to the story, expand it and work on it diligently, as "the story is always mediated – by a voice, a style of writing, camera angles, actor's interpretations – so that what we call the story is really something that we construct" (Abbott 20). Abbott, here, draws our attention to the various ways through which a story can be revealed. There are millions of ways through which a story can be composed and narrated, conveyed and

staged, just as there are different types of narrators. Beckett's stage, filled with different narratives and narrations stands as a proof to this view. Beckett's characters always construct stories in the form of anecdotes, jokes, memories, poems or songs. Narrative dominates the world of the Beckettian character, which is already in total darkness, damp and desolate. However, as soon as the character steps into the stage, he brings a dim light, and a bit of hope to the stage, to the world by telling various stories and jokes, by acting and singing, sometimes by just sitting and talking.

In *Toward a Natural Narratology*, Monika Fludernik argues that the story - discourse dichotomy can be traced back to Aristotle's "constitutive" notion of plot (*muthos*) which may be considered a contrast to his idea of *whole* composed of beginning, middle and end (250). Fludernik reminds us that Aristotle's triple structure model aims at discussing Greek *drama* and not *narrative.* Therefore she claims that narrative studies have taken its inspiration and "origin" from a drama criticism text that of from Aristotle's Poetics. Yet to Fludernik "this foundational frame has been repressed so successfully that drama has now frequently came to occupy the position of narratology's non-narrative Other" (250). Being rather critical about the place that drama occupies in narrative studies, Fludernik suggests that the story - discourse issue is essential to drama as well. According to Fludernik, though drama has different features, and that it employs different means to convey a story, the narrative mechanism working in drama is similar to that of novels.

In line with Fludernik's argument, the theoretical part of this chapter intends to show that "narrative" in Beckett's drama paves the way to a different understanding of narrative theory and its basic constituents. Upon questioning the issue of narrativity in

Beckett's drama, one finds himself in a vast valley opening either to a fertile or a barren area. Therefore, it often becomes difficult to decide whether to give up making sense out of the text or to read against the grain, to read for the plot or for its absence/plotlessness, to hear the story of the narrator or to shut ears to characters' gibbering.

Reading for the Plot or the Plotlessness?

In literary studies almost any discussion on plot begins with Aristotle, who in *Poetics* devotes a considerable part to plot, treating it in one form or another including significant arguments and taxonomies. Aristotle in *Poetics* basically discusses "the art of poetry, itself, and its species" together with its three main forms existing at that time: tragedy, comedy, and epic poetry (3). When Aristotle discusses the nature of plot in relation to drama, mainly to tragedy, he defines plot as "the imitation of an action, [. . .] that is one and whole" (16). "To be a *whole*" in Aristotle's terms "is to have a beginning, middle and an end" (14). Aristotle talks about the need for an organized plot which has connected events with proper openings and closures. He thinks that a good plot should not begin or end anywhere perchance, and it should be graspable in a single sitting. To him, everything should be there, in the story for a reason:

> Necessarily, then just as in other forms of imitation, one imitation is of one thing, so also, a plot, since it is an imitation of an action, must be an imitation of an action that is one and whole. Moreover, it is necessary that the parts of the action be put together in such a way that if any one part is transposed or removed, the whole will be disordered and disunified. For that whose presence or absence has no evident effect is no part of the whole. (16)

As the above quotation indicates, Aristotle pays utmost attention to the "determinate structure" of a plot. If the events of a story are removed and that the whole is not affected, then it can be inferred that these events are not the essential parts of the story, and cannot be regarded as the part of the unity.

Aristotle's three-part view of a plot structure (with a beginning, middle, and end) prevailed until 1863, when the German playwright and novelist Gustav Freytag wrote *Technique of the Drama,* a book in which he looks into the dramatic structure in ancient Greek and Shakespearean tragedy. In this book, Freytag provides an analysis of plot that has come to be known as *Freytag's Pyramid.* He claims that drama possesses a "pyramidal structure" (114). It rises from the *introduction,* with the addition of different forces to the *climax* and falls from here to the *catastrophe.* The parts of *the rise* and *the fall* are sandwiched between these three parts. Freytag believes that tragedies follow a general pattern: the story begins and the scene is set, a problem arouses that leads to a climax which is the moment of greatest tension in the story, and then the loose ends of the story are tied up and taken care of; the conflict is resolved in the end. Recently Freytag's model of dramatic structure has been appropriated for narrative study and "various of his terms are frequently echoed by critics of prose fiction as well as drama" (Abrams 161). Freytag's pyramidal structure of drama includes five categories as (a) introduction, (b) rise, (c) climax, (d) return or fall, (e) catastrophe and is simply illustrated in his *Technique of the Drama* as follows:

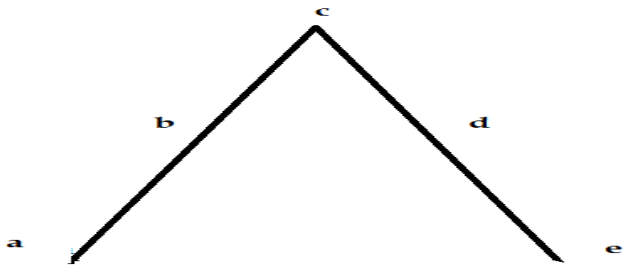

Figure : Gustav Freytag's pyramidal structure: five parts and the three crises of the drama.

Technique of the drama; an exposition of dramatic composition and art. 1986.

Aristotle's discussion on plot and Freytag's plot structures provide a fruitful onset for narrative studies, yet there are other prominent scholars to be turned to on the story-plot discussion. Apart from canonical critics like Aristotle and Freytag, twentieth century narrative analysis witnessed the ardent studies of scholars in the field, such as E.M. Forster, Walter Benjamin, Wayne Booth, Vladimir Propp and Northrop Frye, who all worked on the issue of plot and developed different structures of plot types.

E. M Forster in *The Aspects of the Novel* draws the distinction between story and plot focusing on a sample sentence:

> We have defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. "The king died, and then the queen died" is a story. "The king died, and then the queen died of grief" is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. Or again: "The queen died, no one knew why, until it was discovered that it was through grief at the death of the king." This is a plot with a mystery in it, a form capable of high development. It suspends the time-sequence, it moves as far away from the story as its limitations will allow. Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story we say "And then?" If it is in a plot we ask "why?"… A plot cannot be told to a gaping audience of cave-men or to a tyrannical sultan or to their modern descendant the movie-public. They can only be kept awake by "And then—and then—" they can only supply curiosity. But a plot demands intelligence and memory also. (130)

Forster's distinction illustrates that what lies at the heart of storytelling is making connections or designs. As it has already been stated, narrative is simply a record of what happened; when it reveals its meaning in human terms it becomes the plot, for events only become interesting when we see their effect upon people, or upon characters.

Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg devote a whole section to "plot" in their work *The Nature of Narrative.* They do not aim to make elaborate distinctions on the discussed

terms story, plot or narration. Instead, they aim to make a simple distinction between "story as a general term for character and action in narrative form and plot as a more specific term intended to refer to action alone" (208). Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg define plot "as the dynamic, sequential element in narrative literature" (207). Much in line with Aristotle's views on plot, they think that plot requires a beginning, middle and an end. They claim that wars, historical incidents and life accounts provide perfect examples for proper plots and for plotting, with their readymade beginnings, middles and ends as their rhetorical question indicates: "What more perfect beginning than birth or more perfect ending than death?" (211)

Of all the other aspects of narrative, Scholes and Kellogg consider plot as the "most essential" and the "least variable" one (238). They explain that one should consider plot to be an aspect which encompasses the whole narrative. Every small detail, every paragraph, every sentence in a text has its own plot, its own beginning, middle and end. Therefore, every small part in a text should be treated as a whole unit and considered a valuable part of narrative, since it is only in such areas that one can realize individual talents and the transmissions of the "quality of mind" (239).

As it is seen, relativism is very much inherent in comprehending narrative theory and its aspects. In its simplest sense, "plot" is used to refer to "story," yet in the case of narrative the term has different meanings and been employed in many different ways. To make things worse, one can claim that the notion of plot is treated in most extreme ways in the hands of Beckett and that it becomes often confusing whether someone reads the plays for their plot or for their plotlessness. For instance, in *Waiting for Godot* and

Endgame, Beckett plays with readers' expectations of a proper story-line and leaves them in the dark throughout the play. There, we never find a "significant plot-development and a closing resolution" (Tonning 53). The process of "waiting" and "ending" is foregrounded in such a way that the only action, the conflict, the beginning, middle and the so-called end revolve around these foregrounded images, "waiting" and "ending." After all, as in the words of Martin Esslin "*Waiting for Godot* does not tell a story; it explores a static situation" (13).

On the other hand, another piece by Beckett, *Play* bears bits and pieces of plot-situations; there the readers can at least follow a story line developed by characters and constructed by their dialogues. However, the plot here can no way be enacted by the characters but by the Light, which controls the movements of the urned characters and lend impetus to the play.

Nonetheless, Beckett's drama allows the reader to experience different plot situations in different story lines. As is known "traditional plot structures are rarely a consideration in the Theatre of the Absurd" (Schumacher 10). Therefore, like many other absurd plays, most of Beckett's plays lack proper plot structures or they rather have plots developed through the repetition of cliché and routine; and are often based on absence and nothingness.

Narration: A Telling Spiral

Studies on narrative theory demonstrate that narration has a lot to do with meaning and interpretation. At this point "meaning" becomes another confusing term like the story or narrative itself for the scholars. According to H. Porter Abbott, normally meaning is linked with "ideas and judgements" (67). If meaning has its relation to opinions, should we ask, as Abbott also does: "Do narratives have meaning?" Do they communicate ideas and produce judgements?" (67). It is hard to provide a proper answer to this question, as nothing seems to be in control when the case is narrative.

Undoubtedly, it becomes a really difficult task to grasp the meaning of the ideas that come up everywhere in a narrative text. This free flow of the ideas makes it hard for the readers to arrive at a judgment. This ability to see the "finish line" in narrative does not only depend on the reader's interpretation of the text, but also on the author's success in forming closures. Some narratives achieve closure whereas some do not. For instance, most of Beckett's plays have open-ended narratives. These plays with their never-ending circular structures leave the readers in tight spots. We, as readers, in our effort to make sense out of the narratives, lose our track, and fall into the traps that the author and the characters set for us. Such kinds of narratives with their idiosyncratic forms and tones, challenge the readers; and their "openness" almost becomes "a kind of judgment" of value for the readers (Abbott 68).

As already stated, narrative statements are of two kinds: "process and stasis" (Chatman 31). It is questionable whether the statement is "directly presented to the

audience or is it mediated by someone - we call the narrator?" (Chatman 146) Narration, in its simplest sense, is the telling of a story or part of a story. As the definition of "narration" has its bond to the activity of "telling", theorists such as Seymour Chatman, Robert Scholes, Roland Barthes and H. Porter Abbott often begin their discussion of "narration" by referring to the notion of "narrator" and its role within narrative.

Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg in *The Nature of Narrative* claim that oral narrative uses "an authoritative and reliable narrator" who is endowed with an ability to assess an event from different points of view and "tell the secrets of men's hearts" (51). The readers often identify this all-knowing person with the author, supposing that the author is present everywhere to interpret and evaluate the characters and events of his narrative for us. This narrator is often referred to as "objective" in the sense that he doesn't talk about himself; instead, he gives information about the characters and actions of his story (52). Robert Scholes and Kellogg assert that in such narrations one can realize "no ironic distance" between the narrator and the author (52). The audience relies on the narrator's knowledge and his judgements about the characters and events in the story. They usually share the same point of view with the narrator and evaluate the events accordingly. However, in written narratives there appears a great deal of disparity between the storyteller and the author. The narrator's view of the characters, their view of themselves and each other, the narrator's view of his story and the audience's view of it… all go to different directions. Beckett's drama stands as an example to this kind of narrative, which stages characters with different point of views, all trying to narrate a story in one plane, whilst at the same time trying to resist to the narrative of the author,

who resides on another level, controlling the stage traffic, as his storytellers populate the world's stage one by one.

In line with Robert Scholes' and Kellogg's views, Seymour Chatman in *Story and Discourse* explains that if there is narration for sure there must be a teller. He thinks that the narrating voice's presence depends on the "audience's sense of some demonstrable communication" (147). To put it another way, if the audience knows that someone has written the story, they also know that they are hearing a narrator tell the story. Thus, they immediately reason that this story requires a teller and accept the presence of a narrating voice, the narrator. Chatman thinks that it has become a cliché of literary theory not to identify this narrator with the author. In his attempt to throw a new light on this discussion he draws a distinction between the "real author" and the "narrator," and proposes a new term called "author-narrator," referring to the speaker in a narrative text (148). Chatman's "author-narrator" actually forms a basis for another author type, the "implied author," introduced by Wayne Booth in the *Rhetoric of Fiction:*

> The implied author (the author's 'second self'). - Even the novel in which no narrator is dramatized creates an implicit picture of an author who stands behind scenes, whether as stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God, silently paring his fingernails. This implied author is always distinct from the 'real man' - whatever we may take him to be - who creates a superior version of himself, a 'second self,' as he creates his work. (151)

The implied author, according to Booth, is a "second self" different from the actual person who wrote the work in question. He is not the flesh-and-blood being but an entity that includes not only some meanings of the text but also some clues about the characters. Booth's views on the implied author differ from the ideas of Chatman who thinks that the

implied author is "reconstructed by the reader from the narrative" (148). He believes that this implied author:

> …is not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the narrative, that stacked the cards in this particular way, had these things happen to these characters, in these words or images. Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, *it* has no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn. (148)

Chatman's claims on the nature of the implied author actually open up a new question: If the implied author is a reconstruction of the reader, then who constructs the narrative?

In a way, narrating means constructing. One can tell the story of his life, be it the whole story or just the exciting parts of it, s/he can omit some details or put emphasis on them. It always depends on the way how you construct a text, build up a frame and bring your story on, as "narrative is always a matter of selecting from a great arsenal of pre-existing devices and using them to synthesize our effects" (Abbott 69). Like the author who has a right to construct his narrative according to his own taste, the reader also has this chance and the right to deconstruct what the author and the characters have already said and reconstruct the narrative according to his own taste and view of life.

Beckett's drama, not concerned with the representation of events in time but with the presentation of one single situation of an individual, assigns a task to the reader to work on the narrative levels it offers. However, the reader finds difficulty in operating on these levels, as Beckett's drama does not pose any questions or bring up an issue or arouse curiosity. It does not have a proper plot-development, characterization or unity in the classical sense. What constitutes the essence of such drama is the silent, puppet-like

nature of the characters and their minimal actions complemented with fragmented dialogues. Following a cyclical pattern, these dialogues carry the whole meaning and action of the play exceeding the limits of representation. Yet, Beckett's drama still keeps the readers in the dark. In a play where "nothing happens, nobody comes" and where ambiguity and uncertainty reign, it becomes difficult for the readers to make sense out of the text. The text slips out of our hands as we get closer to grasp a pinch of meaning, trace a proper beginning, a crisis or a resolution. In the end, we come to realize that there is a resolution neither for Beckett's characters nor for his readers.

Time and Space

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermaldynamics - The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. (22)

So says Michel Foucault in "Of Other Spaces."[3] Twentieth century cultural studies illustrates that there has been a considerable change concerning the amount of the scholarship on spatial discourses in various disciplines, whereas narrative theory seems not have gotten its share of this change.

It may not be wrong to assert that narrative theory has always been much more concerned with narrative "time" than narrative "space," which is apparent from the large body of scholarship on "time" in narrative studies. The works of many prominent theorists from Paul Ricoeur, Gerard Genette to Peter Brooks show that space has not been paid much critical attention. If we are to consider a few examples, we could note that Paul Ricoeur's three-volume study entitled *Narrative and Time* and Gerard Genettte's *Narrative Discourse* devote a considerable part to time but hardly deal with the issue of space. Perhaps, for this reason "space" together with "character," "are the two concepts of narrative that have stayed "so vague" within narratology" as Mieke Bal remarks (132).

"Space in narrative poetics is often present as the "description" that interrupts the flow of temporality or as the "setting" that functions as static background for the plot, or

[3] This text, entitled "Des Espaces Autres," and published by the French journal Architecture-Mouvement-Continuite in October, 1984, was the basis of a lecture given by Michel Foucault in March 1967.

as the "scene" in which the narrative events unfold in time" (Friedman 192-193). Friedman's definition of space is a broad one, which encompasses the three different functions that "space" serves in narrative. Other than forming a background for narrative, space also stands as a foe to narrative, as it "slows up and intrudes into the narration," bars the flow of story events (Bridgeman 53).

Contrary to this view which presents "space" as a negative force behind narrative, Mikhail Bakhtin claims that time and space are bound up with each other. In his book *The Dialogic Imagination* Bakhtin employs the term *chronotope* to refer to the bond between "temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). Bakhtin treats these two terms, time and space, together and focuses on the connectedness between them as indicated in his words: "time, as it were, thickens takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). He claims that *chronotope* plays an important role in the judgement of a literary work's artistic unity as well as in the construction and shaping of narrative. It functions in materializing time and space, bringing them together, and forming a whole, thus giving "body" to the entire narrative. Therefore, *chronotope* is a crucial issue in narrative; "it is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied" as in the words of Bakhtin (250).

Mieke Bal is another critic who discusses the notions of "time" and "space." In *Narratology*, Bal begins her discussion of space by stating the fact that the space is connected to the characters who populate it. She regards this space to which the character belongs as the "frame" (133). For instance, a character may feel itself at ease in a space, while s/he may feel insecure outside of that particular space and vice versa. Besides,

objects may play important roles in the determination of the "spatial effect" of a place. The colours, measurements and the shapes of the objects may influence the perception of that space. The way in which the objects are arranged in a space may also affect the reader's image of that place. All this spatial information helps the reader to trace what is going on in narrative and how these events affect the flow of the story.

Moving away from the discussion of "space" to "time," we should begin by drawing the distinction between two types of times working in narrative texts: reading-time and the plot-time, or, in Seymour Chatman's distinction "discourse-time and story-time" (62). Chatman employs discourse-time to refer to the time it takes to analyse the discourse, and story-time to refer to the duration of the supposed events of the narrative.

H. Porter Abbott also focuses on this "time" issue, stating that there are "two kinds of time and two kinds of order" in narrative (16). He talks about the difference between reading a narrative and a non-narrative text, stating that while reading an essay, the only time involved is the time it takes to read, and the only order is that of the structure of the essay. However, the case is different in narrative texts. When one reads a narrative, he becomes aware of both the time of reading and the order in which the things are read, and on the other hand, he also becomes aware of the time the story takes and the order in which the story events occur. In other words, with narrative one has the chance of grasping different times and different worlds that exist in narrative. Thus, "discourse time" refers to the time which the reader engages with the text, and the "'discourse world" is the spatiotemporal domain in which writing and reading occurs" (Bridgeman 64).

In her article "Time and Space" Teresa Bridgeman focuses on the relationship between space and the reader's position. She explains that human beings are kind of confined to their restricted physical worlds, whereas imagination allows them to travel into other people's worlds, in other places. This activity is often employed in the reading process of narrative as "we shift conceptually from our own reader-centred position to locations in the story-world" (62). Such a process and such experience play an important role in our interpretation of the text and certainly alter our perception of the story-world and our perception of its inhabitants.

On the whole, it can be said that temporal and spatial relationships are of great importance to our conception of narrative. These two notions influence our interpretation of narratives and guide us through the paths that stories open for us. They also affect the process of our construction of the image of character from what we read. We certainly rely on the representations of time and space while establishing our sense of the characters and of the climax, resolutions or complications of the story, as time and space are the "components of the basic conceptual framework for the construction of the narrative world" (Bridgeman 63). Thus, building up a narrative world is strongly influenced by the free-play of time and narrative in the text. As in the words of Teresa Bridgeman, "narratives unfold in time, and the past, present and future of a given event or action affect our interpretation of that action, while the characters who populate narrative texts move around, inhabit and experience different spaces and locations, allowing readers to construct complex worlds in their minds" (52). The way how we interpret a narrative text depends upon many factors varying from our perception of the characters and the space they populate to the time in which they experience certain events. Drawing

some clues from these elements we, as readers, frame the narrative, construct the text and bring forth the characters. Collaborating with the author, defining the time, space and the characters, we create a world out of the text.

Beckett's drama requires the reader to decode the text and bring out the subjectivity of characters into light, as the characters in *Beckettland* live in between the time and space of the stage and their own present time. They in a way "exist in a dramatic timespace that is indistinguishable from the timespace of performance" as in the words of David Pattie (393). For instance, Vladimir, Estragon, Krapp, Hamm and Winnie all stand flesh and blood before us. They are certainly present, but they do not have a clear notion of time and space. They do not know where they are, and when they last met and how long they have been getting together. They take refuge in talking, creating dialogues and telling so that they could feel that they are alive. Similarly, Hamm and Clov indulge in talking and often making fuss on petty things to keep them in place. Krapp listens to his past, comments on his present state and gives up hope on future. He has a blurred notion of time consisting of past memories, mistakes, regrets and disillusionments. Like Krapp, Winnie takes refuge in recounting her "good old memories," as she gradually approaches to his end, sinking into the earth. The past does no good for Winnie or Krapp, nor does the present. Time cannot be a healing power for the wounds that time itself has opened in their very hearts. For "they cannot rely on a past history to confirm their own existence, their own subjectivity; but they can define themselves, even if it is only from moment to moment, in the actions and the words that they perform day after day and night after night" as in the words of David Pattie (393).

Character

> What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. (6-7)

So writes Henry James in his influential essay "The Art of Fiction." Properly speaking, James poses rhetorical questions to propose that characters and events cannot be thought in isolation from the plot by which they are connected and through which they gain significance within narrative. It is through the series of actions that we come to realize the characters, and it is through the characters that we begin to trace the chain of events within narrative. In other words, the actions and the characters coexist in narrative so that the main text comes into existence.

Aristotle in *Poetics* claims that "without action tragedy would be impossible, but without character it would be still possible importance to the tragedy" (12). As the quotation indicates, Aristotelian poetics regards the notion of character as secondary, and in fact subsidiary to the notion of action. Similarly structuralist theorists being not much concerned with the psychological essences of the "character," prefer to regard it as a "participant" rather than a "being" in Roland Barthes' words (106). Roland Barthes' discussion of the notion of "character" appears under the subtitle of "Actions" in his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" (104). Barthes argues that classical theory treated character only "as a name, the agent of action" which later on gained a psychological essence and came to be considered as a "being," a "person," an

"individual" (104). From then on characters stripped off their role of being assistants to the actions, and gained certain roles within the texts.

Mieke Bal in her discussion of "character" in *Narratology* entitled "From Actors to Characters," proposes a different point of view. She leaves aside the classical connotation of the "character," puts forward another term "actor" and draws a distinction between the two terms. According to Bal the term "actor" is a "general" and encompassing term, while "character" is a "specific" one (114). Bal's "actor" may refer to anything, to a dog, a cat, an object or a machine, while the "character" refers to the humanlike figures that the narrator tells the reader about:

> Characters resemble people. Literature is written by, for, and about people. That remains a truism, so banal that we often tend to forget it, and so problematic that we as often repress it with the same ease. On the other hand, the people with whom literature is concerned are not real people. They are fabricated creatures made up from fantasy, imitation, memory: paper people, without flesh and blood. That no satisfying, coherent theory of character is available is precisely because of this human aspect. The character is not a human being, but it resembles one. It has no real psyche, personality, ideology, or competence to act, but it does possess characteristics which make psychological and ideological descriptions possible. (115)

As the above remarks suggest, the issue of character is perhaps the most important category of narrative, and most liable to misconceptions, as on the level of the story, every character has different qualities in the same way that a real person does. The characters, as individuals, have different ideas, ideologies, points of view, and roles assigned to them by the author or the reader. The author endeavours to create the "character" on his imagination so that the image of the character appears before the eyes of the reader. Thus, the author and the reader collaborate in narrative to give birth to "character" whose existence depends on the "intellectual activity of authors and readers"

(Margolin 67). If the reader and the author collaborate in this construction process of the character, it can be asserted that the notion of the character is a constructed being, "an artistic product or artifice constructed [. . .] for some purpose" as in the words of Uri Margolin (66).

Mieke Bal touches upon some important details on the construction of the image of a character within narrative. She thinks that there are four principles which work together to construct the image of a character: "repetition, accumulation, relations to other characters and transformations" (126). When a reader comes across a character for the first time, it is for sure that the reader's knowledge of the character is very little. As the story goes on, some qualities of the character are repeated more often, and they emerge more clearly before the readers' eyes. Therefore, the reader gradually comes to know the character better. "Repetition" thus plays an important role in the construction process. In addition to this, the piling up of data, "accumulation," the collecting of the qualities and characteristics of the character, also helps the construction process of the reader. For instance, a character's ideas, obsessions and behaviours, all kinds of facts related with his life and individuality come together and form a whole. As a result, a clear, complete picture of the character emerges from the narrative. In the third place, "relations to other characters" also fulfils a function in this construction. The character's relation to itself or to the other characters of the narrative give the reader important clues about the character. Lastly, "transformation" is an equally important issue in constructing the image of a character. Bal claims that characters tend to change; this change may sometimes alter the whole image of the character. However, if the reader has a good

knowledge of the character's traits he may follow these transformations easily and describe them properly.

Characters are essential to the stories just as they are essential to Beckett's stage which is dominated by various storytellers with countless stories, jokes, anecdotes and old memories. Characters are the folks of the story-worlds with their different characteristics, ideas, obsessions and behaviours, beliefs and imaginations. These inhabitants shape both the narrative process and the reading process from the beginning to the end, guiding the reader through the paths narrative opens before them. Nonetheless, the notion of character undergoes a change in Beckett's drama. There, the characters are not always necessarily flesh and blood beings and not men or women in conventional sense. A light, a camera, a tape, a spool, an off-stage voice, or any simple object can be regarded as a character on Beckett's stage. A sleep-walker, a man in a wheelchair, men in ashbins or in urns may be the inhabitants of this space. They may not seem "proper" actors or characters in the accepted sense; yet, they reveal the essence of Beckett's unique dramaturgy.

CHAPTER III

DRAMA AND NARRATIVE: STORYTELLING ON STAGE

"It's time for my story." So announces Hamm in *Endgame* (34). Then he indulges in a session of pure storytelling on stage with many interruptions, but still with appetite. He tells his own story, various stories of other men, or the stories of *Everyman*. Whatever he tells immediately turns his isolated cave-like room into a theatre hall with full of audience ready to hear his fragmented accounts. Hamm's narrative changes the pace of the play just as his act of storytelling changes the tone of Beckett's drama. Hamm is not the only magician-like character of Beckett, whose words at once transforms the *space* into *stage*. Beckett's stage is filled with ardent storytellers, who resort to stories whenever they think that the world is too cruel with them; very much like the dramatist himself who always takes refuge in writing whenever he feels that the world is too much for him.

Perhaps it is better to ask why people tell stories before asking why Beckett employs such a dramatic technique as storytelling on his stage. The question "Why do people tell stories?" lends itself to various interpretations. Possible answers to this question explain the values of stories and storytelling for broadening our vision of the world and perceiving it with a clear sight in different ways. Stories enable one to get in touch with himself, thus connect him to the world outside with lifelong ties. Getting in

touch with oneself perhaps is the only reality that protects man from all the false and coloured attractions of the outside world. As in the words of Charles E. Winquist "Without a history or without a story, there is very little that we can say about ourselves" (102). Only when one feels that he has something to tell, does he prove his real existence and identity. Without a story, man can only live in the restricted, time-bound spaces of the moment, or of today. Being totally disconnected from the past, from the legends, myths and histories of mankind, he loses his track within the paths of humanity. He can neither free himself from the emptiness of the moment nor can he take shelter in modern lies of today.

Stories play great roles in our everyday lives. They function in multiple areas: sharing personal news, entertaining an audience, constructing identity, reporting current news, confessing sins or testifying at a court and so forth. Besides, storytelling gives us the opportunity to exchange experiences. Everyday many people in different corners of the world exchange their stories from the moment they open their eyes to the world till the moment of death. A baby cries in his birth chamber, and tries to tell that he is hungry; while his mother in her death bed looks into the very eyes of the people around in an effort to plead for mercy. Every man in one way or another finds himself within this web of storytelling which surrounds him from the very heart. The situation is the same for Beckett's characters who are entangled in an endless web of stories, memories, and various kinds of narratives on stage.

Beckett's use of different narrative forms on stage, signals a new technique in drama. Nonetheless, Beckett is not the first to employ such a technique on stage; the history of drama has witnessed many forms of narrative used in plays for different

purposes, from creating a distancing effect to revealing psychological content. However, Beckett's work along with Bertold Brecht and Harold Pinter stands as the most prominent example of the technique.

It should be noted that the English stage has always experienced plays with extended narratives; the plays with ballads, Homeric tales, and Biblical stories and pieces from mythology. British drama is filled with characters that have a passion for telling, with characters that shift into giving personal accounts; telling anecdotes, jokes and witty dialogues on stage. There are also different kinds of epilogues or prologues in which a character addresses the audience, lets them comment on the play, or he himself comments on it. There are plays in which a single character appears on the stage and begins telling the play as if the whole play were a story. There are plays where the characters flash back on previous scenes of the play and summarize the events to bring the story up to date. As in the words of Kristin Morrison "in whatever form – extended narratives recited as set pieces or compressed narratives with only a halo of story embellishing the dialogue − all these established narrative types function quite straightforwardly as familiar devices of poetry, rhetoric and drama" (5). All these narratives, the personal accounts, psychological revelations, confessions, memories, jokes and anecdotes delivered on stage actually play the most important part within the course of the dramatic events. These dialogues carry the whole dramatic action of the play, drawing the attention of the audience or the reader not only to the performance of the characters but also to their stories.

Exploring the *narrative* presence in Beckett's art of *drama*, it becomes clear that these two fields of study – narrative and drama − meet at converging paths on Beckett's stage. At that point, the distinction between showing and telling clearly appears. It can be

briefly put forward that drama acts what narrative tells or cannot tell, just as narrative tells what the drama acts or cannot act. What is meant by this tongue twister like sentence is that drama and narrative cooperate on Beckett's stage, and it is in fact the narrative that plays the most dominant collaborating part.

Storytelling Into Drama: *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*

"What I need now is stories . . ." (*Trilogy* 13)

Beckett did not carry over his talent to the stage until he completely emptied the setting of his novels. When the novels became quite abstract, without people, he took up writing for the stage. However, within time the plays too have lost shape and been fined down. The plays with expansive dialogues have turned into monologues and pure performances of mime, and finally ended up being voice plays. Explaining the reason for his shift from prose to drama, Beckett once wrote: "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 of a certain light. I wrote *Waiting for Godot*" (qtd. in Worton 69). In turning to dramatic form Beckett might have been searching for an order that he couldn't impose on his fiction, as compared to the chaos of the difficult prose. He might have thought that the theatre at least would allow him to create intact individuals who would evolve in the concrete space of the stage. He would end his "search of a respite from the wasteland of the prose" (qtd. in Gontarski xxii). This need and desire for control in a way determined the mode of Beckett's dramatic art.

Thus came *Waiting for Godot* with its applause and debate. Beckett's play written in 1949 was first directed by Antonin Artaud's pupil Roger Blin on 5 January 1953 in the Théatre de Babylon. Roger Blin was quite forthright to declare that he was actually impressed by the dialogue of the play, and was unsuccessful to grasp the deeper significance lying in it. However, he was more than a great help to Beckett who did not

hesitate to take Blin's advice on many points. Roger Blin put great effort onto the production *Waiting for Godot* and provided his author with a worldwide fame. From then on, it was no longer possible to describe how great an impact *Waiting for Godot* had on world literature. Ruby Cohn, an ardent Beckett scholar and critic, analyzes this impact in the following quotation:

> Now that any serious drama seeks a mythic dimension; now that disjunction is the familiar rhetorical pattern of stage speech; now that tragic depth always wears clown costume; now that the gestures of drama border on dance; now that expositions are quainter than soliloquies, and stage presence implies neither past nor future−now it may be hard to recall that it was not always so. (172)

For sure it was not always so. From then on Beckett's masterpiece *Waiting for Godot* together with his other works has been considered in the light of structuralism, post-structuralism, feminist and psychoanalytic criticism, along with modernist/postmodernist lines. Much has been said on the value of Beckett's works in regard to various kinds of schools and philosophical theories. This is not the place to undertake the delicate task of explicating Beckett's ideas and analyzing his plays in accordance with certain schools like Theatre of the Absurd or any philosophical theories like Existentialism or Phenomenology. Considering the fact that little effort has been put into the understanding of his plays in the light of narrative theory, this study intends to present a new approach to the plays and appreciate their value in accordance with "narrative presence," and specifically with "storytelling."

The following section intends to trace the narrative presence in two of Beckett's outstanding plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, within the context of one of the important aspects of narrative theory, dialogue.

Waiting for Godot

"To have lived is not enough for them."

"They have to talk about it." (WFG[4] 63)

One evening, on a lonely country road near a bare tree, two tramp-like men, are waiting for someone whom they call Godot. The two, Estragon ("Gogo") and Vladimir ("Didi") are not sure whether this Godot will be any help to them or whether they have come to the right place on the right day, since they do not have a clear notion of time and space. They fill the time as best as they can, by telling stories and jokes; by playing games and by some improvisational activities like dancing, miming falling and juggling. Soon there appears a man, Pozzo who is in his way to the fair to sell his slave, Lucky. The two couples spend certain time together; Pozzo eats his lunch, grants Estragon his bones, has Lucky dance and think aloud for them as a sign of their being friends. As soon as, Pozzo and Lucky leave, there appears a small boy with the news that Mr. Godot "won't come this evening but surely tomorrow" (50). The boy takes his leave, suddenly the night falls, two men in their solitude and despair think of hanging themselves from the tree, give up the idea at once and decide to go. They do not move, as the curtain falls.

The second scene does not bring much change to the atmosphere and the tone of the play except for the fact that the tree has a few leaves sprouted now. Estragon and Vladimir continue to do their daily routines to spend time. Pozzo and Lucky arrive for the second time; the former being blind and the latter dumb. After a brief interval, the boy comes again to deliver the same message as before. Abruptly, the sun sets, the moon

[4] Hereafter *Waiting for Godot shall be cited as WFG.*

rises, the two again revolve around the idea of committing suicide. Not being determinate enough they decide to leave again. The curtain falls, as they stay immobile gripped with fear, despair and hope in the eternal void of waiting.

Sandwiched between the void of waiting and the characters' vain efforts to fill that void, stories permeate *Waiting for Godot*. Storytelling is a means of coping with "being-in-time" for these characters. (Worton 70). They look forward to the future, but they do not have a past or a history. They only have their fragments of memories, bits and pieces of life accounts to tell in the entrapment of their eternal time. It seems that it has been now centuries that they have been waiting for Godot, there at the same spot:

> Vladimir: When I think of it . . . all these years . . . but for me . . . where would you be . . . (*Decisively.*) You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it.
>
> Estragon: And what of it?
>
> Vladimir: (*Gloomily.*) It's too much for one man. (*Pause, cheerfully.*) On the other hand what's the good of loosing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties. (10)

This captivation by the eternal time increases the characters' need for creating a past for themselves, and this they do by inventing stories and remembering the past with nostalgia. The first of these stories is Vladimir's discussion of the two thieves which he insistently tells to Estragon though he has no appetite for listening to it. "Where was I..." he asks; as if he has been telling the story for a while and has been interrupted by someone:

> Vladimir: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?
> Estragon: No.
> Vladimir: Shall I tell it to you?
> Estragon: No.

Vladimir: It'll pass the time. (*Pause).* Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One —
Estragon: Our what?
Vladimir: Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other . . . (*he searches for the contrary of saved*) . . . damned. (12)

It seems that what Vladimir tells is of no great importance to Estragon. However, Vladimir keeps philosophizing on the issue, raises a question and continues: "How is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved." "One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him" (12-13). What constitutes the base of Vladimir's story of the thieves on the cross is the uncertainty of the hope for salvation. Vladimir states this right at the beginning saying that "One of the thieves was saved. (*Pause*) It's a reasonable percentage. (*Pause*)" (11). He later on contemplates on the issue, and being rather surprised asks again: "Why believe him rather than the others?" (13). Vladimir thinks that there should be more than only one witness among the four to report that a thief was saved. However, only one of the four witnesses reports so. He comes to the conclusion that everybody believes him, as "it is the only version they know" (13).

Why is all this fuss about the thieves? What is it that makes these tramps talk about salvation, the Bible, the Saviour on a lone country road while waiting for a Godot who never comes? Perhaps this is the only story Vladimir knows, and this storytelling is his only means of killing time. From the outset, the story does not suggest any significant meaning considering the situation of the two men. However, in the deepest level there lies the actual motive that Beckett tries to put into the very heart of his play. From the very beginning Beckett prepares his audience for a conflicting future; a future that is bleak, yet not without hope. He constructs the play in such a way that the free play of

hope and *despair* is felt through the dialogues and conversational storytelling of Vladimir and Estragon.

In a conversation he had with Beckett Harold Hobson, being curious about why Vladimir and Estragon should indulge into such a discussion of Bible through this little story says: "And yet the thieves on the Cross interest you. Vladimir is troubled to account for one of them being lost and the other saved. How can you be so preoccupied with this when you do not believe in salvation?" (qtd. in Olney 13) Beckett explains as follows:

> I am interested in the shape of ideas even if I do not believe in them. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine. I wish I could remember 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. (qtd. in Olney 13)

Beckett in a way suggests that it is not important whether this story has a meaning, a message or not; what is crucial is the structure. The story is there, as its moral serves the characters well in their desperate situation. There is another point to be mentioned here; Beckett thinks that the sentence is by St. Augustine, yet it is actually a statement by St. Luke and referred to by St. Augustine in a couple of sermons. It seems that Beckett falls prey to the tricks of his memory like most of his characters living upon the stores of fragmented memories.

The second narrative of the first act is the story of the Englishman in the brothel. This time it is not Vladimir who suggests telling, but rather Estragon. Estragon begins his narrative soon after he "voluptuously" pronounces the word "calm" and notes that the English say "cawm" for "calm:" (16)

> Estragon: (*voluptuously.*) Calm . . . calm . . . The English say cawm. (*Pause.*)You know the story of the Englishman in the brothel?
> Vladimir: Yes.

Estragon: Tell it to me.
Vladimir: Ah stop it! (16)

Despite Vladimir's protestations Estragon begins: "An Englishman having drunk a little more than usual goes to a brothel. The bawd asks him if he wants a fair one, a dark one, or a red-haired one" (16). Estragon even asks Vladimir to "go on," with the intention of trying him. At this point Vladimir yells, "STOP IT!" and exits (16).

Ruby Cohn in her article "Beckett's German Godot" suggests an ending to this joke: In her version, the Englishman replies that he wants a boy. Shocked, the bawd threatens to call a policeman, whereupon the Englishman pleads, 'O no, they're too gritty' (42). Cohn actually links this story to the incident between the little boy and Estragon and Vladimir in the second act of the play. When Vladimir asks the Boy whether Mr. Godot's beard is fair or black, the German question becomes: "Blonde or . . . *he hesitates* black . . . *he hesitates* or red?" Whereas the standard line in English reads "Fair or… *(he hesitates*)…or black?" (92). Thus, Beckett provides a double irony in this joke of the Englishman in the brothel. He employs it not just to introduce laughter to the play but also a moment of intense emotion and dramatic tension, for the story incorporated into the play in the first act is not only told by the characters but also acted by them on stage in the second act. This illustrates the power of story behind Beckett's dramatic art.

Lucky's speech which appears towards the end of the first act is another kind of narrative which stops the action on stage for a while, and presents a performative storytelling. This monologue is prompted by Pozzo when Estragon and Vladimir want the boy to "think" or "dance" for them (42). Lucky's monologue is unique in the sense that it

is delivered by a character who, during the whole play, speaks only two sentences one of which is this seven hundred words long speech. In a play where conversational dialogue is abundant, it is remarkable that Lucky just speaks once and devastates all the ground. The following quotation constitutes one third of the whole speech and is included to give a clue about the rambling logorrhoea of Lucky.

> Lucky: Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing but not so fast and considering what is more that as a result of the labors left unfinished crowned by the Acacacacademy of Anthropopopometry of Essy-in-Possy of Testew and Cunard …the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labors abandoned left unfinished graver still abode of stones in a word I resume alas alas abandoned unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard (mélée, final vociferations) tennis...the stones...so calm...Cunard...unfinished. . . (42-43)

From the outset it is seen that nothing actually makes any sense in this speech. Whereas there are certain words that may be picked up as references to man's suffering in the world, God's being indifferent to this suffering, and man's being only a fading and dying "skull" in this world. These fragmented words actually allude to many different ideas and schools of Western thought. Many repetitions, puns like "quaquaquaqua" "Acacacacademy of Anthropopopometry" and lamentations of "Alas" should all be seen as mocking remarks considering Western philosophy, art and literature which according to Beckett proved to be artifacts in the shadow of two world wars. Lucky, once given the

chance to speak, narrates the whole story of Western philosophy together with man's odyssey through the maze of life.

Pozzo has also his story to tell. Unlike Lucky's agitated speech, Pozzo's speech is more like a universally made statement with a moral in it. In the second act when Pozzo and Lucky make their appearance for the second time, Vladimir wants Pozzo to ask Lucky to sing for them. Pozzo informs him that "he cannot even groan" let alone sing; as he is dumb. Vladimir, quite shocked, exclaims: "Dumb! Since when?" (89). Pozzo, getting furious about Estragon's and Vladimir's being obsessed so much with time, gives a brief account of what has happened:

> Pozzo: (*suddenly furious.*) Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (*Calmer.*) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (*He jerks the rope.*) On! (89)

This brief account of Pozzo's going blind and Lucky's going dumb can be considered a well made statement on the brevity of human life and apparent meaninglessness of existence. Pozzo indicates that man is suspended for one instant between the birth chamber and the chamber of death. He is stuck on the way between the womb and the tomb; the two adjoining factors of human life. Pozzo's speech is actually intellectual and philosophical, yet, it is pure fiction; the story, its moral and the metaphor carry the whole meaning.

Through Pozzo's furious remarks Beckett actually takes us to a journey in mind. He gives us a chance to experience the cyclical nature of man's life from birth to death quite like his play *Breath* which consists of the sound of an instant of recorded birth-cry,

followed by an amplified recording of somebody slowly inhaling and exhaling accompanied by an increase and decrease in the intensity of the light. There is then a second identical cry, and the piece ends.

However, neither Beckett nor his characters can end their battle with time and achieve to grasp its nuances. Their blurred notion of time only brings them the good old memories, bits and pieces of stories. Time has its destructive effect in store for these two men, Estragon and Vladimir; as it proceeds along in its cyclical orbit to eternity. This is perhaps best felt when they decide to hang themselves through the end of the first act, soon after they get the news that "Mr. Godot won't come this evening but surely tomorrow" (50).

> Estragon: How long have we been together all the time now?
> Vladimir: I don't know. Fifty years perhaps.
> Estragon: Do you remember the day I threw myself into the Rhone?
> Vladimir: We were grape-harvesting.
> Estragon: You fished me out.
> Vladimir: That's all dead and buried.
> Estragon: My clothes dried in the sun.
> Vladimir: There is no good harking back on that. Come on. (53)

Estragon fervently digs up his memories and tells stories. He wants to remember how they used to get along with each other. He wants to unravel the certain history they have shared together. This is the only way of a Beckettian character of healing the wounds that time has opened up in his very heart.

Waiting for Godot is rich in such story units that sometimes appear in the form of a memory, a joke, a song or a pure monologue and most of the times of unending dialogues. No matter what form they are, these units signal the presence of a narrative quality which turns the whole text into a performance enriched with various techniques.

One of these techniques appears at the beginning of Act II when Vladimir enters and performs a mime before reciting the first text of the act, a narrative poem on a dog:

> Vladimir: A dog came in–
>
> *Having begun too high he stops, clears his throat, resumes:*
>
> 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
> And dug the dog a tomb–
>
> *He stops, broods, resumes:*
>
> Then all the dogs came running
> And dug the dog a tomb
> And wrote upon the tombstone
> For the eyes of dogs to come:
>
> ...
>
> Then all the dogs came running
> And dug the dog a tomb–
>
> *He stops, broods. Softly.*
>
> And dug the dog a tomb . . . (57-58)

What is this endless narrative about dogs? The song is actually a typical nursery rhyme; however here Vladimir recites it as if he is training himself and developing a kind of acting style. Donald McManus in his book *No Kidding!: Clown as Protagonist* explains that the very same song is used to be employed by Bertold Brecht as a device for training actors in the 1930's. He continues that different variations of dog songs have been employed as actor-training devices at the Berliner Ensemble to this day (89). As it is known "song and narration" is a theatrical convention of Brechtian stage. Brecht makes use of many songs, ballads and poems in his drama to heighten the emotion of the scenes and to narrate what is going on. It is also a technique of alienating the audience and thus

making them question the run of events. However, in the case of *Waiting for Godot*, it is apparent that neither Beckett nor Vladimir has the intention of heightening the emotion of the play. One learns to except nothing more in a play filled with such misery and despair.

In the mean time, a number of critics have commented that the song may also represent the cyclical structure of the play. Vladimir might have indulged in such a narration to bring the course of events up to date and to implicate the cyclical nature of the play. For instance, in the play, there are two identical acts, a couple waiting for Godot both, obsessions with boots and hats in both, another couple Pozzo and Lucky appear in both, there are two messenger boys, night falling and moon rising at the end of both acts, game playing and storytelling by the couples; their endless struggle to leave each other but eventually failing to do so. The finale of the both acts: "Let's go. They don't move" (94). Therefore "Vladimir repeats the whole lyric until it becomes like the picture of a picture within the picture; that is, an internalized repetition of itself" as in the words of Kenneth Kramer (20). Vladimir may be reminding us this whole cycle by reciting this repetitious song and presenting before us a panorama of the play.

There lies Beckett's universe of characters with all their stories, memories, chronicles and Biblical allusions, jokes and songs. By introducing such story-like elements into his play *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett prepares us for a highly developed technique which would be essential in *Endgame* and his later plays.

Endgame

"It's time for my story." (*Endgame* 34)

Originally written in French entitled *Fin de Partie* and translated into English by Beckett himself, *Endgame* was given its first London performance at George Devine's Royal Court Theatre in London, 1957. *Endgame* is a one-act play with four characters, set in a bare cell, in a stark, grey-lit room with two high windows in one wall. The room is furnished only with the dustbins against the wall and Hamm's chair in the centre, and the picture with its face to the wall. Of the four characters of the play, only Clov can move to a certain extent. He has this stiff-legged gait and is unable to sit down. His master Hamm is blind and paralyzed in a wheelchair; he cannot stand up. There is also another couple, Hamm's legless parents Nagg and Nell, who live in dustbins placed on stage. The play revolves around the discussions of Clov and Hamm who have never been on good terms. Clov always wants to leave Hamm but never seems to be able to do so, and the action of the play is based on this "leaving" which is constantly deferred. As Michael Worton also puts "Godot is grounded in the promise of an arrival that never occurs, *Endgame* is the promise of a departure that never happens" (73).

The first movement of *Endgame* is Clov's of drawing back the curtains of two windows. Clov carries out his daily routine in a quite ritualistic way; he first stares at Hamm, who is sitting on a wheelchair, covered by an old sheet. He staggers offstage, returns with a stepladder and draws back the curtains for both windows; removes the sheet from the ashbins and raises the lid of both and looks within. Then he goes to

Hamm, removes the sheet covering him, folds it over his arm who in his dressing gown, a whistle hanging around his neck, and a handkerchief over his face, appears to be asleep. The whole opening scene is a pure mime composed of repetitive gestures. This very first action of the play gives us the feeling that *Endgame* begins right from the same spot where we have left Estragon and Vladimir, when they stay motionless as the curtain falls at the end of Act II only to be drawn back again by Clov.

Pointed by Beckett himself, there exists a resemblance between two plays: "You must realise that Hamm and Clov are Didi and Gogo at a later date, at the end of their lives ..." (qtd. in Bair 495). Whether "Hamm and Clov are Gogo and Didi at a later date" or not; it is for sure that they share certain common features that befit a typical Beckettian character. For instance; they are too like Didi and Gogo are mutually dependent couples who decide to leave one another but fail to do so. Being entrapped in their eternal, circular, static and thus "accursed" time, in a bare room with only a few objects, the two couples are both haunted by the sin of being born (*WFG* 89). Moreover, they are both engaged in an act of waiting which makes it impossible for them to arrive at the chosen destination. They have their own ways of coping with life and bearing the burden it puts upon them. Above all, they have their stories chronicles jokes and fragmented memories to tell so that they could pass the time, flee from its devastating impact and thus get the impression that they exist. In one way or another, they persuade themselves that they are living in this universe, recalling and recounting, thinking and enacting, playing games. All these efforts serve as proofs of existence for Beckett's characters who are obsessed with "being." Perhaps no one could explain this situation more clearly than Estragon who

asks his rhetorical question in glee: "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?" (69)

Leaving aside the little narrative units of *Waiting for Godot* and the turbulences of the two tramps Gogo and Didi, we should note that in *Endgame* the focus is now on Hamm's "chronicle" which dominates the whole play from the beginning to the end and illustrates Beckett's extensive use of storytelling within drama. Kristin Morrison commenting on the crucial role of Hamm's story to the course of the play says that "the whole point of *Endgame* lies in the interrelationship between this chronicle, this value-laden record of past events, and the words and actions which make up the dramatic present of the play. The play ends when the narrative ends" (28). Hamm is there to tell his stories. Very much like the Cartesian thought *cogito ergo sum*, Hamm has a story, therefore he is.

Just as Clov's mime at the opening scene sets the stage, Hamm's narrative starts the action of the play. His first story is heard soon after he and Clov quarrel about the meaning of the word "Yesterday." Hamm questions the meaning of "yesterday" asking furiously "Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday! " (32) Clov fiercely answers: "That means the bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything anymore, teach me others. Or let me be silent" (32). It seems that the word "yesterday," although it does not make any sense to Hamm, reminds him of his memories. After this brief discussion Hamm begins to tell a story about a madman he "once knew:"

> Hamm: I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come. He was a painter—and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see

him, in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness! *(Pause.)* He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes. *(Pause.)* He alone had been spared. *(Pause.)* Forgotten. *(Pause.)* It appears the case is... was not so... so unusual.

Clov: A madman? When was that?

Hamm: Oh way back, way back, you weren't in the land of the living. (32-33)

Like the characters in *Waiting for Godot*, the characters in *Endgame* do not have a clear notion of time, yet they manage to survive with this blurred notion by taking refuge in stories. After all why is this story? Why is it a madman, a painter, an engraver? The questions do remain unanswered. Hamm tells this story, as he wants to. Moreover, he wants to reassure himself that he is there with Clov and all these memories are now "way back" (33).

In *Endgame* one should not be surprised to come across such stories and with a "complex web of references, recurrences, reflections (which) might easily turn into a mere tangle" (Fletcher and Spurling 75). Although the theme of the play is simple and single, the play has a multi-layered construction. Therefore, one should not try to impose certain meanings into these stories, for it might disrupt the multilayered construction of the play.

Hamm's second story which he calls it as his "chronicle" comes soon after his quarrel with Clov again. The quarrel is in fact a nonsense discussion about the alarm, which is also a witty dialogue twisted by Hamm's sentences:

Hamm: Is it working? *(Pause. Impatiently.)* The alarm, is it working?
Clov: Why wouldn't it be working?
Hamm: Because it's worked too much.

> Clov: But it's hardly worked at all.
> Hamm: *(Angrily.)* Then because it's worked too little!
> Clov: I'll go and see. (*Exit Clov. Brief ring of alarm off. Enter Clov with alarm-clock. He holds it against Hamm's ear and releases the alarm. They listen to it ringing to the end. Pause.)* Fit to wake the dead! Did you hear it? (34)

After this petty dialogue on alarm, Hamm asks for a second time whether it is time for his painkiller or not. Getting quite angry, Clov declares his will to leave Hamm in the usual manner. He goes to the door, turns and says "I'll leave you" (34). Seeming to be quite used to the situation, Hamm does not take any interest in Clov's decision to depart. He begins to tell his story as if nothing has happened. In a sense, Hamm treats Clov as a little child who needs to be distracted by stories whenever he feels himself restless. This conduct of Hamm brings to our mind that Hamm might be detaining Clov's leave by telling him stories. Therefore, Hamm's stories serve as a deferring factor for Clov who constantly threatens Hamm to leave. Quite like the Scheherazade of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Hamm detains Clov from leaving till his story is totally finished. Hamm's own life is also deferred by this endless session of storytelling; he knows that this will be the end of him when there is no story left to tell.

"It's time for my story. Do you want to listen to my story?" so announces Hamm and his performance starts (34). Seeing that Clov has no appetite for his story, Hamm asks him to find out whether his father would like to hear it. His father is asleep and does not want to hear Hamm's story. Hamm urgently needs a listener for his story and an audience for his performance. He even bribes his father to listen to his story for a bonbon. However, Nagg is not satisfied; he wants a sugarplum. He says that he will not listen to the story unless he is given a sugarplum. That is the deal between the son and the father.

All is for a story which would make Hamm's life more bearable for a while, as indicated in his following piece:

> One! Silence! *(Pause.)* Where was I? *(Pause. Gloomily.)* It's finished, we're finished. *(Pause.)* Nearly finished. *(Pause.)* There'll be no more speech. *(Pause.)* Something dripping in my head, ever since the fontanelles. *(Stifled hilarity of Nagg.)* Splash, splash, always on the same spot. *(Pause.)* Perhaps it's a little vein. *(Pause.)* A little artery. *(Pause. More animated.)* Enough of that, it's story time, where was I? *(Pause. Narrative tone.)* The man came crawling towards me, on his belly. Pale, wonderfully pale and thin, he seemed on the point of— *(Pause. Normal tone.)* No, I've done that bit. *(Pause. Narrative tone.)* I calmly filled my pipe—the meerschaum, lit it with... let us say a vesta, drew a few puffs. Aah! Well, what is it you want? *(Pause.)* It was an extra-ordinarily bitter day, I remember, zero by the thermometer. But considering it was Christmas Eve there was nothing... extra-ordinary about that. Seasonable weather, for once in a way. *(Pause.)* Well, what ill wind blows you my way? He raised his face to me, black with mingled dirt and tears. *(Pause. Normal tone.)* That should do it. *(Narrative tone.)* No no, don't look at me, don't look at me. He dropped his eyes and mumbled something, apologies I presume… (35-36)

Thus begins Hamm his the two-page long "chronicle" and continues with distractions, interruptions and editorial changes till to the end of the play. Basically, the story is about a father who begs Hamm for bread for his dying son on Christmas Eve, "the very boy who grew up, in all probability, to be Clov" (Fletcher 54). Hamm tells the father that he doesn't have any bread, but instead offers to give him some corn to make a pot of porridge for the child.

It's no surprise that Hamm tells a father-son story like the play itself which gives clues about Hamm-Nagg relationship. Therefore, on its deepest level Hamm's chronicle might be considered as a speech which betrays Hamm's feelings about his father. For instance, when Hamm asks Clov whether he remembers his father or not, Clov answers in a weary tone complaining that Hamm has asked this question "millions of time" (29). Then Hamm speaks in a moody tone and says: "It was I was a father to you. . . My house

a home for you. (*Proudly.)*: But for me, *(gesture towards himself)* no father. But for Hamm, *(gesture towards surroundings)* no home. *(Pause.)*" (29-30). It might not be wrong to assert that Hamm's chronicle is about paternal love, the love Hamm never felt throughout his life, and the love he has lacked and failed in giving.

Hamm's chronicle undoubtedly dominates the play from the beginning to the end; it is told in three different narrating voices which Hamm himself arranges accordingly. Being a conscious storyteller, he adopts different tones and enlivens his narrative by representing the voices and accents of the characters in his story. When he begins to describe the man he has come across, he adopts a "narrative tone" (35). At some points he quotes the father's voice in narrative tone again. He finally uses his own voice as a kind of authorial intervention to talk about the course of the events and comment on the story and the characters:

> [. . .] It was a glorious bright day, I remember, fifty by the heliometer, but already the sun was sinking down into the... down among the dead. *(Normal tone.)* Nicely put, that. *(Narrative tone.)* Come on now, come on, present your petition and let me resume my labors. *(Pause. Normal tone.)* There's English for you. Ah well... *(Narrative tone.)* It was then he took the plunge. It's my little one, he said. Tsstss, a little one, that's bad. My little boy, he said, as if the sex mattered. Where did he come from? He named the hole. A good half-day, on horse. What are you insinuating? That the place is still inhabited? No no, not a soul, except himself and the child—assuming he existed. Good. I enquired about the situation at Kov, beyond the gulf. Not a sinner. Good. And you expect me to believe you have left your little one back there, all alone, and alive into the bargain? Come now! *(Pause.)* It was a howling day, I remember, a hundred by the anemometer. The wind was tearing up the dead pines and sweeping them... away. *(Pause. Normal tone.)* A feeble bit, that. (36)

At one point, Hamm indulges in a habit of talking about the weather and embellishes his narrative with some technical terms like "thermometer", "heliometer," "anemometer" and

"hygrometer" (35-37). As the narration goes in its natural course he suddenly interrupts it and wants to cut it short only to say that "I finally offered to take him into my service" (37). This time he adds interruptions to the story which is already filled up with pauses and authorial interventions, as if he did not have any intention of grasping the attention of his audience. However, he also shows that he cares very much for his story saying "I'll soon have finished with this story. Unless I bring in other characters. But where would I find them?" (37)

At this point Hamm whistles for Clov to come; and all of a sudden he suggests praying to God in the company of Clov and Nagg. He even forces them to join him in this act of praying. It is really strange that Hamm tries to communicate with God when he needs new characters to continue with his story. Quite ironically he reminds us of the Romans and Greeks who pray to the Moses for inspiration. Together with Nagg and Clov, Hamm begins his praying session. However, he is constantly disturbed by Nagg's childish insistence on having his sugarplum. They could not pray; thus they break off with disrespectful remarks. The prayer scene closes as Nagg almost curses Hamm for not giving him the sugarplum he has promised to. Upon realizing that he has been deceived by Hamm, Nagg thinks of a way of taking revenge. He tries to depress Hamm by recounting Hamm's childhood fears; how he used to cry when he was frightened in darkness. He also gives the details of their neglect of the child and being indifferent to his needs. The scene is cardinal in the sense that Nagg's account reveals much about the relationship between Hamm and Nagg, between the son and the father:

Nagg: Me sugar-plum!

Hamm: There are no more sugar plums! *(Pause.)*

> Nagg: It's natural. After all I'm your father. It's true if it hadn't been me it would have been someone else. But that's no excuse. *(Pause.)* Turkish Delight, for example, which no longer exists, we all know that, there is nothing in the world I love more. And one day I'll ask you for some, in return for a kindness, and you'll promise it to me. One must live with the times. *(Pause.)* Whom did you call when you were a tiny boy, and were frightened, in the dark? Your mother? No. Me. We let you cry. Then we moved you out of earshot, so that we might sleep in peace. *(Pause.)* I was asleep, as happy as a king, and you woke me up to have me listen to you. It wasn't indispensable, you didn't really need to have me listen to you. *(Pause.)* I hope the day will come when you'll really need to have me listen to you, and need to hear my voice, any voice. *(Pause.)* Yes, I hope I'll live till then, to hear you calling me like when you were a tiny boy, and were frightened, in the dark, and I was your only hope. (38-39)

Nagg's speech serves as a sequel to the prayer scene and to Hamm's chronicle. All are actually related to one another to illustrate the relationship between the father and the son; to show how they are mutually dependent on each other. The scene reveals that those childhood fears of Hamm are now in fact recurrent in adult Hamm at a later date. Like the hopeless and helpless "tiny boy" Hamm, who wakes up in the middle of the night to have his father listen to him, now grown-up Hamm bribes his father to listen to his story. Hamm in a way copies his father's own earlier treatment of him. For instance, he objects to Nagg's disturbing and keeping him awake by storytelling when Nagg and Nell talk about their memories. This is like Nagg's objection to having his own sleep interrupted by Hamm's infant cries in the frightening dark.

When Hamm announces that it is time for his story, he also announces his need for listeners. He wants to articulate himself; he wants to communicate and relate his story to others. That is why he bribes his father for listening to his story, and now his father, quite resented, by reminding him of the old days in a way tries to avenge on him. His only way of taking revenge is to utter a half threat, half curse like sentence: "I hope the

day will come when you'll really need to have me to listen to you, and need to hear my voice, any voice" (39). They are both aware of their need for tales and listeners. Therefore, Nagg touches his soft spot when he threatens him to shut his ears to his story when the time comes.

Like Nagg's being the "only hope" for Hamm, storytelling is the "only hope" for Hamm's survival. Hamm should go on with his story and the show must go on. As in the words of Kristin Morrison "if he ends his story, he will indeed be alone in the dark, a solitary child abandoned, no father to listen and comfort" (33). Hamm endures as best as he can, but there comes the moment when he thinks "That's enough" of the story. He finds himself abandoned both by his father and his son, Clov. He gets rid of all the objects in which he used to find solace. He takes off his glasses, "throws away the gaff, throws away the dog tears the whistle from his neck" (52). He prepares himself for the inevitable end, the endgame; for the characters are all weary of this game which gets more and more tormenting for them. We seem to hear his divine voice, his very last announcement: "It is time '*to end'* my story" (emphasis is mine). He recites "a little poetry:"

> [. . .] You prayed— *(Pause. He corrects himself.)* You CRIED for night; it comes— *(Pause. He corrects himself.)* It FALLS: now cry in darkness. *(He repeats, chanting.)* You cried for night; it falls: now cry in darkness. *(Pause.)* Nicely put, that. *(Pause.)* And now? *(Pause.)* Moments for nothing, now as always, time was never and time is over, reckoning closed and story ended. *(Pause. Narrative tone.)* [. . .] Since that's the way we're playing it... *(he unfolds handkerchief)* ...let's play it that way... *(he unfolds)* ...and speak no more about it... *(he finishes unfolding)* ...speak no more. *(He holds handkerchief spread out before him.)* Old stancher! *(Pause.)* You... remain. *(Pause. He covers his face with handkerchief, lowers his arms to armrests, remains motionless.)* (52-53)

Thus ends Hamm's chronicle with the exclamation "Old stancher!"(53). He discards everything except the handkerchief that covers his face and stops the flow of blood. This "Old stancher!" is indeed considered a true and a loyal friend to Hamm compared to the ones he has been getting along. This final tableau of the play dramatizes what Hamm's chronicle has revealed throughout. Also mentioned by Hugh Kenner in his article "Life in the Box" that the last soliloquy of the play is a proof how much Beckett's drama relies on words rather than actions:

> [. . .] Beckett transforms Hamm's last soliloquy into a performance, his desolation into something prepared by the dramatic machine, his abandoning of gaff, dog and whistle into a necessary discarding of props, and the terminal business with the handkerchief into, quite literally, a curtain speech. *Endgame* ends with an unexpected lightness, a death rather mimed than experienced; if it is "Hamm as stated, and Clov as stated, together as stated," the mode of statement has more salience than a paraphrase of the play's situation would lead one to expect. (47)

It is evident that Hamm's story serves a double function in the play. Through this story Hamm reveals his most intimate feelings, his neglect, and his being neglected, his resentment and hatred; but he also conceals the ones he wants to. One should remain a bit aloof not to impose certain interpretations into the story itself, as Hamm's stories should not be fully trusted. After all, he is a storyteller in search of new characters to make up new stories. He is a conscious performer, and actor, a "Hamm-let." Very much like the triple roles of Hamlet, as a son, a prince and an intellectual Hamm has his roles of a father, a son and a storyteller neither of which he fulfils properly.

Apart from this long, single narrative of Hamm, there are little accounts of memories told by Nagg and Nell as a means of amusement in their moments of nostalgia. These memories reveal the secrets of Nagg and Nell relationship. According to the critic

Ruby Cohn, this Nagg and Nell relationship functions as a “subplot” within the story and within the play (147). In other words the play contains two narrative breaks, “performances within the performance” (Kenner 48).

The dialogues of Nagg and Nell consist in simple and single words mostly references to old memories. Nagg and Nell frequently challenge their memory to remember the days when the two were happy. In one of such moments, Nagg asks Nell if she wants to hear the story of the tailor. He thinks that it will cheer her up as it always did. He even adds that the first time he told the story she almost laughed herself to death on Lake Como. Though Nell is not in the mood of listening to his story, Nagg begins:

> Let me tell it again. *(Raconteur's voice.)* An Englishman, needing a pair of striped trousers in a hurry for the New Year festivities, goes to his tailor who takes his measurements. *(Tailor's voice.)* "That's the lot, come back in four days, I'll have it ready." Good. Four days later. *(Tailor's voice.)* "So sorry, come back in a week, I've made a mess of the seat." Good, that's all right, a neat seat can be very ticklish. A week later. *(Tailor's voice.)* "Frightfully sorry, come back in ten days, I've made a hash of the crotch." Good, can't be helped, a snug crotch is always a teaser. Ten days later. *(Tailor's voice.)* "Dreadfully sorry, come back in a fortnight, I've made a balls of the fly." Good, at a pinch, a smart fly is a stiff proposition. *(Pause. Normal voice.)* I never told it worse. *(Pause. Gloomy.)* I tell this story worse and worse. *(Pause. Raconteur's voice.)* Well, to make it short, the bluebells are blowing and he ballockses the buttonholes. *(Customer's voice.)* "God damn you to hell, Sir, no, it's indecent, there are limits! In six days, do you hear me, six days, God made the world. Yes Sir, no less Sir, the WORLD! And you are not bloody well capable of making me a pair of trousers in three months!" *(Tailor's voice, scandalized.)* "But my dear Sir, my dear Sir, look— *(disdainful gesture, disgustedly)* —at the world— *(Pause.)* and look— *(loving gesture, proudly)* —at my TROUSERS!" (21-22)

It is apparent that the tailor in the story is consistently messing up and delaying the customer’s orders for a pair of trousers. Being quite outraged the customer remarks that God created the world in six days while it has taken the tailor three months to make a pair

of trousers. Nagg tells this story to amuse Nell while they are trying to kill time in ashbins. Perhaps no other intention or meaning should be sought in this recounting. Nagg's story is there simply because he resorts to storytelling in his desperate situation. He finds solace in this act of recalling and recounting, as it passes the time and brings the characters closer to their end. However, it should be noted that in *Endgame* and in all the other plays of Beckett "Not meaning anything becomes the only meaning" (Adorno 69). Therefore the anecdote, focusing on many delays and repetitions, may be referring to Hamm's life which is the epitome of repetitions and delays. These delays provide Hamm with certain power to act the way he does just as they enable the customer to act in the way he does.

Another thing to be noted is that, as the tailor takes pride in what he has done and complains about the world, Hamm takes pride in telling stories and shuns the world in his cave. These manoeuvres help Hamm to survive and continue with his story till to the last moment. However, they remain vague throughout the play. Perhaps no one can describe the nature of this shift in Hamm's movements better than his creator Beckett:

> Hamm is a king in this chess game lost from the start. From the start he knows he is making loud senseless moves. That he will make no progress at all with the gaff. Now at the last he makes a few senseless moves as only a bad player would. A good one would have given up long ago. He is only trying to delay the inevitable end. Each of his gestures is one of the last useless moves which put off the end. He is a bad player. (qtd. in Ruby Cohn 152)

One can never be sure whether Hamm is a good player or not in this game of life, but it is certain that he is a good storyteller who weaves into the plot of life itself in his *ivory tower* looking over the world shattering before him.

Dialogue as Action in Samuel Beckett's Drama

"What is there to keep me here?"

"The dialogue." (*Endgame* 39)

Waiting for Godot and *Endgame* have proved to be the plays after which Western drama would never be the same again. Both plays are constructed in such a way that the action and the dialogue, coloured with pauses, provide a feast for the senses and the mind. In both plays, there is little action on stage, as in the words of Estragon: "Nothing happens nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (41). However, there is an abundance of dialogue; be it mere stories, jokes, anecdotes and songs. The conversation between the characters, their everyday talks, and physical exchanges certainly bear a dramatic quality which carry the play to a different realm. These characters all confined to a bare space, struggling in an endless void, try to give meaning to their existence by talking and telling; recalling and recounting. This conversational storytelling makes up the whole performance of Beckett's drama.

Quite in a metatheatrical way these characters all know that they are situated somewhere on this world stage, playing their roles, trying to amuse the audience by making gestures, telling stories and sometimes only by keeping silent for moments. These characters are all aware of these activities and thus they borrow much from the theatrical language of stage. For instance, when Vladimir goes offstage to relax, Estragon calls after him: "At the end of the corridor, on the left." Vladimir replies, "Keep my seat" (35). Estragon "advances to front, halts facing auditorium" and says "Inspiring prospects" (13-

14). They discuss about the form of their mime and comment on the very play they are in. They always keep in mind that they are the sole characters of this ongoing show at this performance hall called life:

> Vladimir: Charming evening we're having.
> Estragon: Unforgettable.
> Vladimir: And it's not over.
> Estragon: Apparently not.
> Vladimir: It's only beginning.
> Estragon: It's awful.
> Vladimir: Worse than the pantomime.
> Estragon: The circus.
> Vladimir: The music-hall.
> Estragon: The circus. (34-35)

Similarly in *Endgame,* Clov and Hamm have dialogues which give us the sense that they are really playing out their roles. At one point Clov turns his telescope on the audience and comments, "I see...a multitude...in transports...of joy. That's what I call a magnifier" (25). Hamm, too has his own comments on the course of events, he is more like a professional actor when he says furiously, "An aside, ape! Did you never hear an aside before? I'm warming up for my last soliloquy" (49). Other than being aware of his role as an actor, Hamm is also aware of his role as a storyteller. He is constantly making up stories and seeking listeners for these stories. Besides, he is quite skilled in this art of storytelling, as he adopts various tones as "narrative tone" and "normal tone" while narrating his "chronicle." He also intervenes in the course of the events and comments on the characters of his story. He is a conscious storyteller, and also a "modest" one:

> Clov: Oh, by the way, your story?
> Hamm: *(surprised)* What story?
> Clov: The one you've been telling yourself all your days.
> Hamm: Ah you mean my chronicle?
> Clov: That's the one. *(Pause.)*

> Hamm: *(modestly)*: Oh not very far, not very far. *(He sighs.)* There are days like that, one isn't inspired. *(Pause.)* Nothing you can do about it, just wait for it to come. *(Pause.)* No forcing, no forcing, it's fatal. *(Pause.)* I've got on with it a little all the same. *(Pause.)* Technique, you know. *(Pause. Irritably.)* I say I've got on with it a little all the same. (40)

All this "farce day after day" that they experience indicates nothing but the performative quality of conversational storytelling. Their everyday talk with its repetitions, witty dialogues and pauses illustrate how the utterances of the characters change the text into performance. In contrast to the conventional theatre which has always put much value on action, on movements and gestures; Beckett's drama is mostly made of words. His characters are endowed with an aspect of simplicity which enables the audience to grasp the meaning of their gestures and speeches immediately.

Considering these aspects, critics have often identified Beckett's theatre with clownery and with music hall comedy, a form of comedy with comic turns and songs. The typical music hall actor comes to stage, tells his jokes with certain comic turns and ends his performance with a song. Sometimes he is accompanied by a partner with whom they indulge in cross-talk routines. These two men often serve as counterparts to each other. One is "straight" in the sense that he has "common sense" and the other one is "funny" lacking common sense (Fletcher and Spurling 63).

Another form of drama which is thought befitting to Beckett's art is mime, acting out a story, with simple repetitious movements and without the use of speech. It is evident that both mime form and the music-hall comedy form are apparent in Beckettian drama in which a clown-like protagonist delivers speeches and performs gestures to pass the time and "cheat his own boredom" (Fletcher 58).

For instance, in the opening scene of *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon pulls and tugs demonstratively at his boot. He seems to be obsessed with the boots that give him so much trouble; he lets his trousers drop about his feet when untying its belt like string. Vladimir constantly looks about his hat, he taps on the crown of his bowler to dislodge a flea that is troubling him; Clov also tries to destroy fleas by shaking insecticide into his trousers. Pozzo eats his lunch noisily, fills his pipe, and uses his vaporizer, all of this with an unnecessarily satisfied air. On the other hand, in *Endgame*, Clov has his ritual of drawing the curtains, moving the stepladder about the stage and looking outside by his telescope. This tedious re-enacting of the smallest actions, this endless talk on petty things, the repetitious and cyclical mode of the plays, the doublings of the dialogues are undoubtedly and typically Beckettian. Certainly above examples are only one small part of the heap and can be varied, yet they are significant in the sense that they illustrate how Beckett's dramatic technique attaches great importance to mime. This can be seen in Beckett's own statement once made to Charles Marowitz in a conversation:

> Producers don't seem to have any sense of form in movement. The kind of form one finds in music, for instance where themes keep recurring. When, in a text, actions are repeated, they ought to be made unusual the first time, so that when they happen again−in exactly the same way−an audience will recognize them from before. (qtd. in Fletcher 65)

Beckett wants to indicate that what concerns him much is to uncover the sense of movement which lies beneath the words. That is why his art of drama is scarce in action but abundant in dialogues which self-reflexively are also actions themselves. Perhaps the key to understand the dynamics of Beckett's drama is to unravel the underlying structures dominating the characters' speech, "the dialogue."

In both *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* we have witnessed that the action is simple and little; so the importance of dialogue is heightened to a considerable point. Therefore, the only action is actually limited to the scenes enacted by the characters in their dialogues. Being aware of this, the characters also remind us how cardinal a role dialogue plays in their lives. When Clov makes one of his usual decisions to leave Hamm, and Hamm one of his usual deferrals, Clov asks in despair: "What is there to keep me here?" Hamm answers in advance: "The dialogue" (39-40).

Beckett has made the dialogue almost a stylistic device and brought it to a point where the audience should feel an urgent need to immerse himself in its colourful tone. While reading the plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, one does not only listen to the stories of Estragon and Vladimir or Hamm and Nagg, but also experiences a pure performance running before him, as he takes another sip of his coffee in his armchair. At that point the boundaries between narrative and story become blurred. There comes the question what is the difference between reading a script composed largely of dialogue and experiencing a play at theatre composed of very little action? Is there any difference at all? We will be seeking an answer to this question throughout the study.

Beckett's characters experiment with dialogue style to the fullest just as he himself experiments with narrative and drama. Once introduced into Beckettian universe, the reader learns how to decipher the fragmented dialogues, words and speeches as the stories of the characters fold and unfold before him. He also gets the chance to see different sides of the characters and to gain access into their hidden worlds through the characters' narratives made up of dialogues. These dialogues with their game-like quality invite the reader to accompany the characters in their ongoing game of life.

Foundations of Samuel Beckett's Catatonic World in Waiting for Godot and Endgame: Maurice Maeterlinck's the Blind and the Intruder

In both *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* "Beckett has created an image of the appalled, motionless world of catatonia" on stage (Alvarez 93). His drama certainly has its antecedents. Advanced by Alfred Jarry and Antonin Artaud, followed by Ionesco, Adamov and Genet the "new theatre" has opened the path for many dramatists including Samuel Beckett. His academic studies also introduced him to the world of French Symbolists and to their theories of theatre. However, there was another influence, a great figure whose vision of a theatre of statues, reflections, sleepwalkers and silence undoubtedly enabled him to lay the foundations of his own art of drama. It was Maurice Maeterlinck, Belgian poet, playwright and philosopher.

Maurice Maeterlinck is considered to be a great contribution to Modern Drama. His plays with their focus on ritual and gesture, on silence and pause are often regarded as the pioneers to absurd theatre. Maeterlinck's career dates back to 1893 when the famous director Lugné Poe produced Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas and Mélisande*. Poe's style is said to have affinities with Maeterlinck's theory of drama, in the sense that Poe, by placing a single light on the stage and employing minimum stage decoré creates a mysterious and gloomy atmosphere before the audience, which Maeterlinck favours very much. Maeterlinck actually studied to become a doctor of law at the request of his father. He spent a considerable time in Paris in 1885, during the time when Paris was enjoying the heyday of Impressionism in the visual arts and Symbolism in poetry. Cézanne,

Monet, Pisarro, Gaugin and many others were giving their greatest works of art. It was also the time when Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine and Mallarmé were blooming in the colourful flower garden of Paris. Maeterlinck quite influenced by the artistic atmosphere of the city composed his first narrative "the Massacre of the Innocents," which appeared in *La Pléiade*, a literary magazine published by his friends in Paris. Two years later, came the second short story by Maeterlinck, "Onirology" and appeared in *La Revue Belge*. In 1889, Maeterlinck decided to publish a volume of poetry titled as "Hothouses." Thereafter, Maeterlinck tried himself in a field which will later be his main focus of interest in his career and in his life. He wrote his first play *Princess Maleine* − a fairy tale-like play set up in a northern land and tells the story of a royal family and a love affair. Maeterlinck sent a copy of his first play *Princess Maleine* to Mallarmé in Paris, which was in turn then sent to Octave Mirbeau for a review in the *Figaro*. Months later wrote Mirbeau in *Figaro:* "[…] Maurice Maeterlinck has given us the most original work of this time and the most naïve also, comparable, do I dare say it? superior in beauty to what is most beautiful in Shakespeare?" (Qtd in Knapp 39) This was actually a turning point in Maeterlinck's career as a dramatist, and that he wrote his second play *The Intruder* immediately after he received Mirbaeu's criticism on his first play. As the years passed, Maeterlinck's interest in drama increased so did his number of plays. Then, came *The Blind, The Seven Princesses, Pelleas and Melisande* subsequently.

The Intruder and *The Blind* stand as two different plays among the other plays in the sense that they exemplify Maeterlinck's theory of static drama. This part of the chapter intends to trace these two plays as influences on Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame.*

The Intruder

First produced on May 20 1891, in Paris at Théatre d'Art and acted by Lugné Poe, later to be director of the Théatre de L'Oeuvre, Maeterlinck's first play *The Intruder* revolves around the theme of death. On the surface nothing happens in the play; the family members, a blind grandfather, a father and an uncle together with three daughters wait for the Mother's recovery after a child birth. A relative, the second daughter of the blind grandfather is expected. The other members of the family, except the grandfather are assured that the mother is getting very well. However, the blind grandfather envisions a terrible night awaiting the family. Finally the expected visitor arrives in the form of Death.

In *The Intruder* the whole action is actually based on the act of "waiting" which brings together a kind of terror, a feeling of anger, anxiety and fear to the dark room. This act of waiting is mostly carried out by words, by dialogues, by pauses and silences, which is due to the fact that Maeterlinck's theory of drama requires minimum action employed on stage. What is seen on Maeterlinck's stage actually emerges from the lines of the text and from the words of the actors rather than their gestures. Bettina Knapp in her study on Maeterlinck describes the dramatist's style as follows:

> For Maeterlinck theatre reflected an inner search based on an intuitive experience. He sought to create a mood and make man's soul manifest through a silent stage language and through rituals devoid of nearly all motion, each restrained gesture being a sign or symbol suggesting some profound or mysterious reality. A nearly static condition had to reign on stage, permitting. (42)

Maeterlinck believed in a certain economy of acting, and thought that one could also reveal man's inner sides almost in a motionless stage. Thus, he always favoured "static" plays with bare decorés with a few objects, and with immobile characters who are trying to survive in certain mysterious situations. His idea of a "static drama" came into being in his earlier play *The Intruder*, a simple, static yet a neat piece of work.

The Intruder, befitting Maeterlinck's style, is set in "a gloomy room in an old chateau" with "stained-glass windows" (9). The room has three doors, a left door leading to the dying mother's room, the right one leading to the newly-born baby's room and a secret one leading to the outside. The family members get into contact with the outside world only through the windows and through the daughters who constantly fulfil the wills and orders of the family, as the following dialogue indicates:

> The Grandfather: And you see no one, Ursula?
> The Daughter: No one, grandfather.
> The Uncle: How is the weather?
> The Daughter: Very fine. Do you hear the nightingales?
> The Uncle: Yes, yes!
> The Daughter: A little wind is rising in the avenue.
> The Grandfather: A little wind in the avenue, Ursula?
> The Daughter: Yes; the trees are stirring a little. (16-17)

Like the arrhythmic dialogue above, the tone and the pace of the play is monotonous. The characters, without any connection to the outside world, live in their "gloomy and damp" atmosphere, and show resistance to leaving the room they all share. It seems that they have set up everything in and upon that room around which the world seems to be revolving. This is apparent in the words of the blind grandfather who says "We had better

stay here. You don't know what may happen" (10). They feel themselves safe and sound in that room, whereas the outside is threatening and dangerous, the "nights are damp and cold:"

> The Three Daughters: Come here, grandfather. Sit under the lamp.
>
> The Grandfather: It seems to me it is not very light here.
>
> The Father: Shall we go out on the terrace, or shall we stay in the room?
>
> The Uncle: Wouldn't it be better to stay here? It has rained all the week, and the nights are damp and cold. (9)

As to the characters; they appear as archetypes rather than as real beings. They do not have their names but rather roles as the father, the uncle and the daughter. Among the other characters only the grandfather has certain qualities that make him a distinguished, proper character. The grandfather is endowed with a quality of omniscience; being totally blind he lives upon his senses and feelings. In his own words, he does not "see" the things as the others do (10). Thus, he is put on a different realm from the other characters of the play. As he lives upon his intuitions in a different realm, he actually transcends the limits of that dark, cold, damp room and reaches into a plane where he can truly see what is happening around him. The grandfather's intuition reflects a universe where spatiotemporal relations are transcended. He is the inhabitant of this "different" that is spaceless and timeless universe.

As the time proceeds and the family keeps waiting, their dialogues become more and more meaningless. They desperately seek ways of spending time while waiting. When the Uncle asks "What shall we do while we are waiting?" the grandfather answers as if he has lost his sense: "Waiting for what?" (16). They listen for the slightest sounds; thinking that there must be someone in the garden as "the nightingales are silent all at

once" and "the swans are frightened" (18). They do not feel at ease when they don't hear the usual voices of the night. The grandfather wants the daughter to shut all the windows and the door, as he is about to take a nap.

The family indulges in a conversation, while the grandfather is almost asleep. He wakes up in anger assuming that someone is standing at the glass door. The family members try to convince him that there is no one at the door. The tension gets higher and higher as the grandfather frightens everyone in the family with his odd behaviours and strange questions:

> The Eldest Daughter: Grandfather! Grandfather! What is the matter with you?
> The Grandfather: Something has happened! ... I am sure my daughter is worse!...
> The Uncle: Are you dreaming?
> The Grandfather: You don't want to tell me! ... I see plainly there is something!...
> The Uncle: In that case you see better than we. (37)

The grandfather insisting on his intuitions says that there "in the midst" of the family sits a stranger (41). He complains that the family is keeping a secret from him and says fervently: "You need not try to deceive me any longer; it is too late now, and I know the truth better than you!..." (47). Quite ironically the uncle exclaims: "But after all we are not blind, are we?" (47)

The irony of the situation lies at the heart of the text itself. The blind grandfather gains his power from his sightlessness and acts upon his intuitions. Thus, he cannot feel at ease, and complains about every little thing. It seems that he wants to take control over his surrounding; and wants to feel the light, the light of the truth. However, he already knows that his daughter is going to die soon. He already feels the darkness of death − the

eternal darkness that falls upon human beings. There is no way to end this darkness, yet he tries his best. “Is it light outside?” Is it very dark in the room?” he constantly inquires. (49,50). Then comes a moment when he can no longer bear this fear and anguish of the awful truth−death. He cries: “I wish I were somewhere else!” “I don’t know where, into another room no matter where! no matter where! . . .” (52).

As the play comes closer to the end the baby who has never cried before is heard crying. The family hurries to the baby’s chamber. There comes a “deathly stillness” after the noise of the “heavy steps” (55). The Intruder – death has arrived as the grandfather has already predicted. The Mother at the left stage exists from life just as the baby steps into world from the right side. This ending echoes the oddyssey of man which begins at the birth chamber and ends in the graveyard, and certainly refers to life’s cyclical frame. The curtain closes as the blind grandfather cries “The light! The light!” (55).

It is no wonder that Maeterlinck impresses the reader with the intensity of his drama − a drama that is actually based on the waiting principle (drama d’attente). In this kind of drama, the characters seem to be almost immobile throughout the play with their actions at minimum degrees, whereas the dialogue is in abundance with its “rhythmic” and “metallic” words quite like the “solemnity of a religious chant” as in the words of Bettina Knapp (41).

The Blind

Maeterlinck's second play *The Blind* opens with a long stage description which sets the pace, the tone and the atmosphere. From the very first line of the play Maeterlinck's poetic power is realized: "An ancient Norland forest, with an eternal look, under a deep sky of deep stars" (61). It is apparent that Maeterlinck conveys a certain feeling of mystery and gloom through the stage description and the whole play. The first sentence together with the last one suffices to prove this: "It is unusually oppressive, despite the moonlight that here and there struggles to pierce for an instant the glooms of the foliage" (62). Between these two sentences lies the whole situation of the play which Maeterlinck sets masterfully.

Maeterlinck begins by describing the "deathly motionless" priest sitting still in the centre with his "fearsome pale" face and with "purple lips fallen slightly apart" (61). The "deathly motionless chest," "immovable waxen lividness" "the watchful stillness of the melancholy wood"… all these phrases construct a fearsome and a static atmosphere devoid of any humanly interaction (61-62). This whole paragraph on the "very old priest" of the play well conveys Maeterlinck's theory of drama. It explains the totally static and immobile situation which the characters are all in.

Like *The Intruder* Maeterlinck's *The Blind* revolves around the same complex−dying. Twelve blind people from their Asylum have been led into an ancient Norland forest by an old man−a priest. This guide-like priest wants his followers to become acquainted with their surrounding, and broaden their knowledge of the world. When the play opens it is understood from the dialogues of the blind, that the priest has

gone to supply food for his followers, and now he is missing. However, the very first stage description informs the reader that the priest lies dead between the group of six old blind men and a group of six blind women. Ironically enough, each party being unaware of the priest's presence waits in silence. The whole drama is based on these blind people's waiting for the dead priest, being ignorant of the situation.

As the play goes forward and the characters keep waiting, their anxiety turns into a feeling of terror and anger. They start complaining about their leader, and regret having left their Asylum. It can be derived from their agitation that these people are not yet ready to confront with the real outside world. They are quite hesitant to open their eyes to the harsh reality, since these people have been living almost exile lives in the Asylum, having no connection with the real world, being almost cut off from the mainstream of life. Therefore, they take their time in adapting to the changes around them. In its simplest sense they are "static," dependent and sick.

From the outset, nothing signals the hope of a change in the static pace of the play, and the immobile and mute situation of the characters. Suddenly the first blind man's voice breaks the silence: "He hasn't come back yet?" (62). Then the anxious voices of each blind man, who inquire about where they are and what time it is, are heard. These people, all in eternal darkness, are not even aware of themselves. They try to determine who they are and where they are so that they could be sure of their existence and prove their identities. "Does anyone know where we are?" the very old blind man asks hopelessly (63). They decide to come closer to each other and unite in their despair. The third blind man asks the women: "Where are you sitting? Will you come over by us?" (64). As the time goes by they get anxious; they do certain things to pass the time

and to end their anguish. They count each other, and try to be sure to whom they are sitting by. They want to hear each others' voices as the following dialogue indicates:

> Second Blind Man: I don't hear everybody; we were just six now.
>
> First Blind Man: I am going to count. Let us question the women, too; we must know what to depend upon. I hear the three old women praying all the time; are they together? (65)

After these little rituals of checking and counting, they continue to wait in solitude. However, they are not at ease again. They want to talk, and utter some words so that they can forget about their hopeless situation for a while. They try to find ways of spending time - the eternal time by which they are victimized. As they talk about the priest and his behaviour that they've experienced lately, they tell their memories about him and about their days in the Asylum.

All of a sudden, the third blind man announces that he is bored and says: "We know- nearly- all we need to know. Let us chat a little, while we wait for the priest to come back. […] I am afraid when I am not speaking" (66-67). They want to know who they are, where they are and what the time is. They want to feel that they are living. There in the midst of a forest, without feeling the lights of the sun, waiting in silence nearly drive them mad. "Are we in the sun, now?" asks the second blind man. "Is the sun still shining?" ask another one (73).

They start telling stories to each other just to forget their anguish and fear. These blind people somehow hope that telling will keep their memories alive, and it will stick them to life. "It was too long ago.... It was colder there than here ...." begins the very old

woman telling her story though a bit hesitantly. (83) Then the young woman takes the turn and tells her story:

> . . . I come from a great country. . . . I could only make you understand by signs: and we no longer see. ...I have wondered too long. ...But I have seen the sunlight and the water and the fire, mountains, faces and strange flowers. ...One day I saw the snow on a mountain top. ...I began to distinguish the unhappy. (84)

This storytelling session keeps them busy, and makes them forget for a while about their anguish and fear. However, as the time proceeds, the tension which formerly almost has driven them mad gets higher and higher. Either out of fear or from curiosity they begin to listen to the slightest sounds. It seems that every little noise makes them nervous, and that they can no longer bear this feeling of isolation and fear. Suddenly they hear footsteps; a dog approaches and passes in front of the blind men. The dog leads one of the blind men to the dead priest who is resting against the "trunk of an enormous and cavernous oak tree" (61). The blind men get shocked, upon discovering that there lies a dead man in their midst.

After this discovery, a couple of odd things occur: the baby among the folk begins to cry, the stars vanish from the sky and suddenly it begins to snow. They hear footsteps again, and begin to hope that someone is coming to save them. No one is there except the deadly silence. The play ends with the cry of the old blind woman: "Have pity on us!" (115).

What is remarkable in the play is that these people experience "death" unconsciously and do not know how to act promptly. As soon as they realize the dead priest among them they come to know that the world that surrounds them requires such

confrontation with reality. They learn that death is in fact an essential part of life. They acknowledge that this is a cyclical process which makes the world turn round. Once they have discovered this mechanism and gained knowledge about the laws of Nature; they feel the fear of loneliness more deep inside.

In *The Blind* Maeterlinck depicts a dark atmosphere with fear and solitude from the very beginning to the end. However, he makes us surprised with a sign of hope that appears at the end of the play when the crazy woman's baby makes its appearance by crying. Like the leaves on Beckett's tree in the second act of *Waiting for Godot* the appearance of the baby signals a hope, a kind of change, even a growth in this static situation of the play and the characters. However, the wailing of the baby does not contribute as expectedly to the play. There is no hope for Maeterlinck's characters either for a change or a reverse in their fortune. They are depicted as sickly, dependent beings rather than as individuals. They are guided and cared by the priest in an asylum alongside the insane. They cannot take control over their lives, but rather they live at the mercy of another person. It seems that they have been waiting there in that dark forest for centuries, telling stories to each other, without being aware of time and its destruction.

First staged on December 11 1891 at Théatre d Art *The Blind* on the surface deals with "death" and the act of "waiting." In this sense, the play has many affinities with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* or *Endgame* in theme. Considering two dramatists' approach to life it is no coincidence that the plays bear certain parallelisms: both dramatists waited for a kind of salvation that would end their pain. They took shelter in "waiting" to resist against the cyclical running of time, and they craved for a linear time which would not entrap man into its phases as birth, life and death.

Maurice Maeterlinck's Dream: "Static Drama"

Maeterlinck's earlier plays *The Intruder* and *The Blind* can be considered as significant examples of his theory of static drama. Edward Everett Hale, in his book *Dramatists of Today* states that he was not much satisfied with Maeterlinck's early plays though he was quite impressed by them. Regarding the plays, he states that "the general tone and the method, the character-drawing, all that amount to nothing…" (178).What he actually misses is that this "nothing" means more than "everything" if one does justice to Maeterlinck's vivid style. After all, Maeterlinck is a man of philosophy. He is concerned with the problem of life, but not with the problems of people. Therefore, he does not actually dwell upon specific scenes or incidents that people experience. Instead he wants to convey certain scenes from life in which the passions and fears of human beings are released. He believes in a kind of mysticism; the acquiring of truth by intuition.

Maeterlinck, as a literary philosopher, sketches his theory of life for his readers in his book *The Treasure of the Humble* and says that "It is idle to think that by means of words any real communication can ever pass from one man to another" (4). His solution to this lack of communication issue is "silence." He believes that in the moments of silence one can become aware of the secrets of life; only in these moments can he feel the real essence of life, and get to know something worth knowing. "For words may pass between men, but let silence have had its instant of activity, and it will never efface itself; and indeed the true life, the only life that leaves a trace behind, is made up of silence alone" (Maeterlinck 5). What is the effect of this view on Maeterlinck's art? What is the dramatic side of this silence-based life?

In his collection of essays *The Treasure of the Humble*, Maeterlinck puts forward his ideas on life, on literature and on drama in general. In one of these essays, "The Tragical in Daily Life" Maeterlinck basically focuses on drama and his theory of static drama. He talks about the "action" or let us say, "the lack of it" and the nature of dialogue: Two main aspects of his theory of static drama:

> Indeed, it is not in the actions but in the words that are found the beauty and greatness of tragedies that are truly beautiful and great; and this not solely in the words that accompany and explain the action, for there must perforce be dialogue besides the one which is superficially necessary. And indeed the only words that count in the play are those that at first seemed useless, for it is therein that the essence lies. Side by side with the necessary dialogue will you almost always find another dialogue that seems superfluous; but examine it carefully, and it will be borne home to you that this is the only one that the soul can listen to profoundly, for here alone is it the soul that is being addressed. You will see, too, that it is the quality and the scope of this unnecessary dialogue that determine the quality and the immeasurable range of the work. Certain it is that, in the ordinary drama, the indispensable dialogue by no means corresponds to reality; and it is just those words that are spoken by the side of the rigid, apparent truth, that constitute the mysterious beauty of the most beautiful tragedies, inasmuch as these are words that conform to a deeper truth, and one that lies incomparably nearer to the invisible sound by which the poem is upheld. (109-114)

As the above remarks suggest, Maeterlinck craves for simplicity and silence. He banishes action from the stage in favour of thought, and tangles it sometimes with a long silence, and sometimes with endless dialogues. It seems that he balances the scarcity of action with excessive dialogues which are simple with repetitions, pauses and silences, appearing throughout the text, and carrying the whole dramatic action. It is often thought that the dialogues and the actions of a play should correlate with one another. However, in Maeterlinck's plays no trace of this idea is seen. Maeterlinck's plays contain simple dialogues even meaningless and useless ones, as he believes that the words that seem to be meaningless and useless in a play are actually the most significant ones. Thus, one

should not look for the useful and the meaningful in a play, he should rather look for the insignificant and the absurd one just to get deeper into the meaning itself. Perhaps it will be of great help to quote a piece from Edward Everett Hale which summarizes Maeterlinck's drama in a sentence: "A theme from the simplest daily life, an action where nothing happens, a dialogue where the only words of value are the meaningless ones" (185). This whole sentence emphasizes the essence of Maeterlinck's art: the conveyance of feelings not through the actions but through silence and insignificant dialogues that open paths for significant meanings. It is the power of words and the power of silence, but not the traces of action that felt in and through Maeterlinck's drama.

This approach has caught the attention of many critics, artists and playwrights including that of Mirbeau, Mallarmé and Lugné Poe. However, many other critics have harshly criticized the new dramatic style, stating the reason that Maeterlinck has created a sort of drama in between libretto and pantomime, a hybrid form. He has been almost reproached for his insistence on this "monosyllabic theatre" the "theatre without words" (Heller 30).

It might be argued that the tendency towards such a static style probably stemmed from Maeterlinck's interest in the strange world of the marionette − the puppets used in Europe throughout the Middle Ages to entertain the masses. Maeterlinck felt that human actors were not efficient enough to convey the message on stage, as they had their physical limitations. However, marionettes, the wooden dolls would create an extraordinary atmosphere on stage with their different skills and ambiguous powers. Being the inhabitants of both the real and the fantasy world these marionettes could be turned into various characters from heroes to villains or from queens to paupers.

What had drawn Maeterlinck into this world was the machine-like, static and passive nature of the marionette. He thought that there existed a correlation between man and the marionette; both were controlled by outer forces, and both were unaware of the great will acting upon them. Like the marionette, man is at the mercy of its Master, who sets the scene and introduces his puppets into the world's stage. However, another point to be taken into account is that the marionette, no matter how helpless he seems to be, he has an ambiguous and mysterious nature which gives him power. It must be this aspect of the marionette that encouraged Maeterlinck to write for the marionette theatre. He composed three plays for marionettes: *Alladine and Palomides*, *Interior*, and *The Death of Tintagiles;* which all contributed a great deal to his becoming a well-known playwright both in France and in England.

Elaborating on Maeterlinck's idiosyncratic dramatic style, Macdonald Clark claims that Maeterlinck's desire to stand against the traditional performance theories of his time should be respected and welcomed as his plays pave the way to a certain progress. However, she continues that where these plays "step from the developed drama to the puppet-show, a desire for difference from the traditional, merely for the sake of difference, creeps in, and the progress changes to retrogression" (267). One cannot totally agree with the critic. Maeterlinck's interest in marionette theatre should not be considered a revolutionary step or a retrogression for marionette theatre has in fact much in common with Maeterlinck's static drama. His characters cannot be thought apart from the marionettes that colour the stage with their still but rhythmic manoeuvres. Like the marionette Maeterlinck's character almost acts like machines with certain movements in time. The marionette has a centre of gravity, which he/she preserves throughout the

performance. He achieves certain elegance in movement as long as he keeps up with this centre of gravity. Once the marionette comprehends the mood he almost acts like a dancer flowing freely on stage.

As a possible approach to Marionette Theatre, one shall focus on Heinrich von Kleist's essay "On the Marionette Theatre" which is often a point of reference for Beckett to cite in directing his actors. Kleist's essay on the marionette theatre has been an influential piece for many literary figures including that of Beckett and Paul De Man. It has a lot of significant points for both Beckett's and Maeterlinck's theatre.

Kleist's essay "On the Marionette Theatre" is in the form of a dialogue between the writer and a "leading opera dancer" Herr C. Kleist borrowing from Herr C.'s comments on marionette theatre conveys his idea on marionettes. Kleist claims that marionettes possess a certain grace that humans do not. Each movement of the puppet has a centre of gravity which moves in a straight line; when the limbs of the puppets are shaken randomly the figure gains a "rhythmic movement" quite like a dance (22). According to Kleist, these movements of the puppets include no affectation, that is, they just flow spontaneously from the centre point, and act unconsciously, without being aware of the pressure that the stage puts upon them. They only concentrate on their movements other than anything: no manners, no affectations and no actor-consciousness. Kleist borrowing from the interlocutor's ideas explains the situation as follows:

> …These puppets possess the virtue of being immune to gravity's force. They know nothing of the inertia of the matter, that quality which above all is diametrically opposed to the dance, because the force that lifts them into the air is greater than the one that binds them to the earth… Like elves, the puppets need only to touch upon the ground, and the soaring of their limbs is newly animated through this momentary hesitation; we dancers need the ground to rest upon and recover from

> the exertion of the dance; a moment that is certainly no kind of dance in itself and with which nothing further can be done except to at least make it seem to not exist. (24)

Kleist's ideas are clearly related to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame.* In both plays one can witness a certain economy of movement and grace in the ritualistic movements and repetitive dialogues of the characters. Their meaningless and blank dialogues appear similar to the mechanized movements of puppets; their gestures, repetitive acts, doubling situations, and their speeches with rhythmical cadences. All these features hint a puppet performance static, yet vivid, running before the audience.

CHAPTER IV

MEMORY AND NARRATIVE: STORIES OF THE STOREHOUSE

> Oh the stories I could tell you if I were easy. What a rabble in my head, what a gallery of moribunds. Murphy, Watt, Yerk, Mercier and all the others. I would never have believed that – yes, I believe it willingly. Stories, stories. I have not yet been able to tell them. I shall not be able to tell this one. (Molloy 137)

Beckett's stage has never lacked the presence of "storytellers" who counted on personal memories to walk out of their purgatory and step into a more liveable place, a place which would at least make them feel that they are there, living. Though they do not live life to the fullest but just save the day, their stories touch our heart both with sorrow and with joy. Stumbling in the tangled web of memories, twisting and turning the truth, hiding behind a mask of lies, and avoiding the unavoidable end; they tell stories. . . stories of love, stories of death, stories not really worthy of telling. This incessant and tormenting process of recalling and narrating forms the very basis of Beckett's drama. For instance, Estragon has his dreams which Vladimir cannot bear to listen to. Vladimir has the story of the two thieves to tell. Estragon has his story of the Englishman in the brothel to pass the time. Hamm has his chronicle of a remembered life. Nagg and Nell have their memories of their marriage life.

Waiting for Godot and *Endgame*, which can be classified as "longer plays" in Paul Lawley's terms, are rich in memories and stories (88). However, there are three significant plays which stand a space apart from this group of longer plays and the dramaticules. This chapter intends to trace the relationship between memory and narrative which presents itself as life-writing in *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days* and *Play* which constitute the exclusive group mentioned above.

Krapp's Last Tape epitomizes traces of memory staging a lone man troubled with his memories, with his self and voice on the tapes which he made years before. In *Happy Days*, Winnie's sexual emotions and erotic fantasies are conveyed through her memories in her so called "monologue" in the presence of her husband Willie. These are actually distant memories, the bits and pieces of a love story, which could find no other way of flowing than the logorrhoeaic monologue of Winnie. Winnie has to convey her sexual and erotic stories to colour her dull life, devoured by the "old extinguisher" (28). The immobile characters of *Play*, a man and two women, being stuck up practically in urns and in theory in a love triangle, also have their stories and memories which they recall and narrate in sessions of confessions on stage under the supervision of another character, the Light. Both *Play* and *Happy Days* deal with shadows of memory and remnants of time, yet it is *Krapp's Last Tape* in which *memory* and *narrative* are handled and staged in its entirety.

The Act of Recalling and the Art of Narrating: *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days*, *Play*

Krapp's Last Tape

> "Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn't want them back." (KLT[5] 63)

Krapp's Last Tape, originally called as "Magee Monologue," was written in English in early 1958, and first performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 28 October 1958. Deirdre Bair in her biography of Samuel Beckett writes that Patrick Magee was an actor, a friend of Beckett, "an Irishman fond of whiskey and a good story, with a boisterous personality and mellifluous voice that enthralled him" (519). When Beckett heard Magee reading extracts from his *From an Abandoned Work* on the BBC's Programme, he immediately thought of writing a radio play for him. The result was a stage play with an auditory inspiration. Krapp, "a wearish old man," alone in his lair, sitting at the table, trying to record his feelings about the year gone − as he always does on his birthday − failing to do so, he finds himself listening to the tape, a recording from the past made thirty years before, on his thirty-ninth birthday (55). The stage is in darkness, except the table and a contiguous area. The only props on stage are "a tape recorder with microphone and a number of cardboard boxes containing reels of recorded tapes" (55).

The opening of the play reminds us of the familiar Beckettian scenes with many stock actions and clownery routines of "red faced, purple nosed" Krapp: "He stoops,

[5] Hereafter *Krapp's Last Tape shall be cited as KLT.*

unlocks the first drawer, peers into it, feels about inside it, takes out a reel of tape, peers at it, puts it back, locks drawer, unlocks second drawer, peers into it, feels about inside it, takes out a large banana, peers at it, locks drawer, puts keys back into his pocket" (55). These ritualistic activities of Krapp merge with his strong urge to narrate, and there emerges a pure Beckettian play with its basic constituents − stories and memories.

Regarded as Beckett's "most lyrical and tender play" by John Spurling, *Krapp's Last Tape* opens with this weird scene of Krapp, an utterly alone man in his shell. (*Beckett* 88) Beckett's usual experiment with theatre here presents itself in his use of a tape recorder on stage as a theatrical device. Beckett employs this device in such an effective way that it becomes a companion to this wearish old man, Krapp, and is displayed almost as a character on stage. It is both the teller and listener for Krapp; a storehouse, a companion, a friend with whom Krapp shares his most intimate feelings, memories and secrets.

The play opens up with Krapp listening to a tape recorded on his thirty-ninth birthday, in which he talks about his addiction to sex and alcohol. In that tape there are also Beckett's recollections probably dating back to the years when he was twenty nine or nineteen, a young man addicted to alcohol and sex. Krapp's narration of memories are coloured with his first love affairs and shadowed by his first encounters with death:

> Krapp: (*Briskly*). Ah! (*He bends over ledger, turns the pages, finds the entry he wants, reads.*) Box . . . thrree . . . spool . . . five. (*He raises his head and stares front. With relish.*) Spool! (*Pause.*) Spooool! (*Happy smile. Pause. He bends over table, starts peering and poking at the boxes.*) Box . . . thrree . . . three . . . four . . . two . . . (*with surprise*) nine! good God! . . . seven . . . ah! the little rascal![*He takes up box, peers at it.*] [. . .] Box three, spool five. *(He bends over the machine, looks up. With relish.)* Spooool! *(Happy smile. He bends, loads spool on machine, rubs his hands.)* Ah! (*He peers at ledger, reads entry at foot of page.*)

> Mother at rest at last . . . Hm . . . The black ball . . . (*He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.*) Black ball? . . . (*He peers again at ledger, reads.*) The dark nurse . . . (*He raises his head, broods, peers again at ledger, reads.*) Slight improvement in bowel condition . . . Hm . . . Memorable . . . what? (*He peers closer.*) Equinox, memorable equinox. (*He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.*) Memorable equinox? . . . (*Pause. He shrugs his head shoulders, peers again at ledger, reads.*) Farewell to--(he turns the page)--love. (56-57)

One can easily realize the different roles that Krapp takes during the course of the play: Krapp the listener and Krapp the teller. He listens to a tape, to his memories; he comments on them, he laughs at them, he feels regret about them, he narrates and re-narrates them, switching back and forth between past and present memories. His so-called actions "overlap, and from that overlap emerges Beckett's most direct character" as in the words of Ruby Cohn (165). He is direct compared to all the other protagonists of Beckett, yet he is as desperate as all of them. He is sixty nine now, an old man in his "den," utterly alone, with no one to love or to lose. What he left is a collection of memories, wasted years, and years all unworthy of wanting back, all enough to torment him at that age.

Similar to the multiple voices and narrative tones of Hamm, Krapp also adopts different voices while narrating his story. What is seen on stage at the beginning is Krapp, the sixty nine old man, sitting at the chair, recording a tape reflecting on his past. He also indulges in listening to other tapes recorded on earlier birthdays. Thus, two more voices emerge from the tape: Krapp at thirty nine and quoted by him is Krapp at twenty nine. The "strong" and "rather pomptuous" voice of Krapp, the thirty nine, is in contrast to the image of the wearish Krapp, the sixty nine, as he switches on the tape and "assumes listening posture" (57). Thus begins the first anecdote of Krapp in which he reflects upon his thirty-ninth birthday at the Winehouse; his birthday party, the "awful

occasion," the time when he "sat before the fire with closed eyes, separating the grain from the husks" (57).

> TAPE: … Thirty-nine today, sound as a−(*Settling himself more comfortable he knocks one of the boxes off the table, curses, switches off, sweeps boxes and ledger violently to the ground, winds tape back to beginning, switches on, resumes posture.*) Thirty-nine today, sound as a bell, apart from my old weakness, and intellectually I have now every reason to suspect at the . . . (*hesitates*) . . . crest of the wave−or thereabouts. Celebrated the awful occasion, as in recent years, quietly at the Winehouse. Not a soul. Sat before the fire with closed eyes, separating the grain from the husks. Jotted down a few notes, on the back of an envelope. Good to be back in my den in my old rags. Have just eaten I regret to say three bananas and only with difficulty refrained from a fourth. Fatal things for a man with my condition. (*Vehemently.*) Cut 'em out! (*Pause.*) The new light above my table is a great improvement. With all this darkness round me I feel less alone. (*Pause.*) In a way. (*Pause.*) I love to get up and move about in it, then back here to . . . (*hesitates*) . . . me. (*Pause.*) Krapp. (*Pause.)*
>
> The grain, now what I wonder do I mean by that, I mean . . . (hesitates) . . . I suppose I mean those things worth having when all the dust has--when all *my* dust has settled. I close my eyes and try and imagine them. (57)

Just as the younger Krapp sits before the fire separating the grain from the dust Krapp the sixty-nine-year-old man sits at the table before us to sort out the rises and falls of his life. He tries to grab the significant moments of his entire life; his early love affairs, his losses, the death of his mother, the girlhood songs of Old Miss McGlome, his magnum opus, yet he fails in doing so. This game is not worth the candle. His memories are fragmented like his sentences. His past is of "all misery" (58). Behind this memories of misery actually lay the sketches of love, and passions drawn by a clumsy actor, as the voice in the tape illustrates:

> 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 . . . (*Pause.*) (58)

Krapp remembers the eyes, the "very warm" eyes of Bianca. He refers to this affair as "hopeless business" and avoids talking much about Bianca, in Kedar Street. However, he does not want to miss the chance of paying a tribute to her eyes which are "incomparable" to anything. After a pause, he switches off, and muses on the record. What is it that makes Krapp stop at once? Perhaps, he cannot bear the burden of this retrospect which gets heavier and heavier with each and every tape, yet he goes on, switches on again. He knows his need for fighting with the memories. He knows the fact that only when he faces with the past can he continue to tell his story "at a late evening in the future" (55).

Krapp's recollection of Bianca in Kedar Street is followed by a couple of lines from a gloomy song, a hymn, *Now the Day is Over*: "Now the day is over / Night is drawing nigh-igh / Shadows –..." Krapp at that moment falls into a fit of coughing, and stops singing. He "sits down, wipes his mouth, switches on, and resumes his listening posture" (59). Actually Krapp's song is a hymn of comfort by Sabine - Baring Gould and it follows like this: "Shadows of the evening / Steal across the sky:"

Now the darkness gathers,

Stars begin to peep,
Birds, and beasts and flowers
Soon will be asleep.

Jesus, give the weary
Calm and sweet repose;
With Thy tend'rest blessing
May mine eyelids close.

When the morning wakens,
Then may I arise
Pure, and fresh, and sinless
In Thy holy eyes. (The Church Times 1867)

Krapp's day is over. He is done with life and with all its games. He is utterly alone in his den, waiting for the inevitable end, death. He sits at his table, eats bananas, drinks alcohol offstage, and carries out his ritual of making tapes on his birthdays. He has nothing other than memories and stories, his hopes for awakening to reality, pure, and fresh, and sinless.

After the memories in Kedar Street, Krapp on the tape turns "back on the year that is gone" and recounts the moment of his mother's death:

> TAPE: −back on the year that is gone, with what I hope is perhaps a glint of the old eye to come, there is of course the house on the canal where mother lay a-dying, in the late autumn, after her long viduity (*Krapp gives a start*), and the — [*Krapp switches off, winds back tape a little, bends his ear closer to the machine, switches on*) —a-dying, after her long viduity, and the — (59)

All of a sudden Krapp interrupts his narrative, switches off the tape to fetch a dictionary to look up the word "viduity" (59). Not being content with what he has already read, he peers at the dictionary again, and looks up the other meanings and sample sentences. He takes much delight in the word "vidua-bird!" (59). It seems that Krapp at his sixties could not remember some of the words that he used to speak with. He may have forgotten them, or he may want to avoid the effect that the word would possibly make on him. He may be trying to suppress the fact that his father is also dead, and his mother is already a widow. Whatever his feelings may be, one certain thing is that he looks up the word "with relish," which makes the matter more complicated (59).

Krapp gives the reader very few clues about his family life. Does he love his mother? Does he hate her? Or is this a relationship based on both love and hatred? The anecdote below brings up even more questions concerning Krapp's relationship with his

mother. The questions mount up as Krapp switches on again, and continues with his narrative, wandering off:

> TAPE: −bench by the weir from where I could see her window. There I sat, in the biting wind, wishing she were gone. [*Pause.*] Hardly a soul, just a few regulars, nursemaids, infants, old men, dogs. I got to know them quite well--oh by appearance of course I mean! One dark young beauty I recollect particularly, all white and starch, incomparable bosom, with a big black hooded perambulator, most funereal thing. Whenever I looked in her direction she had her eyes on me. And yet when I was bold enough to speak to her − not having been introduced−she threatened to call a policeman. As if I had designs on her virtue! [*Laugh. Pause.*] The face she had! The eyes! Like . . . [*hesitates*] . . . chrysolite! [*Pause.*] Ah well . . . [*Pause.*] . . . . (59)

Krapp's narrative of his mother's death is interrupted by other recounts. Instead of paying certain respect to his mother's death and assuming a grave posture, Krapp behaves rather weirdly. He digresses often, and fills his speech with trivial details; with "nursemaids, infants, old men, dogs" (59). Krapp's memories are blurred, fragmented, and so scattered that the recollection of the mother's death merges with the reminiscence of a "one dark young beauty" with "chrysolite eyes" or of "the dog yelping and pawning" at Krapp. (60) At the moment when he understands that everything is "all over and done with," he is "throwing a ball for a little white dog" (60). It is weird that Krapp is playing with a dog, at the very moment of his mother's death:

> [. . .] All over and done with, at last. I sat on for a few moments with the ball in my hand and the dog yelping and pawing at me. [*Pause.*] Moments. Her moments, my moments. [*Pause.*] The dog's moments. [*Pause.*] In the end I held it out to him and he took it in his mouth, gently, gently. A small, old, black, hard, solid rubber ball. [*Pause.*] I shall feel it, in my hand, until my dying day. [*Pause.*] I might have kept it. [*Pause.*] But I gave it to the dog.
>
> *[Pause.*]
>
> Ah well . . . . (60)

Like the desperate clowns of Beckett's circus, Krapp finds shelter in this little game: "Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?" yells Vladimir at Estragon right in the middle of their discussion on the story of the two thieves (12). They try to pass the time with these little manoeuvres. Similarly, Krapp takes a journey in his mind and distances himself from the scene of death. However, he can never return the ball. He "might have kept it." But he "gave it to the dog" (60).

Krapp does not pay an affectionate tribute to his mother's death. He appears to be quite detached from the incident, which is not treated with utmost care. Certainly not the typical image of a grieving son, Krapp is more like a desperate, vulnerable child who tries to distance himself from the misery of death. This is his way of turning deaf ears to reality, and escaping the pain of mourning. Ruby Cohn states that this is a scene in which "death is surrounded by trivia" (167). This is rather an odd scene in many ways, yet not so unpredictable in the case of Krapp, who appears to be an odd character himself.

This memory of the mother's death is in fact an actual scene from Beckett's own life and immortalized here, in the play and recounted in Deirdre Bair's biography of Samuel Beckett:

> In the early evening of 25 August, on Frank and Jean's eighteenth wedding anniversary, May Beckett died quietly. All day long Beckett had sat beside her bed, watched her laboured breathing, until he could stand it no more. Then he went for a walk along the Grand Canal and then returned to the nursing home, sat outside for a while on a bench, shivering in the evening wind. When he looked up at her window, he saw the shade go down, the signal that she had died. [. . .] There was a ceremony in Tullow parish church, which Beckett, his demeanour stony, sat through, seemingly oblivious. (429)

Like Beckett, Krapp needs to pass the time, the time which has stopped, and imprisoned his mother to an eternal sleep. For this reason, he behaves in an indifferent way and

seems to pay little attention to her death. Whatever lies behind his behaviour, one certain thing is that now he has opened his eyes to reality, opened wide enough to bear these moments, and to record them on tape like Beckett himself who gathered his courage to recount and immortalize his memories almost ten years later in a play called *Krapp's Last Tape.*

When Krapp is done with the recounting of his mother's death, he tries to go on with his narrative. He actually plays with the tape, switches on and off, and winds the tape forward and back. When he cannot bear listening, he stops the tape, and moves it forward to another piece. He carries the burden of the past in his words, in every single word which assists him in this task of recalling and narrating. His weary and fragmented memory is reflected on his narrative as well as in his performance. This time, he talks about a kind of awakening a "vision" that he saw "at last" "in March, at the end of the jetty, in the howling wind" (60). He creates a kind of mystery when he talks about his insight, and hesitates to recount the whole thing. Krapp plays with the expectations of the audience, constantly deferring telling. He begins with "The vision, at last." This beginning gives the audience some clues, but requires them to fill in the crucial gaps:

> This I fancy is what I have chiefly to record this evening, against the day when my work will be done and perhaps no place left in my memory, warm or cold, for the miracle that . . . (*hesitates*) . . . for the fire that set it alight. What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely--(*Krapp switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again*)--great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most–[*KRAPP curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*]−unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire− (*KRAPP curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*) − (60)

As the incomplete sentences of the quotation illustrate, Krapp cannot directly and properly explain his vision. One can only cobble these sentences together, and create a basic statement to solve the Krapp mystery. It seems that Krapp is not satisfied with the way he goes on with his life. He seeks an alteration, an ideal, or a "miracle" which would guide him all the way through life. He desires a new beginning, a reason for living; yet he knows that it is all over now, and convinces himself that he does not want his years back. However, he does want them back. Despite his blurry memories and fragmented stories, Krapp is firmly rooted in this world with all his love and passion.

Right after this little blurry memory, Krapp continues his journey of memories with a rather erotic love story. This story seems to be his favourite, as he winds the tape back and forth to hear it more than twice:

> TAPE: −upper lake, with the punt, bathed off the bank, then pushed out into the stream and drifted. She lay stretched out on the floorboards with her hands under her head and her eyes closed. Sun blazing down, bit of a breeze, water nice and lively. I noticed a scratch on her thigh and asked her how she came by it. Picking gooseberries, she said. I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on, and she agreed, without opening her eyes. [*Pause.*] I asked her to look at me and after a few moments− [*pause*] −after a few moments she did, but the eyes just slits, because of the glare. I bent over her to get them in the shadow and they opened. [*Pause. Low.*] Let me in. [*Pause.*] We drifted in among the flags and stuck. The way they went down, sighing, before the stem! [*Pause.*] I lay down across her with my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side.
>
> [*Pause.*]
>
> Past midnight. Never knew− (61)

Krapp, the old man, starved of love surprises the audience this time with a proper recollection of love, though a "hopeless" one. His reminiscence opens quite romantically; two lovers side by side in a pastoral setting: "Sun blazing down, bit of a breeze, water

nice and lively" (61). They have already "bathed off the bank, then pushed out into the stream and drifted" (61). Krapp is careful in his description of the scene and of his lover. His narrative indicates that he is deeply absorbed in the presence of this woman who is lying "stretched out on the floorboards with her hands under her head and her eyes closed" (61). Krapp studies her body so well that he notices the scratch on her thigh, caused by a gooseberry thorn. Suddenly the pace of the dialogue gets gloomy, as Krapp declares *again* the "hopeless" situation they are in. It seems that they have been on bad terms for a long time at the edge of this "hopeless" relationship.

Unlike many Beckettian scenes, the scene is a romantic one with sexual moments which are enhanced with Krapp's diction and his detailed description of their movements. Krapp's memory is rich in sexual imagery, and it focuses on the parts of the woman's body: hands under the head, closed eyes, scratch on the thigh, glaring eyes, face in the breasts, and hands on the body. These phrases with sexual implications are open to interpretation. Krapp's attitude towards the woman is also quite sexual: He bends over his lover to look at her in the eyes, and whispers "Let me in." This is a reflection of Krapp's need for unification; it is "a plea to heal separation and exclusion" (Lawley 92). He wants to look into her eyes, unite with her, and live the "happiest moment of the past half million year" as in the words of Krapp himself (62). This is actually one of the very rare moments when a Beckettian character is a real flesh and blood human being. Krapp is there, with all his love and passion. For the first time, he is not distanced from the audience. He is before them, desperately bidding "Farewell to love" (57).

Now it is old Krapp's turn on stage to narrate. He loads a new reel on the machine, switches on, and begins to record. He makes his way through his review of the

past and comments on the year that was concluded. He tells how he sat shivering in the park, how he had a sexual affair with a whore called Fanny, and so forth. He is surprised at the way Krapp thirty nine, whom he calls as "stupid bastard" had lived his life. His life has been a failure very much like his "magnum opus" which has only sold seventeen copies. He is content that it is all over now. At present, he has nothing other than the "iron spools," as he fiercely indicates in his words: "Spooool! Happiest moment of the past half million" (62). Though he refers to them in a rather ironic and dry tone, these spools which bear his fears, joys, grief and distress are actually his only treasures. Thus, he continues to call forth memories from the past, and narrates his "last fancies:"

> [. . . .] Crawled out once or twice, before the summer was cold. Sat shivering in the park, drowned in dreams and burning to be gone. Not a soul. [*Pause.*] Last fancies. [*Vehemently.*] Keep 'em under! [*Pause.*] Scalded the eyes out of me reading *Effie* again, a page a day, with tears again. Effie . . . . [*Pause.*] Could have been happy with her, up there on the Baltic, and the pines, and the dunes. [*Pause.*] Could I? [*Pause.*] And she? [*Pause.*] Pah! [*Pause.*] Fanny came in a couple of times. Bony old ghost of a whore. Couldn't do much, but I suppose better than a kick in the crutch. The last time wasn't so bad. How do you manage it, she said, at your age? I told her I'd been saving up for her all my life. [*Pause.*] Went to Vespers once, like when I was in short trousers. [*Pause. Sings.]* (62)

This is actually a vivid memory of Beckett's summer of 1929 with her aunt Cissie Sinclair and her family in one of the resort towns along the Baltic Sea. Besides, it stands as a sequel to Beckett's story of sexual passion. Deirdre Bair's biography of Beckett gives the details of this summer together with the details of Beckett's "hopeless" relationship with Peggy Sinclair, Cissie's daughter. Beckett was deeply enchanted by Peggy who was "a cool green eyed beauty" very much like the woman in Krapp's memory. Though Beckett's admiration was strictly protested by his parents, May and

Bill, Beckett was insistent on his decision "to know more about Peggy and the branch of the family" (59). This growing interest prompted him to pay regular visits to the family.

This last little narrative revives his memory with Peggy on their way to the holiday resort along the Baltic Sea. Peggy was reading *Effi Briest,* a novel by Theodor Fontane. She was so deeply absorbed in the book that she wept tears for Effi and for Effi's failed marriage. This was actually a restless summer for Beckett. The developing relationship between the two was confusing, and not well-approved by Beckett's parents, mostly because of the girl's half-Jewish background. As to Peggy, she was flattered by her cousin's passion and concern, but she stayed "unmoved, for she was not yet ready to commit herself" (Bair 91). Beckett/Krapp now reflects on what he has missed, and how he has spent his life. He could have lived with her there, on the Baltic happily. However, knowing that this was a "hopeless business" with no future in it; he just let it go. The final moment of the play is a repetitive act of Krapp who once again listens to his episode of love in the punt. Alas! "Now the day is over, night is drawing nigh-igh" for Krapp (59). No matter how much passion and fervour he has, he has given up his magnum opus, and parted with the glaring, chrysolite eyes. His life could have been different; his fate could have been avoided. He understands all these things, as he looks back on his life, thinks about the decisions and choices he has made and evaluates his present state. He is aware of the fact that his fire "is now not even a glow in the embers" (Fletcher 126). His "best years are gone, when there was a chance of happiness" (63). There is cure for neither nostalgia nor regret on Krapp's stage. Thus, he would in no way reclaim those "best years," but it is for sure that he would always remember them. Now, he desperately glances at the broken memories fall to the ground and walks away, no matter how much he wants to fix them.

*"*Spoooool!*"* : Krapp's Augustinian Memory

> "The memory came faint and cold of the story I might have told, a story in the likeness of my life, I mean without the courage to end or the strength to go on." ("The End" 99)

Waiting for Godot is a play that depicts the characters' struggle to overcome their failing memories which torment them to death. Estragon and Vladimir are tortured with a past which they cannot remember properly. It is not even clear whether these characters have a past or not, as they live within a circular time without a beginning or an end. They have only bits and pieces of memories, little stories and anecdotes by which they try to create a certain history for themselves. Similarly in *Endgame*, Hamm intends to construct a certain past for himself by making up stories. He tries to reconstitute the meaning of selfhood by telling himself and the others the story he has been making up for a long time. As to his parents Nagg and Nell, they have more vivid memories of the past, yet they do not have the slightest clue about the present. No matter how blurred the present is Nagg and Nell do not give up recalling the past happy days on Lake Como.

When it comes to *Krapp's Last Tape*, it should be noted that here Beckett's concern with memory takes a different shape; here the memory is pure life story, which has been "codified" on a tape (Cohn 165). This tape being in constant dialogue with Krapp on stage, actually serves as a character that carries the whole dramatic action of the play. Beckett, by employing such a device on stage, in a way gives a dramatic shape to Krapp's memories and enacts them. This tape is a "static memory-machine," which serves Krapp to preserve his memories, as in the words of Jeanette R. Malkin (25). However, this tape is not only a machine as it is referred to by Malkin but is actually a highly functional

device that "enables present to confront past and past to confront present" (Spurling 91). Krapp's memory and vision, his past and present all mingle with one another in the various spools of this tape. All these memories, though fragmented, are inside this box, ready to be narrated. Krapp, split up into three selves and fluctuating between his memory and his life, between recalling and narrating, takes shelter in this tape recorder. Therefore, the tape recorder functions not only as a medium for Krapp's naked confessions but also as a coordinator to manage the split "Krapps" on stage.

As the play proceeds, one finds it really difficult to catch up with Krapp's spools, his memories and his fragmented selves. Ruby Cohn in her discussion of *Krapp's Last Tape* writes that "Neither Bible, Descartes, Dante, nor even Proust helps us to know Krapp" (166). Krapp with his constant manoeuvres and abrupt shifts does not give us a chance to know him. He switches on and off, winds the tape back and forth, interrupts his narrative, broods, comments on it, and laughs at his own sentences and past decisions.

For instance, the sixty-nine-year-old Krapp, after listening to the tape made on his thirty-ninth birthday, laughs at and mocks the younger Krapp's resolution to drink less. He makes a round sum to conclude how much time he has spent on drinking in his life: "Statistics. Seventeen hundred hours, out of the preceding eight thousand odd, consumed on licensed premises alone. More than per cent say 40 per cent of his waking life" (58). What is actually ironic here is that Krapp at thirty nine celebrates his birthday at Winehouse, and Krapp at sixty nine is listening to his tape in a den, where he stops regularly, goes offstage and drinks like fish, many bottles at once, as the stage direction indicates: "*Ten seconds. Pop of cork. Ten seconds. Second cork. Ten seconds. Third cork. Ten seconds. Brief burst of quavering song" (59).* Ironically enough, Krapp does never

change; he mocks his earlier selves, laughs at the fool he used to be, yet he is totally ignorant of the fool he has become.

Krapp's split selves keep wandering around the stage while Krapp at sixty nine is trying to find a real voice to tell his story. What is seen on stage is the free play of different selves. This is doubled by Krapp's own perception of the self which is also multiple and incomplete. Krapp sits at the table on his sixty-ninth birthday with an intention of recording his memories of the past year. However, he ends up listening to the older tapes made on his different birthdays. He takes on different views while listening to these old spools and while recording the new one. This is a clear indication of Krapp's failure in controlling his memory mechanism. He not only struggles with memories to "keep (them) under" but also tries to overcome his failing memory. This is an endless battle going on between Krapp and his memory, between forgetting and remembering, mostly between past and present. This battle is followed and accompanied by the act of narrating. His best and only armour in this battle is his tape, the memory machine. Yet, there is victory neither for Krapp nor for any other Beckettian character. They only find solace in reciting the same military march: "[. . .] I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" (*The Unnamable* 414).

It may be possible to link Krapp's search through memory and narrative all the way back to St. Augustine, who in his autobiographical work *Confessions,* examines the workings of memory, especially as related to the senses, and provides a fruitful insight into this discussion of memory and narrative. For Augustine, memory is a "spacious" place, a storehouse where many different images are brought into scene by the senses. In Book X of *Confessions*, St. Augustine writes:

> And I come to the fields and spacious palaces of my memory, where are the treasures of innumerable images, brought into it from things of all sort perceived by the senses. There is stored up, whatsoever besides we think, either by enlarging or diminishing, or any other way varying those things which the sense hath come to; and whatever else hath been committed and laid up, which forgetfulness hath not yet swallowed up and buried. When I enter there, I require what I will to be brought forth, and something instantly comes; others must be longer sought after, which are fetched, as it were, out of some inner receptacle; others rush out in troops, and while one thing is desired and required, they start forth, as who should say, "Is it perchance I?" These I drive away with the hand of my heart, from the face of my remembrance; until what I wish for be unveiled, and appear in sight, out of its secret place. Other things come up readily, in unbroken order, as they are called for; those in front making way for the following; and as they make way, they are hidden from sight, ready to come when I will. All which takes place when I repeat a thing by heart. (98)

Augustine's *Confessions* standing as a masterpiece in the field of life-writing, in a way establishes the grounds for Krapp's process of recalling and narrating. Unlike Krapp who has no control over his memory, Augustine knows well how to manage it. In Book XI of his *Confessions* Augustine suggests a simple example to examine the workings of memory: reciting a psalm. What he claims is that the mind stands as a bridge between past and the future; as the mind can look to the past and the future through memory and expectation, while at the same time focusing on the present.

> I am about to repeat a Psalm that I know. Before I begin, my expectation is extended over the whole; but when I have begun, how much so ever of it I shall separate off into the past, is extended along my memory; thus the life of this action of mine is divided between my memory as to what I have repeated, and expectation as to what I am about to repeat; but "consideration" is present with me, that through it what was future, may be conveyed over, so as to become past. Which the more it is done again and again, so much the more the expectation being shortened, is the memory enlarged: till the whole expectation be at length exhausted, when that whole action being ended, shall have passed into memory. And this which takes place in the whole Psalm, the same takes place in each several portion of it, and each several syllable; the same holds in that longer action, whereof this Psalm may be part; the same holds in the whole life of man, whereof all the actions of man are parts; the same holds through the whole age of the sons of men, whereof all the lives of men are parts. (129)

This paragraph above indicates that Augustine's recitation brings together three functions of the mind: *memory*, *expectation* and *consideration*. As it is seen, this recitation/narration process is actually a circular one, a flow of future into past and vice versa. For instance, if you recite a psalm that you are already familiar with, it is for sure that this is something reserved in your mind; when the process of recitation is over, this psalm proceeds to your memory again and becomes ready there for the next time. This kind of mechanism is obvious in the first ten books of *Confessions* in which St. Augustine describes his narrative process at the same time continuing with his narrative.

Augustine's narrative process revolves around the key elements of expectation, memory and words. Expectation is related with the future, memory is in relation to the past, and the words, the narrative units lean upon the present. When the recitation begins, the words move past from expectation across the plane of present and land in memory. Once the narrative is over, there is still expectation to be fulfilled. That is, what lies in memory actually becomes the expectation for another act of recitation/narration. According to critic James Olney, this whole process is codified in Augustine's text "as pairs of verbs: remember-and-confess, recall-and-narrate, recollect-and-tell" (5). Olney thinks that these verbs "serve to suggest a reverse mirror likeness in the two activities; or perhaps one might better say that the verbs suggest a single activity of dual dynamic, recalling a story backward and telling it forward" (5). This is actually what Krapp does throughout the play. First of all, he listens to the record of the thirty-nine-year old Krapp, the record that he made thirty years ago but experienced earlier. Then, he makes a tape of what he has recently experienced, as indicated in his words "just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that.

Thank God that's all done with anyway" (62). The play goes on as he moves from one spool to another and from one memory to other.

Ronan McDonald, considering the role of the tapes in *Krapp's Last Tape*, states that Krapp's tapes actually contribute much to the treatment of past in Beckett's drama, "for here we do not simply have the sepia-tinted past reconfigured to the fit needs of the present. Rather the voice is captured at the moment of recording, without all the distortions of retrospection" (59). Krapp's tape has a multifunctional role within the play. It is pure narrative in the shape of memory. Everything is there; expectation, memory and narration; past, present and future. They all stand in the same plane, a plane where "the present of things past is memory; the present time of things present is sight; the present time of things future is expectation" (St. Augustine 125).

James Olney in his book *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* devotes a considerable chapter to Beckettian memory and Augustinian memory. Considering *Krapp's Last Tape,* Olney claims that Krapp's spools are actually another form of representation of time's move from future as has already been discussed:

> [. . .]Krapp, in order to assist himself in extending expectation over the whole of his life, listens to the narrated episodes of his life pass from the spool of expectation on the left across the head of the tape player, which corresponds to the present of narration, to be taken up by the spool of memory on the right-which, when rewound, becomes once again the spool of expectation. The analogy to the Augustinian recitation of a psalm—"true also of the whole of a man's life"—is quite exact. (8)

Krapp's tape embodies memory which is actually a nonrepresentational matter of fact, as Krapp can easily return to past by rewinding the tape, or he can shift from one memory to the other, from the undesired to the most welcomed one. The tape is Krapp's "storehouse" very much in Augustinian sense. Then, can we say that *Krapp's Last Tape*

is a "narrative" about the act of recalling and narrating like Augustine's *Confessions*? The answer to this question should be undoubtedly "yes." Krapp narrates the story of a man, which is of himself, who tells his life story. This is a double-storytelling which runs through the text. Olney, considering the acts of memory in Augustinian texts and in Beckett's works, writes that in both authors "retrospective reflection cast back over retrospective reflection" (9). In other words, every memory of the past is a new pondering upon the memories of past:

> For Beckett's character as for the Augustinian confessant, the making of earlier tapes of recollection or the recall of earlier acts of retrospection are made a part of the twin acts of memory and narration in the present, so that memorial acts surround earlier memorial acts which surround earlier memorial acts which . . . as far back as memory reaches. (Olney 9)

It is obvious that this act of recalling and narrating will never end in Beckett's world. The memories will show up as long as the words live, and the characters will ramble on stage as long as the memories live, since "once was not enough for" Krapp, he "should go on" he "will go on" like his fellow sufferer in the *Unnameable*.

Narrative is an essential need for Krapp and for many other characters of Beckett who are endowed with the capacity to weave together the moments of their life, constantly remembering and retelling their stories. However, this strong need of articulation, this "narrative imperative" often falls prey to the tricks of memory which is a rather detrimental faculty in Beckett's case. As in the words of James Olney, "Beckett conceives of his weaving as an act of both life and death: his narrative destroys as it creates, it devours the life it records as it devours the remaining sheets in the exercise book and the pencil with which he writes" (21). Beckett's *memory* is destructive, tormenting and suffocating. It comes with the very worst moments; with hatred, regret,

disillusion, fear and despair. There is no release for any Beckettian figure whose memory entraps him to the dead end streets of life, never doing justice. The only salvation is in stories, in the fragmented narratives of life, love, passion, and death.

Happy Days

"Oh this is going to be another happy day!"

(*Happy Days* 14)

Leaving Krapp's stories and memories aside, it is now time to turn to the story of another desperate yet "happy" protagonist, Winnie of *Happy Days*. Readers may not find it hard to realize the "significant continuity" between *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Happy Days*, which has already been suggested by Paul Lawley (94). Both plays stage lonely characters that continuously put great effort into reviewing their lives and decisions before the audience, with the aim of constructing their fragmented identities. Above all, they both have a strong need to tell stories to cling to life which falls into pieces before them.

Originally called "Willie-Winnie Notes," *Happy Days* had its first performance on 17 September 1961 at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York. Staging a seemingly "happy" woman desperately stuck up in a mound of earth, with her husband Willie nearby, reading the newspaper all the time, Beckett's *Happy Days* exceeds the limits of theatrical representation with its bizarre setting and whimsical characters. The settings of the plays which have been discussed in the previous chapters were rather weird and extraordinary but they were still sharing some features with the outside reality. However, in *Happy Days* the scene suggests very few things familiar to actual life; as the "scenario is the most surreal in all of Beckett's drama, not just by virtue of its stage imagery [. . .] but because of the juxtaposition, at once grotesque and poignant, of Winnie's physical situation with her verbal and gestural manners" (Lawley 94).

Winnie is a married woman; she is "about fifty, well-preserved, blonde for preference, plump" (9). "Embedded up to above her waist in exact centre of mound," she is aware of her hopeless physical situation (9). However, Winnie possesses a certain grace and strength to survive; she does not let herself easily sink into the mound which sucks her down every day. She has her program of regulating the day; she wakes up by a bell ring, and begins her day, turns to her "capacious black bag," searches into it which contains all feminine props as comb, mirror, lipstick and nail-file (9). She puts on and off her hat, sings her song and says her prayer. She polishes her spectacles, files her nails, brushes her teeth, and makes her toilette. In between all these activities, she tells her stories and comments on her narrative performance with certain remarks like many other characters of Beckett's stage. Entrapped in the vicious circle of these daily activities Winnie tries hard to survive. She never gives up hope and begins her "heavenly day" with joy and ends it with a smile. However, in the end of the play it is seen that she is "embedded up to neck, hat on head which she can no longer turn, nor bow, nor raise" (37).

What is there to save Winnie from this desperate situation? Is there any saviour at all? Perhaps the sole answer to these questions is "narrative." Like all the other inhabitants of Beckett's world, Winnie has her stories to take refuge in and her memories to lean upon. The whole play is a performance of her pieces of stories and "happy memories," her anecdotes and allusions (14).

Having this bombastic, well-kept woman as the central character, the play undoubtedly revolves around romantic and erotic memories of Winnie. One of these memories comes up in the scene where Willie is reading his newspaper and Winnie is

busy with rummaging in her bag. After Willie has read aloud from the newspaper, "His Grace Most Reverend Father in God Dr. Carolus Hunter dead in tub," Winnie gazes front and speaks in a "tone of fervent reminiscence:"

> WINNIE: Charlie Hunter! (*Pause.*) I close my eyes − (*she takes off spectacles and does so, hat in one hand, spectacles in other, WILLIE turns page*) – and am sitting on his knees again, in the back garden at Borough Green, under the horse-beech. (*Pause. She opens eyes, puts on spectacles, fiddles with hat*.) Oh the happy memories! (14)

When again Willie continues with his reading and says "Opening for smart youth," Winnie remembers her "first ball" and "first kiss:"

> WINNIE: My first ball! (*Long pause*.) My second ball! (*Long pause. Closes eyes.*) My first kiss! (*Pause. Willie turns page. Winnie opens eyes.*) A Mr. Johnson, or Johnston, or perhaps I should say Johnstone. Very bushy moustache, very tawny. (*Reverently.*) Almost ginger! (*Pause*.) Within a toolshed, though whose I cannot conceive. We had no toolshed and he most certainly had no toolshed. (*Closes eyes*.) I see the piles of pots. (*Pause.*) The tangles of bast. (*Pause.*) The shadows deepening among the rafters. (15)

Winnie, like Krapp has her memories of an early love which flash into her mind in moments of ecstasy. She not only recalls these memories fervently but also narrates them in great ardour. Moreover, very much like all the other characters of Beckett, Winnie insists on having a listener for her stories and audience for her performance. She has indeed her companion, Willie, "a decrepit man in his sixties," the motionless listener (Fletcher 101). Willie actually serves as a spectator to Winnie's performance rather than a companion to her. He is there as a spectator, but doing all sorts of irrelevant things other than paying attention to Winnie. No matter how indifferent his companion is to Winnie, she does not stop talking, but she goes on with her performance. Therefore, it is probable to claim that *Happy Days* is not a couple's play like *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame.*

Winnie and Willie appear to be a couple on stage like Gogo-Didi, Pozzo-Lucky, and Hamm-Clov, but Willie interacts neither with Winnie nor with the audience. Thus, the play is entirely a monologue of Winnie who recalls her memories, tells her stories and yearns for an audience to attend her performance.

After the recollection of balls and the first kiss, Winnie continues with a lengthy speech on this and that. She gets worried realizing that Willie has disappeared and reappeared on stage, since he left to blow his nose. It is apparent that Winnie cannot bear to lose her listener even temporarily. She always wants to have him nearby:

> WINNIE: Ah yes, if only I could bear to be alone, I mean prattle away with a soul to hear. (*Pause.*) Not that I flatter myself you hear much, no Willie, God forbid. (*Pause.*) Days perhaps when you hear nothing. (*Pause.*) But days too when you answer. (*Pause.*) So that I may say at all times, even when you do not answer and perhaps hear nothing, something of this is being heard, I am not merely talking to myself, that is in the wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do−for any length of time. (*Pause.*) That is what enables me to go on, go on talking that is. (*Pause.*) (18)

Quite like Hamm's fear in *Endgame*, Winnie has this fear of Willie's leaving her which is clearly indicated in her plea "You are going Willie, aren't you?" "You will be going soon, Willie won't you?" (22). Winnie does not want to be silent and to end this performance. She wants to be seen and to be heard: "Could you see me, Willie, do you think, from where you are, if you were to raise your eyes in my direction? . . . Lift up your eyes to me, Willie, and tell me can you see me, do that for me. . ." (23). She wants to know that her Willie is there "within hearing" when she carries on her ritual of storytelling (25).

Winnie narrates two stories during the course of the play. These stories are significant in the sense that they bear a lot of clues about Winnie's sexual life and impairment, which clearly reveals itself in the second act. The first story is offered as a memory of a more recent event by Winnie herself: The Shower / Cooker anecdote. In this story, Winnie tells about her encounter with Mr. Shower or Cooker "and perhaps a Mrs. Shower" "his fiancée then more likely −or just some−loved one." The couple approaches "holding hands" with bags in the other hands: (31)

> WINNIE: There floats up – into my thoughts – a Mr. Shower – a Mr. and perhaps a Mrs. Shower [. . .] Well anyway – this man Shower – or Cooker – no matter – and the woman – hand in hand− in the other hands bags – kind of big brown grips− standing there gaping at me – and at last this man Shower – or Cooker – ends in 'er anyway stake my life on that – What's she doing? he says – What's the idea? he says – stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground – coarse fellow – What does it mean? he says – What's it meant to mean? – and so on – lot more stuff like that – usual drivel – Do you hear me? he says – I do, she says, God help me – What do you mean, he says, God help you? (*Stops filing raises head, gazes front.*) And you, she says, what's the idea of you, she says, what are you meant to mean? It is because you're still on your two flat feet, with your old ditty full of tinned muck and changes of underwear, dragging me up and down this fornicating wilderness, coarse creature, fit mate – (*with sudden violence*) – let go of my hand and drop for God's sake, she says, drop! (*Pause. Resumes filing.*) Why doesn't he dig her out? he says – referring to you, my dear – What good is she to him like that? − What good is he to her like that? – and so on – usual tosh – Good! she says, have a heart for God's sake – Dig her out, he says, dig her out, no sense in her like that – Dig her out with what? she says – I'd dig her out with my bare hands, he says – must have been man and – wife. (*Files in silence.*) Next thing, they're away – hand in hand – and the bags – dim – then gone – last human kind – to stray this way. (33)

First of all, Winnie's long account of her memory like all the other narrative units of Beckett's plays serves to pass the time, since Winnie has no other way of passing the time other than talking and telling. In the second place, Winnie's story is a direct reference to her immobile situation, to her buried body on stage. There is much talk

between the Shower/Cooker couple about the situation of Winnie. They are clearly puzzled about what Winnie's situation might mean. They fervently ask one another to "dig her out," yet they cannot act. They do not know how to do this. Then the man says that he would do it with his "bare hands." A passerby, a "coarse fellow" but not his Willie would dig Winnie out with his bare hands. This sexual remark made by Mr. Shower/Cooker actually gives us a clue about his intention. The man is obviously interested in Winnie's body and that he wants to touch her with his bare hands and dig her out. As it is also suggested by Kristin Morrison that "what is lost by Winnie's burial is not merely physical mobility (for that, a friend or relative might dig one out), but access to sexual organs" (47). There "embedded up to above her waist", Winnie is no good to anyone around except this fellow who wants to have her.

When Winnie continues with her Shower/ Cooker anecdote, it becomes apparent that the man is after Winnie's sexuality. This time he goes too far to ask about Winnie's underwear, and the wife bursts with anger and damns the man, wishing him dead:

> Mr. Shower – or Cooker [. . .] Can't have been a bad bosom, he says, in its day. (*Pause.*) Seen worse shoulders, he says, in my time (*Pause.*) Does she feel her legs? he says. (*Pause.*) Is there any life in her legs? he says. (*Pause.*) Has she anything on underneath? he says. (*Pause.*) Ask her, he says, I'm shy. (*Pause.*) Ask her what? she says. (Pause.) Is there any life in her legs. (Pause.) Has she anything on underneath. Ask her yourself, she says. (*Pause. With sudden violence.*) Let go of me for Christ sake and drop! (*Pause.*) Drop dead! (43)

Winnie, "embedded up to above her waist" cannot move but she can clearly remember the comments of this "last human kind" who passed by (33). There is not the shadow of a doubt that she takes pride in the idea of their being so concerned with her problem. However, she becomes much more aware of the painful fact of her sexual disability.

There are other incidents in which this sexual impairment is reflected. At one scene Winnie puts great effort into reading the words on her toothbrush, and she finally achieves to grab a whole sentence "fully guaranteed genuine pure hog's setae" upon Willie's enjoyment of a pornographic postcard (16). The rest of her speech throughout the first act is based on her curiosity about the definition of the word "hog." When Willie finally speaks to her and explains that a hog is a "castrated male swine" a happy expression appears on Willie's face (35). Willie, too, is deprived of sexual activity. They are no good to each other. However, Winnie wants to feel that she has been once touched by that feeling "love." Thus she asks: "Was I lovable once, Willie? (Pause.) Was I ever lovable? (Pause.) Do not misunderstand my question, I am not asking you if you loved me, we know all about that, I am asking you if you found me lovable – at one stage (25). No, we *do not* know all about that; it is never clearly understood what is going on between Winnie and Willie. It is a matter of question whether Willie loves her or not, very much like the finale of the play, where we feel the need to ask will Willie kiss Winnie or kill her? Apparently this is another hopeless relationship on Beckett's stage, like the one we have witnessed in *Krapp's Last Tape*.

Winnie's pieces of love, her pieces of memories, her sexual desires and passions . . . all draw close to an end as her "words fail" (20). However, "when all else fails" she still has one last story saved for the last minute: The "Mildred story" (41).

This is a story about a little girl, "four or five already" called Mildred (41). Winnie tells that Mildred has recently been given a waxen, fully clothed, china blue-eyed dolly. This dolly has everything as an outfit: "shoes, socks, unties, complete set, frilly frock, gloves" (41). She has also "a little white straw hat with a chin elastic" (41). She has even

"a little picture-book with legends under her arm when she takes her walk" (41). After giving all these details about the dolly, Winnie begins her narrative:

> . . . (*Pause. Narrative.*) The sun was not well up when Milly rose, descended the steep . . . (*pause*) . . . slipped on her nightgown, descended all alone the steep wooden stairs, backwards on all fours, though she had been forbidden to do so, entered the . . . (*pause*) . . .tiptoed down the silent passage, entered the nursery and began to undress Dolly. (*Pause.*) Crept under the table and began to undress Dolly. (*Pause.*) Scolding her . . . the while. (*Pause.*) (41)

When Winnie mentions a mouse approaching Mildred in the story, she interrupts her narrative. She feels a bit uneasy and calls on Willie for concentration. Willie appears as indifferent as ever and does not give any heed to her call. Realizing that it is almost impossible to catch Willie's attention, Winnie continues with her story after much rambling, a lot of digressions and other narrative additions:

> *(Long pause. Narrative.)* Suddenly a mouse . . . *(Pause.)* Suddenly a mouse ran up her little thigh and Mildred, dropping dolly in her fright, began to scream – *(WINNIE gives a sudden piercing scream.)* – and screamed and screamed and screamed and screamed till all came running, in their night attire, papa, mamma, Bibby and . . . old Annie, to see what was the matter . . . *(Pause.)* Too late . . . *(Pause.)* Too late. (44)

The Mildred story actually seems to be an innocent one which tells the childish fears of a little girl. However, Winnie's narration of the story, her extended description of the girl and her attire give the signals of a story of "a sexual violation" (Lawley 98). Therefore, this story of Mildred is as suggestive as the story of Mr. Shower or Cooker. For instance, the moment of the mouse's running up Mildred's little thigh can be considered as a clear indication of sexual intercourse. In contrast to Winnie's sexual disability, her protagonist is actively involved in sex. She screams when she feels that the mouse is drawing near,

climbing up her thighs. She screams twice as she is afraid of the thing she has been deprived of. Her passion for an erotic love appears to go hand in hand with her fear of the same kind of love.

The stage relapses into silence right after the screams of Winnie which Paul Lawley associates with "the experience that the story both dramatizes and displaces" (98). Lawley thinks that together with the story of Mr. Shower/Cooker, the Mildred story "effects a disturbing sexualisation of the medium in which Winnie constructs her being: the theatre" (98). Winnie builds up her identity through her performance which is reminded to her periodically by a bell. She is buried in a mound up to her neck; therefore, her performance is based not on movement or action but rather on words and storytelling. Her stories are not only narrated on stage but also dramatized very much like the other stories of Beckett's characters.

At the end of the play there appears Willie, the decrepit man who has been mute and almost immobile throughout the play. Finally he is "in full view of the audience," and about to take action (Fletcher and Spurling 105). He tries hard to crawl towards Winnie with a pleased expression on his face. What is it that he is after? Is it crime, punishment or love? "Is it a kiss you're after, Willie . . . or is it something else?" as in the words of Winnie (47). There is no answer, not a word other than "Win" that he utters gleefully (47). They look at each other and the curtain falls. Who is to "win" in this game of love and game of life? Neither Winnie nor Willie is a promising winner in this play which does not have a "happy" moment at all.

It is the stories which triumph over life at the end. “When all else fails,” Winnie is ready to deliver her last narrative, her song, the sentimental waltz from *The Merry Widow.* She is now buried to her throat and finds it really difficult to move. However, she never ceases to hark back on memories, to compose stories and narrate them. She rejoices repeating the same exclamation to herself: “Oh this is going to be another happy day!” (14). There is in fact not a single “Happy Day” sighted on the horizon for Winnie. She hopes for this just like she hopes for the love of Willie, indicated in her last chant:

Though I say no
What I may not
Let you hear,
Yet the swaying
Dance is saying,
Love me dear!
Every touch of fingers
Tells me what I know,
Says for you,
It’s true, it’s true,
You love me so! (47)

Play

"I know now, all that was just . . . play"

(*Play* 153)

The bell ring is heard, when it is time for Winnie to end her performance and leave the stage. Just then, Winnie, the seemingly happy woman, under a hellish sun is renewed by the three immobile figures of the *Play* under a spotlight. *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Happy Days* share certain features which are not difficult to notice. Similarly, *Play* has its affinities with *Happy Days,* in the sense that it is a play about the memories and stories of a hopeless love, a love triangle. Ruby Cohn, drawing attention to the parallelism between the two plays, states that "Happy Days gave birth to the triplet of Play . . . A marriage play is followed by a play about lovers' triangle" (193). All in all, these three plays, no matter how differently they are put onto stage, dwell on memory and narrative in the shadows of a "hopeless business", a love which hurts more than it heals (*Play* 51).

Beckett's *Play,* first written in English in late 1962 and first published in German as *Spiel* in the journal "Theater Heute" in July 1963, was first performed in German in 1963, at the Ulmer Theater, Ulm-Donau. The play has a smooth plot behind it: a love triangle weaved basically out of clichés. The play revolves around the relationship of three characters identified as M, W1, W2 – a man and two women. This is nothing other than a love triangle indicated in the very first sentence of W1 in the play: "I said to him. Give her up" (148).

To put it in a nutshell, in *Play* there are seemingly two couples, sharing one husband, on stage; M-W1 couple is the actual couple. When W1 feels suspicious that M,

her husband, is cheating on her, and having an affair with W2, she holds him responsible for this and threatens him with suicide if he keeps on sleeping with W2. Then she goes to W2 for confrontation and asks for the details. She even threatens to kill her when she hears that W2 has no relation with the issue. Not satisfied with the output, W1 takes action and hires a detective, whom M bribes not to release any information. Finally he confesses and tells everything; in turn he is forgiven by W1. Taking pride in her victory, W1 goes to W2 again to threaten her to end the affair. The man treating both women kindly continues with his marriage and with the affair. Suddenly, he disappears. W1, who lies "stricken for weeks," goes to her place again only to find that it is "all bolted and barred" (151). W2 just burst with anger makes "a bundle of his things" and burns them (151). In the end, each woman miscalculates that she has been deserted because of her rival. They challenge each other for the same man, a man who finds refuge in escaping when everything gets terribly complicated.

Frankly speaking, no matter how stock the characters seem, no matter how cliché the plot sounds, *Play* creates a surpassing effect with its alternative staging techniques. Perhaps no one but Beckett would place "three identical grey urns" with protruding heads from each on a bare stage (147). Separated by the urns and deprived of physical interaction these characters share a story which they tell in toneless voices. This should come as no surprise to Beckett's audience, who has already seen characters in ashbins, or embedded in mound on stage, struggling to recall and narrate.

In addition to this character designation, there is also another special feature of the play, which is Beckett's use of a spotlight on stage. When Paul Lawley touches upon the similarity between *Happy Days* and *Play,* he states that "where Winnie has a bell which

regulates her waking and sleeping and cuts into her when she is disobedient, the urn-bound shades of *Play* have as "unique inquisitor" a spotlight, which alone and immediately, provokes their speech, "swivelling at maximum speed from one face to another" (99). Situated "at the centre of footlights" "on a stage in almost complete darkness" this spotlight plays an important role, controlling the action the play (*Play* 147). The spotlight freely shifts from one character to another fades or wavers, tormenting the urned characters as well as the audience. This free play of the light on stage, getting brighter or fainter, strands the characters that would prefer to stay in total silence to the tortures of the spotlight. Placed in complete darkness, the characters cannot stand the manoeuvres of the light which acts as an "interrogator" or a "conductor" within the play (Fletcher and Spurling 107). There in total darkness the characters are tormented by the constant interrogation of the spotlight, while the audience sits in silence to see how the story of these characters is folded and unfolded before them. However, putting themselves in the characters' shoes, the audience may also feel a bit uneasy, and become aware of their weakness, impotence, and "entrapment within their role as spectators" (McMullan 25).

John Spurling in his discussion on *Play* draws an analogy on the dramatic power of the spotlight, and suggests that "the theatrical effect of the light in *Play* is somewhat similar to the experience of visiting a graveyard – the visitor is made keenly aware of his own flesh and blood by comparison with the lack of it all around him" (108). Considering the fact that the play has three characters in funeral urns, the graveyard analogy seems a really apt one. Side by side, immobile, in their toneless voices, these characters sound like living corpses in the graveyard, sharing the same story: *love and death.*

Play consists of two parts one of which is about the memories and stories of the characters on the love triangle, and the second part is about the feelings and responses of these characters to their situation and to the manoeuvres of the spotlight. This second part is called "Mediation" by Beckett, which refers to the intermediation of the characters to "make sense of their position" (Lawley 100). The first part is called "Narration" in which the characters tell the same story, the love triangle, from different points of view, in the same toneless voices. In other words, where "Mediation" dwells upon present, immediate responses, thoughts and feelings of the characters the "Narrative" section leans upon past experiences, a story of a *hopeless love.* What this segmenting implies that in *Play,* past and present run in the same stage whose traffic is organized and regulated by the moves of the spotlight. It is worth quoting from Paul Lawley who gives a brief insight into this chain:

> The story is located firmly in the past; it seems that after death they tell of their triangular lives. But what we notice are those moments at which the past-tense story seems to be giving a displaced description of the *present* operation of the light which calls it forth. It is, after all, a story about a man *going back* to one woman, then to another, seemingly unable to *leave* either; the wife inevitably *makes a scene* and the man pretends to *make a new start.* The uncertain end of the story dramatizes the heads' wish for the light: the man stops *coming* and disappears. The continual shifts, the metatheatre, the repeat, the inexplicable wished-for end – all are there in displaced, narrativized from. (101)

In *Play* everything is before our eyes in a "narrativized form" as it has always been in most of the works of Beckett (Lawley 101). This is the performance of the word in the form of storytelling, a mechanism of narrative, which runs through all the other plays we have discussed before.

Play opens with the verse of a beginning choir which is formed out of the very first sentences of the monologues of the characters. This chorus actually evokes a funeral in a church when the three say altogether:

W1:		I said to him, Give her up –
W2:	[Together.]	One morning as I was sitting –
M:		We were not long together –

[Spots off. Blackout. Five seconds. Spot on W1.]

W1: I said to him, Give her up. I swore by all I held most sacred –

[Spot from W1 to W2.]

W2: One morning as I was sitting stitching by the open window she burst in and flew at me. Give him up, she screamed, he's mine. Her photographs were kind to her. Seeing her now for the first time full length in the flesh I understood why he preferred me.

[Spot from W2 to M.]

M: We were not long together when she smelled the rat. Give up that whore, she said, or I'll cut my throat – [Hiccup.] pardon – so help me God. I knew she could have no proof. So I told her I did not know what she was talking about.

[Spot from M to W2.] (148)

This very first part from the play gives an insight into the narrative mode of the whole play, which is controlled by the mechanical mode of the Light. The Light is there to question the characters, relate the stories and solve this "jigsaw puzzle of facts" as in the words of Ruby Cohn (195). The stage directions clearly illustrate the Light's interrogation process which prompts the "protruding heads" to tell their story and reveal their secrets. The Light actually has a difficult task, as there is not just one story but many versions of it. What the characters tell is in fact a replica of the same story weaved on and out of their experiences and memories. To make matters worse, storytelling mechanism

runs a bit differently in *Play*. Unlike the stories and allusions of Didi and Gogo, the chronicle of Hamm, or the gleeful monologue of "happy" Winnie, what is seen here is a play designed as a story itself. Therefore, it is no surprise that there are different versions of the same story as well as different versions of truth.

The Light has a lot to do during the course of the play. Each time the light has to stop one character, make her/him speak or prompt the other to speak. Therefore, the monologues of the characters are usually interrupted or broken. Instead of a linear speech that flows throughout the play, there are fragments. Anna McMullan claims that this fragmented narrative is a detriment in terms of the authorial position of Light. Taking into consideration the disconnected speeches of the characters, and the repetitive style of the play, she argues that the Light falls prey to the same tricks of narrative, and is subjected to the same painful processes as the urned figures. She essentially points out that "if the Light is not only a figure of authority but an author-figure, it continually fails to make an ordered, meaningful narrative out of the fragmented phrases and images that inhabit its skull-place" (22). One can agree with McMullan, as the play clearly shows, there is a certain rupture in narrative. The line between the "act of narration" and the narrative of the text itself is somewhat blurred. The text, which is actually a narrative itself, lends itself to narrativization. This is Beckett's cycle of storytelling, hell, heaven or Dante's Purgatory; this is Penelope's thread or Scheherazade's trick. This is pure Beckettian storytelling.

The first section of the play – the process of storytelling draws to a close with the desperate situation of the two women, and with an indication of the man's breaking point:

"Finally it was all too much. I simply could no longer –" (151). The second segment of the play opens with the same chorus beginning:

W1: Mercy, mercy –

W2: [Together.] To say I am –

M: When first this change −

[*Spots off. Blackout. Five seconds. Spot on M*.]

M: When first this change I actually thanked God. I thought, it is done, it is said, now all is going out –

W1: Mercy, mercy, tongue still hanging out for mercy. It will come. You haven't seen me. But you will. Then it will come.

[*Spot from W1 to W2.]*

W2: To say I am not disappointed, no, I am. I had anticipated something better. More restful. (152)

This second part of the play includes the comments of the characters on the course of events. This part differs a bit from the first part in the sense that the characters seem to have undergone changes. There is still storytelling and twisting the truth, but it is not much compared to the first part. The monologues now get shorter and the characters more precise. However, there is still a "play" going on stage; these characters are deceiving the Light, the audience, and themselves as well. For instance, as the Light forces the characters to speak and tell the truth, man gets worried. He feels an urgent need to make an explanation: "Is it that I do not tell the truth, is that it, that some day somehow I may tell the truth at last and then no more light at last, for the truth?" (153). It is obvious that he does not tell the truth. No one does so. These three characters are telling the same story from different point of views, thus twisting the truth, giving it a new shape and retelling the story.

The most obvious lie which permeates the story in the play is the "love" affair: there is no real love here. Though the man seems to be unable to leave either of the women, he is not actually in love with any of them. There are clear indications of this throughout the play: He is deceiving both women by telling each that he is not having sex with the other. In the first part of the play when he finally confesses and tells everything, he takes W1 in his arms and wows that he cannot live without her. From then on, they carry on as best as they can. However, the man is not sincere in his feelings as indicated in his speech:

> M1: At home all heart to heart, new leaf and bygones bygones. I ran into your ex-doxy, she said one night, on the pillow, you're well out of that. Rather uncalled for, I thought. I am indeed, sweetheart, I said, I am indeed. God what vermin women. Thanks to you, angel, I said. (151)

All these sweet words and "all heart to heart" dialogues actually amount to nothing, as W1 begins to "smell her off him again" (151). Fluctuating between the first woman and the second one, he leaves both when he thinks that it has all become unbearable. He escapes to a place where the pain of truth would not touch him. It is obvious that M does not provide us with a clear picture of a proper husband or a boyfriend as indicated in his hypocritical remarks: "Have I been neglecting you? How could we be together in the way we are if there were someone else?" (148) He is quite "assiduous" in his relationships; he knows how to keep his secrets, but at the end of the day he is a professional liar, a deserter and a hypocrite. Even W2, the woman who is in love with him, thinks that he is together with W1 only for her money: "I sometimes wondered if he was not living with her for her money" (149). The Light is also suspicious of the Man, and has no faith in him. At one point, as the Light moves from W1 to M, and M opens his mouth to speak

only to see that the Light shifts from him to W2 basically skipping his chance of defence. This tide of lies rolls through the whole play and takes in everyone on its way. Truth and lies exist hand in hand in this play, looming over the characters like a nightmare. These characters do not have any chance other than confessing and telling through various sessions of inquiry. The Light is there to take the whole control of the characters' sessions of confession. During all these sessions characters seem not to talk to each other but to the spotlight. When they talk about the memories of this love triangle, the light is bright, at its full strength. When The Light is faint, they try to analyse the events and make sense of their situation. After the first sessions have been completed under the supervision of Light, the whole play is repeated as indicated in the stage direction: "[*Repeat Play*]" (157). This act of repetition may refer to the characters' insistence on narrating the same twisted story which has neither a proper beginning nor an end. When finally it is time to have the so-called end the very same sentence of M is heard: "We were not long together" (158). Kristin Morrison suggests that this very last sentence actually does not signal an end but rather another beginning, a third round of the whole play, "were the audience and actors willing to endure again what these characters will apparently spend an eternity reciting" (85). Obviously, one repetition in this case may be an indicator of numerous repetitions; endless recollections of these events, and an incessant torture for the three urned figures. Repetitive or not, *Play* has shown with its different form and content that once again stories abound on Beckett's stage, this time together with lies, betrayal, adultery, accusation, blackmailing, and bribery.

From Dialogue to Monologue: Beckett's Knotty Pieces

> Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark." (*Endgame* 45)

Leaving behind the dialogues of Gogo and Didi, the stories of Hamm and Clov; Nagg and Nell, we have seen that Beckett's drama has changed in the sense that the excessive dialogues have turned into monologues that are stylish yet problematic to be called as "monologues." The earlier plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* have proved that what lies behind Beckett's drama is in fact not the action but the "Words, words" (*WFG* 50). These two plays, dwelling upon dialogue as a dramatic style as well as a dramatic device, have shown us that in a play where almost nothing happens it becomes the dialogue that is of great value. After all, "what is there to keep" these desperate creatures here, in this unbearable, vexing world? It is "the dialogue" (*Endgame* 40).

When the curtain rises upon *Krapp's Last Tape* and then upon *Happy Days* and *Play*, one can easily realize the stylistically different nature of the plays in the sense that they are all formed in monologues. Both *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, though essentially classified as dialogue plays, also contain soliloquies, solo speeches and pieces of monologue, but it is actually these three plays mentioned above in which monologue is prevalent. Yet, it may not be wrong to assert that, no matter how much they are fit to be called monologue pieces, *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days* and *Play* push the limits of the definition of monologue hard. As Paul Lawley also points out that "if as a sequence these three plays make monologue central, they also render it problematic" (88).

For instance, none of these plays consists of only a single voice speaking on stage. In these plays each character has its own companion: Krapp is seemingly alone on stage, sitting at a table, with only a few props around. He has his tape recorder and spools with which he is in an endless interaction and through which he adopts different voices at the same time. Moreover, there is not one single voice on stage but many versions of it: Krapp sixty nine, Krapp thirty nine, Krapp the younger, Krapp the older, Krapp the drunk, Krapp the mournful, Krapp the gleeful, Krapp the regretful and so forth.

As to Winnie of *Happy Days*, she is not seemingly alone on stage, she has her companion Willie. However, Willie is no good to Winnie; he is there, almost immobile and mute throughout the whole play. Winnie is struggling to articulate herself, trying to capture her companion's attention, telling him stories and carrying an endless ritual of daily routines whereas Willie is busy with reading his newspaper and he has no intention of giving an ear to Winnie. Therefore, Winnie is actually alone. She has her quotations, many voices from the past, from Shakespeare, Milton, from Lord Byron, Thomas Gray, and Omar Khayyam. Winnie needs company; she needs more than one voice to distance herself from the unbearable condition she is in. She resides in past; in memories, in stories, and in literary allusions.

In *Play*, this problematic nature of Beckett's "monologue" becomes more apparent as the play is composed of independent monologues delivered by three characters that are urned side by side. Although the characters all speak when prompted by the Light, none of them is aware of the presence of the other. Each regards himself as alone, speaks only when asked by the Light, and repeats the same story, the story of their love triangle. "Unable to communicate with one another, ignorant of the fate of the other two, each of

the three people reviews and re-views the triangle" (Cohn 195). This review of the triangle, this ongoing story is nothing but monologue, delivered by each character and addressed to the Light himself.

Beckett never ceases to experiment with the dramatic genre and always comes up with an outstanding output. Just as his early plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, with their focus more on dialogue and less on action, have shaken the world of Western drama, his subsequent plays *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days* and *Play* have given it a new shape.

CHAPTER V

MUSIC AND NARRATIVE: MELODIC STORIES

Narrative on Air: Samuel Beckett and the Radio Medium

If one ever wonders to where all the silences and pauses of Beckett's stage lead, he would probably come up with the answer nowhere. This supposition may prove totally false when one takes Beckett's radio dramas into consideration. All the silences and the pauses of the stage emerge from the theatre hall and come into being in his radio drama and echo on the ears of the listeners. This smooth transition from stage to air comes as no surprise to us, as being the readers who have experienced the every little variances of Beckett's stage. Experimenting with many different styles of drama and art, exploring the limits and possibilities of each and every form, Beckett has proved us that narrative is an integral part of his stage, which manifests itself in radio medium in this chapter.

When we consider the dramatic career of Beckett, we can say that Beckett has prepared us for such a transition which seemed almost inevitable in his case, and has taken up writing for radio. All to the good that he consented to writing his first piece for radio when was asked to by BBC in 1955. Undoubtedly the collaboration with Beckett contributed a lot to the BBC. Similarly it had an important effect on Beckett who wrote

prominent plays for radio and other non-print media in the following years. As in the words of Everett C. Frost, “in the opportunity to write for the BBC, Beckett found not only a new venue, new audiences, and source of much-needed income, but also a fruitful context for the formal and conceptual issues being addressed in his work” (314).

When BBC Third Programme asked Beckett to write a play for radio Beckett was not keen enough at all. In a letter to his friend Nancy Cunard Beckett wrote: "Never thought about radio play technique but in the dead of t'other night got a nice gruesome idea full of cartwheels and dragging of feet and puffing and panting which may or may not lead to something" (qtd in Frost 361). Not quite reluctantly but rather indifferently he took up his pen to write and his “nice gruesome idea” gave way to *All That Fall*, Beckett’s first radio play. *All That Fall*, written in English in 1956, was first broadcast on the BBC Third Programme on 13 January 1957. This famed play was the first but not the last contribution of Beckett to radio medium. He continued to write for radio during the next twenty years; soon came more radio plays *Embers, Words and Music, Cascando* and *Rough for Radio I, II.* As the distinguished literary critic and former Head of Radio Drama Department at the BBC Martin Esslin has observed in his article entitled “Samuel Beckett and the Art of Broadcasting”:

> Samuel Beckett's work for broadcasting is a highly significant part of his oeuvre and far less fully discussed in the mounting literature on Beckett than his other output, far less readily available, also, in performance which alone can bring out its full flavor. But beyond that, Beckett's experience with broadcasting and above all radio, has played a significant and little-known part in his development as an artist. (125)

Much ink has been spilled into Beckett's introduction to radio drama, especially by prominent critics like Martin Esslin and Clas Zilliacus (Kalb 126). However, little has been said on his motives lying under such a shift to radio drama. Reducing the movement of bodies on stage, transforming the characters into marionettes or ghostly figures, controlling their gestures and interactions, and bringing up Voice as a character to stage, Beckett would surely find himself in the field of radio. As a man who was always obsessed with time/space and being issues, he would for sure exploit radio medium in which time and space are easily made adaptable. More importantly it might be asserted that Beckett, as a man who had always taken pleasure in recounting new stories of love and life in the plays, would make use of a radio play which "can be defined quite simply as a story told in dramatic form by means of sound alone" (Ash 1).

Departing from this definition by William Ash the prominent script editor of BBC Radio Drama Department, it can be asserted that radio drama carries in itself both a dramatic and a narrative potential. In its simplest sense, drama portrays a clash between two opposite poles such as man and woman or a man and nature. This clash reaches at a peak point and gradually is dissolved. Therefore, it can be said that dramatic form is based on the destruction and restoration of unity, which is quite an ongoing process within the play. As in the words of William Ash "dramatic form, with its tightening and relaxing of tension, its ebb and flow of energy and passion tends always toward cyclical" whereas narrative form gradually folds and unfolds itself in time, before our eyes (7). Thus we get to know the characters following the clues and the details that the text presents us with. Enriched by the tenets of both narrative form and dramatic form, Beckett's dramatic art proves to be highly fruitful.

Drama and *narrative* being the key words here, explain clearly why radio medium constitutes an integral part of Beckett's literary works as well as our study. So far the thesis has explored the way how narrative theory works out in Beckett's drama, and how his characters take refuge in storytelling and use it as a defence mechanism against the memories of life and love. In these plays Beckett employs story and storytelling as stage techniques for representation. These plays dramatize the stories that the characters have been telling themselves and others throughout the play, in the form of dialogues, monologues, soliloquies or just in voice, with the help of stage props and asides. In all these plays verbal is visualized on stage.

It may not be wrong to assert that every play tells a story but in Beckett's stage this storytelling is double-sided. Beckett's plays are constructed in such a way that it is always possible to trace a storyline within the text and hear a story told by the characters and witness the plot as it folds an unfolds before us. Among all these stories lies the real dramatic potential of the plays. Normally in radio drama there is no visualisation, verbal is vocalized and broadcast. The dialogues are spoken and performed with the assistance of sounds and silences. Landscape has lost its importance and made way for soundscape. The radio drama actor or the narrator tells instead of acting the events out for us, while the actor in drama enacts the events that he has recounted or just has been recounting. This is the very basic distinction between visual drama and radio drama which reminds us of showing - telling debate. However, the case is not the same for *Endgame*, *WFG*, *Embers* or many other plays of this study. In these plays, be it radio dramas or visual ones, all the characters tell stories, and they act them out. These stories are irrelevant accounts made up in time or grabbed from past, and brought into present. They are

sandwiched between the so-called actions of the characters, the actions that do not carry any dramatic potential at all. In these dramas it is actually the stories that carry the whole dramatic potential and turn the prosaic atmosphere into a visual fest.

As we have already noted and have been pointing out throughout the study that stories are everywhere in different forms in the works of Beckett, be it in the form of anecdotes, life accounts biblical allusions or chronicles. *Embers* discussed in the following part, is one of these works, a radio piece, in which a character peoples his surrounding with ghostly characters from his past recounting a couple of memories and stories.

> Stories, stories, years and years of stories, till the need came on me, for someone, to be with me , anyone, a stranger, to talk to, imagine he hears me, years of that, and then, now, for someone who . . . knew me, in the old days, anyone, to be with me, imagine he hears me, what I am, now. (*Embers* 95)

Embers

Beckett's second radio piece *Embers* begins with the sound of the sea which is "scarcely audible" at first and then "a little louder" (93). Very much like the wavy sea, the tone of the play and the voice of the narrator Henry rise and fall and thus create a ripple effect within the play. Weaving the waves together we are gradually drawn into the world of Henry whose relation to these voices and sounds around create the dramatic atmosphere of the play. Lacking the opportunity to see the play in its full sense, yet blessed with an ability to look through the mind's eye, we, as listeners feel content. As Henry creates a drama out of sounds and stories we similarly create a drama in our minds out of Henry's story. This process of creation and recreation constitutes the base of Beckett's *Embers.*

Written in English and completed at the beginning of 1959, *Embers* is first broadcast on the BBC Third Programme on 24 June 1959. The play opens with a view of Henry on the seaside, talking to himself and to the sounds of nature: "On. [*Sea. Voice louder.*] On! [*He moves on. Boots on shingle. As he goes, louder.*] Stop! [*He halts. Sea a little louder.*] Down. [*Sea. Voice louder.*] Down!" (93). Henry commands and controls the sounds around as he tries to pitch his voice to the listeners. Quite in an authoritative

way he summons the sounds: "Hooves! (*Pause. Louder*.) Hooves! (*Sound of hooves walking on hard road. They die rapidly away. Pause.*)" (93). These sounds dominate Henry's world; though it is not certain whether they exist independently or are just created by Henry in his mind, they are there larger than life.

Henry seems to be alone on the seaside, alone yet accompanied by many voices and memories from the past− the father, the daughter Addie and the wife Ada. All may or may not be there. They may or may not be in his imagination either. Concerning their existence there, Henry asks himself a couple of questions providing the answers as well:

> Who is beside me now? [*Pause.*] An old man, blind and foolish. [*Pause.*] My father, back from the dead, to be with me. [*Pause.*] As if he hadn't died. [*Pause.*] No, simply back from the dead, to be with me, in this strange place. [*Pause.*] Can he hear me? [*Pause.*] Yes, he must hear me. [*Pause.*] To answer me? [*Pause.*] No, he doesn't answer me. [*Pause.*] Just be with me. [*Pause.*] (93)

The father is the first image that appears before Henry over there in that "strange place" or in his mind (93). Henry, referring to his father as an old, a blind and foolish man tries to find the reason of the father's appearance there. To him, the father is there to accompany Henry, who in his solitude sits in that strange place and talks to himself. What is "this strange place" Henry talks about? Where is it? What is it that makes it so strange?

Henry satisfies our curiosity; as if trying to instil a notion of space in the reader. In a very reassuring tone, Henry states where he is standing and talking to us: "That sound you hear is the sea. [*Pause. Louder.*] I say that sound you hear is the sea, we are sitting on the strand" (93). Henry also states the reason of his giving information about the sound of the sea. To him the sound is really weird that no one can tell what is it

without seeing it properly: “I mention it because the sound is so strange, so unlike the sound of the sea, that if you didn’t see what it was you wouldn’t know what it was. [*Pause.*]” (93). Henry sets the stage, describes the scene, and grabs our attention to the soundscape. Such descriptions in the form of cues almost serve as stage directions within the play and guide us through the maze of Beckettian tales. Through these instructions we are drawn into the depths of the performance of the words.

In *Embers* narrative presents itself in the form of a long tale, in which Henry talks about his memories of his father. He tells how his father used to spend his time “on the shore in shadow,” how he used to take his evening bathes, “listen to the light” and how he ran away and disappeared from light one day (93). This very first reflection of Henry about his father suggests that the father may have committed suicide in the sea, but this assumption remains suspended. We can never be sure any of the play’s given details as the characters are constantly playing with us, appearing and reappearing; talking and keeping silent. Being the “blind” listener of radio drama our suspicions grow high, as we cannot see the dramatization of events. However, we are given an ability to see the events and the characters with the mind’s eye, from a very different point of view.

Henry describes the surrounding, the sea, as if trying to drag us from the realm of memories to real life to the present time: “Today it is calm, but I often hear it above in the house and walking the roads and start talking, oh just loud enough to drown it, nobody notices” [*Pause.*] (94). All these pauses in Henry’s narrative embody the sound of the sea, the unbearable, aggressive, tormenting sound of the sea for Henry. No matter how hard for him to bear the sound of the sea, Henry does not give up. He starts talking loudly not to hear the sounds of the waves. He tries to “drown” them all, just like they did to his

father. However, there is no end to the sound of the sea, neither to the voices which come from his mind. All those echoes are like the stories of Henry which go on and on till "little is left to tell" (*Ohio Impromptu* 285). These neverending stories permeate Henry's life, but they are no good to him, since he is never able to finish them: "I usen't to need anyone, just to myself, stories, there was a great one about an old fellow called Bolton, I never finished it, I never finished any of them, I never finished anything, everything always went on for ever. [*Pause.]"* (94). Henry explains that he does not need anyone but the stories which he never succeeds in finishing. Henry does need stories so as to repress the sound of the sea and the fretting noise in his brain. He needs to compose stories to reconstruct the father figure in his mind and bring him back from the death, from the deadly silence and the deadly sea.

Henry's memory of the father is followed by a long story called "Bolton" that Henry keeps telling to himself throughout the play. This Bolton story basically tells the story of the man Bolton who needs a doctor named Holloway one winter night. Bolton's reasons for calling Holloway though are no certain, may be related to Bolton's wish for something which Holloway refuses to do; maybe an "euthanasia," "an abortion or some other act of mercy" (Perloff 260). This story, like many other narratives of Beckett's stage lacks conventional plotting, thus such assumptions on the plot and subject of the story remain ambiguous. One thing is certain that this story like the other narrative pieces of this study plays an important part within the drama. Peopling his world through making up story characters called Bolton and Holloway, and calling characters from his past, Henry builds up a world of his own with stories and memories. This world-making

is illustrated in his story "Bolton and Holloway" which he opens in an artistic way summoning "Bolton [*Pause. Louder*.] Bolton! [*Pause.*] :"

> Before the fire with all the shutters . . . no, hangings, hangings, all the hangings drawn and the light, no light, only the light of the fire, sitting there in the . . . no, standing, standing there on the hearthrug in the dark before the fire with his arms on the chimney-piece and his head on his arms, standing there waiting in the dark before the fire in his old red dressing gown and no sound in the house of any kind, only the sound of the fire. [*Pause.*] Standing there in his old red dressing-gown might go on fire any minute like when he was a child, no, that was his pyjamas, standing there waiting in the dark, no light, only the light of the fire, and no sound of any kind, only the fire, an old man in great trouble. [*Pause.*] Ring then at the door and over he goes to the window and looks out between the hangings, fine old chap, very big and strong, bright winter's night, snow everywhere, bitter cold, white world, cedar boughs bending under load and then as the arm goes up to ring again recognizes . . . Holloway . . . [*Long pause.*] . . . yes, Holloway, recognizes Holloway, goes down and opens. [*Pause.*] Outside all still, not a sound, dog's chain maybe or a bough groaning if you stood there listening long enough, white world, Holloway with his little black bag, not a sound, bitter cold, full moon small and white, crooked trail of Holloway's galoshes, Vega in the Lyre very green. [*Pause.*] Vega in the Lyre very green. [*Pause.*] Following conversation then on the step, no, in the room, back in the room, following conversation then back in the room, Holloway: 'My dear Bolton, it is now past midnight, if you would be good enough–', gets no further, Bolton: 'Please! PLEASE!' Dead silence then, not a sound, only the fire, all coal, burning down now, Holloway on the hearthrug trying to toast his arse, Bolton, where's Bolton, no light, only the fire, Bolton at the window his back to the hangings, holding them a little apart with his hand looking out, white world, even the spire, white to the vane, most unusual, silence in the house, not a sound, only the fire, no flames now, embers. [*Pause.*] Embers. [*Pause.*] Shifting, lapsing, furtive like, dreadful sound, Holloway on the rug, fine old chap, six foot, burly, legs apart, hands behind his back holding up the tails of his old macfarlane, Bolton at the window, grand old figure in his old red dressing-gown, back against the hangings, hand stretched out widening the chink, looking out, white world great trouble, not a sound, only the embers, sound of dying, dying glow, Holloway, Bolton, Bolton, Holloway, old men, great trouble, white world, not a sound, [*Pause.*] Listen to it! [*Pause.*] Close your eyes and listen to it, what would you think it was? [*Pause. Vehement.*] A drip! A drip! [*Sound of drip, rapidly amplified, suddenly cut off*.] Again! [*Drip again. Amplifications begins*.] No! [*Drip cut off. Pause*.] Father! [*Pause. Agitated.*] (95)

Like many other orator-narrators of Beckett, Henry is skilled in telling and talking. Throughout his narration, quite in an improvisational way he adopts different tones and makes different gestures. With detailed colour, form and movement descriptions Henry constructs his story in great ardour. He sometimes goes very much into details, sometimes chops his own words. There are times that he contradicts himself, changes his mind or denies what he has already said: "Following conversation then on the step, no, in the room, back in the room, following conversation then back in the room." He writes and rewrites his story as he puts his words into performance: "shutters . . . no hangings," "the light, no light," "sitting there in the . . . no, standing" "starts playing with the curtain, no, hanging, difficult to describe, draws it back no, kind of gathers it towards him" (95, 103).

Henry's idiosyncratic style of telling appeals the taste of the reader and the listener. He tells his story in such a way that the reader and the listener can grab the details easily and thus visualize the play. This unique style, the alteration in tone and style add a different colour to the play which otherwise being surrounded by ghostly images and voices stands as a bleak picture of the sea shore with a loner in view. Henry creates his story, presents his characters; vocalizes and performs the story. This constitution process becomes double-sided when backed up by his narration. The pattern Henry follows is a compelling one in the sense that, we as listeners, "tune into the story in the course of its transmission, which in Henry's case is equivalent to its creation" as in the words of Ronan McDonald (57). Henry's *Embers* is a story of creation composed with the assistance of tellers and tales; sounds and voice; of narrative and discourse, drama and performance.

By telling stories to himself Henry tries to drown the sound of the sea but is prevented by the voices coming from his mind and presenting themselves around him. Though Henry's story is filled with the same repetitious phrase "not a sound" it is for sure that the drips become his torturer. Actually every drip is a kind of stroke in his mind which he tries to escape desperately by talking and telling. Ambiguously enough he sometimes insists on hearing the sounds no matter how tormenting for him to do this. "Listen to it!" he says at one point, "Close your eyes and listen to it, what would you think it was? [*Pause. Vehement.*] A drip! A drip!" (95). He breaks off with his narrative, asks his father and the audience to listen to the sound of the sea. "Father!" he summons in an agitated tone, and he tries to pull his father out of that deadly sea and have him as company there on the sea shore. Shifting from his narrative to his memories of the father does no good for Henry. He is tired off all the words which have already become exhausted in his mind and in our ears. All he needs is company now, someone, even a stranger to talk to but not the stories.

> Stories, stories, years and years of stories, till the need came on me, for someone, to be with me , anyone, a stranger, to talk to, imagine he hears me, years of that, and then, now, for someone who . . . knew me, in the old days, anyone, to be with me, imagine he hears me, what I am, now. (95)

What is Henry now? Where is he? He is "no good," "not there either" (95). Stuck up in his borderline situation he can neither stay away from the sea nor can he bear the sound. Realizing that there is no way out he continues with his story:

> Try again. [*Pause.*] White world, not a sound. [*Pause.*] Holloway. [*Pause.*] Holloway says he'll go, damned if he'll sit up all night before a black grate, doesn't understand, call a man out, an old friend, in the cold and dark, an old friend, urgent need, bring the bag, then not a word, no explanation no heat, no light, Bolton: 'Please! PLEASE!' Holloway, no refreshment, no welcome, chilled

> to the medulla, catch his death, can't understand, strange treatment, old friend, says he'll go, doesn't move, not a sound, fire dying, white beam from window, ghastly scene wishes to God he hadn't come, no good, fire out, bitter cold, great trouble, white world, not a sound, no good, [*Pause.*] Father! [*Pause.*] (95-96)

Henry, no matter how hard he tries cannot feel at ease, breaks off again with his story of Bolton and Holloway and returns to the memories of his father. By association of ideas and feelings he recounts his very last memories about his father. He remembers the day when his father scorned him for his fear of a dip. Imitating his father's voice Henry says: "A washout, that's all you are, a washout!" (96). His mind and memory play tricks with him as he plays with us and with our anticipation, constantly breaking off and resuming his story. For an instance he remembers the noise of a slamming door which leads him to more associations. It is not certain that whether this slamming of the door is in his imagination or in his memory. The word "Washout" and the slam of the door almost come as strokes to his mind. He then turns to other memories, to the memories about his wife Ada and his daughter Addie. Imitating Addie's voice as well Henry recounts how he used to walk with Addie in the fields. After Henry is done with all the associations, he quite in an agitated tone yells at his father again and tells him that he is "better off dead" as he is now tired of talking to him (96). He switches off his memory box and the figure of the father almost vanishes away. Now he has Ada for company: "Ada! [*Pause. Louder.*] Ada!" he calls. Ada appears before him and answers his summons: "Yes" (97).

From the realm of the father now we have moved into another place which is the plane of the wife, Ada, who comes like a breath of fresh air to Henry's deadly atmosphere. Though we cannot see her, Ada is there as a companion to Henry; she is not

far away. They spend some time together; Ada talks a great deal about trivial things, tries to control Henry like a caring, tender mother. She warns him against the cold weather and cold stones and offers him her shawl. They talk about children, their daughter Addie, about horses and music lessons. However, this conversion, very much like the others, is interrupted by Henry's associations.

This time it is Addie's turn to appear in the blurry mind of Henry. Henry remembers his daughter Addie taking his piano lessons. Memories get blurred as Henry presents us with the conversations between Addie and her music master and riding master. It seems that Addie in both lessons experiences hard moments with the demanding masters like his father who does not get on well with life, having the very Beckettian sin on mind − the sin of being born as indicated in his funny comment: "It was not enough to drag her into the world, now she must play the piano" (99). Among the three plays of this chapter *Embers* is the one in which music plays a minor role, yet the play has this really funny and meaningful line.

What is wrong with Henry? Like any other Beckettian character he is constantly talking and telling, hearing offstage voices and weird sounds. Should Henry really see a doctor, as his wife suggests him to do? Ada thinks that there is something wrong with Henry's brain as he is constantly talking. This situation is getting worse and becoming strange for their child Addie who basically cannot make sense of her father's behaviour:

> Ada: You should see a doctor about your talking, it's worse, what must it be like for Addie? [*Pause.*] (. . .)
>
> Ada: It's very bad for the child. [*Pause.*] It's silly to say it keeps you from hearing it, it doesn't keep you from hearing it and even if it does you shouldn't be hearing it, there must be something wrong with your brain.

> Henry: That! I shouldn't be hearing that!
>
> Ada: I don't think you are hearing it. And if you are what's wrong with it, it's a lovely peaceful gentle soothing sound, why do you hate it? [*Pause.*] And if you hate it why don't you keep away from it? Why are you always coming down here? [*Pause.*] There's something wrong with your brain, you ought to see Holloway, he's alive still, isn't he? [*Pause.*] (100)

Henry does not answer Ada, nor does he pay any attention to Ada's thoughts. Instead, he "fumbles in the shingle, catches up two big stones and starts dashing them together" (100). He throws one of the stones away. Referring to the sound of the stone's fall Henry exclaims: "That's life!" (100). For Henry the sound of the stone's fall is life. What is it there to be called as "life?" Is it the fall or is it the "dying sound," or both? Ada cannot understand the reason of Henry's obsession with the sound of the sea. She tries to convince Henry that there is nothing wrong with the sound of the sea, and he should see Holloway so as to solve the problem in his brain. She then as if trying to change the subject asks: "Who were you with just now? [*Pause*.] Before you spoke to me" (101). Henry explains that he has been trying to communicate with his father and ask him whether he has met Ada or not.

Now Ada takes her turn to recount memories. She remembers the day when she saw Henry's father on the road. Henry implores her to tell more, for him "every syllable is a second gained" (102). However, Ada has no more to tell: "That's all, I'm afraid. [*Pause.*] Go on now with your father or your stories or whatever you were doing, don't mind me any more" (102). In her effort to tell something more Ada once again starts talking, hoping that "this rubbish" would be a help to Henry (103). Unfortunately all her efforts turn to be in vain, as she cannot go on. She vanishes away and is no longer on the reach of Henry's imagination.

Alone now on the shingle, seeing that there is no help from Ada, Henry once more gathers his courage and calls: "Ada! [*Pause. Louder*.] Ada! [*Pause.*] Hooves! [*Pause.*] Christ! [*Pause.*] Hooves! [*Pause. Louder*.] Hooves! [*Pause.*] Christ! [*Long Pause.*]" (103). Realizing that there is no answer to his summons Henry revolves Ada's story in his mind and tries to continue with his own story, Bolton and Holloway:

> 'My dear Bolton . . . .' [*Pause.*] 'If it's an injection you want, Bolton, let down your trousers and I'll give you one, I have a panhysterectomy at nine,' meaning of course the anaesthetic. [*Pause.*] Fire out, bitter cold, white world, great trouble, not a sound. [*Pause.*] Bolton starts playing with the curtain, no, hanging, difficult to describe, draws it back no, kind of gathers it towards him and the moon comes flooding in, then lets it fall back, heavy velvet affair, and pitch black in the room, then onwards him again, white, black, white, black, Holloway: 'Stop that for the love of God, Bolton, do you want to finish me?' [*Pause.*] Then he suddenly strikes a match, Bolton does, lights a candle, catches it above his head, walks over and looks Holloway full in the eye. [*Pause.*] Not a word, just the look, the old blue eye, very glassy, lids worn thin, lashes gone, whole thing swimming, and the candle shaking over his head. [*Pause.*] Tears? [*Pause. Long Laugh.*] Good God no! [Pause] Not a word, just the look, the old blue eye, Holloway: 'If you want a shot say so and let me get to hell out of here.' [*Pause.*] 'We've had this before, Bolton, don't ask me to go through it again.' [*Pause.*] Bolton: 'Please!' [*Pause.*] 'Please!' [*Pause.*] 'Please, Holloway!' [*Pause.*] Candle shaking and guttering all over the place, lower now, old arm tired takes it in the other hand and holds it high again, that's it, that was always it, night, and the embers cold, and the glim shaking in your old fist, saying, Please! Please! [*Pause.*] Begging. [*Pause.*] Of the poor. [*Pause.*] Ada! [*Pause.*] Father! [*Pause.*] Christ! [*Pause.*] Holds it high again, naughty world, fixes Holloway, eyes drowned, won't ask again, just the look, Holloway covers his face, not a sound, white world, bitter cold, ghastly scene, old men, great trouble, no good. [*Pause.*] No good. [*Pause.*] Christ! (103-104)

Henry finishes his narrative with another call to Christ. He walks towards the sea, moves on till he comes to the edge and halts there. He reads a couple of lines from his appointment book to which he refers as "little book" (104). He sees that "this evening" he has nothing to do but tomorrow evening to his surprise the plumber is supposed to come at nine o'clock: "Plumber at nine? [*Pause.*] Ah yes, the waste. [*Pause*.] Words"

(104). The plumber has to come at nine, and Holloway has a panhysterectomy at nine. Both the plumber and the so called doctor Holloway has to do away with the waste. Henry also has to do away with the waste. Words, words, words . . . all his words, all his stories have been a waste. His life has been the waste. Now nothing remains and all the rest is silence. "The silence of nonbeing finally drowns all being" (Cohn 176). The fire in the story dies out, turns into embers and almost to nothing. Now, there is "not a sound," only the sound of the sea which echoes in our minds.

Throughout the play, being the essential voice of the story Henry, keeps trying to create multiple voices to drown the sound of the sea. Therefore, his drama is filled with imaginary characters, their voices and with different external sounds; the voice of the father, Ada, Addie, the music master and the riding master; the sound of the sea, the sounds of the galloping hooves, the sound of the fall of the stones. Katherine Worth in her article entitled as "Beckett and the Radio medium" puts that when she and David Clark first attempted to cast *Embers* for the University of London production, they were surprised to confront with "a Pirandellian situation, many lively characters, with no more claim to real existence than the celebrated six characters had, clamouring to be given voice; Henry's wife, Ada, their daughter Addie, her Music Master, her Riding Master; all their distinct personalities, though so dubiously there" (203).

Unlike Worth and Clark Henry feels himself at ease within this polyphony, and thus continues with his neverending story. This story for Henry is both a means to forget the death of the father and also a way to escape from the sound of the sea. Above all, it is almost a duplicate story of Henry's own life, as it reveals certain facts about his relation to life and death, to love and sex, to marriage and childbirth. Moreover, Henry throughout

this story reveals his regret for having been born. Feeling the very heavy burden of existence on his shoulders, Henry tries to pass time. Therefore, he chooses telling stories and escaping the memories of love and life. No matter how badly he is tormented by the sound of the sea, by the voices coming from his mind, he struggles to drown them all, by talking to himself and telling stories. As Kristin Morrison is surely right in saying that Henry "prefers imaginary relationships, fictional events, conjured voices, absent faces rather than actual ones: narrative rather than life. He wants a panhysterctomy for his very existence, and he wants it "safely" in the form of story rather than violently in the form of suicide" (93).

Henry creates characters, calls them, talks to them, or at his own will annihilates them, brings on new ones continues with his imaginary performance. The stories and memories act as saviours for Henry who constantly spins them to challenge the sound of the sea. God knows whether he is going to achieve drowning the sound of the sea or not, but one thing is certain that he will achieve creating a world of his own away from the sea, away from the sounds, weaved out of neverending stories.

Words and Music

Embers certainly is not the only radio piece Beckett composed for BBC Drama Department. Right after the play's success, BBC asked Beckett for a new piece. Beckett agreed to write a new radio play. He also wanted to incorporate his cousin in this new project so as to provide him with an artistic stimulation who at that time was trying to recover from an accident (Knowlson 496). The collaboration resulted in *Words and Music*. Written in 1961 and composed by the author's cousin John Beckett, the play was first broadcast on the BBC Third Programme on 13 November 1962. *Words and Music* is an important radio piece in the sense that it is one of the two parallel radio plays together with *Cascando* in which Music is introduced as a character in its own right, and is "given a remarkably vivid dramatic presence" (Worth 10).

Words and Music is a bit different from the other plays of this study as it deals with narrative in a rather different way. The play appears here in our discussion of narrative and Beckett's drama, as it provides insights into the discussion of another radio play *Cascando* which bears certain parallelisms with *Words and Music* itself. In *Words and Music* there is not supposed to be a story as we used to trace in *Endgame,* in *Happy Days* or in *Embers*. This time the story is dispersed within the text, felt here and there in the cues of Words and Music. In Kristin Morrison's words these cues, the story-like pieces are "pseudodisquisitions recited upon various themes" upon which the dramatic action of the play is actually based (93).

In the play, there are three poems recited on "Love" "Age" and "Face" by a narrative voice (Words) and an orchestra (Music). These two characters are controlled by

a master called Croak, a maestro-like character who refers to Words as "Joe" and to Music as "Bob" and in turn referred by them as "My Lord." Like all the other Beckettian characters Croak is a weary man. Put in the position of a maestro he runs the orchestra, gives Words and Music orders to recite poems and make statements. Words and Music stand there as two characters at the will and mercy of Croak to introduce and illustrate different concepts varying from love to age and thus entertaining their lord Croak.

Music opens the play "softly tuning up" and immediately after this opening the pleas of the Words are heard. "Please! [*Turning. Louder*.] Please! [*Turning dies away*.] How much longer cooped up here in the dark? [*With loathing*.] With you! [*Pause.*] Theme . . . . [*Pause.*] Theme . . . sloth" (127). Like the monologue of Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* Words delivers a rambling speech on sloth. Words stumble upon each other as Words tries to speak, and put the right words together so as to define "sloth" properly. Croak appears rather late on the scene, and announces three themes for Joe and Bob: "Love, Age, Face."

> Croak: Love. [*Pause. Thump of club on ground.*] Love!
>
> Words: [*Oratund*.] Love is of all the passions the most powerful passion and indeed no passion is more powerful than the passion of love. [*Clears throat*.] This is the mode in which the mind is most strongly affected and indeed in no mode is the mind more strongly affected than in this. [*Pause.*] (128)

Words cannot offer more for the theme of Love than repeating his speech on Sloth, and Music plays with no expression at all. Together Words and Music recite and serve Croak who enjoys controlling them. During these recitations Words and Music often have rows, and Croak tries to calm and enjoin them.

The recitation proceeds and Words continues to talk about "love" posing rhetorical questions on the nature of "love" and "soul:" "What? [*Pause. Very rhetorical.*] Is love the word? [*Pause. Do.*] Is soul the word? [*Pause. Do.*] Do we mean love when we say love? [*Pause. Pause. Do.*] Soul, when se say soul? (129). As Words continues to protest, Croak announces his second theme: "Age!" This time Words fails better in a very Beckettian sense. There appears ellipses between her words implying that he has difficulty in putting the words together: "Age is . . . age is when . . . old age I mean . . . if that is what my Lord means . . . is when . . . if you're a man . . . were a man . . . huddled . . . nodding . . . the jingle waiting–" (129). Then Croak, calling Words and Music as "dogs!" wants them to sing together. (129) In their struggle to do so Words and Music as a final statement recite a poem on "Age" which is like a repetitive song of Words' words:

> Age is when to a man
> Huddled o'er the jingle
> Shivering for the hag
> To put the pan in the bed
> And bring the toddy
> She comes in the ashes
> Who loved could not be won
> Or won not loved
> Or some other trouble
> Comes in the ashes
> Like in that old light
> The face in the ashes
> That old starlight
> On the earth again. (131)

Touched by this little emotional poem of Words, Croak murmurs "The Face. [*Pause.*] The face . [*Pause.*] The face. [*Pause.*]" as if trying to remember something (131). Being an old man himself it is no surprise that Croak is moved by the poem. Evoked memories bring the third theme into scene: "Face" (131). Words then tries to talk more and more, and begins describing the face of a woman in detail, which causes Croak to groan and suddenly cry out 'Lily!' (132). During this lengthy narrative in which Words elaborate on the facial description of the woman, he adopts different tones as "cold" and "warm." He adjusts his narrative tone in accordance with his words, as he describes the "piercing beauty", the eyes, the brows, the lashes, the breasts (131). As Words continues with his narrative, formulations and poems Croak cries once again: "No!" in an effort to make him stop (130). Words pays no attention to the pleas of his master and continues with his description: "- the brows uncloud, the lips part and the eyes . . . [*Pause.*] . . . the brows uncloud, the nostrils dilate, the lips part and the eyes . . . [*Pause.*] . . . " (133)

In the end, Croak gets so stricken that he can no longer bear this tormenting session of memories and evocations. He shuffles off and fades away in silence. Words and Music are alone now; Words calling "Bob! Bob!" "Music! Music!" tries to replace his Lord. Music, in an effort to continue with his part repeats its last phrases. Everything is already used up, "the ecstasy is over, cannot be recaptured unless Music will give him (Words) a new inspiration" (Worth 210). Words is left without any words but only with a sigh. Everything is turned into "Nothing," words are diminished into a breath. However, in a very Beckettian sense, there is still something there to tune into, as "nothing" means "a lot" on Beckett's stage.

Words and Music can be seen as the dramatic representation of the artistic process if we take into consideration the great amount of effort Croak, Words and Music have put into creating a piece of art. The way how these characters struggle with language to find the proper words and proper sounds to express themselves and prove their identities stands as the proof of the very well-known concept−the artist's dilemma−the quest for dialogue and for expression together with the inability to express.

Cascando

"-story. . . if you could finish it. . . you could rest. . ."

(*Cascando* 137)

Beckett wrote his two radio dramas *Words and Music* and *Cascando* almost within a month of each other. Written originally in French in 1962, with music by the Romanian composer Marcel Mihalovici, a friend of Beckett, *Cascando* was first broadcast in French by the OTRF on 13 October 1963. It was not until the date 6 October 1964 that the first English production was carried out by the BBC Third Programme. Since *Fin de Partie* (Endgame) *Cascando* is Beckett's only play to be written in French, and as Ruby Cohn writes, "it absorbs the narrative problems with which he wrestled in the French fiction: How tell a story? And why? Or, conversely, how be silent as long as the mind churns words?" (204).

"Story" is the very first word of Voice, one of the three characters of the play together with the Opener and Music. Like Beckett's all the other French voices of the *Trilogy*, this Voice immediately after the Opener's announcement indulges in telling a story of a man called Woburn. In a sense, Voice is not the only one to be regarded as the teller of the tale. Actually the three characters might be all trying to recount a story in their own language, in their own ways. Maybe there is just one story − the story of Woburn, that all the characters are trying to narrate. Perhaps there is only one person, one teller divided into two voices in the form Voice and Music, former is verbal and the latter is aural. Questions occupy our minds and our curiosity seems to be never satisfied.

However, there is one thing certain that these three fictional authors collaborate on stage to tell the very last tale. Once again we are at the mercy of Beckettian characters to hear the ongoing story, this time to take it to the end, and have some "rest" (*Cascando* 137).

"It is the month of May . . . for me" says Opener as he opens *Cascando* with this vernal reference (137). This rather idyllic beginning takes us by surprise, as spring is not usually a period that we can associate with a Beckettian setting. Voice blurs our notion of time; it may be or may not be the month of May; there may be birds singing, flowers blossoming and children playing on the ground. However, there is no spring reawakening for the characters in *Cascando*, as the month of May suggests. These characters are in this cycle of stories unaware of time and unaware of space. They only seem to be aware of their roles in this drama.

In the role of "Master of Ceremonies" Opener controls and commands Voice and Music (Cohn 203). He opens and closes them as they continue with the narrative, asks them to gather strength as they weaken: "Full strength" (140). He opens them alternately or both at the same time: "I open", "I close", "I open the other," I open both," I start again" (137-144). There appears a perfect harmony between Voice and Music as they don't have difficulty in keeping in step with each other whenever Opener interrupts to open or close the narrative. The interesting thing about this harmony is that Voice's tale is already in midstream. It is always there. Only when Opener opens it the Woburn story is heard. Katharine Worth in her article "Beckett and the Radio Medium" talks about the nature of such accord and says: "Beckett enjoys witty play here with the basic situation of radio drama; someone turns a switch or knob and a flow of sound is heard which has been there all the time, but will come and go as the control is moved" (211).

Opener prepares the listeners for the Woburn story and leads them through the Woburn journey. As the very beginning of the play illustrates, Opener forms full sentences with the "I" pronoun as if trying to prove an identity of his own. Only after he states in a very assured tone "I open," the Voice opens his narrative:

> [*Low. Panting.*] –story . . . if you could finish it . . . you could rest . . . sleep . . . not before . . . oh I know . . . the ones I've finished . . . thousands and one . . . all I ever did . . . in my life . . . with my life . . . saying to myself . . . finish this one . . . it's the right one . . . then rest . . . sleep . . . no more stories . . . no more words . . . and finished it . . . and not the right one . . . couldn't rest . . . straight away another . . . to begin . . . to finish . . . saying to myself . . . finish this one . . . then rest . . . this time . . . it's the right one . . . this time . . . you have it . . . and finished it . . . and not the right one . . . couldn't rest . . . straight away another . . . but this one . . . it's different . . . I'll finish it . . . I've got it . . . Woburn . . . I resume . . . a long life already . . . say what you like . . . a few misfortunes . . . that's enough . . . five years later . . . ten . . . I don't know . . . Woburn . . . he's changed . . . not enough . . . recognizable . . . in the shed . . . yet another . . . waiting for night . . . night to fall . . . to go out . . .go on . . .elsewhere . . .sleep elsewhere . . . it's slow . . . he lifts his head . . . now and then. . . his eyes . . . to the window . . . it's darkening . . . earth darkening . . . it's night . . . he gets up . . . knees first . . . then up . . . on his feet . . . slips out . . . Woburn . . . same old coat . . . right the sea . . . left the hills . . . he has the choice . . . he has only– (137)

Voice's narrative begins with the word "story,." The hyphen in the sentence gives us the impression that he story has already began when the Opener announced his opening, and the hyphen at the end of his speech indicates that he hasn't done with it yet. As this is not a proper beginning but an in medias res one, we should not hope for a proper end to this story at its end. It should be noted that in this play the end will never come. There will be lots of interruptions, ruptures, openings and closings, but the longed-for end will never be reached.

Opener gives another direction and interrupts the story: "And I close" (137). He then closes and opens the other, this time with the collaboration of Music whose part is

only indicated by extended dots. Opener as if trying to find the proper voice and narrative, the clear sound or the perfect tone, opens and closes Voice and Music alternately or he opens them both. Music and Voice, at one point, try to speak together, one with the words the other with the notes:

VOICE
MUSIC

−on . . . getting on . . . finish . . . don't
[*Together*]
. . . . . .
give up . . . then rest . . . sleep . . . not before . . . finish
. . . . . .
this time . . . it's the right one . . . you have it . . . you've got
. . . . . .
it . . . it's there . . . somewhere . . . you've got him . . . follow
. . . . . .
him . . . don't lose him . . . Woburn story . . . getting on . . .
. . . . . .
finish . . . then sleep . . . no more stories . . . no more words . . .
. . . . . .
. . . come on . . . next thing . . . he−
. . . . . (138)

Like Scheherazade, Voice has already finished "thousands and one" stories (137). However, he realized that those were not the right stories. Now he has to struggle with himself and with words to find a new one. He knows that only if he tells this very last story he will find peace. This Woburn story is promising in the sense that this time Voice feels that it is the right story. However, his duty is not yet fulfilled. There is another difficult task which is to follow Woburn through his journey to the sea, "to the end" (139).

Voice during his practice with Music repeats: "I'm there . . . somewhere . . .," "I've got him . . . don't lose him . . . follow him . . ." "this time . . . it's the right one" (139). Though Beckett almost employs no "pauses" in this play, it can be realized that the ellipses in Voice's speech indicate the pain of articulation and the difficulty of telling the right story. The extended dotted lines also indicate an impossibility of closure in the narrative of Voice who is never able to achieve a proper end. Like his fellow Henry in *Embers* it seems that Voice has "never finished anything, everything always went on for ever" (94).

What is this story about Voice is urging to tell? This man Woburn with the "same old coat" waits for the "night to fall" to go elsewhere and "to sleep elsewhere" (137). One night he "gets up" and "slips out" (137). He has to make a decision either to go to the right or to the left, to the sea or to the hills. (137). On his way to the "faint sea" he confronts with many difficulties; many times he goes down, he falls, he gets his face covered in mud. He gets up with great difficulty, he:

> −falls . . . again . . . on purpose or not . . . can't see . . . he's down . . . that's what matters . . . face in the sand . . . arms spread . . . bare dunes . . . not a scrub . . . same old coat . . . night too bright . . . say what you like . . . sea louder . . . thunder . . . manes of foam . . . Woburn . . . his head . . .what's in his head . . . peace . . . peace again . . . in his head . . .no further . . . no more searching . . . sleep . . . no not yet . . .he gets up . . .knees first . . . hands flat . . . in the sand . . . head sunk . . . then up . . . on his feet . . ." "He goes on . . . ton weight . . . in the sand . . . knee-deep . . . he goes down . . . sea− (139)

Opener once again interrupts and closes Voice's story. He opens the other, this time with Music, and closes again only to speak about himself and his life. "It's my life, I live on that" says he (139). Opener in a way tries to respond to his critics who criticize his role within this drama: "What do I open? They say, He opens nothing, he has nothing to open,

it's in his head. They don't see me, they don't see what I do, they don't see what I have, . . . I don't protest any more, I don't say any more, There is nothing in my head. I don't answer any more. I open and close" (140). Opener's role seems to be limited to opening and closing, however, his function within the play is varied. He is there not only to open or close but also to separate Voice and Music and to enjoin them. Above all, he is there to take Voice and Music to the longed-for end, to Woburn story.

"There is nothing in my head" says Opener as he objects to the claims people make about him. This sentence remind us of Woburn story in which Voice tells "what's in his head . . . a hole . . . a shelter . . . a hollow . . . in the dunes . . . a cave . . . vague memory . . ."(138). As if trying to respond to this question, Opener assures his critics that there is nothing in his head. He also tries to convince us that he has lived his life till he is old, like Woburn who has had "a long life . . . already" (137). What is it that makes Opener think in such a way? Why does he seem to be weary of his role in this drama of life? Is he only tired of the way people talk about him, or is he worn out by this neverending pursuit of "Woburn." At this point one might have no difficulty in realizing the point of convergence where Opener and Voice meet. Opener's life story bears some parallelisms with the Woburn story of Voice. These certain reflections from both stories evoke a couple of questions in our minds: "Who is Opener?" "Who is Voice?" and "Who is Woburn?" Are they all the same and one? And where is Music placed within this blurry picture whose presence is represented only by extended dotted lines?

As it always happens in a Beckettian situation, we cannot differentiate between the real and the construct beings and write a proper script for these characters in our mind. Instead we have to listen to the story Beckett and his characters narrate. Then we

have to try to "create images of what we hear upon the stage of our minds" (Hale 65). For instance, we have to create the figure of Woburn, and visualise him so that he appears before us. It is interesting that throughout the play Woburn is the only character that we cannot hear his voice. However his image floats in our minds more than any other character in the play as his boat floats over the open "faint sea" (138).

Now Voice and Music take us to a journey, out to the open sea as they follow Woburn in his voyage. Woburn being mobile in time and space proceeds in his journey with difficulty yet with determination, as the narration of Voice indicates:

> −no tiller . . . no thwarts . . . no oars . . . afloat . . . sucked out . . . then back . . . aground . . . drags free . . . out . . . Woburn . . . he fills it . . . flat out . . .face in the bilge . . . arms spread . . . same old coat . . . hands clutching . . . the gunnels . . . no . . . O don't know . . .I see him . . . he clings on . . . out to sea . . . heading nowhere . . . for the island . . . then no more . . . else−
>
> . . .
>
> −faster . . . out . . .driving out . . . rearing . . . plunging . . . heading nowhere . . . for the island . . . then no more . . . elsewhere . . . anywhere . . . heading anywhere . . . lights− (142)

Voice and Music are in pursuit of Woburn, Woburn is drifting in dark in the open sea, and we are oscillating between the text and the characters, between the Woburn story and *Cascando* story. Now the plot almost turns into a pursuit detective story which goes on and on. Tired of all this endless pursuit, "they don't say any more, they have quit," and Opener does not answer any more (142). Though he is afraid to open he just opens once more: "I'm afraid to open. But I must open. So I open" (142). This desperate resolution of Opener reminds us the Unnamable of *Trilogy* who closes the novel with a similar lamentation: "You must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" (*The Unnamable* 414).

As it is realized Opener's control over Voice and Music, over the story and over the play gradually gets thinned down. Now Voice and Music has already begun to perform "at will," as Opener's role has almost ended. He is now "afraid to open," yet he knows that he has to. (142) He has to open once more and join Voice and Music in their pursuit of Woburn. Therefore he opens again, accompanies Voice in his story and in his struggle to follow Woburn, summoning together with him "Come on! Come on!" (142). Story and the pursuit go on; Voice and Music have almost caught Woburn, yet they can neither see his face nor hear his voice. We all know that Woburn will never raise his head and face the light. During the play it is seen that his face is always turned away or it is in the mud. Who is he? Is he merely a construct of Voice? This we could never know, yet we could say that if *Cascando* explores the nature of artistic creation, Woburn stands as the very actual proof of this process, with his laborious journey. Throughout the play, every little effort that the characters make in the name of finding Woburn and trying to tell one last story illustrates how the modern artist pursues words and sounds to come up with a melody, a melody of art.

Beckett in a letter to Herbert Myron, dated as 21 September 1962 talks about *Cascando* and says that "It is an unimportant work, but the best I have to offer. It does I suppose show in a way what passes for my mind and what passes for its work" (qtd in Hale 63). If Beckett says this is the best Beckett he could offer, one should not expect more from his side, as the work proves that he has hit the bull's eye.

The end of the play illustrates the union of the three characters, Voice, Words and Music. "As though they had linked their arms" the three characters try to get Woburn, so

that they could end their anguish, and rest (143). They are all one now, they've "nearly" got Woburn, yet the story is not closed:

OPENER: [*with VOICE and MUSIC, fervently*.] Good!

VOICE: } −this time . . . it's the right one . . .

[*Together*]

MUSIC: . . . . . .

finish . . . no more stories . . . sleep . . . we're there . . . nearly

. . . . . .

just a few more . . . don't let go . . .Woburn . . . he clings

. . . .

on . . . come on . . . come on . . . –

. . . .

[Silence.] (144)

So ends the Woburn story of Voice with a hyphen, with dotted lines and with silence. The characters are now "nearly" there, very close to Woburn. They have seen the dazzling lights which are in their sight, but invisible to Woburn. Though Opener encourages Voice and Music and us with his remark "Good" we know that they will never see Woburn's face and get him, nor will we hear his voice (143). At least we have had the chance to cry "land, ho!" yet we will never hear the end of the story, never get to the island safe and sound. We know that the anguish and the pursuit of the characters of *Cascando* will never end.

This has been a laborious journey with the constant falls of Woburn on his way to the sea, together with the constant falls in the tone and movement of the play. In this sense the Italian title of the play meaning "falling" serves very well to the author, who has tried to express a gradually diminishing and coming to an end process throughout the

play, *Cascando*. Beckett has also experienced this "lessening down" throughout his dramatic career, first staging plays with crowded cast and excessive dialogues, and then doing away with the dialogue and dwelling more on monologue; placing, buried or urned beings, body parts and voice on stage as characters, and finally ending up in writing for radio and television. Losing faith in language and thus turning to sound and voice, to silence and to pause, Beckett's struggle to "express the inexpressible" is illustrated in *Cascando* which stands as an epitome of artistic creation in its own right.

Narrative Melodies: Music and Beckett

Much has been said about Samuel Beckett and his relation to arts, and about the echoes of music in his oeuvre. Music has always been an area of great importance when it comes to Beckett studies. Many prominent scholars and critics of Beckett have delved into this area but not yet fully explored it. For instance, edited by Lois Oppenheim, *Samuel Beckett and the Arts*: *Music, Visual Arts, and Non-Print Media* stands as an invaluable book on the field and provides insights into Beckett's relation with music, visual arts and other non-print media. Similarly, Mary Bryden's book *Beckett and Music* throws much light on the undiscovered area of Beckett and Music and provides Beckett scholars with a great deal of selective information on the area. This is exactly not the place of taking the delicate task of exploring the roots of Beckett's long-time passion for music. Mine is a modest chapter on music within the context of narrative which has already been touched upon by the prominent critic H. Porter Abbott in his article entitled "Samuel Beckett and the Arts of Time: Painting, Music, Narrative." I couldn't speak of the use of music in the plays in musical terms, yet I have tried to show how music dominates Beckett's radio plays and especially the last two ones appearing as a character itself and carrying out the narrative potential in the play.

Beckett once "told André Bernold that if he had not been a writer, he would have spent his life listening to music" (qtd in Abbott 7). All to the good, he was a writer, a writer who has enriched every field with his talent that he has touched upon. Among these fields of interest music always had a special place, as Beckett for sure was a music person.

Edward Beckett, Beckett's cousin, in his foreword to Lois Oppenheim's book *Samuel Beckett and the Arts* explains Beckett's relation to music by giving certain examples from Beckett family. He tells that Beckett came from a family which had gifted musicians. Beckett's uncle Gerald was a successful pianist, and his two cousins John and Walter were talented musicians. Beckett's parents were not much into music, singing or playing instruments but Beckett took piano lessons, practiced a lot and almost became a professional pianist. He never gave up playing the piano, and the sonatas by Beethoven, Haydn as well as the pieces by Chopin and Schubert. He took great pleasure in going to concerts either alone or with his wife who was a pianist herself (v).

Music, having such a great role in Beckett's life would certainly have greater role in his drama. We have all listened to the dog song of Vladimir and the love song of Winnie, as well as the last tape of Krapp. Music appeared in the scripts of *Embers, All That Fall, Ghost Trio,* and became a character itself in the plays for radio, *Words and Music* and *Cascando.* Especially in these two radio plays Beckett has proved that Music is an integral part of his life and his writing which is "largely narrative" as in the words of H. Porter Abbott (7).

In these plays *Embers, Words and Music* and *Cascando* Music appears most of the time with words and with stories. Narrative either in the role of a companion or an opponent takes the play to a different realm where the listeners could both reassess the poetics of radio drama and the poetics of storytelling. Actually this changing relation between music and words creates a certain harmony from which narrative quality of the play emerges. Sounds and silence, words and music mingle into one another and compose a story for the listeners. "If we listen well enough, we recognise that words are

gaining new force from their tense, witty, suggestive relationship with sound effects, music, and – audacious coupling – silences" (Worth 217). When Henry invites us to listen to the sound of the sea as well as his story of Bolton and Holloway, it is seen that his story shines out among the sound of the faint sea, sound of the drips and sound of the fall of the stones as Henry throws them to the sea. It is through the narration of this story we get to know Henry. It is through his silence, his associations, and his changing narrative tone we come to understand him, yet not fully. Why is Henry so obsessed with the sound of the sea? Why does he try to drown it while at the same time he cannot stay away from it? The questions remain unanswered; as the text of *Embers* is weaved out of mystery so is its narrative. The Bolton story, standing as an integral part of the play also remains as a mystery within the play. This story takes the narration to a different stage as the narrator Henry seems to be not having a full control over his narration. He oscillates between the story time and the present time, interrupts his narration many times only to resume it from a different point. Right from the beginning Henry knows that he will never finish this story: as indicated in his words "I never finished it, I never finished any of them, I never finished anything, everything always went on for ever. [*Pause.]"* (94). He admits that he lacks this ability to end things; he never ends his battle with words, he never gives up recounting memories from the past, he never gives up listening to the sound of the sea. This is his way of expressing himself − an expression through neverending stories and sounds.

"Wrestling with the raw materials of words and music in an attempt to express or create is both the work of traditional storytellers who accompanied themselves on various instruments and the literal subject of Beckett's radio dramas" (Richardson, Hale 285).

Like the traditional Irish storyteller *seanchai* Beckett's characters tell stories, to others or to themselves. These stories prove to be important themes in the novels, in the plays, in the short stories, even in the poems. Narrative dominates Beckett's world; his works of art are filled with tellers, listeners, auditors, with maestros. In this sense it can be said that radio medium serves Beckett very well bringing together all these different agents. The audience now has the chance to work with the characters; to "open" and to "close" the narrative, to make Words talk or silence them.

At the mercy of the blind listener radio drama survives till the very last minute, till it is turned off. However, the story goes on; Woburn is there, Bolton and Holloway are there in the midstream. Henry keeps talking and telling, Words and Music continue to give their concert, Voice and Music come together to tell more. Everything always goes on in Beckett's realm which is dominated by fragmented stories with no closures.

CHAPTER VI

VOICE AND NARRATIVE: ACOUSTIC STORIES

The formerly discussed plays have shown that narrative shapes the form of Beckett's drama, and storytelling dominates his stage. These plays have proved that on Beckett's stage, stories created and told by the characters can frame a whole play, adding much to its narration. *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* have dwelled on dialogue as an important aspect of narrative theory. *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days* and *Play* have shown us that dialogue has gradually lost its shape and turned into monologue. The subsequent chapter on Beckett's shift towards radio drama has discussed three radio plays in which stories are narrated and enacted by voice and sound, music and words. Though Words and Music struggle to tell the one last story and leave the stage for good, there is still a lot to tell. This time there is no Vladimir, Hamm, Winnie, Krapp, or Croak. We no longer hear Winnie's pleas to have Willie as company, as a listener to her monologue. We no longer laugh at Hamm, as he bribes his father to listen to his story. There is no Krapp on stage meddling through the spools. Now the characters have vanished from the stage and given way to ghostly voices and bodies, to May and Mouth. Considering the fact that the act of telling and listening has always been an important part of Beckett's plays, it is no wonder that voice appears as a recurrent issue throughout the plays. This chapter intends to trace Beckett's preoccupation with voice and narration in *Not I* and *Footfalls* both of which dramatize a voice recounting fragments of memories in the form of stories.

The Ongoing Story: *Not I* and *Footfalls*

Not I

Written in 1972 and first performed at the Forum Theater of Lincoln Center, New York, in 1972, Beckett's *Not I* stages a single, faintly illuminated Mouth suspended eight feet above stage level, speaking at a mute, standing figure in black djellaba, the Auditor. The play basically revolves around Mouth's struggle to tell a "story," a story which imprisons her and a story from which she totally disassociates herself. She strains every nerve to evade this personal life account and the notion of I-voice. This constant evasion becomes the leitmotif of the play and is (surprisingly) mentioned by his author Beckett in the notes to the text: "vehement refusal to relinquish third person" (215).

The plays discussed in the previous chapters of this study have shown that Beckett's drama bears numerous narratives in the form of stories, memories, and life accounts. These plays borrow much from narrative theory, combine it with theories of drama and in one way or another prove their significant relation to storytelling in particular. Similarly, *Not I* evidently appears as a narrative piece staging two main components of storytelling: a teller and an auditor. The whole action of the play depends on the interaction or perhaps non-interaction between the two: Mouth and the shadowy Auditor, both of whom are faintly-lit on stage. One is the excited and nervous teller the other one is the calm and silent Auditor. These two are set as a contrast to each other. As it is seen, there is always and will be a contrast between the characters, "between past and

present, between silence and speech and between absence and the flux of visual/verbal forms" within the text (Anna McMullan 78).

Mouth is the actress of *Not I* and "she" is the protagonist of Mouth's story. Above all Mouth is "the woman" of her own story. There is yet another witness to this drama of "complication"- Auditor. This Auditor figure is an essential part of Mouth's drama. Though he does not seem to be actively involved in the play, he gestures four times to Mouth, which marks the "Pause and Movement" parts of the play. The Auditor from the very first beginning bears a double role: the role of an actor and a spectator. Very much like Willie's role as a spectator to Winnie's performance, or Hamm's need for a listener to his story, or Vladimir's and Estragon's need for company, Auditor is there to witness Mouth's trial, her disturbing image and tormenting speech on stage. [He] is in fact there to carry multiple duties: First of all, he is a listener to Mouth's story, a spectator to her performance. Secondly, [he] stands there as a witness to Mouth's denial of her "story," her objection to thrown "...out...into this world..." (216). This Auditor on stage seems to be in a position of gazing Mouth and thus adding much to her suffering. [He] does not do any good to her other than offering a "helpless compassion" as indicated in Beckett's own description of the play's movements (215). Moreover, [he] is a judge to Mouth's trial, or as a judge to the trials of the audience, who sit in silence there sharing the sin of "being born" with Mouth and with the woman in her story. Therefore, this tall "sex undeterminable, enveloped from head to foot in loose black djellaba, with hood, fully faintly lit" Auditor figure is endowed with a double role. [He] is both an actor, a character of the play and a spectator to Mouth's performance.

The audience is also condemned to listen to the story of Mouth and cobble her fragmented words together. As they know that Mouth is building up a world before them with her stream of words, and that they have to assist her in this process of world-making. However, the audience does not feel at ease, as it is pretty certain that this suspended and deficient figure, loaded with fragmented sentences, annoy them. As Anna McMullan points out, "the disturbing impact of the image of Mouth can be linked both to the uncontrollable flow of its utterances and to its open, "gaping nature" (77). During the performance, the Auditor, despite the total darkness of the stage, is visible to us; whereas the performer is totally disembodied and reduced to her mouth, which is the only body part visible to us. This incomplete figure of Mouth, which is set as a contrast to the very complete figure of the Auditor, disturbs the audience to such a point that it almost becomes a torture.

Can you imagine a mouth babbling for almost half an hour incessantly in different tones, with disturbing gestures, screams, and emphases on stage? The word "babble" would be an underestimating remark considering the significance of the performer's task. However, the difficulty of the text proves very well how much effort, discipline and strength it requires to be performed. As Beckett's text requires such great effort to be staged, no wonder the effect it creates becomes huge both on the actor and the audience, both in a negative and a positive way. "Definite people in a definite place may be relaxing for Beckett," but in the words of Ruby Cohn, "*Beckett's* stage speech prohibits relaxation either for actor or for audience" (217). No need to mention how much attention Beckett used to pay to the production of his plays and what a strong authorial intervention he exerted upon the actors during the rehearsals. Perhaps no one could

explain this process better than the Mouth of *Not I*, Billie Whitelaw. Below is a quotation from the documentary, *A Wake for Sam*, broadcast by the BBC in January 1990 to commemorate the works of Beckett. Here, Billy Whitelaw talks about *Not I* and the impact the play had on her:

> Plenty of writers can write a play about a state of mind, but Beckett actually put that state of mind on the stage, in front of your eyes. And I think a lot of people recognized it. I recognized it. When I first read it at home, I just burst into tears, because I recognized the inner scream. Perhaps that's not what it is, I don't know, but for me, that's what I recognized, an inner scream, in there, and no escaping it.
>
> (A Wake for Sam)

Beckett's *Not I* is often considered to be a piece written for British actress Billie Whitelaw, like *Krapp's Last Tape* which is composed by Beckett specifically for Patrick Magee and originally titled as "Magee Monologue." In relation to Beckett's choice of Whitelaw for the role of Mouth, Deirdre Bair writes that Beckett was really impressed by Whitelaw's voice in the Royal Court production of *Play*, in 1964, and he wanted to write a piece for her in the future (628). It seemed that Billie Whitelaw was the right actor for such a "demanding" playwright as Beckett. Beckett's intention of producing pieces for Whitelaw was fulfilled almost ten years later in 1972 with the emergence of *Not I*. The tribute to Whitelaw continued throughout the 1970's, when Beckett produced other plays as *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*.

In Beckett's Biography, Deirdre Bair gives an account of how Beckett composed *Not I* and how he combined two different scenes in his mind to create the frame for the play. Bair notes that taking his inspiration from two different sources, Beckett wrote the play quite in a hurry, in twenty days' time, upon his return to Paris from Morocco. One of

these inspirations was Caravaggio's painting of the decapitation of St John, which he saw in Malta and was deeply influenced by. The second inspiration came in Morocco, where Beckett observed an Arab woman clad in black djellba waiting anxiously for his child to arrive from school. Sitting at a cafe, and being an eyewitness to the woman's scene, Beckett would know that he would make use of such an inspiring scene of waiting. That was the shaping process of *Not I* in Beckett's mind, which in turn shaped the mind of Mouth in *Not I* (660-662).

Beckett's *Not I* is the staging of the "state of mind" as in the words of its actress Billie Whitelaw. This state of mind is conveyed us through a stream of words, in the form of a "story" which Mouth's voice struggles to utter. This is such a pathetic life account that Mouth denies having any relation to it, which is clearly indicated in her refusal to say "I." She rejects associating herself with the things she speaks out; and continues to tell the story for which she made up an imaginary "she" character. The story Mouth tells happens to be about a lonely woman who is in her seventies. The woman's life is characterized by lack of love and passion; and is filled with displeasure and punishment. Mouth's dramatization of the story of this unknown "she" adds an ironical touch to the play, as the story she tells is in fact a personal account of her own. This autobiographical fabrication conceals the very bitter details of her own life, whilst at the same time giving her a voice to convey her anguish. Therefore, both performance and narration revolve around *Mouth* and are constructed by her *Voice*. As she pours down all her words and tries to utter her story, it becomes apparent that there lies a huge world in that hole from where Mouth is suspended. "When you put a finite shape, or figure, against what amounts to pure space, you achieve a representation of limitlessness" says Bert O. States

in his article on Beckett's voice plays. Drawing from Beckett's motto "Less is more" he states that "Infinity begins here, in a doorway – or in a figure, a face, or a mouth, which becomes an opening onto the "vast." States relates this situation to the working style of eighteen-century scenographers as they "produced the effect of a cathedral interior's vastness by deliberately narrowing the aperture through which the eye enters it" (456). As in the case of *Not I*, it is apparent that no matter how limited Mouth's space seems to us, it bears the whole world in it. Life is there leaking from that hole and flowing to a vast valley. Life is there, in that limited space where Mouth is imprisoned to. Like Winnie of *Happy Days* who is buried up to her neck in mound, Mouth too, from that space, that hole, tries to tell a life account which is not worthy of telling. She struggles to utter words, and all her utterance gradually turns into a performance. Her words rush out of her mouth and disperse on stage only to be picked up by Voice again during the endless repetitive acts of the play.

What is the meaning of all this rush? What is there to make Mouth so occupied with the delivery of this speech? What is the motive lying behind her evasion of "I"? It is certain that Mouth has to tell the "story" of her life, which is the thing which she has always feared to do. When she finally decides to give it a go, she fictionalizes it in such a way that she can avoid saying "I" and pretend that she is not the character of this biting story. She introduces an illusory "she" instead, and thus begins her logorrhoeaic narration. Beckett's note to the play sets the scene for this narration as follows: "*As house lights down MOUTH's voice unintelligible behind curtain. House lights out. Voice continues unintelligible behind curtain, 10 seconds. With rise of curtain ad-libbing from*

text as required leading when curtain fully up and attention sufficient into: MOUTH ..." (216).

It seems that Beckett wants to prepare his audience for the "stream of words" that will make their way into the hall during the play. These words appear in unfinished, fragmented yet meaningful sentences, and turn into screams, cries and laughter. They disturb the audience but not as much as they disturb the Mouth. Much like the Ancient Mariner who carries his crime with him all the time and stops men on the street to recount his story, Mouth insists on telling a story before the audience with whom she shares a major sin − "the sin of being born" as she is out into this world before its time:

> MOUTH: . . . . out . . . into this world . . . this world . . . tiny little thing . . . before its time . . . in a godfor– . . . what? . . girl? . . yes . . . tiny little girl . . . into this . . . out into this . . . before her time . . . godforsaken hole called . . . called . . . no matter . . . parents unknown . . . unheard of . . . he having vanished . . . thin air . . . no sooner buttoned up his breeches . . . she similarly . . . eight months later . . . almost to the tick . . . so no love . . . spared that . . . no love such as normally vented on the . . . speechless infant . . . in the home . . . no . . . nor indeed for that matter any of any kind . . . no love of any kind . . . at any subsequent stage . . . so typical affair . . . nothing of any note till coming up to sixty when– . . . what? . . seventy?. . good God! . . coming up to seventy . . . wandering in a field . . . looking aimlessly for cowslips . . . to make a ball . . . a few steps then stop . . . stare into space . . . then on . . . a few more . . . stop and stare again . . . so on . . . drifting around . . . when suddenly . . . gradually . . . all went out . . . all that early April morning light . . . and she found herself in the-–– . . . what? . . who? . . no! . . she! . . (216)

Abruptly, Mouth opens her very first speech with the preposition "out," continues without using any subject pronoun but an abundance of prepositions and ends with the pronoun 'she.' Mouth's immediate rejection of 'I' prompts her to speak in all kinds of subject pronouns, finally uttering the word 'she.' This utterance of 'she' is due to a sort of crisis Mouth undergoes when she gets almost outraged through her question-answer

session: ". . . what? . . who? . . no! . . she! . . ." This is Mouth's first utterance of the subject pronoun 'she" and is marked by the first "pause and movement" of the play.

Andrew Kennedy in the article "Mutations of the Soliloquy: *Not I* to *Rockaby*" asserts that "The 'I' voice is the pivot of self-expressive speech in life, in drama, just as the 'I-you' exchange is the axis of all verbal interactions both in daily conversation and in dramatic dialogue" (31). Mouth lacks the courage and the appetite for expressing herself. All she wants to do is to annihilate the "I-voice" and create a new voice for herself – a "she" who is actually a duplicate of Mouth herself. What good does this make to Mouth? Mouth, with this clearance between the subject and the object of her story, tries to make us sure that this is not her story; this is "Not She" but 'she.' It might be realized that the boundaries between the character/actress of the play and the character/protagonist of the story which the character tells are blurred. Ironically enough, Mouth can be treated both as the character of the story that the play presents us with; and as the protagonist of the story which she tries to tell throughout the play.

Bert O. States in his article on Beckett's voice plays called "Playing in Lyric Time: Beckett's Voice Plays" talks about different types of phenomenological appearance of the actor on stage. In this article States actually restates his ideas which he formerly discussed in his book *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater,* and referring to the Beckettian actor, he adds a fourth actor to his listing of the types of actors:

> There are three phenomenal modes in which the actor appears before us on the stage: the *self-expressive,* in which we see him or her primarily as a performer – say Lawrence Olivier rather than Othello; the *collaborative,* in which he/she implicates us, to some degree, in the stage world- the simplest example being the

> comic aside; and the *representational*, in which he/she appears as a character in a play which we take to be real enough to have emotions about. These modes are usually blended in our attention, but we can choose, at any time, to see the actor in any single mode-as when I choose to watch Olivier rather than the Othello whose clothing he is carrying around on his back. For Beckett I was almost tempted to add a fourth, but I think it is rather a unique way in which at least two of these three modes come together in the Beckett stage-figure. The best word I have found for this effect is self-representational, which, as you see, takes the self from the self-expressive (or artist-expressive) and grafts it onto the representational (or character-expressive). ... What I mean by it in Beckett's case is that the stage-figure (that is, the actor-character entity) seems not simply to be a character played by an actor who is ultimately performing for us and sharing with us a certain confidence (if only that we will all behave politely); she also seems to be a character who is real, but not simply real as the actor's body, and an actor who is performing, but not exactly for us. Something in the way she comports herself, or exists on stage, leads us to feel-though this is all part of the illusion-that she is there for herself, as herself (whatever that may be!), but that this self somehow includes a player of sorts, or someone who is motivated by the task of representing herself for herself-"whom else"? as the Voice says in Rockaby. (454)

Bert O. States remarks that Beckett's characters playing the role of actors, storytellers, auditors and authors, thus possessing an outstanding position on stage, go far beyond the limits of representation. Placing such characters as a Mouth, a ghostly figure, and a silent Auditor on stage, Beckett breaks the routines and deconstructs the way how we used to perceive the typical actor on stage. It seems that representation no longer stands for something which has a core, essential meaning. Representation loses its actual meaning in Beckett's hands and turns into an over encapsulating term that serves both the author's needs and the actor's needs. Then one should ask, does Mouth represent Beckett's woman of *Not I*? Or does she represent herself? Is she a real entity on stage? Or is she just a fabrication of herself on stage? Mouth is there before us, before the Auditor and before her 'self.' We are all ready for her lagorrhea, her account of life and for the performance of words. However, she is not ready to confront with herself, and bear the pain of identification with "I." She represents a being, a thing on stage, rather than a

woman or a character. Even if she represents an entity on stage, she tries to convince us that this is "not she" but another woman she has created. This woman lives in the very same storyworld with Mouth and shares the same 'story' with her.

It is understood from the 'story' that this girl Mouth tries to introduce to us is a prematurely born little girl who has grown up without the love and passion of both parents. Now she has grown into a woman who is unable to make any contact with the outside world mainly because of her fears and insecure position. She finds it really difficult to utter any words and communicate with others. Therefore, she is often portrayed as a silent, passive and timid girl, staring into space with fixed eyes in public scenes.

The woman is now seventy, already old, "wandering in a field" without any aim, on one April morning, trying to gather enough courage to speak up. This is the very first scene of the play: "an April morning in a field" (216). Mouth relates many incidents concerning the life of the woman, but the one in the field on that April morning appears more than once within narrative. It is quite interesting that this desperate woman ends up lying in a field on an 'April' morning. Here the emphasis is on April in the sense that April is always associated with spring and rebirth. Considering Mouth's case, we can say that there is neither spring nor rebirth for her. She is as hopeless as ever. However, this April morning can be considered as an epiphany, a kind of reawakening in terms of the woman. This morning can be the indication of the motive lying behind all her strong urge to tell the 'story' she has been evading for long. It is on this April morning that she rushes out to "tell." This time there is no escape; she has been trapped and condemned to speak from now on to eternity. When she realizes that she is done with the story, she has to pick

it up from the same point where she has started. This is the "damnation-narration" in the play, the labour of Mouth, as Keir Elam puts it (145). This is the time for her to be "punished . . . for her sins . . . a number of which then. . . ." (217).

What is Mouth trying to do while presenting us with this portrayal of a miserable woman? Undoubtedly, she is trying to remember and narrate a past that she has always evaded while at the same time referring to a present to which she has no relation. As in the words of Keir Elam Mouth "refuses identification both with the narrative present and with the narrated past, the wretched life that her fragmented story elliptically relates, beginning from the beginning: '. . . out . . . into this world . . . this world . . . tiny little thing . . ." (216). It seems that the language does not serve this disembodied voice anymore. The words, as soon as they come out of her mouth, dissolve into pieces and disperse on the ground. Perhaps they are already shattered in her brain and they pour out like that.

Penelope's Thread: Mouth's Narration

As already mentioned *Not I* is structured mainly as a story, yet there are also specific anecdotes that stand as critical moments within the course of the story. It is in these moments that Mouth reveals her innermost feelings and presents us with proper life scenes. These life scenes are more or less apparent in the text. However, they are clearly identified in Beckett's synopsis of *Not I.* In the synopsis Beckett talks about five "life scenes" which dominate the woman's story, and are listed as "field," "shopping centre," "Croker's Acres," "courtroom," and "rushing out to tell" scenes (qtd. in Morrison 66).

Ruby Cohn asserts that these life scenes in the play very well correspond to the scenes in human life. She explains that "economically, Beckett has sketched images for a life whose resonance is extensible to us all-born too soon, surviving mechanically, feeling and watching ourselves feel, wondering about the meaning of the living as we live" (215). Mouth begins her narration referring to her ill-timed birth, very much like human beings who feel the burden of life on their shoulders in every single day. They grow up, become indulged in daily activities, feel that the burden gets heavier and heavier. They circle in a vicious cycle, never reaching the end of the tunnel, where they don't even hope that there may appear a light. Yet the search never ceases but lasts eternally, like the case on Beckett's stage.

Not I and its storytelling potential can be discussed through such life-scenes which Beckett himself lists in the synopsis of the play. In line with Beckett's listing of the life-scenes, the first part of Mouth's story which ends with her declaration of the

pronoun "she," can be considered the beginning of the "field scene." The scene which is interrupted by Auditor's gesture follows as below:

> [*Pause and movement 1.*] . . . found herself in the dark . . . and if not exactly . . . insentient . . . insentient . . . for she could still hear the buzzing . . . so-called . . . in the ears . . . and a ray of light came and went . . . came and went . . . such as the moon might cast . . . drifting . . . in and out of cloud . . . but so dulled . . . feeling . . . feeling so dulled . . . she did not know . . . what position she was in . . . imagine! . . what position she was in! . . whether standing . . . or sitting . . . but the brain– . . . what?. . kneeling? . . yes . . . whether standing . . . or sitting . . . or kneeling . . . but the brain– . . . what? . . lying? . . yes . . whether standing . . . or sitting . . . or kneeling . . . or lying . . . but the brain still . . . still . . . in a way . . . for her first thought was . . . oh long after . . . sudden flash . . . brought up as she had been to believe . . . with the other waifs . . . in a merciful . . . [*Brief laugh.*] . . . God . . . [*Good laugh.*] . . .(217)

This scene is significant in the sense that it describes woman's awakening to her situation and to life. The fragments from this "field scene" scene are recurrent throughout the play, since the woman goes back to this scene a lot in her mind. Mouth takes her there too, whenever she feels that "she can't go on" anymore (221). Therefore, this field scene may be interpreted as a triggering force behind Mouth's narration.

The second "life scene" of the play comes soon after the second stage direction that announces "pause and movement 2:"

> . . . realized . . . words were coming . . . imagine! . . . words were coming . . . a voice she did not recognize at first so long since it had sounded . . . then finally had to admit . . . could be none other . . . than her own . . . certain vowel sounds . . . she had never heard . . . elsewhere . . . so that people would stare . . . the rare occasions . . . once or twice a year . . . always winter some strange reason . . . stare at her uncomprehending . . . and now this stream . . . steady stream . . . she who had never . . . on the contrary . . . practically speechless . . . all her days . . . how she survived! . . . even shopping . . . out shopping . . . busy shopping centre . . . supermarket . . . just hand in the list . . . with the bag . . . old black shopping bag . . . then stand there waiting . . . any length of time . . . middle of the throng . . . motionless . . . staring into space . . . mouth half

> open as usual . . . till it was back in her hand . . . the bag in her hand . . . then pay and go . . . not as much as good-bye . . . how she survived ! . . (219)

The second "life scene" presents us with some details of the woman's behaviour in public places. In one of these scenes, Mouth describes how this woman used to act mechanically in shopping; she would go to a supermarket with a certain shopping list in hand, and wait there for a long time standing and staring. She would then pay and go without saying good-bye. These details indicate that, Mouth's protagonist leads a mechanical and wretched life.

Why does Mouth give us all the details? On the one hand, she feels this need to tell the story, her story. On the other hand, she does not feel herself as part of such a story, therefore, she provides us with this passive woman figure that stays rather mute and almost motionless during her encounters with public. Interestingly, the woman is silent, yet, loaded with words ready to pour out. She is physically rather passive, yet her mind is active all the time, busy with millions of words wandering around.

Moreover, this woman is often troubled by these words and sounds buzzing in her ears. One day there comes a moment when this woman who "could not make a sound . . . no sound of any kind" before cannot yield anymore to the buzzing in her ears, and starts to talk. She cannot stop the "stream of the words . . . in her ear:"

> . . . practically in her ear . . . not catching the half . . . not the quarter . . . no idea what she's saying . . . imagine! . . no idea what she's saying! . . and can't stop . . . no stopping it . . . she who but a moment before . . . but a moment! . . could not make a sound . . . no sound of any kind . . . now can't stop . . . imagine! . . can't stop the stream . . . and the whole brain begging . . . something begging in the brain . . . begging the mouth to stop . . . pause a moment . . . if only for a moment . . . and no response . . . as if it hadn't heard . . . or couldn't . . . couldn't pause a

> second . . . like maddened . . . all that together . . . straining to hear . . . piece it together . . . and the brain . . . raving away on its own . . . trying to make sense of it . . . or make it stop . . . or in the past . . . dragging up the past . . . flashes from all over . . . (220)

Then comes the woman's much expected outburst of words. She tries hard to interpret the sounds in her ears and the words in her mouth, or to stop this flood of "flashes from all over" (220). Very much like the woman who is struggling to overcome her crisis, similarly the audience strains to catch up with Mouth's rapid, tormenting narration and cope with Beckett's endless web of words. Narrative in Mouth's mouth becomes a never-ending process, constantly repeating itself. It is disrupted, interrupted, fragmented and incomplete very much like Mouth itself. There is neither a stop to Mouth's stream of words nor an end to Beckett's narrative. This narrative lacking any punctuation marks other than ellipses reveals that there is no closure for Mouth's performance.

"Croker's Acres," the third "life scene" anecdote according to Beckett's list, comes right after the woman's pouring out words. Mouth leaves the woman there trying to stop her word-flood; cuts the narration taking us to a private scene. This time Mouth talks about the woman's memory of a day when she has cried and watched the tears dropped into her palms:

> . . . walking all her days . . . day after day . . . a few steps then stop . . . stare into space . . . then on . . . a few more . . . stop and stare again . . . so on . . . drifting around . . . day after day . . . or that time she cried . . . the one time she could remember . . . since she was a baby . . . must have cried as a baby . . . perhaps not . . . not essential to life . . . just the birth cry to get her going . . . breathing . . . then no more till this . . . old hag already . . . sitting staring at her hand . . . where was it? . . Croker's Acres . . . one evening on the way home . . . home! . . a little mound in Croker's Acres . . . dusk . . . sitting staring at her hand . . . there in her lap . . . palm upward . . . suddenly saw it wet . . . the palm . . . tears presumably . . . hers presumably . . . no one else for miles . . . no sound . . . just the tears . . . sat and watched them dry . . . all over in a second . . . (220-221)

It is certain that Mouth's description of the tears and their movement is highly touching. However, there is more in this scene to focus on than this sentimental portrayal. The woman keeps her silence and immobile situation; she is again in the role of an observer, watching the tears drop by. The scene evokes our deepest sentiments and it is important in the sense that for the first time the woman is not detached from us. She is there staring at her palms, studying every little drop. This time it is not the buzzing in her ears, but the sound of the tears as they drop by. She is not disturbed at all; she takes her time, contemplates on it, sits and watches the drops till they all become dry.

The woman's tears, her fragmented words, her unfinished sentences, and her babbling lead us nowhere but to Dante's Purgatory. It seems that she is taking us with her to experience the same trials and go through the same judgment she herself goes through. She knows that there is still something that she needs to "tell," but it takes a long time for her to name this activity "tell" (211). No matter how hopeless the situation seems for the woman, she is still aware of the fact that she must tell this "story." This is the obligation of Mouth, and her Voice. Below is her fourth anecdote which comes right after the third *Pause and Movement* and is set in a courtroom:

> . . . something she had to–. . . what? . . the buzzing? . . yes . . . all the time the buzzing . . . dull roar . . . in the skull . . . and the beam . . . ferreting around . . . painless . . . so far . . . ha! . . so far . . . then thinking . . . oh long after . . . sudden flash . . . perhaps something she had to . . . had to . . . tell . . . could that be it? . . something she had to . . . tell . . . tiny little thing . . . before its time . . . godforsaken hole . . . no love . . . spared that . . . speechless all her days . . . practically speechless . . . how she survived! . . that time in court . . . what had she to say for herself . . . guilty or not guilty . . . stand up woman . . . speak up woman . . . stood there staring into space . . . mouth half open as usual . . . waiting to be led away . . . glad of the hand on her arm . . . now this . . . some-thing she had to tell . . . could that be it? . . something that would tell . . . how it was . . . how she– . . . what? . . had been? . . yes . . . something that would tell how it had been . . . how she had lived . . . lived on and on . . . guilty or not . . . on and on . . . to be

> sixty . . . something she– . . . what? . . seventy? . . good God! . . on and on to be seventy . . . something she didn't know herself . . . wouldn't know if she heard . . . then forgiven . . . God is love . . . tender mercies . . . new every morning . . . (221)

The courtroom anecdote marks a significant point within the course of the story. This time the woman is observed and judged by the public as indicated in the words: ". . . stand up woman . . . speak up woman" (221). She preserves her dignity and calmness; keeps staring into space with empty eyes. Like the Auditor of the play, she remains as passive as ever. That morning reminds her that she has to continue with her narrative, "pick it up there" from the point where she stopped. All these scenes, including the court scene, are sandwiched between the field scenes back to which the woman constantly returns.

After the last pause and movement of the play, comes the last anecdote: woman's "rushing out to tell." She intends to finish her performance and "crawl back in . . ." (222). The woman, even in her last image, is passive, as passive as a reptile, which recedes as crawling:

> . . . sometimes sudden urge . . . once or twice a year . . . always winter some strange reason . . . the long evenings . . . hours of darkness . . . sudden urge to . . . tell . . . then rush out stop the first she saw . . . nearest lavatory . . . start pouring it out . . . steady stream . . . mad stuff . . . half the vowels wrong . . . no one could follow . . . till she saw the stare she was getting . . . then die of shame . . . crawl back in . . . [. . .] . . . all that . . . keep on . . . not knowing what . . . what she was– . . . what? . . who? . . no! . . she! . . SHE! . . [*Pause.*] . . . what she was trying . . . what to try . . . no matter . . . keep on . . . [*Curtain starts down.*] . . . hit on it in the end . . . then back . . . God is love . . . tender mercies . . . new every morning . . . back in the field . . . April morning . . . face in the grass . . . nothing but the larks . . . pick it up– (222)

So ends the story of the woman and Mouth's narration, though Beckett's stage direction to the ending announces the contrary: ". . . *voice continues behind curtain, unintelligible, 10 seconds, ceases as house lights up]"* (223).

Considering the fact that defining an end has always been a major problem for Beckett's plays in general and for this play in particular, this stage direction comes as no surprise to us. *Not I* with its repetitive and elliptical narrative style evades closure and leaves out countless gaps and ellipses for the audience to fill up throughout. Here the audience participation becomes the essence. As Mouth's story folds and unfolds on stage before the Auditor and before us, we gradually learn to associate the fragments and gaps with the barren life of Mouth. No matter how badly she has run out of all words and sounds, her voice insists on keeping with the story. Curtain is down... The lips are closed... Voice has gone... "Little is left to tell;" yet the story goes on (*Ohio Impromptu* 285).

Footfalls

> May: I mean, Mother, that I must hear the feet, however faint they fall.
>
> The mother: The motion alone not enough?
>
> May: No, mother, the motion alone is not enough I must hear the feet, however faint they fall." (*Footfalls* 241)

Not I has shown us how a character diminished into a pure 'Voice' would struggle to tell her story and articulate itself, evading the 'I' pronoun and thus crossing the boundaries of self. Placing a 'Mouth' on stage, blurring the roles of subject and object, experimenting with the limits of self and identity are not really abnormal situations in the case of Beckett, especially when we consider his later shorter plays called as "dramaticules." *Footfalls is* one of these shorter plays and is certainly the play which together with *Not I* shares the privilege of starring a woman and her voice on stage with a certain story to tell. After the sound of the sea in *Embers*, the buzzing sound of the woman in *Not I*, once again the dark stage is haunted with voices and sounds from undefined locations: voices from the head, the sound of heart beats or footfalls, pacing or racking . . . or the voice of an unreliable narrator who tries to fill up the void of being with her stories as she takes a couple of meaningless steps on stage.

Written in 1975, specifically for Billie Whitelaw for whom Beckett "has a professional respect bordering on passion" *Footfalls* is Beckett's other brief speech on self and identity delivered through a voice (Bair 678). *Footfalls* had its first performance at Royal Court Theatre, London, on May 1976 with the appearance of Billy Whitelaw. This surely would come as a surprise to the audience who had formerly watched the

performance of "Mouth" in *Not I*. This time the character, no matter how ghostly she seemed, she stood there, before the audience, as large as life. Therefore, the audience were "relieved to find a human being onstage who is, as far as the eye can see, of "the same species as Pozzo," made "in God's image" as in the words of Enoch Brater (52).

Footfalls like the other plays of Beckett's stage only begins when the characters step into a storyland, a place where fears, wishes and regrets mingle with one another. Other than that, there is no drama and thus no life. *Footfalls* displays the interplay of two stories and two voices on stage: one is the voice of May, a woman with "dishevelled grey hair, worn grey wrap hiding feet, trailing;" and the other voice belongs to another woman, her mother, set as (V) in the play, meaning "Woman's Voice" (239). Beckett's stage directions inform us that both voices are "low and slow throughout" the play, yet eager enough to carry on the story (239). The very first dialogue between these two voices provides us with basic details about the characters that will be elaborated as the plot unfolds itself. This dialogue is significant in the sense that it gives information about the relation between the characters, and their personal details. May opens the dialogue with a double utterance of the word "Mother," which very well sets the relation between the two ghostly figures on stage. Then she indulges into asking a series of questions to make sure that her mother is doing well, and gets the very same answer to each question every time. It is understood from this dialogue between the two women that May is taking care of the mother who is very old, probably "eighty-nine or ninety," and bedridden:

> May: Would you like me to inject you again?
> V: Yes, but it is too soon. [Pause.]

May: Would you like me to change your position again?

V: Yes, but it is too soon. [Pause.]

May: Straighten your pillows? [Pause.] Change your drawsheet? [Pause.] Pass the bedpan? [Pause.] The warming-pan? [Pause.] Dress your sores? [Pause.] Sponge you down? [Pause.] Moisten your poor lips? [Pause.] Pray with you? [Pause.] For you? [Pause.] Again. [Pause.]

V: Yes, but it is too soon. [Pause.] (240)

The rest of the dialogue shows how the mother says she is sorry and asks for forgiveness, as the daughter keeps pacing on stage, which is "all in darkness" (240). Feeling regret for having had her daughter late "in life," the mother begs to be forgiven "again" (240). The girl does not react in any other way to her mother's wish than asking "What age am I now?" as she resumes pacing. The mother answers: "In your forties" (240). This comes as a quite surprise to May, who considers this age to be "so little?" (240). She almost seems to be unaware of herself, distanced from herself and her body.

There appears a little gap within the play which prompts the audience to question the characters' motives and make the plot unfold. What is the story of this conscience-stricken mother? What is the story of this "so little" daughter, born into this world "late"? If mistakes are already made, what is there to keep the daughter and the mother together? We will be "revolving" all these questions in our minds throughout the play, unlike May herself who has never "done . . . revolving it all" in her "poor mind" (240).

The mother's question "Will you never have done . . . revolving at all?" closes the scene as May's steps cease and her appearance fades on dark stage (240). There is actually not any proper and clear suggestion that the scene closes. Beckett also does not mention any closure in the stage directions but we can assert that mother's question,

"Will you never have done? . . . Will you never have done . . . revolving it all?" opens up a new level within the play (240). From then on both the mother and the daughter indulge into a session of storytelling repeating the same question from time to time, which serves as a mantra for them.

Speaking of this new level, one can assert that there are three different realms within the play. The first realm is where the daughter and the mother stand together, the Voice asking and the girl pacing. In the second realm, there is the mother/the Voice telling "how it was" (241). It is then May's turn to "tell how it was" in the third realm. In accordance with the levels of the play, there are two different stories running within the text together with the actual story of May and the Mother.

The first story of the play is an account of May's life told by the Voice. Voice tells how she places herself on stage and accompanies May, though May herself thinks that "she is alone" (241). In this scene May acts like the Auditor of *Not I;* she is there listening, in silence, in darkness and in rest. While she rests in darkness, Voice gives a lot of details concerning May's life and especially her childhood: "She has not been out since girlhood" . . . "When other girls of her age were out at . . . lacrosse she was already here" on this 'bare' floor:

> The floor here, now bare, once was – [M begins pacing. Steps a little slower.] But let us watch her move, in silence. [M paces. Towards end of second length.] Watch how feat she wheels. [M turns, paces. Synchronous with steps third length.] Seven, eight, nine, wheel. [M turns at L, paces one more length, halts facing front at R.] I say the floor here, now bare, this strip of floor, once carpeted, a deep pile. (241)

Voice, while releasing information about the protagonist of her story, tries to arouse our curiosity and interest in her narrative. By emphasizing certain movements of May she tries to invite us to the stage and into her narrative. Like a puppet moving in darkness May seems to be acting according to the directions of Voice, who in turn narrates her movements. The boundaries between May's movements and Voice's words are blurred on stage: "M begins pacing. Steps a little slower" says stage directions (241). "But let us watch her move, in silence" says Voice, and directs the attention of the audience to May. Then, "Watch how feat she wheels" says Voice as M turns and paces" (241).

Voice also focuses on the elements of setting with the aim of creating a proper narrative. She describes the floor, the bare, strip floor, and reminds us that we are in a theatre hall, listening to Voice's story, watching May's performance. "This floor, now bare, once was carpeted with "a deep pile," perhaps for some other scene in some other play" as in the words of Enoch Brater (55). Voice like Hamm of *Endgame* wants to take full control of her narrative and assert her individuality which is quite apparent in her sentence "I say the floor here . . ." (241). She tries to dissociate herself from the narrative she tells by clearly defining the objects within the story. She wants to make sure that she is the narrator, the *teller*, while May is the narrative, the *tale*.

Moreover, Voice internalizes her role as a teller quite well. She is there to tell the story of May and the Mother. She is for sure the mother of May, yet there is no trace that she considers herself the Mother of the story:

> Till one night, while still little more than a child, she called her mother and said, Mother, this is not enough. The mother: Not enough? May – the child's given name – May: Not enough. The mother: What do you mean, May, not enough, what can you possibly mean, May, not enough? May: I mean, Mother, that I must

> hear the feet, however faint they fall. The mother: The motion alone not enough? May: No, mother, the motion alone is not enough, I must hear the feet, however faint they fall. [Pause. M resumes pacing. With pacing.] (241)

While constructing her story and her protagonist May, Voice colours her narrative with certain writing techniques. The hyphens and dashes, the clear indication of 'May', and the "Mother" roles are Voice's techniques of telling the story. Voice alienates herself from the narrative and places herself at a place where she can see and narrate the events. Perhaps, this very omniscient position of Voice gives her the chance to compose her story according to her own taste. Sometimes she uses reported speech or sometimes indirect speech and direct speech in the cues. Sometimes she says "she" sometimes "May:" Whatever it is and no matter how it is, she tries to tell "how it was:"

> Does she still sleep, it may be asked? Yes, some nights she does, in snatches, bows her poor head against the wall and snatches a little sleep. [Pause.] Still speak? Yes, some nights she does, when she fancies none can hear. [Pause.] Tries to tell how it was. [Pause.] It all. [Pause.] It all. [M continues pacing. Five seconds. Fade out on strip.
>
> *All in darkness, Steps cease. Pause.* (241)

This last paragraph of Voice's story gives details about May's everyday life. This part is in the form of a dialogue, between Voice and someone unknown to us. It can also be regarded as a session that Voice both asks questions and provides the answers for these questions. This is also a dialogue between Voice and the audience, or it might be an internal dialogue of Voice between herself and the voice inside. It might be May herself as well who answers Voice's questions, evading the "I" pronoun, and referring to herself as "she." It is not certain who peoples Voice's story: Is May there, participating in the performance or not? Questions do vary, as Voice continues to configure May before our

eyes. Voice's story constructs May just like Beckett's story constructs May and the Mother. May's construction process is in fact threefold: her 'self' is also created through the story she tells. This endless construction of self, this folding and unfolding of the story reaches into its peak point when May begins to tell her story, with the opening word:"Sequel:"

> [*Pause. Begins pacing. Steps a little slower still. After two lengths halts facing front at R. Pause*.] Sequel. A little later, when she was quite forgotten, she began to –[*Pause.*] A little later, when as though she had never been, it never been, she began to walk. [*Pause.*] At nightfall. [*Pause.*] Slip out at nightfall and into the little church by the north door, always locked at that hour, and walk, up and down, up and down, His poor arm. [*Pause.*] Some nights she would halt, as one frozen by some shudder of the mind, and stand stark still till she could move again. But many also were the nights when she paced without pause, up and down, up and down, before vanishing the way she came. [*Pause*.] No sound. [*Pause.*] None at least to be heard. [*Pause.*] The semblance. [*Pause. Resumes pacing. After two lengths halts pacing front at R. Pause.*] The semblance. Faint, though by no means invisible, in a certain light. [*Pause.*] Given the right light. [*Pause.*] Grey rather than white, a pale shade of grey. [*Pause.*] Tattered. [*Pause.*] A tangle of tatters. [*Pause.*] Watch it pass – [Pause.] – watch her pass before the candelabrum, how its flames their light. . . like moon through passing rack. [*Pause.*] Soon then after she was gone, as though never there, began to walk, up and down, up and down, that poor arm. [*Pause*.] That is to say, at certain seasons of the year, during Vespers. [*Pause.*] Necessarily. (242)

Unlike the mother who begins her story in an ordinary way, May opens her narrative almost in an epic style, introducing it as a "sequel" (242). Like Hamm of *Endgame* who calls his narrative a "chronicle," May, too treats it as a special piece of narrative. In the first part of her speech May tells how she used to stroll at night, head for the church, and step up and down the transept. This is like Voice's description of how she proceeds into the room in which May assumes herself alone though she is accompanied by Voice. Both the daughter and the Mother follow the same delicate pattern while recounting their stories.

May forewarns us that now it is her turn to tell "how it was," as Voice recedes into darkness and rests in silence (242). The roles of the narrators are interchanged, yet the same cannot be said considering their narratives and techniques. The story they tell and the way how they tell it remain the same. This is the story from which both Voice and May totally dissociate themselves by evading the "I" pronoun and sticking into "she." This is a distanced life account rather than an autobiography for both of them. This is in fact the same ongoing story we have been listening to from *Waiting for Godot* onwards, a certain life story which is not much worthy of telling, a story weaved out of May's footfalls on stage.

May keeps pacing on stage and telling the story, which together set the whole action of the play. Her words appear in accordance with her footfalls and she takes us through her story to the stage. She immediately assigns us some roles. We are no longer the audience at the theatre hall, but the readers who trace May's story on the pages of an old book as we take another sip of coffee. Her role also changes from a humble storyteller to a literary figure as she resumes pacing and narrates another story within a story, with a certain shift in narrative style:

> Old Mrs Winter, whom the reader will remember, old Mrs Winter, one late autumn Sunday evening, on sitting down to supper with her daughter after worship, after a few halfhearted mouthfuls laid down her knife and fork and bowed her head. What is it Mother, said the daughter, a most strange girl, though scarcely a girl any more . . . [*Brokenly.*] . . . dreadfully un − . . . [*Pause. Normal voice.*] What is it, Mother, are you not feeling yourself? [*Pause.*] Mrs W. did not at once reply. But finally, raising her head and fixing Amy – the daughter's given name, as the reader will remember – raising her head and fixing Amy full in the eye she said – [*Pause.*] – she murmured, fixing Amy full in the eye she murmured, Amy did you observe anything . . .strange at Evensong? Amy: No, Mother, I did not. Mrs W: Perhaps it was just my fancy. Amy: Just what exactly, Mother, did you fancy it was? [*Pause.*] Just what exactly, Mother, did you perhaps fancy this . . . strange thing was you observed? [*Pause.*] Mrs. W: What do

> you mean, Amy, to put it mildly, what can you possibly mean, Amy to put it mildly? Amy: I mean, Mother, that to say I observed nothing . . . strange is indeed to put it mildly. For I observed nothing of any kind, strange or otherwise. I saw nothing, heard nothing, of any kind. I was not there. Mrs W: Not there? Amy: Not there. Mrs W: But I heard you respond. [*Pause.*] I heard you say Amen. [pause.] How could you have responded if you were not there? *[Pause*.] How could you have possibly said Amen id, as you claim, you were not there? [*Pause.*] The love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all, now, and for evermore. Amen. [Pause.] I heard you distinctly. (242-243)

This time, May introduces the story of old Mrs Winter and her daughter Amy. This sudden shift into another story does not come much as a surprise to us who have already experienced countless variations of narrative activities on Beckett's stage. May's story of Mrs Winter and Amy actually has nothing to do with Voice's and May's opening narratives, yet the story has its explicit details which reveal that the story stands for -so called- real characters of the play May and Voice. There are number of details and parallelisms which confirm this claim: Both stories have old mothers and middle-aged daughters as characters. It may not be difficult to see the anagram of May's name, Amy, and realize that both Voice's and Mrs Winter's names are employed in short forms in the stories as "V:" and "Mrs W." Besides, the speech patterns, the questions and repetitions which dominate the stories are quite the same. For instance, when Mrs Winter says "What do you mean, Amy, to put it mildly, what can you possibly mean, Amy to put it mildly?" she undoubtedly echoes the Mother in Voice's story: "What do you mean, May, not enough, what can you possibly mean, May, not enough? (241-242). Voice's narrative wit, her tone, her turns and twists are strongly felt throughout May's narrative. Voice's sentence "May – the child's given name–" becomes "Amy – the daughter's given name" in May's narrative. She does not forget to inject her narrative skills into all these cues and

embellish her narrative with additions like "as the reader will remember –," or "whom the reader will remember" (242-243).

So far the play has presented us with two different layers with three different stories. In the first layer there is Voice with her story of The Mother and May. In the second layer we have May and her story of Mrs Winter and Amy. Considering the overall picture, we can say that there is also the main frame that covers May's and Voice's story in general. Various stories glide on stage, and undoubtedly all these stories try to convey the one and the same thing which haunts all Beckettian characters from *Waiting for Godot* onwards: the pain of life.

For instance, May starts to tell an account of her life, yet ends up making up a story about Mrs Winter and Amy. This story functions as May's saviour and helps her to distance herself from the misery of her life. She invents this story in order to avoid telling an autobiographical piece. She is aware of the fact that she does not have a good story to tell at all. A girl who has not been "out since girlhood . . . at lacrosse" with other girls at her age, would not have anything to tell (241). She would not talk about *life* but only the *pain* of it. Therefore, she takes refuge in making up a story from which she totally distances herself, and conveys it accordingly. What is it that eases May's pain? Or does she really feel relieved when she invents a fictional Amy and the mother Mrs Winter? Does she take comfort in seeing that it is not she, herself who "was not there." It is Amy who "was not there" (243). What is it that makes her so preoccupied with these imaginary characters and their imaginary issues?

May feels a need to prove her identity, one which has been long evaded. All these attempts are means of creating a name, a time and space, a history for her being. She wanders about the stage, walks up and down every inch of it, and tries to convince the audience that she breathes. She tries to convince herself that she is there pacing on the stage of life. However, May is not actually there, she has never been there maybe she has never been born. As in the words of Enoch Brater, she "is a presence, not a person – certainly not a person who has ever been properly born outside of the dramatist's imagination. Her existence is neither more or less substantial than that of any other stage character" (64). Perhaps May is just a fabrication of Voice's mind, a "being" who is there to comfort the mother's conscience, or vice versa. It is also probable that Voice may be an imaginary figure created by May to accompany her on stage. Many questions do arise in our minds concerning 'presence' on stage and 'existence' in life as we continue to trace her footfalls and the mother's Voice.

It is no wonder that the same questions would arise in the mind of the actress Billy Whitelaw, as she worked hard during the rehearsals to act her role properly and perfectly, as Beckett always required. She experienced the very basic and the same problem which the audience, and we, as the readers would experience: May's existence. In the London production of the play, Whitelaw asked Beckett "Am I dead?" Beckett responded: "Let's just say, you're not really there" (qtd. in McDonald 56).

Commonly known, that Beckett has been preoccupied with "existence" and 'being' in his life and in his works. However, there is one specific incident that sets the grounds for this preoccupation in *Footfalls*. This incident in a way shows that Beckett has had an agenda while placing such a character on stage, and engaging our attention.

Walter Asmus' *Rehearsal Notes* reveals that Beckett has been influenced by one of Jung's lectures which he attended in the 1920's in London, and got the inspiration from a case Jung had been dealing at that time. In this lecture, Jung basically talked about a patient who he had been having therapy sessions for quite a long time, yet it was still beyond Jung's power to help her. The problem was that the patient was theoretically living in this world but not quite practically. Jung defined her state as "never having been really born"(83-4).

Actually May is there, as opposed to her so called non-being, she is there pacing and wheeling to eternity. This presence on stage is set as a contrast to her existence on life's stage. Though it is not perfected and complete, this presence is reasonable considering the effort May makes to prove an identity. She fluctuates between presence and absence, strains to represent the self which will eventually lay a bridge between the audience and May, herself. Her pacing, her footfalls, her story all contribute to her representation of the self. Her every movement on stage arouses questions in the minds of the audience and stirs up their imagination. As physical movements of May tread a pattern on stage, the regular pattern of Beckett's text emerges here and there, making it impossible to arrive at a sound judgment about the play. The text and the performance first seem to be quite apart from each other, then to be complementing one another. At some stage, they come to a point that it becomes no longer possible to follow either of them and give a meaning to the play. Just then it is realized that what is of the essence is the footsteps, the eternal pacing, since "the text, the words were only built up around this picture" as Beckett, himself indicates in the Berlin production of the play (McMullan 94). Moreover, as both the characters and the text are constantly creating images that fill up

the stage space, we cannot attribute a proper meaning neither to the play nor to the stories that the characters tell. The meaning in the text is nothing but floating, shifting from one level to another, following a nonlinear path, like the narrative of the play itself, which proceeds in different paths only to end up at the same spot where May has begun her pacing. All roads lead to May, and to her pacing, which points out to the fact that there is a certain circular pattern within the play. This cyclical nature of the play proves itself in the final scene where Voice's early plea is reflected in May's story: "Amy. [*Pause. No louder*.] Amy. [*Pause.*] Yes, Mother. [*Pause.*] Will you never have done? [*Pause.*] Will you never have done . . . revolving it all? [*Pause.*] It? [*Pause.*] It all. [*Pause.*] In your poor mind. [*Pause.*] It all. [*Pause*.] It all" (243). Perhaps it would not be wrong to assert that the play and the narrative proceed in circular motion, as storytelling begins with Voice's inquiry about May's 'revolving,' and ends with Mrs Winter's restatement of this 'revolving' as the mouthpiece of May.

As we move along, we get to realize that the narrative and the performance cause much confusion in the play, which inevitably affects our perception of the text as well as the characters. What do we have, after all? - Two ghostly figures on stage treading a fabric of drama out of stories and sounds; out of fancy and fantasy. Who are these characters? Do they have a history? Is there any relation between the two? Are they doing any good to each other? All these questions appear and reappear till the whole reading turns into a kind of Sisyphus' Labour. Whenever we feel closer to the text and to the characters, the text slips out of our hands and makes us remain as distanced as ever. Whenever we try to grasp a pinch of meaning we are not surprised to see that the text leaves us all up in the air. For we have seen that in Beckett's universe "meaning no

longer lodges itself firmly in single words, single concepts, and exact definitions. Meaning, rather, hovers like a ghost, in images, actions, objects and despairing hopes. Among *these* layers lie hidden, other worlds" (Doll 55). At the end of the day, we all remain in the twilight zone together with the characters which open up these worlds before us, yet pleased with what we have got: 'a story.' A story which is not much worthy of telling, like all the other touchy stories of Beckett's stage – unaccountable yet non-striking; ultimately *Ill seen, Ill said*.

Our struggle to overcome the obstacles that the text puts before us continues till we see May leaving the stage, with no trace, as quiet as a mouse. Her footfalls are no longer heard, there comes a faint chiming tune instead, marking the end - the end of May's performance on the stage of our world.

From page to Stage: Beckett's Voices

> "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[6]." (Samuel Beckett)

Every time we step into *Beckettland* we are not surprised to see a different style of dramatic representation with its idiosyncratic modes of character construction and setting design. Beckett, as a dramatist who has always taken great pleasure in experimenting with genres and challenging the possibilities and limits of dramatic art, has proved that 'anything' might happen in a play flavoured by his craft. This 'anything' takes us to a point where our basic notions of drama have turned upside down. This is the point where any comment on Beckett's dramatic art would open up new questions and new discussions rather than settle the ongoing ones. The more we try to uncover the gist of Beckett's style the harder it gets for us to find our way in *Beckettland.* Therefore, we are doomed to lose our path through the grey areas Beckett opens before us. In this chapter, the grey areas present themselves in the shape of two plays formed entirely out of Voice. It is understood that now the characters have no strength left and nothing to say, the dialogue and monologue come to a dead end. The body loses its form and all we have on stage is an object, a moving thing, a shapeless being: a Mouth, a recorded Voice, a ghostly rambler figure. If nothing is left on this stage Beckett's characters still possess a heavenly gift − Voice, to dramatize the ongoing story.

[6] From Beckett's well-known letter to Alan Schneider. Extracts from Beckett's Letters to Schneider on Endgame were published in *Village Voice.* (19 March 1958), pp.8, 15.

Not I and *Footfalls* stand as two significant plays for this argument as they both dramatize a single Voice that recounts the ongoing story Beckett has been trying to tell for a long time. Diminished into a Voice the so-called character of Beckett's stage drags up baggage from the past just to fill in that moment. Then everything loses its meaning and importance. What becomes of the essence is the synergy effect created between the self and the voice, and dramatized before us. "The momentum of the play would therefore seem to be the production of self: the rhythm of birth, at which the audience assists . . . like a mid-wife. Yet, instead of rising towards completion or creation, the rhythm increasingly loses momentum and simply fades out" (McMullan 102).

Anna McMullan describes the process in *Footfalls* in such a sentence, which would also be relevant for the case in *Not I.* Both plays make use of on-stage, off-stage or recorded voices as characters who in their effort to prove an identity before the audience. They talk their head off or quieten down; they walk, rock, pace, stand or just sit down. Movements and words; images and sounds, no matter how limited they are, create a drama, tell a story, dramatize a world before us together with a blurry picture of the self. "These dramas of the frustration of birth, language, and self," as in the words of R.Thomas Simone "imply in peripheral vision, the power and the reality of existence, even if the meaning of that existence remains unattainable" (65). This non-attainable nature of existence and its representation in Beckett's drama comes as no surprise to us who, as audience and readers, have already witnessed the pain of life and the sin of being born in our very hearts together with the inhabitants of Beckett's stage.

This time existence appears in the shape of a hopeless woman on stage in *Not I,* and of desperate mothers and daughters in *Footfalls.* Abandoning all hopes of existence,

and screaming in soft voices, these characters fluctuate between the task of creating the self and then evading it. They are aware of the fact that, they have to articulate themselves and tell a story to prove their existence. However, this existence gives so much pain that they prefer to avoid it rather than accept and face it. The result is a split self composed of different voices, trying to tell a story, familiar to all of us. Among this jumble of voices the characters of *Not I* and *Footfalls* grab our attention with their striking nature, placing women and their voice on stage. Either in the role of a teller or an auditor, talking to the audience rather than to actors, Voice presents itself both as a character within the play and as an aspect of narrative theory within the stories of the play. In any case Voice acts as the dominating force behind the performance in these plays.

Serving double roles in the text and acting on stage, this Voice takes up a greater part in Beckett's drama. In his prominent article "Voice and Narration in Postmodern Drama" Brian Richardson, outlining different aspects of narrative voice and voice as a literal entity, draws a rough picture of narration in drama. Borrowing the terms from Gerard Genette, Richardson first talks about "homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narratives," which provide a good point of departure for his discussion of narration in drama and then shifts into the issue of off-stage voices in drama. Talking about Brecht's epic style in drama and his storytellers, Richardson asserts that Brecht's narrative is heterodiegetic in the sense that his "storyteller narrates diegetically, in the third person, until, pointing to the stage, he directs actors to mimetically enact the narrative he gives voice to" (685). These storytellers, fluctuating between two modes of representation, achieve a symposium of narration. It seems that they first establish the storyworld, and

then stand at a distanced position so as to conduct the narrative properly. They create a fictional world, enact the story they recount, and reside "in a distinct ontological level from that occupied by the characters" (685). Richardson calls these kinds of dramatic, storytelling narrators as "generative narrators" and considers Beckett as one of the most distinguished dramatists who employs this technique especially in his later dramas, "whose dramatic narrators and monologists create the world around them as they name it" (685). This act of treading the web of life out of stories, and giving a shape to it by words are the very basic tenets of Beckettian narrators.

Other than these actors, Beckettian drama has off-stage voices on stage as actors, who tell various stories, and comment on these stories throughout the play. Sometimes in words, sometimes in images, or movements but most of the time in the form of echoes, these voices dramatize the story they tell or the story the characters tell. This kind of narration almost creates a fest on the stage as the voices interact with one another, lean on one another and stand for the mouthpiece of the author as well as the other characters on stage. Thus, the stage turns out to be a place where the interplay of voices is witnessed. These voices are accompanied by screams, laughs, pacing and walking, words and sounds, chiming and silence ... Everything mingles into one another on Beckett's stage. Rather than remaining in our minds' eye with images or its characters, the play echoes in our ears, as a drama of Voice, one enacted by Voice.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

> "A narrative is like a room on whose walls a number of false doors have been painted; while within the narrative, we have many apparent choices of exit, but when the author leads us to one particular door, we know it is the right one because it opens."
>
> John Updike

Such is Updike's approach to narrative. It's a quite common notion that narrative directs us to diverse destinations, but at the end of the day it is always the author who guides us towards a way out. However, Beckett leads us to nowhere but to the land of never-ending stories. His false doors never open before us, nor can we find a way out in the maze of his plays woven from various narratives, from stories, memories, songs and sagas. This study has been an endeavour to point out how these narratives work on Beckett's theatrical space and turn the utterance into performance. Narrative theory is taken as a reference point here, as Beckett's stage is a revelation spot where the characters engage in endless sessions of telling, roaming around the edges of different narratives. Beyond the idiosyncratic form and content of the narratives discussed here a different realm exists, the realm of stories. "When all else fails" there is always the "story" as in the words of Winnie in *Happy Days.* (41)

It is no doubt that narrative analysis offers different insights into Beckett studies. Within the context of "narrative" Beckett's dramatic art stands before us as an

unexplored treasure island. This study has aimed to show that in order to have access into this treasure we must embrace the complex workings of Beckett's stage, listen to its untold, performative stories and discern its melody.

Over the years Beckett's fiction has been widely studied within the context of narrative theory; however, his dramatic works have not received much critical attention by scholars of narrative. Perhaps, narrative scholars with a tendency to trace narrative only in fiction have missed the narrative quality of Beckett's drama. In an effort to throw new light on Beckett studies this study has aimed to discuss the issue of narrative presence in Beckett's plays within the context of storytelling. It should be noted that in this discussion of Beckett's plays "story" and "narrative" do not refer to "plot" as they often do in literary criticism. Here, these terms basically indicate the particular narrations; the narrative units; stories, chronicles, jokes or anecdotes; dialogues, or monologues presented during the course of the play by the characters. These narrative units, being essential devices of Beckett's oeuvre, actually serve to create the whole dramatic action of the play.

Regarding the fact that narrative is a slippery term which is hard to pin down, the first chapter of this study is devoted to an introduction to narrative theory. This introductory chapter on narrative theory opens with a brief history of the theory and its developments over the years; it continues with the exploration of the components of narrative theory and their relation to drama. The discussion of the convergence of the realm of narrative and the realm of drama on Beckett's stage is saved for the next chapter.

Considering the fact that narrative theory has many diverse elements, the concepts discussed here are limited to six: story, plot, narration, time, space and character. These elements are specifically chosen, and are significant for the study in the sense that they prove useful for the understanding of "narrative presence" in Beckett's dramatic art. The plays discussed in this study in the light of narrative theory have shown that narrative, presenting itself mainly in the form of stories, memories, jokes, anecdotes, songs and sagas, dominates Beckett's stage just as his characters dominate our minds with their neverending stories. Therefore, of all the six main elements, "story" is given a special attention, as being the dominant element, and the one which establishes the frame of this thesis.

This cursory discussion of narrative theory dealing with the main elements of narrative provides a basis for the discussion of "narrative" in Samuel Beckett's drama. This study aims to show that these basic elements which are normally associated with only fiction are also relevant to the workings of dramatic narrative in Beckett's plays. In theatre, stage has its actors, decoré, props, boards, lights, sounds and silence through which drama conveys its message, but this stage also suggests a plane within which these elements carry "fictional meaning" in Stanton B. Garner's words (7). Beckett's stage combines these fictional elements with theatrical elements and presents a drama formed of stories. Characters in the role of narrators spin these stories with words, sounds, music and signals. As these verbal and aural codes unfold on the stage the audience goes back and forth in time, in the narrative line of the play which spins, yet another story altering the story the characters have already made up. Beckett's stage presents its theatrical

power in such stories, words, sounds, music and movement or the absence of it, which altogether bring into view the dramatic narrative of the play.

"Dramatic narrative" in this study refers to the stories of the stage which create performance and which are created out of performance. This stage is a performative and fictional world from which "narrative" arises and to which, with every movement and gesture of the characters, with every opening and closing of the curtain, it eventually returns. Performance and narrative in the hands of the characters and the audience rely on each other to create and sustain drama on stage. This dramatic narrative potential which is first embedded in the text itself, later on carried to the stage by the characters, constitutes the gist of Beckett's style and the focal point of this study.

In an effort to handle the issue of narrative in a broader context, the study has sought different ways to approach the plays. For instance, the plays discussed in this study are not arranged in a chronological order, but in a thematic way. The plays are categorized as dialogue plays, monologue plays, memory plays, radio plays and voice plays. Taking "storytelling" as the umbrella concept of the study, I have introduced a new sub-theme in each chapter varying from memory to music. These sub-themes contribute to the main discussion of the study by providing a clear understanding of the plays and their relation to storytelling.

Following the chapter which lays the foundations of narrative theory the third chapter opens with a brief section on stories and storytelling. It would not be wrong to assert that stories, being the lifelong webs that connect us to the world play crucial roles in our lives. Functioning in diverse areas, ranging from exchange of dialogues and

personal secrets to reporting news, confessing in a church, or testifying at a court, stories permeate our lives. As Peter Brooks states, "We live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meaning of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed" (3). Every day of our lives is a repetitive act of storytelling in the form of news, jokes, anecdotes, memories, dreams and tales. We spin and tell stories to entertain ourselves and others, to flee from the pain of past or to face it. We spin stories to recognise ourselves and reconstruct our identities. This act of spinning stories is an ongoing process in life and on Beckett's stage, "for storytelling is always the art of repeating stories," in the words of Walter Benjamin (5). In an effort to trace this ongoing process on Beckett's stage, this study has singled out ten plays from different phases of Beckett's oeuvre and aimed to discuss them in a certain pattern. That is to say the whole study proceeds in a diminishing style, a style of *Cascando*, a term which is also relevant for Beckett's dramatic career.

The first plays put into discussion in this study are two major plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, which are analyzed in the light of "storytelling" and "dialogue" as narrative styles. The discussion of these plays is followed by a sub-section on Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian dramatist whose theory of static drama is considered to have laid the foundations for Beckett's catatonic world in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*.

In these two major plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, Beckett employs a more crowded cast compared to the later plays. There are at least four or five characters on stage, talking, thinking, and singing, quarrelling, and shouting at each other. Above all, they are telling stories . . . stories of life, love and death. One evening, on a lonely

country road near a bare tree, what more could two tramp-like men do while waiting for a man named Godot other than talking and telling stories to each other to pass the time and forget about their misery for a while. "Do you remember the story?" asks Vladimir as he is dying to tell "the story of the two thieves" to Estragon (12). After a page long discussion on thieves, salvation, the Bible, and the Saviour on a country road while waiting for a Godot who never comes, the two tramps indulge in telling new stories. Soon after Estragon "voluptuously" pronounces the word "calm" and notes that the English say "cawm" for "calm" he begins telling his joke: "An Englishman having drunk a little more than usual goes to a brothel. The bawd asks him if he wants a fair one, a dark one, or a red-haired one" (16). *Waiting for Godot* is rich in such "story" units that appear sometimes in the form of a joke, a song or a conversational story. These narratives incorporated into the play are not only told by the characters but also acted by them on stage.

Similarly, *Endgame* is an important cornerstone in tracing the narrative presence on stage. The play opens with a direct reference to story when Hamm asks Clov "Do you want to listen to my story?" as he wants him to be his listener (34). Seeing that Clov has no appetite, Hamm bribes his father to listen to his story for a bon-bon. All his effort is for a story which would make him feel a bit at ease while weaving the "chronicle" of life in his ivory tower. The discussion of the two plays is followed by an overview of dialogue as an element of narrative on Beckett's stage. Both plays, with their emphasis on dialogue rather than action as a means of making conversation and creating stories, have proved that what lies at the heart of Beckett's major plays is dialogue formed out of

stories, as indicated in the conversation between Clov and Hamm: "What is there to keep me here?" 'The dialogue' (39-40).

Chapter four focuses on the relationship between "memory" and "narrative," which presents itself as life-writing in Beckett's plays *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days* and *Play*. *Krapp's Last Tape* stages an utterly alone, aged man, crushed under the weight of spent years, turning to his memories, to the story of his life. Sitting at a table on his sixty-ninth birthday, he listens to a tape and weaves the story of his life, through the memories he hears from the tape and the memories in his mind. His taped narratives carry the whole performance from the beginning to the end, creating a memory play on stage. *Happy Days* portrays another desperate character, Winnie, buried up to her neck in a mound of memories. Winnie's erotic and romantic memories, her "Mildred story" and the anecdote of "Mr. Shower and Mr. Cooker" design her movements and gestures (if there were any) as well as sound and silence on stage. Unfortunately, very much like Pozzo and Lucky in *Waiting for Godot,* Winnie's situation deteriorates as the play proceeds. She tries hard to survive, yet the end of the play shows her "embedded up to neck, hat on head which she can no longer turn, nor bow, nor raise" (37). This "strained position" of the character on stage reaches its peak point in *Play* which portrays three immobile figures in urns under a spotlight on stage, telling their memories of a hopeless love triangle. As distinct from *Happy Days* and *Krapp's Last Tape,* in *Play* the whole play is arranged as a story, having three protagonists and tellers as characters. Therefore, the story of the play and the story of the characters are intertwined, giving us the pleasure of observing a double storytelling session.

Moreover, formed mainly of memories, stories and confessions, these three plays have shown that dialogue of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* has given way to monologue on stage. With the discussion of these plays, this study aims to show that the crowded cast of the first two plays have thinned down, now, and the stage is occupied by Krapp and his tape, by Winnie and his motionless listener Willie, and the urned characters of *Play* who are three, yet unaware of the existence of each other, all delivering their "problematic" monologues (Lawley 88).

Chapter five endeavours to explore Beckett's first foray into radio drama upon the request of BBC in 1955. In three of Beckett's radio plays, *Embers*, *Words and Music* and *Cascando* memories continue to haunt characters who indulge in spinning stories of life, love and death. For instance, in *Embers* Henry, alone at the seaside, tormented by the sound of the sea and the memories of his father, tries to tell a story called "Bolton and Holloway" which he never finishes. In *Words and Music* the characters struggle with language, with words, and sounds to express themselves, and to find the right melody and the right story. In *Cascando* this time it is Voice and Music who struggle to tell the right story, the "Woburn Story, the "story . . . if you could finish it. . . you could rest. . ." (137). *Cascando* stands almost as the epitome of all the plays we have been discussing in the thesis within the context of storytelling and drama. Being about storytelling, the play itself illustrates how the Beckettian character struggles to spin and tell a story no matter how hard it is for him to start, to continue and then to finish. Moreover, in these plays Beckett has introduced music not only as a theatrical device but also as a character in its own right. Therefore, Beckett's preoccupation with music and the nature of his longtime interest in "music" are emphasized throughout the chapter.

The last chapter of the study looks into the relationship between voice and narrative on Beckett's stage. Focusing on the narrative fragments of Mouth of *Not I* and the ghostly figures of *Footfalls*, May and the Mother, this chapter also aims to emphasize the change in Beckett's dramatic style. The first play of this chapter, *Not I*, clearly presents itself as a narrative piece employing two main components of storytelling on stage: a teller, and an Auditor. In *Not I* the "life story of a desperate woman" which the character-narrator constantly rejects to be her own is narrated from the beginning to end by Mouth. This narrative stream of Mouth stands on its own as an element which carries the whole performance on stage. Similarly in *Footfalls*, May's fragmented words as she narrates her "sequel" of "Old Mrs. Winter and Amy," synchronically appears with her footfalls on stage. This synchrony creates a plane where drama ravels out before us, takes us in and invites us into the world of the play. In these plays, the whole performance is carried on by Voice who, in her struggle to have an account of her life, stitches the words together. This voice, no matter how helpless it sounds, proves to have a mysterious power in the sense that it does not have a certain location or source, but appears anywhere and plays a great role in creating drama on stage.

The plays analyzed illustrate that as Beckett's literary style changes throughout the years, so does the nature of his plays. As someone with a unique *voice* in his search and experiment through different styles and modes of representation, Beckett has grey areas which no matter how intimidating they are, provide us with a fruitful garden ready to be explored. Readers, however, realize an apparent change in the nature of the dramas − a deterioration in the state of the characters as well as the text. His later plays, which, in the words of Andrew Kennedy, clearly indicate a "sense of dramatic lessness," can be

considered “miniature monodramas that pursue a principle of self-diminishment, that is, the self-moving towards existential and verbal extinction” (30). Certainly, this does not hinder Beckett’s progress in the genre, but the same cannot be said for his characters. As entrapped as ever on a lonely country road, in a basement, in a mound of sand or in urns, his characters circle in a neverending void, with their neverending stories. Struggling for a very long time to create the “self” and realizing that there is no way to succeed in this other than taking shelter in stories, these characters lose hope, lose faith and finally shape. Estragon and Vladimir are the only flesh and blood characters who remain in our minds. The rest is a blurry picture of fragmented characters on stage; Hamm is in a wheelchair, Nagg and Nell are in ashbins, Winnie is in a mound, M, W1 and W2 are in urns, Krapp is split among three different voices, May does not even exist, and Mouth is nothing but a fragmented body part, “a pair of blubbering lips” in the words of Beckett himself (qtd. in Bair 661). Moving from the mode of stagnation to regression, consuming all the words, destroying all the structures and boundaries of language, these desperate characters in the end realize that they have nothing left to turn to other than the “story” which annihilates everything and dominates the stage. This story embodies language, word, the vision, movement and action, like Atlas who carries the whole stage/world on his shoulders.

Regardless of the disheartening situation on stage, the story goes on. Even if it were a breath left on stage, the story would still go on and we would hang on *Seanchai’s* every word, tracing narrative on every inch of the stage.

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[7] This book contains all of Beckett's less-than-full-length works (or 'Dramaticules') for the stage, radio and television. The plays anlayzed in this study except for *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *Happy Days* all appear in this volume and are cited accordingly.

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