

BACK TO BECKETT

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY



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LCC: 72-14024

ISBN: 0-691-06256-0

Publication of this book has been
aided by a grant from the
Whitney Darrow Publication
Reserve Fund of
Princeton University Press.

This book has been composed in
Linotype Caledonia

Printed in the United States of
America by Princeton University
Press, Princeton, New Jersey

Library of Congress Cataloguing
in Publication data will be found
on the last printed page
of this book.

TO

Nan Del Monte
Barbara Howard
Bruce Langford

and especially Jim Eigo
who accompanied me back to Beckett

and with gratitude for the scrupulous reading of

Herbert Blau
Lawrence Harvey
Marilynn Meeker
Jerry Sherwood,
exemplary editor

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return. He tries to summon others: "Christ! Hooves! Hooves! Christ!" But we hear no sound of hooves, and we hear no indication of relief from Christ.

Henry creates a scene of Ada for his father, but soon she is out of reach of his imagination. Again Henry calls on Christ, and then tries to continue his story. But this time there are no embers; the fire is out. Bolton pleads with Holloway: "Please! Please! Please, Holloway!" And soon Henry is pleading: "Ada! Father! Christ!" Another sentence of his story, another call to Christ, and Henry walks to what the sound directions tell us is the water's edge. From his appointment book, Henry reads: "Plumber at nine." In Henry's story it was at nine that Holloway was to perform a "panhysterectomy." Nine, the hour of Christ's crucifixion, is the hour of the death of a world. Those who live in time must die in time, as opposed to the eternal sea.

Henry is puzzled by his note on the plumber, and then comments: "Ah yes, the waste." Life will have been a waste; Sunday will bring no Easter resurrection. There will be nothing and silence at last: "Not a sound." The three words are Henry's last sound, echoing his words about embers, Ada's words about the depths of the sea, and his own words about the white world of his story. The silence of nonbeing finally drowns all being. The radio play's last sound is "Sea," which drowns all embers of life.

Acte sans paroles II

If we might make a proportion out of plays, it is possible to view *Acte sans paroles II* with relation to *Acte sans paroles I* as *All That Fall* to *Embers*. In the first term of the proportion, we have a familiar world with men behaving in familiar ways, but in the second term we have representative men behaving symbolically. The divisions are not absolute, however, and all four plays are distinguished by Beckett's humor. In the first two plays living is marked by falling; in the second two plays living is marked by rhythmic timing—of sounds on radio, of gestures in mime.

In *Acte sans paroles II*, two men perform a series of actions, one after the other. The two men are behavioral opposites: "A is slow, awkward . . . , absent. B brisk, rapid, precise." A is goaded into his day's activities, which consist of prayers, pill-taking, clothes-donning, carrot-eating, whose result is to change the position of his sack with respect to B. A's most characteristic action is to brood. B is goaded into his day's activities of checking the time, exercising, brushing teeth, combing and brushing hair, brushing clothes and dressing, eating carrots, using map and compass, whose result is to change the position of his sack with respect to A. B's most characteristic action is to check the time on his watch. A's slow motions and B's rapid movements last approximately the same time and achieve precisely the same end or non-end. The comedy depends on the timing—A versus B.

When the goad again prods A into prayer, we have come full circle. The sum total of human endeavor is on the surface of the mime play. As opposed to *Acte sans paroles I*, however, where mysterious offstage forces controlled the action, the goads of *Acte sans paroles II* are visible to us and palpable to the actors. And they become increasingly mechanized, like the goads of our world; the first goad is "strictly horizontal," the second goad is supported by one wheel, and the third goad by two. But A still needs two pokes from the goad to face his day, and presumably a three-wheeled goad will need to poke B only once. Activities will remain the same for each actor. Life in time accomplishes nothing, however one responds to time, but movements through time can be delectable play.

TIMELESS

Happy Days

Each Beckett play opens on different terrain. But though the "scorched grass" of *Happy Days* is new on Beckett's

stage, other aspects of the play are familiar. Its "blazing light" looks like the "dazzling light" of *Acte sans paroles I*. Winnie, a female protagonist, was preceded by Maddy Dunne of *All That Fall*. Her fixed centrality was approximated by Hamm in *Fin de partie*. A quasi-monologue was already spoken by Krapp in *Krapp's Last Tape*. *Happy Days*, like *Godot*, is divided into two acts. *Happy Days* contains invisible sounds of radio drama (bell ringing, nose-blowing) and exaggerated gestures of mime (Winnie's business with the contents of her bag, Willie's business with his hat, handkerchief, postcard, and parasol as in other seem to be familiar—hat, sack, and parasol as in other Beckett works; revolver as in melodrama, and music-box suggesting musical comedy; implements of personal hygiene as in *Acte sans paroles II*, or in our own daily lives).

Happy Days repeats details of earlier Beckett plays, but other Beckett work. As Beckett would explain when he came to direct it, he wanted to write a play that would live through its text alone. The text is largely spoken by a partly buried woman, under a blazing sun. The image is immediately arresting, but its cruelty only slowly etches itself upon our consciousness, as our eyes begin to ache in the unrelieved brightness, as we learn that this sun never sets, as we watch it victimize Winnie, sinking into her grave. In spite of the mounting irony against the play's title, we are hardly prepared for the appalling bareness of the second act—a talking head, that motif of folklore. Winnie's head sustains a discourse, which is finally punctuated by the climactic arrival of Willie in full dress. Like previous Beckett's plays, *Happy Days* ends in stillness, but the last scene reflects obliquely on one of the oldest images of Western culture—Oedipus facing the Sphinx. Beckett's Sphinx asks a different question—Kiss or kill?—and Willie's answer is visual—man is the animal who crawls on all fours though middle-aged. Upright man in his prime is only a memory or a legend, as is Willie's single syllable, "Win."

In Act I of *Happy Days*, half-buried Winnie is the upper half of an hourglass. More literally than Shakespeare's Chorus in *Henry V*, she turns "the accomplishment of many years/ Into an hour-glass." Living in an endless present, she doubts "the accomplishment of many years," as we have all doubted the passing of time while it passes. Though Winnie's opening line seems to acknowledge that time passes—"Another heavenly day" (my italics)—she comes to refer apologetically to "day," "night," and "die" as "old style." In Act II she states explicitly that time itself is "old style." Since the sun never sets, there are no more days or nights, and there is no more death. It is through a bell that Winnie is invaded by consciousness. In Act I she begins her bell-bound day with an automatic prayer, but soon she invokes deity as a mere expletive. Though she begins with prayer, and plans to end with song and prayer, Winnie marshals other resources for living through her day: the stage props, her husband Willie, composition of stories, and almost inadvertent recollection of lines of verse. An emmet appears momentarily, her parasol bursts into flame, but Winnie can scarcely depend on such distractions in a world even more "corpsed" than that of *Fin de partie*. She tries to endure through the happy day with careful deployment of props and Willie, and, to a lesser extent, with fictional invention. She tries to endure by talking her way through each bell-bound day.

Winnie herself sees her bag as her main prop: "There is of course the bag. . . . There will always be the bag. . . . Even when you are gone, Willie." In her bag Winnie finds toothbrush, toothpaste, mirror, spectacles, medicine-bottle, lipstick, hat, magnifying glass, comb and brush, music-box, nail file, revolver. Except perhaps for the last of these, the props are those of any middle-class, middle-aged woman. Winnie uses them to endure until the bell for sleep. And so do we. Thus we camouflage our dying, but Winnie cannot die, and she lives in her present, noting its several facets, of which the most vital is Willie.

He alone—and not the props, however she personalizes them—can rescue Winnie from the solitude she calls her wilderness. He can and does. Throughout Act I Willie gives evidence of his presence, and responds as witness to Winnie's presence, though he speaks only fifty-two words. He returns Winnie's parasol when she drops it; he lends her his treasured obscene postcard; he solves her grammatical problem as to whether hair is singular or plural; he tells her five times that he hears her; he charges her to "Fear no more"; he identifies the burden and motion of the ennet, he laughs more or less together with her; he puzzles over her phrase "Sucked up?"; he shows five fingers when she asks for a mere one; he bursts into song in accompaniment to her music-box; and, in his most extended speech, he defines "hog" for her. Presumably, he even follows her nagging instructions for crawling into his hole. In Act II we learn that he has given Winnie the bag, parasol, and revolver—the only objects still within Winnie's field of vision. If we can overlook Willie's taciturnity, it would be hard to imagine a more cooperative husband—at least until Act II, when he appears "dressed to kill" in "morning coat," full of unfathomable intention.

Before that final tableau of an endless end, Winnie has punctuated her discourse with quotations from English poetry. Inserted into a late draft of the play, these quotations at once enrich and undercut Winnie's own language. If we judge by quantity, Shakespeare is Winnie's favorite poet, since she draws upon *Hamlet* (twice), *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cymbeline*, and in Act II on *Twelfth Night*. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is recalled once in Act I and once in Act II. Other poems cited in Act I are the Khayyam-Fitzgerald *Rubaiyat*, Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, and a Browning poem that neither Beckett nor I can identify. In Act II Winnie mumbles niggardly phrases from Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*, and Herrick's *To the Virgins to Make Much of Time*. She

has a more extensive recollection of Charles Wolfe's "Go forget me." Winnie tends to quote inexact or incompletely, and she uses the description "exquisite" and "classics" only for the maudlin verse of Charles Wolfe. In Act II she calls for "unforgettable" and "immortal" lines, but none pour forth. Winnie's taste is nearly as uncertain as her memory. She opens her quasi-monologue on a prayer and closes it on a musical comedy libretto, but through her quotations Beckett reveals the ironic resonance of her repetitions of "happy days." The better we know the poems, the more ironic the resonance.

Of the play's fourteen quotations, six comment on the cruel landscape in which Winnie spends her happy days. Ironic are 1) Winnie's reference to *Hamlet*'s "bird of dawn-ing" that sings at Christmas, whereas she knows neither dawn nor Christmas; 2) her Miltonic greeting of the merciless sun as a holy light; 3) her recollection of the "beechen green" and numberless shadows in which Keats's nightingale sang; 4) her evocation of Omar Khayyam's "Paradise enow," which consists of a jug of wine, a loaf of bread, and above all "Thou/ Beside me singing in the Wilderness." More reflective of Winnie's actual situation is the line she does not quote (following the one she does) from Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*: "A well long choked up and dry."

Three other quotations on Winnie's happy day speak of woe, and one implies grief:

woe woe is me . . . to see what I see

O, woe is me,/ To have seen what I have seen, see what I see! (*Hamlet*)

Oh fleeting joys—(*Lips*)—oh something lasting woe.

O fleeting joys/ Of Paradise, dear bought with lasting woes! (*Paradise Lost*)

something something laughing wild amid severest woe
And moody Madness laughing wild/ Amid severest woe.
(*Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*)

cheek . . . no . . . (*Eyes right.*) . . . no . . . (*Distends cheeks.*) . . . (*Eyes left, distends cheeks again.*) . . . no . . . no damask.

She never told her love,/ But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,/ Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,/ and with a green and yellow melancholy/ She sat like Patience on a monument,/ Smiling at grief. (*Twelfth Night*)

Three other quotations are spoken in the face of death. In making up her lips in the mirror, Winnie exclaims: "Ensign crimson" and "Pale flag." When Romeo thinks Juliet is dead, he speaks to her: "Beauty's ensign yet/ Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,/ And death's pale flag is not advanced there." Later, Winnie tests Willie's hearing with a line from *Cymbeline*: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun." Imogen's brothers sing this as the opening line of a dirge when they believe Imogen is dead. In Act II of *Happy Days*, when Winnie is at last face to face with Willie, she asks him: "Where are the flowers? (*Pause.*) That smile today." Willie sinks his head in answer; perhaps he too knows Herrick's lines: "And this same flower that smiles today/ Tomorrow will be dying."

Winnie does not often seem to be conscious of the ironic resonance of her quotations, but she herself uses her stories to cast ironic reflection upon the happy days we witness. More inventive than Hamm in *Fin de partie*, she works at two different stories, though she labels only one a story. The other, sustained through both acts, records the observations of the Cooker or Shower couple (both words are German for "look") when they are faced with the phenomenon of Winnie. Mr. Cooker or Shower gives voice to the very questions and exclamations that are passing through the minds of many of the theater audience: "What's she doing? he says—What's the idea? he says—stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground?"

Only in Act II does Winnie start what she herself calls a

story: "There is my story of course when all else fails." Mildred (Winnie's own name in an earlier draft of *Happy Days*) will begin in the womb and have a long life. Four or five years old, she has a new doll with full set of clothes. Announced as fiction, Mildred nevertheless reflects Winnie, with whom she shares a taste for clothes and props. Winnie endows Mildred with Willie's mobility, and her dolly with his china-blue eyes. Like Winnie, Mildred is frightened, but Winnie does not allow her to give vent to terror until she herself finishes her account of the Cooker couple, concluding as in Act I: "Last human kind—to stray this way." Then Winnie imagines a mouse running up Mildred's thigh, and Winnie screams three times in the fear that she shares with her character.

The word "reflexive" is often applied to Beckett's work; his novels refer to his other novels, his stories contain other stories, his plays converge upon inner plays. But *Happy Days* is extraordinary in the range of both its reflection and its extension. The set is at once heaven, hell, and scorched earth. Most of the props indicate the daily routines of Western woman or man, but the revolver introduces a note of melodrama and a dark hint of death. A more ordinary prop, the toothbrush, slowly leads toward a kind of damnation; when it is first seen, Winnie uses it to brush her teeth; then she tries to read what is printed on its handle; with the help of spectacles and magnifying glass, Winnie finally makes out: "Fully guaranteed genuine pure hog's setae." Instead of querying the meaning of "setae," as most of us would, Winnie asks for a definition of "hog," which Willie renders as: "Castrated male swine. Reared for slaughter." But Beckett's Malone wrote: "For all pigs are alike, when you get to know their little ways, struggle, squeal, bleed, squeal, struggle, bleed, squeal and faint away, in more or less the same way exactly." Willie's summary is more theatrically pointed, but the sentiment is identical.

Occasionally, Willie himself is no more than a prop for Winnie, and yet Beckett creates a play-long tension between

Winnie and her largely invisible husband. Both given to hats, handkerchiefs, and reading print, they resemble other Beckett couples in their suggestive oppositions: man-woman, motion-speech, pragmatism-aesthetics, animal-bird, earth-air, philology-philosophy. Willie's newspaper excerpts comment on the condition of human beings condemned to an earth that does not accommodate their aging and death. Winnie's quasi-monologue implies more: literally sinking into her grave, she is irresistibly drawn to the heavens. Old-fashioned in her vocabulary ("naught," "would I had," "tis," "beseech," "bid," "amiss," "God grant," "dire need"), she clings to the comfort of half-remembered classics. Unlovely and perhaps unlovable, she ritualistically and volubly performs her toilette.

In Act I, her first happy day, she predicts the happy day to come: that she will sink farther into the earth, that the parasol will renew itself like a phoenix, and that Willie will come around to her side of the mound. Act II repeats the motifs of Act I, but it is more stringent. Buried to her throat, Winnie still refers to three visible props, she still talks to an invisible Willie, she still tries to remember verse, and she still composes stories. She still can speak of "great mercies" and "that is what I find so wonderful," but she does not claim that these swift days are happy, until the arrival of Willie. In a striking audio-visual effect, Willie appears in full dress just after Winnie evokes their wedding day. Presence recalls and punctures the past in a play that apparently denies time, but nevertheless yields to "old style" in its title, *Happy Days*.

Written in English, depending so intimately upon English poetry, *Happy Days* had its world premiere in New York's Cherry Lane Theatre, directed by Alan Schneider and starring the late Ruth White. Schneider was at some pains to remove the labels of "pessimistic" and "obscure" that had been attached to Beckett, and Ruth White evidently succeeded in voicing cheer and clarity for her Winnie. After Beckett translated the play into French, Roger Blin directed

Madeleine Renaud in a production that toured several countries. Even more gregarious than the American Winnie, the Frenchwoman flirted with her audience, and the Winnie-Willie smile did not fade at the end. Many actresses are moving in Act I of *Happy Days*, if they can convey the life inherent in things, but Act II is too deeply internal for most actresses.

In 1971 Beckett directed *Happy Days* at the Werkstatt of the Schiller Theater—his third production there. He began rehearsing *Glückliche Tage* in West Berlin on August 10, 1971, and his production opened at the Werkstatt on September 17. Some weeks before rehearsals, Beckett had begun a careful study of Elmar Tophoven's German translation. Beckett underlined and numbered the text's many repetitions, and he noted some forty minor changes for the dialogue. He introduced a few changes into Act II so that the lines would echo those of Act I. These are difficult to convey in English, but an example may illustrate the principle. In the English Act I Winnie remarks to Willie after their laughter at God's poor joke: "I think *you would back me up there, Willie*." In Act II, commenting on sadness after sexual intercourse, Winnie says: "*You would concur with Aristotle there, Willie, I fancy*." In German, both italicized phrases were brought closer to "You would agree."

Before the rehearsal period, Beckett had memorized the entire German text (with gestures), and he had composed his *Regiebuch*. Eighty-five pages, handwritten in English, testify to the care with which he examined *Glückliche Tage*. After marking the German text, Beckett apparently noted directorial matters as they occurred to him. On the flyleaf of the *Regiebuch*, probably penned last, is a neatly printed table of contents; on the facing page is Beckett's division of the play into rehearsal scenes, eight in Act I, when Winnie is buried to her waist, and four in Act II, when Winnie is buried to her neck. In Act I the divisions are: (1) opening to "Old eyes"; (2) to the point where Willie fans himself visibly and Winnie takes up her magnifying glass; (3)

Winnie's "Fully guaranteed" to Willie's "It"; (4) to end of laugh; (5) to Winnie's "No one. (*Smile off. Looks at parasol.*)"; (6) to Winnie's "... (*Voice breaks, head down.*) ... things ... so wonderful"; (7) to end of Mr. Shower-Cooker story and end of nail filing; (8) to end of Act I. And the Act II divisions are: (1) to Winnie's "And now?"; (2) from Winnie's "The face" to "Gently, Winnie"; (3) to Winnie's "Sing your old song, Winnie"; (4) to end. These divisions are in no sense structural, but a matter of mechanical convenience for rehearsal purposes only.

The *Regiebuch* reveals that Beckett reconsidered every word and gesture of the text, as well as all props and sound effects. He enumerated the contents of Winnie's bag and specified that they be worn-looking, conspicuous, and non-realistic. He drew sketches of her parasol and spectacles, and he noted that she should handle glass props with her left hand, setting them down on her left. Furthermore, Beckett wrote specific directions regarding sound. For each of the eight times a bell rings, he indicated pitch, volume, and duration (shorter than in the printed text); when Winnie strikes Willie with the parasol, the second blow was to be louder than the first.

Early in the *Regiebuch*, Beckett focused on Willie, who is invisible and inaudible through most of the play. Beckett nevertheless knew Willie's every word, motion, and breath. A diagram traced Willie's invisible crawl into his hole, and another diagram traced his visible crawl up the mound. Beckett listed Willie's three Act I positions: sitting against the mound (partly visible), lying behind the mound (invisible), lying in his hole (invisible). Willie's voice was to sound different from his different positions, but he was to read the same newspaper advertisements in the same way each time. Beckett counted Willie's words and described his actions during the dozen scenes of the two acts, and he added breathing noises to indicate Willie's exertions. A page and a half of minute description detailed Willie's final crawl up the mound.

It is mainly Winnie whose role fills the pages of Beckett's *Regiebuch*. He listed her repeated refrains and her repeated gestures, and he separately listed variations upon those repetitions, or the varying possibilities for her phrase "happy day." When she is buried to her waist in Act I, Winnie has three main series of movements: she turns back and right to look at Willie, she turns forward and left to explore her bag, and she looks closely at her toothbrush trying to read the inscription. Each of these three main movements contains three variants: (1) she simply turns to Willie, or turns and then leans back, or turns, leans, and cranes as far as she can; (2) when she begins to explore her bag, she is sometimes prevented, sometimes interrupted, and she sometimes plunges her hand in; (3) to read the print on her toothbrush, she tries with naked eyes, with glasses, then with glasses and magnifying glass before she deciphers: "Fully guaranteed genuine pure hog's setae." Beckett was equally concerned with the precision of Winnie's emotions, listing her thirty-one smiles, five happy expressions, and eight hints of gloom. Opposite the English of Winnie's fourteen quotations, Beckett noted standard German translations of these texts, other than Tophoven's published versions.

The *Regiebuch* is primarily a record of stage details, but one note in the eighty-five pages suggests the philosophic basis of the drama: "Relate frequency of broken speech and action to discontinuity of time. [Winnie's] time experience incomprehensible transport from one inextricable present to the next, those past unremembered, those to come inconceivable." Since Winnie's experience of time is apparent in the dialogue of the drama, the note reveals how the play's technique mirrors its metaphysics: interrupted gesture and fragmented speech convey the subtly discontinuous groundwork of lived time. In spite of Beckett's note, however, Winnie does have memories, and in Act I she tries to conceive of a future. By the reviving of memories, her past is converted to a present, and her future becomes a mere prolongation of the immediate moment. Drama has long

been defined as the art of the present, and Beckett builds that definition into *Happy Days*.

In successive plays Beckett has imposed increasing restrictions upon his actors. His *Regiebuch* meticulously, almost maniacally, delineates such restrictions. Beckett's hope is that severely imposed limits will demand more of the actor, intensifying his emotional expression, rather than inhibiting it. Though he does not use Grotowski's word "score" for his texts, he is a musician who appreciates his instrumentalists. He once told Charles Marowitz: "Producers don't seem to have any sense of form in movement, the kind of form one finds in music, for instance, where themes keep recurring. When, in a text, actions are repeated, they ought to be made unusual the first time, so that when they happen again—in exactly the same way—an audience will recognize them from before." When Beckett came to direct, he orchestrated his score.

Before rehearsals began in Berlin, Beckett studied sketches with his scene designer Matias, who had also designed the French set of *Happy Days*, eight years earlier. Beckett no longer wished Winnie to be "in exact centre of mound," but slightly to stage left, so as to give more importance to Willie. Matias' earlier set had substituted a baked desert for the scorched grass of the text, and on the shallow Werkstatt stage depth was gained by adding mounds and hillocks. The set was thus to look more realistic, in contrast to the decidedly unrealistic image of a partly buried Winnie.

Rehearsals were complicated in that Eva Katharina Schultz, Winnie, was playing in repertory throughout the rehearsal period, and Willie had to be replaced three times before Rudi Schmitt stayed with the part. On the first days of rehearsals Beckett did not read the whole play aloud, nor did he ask his actors to do so. And he offered no explanations or interpretations. Rather, he focused at once upon Winnie's lines and gestures. Instead of the symmetrical, head-down sleeping position of Madeleine Renaud

(the only Winnie Beckett had seen), he suggested a pose that he proceeded to demonstrate—left hand protecting the bag and right hand folded back to protect the nape of the neck. When Winnie is summoned to consciousness by the bell (rung by Beckett), there was to be a separation of words from gestures.

Even before Frau Schultz learned her lines, Beckett indicated the vocal variety he expected. Winnie was to speak in three main voices—normal, intimately to herself, and with pronounced articulation to Willie. In Act I she imitates Willie's voice as he implores her to take the revolver away from him; in Act II she imitates his proposal of marriage. Winnie's sustained story necessitates another three voices in each act: ordinary narrative, a gruffly energetic Mr. Shower-Cooker, his lady companion filled with terror and hatred. Moreover, in Act II Mr. Shower-Cooker's voice was to have an erotic tone as he asked about Winnie's legs. In the story about Mildred and the doll Winnie was to contrive a doll-like voice. Further, Beckett wanted a special tone for reading the print on the toothbrush, and he wanted something close to a chant for the literary quotations, which are not readily recognizable in German. At one point during rehearsals, Beckett compared Winnie to a bird, and said that her voice should convey her weightlessness. What he called "the many colors" of Winnie's Act I voice had to be a richly contrasting background for her "white voice" of Act II.

During the course of rehearsals, Beckett worked long on coordinating gestures and words. Thus, the *sound* of Winnie's verbal flight opposes the *sight* of Willie studying his dirty postcard. When Winnie looks at the pornographic postcard, her devouring eyes oppose her disapproving words. Later in the rehearsal period, Beckett gave attention to pacing; after Willie repeats Winnie's "Fear no more," for instance, Winnie was directed to speak very quickly.

Though Beckett made few general remarks about his text, some of his laconic observations are informative. He early told Winnie that the bag was her friend, the bell her

enemy, and that she had to convey this throughout the play. In Act I Winnie turns to Willie twenty times, and seventeen times to the bag. In Act II the bell rings five times (one fewer than in the printed text), forcing Winnie to open her eyes; she looks more often (eight times) in Willie's direction (right) than in that of the bag (left). About Winnie's quotation from *Romeo and Juliet* Beckett remarked that "Ensign crimson" is life, and "Pale flag" death. When Winnie is able to talk without prompting from props, she should be both surprised and pleased. Beckett wished the phrase "old style" to be pronounced very slowly and distinctly the first time, but with increasing casualness afterward. Similarly, Winnie should linger over her first mention of a "happy day," but then should take the phrase for granted. In their shared laugh Willie was to begin alone, then be joined by Winnie, but he was to end alone again. Beckett described the laugh in French as "*rire jaune*," which might be translated as bitter laughter. When Winnie remarks, "Ah earth you old extinguisher," Beckett wished her to suggest that she, as well as the parasol fire, was being extinguished by the earth, and he added: "Winnie's fate is all the more pathetic because this weightless being is devoured by the earth."

After ten days of rehearsal of Act I, Beckett recited Act II for Frau Schultz, complete with eye movements. By Act II Winnie can no longer speak full sentences or remember whole lines of verse. Volume and duration of speech are both reduced in the new present, far bleaker than the second act of *Godot*. Beckett stressed the importance of Winnie's line: "Then . . . now . . . what difficulties here, for the mind." Accordingly, she was to emphasize the difficulties of "then." Beginning with the auxiliary verb of a continuous past, Winnie breaks off unbelievably; she then resumes her recollection as a recitation rather than an account of past experience.

Only midway during the rehearsal period was the final

Willie cast, and Beckett rehearsed him alone for two days, playing Winnie himself. He compared Willie to an old turtle, very much of the earth. Even though the audience cannot see Willie, Beckett wanted him to mime the actions Winnie described. Details of Willie's part, like those of Winnie, were built on triplets. Willie has three periods of visibility. He puts a hat on three times (twice the boater, and once the stovepipe) with the same flick of the finger against the hat. He blows his nose resoundingly three times. Beckett changed his text to have Willie turn the pages of the yellowed newspaper three times at first reading, then another three at the second. Beckett added to his text three cries from invisible Willie—the first two when Winnie is struck by Winnie's parasol, and the third when Winnie's medicine bottle hits his skull, causing it to bleed.

At the end of Act II Willie crawls into sight. As soon as the set was built, Beckett crawled through Willie's stage path, and he corrected Willie's movements right up to the dress rehearsal, always insisting upon the dramatic quality of silence during that climactic crawl. In the final tableau Beckett carefully positioned Willie's hand to sustain the ambiguity as to whether Willie reaches for Winnie or the revolver.

Just before the opening, there were inevitable technical difficulties: since Beckett wanted absolutely no shadows on stage, the lighting had to be reworked. The harsh bell-sounds rose twice in pitch, but they had to be more precisely timed. The long toothbrush handle was balanced by the long revolver muzzle, but the parasol handle, without the sheath of the text, was of shining chrome that had to be darkened. Music box and burning parasol were not perfected till the technical rehearsal, when the parasol continued to burn backstage. For the technical rehearsal Beckett reduced the size of Willie's handkerchief so that, perched unprotectively on his bald head, it looked comically dainty. Even after the dress rehearsal, Matias wanted

Willie's morning clothes to look older, his newspaper to be less yellow, and Winnie's bag to hover more indeterminately between black and gray.

As Beckett is shy, he suffers in an audience-filled room, and he has never attended his opening nights. At the dress rehearsal of *Glückliche Tage*, when the house is traditionally half full in West Berlin, Beckett was as tense as any other director on a first night. He sat in the tiny side balcony of the Werkstatt and frowned through much of the performance, but he gave the actors no notes afterward. On opening night he came to the theater about half an hour before curtain-time. He patiently received the traditional gesture of good luck: three breaths blown over his shoulder. In Frau Schultz's dressing room he spoke privately to his Winnie. Leaving the theater before curtain-time, he autographed programs for a few people who waylaid him at the stage door.

After the performance Beckett met theater workers and friends at a post-opening party in his favorite café. Though he asked no questions, he listened courteously when others discussed the production. As though he had not lived with it for thirty-seven obsessive days in Berlin. As though the production had no relationship to him.

After his months of concentrated work for production of *Happy Days*, Beckett took a dislike to the play, but for me, perhaps because I am a woman, it remains intensely stirring. *Godot* is more beguiling, *Fin de partie* more greatly tragic, and *Krapp's Last Tape* more simply human, but *Happy Days* haunts me as the quintessential drama of modern humanity. Literally a consumer of goods, Winnie uses those goods to protect herself against her wilderness. Already in her grave, Winnie begins by looking to heaven, but she voices faith only hesitantly: "Prayers perhaps not for naught." Even as her flesh is baked and buried, Winnie counts her blessings. Dubious about past and future, she embraces the presence of her present. Her kisses and wedding-toasts have inexplicably been replaced by the bar-

ren stage, but she will not admit that she was born merely to die.

Winnie's temperament and background have taught her to keep a stiff upper lip. She never despairs, her eyes only once well up with tears, her voice breaks eight times, but she smiles thirty-one times. She determinedly reiterates "happy day," "great mercies," "That is what I find so wonderful." Lacking the imagery of Vladimir, Hamm, or Krapp, Winnie resorts to quotation for short poetic flights. Her own speech accumulates banalities, and yet it is harrowing in its rhythmic force. When Winnie does utter an imaged sentence, she implies a wish for annihilation: "And if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why then just close the eyes—(*she does so*)—and wait for the day to come—(*opens eyes*)—the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours." But even that wish is couched in terms of dissolution in a long present rather than nonbeing in eternity.

For Winnie feels that time has no meaning, even though she must endure it. And the basis of that feeling is human mortality, of which she rarely speaks. Less terrifyingly lucid than Hamm, Winnie is not the Pollyanna whose role she plays. Or not only that. It is because she knows where she is—under a hellish light, returning to the dust—that she assumes the role of Pollyanna rather than of Cassandra. Because man's fate can drive him mad, Winnie maintains her equilibrium as we all do—living in a minor key. It is a gallant part, played with discipline if not splendor, with style if not panache, and with gentle lovable grace.

Play

Happy Days gave birth to the triplet of *Play*. Winnie, buried to her neck under a scorching sun, is replaced by three urned figures under a spotlight. A marriage play is followed by a play about a lovers' triangle. (*Words and Music* may have preceded the first draft of *Play*, whose