Memory and the (de)construction of identity in Beckett, Pinter, and hyperfiction
by Jane Erin Gatewood

Abstract:
The Theatre of the Absurd, represented in this work by Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, rejected traditional forms in theater and sought to present humans in situations that could not be understood by reason or rationality; hence, traditional methods of rational explanation became no longer workable in this movement. Beckett saw his task as an artist to be the abandonment of unworkable structures which necessarily excluded chaos; he sought a form that admitted what he termed "the mess" in art. Beckett allows chaos by abandoning dramatic structures such as conflict resolution and character development. Very often his plays lack a discernible conflict, much less a resolution of this conflict, and his characters possess an inability to explain their situations and lives. Harold Pinter continued Beckett's project by juxtaposing word and action, implementing inexplicable silences, and disallowing his characters the ability to cogently narrate their lives.

Hyperfiction, discussed in this thesis with reference to Michael Joyce, further continues the project of transforming structure in art begun by Beckett and Pinter; as a form, hyperfiction allows chaos in art by abandoning sequential plot development, replacing it with story development that is created as much by the reader as by the author. Like Absurdist drama's abandonment of traditional dramatic forms, hyperfiction does not adhere to the traditional linear structure of a print novel, as "pages" are not ordered in an absolute sequential manner by the author. Hyperfiction allows for plot development which proceeds not only by the dictates of the author, but also by the choices of the reader. As such, hyperfiction decenters the process of reading by making reading a collaborative process involving not only the understanding of the text, but its very creation and development.

MEMORY AND THE (DE)CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

IN BECKETT, PINTER, AND HYPERFICTION

by

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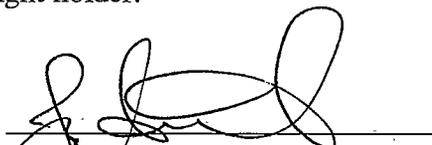Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

The Theatre of the Absurd, represented in this work by Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, rejected traditional forms in theater and sought to present humans in situations that could not be understood by reason or rationality; hence, traditional methods of rational explanation became no longer workable in this movement. Beckett saw his task as an artist to be the abandonment of unworkable structures which necessarily excluded chaos; he sought a form that admitted what he termed "the mess" in art. Beckett allows chaos by abandoning dramatic structures such as conflict resolution and character development. Very often his plays lack a discernible conflict, much less a resolution of this conflict, and his characters possess an inability to explain their situations and lives. Harold Pinter continued Beckett's project by juxtaposing word and action, implementing inexplicable silences, and disallowing his characters the ability to cogently narrate their lives.

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CHAPTER ONE

STRUCTURE, FORM, AND CONTENT

The end is the beginning and yet you go on.— Samuel Beckett, Endgame

In his "Introduction" to *Theatre of the Absurd*, a work which seeks to define

the movement, Martin Esslin quotes from Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* in

order to establish the impetus for "Absurdity":

> A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar
> world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light,
> man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of
> memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land
> to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting,
> truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity. (5)

Esslin goes on to note that "Absurdity" (or "Absurd") in such a sense does not mean

the traditional and common "ridiculous" but, to quote the playwright Eugene Ionesco,

"that which is devoid of purpose... Cut from his religious, metaphysical, and

transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless"

(5). Thus, to incorporate both Camus and Ionesco, Absurdism lacks the traditional

components of reason and rationality to explain the human condition. Esslin notes

that this loss of reason as a navigating component of life followed World War II.

"The decline of religious faith was masked until the end of the Second World War by

the substitute religions of faith in progress, nationalism, and various totalitarian

fallacies. All this was shattered by the war" (5). In many senses, World War II

provided an opening for the recognition of the loss or absence of such traditional referents (religion, progress, etc.).

The loss of traditional methods of understanding was paralleled by the decline of traditional formalizing structures in art, and such moves were of key interest to Samuel Beckett. Beckett was increasingly concerned with what he termed "the mess" and the tension between it and form in art. According to Tom Driver, Beckett noted that art has traditionally "withstood the pressure of chaotic things… but now we can keep it ["the mess"] out no longer 'it invades our experience at every moment. It is there and it must be allowed in'" (Driver 23). Thus, as Beckett saw it, traditional form in art was previously unquestioned and it necessarily excluded chaos, but this traditional form was no longer workable. Form that excluded chaos had to be rejected. Again according to Driver, Beckett went on to note that such a responsibility

> does not mean that there will henceforth be no form in art. It only means that there will be new form, and that this form will be of such a type that admits the chaos and does not really try to say it is something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now. (Driver 23)

Beckett took this task upon himself. And, as Beckett took on this task, Harold Pinter's stage dramas and Michael Joyce's hyperfiction continue and extend Beckett's project for symbiosis between form and mess.

Samuel Beckett

Samuel Beckett once noted "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express" ("Three Dialogues..." 17). This articulation of Beckett's modernist obstacle outlines the quandary faced not only by Beckett but also by his stage characters in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. Additionally, the paradox of lack of expression combined with the obligation to express creates an opposition which Beckett sought to incorporate into his work. The above plays are constructed with reference to such an opposition and embody his concern with form and his skepticism regarding language.

Endgame portrays four characters existing in a post-apocalyptic situation, confined to a room. Hamm, a master of sorts, is blind; Nagg and Nell, Hamm's legless parents, are confined to ashbins; Clov, Hamm's helper/servant, wishes to leave but does not. The entire drama hinges upon Clov's potential departure which would "end" the "game" played between the characters, as Hamm would be unable to care for himself or his parents. Midway through the play, Hamm asks Clov when he last oiled the castors on the chair, to which Clov responds that they were oiled "yesterday." Hamm exclaims, "Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!" prompting a "violent" response from Clov: "... I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything anymore, teach me others. Or let me be silent" (*Endgame* 43–44). Thus, we have words potentially lacking meaning and the request to cease speaking. Yet, no new words come, and the characters remain "obligated" to continue speaking. Even at the play's close after Hamm utters "speak no more" he

continues to say words (*Endgame* 84). Such a compulsion refers to the title's chess reference: an endgame refers to the final stages of the game. However, this game consists of the worst possible of scenarios: only the two kings are left to move endlessly around the board. To end the game, one of the players must concede. However in the dire situation of the stage, to concede and separate would be the equivalent of death. Thus, the characters continue speaking because they must; to cease doing so would be to die. Such a bind mirrors Beckett's own bind expressed above: while there is nothing to express, one must continue doing so because to cease would be a recognition of and invitation for death.

Just as Hamm and Clov do not separate in *Endgame*, Vladimir and Estragon think of killing themselves but do not in *Waiting for Godot*. Vladimir and Estragon are two tramps positioned on a country road; their objective is to wait for Mr. Godot with whom they have an appointment. As they wait, they grow weary and consider hanging themselves from the nearby willow tree. But they do not, and as they continue to exist they must continue speaking. As such, Vladimir and Estragon emulate Beckett's own statement regarding the lack of something to express combined with the "obligation" to express. As demonstrated in the following exchange, the two seem to speak out of some obligation to speak.

> VLADIMIR: Say something!
> ESTRAGON: I'm trying.
> *Long Silence.*
> VLADIMIR: (*in anguish*) Say anything at all!
> ESTRAGON: What do we do now?
> VLADIMIR: Wait for Godot.
> ESTRAGON: Ah! (63)

The two speak out of a similar obligation to pass the time, and the dialogue spoken establishes the two as a pair.[1] Yet while complementary, the two are situated as opposites in many ways. Theatre critic Martin Esslin's reading is useful here:

> Estragon is volatile, Vladimir is persistent. Estragon dreams, Vladimir cannot stand hearing about dreams. Vladimir has stinking breath, Estragon has stinking feet. Vladimir remembers past events, Estragon tends to forget them as soon as they have happened. Estragon likes telling funny stories, Vladimir is upset by them. (*Theatre of the Absurd* 27)

Thus as opposites, the two parlay conversation and banter much like Ros and Guil do in their verbal tennis match in Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. However, Vladimir and Estragon do not *do* anything. They talk about leaving but do not move. They wait for Godot, but he never comes. "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" exclaims Estragon in Act I (*Waiting* 41). Didi and Gogo seemingly have "nothing to express" yet the "obligation" to do so remains. And so do they.

What we are faced with in this play is a system of stark opposites. However, rather than delineate impenetrable and clear absolutes, polarity reveals similarities between the opposites and calls respective roles into question. For example, the play's setting is "Evening," but the daylight does not recede gradually into night. Rather, the change is abrupt: "The light suddenly fails. In a moment it is night" (*Waiting* 52).[2] In a letter (Dec. 14, 1955) to director Peter Hall, Beckett described the transition thus: "1) unvarying evening light up to boy's exit; 2) then suddenly darkness; 3) then

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[1] Esslin notes the two are modeled after "cross-talk comedians" (*Absurd* 26).
[2] Beckett displays an interest and continued use of dark/light imagery from *Godot* and *Endgame* through *Krapp* and *Not I*.

suddenly moonrise and moonrise until curtain" (*No Author...* 2). Yet this "change" makes no difference; night is the same as day in that repetitive acts occur as much at night as during the day. Vladimir and Estragon continue to "wait" after darkness has fallen, and Estragon notes that he is beaten nightly while sleeping in a ditch "over there" (9). Yet the location of the ditch is unimportant as Estragon does not gesture to suggest where "over there" is located. The importance lies in the nightly repetition of the act. Additionally, "unvarying evening light" connotes a combination of dark and light, and even the abrupt transition from dark to light does not remain absolute for the moon rises in the darkness casting light.

Pozzo and Lucky create another pair. Pozzo is the master, Lucky the servant. Yet, these roles do not retain their polarity. While Lucky is technically tied to Pozzo (and not vice versa), it is Lucky who leads the pair on and off stage—an act that questions the power role in the master/servant pair.[3] Such is the paradox of Beckett's pairs. While the individual sides constitute a pairing of opposites, each side also demonstrates a shared affinity with its "other." The demarcations between the two(s) are hazy, revealing an impenetrable conjoined-ness.

While Act II is an inversion of Act I,[4] the two are so similar that some have noted nothing happens... twice (Esslin, *Absurd* 26). While Vladimir and Estragon alternate the role for initiator of the individual acts, the basic structure remains unchanged in both acts: The two wait and exchange dialogue; Pozzo and Lucky enter,

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[3] Worton provides more on the master/servant dichotomy p.71.
[4] In mathematical terms, such an inversion could mean the play only consists of one act (ex. $3/4 \times 4/3 = 1$)—an aspect of which Beckett was no doubt aware. (See Esslin's "Telling..." for more on Beckett's interest in and appropriation of mathematics in his writing).

exchange dialogue, and exit; a boy enters, delivers message from Mr. Godot, and exits; daylight changes into night; Vladimir and Estragon talk of leaving but do not; curtain. Yet little changes are interspersed throughout: as noted above, Estragon is onstage at the beginning of Act I, and Vladimir initiates Act II; Pozzo and Lucky can see and speak in Act I, but are (respectively) blind and dumb in Act II; the tree is devoid of leaves in Act I, but has leaves in Act II. However, these changes are so minute they have to effect of sameness; and conversely, a staged repetition of Act I and Act II is a "new" and different move in theater, thus having the effect of change or difference. Hence, change/sameness is another paradoxical pairing causing the very structure of the play to be of reciprocal opposition.

As change is difficult to differentiate from sameness and as paired opposites possess shared affinities, clearly differentiating between the two(s) is difficult. It is not that these little differences do not matter (because they matter ultimately); rather it is that these differences can easily go unnoticed individually. Sameness seems to hang over the stage. Yet, this "sameness" is slightly skewed; it is not absolute. The combination of tiny differences, the snowball effect, facilitates the establishment of a world that is off-center and noticeable as such.

For Beckett, the presentation of opposites forsakes clarity. Tom Driver, a friend of Beckett, quoted him thus:

> If life and death did not both present themselves to us, there would be no inscrutability. If there were only darkness, life would be clear. It is because there is not only darkness but also light that our situation becomes

inexplicable. Take Augustine's doctrine of grace given and grace withheld:[5] have you pondered the dramatic qualities in this theology? Two thieves are crucified with Christ, one saved and the other damned. How can we make sense of this division? In Classical drama, such problems do not arise. The destiny of Racine's Phedre is sealed from the beginning: she will proceed into the dark... Within this notion clarity is possible, but for us who are neither Greek nor Jansenist there is not such clarity. The question would also be removed if we believed in the contrary—total salvation. But where we have both dark and light we also have the inexplicable. (Driver 24)

The conjunctive existence of the one and its other does not aid understanding; nor as the discussion of paired-ness above reveals, does it provide for a system of clear and distinguishable opposing absolutes. Opposites remain oppositional, but the dividing line is indistinct, gray, and hazy. From the unavoidability of the inexplicable emerges the necessity to dramatize the inexplicable. Beckett saw form and content to be undeniably separate. Yet while separate, the two remained unthinkable except in conjunction. Just as the pairs in his dramas are irremediably intertwined, Beckett saw form and content as reciprocally and irremediably interwoven; form affects meaning of content, and the desired meaning of the content affects form.

The pairing of opposites in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* serves to admit chaos. As described above, the pairing of opposites in *Godot* results in uncertainty, and through uncertainty we as readers or spectators encounter "the mess." As no third act provides resolution of conflict, the inverted two-act structure of the play suggests that we may have caught the characters somewhere "midway" through a continual sequence of inversions which could continue into infinity. Even though the curtain

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[5] Beckett refers to a sentence by Augustine: "Do not despair, one of the thieves was saved; do not rejoice, one of the thieves was damned." Beckett held that this sentence had a wonderful "shape" (qtd. in Olney 867).

falls and the play ends, we can assume that Vladimir and Estragon will never leave; they will talk of leaving but will continue to wait for Mr. Godot, who will never come. We can assume that the boy will continue to come at dusk to tell them that Mr. Godot is not coming today but will come tomorrow. We can also assume that Pozzo and Lucky will continue to pass by Vladimir and Estragon day after day but not recall having met them previously. We can assume all of the things, but we cannot know with certitude; nor can we know exactly why Vladimir and Estragon are waiting in the first place. Such lack of resolution, in fact the very lack of definable conflict, signals a chaotic system. Beginnings and ends, causes and effects are not definable or locatable as such. Events seem to occur at random, chaotically.

Like *Godot*, *Endgame* also lacks resolution. The majority of this play's action concerns whether or not Clov (the only character with working legs) will leave Hamm. Yet it closes with all the characters on stage, Clov dressed for travel but unmoving. Also like *Godot*, *Endgame* is composed of pairs of characters. Clov and Hamm with their "very red faces" compose one set; Nagg and Nell in their ashbins with "very white faces" compose another set.[6] Clov cannot sit; Hamm cannot stand. Hamm is blind; Clov has vision (and visions). Nagg tells stories of yesterday; Nell marvels over the word "yesterday" ("Ah yesterday!" [15]). Nell is said to have no pulse; Nagg remains "alive." Additionally these sets of pairs create yet another paired opposition. Nagg and Nell display love for one another; they attempt to kiss and wish

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[6] In a letter to Beckett (Jan. 5, 1958), director Alan Schneider asked clarification as to why Clov and Hamm should have red faces if they were eternally indoors. Beckett replied in a letter dated 10.1.58, "Actually illogical that H and C living in confinement, should have red faces. Scenically it serves to stress the couples and keep them apart" (*No Author* 27, 29).

to be near one another but are separated physically by their bins. Conversely in spite

of the possibility for proximity, Clov and Hamm seem to despise one another, and

Clov wishes to leave Hamm but doesn't. The reason for Nagg and Nell's separation,

or the reason for Hamm and Clov's continued proximity, is unclear and inexplicable

except in terms which are no longer workable for Beckett (i.e. Providence deemed it

such). Yet again, despite the creation of a visible dialectic, clarity recedes and chaos

enters.

We do not know if Clov will leave, nor do we know certainly if Nell has died

in her bin. Furthermore, while the interior world inhabited by the characters is gray

and confined and the world beyond the windows is described as dead and gray,

statements within the play call the state and condition of that exterior world (of the

play) into question. In *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Martin Esslin notes such

"intratextual" references by Hamm (Worton 68).

> Hamm describes a memory that is strangely reminiscent of the situation in
> *Endgame*: "I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had
> come. He was a painter—an engraver... 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!
> The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness! ... He'd snatch away his
> hand and go back to his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes... He
> alone had been spared. Forgotten... It appears the case is... was not... so
> unusual" (*Endgame* 44). Hamm's own world resembles the delusions of the
> mad painter. (Esslin 45)

If such cases are "not so unusual," such a statement raises the possibility that the

outside world is not dead and ashen, but alive and lovely. But again, we cannot be

certain of either scenario, and again we are faced with "the mess" of a world which

resists definition and formalization. Such moves by Beckett force the question of

textual stability and the authority of language, as the text calls its own authority into question.

Waiting for Godot and *Endgame* "constitute a crux," notes Michael Worton, a scholar of French at University College, London, in that they do not adhere to pre-established developments in theater.

> The central problem they [*Godot* and *Endgame*] pose is what language can and cannot do. Language is no longer presented as a vehicle for direct communication or as a screen through which one can see darkly the psychic movements of a character. Rather it is used in all its grammatical, syntactic and—especially—intertextual force to make the reader/spectator aware of how much we depend on language and of how much we need to be wary of the codifications language imposes on us. (68)

As Hamm and Clov create the concept of the dead and ashen outside world through language, they are also able to subtly call the validity of such a world into question through language. In *Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon point to the problem of language in their discussion of the four Evangelists; Worton notes such a reference signals Beckett's distrust of any text, particularly the Bible (76). Thus, we depend upon language but ultimately cannot trust it; it is this double bind Beckett sought to incorporate into his plays.

Martin Esslin has noted that words in drama are "no longer the only or even the principal elements: in drama the visual elements supplement and undermine the word" ("Telling..." 210). Beckett uses this element to aid his questioning of the authority of language. As Esslin goes on to note, words in Beckett's plays are often "invalidated by action and image" ("Telling..." 210). For example, both acts of *Waiting for Godot* close with the question "Shall we go?" followed by the reply "Yes, let's go." Yet, the stage directions note the two "do not move." Thus, the image of the

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two remaining on stage undermines both the question and the decision to leave (210).

Furthermore, Esslin notes in *Theatre of the Absurd* that Beckett's "use of the dramatic medium shows that he has tried to find means of expression beyond language. On the stage... one can dispense with words altogether... language can be put in a contrapuntal relationship with action" (*Absurd* 62). Thus, silence—the very absence of language—also serves to supplement and undermine the language spoken in these scenes and in others.[7]

Worton has noted that through these silences "Beckett writes chaos into his plays" (75). Silence "fragments the text, making it a series of discrete speeches and episodes rather than the seamless presentation of a dominant idea," and the interim between these speeches allows "the reader-spectator time to explore the blank spaces between the words and thus intervene creatively" (Worton 75). As such, meaning emerges from the gap between the words and their respective silences. Such meaning is created by the reader or spectator—hence, meaning is subject to variation. Worton notes Beckett allows "the mess" "not by imposing his own vision but by demanding that they been seen or—especially—read by receivers" (75). I agree with half of this assertion: viewers must make meaning. But this is not to say that Beckett does not have or impose his own vision; rather his vision is less straightforward than most. Beckett's vision is operative; he forces his audience to make connections, thereby forcing the realization that all texts are subject to interpretation. Such a move demands recognition that textual meaning is never absolute.

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[7] Here again we find another positioning of opposites.

To further signal textual instability and to call attention to the unavoidability of our dependence and reliance upon language (however unstable), Beckett's plays brim with textual references—some inwardly pointing, some outwardly pointing. Here again, Worton's reading of the textual function of the tree in *Waiting for Godot* provides insight to such intertexuality used by Beckett. Worton notes the tree is "first evoked (silently!) in Vladimir's thoughts on ending" (76). While Vladimir does not complete the reference, according to Worton an intertextual reader may know this is a reference to Proverbs 13:12, which states: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Worton 77). "The intertextual reader... completes the sentence—and is consequently alerted to the complexity of *Godot*'s tree(s)" (77). Worton goes on to note that reference in the play to the tree is not singular. "As the play continues, the references to the tree multiply: it is successively a potential gallows tree (*WFG* 17, 53, 93); a paradoxical symbol of change and stability (*WFG* 60); and inadequate hiding place (*WFG* 74); the name of a yoga balancing exercise (*WFG* 76); a symbol of sorrow (*WFG* 93)" (77). Hence, the tree is not symbolic of only one thing, nor does it reference merely one entity. It references many things, often silently and simultaneously. Thus, in every Beckett text there is always "a presupposition of reference. Every Beckett text is built on the premise that whenever we speak or write, we are using someone else's thoughts or language. And each time we write, we are rewriting and therefore transforming (and deforming!) what we and others previously wrote" (81). Vladimir and Estragon comically demonstrate this inevitability in Act I of *Waiting for Godot.*

POZZO: (*groaning, clutching his head*). I can't bear it... any longer... the way he goes on... you've no idea... it's terrible... he must go... (*he waves his arms*)... I'm going mad... (*he collapses, his head in his hands*)... I can't bear it... any longer...
Silence. All look at Pozzo.
VLADIMIR: He can't bear it.
ESTRAGON: Any longer.
VLADIMIR: He's going mad.
ESTRAGON: It's terrible. (34)

Vladimir and Estragon use Pozzo's words to help them understand Pozzo and his situation; they have no new words of their own.

Such a textual move by Beckett demonstrates his position regarding language. That is, to refer to the statement noted at the beginning of this section, there are no new words ("nothing to express"), but the obligation to continue speaking remains. Thus, his characters speak repetitive utterances and enact a situation of stasis rather than action—itself a "new" move in theater. By attending to form as well as content, Beckett allows in the mess.

Harold Pinter

Harold Pinter extends Beckett's pursuit of form allowing chaos through the use of silence and subtext in *The Dumb Waiter*, pairing of opposing forces in *The Room,* and by utilizing repetition and reverse dramatic irony in *Old Times*. The words spoken in *The Dumb Waiter* do not underline or highlight the play's action; rather, language runs counter to meaning. *The Room* posits a confrontation between opposites which results in uncertainty. And, as Hamm questioned the "reality" of the setting in *Endgame*, the characters of *Old Times* likewise call their own reality into question as they repeatedly remember different versions of the same past.

"Something" is taking place, but clearly naming that something is an impossibility. Thus, we are faced with Pinter's use of reverse dramatic irony—something is happening onstage of which the characters and the playwright are aware. However, the audience "remains in the dark," grappling for intangible meaning.

As Vladimir and Estragon nullified their words at the close of each act of *Waiting for Godot* by not moving, the meaning of Pinter's plays also lies in the difference between what one speaks and what one does—between words and actions. In a 1962 speech at the National Student Drama Festival in Bristol, Pinter noted, "There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear" (*Plays One* xiii). Thus, silence in Pinter's plays does not always mean a lack of language; silence means a lack of an easily discernible signified.

The Dumb Waiter dramatizes the ominous, "loaded," and often silent interaction of two hit men who are together in a room waiting for their next assignment. The title is a double entendre referring to the actual Dumb Waiter that is raised from and lowered into their room, each time demanding restaurant orders, and to the situation the two men find themselves in: one of them is the "dumb waiter" who waits unknowingly for his impending execution.

As noted above, "verbal" silences occur in this drama as Gus and Ben argue over whether one "puts on the kettle" or "lights" it (*Plays One* 125). However, neither cares about the syntactic argument; the verbal struggle signifies a power struggle.

"The battle of wills, the battle between two different outlooks on life, different temperaments, is translated into a battle of two different views on language" (Esslin, *Pinter* 78). Gus and Ben are confined to what Esslin terms "Pinter's basic situation: a room with a door; and outside, a cold hostile world" (*Pinter* 64). They are confined to a windowless room in a building of undefined size. They are hit men who do not know when or where their next job will be, or upon whom. The last assignment was apparently upon a female who "spread" (Pinter, *The Dumb Waiter* 131). The idea of "the mess" they leave behind causes mental angst for Gus, which is apparent far before he discusses the "spread"—possibly from the very first action when he is deep in thought wandering about the room tying his shoes (113). He attempts to discuss his worries with Ben. Yet these are thoughts Ben does not want to pursue, and he becomes irritated that Ben is even thinking them. As a result, their anger, worry, fear, and irritation find an outlet in the verbal power struggle concerning "lighting" or "putting on" the kettle. As such, Pinter's meaning lies within and beyond what is said and unsaid; meaning lies within the subtexts of language. Chaos enters because the characters, although they speak, do not formalize meaning in their language; their words speak of a tension rooted layers beneath the utterances. Absolute meaning is elusive, unspeakable, and the audience must connect the dots between the words and actions.

The Room, like *The Dumb Waiter*, displays Pinter's "basic situation"[8] (Esslin, *Pinter* 64). Rose, the protagonist, chattily speaks to her husband, Bert, about the cold,

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[8] As noted above, Pinter's "basic situation" is "a room with a door, and outside the cold, hostile world" (Esslin, *Pinter* 64).

damp basement "down there" and contrasts the cold outside to the warmth of her room. However, such contrasts do not serve to enforce and contain the warmth of the room as Rose would like. Rather the statements serve to emphasize her fear and discomfort at the thought of the cold outside and the basement below. Rose's first lines stress the need to keep the outside cold at bay: "Here you are. This'll keep the cold out" (Pinter, *Plays One* 85). Paired with the stage setting—"*A gas fire down left. A gas stove... up left*"—Rose's lines signal that opposing forces are at work. Her initial monologue goes on to stress the difference between the cold outside and her warm room, as well as between the damp dark basement below and her warm, dry room.

> ROSE: ... I don't know how they live down there. It's asking for trouble. ... I wouldn't like to live in that basement. Did you ever see the walls? They were running. (85–86)

Additionally, in this opening, Rose wonders who now lives "down there" noting that she thinks it has "changed hands" (86).

Within very few lines Pinter has established a dichotomy between the dark below and the light above, between the cold outside and the warm inside. Esslin has noted that for Pinter this is a "very dangerous situation. Somebody will be pushed from the warmth of the room out into the cold" (*Pinter* 61). Thus, "the mess" establishes itself early in this play, making its way in (as Beckett noted) through the "inscrutability" of opposites. Rose is foiled in her attempts to clearly demarcate boundaries between her world and the world below. The door continually opens, letting the outside in. In one instance, Rose opens the door to find a couple, Mr. And Mrs. Sands, standing in the doorway, but they haven't knocked. Rose nonetheless

invites them in to warm themselves. As they enter, they explain they are looking for a room to let; a voice in the basement told them room seven—Rose's room—was available. In surprise and shock, Rose informs them that room seven is her room and it is very much occupied. Mr. and Mrs. Sands abruptly leave a frightened and disturbed Rose. Hence, Rose is unable to keep the outside at bay; the cold has further penetrated her warmth through the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Sands. As in Beckett's plays, opposites do not retain their boundaries and remain finite. Rather, they swirl and coalesce, creating confusion and uncertainty.

Even when the dark world below in the form of Riley meets Rose in her warm, cozy room above, the result is uncertain. Riley talks to Rose as her father, but again as in Beckett, we do not know their exact relationship or Riley's function. Furthermore, when Bert enters and attacks Riley, Riley goes limp (dead?) and Rose is struck blind. Does Rose's blindness signify her death? Did Riley foretell to Mr. and Mrs. Sands of Rose's room (number seven) becoming vacant? The play closes with such questions hanging in the air and leaves them unresolved. Like Beckett's plays, Pinter's plays lack resolution of the conflict of opposites.

As the conflict between dark (death)/ light (life) goes unresolved in *The Room*, the characters of *Old Times* create their own unresolved oppositions as each remember distinct pasts for themselves. In turn, these distinct pasts come to overshadow and contradict one another as specific events are remembered differently by different characters. Such contradictions create a power struggle, as in *The Dumb Waiter*, which seems to have entangled roots in the past. While the characters seem to have an awareness of the intricacies of this struggle, the audience can only guess.

Rather than the audience's knowing something the characters do not, the audience is at the mercy of the stage and again experiences Pinter's reverse dramatic irony.

Act One has Deeley remembering his first meeting Kate. He went to "the middle of nowhere and watched Odd Man Out... And there was only one other person in the cinema, one other person in the whole of the whole cinema, and there she is" (*Old Times* 29–30). Deeley repeats (for emphasis?) that he and Kate were the only people in the theater. Yet Anna immediately calls the validity of this memory into question with the statement: "... I do know what you mean. There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place" (31–32). Anna further undermines Deeley's memory with one of her own: "I remember one Sunday she [Kate] said to me, looking up from the paper, come quick, quick, come with me quickly, and we seized our handbags and went, on a bus, to some totally obscure, some totally unfamiliar district and, almost alone, saw a wonderul film called Odd Man Out" (38). Anna's memory calls the validity of both memories of the film into question. Anna notes that she and Kate were "almost alone," yet Deeley repeats that only "one other person" besides himself was in the cinema and that person was Kate. Neither of the memories is more correct than the other; both are questionable because neither can be confirmed.

Such moves by Pinter allow "the mess" to enter. The characters seem to lack a distinct past upon which to base their present reality. As a result, the audience cannot know with certainty what is *the* truth or whom to believe. Yet, as the characters lack the revelation of a distinct past, they also seem to be hiding something

within that past. Deeley and Anna seem to have a hidden and shared past to which they allude, speaking in concessions. According to Deeley, they met at The Wayfarer's Tavern where Deeley gazed up Anna's skirt. They then went to a party; afterwards they had coffee. However, Anna initially denies having met Deeley, but later acknowledges Deeley looking up her dress: "Oh, it was my skirt. It was me. I remember your look" (*Old Times* 71). However, Anna notes this only after Deeley suggests that the woman he gazed upon might not have been Anna: "If it was her skirt. If it was her" (71). Nonetheless, Deeley recounts his and Anna's questionable past to Kate near the play's close, beginning with the statement, "We've met before, you know. Anna and I" (69). However, by the close of his recounting, Anna and Kate have merged in the memory: "She thought she was you, said little, so little. Maybe she was you. Maybe it was you, having coffee with me, saying little, so little" (69). What is going on here? Do Anna and Kate both exist? Is one of them dead? Did they both know Deeley previously? The characters seem to know, yet they don't allow the audience a full view of their interrelations. As a result, we are forced to guess. Yet all of our guesses are simultaneously valid and not valid. Again, we cannot know with certainty.

Such moves by Pinter undermine language's ability to establish believable fact, thereby revealing language's indeterminacy. Pinter's linguistic tricks further Beckett's project of admitting chaos because these tricks do not allow the characters to coherently express themselves or cogently explain their motives. The audience is forced to guess these emotions and motives, and by guessing, realizes that no guess can ultimately be confirmed.

Michael Joyce

In an article entitled "What I Really Wanted to Do I Thought," novelist and co-creator of the web writing software Storyspace and author of the first hyperfiction, Michael Joyce discusses his initial yearning to create a book that changed with every reading. In 1982, he was finishing a manuscript for a small press novel and discovered "midway through the last draft, something on page 265 would work wonderfully on page 7" (31). From this he discovered that "what he really wanted to do was not merely move a paragraph from page 265 to page 7 but to do so endlessly... Paragraphs on many different pages could just as well go with paragraphs on many other pages, although with different effects and for different purposes" (31). Joyce wanted to move beyond the linearity of print—a desire which echoes Beckett's own desire to "allow the form to admit the mess," although Joyce doesn't refer to it in quite this way. Both are concerned with finding a pliant form which allows indeterminate rather than determinate readings.

The concept of "hypertext" is not new, although the term was only relatively recently coined.[9] Reading is always a hypertextual process; however, we have only recently begun to refer to it in this manner. Aspects of hypertext are evident in most any scholarly or literary text; only, they are called "textual references" or allusions. As literary scholar Arnold Sanders notes, "scholars rarely produce a 'unitary' or 'stand alone' reading, because they are unable by training to read linearly, without recursive references to other texts and to other parts of the primary text" (129).

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[9] "Hypertext" was coined by Ted Nelson in 1965 to define electronic text that could be interlinked to other parts of itself and to other texts.

However, as a *form* hypertext—and its progeny, hyperfiction—is new, as it foregrounds the necessity of such recursive readings and of intertextuality. As a form, hypertext continues Beckett's project of allowing the structure of writing or art to admit "the mess," as it allows texts to be manipulated thereby recognizing textual indeterminacy.

Just as Beckett's and Pinter's plays require the creative intervention of the audience for the formulation of meaning, hyperfiction—as a form always in the process of creation—requires the intervention of readers for the very creation of the text. As Beckett's texts are fragmented by silence, hyperfiction is necessarily composed of fragmentary pages which must be "linked" by the reader. Additionally, hyperfiction continues Beckett's task of admitting the mess through the structure of the work by foregrounding the inevitability of rewriting another's words through the act of reading. Furthermore, the writer of hyperfiction necessarily adapts Pinter's reverse dramatic irony by knowing something the reader does not. Alternately, the reader takes on the role of audience, perhaps making connections unintended (or unthought) by the author.

Michael Joyce's *Reach* begins "Let me tell you a story. This story. Tell you this. Story." Well, that is one beginning, numerous others also exist. One could perhaps say this is the "intended" (if in fact one can say such things regarding such texts) beginning because many of the links on the introductory page lead to this page. Every time the reader accesses this text, she will be "told" a story determined by the links she chooses. Every time it will be "this story," the one in the process of being created. And every time "this story" is read it will be different (which makes for a

rather complicated critical analysis). Like the performance of a play, every experience with the text will change. Yet, unlike a theater performance, the reader/spectator of hyperfiction is the audience, director, and writer. As such, the reader must involve herself with the text in a new manner.[10]

The reader is forced to take an active role in the creation of the text. As the reader/spectator of Beckett's and Pinter's dramas must make associations between words, silences, and actions within the plays, a reader of hyperfiction must fill in the blanks between links, for many links do not "logically" relate to one another. For example in Michael Joyce's story "Afternoon," one could go from a link entitled "yesterday" which is an intersection point of a path of fragments[11] to a link entitled "Lolly2." The link "yesterday" completes the phrase, "As if Poetry This were about yesterday?"[12] By choosing "Lolly2"[13] one is directed to a link which describes the etymology of the character Lolly's (Lolita) name. The two seem unrelated, and perhaps they are. Yet if one continues reading, one would discover that Lolly is a psychiatrist whom the narrator, Peter, seeks after he thinks he witnessed his son die "yesterday." Lolly does not typically treat men; in fact, she is said to despise them. The reader must make conceptual (and intertextual) jumps to establish meaning

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[10] One could correctly argue that every time a person reads a traditional, linear, bound text, the experience changes. However, the difference between such a change in print and electronic formats is that the order of the words on the printed page will remain the same no matter how many times a person reads the text. With an electronic text, the order of the words changes with each reading, thus presenting the reader with an entirely new reading for each experience with the text.

[11] Once one chooses a path of fragments, one can only go forward or back as tangential links are unavailable until one reaches an intersection point such as the one noted above which allows the reader a choice of more than one link. In this case the reader was allowed three choices. Choosing a fragments path in hyperfiction is analogous to choosing a long hallway in a labyrinth. Once hallway, one can only choose forward or back until an intersection point is reached.

[12] Each of these words is an individual link.

[13] Other choices would be to continue with the fragments path, or to follow a link entitled "die."

between these links. The reference to the etemology of Lolly's name is intertextual as it refers to Nabokov's *Lolita*, a novel which portrayed the love and lust a middle aged man had for a young girl. As such the reference helps establish Lolly's aversion to males, for in the novel "Lolita" never forgave Humbert for his acts. The word "yesterday" references the event Peter thinks he may have seen on the preceding day; he will seek Lolly's psychiatric help with the stress of this event. Thus, the reader can relate the two links by making the above connections.

As Hamm's reference to the artist in the asylum who saw only ashes questioned the foundation of *Endgame*, Joyce's hyperfictions are eternally self-referential and ultimately reveal that no concrete foundation exists. Jay Bolter says of hyperfiction in *Writing Space,* "There is no single story of which each reading is a version, because each reading determines the story as it goes. We could say that *there is no story at all*; there are only readings" (124, italics mine). Like theatre, the performance of the text in hyperfiction is altered with every reading. Yet also like theatre (particularly like the differences in the two acts of *Godot*), Bolter notes, "In 'Afternoon,' the important events seldom vary on different readings. Instead it is the characters' reactions and interactions that vary" (*Writing Space* 127).[14] Nonetheless, in every reading the reader is confronted with the knowledge that he is re-writing and re-formulating another's words. As Vladimir and Estragon reformulated Pozzo's words and as Vladimir left the reader/spectator to guess the silent reference to the tree in *Waiting for Godot*, the reader of stories like "Afternoon" knows that he is

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[14] Bolter goes on to note that "We may judge the success of a work by its ability to adapt to new readings yet preserve its essence" (130).

reformulating the author's words *and* the words of individual characters. In subsequent readings, what were initially one character's statements may become those of another, depending upon which links are followed. The structure of hyperfiction allows for such alterations, but the possibility for these alterations is always scripted by the author as she writes the text and creates the links.

Viewing a hyperfiction in its entirety is impossible for a reader. Like a labyrinth maker, the writer of hyperfiction incorporates twists and turns into the narrative whose function or meaning will not be easily determinable for the reader. Like Pinter, the writer of hyperfiction appears to have a trick up his sleeve as the reader often seems to be in the dark, making guesses and associations after following links the author has arranged to be followed.

As in Beckett's and Pinter's dramas, certainty of meaning in Michael Joyce's hyperfictions is never absolute, and closure is equally uncertain. As Bolter notes of "Afternoon," "The story itself does and does not end" (*Writing Space* 143). He goes on to quote the story itself:

> Closure is, as in any fiction, a suspect quality, although here it is made manifest. When the story no longer progresses, or when it cycles, or when you tire of the paths, the experience of reading it ends. Even so, there are likely to be more opportunities than you think there are at first. A word which doesn't yield the first time you read a section may take you elsewhere if you choose it when you encounter the section again; and sometimes what seems a loop, like memory, heads off in another direction.
> There is no simple way to say this. (Joyce, qtd. in Bolter 143)

Thus, as the two-act structure of *Waiting for Godot* suggested endless repeatability, the hyper-story can recycle and repeat into infinity. While Beckett suggested this quality in his drama, actually embodying it was not possible—effectively creating a

performable, yet infinitely repeatable stage drama is impossible as the captive audience will not remain indefinitely in the theater.[15] Hyperfiction, as a form, actualizes the goal of endless repeatability as the links can recycle and relink indefinitely. The end, the act of closure, is the choice of the reader.

As a form, hyperfiction allows for textual reordering, just as Vladimir and Estragon reordered Pozzo's words when they had none of their own. The structure of hyperfiction also allows for the continued admittance of chaos, as the ordering of the text changes with each reading; hence, hyperfiction foregrounds both the necessarily indeterminate nature of language and the possibility for making new statements even when the words used to speak are not "new."

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[15] However, drama as a form does allow endless repeatibility as plays can be staged and restaged indefinitely. Nonetheless, each time they are staged they have a beginning and an end; hyperfiction has no definable end.

CHAPTER TWO

RECUPERATIVE MEMORY AND THE LOSS OF THE REAL

Memory is memory's memory.—Michael Joyce, Reach

In his "Memory and the Narrative Imperative" literary scholar James Olney writes that the "justification, validation, and necessity of writing one's life are established in [Augustine's] *Confessions*" (858–59). He charts the compulsion to narrate "a life" using St. Augustine and Samuel Beckett as touchstones with the purpose of demonstrating that narrative, as a constructor of identity, is invariably linked to memory and has undergone changes of approach in the modern era. According to Olney, narrative for Augustine is capable of rendering the past via present memory and order of narrative is crucial for it (re)presents a "continuity of identity" (866). To achieve an ordered telling, past events are remembered in "reverse chronological order" and narrated in "forward chronological order" (866). For Augustine, the form of the narrative, its ordered telling, is not separate from that which it tells, the narrative itself. The centered, unitary self is retrieved from and revealed through such narrations of memory. As such, this form of narration is recuperative as it seeks to restore, to create via memory, the idea of the self.

As discussed in chapter one, Absurdism was a recognition that traditional logical and reasoned modes of narration were/are no longer workable. To refer again to Camus's statement used in chapter one, the Absurdist condition is one in which

humans are deprived of memories (qtd. in Esslin, *Absurd* 5). The past methods of explaining and understanding the world are questioned, thereby questioning the very past understood by such traditional explanations.

As Samuel Beckett sought a new form to accommodate chaos, his characters are disallowed traditional modes of memory and narration because to remember and recount those memories in a traditional format would be to necessarily exclude "the mess." Hence, Beckett's characters (however they may try) do not engage in "ordered tellings" or narrations of their lives, for such a telling would allow the creation of an understandable line of causality for present situations and identity. His characters in *Waiting for Godot* and *Krapp's Last Tape* seek to reconstitute a past (they may or may not remember) so as to create a context for understanding their present experiences and identities. Yet these tellings also are not "in order" and result in the deconstruction of the impulse to narrate rather than in the creation of a context for interpreting present interactions.

Likewise, Harold Pinter's characters in *Old Times* seek to formulate individual pasts and identities via memory in order to create a basis for understanding the present. But the characters never succeed in such goals. They simulate memories of the past that never represent or mirror an actual "real" scenario. In Beckett and Pinter, nostalgia for a(n) (unremembered?) past creates a scenario in which the basis for understanding the present and individual identity crumbles. We are faced with a "loss of the real," as Jean Baudrillard terms such a scenario in his *Simulacra and Simulation*. A "loss of the real" is a situation in which reality is recognized to never have existed, only the idea of it existed. Reality and its reconstruction or simulation

cannot be differentiated. For example, in these dramas as memories are created or simulated they cannot be authenticated or confirmed as the past can never be revisited, <u>except</u> through memory. But memory is not the past; it is only a representation of an interpretation of the past. Nonetheless as memory is the only method of revisiting the past, the two are conflated and cannot be distinguished individually. The past becomes memory, and memory is thought to equal the past. However as memory can never reinstate the past or effectively and completely represent past events, memory serves to be an insubstantial basis for the construction of identity or reality.

Michael Joyce's hyperfictions extend Beckett's and Pinter's questioning of recuperative memory and further the scenario of the "loss of the real" as each reading tells a story, but each story lacks established order. A hyperfiction cannot be told "in order." Thus, recuperative memory is impossible in such a scenario. The characters cannot intentionally seek to reconstitute a remembered past as their actions are dictated by choices of the reader; the form of hyperfiction eludes such possibilities for ordered and recuperative tellings.

Samuel Beckett

Olney views the *Confessions* as an attempt by Augustine to confess what he is. "It is a confession of himself, not of his actions, not even of his thoughts, but confession of his very self that Augustine undertakes in book ten, and it is altogether significant how immediately he comes to memory in this confession of himself" (870). In an odd sort of circularity, narrative, as the product of memory, attempts to

encompass memory within narrative in order to know the self. As Olney notes, this process of memory production is capable of rendering a knowable self for Augustine. While Augustine claimed identity of the self through memory, Olney notes that Beckett will not permit "the easy claim of 'I remember' or the secure identity that such a claim entails" (863).

Nonetheless, Olney holds that Beckett's characters are overcome by the same impulse to narrate their lives as is Augustine. He notes Augustine's question in book eleven of the *Confessions*—"why then do I put before you [God] in order the stories of so many things?" (qtd. in Olney 857)—becomes for Beckett, "why should I try to put in order, time after time, the stories of so few things, my old stories, my old story, as if it were the first time?"[16] (Olney 858). For Beckett, Augustine's question of necessity becomes one of futility paired with necessity. By creating characters who ultimately cannot remember, or if they can, immediately undermine memory's validity, Beckett constantly draws our attention to the problem of memory: that "reference [in memory narrative] is never to events of the past but to memories of those events" (Olney 863).

Beckett noted "the greater part of what is said cannot be verified" (*Company* 7). Thus, the past is irretrievable and ultimately unknowable. This is an interesting and important temporal inversion Beckett makes and extends to his dramas: the past, although it is already lived, cannot be known; the future, even though it is unlived, remains certain—we will die. *Waiting for Godot* exemplifies Beckett's inverted

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[16] This question is formulated by Olney for Beckett.

sense of temporality, and as they have nothing upon which to base their experiences, the characters seem to exist at the outset in a circumstance defined by the loss of the real. Vladimir and Estragon know where they are "going" (nowhere, in that they will continue to wait for Mr. Godot), but they do not know where they have been. Early in Act I, Vladimir and Estragon attempt and fail to establish what they did yesterday.

> ESTRAGON: We came here yesterday.
> VLADIMIR: Ah no, there you're mistaken.
> ESTRAGON: What did we do yesterday?
> VLADIMIR: What did we do yesterday?
> ESTRAGON: Yes. (14)

Such an exchange demonstrates that for Beckett the past is unverifiable. Vladimir and Estragon cannot remember what they did yesterday, and if they can't remember, they cannot claim or reconstruct a past. The future of *Godot* is certain, not the past. As a result, present location (as it is derived from the past) becomes as elusive as are past activities.

While Vladimir and Estragon attempt to create reality through recalling a past they cannot remember, their attempts are always futile. In the following exchange in Act II, Vladimir attempts to shake a realization from Estragon that things have changed since yesterday, but again Estragon cannot remember yesterday.

> VLADIMIR: The tree, look at the tree.
> *Estragon looks at the tree.*
> ESTRAGON: Was it not there yesterday?
> VLADIMIR: Yes, of course it was there. Do you not remember? We nearly
> hanged ourselves from it. But you wouldn't. Do you not remember?
> ESTRAGON: You dreamt it.
> VLADIMIR: Is it possible that you've forgotten already?
> ESTRAGON: That's the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never
> forget.
> VLADIMIR: And Pozzo and Lucky, have you forgotten them too?
> ESTRAGON: Pozzo and Lucky?

VLADIMIR: He's forgotten everything! (60–61)

Here, as Olney notes, the characters deny the absolute statement of "I remember."

Didi attempts to coax Gogo into such a statement, but Gogo hesitates. Eventually,

Gogo will state that he remembers being "kicked in the shins" by "a lunatic who

played the fool" (*Godot* 61) but establishing when and where the occurrence took

place results in futility. So, we are left an occurrence without specific relation to time

or place; thereby its causality or origin cannot be established. Such moves do not

allow for the creation or even the simulation of a real; they underline its absence.

If Augustine were able to establish a knowable present via recuperative

telling, Beckett's characters in *Waiting for Godot* are denied a past, thereby denying

them an identifiable location in time and place. In Act I, Vladimir and Estragon have

difficulty pinpointing the day they are in and they day on which they are to wait for

Mr. Godot.

> ESTRAGON: You're sure it was this evening?
> VLADIMIR: What?
> ESTRAGON: That we were to wait?
> VLADIMIR: He said Saturday. (*Pause.*) I think.
> ESTRAGON: You think.
> VLADIMIR: I must have made a note of it. [...]
> ESTRAGON: (*very insidious*). But what Saturday? And is it even Saturday?
>   Is it not rather Sunday? (*Pause.*) Or Friday?
> VLADIMIR: (*looking wildly about him as though the date was inscribed on
>   the landscape*). It's not possible!
> ESTRAGON: Or Thursday?
> VLADIMIR: What'll we do? (15)

The problem of the past is extended in this passage, and its importance for creating a

context for present understanding is highlighted. If the characters cannot remember

the past, they cannot establish the present. The unknowable past has extended itself

into the present, displacing certainty of time and place. Hence, we arrive at the significance of the play's nonspecific setting: "A country road. A tree. Evening." *Waiting for Godot* seems to occur outside time and place and signals the lack of temporality the characters experience, as they are unable to understand themselves via cause and effect—via past and present.

As Samuel Beckett's plays demonstrate a concern with the creation of identity and selfhood, Charles Taylor charts in *Sources of the Self* the creation of modern identity and consciousness. In this work, Taylor describes two modes of temporal consciousness. The first, the archetypal, was the general mode of understanding during the Middle Ages. Taylor describes it as "extra-temporal" as it involves the "linking of two events through something outside of history, where their symbolic affinity reflects some deeper identity... Something other than causal relation in time connects them; in spite of the immense temporal gap, there is a sense in which they are simultaneous" (288). As an example, Taylor notes that the sacrifice of Isaac could be seen as a "prefiguration" of the sacrifice of Christ; both events represent a "type" of event (288). Thus, events are linked in the mind through similarity of type (archetype) rather than causality. Self-narration would involve the fitting of experience into generalized "types." By way of self-explanation, one could relate their experience to Job, Mary, or other figures, rather than explain their own experience in terms of chronological self-building events.

The second type of consciousness is the modern diachronic and synchronic perception of time. Taylor refers to this as an "objectification of time" and notes that it has affected "the notion of the subject" (288). Such a cause-effect understanding of

time has created "the disengaged, particular self, whose identity is constituted in memory" (288). Rather than understand and construct the self through an archetypal fitting, the self in the modern sense is grounded in "personal particularity"—memory and understanding of individual, as opposed to general, experiences.

Taylor's theories of identity consciousness are helpful in understanding Beckett's characters in *Waiting for Godot*. Vladimir and Estragon have often been understood as "types" rather than fully created characters; thus applying Taylor's categories of time to *Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon seem unable to position themselves within the modern consciousness as they cannot explain their individual, causal lives. Rather they seem to adhere to the archetypal, for they relate their own experiences to past experiences and events of others—particularly those in the Bible.

While they cannot determine the day or what happened yesterday, Vladimir and Estragon remember specific occurrences within the Bible. "One of the thieves was saved... It's a reasonable percentage," notes Vladimir early in Act I (11). Such remembrances seem to construct *Godot*'s "other" memory. The characters cannot position themselves in time by assessing and remembering their own pasts, but they can position themselves in relation to other pasts. Their memory isn't constituted only of stories of themselves, but of events which may never have happened to them. Such a reference by Vladimir to the Bible demonstrates that the past is experiencable *only* through memory and never initial experience. The past can be remembered but not returned or recuperated. Beckett furthers complicates the problem of memory when Vladimir goes on to question the story of the thieves.

> VLADIMIR: And yet... (*pause*)... how is it—this is not boring you I hope—
> how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved.
> The four of them were there—or thereabouts—and only one speaks of a thief
> being saved. (*Pause*). [...]
> 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. [...]
> But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved. Why
> believe him rather than the others? (12–13)

By noting discrepancies in individual accounts by the Evangelists of the Crucifixion,

Beckett reveals and underlines that memory can never return the initial experience.

As noted in the epigram to this chapter, "Memory is memory's memory." Memory

can never reflect with exactitude or certainty events of the past; memory is a mirror of

memory, not of the actual event.

As such, the problem of memory institutes a "loss of the real," a scenario in

which the real and its imitation cannot be differentiated (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 21).[17]

Memory attempts to reinstate a past real scenario, and narrative attempts to record

that memory of the scenario. Such a move is made by Vladimir and Estragon when

they attempt to remember and recount what they did "yesterday" (described above).

However, memory cannot capture and reinstate the past; instead the real event is

removed and replaced by its simulation in the form of memory telling.[18] Vladimir and

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[17] Such a loss occurs in conceptual stages for Baudrillard, with the idea of a real initially existing and mirroring itself in the world in the form of an image or symbol (6). In the second stage, the image that initially reflected a reality now masks that reality, taints its realism in some way. Third, the idea of the reality has vanished and the remaining reflecting image covers the absence of that reality. In the fourth stage, the image no longer attempts any relation to a reality; "it is its own simulacra" (6). Images of the fourth stage do not serve to establish, mirror, or mask any reality; they exist of and for their own proliferation. As such, they question the very existence of the real and force the realization that the real is always already its own simulation. The real was always only the simulation of the idea of the reality (and not the reality itself).

[18] Baudrillard defines simulation as an attempt at mimicking the real. But simulation can never mirror or reflect the real; rather it appears in such a likeness to the real the difference between the real and its simulation cannot be determined. Thus, the real is lost.

Estragon cannot remember "yesterday," and their past is rendered absent. As they cannot remember their own past, they refer to an alternate past—that of the four evangelists and two thieves described above—which will lend meaning to their own present. However, it is significant that they turn to the Bible, for as Beckett noted, all texts are questionable and the Bible for Beckett was a text he knew could not be believed. Thus, this alternate past for Didi and Gogo is no more verifiable than their own past in absentia. Hence, they find themselves in a scenario in which they are unable to establish a past real scenario upon which they can build and understand their present interaction.

This brings us to a crucial point of Beckett's: memory attempts to establish a bridge between the known and the unknowable. Yet, the known and unknowable do not exist temporally as one might initially think. It seems that the known should be what has already taken place (the past) and the unknowable would refer to what remains to come. However, this is not the case in Beckett. The known is not what has come to pass, and the unknowable is not what lies ahead. Rather the known is that which will come (future, death), and the unknowable is that which came before (past, birth), for the most important event of our experience—birth—is beyond personal memory.[19]

Beckett further explores the problems of the known and unknown in *Krapp's Last Tape*. Krapp is an old man, who makes a tape of the year's occurrences on his birthday after listening to recordings of past years. The play occurs on Krapp's sixty-

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[19] See Olney p. 861-62 for more on Beckett and the problem of remembering one's own birth.

ninth birthday and dramatizes Krapp's ritual of listening to past recordings and making a recording of the past year. Krapp literally has the past stockpiled and under lock and key, as the tapes of the past are in a locked room to the rear of the stage. Nonetheless, the past still eludes him.

Before Old Krapp begins this year's annual listening, he searches first through the desk's drawers and then through entries in a ledger to find the tape he seeks. As he reads the particular entry he seeks in the ledger (which one could assume was written to help him recall the events recorded), he cannot remember the reference points of many of the words.

> KRAPP: The back ball... [*He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.*] Black ball?... [*He peers again at the ledger, reads.*] The dark nurse... [*He raises his head, broods, peers again at ledger, reads.*] ... Memorable... what? [*He peers closer.*] Equinox, memorable equinox. [*He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.*] Memorable equinox?... (313)

As the words in the ledger fail to signify meaning, the recordings on the tape fail to provide an unquestionable past upon which Krapp can continue to build. Here again, Beckett denies his characters the claim of "I remember," as Krapp cannot remember events that previously occurred. His attempts at capturing the past prove futile, as the memory of the event fails to mirror or reinstate the actual occurrence.

Krapp's taped memory-tellings also serve to reveal the dichotomy of past and present that memory creates within the self. At one point in the play, Krapp abruptly switches off the tape and goes to the dictionary to find a word used by his past self on the tape.

> TAPE: [...] after her long viduity [KRAPP *gives a start*], and the—[KRAPP *switches off, winds back tape a little, bends his ear closer to machine, switches on*]—a-dying, in the late autumn, after her long viduity, and

> the—[KRAPP *switches off, raises his head, stares blankly before him. His lips move in the syllables of "viduity." No sound. He gets up, goes backstage into darkness, comes back with an enormous dictionary, lays it on table, sits down and looks up word.*] (314–15)

That Krapp "gives a start," demonstrates his utter surprise at initially hearing the word; he responds as if he has never heard it before. Yet it is an earlier version of him who uses the word. He attempts to remember and does not; the memory re-telling of the tape deconstructs by revealing that Krapp does not conceive himself to be a compilation of the events of the past, even if he is. He laughs at himself, or his past "selves," as the following excerpt demonstrates.

> TAPE: [...] Hard to believe I was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus! And the aspirations! [*Brief laugh in which* KRAPP *joins.*] And the resolutions! [*Brief laugh in which* KRAPP *joins.*] To drink less, in particular. [*Brief laugh of* KRAPP *alone.*]... (314)

Krapp laughs with his past self laughing at his past-past self, and laughs "alone" at his past self. Through the laughter, the alternate selves both merge *and* emphasize their separateness. Even though Krapp has "saved" memories, these are in flux for, as he laughs at himself and responds to the tape, a statement perhaps meant seriously or forlornly ("To drink less, in particular") is rendered comical. Krapp does not hold the same assertions he once did, nor does memory help to revive these aspirations. Such paired statements and responses reveal not a personal goal, but something far more bleak—that we are not a compilation of our personal creeds but of our responses to and against these creeds, and ourselves.

As noted above, the order of the narration of memory was crucial for Augustine; past events had to be recounted in order so as to preserve (and establish, although Augustine does not acknowledge this aspect of ordering) a "continuity of

identity." Unlike Augustine's narrations of memory, Krapp's "re-tellings" (or re-playings) are unordered as Old Krapp forwards and rewinds the tape to locate the memory he seeks.

> TAPE: [...] 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 propellor, 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 understanding and the fire—[KRAPP *curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*]—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. (316)

Here Krapp has found the memory he seeks, and he again switches off the tape and winds is back to hear the full segment about the two in the boat on the lake. Such disorder in the memory-telling does not foster the "continuity of identity" Olney notes Augustine sought. Rather the disorder foregrounds and emphasizes that memory can never return or reinstate the past; the past remains inaccessible even through memory.

Beckett's dramas draw our attention to both the problem of memory and the loss of the real such a problem creates. His characters could be said to exist in simulated (unreal) circumstances which their attempts at remembering underline. Beckett's characters seem to be faced with situations defined not only by the "loss of the real" but by the possibility that it never even existed (which is ultimately Baudrillard's point, however his confounding explanation muddies such a concept). If his characters cannot make a claim to "I remember" then they can't create a real present out of (and in relation to) a real past.

Harold Pinter

As Beckett's characters seek to formulate a past to establish a context for the present, characters in Harold Pinter's *Old Times* likewise create individual pasts and narrate them in the present in attempt to create and control present situations. As in Beckett's plays, memory in *Old Times* functions as simulation, not representation. That is, memory does not reflect real pasts; rather memory recalls the memory of the past, and thus simulates pasts which may or may not have occurred. Yet as the pasts are remembered they come into being. A reality of which they are representative cannot be confirmed.[20] The characters recognize the lack of a concrete reality upon which to base their present interactions and attempt to simulate reality via memory. However, not one of the realities matches another, and individual characters seek to destroy those memories which do not fit their interpretation of the "real" past.

The idea of the past perpetuates itself in *Old Times* but never mirrors a real. Although Deeley initially attempts to equate memory with the real, the real is always masked or shadowed by other characters' versions of the same occurrence. The reality of the past is called into question, resulting in a loss of the real.

The play's opening scene has Deeley attempting to surmise Anna's present identity via the past—"what sort of man would she have married?" (14). This question illustrates that the past for Deeley is something that can be reflected and retrieved. He believes he can know Anna now by determining who she was then. Furthermore, his memory of first meeting Kate attempts to illustrate a reality directly.

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[20] Pinter himself has noted that whether these memories are "real" or not is beside the point ("*Old Times…,*" par. 2).

This memory consists of Deeley wandering into a movie theater "in the middle of nowhere" and watching *Odd Man Out*. As such, Deeley's memory presents the past as unproblematic, returnable.

First, he authoritatively begins the remembrance with the statement: "What happened to me was this" (29). Deeley's language marks him as thinking that he can remember "what happened" and reflect those happenings in his retelling of the past. Second, he recalls thoughts and feelings: "I remember thinking there was something familiar about this neighborhood and suddenly recalled that it was in this very neighborhood that my father bought me my first tricycle... " (29). Such a statement demonstrates he believes his remembrance of the experience now is how it happened then. Last, he notes that only one other person, Kate, was in the theater: "there she is and there she was" (30). This statement positions Kate as a reflection of the past, as it suggests that the Kate sitting in front of him is the same Kate he met in the theater. If she is depicted in his memory as unchanging, she is evidence of the profound reality Deeley seeks in his memory. Such moves by Deeley position him as initially believing the real can be reflected in memory.[21]

However, Deeley's attempt at mirroring the real is immediately shattered by Anna's response: "There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place" (32). This statement simultaneously points to the

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[21] Believing the real can accurately be reflected signals Baudrillard's first stage of the image.

absence of the reality Deeley seeks to create and refers to the want or need to simulate

a reality.[22] The characters of *Old Times* fear that memories represent no reality. Thus,

in attempt to salvage their own interpretations of the "real" past, the characters seek to

destroy the memories of the other characters through the simulation of an opposing or

contradictory memory.

Additionally, further annihilating Deeley's attempt to represent the real, Anna

offhandedly reminisces shortly after Deeley's memory of *Odd Man Out* of going with

Kate to "some totally unfamiliar district and, almost alone, [seeing] a wonderful film

called *Odd Man Out*" (38). This memory of the film counters Deeley's, calling it into

question. Anna's memory taints and annihilates the profound reality Deeley has

sought to reflect in his memory.

As Anna's memory of *Odd Man Out* differed from Deeley's and questioned

the reality to which Deeley referred, it also pointed to the possibility that the memory

reflected no reality. The characters' memory simulations displace reality and the

attempt to restore the real results in hyperreality—scenario characterized by "the

generation by models of a real without an origin or reality," a scenario defined by the

loss of the real (Baudrillard 1). The stage fluctuates between past and present; by the

play's close any distinction between present and past is eradicated. The characters of

the play face the absence of a reality and seek to restore it by simulating memories

and attempting to destroy other simulations.

In Act I, Anna remembers a man crying in her and Kate's room.

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[22] An absence of reality and a need to simulate one are characteristics of the third and fourth stage of the image, respectively.