

INFORMATION TO USERS

This dissertation was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

University Microfilms

300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

A Xerox Education Company

72-24,129

GOLD, Margaret C., 1942-
UPON WAITING FOR GODOT: A STUDY IN DRAMATIC
FORM.

The City University of New York, Ph.D., 1972
Language and Literature, modern

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

© 1972

MARGARET C. GOLD

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

UPON WAITING FOR GODOT: A
STUDY IN DRAMATIC FORM

by

MARGARET GOLD

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in English in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1972

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 3, 1972
date

Allen Mandelbaum
Chairman of Examining Committee

May 9, 1972
date

David S. Stru
Executive Officer

Merwin Magalano
Rosette C. Lamont
Supervisory Committee

PLEASE NOTE:

Some pages may have

indistinct print.

Filmed as received.

University Microfilms, A Xerox Education Company

Abstract

UPON "WAITING FOR GODOT:" A
STUDY IN DRAMATIC FORM

by

Margaret Gold

Adviser: Professor Allen Mandelbaum

This study attempts to demonstrate that the structure of Samuel Beckett's play Waiting for Godot rests upon the relationships among its characters, rather than upon the conventions of narrative.

The drama is seen as arising from the conflict of two main characters who elaborate an antithetical opposition between the spiritual and material aspects of human existence. Their relationship moves between limiting positions of strife and concord.

In order to draw our attention to this level of conflict, Beckett deliberately short-circuits the flow of narrative. Individual episodes do not end, either because they suggest two alternative conclusions or because the last step in a chain of events repeats the first step in the chain, making the action cyclical.

The events of the play do gather allegorical force as they are assimilated to the fundamental antithesis established by the characters. In addition, language is employed at its most literal and therefore most universal level, adding to the work's allegorical thrust.

Each act of the play can be resolved into four "situations" defined by the introduction or departure of a major character. Thus in Act I, Vladimir and Estragon set in motion opposing tendencies toward hope and despair. Estragon is attracted by Pozzo's aura of worldly success; Vladimir prefers to count on the messenger's dubious promise of salvation. Alone together again, Estragon suggests that they have completed their quest; Vladimir insists that they must return to keep the appointment again on the following evening.

Where Act I revolves chiefly about Estragon, in Act II Vladimir moves to the fore. His speculations on the validity of action are put to the test when Pozzo returns, in desperate need of help. The messenger is greeted with growing belligerence by Vladimir, and at the close of the play the two friends view their alternatives with greater clarity and greater despair.

The eight situations of the play are arranged in a symmetrical pattern with significant asymmetrical variations. The significance of the characters' actions in time dwindles in comparison to their relationship to their destiny. Godot emerges as the mediating force which has, all along, made possible the interaction of Vladimir and Estragon.

The play is consistently innovational in technique, avoiding the obvious coherence of narrative. And, by using the fewest possible theatrical elements to maximum effect, the work provides us with an insight into the irreducible components of dramatic form.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have been written without the help of Professor Allen Mandelbaum who put the right books in my path and always asked the interesting questions. His gestures of kindness and confidence during the preparation of this work made it a pleasure to carry out.

To the English Department at the Graduate Center I owe the privilege of having studied with many scholars of distinction and sensitivity.

I wish to thank Helen Werlinitzsch who has helped to give the dissertation final form by typing it with endless patience, a good grace and evident expertise.

And finally I offer thanks to my husband, Leon, who first encouraged me to pursue the degree and whose commitment to the project has supported all my efforts in the last five years.

Contents

Introduction	1
I. Oppositions Between Characters	8
II. Episodic Actions	31
III. Towards the Literal	52
IV. Language Games	65
V. Vladimir and Estragon	76
VI. Pozzo and Lucky	86
VII. The Messenger	98
VIII. Vladimir and Estragon Again	110
IX. Vladimir and Estragon, A Reversal	121
X. Pozzo and Lucky, A Catastrophe	138
XI. The Approach to Godot	150
XII. Symmetrical Structures	159
XIII. Mediation	168
XIV. Innovation	179
Bibliography	185

List of Charts

1. Situations	28
2. Deflected Actions	50
3. Act I, Part one	84
4. Act I, Part two	96
5. Act I, Part three	108
6. Act I, Part four	118
7. Summary Chart - Act I	118-119
8. Act II, Part one	135-136

Introduction

This study began with the conviction that Samuel Beckett's play Waiting for Godot, which has generated a profound but often conflicting critical response, must finally draw its power from a coherent formal foundation.

Many aspects of the play have been documented critically. One finds, for example, efforts to trace its lineage in ritual, Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, Commedia del'Arte, farce, mono-situational Expressionist drama, the circus, Charlie Chaplin's films and the contemporary theater of the absurd. The philosophical antecedents of the play have been sought in Descartes and the Occasionalist school which followed him, in the dialectical philosophy of Hegel and in the borderline existentialist situations of Jaspers.

Interpretation has seen the play, variously, as theological, psychoanalytic and sociological in concern. As Northrop Frye has written, "A good deal of the best fiction of our time has employed a kind of myth that might be read as a psychological, a social or a religious allegory, except that it cannot be reduced to an allegory but remains a myth, moving in all three areas of life at once, and thereby interconnecting them as well . . . It was [this] appeal in myth of Waiting for Godot that, so to speak, identified Samuel Beckett as a contemporary writer." ¹

For some Godot has evoked the religious doctrines of Buddhism, for others the modern Christianity of Dietrich

Bonhoeffer and Simone Weil. The characters have been seen as the victims of psychosis or as the masquerading libidos and egos in a Freudian allegory. Marxists find that Godot documents the depersonalisation of existence in the modern capitalist state, while the historically-minded see an expression of despair over Europe as shattered by the war.

This very richness of genealogy and interpretation creates a mounting sense of frustration. The criticism seems as fragmented as the play, and one longs to grasp the work as a whole without doing violence to its complexity and suggestiveness. This study seeks to uncover coherence in the realm of form.

Ferdinand de Saussure has suggested that all discourse rests on two fundamental forms of coherence. Elements of discourse are related either by contiguity or by similarity: "Relations and differences between linguistic terms fall into two distinct groups, each of which generates a certain class of values . . . They correspond to two forms of our mental activity both indispensable to the life of language. In discourse, on the one hand, words acquire relations based on the linear nature of language because they are chained together . . . Combinations supported by linearity are syntagms. Outside discourse, on the other hand, words acquire relations of a different kind. Those that have something in common are associated in memory. . . They are associative relations."²

Subsequent research has tended to bear out de Saussure's theory. Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, studying language

disorders among aphasics, find that symptoms can be divided into two groups -- suggesting de Saussure's original categories. Thus in contiguity disorders, "Words endowed with purely grammatical functions like conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns and articles, disappear first, giving rise to the so-called "telegraphic style."³

In similarity disorders, "contiguity determines the patient's whole verbal behavior,"⁴ Thus the patient "feels unable to utter a sentence which responds neither to the cue of his interlocutor nor to the actual situation."⁵ This aphasic cannot put together utterances based upon similarity. "Both signs are in complementary distribution: if one is performed by the examiner, the patient will avoid its synonym: 'I understand everything' or 'Ich weiss es schon' will be his typical reaction."⁶

The Jakobson-Halle study, in addition to bolstering the neurological foundations of these two fundamental kinds of coherence, goes on to generalize their relevance to other kinds of linguistic productions: "A competition between both devices, metonymic and metaphoric, is manifest in any symbolic process, either interpersonal or social. Thus in an enquiry into the structure of dreams, the decisive question is whether the symbols and the temporal sequences used are based on contiguity (Freud's metonymic 'displacement' and synechdochic 'condensation') or on similarity (Freud's 'identification' and 'symbolism')⁷).

If we shift our attention to the more formal

linguistic constructs of folk-tale and myth we find that structural analyses have tended, once again, to focus on either one of the two forms of coherence. Alan Dundes summarizes the split:

First of all there seem to be at least two distinct types of structural analysis in folklore. One is the type of which Propp's Morphology is the exemplar par excellence. In this type, the structure or formal organization of a folkloristic text is described following the chronological order of the linear sequence of elements in the text as reported from an informant . . . The other type of structural analysis in folklore seeks to describe the pattern (usually based upon an a priori binary principle of opposition) which allegedly underlies the folkloristic text. This pattern is not the same as the sequential structure at all. Rather the elements are taken out of the "given" order and are regrouped in one or more analytic schema . . . The champion of paradigmatic structural analysis is Claude Levi-Strauss.⁸

Tzvetan Todorov has made an interesting experiment in applying these two structural models to a single literary work: "L'étude structurale du folklore date d'il y a assez peu de temps, et on ne peut pas dire qu'à l'heure actuelle un accord se soit fait sur la façon dont il faut procéder pour analyser un récit . . . Pour notre part, nous nous bornerons ici en guise d'illustration, à appliquer deux modèles différents à l'histoire centrale des Liaisons dangereuses pour discuter des possibilités de la méthode."⁹

Todorov first describes the narrative episodes as a kind of consecutive Propp-like chain, related to each other in sequence. He then attempts to diagram the story

in terms of incidents that seem to be related to each other by similarity. These he arranges in vertical columns, after the fashion of Levi-Strauss. Studying the columns, Todorov makes an interesting discovery. He finds that the structure of the novel rests upon a set of relationships between characters: "Cherchons à présent le dénominateur commun de chaque colonne. Toutes les propositions de la première concernent l'attitude de Valmont envers Tourvel. Inversement, la seconde colonne concerne exclusivement Tourvel et caractérise son comportement devant Valmont."¹⁰

From this discovery, Todorov draws the conclusion that while "Il ne faut pas croire que, du fait que le sens de chaque élément de l'oeuvre equivaut à l'ensemble de ses relations avec les autres, tout personnage se définit entièrement par ses rapports avec l'autre personnage. C'est toute fois le cas pour un type de littérature et notamment pour le drame."¹¹

Todorov is troubled, however, by the fact that structural analysis reveals two alternate forms of structure within a single work, one based upon a sequence of events, and the other upon a series of "predicates" between characters: "Le fait que selon le modèle choisi, nous obtenions un résultat différent à partir du même récit, est quelque peu inquiétant. Il se révèle d'une part, que ce même récit peut avoir plusieurs structures, et les techniques en question ne nous offrent aucun critère pour en choisir une."¹²

Jakobson, however, makes the point that while

there are two basic forms of relationship, "under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other."¹³ Godot is an especially clear-cut case. Critics have found the structure of the play elusive precisely because Beckett disappoints conventional expectations of plot -- or a causal sequence of events. Thus the characteristics of the play itself dictated the initial choice of one model over the other, and this study begins with a consideration of the relationships between characters.

In fact, the modulation of these relationships, through the introduction of new characters, gives rise to a linear sequence of its own, existing beneath the apparently random collection of episodes that constitute the action of play.

Footnotes to the Introduction

- 1 Northrop Frye, "The Nightmare of Life in Death," Hudson Review XIII (Autumn, 1960), p. 442.
- 2 Ferdinand De Saussure, Course in General Linguistics trans. Wade Baskin (New York, 1966), p. 123.
- 3 Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, Fundamentals of Language (Mouton, 1956), p. 72.
- 4 Ibid., p. 70.
- 5 Ibid., p. 64.
- 6 Ibid., p. 66.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
- 8 Alan Dundes, "Introduction," Morphology of the Folktale by Vladimir Propp (Austin, Texas, 1968), pp. xi-xii.
- 9 Tzvetan Todorov, "Les Catégories du Récit Littéraire," Communications, 8 (1966), p. 129.
- 10 Ibid., p. 131.
- 11 Ibid., p. 132.
- 12 Ibid., p. 132.
- 13 Jakobson, p. 76.

Chapter One: Oppositions Between Characters

The apparent lack of plot in Waiting for Godot has supplied abundant ammunition to the play's detractors. As Harold Hobson remarked when reviewing the play in the London Sunday Times: "The objections to Mr. Samuel Beckett's play as a theatrical entertainment are many and obvious. Anyone keen-sighted enough to see a church at noon-day can perceive what they are . . . In the course of the play nothing happens. Such dramatic progress as there is, is not toward a climax, but toward a perpetual postponement."¹

Admirers of Godot, having accepted the loss of a conventional plot, have fastened upon the relationships between the characters as its structural raison d'être. Thus Eric Bentley concluded: "Beckett's finest achievement is to have made the chief relationships, which are many, so concrete that abstract interpretations are wholly relegated to the theater lobby. He gives us, not tenets, but alternatives seen as human relationships (between bum and bum, master and man.)"² Jacques Guicharnaud characterized these relationships when he wrote of Godot that "the drama of the human condition lies in the uncertainty of each man's relationship to others. Theater," he adds, "feeds on the contradictory efforts made by the characters to solidify the relationship [between themselves] or burst it wide open."³

Thus, in investigating the structure of Waiting for Godot I have chosen to begin, not with plot, but with an examination of the relationships among its characters. And there is a warrant in recent drama criticism for adopting this mode of analysis. Steen Janssen has written, for example, that such relationships lie beneath all dramatic intrigues: "Enfin la chaîne - conflit se trouve toujours avoir comme expression initiale l'expression d'un rapport d'opposition entre deux personnages ou deux groupes de personnages . . . Ce rapport d'opposition apparaît en réalité comme l'élément fixe des expressions successives du conflit, ce qui fait de l'ensemble de ces expressions l'expression d'un seul conflit."⁴

How are we to characterize the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon? Certainly Bentley's sense of the relationship as offering alternatives is crucial, as is an additional hint offered by Ruby Cohn who notes that "Didi is the more eloquent and inventive of the two, Gogo the more physically alive."⁵

A pervasive element in the relationship between Estragon and Vladimir is the fact that Estragon consistently is associated with things of the body and the material realm while Vladimir is as uniformly connected with things of the mind and the spiritual realm. The actions that revolve primarily around Estragon are concerned with physical themes. Estragon's opening comment, "Nothing to be done," refers manifestly to the boot which is pinching his foot. But, Vladimir generalizes the despair so that it refers to all

of existence: "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me."⁶ [Emphasis added.]

Vladimir has a problem with his bladder, but it is not quite equivalent to Estragon's problem with his feet. Estragon says that Vladimir "Always wait[s] till the last moment." And Vladimir replies "The last moment . . . Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer." (Godot, 18). As John Moore remarked, "Didi's description applies equally well to a man with a painful stone in his bladder who must relieve himself and to a vision of the Last Judgement."⁷

These initial incidents of boot and bladder establish the touchstones for two divergent trains of action: Estragon sinking always towards the physical and despair; Vladimir tending toward the philosophic and the spiritual and inclined to be more optimistic. I have prepared the illustrative table below to show that this divergence of the physical and mental, and by correlation the material and spiritual, are not merely an incidental motif but so pervasive as to be of structural significance in the play.

<u>Estragon</u> (Physical)	<u>Vladimir</u> (Intellectual)
	V. That opinion. 7.
	V. Be reasonable. 7.
	V. When I think of it. 7.
V. A little heap of bones. 7.	
E. Ah stop blathering. 7.	V. We should have thought of it. 7.

Estragon (Physical)

- E. This bloody thing. 7.
- E. Dreadful privation. 8.
- E. Maps.
- E. Holy Land. 8.
- E. Colored. 8.
- E. Pretty. 8.
- E. Dead Sea. 8.
- E. Thirsty. 8.
- E. The look of it. 8.
- E. Our honeymoon. 8.
- E. We'll swim. 8.
- E. I was. (Gesture toward his rags.) 9.
- V. Your foot. 9.
- E. Swelling visibly. 9.
- E. People are bloody ignorant apes. 9.

Vladimir (Intellectual)

- V. The little things of life. 8.
- V. I go all queer. 8.
- V. I feel it coming. 8.
- S.D. He takes off his hat, peers inside it. 8.
- V. A reasonable percentage. 8.
- V. Repented. 8.
- V. One daren't even laugh. 8.
- V. Read the Bible. 8.
- V. Remember the Gospels. 8.
- V. You should have been a poet. 9.
- V. How is it? 9.
- V. Why believe him? 9.

Estragon (Physical)Vladimir (Intellectual)

- E. No more weeping.
- E. The Englishman in the brothel. 11.
- E. (highly excited.) An erection. 12.
- E. It might be better to strike the iron before it freezes. 12.
- E. (violently.) I'm hungry! 13.
- E. I'll never forget this carrot. 14.
- E. er . . . you don't need the . . . er . . . bones? 18.
- E. Ah! That's better. (He puts the bones in his pocket.) 19.
- E. Why doesn't he put down his bags? 20.
- E. He's crying! 21.
- E. He's crippled me! 22.
- V. You're mistaken. 10.
- V. Nothing is certain. 10.
- V. With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. 12.
- V. Let's wait till we know exactly how we stand. 12.
- V. I'm curious to hear what he has to offer. 12.
- V. How do I know? 17.
- V. It's not certain. 17.
- V. What do we risk? 18.
- V. It's a scandal. 18.
- V. Who told you? 20.
- V. You're being asked a question. 20.

Estragon (Physical)Vladimir (Intellectual)

- E. I'll never walk again.
22.
- E. You'll get pneumonia.
24.
- E. Take the weight off
your feet. 25.
- E. You'll catch your
death. 25.
- E. Even ten francs would
help. 26.
- E. Even five. 26.
- E. I'd rather he'd dance.
26.
- E. My left lung is very
weak. 27.
- E. Why doesn't he put
down his bags. 27.
- E. and I have stinking
feet. 31.
- E. Didi! It's the other
foot. 32.
- E. They crucified quick. 34.
- E. Pity we haven't got a
piece of rope. 35.
- E. I threw myself into the
Rhone. 35.
- V. (Looking at the sky.)
22.
- V. Time has stopped. 24.
- V. We are not beggars. 26.
- V. I'd like well to hear
him think. 26.
- V. Tell him to think. 27.
- E. [Vladimir] has stinking
breath. 31.
- V. How they've changed.
32.
- V. You forget everything.
32.

Estragon (Physical)Vladimir (Intellectual)

E. My clothes dried in the sun. 35.

Act II

V. Who beat you? 38.

V. I remember. 38.

V. One is not master of one's moods. 38.

V. Things escape you that don't escape me. 38.

V. It's the way of doing it that counts. 38.

E. Everything oozes. 39.

V. Things have changed here. 39.

E. It's never the same pus. 39.

E. A lunatic who kicked the shins off me. 39.

E. He gave me a bone. 39.

E. All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud. 39.

V. Do you not recognize the place? 39.

E. I've puked my puke of a life away. 40.

V. To every man his little cross. 40.

V. All the dead voices. 40.

V. They speak all at once. 40.

V. What do they say? 40.

V. When you seek you hear. 41.

V. That prevents you from thinking. 41.

V. We're in no danger of thinking. 41.

Estragon (Physical)Vladimir (Intellectual)

- E. We should turn resolutely toward nature. 41.
- E. I'm not a historian. 42.
- E. I suppose we blathered. 42.
- E. They were like fishbones. 43.
- V. Pull up your trousers. 43.
- V. There's the wound. 43.
- V. Beginning to fester. 43.
- E. All that's a lot of bloody-- 43.
- V. Would you like a radish. 44.
- V. You overdo it with your carrots. 44.
- E. A relaxation. 44.
- E. A relaxation. 44.
- E. If only I could sleep. 45.
- E. I was falling. 45.
- V. You do Pozzo. 47.
- E. I lost my head. 48.
- E. I'm tired. 49.
- E. I'm tired breathing. 49.
- V. Thinking is not the worst. 41.
- V. Try and remember. 42.
- V. The sun. The moon. 43.
- V. It's elementary. 43.
- V. This is becoming really insignificant. 44.
- V. An occupation. 44.
- V. A recreation. 44.
- V. We're magicians. 44.
- V. I'll do Lucky. 47.

Estragon (Physical)Vladimir (Intellectual)

- V. Perhaps he has another bone for you. 50.
- E. We should ask him for the bone first. 50.
- E. Suppose we gave him a good beating. 51.
- V. Time flows already. 50.
- V. That seems intelligent all right. 50.
- V. That seems a good idea all right. 51.
- V. But could we do it. 51.
- V. Let's not waste time in idle discourse. 51.
- V. It's true when with folded arms we weigh the pros and cons. 51.
- V. That is not the question. 51.
- V. Proceedings which at first sight may seem reasonable. 51.
- V. You follow my reasoning. 51.
- V. I wouldn't go so far as to assert I was weak in the head when I came into the world. 52.
- V. That is not the question. 52.
- V. We are bored. 52.
- E. You'll catch a chill. 52.
- E. Sweet mother earth. 53.
- E. What about a little snooze. 53.
- E. Kick him in the crotch. 53.
- V. I begin to weary of this motif. 53.

Estragon (Physical)Vladimir (Intellectual)

- E. He's all humanity. 54.
- E. Child's play. 54.
- E. How much longer are we to cart him around. 55.
- E. There's my belt. 60.
- E. You could hang on to my legs. 60.
- V. Pull on your trousers. 60.
- V. Simple question of will power. 54.
- V. Do you not recognize us? 54.
- V. Don't lets quibble. 54.
- V. Don't be a fool. 55.
- V. He's thinking. 55.
- V. What do you do when you fall? 57.
- V. Since when? 57.
- V. I don't know what to think anymore. 58.
- V. But in all that what truth will there be? 58.
- V. What have I said? 58.
- V. You're sure you saw me? 59.
- V. It's too short. 60.
- V. And who'd hang on to mine? 60.
- V. That's what you think. 60.

Accumulating a related group of motifs around a single character in the fashion suggested by these lists is a highly conventional literary technique. As the Russian formalist critic Boris Tomashevsky has noted: "The usual

device for grouping and stringing together motifs is the creation of a character who is the living embodiment of a given collection of motifs."⁸ Dynamically the predispositions of Vladimir and Estragon reflect Janssen's "rapport d'opposition entre deux personnages [which is] l'élément fixe des expressions du conflit."

Mirrored in the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon is the sense that the two realms of experience can neither be fused in any satisfying way nor satisfactorily divorced from each other. Inevitably, then, as Guicharnaud suggested (see pp. 1-2), the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon is seen to move between limiting extremes of separation and dependency.

Investigating the limits of this relationship, I found it simplest to begin by noting verbs of direct action. One notices first that these verbs fall into positive and negative groups. Positive verbs include giving, encouraging and sympathizing. Thus Vladimir gives Estragon a carrot; Estragon gives Vladimir an embrace. Vladimir encourages Estragon in his struggle with the boot; Estragon sympathizes with Vladimir's painful urination. Negative verbs encompass such actions as refusing, ignoring, rejecting, repelling. Estragon refuses a turnip;

Vladimir ignores Estragon's struggle with the boot; Estragon repels an embrace; Vladimir rejects the proposal to hang himself first.

The verbs have a specific and limited emotional impact. This constant criss-crossing of acceptance and rejection, offer and refusal, sympathy and imperviousness, weaves an emotional network in which Vladimir and Estragon are related and contained. It creates an intimate realm in which the balance of positive and negative mutual actions seesaws precariously about a fulcrum of mutual dependency, a dependency which emerges as a major structuring element of the play.

The movement of Vladimir and Estragon, towards each other and then apart, is a dynamic which operates between limiting extremes. One limit is established by their inability to embrace each other. Vladimir starts out by offering an embrace which is rejected by Estragon -- when they meet at first after a night's separation. Later Estragon offers and gives an embrace, after his brief nap, and is accepted, only to find himself repelled by Vladimir's stinking breath.

At the other extreme is their unwillingness to separate. For example, the two abandon their suicide scheme when they realize that only one of them may succeed while the other fails, leaving the unsuccessful member of the pair to face life alone. Similarly, although each threatens to leave the other, the threat is never carried out.

The illustrative table below collects examples of the positions of separation and dependence to show how pervasively they occur in Godot.

<u>Separation</u>	<u>Dependency</u>
	<u>Act I</u>
	V. I'm beginning to come round. 7.
	V. I'm glad to see you back. 7.
E. Not now, not now. 7.	V. Get up 'till I embrace you. 7.
	B. But for me . . . where would you be? 7.
E. Stop blathering. 7.	
	V. Hand in hand. 7.
V. Why don't you listen to me? 7.	E. Help me! 7.
	E. Why don't you help me? 8.
E. I'm going. 9.	
	V. Come on, Gogo, return the ball. 9.
	V. You're merciless. 10.
	V. Gogo! Gogo! GOGO! 11.
	V. I was lonely.
V. Don't tell me. 11.	
V. DON'T TELL ME. 11.	
	E. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you. 11.
E. I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part. 11.	V. You wouldn't go far. 11.

SeparationDependency

- V. Ah stop it! 11.
- V. STOP IT! 11.
- V. I've nothing to say to you. 12.
- E. Don't be stubborn. 12.
- E. You stink of garlic! 12.
- V. Let me go! 15.
- E. I sometimes wonder if we wouldn't have been better off alone, each one for himself. 35.
- E. We weren't made for the same road. 35.
- V. We can still part if you think it's better. 35.
- E. Forgive me. 12.
- E. Give me your hand. 12.
- E. Embrace me. 12.
- E. Didi heavy -- bough break -- Didi alone. 12.
- E. Stay where you are! 15.
- V. I'll carry you. 22.
- V. Come on. 35.
- V. Come on it's cold. 35.
- V. Yes come on. 35.
- E. How long have we been together? 35.
- E. You fished me out. 35.
- V. Come on. 35.

Act II

- E. Don't touch me! 37.
- V. Come here 'till I embrace you. 37.

Separation

- E. Don't question me! 37.
- E. Don't speak to me! 37.
- E. I feel better alone too. 38.
- E. It'd be better if we parted. 40.
- E. The best would be to kill me like the other. 40.

Dependency

- E. Stay with me! 37.
- E. You let me go. 38.
- V. Look at me. 38.
- V. Will you look at me! 38.
- E. He's all alone, he thinks I'm gone forever and he sings. 38.
- E. You see you piss better when I'm not here. 38.
- V. I missed you. 38.
- V. (Joyous) There you are again. 38.
- E. You see you feel worse when I'm with you. 38.
- V. Then why do you always come crawling back. 38.
- V. But we were there together. 39.
- V. You always say that and you always come crawling back. 40.
- V. Help me! 41.
- E. You'll help me? 44.
- E. We don't manage too badly eh Didi, between the two of us? 44.
- S.D. Vladimir runs to him, puts his arms around him. 45.

Separation

- V. Will you stop whining!
I've had about my belly
full of your lamentations.
46.
- E. I'm going. 46.
- E. Farewell. 46.
- E. You'll never see me again.
46.
- E. I'm going. 46.
- E. I'm going. 47.
- V. Ceremonious ape! 48.
- E. Punctilious pig! 48.
- V. Moron! 48.
- E. Vermin! 48.
- V. Abortion! 48.
- E. Morpion! 48.
- V. Sewer rat! 48.
- E. Curate! 48.
- V. Cretin! 48.
- E. Crritic! (sic.) 48.
- E. Your arms? 49.
- S.D. They separate. 49.
- E. I'm going. 52.

Dependency

- V. Come we'll walk it off.45.
- E. Now let's make it up. 48.
- V. Your hand! 48.
- E. Take it. 48.
- V. Come to my arms. 48.
- S.D. They embrace. 49.
- V. Help! 52.
- V. Help me up first, then
we'll go together. 52.

- | <u>Separation</u> | <u>Dependency</u> |
|--|---|
| E. <u>(recoiling)</u> Who farted? 52. | |
| E. It's revolting. 52. | |
| | V. Quick! Give me your hand! 52. |
| E. I'm going. (<u>Pause, louder.</u>) I'm going. 52. | |
| V. Go to hell. 52. | |
| | E. What's the matter with you? 52. |
| V. Don't worry about me. 52. | E. Come on, get up, you'll catch a chill. 52. |
| | E. Come on, Didi, don't be pig-headed! 52. |
| | V. I felt lonely. 57. |
| E. If we parted? That might be better for us. 60. | |

The structure of Godot, then, is grounded in a division of material and spiritual qualities embodied respectively by its two main characters, and the action moves between unrealized extremes in which these aspects of experience are either fused or sundered.

In fact, Godot seems to spring from the kind of binary matrix which, according to Claude Levi-Strauss, characterizes the structure of myth. Alan Dundes has supplied a lucid summary of the Levi-Strauss approach: "[This type] of structural analysis seeks to describe the pattern (usually based upon an a priori binary principle of opposition) which allegedly underlies the folkloristic text . . . This pattern is not the same as the sequential

structure at all. Rather the elements are taken out of the 'given' order and are regrouped in one or more analytic schema. The champion of paradigmatic structural analysis is Claude Levi-Strauss . . . The hypothetical paradigmatic matrix is typically one in which polar oppositions such as life/death, male/female are mediated."⁹

It is interesting that in his study of myth, Levi-Strauss often finds "a double set of dioscuric pairs, the purpose of which is to mediate between conflicting terms."¹⁰ It is even more interesting to note, when considering Godot, that this function is often carried out in myth by two ceremonial clowns.

Considering the relationship between characters has allowed us to clarify the major thematic concern of the text. This notion of relationship also allows us to break down the text of the play into units that are at once manageable and significant.

Earlier critics of the play have been troubled by the fact that episodes seem arranged at random and that the action seems to lack development. Kolve remarks that Beckett: "offers us a play that is all 'middle,' . . . a play composed of many small, hard edged movements or conversations, each enigmatic and complete, often unrelated to what follows or what went before."¹¹

It is possible, however, to identify the fundamental dramatic situations within the play on the basis of the operative relationships between characters. Steen Janssen proposes, for example, that: "La situation sera

définie comme le résultat d'une division du plan textuel en parties qui correspondent à des groupes achevés du plan scénique. Cela veut dire que dans l'analyse du texte concret nous instaurerons la limite entre deux situations là où un personnage entre ou sort ou bien encore là où il y a un changement de lieu dans le décor."¹²

One finds a similar definition in Tomashevsky: "Usually a story is developed by introducing several characters (dramatis personae) related to each other by mutual interests or by other ties (kinship for example). This interrelationship at any given moment is the situation . . . The development of a story may generally be understood as a progress from one situation to another."¹³

We may thus divide Act I into four sections. Part one encompasses the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon. Part two extends from the arrival of Pozzo and Lucky to their departure. Part three deals with the new group of relationships introduced by the arrival and departure of the messenger. And in Part four, the initial relationship between Vladimir and Estragon is reestablished. Act II, of course, may be similarly segmented.

The relationship of these four major sections in each act points the direction of the action. Thus we shall proceed through the play section by section, taking up the articulation of the sections as we move from one portion of the text to the next.

The link between these sections is revealed by the new relationships established by new characters. As

Janssen writes: "Le rapport d'opposition n'est pas toujours lié a un même couple concret d'un bout à l'autre de la chaîne-conflit mais le remplacement éventuel d'un couple ou d'un des 'opposants' par un autre qui forme alors une relation d'antéposition entre une expression et celle qui la précède dans la même chaîne."¹⁴ What we shall find is that Estragon responds most warmly to Pozzo, who elaborates aspects of the material realm, while Vladimir welcomes the young messenger and his tidings of the spiritual realm. Thus each of the new arrivals is assimilated to the basic opposition of matter and spirit which generates the actions of the play.

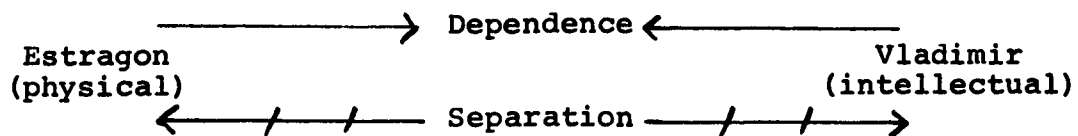
Within the four major segments of each act, one is obliged to deal with brief episodes that appear to be haphazardly arranged. If one searches among them for changes in direction that signal the development of a theme, no introduction of new characters will serve as a sign post. Instead one finds that moments of closure are established when Vladimir and Estragon arrive at either one of the limiting conditions of their relationship. Thus a chain of actions has moved to a close when one of the two threatens to leave the other. Conversely, there is a moment of closure when the two find themselves in complete accord.

In the next chapter we shall examine the structural role of those many anecdotes, episodes and conversations which elaborate the thematic concerns of the play.

Chapter One: Summary Charts

<u>I Situations in Act I</u>	<u>Situations in Act II</u>
A. Vladimir and Estragon.	A. Vladimir and Estragon.
B. Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo and Lucky.	B. Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo and Lucky.
C. Vladimir, Estragon and the Messenger.	C. Vladimir, Estragon and the Messenger.
D. Vladimir and Estragon.	D. Vladimir and Estragon.

II



Footnotes to Chapter One

- 1 Harold Hobson, "Tomorrow," reprinted in Casebook on 'Waiting for Godot,' ed. Ruby Cohn (New York, 1967), p. 27.
- 2 Eric Bentley, "The Talent of Samuel Beckett," Casebook, p. 63.
- 3 Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Drama from Giradoux to Beckett (New Haven, 1961), p. 203.
- 4 Steen Janssen, "L'unité d'action dans 'Andromaque' et dans 'Lorenzaccio,'" Revue Romane, III, 1968, p. 18.
- 5 Ruby Cohn, Currents in Contemporary Drama (Bloomington, 1969), p. 189.
- 6 Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (New York, Grove Press, 1954), p. 7. Future references to the play in the text are to this edition.
- 7 John R. Moore, "A Farewell to Something," Tulane Drama Review, V (September, 1960), p. 5.
- 8 Boris Tomashevsky, "Thematics," Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reiss, Regents Critics Series (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965), pp. 87-88.

- 9 Alan Dundes, "Introduction," Morphology of the Folk Tale, by V. Propp, trans. Lawrence Scott, revised by Louis Wagner, Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, Publication 10, Revised Edition (Austin, Texas, 1968), xi-xii.
- 10 Claude Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York, 1963), p. 223.
- 11 J. A. Kolve, "Religious Language in 'Waiting for Godot,'" Centennial Review, XI, p. 107.
- 12 Steen Janssen, "Esquisse d'une théorie de la forme dramatique, Langages," Linguistique et littérature, special number of La Nouvelle Critique, 1968, p. 75 .
- 13 Tomashevsky, "Thematics," pp. 69-70 and 71.
- 14 Janssen, "L'unité d'action," p. 22.

Chapter Two: Episodic Actions

In a general way, the relationships between characters in Godot begin with the opposing forces of matter and spirit set in motion by Vladimir and Estragon. These forces are at once contingent and antithetical. The flow of the action may be charted by noting the moments when the two main characters act in concert and the moments when their relationship verges on dissolution. Beyond this, four primary dramatic situations are created in turn in each act by the appearance of new characters.

Constructing an analogy between the play and a human body, one might say that these relationships are the skeleton and musculature of the play -- the articulation of the parts with each other. For the cells which constitute each part one must turn to those "many small, hard edged movements or conversations, each enigmatic and complete," which compose the matter of the play.

It is simple enough to isolate the individual episodes that make up the text of Godot. Many of them, for example, are brief narratives. One recalls almost immediately Lucky's speech, Pozzo's description of the twilight, the Evangelists' account of the two thieves who died with Christ. Other episodes stand out as unified choral passages like the lament over "all the dead voices" in Act II, or Vladimir's song about the dog who went into the kitchen. Still other episodes cohere because they focus

compulsively on a theatrical prop: Estragon's boots, Vladimir's carrots and turnips, Lucky's hat, the tree, the suitcases, the chicken bones. One recalls, also, particular projects undertaken by Vladimir and Estragon: the hanging scheme, the examination of Lucky, Estragon's attempts to go to sleep, their attempts to embrace each other.

We are interested, first, in whether these incidents possess some structural principles in common. Certainly one characteristic quality of an action in Godot is that it is launched only to be interrupted or broken off in some way and then resumed.

Take for example the case of Pozzo, anxious to explain to the tramps why Lucky stands burdened with two suitcases throughout Act I when he might as easily put them down. First Pozzo makes a social event of the question:

Pozzo: (delighted). A question!
 Who? What? A moment ago
 you were calling me Sir,
 in fear and trembling. Now
 you're asking me questions.
 (Godot, 20).

At this point Vladimir breaks off the action by suggesting to Estragon that they approach Lucky himself on the matter: "You can ask him now. He's on the alert." (Godot, 20). Pozzo, eager to keep the center of the stage, meanwhile "has followed these exchanges with anxious attention, fearing lest the question get lost." He says: "You want to know why he doesn't put down his bags, as you call them." (Godot, 20).

A number of other petty interruptions retard the answer to the question. Pozzo is disturbed by the fidgeting of his audience; he takes time out to spray his throat; he forgets the original question; the tramps, in disgust, make ready to leave. In its endless halts and new beginnings, this episode recalls countless others in the play. Estragon struggles to remove his boot, gives up, and then tries again. Lucky is made to dance; dances, and is made to dance again.

In general, the play concerns itself with the beginnings of actions, their conclusions and their recurrences, as the table below will illustrate:

<u>Beginning</u>	<u>Ending</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Act I		
S.D. <u>Estragon is trying to take off his boot.</u> 7.	S.D. <u>He gives up.</u> 7.	S.D. <u>tries again.</u> 7.
	E. Nothing to be done. 7.	
		V. I resumed the struggle. 7.
		V. So there you are again. 7.
		V. Together again at last. 7.
	V. It's too much for one man. 7.	
		V. Try and put it on again. 8.
S.D. <u>he takes off his hat.</u> 8.		S.D. <u>he takes off his hat again.</u> 8.
		S.D. <u>puts it on again.</u> 8.

<u>Beginning</u>	<u>Ending</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
E. Our being born. 8.	V. Nothing to be done. 8.	
	V. It must be dead. 10.	
	E. No more weeping. 10.	
		V. We'll come back tomorrow. 10.
		V. You say we were here yesterday. 11.
	E. Let's stop talking. 11.	
E. Why will you never let me sleep. 11.		
	V. Ah stop it! 11.	
	V. STOP IT. 11.	
V. What do we do now? 12.	E. What about hanging ourselves? 12.	
E. We can always try. 12.		
V. What do we do? 12.	E. Don't let's do anything. 12.	
S.D. <u>Vladimir rummages in his pockets.</u> 14.	S.D. <u>Takes out a turnip.</u> 14.	S.D. <u>He rummages again in his pockets.</u> 14.
	V. Nothing you can do about it. 14.	
	E. No use struggling. 14.	
P. On. 15.	P. Back. 15.	
S.D. <u>Vladimir takes a step toward Lucky.</u> 15.	S.D. <u>Estragon holds him back by the sleeve.</u>	

<u>Beginning</u>	<u>Ending</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
	E. Nothing we can do about it. 16.	
	P. Let's say no more about it.	
P. Up hog! 16.	P. Back! 16.	
		P. I propose to dally . . . before I venture further. 17.
	E. Why doesn't he put down his bags? 17.	
V. Ask him a question. 18.	P. Leave him in peace. 18.	
S.D. <u>He strikes a match.</u> 18.	S.D. <u>Pozzo throws the match angrily away.</u>	S.D. <u>Pozzo strikes another match.</u> 18.
		P. Try him again. 18.
	P. Nice business it'd be if he fell sick on me! 18.	
P. I must be getting on. 19.	P. How am I to sit down now. 19.	
		P. The second is never so sweet. 19.
		P. He speaks to me again. 20.
P. What was it exactly you wanted to know. 20.	P. Don't interrupt me! 20.	P. What was I saying? 20.
V. You want to get rid of him. 21.	P. You can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill him. 21.	
E. He's crying. 21.	P. He's stopped crying. 22.	P. You have replaced him. 22.

BeginningEndingRecurring

- V. Will night never come. 22.
- P. I can't bear it any longer. 22.
- P. Forget all I said. 23.
- V. It's not over. 23.
- V. It's only beginning. 23.
- V. I'll be back. 23.
- P. Oh! He's gone! 23.
- E. It's all over. 24.
- P. He subsides. 24.
- P. All subsides. 24.
- V. Will night never come. 24.
- P. You don't feel like going. 24.
- P. I'd very much like to sit down. 24.
- S.D. He sits down. 24.
- P. Done it again. 24.
- P. Worn out, this whip.
- P. Will you look at the sky. 25.
- P. Good, that's enough.
- P. having poured forth . . . torrents of . . . light. 25.
- P. pppfff! Finished! it comes to rest. 25.
- P. I weakened a little towards the end. 25.

<u>Beginning</u>	<u>Ending</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
S.D. <u>Lucky dances.</u> 26.	S.D. <u>He stops.</u> 26.	P. <u>Encore.</u> 26. S.D. <u>Lucky executes the same movements.</u> 26.
S.D. <u>[Vladimir] picks up the hat and tenders it at arm's length to Lucky. . . He goes round behind Lucky . . . puts the hat on his head.</u> 28.	S.D. <u>Vladimir seizes Lucky's hat. Silence of Lucky.</u> 29.	
S.D. <u>[Lucky] falls.</u> 29.	S.D. <u>Vladimir and Estragon hoist Lucky to his feet, support him for an instant then let him go.</u> 30.	S.D. <u>[Lucky] falls.</u> 30. S.D. <u>They raise Lucky, hold him up.</u> 30.
E. <u>Off we go again.</u> 32.	V. <u>At last!</u> 34.	
S.D. <u>He draws Estra- gon after him.</u> 35.	S.D. <u>They halt.</u> 35.	S.D. <u>He draws Estragon after him. As before (repeated three times).</u> 35.
S.D. <u>He moves away from Vladimir. Vladimir . . . sits down beside Estragon.</u> 35.	S.D. <u>They do not move.</u> 35.	

Act II

V. <u>A dog came in.</u> 37.	V. <u>Till he was dead.</u> 37.	V. <u>A dog came in.</u> 37.
		V. <u>You again!</u> 37.
	E. <u>Another day done with.</u> 38.	
V. <u>Not yet.</u> 38.	E. <u>For me its over</u>	

BeginningEndingRecurring

and done with no
matter what hap-
pens. 38.

- V. Look at the tree.
39.
- E. Tell me about the
worms. 39.
- V. To have lived is
not enough for
them. 40.
- V. To be dead is
not enough for
them. 40.
- V. Say something! 40.
- E. I'm trying. 41.
- E. What do we do
now? 41.
- V. We must have
thought a little.
41.
- E. At the very begin-
ning. 41.
- E. We should turn
resolutely toward
nature. 41.
- V. There you are
again. 38.
- V. There we are
again. 38.
- V. There I am again.
38.
- E. Was it not there
yesterday? 39.
- E. They have to
talk about it.
40.
- V. We could start
all over again,
perhaps. 41.
- V. We're in no danger
of ever thinking
anymore. 41.
- V. Where are all these
corpses from? 41.
- V. We've tried that.
41.

BeginningEndingRecurring

- E. That wasn't such a bad little canter. 42.
- V. Yes but now we'll have to find something else. 42.
- V. What I was saying we could go on from there . . . at the very beginning. 42.
- E. What'll we do, what'll we do. 44.
- V. There's nothing we can do. 44.
- E. I suppose I might as well sit down. 45.
- S.D. Goes and sits down. 45.
- V. That's where you were sitting yesterday evening. 45.
- E. If only I could sleep. 45.
- V. Yesterday you slept. 45.
- S.D. Estragon sleeps. 45.
- V. It's all over, it is all over. 45.
- E. Then it will be night.
- V. And we can go. 46.
- E. Then it'll be day again. 46.
- E. What'll we do, what'll we do. 46.
- S.D. Estragon takes Vladimir's hat. 46.
- S.D. He hands [Vladimir's hat] to Vladimir. 46.
- S.D. Estragon takes Vladimir's hat. 46.
- S.D. Estragon hands Vladimir's hat back to Vladimir. 46.
- S.D. Estragon takes it and hands it back to Vladimir. 46.

<u>Beginning</u>	<u>Ending</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
	S.D. <u>Vladimir throws [his hat] down.</u> 46.	
S.D. <u>Vladimir puts on Lucky's hat.</u> 46.	S.D. <u>He takes off Lucky's hat.</u> 46.	S.D. <u>Puts it on again.</u> 46.
V. Tell me to think. 47.	E. That's enough of that. 47.	
S.D. <u>Exit Estragon, left.</u> 47.	S.D. <u>Enter Estragon, left.</u> 47.	V. There you are again. 47.
S.D. <u>Estragon exit right.</u> 47.	S.D. <u>Enters Estragon right.</u> 47.	V. There you are again again! 47.
S.D. <u>(turning his head).</u> 48.		S.D. <u>They resume their watch.</u> 48.
S.D. <u>(turning his head).</u> 48.		S.D. <u>They resume their watch.</u> 48.
V. Off we go. 49.	E. That's enough. V. At last. 49. V. Now its over.	V. Time flows again already. 50.
V. The moon will rise, and we away. 50.	V. The sun will set. 50. V. We have kept our appointment and that's an end to that. 51.	
V. Come let's get to work. 52.	V. In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more in the midst of nothingness! 52.	
V. Help me up first. 52.	V. Then we'll go to- E. And we'll never come back? 52.	

BeginningEndingRecurring

V. He's off! 53.

V. Never! 52.

V. He's down! 53.

V. I'm afraid he's
dying. 53.

V. I begin to weary
of this motif. 53.

S.D. They help Pozzo
to his feet, let
him go. 54.

S.D. He falls. 54.

S.D. They get him up
again. 54.

S.D. They half release
him, catch him
again as he falls.
54.

V. And you are
Pozzo? 57.

V. The same as yes-
terday? 56.

P. I don't remember
having met anyone
yesterday. But
tomorrow I won't
remember having
met anyone today.
56-7.

V. It wasn't you came
yesterday. 58.

B. No Sir. 58.

V. This is your
first time. 58.

V. We have to come
back tomorrow.
59.

E. Why don't we
hang our-
selves? 60.

E. I can't go on
like this. 60.

V. We'll hang our-
selves tomorrow.
60.

This compulsive concern with beginnings and endings suggests a major thematic focus in the play. For the two tramps are intent upon an appointment with Godot which presumably will end their struggles with life as they have found it and will launch them upon a new spiritual existence.

Estragon: And if he comes?

Vladimir: We'll be saved.

(Godot, 60).

But like the micro-dramas which constitute it, the drama as a whole finds beginnings and endings problematical. The action begins always in the same way. Two men wait at twilight for Godot to come. In Act I, Godot does not come. In Act II, the same two men wait again at twilight, and again Godot does not come. Action is, for Beckett, cyclical and without issue. An action is undertaken, abandoned and undertaken again. Resolution of the dilemma evades us.

And the adventure of human civilization, for Beckett, is no different in form from the process of his play. A generation is born, struggles to survive, and then dies, only to be replaced by a new generation which will repeat the process. "It's so we won't hear . . . All the dead voices." (Godot, 40). "A charnel-house! A charnel-house!" (Godot, 41).

If many of the lesser actions of the play are cyclical, certain incidents then stand out with unusual force because they run their course with very little interruption. Among them are Lucky's speech and Vladimir's song about the dog who came into the kitchen. One thinks

also of the choral passages where Vladimir and Estragon support rather than deflect each other. Nevertheless, Lucky's speech ends on the word "unfinished" and Vladimir's song is constructed so that the last line becomes the first again.

If the cyclical is one of Beckett's major techniques for defeating resolution, the establishment of alternatives is the other. Vladimir and Estragon were troubled by Lucky's condition of extreme servitude. Pozzo stands the issue on its head when he explains that Lucky "wants to impress me, so that I'll keep him." (Godot, 21). The image of slavery imposed is contradicted by the image of slavery voluntarily undertaken.

Other episodes end in similar stand-offs. For example, Estragon despairs of ever removing his boot. Vladimir encourages him to go on. The action is endlessly attempted, drawn out over obstacles and interruptions, and finally completed. The boot is off, but the foot is swelling visibly and the pain is as bad as ever, making the success useless. Closure and completion coexist with failure. Similarly, while in Act I Estragon's boots are too tight, in Act II, when he finds a new pair, they are too loose.

Like the recurrent, the alternate insistently heads off resolution as the following list will demonstrate.

Alternatives

- V. I'm glad to see you back. 7. V. I thought you were gone forever. 7.
- V. What's the good of losing heart now. 7. V. We should have thought of it a million years ago. 7.
- V. One of the thieves was saved. 8.
- V. One is supposed to have been saved. 9. V. and the other . . . damned. 9.
- V. Of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. 9. V. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him. 9.
- V. Then the two of them must have been damned. 9.
- V. Why believe him. 9. V. Rather than the others. 9.
- E. Let's go. 10. V. We can't. 10.
- V. He said by the tree. 10. V. Do you see any others? 10.
- V. It must be dead. 10 V. Or perhaps its not the season. 10.
- E. And is it Saturday? 11. E. Is it not rather Sunday? 11.
- E. After you. 12. V. No no, you first. 12.
- E. Gogo light -- bough not break. 12. E. Didi heavy -- bough break. 12.
- V. But am I heavier than you? 12. E. There's an even chance. 12.
- V. Let's wait 'till we know exactly how we stand. 12. E. On the other hand it might be better to strike the iron before it freezes. 12.
- V. We can take it. 12. V. or leave it. 12.
- V. Do you want a carrot? 13. V. I might have some turnips. 13.

Alternatives

- | | |
|---|--|
| E. Funny, the more you eat the worse it gets. 14. | V. With me its just the opposite . . . I get used to the muck as I go along. 14. |
| E. He said Godot. 15. | P. I am Pozzo. 15. |
| P. Instead of driving him away. 21. | P. I am bringing him to the fair. 21. |
| E. I'd rather he'd dance. 26. | V. I'd like well to hear him think. 26. |
| E. My left lung is very weak! 27. | E. But my right lung is strong as a bell! 27. |
| E. He has stinking breath. 31. | E. And I have stinking feet. 31. |
| V. That passed the time. 31. | E. It would have passed in any case. 31. |
| V. We know them I tell you. 32. | V. Unless they're not the same. 32. |
| B. He won't come this evening. 33. | B. but surely tomorrow. 33. |
| V. Is he good to you? | V. Whom does he beat? |
| B. Yes sir. 33. | B. He beats my brother. 33. |
| B. I mind the goats. 33. | B. He minds the sheep. 33. |
| E. Another will come, just as . . . as . . . as me. 34. | E. but with smaller feet. 34. |
| V. We've nothing more to do here. 34. | E. Nor anywhere else. 34. |
| | E. I sometimes wonder if we wouldn't have been better off alone. 35. |

Act II

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| V. I missed you. 38. | V. And at the same time I was happy. 38. |
|----------------------|--|

Alternatives

- | | |
|---|---|
| E. Either I forget immediately. 39. | E. Or I never forget. |
| E. It'd be better if we parted. 40. | V. You always say that and you always come crawling back. 40. |
| V. To have lived is not enough for them. 40. | V. To be dead is not enough for them. 40. |
| V. It's the start that's difficult. 41. | E. You can start from anything. 41. |
| E. You think all the same. 41. | V. No no, impossible. 41. |
| | E. Let's contradict each other. 41. |
| E. You don't have to look. 41. | V. You can't help looking. 41. |
| V. Yesterday evening it was all black and bare. 42. | V. And now it's covered with leaves. 42. |
| S.D. <u>Estragon gives the same leg. 43</u> | S.D. <u>Estragon gives the other leg. 43</u> |
| E. Mine were black. 43. | E. These are brown. 3. |
| V. And these are brown. 43. | E. Well they were a kind of gray. 43. |
| V. His were too tight for him. 43. | V. So he took yours. 43. |
| E. Let's go. 44. | V. We can't. 44. |
| V. There are radishes. 44. | V. and turnips. 44. |
| E. Its black! 44. | E. I only like the pink ones. 44. |
| S.D. <u>Estragon raises his foot. 44.</u> | S.D. <u>Estragon raises the other foot. 44.</u> |
| E. It fits. 44. | E. It fits too. 45. |
| V. They don't hurt you? 45. | E. They're too big. 45. |

Alternatives

- | | |
|---|--|
| V. Then I can keep it. 46. | V. Mine irked me. 46. |
| V. We're saved. 47. | E. I'm in hell. 47. |
| S.D. <u>He draws Vladimir to extreme right and places him with his back to the stage.</u> 48. | S.D. <u>Estragon runs and takes up the same position extreme left.</u> |
| E. Carry on. 48. | V. No no, after you. 48. |
| V. What about a little deep breathing. 49. | E. I'm tired breathing. 49. |
| E. God have pity on me! 49. | V. And me? 49. |
| E. I knew it was him . . . Godot. 50. | V. But it's not Godot. 50. |
| V. Perhaps we should help him first. 50. | E. We should ask him for the bone first. 50. |
| V. Let us not waste our time in idle discourse. 51. | V. Let us do something, while we have the chance! 51. |
| V. It is not every day that we are needed. 51. | V. Others would meet the case equally well. 51. |
| V. We are waiting for Godot to come. 51. | V. Or for night to fall. 51. |
| V. Perhaps I could crawl to him. 53. | V. Or I could call to him. 53. |
| E. Abel! Abel! 53. | E. Perhaps the other one is called Cain. 53. |
| P. Are you friends. 54. | P. You are not highwaymen? 54. |
| P. Is it evening? 55. | E. It's rising. 55. |
| P. The things of time are hidden from them. 55. | V. I could have sworn it was just the opposite. 55. |
| P. It isn't by any chance . . . the Board? 55. | P. Then it's not the Board. 55. |

Alternatives

- | | |
|---|---|
| P. One day we were born. 57. | P. One day we shall die, the same day. 57. |
| V. Do you not recognize me? 58. | V. It wasn't you came yesterday? 58. |
| V. He won't come this evening. 58. | V. But he'll come tomorrow. 58. |
| V. Fair or . . . 59. | V. or black? 59. |
| V. Tell him you saw me. 59. | V. You won't come and tell me tomorrow that you never saw me! 59. |
| V. Not far. 59. | E. Oh yes, let's go far away from here. 59. |
| E. If we dropped him? 59. | V. He'd punish us. 59. |
| V. Not worth a curse. 60. | E. Then we can bring a good bit of rope. 60. |
| E. I can't go on like this. 60. | V. That's what you think. 60. |
| V. We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. 60. | V. Unless Godot comes. 60. |
| E. And if he comes? 60. | V. We'll be saved. 60. |
| E. You want me to pull off my trousers? 60. | V. Pull <u>ON</u> your trousers. 60. |
| E. Yes, let's go. 60. | S.D. <u>They do not move.</u> 60. |

This pervasive use of alternatives at the level of micro-exchange is reflected in the structure of the play as a whole. The messenger says "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow." As the play ends, the two men discuss the alternatives available to them.

Vladimir: We have to come back tomorrow . . .

Estragon: And if we dropped him? . . .

Vladimir: He'd punish us.

(Godot, 59).

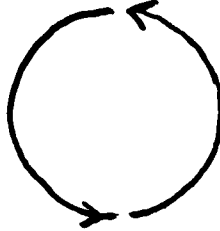
Godot may or may not come. The two men may choose to come to this place or go away to another place. They may choose to go on waiting (and living) or they may commit suicide by hanging themselves. They may remain together or separate. One of them may be saved and the other damned, as in the episode of the two thieves. Or they may both be damned.

The alternatives are always present, but it is not quite fair to say with regard to the play as a whole that they are given equal weight. On the basis of the evidence supplied in two successive acts we are probably justified in assuming that the two men will remain together, that they will continue to expect salvation, and that salvation will always be denied to them.

In summary, then, two major techniques are used to block the completion of any action. Resolution is blocked either by recurrence or by the suggestion of an alternative resolution. This determination to avoid closure is found by Barthes to be typical of modern texts: "Le texte classique . . . suit un ordre logico-temporel. Il s'agit d'un système multivalent mais incomplètement réversible. Ce qui bloque la réversibilité, voilà ce qui limite le pluriel du texte classique. Ces blocages ont des noms: c'est d'une part la vérité et d'autre part l'empirique: ce précisément contre quoi -- ou entre quoi -- s'établit le texte moderne."¹

Chapter Two: Summary Charts

I Actions are deflected from resolution
either because they recur:



II or because they supply their own alternative:



Footnotes to Chapter Two

1. Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris, 1970), p. 37.

Chapter Three: Towards the Literal

Estragon and Vladimir establish between them the essential dramatic situation in Waiting for Godot -- a conflict between body and mind, matter and spirit. The action of the play is an attempt to fuse these two aspects of existence, as the relationship between the two men oscillates between mutual dependence and a converse mutual disgust.

Individual episodes reflect a similar failure to resolve the underlying conflict of the drama. Incidents are not concluded. Rather they are broken off only to be begun again. Or, if a solution is proposed, its alternative is immediately proffered, so that there is not a victory but a standoff. Before the play is examined in detail, however, one further structural issue must be studied. One must try to discover how the apparently trivial incidents of the play are made to reflect a profound spiritual dilemma. What, in fact, is the mode of Beckett's symbolism?

When Beckett writes about Estragon's tight boots he evokes all men's impatience with physical suffering. For, when a man takes off his boots one time, one notices that he does so more or less in passing. If, however, he struggles with his boots, off and on, for two hours, one attributes a more general significance to the action.

In Chapter two we spoke of actions begun, abandoned and begun again. The thematic importance of this

pattern seemed to lie in Beckett's sense that, in life, action is futile because it is cyclical. But within the framework of the play, each time an action is repeated it draws more attention to itself. The process is a kind of magnification by repetition, giving pedagogic emphasis to that which at first glance appeared insignificant.

This repetition, characteristic of Godot, is common also in myth. Levi-Strauss speculates that in myth it is meant to draw attention to the underlying thematic organization of the story: "First the question has often been raised why myths and more generally oral literature, are so much addicted to duplication, triplication or quadruplication of the same sequence. If our hypotheses are accepted the answer is obvious: the function of repetition is to render the structure of myth apparent. For we have seen that the synchronic -- diachronic structure of myth permits us to organize it into diachronic sequences which should be read synchronically. Thus a myth exhibits a 'slated' structure, which comes to the surface, so to speak, through a process of repetition."¹

In addition to repetition Beckett uses a kind of gross physical action, so visible and so instantly recognizable when repeated, that it functions structurally to re-link episodes which have been deliberately interrupted and interspersed throughout the play.

Edith Kern has noted a resemblance at this level of action between Godot and Commedia dell'Arte whose

"loosely knit plots could be interrupted at any time. [It] could freely develop those fragments comiques, those little islands of stage business called lazzi . . . In his theatre, Beckett has employed a large number of such traditional Commedia dell'Arte lazzi: people falling over each other, the pulling on and off of garments, the amusing exchange of ill-fitting hats, the catching of a flea."² But Beckett himself is quite clear that the structural function of these actions is a unifying function. He told an interviewer that: "Producers don't seem to have any sense of form in movement . . . 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."³

Styan also sees this level of action as primary in the play: "Beckett repeatedly calls for the grotesque gesture between actor and actor . . . to create both his comedy and our sense of his symbolism."⁴ Thus, repetition and gross physical markers help bring to the surface the "slated" structure we noted in Chapter one -- of anti-thetical opposition.

We must still ask, however, why Beckett should deal with major issues in terms of avowedly trivial actions. Stanley Cavell has written with reference to Endgame that "the ground of the play's quality is the ordinariness of its events,"⁵ and the observation is as true for Godot.

This trivialization of subject matter in Beckett is part of an ongoing movement in modern literature. As Todorov writes: "D'une part, dès la fin du siècle précédent, les écrivains ont fortement diminué l'importance absolue des événements d'écrits: alors qu'au paravant les exploits, l'amour et la mort constituaient le terrain de prédilection de la littérature, celle-ci se tourne avec Flaubert, Tchekov et Joyce vers l'insignifiant, le quotidien."⁶

The stratagem, as often with Beckett, seems motivated by a desire to strip things away; Cavell describes the technique: "Beckett . . . shares with positivism its wish to escape connotation, rhetoric, the non-cognitive, the irrationality and awkward memories of ordinary language, in favor of the directly verifiable, the isolated and perfect present."⁷

That is, if one wishes to present the fact that man suffers because he is a physical being who must blunt the pains inflicted upon him by nature by poorly contrived stratagems, one writes of a tramp whose boots are too tight. "But you can't go barefoot!" Vladimir expostulates. "Christ did," responds Estragon.

Beckett, then, tackles philosophical problems at the level of the "directly verifiable," in a technique that Cavell refers to as "literalization." Cavell says of "the language that Beckett has discovered or invented" that "its particular way of making sense [is] the quality

it has of what I will call hidden literality."⁸ But it should be noted here that the need to literalize language is one that confronts all writers in one fashion or another. As Roland Barthes has written: "Le seul pouvoir de l'écrivain sur le vertige stéréotypique (ce vertige est aussi celui de la 'bêtise,' de la 'vulgarité'), c'est d'y entrer sans guillemets, en opérant un texte, non une parodie."⁹

The Russian formalist critics dealt with this technique as "defamiliarization." As Tomashevsky wrote: "I consider the device of defamiliarization to be a special instance of artistic motivation. The old and habitual must be spoken of as if it were new and unusual. One must speak of the ordinary as if it were unfamiliar."¹⁰ And Shklovsky points out that literalization was a device favored by Tolstoy, among others: "Tolstoy described the dogmas and rituals he attacked as if they were unfamiliar, substituting everyday meanings for the customarily religious meanings of the words common in church ritual."¹¹

Beckett subverts every traditional organizational mode in language in order to unfix words from their moorings in tradition. Individual critics have noted one aspect or another of this process, at the level of syntax, for example, or of diction, and we can summarize some of their comments briefly here.

The most obvious device for robbing language of its traditional associations, as Manfred Smuda points out, is to write in a foreign language. And, indeed, after his

novel Watt, Beckett has chosen to write almost exclusively in French, later translating works back into his native English. Smuda notes that: "Wurden die Konnotationen der Bedeutung in der Sprache des Romans Watt schon weitgehend durch Funktionalisierung abgebaut so treibt die Funktionalisierung der Sprache die Erkenntnis hervor wie sie Wittgenstein im Tractatus logico-philosophicus formuliert hat . . . das die Grenzen der Sprache . . . die Grenzen meiner Welt bedeuten. Beckett jedoch findet einen produktiven Weg aus dieser Enge, indem er das Schreiben in seiner Muttersprache aufgibt und sich einer fremden Sprache bedient, deren Konnotationen last unmöglich so druckend sein kann wie diejenige der Muttersprache."¹²

Then too, the logical resource of contradiction, always available in dialogue, allows words to unseat and unfix each other. Janvier writes that in Beckett, dialogue, the paragraph and even the sentence "tend vers le sabotage final dans la formule qui couronne et contredit, satisfait et frustre."¹³ Hampton notes of the dialogue in Godot, that "Most [exchanges] are set in the thesis antithesis, hope frustration pattern introduced by the opening lines."¹⁴

It may be, however, that Beckett mounts his major attack on language at the level of syntax. Donald Davie writes that "Here as elsewhere Beckett stakes new ground away from Joyce by applying Joycean perceptions of parody to a different dimension of language . . . his quarry is not Joyce's, the word, but the sentence, not in the first place

vocabulary but syntax."¹⁵ As Huguette Delye has pointed out: "Nous retrouvons dans la syntaxe beckettienne toutes les audaces du langage familier: inversions, ellipses, répétitions, parenthèses additives ou correctives."¹⁶

While Beckett's prose in the novels had already begun to move in this direction, the dialogue of the plays opens new avenues of escape from the sentence. Utterances of only a few words, depending for completion upon the utterance of others or upon visible actions, are the norm in Godot. Even a glance at the first pages of the text reveals several instances: "Am I?"; "Me too."; "Not now."; "In a ditch"; "Over there"; "And what of it?"; "Taking off my boot."; "(angrily) Hurts!".

The foregrounding of a single word or brief phrase allows Beckett to organize his dialogues in distinct syllabic patterns. Thus in the examination of Lucky, one is caught up in a system based on lines of three and four syllables:

E. Oh I say!
 V. A running sore!
 E. It's the rope.
 V. It's the rubbing.
 E. It's inevitable.
 V. It's the knot.
 E. It's the chafing.
 (Godot, 17).

The alternation between lines of three and four syllables is disturbed only by the comment "It's inevitable," containing six syllables, which crops up twice more in the passage.

Ludovico Janvier writes that repetition in Beckett is of a musical sort: "Disons que la première qualité du langage beckettien est précisément dans le jeu d'appels et de réponses, des schèmes vocaux, appels un instant suspendus . . . non seulement comme crispation d'angoisse mais comme la montée interrupta de la phrase musicale: double phénomène de frustration que se résoud dans l'apaisement écho à la question aussi bien que la répétition - achèvement de la ligne mélodique."¹⁷ Shlovsky made the important basic observation that "the rhythm of prose is an important automatizing element; the rhythm of poetry is not."¹⁸

In the dialogue cited above, the isolation of the word "inevitable," its repetition and syllabic deviance, combine to lend the statement unusual prominence and force. The word seems to insist upon its root meanings, not only "unavoidable," but also "not capable of being shunned." A word of extremely general application is pinned down to a most graphically literal use.

The diction for the most part in Godot embodies a clash between the euphemism of cliché and the unflinching candor of slang. In an early exchange, Vladimir says, "On the other hand what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say," rocking along in the comfortable groove of conversational commonplace. Estragon loses no time in jolting him out of it. "Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing." (Godot, 7).

This dissonance of registers is always obliging us to reconsider the conventional as literal. When Vladimir proffers a rather general suggestion, "suppose we repented," Estragon immediately catches him up: "Repented what?" Vladimir, clinging to cliché, demurs: "We wouldn't have to go into the details," but Estragon pursues with: "Our being born?" at which "Vladimir breaks into a hearty laugh which he immediately stifles." (Godot, 8).

The phenomenon of clashing diction has been noticed in Beckett's novels as well. Huguette Delye finds that Beckett, as novelist, "mélange donc le vocabulaire savant et l'argot pour obtenir le langage robot d'un type."¹⁹ Frederick Hoffman sees a different implication: "His creatures are victims both of a high degree of metaphysical expectation sponsored by centuries of rational confidence and of their own sobering recognitions of things as they miserably are. The two languages -- that of a metaphysically stimulated confidence and that of an existential limitation sometimes clash."²⁰

This technique is modified in the plays primarily because "le vocabulaire savant," the language of "metaphysically stimulated confidence," has to be modulated downward in the direction of the characters, so that it becomes the cliché of the common man. Vestiges of it remain, however, in Lucky's philosophical jargon and Pozzo's more pretentious use of cliché: "That is why, with your permission, I propose to dally with you for a moment, before I venture any further." (Godot, 17).

Extending the possibilities for literalizing language implicit in the categories of syntax and diction Beckett seems to be breaking down a hitherto organic relationship between a man and his words. For example, Wolfgang Iser complains: "The short speeches correspond to the quickly changing subjects, and both reveal a dissolution of the relationship between speech and speaker . . . In such a dialogue, language is conceived neither as expression nor as communication . . . thus dialogue becomes abstract because there is no motivation and intention in the conversation, despite the exchange of words."²¹

And Beckett is not an isolated case. Barthes finds such dislocation to be a common modern phenomenon: "Dans le texte moderne, les voix sont traitées jusqu'au déni de tout repère: le discours, ou mieux encore, le langage parlé, c'est tout. Dans le texte classique, au contraire, la plupart des énoncés sont originés."²² When Beckett breaks through the easy, habitual connection between a man and his words it is to revitalize words by attaching them not to the speaker, and our sense of language in general, but to the particular situation in which they originate.

All the efforts to literalize action and language force the reader to seek the symbolism of the play within the structure of the play itself, and not primarily in any external theological, psychological, philosophical or historical system. Similarly, the movement of the play is never towards transcendence, but always towards the collapsing of transcendence into the irremediable present.

As Cavell says of Endgame, "there is no world just the other side of this one, opened onto through mirrors . . . there is only this world, unenchanted, unsponsored, but more fantastic than we can tell."²³

Footnotes to Chapter Three

- 1 Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, p. 229.
- 2 Edith Kern, "Beckett and the Spirit of Commedia del'Arte," Modern Drama, IX, 3, p. 262.
- 3 Charles Marowitz, "A Quick Walk Away from Samuel Beckett," Encore, IX (March-April, 1962), p. 44.
- 4 J. L. Styan, Dark Comedy (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p. 225.
- 5 Stanley Cavell, "Ending the Waiting Game: A Reading of Beckett's 'Endgame'," Must We Mean What We Say (New York, 1969), p. 117.
- 6 Tzvetan Todorov, "Poétique," Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?, ed Francois Wahl (Paris, 1968), p. 126.
- 7 Cavell, Must We Mean What We Say?, p. 120.
- 8 Ibid, p. 119.
- 9 Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris, 1970), p. 105.
- 10 Boris Tomashevsky, "Thematics," p. 85.
- 11 Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," p. 17.
- 12 Manfred Smuda, Beckett's Prosa Als Metasprache (Munich, 1970), p. 61.

- 13 Ludovic Janvier, Pour Samuel Beckett, Arguments, No. 27 (Paris, 1966), p. 254.
- 14 C. C. Hampton, Jr. The Human Situation in Beckett's Plays: A Study in Stratagems of Inaction, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Dissertation Abstracts XXVII, 2161A), p. 42.
- 15 Donald Davie, "Kinds of Comedy," Spectrum (Winter, 1958), p. 26.
- 16 Huguette Delye, Samuel Beckett, Publications des Annales de la Faculte des Lettres Aix-en-Provence, Travaux et Memoires, No. 16 (Aix-en-Provence, 1960), p. 83.
- 17 Janvier, Pour Samuel Beckett, p. 222.
- 18 Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," p. 24.
- 19 Delye, Samuel Beckett, p. 82.
- 20 Frederick Hoffman, Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self (Carbondale, Ill., 1962), p. 140.
- 21 Wolfgang Iser, "Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Language," Modern Drama, IX, p. 254, 253.
- 22 Barthes, S/Z, p. 48.
- 23 Cavell, p. 131 .

Chapter Four: Language Games

It is clear that Beckett's sense of language, like Cavell's own, is very close to that of Wittgenstein's in the Philosophical Investigations. For Wittgenstein, language has meaning only in reference to particular situations, and not in any generalized system: "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language . . . A philosophical problem has the form: I do not know my way about (Ich kenne mich nicht aus) . . . Understanding is not a mental process. It is the circumstances under which he had such an experience that justifies him in saying in such a case that he understands, that he knows how to go on."¹

Godot is made up in large part of a variety of language games. We can identify these games, and the problematic that lies behind them, in the terms that Wittgenstein sets up to explain his sense of the difficulties that are inherent in our use of language.

Take, for example, the problem of naming. We do not come any closer to the essence of an object by naming it; we merely incorporate it into one language game (system) or another. As Wittgenstein writes: "Only someone who already knows how to do something with it can significantly ask a name . . . The word 'meaning' is being used illicitly if it is used to signify the thing that 'corresponds' to the word . . . The meaning of a word is

its use in language . . . One feels a name ought really to signify a simple."²

In Godot we have the simples before us. We have a tree:

- V. He said by the tree. (They look at the tree.)
 E. What is it?
 V. I don't know. A willow.
 E. Where are the leaves?
 V. It must be dead.
 E. No more weeping.
 V. Or perhaps it's not the season.
 E. Looks to me more like a bush.
 V. A shrub.
 E. A bush.

(Godot, 10).

We have also got Pozzo's pipe:

- P. What have I done with my pipe? . . .
 P. What can I have done with that briar?
 E. He's a scream. He's lost his dudeen . . .
 P. (on the point of tears). I've lost my Kapp and Peterson!

(Godot, 23)

There is also a carrot:

- V. Do you want a carrot? . . .
 V. I might have some turnips.
 E. Give me a carrot . . . It's a turnip.
 V. Oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a carrot . . . There dear fellow . . . How's the carrot?
 E. It's a carrot.
 V. So much the better, so much the better.

(Godot, 14)

The multiple namings of Pozzo's pipe, although they are colorful, in no way alter the fact that it is

irretrievably lost. And the final triumphant matching of the name carrot, with the object carrot, in no way alters the fact that while it may be somewhat better than a turnip, it is nothing to rejoice over.

By multiple namings we can incorporate the objects before us into a number of systems of reference. A tree may be a willow, with some symbolic overtones of sorrow. It may be a shrub, a trivial, decorative background planting. It may be a bush, perhaps even a burning bush in which God will choose to manifest himself. But the associations collapse. They give us no new purchase on the irreducible situation. Objects cannot be identified absolutely or generally. Having examined the tree, willow, shrub, bush, Vladimir must ask "What are you insinuating? that we've come to the wrong place?" (Godot, 10).

As we cannot fix objects by their names so we cannot remember them by their names. Wittgenstein writes that: "Remembering has no experiential content. I get the idea of a memory content only because I assimilate psychological concepts."³ Beckett adapts this position:

- V. You don't remember any fact, any circumstance?
 E. (weary) Don't torment me, Didi.
 V. The sun, the moon. Do you not remember?
 E. They must have been there, as usual . . .
 V. And Pozzo? And Lucky?
 E. Pozzo?
 V. The bones.
 E. They were like fishbones.
 V. It was Pozzo gave them to you.
 E. I don't know.
 V. And the kick.

- E. That's right, someone gave
me a kick.
V. It was Lucky gave it to you.
E. And all that was yesterday?
(Godot, 42-43).

Estragon has assimilated the psychological concepts of ending hunger and experiencing pain, but cannot remember particular people. For the existence of the sun and the moon he has got to content himself with the commonly accepted generalization of experience.

Our language has supplied us with no certainty. As Wittgenstein writes: "How was it possible for thought to deal with the very object itself? . . . How can I decide what is an essential and what an accidental feature of the notation . . . An expectation is embedded in a situation, from which it arises. What is happening now has significance -- in these surroundings."⁴ Wittgenstein's admonition is that "We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place."⁵ In moving from the novel to the drama, Beckett seems to have taken the warning to heart. Already in the novel he had minimized authorial explanation, but in drama it is possible to present more purely "a situation."

It is Wittgenstein's feeling that grammar tends to run away with us: "When we follow the rules things do not turn out as we had assumed. That we are therefore as it were entangled in our own rules. This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand."⁶ There are several examples of this logical entrapment in the play.

Pozzo supplies us with one of the most obvious.

P. The tears of this world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh. (He laughs.) Let us not then speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. (Pause.) Let us not speak well of it either. (Pause.) Let us not speak of it at all. (Pause, Judiciously.) It is true the population has increased. (Godot, 22).

We cannot generalize about the human condition without falling into logical absurdity. Nor can we establish with any certainty explanations of the phenomena which we observe. Wittgenstein asks "Can we judge the difference between a cause and a motive?"⁷ Beckett answers that we cannot. The tramps ask Pozzo why Lucky stands holding the suitcases when he might put them down, and Pozzo replies that "He wants to impress me, so that I'll keep him." (Godot, 21). The tramps are dumbfounded by this seemingly improbable explanation of Lucky's servitude, but the facts of the situation, given the limitation that Lucky will not explain himself directly, make this explanation as defensible as any other.

Wittgenstein says that we cannot generalize or explain, and Beckett agrees with him. But for Wittgenstein there is some hope in the fact that we can judge individual situations on their merits. "One learns correct judgments

but they do not form a system and only experienced people can apply them right."⁸ Thus, Vladimir and Estragon undertake their own examination and evaluation of Lucky. "What ails him?" "Perhaps he's a half-wit." "Looks as his last gasp to me." "It's not certain."

In what way then can we rise, if at all, from the object to its implications. Wittgenstein suggests that meanings are created as we perceive the object in shifting sets of circumstances: "When the aspect changes parts of the picture go together which before did not . . . The dawning of an aspect is not a property of an object but an internal relation between it and other objects. It is the field of force of a word that is decisive."⁹ And in the constantly shifting situations of drama and dialogue we find, finally, the way in which Beckett's terms acquire local meaning and significance.

Let us consider an isolated event -- Lucky's dance in Act I. The meaning we attribute to the performance depends primarily on its function in the play as a whole, and we leave discussion of that function to its place in the analysis of the play (see Chapter 6). But even in its immediate context it gathers significance from the shifting aspects in which it is viewed.

Estragon says "I'd rather he'd dance [than think], it'd be more fun," to which Pozzo replies "Not necessarily." Estragon has suggested that the dance will be an entertainment, while Pozzo's reply indicates that it may not be.

Estragon proposes that Lucky "dance first and think afterwards" to which Pozzo replies "It's the natural order." Dance is now defined as a human function on a par with thought, and human activity is described as moving from the physical to the mental.

Estragon then queries the fact that a man will perform a natural function upon command. "He never refuses?" and Pozzo answers "He refused once." We learn, then, that Lucky at one time exercised his will over his own natural activities and/or creative performances. A previous act of defiance defines the current performance as unwilling by the performer and particularly servile.

Pozzo then commands "Dance, misery!" We now see dance in a new relationship. Ordinarily dance would express joy. Here it is starkly contrasted in a single utterance with its antithesis -- misery. Considering the halting, unpleasant nature of the dance itself, the line might almost be read without the comma so that Lucky would be ordered to do a dance expressing misery.

Estragon is the performer's first critic and he asks when the dance is finished "Is that all?" His disappointment, like ours, is with the dance as an entertainment and as an expression of human activity. Pozzo, however, limits the scope of the criticism by calling out immediately "Encore!" Perhaps it is only that the dance was too short. Perhaps he is lauding the performance by calling, in the way of audiences, "Encore!" Perhaps he

is making the point that however unsatisfactory we find the scope and nature of human action and creation we can only hope to see it repeated again and not ever improved upon.

Witnessing the repeat performance Estragon makes his criticism more emphatic: "Pooh!" He goes on to say "I'd do as well myself." The implication now is that the artistic ability displayed is so wanting in skill or distinction that it falls within the compass of ordinary, common, human action. "(He imitates Lucky, almost falls.) With a little practice." His own attempted performance, redefines the dance as something that, however poor, is distinguished by some special skill.

Pozzo elaborates on this discovery of special skill: "He used to dance the farandole, the fling, the brawl, the jig, the fandango, and even the hornpipe." Beckett is back at his multiple naming game. We now see dance as a cultural phenomenon, expressing the special spirit of a nation: Spain, Ireland, Scotland. His actions may even have expressed a vocation, "and even the hornpipe." By his special skill he could express in particular forms a universal human emotion.

We now see that emotion which we felt previously ought to be expressed by dance is the one that motivated his earlier performances. Pozzo says "He capered. For joy. Now that's the best he can do." Pozzo launches a new round in the game of multiple naming: "Do you know what he calls it?" Estragon replies "The Scapegoat's Agony."

The dance then becomes an expression of Lucky's own personal condition, the suffering he experiences by virtue of his enslavement. The implication is that as artist he no longer expresses the creative, spontaneous joy of his nation, but exiled, takes the nation's sins upon his own head.

Vladimir calls the dance "The Hard Stool," perhaps associating Lucky's condition with a related problem of his own, but also coming closer to a naming of the physical motions of the ding an sich. Pozzo however shifts the context. The dance does not express the artist's position, vis à vis society, nor does he express his own personal physical sufferings. The artist expresses a relationship to an invisible entrapment which is cosmic in order. "The Net. He thinks he's entangled in a net." The net has been interpreted as an allusion to the Old Testament. John Sheedy sees it, however, as a reference to "most pre-Christian cosmologies [where it] is usually associated with the retributive power of older harsher gods . . . in the East the Net is a figure for the cosmos -- the 'Net of Heaven.'"¹⁰

Thus in scarcely a page of dialogue, Beckett has allowed us to see a single event, a dance, in a situation which reveals its multiple "aspects." His primary tool of diversification is the shifting interplay of responses to the object by a number of characters -- responses which gather complexity in that they are guided not only by the object but also by the attitudes of the other characters.

Although the responses are in some cases allusive "the farandole . . . the Net," the allusions do not prompt us to move beyond the action, but rather intensify our perception of it.

An account of this phenomenon has been rendered by Mikhail Bakhtine in his analysis of dialogue in Doestoevsky's novels: "La sémantique du mot dialogué est tout à fait particulière . . . La conscience (la perception) du contre discours (Gegenrede) provoquant des modifications spécifiques dans la structure du mot dialogique, le rend intérieurement événementiel et éclaire l'objet même du mot d'une manière inhabituelle, dévoilant en lui des aspects nouveaux inaccessibles au mot monologique."¹¹

Within the play as a whole, however, the dance can be interpreted not as general cosmic entrapment but in the Old Testament sense of entrapment by specifically false and worldly gods (see Chapter 6). As such it is further defined by the fact that it is performed by Pozzo's slave at Pozzo's command. It feeds into the basic binary symbolism created by the action itself, which distinguishes between the pain and misery of the physical world on the one hand and the uncertainty of the spiritual realm on the other.

Footnotes to Chapter Four

- 1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Ancombe, 2nd ed. (N.Y. 1958), pp. 49e and 61e.
- 2 Ibid., p. 15e, 20e and 19e.
- 3 Ibid., p. 231e.
- 4 Ibid., p. 127e, 150e and 153e.
- 5 Ibid., p. 47e.
- 6 Ibid., p. 50e.
- 7 Ibid., p. 224e.
- 8 Ibid., p. 227e.
- 9 Ibid., p. 212e and 219e.
- 10 John Sheedy, "The Net", Casebook on "Waiting for Godot," ed. Ruby Cohn (N.Y., 1967), p. 162.
- 11 Mikhail Bakhtine, La Poétique de Dostoïevski, trans. Isabelle Kolitcheff (Paris, 1970), p. 256-7.

Chapter Five: Vladimir and Estragon

The opening portion of Act I encompasses several incidents (or micro-dramas as I shall call them) that are emphatically physical. Estragon struggles with his boot. The two men examine the tree. Estragon takes a nap. Vladimir offers Estragon a carrot. Estragon proposes that they hang themselves. The two men alternately try to embrace each other.

As these actions are played out they establish the nature of the two characters and their relationship with each other. Two other episodes, however, one concerning the two thieves who died with Christ and the other concerning the appointment with Godot are more speculative than physical in nature. They point not to the relationship between the two men, but towards the end and purpose of the action.

The outcome of each of the micro-dramas in this segment of the play -- the boots, the embrace, the suicide project, and the carrot -- is a standoff. And it has certainly been argued that as such each is a microcosm of the larger and equally inconclusive action of the play. Because of the impasses, some writers have interpreted the incidents themselves as radically pointless -- barren attempts to pass the time. Yet in this isolated group of physical actions there are elements that tend toward the elucidation of theme on the one hand and toward a sense of completion or closure on the other.

Estragon despairs of ever removing his boot. Vladimir encourages him to go on. The action is endlessly attempted, drawn out over obstacles and interruptions, and finally completed. The boot is off, but the foot is swelling visibly and the pain is as bad as ever, making the success useless. Closure and completion coexist with failure. Similarly, Vladimir starts out by offering an embrace which is rejected by Estragon -- when they meet at first after the night's separation. Later Estragon offers and gives an embrace, after his brief nap, and is accepted, only to find himself repelled by Vladimir's stinking breath. Yet Vladimir's initial expression of joy, at first rejected, has been transformed into a responsive gesture of consolation.

Something has been completed. Twice Estragon succeeds -- through Vladimir's encouragement or through his own awareness of a need for Vladimir. A shared gesture has been made to overcome an external hardship of situation -- separation, pain. But the hardships remain even when the gesture is completed, and one is left then with the ineluctability of the physical.

Estragon's proposal that the two hang themselves from the tree and Vladimir's furnishing the carrot are more condensed micro-dramas, and they have sharper punch lines. Estragon makes a very definite proposal that will end their suffering and bring pleasure of a sort, but is obliged to abandon the project because of the inadequacy of available physical means -- the branch of the tree may break. Vladimir

undertakes to supply Estragon's hunger in lordly fashion. But the carrot isn't much of a meal after all. More obvious efforts to solve their problems meet only with more resounding defeats.

These four micro-dramas, then, are preoccupied with a physical theme -- the first pair with the ineluctability of physical suffering, the latter pair with the inadequacy of physical means for obtaining any positive satisfaction. They are also incidents that revolve primarily around Estragon, widely recognized as the more physical member of the couple.

The micro-dramas that center upon Vladimir tend to resemble not vaudeville routines, but philosophical disputations. It is this disparity of tones in fact that must have prompted Anouihl's famous first-night bon mot -- that Godot is "The music-hall sketch of Pascal's Pensées as played by the Fratellini clowns."¹ Vladimir, even when confronted with the physical, is more than likely to take it up onto metaphysical ground.

In this first part of Act I, Vladimir recounts the Gospel story of Christ and the two thieves, one of whom may have been saved. The appointment with Godot has not yet been mentioned, but the context in which it will be viewed is already being established. The issues of salvation and damnation have been raised. The underlying problem is whether one ought to believe the story at all. The testimony of the four evangelists is wildly conflicting, and only one gives Vladimir's version. The fact that this

account is universally credited is only further evidence, according to Estragon, that "People are bloody ignorant apes." (Godot, 9).

Vladimir, in the very next micro-drama, introduces the appointment with Godot. Following hard upon the Gospel narrative, it carries overtones of salvation, picked up by the echo of God in Godot. And uncertainty is again the overriding difficulty. "You're sure it was here? . . . that we were to wait." "You're sure it was this evening? . . . that we were to wait." (Godot, 10).

Two groups of micro-dramas, then, are discernible in Part one of this act. The first group originates with Estragon and points to the inevitability of physical suffering; the second originates with Vladimir and points to the uncertainty of spiritual salvation. The micro-dramas are often interrupted and seem haphazardly arranged. And yet certain of them can be associated with one character or the other and thus grouped by theme.

The movement of Vladimir and Estragon towards each other and then apart, suggested in Chapter one, articulates a still more definite arrangement of micro-dramas. This dynamic has two limiting extremes. One limit is established by their inability to embrace each other. Vladimir starts out by offering an embrace which is rejected by Estragon -- when they meet at first after a night's separation. Later Estragon offers and gives an embrace, after his brief nap, and is accepted, only to find himself repelled by Vladimir's stinking breath.

At the other extreme is their unwillingness to separate. And as each one separately recognizes this unwillingness, he abandons the initiative for the action to the other. Thus Vladimir begins quite cheerfully, considering suicide an alternative long ago rejected. He resolutely maintains the appointment with Godot in the face of Estragon's repeated doubts and questions. It is when Estragon dozes off, suddenly leaving Vladimir alone, that Vladimir becomes terrified and dependent, and a reversal takes place.

Now it is Estragon who becomes warm and affectionate, embracing Vladimir and enthusiastically proposing that they hang themselves. The hanging scheme founders, however, because the branch may break, leaving one man hanged and the other alone. Unwilling to risk the separation, Estragon relinquishes control of the action and reverts to Vladimir's plan -- to wait for Godot.

Each realizes the impossibility of separating in terms appropriate to the other. When Estragon naps, Vladimir succumbs to a profound physical sense of loneliness. Estragon's effort to determine whether the tree will hang them both seems to parody Vladimir's elaborate philosophical speculation about whether one of the thieves was saved.

Plotted against these reversals in initiative are moments of accord between the two. There is the "it hurts" chorus right at the opening:

- E. Help me!
 V. It hurts?
 E. Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts.
 V. No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have.
 E. It hurts?
 V. Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts! (Godot, 7).

This is a moment of mutual recognition of the ineluctability of physical pain, that consciousness toward which the action initiated by Estragon constantly tends.

There is a second passage in unison at the critical juncture when the suicide plan has been rejected as unworkable and Pozzo and Lucky have not yet arrived. The friends speculate together on how Godot will deal with them:

- V. That he'd see.
 E. That he couldn't promise anything.
 V. That he'd have to think it over.
 E. In the quiet of his home.
 V. Consult his family.
 E. His friends.
 V. His agents.
 E. His correspondents.
 V. His books.
 E. His bank account.
 V. Before taking a decision.
 E. It's the normal thing.
 V. Is it not?
 E. I think it is.
 V. I think so too. (Godot, 13).

The two men move verbally into union as Godot seems to move further and further off, this time sharing a consciousness of the uncertainty of the spiritual -- that recognition to which the train of action initiated by Vladimir always moves.

We began by considering very small sequences of actions under the heading of micro-dramas. Now perhaps

it will be possible to consider the broader narrative outlines of Act I, Part one. What is given, clearly, is not the single ascending line of a major action tending toward completion, but rather alternatives of action seen as alternatives of character. Estragon and Vladimir want different things. Estragon, pursuing his despair to its natural terminus, would choose suicide. Vladimir, optimistic in the face of uncertainty, chooses to wait. St. Augustine, apparently, had a good word for each of the two. Beckett told Harold Hobson, "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."²

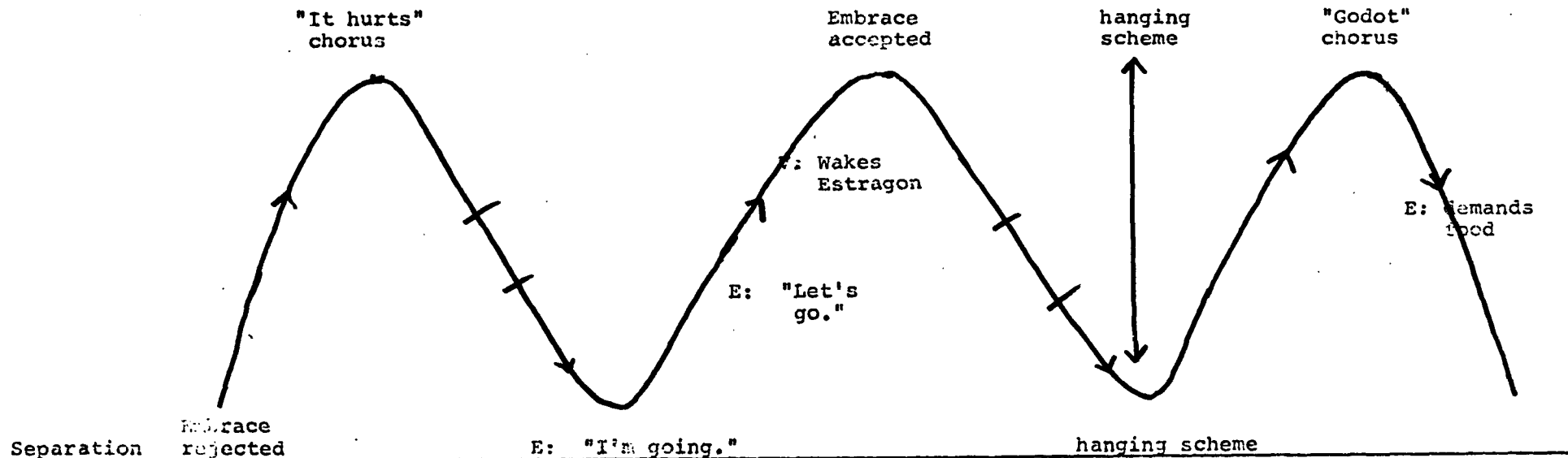
Typically, the theatrical presentation of such alternatives might exploit conflict of character pursued to the triumph of one. Beckett, with comic grace, steps aside and makes the resolution a problem for the audience, by giving us not opposed contenders but inseparable comrades.

The issue of the appointment, introduced at the outset by Vladimir, will continue to occupy us for the rest of the play, providing the most obvious line of continuity or plot. But it is not really an action moving toward resolution but rather the articulation of an enigma which confronts us. Will Godot come? Will Vladimir and Estragon choose to go on waiting? Who or what is Godot? The action of succeeding portions of the text bears directly

on these questions.

Summary Chart: Act I, Part One

Dependence



Footnotes to Chapter Five

- 1 Jean Anouilh, "'Godot' or The Music-Hall Sketch of Pascal's Pensées as Played by the Fratellini Clowns," Casebook on "Waiting for Godot", ed. Ruby Cohn (New York, 1967), p. 13.
- 2 Hugh Kenner, Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study (Berkeley, 1968), p. 100.

Chapter Six: Pozzo and Lucky

Pozzo and Lucky erupt across the path of the waiting tramps. Estragon suggests immediately that Pozzo is Godot. "Not at all," says Vladimir, whose final verdict is that the intrusion has been a mere diversion: "That passed the time," he remarks laconically when Pozzo's imprecations die in the distance. Worse still, Pozzo and Lucky may even have delayed Godot's own messenger. "I know what it is, he was afraid of the others," says Vladimir, explaining the messenger's delay.

These diverging responses of Estragon and Vladimir to Pozzo's role constitute two organizing relationships of the interlude. A third is created by the general drift of Estragon and Vladimir towards Pozzo and away from Lucky.

Hardly an interlude, this portion of Act I covers thirty-four pages and is longer than all the other three sections of Act I put together. The presence of four characters generates a more complex network of relationships than in the other sections. Certain possible relationships remain virtual, however, because they are fixed. Thus the relationship between Lucky and Pozzo remains static in Act I. Nor do Vladimir and Estragon enter into individually different relationships with Lucky as they do with Pozzo.

Each of the three functioning relationships tends to organize a thematically related group of incidents or

micro-dramas. Estragon is attracted by Pozzo as the worldly embodiment of God-like power. Vladimir's distaste for Pozzo is linked to episodes that emphasize the suffering contingent upon a God so conceived. These episodes envision human life painfully trapped in material existence. The third relationship, which carries the action forward through the section, is grounded in a definition of the human. It implicates Vladimir as well as Estragon in a common worldly existence with Pozzo.

Vladimir and Estragon are initially terrified of Pozzo and fascinated by Lucky, a stock response shared by the audience. Pozzo's effort is to invert this relationship of aversion and sympathy, and with the tramps, at least, he succeeds.

Pozzo's attempt to associate himself with the two friends is grounded in a definition of the term human being. Pozzo begins by defining Lucky as an animal. He enters driving Lucky before him, with whip and reins, as if Lucky were a horse. "Be careful! He's wicked. With strangers," Pozzo warns, as if against an especially vicious dog. "Up pig! . . . Up hog!" is not infrequent as a mode of address. Vladimir and Estragon, on the other hand, Pozzo manages to convey, share with Pozzo himself the distinction of being human. "You are human beings none the less. As far as one can see. Of the same species as myself." (Godot, 15). "Gentlemen, I am happy to have met you . . . Yes, gentlemen, I cannot go for long without the society of my likes." (Godot, 16).

Vladimir and Estragon, fascinated by the spectacle of Lucky, undertake their own inspection of him. From Estragon's initial question, "What ails him?" (Godot, 17), to his final diagnosis, "Looks at his last gasp to me" (Godot, 18), the scene is a kind of wild parody of a medical conference. The investigators see Lucky as suffering, tired, afflicted by servitude, not unattractive, possibly mentally deficient, certainly diseased and probably on the verge of death. It is a summary of the human condition very typical of Beckett, and in fact Vladimir will presently protest to Pozzo that "To treat a man . . . (gesture towards Lucky) . . . like that . . . I think that . . . no . . . a human being . . . no . . . it's a scandal!" (Godot, 18).

Yet in the course of Part two, Vladimir and Estragon do in fact move closer to Pozzo, joining him and cutting off Lucky. As Pozzo finishes delivering his version of the relationship between himself and Lucky, Vladimir finally turns on Lucky: "How dare you! It's abominable! Such a good master! Crucify him like that! After so many years! Really!" Vladimir and Estragon are both willing to exploit Lucky as a form of entertainment, commanding him to dance and "think." They finally fall into line behind Pozzo by raising Lucky up after his collapse and restoring him to his role as slave. At the end, they are practically on top of Pozzo, listening for the clock in his belly that may be, after all, his heart.

This reversal of an initial attraction is fraught with irony. For whatever Estragon and Vladimir may suppose, an audience will recognize that the two tramps in castoffs have as much in common with the suffering servant as with the arrogant master. And Lucky, a vicious automaton, represents much that is quintessentially and tragically human. Nevertheless, the strengthening relationship of Vladimir and Estragon vis à vis Pozzo indicates that to be human is to be something more than a mute, suffering beast of burden.

It is Estragon who associates Pozzo with the God-like figure of Godot. He heralds Pozzo's arrival as he badgers Vladimir: "I'm asking you if we're tied . . . Ti-ed . . . Down . . . To your man." "To Godot?" asks Vladimir. A moment later Pozzo enters -- with Lucky tied to the end of a rope. When Pozzo expresses his disgust with Lucky, Estragon asks Vladimir "Does he want to replace him . . . Does he want someone to take his place or not?" (Godot, 23).

Pozzo himself is eager to cultivate an aura of divinity. The initial comparison between himself and the tramps, when cited in full, runs as follows:

You are human beings none the less. (He puts on his glasses.) As far as one can see. (He takes off his glasses.) Of the same species as myself. (He bursts into an enormous laugh.) Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image!

or again:

Yes, gentlemen, I cannot go for long without the society of my likes (he puts

on his glasses and looks at the two
likes) even when the likeness is an
imperfect one.

If Pozzo is God-like, he is emphatically the God of this world. He is the benevolent source of chicken bones and alms in the offering. He is the landowner and follower of social forms. He pursues bodily satisfaction with wine and tobacco, coat and stool. In fact, playing a variety of roles -- actor, prophet, slavedriver and entrepreneur -- he seems a Protean manifestation of the whole phenomenal world and its rulers.

The exaggeratedly farcical tone in much of this section can be traced, perhaps, to Pozzo's double nature. He is obliged to be awesome and to control situations in his divine aspect. At the same time, his clearly worldly nature gives us the man who stuffs himself like a pig with chicken, tenderly sprays his throat like an actor, and, most significantly, the man who is victimized by a long series of physical props that have begun to disappear. "He's a scream," says Estragon. "He's lost his dudeen." (Godot, 23).

Estragon's needs are overridingly physical, and he is solicitous in encouraging Pozzo to remain. Vladimir, intent upon an altogether more spiritual saviour, is consistently anxious for Pozzo to leave. He indicates through outrage at the treatment of Lucky, impatience for night to fall, and boredom at Pozzo's antics, that Pozzo's presence is superfluous.

Pozzo is sensitive to Vladimir's social snubs, and each time he wishes to stay justifies his remaining

with some sort of entertainment. We are offered two performances by Pozzo -- the story of his life with Lucky and a histrionic description of the twilight -- and two performances by Lucky -- a dance and a speech. Each documents disillusionment with a materially conceived God and the suffering of those who are mired in worldliness.

Like a parable, Pozzo's first story explicates the mystery of Lucky's suffering, which, unlike Estragon's, appears to be not inevitable but gratuitous. The question is why, when "He's puffing like a grampus," "Why he doesn't put down his bags." (Godot, 20). Pozzo's startling explanation is that Lucky is actively seeking servitude, that if he does not put down the bags, "It follows that he doesn't want to. There's reasoning for you . . . He wants to impress me, so that I'll keep him." (Godot, 21).

In this version of faith man seeks to please God by his ability to bear the burdens that God places upon him and by his endurance in the face of suffering: "He imagines that when I see how well he carries I'll be tempted to keep him on in that capacity . . . He imagines that when I see him indefatigable I'll regret my decision." (Godot, 21).

But even Pozzo is quick to recognize that these are not the qualities which distinguish a human being: "In reality he carries like a pig. It's not his job." (Godot, 21). Thus the theme of the nature of the human, introduced in the shifting relationship between the tramps and Pozzo, recurs as an essential aspect of the problem of God's

relation to man.

Man's true role, says Pozzo, is to achieve the refinement of experience in art, and philosophy: "But for him all my thoughts, all my feelings, would have been of common things. (Pause. With extraordinary vehemence.) Professional worries! (Calmer.) Beauty, grace, truth of the first water, I knew they were all beyond me. So I took a knook." (Godot, 22).

The tragedy of the relationship from Pozzo's point of view is that man no longer functions properly in relation to God: "He used to be so kind . . . so helpful . . . and entertaining . . . my good angel . . . and now . . . he's killing me." (Godot, 23). But Pozzo is a false and worldly God, and Vladimir properly attacks him: "And now you turn him away . . . After having sucked all the good out of him." (Godot, 22).

If the God of this world is unhappy with his servant, Lucky's speech conveys the servant's disillusion with his worldly master. The major syntactic utterance in that heap of fragments is a description of the relation between man and God. Stripped of qualifications it reads: "Given the existence . . . of a personal God . . . who loves us dearly . . . and suffers . . . with those . . . who are plunged in torment . . . it is established . . . that man . . . wastes and pines." (Godot, 28-29). Faced with so mind-boggling a contradiction, the logical structure of Lucky's speech could hardly fail to break down.

Pozzo saw man's function as the artistic refinement of experience. Lucky sees man as a physical being who cannot sustain himself by physical means alone. Man is said to have lost stature and substance since the death of Bishop Berkeley, or presumably since he ceased to perceive the physical as contingent upon a spiritual presence: "That man . . . in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation . . . in spite of the strides of physical culture . . . fades away . . . the dead loss per head since the death of Bishop Berkeley being to the tune of one inch four ounce per head." (Godot, 29).

Pozzo indicted man for his failure to function properly in relation to God. Lucky's counter-accusation is that God has inexplicably abandoned man to torments "whose fire . . . if that continues . . . will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven." (Godot, 28).

To such a situation Lucky responds in the modes of prophecy and lament. Abandoned, man and the earth will both die out, one until there is nothing left but a skull, the other to an abode of stones. In his peroration, the word skull occurs seven times and the word stones, eight, among the heaviest repetitions anywhere in the speech.

In contrast, the lament springs out most poignantly for being expressed in words which occur uniquely among elements so often repeated they have become a drone. Thus, in, "The beard the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on" (Godot, 29), it is only the under-scored words that are introduced for the first time, so near

to the end of the speech.

Pozzo's charge and Lucky's response both end with tears, for both express a yawning gulf between man and God. Pozzo's description of nightfall and Lucky's dance elaborate the ensuing painful and inevitable entrapment in the material.

Vladimir asks impatiently, "Will night never come?" He looks forward to the moment when he will be released from his obligation to wait for Godot. And he looks forward also to the end of his involvement with this place and these tiresome people. Pozzo reminds him that the moment of release refers not only to a spiritual contract voluntarily undertaken but also to a physical contract that is always enforced.

Night for Pozzo is not release but death. For Pozzo the sky is only the sky and not heaven, and nature is not our mother but only "this bitch of an earth." "Will you look at the sky, pig! . . . What is there so extraordinary about it? Qua sky." (Godot, 25). Nothing is more certain, he assures Vladimir, than that "night is charging and will burst upon us pop! like that! just when we least expect it. That's how it is on this bitch of an earth." (Godot, 25).

The sense of entrapment by the physical is even more powerful in Lucky's dance:

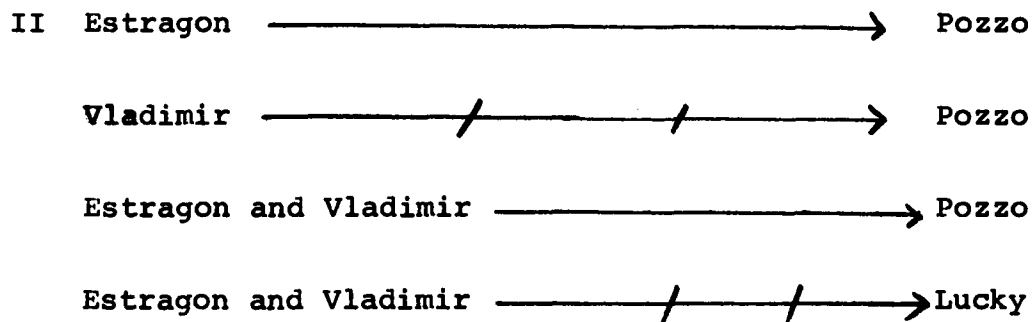
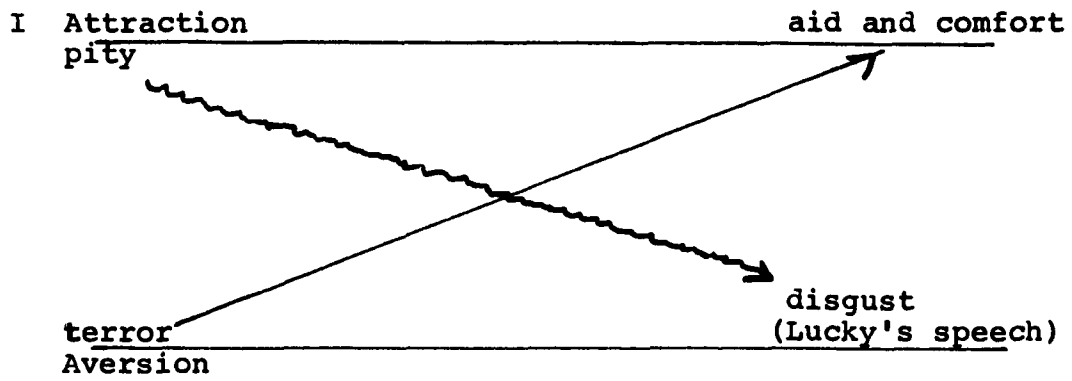
Pozzo: Do you know what he calls it?
 Estragon: The Scapegoat's Agony.
 Vladimir: The Hard Stool.
 Pozzo: The Net. He thinks he's entangled
 in a net. (Godot, 27).

It has been suggested to me¹ that such entanglement is often associated in the Bible with an attachment to worldliness and false gods: "If thou serve their gods it will

surely be a snare unto thee." (Exodus, 23:33). "The fear of man bringeth a snare." (Proverbs, 29:25). And finally "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." (I. Timothy, 6:9).

The opening of Act I set up an antithesis between the physical and the spiritual in the form of a relationship between Estragon and Vladimir. The Pozzo and Lucky interlude elaborates the physical side of this antithesis, as Estragon confronts a worldly master. With the arrival of the boy, the spiritual side of the antithesis is brought forward and Vladimir meets the messenger sent by Godot.

Summary Chart: Act I, Part Two



→ Attraction → attitude toward Pozzo

- - - - - Aversion → attitude toward Lucky

Footnotes to Chapter Six

- ¹ By Prof. Rosette Lamont in a seminar on Samuel Beckett conducted in the spring of 1971 at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Chapter Seven: The Messenger

A disturbing atmosphere of uncertainty settles over the stage with the departure of Pozzo and Lucky. The uncertainty seems to signal a violent reorientation of the characters in time and space. We shift gears from the worldliness of Lucky and Pozzo to the other-worldliness of Godot's pastoral messenger.

Considered structurally, Parts two and three of the first act seem deliberately arranged to oppose each other. Parts one and four, on the other hand, where Vladimir and Estragon are alone, tend to complement and complete each other. Let us suppose here that Act I loosely follows the figure of chiasmus in structure. It could be diagrammed as follows:

Act I

Part 1: Vladimir and Estragon	}
Part 2: Pozzo and Lucky	
Part 3: The Messenger	
Part 4: Vladimir and Estragon	

A mirror-like reversal in the relationship between characters instantly indicates the contrast between Parts two and three. Estragon, we recall, welcomed Pozzo and Lucky almost from the first:

Vladimir: Let's go.
Estragon: So soon?

Vladimir was repelled by Pozzo:

Vladimir: I'm going.
Pozzo: He can no longer
endure my presence.
(Godot, 19).

When momentarily at a loss, Pozzo asks: "What was I saying," to which Vladimir characteristically responds "Let's go," while Estragon chimes encouragingly to Pozzo, "But take the weight off your feet, I implore you, you'll catch your death." (Godot, 25).

In Part three the relationships are inverted. Vladimir is kindly and protective towards the boy and urges him to "Approach, my child." Concerned about the boy's fears, he asks "You were afraid of the whip?" and solicitous of his well-being Vladimir wants to know, "Is [Godot] good to you? . . . Does he give you enough to eat?" (Godot, 32-34 passim). Meanwhile Estragon is unreservedly hostile: "(Violently) Will you approach! (The Boy advances timidly.) What kept you so late?" When the boy claims to be a native of the region, Estragon explodes: "That's all a pack of lies. (Shaking the Boy by the arm.) Tell us the truth!" (Godot, 33).

Just as Estragon was susceptible to the blandishments of the worldly, Vladimir is kindly disposed towards the emissaries of the spirit. And Vladimir's earlier outrage at the tyranny of the material world, "To treat a man . . . like that . . . no . . . it's a scandal!" is mirrored by Estragon's anger at his own kind of bondage: "What kept you so late," he demands of the boy. "What kept you so late . . . Do you know what time it is?" (Godot, 32).

Just five pages of dialogue suffice to construct Part three as against thirty-four pages devoted to the

encounter with Pozzo and Lucky. The narrative element in Part three is correspondingly sparse, but also immediately more relevant to the major action of the play. Part two may or may not be a passtime and a diversion. But if Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot, the boy's message -- "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow," (Godot, 33) constitutes the only event to advance the central action thus far.

The boy's credibility, however, is at issue. Having read Act II, we know that in this play Godot will not come. If even in Act I Godot does not appear at the rendezvous, how seriously are we to take his promises to appear on the morrow? There is the suggestion, even here, that the boy may have come before, that the two men have, in fact, been disappointed before. Estragon enraged, already has called the boy a liar.

The micro-dramas in Part three examine this pivotal problem of credibility and doubt. But two quite distinct kinds of doubt are at issue. One concerns the possibility of spiritual salvation; the second unsettles the domain of human experience. We have already been introduced to both forms with dazzling economy in the cornerstone episode of the two thieves, recounted by Vladimir as the play opens. Salvation itself, we recall, is a chancy business: "Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One . . . is supposed to have been saved and the other . . . damned." But our opportunities for drawing conclusions about salvation are yet more uncertain. This second form

of doubt pervades the empirical: "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." (Godot, 9).

Empirical doubt is rendered in Part three by three separate problems of recognition. Vladimir says at once that he has seen Pozzo and Lucky before. He implies that he has seen the messenger before. And thirdly, returning a message to Godot, Vladimir says, "Tell him . . . (he hesitates) . . . tell him you saw us. (Pause.) You did see us, didn't you?" (Godot, 34).

Lack of recognition seems to point, in each case, to a breakdown in the concept of continuous personal identity. That Pozzo and Lucky may have metamorphosed beyond recognition is suggested first by the exclamation "How they've changed!" and then by Vladimir's thoughtful and ambiguous repetition of "Unless they're not the same." Vladimir wonders, too, if the messenger is not the same:

Vladimir: I've seen you before, haven't
I?

Boy: I don't know, Sir.

. . .

Vladimir: It wasn't you ~~came~~ yesterday?

Boy: No sir. (Godot, 33).

Estragon's comment is that "They all change. Only we can't." (Godot, 32). Yet the tramps are subject to lapses of memory indicating that they too are hard put to maintain a bond between former and present selves. The

two are never quite sure that they are in the same place or that the day they remember is the one before this one.

If the continuity of personal identity is once questioned, there can be no absolute measure for empirical data. Events, for Vladimir and Estragon, refuse to be fixed in time and space. For, granted the destruction of res cogitans, the destruction of res extensa becomes child's play. What is wanted, then, from Godot is a validation of the tramps' particular identity in time and place.

"Tell him . . . tell him you saw us." Given even this fixed point, what prodigies of belief might not be possible.

But this is Descartes' world without Descartes' faith. One experiences the division between the mind that perceives and the world of phenomenon. But now Descartes' principle of doubt is liberated from its original confines and allowed to ravage the mind that perceives. For as Kierkegaard clearly saw: "What those ancient Greeks (who also had some understanding of philosophy) regarded as a task for a whole lifetime, seeing that dexterity in doubting is not acquired in a few days or weeks . . . that is where everybody begins in our time. In our time nobody is content to stop with faith but wants to go further."¹ Without the principle of faith that validates Descartes' universe, the world collapses into division.

The British psychoanalyst R. D. Laing helps one to sense the dimensions of this condition by first outlining its contrary: "A man may have a sense of his presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal

sense, a continuous person . . . such a basically ontologically secure person will encounter all the hazards of life . . . from a centrally firm sense of his own and other people's reality and identity². . . With Samuel Beckett . . . one enters a world in which there is no contradictory sense of the self in its health and validity to mitigate the despair, boredom and terror of existence."³

Descartes, as Kierkegaard reminds us, did not doubt in matters of faith. But his great contemporary Pascal addresses himself to precisely those among his friends who did. The wager of the Pensées is an argument constructed, in part, for the conversion of the skeptic. The spirit of that wager pervades the two micro-narratives in Part three that concern the possibility of spiritual salvation.

The very promise that Godot will come is phrased in terms of an alternative: "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow." There are echoes of "Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other . . . damned." Vladimir, interrogating Godot's own messenger, learns the story of two brothers, who again seem to bear out the doctrine of "an even chance."

Vladimir: You work for Mr. Godot?

Boy: Yes Sir.

Vladimir: What do you do?

Boy: I mind the goats, Sir.

Vladimir: Is he good to you?

Boy: Yes Sir.

Vladimir: He doesn't beat you?

Boy: No Sir, not me.

Vladimir: Whom does he beat?

Boy: He beats my brother, Sir.

(Godot, 33).

Pascal puts the argument forcefully: "If we must not act save on a certainty, we ought not to act on religion, for it is not certain . . . I say then we must do nothing at all, for nothing is certain, and that there is more certainty in religion than there is as to whether we may see to-morrow."⁴

Pascal made his own portrait of the man in spiritual doubt, and it sounds not unlike a 17th century Godot:

I know not who put me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I myself am. I am in terrible ignorance of everything. I know not what my body is, nor my senses, nor my soul, not even that part of me which thinks what I say, which reflects on all and on itself, and knows itself no more than the rest. I see those frightful spaces of the universe which surround me, and I find myself tied to one corner of this vast expanse, without knowing why I am put in this place rather than in another, nor why the short time which is given me to live is assigned to me at this point rather than at another of the whole eternity which was before me or which shall come after me. I see nothing but infinities on all sides, which surround me as an atom and as a shadow which endures only for an instant and returns no more. All I know is that I must soon die, but what I know least is this very death which I cannot escape.

As I know not whence I come, so I know not whither I go. I know only that, in leaving this world, I fall for ever either into annihilation or into the hands of an angry God, without knowing to which of these two states I shall be for ever assigned. Such is my state, full of weakness and uncertainty. And from all this I conclude that I ought to spend all the days of my life without caring to inquire into what must happen to me. Perhaps I might find some solution to my doubts, but I will not take the trouble, nor take a step to

seek it; and after treating with scorn those who are concerned with this case, I will go without foresight and without fear to try the great event, and let myself be led carelessly to death, uncertain of the eternity of my future state."⁵

In fact, although Beckett's affinities with Descartes have been extensively traced by Kenner and others, the affinities with Pascal, at least in Godot, are as striking. They extend from the brevity and tautness of style in Les Lettres Provinciales to the fact that each sets out in his spiritual investigations from a sense of man's physical suffering and frailty.

Does this anatomy of doubt cast light on the critical issue. Can we believe the messenger who says that "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow." The dictionary says that "sure" is used with judgements that are intuitive or subjective, while "certain" applies to those that rest in indubitable evidence.

The realm of the spiritual depends on uncertain assurance, or faith. But for Beckett the rational certainties of the empirical domain are the object of derision. And it is only with the examination of doubt in this section of the play that the Swiftian satire on man's pride in reason in the preceding Pozzo and Lucky interlude, finds its focus and foil.

Pozzo's parable and Lucky's speech -- two diagrams of the relation of God to man -- are offered with all the trappings of logical thought.

Pozzo: Ah! Why couldn't you say so before? Why he doesn't make himself comfortable? Lets try and get this clear. Has he not the right to? Certainly, he has. It follows that he doesn't want to. There's reasoning for you.
(Godot, 21).

This rather incredible deduction from appearances seems to demonstrate only that one is free to draw whatever conclusions seem attractive despite any viable route from appearance to cause.

But Pozzo's logical arsenal is not yet exhausted. "Remark," he says, "that I might just as well have been in his shoes and he in mine. If chance had not willed otherwise. To each one his due." A more complete self contradiction is difficult to imagine. On the one hand, we are to assume, with Vladimir for example, that our fate hangs upon an even chance. On the other hand, we are to accept that chance is somehow capable of willing merited or caused fate -- "to each his due."

If causes cannot be deduced from appearances and if statements seem automatically to generate their own obverse, the attempt to formulate general theories is likely to lead one over the edge into syllogistic idiocy:

Pozzo: The tears of the world are a constant quantity, for each one who begins to weep some where else another one stops. The same is true of the laugh. (He laughs.) Let us not then speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. (Pause.) Let us not speak well of it either. (Pause.) Let us not

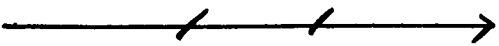
speak of it at all. (Pause.
Judiciously.) It is true the
 population has increased. (Godot, 22).


From the preceding we may presumably conclude that it is
 more humane to cry than to laugh and that if there are more
 and more people each one of them is less important.

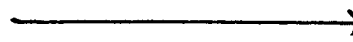
Beckett, however, reserves his heaviest anti-rational
 fire for Lucky as a thinking machine, to be switched on and
 shut off at will. The preserve of rational certainty has
 degenerated into the mechanical repetition of formulae that
 express qualifications: "with some exceptions, for reasons
 unknown, considering, what many deny . . . it is established,
 approximately, by and large, more or less, beyond all doubt
 other than that which clings to the labors of men." Our
 scholars are Fartov and Belcher, Testew and Cunard -- anal
 and obscene -- and they belong to the Acacacademy of
 Anthropopometry which terms resume the caca and popo
 of French nursery slang. Their labors are unfinished,
 lost, abandoned -- in a total of eight repetitions.


Act I, Part one presented us with alternatives of
 action conceived as alternatives of character. Together
 the second and third parts of the act spell out the con-
 sequences of those alternatives. One is to choose,
 apparently, between the false certainties of despair and the
 intrinsically uncertain "even chance" that prompts hope.

Summary Chart: Act I, Part Three

Estragon  Messenger

Vladimir  Messenger

 Attraction

 Aversion

Footnotes to Chapter Seven

- 1 Soren Kierkegaard, "Fear and Trembling" and "The Sickness Unto Death," trans., Walter Lowrie (Garden City, N.Y., 1955), p. 23.
- 2 R. D. Laing, The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness (Baltimore, 1970), p. 39.
- 3 Ibid., p. 40-41.
- 4 Blaise Pascal, "Pensées" and "The Provincial Letters," trans., W. F. Trotter (New York, 1941), p. 68.
- 5 Ibid., p. 69.

Chapter Eight: Vladimir and Estragon Again

In Part one of the first act of Godot, Vladimir is moving towards an intuition of Estragon's loneliness. Estragon, for his part, in pursuit of the hanging scheme, is learning what it is to face the spiritual dilemma of an even chance. Each moves toward a sense of the other's position and they move together into a joint recognition of both physical suffering ["It hurts"] and spiritual isolation.

Continuing to examine the relationships between characters, we found that Vladimir and Estragon move out from an initial position of limitation towards varying forms of satisfaction. In the second part of the act Estragon reaches out towards Pozzo who is able to supply the delights of chicken bones, vaudeville entertainment and, possibly, alms. In Part three, Vladimir welcomes a messenger who promises spiritual salvation.

In fact, both Part two and Part three contain micro-dramas on the subject of satisfaction.

Pozzo: Yes, yes, you have been correct. So that I ask myself is there anything I can do in my turn for these honest fellows who are having such a dull, dull time.

Estragon: Even ten francs would be a help.

Vladimir: We are not beggars!

Pozzo: Is there anything I can do, that's what I ask myself, to cheer them up?

. . .

Estragon: Even five

Vladimir: (to Estragon, indignantly.)
 That's enough!
 Estragon: I couldn't accept less.
 Pozzo: Is it enough? No doubt.
 But I am liberal. (Godot, 26).

When Pozzo proposes to lighten their spirits, Estragon replies that nothing would cheer him up like a little money. Vladimir objects that one must humiliate oneself for material satisfaction, warning Estragon "That's enough!" In the little game of definition through repetition that is a favorite of Beckett's, Vladimir has now succeeded in redefining "enough" as "too much." Estragon's riposte "I couldn't accept less." again redefines enough -- this time as the minimum possible amount.

Estragon breaks down and weeps in Part three:

Vladimir: What's the matter with you?
 Estragon: I'm unhappy.
 Vladimir: Not really! Since when?
 Estragon: I'd forgotten.
 Vladimir: Extraordinary the tricks that
 memory plays. (Godot, 33).

The implication is that Estragon is usually unhappy or perhaps was only less unhappy when Pozzo threw him a bone. Vladimir, on the other hand, identifies with the condition of the boy.

Vladimir: Does he give you enough to eat?
 (The Boy hesitates.) Does he
 feed you well?
 Boy: Fairly well, Sir.

. . .

Vladimir: You don't know if you're un-
 happy or not? . . . You're as
 bad as myself. (Godot, 34).

The last part of Act I is a condensed reprise of

the first part, reflecting in a little more than two pages much of what had been established in the first sixteen. It begins, as has been suggested, in a state of relative satisfaction. Vladimir sighs "At last," for the appointment has been kept -- after a fashion -- and Estragon is now free of both painful boots.

As in Act 1, Part one, Estragon carries the burden of the physical action, coming to terms with his boots, proposing a new suicide attempt, reflecting on a previous suicide attempt that almost succeeded and suggesting, yet again, that the two split up. Vladimir, as before, urges him to avoid despair, to take heart and wait: "Ah Gogo, don't do on like that. To-morrow everything will be better." (Godot, 34).

Estragon's sense of his situation in Part four is more intense and somehow loftier than it was in Part one. His recollection of the Gospels in Part one, for example, is childlike and primitive: "I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty." And Vladimir responds: "You should have been a poet." (Godot, 8). In the last part of the act, however, Estragon contemplates the newly risen moon, and of his own accord calls Shelley to mind in "Pale for weariness." The intellectual Vladimir, in an ironic reversal, keeps trying to direct Estragon's attention back to his boots.

In each of the micro-dramas of Part four Estragon

moves toward a more poignant sense of the natural condition of man. Shelley sees the moon as an emblem of the human spirit -- trapped between heaven and earth.

I

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth --
And ever changing like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

II

Thou chosen sister of the spirit,
That gazes on thee till in thee it pities . . .¹

Estragon sees himself very definitely as of the earthly company: "Pale for weariness . . . of climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us."

Although Vladimir tries to discourage him, Estragon is intent in Part four on establishing some natural equilibrium as a mode of salvation.

Estragon: (Turning to look at the boots.)
I'm leaving them there. (Pause.)
Another will come, just as . . .
as . . . as me, but with smaller
feet, and they'll make him happy.
(Godot, 34).

Estragon, as a new kind of Saviour, identifies himself with Christ. He offers himself first as crucified:

Vladimir: But you can't go barefoot!
Estragon: Christ did.
Vladimir: Christ! What has Christ got to
do with it? You're not going to
compare yourself to Christ!
Estragon: All my life I've compared myself
to him.
Vladimir: But where he lived it was warm,
it was dry!

Estragon: Yes. And they crucified quick.
(Godot, 34).

The ironic implication is that Estragon is even more satisfactory as saviour because his suffering is, if anything, greater.

Having given us Estragon as crucified, Beckett then offers him to us as resurrected in the flesh.

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.
(Godot, 35).

Grapes and fishers suggest a Christian setting. And when Vladimir dismisses the incident, "That's all dead and buried," Estragon reminds him that "My clothes dried in the sun" -- that he came to life again in the flesh.

The opposition between the two men is more concise and more marked in Part four than it is in Part one. The issue has drawn to a head. To the image of Estragon as Christ crucified, Vladimir responds "We've nothing more to do here." To Estragon as resurrected he remarks "There's no good harking back on that. Come on. (He draws him after him, as before.)" (Godot, 35). The physical action of Part four, in fact, consists of Estragon's attempts to remain in the position where he has finally arrived, balanced by Vladimir's efforts to move on, now that the appointment has been kept, and to return to keep the same appointment on the morrow. The completion that Vladimir seeks has not yet been established.

The figure of chiasmus is persuasive, I think, as a model for Act I. Part one, which established modes of despair is balanced and completed by Part four which establishes modes of satisfaction. Enclosed within this frame, we find earthly satisfaction opposed to spiritual hope, in Parts two and three, while earthly suffering is set against spiritual uncertainty.

The imagination behind Godot is one that works powerfully in terms of antithetical pairs. Vladimir and Estragon are spiritual and physical. Pozzo is godlike and worldly. Lucky, most violently split, is thinking machine and beast. Considered in another fashion, each couple inverts the relationship of the other. That is, if the relationship of Vladimir and Estragon tends to express the ascendancy of intellect over matter, the relationship of Pozzo and Lucky asserts the ascendancy of matter over intellect.

Even phonologically the characters are paired. Vladimir's and Estragon's names are dactyls, while Pozzo and Lucky are trochees. When the main characters are called Gogo and Didi, their names are also trochees and all four are opposed to Godot, whose name is the only iamb in the group, a significant internal deviation.

The powers of reason are savagely mocked and the pain of uncertainty is poignantly driven home. The alternatives of action are despair followed by suicide or hope followed by waiting. Heaven and earth regard each other across an immeasurable gulf, as do mind and phenomena.

Roland Barthes, who finds antithesis one of the most stable of all figures proposed by the art of rhetoric, senses its implications: "L'Antithèse sépare de toute éternité; . . . les deux termes d'une antithèse sont l'un et l'autre marqués: leur différence n'est pas issue d'un mouvement complémentaire; dialectique (creux contre plein): l'antithèse est le combat de deux plénitudes, mises rituellement face à face comme: deux guerriers tout armés: l'antithèse est la figure de l'opposition donnée, éternelle, éternellement récurrente: la figure de l'inexpiable."²

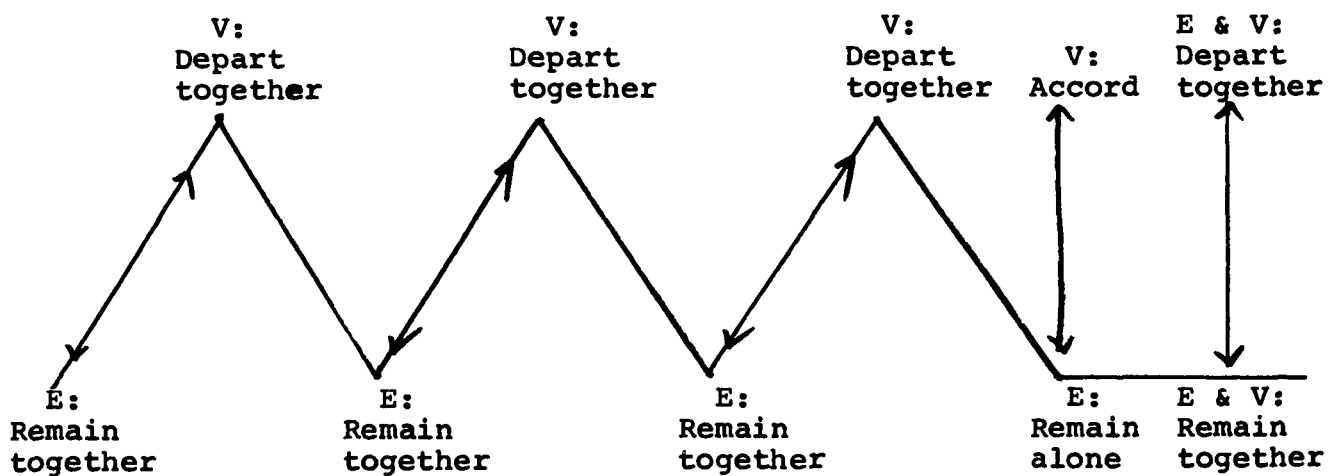
"L'Antithèse est le combat de deux plénitudes," says Barthes, suggesting the fashion in which symbolic pairs tend to reinforce each other, adding richness of connotation. Thus a constellation of related motifs emerges in Godot that takes in the spiritual, the godlike, heaven, hope and uncertainty, with context modulating the terms. In a similar fashion we associate the physical, the worldly, the beast-like, despair, and the pitfalls of reason.

But antithesis, says Barthes, is "la figure de l'inexpiable." As such it frustrates the completion of actions in Godot. The warriors remain forever armed and forever opposed. This would account, of course, for the utility of chiasmus, as the structuring device that encloses oppositions.

We said in considering the first part of Act I that Beckett supplies us with alternatives of action. It was also pointed out that while action may not move forward sequentially

it may proceed through a rebalancing of the relationships among characters. And it is at least true that where in Part one we found alternatives of action, in Part four Estragon's alternatives seems to be more strongly advanced by the action, although still rejected by Vladimir.

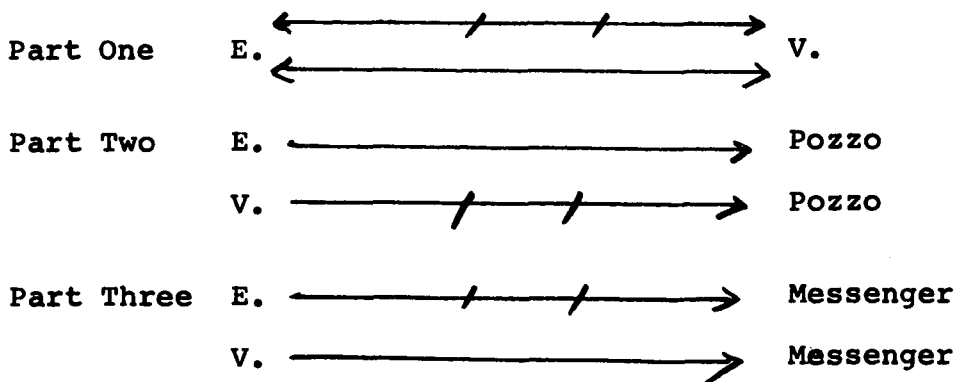
Summary Chart: Act I, Part Four



Estragon —————> Satisfaction

Vladimir ———/——/——> Satisfaction

Summary Chart: Act I



Summary Chart: Act I, Part Four (continued)

Part Four E. \longleftrightarrow V.

 E. \longleftrightarrow V.

Attraction \longrightarrow

Aversion \longleftrightarrow

Footnotes to Chapter Eight

- 1 Percy Bysshe Shelley, "To The Moon," The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed., Thomas Hutchinson (London, 1961), pp. 621-2.
- 2 Barthes, op. cit. (Footnotes to Chapter One, note 1), pp. 33-4.

Chapter Nine: Vladimir and Estragon, A Reversal

John Sheedy notes that "within its sameness, Act II accomplishes a reversal of Act I . . . Here in Act II, Vladimir dominates, as Estragon dominated Act I."¹ If we begin with this awareness of symmetry, we may then consider how Act II can at once mirror and extend Act I.

Too often, critics have found that the two acts are either senselessly parallel or obscurely asymmetrical. In support of the former view, Vivian Mercier has remarked, although only half seriously, that Godot is a play in which "nothing happens, twice."² Similarly, Eric Bentley has written that "Deliberately anti-dramatic, Beckett's play has a shape of a non-dramatic sort; two strips of action are laid side by side like railway tracks. These strips are One Day and the Following Day in the lives of a couple of bums. There cannot be any drama because the author's conclusion is that the two days are the same."³

In the latter camp are those like Hugh Kenner who are more intrigued by the changes that occur between one act and the next: "Things at the fall of the final curtain are not precisely as they were . . . The world is now poorer by one carrot and one rope. In the interval between the acts there have been three organic changes: the tree has acquired leaves, and Pozzo has lost his sight and Lucky his speech . . . In the same interval Gogo's boots have been taken and a pair of a different color substituted . . . One further

item comes from outside the visible economy of the play, viz. Lucky's second hat."⁴

John Fletcher takes note of both repetition and change: "Doubling is a frequent device in Beckett's work . . . There are numerous . . . examples of doubling in [Godot], especially in a slightly modified form, so much so that it gives the play that asymmetrical structure which accounts for much of its power."⁵

Act I was constructed around the alternative modes exemplified by Vladimir and Estragon. But Pozzo commanded a disproportionate amount of attention in Act I. And the act drew to a close around Estragon's deepening vision of man confined by the satisfactions of nature. In a sense Act I represents a single alternative that has been played through and rejected. The possibilities of worldly satisfaction have been given their due. Estragon sampled Pozzo's treasures, and Vladimir found them wanting.

Like the two main characters, the two acts of Godot are antithetically paired. Act II moves into the realm of the mind as Vladimir steps to the fore. We find, for example, that the portion of Act II dealing with Pozzo and Lucky has dropped to 15 pages, from 34. The initial section of Act II, encompassing the dialogues of Vladimir and Estragon, has stretched out, correspondingly, to 26 pages from 14 in Act I.

Vladimir, who appears first on stage in Act II (as

Estragon appeared first in Act I), begins by trying to bury Act I in his mysterious song about the dog:

"A dog came in the kitchen
 And stole a crust of bread
 The cook up with a ladle
 And beat him till he was dead . . .
 Then all the dogs came running
 And dug the dog a tomb
 And wrote upon the tombstone
 For the eyes of dogs to come:
 A dog came in the kitchen. . ."
 (Godot, 37).

The struggle for material survival means desperately snatching at meager sustenance -- as Estragon snatched at Pozzo's chicken bones. But it is a self-defeating struggle, because the mere effort to survive is always and inevitably punished by death.

Still, nothing stays buried in Godot; the dog endlessly returns to the kitchen, and if Estragon cannot get the carrot of Act I he will settle for the radish of Act II.

As Vladimir cannot bury Act I, neither can he bury Estragon. His circular song breaks off as Estragon enters and Vladimir exclaims "You again!" (Godot, 37). The dog has re-entered the kitchen. Estragon, more dependent, suspects that Vladimir has been tempted to go on alone: "He is all alone, he thinks I'm gone forever, and he sings."
 (Godot, 38).

If the likelihood of worldly satisfaction seems thin after Act I -- as Vladimir concludes in his song -- Act II is then left to consider the validity of any action at all. Pervasive in Beckett's writings is the sense that a human being goes on in conditions of ever-increasing

deprivation, unable to be silent and unable to die. A poignant inquiry into the end and issue of action seems to be the basis of this section.

We found in Act I that the outcome of each of the micro-dramas -- the boots, the embrace, the suicide project and the carrot -- is a standoff. The inability to resolve and conclude actions in Act I is balanced in Act II by an inability to begin actions or carry them on. Estragon says "We are happy. What do we do now, now that we are happy?" (Godot, 39). Vladimir says "We could start all over again perhaps," (Godot, 41). Estragon's repeated complaint is "I'm tired" or "That's enough. I'm tired . . . I'm tired breathing." (Godot, 49).

If Act I finds endings problematical and Act II struggles with beginnings, the two acts, together, express the frustration of the cyclical. Events do not end because they are repeated, and if they are only repeated there is no point in beginning again. Only change can validate new action and Estragon will determinedly controvert Vladimir's assertion, in Act II, that "Things have changed here since yesterday." (Godot, 39).

While the predispositions of the characters are unchanged, the balance between them has altered. Estragon's suffering and dependence on Vladimir are now more extreme. Cowed by persecution, he says to Vladimir "Don't touch me! Don't question me! Don't speak to me! Stay with me!" (Godot, 37). Released from Vladimir's embrace "Estragon,

no longer supported, almost falls." (Godot, 38).

When the relationship between the two men, in Act I, swung around a pivot, the action mimed these same mechanics. Act I had a closed shape in which opposing alternatives were enclosed within the initial assertion and ultimate reassertion of a balance.

In the opening section of Act I, Vladimir and Estragon each moved towards a recognition of the other's position. Their conversations in unison were the dominant mode of closure amid many other actions that fell short of resolution. In Act II the mode of closure has altered dramatically. Each progressive stage of the opening debates is punctuated by Estragon's ever more determined attempts to depart.

Thus when Vladimir, defeated in debate, says "You're a hard man to get on with, Gogo," Estragon replies "It'd be better if we parted." (Godot, 40). Discouraged by an endless debate about new boots, Estragon "(having tried in vain to work it out,)" exclaims "I'm tired! . . . Let's go." (Godot, 44). Estragon's efforts to escape mount in intensity as he tries first to fall asleep and then to leave the stage altogether. Nightmares and the advance of persecutors balk him again and again.

Act I took action as its province, and stylistically it was characterized by the kind of grossly physical episodes that I have described in Chapter V. In Act II we are concerned with the end and status of action and have entered

the domain of thought. Appropriately, now, the cross talk of the tragicomedians becomes more insistent, and the pratfalls, although they have not vanished, cede precedence to dialogue. The argument moves logically and relentlessly forward to the single devastating conclusion that action is futile.

Vladimir opens the debate by redefining happiness. It is not a possession like comfortable boots and chicken bones, but a state of mind. It may arise, unbidden, as it has for Vladimir: "One is not master of one's moods. All day I've felt in great form . . . I missed you . . . and at the same time I was happy." (Godot, 38). Estragon attained a state of equilibrium and satisfaction at the close of Act I that excluded Vladimir. Vladimir's attempts to include Estragon are similarly futile. "You must be happy too, deep down if you only knew it . . . Say you are, even if it's not true." (Godot, 38-39).

And now the battle is joined. Vladimir will attempt to demonstrate that changes occur in time -- a ground for hope; the field of history may also be the field of salvation. The tree that marks the rendezvous, once bare, now has four or five leaves, "I was saying things have changed here since yesterday . . . The tree, look at the tree." (Godot, 39). Vladimir is defeated initially by the lapses of memory, discussed in Chapter three, that undermine the status of any absolute measure. "Do you not remember? . . . He's forgotten everything!" (Godot, 39).

Even the appeal to a common personal history fails to elicit a response. "But we were there together, I could swear to it!" (Godot, 40).

To a sense of possible progress, Estragon opposes the conviction that the human condition is ever unbearable and ever the same. "Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery! (Looking wildly about him.) Look at this muckheap! I've never stirred from it!" (Godot, 39).

Vladimir, momentarily routed, sighs deeply. "You're a hard man to get on with, Gogo." And Estragon, who in this act will characteristically refuse to be carried along with Vladimir, replies "It'd be better if we parted." Though dependent he is nevertheless indomitably unconvinced.

Estragon shifts the subject from suffering to death. "You and your landscapes! Tell me about the worms!" Now Vladimir seizes the opportunity to remind him delicately, indirectly, that Estragon owes him his life. "All the same, you can't tell me that this (gesture) bears any resemblance to . . . (he hesitates) . . . to the Macon country for example . . ." (Godot, 39). "We were there together . . . picking grapes." (Godot, 40).

We recall that in Act I Estragon has mentioned "the day I threw myself into the Rhone." Vladimir replied: "We were grape harvesting," and Estragon answered "You fished me out." The Rhone flows along one of the borders of the Macon country (the old province of Burgundy).

Similarly, in the French version of the play, the river mentioned in Act I is the Durance and the district mentioned in Act II is the Vaucluse -- a parallel geographic situation.

This memory lends force to the passage which bridges the discussion of suffering that has passed and the discussion of death that is to come:

- E. It'd be better if we parted.
 V. You always say that and you always come crawling back.
 E. The best thing would be to kill me like the other.
 V. What other? (Pause) What other?
 E. Like billions of others.
 (Godot, 40).

Estragon has come around and for the moment abandons his belligerence. "In the meantime let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent." Several pages follow in which the two speak not from opposite poles, as before, but in a mutual consideration of human experience; thought and action come together in the single arena of history. Together the two men contemplate the past: "It's so we won't hear . . . All the dead voices," says Estragon. (Godot, 40). "Where are all the corpses from?" asks Vladimir. (Godot, 41). When the dialogue finally does break down it is because Estragon protests "I'm not a historian." (Godot, 42).

This most singularly moving passage in the play is indeed the one that has called up images of postwar Europe in the minds of readers: "In one little diabolic canter we have the decay of Western civilization . . . let us go back a few years before Godot to another voice,

renowned for grandeur and hope: 'What is Europe now? It is a rubble-heap, a charnel house, a breeding-ground of pestilence and hate.' It's the atmosphere out of which Godot was born -- the despair, hunger and disease of post-war Europe -- being defined by Winston Churchill."⁶

History reveals the paradox in which thought and action are implicated. The two men must continue to act in order to blot out an awareness of inevitable destruction: "It's so we won't think . . . It's so we won't hear." (Godot, 40). Yet, action needs the impetus of thought. "We could start all over again," but "When you seek you hear." (Godot, 41). Vladimir despairs, for the moment, of thought:

- V. Thinking is not the worst . . . What is terrible is to have thought . . . Oh it's not the worst, I know.
 E. What?
 V. To have thought.
 E. Obviously.
 V. But we could have done without it.
 (Godot, 41-42).

Action and thought, equally, create despair. And with despair comes the ever-present threat of inertia, brooding always over Act II, the state in which one no longer cares to begin.

The movement of Act II, Part I, as we have noted, progresses along the logical lines of a debate. It begins with Vladimir's state of relative satisfaction and pursues a consideration of human suffering to a meditation upon mortality. When the realm of history is exhausted -- yielding no indication of hope -- Estragon proposes that they "turn

resolutely toward nature." (Godot, 41).

Vladimir replies that "We've tried that," (Godot, 41), . . . and so they have, in Act I. The section that follows is a reprise of incidents in Act I, in which Vladimir attempts to demonstrate to Estragon that their physical circumstances have changed for the better. In order to do so he must first establish that they have come to the same place. The foundation of that proof, however, rests on shifting sand.

- E. I tell you we weren't here yesterday . . .
 V. And where were we yesterday evening according to you?
 E. How would I know? In another compartment. There's no lack of void.

(Godot, 42).

Vladimir maintains that the dead tree has sprouted leaves -- indicating that in the realm of nature hope remains. And yet Estragon's wound has begun to fester and the supply of carrots has been exhausted. All through this section, as at the opening of the act, Vladimir urges Estragon to go on.

- E. Ah! (Pause. Despairing.) What'll we do, what'll we do!
 V. There's nothing we can do.
 E. But I can't go on like this!
 V. Would you like a radish?

(Godot, 44).

Estragon is no more satisfied with the increment in leaves, food and boots than he had been with the progress of history. "That's enough about these boots . . . Enough! . . . If only I could sleep . . . (He resumes his foetal

posture).” (Godot, 45). And if all the dead voices persuaded him that not even death promises surcease, he will try, in the foetal posture, to pretend that he has never been born.

Escape introduces a reign of terror, for nightmare follows upon sleep. Abandoning existence, Estragon finds that the ground disappears from beneath his feet. "I was falling -- . . . I was on top of a --" (Godot, 45). Walking off into the unknown, "Exit Estragon left, precipitately," exposes him to punishing dangers. "I'm accursed . . . They're coming." (Godot, 47). Backed up against the wall, driven to the last ditch, Estragon still cherishes hopes of escape.

Vladimir's commitment to the appointment with Godot, however, is absolute:

E. What do we do now?
V. Wait for Godot.
(Godot, 39).

E. What do we do now?
V. Wait for Godot.
(Godot, 41).

E. Let's go.
V. We can't.
E. Why not?
V. We're waiting for Godot.
(Godot, 44).

E. Let's go.
V. We can't.
E. Why not?
V. We're waiting for Godot.
(Godot, 45).

Faced with the necessity of filling in the time, Vladimir manages to go on. Thought may be impossible because it is hedged with uncertainty. Action may be senseless because it is cyclical. But Vladimir can shift the

antithetical pair to a new meta-realm, where thought becomes attitude and action becomes play.

Vladimir suggested at the opening of Act II that attitude is more important than action:

- E. I tell you I wasn't doing anything.
 V. Perhaps you weren't. But it's the way of doing it that counts, the way of doing it, if you want to go on living.
 E. I wasn't doing anything.
 (Godot, 38-39).

As the act progresses Estragon convinces him of the futility of thought. Forced to abandon thought, Vladimir contents himself with playing at thought:

- V. Lucky's hat . . . How does it fit me? . . . Will you not play? . . . We could play at Pozzo and Lucky . . . I'll do Lucky.
 (Godot, 46-47).

Does not the elaborate pantomime in which Vladimir and Estragon exchange hats, introducing a third hat into the rotation, constitute an elaborate parody of all the preceding discussions in Act II? Each tries on the other's position only to return to his own, while the third hat stimulates dialogue by introducing the received issues of philosophical speculation.

If Estragon refuses to play at thought, he can occasionally be induced to play at action:

- V. We could do our exercises.
 E. Our movements.
 V. Our elevations.
 E. Our relaxations.
 V. Our elongations.
 E. Our relaxations.
 V. To warm us up.

E. To calm us down.
 V. Off we go.
 (Godot, 49).

As the opening dialogues of Act II draw to a close, prior to the arrival of Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir and Estragon play the only game that is inexhaustible, the game of their relationship with each other. They explore the relationship at its two extremes, first assaulting each other with verbal abuse then rushing to each other's arms.

V. Moron!
 E. Vermin!
 V. Abortion!
 E. Morpion!
 V. Sewer rat . . .
 E. Now let's make it up.
 V. Gogo!
 E. Didi!
 V. Your hand!
 E. Take it!
 (Godot, 48).

Vladimir, intent on his appointment, is willing to play. But for Estragon a moment of crisis has arrived. In his first attempt to escape, through sleep, he feels the ground disappear from under him. As he tries to leave, he is set upon by attackers. He rushes back onto the stage exclaiming: "I'm accursed . . . I'm in hell." To be accursed is to be excommunicated. To be in hell is to be forever cut off from God.

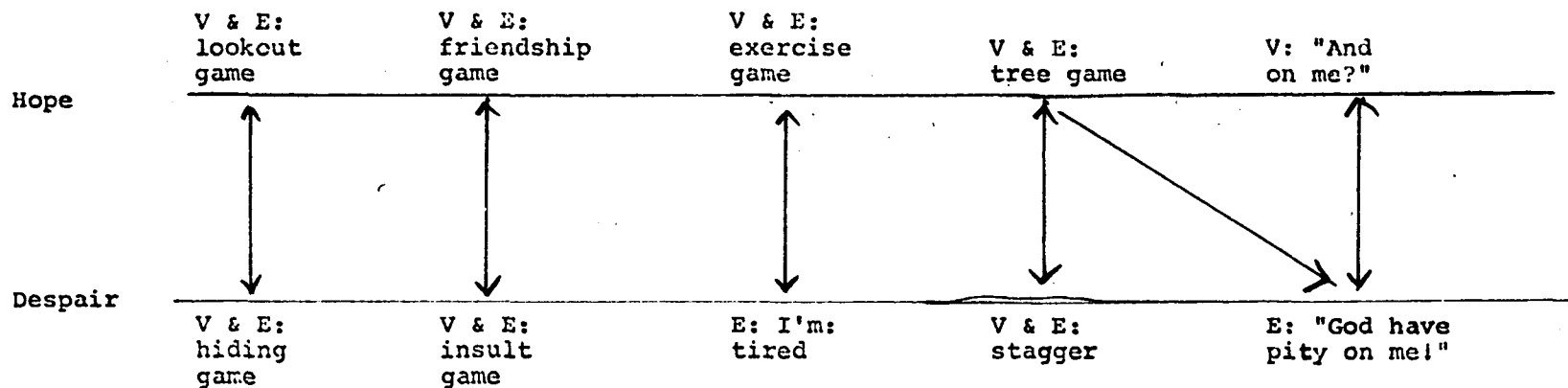
Estragon feels he has been abandoned by heaven to ceaseless suffering on earth and after death. Vladimir encourages him to go on through a new series of games. But when the games have ended, the question still remains. Estragon asks "Do you think God sees me? Question is

transformed, finally, into supplication: "God have pity on me! . . . On me! On me! Pity! On me!" (Godot, 49).

We are concerned in this section of Act II with a progressive mode -- the logical sequence of argument. The reciprocal mode of Act I hinged structurally upon moments of accord and discord between the characters. Each, we recall, moved, at some point, to a sense of the others position. But the emphasis fell on the balance between the two.

Only here in Act II, where Vladimir is vigorously trying to persuade Estragon, do we have the sense of positions being defended and then abandoned. It is his failure to persuade Estragon that marks the direction of the action; which is distinguished by Estragon's ever-more determined attempts to leave. Insofar as he fails, Vladimir is driven back to the root of his position, which is a commitment to wait for Godot.

Summary Chart: Act II, Part One (continued)



Footnotes to Chapter Nine

- 1 John J. Sheedy, "The Net," Casebook on Waiting for Godot, ed. Ruby Cohn (New York, 1967), p. 160 and p. 165.
- 2 Quoted by Hugh Kenner, Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study (Berkeley, 1968), p. 152.
- 3 Eric Bentley, "The Talent of Samuel Beckett," Casebook, p. 61.
- 4 Kenner, p. 152.
- 5 John Fletcher, Samuel Beckett's Art (London, 1967), p. 64.
- 6 Herbert Blau, "Notes From the Underground," Casebook, p. 114.

Chapter Ten: Pozzo and Lucky, A Catastrophe

We are more than two-thirds of the way through Godot when Pozzo and Lucky appear a second time, drastically altered in condition. It is the first moment all evening when we meet a conventional plot. Master and slave have been overtaken by catastrophe -- one has been blinded and the other stricken dumb. One feels, with John Sheedy, that "In Act II, the world has gone mad. All is intensified and accelerated. While Act I can be played for laughs, Act II shrieks."¹

For Act II is played in the last ditch. We recall that at the opening of Act I Vladimir and Estragon explored the limits of material satisfaction. The balance tipped one way and then the other around the pivot of their relationship. But in Act II the opening debates between the two move with destructive intent. Argument ruthlessly wipes out each worldly base in succession. Vladimir despairs of thought and then of action, to be left, finally, only with play. Estragon cries out that he has been abandoned.

If Pozzo's catastrophe suggests traditional drama, so too does this entire portion of Act II. No other section of the play is so rigorously limited to a single major action. All revolves around the effort of Vladimir and Estragon to raise Pozzo to his feet. It is, in fact, their opportunity to become rescuers and heroes. If the opening section explored the validity of action by precept, this

section turns to the veritable test case.

The noble motives of melodrama are parodied in the mundane deliberations of Vladimir and Estragon. The realm of action, apparently, responds most directly to behavioristic stimuli of reward and punishment.

- E. We should ask him for the bone first.
Then if he refuses, we'll leave him there . . .
- V. But there's one thing I'm afraid of . . . That Lucky might get going all of a sudden. Then we'd be ballocksed.
(Godot, 50).

Power finds it easy to neglect moral considerations.

- E. And suppose we gave him a good beating the two of us?
- V. You mean if we fell on him in his sleep?
(Godot, 51).

Having just announced to Estragon that they ought to help Pozzo "in anticipation of some tangible return," Vladimir, in the political manner of those who attribute moral motives to self-serving deeds, issues a stirring call to action: "Let us represent worthily for once, the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us." (Godot, 51).

But action, whether basely prompted or undertaken out of a noble concern for others, is utterly irrelevant:

- V. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come --
- E. Ah!
- P. Help!
- V. Or for night to fall.
(Godot, 51).

Lest the audience be intoxicated by the sudden appearance of action and plot, Vladimir reminds them that significant action belongs not to the material but to the spiritual arena. Action degenerated into play in the opening pages of Act II. The arrival of Pozzo has not changed its status.

V. We are bored . . . A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come, let's get to work!

(Godot, 52).

Involvement with the world of events, however, is debilitating in the extreme. Vladimir, attempting to raise Pozzo, falls and is unable to raise even himself. Lacking his former precarious power Vladimir is no longer rescuer but potential victim. He cries to Estragon "Don't leave me! They'll kill me!" (Godot, 52).

One is reminded here of Beckett's own abortive war-time involvement with history, recounted by Martin Esslin in a brief biographical sketch: "When war came, in September 1939, Beckett . . . immediately returned to Paris . . . He joined a Resistance group, and led the dangerous and precarious life of a member of the underground movement. One day in August, 1942, he returned to his apartment and found a message informing him that some of the members of his Resistance group had been arrested. He left his home immediately and made his way into the unoccupied zone, where he found shelter and work as an agricultural laborer in a peasant's house in the Vaucluse, near Avignon."²

Meanwhile, Estragon, seeing Vladimir dragged down

by Pozzo, follows the urging of instinct to save himself. "I'm going." But he is really unable to go on without Vladimir.

- E. Come on, get up, you'll catch a chill.
- V. Don't worry about me.
- E. Come on, Didi, don't be pig-headed!
(Godot, 52).

The price for extricating Vladimir from the heap is a promise that they may abandon their appointment forever.

- V. Help me up first, then we'll go together.
- E. You promise?
- V. I swear it!
- E. And we'll never come back?
- V. Never!
- E. We'll go to the Pyrenees.
- V. Wherever you like.
(Godot, 52).

Estragon is prompted by tenderness, dependence and the desire to bring Vladimir around to his own position. Their relationship is personal, almost organic. The motives for coming to Pozzo's aid are gain at the most, diversion at the least, because their relationship to him is general and abstract. All they share is the fact that they are human, a common status that amounts to no more than the fact that they are all mired in the same mud. "Estragon pulls, stumbles, falls."

- P. Help!
- V. We've arrived.
- P. Who are you?
- V. We are men.
- E. Sweet mother earth.
(Godot, 53).

In Act I Pozzo attempted to link the tramps to him in a common definition of the human. We said that he

seemed "a Protean manifestation of the entire phenomenal world and its rulers." Our description is confirmed at his second appearance:

E. We might try him by other names . . .
 V. I tell you his name is Pozzo.
 E. We'll soon see. (He reflects.)
 Abel! Abel!
 P. Help!
 E. Got it in one! . . . Perhaps the other one is called Cain. Cain!
 Cain!
 P. Help!
 E. He's all humanity. (Silence.)
 (Godot, 53-4).

But he is the material world stripped of all pretense of power. Blind, stumbling, unable to rise, he is mankind, the son of Adam, expelled from Eden, wandering the earth, abandoned, like Estragon, by God. His multivalence as a character who had been both threatening and entertaining is now gone. Polarities have collapsed. Pozzo's contribution to Act II is almost entirely composed of thirteen scattered, successive cries for "Help!" and four requests for "Pity." He has been reduced to an object lesson on the ends of action.

Discovering his condition we seek its causes.

Pozzo supplies an explanation in his final speech:

"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 . . . On!"
 (Godot, 57).

It is the nature of human existence that afflicts Pozzo, and all men, with ever increasing deprivation. In Act I Estragon found Pozzo sympathetic. Now Estragon and Pozzo have drawn still closer together. What they share is a despair of the human condition.

What, then, are we to make of the semi-divine powers that once distinguished Pozzo. Not a few critics have gone so far as to suggest that Pozzo is Godot, but no consistent interpretation can be founded on this premise.

Chadwick, for example, will argue that because Pozzo is wicked (vide Act I) Godot is wicked as well. He reasons as follows: "Pozzo arrives not merely once, but twice, just when Godot is expected . . . on the second occasion, he enters immediately after, one might almost say in response to, Estragon's despairing cry: 'God have pity on me!' . . . Surely a logical argument, without any a priori assumptions must run: Godot is God, Pozzo is Godot, Pozzo is therefore God and since Pozzo is nothing but a tyrant and a slave driver, so too is God."³

Rechtien summarizes a countervailing view: "Through analysis of the Biblical allusions in the play, two critics Charles S. McCoy . . . and Gabriel Vahanian . . . come to the same conclusion: Godot does come but Vladimir and Estragon are not able to recognize him. Godot must be recognized in others, even in the most abandoned, such as Pozzo and Lucky."⁴ Clearly, this interpretation takes into account not the Pozzo of Act I, but only the Pozzo of Act II. God then is not

tyrant, but sufferer, not Jehovah but Christ.

It is true that even in Act II, Pozzo draws about himself some shreds of divine power. But he claims to be neither Jehovah, nor Christ. "I woke up one fine day" says Pozzo, "as blind as Fortune." And Fortune, like Pozzo in Act I, is a ruler of this world. Kolve describes her in an article on Godot: "The Goddess Fortuna was traditionally pictured sightless . . . She turns a wheel with men strapped to it . . . and by it they rise and fall. That Fortune (or Chance) confers her favors haphazardly, without regard for good or evil, can be little doubted."⁵

The classic explication of the role of Fortune within the Christian scheme is that of Boethius. The Consolation of Philosophy, according to one of its translators, "[celebrated] for the reader of the Christian middle ages . . . the life of the mind . . . and the possibility of its victory over the misfortunes and frustrations which attend fallen man's pursuit of transitory substitutes for the Supreme Good which alone can satisfy human desires."⁶

Boethius, a philosopher trying to serve the civil government, finds himself thrown into prison, much as Vladimir, a philosopher, coming to the rescue of the worldly Pozzo, finds himself toppled in the mud.

Wretched and fallen, Boethius demands of God "Why should uncertain fortune control our lives?"⁷ Dame Philosophy reminds Boethius that he must not "expect to find stability in human affairs, since the life of man

himself is often quickly ended."⁸ Power is not to be desired because, as Pozzo discovers in Act II, "How wonderful is power which is found incapable even of preserving itself."⁹

The force of the Boethian argument, like the force of Godot, Act II, is that man ought not to seek distinction, or justice, in the actions of this world: "Where now are the bones of faithful Fabricius? What has become of Brutus and stern Cato? Their slight surviving fame entrusts their empty names to some few books. But although we know these fair words we cannot know the dead. They lie there, quite unknown, for fame will not keep fresh your memory. If you hope to live on in the glow of your mortal name, the day will come at last to take that too, and you will die a second death."¹⁰

Godot has its own version of the ubi sunt:

- V. (Sententious.) To every man his little cross. (He sighs.) Till he dies, (Afterthought) And is forgotten. . .
- E. All the dead voices. . .
- V. What do they say?
- E. They talk about their lives.

II

In fact, Pozzo and Estragon together abandon the two coordinates of historical action -- time and space. "Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time!" says Pozzo, turning on Vladimir, suddenly furious. In the

same fashion Estragon had protested: "What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery." (Godot, 39).

If particular actions can be fixed in time and space with certainty, causal connections may be established between them and interpretations attempted. If Estragon and Vladimir have come to the same place on this second evening (and Beckett in a stage direction, assures us that they have), then we know that the tree which appeared to be dead in Act I, in Act II has sprouted "four or five" leaves.

Vladimir adduces the leaves as a ground for hope. Again and again in the opening section of Act II he draws Estragon's attention to the tree.

V. I was saying that things have changed here since yesterday The tree, look at the tree.

(Godot, 39).

V. What was I saying, we could go on from there . . . let me see . . . ah! The tree!

(Godot, 42).

The rebirth of life is an emblem of hope for Vladimir. Estragon, despairing, will repeat four times that to him "all the dead voices" sound "like leaves." Vladimir vainly proffers alternatives. The dead voices sound "like wings" "like sand," "like feathers," "like ashes," and each time Estragon responds, "like leaves." (Godot, 40).

When Estragon is pursued by tormentors, Vladimir urges him to hide behind the tree. But apparently the tree

does not constitute an adequate defense. "(Estragon goes and crouches behind the tree, realizes he is not hidden, comes out from behind the tree.)" And Vladimir is obliged to conclude that "Decidedly this tree will not have been the slightest use to us." (Godot, 48).

The last exercise that Vladimir proposes, before the men are interrupted by Pozzo, is an imitation of the tree:

- V. Let's just do the tree, for the balance.
- E. The tree?
Vladimir does the tree, staggering about on one leg.
- V. Your turn.
Estragon does the tree, staggers.

(Godot, 49).

The two men cannot obtain the balance and repose of natural objects, because man is a creature of spirit as well as of nature. His dualistic nature does not allow him to balance on a single leg. That may be why when Estragon staggers he is finally prompted to ask "Do you think God sees me?" (Godot, 49).

If the first part of Act II offers the tree as evidence that in life things change for the better, the second part of Act II offers Pozzo as evidence that in life things change for the worse. Pozzo's rebuttal of Vladimir's position is that "They give birth astride of a grave." Implicit in every beginning, however hopeful, is the inevitable mortal end. Decline is instantaneous, "The

light gleams an instant, then it's night once more."

These, then, are the two substantial changes in Act II, the one encouraging hope, the other reinforcing despair.

Philosophy had counseled Boethius to "fly from hope and sorrow." For when "these things rule, the mind is clouded and bound to the earth." But of course it is precisely between the poles of Vladimir's hope and Estragon's sorrow that the drama of Godot, Act II, unfolds.

Insofar as the acts resemble parallel tracks, however, we may have Beckett's own sardonic comment. Vladimir and Estragon appear on stage. Pozzo and Lucky enter and depart. Night falls, and the two men leave the stage, planning to return the next evening. Things in life do not change for the better; nor do they change for the worse. They do not change at all.

Footnotes to Chapter Ten

- 1 Sheedy, Casebook, p. 164.
- 2 Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York, 1969), pp. 17-18.
- 3 C. Chadwick, "Waiting for Godot: A Logical Approach," Symposium (Winter, 1960), pp. 253-5.
- 4 Brother John Rechten, "Time and Eternity Meet in the Present," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, VI (1964), p. 14.
- 5 J. A. Kolve, "Religious Language in Waiting for Godot," Centennial Review, XI, p. 124.
- 6 Richard Green, trans. The Consolation of Philosophy, by Boethius (Indianapolis, 1962), p. ix.
- 7 Ibid, p. 15.
- 8 Ibid, pp. 26-27.
- 9 Ibid., p. 51.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 39-40.
- 11 Ibid., p. 20.

Chapter Eleven: The Approach to Godot

It is ever more apparent in Act II that Estragon has given up. In Act I he manages a single nap. In Act II he drifts off to sleep no fewer than four times. The first time he is haunted by nightmares; the second time he is disturbed by Pozzo's flailing. When Pozzo leaves, he dozes again but is wakened by Vladimir who is lonely. For Vladimir has begun to share Estragon's desperation.

- E. Are you sure it wasn't him?
 V. Who?
 E. Godot?
 V. But who?
 E. Pozzo.
 V. Not at all! (Less sure.) Not at all!
 (Still less sure.) Not at all!

(Godot, 58).

What ground has Vladimir, after all, for the conviction that anything exists beyond the world as he knows it. He says "I don't know what to think any more." After Pozzo's departure, the two men are driven back by pain into a yet more acute dependence on each other.

- V. I was lonely . . .
 E. My feet! . . . Help me!

(Godot, 57-58).

Vladimir can make no more of the events that have transpired than Pozzo can. "But in all that what truth will there be? . . . Astride of a grave and a difficult birth."

(Godot, 58).

The existence of a transcendent world cannot be demonstrated by means of experience. It is manifest only in intuitions that arise unbidden: "At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on What have I said?" (Godot, 58).

Vladimir's intuition is a moment of closure. Just before Pozzo stumbled onto the stage, Estragon had asked "Do you think God sees me? and Vladimir had replied "You must close your eyes." (Godot, 49). Seeking an awareness of God, one must blot out this world by an act of the will. The irony is that like Pozzo, the world is blind to God, and yet it struggles on as before. Perhaps only those who, like Vladimir, subordinate all action to a commitment to God are granted awareness. He had said in Act I, "Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time . . . appalled." (Godot, 8).

As Rosette Lamont has written: "In his effort toward ever growing abstraction and purification, Beckett captures with loving irony that precise moment in time when life has deserted the body, but consciousness lingers on, the spirit's afterglow Awareness then is what matters for Beckett, though he may exorcise in a series of ever tightening statements, or questions, the existentialist illusion of the necessity of ethical choice.

He seems to prefer the Buddhist ideal of choiceless awareness, more suited to a dramatist whose concern is with the irrevocability of human suffering."¹

In the relationship of Vladimir and Estragon there is a paradigm for the relationship of God and man. God might say with Vladimir "Ah no, Gogo, the truth is there are things escape you that don't escape me." (Godot, 38).

Estragon has begun to drop out of the equation. When the messenger arrives for the second time, Estragon, sleeping, does not even know that he has come again and gone. But Vladimir, who has received the boy in Act I with kindness, has now adopted Estragon's belligerence." (With sudden violence.) You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me to-morrow that you never saw me! Silence. Vladimir makes a sudden spring forward, the boy avoids him and exit[s] running." (Godot, 59).

The first time the boy had been frightened by Pozzo and Lucky. This time he hasn't even seen them. The first time he had to be coaxed to approach. Now he begins unbidden. The material world is dwindling in power, and the confrontation with the spiritual is more direct. In the first act, Vladimir asked "You work for Mr. Godot?" and was told of pastoral duties. Now Vladimir asks "What does he do Mr. Godot?" and the boy responds "He does nothing, Sir." (Godot, 59).

Vladimir is vouchsafed a second-hand vision of

Godot. "Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?" . . . "I think it's white, Sir." Godot then is precisely the Old Testament God, existing in righteousness beyond the world of men. Estragon had cried out "(brandishing his fists, at the top of his voice) 'God have pity on me!'" (Godot, 49). Now Vladimir exclaims "Christ have mercy on us!"

Vladimir begins in Act II with a meditation upon the nature of history. He sets out more or less buoyantly to persuade Estragon that changes in events and circumstances may justify hope. Estragon remains unconvinced and Vladimir's certainty wilts. The debates conclude as Estragon calls upon God for pity, more than ever convinced that he has been abandoned.

The events ensuing upon the arrival of Pozzo destroy the last shreds of historical optimism. A second rendezvous with the messenger brings Vladimir still further into concert with Estragon's despair.

He insists that they will return on the morrow, but he is less hopeful than ever before. For the first time, all the scattered examples in the play of power that is being abused come together in a reference to Godot. "If we dropped him?" asks Estragon? "He'd punish us", answers Vladimir, (Godot, 59). Godot, with his white beard, is a God of vengeance.

The suicide scheme of Act I is undertaken in Act II with greater determination.

E. You say we have to come back tomorrow?

- V. Yes.
 E. Then we can bring a good bit of rope.
 V. Yes . . . We'll hang ourselves to-morrow.
 (Pause) Unless Godot comes.
 E. And if he comes?
 V. We'll be saved.

(Godot, 60).

The alternatives are now sharply focussed. Either human life is redeemed by God made manifest, or it is unendurable and must be ended.

All that the spiritual can accomplish is to coax man into hanging on to some last few rags of dignity and decency.

- V. Pull on your trousers.
 E. What?
 V. Pull on your trousers.
 E. You want me to pull off my trousers?
 V. Pull ON your trousers.
 E. (Realizing his trousers are down.) True.
He pulls up his trousers.

(Godot, 60).

If there is a choice to be made between alternatives it seems clear that the two men will be unable to make it. Triumphantly managing to rise from the ground in Act II, Vladimir said "Simple question of will-power." (Godot, 54). Now Vladimir says "Well? Shall we go?" and Estragon answers "Yes, let's go." But in the final stage direction "They do not move." (Godot, 60).

Many have commented on the comparative freedom of the tramps compared with the servitude of Pozzo and Lucky. But free will, according to Boethius, is not primarily relevant to the sphere of human action: "Human souls, however, are more free while they are engaged in

contemplation of the divine mind, and still less free when they are bound by earthly fetters. They are in utter slavery when they lose possession of their reason . . . For when they turn away their eyes from the light of supreme truth to mean and dark things, they are blinded by a cloud of ignorance and obsessed by vicious passions."²

Although Vladimir and Estragon are free to act, their command of circumstance is inadequate to the necessity of making a choice. Their perspective is too limited. As Philosophy explains to Boethius, the process of human reason cannot comprehend the simplicity of divine foreknowledge: "For whatever lives in time lives in the present, proceeding from past to future, and nothing is so constituted in time that it embraces the whole span of its life at once. It has not yet arrived at tomorrow, and it has already lost yesterday; even the life of this day is lived only in each moving, passing moment."³

Thus, although they have escaped the material entanglements that bind Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir and Estragon cannot move out to the transcendental, all-comprehending contemplation that characterizes the divine. The sum of Vladimir's achievement is to recognize that, perhaps, beyond his limited grasp, such a perspective may exist.

Their position, finally, however, differs from that of Boethius. Boethius counselled a turning away from the world. The tramps, in contrast, remain trapped

between this world and the next, obliged to go on living and to go on expecting salvation. We remarked earlier (in Chapter Seven) that Beckett's sense of man's spiritual dilemma seemed very close to that of Pascal. By the end of the play, this affinity is yet more marked. For Pascal, like Beckett, is concerned with the fact that men must go on living in this world.

I am indebted to Lucien Goldmann's study of Pascal's thought in relation to the tragedy of Racine for the following description of Pascal's position. Goldmann writes:

In my view, Pascal's attitude stems from the fact that he carries the idea of the hidden God -- or, rather, of the God who hides himself -- to the extreme point where he sees God as preventing man from discovering not only his will but also his existence. It is precisely because, for man in his fallen state, the existence of God has become a hope and a certainty of the heart -- that is to say an uncertain and paradoxical certainty -- that man can no longer find a sure and certain refuge by simply withdrawing from the world. It is in the world, or at least in the presence of the world, that man must now express both his rejection of any relative values and his quest for values that shall be authentic and transcendent.

And if we return for a moment to the problem of the two thieves, who like Vladimir and Estragon may or may not have been saved, we will see that Beckett again is close to Pascal in his disposition of the issue of God's will. As Goldmann writes: "From the point of view of God there are the Elect who cannot be damned and the Reprobate who

cannot be saved. From the point of view of man, on the other hand, the categories of 'Elect' and 'Reprobate' are in each individual case merely permanent possibilities.⁵

Footnotes to Chapter Eleven

- 1 Rosette Lamont, "Beckett's Metaphysics of Choicelless Awareness," Samuel Beckett Now, ed. Melvin J. Friedman (Chicago, 1970), p. 199 and 201.
- 2 Boethius, p. 105.
- 3 Ibid., p. 115.
- 4 Lucien Goldmann, The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensees of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine, trans. Philip Thody (New York, 1964), p. 284.
- 5 Ibid., p. 293.

Chapter Twelve: Symmetrical Structures

Beckett has compensated for the absence of plot -- obviously a major organizing element in drama -- by substituting symmetry in its place. In his discussion of the structural elements of the drama, Paganini finds that what he calls "spatial" order is especially suited to drama, "dove la disposizione delle parti costruisce una geometria, mediante parallelisme, simmetrie, ecc., funzione, questa, forse piu frequente nel teatro che nel romanzo."¹

Hermann Weyl has written at length on the concept of symmetry as it is manifested in the arts, and as it is understood in the sciences. He writes that: "The image of the balance provides a natural link to the second sense in which the word symmetry is used in modern times: bilateral symmetry, the symmetry of left and right, which is so conspicuous in the structure of the higher animals, especially the human body."²

The concept of bilateral symmetry carries within it a submerged notion of opposition. Weyl makes it clear that "to the scientific mind there is no inner difference, no polarity between left and right, as there is for instance in the contrast of male and female."³ He does note, however, that "mythical thinking has always taken the contrary view as is evinced by its usage of right and left as symbols for such polar opposites as good and evil."⁴

It is interesting that when Weyl wishes to demon-

Act I and Act II also exhibit bilateral symmetry in that Estragon dominates Act I, while Vladimir dominates Act II. Act I and Act II are also symmetrical in another fashion. They exhibit translatory symmetry of the kind that is found in the repetitions of a band ornament. In a band ornament a unit design is, as it were, picked up totally and repeated alongside the original. This is the case in Godot where a sequence of actions occurs in Act I and is repeated in a similar sequence in Act II. Weyl writes of translatory symmetry "Of course the pattern does not go on into infinity (nor does a band ornament) but one may say that it is potentially infinite at least in one direction."⁶

While the symmetries create order in the play their effect is essentially static and "undramatic." What happens dramatically is that action, change and progress are perceived as a deliberate weighting of one side of the symmetrical balance. Thus at the end of Act I Estragon has moved to a more commanding position than he occupied at the beginning of Act I. And in Act II where Estragon is eclipsed by Vladimir the balance is weighted ever more heavily on Vladimir's side. As Weyl remarks, it is asymmetry that suggests an awareness of meaning and intent: "Seldom is asymmetry merely the absence of symmetry. Even in asymmetric designs one feels symmetry as the norm from which one deviates under the influence of forces of a non-formal character. [emphasis added]."⁷

If symmetry in the play is upset by movement

away from the material towards a confrontation with the spiritual, it is also undermined by Beckett's sense that two dimensional symmetry cannot adequately account for a four-dimensional universe. Weyl sets out the scope of the problem: "All these considerations are deficient in one respect: they ignore that physical occurrences happen not only in space but in space and time; . . . The symmetry, relativity or homogeneity of this four-dimensional continuum was first correctly described by Einstein."⁸ Weyl points out that since Einstein, we are unable to give objective meaning to the statement that two events take place at the same time or in the same place: "Thus one came to realize that only the coincidence of two world points, 'here-now' or their immediate vicinity has a directly verifiable meaning."⁹

Thus whether Act I and Act II of Godot are indeed symmetrical is problematical from the point of view of the characters who never establish to their satisfaction that on the second night they have returned to the same place. Obviously, however, the symmetry of the play could not be effective without some certainty on this point; and Beckett who supplies very little in the way of certainty, does at least assure the reader in a stage direction for Act II that this is "Next day. Same time. Same place."

Godot, then, is characterized by both translatory symmetry arising from the repetition of events from Act I in Act II and bilateral symmetry generated by the opposition

between characters. (These forms of order carry with them, as is typical in Beckett, a form of negation which asserts that no symmetry is possible in the four-dimensional continuum of time-space.) These two kinds of symmetry correspond closely with the first and second order "geometries" which Paul Ginestier¹⁰ sees as typical of all drama.

Geometry of the first order is usually predicated on the affairs of men, and "dans la zone d'existence se meuvent les personnages." Their actions are "mouvements réels dus à l'extériorisation des tensions."¹¹ To this order belong the consecutive actions of Acts I and II of Godot.

The two acts correspond most closely to that category of first order geometry which Ginestier calls "situations en parallèle." Acts I and II of Godot are structured in terms of "le parallélisme dans le temps, avec un intervalle plus ou moins grand entre les parallèles (plusieurs siècles ou une ou deux générations)."¹² Of course in Godot the interval in time has been collapsed to a single night.

Such parallel construction, it is interesting to note, always raises the problem of endings: "Le dénouement d'une géométrie dramatique en parallèle pose des problèmes particuliers, car il donne nécessairement une impression d'arbitraire: pourquoi arrêter l'action là plutôt qu'ailleurs? Dans les autres géométries, ce sont les intersections qui forment les dénouements, mais rien de tel ici . . . L'inachevé fondamental de cette géométrie

est sa force auprès des spectateurs qui vont pouvoir compléter mentalement."¹³

However, plays which seek to move outward from human affairs to the metaphysical possess also, according to Ginestier, a second order structure which originates not with events but with the hero. "La zone de sur-existence est celle où trône le héros," and it is characterized not by movement but rather by "mouvement immobile du à une tension intérieure."¹⁴ It is to this second order of structure that the binary opposition of Vladimir and Estragon belongs.

Ginestier suggests that the hero is able to move out towards the metaphysical most commonly through "la fixation à une fatalité,"¹⁵ which in the case of Godot would be the expected rendezvous. However, a resolution of the opposition between Vladimir and Estragon is not possible in human terms. It could only be brought about by the appearance of Godot. Second order structures, in general, according to Ginestier, move towards resolution only in the realm of the absolute.¹⁸

Godot strikes us as unusual, in part, because the geometry of the first order is deliberately trivialized while the geometry of the second order becomes apparent only when repetition has forced us to take note of a submerged binary pattern.

To sum up, we may say then, that in Godot, Beckett makes scant use of the chronological pattern of

cause and effect and consecutive action that are the mainstay of most stories. He chooses, rather, to organize his drama at the "second order" of structure, where pattern arises from the nature of the hero and his relationship to his destiny. And at this level our sense of pattern is not primarily temporal but spatial.

Footnotes to Chapter Twelve

- 1 Marcello Paganini, "Per una semiologia del teatro classico," Strumenti Critici, No. 12 (June, 1970), p. 136.
- 2 Hermann Weyl, Symmetry (Princeton, N. J., 1952, reprinted 1962), p. 4.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
- 4 Ibid., p. 22.
- 5 Ibid., p. 22.
- 6 Ibid., p. 51.
- 7 Ibid., p. 13.
- 8 Ibid., p. 130.
- 9 Ibid., p. 131.
- 10 Paul Ginestier, Le Théâtre Contemporain dans le Monde (Paris, 1961).
- 11 Ibid., p. 105.
- 12 Ibid., p. 31.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 41-42.

14 Ibid., p. 105.

15 Ibid., p. 106.

16 Ibid., p. 107.

17 Ibid., p. 102.

18 Ibid., p. 153.

Chapter Thirteen: Mediation

The spatial structure of Waiting for Godot denies the possibility of resolution. But while the play does not move toward a conclusion in time, it does create an increment in our understanding, almost by sleight of hand. Like the characters, the audience expects that the arrival of Godot will resolve all problems. It is when Godot does not arrive, paradoxically, that we grasp his true significance.

If Godot comes, says Vladimir, the two friends will be saved. They see their salvation, always, in the conventional language of Christianity. Vladimir gropes for his definitions within the context of the Gospels:

- V. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other . . . (he searches for the contrary of saved) . . . damned.
 E. Saved from what?
 V. Hell.

. . .

- V. Both of them abused him . . . because he wouldn't save them.
 E. From hell?
 V. Imbecile! From death.
 E. I thought you said hell.
 V. From death, from death.

Vladimir is not sure whether salvation applies to this world or the next. It may be that even to be preserved in life is to be "saved," but the men seem to hope for more than this.

- E. What did we ask him for?

- . . .
- V. Oh . . . Nothing very definite.
 E. A kind of prayer.
 V. Precisely.
 E. A vague supplication.
 V. Exactly.

Their need is refined and intensified by their suffering. Towards the end of their vigil Estragon cries out "God have pity on me!" (Godot, 49). Not long after, Vladimir says, "Christ have mercy on us!" (Godot, 59). The dimensions of their salvation have become coextensive with the space of the play. What the men seek is nothing less than the transfiguration or transvaluation of their now utterly painful and boring existence.

Such transfiguration implies a move outward from the confines of the play into the realm of the absolute. Fraser writes that "The squalor of their surroundings, their lack of a 'stake in the world,' represent the idea that here in this world we can build no abiding city."¹ Their existence is never transformed. The only shred of comfort each man derives is the consolation of the other's presence. It is of the first importance, however, that only the appointment with Godot allows that relationship to function.

If Godot fails them again, Vladimir and Estragon say they will commit suicide. But both previous suicide attempts have foundered on the suspicion that suicide means separation. In Act I Estragon says "(with effort) Gogo light -- bough not break -- Gogo dead. Didi heavy -- bough break --

In time it moves toward the appointment with Godot. In space the two men move towards each other. René Girard, discovering a similar polarization in the European novel generally, writes that "The impulse of the soul toward God is inseparable from a retreat into the self."⁴ This posture is typical of many of Beckett's protagonists. As Michael Robinson describes them, "What, in fact, they seek is to be reunited with the Self they know must exist outside time in the union of their personal infinity with that of the timeless void."⁵

We have characterized Vladimir and Estragon as aspects of the human: man's physical nature in precarious alliance with his spiritual leanings. Some critics suggest they are even more intimately bound, as aspects of a single self. Thus Alfonso Sastre finds that Waiting for Godot is "above all a strangely lucid dramatic representation of the rending apart of a human being."⁶ And Herbert Blau writes that "By an act of histrionic juggling in which they perform no-action the two tramps convince us they live one-life. Between them they compose an identity."⁷

The danger of this view, pushed to its logical end, is that it encourages the expectation that the two men might somehow merge into a single, integrated Self. Girard, speaking of Dostoevski, writes that "An exigency arising from the self and bearing on the self must be capable of being satisfied by the self. The subject must have placed his faith in a false promise from the outside. In Dostoevski's

eyes the false promise is essentially a promise of meta-physical autonomy. For two or three centuries this has been the underlying principle of every "new" Western doctrine. God is dead, man must take his place."⁸

Psychoanalyst Eva Metman, and others, are inclined to view Godot as a profoundly anti-religious play. For her, Godot is the false promise that keeps Vladimir and Estragon at odds. "The parts of the psyche of modern man embodied in the two tramps are still prevented from creative confrontation with each other and with their inner voices by the prevailing power of a "beautiful and comprehensive" image that has been handed on, represented by Godot, for whom they wait."⁹

But Dr. Metman's hopes for this world are considerably in advance of Beckett's. It seems altogether more likely that robbed of a focus on Godot, intellect would find itself in mute bondage to an earthly master, as Lucky is in bondage to Pozzo. It is Godot who is the warrant for the greater humanity of Vladimir and Estragon as a couple.

Functioning to reconcile antithetical aspects of the human, Godot takes on the role of mediator, emphasized in recent analyses of myth. Levi-Strauss, investigating binary forms in myth, uncovers a variety of mediating agents. A useful survey of these can be found in an essay by the British anthropologist Edmund Leach, a follower of Levi-Strauss. Leach writes that "Among the examples that Levi-Strauss has used to illustrate his thesis are the following:

(1) He claims that an analysis of certain Pueblo Indian myths shows that the central problem that the myth cluster seeks to resolve is the opposition between life and death. In the myths we find a threefold category distinction: agriculture, hunting and war. Agriculture is a means to life for man but entails the death of animals. It is thus a mediating middle category."¹⁰

The Pueblo myth turns towards nature to discover its mediating category. But when pressed, the mind is capable of constructing an artificial mediator to serve the situation, as in the case of the Oedipus myth. Leach writes: "On [Levi-Strauss'] analysis the myth centers around a problem of patrilineal descent: the requirement that fathers shall be perpetuated in their sons without the intervention of women, which in simple fact is plainly impossible. However, the impossibility is 'resolved' in the myth by mediating the antithesis between male and female parents into the ambivalent person of the Sphinx . . . the Sphinx is a kind of merging of the two parent figures Jocasta and Laios."¹¹

It is difficult, however, to assimilate the mediation of Godot to the rather mechanical types of myth. Godot does not in any simple sense combine earthly and spiritual attributes. Godot's earthly world, on the testimony of his messenger, is pastoral. Brothers, there, guard their goats and sheep in a setting of Biblical simplicity, quite removed from the complex society which lies behind the

two tramps exiled upon their plain at twilight.

There is some evidence that the modern literary imagination has moved away from mediators that are simply intermediate categories, or synthetic forms, towards mediation as a more subtly psychological phenomenon. Rene Girard, who sees the European novel from Cervantes to Proust as united by a common concern with mediation, has described the mediator's modern aspects.

For Girard, the cardinal fact about the mediator is that he becomes a kind of substitute for the desired object. Thus for Estragon and Vladimir the desired object for each may be the other and for both may be the transfiguration of the world, but these ends find expression in the desire for Godot. Thus, as Girard writes, "The impulse toward the object is ultimately an impulse toward the mediator."¹²

Girard proposes Don Quixote as a case in point: "the disciple [Quixote] pursues objects which are determined for him, or at least seem to be determined for him, by the model of all chivalry [Amadis]. We shall call this model the mediator of desire. Desire is always spontaneous. It can always be portrayed by a simple straight line which joins subject and object. The straight line is present in the desire of Don Quixote, but it is not essential. The mediator is there, above that line, radiating toward both the subject and the object."¹³

Often what we learn from a novel, through the hero's

efforts, and disillusionments, is how to value the mediator he has chosen. It is essential to Girard's argument that the mediator embodies an illusion. And the novels he discusses move, for him, towards the renunciation of the mediator. Thus, for example, Don Quixote renounces the chivalric ideal on his deathbed, and orders the burning of his library of romances. In Beckett's play, too, we are disillusioned in our hope that Godot will come, but if we discover that Godot is an illusion, we also find that he is a necessary illusion. As Gunther Anders has written, "What Beckett presents is not nihilism, but the inability of man to be a nihilist even in a situation of utter hopelessness."¹⁴

The progress of our disillusionment hinges on our having been invited to watch two men playing a game called waiting. Godot never appears and Beckett knows from the beginning that he will not come. We discover that in fact we have been invited to watch two men playing a game called being together. The game moves not toward a conclusion but toward the insight of the audience into the nature of that game and of the mediation which allows it to go on.

Thus if we glance back at Ginestier's distinction between first and second order geometry, we see that our disillusionment with the unfolding sequence of events at the first order of geometry is a necessary preliminary to our awareness of the second order of geometry. We abandon the temporal perspective of waiting for the spatial symmetry of an opposition between characters. Unlike the

temporal, which can move toward a conclusion, the spatial can move only towards a deepening of awareness. As the characters move towards a more immediate confrontation with Godot, the audience moves towards a more intimate confrontation of the characters themselves.

Ruby Cohn has noted that "As the end approaches, the references to the play as a play are more numerous and pointed."¹⁵ And Guicharnaud adds that "the idea of life as a game and man's attempts to play it remain a central theme."¹⁶ The strength of Estragon and Vladimir can be attributed to their willingness to go on playing the game. As Rechten writes "Through faith and hope, Vladimir and Estragon -- accepting their existence within the confines of place, the tree, and time, eternity -- freely follow the rules of the game of existence which fate has bestowed upon them."¹⁷

The strength of the play, however, is two-fold. On the one hand it lies in Beckett's uncompromising delineation of the rules of the game -- a certain knowledge that man on earth is doomed to division within himself in a world that does not respond to his innermost needs. On the other hand it lies in a recognition of the comic heroism of man's attempts to remain human through allegiance to an ideal which gives the lie to the hopelessness of his existence.

Footnotes to Chapter Thirteen

- 1 G. S. Fraser, "'Waiting for Godot,'" Casebook, p. 133.
- 2 Rechten, p. 18.
- 3 Michael Robinson, The Long Sonata of the Dead (New York, 1969), p. 238.
- 4 René Girard, Deceit Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, 1965), p. 58.
- 5 Robinson, p. 244.
- 6 Alfonso Sastre, "Seven Notes on 'Waiting for Godot,'" Casebook, p. 105.
- 7 Herbert Blau, "Notes from the Underground," Casebook, p. 117.
- 8 Girard, p. 56.
- 9 Eva Metman, "Reflections on Samuel Beckett's Plays," Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1965), p. 131.
- 10 Edmund Leach, "Levi-Strauss in the Garden of Eden: An Examination of Some Recent Developments in the Analysis of Myth," Transactions of the N. Y. Academy of Sciences, Series II, No. 23, p. 389a.

- 11 Ibid., p. 389a.
- 12 Girard, p. 10.
- 13 Ibid., p. 10.
- 14 Gunther Anders, "Being Without Time," Beckett: Col-
lection of Critical Essays, p. 144.
- 15 Ruby Cohn, Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut (New
Brunswick, N. J., 1962), p.
- 16 Rechten, p. 18.

Chapter Fourteen: Innovation

Godot seemed radically new to its first audiences in 1953. The absence of décor and the graver absence of plot certainly constituted a refusal to satisfy the usual expectations. But an artist who ignores a conventional form of order usually must replace it with some other unifying factor.

In fact, Tzvetan Todorov makes the point in his essay "Poétique," that most works incorporate several forms of order, only one of which may predominate. "Une oeuvre particulière utilise à la fois plusieurs types de relation entre ses unités, et obéit donc à la fois à plusieurs ordres. Si on dit qu'un livre illustre plutôt telle structure que telle autre, c'est que le type de relation en question y est prédominant."¹

In Todorov's view, 20th century literary innovators like Joyce and Proust have abandoned the highly conventional causal (or logical) form of structure in favor of structures based on temporal or spatial unity. Beckett as their literary heir may be seen, in turn, as carrying these experiments yet one step further.

It is in these terms that Todorov writes of the modernist movement in which Joyce prominently figures: "La dominance de la causalité sur la temporalité a provoqué une réaction vers le début de ce siècle. On a voulu créer une littérature où les événements décrits se suivent sans être

la cause les un des autres . . . l'exemple le plus parfait de soumission à l'ordre temporel est Ulysse de Joyce . . . La seule, ou à tout moins la principale relation entre les actions est leur pure succession: on nous rapporte, minute après minute, ce qui se passe."² Todorov makes it equally clear that what Beckett has done in the novel is to move a step beyond Joyce. For the temporality of events, Beckett has substituted in the novels the pure temporality of narration: "Cette forme de temporalité référentielle n'est pas la seule que le récit connaisse. A côté de la temporalité de l'énoncé, il existe aussi une temporalité de l'énonciation qui est formée par l'enchaînement des instances du discours." . . . Un récit qui n'obéit qu'à cet ordre, tel l'Innommable de Beckett, apparaît aux yeux du lecteur comme précisément dépourvu de tout ordre."³

In the plays, however, Beckett appears to be following Proust in favoring an order which is spatial rather than either causal or temporal. As Todorov writes: "La littérature de tous les temps est riche en répétitions, parallélismes, antithèses, etc. Un des premiers peut-être qui ait réalisé une oeuvre de prose, un récit, dont l'ordre dominant soit spatial, est Proust."⁴

While Todorov's three forms of unity (the causal, the temporal and the spatial), may be present in texts of any genre, the drama possesses unique forms of organization that allow still other possibilities for innovation. An excellent inventory of these forms has been compiled by

Tadeusz Kowzan in his essay on the semiology of drama.⁵

Kowzan distinguishes five groups of signs in spectacle, namely: word, gesture, costume, decor and sound effects.⁶ As with the forms of order in narrative, Kowzan points out that one set of signs may stand in for several others: "It is well to insist on the fact of the interchangeability of signs between different systems . . . The word, first of all, has the power of replacing most of the signs of the other systems. The gesture comes second to it."⁷ Beckett, of course, prone to stripping away where he can, is relying on the two sign systems, word and gross physical gesture, that can be made to bear the most weight single-handedly.

Beckett's language has been treated in detail in Chapters III and IV, but his use of gesture merits further attention here. It was clear that Beckett extracted the maximum content from individual words by playing upon their shifting aspects in a dramatic situation. It is equally evident that gesture is made to carry unusual weight in the play.

Gesture, according to Kowzan, may be "successive positions in relation to the other actors," or perhaps "different ways of moving about (slow, hurried, hesitant, majestic gait)." Other gestures include "entrances and exits" and "collective movements."⁸

In terms of successive positions in relation to the other actors we recall the unusual importance in Godot of the embrace rejected and accepted by Vladimir and Estragon.

Different ways of moving about are also striking. We have Estragon hobbled by a sore foot, for example, and Pozzo standing up and sitting down again in Act I as he searches for pretexts to remain upon the stage.

The rigid pattern of entrances and exits is emphasized by repetition and charged with significance by slight variations. Thus in each act the entrance of Vladimir and Estragon is followed by that of Pozzo and Lucky, and then by that of the messenger. But in Act I we discover Estragon upon the stage first where in Act II it is Vladimir who enters, to be joined after some moments by his comrade.

Act II supplies the single most striking example of a collective movement, with individual variations, as Pozzo and Lucky fall to the ground to be joined in a heap by Vladimir and then Estragon.

One is obliged to agree with Kowzan that "Considered from a semiological viewpoint, these principal categories of the actor's movement on the stage are capable of providing us with the most varied signs."⁹ This is true because movement serves to establish the nature of the character, his relationship to the other characters, and the coordinates of the "situation" (entries and exits), which are, as we have noted throughout, the fundamental elements of dramatic construction.

If Beckett strips down language and movement, however, he is no less rigorous in his treatment of setting. The scene of Godot is set in nine words. "A country road.

A tree. Evening . . . a low mound." Kowzan points out that "The semiological value of a decor does not . . . depend directly in the quantity of signs at the first degree. An isolated sign can have a semantic content that is richer and denser than a whole collection of signs."¹⁰ And this is, in fact, the case with Godot.

Whether in word, gesture or setting Godot obtains its effects by making the fewest possible elements bear the greatest possible weight. Thus the value of the play lies not only in its unique expression of fundamental human conflicts, but also in the way in which it allows us to understand what is fundamental to the form of drama. When so much that is conventional has been stripped away the elements of dramatic form seem to take on a new vigor and life.

Footnotes to Chapter Fourteen

- 1 Tzvetan Todorov, "Poétique," Qu'est-ce le structuralisme?, ed. Francois Wahl (Paris, 1968), p. 123.
- 2 Ibid., p. 128.
- 3 Ibid., p. 128.
- 4 Ibid., p. 131.
- 5 Tadeusz Kowzan, "The Sign in the Theater: An Introduction to the Semiology of the Art of the Spectacle," trans. Simon Pleasance, Diogenes, No. 61 (Spring, 1968), pp. 52-80.
- 6 Ibid., p. 61.
- 7 Ibid., p. 76.
- 8 Ibid., p. 65.
- 9 Ibid., p. 65.
- 10 Ibid., p. 69.

List of Works Consulted

Books and Articles on Samuel Beckett

- Adorno, Theodor W. "Towards an Understanding of 'Endgame' Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'Endgame', ed. Bell Gale Chevigny, Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
- Alpaugh, David J. "Negative Definition in Samuel Beckett's 'Happy Days'" Twentieth Century Literature, XI, 202-10.
- Barnard, Guy Christian. Samuel Beckett, A New Approach. London: J. M. Dent, 1970.
- Berlin, Norman. "Beckett and Shakespeare." French Review, No. 40, 647-51.
- Bernal, Olga. Langage et fiction dans le roman de Beckett. Paris: Gallimard, 1969.
- Brick, Allan. "A Note on Perception and Communication in Beckett's 'Endgame.'" Modern Drama (Summer, 1961), pp. 20-22.
- Brooks, Curtis M. "The Mythic Pattern in 'Waiting for Godot.'" Modern Drama, IX, 292-99.
- Brown, John Russell. "Mr. Beckett's Shakespeare," Critical Quarterly, V, iv (Winter 1963), 310-26.
- Cavell, Stanley. Must We Mean What We Say. New York: Scribner, 1969.
- Chadwick, C. "'Waiting for Godot': A Logical Approach." Symposium (Winter, 1960), pp. 252-57.
- Cohn, Ruby, ed. Casebook on 'Waiting for Godot'. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- Cohn, Ruby. Currents in Contemporary Drama. Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1969.
- Cohn, Ruby, ed. Modern Drama: Samuel Beckett Issue, IX (December, 1966), pp. 237-346.
- Cohn, Ruby, ed. Perspective: Samuel Beckett Issue. IX, (Autumn, 1959), pp. 119-196.
- Cohn, Ruby. "Plays and Players in the Plays of Samuel Beckett," Yale French Studies, No. 29 (1962), 43-8.

- Cohn, Ruby. Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1962.
- Davie, Donald. "Kinds of Comedy." Spectrum (Winter, 1958), 25-31.
- Delye, Huguette. Samuel Beckett, ou la Philosophie de l'Absurde. Aix en Provence: La Pensée Universitaire, 1960.
- Dubois, Jacques. "Beckett and Ionesco: The Tragic Awareness of Pascal and the Ironic Awareness of Flaubert." Modern Drama, IX, 283-91.
- Duckworth, Colin, ed. En Attendant Godot, by Samuel Beckett. London: George G. Harrap and Co., 1966.
- Esslin, Martin, ed. Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965.
- Esslin, Martin. The Theatre of the Absurd. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1961.
- Fletcher, John. "Action and Play in Beckett's Theater." Modern Drama, IX, 242-50.
- Fletcher, John. Samuel Beckett's Art. London: Chatto and Windus, 1967.
- Friedman, Melvin J., ed. Samuel Beckett Now. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Frye, Northrop. "The Nightmare Life in Death." Hudson Review (Autumn, 1960), 442-48.
- Gray, Ronald. "'Waiting for Godot': A Christian Interpretation." Listener (January 24, 1957), 160-61.
- Gregory, Horace. "Beckett's Dying Gladiators." Commonweal (October 12, 1956), 88-92.
- Guicharnard, Jacques (with June Beckelman). Modern French Theater From Giradoux to Beckett. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1961.
- Hampton, C. C. Jr. "The Human Situation in the Plays of Samuel Beckett: A Study in Stratagems of Inaction." Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation. Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., 1966. Listed in Dissertation Abstracts, XXVII (July-Aug., 1966), 206A.
- Hoffman, Frederick J. Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1962.

- Iser, Wolfgang. "Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Language." Modern Drama, IX, 251-59.
- Rechtien, Brother John. "Time and Eternity Meet in the Present." Texas Studies in Language and Literature, VI (1964), 5-21.
- Schoell, Konrad. "The Chain and the Circle: A Structural Comparison of Waiting for Godot and Endgame." Modern Drama, XI, 48-53.
- Styan, J. L. Dark Comedy. London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1962.
- Jacobsen, Josephine and William R. Mueller. The Testament of Samuel Beckett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.
- Janvier, Ludovic. Pour Samuel Beckett. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1966.
- Kenner, Hugh. Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.
- Kenner, Hugh. Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study. 1961. New rev. ed. U. of Calif. Press, Berkeley, 1968.
- Kermode, Frank. "The New Apocalyptists." Partisan Review, XXXIII, 339-361.
- Kermode, Frank. "Beckett, Snow and Pure Poverty." Encounter, July 1960, pp. 73-76.
- Kern, Edith. "Beckett and the Spirit of the Commedia dell'Arte." Modern Drama, IX, 260-67.
- Kolve, V. A. "Religious Language in 'Waiting for Godot'." Centennial Review, XI, 102-27.
- Kott, Jan. "'King Lear' or 'Endgame'." Evergreen Review (August-September 1964), 53-65.
- Laing, R. D. The Divided Self. Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1965.
- Marowitz, Charles. "A Quick Walk Away from Samuel Beckett." Encore, IX (Mar-April, 1962), pp. 43-45.
- Mayoux, Jean-Jacques. "Beckett and Expressionism." Modern Drama, IX, 238-41.
- McCoy, Charles. "'Waiting for Godot': A Biblical Approach." Florida Review (Spring, 1958), 63-72.

- Moore, John R. "A Farewell to Something." Tulane Drama Review (September, 1960), 49-60.
- Robinson, Michael. The Long Sonata of the Dead. London: R. Hart-Davis, 1969.
- Smuda, Manfred. Beckett's Prosa Als Metasprache. Munich, 1970.
- Suin, Darko. "Beckett's Purgatory of the Individual or the 3 Laws of Thermodynamics." Tulane Drama Review, XI, IV, 23-36.
- Todd, Robert E. "Proust and Redemption in Waiting for Godot." Modern Drama, X, 175-81.

Theoretical and Background Materials

- Bakhtine, Mikhail. La Poétique de Dostoevski. trans. Isabelle Kolitcheff. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970.
- Barthes, Roland. S/Z. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970.
- Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy. trans. Richard Green. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962.
- Brémond, Claude. "La logique des possibles narratifs." Communications, 8 (1966), pp. 60-76.
- De Saussure, Ferdinand. Course in General Linguistics. trans. Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw Hill, 1966.
- Ginestier, Paul. Le Théâtre Contemporain dans le Monde. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961.
- Girard, René. Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure. trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965.
- Goldmann, Lucien. Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine. trans. Philip Thody. New York: Humanities Press, 1964.
- Jakobsen, Roman and Morris Halle. Fundamentals of Language. Gravenhage: Mouton, 1956.
- Janseen, Steen. "Esquisse d'une théorie de la forme dramatique." Linguistique et littérature, numero speciale, La Nouvelle Critique (1968), pp. 71-93.
- Janssen, Steen. "L'unité d'action dans Andromaque et dans Lorenzaccio." Revue Romane, 3 (1968), pp. 16-29 and 116-135.
- Kierkegaard, Soren. "Fear and Trembling" and "The Sickness Unto Death." trans. Walter Lowrie. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1955.
- Kowzan, Tadeusz. "The Sign in the Theater: An Introduction to the Semiology of the Art of the Spectacle." trans. Simon Pleasance. Diogenes, 61 (Spring, 1968), pp. 52-80.
- Leach, Edmund. "Levi-Strauss in the Garden of Eden: An Examination of Some Recent Developments in the Analysis of Myth." Transactions of the N. Y. Academy of Sciences, II, 23, pp. 386-96.

- Lemon, Lee T. and Marion J. Reiss. Russian Formalist Criticism. Lincoln, Nebraska: Bison Books, 1965.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. Structural Anthropology. trans. Claire Jacobsen and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. New York: Basic Books, 1963.
- Morin, Violette. "L'histoire drôle." Communications, 8 (1966), pp. 102-119.
- Paganini, Marcello. "Per una semiologia del teatro classico." Strumenti Critici, 12 (June, 1970), pp. 121-140.
- Pascal, Blaise. "Pensées" and "The Provincial Letters." trans. W. F. Trotter. New York: E/P. Dutton, 1958.
- Propp, Vladimir. The Morphology of the Folktale. ed. Louis A. Wagner. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 2nd ed., rev., 1968.
- Souriau, Etienne. Les Deux Cent Mille Situations Dramatiques. Paris: Flammarion, 1950.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. "Les catégories du récit littéraire." Communications, 8 (1966), 125-51.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. "Poétique." Qu'est-ce le structuralisme. ed. Francois Wahl. Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1968.
- Tonge, Frederick. L'Art du Dialogue dans les comédies en prose d'Alfred de Musset, Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1967.
- Weyl, Hermann. Symmetry. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Philosophical Investigations. 2nd ed. trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, New York: Macmillan, 1958.