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Beckett's "Happy Days": Rewinding and Revolving Histories

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BECKETT'S *HAPPY DAYS*: REWINDING AND REVOLVING HISTORIES

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In *Happy Days* Samuel Beckett's bird-like protagonist, Winnie, resists readings by those who, like Richard Gilman, desire to situate Beckett's stage images outside of history.¹ While the set of *Happy Days* is very much an unrecognizable wasteland (echoing Gilman's description of *Waiting for Godot*), much of the play's monologue are Winnie's memories. Buried up to her waist in Act I and her neck in Act II, Winnie recalls days long gone, rewinding and revolving her personal past as well as a cultural and historical past she once took part in. Despite the cheerfulness that accompanies many of her memories, Winnie is a victim of molestation. Futilely, she attempts to keep the memory of the traumatic incident at bay. However, Winnie is winding down, becoming slower and increasingly trapped by her trauma. Beckett is keenly interested in ways individuals unsuccessfully attempt to disown their past. His explorations into this reflect his awareness of being a survivor of the Second World War. Beckett's involvement in the French Resistance, hiding after his cell of the Resistance was discovered by the Nazis and his work with the Irish Red Cross must have left a mark on his person as well as his work; these wartime experiences are like ghosts haunting Beckett's stage, paralleling the past that haunts Winnie. Beckett's creative output reveals that history leaves marks, inflicts us in ways that change us.

Mark Nixon and James McNaughton offer invaluable explorations of Beckett and history with particular detail to his movements leading up to the Second World War. Both scholars put Beckett's own statements disavowing history and politics in context. Nixon shows that although "the correspondence and publications tend to avoid political and historical references, Beckett's notebooks from the 1930s paint a different picture" (32). Extensively, he points to Beckett's critique of, and even disgust with, the rise of Nazism. His critique, moreover, was a well-informed one. Beckett, for example, listened to broadcasts of Hitler and read *Mein Kampf*, or as Beckett called it, "Mein Krampf"

(qtd. in Nixon 33), and as such saw through the irrational narrative of Nazism. Like Nixon's, McNaughton's investigation of the diaries reveals Beckett's deep concern about the future of Europe. He argues:

Not until after the trip [through Germany] does Beckett find a way in his creative work to reconcile his earlier conviction that abandoning historical sense and cause-and-effect judgment represents a political liability and his later awareness that rationalising the chaos of history can generate dangerously irrational historical narratives that lead to censorship and war. (102)

What we see happen in the diaries and Beckett's creative work, according to McNaughton, is "a performative erasure of history" (102), but erasure always leaves impressions—traces. Beckett keeps from trying to rationalize what he sees happening; he accepts the chaos and longs to see the thing as it is. In his diaries, this awareness is put into action through the listing of what he witnesses rather than producing a narrative to "understand" what he witnesses.

Jonathan Boulter, likewise, argues that the past has left its trace on Beckett. He begins his 2009 essay, "Archives of the End: Embodied History in Samuel Beckett's Plays," with "Samuel Beckett's characters are haunted by the ghost of memory" (129). Boulter concludes by suggesting that the body on stage

must function as an index of its own compromised attempt to maintain, to contain, a history which could, ideally, offer the subject—in the work of mourning—a totalized vision of itself *to itself*. And thus the posthuman subject, finally, is the only viable trope of the archive as it really is: the spectral site of history's effaced continuity, "irremediably part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous." (146)

Like Boulter, Daniel Katz is careful to warn us that it is important that we do not read Beckett's work as "a representation of the death camps," or any other historical event, for that matter. For Katz, Beckett's work exhibits a "*refusal* to express, within the clear sense of an *obligation* that has no name" (2009, 145). Beckett's work cannot express the way Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* does because he witnessed something unimaginable which, according to Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, silenced writers. In his essay of 1936, Benjamin asks, "Was it not noticeable at the end of the war [World War I] that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer

but poorer in communicable experience?" (84). How can one express something so irrational, so unknowable, Benjamin wonders. We can imagine that if Benjamin had survived the Second World War, he would have argued that this silence had intensified with post-World War II writers. Beckett's work expresses that silence, refusing to name the ineffable horror. Several years after Benjamin's observation, Adorno argued that "poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (34). While often read as questioning how anyone could write poetry after the atrocities of the Second World War, this claim may be reinterpreted as suggesting that the only poetry worthwhile after the war was one that expressed the barbarism of Auschwitz—an expression that is impossible and necessary.

Trauma, like that which survivors of the Second World War experience, is "The encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it" (Caruth 7). Theorist Cathy Caruth goes on to explain that "What returns to haunt the victim [...] is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully understood" (2-3). Drawing on Freud, Caruth argues that the traumatic event is repressed because of the witness's guilt to surviving the unfathomable encounter with death. The unwelcome repetition of the event is "not just an unconscious act of the infliction of the injury," but rather "a voice that cries out from the wound, a voice that witnessed the truth" that the survivor cannot reconcile (2-3).

Writing is that very display of the voice that has witnessed the horror of truth and cries out from the wound it inflicts—a cry that is resisting or repressing the past. The manifestation of trauma takes on three characteristics: repetition, the need to stabilize the "it," and fragmentation. Adam Phillips, also indebted to Freud, argues that "Repetition is the sign of trauma; our reiterations, our mannerisms, link us to our losses, to our buried conflicts" (142), and he continues to point out that writing and painting are "a form of repetition that easily obscures its own history, the conflicts it was born out of, the problems which made it feel like a solution" (142). Not only is Beckett's writing ripe with repetition (one needs only to think of Vivian Mercier's famous 1956 review of *Waiting for Godot*, in which he claimed that Beckett had done the impossible, he had written a successful play "in which nothing happens, *twice*" [29]), but also the very act of writing is a re-seeing, or re-saying that is always distorted by a lack of distance; the writing of

the past, in other words, is, to borrow from the title of Beckett's 1981 novella, *ill seen ill said*.

The second indicator of internal conflict, or trauma, according to Adam Phillips, is "the need for things to have an exact position—the determined commitment to a definitive historical narrative" (146). While Beckett's texts are not historical narratives (they are not attempts to reconstruct or revise historical events), there is in Beckett's plays an attempt to situate the body in an exact position. In *Endgame*, for example, the blind and wheelchair bound Hamm absurdly tries to ensure that his servant Clov has returned him to the exact center after taking Hamm on a little tour of the stage. Moreover, as Antonia Rodriguez Gago points out,

In Beckett's early plays, past memories are kept in various containers, dustbins in *Endgame*, tapes in *Krapp's Last Tape*, a mound in *Happy Days*, [urns] in *Play*, or are embodied through sound and repeated in the stories the characters tell. In the late plays, however, memories, or imaginings of the past, are contained in, or are prisoners of, the stage darkness (116).

Quite literally, Beckett imprisons his storytellers perhaps to show how the past—their histories—imprison them. This desire to position the body in an exact location reflects, in some sense, the historians need for exactness. We can also think of those voices in Beckett who undergo a self-correcting process. In *Not I*, for example, this process reflects a desire and horror in getting the story right. Yet, as Dominick LaCapra discusses in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, the historian's need for accuracy is thwarted by the impossibility for the survivor to provide an exact account of traumatic events because of the tension between needing to cry out from the pain of the wound and the avoidance of the wound altogether. Nonetheless, LaCapra urges that their inexact accounts of traumatic events make the experience no less accurate. Such testimony bears witness to the individual survivor's intimacy with the traumatic event.

Beckett's fragmented bodies reflect a "too-closeness," or the lack of critical distance from trauma. Survivors have no distance from the traumatic event, Adam Phillips argues in his essay on historical trauma and painting: their experience is one of intimacy and as such is manifested in distortion and fragmentation (147-8). Beckett's characters often suffer from being too close to a traumatic event. We need only to think of *Eh Joe*. With the help of the camera, Beckett is able to

express Joe's "too-closeness" to the suicide of his former lover. During the remembrance of her suicide in the form of rehearsing a mysterious voice recall the tragedy, the camera inches forward, closing in on Joe's face until his agonizing expression is caught in an extreme close-up, showing only the eyes, nose and mouth.

Dominick LaCapra gives us a language of coping with historical trauma. Like Caruth and Phillips, LaCapra theorizes that survivors of catastrophic events are "possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes— scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop" (21). In the unwelcome return, or what LaCapra calls, the acting out of the event, "tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene. [. . .] In this sense the aporia and the double bind might be seen as marking a trauma that has not been worked through" (21). "Acting out," for LaCapra, another follower of Freudian thought, "is a process but a repetitive one" (148). It comes back, repeatedly, haunting those affected by traumatic events and keeping them from obtaining the critical distance needed to examine the experience and event. Obtaining distance and being able to construct a controlled narrative of the event (a process LaCapra calls "working through") does not release an individual from the ghosts of the past, it is not, in other words, a cure; it does allow one to come to terms with traumatic events: "In working through, the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem and to distinguish between past, present, and future" (143). LaCapra warns that acting out and working through are not binary oppositions, but rather similar processes both of which involve repetition, and both of which may coexist in a person. However, the repetition involved in the process of working through is not one that is "compulsive"; it is, instead, a process that leads "to a rethinking of historicity and temporality in terms of various modes of repetition with change" (149). To bring the matter back to Beckett, LaCapra argues that much of post-modern experimental literature is a controlled response to trauma—a process of working through traumatic experience. Here he differs from Phillips who leaves it ambiguous as to whether the artist or writer is working through or acting out in the process of creation. In fact, Phillips leaves it ambiguous as to whether the artist or writer is working through or acting out in the process of creation. However, Caruth and LaCapra see writing as a more deliberate act and claim that the reason

we see so much post-World War II writing display a process of working through trauma is because “literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (Caruth 3). Whether Beckett’s writing is a working through or acting out—or perhaps a mixture of both—is difficult to say. What is apparent, however, is that *Happy Days* embodies a concern with the pain of the past in both its plot/content and in its form/style.

Samuel Beckett’s 1961 theatrical *tour de force*, *Happy Days*, rewinds and revolves historical narratives through its repetition, fragmentation, and stage image of a woman caught in a mound—an image which is an embodiment as well as embodies histories. Indeed, *Happy Days* can be read in terms of Beckett’s experience of working with the reconstruction of Saint-Lô, Normandy—a town that was devastatingly bombed during the Second World War. The image of Winnie in *Happy Days*, for Phyllis Gaffney, whose father was a pathologist with the Irish Red Cross in Saint-Lô, “echoes the real experience of a Saint-Lô citizen who was found by rescue-workers standing upright, unable to move, stuck in the ruins of his house” and “Winnie’s care to look her best recalls the women of the town, who would emerge into the sunlight from their dusty cellars, beautifully turned out in starched white blouses” (76). Having been a witness to the aftermath of the bombing of Saint-Lô, Beckett wrote to his friend, Thomas McGreevy, “St.[-]Lô is just a heap of rubble, la Capitale des Ruines as they call it in France. Of 2600 buildings 2000 completely wiped out, 400 badly damaged and 200 ‘only’ slightly” (qtd. in Knowlson 313). Moreover, Beckett recorded his impressions for a radio broadcast which was never aired. In “The Capital of the Ruins,” he writes of the destruction, the efforts to reconstruct the city by hand, the lack of medicine, and the “imaginative people” of Saint-Lô who continued to “smile at the human conditions” (277). The echoes are perhaps too obvious. The destitute landscape in *Happy Days* is described as an “*expanse of scorched grass*” (138) and Winnie’s medicine, toothpaste, and lipstick are “running out” (141), yet she repeatedly smiles and even concludes the play with “Oh this is a happy day, this will have been another happy day!” (168). Her relentless happiness attests to her endurance.

Interestingly, it is the endurance of the people of Saint-Lô that stays with Beckett. Their endurance to survive, and their struggle to preserve their past, despite the urge to forget it, haunts Beckett’s *Happy Days*. What we discover in this play is a rewinding of collective, cultural

and personal histories into voluntary and involuntary narratives. In remembering them, Winnie revolves these histories. In other words, she re/creates the past through a process of storytelling.

From the onset of the play, Beckett provides his audience with an exploration of how memory works in his portrayal of Winnie, who insists on following through with the “old style.” She insists on keeping up her appearance mostly by keeping up old habits and by attempting to remember forgotten quotations. Frequently, she asks, “What are those wonderful lines?” (140). Several scholars, mostly notably S.E. Gontarski, Derek Goldman and Ruby Cohn, have written about Winnie’s half-quoted and misquoted fragments.² Such readings have rightly posited that the cultural debris littering the play represents the very mound of earth imprisoning Winnie. She is stuck in the old ways and the old sayings, and these habits are like the ballast that chains Beckett’s dog to his vomit (*Proust* 8). While habit and memory are impossible to break away from and indeed are necessary to continue the struggle of existence as we see in *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett here suggests that holding on to the “old style” too vehemently is also detrimental as it leads to paralysis.

In trying to remember the forgotten lines, Winnie takes part in attempting to reconstruct the past—a narrative that privileges the classics. She is saddened that “One loses one’s classics” (164) whereas Beckett, according to Anne Atkin, “feared erudition swamping the authenticity of a work, and constantly warned against that danger for other artists, having had to escape from it himself” (Atkin qtd. in Feldman 5). Winnie, like an archive, embodies cultural debris, but by doing so, constructs a historical narrative that is always lacking, always fragmented, and as such she is imprisoned. Through Winnie, Beckett reminds us of the impossibility of forgetting.

Thus, Winnie continues to rewind and as such revolve her histories. This is best demonstrated in Beckett’s attention to the musical-box. While Winnie only once retrieves the musical-box, when she does so, she “winds it up, turns it on, listens” (155), happily “sway[ing] to the rhythm” of the 1905 operetta waltz duet “I love you so” from *The Merry Widow*. The musical-box tune also stirs up happy memories for her husband, Willie as he continues humming the melody once the musical-box winds down. This song, which reappears at the play’s conclusion when Winnie sings once her husband attempts to climb up the mound to join her, harks back to happier times for the married couple, but what those

times entail we cannot know. Now, in their destitute wasteland these memories are re-enacted by consciously winding up the mechanism which holds a degraded version of the operetta. Musical-boxes almost never provide the tune in its entirety. Invariably, after winding up such a box, one hears only a fragment of the song, recorded or “fixed” into the mechanism’s “memory.” As such, the musical-box functions very much like Winnie’s mind, and for that matter, the human mind. As Fiona Shaw in a 2008 interview on New York public radio noted, when Winnie recollects her memories she is “nearly remembering” the event before it “collapses in her mind” (Shaw). Beckett, as Shaw comes close to expressing, suggests that the construction of history is an attempt to rebuild, and invariable fabricate, where memory has collapsed.

The revolver, too, connects to Winnie and Willie’s history. For Winnie, the revolver, or Brownie, stirs up mixed emotional responses. When she first pulls out the revolver after dipping into her bag, she “*kisses it rapidly*” (141) and returns it to the bag. However, later in Act I, when she takes out the revolver, she is “*Disgusted*” (151) but leaves the miserable object on the mound. It is at this point, too, that we learn about Willie’s suicidal thoughts. Here we see how the revolver works very much like the musical-box, yet the sound that escapes this gadget is very different. Winnie rewinds Willie’s past agony when she reminds him of his suicidal tendencies: “Remember Brownie, Willie? [*Pause.*] Remember how you used to keep on at me to take it away from you? Take it away, Winnie, take it away, before I put myself out of my misery” (151). Even though the revolver reminds Willie and Winnie of the painful past, Winnie nevertheless claims that “Oh I suppose it’s a comfort to know you’re there, but I’m tired of you” (151). The audience is left to ponder why a revolver is a comfort. Although the revolver offers a way out of their misery and in doing so r/evolves their history as it has done in a larger world context, it does so ultimately by potentially ending life—Willie’s or Winnie’s.

Brownie is not only a reference to the poet, Browning whose “My Last Duchess” offers a sinister way to read the end of *Happy Days*, but also to the Browning pistol (Knowlson and Pilling 106). Curiously, however, the Browning is not a revolver even though it has often been mistaken for one. John Moses Browning designed the modern self-loading pistol more than a hundred years ago (Venturino 20-1). This automatic pistol has changed history as it was implemented in both World War I and World War II, offering soldiers possibilities to

fire more rounds without cocking a barrel and without reloading the cartridge as often as one does with a revolver (*Asia Africa Intelligence Wire*). Whilst the Browning altered the way in which wars were fought, an evolution that results in destruction, terror and death is perhaps more accurately a degeneration.

An equally important allusion to war is Willie's moustache. When Willie makes his first full appearance at the end of the play, the audience sees an old man wearing a "*Battle of Britain moustache*" (166). Perhaps a minor detail and one that a less conscious director would cut, the moustache alerts the audience to a significant historical narrative. In 1940, the German Luftwaffe waged a campaign against the British air force. This campaign, the Battle of Britain, was the first major campaign fought mainly by air. While most of the pilots did not wear the elaborate moustache, Squadron Leader "Teddy" Donaldson who flew his Hurricane into one of the more devastating air-strikes did. During the attack on July 12, Donaldson's Squadron suffered severe losses and although he returned unscathed his plane was badly damaged (Mason 164-5). Fortunately, after three months of fighting, Britain was able to defeat Germany on September 17, but if Germany had been victorious, they would have launched an amphibious and airborne attack on Britain. Although *Happy Days* is not a play explicitly about the Second World War, the Battle of Britain or Donaldson, the allusion to the battle suggests that Beckett's too-closeness with the events of the war have put their mark on this play. The ghost of the bombing of London and Saint-Lô haunts the play.

The newspaper Willie reads, *Reynolds News*, or *Reynolds Weekly News*, also informs the audience of the importance of historical narratives.³ One does not, however, have to know the make-up of the popular newspaper which ran from 1850-1950 since its radical politics—the Chartist political reform movement, campaigning for secret ballots and voting rights to all men of 21 years of age regardless of property—are not apparent in *Happy Days* (Madden and Dixon 147). However, what we do gather is plenty. Newspapers in themselves help to make up a collective historical narrative. The reporting of politics, world events, and even deaths and employment opportunities help to construct a narrative of the past. Even if newspapers claim to disperse information about current happenings, the news is always in the past, although usually an immediate past. In reading newspapers, we learn what happened before the moment we are reading about it. Beckett reveals,

moreover, that Willie reads, or rereads, an old newspaper. We are told that the newspaper sheets are yellow (142); thus, what Willie reads is, indeed, part of the past—a past that this old married couple connects to. We learn of “His Grace and Most Reverend Father in God Dr. Carolus Hunter dead in tub” (142). The obituary that Willie reads brings up happy memories for Winnie—memories of a flirtatious and promiscuous past. Beckett further emphasises this desire for a long lost youth which involved play and frolic with the want ads. While Winnie perhaps longs for a “smart youth” or a “bright boy” (142-3), she is stuck with the marriage partner she chose—Willie.

Print media to recollect the past appears again when Willie looks at a pornographic postcard (143). After noticing that Willie is closely examining a postcard, Winnie, burning with curiosity, manages to convince Willie to hand it over to her. Despite never being told what sexual act is depicted in the postcard, from Winnie we learn that “this is just genuine pure filth! [*Examines card.*] Make any nice-minded person want to vomit!” (144). However, Winnie’s reaction is once again muddled. Her words express her disgust while her action of examining the card and looking closer suggests that, like Willie, some part of her is turned on by the obscenity in the card (144). Indeed, her earlier reminiscences of her first ball, her second ball, and her first kiss in a tool shed (142-3) helps to establish Winnie as a woman with real sexual desires and a sexual past that does not involve her husband.⁴ More to the point, the postcard is a pictorial representation of the past, and pornography is a narrative of human sexuality and sexual taboos. It is a history that appears to be hidden. The cameraman makes him/herself into a peeping tom, recording activities that are constructed to be taking place behind closed doors. In actuality, however, the historical narrative of sex and sexuality is not an exposure of what happens in the bedroom between men and women but rather a fabrication and distillation of sexual taboos in print form. Photography is perhaps one of the most deceptive history-makers as the framing of it always suggests a posing (even in candid shots) and editing out or in; it is a medium constructed in terms of repetition, fixing, or freezing the moment, and fragmentation. Thus, Winnie’s reaction, which is tied to her memory of Mildred, is tied to her history and her personal trauma.

Not until the second, and last, act does Winnie recollect her most painful memory: “There is my story of course, when all else fails” (163). By referring to the narrative as “my story,” Winnie sets up an

ambiguous relationship to the tale; she, in effect, tells us that it is a mere story, a fiction. However, the personal pronoun “my” testifies that Winnie is closer to the tale than she wishes to admit. Winnie inadvertently reveals that this is “her story,” her history. The pain of the past haunts her, but as is characteristic of trauma victims, she has distorted the event into an obscure tale of a mouse running up Mildred’s thigh. Paul Lawley compellingly argues that Winnie’s story, along with numerous sexual references in the play, stands for “a sexual violation—a defloration” (98).⁵ To begin with, this child, who has sneaked out of her room at night, undresses her new waxen doll, “Scolding her ... the while” (163). Undressing a doll is, of course, a natural curiosity for children. However, the scolding of the doll whilst it is being undressed is not. When Winnie breaks off this story with “Suddenly a mouse—” (163), we immediately are left hanging with a burning curiosity to know what happens. We want to peer into this closed door to discover what keeps Winnie from continuing. Instead, however, Winnie calls out to Willie for help and when he does not respond, she philosophizes until she “call[s] to the eye of the mind ... Mr. Shower—or Cooker” (164), a memory that in Act I “float[ed] up in the mind” (155). She does not want to remember how this “coarse fellow” (156) and his partner gape at her, wondering why she is “stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground” (156) and if she has “anything on underneath” (165). His coarseness is emphasized by Winnie’s imitating his working-class accent and the sexual content of his expressions which are echoed in the Mildred story. *What does Dolly have on underneath her clothing*, the child may have wondered.

In both instances of the memory of Mr. Shower/Cooker, as in the tale of Mildred, Winnie interrupts and returns to the memory. In the first instance, she files her nails, punctuating the memory of Mr. Shower/Cooker with comments about her nails as if to keep a certain distance from the past; if it will not, she seems to be saying, disrupt her daily habits. At the end of this recollection, she even states that she is “thankful for it in any case” (157). In the second act, Winnie, who is now buried up to her neck, cannot file her nails or entertain herself with other habits to distance herself from the pain of the past; she can only attempt to shut the past out by closing her eyes (164). The bell, however, forces her to face her past. Urgently, she again calls for Willie’s help. In his silence, the “*Narrative*” of Mildred resurfaces with

Suddenly a mouse... [Pause.] Suddenly a mouse ran up her little thigh and Mildred, dropping Dolly in her fright, began to scream – [Winnie gives a piercing scream] – and screamed and screamed – [Winnie screams twice] – screamed and screamed and screamed and screamed till all came running, in their night attire, papa, mamma, Bibby and ...old Annie, to see what was the matter... [pause] ...what on earth could possibly be the matter. [Pause.] Too late. [Pause.] Too late. (165)

This return to the narrative suggests that Winnie suffers from some sort of trauma event similar to Mildred's. Even in her attempts to distance herself from her trauma by fixing the memory in a controlled narrative, her history screams out through its fragmentation and repetition. In her attempt to resist her history and to avoid the wound seen in the fragmented account of the Mildred story, the resurfacing of it appears to be increasingly painful. The repetition of the word "screamed" as well as Winnie's screaming is a reliving of the event. The violence done to Mildred, or rather Winnie, however, remains somewhat obscured.⁶ This image of violation is foreshadowed in Act I with the emmet, carrying "a little white ball" (149) that penetrates the mound that Winnie is stuck in. Willie tells her that the balls are "Eggs" and a process of "formication" will occur (150). To this, Winnie merely murmurs "God" (150). This is perhaps the most horrifying moment in the play. Once the eggs hatch, insects will swarm all over Winnie, devouring her as does the history she attempts to resist—to forget (Gontarski 86-7).

Beckett was all too aware of the paralysis that could occur from historical trauma. In his 1974 play, *That Time*, an old man, imprisoned in the darkness of the stage, listens to voices recalling for his past memories. The three voices contain different narratives. In each memory, the statement that recurs throughout the play, "when was that," suggests that this man is stuck in trying to remember, trying to construct a clear historical narrative to give his life meaning. Likewise, May in *Footfalls* (1975) is never "done ... revolving it all?" (400). The "it" remains unknown. Her refusal to forget that "it" results in her paralysis. Winnie, like May, remains haunted by the past, rewinding and revolving her history—that wound that haunts.

NOTES

¹In *The Making of Modern Drama*, Richard Gilman asserted that "theatre in Beckett's hands has abandoned events, direct clashes, inquiries, representation" (266).

²See Gontarski 74-75; 83, Goldman 45-55, and Cohn 180-183.

³In earlier versions of *Happy Days*, the items in Willie's newspaper were explicitly about war. In them, he read, "Rocket strikes Pomona, seven hundred thousand missing," "Rocket strikes Man, one female lavatory attendant spared" and "Aberrant rocket strikes Erin, eighty-three priests survive" (Gontarski 80).

⁴Gontarski tells us that in an earlier draft of *Happy Days* the "sexual overtones ... were more explicit" (81).

⁵Despite their avoidance to define Winnie's Mildred story, Knowlson and Pilling argue that it gives "expression to the fear, violence, and suffering that, in Beckett's view, seems to be an unavoidable accompaniment to procreation, birth and being" (97).

⁶A mouse, according to Sigmund Freud, often symbolises the penis in dreams, folklore and mythology (245).

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