

The Idea of "Game" and "Play" in Samuel Beckett's Theatre: From *Waiting for Godot* to *Play*

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Introduction

Beckett likes using the word "game" as a metaphor for some of his dramatic works. In *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon and Vladimir play "a game in order to survive."¹ The word "partie" in the French title *Fin de partie* also refers to the game, and the English title *Endgame* specifically alludes to endgame in chess.² These game metaphors are also manifest in the content of the plays. For both couples, Estragon and Vladimir, and Hamm and Clov, the verb "jouer" or "play," which entails not only their dialogue but their positional play, is their major activity on stage. The important association between the game metaphor and the act of "jouer" is further pursued by another title of Beckett's play: *Play/Comédie*. Not only that, the title suggests the play of theatrical elements, speech, movement, physical presence, certainty of "being there"³ etc., but also its content explores a new style of "jouer" as "just play."

A number of studies that deal with this subject reveal that the figures of chess, game and play serve to elucidate the structure and inner workings of Beckett's theatre. A normative approach, loosely represented by the humanistic reading of Beckett such as Kenner's and Cohn's, takes the viewpoint of the spectator and seeks to capture the authorial intention governing the coherence of the world of Beckett's theatre.⁴ This approach freely draws a parallel/analogy between the game and Beckett's theatre, presupposing that the authorial intention imposes some kind of law on Beckett's theatre: the norm such as rules and telos (the transcendent purpose of the game) that defines the game. In this approach, because of the strong self-referential nature of Beckett's theatre, the telos in his work is identified with authorial intention, which should also be comprehensible to the spectator who also stands outside the world of theatre. By contrast, the deconstructionist approach emphasises the displacement of the telos in Beckett's theatre. Telos does not precede the game but is articulated or produced as an effect by the process of the game (of speech and action). For instance, Connor reads Beckett's theatre in light of repetition with difference, proving that this repetition dismantles the border between the original presence and the repeated presence;⁵ he suggests that the normative approach can fail to capture the dynamic aspect of Beckett's theatre. This approach can loosely be joined to the postmodern take of the game as "the play," which focuses on the

plurality of the games and/or self-generative process of the "play." Some commentaries radically see the play as "indefinable": "asking what, exactly, play is, tends to make it [play] disappear, since such questions only try to make play represent something other than itself."⁶ Such a view would ultimately abolish any analysis of the play.

Despite the vague border between the game and the play, Beckett nevertheless appears to create his theatre precisely on this border. Whilst, Beckett uses the word "game" to describe his theatrical works in the view of the author or spectator, for example, the title "Endgame" or his description of *Waiting for Godot* as "the game to survive," he uses the word "play" mostly as a verb "in" his texts: "Vladimir (V) Will you not play? Estragon (E): Play at what? V: We could play at Pozzo and Lucky" (TN1, 66); "Hamm (H): Me – to play (TN2, 4)"; "Clov (C): Let's stop playing!" (TN2, 39), with meanings ranging from trifling word-play, to survival, language-game and theatrical acting. This contrast suggests that in Beckett's theatre, the game and play coexist in the way that the normative view is possible only from the point of view of the spectator of the play, i.e. being outside the world of the characters/text, whilst the play generates itself through the interactions of the characters/text regardless of the rules imposed from outside.⁷ This border disappears in *Play*, whose title is supposed to represent the outside view, becomes identical to the word "play" by which the characters-bodies implicitly refer to their own performance and word play. In other words, there is no more game but play in this work. Beckett's project of "play" precisely concerns this bordering between the game and play, and the erasure of its bordering. The moment of this bordering is precisely when the norm (rules and telos) of the game experiences rupture and the limit of the game revealed. A kind of structure of play is articulated through its difference from the game. Accordingly, this paper proposes a combination of the normative and deconstructionist approaches, a normative approach 'without presupposing telos,' in order to capture the way Beckett's theatre incorporates and shows the moment of this bordering and rupture.

This paper seeks to examine the border between the game and play in Beckett's theatre between the early 1950s and the early 1960s. The focus on "game" and "play" illuminates three aspects which constitute the foundation of the development of Beckett's early theatrical work: speech, movement/action, space and time. The first section studies the game of "waiting" in *Waiting for*

Godot in light of the normative game, explores its limit by analysing the dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon and elucidates the process in which the plurality of games, "play," emerges. The second section examines Krapp's acts on the tape recorder in light of game and clarifies how this game is replaced by the play of the tape recorder. The parallelism between Krapp and Henry, the protagonist of the radio play *Embers*, leads to the expansion of the game of actions from theatrical action to interaction between theatre and radio. The comparative studies between *Krapp's Last Tape* and the radio plays, *Embers* and *Cascando*, delineate the development of Krapp's action on the radiophonic medium with regard to the increasing significance of silence and mechanisation of the repetition. Finally, the paper elucidates the new form of theatrical expression in *Play* as the mechanisation of "play," both as game and theatre. It analyses the way in which his theatre "shows" the indeterminacy of the foundation of the game-play.⁸

1. *Waiting for Godot*: From "Game" to "Play"⁹

In that *Waiting for Godot* is a game of waiting, the normative approach would identify "Godot" as the telos of the game. However, this view needs to be reconsidered because the existence of Godot is never certain. In Vladimir and Estragon's waiting the existence of Godot is elicited mainly by their dialogue, the language-games. The dialogue that directly concerns this objective turns around the phrase "Waiting for Godot": "E: Let's go./ V: We can't./ E: Why not?/ V: We are waiting for Godot./ E: (Despairingly) Ah yes" (13, 44, 61, 64, 71, 77). This dialogue is repeated six times with only a few modifications.¹⁰ On the one hand, the persistent repetition of the dialogue suggests that Godot indeed concerns their waiting. Yet, the modification made to the last repetition of this dialogue illuminates another aspect of the game: "E: Let's go. [(Half rises.)] We can't. [(Sits again.)] Ah [yes]! (Pause)" (81). In this instance both Estragon's line "Why not" and Vladimir's reminder "We are waiting for Godot" are omitted.

The deletion of the crucial sentence "We are waiting for Godot" can be explained in relation to the precondition of the repetition of this dialogue: Estragon's forgetting. It is because Estragon forgets that he and Vladimir are waiting for Godot that this dialogue must be persistently repeated. However, the pattern of this forgetting goes through some variation. Toward the end of the play Estragon manages to say, "I am waiting for Godot" in response to Pozzo's question "What are you doing?" (79). Here, he does remember that he is "waiting." Considering that Estragon's final reference to waiting comes soon after this episode, it can be seen that the game of waiting involves

Estragon's learning to say "We are waiting for Godot," and that it is Vladimir who teaches him this phrase. Then, the deletion of the final "We are waiting for Godot" may suggest that Estragon's learning completes. At the same time the absence of the phrase opens up the ambiguity of interpretation. We will come back to this point later.

If the game of waiting is sustained by the repetition of "We are waiting for Godot," the precondition of this repetition, i.e. Estragon's forgetting, deserves further analysis. Indeed, the motif of remembering and forgetting constitutes a backbone to this theatre.¹¹ At first glance, the game seems to build on Vladimir's ability to remember and Estragon's irremediable oblivion. They talk about "yesterday," by which they mean Act I. Vladimir seems to remember what happens in Act I and recognises Pozzo, Lucky (44, 80) and the Boy (47, 82)¹² both in Act I and II, whilst Estragon is incapable of identifying either of them or the place. Remembering and forgetting are also concerned with recognising the repetition. In the opening of Act I and II, it is Vladimir who finds Estragon "again." In contrast, Estragon only gives an indifferent response: "V: So there you are again./ E: Am I?" (9).¹³ Estragon experiences any repetition as if for the first time, and this is the precondition of their language-game of waiting. Estragon does not simply live in time, in that he cannot perceive repetition as such.

That all the characters except Vladimir experience this kind of oblivion also casts doubt on Vladimir's remembering. Pozzo's position in Act II most radically questions the existence of time. Pozzo denies not only the fact that he met Vladimir yesterday but the concept of yesterday itself (78): "Pozzo (P): I woke up one fine day as blind as Fortune. Sometimes I wonder if I'm not still asleep./ V: When was that?/ P: I don't know" (78). These lines dictate that an experience of time is inevitably conditioned by the perception of a change or a border between two phenomena: either before and after being blind, or seeing and not seeing.

In fact Vladimir and Estragon's dialogue on "yesterday" illustrates the uncertainty of Vladimir's own memory.

E: We came here yesterday./ V: Ah no, there you're mistaken./ E: What did we do yesterday?/ V: What did we do yesterday?/ E: Yes./ V: Why ... (Angrily) Nothing is certain when you are about./ E: In my opinion we were here (13-14).

Estragon insists that he and Vladimir were here "yesterday." Vladimir immediately denies this but at the same time avoids answering Estragon's question. As Estragon is unable to provide any evidence to support his statement, he ends up admitting that he may be wrong.

However, Vladimir's dialogue with the Boy toward the end of Act I implies that they were indeed there yesterday. Vladimir himself asks the Boy if he came "yesterday" (47). As there is no indication of Vladimir's waiting alone, his denial to Estragon and indication of "yesterday" to the Boy are contradictory. After all, all these characters live in the loss of memory and time, which cannot be shared with other characters. The loss of time leads us to reconsider the foundation of the game called "waiting for Godot." Waiting is preconditioned by the prospect of, for instance, something to happen or somebody to come. In other words, the prospect bears the sense of future or time to come. However, Vladimir and Estragon do not share this foundation of the game. How, then, are they able to continue the game of waiting?

The following exchange between Estragon and Vladimir elicits the experience of time grounded by the perception of change and the coexistence of plural games as a possible driving force of the game of waiting.

V: How they've changed!/ E: Who?/ V: Those two./ E: That's the idea, let's make a little conversation./ V: Haven't they?/ E: What?/ V: Changed./ E: Very likely. They all change. Only we can't./ V: Likely! It's certain. Didn't you see them?/ E: I suppose I did. But I don't know them./ V: Yes, you do know them./ E: No I don't know them./ We know them, I tell you. You forget everything. (Pause. To himself). Unless they're not the same ... [...]/ E: Why didn't they recognize us then?/ V: That means nothing. I too pretended not to recognize them. And then nobody ever recognizes us./ E: Forget it. What we need (halts) – Ow! (Vladimir does not react.) Ow!/ V: (To himself) Unless they're not the same (44-5).

Vladimir tries to talk about "a change", i.e. a precondition of time, whilst Estragon misunderstands this dialogue as the beginning of another "little conversation," part of their frivolous and non-teleological word-play. The invention of this type of game is Estragon's speciality. The examples range from playing Lucky and Pozzo (66), to abuse of each other (68), exercise (69), etc. In the quote above, Estragon does not appear to think about the content of the conversation. He simply approves Vladimir's sentence with "Very likely," but it is shown that he is unable to hold a conversation. Vladimir goes into soliloquy mode and, in the background, Estragon tries to begin "what we need" – yet another frivolous game. In this dialogue, we can see that Vladimir and Estragon play the game of "waiting" on different grounds. Here, we observe the rupture of the teleological game. Yet, their game continues. It is not that the telos continues the game, but it is produced

by the continuation of play. This transition from game to play reveals at the moment when the games experiences rupture.

Natanson sees "irrealisation of time" in this state of play: "With irrealisation of time comes the temporal reality of the fictive."¹⁴ Indeed, in the quotation above, Vladimir is on the side of the realisation of time, which ends in constant failure, whilst Estragon is on the side of the temporality of the fictive, an endless, atemporal and non-teleological invention of word-play. When Estragon is able to say, "I'm waiting for Godot," we can no longer tell whether he realises that he is indeed waiting for Godot, or whether he has incorporated this phrase in his continuing invention of word-play. The boundary between the game as a metaphor for the process of their waiting and the play becomes vague, and the transcendental status of the telos "waiting for Godot" disappears. Yet, their game as a play continues insofar as the foundation of Vladimir's game, realisation of time, and Estragon's, learning and unlearning of the phrase "waiting for Godot," remains unresolved. If Estragon does not say "We are waiting for Godot" in his last reference to Godot, it may be because he cannot master the sense of "we," the sharing of time with Vladimir. Play as the plurality of the games allows the waiting game to continue. The teleological objective "Godot" should be an effect of their waiting and language-games, simply because Vladimir and Estragon do not agree that the foundation of their game is Godot. They live in a world of no time and no space, on the edge of which the boundary between teleological game and frivolous play is constantly being articulated. In this world the waiting game survives in that it continues beyond ("sur") their life ("vivre") and time.¹⁵

2. *Krapp's Last Tape: From Krapp's Playing with Time to Actions Playing with Krapp's Time*¹⁶

Krapp's Last Tape has largely been regarded as a game of the double or split self in time. On the one hand, there is the physical presence of old Krapp on stage, which, to the eyes of the spectator, stands in the present. On the other hand, there is the voice of middle-aged Krapp on the tape recorder, which embodies the past. Nevertheless, these two Krapps have similarities. It appears that old Krapp, through his actions on the tape recorder, edits and reshapes (or in some way appropriates) the past to gain the unification of two selves (Lawley, 90-1; Worth, 19). However, there is another layer to this game: Krapp's actions on the tape recorder. These actions are fundamental to Krapp's game of split self. It is only through old Krapp's actions on the tape recorder that middle-aged Krapp can appear as a voice, and that the articulation is made between present and past, from which time emerges. The

stage direction at the beginning "A late evening in the future" (3)¹⁷ joins ideas of the "irrealisation of time" and "the prospect" in *Waiting for Godot*, thus anticipating the emergence of "the play." This part of the paper seeks to elucidate this point by focusing on Krapp's actions on the tape recorder.

Old Krapp's six actions on the tape recorder are switch on, switch off, forward, rewind, listen, record. Thirteen actions of switching on and twelve actions of switching off divide this theatre into twenty-six sections. Thirteen sections centre on old Krapp's actions on stage, including his actions on the tape. The acts of winding back and forth can be understood in relation to old Krapp's intellectual and emotional reactions to the tape. When he winds back, he wants to check the content of the tape (e.g. looking up the word "viduity" in the dictionary). This reflects old Krapp's ability to remember and repeat what came before "here and now." By contrast, he winds the tape forward when he becomes impatient to listen to the story to come. This action suggests that old Krapp is able to anticipate what comes after "here and now." These two actions prove that he has a clear sense of time – before, now and after.

The other thirteen sections deal with old Krapp's listening/representation of middle-aged Krapp's recording and old Krapp's own recording, in which the resemblances between old and middle-aged Krapps are emphasised. For example, middle-aged Krapp regrets his liking for bananas ("I regret to say three bananas and only with difficulty refrained from a fourth" (5)), refers to his listening to a tape recorded ten years earlier ("Just been listening to an old year, passages at random" (5)) and repeatedly comments on women's eyes. Similarly, old Krapp eats two bananas on stage (3), listens to the tape recorded thirty years earlier and expresses his enthusiasm for women's eyes in the recording (9). Furthermore, old Krapp joins middle-aged Krapp's laughter whilst listening to the tape, as if middle-aged Krapp's emotion is revived in old Krapp (5, 6). Thirty years of distance in time seems almost nonexistant for old Krapp. This assimilation is also suggested by old Krapp repeating in his actual recording some of the phrases used by middle-aged Krapp: "The voice! Jesus!" (9). This series of correspondences leads old Krapp to lose a sense of the border between past and present and to absorb himself in the world of the tape.¹⁸

However, it is crucial to note that recording does not share the same temporality as listening. Whilst the listening action concerns the material recorded in the past and edited in the present, the recording action creates the material in the present, in "projecting" the present "on tape into the future" (Worth, 20). Such difference is significant in this theatre. Whilst old Krapp has control over the tape recorded in the past, i.e. he can freely rewind

and forward and choose where to listen, he is unable to do so in his recording session. For example, Krapp switches on the tape before his recording, and after speaking for a while, realises that he has recorded the silence. However, he does not rewind the tape to start afresh. This suggests that the recording allows him only to switch on and off. In other words, the tape records the unrewindable and unrepeatable chunks of continuum in time.

At the same time, this newly recorded tape has yet to be allocated to time. The tape as simple material has the potential for time but cannot articulate time within itself. It needs the act of switching on in order to appear. In other words, the tape embodies the state of "irrealisation of time." The act of switching on gives time to the recorded tape. This further elucidates the difference underlying the actions of rewinding and forwarding and those of switching on and off. Whilst the former presupposes a clear sense of time, before now and after, the latter articulates time, and this articulation is the precondition of the emergence of time in this theatre. Curiously, the act of switching on involves a peculiar twist in time. We have old Krapp's recording of the present which needs to be switched on in order to be articulated in time. Then again, the moment this recording is switched on, it will be allocated to the past in comparison with the moment of listening in the present. Thus the tape has to anticipate its future, the moment when it will be articulated as the past. If the first stage direction instructs that old Krapp is in the future, he is an anticipated future for the (absent) presence of middle-aged Krapp's recording. In the view of middle-aged Krapp, old Krapp is the prospect who has yet to exist. This view is imposed by the setting "one evening in the future." If such is the case, old Krapp's presence on stage has yet to be realised in time, and he is conceptually a timeless/ghostly presence on stage.

In addition, the recording of middle-aged Krapp suggests that the recording has to be completed in order for it to be projected into the future and listened in the future. Recording in *Krapp's Last Tape* gives the prospect of listening, which incorporates the game of selves. Yet old Krapp abandons his recording in the middle and goes back to listening again. His recording on his 69th birthday shows his lack of will for capturing "the present." He has nothing to record about the present which would throw his recording into the future, unlike middle-aged Krapp who talks enthusiastically about his present. From old Krapp's abandoning of recording, we can understand why old Krapp loses control over the tape recorder,¹⁹ why old Krapp "listens dead still till the end" in a dreaming gesture and does not switch off the tape at the end of the final listening. This is because there is no more tape that can be switched on and no more time that can be articulated

in "the evening in the future" to come. Thus old Krapp continues to be suspended between past and future.

The final tableau of visually present yet temporally still and suspended and probably dead Krapp is clearly incongruent with the mode of theatre. In fact, this state again ties up with the first stage direction. The mode of theatre cannot present or re-present the future as it is a mode of expression of the here (stage-enclosed space of fiction) and now (duration of time as a continuation of the stage). Yet, if we read this dramatic work in light of Krapp's actions on the tape recorder, the act of switching on survives this temporal restriction. This act is itself timeless; in that it articulates time, it precedes time. It is time's precondition and origin. And this action has a concrete presence on stage. Ultimately, the spectator of *Krapp's Last Tape* attends this presence, "now" and the timeless act of "play," as the foundation of Beckett's theatre. Krapp's time may be sacrificed for this act of articulation for the mode of theatre, whilst the tape (recorder) survives timeless time and awaits articulation.

3. Radio Plays: *Embers* and *Cascando*: Game/Play of Theatre and Radio²⁰

The radio play *Embers* is constructed on a very similar footing to that of *Krapp's Last Tape*. The radio medium itself takes over the ultimate timelessness in Beckett's theatre. On the one hand, it is the game in which the protagonist/narrator Henry seeks to communicate with his double: sounds, voices, stories and past memories. On the other hand, this game is grounded by Henry's act of naming objects. It is precisely at this point where the difference lies between theatre and radio: physicality and the index of space and time. Whilst Krapp has concrete physical presence on stage, and his space is defined by the presence of objects, in Beckett's radio play, at least, the radiophonic space is potentially indefinite and borderless in terms of both time and space. Henry trains the sounds of "hooves" to mark time (253). However, its marking time is irregular and ultimately fails. Sounds do not necessarily have clear referentiality. The sound of the sea, the shingles, the hooves and other sounds in *Embers* are not so realistic as to signify their referent. Henry explains: "I say that sound you hear is the sea, we are sitting on the strand. [Pause.] I mention it because the sound is strange, so unlike the sound of the sea, that if you didn't see what it was you wouldn't know what it was" (253). This parallelism between the two allows us to study another form of play, namely a play of different modes of expression: theatre and radio.

Henry's naming is comparable to Krapp's actions on the tape recorder, and Henry gradually loses his control over the sounds just as Krapp does with the tape

recorder. Henry's naming concerns the four following borders: his words and sounds ("hooves" and "a drip"); the living (Henry) and the dead (Ada and his father); his world (Henry) and his story (Holloway and Bolton); the present and the past (Addie). In the first case, the border is articulated through dialogue: Henry names a thing and the thing responds with its sound. This equally applies to the dead Ada whose voice appears when Henry calls her name. However, Henry gradually receives less response from things and Ada, and, eventually, when the outburst of memories starts intervening in Henry's narrative, receives none at all. His ordering to the sound of shingles can also be considered as part of his naming game. When Henry orders "On," "Off," "Down," to the sound of shingles made by his own boots, it is as if this sound did not belong to him at all (253). This reveals the twofold nature of this game. While it gives the sense that Henry controls or appropriates the sounds or others, naming separates Henry from what he names and describes. His naming game thus combines the appropriation of and distancing himself from the objects which can appear only after Henry's naming. Paradoxically this creates some kind of object that can deprive Henry of his control over the game.

The unknowable object articulated by Henry's naming is ultimately silence. The absence of Ada's footsteps and of Henry's father²¹ suggests the border between the dead and living, a long pause separates Henry's world from Holloway/Bolton's, and the outburst of Addie's childhood and Ada's drowning scene intervene with Henry's world after a noticeable length of silence. The absence of Henry's naming both on the silence and on these inserted episodes suggests that he may not be able to perceive them, in that the act of naming is proof of perceiving on the radio, at least to the ears of auditors. As Henry does not name silence, its meaning remains unarticulated. As silence as such cannot have reference like language, it can suggest its meaning through its barely perceptible relationship with Henry's naming, and it can become somehow meaningful when it is combined with and differentiated from sounds, and perceived/named as silence. Thus *Embers* seems to witness the threshold of signification of silence through Henry's naming game with objects. We see that in *Embers* Henry's naming is just one bordering among many conducted by the unexplained silence.

Silence in *Embers* is transferred to the potential yet unnamed and unarticulated presence of sounds in *Cascando*. The script indicates that Music and Voice are "on" all the time, and that their appearance on the phonetic medium is operated by Opener, who opens and closes Voice and Music. Here, the equivalent of Krapp's act on the tape recorder or Henry's act of naming becomes separated from its owners and becomes an independent

operator: Opener. However, in the way Opener is represented on the radio, there is a limit to this function, as the signposting of actions, "I open" and "I close" need to be made phonetically, arousing self-referentiality in the act of Opener. As a result, the instantaneous and non-reflexive act in *Krapp's Last Tape* cannot but fall into the self-reflexive mode in *Cascando*. Furthermore, the presence of Music and Voice preconditions the game of opening and closing, in that these actions are validated only by the subsequent appearance of Music and Voice. This radio drama dictates how this self-reflexive mode of Opener once again becomes a non-reflexive action by intermingling with the latent sounds of Music and Voice on the radio medium.

Opener's game is the act of opening and closing Music and Voice. It has two variations, changing from the first to the second during the course of the play. In the first variation Music and Voice appear and disappear in accordance with Opener's phrase "I open" for opening and "I close" for closing.²² This gives the impression that Opener has control over both. The pattern of their alternate appearance is Opener ("I open")-Voice-Opener ("I close"/ "I open the other")-Music-Opener ("I close"/ "I open both")-Voice and Music-Opener ("I close"). In contrast, the second variation is an exact repetition of the first, except that Opener's "I close" is replaced by silence: Opener-Voice-(Silence)-Opener-Music-(Silence)-Opener-Voice and Music-(Silence). The first occurrence of this variation is signposted by Opener's single phrase "I start again" (298).²³ Voice and Music automatically close without Opener's instruction "I close." The repetition of this variation enforces the autonomy and mechanisation of the interaction between Voice and Music. Subsequently, Opener combines the two phrases and says "I open and close" (300). Thus Opener's loss of closing can be seen as the end of his self-indulgent game, just as Krapp's final "rewinding/forwarding" of the tape deprives Krapp of time and the possibility of playing the tape.

However, we can see in this rupture of Opener's game a transition to a new game between Opener and Voice/Music. Although Opener stops closing, he continues to say "I open." And if Voice/Music arrives at closing the game, Opener's game is now incorporated in the mechanised game between Voice and Music. Now Opener can affect Voice/Music only by the phrase "I open." Opener is now deprived of radiophonic naming and self-referentiality and is reduced to the minimalistic repetition of itself: "I [Opener] open." Here we may witness the exposition of two limits of the radio medium: non-referential silence (the most real absence) and the self-identical repetition of the act and name (minimalistic nominalism). This combination completes the mechanisation of the game as play. And

both the space, which is articulated by the distinction between the operator and the operated, and the time, which can solely be articulated by change, disappear.

4. *Play: Play with and of Theatre*

M: I know now, all that was just ... play. And all this? When will all this – [...] cut off by W1 and then by W2]/ M: All this, when will all this have been ... just play? (313)

"Beckett's plays are just play for precise performance. They are play as opposed to unmediated reality, but play is its own mode of reality."²⁴ The spectator of Beckett's theatre should recognise its autonomy and fictiveness as well as its mode of reality. Whilst this view points to the core of the bordering in Beckett's exploration of the game and play, it may not suffice to illuminate the self-generative potential of the autonomous and fictive sphere of game. This part of the paper would like to study *Play* in light of our analysis in the previous sections and to delineate the world in which the game of the operator is no longer able to identify the objective of the play, being deprived of self-referentiality and difference in time.

There appear to be two types of play in *Play*. "All that," marked in the past tense, can be seen as an indication of the past triangular relationship between M, W1 and W2, three bodies, each in a separate urn, who talk about this relationship in the past tense. By contrast, "All this," marked in the future perfect, most likely refers to the play happening on stage, namely, the play of light on three bodies. The latter preconditions the former, in that the light switches on the speech of the three bodies.

The three bodies' relationship with the "spotlight" is suggested by their movement and speech. Their reaction to light is automatic and regular; their speech starts simultaneously with the shining of light and cuts off with the extinguishing of light. The bodies also comment on light. W1 has a direct comment on the light: "W1: Hellish half light!" (312), "W1: Get off me! Get off me!" (313). M makes an indirect comment on his reaction to the light: "M: It [Peace] will come. It must come. There is no future in this" (313). However, these characters are unfortunate in having such a radiophonic consciousness in which everything has to be named in order to be articulated, for neither their awareness of nor their comment on the light affects the movement of the light. Their naming of "light" does not set up a relationship with the light on stage. In other words, the light does not take part in the game that the bodies have themselves set up. The light goes beyond their verbal game and shines as a nameless presence on the bodies.

In this sense, the light has no relationship with the

bodies. This light is simply there, and simply repeats its mechanical shining on and off. The function of light can easily be compared to Krapp's act with the tape recorder or Opener's opening. Without light, speech cannot be articulated. The speech of the three bodies, just as Music and Voice in *Cascando*, is always in a state of "waiting" to be articulated. However, the spotlight, unlike Krapp's play or Opener's opening, is bereft of any consciousness of or explanation for this action. It is more like a theatrical embodiment of the mechanised play of Music/Voice and Opener. With regard to simple repetition there is no time articulated as "before" and "after" something. It is the potential articulation of time in the bodies' narrative. The light itself is a timeless presence.

The play of "all that" has two aspects. To the spectator this play seems like an intermingling of the stories of three different bodies; the spectator somehow perceives the relationship between M, W1 and W2 through the overlap of the content of their stories as well as their presence and identical reaction to the light. However, on the level of the bodies' world, there is no acknowledged "relationship" between them. None of them speaks or listens to another. Their speech is not dialogue. Their confessions do not show any concern that the others might be listening. The stage direction also instructs that the three bodies "face undeviatingly front throughout the play" (307). As a result, the topos-stage seen as a single and concrete entity by the spectator appears to be divided into three worlds with three separate games played by each body or, precisely, each individual urn, as the bodies are "almost as part of urns" (307). Theatrical space is thus fragmented by the bodies and their one-way relationship with the light.

The unintelligibility of the bodies' speech also explains the non-relationality among the bodies. The "rapid tempo throughout" (307) used to deliver the speech renders the speech of the bodies almost unintelligible. Thus the questioning of intelligibility is not inherent in the world of this play, for the unintelligible speech does not allow the bodies to establish a dialogue, a relationship on stage. As a result, whatever the content of the bodies' speech may be, the essence of this theatre is reduced to the actions of the light on the bodies, just as the dividing of the game in *Krapp's Last Tape* is reduced to the timeless act of switching on. *Play* shows unintelligibility as it is, and renders it intelligible through the act of showing.²⁵ Yet, this intelligibility gives neither time nor meaning to the theatre.

How, though, does the "showing" of theatre make unintelligibility intelligible? The da capo structure in *Play* can only articulate the eternal continuation of the spaceless and timeless world. In the world of this theatre, where movement and dialogue are eliminated, only an

unarticulated confusion of bodies' voices remains. Beckett hopes, through the mechanisation of the play itself, that "repetition" will achieve a theatre that gives "confusion shape [...] a shape through repetition, repetition of themes, not only themes in the script, but also themes of the body."²⁶ In this line the speed of the speech can be seen as a state of confusion; a state in which language is reduced to an unarticulated origin, a state in which language cannot hold onto the certainty of presence. *Play* is an embodiment of the definition that Beckett gives to "da capo": "as a testimony to the intimate and ineffable nature of an art that is perfectly intelligible and perfectly inexplicable."²⁷ Through the grafting of theatre and radio, *Play* reaches the art of showing and expressing the auto-generative nature of language-game beyond its referentiality:

Yes. If life and death did not both present themselves to us, there would be no inscrutability. If there were only darkness, all would be clear. It is because there is not only darkness but also light that our situation becomes inexplicable (220).²⁸

If we were surrounded only by darkness, we would have no vision. Darkness as totality would be the only reality for us and there would not be no need to scrutinise it. However, there is light. It allows us to perceive and suggests to us the intelligibility of the world. Regardless of this suggestion, light as the origin of our perception and intellect is never explicable, because it is already given to us. In the end, the coexistence of the darkness and the light in which we are "already" thrown into is the origin of paradox. Light suggests and alludes to the intelligibility of the world, despite its own unintelligibility.

Conclusion

We have studied the development of the ideas of "game" and "play" from *Waiting for Godot* to *Play*. Our analysis began with the teleological waiting game between Vladimir and Estragon. This reveals the irrealisation of time in their world and the plurality of the games. This plurality is seen as a driving force behind their waiting, deprived of the telos. The loop of showing, learning and repeating can reveal the lawlessness or lack of foundation of the language-games. In the analysis of *Krapp's Last Tape*, we focused on two types of game played by old Krapp. We have observed that Krapp's actions on the tape recorder are divided into two: one that preconditions time and another that presupposes time. We have analysed how the acts of listening and recording blur the border between the middle-aged and old Krapps, and how timelessness replaces time, thus depriving old Krapp of control over his

play with the tape recorder.

Comparative analysis between *Krapp's Last Tape* and the radiophonic works reveals the play of different modes of expression: theatre and radio. The parallelism between *Embers* and *Krapp's Last Tape* demonstrates the characteristics of Beckett's radio plays as the insertion of silence i.e. the latent presence of sounds, the act of articulating the world (sounds, space and time) through naming, and the erosion of space and time in the radio medium. Mechanisation of the exchange between Voice and Music in *Cascando* is defined as the limit of articulating the world through the radio medium. This turns into the complete effacement both of self-referentiality and of the intelligibility of the game from within. Finally, a study of *Play* delineates this play as an embodiment of the intersection between theatre and radio. The boundary between inside and outside disappears, as light, a theatrical device, is now incorporated in the world of the bodies/characters. Nevertheless, a reciprocal relationship can no longer be established either between the characters or between the light and the characters. All the movements and speech of the bodies, as well as the light, are now deprived of intelligibility and meaning produced by self-reference (difference in self) and time (a change in time). Articulation of the world is now rendered as the repetitive musical structure "da capo" of the play. A series of analyses have revealed the indispensable function of "articulation" in Beckett's theatre.

Some form of unintelligibility is always present in Beckett's work. The game is a normative device that helps us grasp the structure of the world. However, as soon as we delve into the core of the structure of Beckett's theatre, this core is peeled away. It is not that the game imposes repetition on Beckett's theatre but repetition itself continues the game and unveils the origin of the core as the plural and the different which are prior to any signification. "To find a form to accommodate the mess, that is the task of the artist now."²⁹ We have indeed reached a form that seems to accommodate the mess or the unintelligible in Beckett's theatre. Yet this form-giving is also a process of self-effacing and self-destructive form. No final answer can be provided to his questioning. Instead, his questioning tests the limits of our reason and can, accordingly, transform it.

Notes

¹ Samuel Beckett, *Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett vol. I Waiting for Godot*. Ed. James Knowlson (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 105; hereafter abbreviated as TN1. The German director Walter Asmus reports that Beckett describes this play as follows: "Beckett: 'It is a game, everything is a game. [...] It is a game in order to survive.'"

See Walter D. Asmus. "Beckett Directs Godot." *Theatre Quarterly* 5.19 (1975), 23-4.

² Samuel Beckett, *Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett, vol. 2 Endgame*. Ed. S. E. Gontarski (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 49; hereafter abbreviated as TN2. The quote from Beckett's *Berlin Diary* elucidates a parallel between *Endgame* and chess. "Hamm is king in this chess game lost from the start. [...] He is a poor player." Bair suggests the possibility that Marcel Duchamp's aesthetics of chess influences the structure of Beckett's *Fin de partie*. Ref. Deidre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Vintage, 1990), 402-494. For a summary of Duchamp's aesthetics of endgame, see Henri-Pierre Roché "Les souvenirs sur Marcel Duchamp." *La Nouvelle N.R.F.* 1.6 (1953), 1133-38.

³ Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Samuel Beckett, or 'Presence' in the Theatre" in *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 108.

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the "humanistic approach," see Ed. Peter Boxall, *Waiting for Godot/Endgame: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁵ Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 120.

⁶ Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins U.P., 1993), 250.

⁷ Here we recall the intervention of the Spectator in Act III in *Eleutheria*. He appears uninvited on stage and accuses it of its absurdity and attempts to lead it to a more logical consequence, but Glazier simply does not understand Spectator's intervention and dismisses it, and the play on stage continues.

⁸ Ref. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Philosophical Investigations*, Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (London: Blackwell, 1958).

⁹ The following discussion on *Waiting for Godot* is based on TN1. All quotations from *Waiting for Godot* are from TN1. I only cite a page number for the quotations in this section.

¹⁰ In Act II Estragon's reaction "Despairingly" is eliminated.

¹¹ To avoid confusion between the word "play" defined in the introduction and its another meaning as a dramatic text, I use the word "play" mainly for the former and the word "work," "theatre," or "dramatic work" for the latter.

¹² In Act II this sentence does not have a question mark.

¹³ French version emphasises the sense of repetition by using the prefix "re-": "V: Alors, te revoloà, toi./ E: Tu crois?" See *En attendant Godot* (Paris: les éditions de minuit, 1952), 12.

¹⁴ Maurice Natanson, *The Erotic Bird: Phenomenology in Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 1998), 66. Natanson expresses his indebtedness to Anders' essay. See also Guenther Anders, "Being without Time: On Beckett's Play *Waiting for Godot*." *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 140-51. See especially pp.146-9 for a related argument.

¹⁵ The setting, lighting of the stage and choreography also create the sense of "irrealisation of time" in *Waiting for*

Godot. On the one hand, changes in lighting from darkness to half-light, then to full-light, then back again to half-light and to darkness, give Vladimir and Estragon the sense of time passing. On the other hand, the pattern of light change is repeated exactly in Act II, which takes place "Next day. Same time. Same place" (50). The exact repetition suggests the eternal recurrence of their waiting process. This state of no time is crystallised in the expression of twelve waiting points (Wartestellen) described by Beckett as "moments of stillness" or "frozen waiting" (91). They were introduced in the Schiller-Theater production in 1975 and were used in order to articulate the play between speech and movement in Beckett's theatre.

¹⁶ The following discussion on *Krapp's Last Tape* is based on Samuel Beckett, *Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 3 *Krapp's Last Tape*. Ed. James Knowlson (London: Faber and Faber, 1992); hereafter abbreviated as TN3. All quotations from *Krapp's Last Tape* are from TN3. I only cite a page number for the quotations in this section.

¹⁷ Beckett was aware of the incompatibility of this sentence with the theatrical mode, yet preferred to keep it as it is. His early draft, MS 1659 (Reading University Library), shows that this sentence initially had a more concrete description of time: "A late evening in the nineteen eighties." In the same draft "the nineteen eighties" is crossed out and replaced by "future." Worth and Lawley both explain this incongruity in light of technology that was not available when the work was written. "The means of review is a tape recorder, and if the setting 'in the future' seems at first odd, we quickly realize that it is there in the interest of chronological plausibility – Krapp in 1958 could not be made to listen to tapes from a time when such recording materials were not available" (Lawley, 89).

¹⁸ In Beckett's stage direction for the Schiller Theater production, Krapp even falls into a "dream" state during some of his listening. This state corresponds to the gesture named as "Attitude I" by Beckett: "Krapp sits with both hands on the table. He remains a good moment motionless, staring before him" (TN3, 3) as the indication of "dream remembering" (TN3, 14). Indeed, a dream state can be the ultimate representation of the absence of time-border. As dream follows a disordered time and space, so old Krapp loses the sense of whether he is listening or acting.

¹⁹ There is a significant difference between the original version in *Complete Dramatic Work* (Ed., S. E. Gontarski (London, Faber and Faber, 1986), 223; hereafter abbreviated as CDW) and the revised one in TN3 (9-10). CDW version is the original version of the text. The difference suggests old Krapp's loss of control over the tape recorder. In the logical succession of the recording, old Krapp's final play with the tape recorder has to be "wind back", as the final listening starts from the part which comes before the end of the thirteenth listening. However, in the original version the instructed action was to "wind forward." This was changed to "wind back" in the revised version. But if we were to follow the logic of the original text, the tape would have played its silence, which embodies the anticipation of the

end of the play. If the voice appeared in this silence, it would be a spectral presence that forwards Krapp's destiny toward no time. We could see the mistake of action suggesting the moment when Krapp loses control over his play with the tape recorder. Instead, playing the tape forwards his destiny. He is no longer able to control time by switching on and off or rewinding and forwarding. His voice is transferred to the tape that is to be played by the tape recorder. Now the tape recorder plays old Krapp's time. As the actions on the tape disappear, there is no more time.

²⁰ All quotations from *Embers*, *Cascando* and *Play* are from CDW. I only cite a page number for the quotations.

²¹ In the case of his father, therefore, the border, strictly speaking, remains unestablished.

²² In the original French text "I close" is "Je referme." The prefix "re-" emphasises the sense of repetition.

²³ V (Voice) in Beckett's television play ... *but the clouds* ... has a very similar pattern in its action and speech.

²⁴ Ruby Cohn, *Just Play: Beckett's Theatre* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1980), 3.

²⁵ The tempo in the first London production directed by Beckett was so fast that it "almost eliminated intelligibility." For more details, See Bille Whitelaw, *Billie Whitelaw ... Who He?* (London: Hodder&Stoughton, 1995), 76-82.

²⁶ Walter D. Asmus, *op.cit.*, 23.

²⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1999), 92.

²⁸ Tom Driver, "48 Tom Driver in "Columbia University Forum;" *Samuel Beckett: Critical Heritage*. Eds., L. Graver et R. Federman, (New York: Routledge, 1979), 220.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 219.

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