

THE LANGUAGE OF ENTROPY: A PRAGMA-DRAMATIC
ANALYSIS OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S *ENDGAME*

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“In the Beginning was
the Word and the Word
was with God, and the
Word was God.”
The Bible,
The Gospel of St. John

The Gospel of St. John sets forth the problem of identification of both Word and Thought. The World begins with the Word. Mythical LOGOS, with its almost sacred connotation, was capable of denoting both the sign and the concept. As the history of drama proves, the progressive divergence between Word and Idea resulted in what is commonly called the inefficiency of the language of modern drama. The source of the crisis is, at least partly, able to be traced through the philosophy of existentialism which shaped the conventions of the Theater of the Absurd. The functioning of language in Beckett's plays, usually interpreted in relation to the rhetoric canon of the Theater of the Absurd, will be analyzed here from the point of view of pragmatics.

Since entropy, being the measure of the disorder in a chain of messages, hinders any attempt at communication, it seems to be feasible that the pragma-dramatic examination be carried out in terms of the written discourse.¹ The alleged death of the theater suggests that, being essentially anti-theatrical², Beckett's drama un-

¹ In a traditional approach there were two theories of drama: theatrical and literary. The former treats the play as a scenario for the theater, stressing the indispensability of staging a play. Literary theory considers the text as a self-defining artifact without the necessity for a stage performance. The contemporary theory of literature, although retaining the old concepts, refers to drama in terms of spoken and written discourse.

² Anti-theatrical, in general, means a non well-made play, where all the classical notions, such as cause and effect action, were abandoned.

deniably asserts the deformation of the myth of logos in contemporary culture. Although the only truth expressed by words is that they are not capable of appropriating a transcendental significance, still *Endgame* heavily relies on verbal codes. Such an understanding of the problem leads one closer to the Derridean concept of *écriture* portraying the mythological significance of the black signs on the white sheet of paper (cf. Culler 1978:133). Yet, communication in drama is primarily concerned with characters expressing themselves by means of language. Hence, Wittgenstein's ontological problem of being through language referred to the meaning of existence and was studied in respect to Austin's Speech Act Theory (1962). For Austin, the use of words in the linguistic system of a community tests their expressive power in the language. When this power is gradually diminished, it is the sign that the forces of entropy enter the closed system.

The plays written according to the convention of anti-realistic theater are governed by their own inherent logic. The comparison carried out between the traditional drama and the 'absurd' plays brought about the situation in which the latter replaced action with a loosely connected chain of images based primarily on dialogues. The action, not governed by the laws of logical development, is deprived of motivation. Also, the plot does not exist and, consequently, the play presents only roughly characterized protagonists. The Theater of the Absurd owes much of its pessimism to the post-Einsteinian disorder usually perceived in terms of a gradual deterioration of living, and to existentialism. The plays written in the conventions of the Theater of the Absurd contain elements of pure, non-literary theater: frequent semantic speculations and misunderstandings, and refrain-like repetitions, along with certain actions, which of their very nature, belong to the music-hall or circus tradition rather than to the theater. The idea of dichotomy and duality shows Beckett's astounding mastery in proving that it is possible to find a form in repetitions, and what is more, one can read them as signifying allegorical relations to the world, or take it as a statement about the incoherence and absurdity of language. By providing an appropriate context, Beckett made the meaningless meaningful. In multidimensional, polysemic literary discourse, Beckett's drama speaks with the language of entropy, indeed subscribing to Wittgenstein's claim that the disordered language of literature mirrors the chaotic universe.

In *Endgame*, everything outside and inside is dying. Beckett paints a picture of desolation, lovelessness, boredom and sorrow. He leaves no hope, no chance. The play, on both the theatrical and metatheatrical levels, opens into nothingness. It is the most self-conscious of Beckett's plays and therefore, the most grim. The play and the game both come to an end leaving the spectator or the reader with an image of the futility of any human action, whether malicious or tender and loving. Through the savagely parodied logic of the dialogues, Beckett implies, hints and suggests metaphors which are stripped down to their bare concepts in order to provide the reader with a vision of an explicit definition of the as yet unnamed entropy. This is what is done by the dangerously simple dialogue of *fin de partie*.

Such a state of affairs forces the evident implications: the incompatibility of the sign and the idea leads to serious incongruity. This directly affects contemporary

literature causing problems with expressing thoughts through words. It seems that this difficulty increased when writers became aware of the prevalent powers of entropy acting inside the closed system, the language itself, and any communicative situation. Taken in the broadest sense, entropy means the rising disorder of energy operating within certain isolated systems which are directed toward total inertia (cf. Tanner 1971:141-54). The paradox of this situation lies in the fact that it is the motion itself that leads toward inaction. Stillness, a recurring denominator of existential plays, is an immediate consequence of the prolongation of an impetus, but it might as well be considered as the diffusion of substance. Yet 'order' in itself is marked by entropy in the sense that it produces homogenous movement and not only does it not prevent destruction, but, in fact, increases it. So a writer finds himself in a predicament of destructive disorder and mechanical order, both of which lead to disorganization.

The notion of entropy is also related to the theory of information toward which a modern writer cannot remain indifferent, because literature is also an act of communication. Since signals present certain organized patterns, the measure or organization is the information conveyed. When the pattern is distorted, entropy enters the system and becomes the measure of disorganization. The dissolution and disappearance of certain essential messages is an inevitable result of the multiple codes existing in the mass media. For Beckett, the informative chaos ruling everywhere is humanity's main enemy, because it impedes the restoration of meaningful order. He himself fell into a deadlock as he strove to find a new form for his poetics of failure. He turned reality, whatever it signifies, into a closed space in which the movable abilities of people are taken away together with their capacity to express themselves by means of language. Life on stage, and the Greek *topos teatrum mundi*, is turned upside down. The idea of life as a game is transformed into a game which is supposed to be life.

The actors are frozen on the stage until the lime light dies. Within the play, they witness the slow withering of nature outside. Still, any attempt to bring back order actually disorganizes their life even more. Absurdity drains off the energy and their life to an inescapable impasse. An example are Clov's continuous pronouncements about leaving Hamm and thus regaining, for himself, internal peace. Within the play they do nothing but aggravate the tension and in an explicit way manifest the incompatibility between the words and the actions. Part of such a disharmony can be traced through existential philosophy. Nonetheless, Beckett's stance on the crisis of language should not be limited exclusively to such an approach. A wider range of interpretative possibilities is supplied by language philosophy and structuralism. Structuralism emphasized that a work of literature is a communicative phenomenon, and, therefore, it has to be treated as an element of the communicative situation relating to the sender: the author and the addressee: the reader (cf. Jakobson 1966:350-77). If the information is to be connoted successfully, it has to be referential to the context. Needless to say, it has to mean something for both the sender and the recipient. The code is, thus, a communicative

necessity on both parts so as to enable one inferring the message from the inherent organization of the work.

How the literary language relates to the structure of the world is yet another problem. For Wittgenstein the meaning of the world is searched through the meaning of the word. Anthropocentric philosophy gave man the right to be the creator of the world by means of words. The philosophers of language, including Wittgenstein, held the position that language is adequate with being. In this way, though indirectly, famous Cartesian 'cogito' was denied. Since the language became the main expression of one's thoughts, Descartes' maxim *Cogito ergo sum* should have been amended to *Dicto ergo sum* ('I speak, so I exist'). That is why Beckett's characters constantly talk articulating their thoughts aloud, frequently in an illogical stream is also an attempt at communicating. The rules governing the linguistic system seem to be primarily logical. If, however, the sentence is a reflection of a situation taking place in the world, therefore it frequently happens that, in a chaotic and disorganized world, it is very difficult to give human actions any kind of meaning.

A different approach to language and meaning of words was provided by the Oxford School of Language philosophy and its distinguished representative John Langshaw Austin. He argued that the meaning of words is in the language itself not in an outside reality. Consequently, he made a distinction between constantives, about which one can say whether they are true or false, and performatives, which, by virtue of saying something, performs an act. His Theory of Speech Acts, thus, comprises three kinds of acts: locutionary, illocutionary (the simple statement of a fact or an utterance having the force of a statement, warning, bet or promise) and perlocutionary (involving the achievement of an effect on the hearers such as persuading, convincing, frightening, boring, amusing, and so forth). For each such act there are felicity conditions (Vanderveken 1980:255) specified and are accompanied by the Doctrine of Infelicities. They are conventional in nature and their felicity depends on fulfilling certain linguistic and social conventions which regulate the functioning of certain utterances in given situations.

The application of Austin's Speech Act Theory to drama, here understood as a written text, poses several problems. Since the object of the study is a written discourse, the pragmatic model for the literary Speech Act must account for the author, the place of the speaker, and the reader in place of the hearer (cf. Gibińska 1987:13-14). In Van Dijk's Theory (1976:23-57) a literary work is a macro speech act which in itself does not have to preserve a strict Speech Act Rule (cf. *ibid.* Van Dijk's account on Grice's Conversational Principle). The communication in the text is only an imitation of real speech acts. As a result, their illocutionary force is only mimetic in its very nature. Austin (1962:22) claimed that Literary Speech Acts are, in a particular way, 'void'. Still, as he admitted later on, drama operates with language which most resembles normal life conversations, therefore, the application of the Speech Act Theory is fully justifiable. Since in Beckett's plays the language is the main organizational factor, a closer analysis will show

that the interpretation of this organization will give an illuminating insight into the philosophy and rhetoric of the Drama of the Absurd.

The static character of Beckett's drama and the resulting lack of division into scenes entails a compulsion, of a sort, to create an artificial division in consent with the topic of a particular conversation. The opening scenes in themselves, challenge conventional openings. The reader is immediately thrown into the middle of the story and, apart from information of a highly metaphysical load which can be inferred from the context, there is never a hint that the dialogues will built into some sort of action. Because of the kaleidoscope quality of the changing images, there are always a few introductory dialogues presented so as to give a more complete picture of the kind of philosophical discourse which would dominate any play.

The opening scene

The opening scene begins with a detailed description of the scenography with Clove studying its particulars. There is something gloomy and sad in that presentation, the way he uncovers all the sheets, and his glances at Hamm suggest finality, but the atmosphere of the ultimate end is built up slowly with the help of subsequent images. It is for the reader to infer from this presentation that something is going wrong, that immobility and stiffness remind one of the deterioration of the nature around.

Clov: (fixed gaze, tonelessly) Finished. It's almost finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. (Pause) Grain, upon grain, one by one suddenly, there's a heap, little heap, the impossible heap. (Pause) I can't be punished any more. (Pause) I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle for me. (Beckett 1958:12)

Clov first utters constantives, whose truthfulness will be checked in the course of the development of the action. He repeats the word 'finished' several times as if to highlight his apocalyptic vision. His fate is that his life, day after day, grain by grain, becomes an impossible burden of stored experiences, a burden that a man can no longer carry. The next performative utterance can be considered felicitous because, after contemplating his statements, Clov indeed leaves the stage. The kitchen, functioning as an off-stage shelter, is Clov's imaginary hiding place to which he wants to escape several times during the play. On the second level of communication, the metatheatrical, it is the asylum to which the clown flees from the ham actor. The mention of the whistle suggests a typical master/servant relationship between those two dramatis personae.

Hamm's following monologue, which is not an answer to what Clove had said, but rather 'returning the ball'. His first sentence explicitly asserts such a thesis:

Hamm: Me (He yawns.) to play. (...) Can there be misery (He yawns.) loftier than mine? (...) Absolute. (Proudly.) The bigger man is the fuller he is. (Pause. Gloomily.) And the emptier. (Beckett 1958:12)

Hamm points to the mutually exclusive concept, the anti-thesis of fullness and hollowness. Capable of suffering, Hamm admits that there is a double context to what he says. He is an actor on stage as well as the character portrayed. Consequently, in this case, the importance of presupposition works on the active communication level of the characters and the reader. Both personalities seem to be like Eliot's 'the hallowed men'. The emptiness around, both spiritual and physical, prompt the image of a waste land ever present in Western literature of the 20th Century. The pictures of waste will prevail throughout the entire play.

Hamm: Enough, it's time it ended, in the refuge too. (Pause.) And yet I hesitate to ... to end. (Beckett 1958:13)

He deliberates on the possibility of ending his life. Blind and immobile, all he can do is to continue the play, to live. *C'est la fin de partie*, the game is over, the time is right to put an end to it, but his constantive utterances never gain an active force. A ham actor on stage, a misfit in life. It is probably his inner incapability of action that hinders all his locutionary acts from have the strength of illocutions and perlocutions. His last sentences subscribe to the doctrine of infelicities. They are simply misfires, that acts purported are neither correct nor complete. (cf. Austin 1962:25-36) In *Endgame* the characters both play and are played with.

Hamm: (...) Don't we laugh?
 Clov: (after reflection) I don't feel like it.
 (...)
 Hamm: Nature has forgotten us.
 Clov: There is no more nature.
 Hamm: No more nature! You exaggerate.
 Clov: In the vicinity.
 Hamm: But we breathe, we change! We loose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!
 Clov: Than nature has forgotten us.
 Hamm: But you say there is none. (Beckett 1958:16)

Just like for other of Beckett's characters, the right to laugh is denied to those whose life is nevertheless considered to be half-existence. Laughter in ordinary life brings the release of tension, is a cure for all ills. But, they cannot laugh. Being natural, laughter belongs to the realm of standard human behavior. The death of nature is, thus, stressed by their inability to relax. Beckett once again presents two contrasting ideas: physicality and spirituality, the loss of hair and ideals put out

in one breath of a character. In this way, Beckett says that the deterioration of the human body concurs with the degradation of beliefs. Moreover, the cyclical changes in nature correspond to the structure of the dialogue. The characters repeat their sequences but they switch roles as the conversation progresses. All the sentences are constantives which are apparently true. In pragmatic terms, their first exchange can be interpreted as unambiguous as all the principles of conversation are preserved. They communicate in the sense of exchanging thoughts (Mühlhäusler and Harre 1990:12; Miller 1980:157-60). In this way, the stychomythic effect is not exclusively restricted to filling in the empty space. Conjectured in terms of an indirect speech act (Morgan 1975:261-79) it conveys the idea of bitter ridicule. The essentially symbolic condition of living is brought to play the role of the literal cause of the inability to move. The low and the sublime intervene in one picture and this almost constant oscillating is one of the distinctive feature of Beckett's style.

The scenes of disagreement and misunderstanding

Neither 'disagreement' nor 'misunderstanding' are the best terms for the dialogues in which the breakdown of communication leads to non-understanding. This breakdown has two sources: intentional, being the result of contrastive viewpoints, and non-intentional, caused by the external conditions of life. These dialogues usually present clear metatheatrical 'ostention of the codes' (Marquerlot 1990:11-13; Bourgy 1990:3). In brief, they are performed by the characters and the actors to while away the time. But in fact, the disagreement and misunderstanding presented in the examples below are the natural outcome of man's inability to restore the dialectic of thought.

Hamm: Silence! (Nagg starts, cuts short his laugh)
 (...)
 Hamm: (exasperated) Have you finished? Will you never finish? (With sudden fury) Will this never finish?
 (...) My kingdom for a nightman!
 (...)
 (He whistles. Enter Clov.)
 (...)
 Have you bottled her?
 Clov: Yes.
 Hamm: Are they both bottled?
 Clov: Yes.
 Hamm: Screw down the lids. (Beckett 1958:22)

This dialogue starts Hamm's growing irritation with his parents which is the origin of the reciprocal anger of Hamm and Clov. The short exchanges between Hamm and Clov provide the reader with the context, and introduce the atmosphere of the conversation. Hamm, at first, is solely concerned with silencing his parents.

But as his anger grows, he becomes more and more irritated with Clov, with a similar reaction on the part of Clove. The tension is wonderfully rendered through the language they use. Their utterances, limited to the emotive and referential function (Jakobson 1966:353), are stressed by Hamm's lack of sympathy toward his mother. The use of the pronouns 'she' and 'her' in his mother's presence is neither a sign of rudeness nor care. Hamm seems to be enraged with his mother's being alive, that is why he orders both parents to be bottled. The verb 'to bottle', normally used in reference to things, is here used to suggest an inhuman action done to human beings, and thus brings an old man, an old woman, and a used thing into an equal line of insignificance. The image of closing Hamm's immobile parents in the dustbins is compared with Hamm's own immobility. His perlocutionary success is at the same time his failure as a son. The grim mood of the situation enhances Beckett's dramatic technique of repetition of Hamm's question: "Will it finish?". At the beginning he pleads for a nightman. The original invocation was a cry of Richard III in Shakespeare's tragedy. The effect of dramatic irony is gained by means of contrast with the king who lost his kingdom, and Hamm, a blind ruler of the empire or ashes, who cries for somebody to clear the 'muck'.

- Hamm: Take me for a little turn (...) Not to fast! (...) Right round the world! (...) Hug the walls, and then back to the centre again. (...) Are you hugging?
- Clov: (Pushing) Yes.
- Hamm: It's a lie! Why do you lie to me?
(...)
- Clov: Take away your hand. (...) There.
(...)
- Hamm: Do you hear? (...) Hallow bricks! (...) Am I right in the centre?
(...)
- Clove: If I could kill him I'd be happy. (Beckett 1958:23-4)

The atmosphere of disagreement is heated gradually, as Hamm becomes more and more impatient, he utters subsequent orders to Clov, which he thinks are performed too slow. The exchanges are short of the master/slave type. Yet, these orders achieve full perlocutionary success, thus all of them appear to be happy performatives, uttered by the right person in the right place. Hamm is possessed by the idea of 'hollowness' which is stressed by his search for hollow bricks. The entire scene informs the reader about the physical side of the action. It also presents the characteristic traits of the characters' personalities, as well as sets them in their appropriate places in the 'action' of the play. The final image is that of a metaphor of self-conscious drama, with the characters as actors and the actors as characters.

In the end, Clov articulates a wish, which nevertheless subscribes to the doctrine of infelicity, this time abuses, because one may infer that he is not actually expressing the will to kill his master. As it has already been observed, he stays with Hamm in the name of compassion and to continue the performance they are sup-

posed to give. On the metatheatrical level, they are both trapped in the determinism of the play. In fact, he cannot kill the master if only because his words have no meaningful reference to life. Thus according to a slightly modified thesis of Wittgenstein (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*): a sentence is a picture of reality but only terms of wishful thinking.

- Hamm: We are not beginning to... to mean something.
- Clov: Mean something! You and I mean something!
(Brief laugh.) Ah that's a good one!
(...)
- Clov: (Anguishly scratching himself) I have a flea!
- Hamm: A flea! Are there still fleas?
(...)
- Hamm: (very perturbed) But humanity might start from there all over again! (Beckett 1958:27)

Beckett contrives many instances of claptrap into the exchanges between *dramatis personae*. Frequently, a character appears genuinely concerned about advancing an idea of magnitude. In the face of greatness, his counterpart always interrupts his attempts as though with dry banality, comic routine, or some trivial gesture designed to rupture what might have, if sustained, turned into a dialogue. Hamm attempts to say something important but Clov interrupts. The above burlesque image with the flea shifts the focus from the spiritual to the physical with a very down to earth matter. Through the theory of implicature (cf. Saddock 1975:281-96) the reader is informed about the state of affairs beyond the represented world. Hamm's seemingly contrastive illocutions have the force of threats reaching deeply into Beckettian philosophy. The source of the misunderstanding here is the result of the differences in the perception of the phenomena of nature. Hamm considers the existence of a flea in a metaphysical dimension, whereas Clov is exclusively concerned with the physical aspect. He is preoccupied only with his own pain. Hamm understands that a flea might be able to re-start the cycle of life and does not want this to happen. Considering all the suffering humanity is exposed to, he wants to spare mankind the 'dolor vitae.' Accordingly, he accepts entropy, not as the ultimate dissolution, but as the resolution of the existing situation. Clov strives to kill the flea because it bites him. The deep philosophical irony is associated here with the perlocutionary success of Hamm's illocutionary acts. With slapstick verve, Clov drowns the flea in powder, and the dialogue continues in a similar vein.

When Clov pronounces: "I'll leave you.", his locutionary act has an illocutionary force of a threat. Hamm's remarks which follow it, make it even more probable that Clov's threat will have a perlocutionary effect. His anger is linguistically enhanced by exclamation marks which are present all through their subsequent dialogue. It becomes clear that on a linguistic level, their disagreement finally leads to the breakdown of communication. The context of the represented world makes it easy for the reader to infer the meaning of the stream of thought of both char-

acters through the theory of implicature. It is not a verbal duel any more. It is a reflexive, intentional misunderstanding where Hamm's slight nostalgia about the past introduces the atmosphere of regret of the irretrievable world.

Hamm: (...) Let us pray to God.

Nagg: Me sugar-plum! (...)

Hamm: God first.

(...)

Hamm: There is no more sugar-plums!

Nagg: (...) I hope the day will come when you'll really need to have me listen to you, and need to hear my voice, any voice. (Pause)

(...)

Nell!

(...)

Hamm: Our revels now are gone. (Beckett 1958:37-9)

Hamm's monologue, preceded by the above quote, begins with a prompt for Clov, Nagg, and himself to pray to God. The fullness of the dramatic effect following the dialogue is disturbed by Nagg's request about a sugar-plum, which can, in fact, be considered in terms of indirect speech acts as an order. Nonetheless, they are disregarded by both Hamm and Clov who are preoccupied with "the rat business". The context for the fictive world once again brings about the image of dying nature. The rat in the kitchen, mentioned earlier by Clov, though still alive, is bound to, is condemned to death. The misunderstanding leading finally to a serious father/son quarrel marks the recurrent contrast between the spiritual and the physical aspect of the human character. Nagg, reduced to his physical needs, is not able to reach spiritual levels of thought. In his final monologue, he makes the last attempt to verbalize his ideas and to warn, or even threaten his son against punishment for inhuman behavior. Nagg's utterances rarely have any perlocutionary effect. This is because he is not strong enough to exert his power on others. In the end, however, he is so desperate as to wish his son a death in solitude and fear. This course, operating beyond the represented world, is an illocutionary act which will achieve its full perlocutionary force in the penultimate scene. For the reader it is a threat, functioning on a spiritual level. Each human being is deserted and lonely in his last hour (just like everyman from the Medieval Morality Play.) With his words, Nagg pictures an apocalyptic vision of the end of the world within the frames of entropy completing the chaos of the universe. The disorder is also perceivable in their speech. The comparison of chopped phrases to the all embracing disintegration is even more acute when tested against the background of the fictive world. For they cannot communicate with themselves, they cannot gain a spiritual bond with the Supreme Being, and that is why they eventually break off in blasphemy, with Hamm enunciating that God does not exist. As Ruby Cohn writes:

The scene ends with Prospero's lines at the end of the masque in *The Tempest*: 'Our revels now are ended'. The Didi and Gogo (*Waiting for Godot* aspect of *fin de partie* is finished: repartee, memories, story, and prayer. Hamm has exhausted his ingenuity in killing time. He will now dissolve his royal role into that of the clown. (Cohn 1973:149)

The closing scene

The Theater of the Absurd rejected traditional dramatic devices, the logical consequence of this change was the substitution of denouement for a non-solving type of ending. Since, in the absurd world of Beckett's drama, life does not progress rationally, the end of a play might as well serve for the beginning of it. The circular pattern working on the structural level likewise functions as a linguistic device, manifesting itself in recurrent ideas.

Hamm: Clov!

(Clov halts without turning) (...)

Clov: This is what we call making an exit.

Hamm: I'm obliged to you for your services.

Clov: (Turning sharply.) Ah, pardon, it's I'm obliged to you.

(...)

Hamm: Me to play. (Pause. Warily.) Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing. (...)

Ah, yes! (...) With my compliments. (Beckett 1958:51-3)

For the last time, Hamm calls Clov with his authoritative voice. Clov is determined to leave, he is prepared both spiritually and physically. "That's what we call making an exit." This remark clearly suggests the metatheatrical reference. The actor leaves the stage. The following exchange, maintained in a very formal tone, resembles the farewell of two people working together, but who are not necessarily good friends. The next sentence shifts, one more time, the reader's attention toward the inside action of the play. The request for the last favor is, though, directed at Clov as the protagonist of the play, not to Clov as an actor. Accepting his refusal, Hamm utters his final monologue starting with the words: "Me to play", just like at the beginning.

The stage directions say that he turns to the audience "with my compliments" and whistles. He apparently reverses the situation, he congratulates the actors as if he became the audience whistling. Since he is the least suitable person to do so, this utterance, along with the following action, is absolutely inappropriate for the stage situation. This is a fine example of ingenuous metadrama in Beckett's theater. Hamm's utterance is then a misinvocation, subscribing to Austin's Theory of Infelicities. The game is over, it is finished, the symbolic gesture of uncovering

the face he started the play with, now brings the curtain down. The repetitive and symmetrical pattern, though present, is much less visible here. The end, because of certain apocalyptic visions of the dying world, reminds one more of the traditional denouement. The concept of circularity is nevertheless preserved by means of metatheatrical allusions. An actor ends the spectacle, but, on the next day, the play will start all over again, and the ham actor will have to carry on his monologue on the stage because "that's the way we're playing it" (Beckett 1958:53).

The language of drama, understood as a verbal as well a visual code, marked the beginning of a communicative approach to literature. This had already been suggested by structuralists who invaded the territory of literature transmitting their linguistic theories to literary language. For them, a culture consists of sets of symbolic systems, and therefore, an object, such as a literary work, must be studied in relation to the structure of those systems corresponding to certain codes. The Theater of the Absurd largely opposed such a view. The playwrights themselves, challenged the traditional approach to drama writing, but at the same time as their works gained recognition they became conventionalized (cf. Eco 1989:123-57). Beckett understood that convention in itself gives birth to the crisis of language. For Wittgenstein the logical structure of the universe was a reflection of the structure of the language. Hence, if language appeared to be illogical it happened because it disguised thought and thoughts in their pre-verbal state are always logical. Beckett, on the other hand, beholds the weakening power of logos in the sense that he asserts the incongruity between the thought and the idea. Accepting the status quo, he does not negate the influence of language being nevertheless the main vehicle of conceptual thought. Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* (cf. Brown 1974:14-19) claimed that semiotics, understood as a language of signs, would be the cure to the further impoverishment of thought. The evolution of Beckett's drama shows a similar development. In his later plays, he seems to subscribe to Antonin Artaud's thesis that "the theater should aim at expressing what language is incapable of putting into words." (Esslin 1964:308). Nevertheless, *Endgame* is still the play in which Beckett experiments with language. This is where he tried to express the inexpressible through simple, limited and almost non-dramatic, yet linguistic means.

If one takes the communication in a play as being portrayed to two levels, the first between the speaker and the hearer, and the second between the characters in a play and the recipient, then the crisis of the language, otherwise present, is successfully dealt with through linguistic means. The play remains communicative. The comic and the tragic impact is anchored in the situational context, which directs the reader's interpretation while the character's remain puzzled and partly unaware of what is happening. The crisis is recognized on the bases of the fact that language is no longer in opposition to the world, but to itself (cf. Sinko 1977:88). Beckett discards corrupted language trying to recover primary, almost bare idea in which entropy is so eminent.

The way this process works can best be illustrated by means of Austin's Speech Act Theory. He argued that the meaning of the words is in the language itself not

in an outside reality. Austin's theory almost erased the difference between speaking and doing something. Here, the pragma-dramatic analysis faces its first problem: Words in Beckett's plays do not do anything, they do not exhibit any perlocutionary power. As Austin (1962) and then Van Dijk (1976) observed fictional language is governed by its own conventions, which in turn, require that the Speech Acts be adopted to these conventions. Beckett's drama proceeds without being structured according to traditional devices but nonetheless "there is a method in this madness." The dialogues of *Endgame* still retain some properties of a communicative situation. Yet, their dramatic value is highly questionable. Particular conversations do not constitute action, and so they do not make up the story. Rather, they create certain images, ensuring in this way that they do not progress in time but in space. They do this with all the cyclically repeated patterns that apparently stand for the metaphysical dimension of immobility of human existence.

The overemphasized fallibility and frequently repeated charges of insufficiency of language bring back Vico's claim (cf. Cohn 1973:20-1) of the primary spontaneity of language which is contrasted with present day linguistic habits. The routine of talking makes Beckett's characters exert their force of existence, while they are going through the painful process when the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being. There is no way to regain language spontaneity just as it is impossible to give up certain linguistic habits. The Theater of the absurd tracks the corruption of speech by pointing to clichés and stereotypic dialogues. Beckett's word games are sort of polemic against sloppy authorized speech. Repetitive verbal formalities kill off the very spontaneity, condor and understanding they pretend to promote. This idiom reduces a frozen lexicon to deal with an infinite variety of problems. Conversations conducted in such language make any exchange of ideas impossible, substitute what Orwell called "prefabricated words and phrases for thought." The Newspeak of our age weakens the power of logos. Therefore, this dangerously pretentious nonsense talk which one day may engulf all its users portrays in an excellent way entropy of language. Beckett do not destroys dramatic language. He expresses his ideas through the language of entropy creating the new poetry out of impoverished thought.

A pragmatic approach to drama gives one to have an insight into what happens in the play and how. Consequently it also offers a justified appreciation of various elements. Beckett is a master of language and undoubtedly a complete and exhaustive interpretation of his works is not possible, especially in an article form, however if a reader pays close attention to the language of the play, it will help to achieve a better comprehension of it. This study is an attempt to encourage the reader to infer the widest possible range of interpretations.

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