

Week 13 Day 2: Late Modernist Drama

ENGL201: Introduction to Modernist Literature

Time in *Endgame*

HAMM: Go and get the oilcan.

CLOV: What for?

HAMM: To oil the castors.

CLOV: I oiled them yesterday.

HAMM: Yesterday! What does that mean?
Yesterday!

CLOV (violently): That means that bloody awful
day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use
the words you taught me. If they don't mean
anything any more, teach me others. Or
let me be silent.





CLOV: What is there to keep me here?

HAMM: The dialogue. (Pause.) I've got on with my story. (Pause.) I've got on with it well. (Pause. Irritably.) Ask me where I've got to.

CLOV: Oh, by the way, your story?

HAMM (surprised): What story?

CLOV: The one you've been telling yourself all your days.

HAMM: Ah you mean my chronicle?

CLOV: That's the one. (Pause.)

HAMM (angrily): Keep going, can't you, keep going!

CLOV: You've got on with it, I hope.

HAMM (modestly): Oh not very far, not very far. (He sighs.) There are days like that, one isn't inspired. (Pause.) Nothing you can do about it, just wait for it to come. (Pause.) No forcing, no forcing, it's fatal. (Pause.) I've got on with it a little all the same. (Pause.) Technique, you know. (Pause. Irritably.) I say I've got on with it a little all the same.

CLOV (admiringly): Well I never! In spite of everything you were able to get on with it!

HAMM (modestly): Oh not very far, you know, not very far, but nevertheless, better than nothing.

The end is in the beginning and yet
you go on.



CLOV: I'll leave you. (He goes towards door.)

HAMM: Before you go... (Clov halts near door.) ...say something.

CLOV: There is nothing to say.

HAMM: A few words... to ponder... in my heart.

CLOV: Your heart!

HAMM: Yes. (Pause. Forcibly.) Yes! (Pause.) With the rest, in the end, the shadows, the murmurs, all the trouble, to end up with. (Pause.) Clov... He never spoke to me. Then, in the end, before he went, without my having asked him, he spoke to me. He said...

CLOV (despairingly): Ah...!





All those who people Beckett's plays attempt to delay the end and are 'bad players', but it is crucial that Hamm is conceived as a king in a chess game. When two kings are left on the board (this is possible only when bad players are playing!), they can never end the game but merely engage in an infinite series of movements around the chess-board. So taking Beckett's metaphor logically implies that Clov is a king — as well as a pawn. This inference accords with the fact that their relationship is one of master and slave/servant....although the master has social superiority, the servant is actually more powerful, since he is more necessary to the master than vice versa.

(Michael Worton, "Waiting for Godot and *Endgame*: theatre as text")

