



SAMUEL BECKETT AND THE PLAY ENDGAME

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ABSTRACT

In 1929 Beckett had contributed to a coterie collection of homages to James Joyce, our Examination Round His Fortification for incamination Of Work In Progress, one of those books which seem, even at the planning stage, to have been destined to be collector's item. Throughout the 1930's he had published sporadically and always in the same over bred way a short and polemical study of Proust, two remarkably slim volumes of poetry, a book of short stories with a fighting title, More Tricks Than Kicks, and in 1938 a comic novel called Murphy. All had sunk more or less without trace. Shortly after the war, in 1947, he had published his own French translation of Murphy, which sold 95 copies in the first four years. At the beginning of the 1950's, when Beckett's name began appearing more frequently in Paris Godot, originally written in French were published between 1951 and 1953.

INTRODUCTION

Waiting for Godot and Endgame have become standard repertory classics. But they represent only the tip of the Beckett iceberg. The submerged mass consists of works for the theatre, the radio and in prose- it is misleading to call the latter novels- of extreme difficulty and compression. Melvin Friedman says "I am not convinced that they are read any more frequently or more willingly than was.



Beckett's work is now surrounded by great mounds of commentary, much of it rubble of interest to literary archeologists but not to the ordinary reader. Beckett however is an absurdist in a strict way. He created a world where Godot never comes and Knott lives up to his name, in which it seems perfectly natural to pass one's time in an urn or a dustbin, up to the neck in sand or face down in the mud, a world which, seen from the skull-like room of Endgame is devastated.

In Endgame Clov says 'is what is called making an exit'; after a particularly tedious inter change, Hamm appropriates the audience response by remarking. 'This is deadly'; Malone writing in bed becomes indistinguishable from Beckett writing in his study.

Beckett was born on April 13th, 1906 at Foxrock, near Dublin. That year April 13th was not only a Friday it was Good Friday-which seems peculiarly appropriate for a man who subsequently became obsessed both with the crucifixion and with the sheer ill luck of existence.

In Endgame, Clov violently hits Hamm's head: "he gets down, looks for the dog, sees it, picks it up, hastens towards Hamm and strikes him violently on the head with the dog". Furthermore, Hamm's bleeding wounds suggest violence and are reminiscent of the gushing and harrowing wounds that both civilians and soldiers incur in persistent wars in our world. Hamm as seen in the following dialogue, wants life to be brutally terminated.

Clove: There is a rat in the kitchen!

Hamm: A rat! Are there rats?

Clov: In the kitchen there's one.

Hamm: And you haven't terminated him?"

Hamm, evidently does not want any potential creatures in the world. He wants nothing that may enable humanity to start all over again, especially as he looks back at his youth with anger, resenting the present that is more painful still. He wants anybody around him to experience his viciousness and wants life, as seen in the case of the rat, to be violently stopped. Again, the fact that Hamm calls Clov "ape" takes us to Darwin's theory on the origin of man which holds that man has developed from apes. Clov by implication is still prone to act on primal impulses like animals.

Thus Beckett from early and most unpromising beginnings the progress of his work was one of a gradual chastening of style, stripping away artifice in order to achieve a final bleak meticulousness that is the progress of his work has been undeviatingly towards the condition of poetry. But he has achieved this- in his novels, plays and works for radio- only in prose.



REFERENCES:

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