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AMONGST SHADOWS AND LABYRINTHS

A VISUAL POETICS FOR SAMUEL BECKETT'S *OHIO IMPROMPTU*

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To my mother,

the "dear name" who taught me

to get through the shadows

and labyrinths

of my life

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"… to darkness,

to nothingness,

to earnestness,

to home…"

- Samuel Beckett (*Malone Dies)*

RESUMO

O objeto de estudo desta tese é a composição pictórica de ***Ohio Impromptu***, de Samuel Beckett. Sendo assim, apresenta uma poética visual como estratégia interdisciplinar de análise da obra, incluindo a sua versão em filme. A partir de sua contextualização histórico-social na pós-modernidade, tendo por base autores como Zygmunt Bauman e David Harvey, juntamente com a definição, delimitação e contextualização das referências artísticas presentes na peça e no filme, é analisado o modo como as escolhas pictóricas feitas pelo autor interferem no conceito de espaço e suas relações com o tempo, assim como o espaço do livro enquanto elemento de conexão entre espaço e tempo em relação ao espectador-leitor, *Listener*, *Reader* e autor. O espaço é analisado por dois ângulos: o pictórico, ou seja, de que modo o espaço é trabalhado e tratado na obra de arte contemporânea, especialmente no que se refere à ruptura do espaço do quadro e o derretimento das fronteiras da obra enquanto categoria; o literário, a partir do que Gaston Bachelard propõe como poética do espaço – uma topoanálise da obra enquanto espaço de síntese do imemorial com a memória, um estudo psicológico sistemático dos locais da nossa vida privada. Nesse teatro do passado, que é a nossa memória, às vezes acreditamos nos conhecer no tempo; no entanto, o que realmente conhecemos é apenas uma série de fixações nos espaços de estabilidade de seres que não querem seguir adiante no tempo, que no seu próprio passado, quando vão à procura do tempo perdido, querem suspender a passagem do mesmo. A poética do espaço lida com o espaço da nossa solidão e, ali, espaço é tudo, já que o tempo não anima a memória. As metáforas apresentadas por Gaston Bachelard podem ser facilmente relacionadas com o universo de ***Ohio Impromptu***, não somente porque *Listener* e *Reader* estão colocados em uma sala, ao redor de uma mesa, mas principalmente porque o texto está imerso no espaço do devaneio que é, de acordo com o autor, a casa das memórias. ***Ohio Impromptu*** é uma casa com sótãos e porões, cantos e corredores cheios de memórias não reveladas, palavras não ditas, sentimentos e faces inesquecíveis – uma síntese perfeita do imemorial com a memória. Através de uma poética visual, somada a uma topoanálise, chegamos à presença velada do autor e sua própria história permeando o espaço da obra, e a um conceito de tempo como antítese do tempo pós-moderno; um tempo que persiste pela repetição, que resiste ao apagamento; o tempo do mito. Através destes procedimentos de análise, chegamos a uma noção de tempo em Beckett enquanto *kairos*.

Palavras-chave: literatura inglesa – Samuel Beckett – arte e literatura.

ABSTRACT

The object of study of this dissertation is the pictorial composition of ***Ohio Impromptu***, by Samuel Beckett. Therefore, it presents a visual poetics as an interdisciplinary strategy of analysis of the work, including its film version. From its social-historical contextualization within postmodernity, based on authors such as Zygmunt Bauman and David Harvey, altogether with the definition, delimitation and contextualization of the artistic references present in the play and in the film, it is analyzed the way the pictorial choices made by the author interfere in the concept of space and its relations with time, as much as the space of the book as an element of connection between space and time in regard to the reader-spectator, *Listener*, *Reader, and author.* The space is analyzed from two perspectives: the pictorial one, that is, the way the space is constructed and treated in contemporary artwork, especially in regard to the rupture of the space of the painting and the melting of the frontiers of the work as category; the literary one, from what Gaston Bachelard proposes as a poetics of the space – a topoanalysis of the work as a space of synthesis of the immemorial with memory, a systematic psychological study of the locals of our private life. In this theater of the past, which is our memory, sometimes we believe to know ourselves in time; instead, what we really know is just a series of fixations in the spaces of stability of human beings who do not want to move on in time, who in their own past, when they go in search of the lost time, want to suspend the passage of time. Space retains the compressed time. The poetics of space deals with the space of our loneliness. Here, space is everything, for time does not animate memory. The metaphors presented by Gaston Bachelard can be easily related to the universe of ***Ohio Impromptu***, not only because *Listener* and *Reader* are set in a room, around a table, but especially because the text is immersed in the space of reverie which is, according to the author, the house of memories. ***Ohio Impromptu*** is a house of attics and basements, corners and corridors full of unrevealed memories, unspoken words, unforgettable feelings and faces – a perfect synthesis of the immemorial with memory. Through a visual poetics, added to a topoanalysis, we reach the veiled presence of the author and his own story permeating the space of the work, and a concept of time as an antithesis of the postmodern time; a time that persists through repetition, a time that resists erasure; the time of myth. Through these procedures of analysis, we reach a concept of time in Beckett as *kairos.*

Keywords: English literature – Samuel Beckett – art and literature.

SUMMARY

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PREAMBLE

Although Samuel Beckett has often been considered apolitical, the fact is that he was deeply committed to human rights as a whole, firmly opposing to apartheid and any form of racism, and involved in a number of specific political cases, even in France, where he lived for many years and was aware of the risk of having his residential permit withdrawn. Therefore, thinking and writing about Samuel Beckett, and especially ***Ohio Impromptu*** (from here onwards this work will be referred to through the abbreviation **OI**)*,* inevitably leads us to dive into the core of our historical moment and its main issues, such as globalization contrasting to fragmentation at all levels – social, cultural, spatial, temporal - besides ethnical and religious conflicts; that is, the core of our crisis. Consequently, in order to fully read the literary text, we ought to make use of a transdisciplinary approach, which can range from classical references such as Aristotle to contemporary views such as Edgar Morin's.

In fact, the latter, in an interview for *Zero Hora* on April 15th 2008, drawing a panorama of contemporary historical events, states that the paradox is that, at the same time the world is unifying, it is getting fragmented too. Morin highlighted that the world lived with

the idea that progress was a historical law, with "the idea that tomorrow would be better than today". From the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, he adds, it seems that progress is not so certain anymore, once technology itself produces its weapons of mass destruction and religious wars, and what seemed to be something overcome returns to our reality. And even though presenting an optimistic approach about our crisis, the philosopher defines the 1990s as the moment when it becomes more accentuated; the moment when we start to delineate the tragedy of our time, what he calls "humanity's loss of future": "The loss of future is very serious. When we lose hope, what remains is the attachment to the past". Stating that although our crisis can lead to disintegrations or regressions, it can also bring up new solutions; like a maggot that turns into a butterfly, the metamorphosis can equally end up positive for humankind.

On the same streamline, about a year before, Domenico De Masi, a sociologist from the University "La Sapienza", in Rome – Italy, in an interview to the Brazilian magazine *Época* on September 13, 2007*,* stated that the psychological common denominator that characterizes our contemporary society is "disorientation", originated from the rapidity and multiplicity of changes. Quoting Heraclitus, who said that "it is through change that things settle down", the author questions whether we could say the same today, for all the changes occurred in the Twentieth century happened in a much slower rhythm. Today things are different; after a few decades we moved from an industrial economy, based on automobile and housing appliances, to a postmodern economy based on services, information, symbols, values, and aesthetics, and this transformation was fast and global, as if all of a sudden an immense avalanche, an enormous mass of water, a volcano eruption and an earthquake had fallen all at once over a quiet region, terrifying its inhabitants. Like them, we are all disoriented, says De Masi; and the problem about feeling disoriented is that we go through a

deep feeling of crisis, and those who feel in crisis stop planning the future; and if we stop doing it, someone else will do it for us, and it will not be for altruistic kindness, but for their own good. De Masi's standpoint will lead us to understand how we reached the point of "unfamiliarity", of "in-between communities" mentioned by authors such as David Harvey and Zygmunt Bauman, which will be explored later on in this dissertation and which, besides being constant elements in Beckett's work, they have effects also in the literary field as a whole; and more specifically, in literary criticism.

Actually, when analyzing the role of criticism from Antiquity to our days, André Richard, in *A Crítica de Arte* (1989), points out the crisis in critics as part of a civilization crisis. According to Richard, in opposition to other times when the critics unscrupulously made use of a canonic judgment, nowadays the historians of art and literature experiment the need to confess their intentions, to specify the nature and the value of their criteria. However, we notice that, despite the changes that have occurred since the nineteenth century in the field of literary criticism, it is only at the end of the twentieth century that we can identify a reconfiguration of the concept of intertextuality, which acquires an effect of resonance, reaching the inter-discursive and identifying elements from other fields.

In this regard, quoting St. Beuve, Bella Jozef (2006) states that literature is a matter of language; and language *is* the subject, which is the "bottom" of the work, i.e., an absence: any metaphor is a sign with no bottom; the critic can follow the metaphors in the work but not reduce them. Today the critic's task is not just didactically organize information for another reader anymore, but materialize transparencies, aggregate forms, memories, knowledge that is apparently invisible. Of course, in order to do so, a new order will have to rise in new spaces, or better, trans-historicized spaces. It is this movement that leads to the replacement of the

notion of "comparative fact" for the one of "strategy", which relates texts apparently non-comparable; that is, the comparison happens through difference. Now, although comparative literature does not ignore the author's work, the focus is on the passage, transgression, the surpassing of limits, in the elimination of borders – to be able to aggregate, that is the strategy of the form. The frontiers have become haunted houses, labyrinths, attics – in Gaston Bachelard's words, "spaces of reverie". Finding these spaces, the voices and monsters that inhabit them, building bridges for a deeper reading, capable of dissolving frontiers apparently as solid as Beckett's absent words, became the greatest challenge, which is actually the aim of this dissertation: through a visual poetics, and understanding the critic as a co-writer and therefore someone who is expected to build bridges where there was no communication, create spaces of transparencies through which the spectator can encounter memories and the knowledge, or part of it, that supported the construction of forms in **OI**; through relating texts and visual references apparently so distant from each other, such as **OI** and Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* dated from 1300, or the pictorial construction of **OI** and the artwork by painters such as Caravaggio, Leonardo Da Vinci, or Jasper Johns.

INTRODUCTION

Although in Beckett's work form and content are totally tied up, the formal sophistication of **OI** justifies my interest in drawing a visual poetics for it, which would signify taking the opposite way that most analysts have taken: instead of going from content to form, I first intend to analyze the pictorial and visual elements in the play and examine its content only later.

In addition and closely connected with this project, there is the contemporary concept of "researcher-artist", which, according to Silvio Zamboni (1998), presents various difficulties in order to manage and define rules for researches related to artistic creation due to its interdisciplinarity and the constant changes which the object of study undergoes each time the artist intervenes. Therefore, a research in the field of the visual arts requires a differentiated methodology since the researchers produce their object of study at the same time that they develop the theoretical research. The concepts originate from the technique, from the procedures, from their way of working, and from the process of instauration of the

artwork. In the academic context, a research in the field of visual poetics involves three methodological instances:

1) Methodology of working in a studio – the artwork as a progressive process of meaning;

2) Methodology of theoretical research – searching the reasons for doing the work allows the researcher to establish connections with art history and the contemporary production, making use of varied sources: texts, interviews with artists; questioning what is affirmed and what breaks down tradition; operating concepts, which is a process that necessarily goes through language which, although it will never completely translate the work, is indissociable from it;

3) Methodology with students – by proposing questions, the students are expected to find answers for them, having as a departing point their own artwork, which will facilitate the occurrence of contributions to the research in general.

According to René Passeron (SOUSA et al. [org.], 2001, p. 9), what the painter sees, what he dreams and thinks while he paints is rooted in the humus of the ghosts, and it is through their insistence that they deviate the forms and push the artist to repetition. "This 'long patience' provokes ab-reaction, which is not only a brusque event of memory but a liberating repetition of the old traumatic act…"[1] The author continues by saying that the ab-reaction stimulates a passion for confessing, it is a sort of awakening of the true memory, and that the memorial conscience embroiders over the past, it even invents false remembrances. Art, according to Passeron, is a practice of the emptiness nurse; the canvas, as a symbol of the birth memorial emptiness, does not cease invading with its fluid

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[1] "Esta 'longa paciência' chama à ab-reação / que não é somente um brusco acontecimento da memória / mas uma repetição liberadora do ato traumático antigo..." (SOUSA, 2001). In order to better support the ideas presented, all the quotations, which were not in English were translated by me, and followed by the original text in a footnote.

whiteness the pictorial bandage – "Making the work be born obliterates the primal oblivion. Screaming-creating is an act of antibirth, so of antideath. Being able to make the work scream is having created it against the death that screams in it"[2]. And when it comes to Samuel Beckett, we find a very concrete reference to this state of birth since he used to claim that he had clear prenatal memories of life within his mother's womb which, despite being commonly thought as a space where the fetus is protected from harm, for him those memories were more often associated with feelings of being trapped and unable to escape, imprisoned in pain; a state that will repeatedly appear in his writings (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 23). Furthermore, the fight against the death of memory, and especially the death of childhood memories, has clearly become a fearful ghost constantly haunting Beckett's writings. As Knowlson states, references to Beckett's childhood appear in many of his works; the larches growing in the garden, for example, which evoke the season when Beckett was born and also the garden of his house when he was a child, figure prominently in his poetry, prose, and drama: "Born dead of night. Sun long sunk behind the larches. New needles turning green." (BECKETT, 1984, p. 265). We can even find the space of the empty nurse, as Passeron states, in his writings, such as in Winnie's story of Milly and the mouse in *Happy Days,* and *Texts for Nothing III* (BECKETT, 1995, p. 110), where the narrator actually refers to Beckett's nurse, Bridget Bray, who took care of him and his brother for twelve years and whose nickname was "Bibby", a name that figures in many of his writings, and where the author   recreates her baby talk: "She'll say to me, Come, doty, it's time for bye-bye. I'll have no responsibility, she'll have all the responsibility, her name will be Bibby, I'll call her Bibby, if only it could be like that. Come, ducky, it's time for yum-yum." Even the prayer they used to recite every night is reproduced almost verbatim

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[2] "Fazer nascer a obra, oblitera o esquecimento primal. Gritar-criar é um ato de antinascimento, então de antimorte. Chegar a fazer gritar a obra, é tê-la criado contra a morte que grita nela." (SOUSA ET al. (org.), 2001, p. 12)

in *Dream of fair to middling women: "God bless dear Daddy,* he prayed vaguely that night for no particular reason before getting into bed, *Mummy Johnny Bibby* (quondam Nanny, now mother of thousands by a gardener) *and all that I love and make me good boy for Jesus Christ sake Armen."* (BECKETT, 1993, p. 8). And so we can move on, endlessly, through Beckett's writings, digging fragments of his past from the walls of his literary production, meeting with his old fears, which appear to remain in the attics and basements of his creative mind. "Balf", the road repairman who used to terrify him just by starring at, making him tremble, also figures in many of Beckett's writings, such as *From an abandoned work* (KNOWLSON, 1996), but also in a more disguised way, as we can see in *Endgame,* in the fear of going out, and also in **OI**, in the fear of sleeping, and of darkness – details of his childhood, when he had trouble to sleep and needed his teddy-bear and a night-light, and which also appear in *Endgame,* in the figure of the stuffed dog with three legs, as well as in *Molloy;* not to mention his passion for chess started in his teenagehood, which is also reproduced in the very title of *Endgame.*

In regard to artistic creation, Edith Derdyk (SOUSA et al., 2001) states that thinking about creation is a departing and also an arrival point, for much more than thinking and writing about creation it generates a demand of time in order to reconstitute the thoughts and sensations that the creative act generates for itself. The creative act is a camp force converging towards the construction of an inaugural form, for it causes the melting of singular experience and cultural conjunctions, activating repertoires pertinent to the visible, the memory and the imaginary. The act of creation, says Derdyk, creates a "cut" in time and space, resignifying experiences, bringing up a feeling of eternal *continuum* within the here and now, as if the poetic ambition of the creative act resided in the immersion of our subjectivity within matter wishing to be language. In fact, as Bran Van

Velde pointed out, Beckett "never wrote anything that he had not lived", meaning by this that he would take his own experience to a deep level, far beyond life-work equivalences, as James Knowlson states (1996, p. 21).

In this way, taking into account the peculiarities of each artistic field, what I intend to do is apply as much as possible to the literary text the method used by artists in their *poiesis*, a task which reveals itself as a challenge. Therefore, the object of study of this project is the pictorial composition of **OI**, and the way it relates to art movements, such as Minimalism, Conceptual Art, etc.*,* altering the relation time-space in the play. Is it possible to construct a visual poetics in relation to a literary work? In case it is, what are the consequences to the reading process? Is it possible to view a literary work as a visual artwork? Were the author's visual choices based on rational thinking? How do literary and visual concepts interchange? How do the pictorial choices interfere with the concept of space? How is space treated in the play? How do spatial choices interfere with the concept of time? Do they liquefy the time/space relation? These are the questions which orient this dissertation, based especially on the theories of phenomenology by Gaston Bachelard, and having as my principal focus the treatment of space in **OI**. Consequently, I intend to:

- Contextualize the historical, social, and cultural moment in which the play was written, outlining the changes that simultaneously occurred concerning the concept of time-space;
- Identify the pictorial elements presented in both the play and film, and relate them to the respective visual techniques and/or art movements;
- Characterize the way these visual elements interfere and define the concept of time-space and its relation with the postmodern concept of "liquidity";

- Contrast the concept of visual recognition stated by Jacques Aumont with the way it is used in both versions of the work;

- Analyze the role of the book that is read in the play/film in relation to the spectator, to the characters – *Listener* and *Reader*, and to the author.

In order to achieve such goals, in chapter 1, I situate the Theater of the Absurd, and specifically Samuel Beckett's work, within the scope of postmodernity, relating it to the concept of "liquidity" given by Zygmunt Bauman, and its consequences on the social, cultural and artistic fields. What the author calls "negative globalization" has a strong impact on the concept of postmodern "openness", arising a "culture of fear", putting progress, change, and dissolution of borders into a totally different perspective; and the fields of architecture and visual arts are the spaces where those changes have become evident, expressing new dimensions of time and space, as well as new interrelations between them. Separation, lack of communication, unfamiliarity, and fear all come up in art and architecture as a mashed up *collage*, which goes beyond aesthetic elements; it brings out all the unprocessed changes – and that means also losses – that have not been absorbed yet by the postmodern man.

In chapter 2, I apply the previous concepts to **OI** by using three different approaches: the literary, where I analyze the return of the "tragic", a moment of "synergy of archaism and technological development", as Michel Maffesoli states, and specifically the "tragic" in the postmodern time of the play. A tragic sensitivity that immobilizes time, provoking a passage from a monochromatic, linear, safe time (the time of history) to a polychromatic, presentist time (the "spiral of destiny"); a feeling that recognizes and privileges a logic of conjunction (and… and) over a logic of disjunction (or… or) and moves towards the

dissolution of the lonely identities – a time of gigantic festivals, parades, or even strikes. The tragic here is understood as intensity, multiplicity, as all sorts of trembling; the feeling of tragic-ludicrous as collective unconscious strongly returns in ordinary life, leaving us with the impression of inanity of a life that consumes itself in the act of its own creation. The time of myth returns to us from the conjunction of the fairytale knight and laser – in the contemporary tragic, the culture of pleasure flows with the tragic consciousness of destiny; in postmodern times, there is a co-presence in the alterity, accentuating the "puppet condition" of the contemporary man or, at best, their condition of mere companions of the forces that overcome them and to which they must adapt. Contemporary human temporality merges with space, dislocating it to an un-localized space, for it does not belong to any specific time, as Maffesoli, states, and consequently it does not belong anywhere. This awareness is expressed through the contemporary nostalgia – the desire for something that has never existed but yet is present in the social imaginary – which forces us to constantly dislocate space through time, and brings out sadness and a feeling of abandonment but, at the same time, the ability to collectively resist through irony and mockery.

Secondly, I relate the sociological approach of liquidity applied to the urban space with the space in the play – a sort of **OI**'s architecture of the city that unveils the unfamiliarity and discontinuity of the drama. All the spatial references bring to light the discontinuity, the absence of a common history, revealing that what we are facing is not a real space but the one perceived by imagination with all its partialities. What we see in **OI** is a game between outer and inner space; and these spaces are analyzed through the metaphor of the house, a topoanalysis based on Gaston Bachelard's phonomenology: the house, says the author, will allow us to evoke fleeting lights of reverie that enlighten the synthesis of the immemorial with remembrance – there is a union between memory and

image, between memory and imagination. And so moves the **OI**'s character, through shadows of memory and imagination in a perfect synthesis between reality and virtuality, dialectically looking for shelter, knowing that, if there is a possibility of comfort, it will only come from unfamiliarity. At the same time, through keeping fixations from the past, fragments of memory, the characters fight against time, as an attempt to suspend it into space.

Thirdly, I analyze the pictorial space in **OI**[3] by identifying biographical spatial references in the play, as well as pictorial references, such as the use of Leonardo Da Vinci's pyramidal perspective, the *chiaroscuro* technique developed by Caravaggio, and visual and literary Minimalism, to further relate them with the treatment of time and space – one of the most significant issues that our society faces in the modern era: the relation of its body with time and space. According to Lois Oppenheim, the unifying force of all Beckett's work is a preoccupation with the visual as a primary paradigmatic force which configures in words, time, space, and the self's dwelling therein; and painting sanctioned that preoccupation. The changeable time-space relation is the attribute that pervades **OI** from the first line; through showing spatial change, it shows a change not only in chronological time but in the time of experience in a multidirectional way: "Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared". It is through the pictorial and spatial aspects that the "literature of the unword" (Oppenheim) gains form, and through them the struggle of the contemporary man unfolds, forced that he is to face a time and a space that do not stop melting, unfolds – and the result is another equation: the desire to "remain", to resist struggling against fear, loneliness, and alterity.

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[3] In order to do so, I make use of the film version from the "Beckett on Film Project" – director: Charles Sturridge; producers: Michael Colgan and Alan Moloney; actor: Jeremy Irons; UK/Ireland; Blue Angels Films; 12 min., 2000. In the same way, all the photos of the play appearing in this dissertation were taken from the same film version.

In chapter 3, I analyze the role of the spectator in relation to the concept of "pleasure of recognition" presented by Jacques Aumont, and the way it is distorted into derangement, unfamiliarity, discomfort. I also analyze the role of the book, identifying biographical and historical references, besides its relation with *Reader, Listener,* reading and reader-spectator, as the simple fact of reading out loud has had throughout history different meanings and importance. And in this case, the materiality of the book becomes equally important once it represents processes of producing meaning, which comes also from the orality of the text, from *Reader* or perhaps from *Listener* in the role of mediator, someone who occupies the in-between, unworded spaces left by the author and to be occupied by our images, imagination, and abyssal memories.

In the conclusion, I sum up the topics presented above pointing out the way they construct and knit time and space in **OI**, which is a *collage* of art history and literary references. By means of a logic of conjunction, Beckett creates a process of "unwording" his own text, making possible the representation of the "unrepresentable", as Lyotard would call it, creating spaces of "nothingness", which end up being the spaces of the reader-spectator's participation in the play. The time and space of Beckett's characters are the time and space of alterity – multiple "transworlds" where it is always possible to add another *collage* of the various human dimensions, memories, desires, and reveries. And life in its banality, the everyday life, is the scenario where Beckett's characters play with the impossible conjunction of past, present, and future, bringing about the aesthetics of alienation of the Self, which we see in **OI**: obsessive repetition of facts, memories and ideas, which leads us back to the time of the myth, through which we escape from a temporality extremely marked by utility and linearity. The world in **OI** is a space that turns out to be a labyrinth where people lose their North and, yet, keep resisting through moving

nowhere, masquerading nothingness with banal repetitions and fake conversations. The consequence is fear and loneliness; a man deprived of the comfort of tradition and, therefore, deprived of the pleasure of recognizing their own time and space. Emptiness will also expose the literary sophistication of Beckett's work. The sophisticated *collage* in **OI** merges the socio-cultural reality with fictional and pictorial spaces – a fragmented tissue, a multiplied structure *ad infinitum.* It actually expresses the long process of changes in the space relations within the painting, especially through the rupture with the concept of perspective, and brings up a new concept of spaciousness, as we can see in the work of Jasper Johns's, who breaks down the concept of inner and outer space within the artwork, and who also investigated Beckett's texts as the focus of a process of "verbal figuration". Emptiness also brings voluminosity to the pictorial as much as to the literary space; like in modern art, it acquires an operational value in the plastic language of **OI**, since the entire play operates in the empty spaces – spaces of pregnancy for uniqueness, discontinuities and intervals; spaces for an excavatory work by the reader-spectator to question their own condition. In this way, the role of the spectator becomes crucial for the very existence of the artwork as they become part of its "total vision". Through a visual poetics, we not only visualize **OI**'s various layers of space but also the contrast between *chronos* and *kairos*, and in the in-between spaces and times we encounter the hidden presence of the author.

1. THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

Written in 1980, upon Stan Gontarski's request for a dramatic play, and first performed in 1981 at an academic symposium at Ohio State University, in Columbus, in honor of Beckett's 75th birthday, Samuel Beckett's **OI** stands in the core of the postmodern era, although it is not our aim to join the apparent endless discussion whether Beckett would be a modernist or a postmodernist. Actually, the fact is that **OI** seems to sum up the clash of a modernist process of shocking structures into the so-called postmodernism, which, even if it did not represent a global change of paradigm in the cultural, social and economic orders, led to a deep change in what the editors of the architecture magazine *PRECIS 6* called the "structure of feeling", a change in sensibility, in the practice and development of a discourse distinct from the previous period (HARVEY, 2004, p.44). And this might also serve as another but equally proper definition for the Theater of the Absurd: a change in the structure of feeling, showing what had remained of the dreams and beliefs held by the modernist society. In fact, if we consider it as a reflection of Nietzsche's *Zaratustra,* the Theater of the Absurd carries the burden of a group of cultural and social events which culminated with the two World Wars. As a consequence, it became a way of expressing a desperate pursuit of a world different than the one they were facing – a world that had lost its meaning, any possibility of absolute certainty, a universe deprived of dignity, of an ordering principle and a vital objective. In fact, indeterminacy is the only concept that pervades the various definitions of postmodernity; and that is the word used by Marjorie Perloff to define Samuel Beckett's work, along with "decreation", by Ruby Cohn, "a literature of the unword" and "interrogatory" (by Samuel Beckett himself), which express his concern with identity and the self, with the struggle between consciousness and its dissolution through the dissolution of the ego (OPPENHEIM, 2003). Actually, differently from his early works, which still present a naturalistic influence, despite his antipathy toward naturalism, in the works produced after

World War II, Beckett seeks to explore the nature of being and is less concerned with the superficial and the transitory, escaping from any direct depiction of life by writing himself out of the text, which did not prevent life material from remaining "located at several removes below the surface" (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 21). In fact, this ground-breaking "unwording" process reaches its peak in the 1980s, with Beckett's *Quad*, which totally abdicates of articulated words – all we can hear are steps – and which, according to Martin Esslin (1986, p. 401), is an "authentic visual poem".

Although the postmodern label is totally rejected by Lois Oppenheim (2003), who claims that Beckett's visual paradigm itself precludes it, since his visual process surpasses the subject/object dichotomy that is the very point of departure of that polemic, the fact is that **OI** was written in postmodern times and expresses not only discontinuity, deformation through a growing minimalist process, but the collapse of genre and therefore of "tradition" – a clashing process so typical of the so-called 'liquid modernity'. As Célia Berrettini (2004) states, Beckett does not believe in the inviolability of linguistic or artistic frontiers, associating music to words or even suppressing them, sometimes, in favor of the visual. Consequently, even not being our intention to historically label Beckett, it justifies the need to locate the play within such critical period as part of this project. And although dates and terminology may vary from one author to another (some will call it postmodernism, others second modernity; some will say it started in the nineteen sixties, others, in the seventies, or even in the eighties), it is clear that many changes have taken place ever since and are about to occur in a very seminal and interconnected way. These changes, according to Zygmunt Bauman (2007), reflect the passage from what he calls "solid" to "liquid" modernity, a period when the social organizations cannot hold their structures anymore and therefore there is no institution able to frame the individual's choices or assure the repetition of those patterns that establish social

behavior. The fact is that, by the end of the 1970s, something had radically changed in our society, making it evident that somehow whatever we had learned had become useless, turning that decade into the scenario where all those post-war years of efforts towards an international reconstruction and development were collapsing, extinguishing frontiers and opening new ones. The "existential wisdom", as Bauman would call it, seemed to have lost its way in the world, which claimed for a deep revision of all our values and social practices. That has been our time – the moment of melting structures; a time marked by diversity, just like Beckett's creation. Nevertheless, this melting process does not promote unity, it just keeps offering the actors of the social arena the spectacle of fading life strategies, structures once believed solid and permanent. And now, after the boom of globalization, with our view broadened to a planetary level, where all connections seem to be possible, we are left with what Bauman defines as "negative globalization": an open society in regard to territorial sovereignty and to the respect to (or lack of) any frontier between States. Yet, this openness does not include an equal and free commerce or capital distribution, access to information, or the control of violence and terrorism.

Despite the original meaning of "openness" given by Karl Popper, which referred to a society that frankly admitted its incompleteness, in Bauman's words, "openness" today is associated with an irresistible fate, with the non-planned and unpredictable effects of the "negative globalization" (2007, p.13) mentioned above. Now, with no boundaries left to protect us (be them physical, political, or social), we face this terrifying feeling of vulnerability in which safety, peace, and justice have become impossible no matter where we are. Consequently, we were left with what Bauman calls "the culture of fear", not only of what already exists but of anything that we can imagine might exist, and in such dark environment, progress turned into a ghost that escapes from the labyrinth of our social

basement and haunts us like long, endless nightmares in which time consumes us, space melts, and we are thrown into nothingness. Fear is what has been left as the great source of power in our postmodern society, and along with fear come individualism and loneliness. The lack of a strong emotional link between people may give them the illusion of freedom and joy, but never of hope. The benefit that solidarity can bring to those individuals can no longer be felt or understood. As we lack the appropriate tools to rebuild our social structure, the demon of fear will continue haunting us, our time and our space; and in this self-consuming process we have been forced to face a new sort of residue – the human trash, that increasing group of "unfitted" people who can no longer find a social spot where they can be recognized as socially, or even professionally useful individuals. The fact is that, at the same time that we discuss and highlight the respect for cultural diversity, the space where this diversity can exist has become increasingly smaller and is sharply represented in Beckett's metaphorical spaces, such as the deserted vastitude of *Waiting for Godot*, or the suffocating bunker-space of *Endgame*, or the small room with a single window in **OI**, where the character has moved to hoping to find relief from unfamiliarity. The more space we have in Beckett's plays, the more we feel its borders and the invisible walls locking us in. As Clifford Geertz (2000, p. 68-88) observed, the social and cultural frontiers coincide less and less, and with such disjunction postmodernity will have to deal with that amount of "human excess" – be it in the figure of a refugee, be it in the figure of a socially, culturally disadvantaged person who claims for a real space where they can in fact exist. This human excess has reached a totally and so far unthinkable condition of helplessness, which goes beyond philosophical aspects, reaching the extremes of not just hunger but absence of protective laws that would guarantee their material existence, especially in the case of the refugees, for whom what seemed to be a temporary condition has become a long term if not permanent state of legal inexistence "nowhere" – what Foucault would call "a place with no place" (FOUCAULT apud BAUMAN, 1986, p.

51). In a metaphorical way, Bauman draws a picture of this condition when he states that the roads that may take us back to the lost domestic paradise were practically closed, and all the exits from purgatory lead to hell (2007, p. 44). In the imaginary communities of the contemporary world, these individuals have become the "un-imaginary" ones, stratifying their condition of "permanently transitory", just like the two clown-figures in *Waiting for Godot*.

In an article written for the *Guardian*, Naomi Klein (2003) mentions the "fortress continents", a group of nations that unite forces to take commercial advantages from other countries and at the same time guard their borders to avoid the entrance of the people from whom they take advantage. At a certain point, Klein asks how it would be possible to stay open to business and closed to people, and the author herself gives the answer: first you expand the perimeter, and then you lock the door. Somehow, postmodernity seems to have created an "in-between space", not just for the refugees, as Klein pointed out, but for everyone who might feel unfitted or unwanted in a social universe with such unclear scope and such strong "pitch" of insecurity making human vulnerability always more evident. In Bauman's opinion, a new fear has aroused – the fear of inadequacy, an almost universal disease, fear of being socially excluded. The omnipresence of fear compels people to build higher and stronger walls around houses, neighborhoods, cities, even countries, and in this process of building protection, we have reached the point in which the way out has been somehow lost and the reference of who is locked in and who is locked out has also become unclear. Therefore, the importance of studying and understanding the postmodern space in all its dimensions became crucial to understand our condition as social beings.

Even though it is not our purpose in this work to analyze postmodernism from the socialist point of view, it is worth mentioning the relationship established by some authors

between postmodernism and Marxism, as the latter is in the core of the whole process of modernization. According to David Harvey, Marx not only is one of the first modernist writers but he also offers one of the first and most complete interpretations of the capitalist modernization.

> All freed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. (MARX & ENGELS apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 97)

Actually, this quotation could certainly be used in any writing on postmodernism, and is related to the questions posed by Harvey – whether postmodernism represents a reinterpretation or a reinforcement of the role of money itself as *the* object of desire, which originates what Marx calls the "merchandise fetishism". The author believed that money and market trade masked the social relations between things, dissolved boundaries and relations that compound the traditional communities; therefore, money would establish the real community, the supreme representation of social power in the capitalist society.

It is also worth mentioning some of the main reasons that, according to Stuart Hall, caused the dislocation of the modern Subject: Marxist thought, which puts social relations in the center of its theoretical system, instead of an abstract notion of man; Freud's discovery of the Unconscious, which destroys the concept of the *cognoscenti* and rational Subject endowed with a fixed and unified identity; Structural Linguistics, which states that we are not the authors of our own language but that language, instead, is a social and not an individual system; the works by Michel Foucault on a genealogy of the modern Subject in which he highlights another type of power – the disciplinary power – focused, firstly, on regulation, on

the government of the human species, and secondly on the individual – based on the power of administrative regimens, professional expertise, and the disciplines of Social Science, and aiming at producing a human being who can be treated as an obedient corpus (DREYFUS and RABINOW apud BAUMAN, 2001). At last, another dislocation mentioned by Hall is the impact caused by Feminism, one of many movements raised in the sixties, which questioned the classic distinction between inner and outer, private and public and, as a consequence, politicized subjectivity, identity and the process of identification.

Summing up, according to some theoreticians, these movements can be seen as key elements which transformed the Subject, as it was understood in the Enlightenment era, with a fixed and stable identity, into a dislocated, open, contradictory, unfinished, and fragmented postmodern Subject. And in order to alleviate this condition, although global mobility made it impossible to consider a nation as a unified cultural identity, national cultures with emphasis on tradition and continuity come at hand to support this idea, even if they mostly exist, as Homi Bhabha would say, only in the individual's imagination (BHABHA, 1990), for, no matter how different the members of a nation are, or how violently forced this process might be, those representations can give them the feeling of being unified into one cultural identity. The fact is that, at the same time globalization, which for some is the worst monster postmodernity has created, pasteurizes the *modus vivendi* and creates a social aura of equality, it also makes more evident the differences and the struggles inside the social corpus to preserve ethnical identities – at the same time that there is the desire for universal assimilation, there is also the willingness to keep the private, the local. As Hall states (2006), the discourse of national culture constructs identities which are ambiguously placed between past and future, and globalization is the main element causing the dislocation of national cultural identities, as it connects communities and organizations through new fragmented

combinations of space-time, compressing distances, time scales, and identities. As a result, the struggles between national and local caused by globalization are originating another type of national identity – the hybrid one – with emphasis on impermanence, difference, and cultural plurality.

In this way, Tradition, the main source of our cultural comfort, has been challenged by the need of constantly reinterpreting itself, contrasting at the same time with another concept focused not on permanence and continuity but on impermanence and difference – the concept of "Translation", presented by Bhabha (1990). This concept describes those identities formed through spatial, historical and cultural intersections and compounded by people who were dispersed from their homeland and forced to negotiate with the new culture without being totally absorbed or having totally lost their old identities. Actually, this is a conflict closely experienced by Beckett, who lived almost his entire life outside his country, having moved to Paris in 1928, at the age of 22, to London in 1934 and returning to Paris in 1937, besides stays in other countries and his early times back in Ireland. This borderless experience led him to his relationship with James Joyce and many other artists who played important roles in his personal and artistic life and especially in his relationship with space – geographic, cultural, artistic, and linguistic as well, since many times he wrote in different languages; for example, in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, which is a collection of previously uncollected writings that appear in their original language of composition (French, German, English), as stipulated by Beckett because the volume "is intended for scholars who should be able to read several languages" (COHN, 1984). Among those writings, we can find his essay "Recent Irish Poetry", published in London in 1934 under a pseudonym, as he was afraid of any possibility of a nationalistic reaction, and where he expressed his opinion on Irish literature as obscurantist and retrograde, drawing a line between the Dublin *litterati* and

the moderns, like him, who were aware that either the breakdown of the object or the breakdown of the subject would lead to the same thing – rupture of the lines of communication, turning the space a "no man's land". In Beckett, there is a breakdown not only at the creative level, but also at the personal level where past and present, origin, beliefs and expectations never really match; words and things always fail to coincide. The Dubliner does not agree with the modern man and writer that he had become; as much as it is not possible to reach a linguistic identity, since when he seemed to have chosen French as his literary language, he goes back to English and vice-versa, or to another language. Actually, he goes even further, joining the criticism of James Joyce who, in an article written in Trieste, Italy, expresses his dissatisfaction with Ireland, stating that a person who has self-respect will not want to stay in Ireland, but run to anywhere far away, as if running from a country that had been visited by a furious Jehovah (JOYCE apud BERRETTINI, p. xvi). Beckett, in his craving for independence, follows Joyce's words and moves away; but in his itinerant self-imposed exile, he remains divided, dissatisfied, excluded, with an almost constant need to search, evade, and occult himself, even in the literary aspect – what we see in Beckett is a man constantly trying to translate himself and the world surrounding him, as if attempting to find a space where he can exist, belong, perhaps a space of comfortable familiarity where past can peacefully merge with present and future, truly believing in the violability of borders, be them geographical, linguistic, or aesthetic, something that is clearly expressed in his works, which always lack geographical references. In fact, Beckett's spaces are always versions of "no-man's land".

Like in Beckett's world, cultural unification in this new world has lost its meaning, for these individuals will irrevocably be the product of diversity, forever inhabiting at least two cultures, having two identities, never unified, being forever what Salman Rushdie calls

"translated men" (1991), children of a compressed time and space, existing in an "in-between" time line, between past and future which, however, is not the present – a sort of an "in-between" postmodern identity, like the characters existing between *Listener* and *Reader* – the "dear name", the man that comes at night carrying a book. Actually they are all in-between characters living in in-between times and spaces, tied together by the tenuous string of words that do not reveal, by the power of the book.

On the same track, Anthony Giddens (1990, p. 18) contrasts modernity, that increasingly separates space from place, once it reinforces relationships between others who are absent, distant from any sort of face-to-face interaction, with the pre-modern societies, in which space and place were broadly coincident. Now we are facing what Harvey calls "the destruction of space through time" (HARVEY, 1989, p. 205), which highlights the difference between space and place: at the same time places give us roots, as they remain fixed, space can be quickly crossed by, for the social structure is atomized by flexible nets of language that allow the individual to access different groups of codes according to the social role they are playing at the moment (political, cultural, religious, etc.). In this way, if there are many different games being played at the same time, according to Jean F. Lyotard (1984), the consequence which we can expect is the birth of broken institutions, what the author calls "local determinisms", understood as interpretative communities formed by specific knowledge "producers-consumers" that act in specific cultural contexts (academic, religious, political, communitarian, etc).

The importance of this variety of language networks acting at the same time comes from the fact that it makes evident one of the strongest aspects of postmodernism: alterity, the idea that each group is capable and has the right to speak by itself and be respected and

accepted as a legitimate voice, which for Andreas Huyssens (HUYSSENS apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 52) carries a liberating potential to a variety of social movements. Postmodernism made us aware of the pluralism of worlds, and this effect can be felt not only in a sociological standpoint, but in all forms of expressions – in the technological world, as much as in the academic and artistic universes, especially in literary fiction. Actually, this is what Foucault would call "heterotopy", the coexistence of a large number of fragmented possible worlds in an "impossible space"; places that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other places, but in such a way that they suspend, neutralize or invert the ensemble of relations that are designated, mirrored, or reflected by them. And amongst utopias and heterotopias, Foucault believed that there was a kind of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror – at the same time a utopia and a heterotopy, for the mirror is a place without place; in the mirror I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface, a sort of shadow that enables me to see myself where I am absent; a heterotopy, for it exists in reality, exerting a sort of counteraction on the position I occupy – from the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am, once I see myself over there, and somehow I am led to turn my eyes toward myself and reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror, when it reflects our image, makes the space reflected absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, for in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.[4]

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[4] Mais ce qui m'intéresse, ce sont, parmi tous ces emplacements, certains d'entre qui ont la curieuse propriété d'être en rapport avec tous les autres emplacements, mais sur un mode tel qu'ils suspendent, neutralisent ou inversent l'ensemble des rapports qui se trouvent, par eux, désignés, reflétés ou réfléchis. Ces espaces, en quelque sorte, qui sont en liaison avec tous les autres, qui contredisent pourtant tous les autres emplacements, sont de deux grands types.

HETEROTOPIAS

Il y a d'abord les utopies. Les utopies, ce sont les emplacements sans lieu réel. Ce sont les emplacements qui entretiennent avec 1'espace réel de la société un rapport général d'analogie directe ou inversée. C'est la société elle-même perfectionnée ou c'est l'envers de la société, mais, de toute façon, ces utopies sont des espaces qui sont fondamentalement essentiellement irréels. Il y a également, et ceci probablement dans toute culture, dans toute civilisation, des lieux réels, des lieux effectifs, des lieux qui ont dessinés dans l'institution même de la société, et qui sont des sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d'utopies effectivement réalisées dans lesquelles les emplacements réels, tous les autres emplacements réels que l'on peut trouver à l'intérieur de la culture sont à la

These immeasurable superposed spaces create for the postmodern character different new enigmas to be solved: "What world is this? What am I supposed to do here? Which persona am I supposed to use?" These are some of the questions posed by Harvey to understand the new dilemmas faced by the postmodern character, and which could perfectly be posed by Beckett's characters in **OI**, since we are presented with this mirror-figure characters *Reader* and *Listener* carrying the dichotomy of presence-absence, and posing to the spectator the enigma of an abyssal space: which space they really occupy in regard to the play and to their own life.

As a matter of fact, according to David Harvey (2004), we cannot consider postmodernity without looking backwards to the conflicts and contradictions within modernism, especially if we take into account the definition of modernity given by Baudelaire: in *The painter of modern life*, published in 1863, he defines it as "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable". And this conflict between ephemeral and eternal seems to permeate what

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fois représentés, contestés et inversés, des sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables. Ces lieux, parce qu'ils sont absolument autres que tous les emplacements qu'ils reflètent et dont ils parlent, je les appellerai, par opposition aux utopies, les hétérotopies ; et je crois qu'entre les utopies et ces emplacements absolument autres, ces hétérotopies, il y aurait sans doute une sorte d'expérience mixte, mitoyenne, qui serait le miroir. Le miroir, après tout, c'est une utopie, puisque c'est un lieu sans lieu. Dans le miroir, je me vois là où je ne suis pas, dans un espace irréel qui s'ouvre virtuellement derrière la surface, je suis là-bas, là où je ne suis pas, une sorte d'ombre qui me donne à moi-même ma propre visibilité, qui me permet de me regarder là où je suis absent - utopie du miroir. Mais c'est également une hétérotopie, dans la mesure où le miroir existe réellement, et où il a, sur la place que j'occupe, une sorte d'effet en retour ; c'est à partir du miroir que je me découvre absent à la place où je suis puisque je me vois là-bas. À partir de ce regard qui en quelque sorte se porte sur moi, du fond de cet espace virtuel qui est de l'autre côté de la glace, je reviens vers moi et je recommence à porter mes yeux vers moi-même et à me reconstituer là où je suis; le miroir fonctionne comme une hétérotopie en ce sens qu'il rend cette place que j'occupe au moment où je me regarde dans la glace, à la fois absolument réelle, en liaison avec tout l'espace qui l'entoure, et absolument irréelle, puisqu'elle est obligée, pour être perçue, de passer par ce point virtuel qui est là-bas. Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits 1984, *Des espaces autres* (conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967), in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, n°5, octobre 1984, pp. 46-49. Available at: http://www.foucault.info/documents/heterotopia. Site visited on January 5th, 2009.

Marshall Berman calls a modality of vital experience, an experience of space and time for the individual and for the others, an experience of possibilities and dangers of life, as if there were a constant struggle between a world of adventure, power, joy and achievement, and the threat of total destruction, provoked by the melting of geographic, cultural, ideological, and religious borders, which does not bring but a paradoxical unity – a unity of disunity. In Berman's opinion, modernity throws us into a turmoil of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of fight and contradiction, of ambiguity and anxiety, which leads us to believe that for most modern writers – and Beckett includes himself in this category – the only thing which they could be sure of in modernity was its insecurity and even its tendency to "totalizing chaos" (BERMAN apud HARVEY, 2004, p.21).

Therefore, the so-called postmodernism emerged from an anti-modern spectrum to stand as a cultural aesthetics; an aesthetics of a new order of space and, as a consequence, of a new order of time. And so emerged the Theater of the Absurd, carrying in its womb the burden of being at the same time transient and eternal, struggling with the desire of unity and the awareness of disunity, for the apparent unity brought up by globalization caused an immense dark hole in social life, where new struggles took place among individuals. And this is what Jonathan Raban states in his book *Soft city,* published in 1974, presenting an urban space characterized by its disseminated individualism and *entrepreneurism*, where social distinction was broadly lent by possessions and appearance. In Raban's point of view the city looked more like a theater, a series of stages where the individuals could operate their distinctive magic while playing a variety of roles. The city became a labyrinth where too many people would lose their North, where it was extremely easy to lose each other or ourselves. If, on one hand, this variety of roles could bring us freedom, there was the inexplicable menacing presence of urban violence followed by the tendency of a total

dissolution of social life. Just like in the theater, the urban space also offered its inhabitants the possibility of playing both the villain and the fool.

According to Terry Eagleton (1987), the postmodern relation with cultural tradition stands as pastiche, intentionally lacking depth, making use of a brutal aesthetics of sordidness and shock. Once more, like in the theater, the mask plays a main role, for it embodies the fleeting aspect of postmodernism. Therefore, we might even quote Baudelaire again when he referred to "the indefinable something we may be allowed to call 'modernity'" (1863), whereas the editors of PRECIS 6 (1987, 7-24), the architecture magazine, define postmodernism as a legitimate reaction to monotony, for it values heterogeneity and difference as liberating forces in the redefinition of the cultural discourse – fragmentation, indetermination and intense distrust regarding all universal discourses became the trademark of the postmodern thought. New approaches to old and new concepts rise in all areas, be them humanistic or scientific, especially Foucault's emphasis on discontinuity and difference in history, corroborating the end of "meta-narratives", as a legitimating tool for the illusion of a "universal" human history. According to Harvey (2004), modernity does not involve only an implacable rupture with any preview historical condition but it is also characterized by an endless process of internal ruptures and fragmentations, and although it has always been focused on the discovery of the "essential character of the accidental", as Paul Klee used to say, it now needed to do it on a field of continuously changing senses which frequently seemed to "contradict yesterday's rational experience" – what Habermas (1983) called "project of modernity". This project, started in the eighteenth century, consisted of an extraordinary effort made by the illuminist thinkers to develop objective science, morality and universal laws, and autonomous art as well, aiming to achieve human emancipation and daily life improvement, as the scientific control of nature would release humankind from famine

and natural disasters. Whereas modernism embraced tradition, the illuminist thought embraced progress and the whirl of change, so the transient, the fleeting and the fragmentary became the necessary condition for the fulfillment of the illuminist project. However, as Harvey (2004) points out, the twentieth century, with its extermination camps, its militarism, the two world wars and the devastating possibility of total destruction, put down this optimism and led the illuminist project towards self-destruction, as it ended up transforming the pursuit of human emancipation into a system of universal oppression on behalf of human liberation. At least, that was the thesis presented by Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in *The dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972), in which they claimed that the logic behind the illuminist rationality was the logic of domination and oppression. On the other hand, Harvey presents Nietzsche as "the other half" mentioned by Baudelaire to show that the modern was nothing else than a vital energy, a will of living and power swimming in a sea of disorder, anarchy, destruction, individual alienation and despair. Therefore, the illuminist concepts were worthless; the eternal and immutable essence of humanity was perfectly represented by the mythical image of Dionysius's "creative destruction". Consequently, what we have is once more the opposition between ephemeral and eternal. As Harvey states, if the modernist has to destroy in order to create, the only way to represent eternal truth is through a process of destruction which in the end will be able to destroy its own truth. Nietzsche placed the idea of aesthetics above science, rationality and politics – the exploration of the aesthetic experience beyond "good and evil" opened space for the creation of a new mythology regarding the meaning of eternal and immutable in the fleeting and fragmented chaos of modern life. And in this new modernist project, a special role in the definition of the essence of humanity was given to artists, writers, architects, composers, poets, and philosophers: the artist, according to Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the greatest modernist architects, must not only understand the spirit of their time but start its process of change, as well. Consequently, the definition of a

modernist aesthetics crucially depended on the artist's approach to these processes of change, fragmentation, and ephemerality; no matter what position they took, they were going to interfere with the way that cultural producers considered the flow and change. The painter, the architect, the writer, artists in general were expected to find a way of representing this eternal and immutable condition, and they found it through the strategy of shocking and violating the expected continuity. James Joyce and Marcel Proust, Stéphane Mallarmé and Louis Aragon, Édouard Manet, Camille Pissarro, and Jackson Pollock are examples of this strategy in action. And Beckett, specifically in *Dante... Bruno, Vico… Joyce* (COHN, 1984), when analyzing the revolutionary role of Joyce's writing, in a literary and political approach, defends his autonomous linguistic choices, establishing a relationship with Dante, who chose various Italian dialects over Latin and without prioritizing or privileging his own – Tuscan – as a statement in defense of literary autonomy and against literary nationalism subjection. Actually, comparing himself to Joyce, in regard to their creative process and how innovative and revolutionary his (Beckett's) role was, he states:

> The difference in regard to Joyce is that Joyce was a magnificent manipulator of matter, maybe the greatest. He would make the words give their maximum; there is no extra syllable. The gender of work that I do is a work in which I am not the owner of my matter […]. Joyce tends toward omniscience and omnipotence as an artist. I work with impotence, with ignorance.
> […] I do not believe that impotence has been explored in the past. It seems that there is a sort of aesthetic axiom that says that the expression is an accomplishment (success), it must be a success. To me, what I try hard to do explore is all that range of the human being that has always been neglected by the artists as something useless or by definition incompatible with art.
> I believe that today any person who pays the slightest attention to their own experience will realize that it is the experience of someone who does not know someone who cannot (BECKETT apud MALÉSÈ apud BERRETTINI, 2004, p. xx).[5]

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[5] A *diferença* em relação a Joyce é que Joyce era um magnífico manipulador de matéria, talvez o maior. Fazia com que as palavras rendessem o máximo; não há sequer uma sílaba a mais. O gênero de trabalho que faço é um trabalho no qual *não sou o senhor de minha matéria* [...] *Joyce tende para a onisciência e a onipotência* enquanto artista. Eu trabalho com *impotência,* com *ignorância.*
[...] não creio que a impotência tenha sido explorada no passado. Parece que *há uma espécie de axioma estético que diz que a expressão é uma realização (êxito), deve ser um êxito.* Para mim, o que me esforço por explorar é toda essa gama do ser que foi sempre negligenciada pelos artistas como alguma coisa de *inutilizável ou por definição incompatível com a arte.*

In regard to one of Beckett's references, Mies van der Rohe wrote in the 1920s that architecture was the "willingness of a time conceived in special terms". Exploring simultaneity, "the modernists were taking the ephemeral and transient as the *locus* of their art"; therefore, it became what Walter Benjamin called an "auric art", for the artist had to assume an aura of creativity and dedication to art for the art's sake in order to produce an original and unique cultural object, so it could be easily sold for a monopoly price. At the same time it attempted to affect the aesthetics of daily life, modernism also internalized its own whirl of contradictions and ambiguities, an extraordinary combination between futurism and nihilism, revolutionary and conservative, naturalist and symbolist, romantic and classic; the celebration of a technological era and its condemnation; an excited acceptance of the end of the old culture regimens and a deep despair towards it (BRADBURY and MCFARLANE apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 32). Furthermore, after 1848, it broadly became an urban phenomenon, with an explosive growth of cities due to migration, industrialization, mechanization, the massive reorganization of the cities and political urban movements. In fact, the growing need of facing the psychological, sociological, technical, organizational and political problems of massive urbanization became the basis where modernist movements blossomed. The city, observes Michel de Certeau (1984, p. 95), is "simultaneously the machinery and the hero of modernity". This craving for experimentation resulted in a qualitative transformation in the nature of modernism sometime between the years 1910 and 1915, affecting all sorts of scientific and artistic expressions, including music – Igor Stravinsky provoked a revolution in 1913 with his "The Rite of Spring", as much as the atonal music by Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Bela Bartók, and others –, and also Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism,   conceived in 1911, in which the meaning of words is firstly

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Creio que *hoje* qualquer pessoa que preste a mais leve atenção à sua própria experiência se dá conta de que é *a experiência de alguém que não sabe, de alguém que não pode*.

determined by their relation to other words than to their reference to objects. "Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared" (**OI**, p. 13).

In the 1920s, many cultural producers, especially the ones involved with the Bauhaus movement, followed Mies van der Rohe's statement that "truth is the significance of the fact", and dedicated themselves to establish a rational order ("rational" meaning technological efficiency and production via machinery) to achieve goals which were socially meaningful (human emancipation, proletariat emancipation, etc). "Through order, promote freedom" was one of Le Corbusier slogans, thus aiming to emphasize that freedom and liberation in the contemporary metropolis vitally depended on the imposition of rational order.

The Italian futurists, on the other hand, so fascinated by velocity and power, with World Wars I and II, as Fascism and Nazism gained space, lost interest in modernist experimentation, because it had been absorbed by the violent militarism even in architecture as, for example, Hitler's architect Albert Speer, who despite having attacked some modernist's aesthetic principles, made use of many of their techniques, combining scientific knowledge with the myth of racial superiority in all areas of creativity. Giorgio De Chirico, for example, turned to commercial art with roots in the classic beauty, combining it with vigorous horses and narcissistic drawings of himself dressed in historical clothes. The strong tension between different political movements forced people, and artists in special to make a stand, and they made it clear in the urban space, affecting the features of the modernist city, with the construction of a series of buildings by socialists, such as the famous Karl Marx-Hof building in Vienna, planned not only to shelter workers but also to serve as headquarters of military defense against any conservative rural attack to a socialist city. Fascism, on the other hand, rejoiced in classic references, not only in architecture but in politics and history as well,

following the Greeks, who were aware of the national aspect of their mythology. As Harvey points out, the aestheticization of politics, through the production of these wide-range myths (and Nazism is just one example), was the tragic side of the modernist project, which became more and more evident, as the "heroic era" reached its end with World War II. Actually, even before World War II, many *avant-garde* artists, such as Pablo Picasso and T.S. Eliot, tried to resist this direct social reference and made use of more universal mythological affirmations. Eliot, in *The Waste Land,* for example, made use of images and languages from all sides of the world, and Picasso turned himself to primitive art, as a desperate attempt to find a mythology that could somehow enlighten that dark world between wars, bringing some kind of hope and comfort to compensate for the terror and destruction of that historical moment, as he faced the impossibility of indifference.

According to Stuart Hall (2006, pp. 8-13), the concept of identity is extremely complex and still little understood in contemporary Social Science. The fact is that the structural changes going on since the end of the twentieth century, which include the treatment of space in all levels of social life, are fragmenting and transforming our personal identities, for they have been through constant dislocations or decentralizations. Those dislocations affected the idea of us as integrated Subjects which we used to have since the Enlightenment, and later as sociological subjects: self-sufficient, formed and transformed through a continuous dialogue with the external worlds and the identities which they offer. The problem is that this process has become increasingly more temporary, variable, and complex. The beginning of the twentieth century, with the aesthetic changes brought up by the Modernist Movement, showed us a much more disturbed and disturbing individual – dislocated, exiled, alienated, forced to create some kind of *collage* of their own history, in order to get a sense of identity in an uncomfortable society marked by difference, plurality

and impersonality. "In a last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they had been so long together to a single room on the far bank" (**OI**, p. 12).

As it was said before, post-modernity became the era of *collage*, of superposed experiences, times, languages, texts intersecting with others and producing more texts, a fact which emphasizes the problem of communication that we are facing: each intersection of texts will necessarily generate a new group of possible meanings, despite what the author intended to give. As a matter of fact, the concept of *collage* is the basis of Derrida's deconstructivism and is presented as the foundation of the postmodern discourse. It is important to consider, though, that the postmodern condition has its roots settled much earlier than the cultural revolution of the 1960s. Actually, it has accompanied in parallel the whole process of capitalism and its relationship with the market, its constant pursuit of new ways of producing and trading, following not only economic but social and cultural tendencies as well, including all sorts of artistic expressions, which culminated with the development of the art market in the 1960s. Following the same line as Baudrillard, who describes the postmodern culture as the "culture of excrement", idea which inevitably reminds us that money equals excrement also for Freud and Marx, Harvey even poses another question: does postmodernism signal a reinterpretation or reinforcement of the role of money as *the* object of desire itself?

> The postmodern concerns about the significant and not the signified, with the means (Money) and not with the message (social work), with emphasis on fiction and not function, on the signs instead of the things, on the aesthetics over the ethics, suggest reinforcement, and not a transformation, of the role of Money described by Marx. (HARVEY, 2004, p. 99)[6]

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[6] As preocupações pós-modernas com o significante e não com o significado, com o meio (dinheiro) e não com a mensagem (o trabalho social), com a ênfase na ficção e não na função, nos signos em vez das coisas, antes na estética do que na ética, sugerem um reforço, e não uma transformação, do papel do dinheiro descrito por Marx.

As a social power that can be controlled by individuals, money forms the basis of a very broad individual freedom that can be used for our own development with no references to others. In Harvey's opinion, money unifies through the ability to accommodate individualism, alterity and an extraordinary social fragmentation; and the result is a derangement of the product of our own experience, a fragmentation of social tasks. "Capitalism did not invent the 'other' but sure did make use of it and promoted it under highly structured forms" and is at the root of modern insecurity, given that the geographic movement of capital and work periodically revolutionizes the territorial and international division of work, giving to insecurity a vital geographic dimension (HARVEY, 2004, p. 101). The transformation of the experience of space and place which results from those movements is followed by other revolutions in the dimension of time, once capitalists aim to reduce the circulation time of their capital to a "blink"; in this way, capitalism is itself a permanently revolutionary and disruptive force, therefore a permanent source of insecurity. In fact, authors such as B. Ollman (1971), B. Taylor (1987) and Walter Benjamin, analyzing capitalism, try to capture the way politics, economy and culture relate in a multifaceted and fragmented system in which some of the terms used by Marx such as "value", "work", and "capital" are constantly separating and reuniting in new combinations as an opposition to the totalizing practices of capitalism. Therefore, it is not possible to expect a unified representation of the world for, according to Harvey, it would be repressive and delusional.

Frederick Jameson (1984), in this regard, establishes a relationship between Lacan's concept of schizophrenia, not in clinical terms but as a linguistic disorder, with a sociological and cultural impossibility to unify past, present and future of our own biographical or psychological experience. In this case, it would represent a disruptive process compound by distinct signifying elements that do not relate among themselves in a time line as it would

happen in a normal mind, and so are incapable of unifying past, present and future. As a consequence, the effect would be the collapse of temporal horizons and the reduction of our experience to a series of non-related pure present times. Jameson believes that this intense fragmented experience focused exclusively on the present time, as it is devastatingly vivid and material, dislocates the Subject and activates the alienation of the Self in the postmodern aesthetics (JAMESON, 1984, p. 63-120). The contemporary cultural production, rooted on ordinary life experience, ended up joining the frantic capitalist process of merchandise production which, especially after the 1960s, was forced to produce not only goods but also desires, the need for more, for something different. In Harvey's opinion, this process can be easily identified in the postmodern aesthetics, focused on temporary, unfinished art objects, such as *performances* and *happenings,* besides the already mentioned *collage,* where any sort of confiscation, quotation, accumulation and repetition of already existing images is allowed, as we can see, for example, in the artwork by Robert Rauschenberg (**Plate 1**), considered one of the pioneers of postmodernism. Such practices, based on instantaneity and exploring the media resources, approximate popular culture and cultural production, reinforcing the transitory aspects of contemporary life, at the same time that it raises another important issue in the postmodern movement, which is the way these two cultural expressions relate. The instant images brought by television and all other media have a direct consequence on the concept and understanding of contemporary space, which even in architecture disregards depth.

Therefore, whether we believe it or not that the descriptions given by Marx of the social processes, generating individualism, alienation, fragmentation, unpredictable changes in methods and as a consequence in the experience of time and space, are the foundation of modern and postmodern thinking; whether we believe it represents or not continuity or

Plate 1: *Persimmon*, Rauschenberg - 1964. Oil and silkscreened ink on canvas. 167,6 x 127 cm

rupture in social conditions, the fact is that postmodernism recognizes, as Anthony Huyssens states (1984), the multiple forms of alterity regarding all differences (gender, class, race, time, space, etc). Actually, what we see nowadays is an aesthetic intervention even in politics and economy, rather than just in social, cultural life – as Harvey points out, a conjugation between mimesis and aesthetic intervention, an emphasis on the ephemerality of *juissance*, an insistence on the impenetrability of the "other", a tendency towards deconstruction close to nihilism; therefore, a preference for aesthetics rather than ethics. Postmodernism claims the need to accept and give in to the fragmentations and cacophonies of voices through which the contemporary dilemmas are understood, to the celebration of masquerade, simulation and all sorts of fetishisms. It also denies any kind of meta-theory capable of apprehending the political and economical processes. As a consequence, at the same time it opens to a variety of voices, it prevents them from having access to more universal sources of power, creating an opaque ghetto of alterity, depriving those voices of power. In this way, in Harvey's point of view, there is more continuity than difference between the long history of modernism and the so-called postmodernism, which seems to be more like a crisis that emphasizes the fragmented, ephemeral and chaotic aspects of modernism. Harvey goes even further and states that the superposition of different worlds in so many postmodern novels, in which an incommunicative alterity in a space of coexistence prevails, can be read as a metaphorical transversal cut of the social landscapes in a process of fragmentation, of subcultures and local ways of communication, for they have a relation with the disempowerment of the minorities in the big centers, which will inevitably lead to identity issues. Within this social frame, speaking and writing about loneliness becomes a cultural claim, a recurrent theme, which was not new when Beckett joined the literary panorama; classical and also authors who were close in time or contemporary to Beckett made use of it. Yet, as Célia Berrettini (2004) states, until Beckett, loneliness would bring to the characters an aura of greatness and exceptionality,

whereas in Beckett loneliness equals a disease that can affect anybody, indistinctly, and is expressed with or without words through scenic materialization – deserted, non-referential places, isolated from the external world, which is reinforced by *Chiaroscuro* effects. Like in *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett's lonely characters wonder around, with no family, no name, no actual place to go, just using their resilient ability to speak, no matter how used, impoverished and meaningless the words might have become; they simply continue using them – an effort that renders even more evident the impossibility to overcome loneliness; a refuge against nothingness. There, tragic and derisory unite in aggressive, cynical, even bitter ways, to paint the absurd of the human condition, attacking the primary human values, such as religion and love, by playing with *clichés* and common-sense – a great metaphysical farce, as Célia Berrettini states (2004, p. 19). In Beckett, the fragmentation of the postmodern communication reveals itself to be beyond repair; it is not possible any real approximation and, at the same time, it is not possible to get away from it, so the only thing to do is to continue talking, even if just to fulfill emptiness. Anyway, the figure of the "story-teller" remains in most of Beckett's works, such as in *Molloy*, the *Unnamable*, or *Endgame*, in which Hamm's fragmented painful life is masqueraded by multiplying the existence of imaginary lives, attributing to him a sort of power to create lives – the author's creative power. The various stories told by Hamm, momentarily deviates from him the awareness of the inevitable mobility of the world and, therefore, find "relief from unfamiliarity", since these lives are constructed at the spur of the moment, in the presence of a constricted listener. Story-telling in Beckett is but a failed attempt to abstract from suffering and to break the theatrical illusion by showing the spectator that its universe is totally fictional, unreliable; life is simply a derisory game – in the end, what remains is pain and loneliness. Actually, in his essay *Proust*, referring to incommunicability, Beckett states that the temptation to communicate, when communication is not possible at all, does not represent but a simian vulgarity, a horrible

farce, similar to a sweet madness that makes you talk to the furniture: the tragedy of all human relationship is a predetermined failure. "Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that!" (Hamm – *Endgame*, p. 53).There is a fundamental alienation of the being, typical of the human condition, and this alienation is visually expressed through self-incarceration, even in an open space, as we can see in *Waiting for Godot*. The late works by Samuel Beckett, which mostly present lonely old men, carry the image of the inevitable human solitude, multiplied, as we can see in **OI**, by failed existences, tiredness, and disillusion, hopelessly locked in an in-between time and space, somewhere between past, present and future, not to mention the biographical similarities to their creator who, for some time in his life, was subjected to depressive crises and psychosomatic disorders. "Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday! […] The end is in the beginning and yet you go on" (Hamm – *Endgame*, p. 43, 69).

1.1. THE POSTMODERN TREATMENT OF SPACE VS. TIME

"Lack of planned depth", this is how Jameson (1984) defines the postmodern architectural approach to space; and in this regard, Harvey (2004, p. 60) states that postmodernity, impotent towards this fragmentation and lack of depth, refuses to answer the question about how to construct the surface of urban life and understand its needs and meanings in a fragmented social tissue, once its aesthetics of fragmentation is just a logical extension of the power of market to all sorts of cultural production. Postmodernism is here seen as nothing but the cultural logic of the advanced capitalism; consequently, understanding and creating a concept for the urban tissue became an important issue, which goes beyond the architectural field; it actually reflects the contemporary dilemma faced by a liquid world in relation to the time-space compression.

If we accept the concept presented by Roland Barthes (1975, p. 92) that the city is a discourse, and this discourse is a language; if we accept architecture as communication, then we must look at the urban net with more careful eyes, in order to be able to read and understand its message: rich in plastic qualities, the liberating space of appearance and disguise that the new city offered to human identity became especially vulnerable to any sort of psychosis and totalitarian systems. And architecture became the great stage where this new situation became reality. For example, the modernist architecture, like the "Dream for Paris", by Le Corbusier, in the 1920s, brought us the concept of molding structures and, as a consequence, a range of changes in life-style and in the meaning of quality, affecting and creating new paradigms also for the art market, especially after 1970, when new intellectual trends appeared, causing also ups-and-downs in the art market, from which the concept of "postmodern" comes. Moreover, still according to Harvey (2004), if the concept of modernism is highly confusing, the reaction or derangement known as "postmodernism" is even more, once it reacts to the austere autonomy of high modernism to embrace the language of commerce and merchandising. This leading language poses an important challenge, for it creates new compressions of time-space, which function more like "black holes" in the psychological, cultural and social structures, preventing their actors from building bridges of communication, and this fact can be especially reflected in the urban net.

Today, the urban strategy of separation no longer offers ways to identify the enemy's side, unlike the old medieval city where the enemy was kept outside. The city, and especially the neighborhood, carries within its walls the threat of new dangerous social classes – the mysterious foreigners and their diversities, transforming the principle of "keeping distance" incapable of containing the supposed invasion. Disconnection has become inevitable, and constant movement seems to be the only possible choice, originating the so-called "ghost

neighborhoods" – areas which were totally abandoned once the community recognized their incapability to restrain the modern ghosts. Belonging to a place has become a utopian expectation, for upper as much as lower classes seem to have lost their ability to identify themselves in their supposed territory. Apparently, the concept of "separated community" has brought up more serious consequences to social life, as the interdicted spaces created by those communities end up originating new forms of social exclusion and consequently violence, which reinforces fear and the feeling of not belonging – a vicious circle of derangement. As Bauman states (2007, p.87), the contemporary cities became battle-fields where global power and local identities meet, confront themselves and try to reach some kind of, at least tolerable, agreement – an attempt of lasting peace, which today is known to be just a temporary break in order to rebuild defenses. And that is the dynamics of the "modern liquid city", spaces where strangers stay and circulate in extreme mutual proximity, an irregular and inconstant life where relief and hope can only be temporary.

In opposition to the modernist idea of urban layers in large scale, postmodernism considers the concept of the urban tissue as something fragmented – in Harvey's opinion, a "palimpsest" of superposed past forms, or in a more contemporary word, a *collage* of architectonic styles. Space became something independent and autonomous to be molded according to aesthetic principles and goals that are not necessarily related to any social objective. What matters is creating what a postmodern architect, Leon Krier, calls a "good city", an urban form that carries within the totality of urban functions in a distance comfortably covered on foot. This urban concept, as a consequence, can only be accomplished if we understand space not in width and height but as a multiplied structure formed by complete, self-sufficient and independent blocks and groups of blocks inside a bigger block – the city. Yet, we can still find today representations of a modernist practice

that uses architecture as a way of publicly expressing the corporative power: constructions like the Rockefeller Center, or the Trump Tower in New York stand as symbols of the celebration of this power – architecture seems to sum up the *collage* not only of styles but of values too, i.e., it is a concrete example of the postmodern aesthetics of diversity.

Locked up within the walls of unfamiliar communities, the individuals react to diversity creating bubbles of similarity, what Richard Sennett would call the "feeling of Us" as if, in this way, they would be able to avoid the ultimate confrontation with themselves. At the same time that there is the innate process of creating a coherent image of the community, there is also the desire of avoiding real participation, the fear of being truly connected to each other (SENNETT apud BAUMAN, 2007). As a result, spatial segregation reduces tolerance in relation to social diversity and increases urban fear, transforming the dream of a perfect social community into something always more distant. As this dream cannot be accomplished with the construction of walls, like in the Middle Ages, once the core of contemporary fear is mostly the existential uncertainty, the disconnection from the Self can constantly disguise itself, as long as it assures that Identity will never be truly unfolded. Individuality in modern society can exist as long as it is apparent, unfamiliar, unknown. This impersonal equality allows a superficial and tranquil social life and seems to solve the fear of facing different universes of meaning; on the other hand, from Bauman's point of view, it is possible that this uniform way of living risks to make people lose their ability to negotiate meanings and therefore tolerate diversity, as it is unlikely that mixphobia will disappear from the liquid world. The possibility of being (or pretending to be) someone else, so common on the internet relationships, has become a key element in this changeable society, like in a masquerade, where the participants are allowed to impersonate any and as many characters as they want, as long as their real faces do not appear.

In regard to the aesthetics of diversity, Jane Jacobs, in *The death and life of great American cities,* published in 1961 (JACOBS apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 73-74), examining the urban scene rebuilt after 1945, criticizes the modernist project, stating that it did not fulfill the needs of any of the social classes: the projects for low income communities became centers of delinquency, while the ones for the middle and upper classes were deprived of vitality and usefulness, as much as the cultural and civic centers. According to Jacobs, these projects were the result of a misconception of what the cities are and demonstrate the need to understand that it is on the social processes of interaction that we should focus our attention. "Healthy" urban environments hold an organized intricate system that depends mostly on diversity, complexity, and the ability of dealing with the unexpected in a controlled but creative way. Of course, postmodernism has an advantage if we compare it with modernism: the technological resources available today favor diversity, for it is possible to offer any sort of product (even architectonic) making use of the industrial mass production system but still in a very personalized way. As Harvey states, the postmodern architect can, consequently, more easily accept the challenge of communicating with different groups, functions, and tastes. Surely, we cannot forget that it also brings about a very capitalistic, "market oriented" conception of architecture, which not necessarily focuses on social interests in a fair manner, leaving the "disadvantaged" still unprotected, unfitted and in some way unwanted too. Postmodernism brought up what Bourdieu (1984) calls "symbolic capital" repressed by Modernism, and transformed architecture into a complex and personalized linguistic system: a "festival" of styles, colors, a multivalent schizophrenia, as Charles Jencks (1984) would say. In fact, "schizophrenic" is how many authors define postmodernism as a whole.

Even though the urban dynamics of destruction and demolition, characteristic of the modernist project, is not a new practice – the Roman Empire did it many times for different

reasons – the fact is that postmodernism in some way was forced to face what some authors consider a tragic inheritance, alleviated by the presence of fixed points of reference – the remained monuments, which carry some sense of collective memory. The *collage* that Postmodernism expresses is actually this effort to accumulate these past references, for, according to Robert Hewison:

> The impulse to preserve the past is part of the impulse to preserve the self. Without knowing where we have been, it is difficult to know where we are going. The past is the foundation of individual and collective identity; objects from the past are the source of significance as cultural symbols. (HEWISON, 1987, p. 45)

What the contemporary urban scene reveals is a high level of eclecticism and, as a consequence, a strong tendency to masquerade social and cultural behaviors, which reflects not only in the architect's concept of surfaces and their lack of depth but also in art in general, bringing to it a sense of theatricality. Technology gives a big hand to this, making easier any sort of *collage* and expropriation, borrowing styles, historical references, even entire images, and this process ends up reinforcing the sense of dislocation and theatricality, which will necessarily force us, when facing an "object", to pose another question: is this an artwork or an architectonic work? Is this a monument or a sculpture? Is this a *happening* or a theatrical performance? And so on. The architects, as they are responsible for threading the urban area, struggle with this schizophrenic eclecticism on a deeper level, for it is their task to create a space that can hold all sorts of diversities, all sorts of communication systems. An example given by Harvey is the *Piazza d'Italia*, in New Orleans (USA), by Charles Moore, considered one of the classic works of the postmodern architecture (**Plate 2**) – a mixture of fragmented historical and cultural references put together, an example of visual and cultural *collage*.

Plate 2 - *Piazza d'Italia , New Orleans* – Charles Moore

As we can see from what was exposed so far, space has been a key issue in all aspects of modern and postmodern society, and contemporary art has been the arena where all the changes in concepts, values and objectives have found ways of expression. Organizing space has been the main focus of all social and cultural practices, whether we think of capitalism, whether we think of architecture, social or ethnical differences and adjustments. In fact, Marshall Berman (BERMAN apud HARVEY, 2004) states that, in the second half of the twentieth century, space organization became the primary aesthetic problem of culture, as much as time was the problem in the first half of the century for Henri Bergson, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce. Some authors even claim that the postmodern changes are actually related to a crisis in our experience with time and space – the latter somehow dominates time in such a way that we cannot keep up with.

As Harvey states, in modern society many different concepts of time constantly interchange; the ordinary activities of everyday life, such as taking a shower or having breakfast in a usual hour, contrast with the perpetual movement towards the unknown and the unlimited, provoked by progress, wars and social chaos. The demands of the "industrial time" and technological changes, locating and relocating workforce, interests, real and imaginary needs, accelerate and increase insecurity, anxiety, and desperation. Therefore, if time is managed, stretched or shortened according to the economic, social or cultural moment, space necessarily will have to be understood and lived in a different way. The difference is that space presents more complex aspects, as it involves not only direction but area, shape, pattern, and volume. Nevertheless, both time and space still suffer the subjective, and consequently distinctive, interpretation and apprehension, turning categories such as "objective-subjective" more complex, if not totally blurred, for we must recognize the multiplicity of objective

qualities that space and time may express and the role of human practices in their construction.

Although it is not our intention to deeply analyze either the industrial or technological processes, it is worth mentioning that some authors believe it is necessary to investigate them in order to really understand the meaning and the actual result of time-space compression, once the objectivity of time and space comes from the material practices of social reproduction. As far as they can geographically and historically vary, we can verify that social time and social space are constructed differently. That is, each distinct way of production or social formation incorporates a particular group of practices and concepts of time and space (HARVEY, 2004, p. 189). In fact, in social theory, progress implies the conquest of space, the fall of all spatial barriers and the ultimate elimination of space through time. However, as it is not just a matter of creating new concepts of time-space but also appropriating and/or reinterpreting old ones, we are immersed in a territory of ambiguity, conflicts and contradictions. Recalling the poetics of space by Bachelard, the postmodern house was built on top of an immense and labyrinthian dark basement; our cities are nothing but gigantic *collages* of old and new histories, for, in this context, economic and political choices will inevitably demand an "appropriate" aesthetics which, on the other hand, will affect the social practices (for example, the urban plan for Paris idealized by Haussmann, or the various buildings planned by Le Corbusier).

Actually, the philosopher Karsten Harries (1982, p. 59-69) states that architecture is not only the domestication of space, struggling and molding an inhabitable place in space; it is also a strong defense against the "terror of time". Futurism, for example, aimed at molding space to represent its most important concepts – velocity and movement, while Dadaism

considered art as ephemeral and consequently renounced to any permanent treatment of space, pursuing eternity through giving to their events a revolutionary character. In the same way, the theory of aesthetics, aiming at establishing the rules that will make it possible to express the eternal and immutable truth in the midst of a turmoil of changes, inevitably puts space and time under different perspective: space becomes the tool to somehow stop time, freeze the experience, a reaction to the terrors of change that time may bring. And, like the architect who tries to communicate values through the construction of a spatial form, poets, and artists in general, will communicate and fix their cultural experiences through words (BOURDIEU apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 191). Certainly, this is not a new postmodern understanding; what is really new, if we may say so, is the awareness of this paradox: as the spatialized frozen written word became the main instrument of learning and constructing concepts, how can it be considered appropriate if it must face the turmoil of the social processes, especially when space and time became forces in constant antagonism? And this paradox becomes clearer when we see the difference of treatment that the social theory gives to space and time.

According to Michel Foucault (1984, p. 70), space has been treated as dead, fixed, non-dialectical, whereas time, on the contrary, represents richness, fecundity, life, and dialectics. This paradox is actually what made Walter Pater (PATER apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 191-192) affirm that "all art aspires at the condition of music", for its aesthetic effect comes precisely through its temporal movement. Somehow, this is what Harvey claims too when referring to De Certeau, when the latter states that spaces can be more easily "liberated" than Foucault imagined, exactly because the social practices spatialize instead of locating themselves in a repressive net of social control. What De Certeau sees is a daily substitution of "the technological system of a coherent and totalizing space" for a "pedestrian rhetoric" of trajectories that have a "mythical structure", understood as an allusive and fragmented history

whose gaps muddle up with the social practices it symbolizes. Yet, what we can see is that, although the common sense that "there is a time and a place for everything" is still used to achieve some specific conquest of power, according to Harvey it is difficult to find a stable mythology in contemporary life, and it is this change in our experience of time and space what basically provoked what we call postmodernism (DE CERTEAU apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 197-200).

As we have already mentioned, the progressive monetization of social relations has transformed the qualities of time and space and made more evident how much subjected to constant change they are. Consequently, the acceleration of the rhythm of the economic processes affects the entire social experience, forcing the production, re-structuralization, and growth of the organization of space in order to reduce spatial barriers; this is why the ways of representation of space are so important to understand the postmodern phenomenon. Globalization, the antagonist process of territorialization and deterritorialization , the social, cultural, as much as artistic *collages* and all sorts of ephemeral expressions are never neutral but all different reflections of the same conflict – the attempt of space to contain time. Acceleration leads to time-space compression, which radically changes the objective qualities of our time and space, forcing us to alter the way we represent the world to ourselves. And in this contradictory process, the postmodern alterity and resistance may apparently blossom anywhere, but usually are subjected to the power which capitalism has over the coordination of the fragmented universal space and the march of the global historical time of capitalism. This assumption brings down the old belief that "there is a time and space for everything" and, as there is no right time nor space anymore, we are thrown into insecurity, especially during the periods of maximum changes, when the spatial and temporal foundations of the reproduction of social order are subjected to a more severe disruption, as we face now in our

liquid times. In this compressive process, space shrinks into Marshall McLuhan's concept of "global village"; our time line is reduced to a schizophrenic time – the present – and we are left with the devastating spectacle of two worlds, that is, two dimensions of ourselves, colliding.

In this regard, the thesis presented by Harvey (2004) is that the 1847-48 crisis in England created also a crisis of representation as a consequence of a radical readjustment of the sense of time and space in the economic, political and cultural life, and the question "in what time are we?" popped in the philosophical agenda. The nature of space and the meaning of money became important issues, for they no longer held the certainty that the Illuminist world carried. All the dimensions of human life were forced to give in to internationalisms and synchronicity; the truth of the experience did not coincide with the place it occurred, highlighting the insecurity brought up by intemporality.

Literature, visual arts, music did nothing but express this new concept of synchronicity, the deconstruction of the traditional visual and cultural space, as we can see in the Impressionist paintings, exploring fragmentation of space, light, and color, as much as new framings; or in literary works like Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, where heterogeneity, simultaneity and synchronicity become key elements to express the still new questions about time-space in a world in rapid change and mostly affected by the homogenizing power of money and a generalized sense of trade. The characters do not have one specific stage of action: social classes, moral values, cultural roles constantly permeate, exchange places, and times juxtapose – past, present and future offer no certainties, no comfort; there are always doubts on what had been done or could have been done. And this was just the beginning of a much more radical process of changes; we would still have two world wars and others to face,

which were going to affect and compress even more our relation with time and space. Not only the wars, but the process of globalization as a whole, the disappearance of frontiers and the upcoming of new ones along with the "human trash" have not only compressed time and space but also consolidated the privilege of time over space in the social theory. Great international events involving architecture and art reinforced what Walter Benjamin (1969, p. 140) called the "phantasmagoria" of the world of merchandise, an effective way of re-territorializing the world according to economic interests. History, tradition, time, all could be replaced and re-signified through space. Of course, technological innovation played a special role in this process – telephone, wireless telegraph, bicycle, X-ray, cinema, automobile, airplane promoted new ways of thinking and feeling time and space, making public time increasingly more homogeneous and universal in space, which had also a direct effect on the visual arts and literature. Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, for example, started their quest in search of the sense of simultaneity in space and time, insisting on the present as the only real place of the experience, making their actions run in a plurality of spaces; stream of consciousness through parallel universes stepped into past and future, totally free from any containment. The experience happens in a time between past, present and future; and at the same time it reaches an extremely individualistic status; it also becomes universal through the power of the press and mechanisms of social communication. Another example that is worth pointing out is the film *Stranger than fiction,* released in 2006, directed by Mark Forster, where the only way to solve the dilemma lived by author and character cannot be found in science but in literary theory: the author's imaginative space and the character's life melting with reality dissolve the space-time frontiers between them, making unbearable for all of them to face the "end". Like in Beckett's process of self-erasure, a process of reducing himself to absence, the author fights against her presence in the text, trying to deny the autobiographical elements in the character, an attempt to die within the novel, which reaches a concrete

dimension in the film: the author tries several times to kill herself, ending up requiring the intervention of a professional writing assistant – someone who is literally distant from the text and the character and, therefore, capable of remaining conscious throughout the process and not being seduced by the character/author. "Little did he know…" – these are the words used by the narrator and which the character heard in his mind; as if not knowing would reduce the struggle between continuing to live and not being allowed to live, and as the narrator depends on the character's actions to write, it is up to him to perpetuate the story by not knowing, not doing, not acting. Once again, it is up to the literary theoretician to say to the character that he does not control his fate – it is the nature of all tragedies: the hero dies but the story lives on forever. When finally author and character meet and he asks her not to kill him, she desperately claims that she herself does not know the rules either; she is just trying to write a book, which within this symbiotic time-space relationship will only be concluded after the character's acceptance of his fate, which will lead to other different routes, new times and new spaces for both of them.

The beginning of the twentieth century brought us the celebration of the annihilation of space by time; the place became unreal in a fragmented relative space. Cohesion was to happen in a global space through mechanisms of communication and social intervention (HARVEY, 2004, p. 245). What we can notice is that architecture, urban space in general, became the arena where all the changes that the twentieth century brought up would be expressed – the space of the body and the psyche revealed by the scientific, philosophical, and psychological discoveries had to be released through a rational organization of space. These new dimensions of space led to a new sense of relativism applied also in the production of space and organization of time in all cultural expressions – architecture, music, literature, and visual arts were all concerned with the purity of their language, affected by the sense of

fragmentation caused by the awareness of the rapidity of life. Therefore, it was necessary to conceive a fragmented, faster art in order to describe the dynamics of life. Gertrude Stein, for instance, interpreted cultural events such as Cubism as a response to the space-time compression; and architecture responds with a unified, highly ordinated and rationalized space, as proposed by Le Corbusier.

However, despite all the ruptures that modernism brought, there was still the need to locate itself in geographical and historical terms, and in order to do so, architects looked for new styles to satisfy the new functional needs and also to celebrate the distinctive qualities of the places, reaffirming the local identity. Therefore, what postmodernism articulates is what modernism had already started, that is, a tendency to privilege the spatialization of time (Being) in detriment of the annihilation of space through time (Becoming). In practical terms, what we have is a struggle between universalism and privatism; between rationalism and expressionism, functionalism and aesthetics, etc.; as Harvey defines it, a crisis in the bourgeois culture, imprisoned in its own rigidity and at the same time facing radical changes in the experience of spaces and time. And if time is changing, space must adjust to it through simplification; as Adolf Loos (**Plate 3)** would state in his essay *Ornament and Crime* <RINEHART, D. R., 2007> "the development of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use", for ornament would make objects "dated" and consequently causing them to go out of style, becoming obsolete. He would even go further saying that ornament was "immoral", "degenerate", and that its suppression was necessary to regulate modern society. On the same path, Mies Van der Rohe (**Plate 4)**, making use of simple rectilinear and planer forms, clean lines, pure use of color, and the extension of space around and beyond interiors, called his buildings "skin and bones" architecture, stating that

"less is more" and that God was in the details. Both architects believed in the "nobility of anonymity".

As it has already been mentioned, architecture and the urban projects clearly expressed this struggle, making evident the consequences of World War I and its effects on the perceptions of time and space, for it abruptly broke the historical tissue, separating people from their past – as an example, David Harvey (2004, p. 250) points Camillo Sitte, who understood the city as also an aesthetic issue, in opposition to Otto Wagner in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Whereas Sitte, horrified with the strict and technical functionalism attached to the capitalist pursuit of profit, aimed to construct spaces that made people feel safe and happy, Wagner, a pioneer of the "heroic" forms of modernism, which were a hit in the 1920s with Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies Van der Rohe, etc., believed that "need was the art's only sovereign"; for them, space should be fixed in a historical process with high degree of dynamism. Interpreted as an obstinate combat between the universalist and localist sensibilities in the arena of cultural production, the "heroic" modernism post-1920 originated from the intellectual and artistic attempt to reach an agreement with the crisis of the experience of time and space, raised before World War I. The "heroic" modernist aimed at showing that the accelerations, fragmentations and the implosive centralization (especially of urban life) could be represented and, therefore, contained in a singular image. They wanted to show that localism and nationalism could be overcome and that some idea of a global project for the improvement of general well being could be restored. The crisis in space exacerbated by the war ended up expressed in art tendencies like that proposed by the Bauhaus, as much as in the artwork of artists such as Pablo Picasso, who drastically changed the treatment of space in his canvases, abandoning the linear perspective; and Wassily Kandinsky, who studied the psychological effect of space, line and color on the spectator (**Plate 5, 6**). Ortega y

Plate 3: *MODEL HOUSE* - Adolf Loos

Plate 4: *FARNSWORTH HOUSE* - Mies Van der Rohe, 1951

Plate 5: *Le Jugement Dernier* – W. Kandinsky, 1912. Watercolor and ink on glass. 33.6 x 45.3 cm.
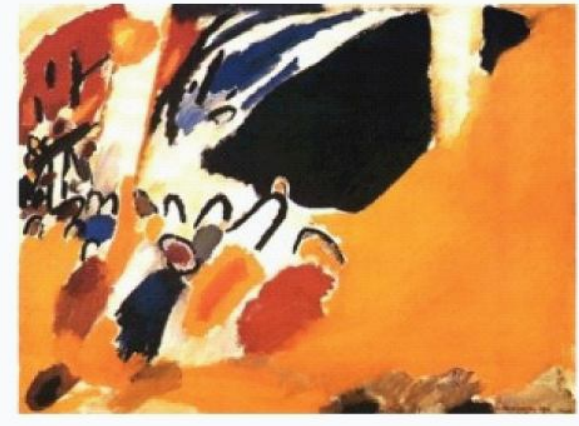

Plate 6: *Impression III (Concert)* - W. Kandinsky, 1911. Oil on canvas. 77.5 x 100 cm.

Gasset, in 1910, claimed that "there were as many spaces in reality as perspectives about it" and that "there were as many realities as points of view" (ORTEGA Y GASSER apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 245).

Notwithstanding the fact that the modernist treatment of space transmitted a permanent sense of human values supposedly universal, and consequently a mythical dimension, the fact is that, those art-space concepts were not used as a coherent representation of what they aimed to express. As Harvey (2004) points out, Le Corbusier's ideas were evoked by Fascism; the Bauhaus concepts were used in concentration camps; Oscar Niemeyer planned Brasília for a populist president but continued to build it for generals, and these differences in the history of modernism in political terms reflect, in Harvey's opinion, the tension between the sense of time and the focus of space. The mutant sense of time and space forged by capitalism forced perpetual re-evaluations of the representations of the world in cultural life. From 1960, and more strongly from 1970 on, there is a revival of the interest in geopolitical theory, the return of the aesthetics of the place and a tendency to open the problem of spatiality to a general reconsideration. Volatility and ephemerality are accentuated and society is permeated by the feeling that "everything that is solid melts in the air", and we are immersed in the dynamics of the "disposal society", which does not relate only to trash but also clothing and life styles, relationships and values. Even the urban net is laid according to this concept of instant obsolescence, and the effect is not felt only on a psychological but on a public level as well, creating a context open to diversity and social fragmentation, exacerbated by the excess of sensorial *stimuli* and the manipulation of desires, needs and tastes. In this context, the image becomes the key element of power, and as ours is an instant world where we can accumulate numberless past, present and future images in a very eclectic way and not necessarily following a time line – images that can be altered, transformed in

front of our eyes on a television or a computer screen – "simulacrum" starts to play an important role in postmodern life. Here, "simulacrum" is used to designate a state of replica so perfectly close to the original that it becomes impossible (or almost) to establish which is real and which is fake. Actually, even in the art market, the power of instantaneity and simulacrum has become evident, for it is built over images (personal, professional, cultural) that can be altered overnight, destroying reputations and transferring capital, erasing any sense of future, and consequently setting the "schizophrenic dimension" of post-modernity. However, in a world with crumbling barriers, contrasts constantly come up, and in a society of "temporary contracts", as Lyotard states (1984) in a clear reaction to the ephemeral, there is the return of the interest in basic institutions (family, community, etc.) and the search for historical roots as a way of finding more secure habits and lasting values, which will be reflected in all aspects of life – from the way we live and dress to the way we build and decorate our houses. Simulacrum permeates all aspects of our life and melts the geographical and cultural barriers even more, giving us a panoply of memories from trips which we actually made and from the ones we dreamed of or imagined through magazines, movies, and all sorts of cultural products, even the international food that we eat at the corner of our street.

Plurality of experiences and tastes, of sounds and spaces, of images and times; the eclectic postmodernity with its mixture of *collages* gives us the feeling of the "already seen and heard"; it brings us the comfort of recognition given by an "imaginary, symbolic museum", rich in accidental alterity, a variety of worlds of blurred locations. The fact that you are in New Orleans does not prevent you from feeling "close" to your original or former hometown, as we can see in the architectural work by Charles Moore, the "Piazza d'Italia" (**Plate 2**), already cited. In an area in need of redevelopment and inhabited by an Italian population, Charles Moore built a combination of Roman temple and modern architecture, a

collage of cultural and aesthetic references planted in the middle of their downtown area to approximate, to bring back the echoes of a distant tradition, to calm down the feeling of not belonging, of being in fact a live example of human *collage*. The same eclecticism that leads postmodernism to proclaim the death of the author makes us believe in the power of our own private museum and pay millions of dollars for a cookie jar that belonged to a famous artist (as it, in fact, happened some years ago when Andy Warhol's cookie-jar collection was auctioned) and turn our houses into a protected area against the rage of time-space compression. The concern and interest in possessing the artist's signature expresses a way of storing value, tradition, and building a personal or collective identity, an attempt to find secure social behaviors in a changing world. In this case, where history is treated and traded as merchandise, according to Harvey, the historical tradition is reorganized as a culture of museum, made of local history, in the way things were once made, sold, used and integrated in an everyday life for a long time lost and frequently romanticized – through the presentation of a partially delusional past, it becomes possible to give some meaning to the local identity, and perhaps with some profit.

Music and literature follow this same principle, presenting characters wandering through places and universes with which they cannot really identify or where they do not fit in, as we can see in Samuel Beckett's characters, whose lack of location becomes the great metaphor for the lack of understanding of who we are, in which space and time we are, and what we are supposed to do there, how we are supposed to live – which mask are we supposed to wear; which *collage* best represents us at that moment?

Still according to Harvey, in periods of confusion and uncertainty, the turn towards the aesthetics becomes more prominent; and, as phases of time-space compression are disruptive,

we can expect that the turning towards the aesthetics and the forces of culture will be particularly acute. After the 1970s, the experience of time and space changed, the faith in moral and scientific judgments was ruined, and the aesthetics triumphed over the ethics as a primary focus of intellectual and social concern; the images dominated the narratives, ephemeral and fragmentation prevailed over previously supposed eternal truths and unified politics. In this context, problems such as poverty and immigration lose their space and force as social issues to become merely aesthetic issues. Whereas the power of money prevails as a way of domination, the need to mobilize cultural creativity and aesthetic inventiveness rises, not only in the production of a cultural artifact but also in its promotion, packing and transformation into some successful spectacle. A process carried by what is known as cultural mass – another social extract added to the middle class, and who have become the big consumers of the postmodern society, as they build their postmodern sense of identity from the acquisition of all sorts of cultural products whose famous labels will offer them an idea of tradition which they may call theirs – in this process we can include fashion, nostalgia, pastiche, and even kitsch.

Super-accumulation; excess of complexity, but also simplification; information and visual stimuli; plurality of worlds, blurriness of frontiers between nations, cultures, languages; individualization, even when we talk about communities; schizophrenic flows: all these are expressions that may define postmodernism. However, there is also another approach to it – what Harvey calls "the progressivistic angle" of postmodernism. This approach accentuates the local and regional resistances, the social movements and respect for alterity as an attempt to extract at least an apprehensible world from the infinity of possible worlds daily shown to us on television. Actually, Raymond Williams understood postmodernism as a mask of deeper transformations of the culture of capitalism; transformations that had been occurring for a

while in the political economy, in the nature of the functions held by the State, in cultural practices, and in the dimension of time-space in which the social relations had to be evaluated (HARVEY, 2004, p. 320).

Regarding the postmodern space, F. Jameson (JAMESON apud HARVEY, 2004, p. 56v) expresses the symptoms of a new and historically original dilemma brought up by the so-called death of the Subject, i.e., by his schizophrenic fragmented dislocations. This dilemma is directly related to the new and complex space of international politics and economy, and it reflects the postmodern oscillation toward the meaning of space in cultural and political life. In this way, the postmodern space reveals itself to be not only a complex factor in the contemporary scenario but also a key element if we are to study any type of art expression. Through space, the labyrinth of dark corridors where our memory and imagination refuge will finally unfold the "immemorial memory", as Gaston Bachelard would say; and in doing so, maybe a new, deeper and more complex exit will rise and give us access to the author's immaterial universe – the actual aim of our research. Consequently, whether we follow a Marxist or any other sociological approach; whether we follow a literary, a philosophical or cultural approach, what we are going to face in analyzing postmodernity is in fact a not subtle process of cultural, political and economic collision which will create new dimensions of space, including the "in-between space" of locality, of the word, and even of time, as we will see in Beckett's work. According to Stuart Hall, we can see new space-time relations being defined in events as different as Einstein's theory of relativity, the Cubist paintings by Picasso and Braque, the Surrealist and Dadaist artwork, and even in the experiments with time and narrative in Marcel Proust's and James Joyce's works. As Harvey states, we can regard postmodernism as some kind of answer to a new ensemble of experiences of time and space, a new round of "time-space compression".

1.2. THE POSTMODERN SPACE IN ART

In *O Espaço Moderno,* Alberto Tassinari (2001) brings an important contribution to the understanding of the transformations suffered by postmodern art and its relation with modern art. In doing so, the author emphasizes the contemporary spaciousness as a way to understand the passage from one artistic period to another, especially the arousal of modernist art, as an anti-perspective and anti-spatial movement, from the opposition to Naturalism. According to Tassinari, opposing to the Renaissance concept of "reconstructing, not destroying", the main task of modernism was to destroy the naturalist spaciousness, and this process is directly connected to the concept of historical time, strongly vivid in modernism – modern turns into an adjective that means not only current but pregnant of future. Modernism aimed above all to anticipate a future not yet dominated – revolutionize, construct through destruction became the main characteristic of modern art and the consequence was an explosion of works and movements, marked by a long process of changes in the space relations within the painting, especially through the rupture with the concept of perspective, leading to what we see today as art. The contemporary artist works in a field full of possibilities, and it is through space that, despite keeping their peculiarities, reality and art permeate each other. Consequently, it makes the affirmation of a new concept of spaciousness possible which opposes Renaissance art, where a painting presents its forms as if it were from a transparent glass or a window, offering a perspective or retaining it, in the case of the glass. This new concept is symbolized by the 1956 artwork *Canvas* (**Plate 7**), by Jasper Johns who, according to Lois Oppenheim, amongst other artists, has investigated Beckett's texts as the focus of a process of "verbal figuration whose paradigm is, precisely, visualization – both to give form and texture to and celebrate an otherwise *in-visible* substance" (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 9). Actually, the relationship between Johns and Beckett goes beyond theory; he illustrated *Foirades/Fizzles* **(Plate 8)**, which consists of five prose fragments ["Foirades"]

written by Samuel Beckett in French in 1972, selected from his *Pour finir encore et autre foirades*, and rendered in English in 1974 to be illustrated by Johns – 57 pages [on double leaves] 13" x 10" of original thirty-three etchings which, except from the numerals that precede each of the five sections, were all reworked from the imagery already used in his previous painting *Untitled* (**Plate 9)**, from 1972, which consists of four unrelated panels forming a sort of modular whole, with no organic principle to order it, and open to any arrangement.[7]   In these works, Johns turns the Beckettian fragmented voices into concrete images of syntactic and semantic fragmentation through the repetition of images and motifs in parallel to the repetition present in the texts, besides using numbers to delude a sense of numerical sequence.

> Although Johns originally thought that he would incorporate Beckett's texts within his images, he ultimately decided to position the etchings to the left of, and sometimes above, Beckett's writings and to uniformly separate the French and English versions by double-page etchings. […] the obsessive repetition and interruptions that define the book's overall design undo any sense of linear continuity. John's decision to include both the French and English versions of the text, though not favored by Beckett ("I do not much like the bilingual setup, but would not oppose it if it pleases you"), creates a kind of theme and variations sequence (OPPENHEIM, 2003, 177).

According to Oppenheim (2003), Johns dismantles the objective world to reveal the struggle for individuation that defines both his own and Beckett's ontology, which at the same time reveals their remarkable likeness in aesthetic sensibility, since they still present a strong congruence of form and content, although the order of the etchings was mostly predetermined by Johns' earlier painting and not by the written texts. Yet, the iconography is

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[7] twenty-six lift ground aquatints (most with etching, soft ground etching, drypoint, screenprint and/or photogravure); five etchings (some with soft ground etching and/or drypoint); one soft ground etching and one aquatint; color lithographs for endpapers and box lining on Richard de Bas Auvergne paper; text pages hand printed, on handmade Richard de Bas Auvergne paper watermarked with the initials of Beckett and the signature of Johns, in a beige linen-covered solander box, with purple silk tassle, an internal case lining of color lithographs by Jasper Johns, with original interleaving tissues (PETERSBURG Press S.A.: London, 1976). Available at: <http://www.joshuahellerrarebooks.com/catalogues/32/9.html>. Site visited on March 13th 2009.

Plate 7: *Canvas* - Jasper Johns, 1956.
Encaustic and collage on wood and
canvas. 76 x 63 cm

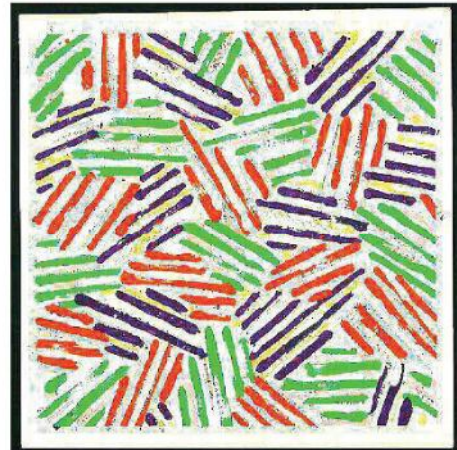Plate 8a: *Fizzles/Foirades* - Jasper Johns, 1974

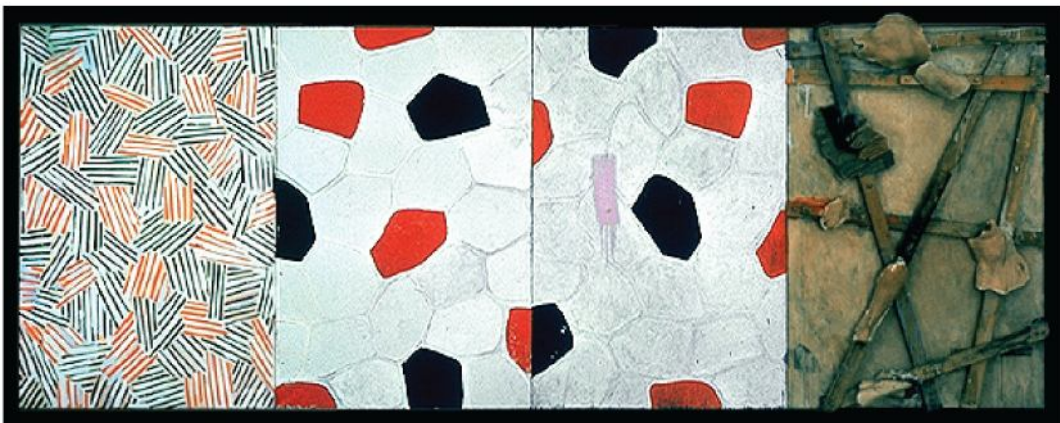Plate 8b: *Fizzles/Foirades* - Jasper Johns,
1974

Plate 9: Untitled - Jasper Johns, 1972. Oil, encaustic and collage on canvas with objects (four panels).
183 x 490 cm

clear: its dialectical form comes from repetition and distortion, echoes of previous texts and paintings, structuring the play on anonymity and individuation (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 180).

Actually, Johns' disruptive spatial process started much earlier. When he painted *Canvas*, a new way of seeing space in modern art arose, and since then it is not the frame what determines the relations between the space of the work and the outside anymore. The new space, however, was not configured alongside a theory as it had happened in the Renaissance space; it just constantly invents itself, and its only reference is the opposition to tradition. According to Tassinari, the passage from modernism to postmodernism happens through a complete opacity of the painting's surface, and this process can be clearly identified in the 1911 Cubism, with works such as *Céret [et Paris], autumne 1911*, by Georges Braque (**Plate 10**) which, although it is still a space at whose inside we look, it shows this openness and integration between form and its surroundings, a process of melting structures where what is solid seems to melt into space and what is open space seems to solidify – according to Argan (ARGAN, 1971, p. 514), a process of structural assimilation of thing and space. And it is this interruption in the contour of the object that allows the emergence to another spatial layer, another rupture in the delimitation of the artwork and its spaces: the *collage*. As it was previously mentioned, this seems to be the artifice that best represents postmodernism as a whole; not only in art, but in architecture, literature, and even sociologically and culturally speaking, if we accept the concept of liquidity brought by Zygmunt Bauman, and whose direct consequence is inevitably a *collage* of cultural, social and historical experiences, in order to create another paradigm for a world incapable of retaining its traditions. And this process of relocating space, started with Pablo Picasso's 1913 *Guitar* (**Plate 11),** has not stopped, as we can see in Jasper Johns' 1962 *Fool's House* (**Plate 12**), in which the *collage* does not only create new spaces, it also opens the painting to the outside by creating layers that stand out of the canvas. This process of relocation, transfiguration, of mirror image, of

Plate 10: *Les usines de Rio Tinto à l'Estaque* – George Braque, 1910. Oil on canvas, 54 x 65 cm
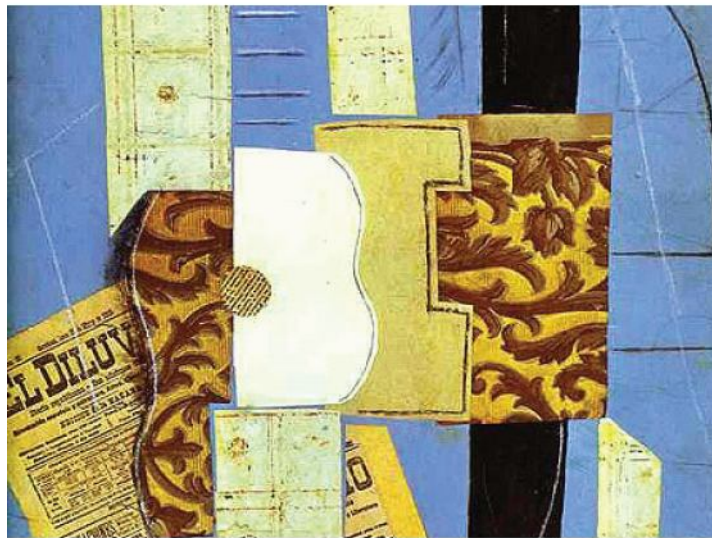

Plate 11: *Guitar* – Pablo Picasso, 1913. Pasted paper, charcoal, ink, and chalk on blue ragboard, 66.4 x 49.6 cm

Plate 12: *Fool's House* – Jasper Johns, 1962.
Oil on canvas with objects, 183 x 91 cm

dismantling the image, leads not much to the perception of a form, but to its imagination, as Tassinari states; a literal imagination in process that allows the spectator to enter the artist's space of imagination, as if the artwork were being created in front of them. Therefore, the space of the *collage* becomes a space where some artistic processes can be visualized by the spectator at the moment they are looking at the artwork, like in *Fool's House*, where it is possible to identify at least five actions by the artist: hanging, gluing, writing, indicating, and brushing; or in a more contemporary example, such as the artwork *Nexos* (2000) (**Plate 13)**, by Manuel da Costa, a series of abstract *collages* turned into photography, where it is possible to identify not only some of his actions, such as composing and gluing, but also imagine other steps of the poetic process, such as the artist walking at a local park and collecting objects that can even have belonged to us. Therefore, just like it has happened on a social and cultural level, also in the artistic field the *collage* has become the element that reflected and allowed the rupture of other levels of space in art, as much as it created a bridge between painting and sculpture which have had their contours re-delimited not by an object specifically but by its environment, which has become its complement. An example given by Tassinari is *Tilted Arc* **(Plate 14)***,* by Richard Serra, 1981, which allows different configurations of the "work-plaza" space, according to the angle it is observed – an artwork that represents a process, or we may say an evolution from a modern art concept defined by the author as the "manipulative space of art", a territory of making, a permanent work in progress, a "working-space", as Frank Stella would call it in his homonymous book of 1984 and which, despite not being in most cases incomplete, unfinished, is something that can be seen as still in process of becoming (TASSINARI, 2001, p.48). We can also think of other earlier examples of spatial rupture in contemporary art, such as the *happening* by Yves Klein at the Iris Clert's Gallery, (April 1958), titled *La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l'état matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée, Le Vide* (*The Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State into*

Plate 13: *Nexos* – Manuel da Costa, 2000 (dimensions not specified).

Plate 14: *Tilted Arc* – Richard Serra, 1981. Sculpture, steel, 366 x 3.751 x 6 cm

Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility, The Void). He removed everything in the gallery space except a large cabinet, all its surface painted white, and then staged an elaborate entrance procedure for the opening night. The gallery's window was painted blue, and a blue curtain was hung in the entrance lobby, accompanied by republican guards and blue cocktails. It is said that people would urinate a blue liquid, Yves Klein's monochrome IKB (International Klein Blue – **Plate 15**). Actually, in the documentary *Yves Klein The Blue Revolution,* the artist states that he had been mocked, treated like a lunatic instead of an artist; that people would not believe that he was able to think with his paintbrush – a perfect example of what is still happening in the space of contemporary art. The limits between types of art have been constantly over-crossed, and with the addition of technology we can have video dance concerts and festivals, in which a new choreography and storyline is created in studio via computer, producing a totally different result. We can also think of artists such as Laurie Anderson, for whom even the open label "performer" would be limiting, due to the variety of artistic tools and techniques of which she makes use, including poetry, graphic design, and many others. Consequently, even today, it is still not uncommon for us, spectators, to be faced with artworks that are visibly "in process of becoming" and, consequently, in process of being read and understood; not mentioning land art, which literally uses common urban spaces as its support, making it difficult to identify the space of artwork from the world's ordinary spaces. As an example, we think of one of Christo's latest performances, *The Gates* (**Plate 16***),* in Central Park, New York: 7,500 gates festooned with saffron-colored fabric panels, lining twenty-three miles of pedestrian paths from February 12th to 27th 2005, a project which had been rejected in 1981 for being considered a gross intrusion into the city's most important green space. Although dates had been informed through the media, the fact is that waking up early in the morning, going to the park for their usual jogging and finding it covered with fabric panels caused all sorts of reactions in the regular users of Central Park.
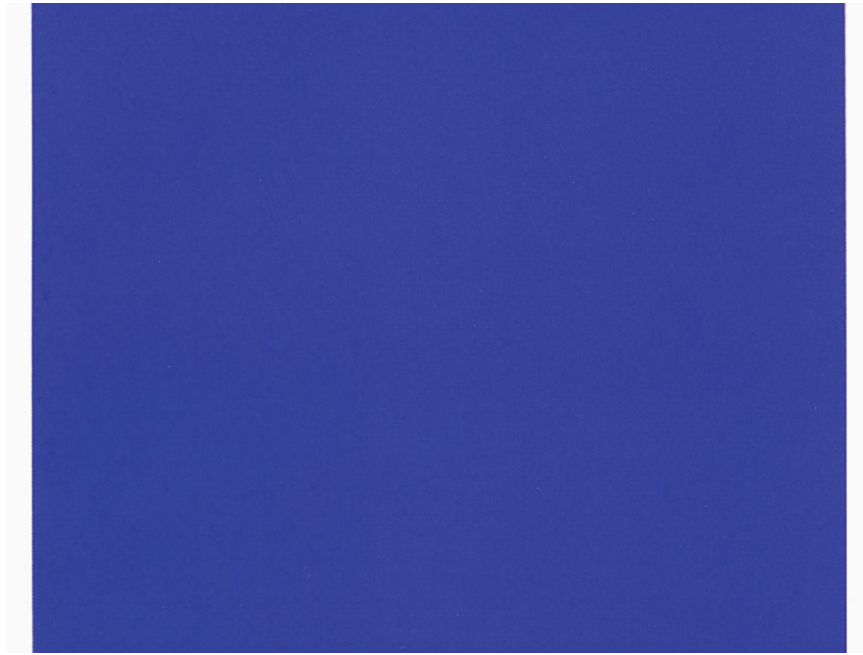
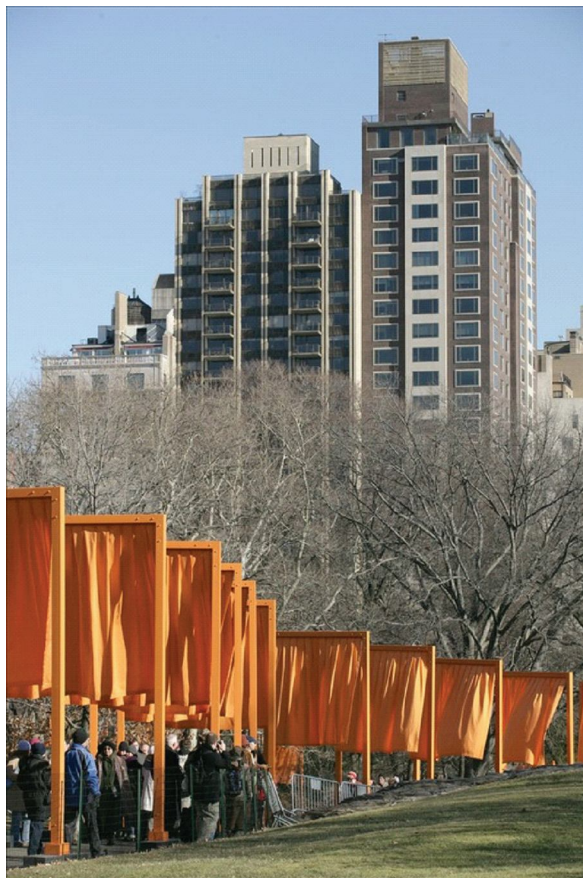Plate 15: *IKB 191* – Yves Klein, 1959

Plate 16: *The Gates* – Christo and Jeanne-Claude, 2005

> The modern culture is a secular culture, and it is only within it that the artistic dimension gains autonomy. Autonomy which, however, is at risk when the space of a painting or sculpture – we can think of *Fool's House* or *Tilted Arc* – does not clearly separate from the ordinary world. (TASSINARI, 2001, p. 55)[8]

Therefore, the contemporary need to conceptualize space comes from this lack of distinction between the artwork and the other things within a common space, which are its surroundings. What differentiates the 'working space", according to the author, is actually the idea of imitation – a "working space" imitates the process of making the artwork, becoming the imitating space, whereas the actual making of the work becomes the imitated one, and what is exposed in the artwork are the similarities that articulate them in signals, peculiar to the process of construction of the "working space", a process that can be linguistic or not – this is what we see in *Fool's House,* by Johns. The limitations of what can be or not present in a "working space" depend only on the ability of expressing the signals of their making in that space. A "working space" is an exterior inside an exterior, says Tassinari; consequently, the spaciousness of the artwork gets an aspect of a practical space, a space of chores; what we see in the contemporary space is the art of its execution, like a speaker in process of learning a new language. "Within a space under work a unique way of making art is imitated, in which some specific work exposes itself as if in process while it imitates its own making" (2001, p. 61).[9] In fact, these modern theories of the artistic creation base the artisticity of the works on their process of construction, instead of in the work itself. As it is stated by Tassinari, the communication promoted by a "working space" between the world space and the space of the artwork is something entirely new in the history of western art. The space of the common world starts to take over functions which were previously limited to the space of the artwork

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[8] A cultura moderna é uma cultura secular, e é só no interior desta que a dimensão artística ganha autonomia. Autonomia, entretanto, que está em risco quando o espaço de uma pintura ou uma escultura – pense-se em *Fool's House* ou em *Arco Inclinado* – não se separa com nitidez do espaço do mundo em comum.

[9] "Num espaço em obra fica imitado um modo singular de se fazer arte, no qual determinada obra expõe-se como em se fazendo na medida em que imita o seu fazer" (2001, p. 61).

(2001, p. 75). However, contemporary artwork does not transform the world into art but, on the contrary, requires the participation of space of the common world to configure itself in order to emerge as art, making possible that an ordinary object awakes aesthetic experiences – Duchamp's *readymade* (**Plate 17)** brings examples of this process of space integration, which ends up bringing to the artwork new meanings, for the work's spatial frame does not separate it from the ordinary world anymore. For Duchamp, "the distinction between the work of art and an ordinary thing of the world is not one of aperception. The difference cannot be apprehended visually (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 91)", an idea that is shared by Beckett, who stated that art is "uniquely self-pervaded" and "not to be clarified in any other light" but its own (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 91).

> Of course a painting exists only in the eye of the beholder; but Duchamp wanted his creations to exist without any help whatsoever; he began by making copies in marble of sugar cubes… then it was enough to buy plates and glasses and sign them. Finally he had no other choice but to fold his hands in his lap (GIACOMETTI apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 155).

"There is no solution because there is no problem" (DUCHAMP apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 93). "There is no key or problem. I wouldn't have had any reason to write my novels if I could have expressed their subject in philosophic terms" (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 96). What we are facing is poetics of the world in common, which favors the arousal of procedures that admit a large variety of what may, many times, be shocking visual appearances, such as the use of unusual materials mixed with traditional ones or unusual supports, as much as a blur among the territorial limits of the artistic genders; and we may add, a change in the relationship between the spectator and the artwork.
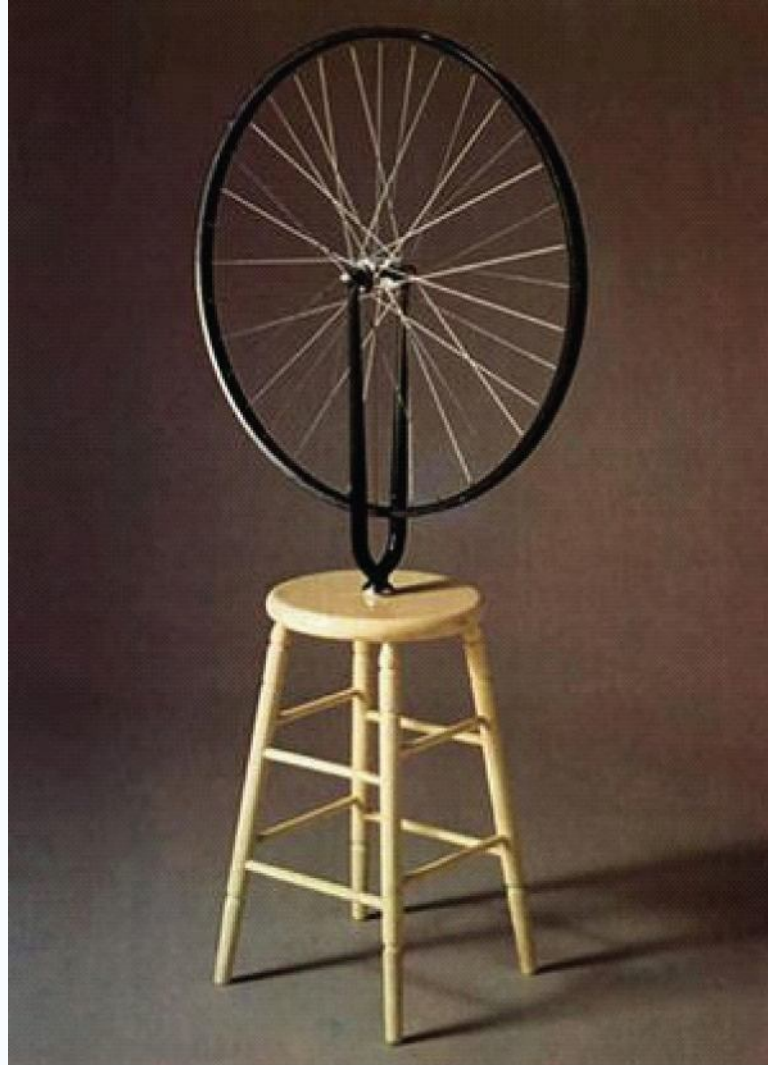
Plate 17: *Bicycle Wheel* – Marcel Duchamp, 1913. Bicycle wheel and stool, 126.5 cm high

> If the experience is intense or, in this case, aesthetic, the spectator feels themselves sharing with the work an intersubjective space in which their eye and their self do not control the situation – they are set by the work at the same time that they lean over it. What the work communicates, then, happens in an intersubjective space. (TASSINARI, 2001, p.145) [10]

It is in this direction that this proposal moves, through the construction of and reflection about a type of space that in postmodernity has been filled and emptied in innumerous ways, as if in a mere exercise of investigation about the limits of its own freedom. Modern space rises as a territory of "making" – we might even say of "making itself". In Johns' *Canvas*, the frame reveals itself defeated, subjected to a space that defines itself as included: now, the external space is inside and its limits will depend on other variants. In *Canvas*, the dimensions still follow a conventional pattern (76x63cm), which reinforces the rupture even more. But, what if that frame, traditionally limiting, fixing, works just as a border inside which space is not fixed anymore, but on the contrary, it constantly transforms itself by the intervention of the spectator? If we accept the concept of contemporary art as a space of "making", we cannot ignore the role of the spectator to answer such questions, keeping in mind that this role transcends the space of art, as we can see from the concept of "Tranformational Object" suggested by the American psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas. For the author this Object has its matrix in early childhood, due to the prematurity of human birth, as the mother serves as a supplementary ego for the infant, altering and facilitating the environment in order to guarantee the baby's survival and full development. Consequently, the mother will also transmit to the infant, through her own particular idiom of mothering, an aesthetic of being that becomes a feature of the infant's self.

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[10] Se a experiência é intensa, ou, no caso, estética, o espectador se sente compartilhando com a obra um espaço intersubjetivo em que seu olhar e seu eu não são senhores da situação – são postos pela obra ao mesmo tempo que sobre ela se debruçam. O que a obra então comunica acontece num espaço intersubjetivo.

> The mother's way of holding the infant, of responding, of selecting objects, of perceiving the infant's internal needs, constitutes the 'culture' she creates for herself and her infant, a private culture that can only be inhabited by the two—mother and child—composed of a language of highly idiomatic syntaxes of gestures, sound, pattern and mood that insures its privacy, and emphasizes the sequestered ambience of this first relation (BOLLAS,1979). The Transformational Object. Int. J. Psycho-Anal., 60:97-107>.

Throughout our lives, we will search for new Transformational Objects, which may be inside or outside us, or in intermediary spaces. And, José Outeiral (2002, Apresentação) states that many of these Objects that become part of our lives will be found in artistic manifestations; they will surround us in the form of music, painting, poetry, sculpture, architecture, and literature, or in any other phenomenon by which we feel touched and understood by someone whom we do not even know. In the same line, Donald Meltzer (MELTZER apud OUTEIRAL, 2002, Apresentação) says that the aesthetic impact refers to a pre-verbal communication in which there is a massive affective content, common to our most precocious experiences. And it is in such experiences that we encounter beauty as newborns, when we first open our eyes and gaze at our mother's face and body – for many, an invasive, overwhelming sight that evokes powerful impulses. The appreciation of an artwork, in fact, opens in us a straight channel of communication with those experiences, awakening in us a feeling of "familiarity", restoring in us the certainty of "being home", despite all the strangeness we might face in the world (OUTEIRAL, 2002, Apresentação).

According to Jacques Aumont (1999, p. 81), the role of the spectator is extremely active; they are the ones who "make" the image, for they can even totally or partially invent the artwork – the image is directly related to imagination, which, on the other hand, is related to the perceptive schemata that are similar to bone-structures, a structural knowledge that we have of the object designed. In reality, the perceptive schemata form an instrument of remembrance that carries a cognitive and didactic aspect; it is not absolute, it evolves and

sometimes even disappears. And, if we speak about remembrance, we also have to speak about recognition and the pleasure that results from the fact of "meeting again" a visual experience in an image in a repetitive, condensed and controllable way. To recognize something in an image means identifying something in it that we see or can see in real life. There is no fortuitous looking; visual perception is a process that implies a system of expectations and, consequently, of hypotheses, verification or annihilation of some former schemata. "Seeing can only mean to compare what we expect to the message that our sight receives (GOMBRICH apud AUMONT, 1999, p. 86)".[11]

Aumont says that, once they make their previous knowledge intervene, the spectators of the image supply the non-represented, turning their action projective – we tend to identify things in an image as long as there is a form that slightly looks like something we already have in our schemata. These schemata give us what Gombrich calls "perceptive constancy", which is the foundation of our visual apprehension of the world, since they hold the totality of the stabilizing tendencies that prevent us from getting dizzy in a world of floating appearances. The work of recognition, says Aumont, activates not only the elementary properties of the visual system, but also codification abilities rather abstract – it is not a matter of identifying an image point by point, but finding visual invariants already structured, like in the case of a caricature where what is represented is precisely this group of invariant visual characteristics that will function as index of recognition. Therefore, the spectator constructs the image as much as the image constructs the spectator, turning them into an emotional and cognitive "active" partner of the image. That is the reason, according to the author, for the development and permanence of representative art, naturalistic or not: the psychological satisfaction originated from "meeting again" a visual experience in an image, in a repetitive,

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[11] Ver só pode ser comparar o que esperamos à mensagem que o nosso aparelho visual recebe.

condensed and controllable way. The recognition which the artistic image offers encounters also the spectator's expectations, which can transform them or generate other expectations; recognition, says Aumont, is connected to remembrance, and once the spectator makes their previous knowledge intervene upon the image, they supply the non-represented. This projective participation of the spectator occurs in all sorts of images, be it a realistic scene, or a black-and-white image, or even an abstract artwork, in order to fulfill the missing or hidden parts of the represented objects. For example, when we look at a real scene or an artwork painted in perspective, the latter is in fact in our vision, which overcomes its ambiguities by activating previous indexes, especially previous schemata. Consequently, the image is, from the standpoint of its author and its spectator as well, a phenomenon linked also to imagination; actually, the spectator can even invent the painting totally or partially.

As Adauto Novaes stated in the colloquium "The Invisible and the Body", held in Porto Alegre in 2001, the invisible is the condition for the creation of the artwork and the works of thought; the invisible is the other side of a presence, a condition to visibility. And Beckett, especially in his late works, virtuosistically plays with these concepts, twisting them until absolute strangeness encounters the spectator – sounds contradicting images; images opposing visual schemata; an inconsistency that continually undermines the possibility of figurative coherence, despite all the artistic references that populate the play's surface. Objects and subjects in Beckett function in gestalt; everything is seen as a whole, there is no separateness among them, and the world becomes a unity of the space where his characters can be whole and nothing, everyone and no one. In this regard, Oppenheim (2003, p. 130) observes: "Recognition of self and others, and all the object paraphernalia that Beckett brings into play in this regard […] place significant stress on figuration as the giving of determinate form."

The subject-object/ego-world relation is an entrapment in Beckett's 'theater-real' and 'prose-real' world. And art, as imaged in the text, is a metaphor both of that confinement and the effort to escape (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 164).

And Beckett himself, in the "observer's equation of the verbs *to know* and *to say*" states that "All needed to be known for say is known. There is nothing but what is said. Beyond what is said there is nothing" (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 165). As Oppenheim (2003, p. 165) points out, "Beckett verbalizes typography in 'dark and bright', the 'almost touching' black letters on the white page where 'no two ever meet'. In the text, in sum, there is no more than literally meets the eye".

Actually, this process of interaction involving author, image, and spectator is not recent, and can be seen especially in Impressionism, which, besides being considered the first interactive art (the work completes itself in the spectator's retina), when of its emergence, was also considered by many – laymen and art critics – the first landmark of the "end of art". In this regard, we follow the same streamline as Lois Oppenheim (2003, p. 45), for whom the "end" represents, as stated by Hegel and Danto, a perpetuation of the making of art beyond the completion of art's history, which means that there is a post-historical production of art, not that there are no more artworks. "The 'end' represents the kind of work that took place in response to its own self-consciousness", and in order to understand the process which led us into the depth of the shock that we still experiment in relation to contemporary art, and especially the lack of delimitation of its space, it is necessary to trace back some concepts present in the art of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

In the Middle Ages, it was considered art what presented technical quality, although still lacking the status of artwork, once it was made by craftsmen who worked for the State

and with no freedom to create. In the Renaissance, art and science united, and the first artists consecrated as intellectuals arose – among others, the genius of Leonardo Da Vinci. Art started being understood as an intellectual production whose theme also became important; it is the moment when Neo-Platonism rose, carrying within the concept of art as knowledge.

When we reached the 16th century, the critics began to care more about the creative idea; manner, taste, style became important and individualized elements, leading Mannerism and Baroque to release art from mimesis – it was the moment when art dissociated from science and, consequently, there was a separation between art and nature (science's object of knowledge). This rupture in fact represented a preparation for the technical art of the 19th century, with the advent of photography and cinema, besides all the *isms,* such as: Impressionism, as it was mentioned above; Expressionism, which aimed to express the psyche's subjective reality (e.g., *The Scream,* by Edvard Munch – **Plate 18**); Surrealism, which criticized the so-called objective reality, denying any logics or rationality and making evident an omnirical and unreal view of the world; Minimalism and Concrete Art, which researched the systematic and planned relation of the composition. In fact, the 19th century revealed itself as the great crucible where old and new languages mixed, many times crashed, causing a serious rupture in the concept of art. The Renaissance concept was altered by Romanticism, which embodied the expression of feelings, including nationalist ones, besides the search for gestuality (e.g., Goya, Delacroix – **Plates 19 and 20**), and this emphasis on a sentimental interpretation ended up causing a pictorial rupture and generating the upcoming of the smudge. A poetics of evasion started then, also as a consequence of the political-cultural situation of that time, and it frequently turned into practice of evasion. Becoming *wild* was a way to evade from a bourgeois world for which many intellectuals did not see a way out. Gauguin's Post-Impressionism, with the series *Tahitians* (**Plate 21**)*,* launched the basis

that opened the aesthetics of the 20th century – it raised here a political aspect through a new pictorial approach: colorism.

In the midst of the shock produced by the encounter of those various concepts, some nostalgia, and some willingness to preserve the old canons, we were thrown into a century signed by the desire for evasion and by ruptures. The twentieth century, initially with Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso, carries the concept of art as experimentation. Actually, Pablo Picasso's artwork *Mademoiselles d'Avignon* (**Plate 22**) is considered the first artistic document that totally breaks with the Renaissance tradition, besides representing the opening factor of the Cubist movement, proposing a deeper thinking about the destructuralization of the artistic making, in which color becomes the representation of the human condition (e.g., blue = pain, misery).

Especially after World War II, the avant-garde becomes official; visual art starts to be seen as a market system, incorporated by media and mass communication; it starts to be seen as an aesthetic adaptation. It is the moment of the individual mythologies – the artistic action is disconnected from groups and ideologies – and a lack of strong criteria to define what art is starts to be felt. Memory becomes one of the most contradictory issues in art. The times also bring a shift of the center of the art market from Paris to New York, where artistic marketing in grand scale is used for the first time– *Life* magazine presents Jackson Pollock as the great American painter (**Plate 23**). Later on, the 1970s will bring the dematerialization of the
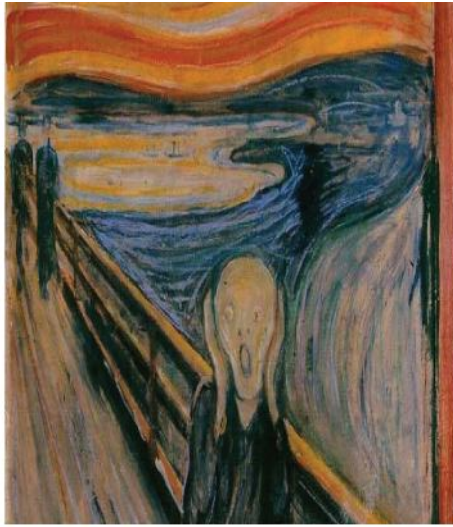
Plate 18: *The Sream* – Edvard Munch, 1893. Oil, tempera, and pastel on cardboard, 91 x 73.5 cm

Plate 19: *Men Reading* – Goya, 1820-23. Oil on gesso, 125.9 x 66.04 cm

Plate 20: *Cleopatra and the Peasant* – Eugene Delacroix, 1838. Oil on canvas, 123 x 97.99 cm.

artwork, with the refusal of traditional supports, making use of ephemeral and uncommon supports; it is the time of the emergence of performances, installations, happenings, ephemeral art, land art, *arte povera,* etc. Furthermore, there is also a dematerialization of utopias and ideologies, with the appropriation and vulgarization of cultural facts and images (e.g., Stalin and Mao Tse Tung's portraits on clothes – **Plate 24**). Therefore, modernity's political dematerialization of history and social movements happens through art. The Biennale of art and the museum become shopping malls of sorts and the artwork carries the traits of its time: permanent update, fixation in the present and the dematerialization of any effort for preservation and memory.

This process of transformation that started in the Renaissance and had its milestone in the nineteenth century is what we still face today with much broader effects in all sorts of visual expressions, not only in painting but in architecture, literature and theater as well. We still feel the shock between the concept of beauty and art, still attached to the Renaissance canons, against a process of dematerialization and derangement, and although over a century since its beginning has elapsed, it still finds resistance, difficulties of understanding and acceptance from an audience that, in an attempt to interpret, makes use of concepts that do not find significance in the postmodern work. And, as it could be expected within the contemporary scenario, the theater becomes the space that materializes this crisis, this blur between artistic territories, as we can see in the play *Museum,* by Tina Howe (1979): through the contrast of art concepts and styles and varied spectators, Tina Howe presents a panorama of contemporary art and the crisis lived by the spectator when facing what nowadays has been conventionally called artwork. Having as its scenery a big American museum, which holds in its many rooms different artistic tendencies, through the many visitors that pass by we are invited to live the experience of a contemporary art exhibition, characterized by all sorts of

Plate 21: *Tahitian Women* – Paul Gauguin, 1891. Oil on canvas, 69 x 91 cm

Plate 22: *Mademoiselles d'Avignon* – Pablo Picasso, 1907. Oil on canvas, 243.9 x 233.7cm

Plate 23: *Autumn Rhythm N° 30* – Jackson Pollock, 1950. Oil on canvas, 270 x 538 cm

surprises and/or contradictions: the museum space, which had previously been a temple of silent and lonely contemplation, receives an exhibition entitled *The Broken Silence,* which even in its last day still provokes all sorts of noises and reactions not only from the public but from the guards responsible for the museum. *The Broken Silence* becomes the great space of unveiling, questioning and, many times, criticizing through satire an art concept that actually, as it was mentioned above, had its first milestone in the 19th century.

Contextualized in the 1980s, Museum throws us into the same state of derangement, inadequacy not only in regard to the contemporary artwork but also in regard to the museum space. In front of us parade characters defined as serious museum goers, laughing adolescents, indifferent tourists who prefer the souvenir shop, the artist's friends, people searching for objects to decorate their houses, people who reveal some discomfort, some nervousness just for being in a museum. And since the first pages we have a meaningful reference: by the author's suggestion, the audience should be encouraged to walk through the exhibition before the play starts.   The silence must be broken, in the first place, by the audience, a fact which puts us in the presence of an art concept that for many people is the cause of discomfort and embarrassment still today: interactivity.   Soon after, a voice which shall be a mix between journalistic and divine announces a violent attack to Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, followed by the declaration of the Galleria degli Uffizi's director stating that it had been the most violent attack ever occurred against Renaissance art, and that restoration would be impossible. This is how we are introduced to the universe of another supposed temple – the contemporary museum – which, for our surprise, has as its guardian someone as inappropriate and incomprehensible in his attitudes as the artworks he is supposed to protect: at the same time that he asks the visitors to be silent, sometimes yelling at them, suddenly he starts dancing, tap-dancing, singing. Every visitor that enters the gallery represents some kind of

Plate 24: *Mao n° 2 – Pop Art*

rupture, and situations, apparently trite, end up provoking a variety of ruptures in the aura of the museum: besides being an excuse to bring about references (or criticism) to contemporary art, especially in the 1980s, with its installations and performances: "The Guard: I`ve caught men exposing their genitals in this room! Certain shows… inspire that!" (HOWE, p. 15). This may be a reference to Francis Picabia's *Nature Morte*, an artwork consisting of a monkey-doll masturbating.   It is this process of transformation that Tina Howe presents through the fictitious work by Steve Williams, whose installation ends totally destroyed by the public; through the four gigantic and totally identical white canvases by Zachery Moe, a reference to Henri Matisse; and also through Agnes Vaag's installation, defined by the guard as "heard music". Moreover, Chloe Trapp, the exhibition's curator who elaborates a visual poetics, that is, a rational reflection on the artistic process so that a bridge can be built between artwork and spectator, states that the work by Zachery Moe is what there is of most meaningful since Henri Matisse[12]. The work by Agnes Vaag, on the other hand, brings clear references to ephemeral art: on page 46, Chloe Trapp once more explains that all the material used by the artist had been found; on the same page, another character, Tink Solheim, a friend of the artist's, says that her Studio is always full of exotic things – fish skeletons, animal beaks and paws, etc. – an explicit reference to *arte povera*[13].

In this regard, Arlindo Machado (MACHADO, 1993) states that it is impossible to judge or classify contemporary art with concepts such as "emotion" and "inspiration", which were created to explain modernity. They must be replaced by "configuration" and "structure", for postmodernity means interactions of languages, multitextuality, which approximates the artistic fields in such way that sometimes it becomes impossible to know whether we are

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[12] It is also possible to identify a reference to *White Square,* by Malevich, as much as an indirect reference to the technique used by Jackson Pollock: "dripping".

[13] Although it became more frequent in the 1980s, in the first years of the 20th century there were already manifestations of this kind of art: in the 1920s, for example, Max Jacob made children's paintings with physiological matter to sell to tourists (DE MICHELI, 1991, p. 58).

facing a painting or a sculpture, or even if we are facing an artwork at all. In this process, the bridges that make the communication between work and spectator possible disappear and the only way to rescue them seems to be through the construction of a theoretical discourse capable of explaining the artistic procedures, making them comprehensible to the audience.

According to Cristina Costa (COSTA, 1998, p. 53), these are the characteristics of postmodernity: rupture of the integration between idea and realization; that is, the authorship becomes an issue in contemporary art and the artist misappropriates themselves from the materiality of their own work – once the work exists, it does not belong exclusively to its author anymore; this is what happens with all sorts of appropriations/re-readings made possible through the internet. The investigation of new languages also generates a great change, which will cause the desecration of art, since it starts to incorporate materials and concepts that were not considered artistic before, as for example, the use of scrap, garbage, physiological material, etc, as we can see in artworks by Jasper Johns, who put an old broom on canvas, creating the concept of combination between bi and tridimensional; or Andy Warhol who, in the 1980s, created an abstract series made of aluminum plates on top of which he urinated. Experimental art becomes more concerned with the process than the result and, consequently, poetics becomes more important than poetry; the pleasure, which used to come from the contemplation of beauty, now is more connected to the textual comprehension of the work: reading about the artwork brings more pleasure than the work itself; that is, the discourse is worthier than the artwork. Today, the concepts are forged, the artist throws the responsibility of poetry over the observer; and then, it is up to the historian to take the task to explain, unveil the artwork, re-approximating the spectator. This role is taken by the curators when they elaborate a visual poetics for the artwork – the bridge between the space of contemporary art and a spectator who still today sees the object of art with unfamiliarity.

Ambiguity has become a permanent presence in contemporary art, and challenges perception in a process of veiling-unveiling the multiple layers of the artwork. As Beckett states about the brothers van Velde: "An endless unveiling, veil under veil, level upon level of imperfect transparencies, an unveiling towards the non-unveilable?" He goes further saying that

> To force the fundamental invisibility of exterior things till the very invisibility becomes itself a thing, not just awareness of limits, but a thing that can be seen and make seen […] on the canvas, this is a work of diabolical complexity and which requires a skill of extreme versatility and levity, a skill which insinuates more than it affirms, which is positive only with the transient and incidental proof of the great positive, the only positive, time that carts away (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p.105).

"In his dreams he had been warned against this change" (**OI**). What we have in contemporary art is also what we see in Beckett's work: subordination to the senses, and more specifically to the eye, which is the way of communication between the character/spectator's inner and outer worlds; modes of perception and their changeability; a "painterly" use of the word (the expression is Oppenheim's); direct and indirect or superposed references to art: these constitute the ground zero, the transforming space on which our experience as reader-spectators will be built. And in this regard, Merleau-Ponty (1961) observes that contemporary space is a space whose degree zero of spatiality starts from the observer's body. To understand this process "we must go back to the working, actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement." In this way, following the same line as Merleau-Ponty, Oppenheim states that the artwork does not exist as object but "agent" of both artist and spectator's seeing. The body itself is seen as a work of art, a "nexus of lived meanings" (MERLEAU-PONTY apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 106). Meanings that will be touchable, altered by other things and their own expressions through a changeable "agent", intertwined with silence or invisibility, and in this way this work of art will inevitably fail to represent its own full history. Beckett

himself in *Three Dialogues* refers to the history of painting as the history of its own attempts to escape from this sense of failure toward completeness, despite the endless possibilities of expression that the postmodern space offers to the artists and the artwork. "[…] my shade will comfort you" (**OI**). Transparency seems to be the weapon to resist failure that silence and invisibility turn evident, since it is the hole through which the eye can perceive and apprehend a fragment of reality. Yet, like in **OI**, vision, seeing the already known, does not bring comfort; it will come from unfamiliarity; it is the unfamiliar scene that will carry the hope of an un-failed completeness – completeness of the self, of expressing oneself and even of silencing oneself.

> I think I perhaps have freed myself from certain formal concepts. Perhaps like the composer Schoenberg or the painter Kandinsky, I have turned toward an abstract language. Unlike them, however, I have tried not to concretize the abstraction – not to give it yet another formal context (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 126).

As Fabio de Souza Andrade states, in Beckett's work there is an absolute refusal of the concept of novel as movement, action that feeds itself from characters struggling against external adverse circumstances. Beckett's fiction institutes a new order of realism that reconstructs through language the failure of the bourgeois subject, the dissolution of the individuals as the source of reflection, lost in a "mattered" world. The peculiarities of Beckett's syntax and style sum up to this paradox: in a world deprived of immanent meaning, departing from a subject who is emptied of reflective ability, it is necessary to elaborate significative forms, which are at the same time denouncement and copy of this state (ANDRADE, 2001, p. 31).

> To bore one hole after another in [language], until what lurks behind it – be it something or nothing – begins to seep through; I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2001, p. 113).

Through not concretizing the abstraction, as Beckett states in a letter to Axel Kaun in 1937, he ends up creating a multilayer *collage* of all sources of references – not only pictorial but literary as well – that will be peeled off by the observer who, by taking off layer by layer, "decreates" the author's "decreative" process, leaving the word with its nudity and strangeness uncovered.

2. *OHIO IMPROMPTU,* BY SAMUEL BECKETT

L = *Listener*
R = *Reader*

Light on table midstage. Rest of stage in darkness. Plain white deal table, say 8' x 4'. Two plain armless white deal chairs.

L *seated at table facing front towards end of long side audience right. Bowed head propped on right hand. Face hidden. Left hand on table. Long black coat. Long white hair.*

R *seated at table in profile centre of short side audience right. Bowed head propped on the right hand. Left hand on table. Book on table before him open at last pages. Long black coat. Long white hair.*

Black wide-brimmed hat at centre of table.

Fade up.

Ten seconds.

R *turns page.*
Pause.

R *(reading):* Little is left to tell. In a last –

L *knocks with left hand on table.*

Little is left to tell.

Pause. Knock.

In a last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they had been so long together to a single room on the far bank. From its single window he could see the downstream extremity of the Isle of Swans.

Pause.

Relief he had hoped would flow from unfamiliarity. Unfamiliar room. Unfamiliar scene. Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared. From this he had once half hoped some measure of relief might flow.

Pause.

Day after day he could be seen slowly pacing the islet. Hour after hour. In his long black coat no matter what the weather and old world Latin Quarter hat. At the tip he would always pause to dwell on the receding stream. How in joyous eddies its two arms conflowed and flowed united on. Then turn and his slow steps retrace.

Pause.

In his dreams –

Knock.

Then turn and his slow steps retrace.

Pause. Knock.

In his dreams he had been warned against this change. Seen the dear face and heard the unspoken words. Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you.

Pause.

Could he not –

Knock.

Seen the dear face and heard the unspoken words. Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you.

Pause. Knock.

Could he not now turn back? Acknowledge his error and return to where they were once so long alone together. Alone together so much shared. No. What he had done alone could not be undone. Nothing he had ever done alone could ever be undone. By him alone.

Pause.

In this extremity his old terror of night laid hold on him again. After so long a lapse that as if never been. *(Pause. Looks closer)* Yes, after so long a lapse that as if never been. Now with redoubled force the fearful symptoms described at length page forty paragraph four. *(Starts to turn back the pages. Checked by* **L'***sleft hand. Resumes relinquished page.)* white nights now again his portion. As when his heart was young. No sleep no braving sleep till – *(turns page)* – dawn of day.

Pause.

Little is left to tell. One night –

Knock.

Little is left to tell.

Pause. Knock.

One night as he sat trembling head in hands from head to foot a man appeared to him and said, I have been sent by – and here he named the dear name – to comfort you. Then drawing a worn volume from the pocket of his long black coat he sat and read till dawn. Then disappeared without a word.

Pause.

Some time later he appeared again at the same hour with the same volume and this time without preamble sat and read it through again the long night through. Then disappeared without a word.

Pause.

So from time to time unheralded he would appear to read the sad tale through again and the long night away. Then disappear without a word.

Pause.

With never a word exchanged they grew to be as one.

Pause.

Till the night came at last when having closed the book and dawn at hand he did not disappear but sat on without a word.

Pause.

Finally he said, I have had word from – and here he named the dear name – that I shall not come again. I saw the dear face and heard the unspoken words, No need to go to him again, even were it in your power.

Pause.

So the sad –

Knock.

Saw the dear face and heard the unspoken words, No need to go to him again, even were it in your power.

Pause.

So the sad tale a last time told they sat on as though turned to stone. Through the single window dawn shed no light. From the street no sound of reawakening. Or was it that buried in who knows what thoughts they paid no heed? To light of day. To sound of reawakening. What thoughts who knows. Thoughts, no, not thoughts. Profounds of mind. Buried in who knows what profounds of mind. Of mindlessness. Whither no light can reach. No sound. So sat on as though turned to stone. The sad tale a last time told.

Pause.

Nothing is left to tell.
Pause. **R** *makes to close book.*

Knock. Book half-closed.

Nothing is left to tell.

Pause. **R** *closes book.*

Knock.

Silence. Five seconds.

Simultaneously they lower their right hands to table, raise their heads and look at each other. Unblinking. Expressionless.

Ten seconds.

Fade out.

2.1. THE "TRAGIC" POSTMODERN TIME-SPACE IN *OHIO IMPROMPTU*

"Synergy of archaism and technological development", this is to Michel Maffesoli (2003, p.10) the only temporary definition capable of giving account of postmodernity and all the musical, linguistic, corporeal, religious, medical and other phenomena that once again dedicate a special attention to nature, to the primitive, to the barbarian. The author states that *hard rock*, in all its versions, the decadent style in painting or dressing, or the present

nomadism translate the return of the barbaric to our walls, which means the fragmentation of the policed universe, patiently ordered by three centuries of modernity. The "tragic feeling of life" is back in the postmodern society – a "deafening non-said"; something that is empirically experienced in everyday life. According to the author, with the tragic sensibility, time immobilizes or at least gets slower, and whereas speed had been the mark of modern drama, today we see the dawn of an elegy to slowness, including idling – a passage from a monochromatic, linear, safe time (the time of history) to a polychromatic, essentially tragic, presenteist time (the "spiral of destiny"). In Maffesoli's opinion, the most significant change of paradigm is precisely the change from an "ego centered" to a "*locus* centered" conception of the world. In the postmodern tragic, there is a concern with "interity", which induces to the loss of the small Self into a vaster Self – the essential mark of this tragic feeling of life is actually the recognition of a logic of conjunction (and…and), as presented by Winnicott, more than a logic of disjunction (or…or), what the author calls an "omnipresent viscosity" that contaminates everyone and every situation. The spirit of time pushes the others towards those who until then were closed in the distant loneliness of their identities; in the "and…and" logic, there is always a festival, a parade, or even a strike of gigantic proportions in which our lonely identity can melt. He even points out the possibility that, instead of work, with its crucifying aspect, the ludicrousness with its creative dimension may be the new cultural paradigm. The tragic is here understood as intensity, as multiple effervescence, as all sorts of trembling, unnamable anomies, and different nomadisms; the feeling of tragic-ludicrous, as collective unconscious, strongly returns in ordinary life which regains force and vigor – a new youth of the eternal child. And, as we do not have a project anymore, for true life has no project, we remain with the impression of inanity of a life that consumes itself in the act of its own creation. For Maffesoli, we are once more entering the time of myth; and the *re-enchantment* of the world comes from the conjunction of the fairytale knight and laser. This

conjunction leads us to see a hedonic aspect of the contemporary tragic – the culture of pleasure flows with the tragic consciousness of destiny. According to the author, even the ordinary theatricality, the search for the superfluous and frivolous, the body worship, are but the expression of such tragic consciousness – the tragic forces us to think of the paradox that life might not be worthy but also that nothing is worthier than life. Maffesoli states that the culture of pleasure, the feeling of tragic, the confrontation of destiny, are all cause and effect of an "ethics of the instant", situations that exhaust themselves in the act itself which cannot be projected into a predictable future nor can be controlled by will. This is the ethics of the instant that we find in **OI,** the simple reference to the story, its remembrance is enough to exhaust its existence in time and space; the story cannot be told, the dear name cannot be said. Words must be kept unspoken in order to keep their existence, for they cannot be controlled by will, and the characters are aware of that impossibility to avoid change, as much as we, spectators, are constantly warned about it. The future, or a possibility of it, can be just foreseen as a game of shadows within which we can easily, if not only, get lost – that is the confrontation which we must face in the Beckettian time, in the paused unrevealing reading time of **OI**. As Fabio de Souza Andrade (2001) points out, the complicating element in Beckett's narrative is precisely the confession of insufficiency, the feeling of failure that accompanies the endless series of reflections by the Beckettian characters.

Opposing modernity and postmodernity, Maffesoli (2003, p. 26-33) sums up saying that, in modernity, history unfolds, whereas in postmodernity the event happens, intrudes, forces, violates. However, although the event is singular, it is rooted in an a-temporal archaic subtract, a peculiar characteristic of postmodernity – a "co-presence" in the alterity, which accentuates the fact that the individual is, at worst, just a puppet, and, at best, a companion of the forces that overcome him and to which he must adapt. "Could he not now turn back?

Acknowledge his error and return to where they were once so long alone together. Alone together so much shared. No. Nothing he had done alone could ever be undone" (**OI,** p. 14). Like the character in *Reader*'s story, the postmodern man cannot turn back, acknowledge his error and return to where once he was the actor of his own history; now he is just a "co-presence" in the alterity that is his own story, a mere reader who does not have the power to alter his future, or, even less, an anonymous listener who has lost, or has been deprived of the power of his own words, deprived of the power over his own story. Now, *Listener* does not exist without *Reader* anymore, he has become the other's shadow which will obey the strings of the narrator and be altered if, by any chance, there is a change in the narration because, now, he is the one who holds *Listener's* identity in its plurality. That is, we do not exist but because of the other, our companion, or the Other – the social – that gives us existence: I am who I am because the other recognizes me as such. Consequently, once I am facing another "other", there is the possibility of living a plural identity, or overcoming the "I" in a vaster entity – that is what the cyclical conception is about. The spirit of time is in the melancholy, in the nostalgia of a quite indistinct place, hardly found in time and space. The cyclical temporality offers the occasion to change everything and each of us, and the media, allowing us to communion with a variety of anonymous destinies, play an important role in this process, for they awake in us the desire for an intense destiny, and the consequence is the arousal of the need for Shadow, the desire for the "damned part" that modernity believed had been expelled.

Maffesoli refers to the "calm anger towards the present"; the desire for living without worrying much about the future is certainly the contemporary modulation of this anthropological constant which is the tragic. This state is expressed in the artistic creation, when it crystallizes in one single moment of full existence, in one single instant of perfect beauty that crystallizes eternity. "After so long a lapse that as if never been. […] White nights

now again his portion. As when his heart was young. No sleep no braving sleep till […] dawn of day" (**OI,** p.15). Through an incorporated, non-conscious knowledge, we know that what is proper to each one and each thing is "becoming" and perishing, which would explain the desire of practicing suspension, of detaining the time running, so that we can better and at the maximum enjoy right here, right now. Actually, Merleau-Ponty (1968, p.113) questions why not "instead of saying that I am in time and in space, or that I am nowhere, why not rather say that I am everywhere, always, by being at this moment and at this place?"

Suspension through memory; retention of memory through hiding its lapses by not revealing, not telling the story: "Little is left to tell. One night – Little is left to tell" (**OI,** p. 15). In this process, "becoming" remains a possibility, whilst perishing can be postponed once more through repetition; in this case, repetition of sentences – "little is left to tell" – and of procedures, such as the reading pauses and *Listener*'s knocks on the table. "Multiple repetitions that suspend the linear time, that signal the return of the myth and the tragic, […] recall the order of synchronicity, where past, present, and future are lived in some kind of circulation" (MAFFESOLI, 2003, p. 50)[14]. And this is how we live time in Beckett's play: circulating through past, present and future, we remain locked within an endless spiral of untold facts, unspoken words, of parallel universes that we can never clearly identify whether it is the actual story, the actual character or some sort of suspension of his, some dimension of the Other he has become, or whether we are circulating through some of the many layers of the universe of reverie – the character's, the author's, or the spectator's as well.

> *Ohio Impromptu*, perhaps one of the most Proustian of Beckett's works, again posits discourse, written and read, as access to and means of sanctioning the past. This self-reflexive parody of the Book as vehicle of memory and purveyor of

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[14] Repetições múltiplas, que suspendem o tempo linear, que assinalam, portanto, o retorno do mito e do trágico. [...] remete à ordem da sincronicidade, onde o passado, o presente e o futuro são vividos em uma espécie de circulação [...].

truth, however, is distinctly cathectic, an affective valorization of the word: as an "old terror of night" returns to take hold of Listener who sits "trembling head in hands from head to foot," Reader is sent to comfort him. Making use, once more, of the *mise en abyme*, Beckett relates how, through repeated readings of the tale of a life, Listener's own (Reader's too, for he and Listener grow to be one), the sufferer of "fearful symptoms" is consoled (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 144).

The large scope of a dateless past opens up to reverie, leaving the imagination free to walk through the crypts of memory, and encountering again the "dreaming life lived in the minuscule, almost animal, home of dreams" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 150). And through dreams the postmodern spectator encounters again the Aristotelian principle of pleasure, which will bring improvement and peace to his heart by provoking pity and terror: by making the spectator feel pity for the suffering spectacle that another man experiments without deserving it; by causing terror on the spectator to the idea that he could be living the same calamity. "We assume that, for the finest form of Tragedy, the Plot must be not simple but complex; and further, that it must imitate actions arousing fear and pity…" (ARISTOTLE, 1954, p. 238).

In **OI,** identification comes from the "unword", from the empty spaces in the play, from what is not told in the story –we can identify ourselves with the character because that anonymous loneliness, that pain, that heart that excruciatingly misses the "dear name" can be anyone's, even ours. By creating an aesthetic distance with the stage set, lighting, and the masqueraded characters, Beckett turns alive the paradox of idealization and a sort of catharsis by approximating the spectator to the humanity of that unreal *personage,* once they can purge their own emotions through plastic representation. And, as we are living liquid times, when the worst fear is forgetfulness and disappearance, the lack of resolution in the drama ends up being object of pleasure and, therefore, catharsis for the contemporary human anxiety. The circular time in **OI** makes the time of the story become any time, so it can fit into anyone's

time – the time of a painful past experience, or the time of reverie, of the dark basements of our soul. Fragmentation here brings identification, despite the dismantling of the narrative grammar and the grammar itself, since there is no subject, no verb. In this regard, Fabio Andrade de Souza (2001, p. 37) points out that in Beckett subjectivity, which was expelled through the window, returns via the back door: what seems to be a neutral topographic description of a fictional community of almost inhuman beings locked within an infernal routine in a very limited space and in a series of normatized and stereotyped behaviors, ends up liberating the mold. The narrator, surprised, is forced to expose the ecclosion, a truly relapse, of new old situations, recognizable reactions exaggeratingly human, apparently out of context – a threat of change, capable of not letting the torture/consolation of hope die completely.

Although Beckett's struggle with tense is more evident in the first drafts of **OI**, the final version still presents this fragmentation of the character's identity through time and space; what Adam Seelig calls a "mythological present" moving from first to third person "he" and then to "they".

> Beckett draws an interesting correlation between time and space in reworking a particular passage: "This means that he is gone. From himself. Or to. For a time space. (Long Pause. Head & spots up.) This that he is back. To himself. Or from. For a space." […] Within this space/time framework a voice speaks in the third person, searching for the identity of this ghost-character from without. Yet, unwilling to correlate time and space directly, Beckett deletes "time," revealing his skepticism toward the representation of temporality in his work. In the first half of MS 2930/3 (ANNEX 1), practically all references to time are under erasure, but toward the conclusion of this dramatic fragment time tends toward more of a "mythological present" that distinguishes much of Beckett's writing: "For this needle were it now to drop, as it has >done< so often in the past, and will [ ] do often more & more in what I hope little time remains." The event is recurrent and will continue to occur in the future, thereby establishing an all-encompassing temporality at the conclusion of the monologue. Because of this split in the voice between external and internal knowledge of the figure on stage, it seems to be a clumsy hybrid of author and character. Perhaps, then, as opposed to thinking of an authorial interjection as a digression from the character's voice, it is more precise to consider the character's voice a digression from the author's, intended to derange Beckett's personal words. This fragmentation occurs in three basic steps, converting the

heavily autobiographical monologue of (1) "I" into a monologue about (2) "he," and finally evolving into a story about (3) "they. [..] In the final text, Reader reads from an autobiography in the third person. From this vantage point, Reader is the (1) "I" who reads about a (2) "he," who simultaneously resembles himself and Listener, or (3) "they." Reader himself causes the erasure of his own "I" in the narrative when he repeats a phrase for Listener. <SEELIG, Adam> [15]

"So from time to time unheralded he would appear to read the sad tale through again and the long night away. Then disappear without a word" (**OI,** p. 16).The tragic of the instant, states Maffesoli (2003), is nothing but a succession of actualizations: passions, thoughts, creations that exhaust in the act itself, that do not save themselves but wear out at the instant. We remember the duration of these moments more than their historical relation – life in its banality, a mixture of light and shadow, as much as in its cruelty, scares the ones who took the task of telling it. As Célia Berrettini states (2004, p. 26), vertigos from emptiness, from nothing, from pauses of the non-existence – it is the dead time of *Godot*'s waiting that will not come; it is as if in the pauses Beckett were making the silent breath of death to be heard. In **OI,** the task of telling the story becomes so heavy that it is necessary the presence of a second *Reader*, we may say *Reader*'s Other shadow who, from time to time, would appear to read the sad tale through again, until the night came when "having closed the book and dawn at hand he did not disappear but sat on without a word" (**OI,** p.17). This presence is not required, is not announced, it appears one night showing only the badge of consciousness – he was sent by the dear name, and he named the dear name – it is an omnipotent presence, it comes hidden in the shadows of the night and, without a word, disappears at dawn; he does not need identification, his presence seems to be expected although not awaited; he does not need words – "With never a word exchanged they grew to be as one" (**OI,** p. 17). Through the long nights, he reads, he reveals, and in his comings and goings, his presence is never questioned,

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[15] A note on the transcriptions: a blank space within square brackets (i.e., [ ]) indicates an indecipherable word, whereas the same thing crossed out (i.e., [ ]) indicates an indecipherable deletion; words between wedges indicate an insertion (e.g., This >insertion< makes a difference) (SEELIG, Adam, Note 9. Available at: <http://samuel-beckett.net/reamains3.html>).

and neither are his words, they are simply accepted, believed – he is the one, the only one, who has had word from the dear name, who saw the dear face and heard the unspoken words, he is the one who carries the light through the shadows of the future and brings directions; he is the one who reads the "written word": "… I shall not come again. I saw the dear face and heard the unspoken words, No need to go to him again, even were it in your power" (**OI,** p. 17). And here light plays a fundamental role in the joint of the body which, according to Berrettini (2004, p. 26), may evoke a heroic-comic representation of decomposition with an exorcizing value: the light carves, cuts, and decomposes bodies, she says, and under the effect of light the text becomes painting – text-painting in movement, not immobile image. "There are no other issues but death" (BECKETT apud BERRETTINI, 2004, p. 27). The Beckettian character, she states, – man in his mortal condition – never stops living coherently with death, never stops walking, sleeping with his death, carrying it within throughout time. Or, as Beckett says referring to Proust's creatures, they are victims and prisoners of this preponderant circumstance, which is time, for we do not escape from the hours nor from the days.

Derangement in Beckett does not happen only in the level of the character and his identity – as Seelig states, the deranging presence is more than just an unreliable narrator – it estranges the text from both author and reader – language estranges itself from the narration to the point that the character can finally hear "unspoken words". Through language, we are taken away from reality and, therefore, free from its moderation, we can imagine, cradled by fear and curiosity, as Bachelard would say (2003, p. 122-23), and through the erasure of words we reach the most decisive of all aggressivenesses, "the procrastinated aggressiveness, the aggressiveness that waits – the wolves closed in shells, states the author, are more cruel

than the wandering wolves".[16] Beckett's deranging process becomes an invitation to us to read/watch his pieces like phenomenologists who carry the ambition to live in the same way the great dreamers of images lived: we become the subject who dreams the reverie. The dreamer is invaded by convictions of refuge, where life concentrates, prepares itself, and transforms. Beckett's house and landscape are like the house of the phenomenologist; it turns into an underground cave and labyrinth, full of dark corners – spaces of reflections, where we can retreat, hide and deny life, places of immobility, spaces that end up being dark corners of solitude too.

> So the sad tale last time told they sat on as though turned to stone. Through the single window dawn shed no light. From the street no sound of reawakening. Or was it that buried in who knows what thoughts they paid no heed? To light of day. To sound of reawakening. What thoughts who knows. Thoughts, no, not thoughts. Profounds of mind. Buried in who knows what profounds of mind. Of mindlessness. Whither no light can reach. No sound. So sat on as though turned to stone. The sad tale a last time told. (**OI,** p. 18)

Ordinary life is the place of the tragic *par excellence* – there is a poetics of banality, which hides an amount of intensity. In this way, according to Maffesoli (2003), the contemporary attitude comes close to the attitude of a tragic hero, who does not demand explanations to destiny, but finds his pride accepting its decrees. In fact, tragic is the acceptance of destiny, the recognition of existence for what it is: precarious, finite, always submitted to the inexorable law of everything and everybody's death – the acceptance of the present is nothing but another way of expressing the acceptance of death, which is at the heart of numerous contemporary phenomena.

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[16] "[...] chegaremos à mais decisiva das agressividades, à agressividade protelada, à agressividade que espera. Os lobos fechados em conchas são mais cruéis que os lobos errantes" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 123).

Says Maffesoli (2003) that what happens in the dreams of the mass, crossed by archetypical images, is the same that happens in the individual's dreams: in their dreams the images penetrate the individual unconscious, forcing the individual to escape from the linear, rational temporality characteristic of the daily activities. The poets, artists, and thinkers find their inspiration in this interaction, more precisely in the one expressed by the union of past, present, and future. In the plurality of the being, everyday life becomes some kind of niche, a refuge to where we return when life hurts us, or when the political, economic, professional pressures become too strong. We can always go back to the book and, in the roads of reverie, read the untold story which can be anyone's, remember whatever we choose; we can dream about the dear face – the one that is dear to our memory – and trace back the "slow steps" or go back to that single room, unfamiliar room. The everyday ritual tastes like tragic: an eternal restart of the same doing or being. For the author, the postmodern is an "imagistic" world, a world where the image is the key element of social linkage. The image, says Walter Benjamin, is sedimentation of history; it is the vector of an "ethics of instant" or an "ethics of aesthetics" – the image causes a short-circuit in history or in the finalized time of the project. The present is privileged as an expression of the presence of life, an "eternal instant" where time suspension and reduction of the speed of existence favor intensity and quality, it deepens social relations and the appreciation of the world as it is.

As Beatriz Sarlo states (2007), the past is always a conflictive struggle between history and memory, since not always history is able to rely on memory; and memory, on the other hand, distrusts a reconstitution that does not hold in its core the rights to remembrance (rights of life, justice, subjectivity). Even the return of the past becomes an advent of the present, and hardly ever a liberating moment of remembrance. Just as we see in **OI,** there is something unapproachable in the past, and at the same time, it cannot be repressed, unless through a

pathological process of psychological, intellectual or moral denial; the past simply continues there, both far and near. Remembrance insists because in some way it is sovereign and incontrollable; the empire of the past has not become weaker compared to the postmodern "instant", it is just disguised in museumfication, historical theme-parks, and best-sellers and films that constantly reprocess the contents of the past – an era of auto-archaeologization, as Charles Maier calls it (MAIER apud SARLO, 2005), a moment of "excavatory" procedures that do make space into the present through literature and the space it offers to any pathological resource – the merging of times, spaces and places, of facts and desires, of reality and reverie. What we have is "visions of the past", and as the past time cannot be eliminated – it is a persecutor that enslaves or releases – its irruption into the present is understandable since it is organized through narrative procedures and an ideology that makes evident a significant and interpretable *continuum* of the time. Hence, no matter what strategy the literary writer chooses, the past will remain there, inaccessible, as it is in Beckett's plays, despite all the attempts to reach it, despite the endless repetitions and denials. Based on Michel de Certeau's social ethnography, which merges with the ideology of "new subjects" emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, Sarlo states that the subjective change, that ideological and conceptual rearrangement of the society of the past and its characters, coincides with a similar renovation in the sociology of culture and in the cultural studies, in which the identity of the subjects once again took the place occupied in the 1960s by structures. What we have here is the restoration of the subject's reasoning, which had been for decades a mere "false conscience", a kind of dark hole that would hide a variety of impulses or mandates that were necessarily ignored by the subject; consequently, the oral history and testimony brought back the trust on the subject who narrates their lives (private, public, affective, political) to retain memory or to repair a wounded identity (SARLO, 2007, p. 19). In fact, we can speak of "wounded identities" in Beckett's **OI**, and probably in almost all his other characters; and

maybe this is why **OI** starts as a first person narrative, as we can see on the manuscripts, moving then to a safer third person. In the backward-forward time line presented, there is an exercise of not only retaining the past, dear memories, but also of unveiling identity wounds – in **OI**, the subject keeps seeking comfort, but it will come from unfamiliarity, from a place or dimension where identity cannot be restored; on the contrary, relief will come from anonymity. Therefore, we do not need to know his sad tale to become aware that the subject is wounded; his "acts of memory" reveal how conflictive the field of memory is. Its movement backward and forward in time constantly conflicts with the idea of "never again": at the same time the story is going to be told again, the "dear name" cannot be spoken again, and the tale will not be told again. According to Sarlo, "never again" is not a conclusion which leaves the past behind, but a decision to avoid repetition through remembrance. In fact, in **OI**, "never again" turns to be a strategy that will not let the past rest, but contrarily to what Sarlo says, through obsessively using repetition, what Beckett does is keep remembrance, which transforms the field of memory into that haunted space, a labyrinthic basement full of dark corners made of reverie, desire and fear, as Bachelard would call. In Beckett, actually, there is not real remembrance, but thoughts of it – there are the book and *Reader*; there are a narrator and *Listener*, but the story is never really told and, consequently, memory is never really restored, which leads us to think Beckett's strategy much more towards what Susan Sontag wrote: "Maybe it has been attributed too much value to memory and too little to thought; it is more important understanding than remembering, although, in order to understand, it is also necessary to remember" (SONTAG apud SARLO, 2007, p. 21). Maybe, this is what Beckett aims at: to provoke thoughts rather than memories, which ends up being a *leitmotif* to force us to stop functioning in an "automatic pattern" and move into a reflexive pattern through his characters and all their multi-dimensionalities; that is, take us off our laziness – once again, we are trapped in Beckett's game.

From the moment when the spirit of time in general, and of the individuals in particular, have no more the ambition to dominate the social and natural surroundings, a more ludicrous concept emerges: the game of the world, or the world as a game, which leads to the logic of "living more". According to this logic everybody is somehow possessed, and this possession is a characteristic of the tragic; it invalidates or at least relativizes the modern pretension to dominate everything (nature, history, society, ourselves). Yet, the tragic also favors some kind of "quietist" mentality, made of indifference and non-activity, and which reflects an evidence of decadence. "Day after day he could be seen slowly pacing the islet. Hour after hour. In his long black coat no matter what the weather…" (**OI,** p. 13): that is the atmosphere in which the unnamed character circulates in his time spiral, a tone of quiet decadence, of a resigned contemplative indifference, as if deep down in his heart he knew it was an endless game and he was locked up in that time-space, in that drama, in a mix of nostalgia and fatalism. The actual atmosphere tends toward the "contemplation of the world", a mixture of acceptance and joy: "giving space to the demoniac joy of living"; "turn your life into an artwork" – that is the lesson which the tragic offers. What we call "crisis" is, in Maffesoli's opinion, just the fact that an entire society ceases to have conscience of the values that constituted it and, therefore, has no confidence in them anymore. Among these values, there is this constant dissatisfaction of hoping for a better society, the myth of heaven, of all lands free from evil; the desire for somewhere else.

> The dreamer in his corner has erased the world in a detailed reverie that destroys one by one all the objects of the world. The corner becomes a cabinet of memories. Having crossed the thousand little gates of the disorder of the things in the dust, the object-memories put the past in order. (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 151). [17]

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[17] "O sonhador em seu canto riscou o mundo num devaneio minucioso que destrói um a um todos os objetos do mundo. O canto torna-se um armário de lembranças. Tendo transposto os mil pequenos umbrais da desordem das coisas na poeira, os objetos-lembranças põem em ordem o passado".

The contemporary nostalgia brings out sadness, a feeling of abandonment, but at the same time, the ability of a collective resistance through irony and mockery – what Maffesoli calls the "organic cement", originated from the Baroque, and whose force lies on the fusion of the elements that compose it. Irision, sadness, elegiac feeling are but the translation of the nostalgia of the "true" country which does not belong to any specific time but to the "atemporal" that flows from the synergy of the varied human temporality. "In his last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they had been so long together to a single room on the far bank. From its single window he could see the downstream extremity of the isle of Swans" (**OI**, p. 12). Contemporary human temporality melts with space, dislocating it to an almost ethereal condition, to an un-localized space, for it does not belong to any specific time, as Maffesoli states, and consequently it does not belong anywhere. Therefore, like Beckett's character, we keep moving space through time seeking relief until the "true country" becomes a single window through which we can see the past, or anything we want to believe is part of it. Nostalgia, through its many expressions (irony, humor, mockery, etc.), is then the conservatory that makes possible living here wishing for another surreal, mythical place, made of dreams, symbols, projections. The nostalgia of what Maffesoli calls the "country of immobile time" translates the desire for something that has never existed, something that is present in the social imaginary with unsuspected pregnancy. The myth of paradise, says the author, is a recurrent theme; all the Atlantis are non-places, dream lands that appear in the confluence of those human parameters, which are precisely the omniric, ludicrous, and the imaginary reality. It is some kind of experience beyond or beneath time, an ephemeral eternity in which time as linearity is replaced by the relativity of duration. And this is the drama lived by almost all Beckett's characters, but especially in **OI** by this man who keeps moving in the hope that relief would flow from unfamiliarity, who keeps circulating around a time and space that do not have a definite location – they constantly move from reality to memory, then to

reverie, and vice versa. The only concrete material we have is the poetic imagination, and in this regard, Gaston Bachelard (2003, introdução) states that the cultural past does not count – so, there is nothing to be told – what is necessary is to be in the present, present to the image at the minute of the image: the poetic image is the sudden highlight of the psyche, he says, it has its own being, its own dynamics, and its power lies on its ability to impact us, our own existence, inviting us to dig deeper into it. According to Bachelard, the repercussion of one single poetic image can provoke a true awakening of the poetic creation in the reader's soul, and, in **OI**, the power of Beckett's poetic images reaches us through the indefiniteness of time and space, which does not only allow us to locate ourselves into them, but also gives us a sense of timing – in this case, a lack of it, a sense of distorted timing that shows us that Time is a separated identity, running apart from the events of life, apart from us. The time image used by Beckett impacts his readers, no matter how much lazy or limited they are, and it is constructed through space, through the lack of its delimitation, which becomes even stronger with the fragmented information we receive throughout the text – the downstream of the Isle of Swans, the room, the window, the islet that he paced day after day. "The image of the river (the Seine)", points out Knowlson,

> with its two arms flowing into one another after they have divided to flow around the island (the Allée des Cignes or Isle of Swans, where Beckett and Joyce used to walk together) is a clue to the meaning of the play. For at its emotional center lie sadness, loss, and solitude, contrasted with a memory of togetherness.
> This feeling of loss suggests that the figure in the narrative who has been left to live alone is deeply rooted in Beckett's personal and imaginative life (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 585).

Knowlson also refers to a dinner conversation he had with Beckett in 1981 about **OI**, which caused surprise to many of his friends who saw him and his wife, Suzanne, in the last ten years of their lives, when they were often irritable with each other. Despite the difficult

times between them, they stayed married for over forty years, and there was never any question of his leaving her, although Suzanne had commented to a friend that their marriage was a marriage of bachelors. Actually, all this time together, including the good times and those when he wished he was alone, according to Knowlson, appear to be evoked in **OI**: "Could he not now turn back? Acknowledge his error and return to where they were so long alone together. Alone together so much shared. No. What he had done alone could not be undone. Nothing he had ever done alone could ever be undone. By him alone" (**OI**, p. 14).

> We spoke first of the link with Joyce: "Of course," he commented of the hat and the Isle of Swans. I then told him that I had heard the "dear face" who is evoked by the Reader referred to as if it were the face of Joyce. "It is a woman, isn't it?" I asked. "It's Suzanne," he replied. "I've imagined her dead so many times. I've even imagined myself trudging out to her grave." (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 585)

In spite of the biographical reference, this location in space is constantly faded by a following information: the room is unfamiliar, the scene is unfamiliar: "Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared". […] "Then turn and his slow steps retrace. In his dreams" (**OI,** p. 13). Of course, we must remember Bachelard when he states that "every reader who re-reads a work that they love knows that the beloved pages *concern them*".[18] Therefore, we do not intend to ignore the personal amount of impact we suffer into our own souls every time we read **OI,** but as Bachelard also says, a little impulse of admiration is necessary in order to obtain the phenomenological benefice of a poetic image which, the minimal it becomes, the more powerful it will be. The "literary miniature", that is the literary image that remarks on the inversions in the perspective of greatness, activate deep values (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 159): values engulf in the miniature, which makes us dream;

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[18] "... todo leitor que relê uma obra que ama sabe que as páginas amadas lhe *dizem respeito*" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 10).

therefore, the "minuscule opens a world" – the miniature worlds, states the author, are dominated worlds, and they bring comfort.

Quoting Baltasar Gracián, who says that "what is not seen is as if it did not exist", the feeling of tragic typical of any theatricalized existence comes from the idea that something cannot be true unless it has a closure, a realization and, consequently, is finite. This is, according to Maffesoli, a paradox that makes the work of understanding the social world difficult – the essential values are the most visible and, at the same time, the less localizable. The specificity of the tragic, says Maffesoli, is in considering the existence in its totality: light needs shadow, good is not possible unless it allows its contrary its relative space; what matters is the situation in which the contraries mix up. Life cannot be divided; it includes shadows and lights, generosity and baseness, the coincidence between death and life, body and spirit, nature, and culture. The barbarian does not oppose the civilized anymore; on the contrary, it is one of its components – this conjunction is definitely the essential characteristic of postmodernity and of the tragic as well. They accumulate, imply, complexify the simple mechanics that modernity made so specific.   In this regard, Roger Bastide proposes a "mythology of the masks", which would express the "ensemble of reflections" that constitute the whole – the mask as a speaker of a discourse that overruns the individual who expresses it. That is why in Greek tragedy the masks and their big open mouths represent the "voice of destiny". Although we cannot talk about a "voice of destiny" in **OI** – at least not in the Greek way – unless we are talking about a disguising voice, the white faces and their ghostly aspect play the role of masks, not to bring enlightenment to the characters' destiny but, besides introducing a morbid quality, to reinforce the mirror image on a visual level as much as on the linguistic level with the fragmentation in the narrative from "I" to "he", and to "they" at the end.

With all of these contrasts, it is appropriate that the same typescript describes a situation in which the character suffers from "the mirror image of his present predicament" and that Reader and Listener in the final play mirror one another as doubles, or, alternatively, together constitute the right and left aspects of a single persona. "He said" prefaces the statement related by "I" because over the course of the narrative "he" supersedes "I" and contributes to the erasure of the first person. The subsequent jump from "he" to "they" does not require much linguistic artifice, since the two characters mirror one another onstage, a visual doppelgänger that elegantly dissolves the difference between singular and plural identities. Within the first three complete sentences of Ohio Impromptu this fragmentation of "I" into "they" takes place:

R: [Reading.] Little is left to tell. In a last –
[L knocks with left hand on table.]
Little is left to tell.
[Pause. Knock.]
In a last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they had been so long together to a single room on the far bank. From its single window he could see the downstream extremity of the Isle of Swans. (**OI,** p. 12) <SEELIG, A., p. 9>

Moreover, we can also consider the mask as a pictorial disguise for the author's editorializing voice, which is a procedure that can be identified in most of Beckett's late plays, such as *Not I,* (1972), *That Time* (1976), *Footfalls* (1976), and *Catastrophe* (1982). As David Pattie states in *Space, Time, and the Self in Beckett's Late Theatre,* published in *Modern Drama,* Volume 43, number 3, similarly to **OI**, the late plays employ the idea of the editor still working on the text, and the idea of a voice whose relation to the image is unfixed. Actually, Beckett made a number of false starts, while staying in Ussy in 1980, from where he wrote to Gontarski saying that he thought he was on to something, but it had petered out and he was going to try again. One of the fragments focused "on a ghost returning from the underworld to speak at such a conference, the other on a figure trying and failing to thread a needle – were drily witty, teasing, and whimsical. But both were abandoned, perhaps because the first piece seemed too trite and the second too personal" (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 585). In **OI,** the process becomes more sophisticated; we do not simply have a voice in the backstage informing the audience about the character's identity or destiny, we have *Reader* reading to a

Listener who just knocks on the table, which leads *Reader* to repeat the sentence, as if that listener were the one editing the story at the moment it was being read, and we, the audience, are there as witnesses of the poetic process. At this point, the mask gains importance in the mirroring strategy, for it brings uncertainty to the play and its narrator/author – could it be *Reader* the editor instead? It also brings a "spatiotemporal displacement of the story" (PATTIE). It seems, at first, that we are listening to the "memoirs" of a single subject that happened at some moment in the past; yet, when we add the editor figure, everything is displaced differently and we are presented with the possibility of a fake subject and his fake memoirs. Therefore, time and space once more relocate all the elements of the play, including the spectator who had been thrown into the dark time-space of the man and his suffering past and quickly pulled back to the reality of fiction; and then we realize that we entered a masquerade ball and Beckett is its master of ceremony.

Actually, in *Anatomie d'André Gide,* Roger Bastide (1972) proposes a "mythology of the masks", which would express the "ensemble of reflections" that constitute the whole; the mask as "speakers" of a discourse that over crosses the individual who pronounces it. The modern individual, states Maffesoli (2003), is but an atom of a mechanism and therefore is tied to one specific "function" for his entire life, and this function requires a "costume" which is also merely functional, in order to avoid any fantasy – like the watch-point in a factory, the costume and the individual who wears it repeat forever the monotony of existence. Frivolity is left to the poet, the outsider, or the woman. Our century, says the author, is a century of an "extreme sociability", the self loses itself in the other; the community prevails over the individual. The contemporary mask became a neutral, non-personalized uniform, hiding the individual's identity, which gets lost within the concept of community, fragmented in anonymity, like *Listener* and *Reader,* whose identities are lost behind the form.

Like the contemporary world full of opacity, in Beckett, what we see is the opacity of art, that is, it can reveal only its own revelatory process and not a reality beyond it, which is expressed by the excavatory work of emptying meaning from words, for language in Beckett represents a barrier to art, and creates a state of chaos, of inexplicability of the world. As Beckett explains to Tom Driver in 1961, "The confusion is not my invention…. It is all around us and our only chance now is to let it in. The only chance of renovation is to open our eyes and see the mess (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 67)". And, if we think of literature as language producing the union between imaginary and reason; if we think of man as language, we see that he and his cultural productions are authentic real masks, like a multilayer mask, whose true face is, according to Bella Jozef (2006) also a mask. In the game of significance, states the author, the word is a mask that covers the lack of meaning, reflected in the absence of a story or of an essential time. As literature does not reveal reality, the discourse does not extinguish itself in the representation, and its similitude with the referent is a simulation that appears as mask in a process of concealment that unfolds endlessly. It possesses in itself a dissimilitude that provokes perversion (JOZEF, 2006, p. 47).

The mythology of the masks, or the game of appearances, is regularly expressed in human stories when death makes itself omnipresent; actually, after 1968, with all the political and cultural changes affecting also the field of the arts, the role and space of the mask also had its limits revisited and, from a facial hiding artifice, it invaded the whole body, it became the character itself – the actor looks at the mask, feels it and embodies it. According to Salvatore Sartori (interview in the program *Starte,* on Globo News Channel, on August 13, 2008), the mask became a figure which represents the masquerading game of revealing-veiling of the contemporary world. The brightness of appearance has no other function than remind finitude, impermanence, which today can be seen in contemporary *happenings, body*

art, or even in music. Appearance is built under and for the other's attention; the Self loses itself in the "Other"; the community prevails over the individual. The tragic is simply the expression of these antinomies; the more imperfect, the more fertile; when there is friction, opposition, contestation, disorder, there is vitality. Perfection, says Maffesoli, is a sign of death; this is why cultural and scientific works are usually created in situations dominated by disorder and insanity. The postmodern holism is marked by an excessive participation that provokes a multiplicity of communions around various totems – it is the time of "small gods". Therefore the importance of rituals, of signs of recognition, of specific linguistic practices, for they function as a new ethics, as the cement of social ties; and contemporary art plays this role, since it leads those who contemplate it to a fusion with the great Whole; as it is itself the whole, it can lead to fusion, and to the confusion which is the aesthetic environment. In contemplation, there is some kind of death, the 'little death' from ecstasy. An artwork, passing through death, allows the transcendence of death and the participation in the rejuvenescence of the world (MAFFESOLI, 2003, p.185).

In regard to the twentieth century art, Theodor Adorno, in *Teoria Estética,* considers its situation as aporetic, due to its progressive integration to the culture of the *bourgeoisie* through the popularization of the mass media and the consequent loss of value, despite its basis on suffering and absurdity (ADORNO apud RICHARD, 1989, p.106). And this is how the Theater of the Absurd views the postmodern world and society. Apparently, this is what we see also in the work of Samuel Beckett: an immense disillusion, a total disbelief in the possibility of human integrity and happiness – only apparently, though. Truly, instead of being called the master of the Absurd, Beckett could be called the master of resilience, that psychological skill which gives the human being the strength to rebuild themselves, to rescue their integrity, even in moments of extreme pain and difficulty. This is what we see in Ham

and Clov's persistence in *Endgame*; this is what we see in **OI**, in the exercise of reading/remembering more than once a never truly told story, as if this impossibility of unveiling it assured its retention in space and continuity in time. "In his dreams he had been warned against this change. Seen the dear face and heard the unspoken words, Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you" (**OI**, p. 14). Here, the tragic consciousness of destiny and the role that shadow plays in our lives become evident – it helps carry the desire for suspension, for detaining the time running, as if it were still possible to "become" despite knowing that we are perishing. Although reinforcing melancholy, the nostalgia of that indistinct place hardly found in time and space, the shadow became another co-presence in alterity, another voice playing within our consciousness as it reinforces the belief that somewhere our mythical Paradise will not be consumed in the act by which it is created, envisioned by our desire. And the only way of holding it is through unfamiliarity, through going "back to where nothing ever shared", through "so long a lapse that as if never been", through the unspoken word, for "with never a word exchanged they grew to be as one". It is the shadows of unfamiliarity that keep the "instant" suspended, that prevent time from consuming life itself, that makes evident that also for Beckett's characters life, the world, existence might not be worthy but there is nothing worthier than life, as Maffesoli stated. In this alterity, man becomes a puppet, and the forces that overcome him and to which he must adapt are his companions, the generators of his multiple identity. This is what justifies *Reader* going back and reading the same page one more time; this is what justifies *Listener*'s silence as if in a mutual non-verbal agreement that, once the story was kept on hold, it would still be possible to return to that unfamiliar room which would feed them with the necessary un-melting reference from reality – the downstream extremity of the Isle of Swans. Therefore, *Atlantis* can continue to exist.

2.2. THE LIQUID MODERNITY IN *OHIO IMPROMPTU*

When analyzing the contemporary urban space, Zygmunt Bauman refers to the concept of city presented by Richard Sennett, which consists of a human settlement where strangers can meet. These encounters, though, do not dissolve the initial condition of unfamiliarity that these people presented before. In this way, according to Bauman, the encounter of strangers is marked by a total discontinuity, as no possibilities of recapturing the dialogue are offered, and this is no common history – it is an event without past and many times without future, one single story with the duration of the instantaneity of its act. Now, what we have is an "ethics of the instant", situations that exhaust themselves in the act itself which cannot be projected into a predictable future nor can be controlled by will. However, we must remember: we are walking through works of poetic imagination and, within them, as Bachelard states, facts do not explain values, the latter have such a sign of novelty that everything which derives from the past is inert in relation to them; the whole memory needs to be re-imagined. Therefore, the poet's universe will always be a world of unfamiliarity; "he has led us into a position limit, a limit that we are afraid of crossing, between insanity and reason, between those alive and the dead one" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 181).

It is this urban concept of unfamiliarity and discontinuity that permeates Beckett's work and creates its aura; and the architecture of the city in **OI** is precisely what unveils this element in the drama. Like a rhizome in **OI**'s net – the dear places, the single room with one single window, the Isle of Swans, the path many times retraced – all these spatial references, actually, bring to light the discontinuity, the absence of a common history. What we see in **OI**, is the space perceived by imagination, a "lived space", as Bachelard would say, with all the partialities of imagination, a space that almost always attracts, concentrates the being within the limits it protects, as if in a Renaissance painting. The difference is in the relations

between outer and inner space, but, as Bachelard would also say: "In the kingdom of images, the game between the exterior and intimacy is not a balanced game".[19] It is not about examining men but images, and in the topography of the house proposed by the author, as the topography of our inner self, images move in both directions: they are in us as much as we are in them, and, in this process of inhabiting, in which belonging means necessarily to shrink, another dialectics rises – the dialectics of the small and the big, in all its relativism (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 20). In the topoanalysis of the house, it is easy to identify this dual movement, which is present in the pursuit of protection and, at the same time, of freedom; the problem is that to feel protected we must find illusions of comfort, which we will find in the smallest shelter, where imagination builds "walls" with untouchable shadows. On the other hand, these walls can also make us tremble and doubt its limits, and in this process we make the space of the house, the space of our imagination, alive in its reality and virtuality as well, changeable through thoughts and dreams. The house, says Bachelard, like fire and water, will allow us to evoke fleeting lights of reverie that enlighten the synthesis of the immemorial with remembrance – there is a union between memory and image, between memory and imagination. And so moves the **OI**'s character from the large house full of past experiences to a single room with its single window (the smallest shelter), as much as his story told by *Reader*: through shadows of memory and imagination in a perfect synthesis between reality and virtuality, dialectically looking for shelter, knowing that, if there is a possibility of comfort, it will only come from unfamiliarity. Beckett's character lives from his fixations of happiness, a state that is only real in the past and whose comfort will come from remembering, from reviving those memories of protection – the desire that nothing would ever change, "From this he had once half hoped some measure of relief might flow" (**OI**, p. 13). And, in order to reach comfort, the character's space must be reduced to a single room, a

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[19] "No reino das imagens, o jogo entre o exterior e a intimidade não é um jogo equilibrado". (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 19)

single window – there, in the smallest shelter, in the house, is where the reverie lies. The house, says Bachelard (2003, p. 26-29), shelters the reverie, protects the dreamer, it makes possible to dream in peace, to feel comfort – that is the benefice of the house. The house holds the power of integrating man's thoughts, memories and dreams through reverie, but it is necessary for the one who found shelter in the smallest place to feel the experience of being thrown away, expelled from the house, and feel the hostility from men and from the universe. This is how the metaphysics of consciousness is activated: the struggle between small and big, between known and unknown, comfort and discomfort. That is the struggle that the **OI**'s character fights– he has been thrown out of his shelter, exposed to the hostility of men and of the universe; the only thing that holds him is the memory, or the image of the "dear name", the remembrance or the reverie of a time and space "where they had been so long together" (**OI**, p. 12). According to Bachelard, space rises for the poet as the subject of the verb "to unfold", of the verb "to grow"; "when a space is a value – and will there be greater value than intimacy? – it grows".[20] The topoanalysis would then be the systematic psychological study of the locals of our inner life.

> In this theater of the past, which is the memory, the scenery keeps the characters in their dominant role. At times, we believe we know ourselves in time, whilst what is known is only a series of fixations in the spaces of stabilities of being, of a being who does not want to pass in time; who in their own past, when in search of the lost time, wants to "suspend" the flight of time. In its thousand alveoli, space retains the compressed time. That is the role of space.[21]

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[20] "Quando um espaço é um valor – e haverá maior valor que a intimidade? – ele cresce". (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 206)

[21] "Nesse teatro do passado que é a memória, o cenário mantém os personagens em seu papel dominante. Por vezes, acreditamos conhecer-nos no tempo, ao passo que se conhece apenas uma série de fixações nos espaços da estabilidade do ser, de um ser que não quer passar no tempo; que no próprio passado, quando sai em busca do tempo perdido, quer 'suspender" o vôo do tempo. Em seus mil alvéolos, o espaço retém o tempo comprimido. É essa a função do espaço" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 28).

In a sort of tacit agreement, the characters, *Reader,* and *Listener* fight against time, through keeping the fixations from the past, their spaces of stabilities; and every time they go back in time, it is not to reveal the past – it cannot be revealed because they do not really know themselves, they can only hold fixations, fragments of memory immersed in reverie – it is just an attempt to suspend time into space, and consequently provoke new fragmentations on the character's identity, as we can see more clearly in one of the unsequenced drafts of MS 2930 series:

> …the fragmentation of character occurs more explicitly in the form of a division between Voice and Actor (V & A), which reflects the split between author and character in the typescript. V, like the author, dictates the proceedings on stage. He begins by calling out stage directions, first asking for the curtain to rise and then for an adjustment of the actor's spotlight. Once the stage is set properly, V proceeds to narrate the "needle and thread" monologue in the third person while A enacts the words. However, at the beginning of the monologue A makes a mistake and is promptly reprimanded by V: "V: In his right hand – (A raises L.H. into light.) The other, fool." Here V and A are fragmented enough to cause a breakdown in simple communication; for, as the author is connected to his characters, V and A are closely related but estranged from each other. This separation and consequent differentiation of V and A marks a significant step in the derangement of a single consciousness, which will evolve into two separate characters (i.e., Reader and Listener) by the final play. <SEELIG, p. 7>

The simpler the house remained, the more it works its inhabitants' imagination, says Bachelard, it is not just a "representation": its lines are "fortresses". "[The shelter] wants to be *simply* inhabited, with the great *safety* that *simplicity* brings".[22] This is why amongst so many shadows, we are presented with few concrete, localized references, e.g., the Isle of Swans, the far banks, the view from the window – they help fix time, they bring stability to a scarily changing world, haunting us with the possibility of fading away, of disappearing. And, facing this dilemma of solitude, states Bachelard, the topoanalyst argues: Was the room big? Was the attic cluttered with things? Was the corner warm? Where did the light come from? How, in

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[22] "[O abrigo] quer ser habitado *simplesmente,* com a grande *segurança* que a *simplicidade* proporciona" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 66).

these spaces, the being got in touch with silence? How did such special silences of the various shelters of lonely reverie taste? Too many questions for "lazy readers", as Beckett defined us; but, if we make an effort, we can see that the more the author reduces the characters' spaces, the more we foresee the attic and how cluttered it is – it is full of our own material images, beautiful fossils, sedimented by long permanencies, full of fixative shadows; and if we do not know how to get in touch with silence, the author helps us giving us time, pauses throughout the text to help digest the spaces of solitude, which are ours too. It is from silence that listening is born, says the poet and philosopher Ruben Alves[23]: we listen only if our inner noise is silenced; we can only listen to the other's truth if we stop chattering – the poets, these creatures of minimal speech, know it; they speak, but to hear the voices of silence, like in the poem *Cessa teu canto!*, by Fernando Pessoa, directed to a poet:

Cessa o teu canto! Cessa, que, enquanto O ouvi, ouvia Uma outra voz Com que vindo Nos interstícios Do brando encanto Com que o teu canto Vinha até nós.

Ouvi-te e ouvi-a No mesmo tempo E diferentes Juntas cantar. E a melodia Que não havia. Se agora a lembro, Faz-me chorar.[24]

The magic of the poem, continues Rubem Alves, is not in the words of the poet; it is in the silent interstices between their words; it is in that silence that we can hear the melody which was not there before –the magic, then, happens: the melody makes us cry. The spaces of solitude carry the human dilemma, for the space that makes us suffer is also the one that brings us comfort, the joy that we wish for, and although it is written that comfort would come from unfamiliarity, repetition in **OI** makes it evident that it comes from re-visiting those spaces that do not aim to be extended but, above all, wish to be possessed once more. The

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[23] Extract from *Bons Fluidos* magazine, number 73, 2008, p. 38.

[24] Extract from *O Cancioneiro,* by Fernando Pessoa. Available at <www.ciberfil literature digital>, site visited on February 10th 2009.

character, as much as *Listener,* does not long for an extension but for possessing and being possessed by those spaces of fixations in time – comfort comes from the possibility of this dual movement of possessing and being possessed.

"Samuel Beckett's new plays tantalize the mind as well as the eye…. We are transfixed by the intensity of the artistic vision".[25] "Poets and painters are born phenomenologists", writes J. H. Van den Berg (J. H. VAN DEN BERG apud BACHELARD, 2003, p. 12), and Gaston Bachelard states that the poetic consciousness is so totally absorbed by the image which appears in language, it speaks with the poetic image such new language, that we cannot productively consider correlations with past and present anymore. Therefore, whenever we are exposed to a poetic image, we face something new, fresh, even when we face aesthetic echoes from the past in a contemporary composition, such as in Beckett's play. Leonardo Da Vinci's concept in **OI** is not the Renaissance concept anymore, it is something totally new, re-imagined, reprocessed into something else: a melting postmodern, and we might add "absurd", visual poetic image especially brought up by Samuel Beckett, who seems to have been able to accomplish something that Bachelard considers a difficult act: the act of overcoming knowledge, for knowledge ought to be followed by an equal forgetfulness of knowledge – "non-knowledge is not ignorance, but a difficult act of going beyond knowledge".[26] Beckett majestically overcomes knowledge; he does not quote, he processes old references into a new poetic image; like a painter who collects old objects and transforms them into a new genuine artwork, he collects references from his personal story, from his visits to museums, from his cultural experience to transform them into his own art. Art, states Bachelard (2003, p. 17), is a reduplication of life, a sort of emulation into the surprises that

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[25] This is how Mel Gussow described the three plays, *Catastrophe*, *What Where*, and *Ohio Impromptu*, in *The New York Times*, when the plays opened on June 15, 1983.
[26] "...é preciso que o saber seja acompanhado de um igual esquecimento do saber. O não-saber não é uma ignorância, mas um ato difícil de superação do conhecimento". (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 16)

excite our consciousness and prevent it from falling asleep, and the contemporary artist does not consider the image as a simple substitute of a sensible reality; what they do is bring to life a new variety of that previous image. The pyramidal perspective in **OI,** for instance, is not Da Vinci's anymore, but a new variety of pyramidal perspective that comes, as Bachelard would say, to "enhance the family" of perspectives, or artistic concepts – what we have in Beckett's play is a game with "images of intimacy" – a "poetics of the house". Therefore, many questions are raised:

> …how do secret rooms, disappeared rooms, turn into homes for an unforgettable past? Where and how does relief find privileged situations? How do ephemeral refuges and occasional shelters receive, at times, from our intimate reveries, values that have no objective basis? With the image of the house, we have a true principle of psychological integration. Descriptive psychology, psychology of the depths, […], it seems that the image of the house becomes the topography of our inner being. (BACHELARD, 2003, p.20) [27]

The house, in Bachelard's topology, is the place that holds our childhood immobile; consequently, omnirically inhabiting it is more than inhabiting it through memory; it means living in the missing house just as the way we dreamed it was once, with its corridors, attics, and basements. In the same way we move from one room to another, from the basement to the attic, and vice versa, we move from the concrete world to the dreamed one and, then, what is real and what is dream become one. In the attic, the daily experience may dissipate the fears of the night; in the basement, however, there is darkness night-and-day, "even with a candle in his hand, man sees the shadows dancing on the black wall of the basement".[28] Like the poet and Beckett himself who suffered from insomnia, followed by dreadful nights and feelings of panic (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 77), Beckett's character is aware of that and, in his

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[27] "[...] como é que aposentos secretos, aposentos desaparecidos, transformam-se em moradas para um passado inolvidável? Onde e como o repouso encontra situações privilegiadas? Como os refúgios efêmeros e os abrigos ocasionais recebem por vezes, de nossos devaneios íntimos, valores que não tem a menor base objetiva? Com a imagem da casa, temos um verdadeiro principio de integração psicológica. Psicologia descritiva, psicologia das profundidades, [...], parece que a imagem da casa se torna a topografia do nosso ser íntimo."

[28] "Mesmo com uma vela na mão, o homem vê as sombras dançarem na muralha negra do porão" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 38).

despair, he struggles to stay awake, to fight the shadows of his own night and the terror they bring; daylight, like youth, brings the hope to keep reverie and fears under control – the postmodern terror of fading away, of having never existed. The dawn of day is the window through which the postmodern man can see possibilities of continuity in time, of existing no matter where, no matter how; as long as he continues awake and telling/reading his story; like in *Endgame,* like in *Waiting for Godot*, he is alive, there is still time to wait a little longer. In **OI**, the window is the image that brings light to the character's life, especially in the film, where the director shows it in the scene and adds color through it – the image-symbol which, despite bringing hope, symbolizes also solitude, the dark loneliness lived by the character. In the kingdom of imagination, the house and the universe mutually throw themselves in opposite reveries; it seems that, says Bachelard (2003, p. 50), by inhabiting stabilizing images, we would start another life, a life that would be ours, in the depths of our being. "In this extremity his old terror of night laid hold on him again. […] White nights now again his portion. As when his heart was young. No sleep no braving sleep till […] dawn of day" (**OI**, p. 15). The night is typically the time and space for dreaming, and dreams do not only allow us to use our imagination and escape from reality, adjusting it according to our wishes; according to Bachelard, sometimes, they go so deeply down into an undefined past, into a past that is so unleashed from its dates, that the clear memories of our home seem to unleash themselves from us. These dreams surprise our reverie, and we even doubt having lived where we lived (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 71). Therefore, Beckett's character must struggle to stay awake; no sleeping because he might risk to lose the only memories that support his identity, his existence as individual; he must wait for dawn and resist like "when his heart was young". Here, we have another reference to time given by the author – the character is not young anymore, time has passed, life has passed; again, we seem to be receiving an encoded message: your past, your story, is the only thing that can assure your continuity in time, the

fossils that can guarantee you that you really existed in some moment in life's timeline; so, guard it with as many symbols you can retain as possible and trust that white nights will come again and enlighten your soul with new possibilities of not falling into nothingness. Beckett's character goes through the same struggle: self-effacement, just like the author's process of writing. In Beckett, states Adam Seelig,

> the process pervades the text – the process of being reduced to absence, the process of dying – so that over the course of composition the process gradually becomes the work. The way in which Beckett produces meaninglessness is that meaninglessness itself. The process is the message – the method, the madness. <SEELIG, p. 3>

The facts, says Bachelard, have the *value* that memory gives them; the distant memory does not remember them unless it attributes value to them, an aura of happiness. Maybe that is the reason why the dear name cannot be spoken, the dear face cannot be seen, the story cannot be told; if they were, they might erase that aura of happiness mentioned by Bachelard and force to ask whether what happened did really happen in the way we cherish them through memory and reverie. On the other hand, the author states that it is necessary that all values tremble– a value that does not tremble is a dead value, and Beckett seems to follow the same belief: more than being an apologist of history, what he proposes, not only in **OI**, is that we question our values. Even more, he makes those values tremble in front of us, values such as the power of words and communication, as we can see in *Godot;* the power of history and tradition, as we can see in *Endgame* in the figures of Clov's parents putrefying in a dustbin and eating dog food as they unsuccessfully try to remember past historical events; the power of memory, as we can see in **OI**, especially in the figure of *Listener* who, by knocking on the table, demands the story to be read again, as if it needed to be checked, as if *Reader* were not trustworthy anymore; or would it be the story? Or was *Listener* trying to reconstitute the "tone

of the voices, the inflexion of the dear voices that silenced" and, with them, the resonance of all the rooms of the "sound house", as Bachelard would say? In fact, darkness and silence are full of sounds in **OI,** the pauses are spaces for our echoes to come out of their little rooms and walk around the attic, with no need of words, no compromising "insignificant confidences" until light arrives from reality and wakes us up. Actually, throughout times, the act of being alone, states Julio Conte (SOUSA, 2001), exposed to silence and to the infinite space, has been invested with the power of creativity; isolation forces us to "think our own thoughts", and that means coping with their absence until something comes out. Handling the absence of thoughts means listening to our deepest and noisiest silence, and somehow touching our insanity; it is the moment of encountering our truth, which is the truth of our unconscious. Loneliness, according to Conte, means being alone with someone or something that belongs to the order of the omnirical and transitory; as Luigi Pirandello states, being alone means "being without myself; therefore, with a stranger nearby" (PIRANDELLO, 2001).

In fact, the *mise-en-scène* of a play is the realization of a process constructed in the solitude of an office, a great example of which is the work by Constantin Stanislavsky who innovated the theatrical language in 1898 when he directed *The Seagull,* by Anton Chekcov, which required from him more than a month in total isolation, in order to decode Chekcov's work – a play that was considered inefficient by the critics, due to its monotony, lack of color in the description of a mediocre reality of the character's everyday life. The difficulties in adjusting to a non-orthodox play, added to the silence involving the artist's process, put him in touch with his "other side", a stranger that made him start to question not only the play but also his work as an artist, bringing about a state of crisis, feelings of abandonment and chaos. In one of his letters to his wife during this period, he wrote:

> All this is not serious. It is, certainly, a useless devotion a person devotes themselves to this kind of life. Wouldn't I be doing the same? These thoughts worry me very much. I used to think that theater was a serious and respectful occupation, but nothing seems to make sense. I am starting to doubt not only my life, but those of many people are being waisted. Again, I cannot avoid thinking that I must do something different to live (SOUSA ET al., org., p. 151). [29]

Stanislavsky's process makes evident not only the effect of loneliness in the director's work but also the effect of the play itself over the audience, showing how much he was affected by the play's mood, by the world's lack of sense, and by the urgent need of social transformation that the text announces. Diving into the crisis, says Conte, Stanislavsky burned out in the absurd, bedeviled by uncontrollable unrecognizable thoughts, and that seems to be Beckett's process as well: the same feelings that characterize the Theater of the Absurd as a whole permeate the author's/director's constructive process, throwing him and his audience into the core of a crisis that goes beyond a personal level. This crisis becomes evident through the silencing process of construction that we can identify through the manuscripts and through the silence and emptiness that permeate the characters' communication, which reflects the same emotional state that we see in Stanislavsky's letter – worrying thoughts. The doubts mentioned by the Russian director are also present in **OI** and that is that is something which we can be certain of: through the doubts that involve the character, we are immersed in a universe of doubts about our own existence and its meaning; we are left in a state of isolation which, according to Conte, is a "splendid" condition, for it forces us to think of our own thoughts, and that means bearing their absence until something new rises, coping with the unknown, aware that, even when facing chaos and complete lack of meaning, life will still

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[29] Tudo isso não é sério. É, com certeza, uma devoção inútil uma pessoa se dedicar a este tipo de vida. Será que não estou fazendo o mesmo? Estes pensamentos me preocupam muito. Pensava que o palco era uma ocupação séria e digna, mas nada parece fazer sentido. Estou começando a duvidar não só da minha vida, mas a de muita gente está sendo desperdiçada. De novo, não posso evitar de pensar que devo fazer algo diferente para viver (SOUSA ET all., org., p. 151).

insist on pursuing meaning. On a certain level, this condition evokes the psychoanalytic approach on literary theory by Marcelin Pleynet, whose thesis was based on the idea that, from the moment that religion does not represent human's psychological repressions anymore, man starts to accumulate them. According to the author, this religious impossibility generated a cultural and psychic trauma that turned modern art into the stage of its compulsive repetition, once this trauma is never clarified because it is never treated; modern art was seen as an ensemble of symptoms of that psychological repression, and only through language, that is literature, it would be genealogically clarified, moving towards consciousness and, therefore, being able to release the stage of compulsive repetition of that original trauma and inaugurate a new history (PLEYNET, 1977, p. 33-35). Although this fundamentalist Freudian approach goes back to the 1960-1970s, a time when psychoanalysis represented the mainstream in literary and art criticism, which according to Stéphane Huchet (SOUZA et al., 2001) has already been subverted especially by the works of authors who are more strongly connected to the visual arts, and here we can include Samuel Beckett for his interest in and deep knowledge of art, the fact is that we can identify this repetitive "trauma" mentioned by Pleynet in most of Beckett's works, and especially in **OI**. Repetition of visual elements (characters), repetition of movements, facts and words, they all bring to surface the impossibility of "treating", as Pleynet would say, an original repression which, as it is never really faced, cannot release the past and inaugurate a new story. We have then *Clov* and *Ham* constantly going back to some past story never really finished; we have *Reader* and *Listener* repeatedly going back to the never told story; in **OI**, even the unspoken words, the silence are repetitive and visibly pregnant of trauma. With no words, there is no need for the poet (the playwright) to overcome his fears, his lack of courage, and compromise himself, for, according to Bachelard, great simple images reveal a state of the soul, and **OI** is pregnant of them – the poet lives a reverie that veils; his dreams live in a "safe", like all unforgettable

things, where past, present, and future condense. The safe, states Bachelard, is the memory of the immemorial, the dimension of intimacy.

> Every man carries a secret; many of them die without having discovered it, and will not discover it because, dead, the secret does not exist anymore, neither them. I died and resurrected with the key of gemstones from his last spiritual urn. It is up to me now open it away from any impression borrowed; and its mystery ought to emanate into an extremely beautiful sky. (MALLARMÉ apud BACHELARD, 2003, p. 97) [30]

The poetic reverie, the creator of symbols, states Bachelard, gives to our intimacy a poli-symbolic activity because the phenomenology necessarily is sensitive to the differentiation of the symbols. The image is the work of absolute imagination; the images of our reveries, if we sincerely lived these perceptions of intimacy, would unveil a myriad of values, of shelters set within each other. We may think of the weather in **OI**: it might change, as much as time and space, but the character will always be seen in his long black coat and hat, from which we can infer that his psychological "weather", his inner state, remains the same – the image of a cold, dark, and lonely winter. We may agree with Gaston Bachelard when he states that, among all seasons, winter is the oldest; it ages memories, evokes a faraway past, and Beckett's meteorology prepares the spectator for long dark nights, and throws us into silence to give us the dimension of time in the unlimited space – the great space: man's friend. Nevertheless, the character continues his pursuit of comfort and intimacy, the return to the primitivity of the refuge, which causes in him a feeling of closure into himself and retreat, shrink, hide (2003, p. 104). Repetition in **OI** comes from revival, which evokes the image of refuge; there, the character meets again his beloved attic full of

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[30] "Todo homem tem consigo um segredo; muitos morrem sem havê-lo descoberto, e não o descobrirão porque, mortos, o segredo não existe mais, nem eles. Morri e ressuscitei com a chave de pedrarias do meu último escrínio espiritual. Cabe-me agora abri-lo longe de qualquer impressão tomada de empréstimo; e seu mistério há de emanar-se num céu extremamente belo." (Letter from Mallarmé to Aubanel, from 16 July, 1866)

memories, even if only in the fleeting moments when the *man* comes to visit him and bring news from the "dear name" in the darkness of the night. Repetition of facts, of words, of images: all together they bring back the image of a nest which, although a failure image, represents a tender sweet home, like it is for the birds, "a house full of life" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 105), which continues to involve the bird that broke the egg. The nest, he continues, like any image of rest and tranquility, is immediately associated to the image of a simple house, but simplicity brings forgetfulness and gratitude for the poet who finds in a rare impetus the talent to renew it. The house-nest is never new – we return to it, we dream of going back to it, just like the bird returns to its nest. "I dreamed of a nest where the trees drove death off. […] I dreamed of a nest where the ages slept no more".[31] Yet, the author poses a question: "But, in order to compare so tenderly the house and the nest, won't it be necessary to have lost the house of happiness?"[32] Isn't this the image that we get from **OI**'s character pacing up and down the islet – the image of a bird that does not have its nest to go back to, and, consequently, keeps retracing its steps once again? Isn't this the "compulsive repetitive trauma" that Marcelin Pleynet explained? The circularity in which Beckett's characters live brings to surface his presence in the play and his awareness that language is not enough – it failed in its task of providing communication between human beings – therefore, there is a constant threat of, author and characters, being overlapped by the possibility of an "end". Circularity that we see in the formation of a shell which, according to Bachelard (2003, p. 118), is similar to life: life starts less by launching itself towards than turning around itself; a "vital impulse that spins". Then, the author proposes a phenomenology of the shell, which is also present in **OI** – the empty shell, like the empty nest, suggests reveries of refuge; everything is dialectics in the man who leaves a shell and, as

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[31] "Sonhei com um ninho em que as árvores repeliam a morte. [...] Sonhei com um ninho em que os tempos não dormiam mais." (SHEDROW, A. apud BACHELARD, G., 2003, p. 115).

[32] "Mas, para comparar tão ternamente a casa e o ninho, não será necessário ter perdido a casa da felicidade?" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 112).

he does not entirely leave it, what comes out contradicts what stays locked inside. The phenomenology of the shell makes imagination go beyond the dialectics of the small and the big; it provokes also the dialectics of the free man vs. chained man. And the author adds: "how much do not the ripples of fear and curiosity increase when reality is not present to moderate them, when we imagine!"[33] "In this extremity his old terror of night laid hold on him again. […] Now with redoubled force the fearful symptoms described at length…" (**OI**, p.15). In **OI**, we do not see the shell, there is no feeling of refuge in the visual emptiness surrounding *Listener* and *Reader;* on the contrary, there is the craving for it, the image of an incomplete man who seeks for it, and that is expressed in the narration's circularity, in the visual repetition of *Listener* and *Reader.* In **OI,** we are offered the refuge of emptiness so we can fulfill it with our imagination, our own fears and symbols, despite the biographic elements present in the text, such as when *Reader* is searching for "page forty paragraph four" and then reads "White nights" which, according to Seelig <SEELIG>, is a pun on "Whiteknights," the location of Beckett's manuscripts at the Reading University Library – "requested by the academic world, Ohio Impromptu in many ways grew to be about it". Another biographic reference is the fact that, in the 1980s, Beckett suffered from a hand disorder, called Dupuytren's contracture, which leads to fixed flexion of the fingers and, according to Seelig can be identified in some of **OI**'s manuscripts:

> In the second group of drafts, the figure of a man tenuously gripping a needle and thread shows that Dupuytren's contracture was also on Beckett's mind during the writing of Ohio Impromptu. The presence of Dupuytren's in these early drafts leads to speculation about certain aspects of Listener and Reader in the final play; Listener's hand might be limited to knocking because it is permanently clenched, or Reader's function could exclude writing because he is unable to grip a pencil. As a result of his contracture, Beckett's arms had thinned out considerably, which could explain the metaphorical and actual references to arms in the final play. Another autobiographical element that Beckett incorporated in his early drafts of Ohio Impromptu was his failing vision, which continued to trouble him throughout

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[33] "Como aumentam as ondulações de medo e curiosidade quando a realidade não está presente para moderá-las, quando se imagina!" (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 123).

his later years, especially after he underwent cataract surgery in both eyes in the early 1970s. The sole typescript of the MS 2930 series offers the clearest exposition of the motifs Beckett was shaping at the time. Here is the opening block paragraph of the monologue:

{in hand} White face
Black eyelids

(Raises shaky R.H.) In his right hand, for he is – (Lowers RH.) Too loud. (Raises RH. Equally loud.) In his right hand for he is – . (Lowers RH.) Good. Now he may seem to be communing. With himself. (Raises RH.) In his right hand, for he is left-handed, he grasps the needle. (Raises shaky LH.) In his left the thread. (Pause.) Between forefingers and thumbs, mercifully spared by his contracture. Till now. (Pause.) Next he brings them propinquous >close<. Thus. (Does so.) Before his one good eye, the right – no, wrong, the left, against whatever light there may happen to be, at the time, and steadies himself for the attempt. (Pause.) Could he now close his right eye matters would be improved. But he cannot. For if he did, the left would close too. Thus (Moves hands apart.) Thus. <SEELIG>

Besides the fact that both Joyce and Beckett developed ocular problems in their old age, which supports the idea that *Listener* could not read for visual problems, we can also recall other biographic aspects, as James Knowlson points out, referring to the close resemblance between *Listener/Reader* and Joyce/Beckett, for Joyce became a sort of "hero-figure", in many ways imitated by the young Beckett: by "wearing shoes that were too narrow for him, drinking white wines, and holding his cigarette in a certain way" (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 108). Especially by tracing back the first drafts of **OI**, Beckett's work of self-erasure from his text becomes more apparent, creating bigger gaps of information and words and, consequently, opening more and deeper "poetic spaces", spaces of imagination and reverie, as Bachelard would call them.

Gone is Beckett's "I," which appeared in the earliest drafts of Ohio Impromptu; yet, while his creative process has undone many personal details, the final play contains no less of the author. Derangement does not elicit a chain of infinite regression that obscures the work's original source. Quite the opposite: it is precisely Beckett's insistence on removing himself from his texts that provides an indication of the author's personality, for the residual signs of his working method reveal how, rather than who, he is. <SEELIG, p. 9>

Heterotopologically, using Foucault's expression, what we see in **OI**'s space is a juxtaposition of a single real place and several spaces that somehow are incompatible, linked to slices of time that lead to a sort of absolute break with man's traditional time – heterochronies. Here we must recall Beckett's biography, since

"Joyce's apartment lay only five hundred meters away from the Seine, and a favorite Sunday morning walk for Beckett and Joyce was to saunter together west along the quai de Branly and the quai de Grenelle as far as Bir-Hakeim, then stroll along the narrow, tree-lined Allée des Cignes (or Isle of Swans), which extends in midstream near the pont de Grenelle" (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 107).

Footsteps whose echo can be retraced in **OI**: "From its single window he could see the downstream extremity of the Isle of Swans. … Day after day he could be seen slowly pacing the islet. Hour after hour" (**OI**, p.13).

Besides the biographic references it contains, the Isle of Swans is a perfect example, for in its history it carries multiple layers of time and space, for it is known that the actual isle is an artificially-created island formed in 1827 and which does not correspond to the former Isle of Swans attached to Champs de Mars in the late 18th century. Moreover, the island holds a notable feature, a small-scale replica of the Statue of Liberty, which after some changes now faces west in the direction of its larger sibling in New York. Culturally, it carries more layers too: this statue was given by the French community living in the United States to commemorate the centennial of the French revolution; its base carries a commemorative plate, and the booklet it holds in its left hand carries the inscription "IV Juillet 1776 = XIV Juillet 1789", recognizing both the American Independence Day and Bastille Day. Therefore, which site does the author refer to? Which time? The Isle of Swans, the room, the scene are but

heterotopias that create a space of illusion which turns every real space in human life even more illusory – some kind of fulfilled utopias, condensed real spaces, somehow inverted, places without places. From the beginning, we are aware that the room is unfamiliar, the scene is unfamiliar, and even the Isle of Swans that really exists in Paris, located between the fifteenth and sixteenth *arrondissement* (**Plate 25**), gives us a sense of unfamiliarity, as if it belonged to another space or time, an aura of haunted space, of time outside time. Actually, in his third principle[34], Foucault relates the theater, cinema, garden, and even carpets and rugs to what he calls "sacred space", a sacred rectangle that, like the Persian rugs that always represented gardens, is supposed to bring together within it four parts representing the four parts of the world. According to Foucault, the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space, like the Isle of Swans that had its site changed, like its replica of the Statue of Liberty that had its position altered and its cultural reference crossed over, superposed. The urban space of the sad tale reveals itself empty, not the expectation of an encounter, but the desire to believe in that possibility, the longing for a name, a dear face. "Unfamiliar room. Unfamiliar scene. Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared. From this he had once half hoped some measure of relief might flow" (**OI**, p. 12). A sacred rectangle, like the

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[34] **Troisième principe**. L'hétérotopie a le pouvoir de juxtaposer en un seul lieu réel plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles. C'est ainsi que le théâtre fait succéder sur le rectangle de la scène toute une série de lieux qui sont étrangers les uns aux autres; c'est ainsi que le cinéma est une très curieuse salle rectangulaire, au fond de laquelle, sur un écran à deux dimensions, on voit se projeter un espace à trois dimensions; mais peut-être est-ce que l'exemple le plus ancien de ces hétérotopies, en forme d'emplacements contradictoires, l'exemple le plus ancien, c'est peut-être le jardin. Il ne faut oublier que le jardin, étonnante création maintenant millénaire, avait en Orient des significations très profondes et comme superposées. Le jardin traditionnel des persans était un espace sacré qui devait réunir à l'intérieur de son rectangle quatre parties représentant les quatre parties du monde, avec un espace plus sacré encore que les autres qui était comme l'ombilic, le nombril du monde en son milieu, (c'est là qu'étaient la vasque et le jet d'eau); et toute la végétation du jardin devait se répartir dans cet espace, dans cette sorte de microcosme. Quant aux tapis, ils étaient, à l'origine, des reproductions de jardins. Le jardin, c'est un tapis où le monde tout entier vient accomplir sa perfection symbolique, et le tapis, c'est une sorte de jardin mobile à travers l'espace. Le jardin, c'est la plus petite parcelle du monde et puis c'est la totalité du monde. Le jardin, c'est, depuis le fond de l'Antiquité, une sorte d'hétérotopie heureuse et universalisante (de là nos jardins zoologiques).
Available at : http://www.foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/; site visited on January 5th 2009.

Plate 25: *Isle Swans* - Paris

table in **OI** that is the base of *Listener*'s and *Reader*'s encounter with the past through reading, except for the fact that this rectangle is plain white, it does not carry any reference that might recall a perfect representation of the world, as it would for the Persians. On the contrary, its whiteness asks for fulfillment, for a new story to be written or told. At the same time, a physical space that affirms the existence of a common story and the possibility of resuming a dialogue is presented to the spectator-reader, the text dissolves the urban space when it shows the absence of familiarity of the place, the scene, there, where nothing was ever truly shared, back to where nothing was ever shared. In this *contrappunto* between the outlined space and the text, the *Reader*-narrator still adds that in that come-and-go movement to that unshared place there was a half hope of some sort of relief. In this game of contrasts, through resisting, Beckett seems to recognize the inevitable – in his world, there is nothing to be recognized, nothing to be truly shared.

> Could he not turn back? Acknowledge his error and return to where they were once so long alone together. Alone together so much shared. No. what he had done alone could not be undone. Nothing he had ever done alone could ever be undone. By him alone. (**OI**, p. 12)

"Everybody was 'Mister'. There were no Christian names, no first names. The nearest you would get to a friendly name was to drop the 'Mister'. I was never Sam. I was always 'Beckett' at the best."[35] The postmodern man moves alone towards his encounters with pairs that never stop being strangers; and in Beckett's universe of half-hopes, he keeps returning to these encounters, day after day, hour after hour – "in his dreams" (**OI**, p. 13). That man, aware of the surrounding darkness, aware of the liquidity of the space that sustains him, does not sleep: "as when his heart was young. No sleep no braving sleep till – (*turns page*) – dawn

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[35] This is how Beckett described the way Joyce related to his friends, saying that despite liking each other there was not much conversation between them, and that he felt very flattered when Joyce dropped the "Mister" (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 108).

of day" (**OI**, p. 15). The desire to resist is always stronger than everything else – than the darkness that surrounds him, than the insignificance and the absence of dialogue with his pair. Unfamiliarity can persist, but the Beckettian man resists even more; the game will always be resumed; no matter how sad the story is, it will always be told once more, but always in the "in between-space", in the "in-between-room" of a shadowy house, marked by a labyrinthian time, the time and the space of nostalgia and reverie mentioned by Gaston Bachelard. The awareness of the melting structure, characteristic of the 1980s which Bauman refers to, permeates Beckett's space, but the keyword remains "resist", never sleep until a new day rises in the horizon of a humanity who, despite not knowing the paths that lead to encounter, know that nothing that has been done in the isolation of the "I" can be undone by the "I" alone. Maybe this is why Beckett moved from "I" in his first drafts of **OI** to "he" and after to "them": he was aware of the impotence of "I".

The Beckettian space is like the "non-places" mentioned by Bauman – spaces that discourage the idea of "settling down", that accept the inevitability of a postponed passage of strangers, and do whatever they can to make that presence preferably unnoticed from the absence, to cancel, level or zero down, empty the idiosyncratic subjectivities of its 'passersby' (BAUMAN, 2001, p. 119). *Reader* and *Listener* are leveled in their mirroring and in their subjectivities and, consequently, become strange passersby, independently of how many times *Reader* refers to the "dear name", for it will never be unveiled; independently of how many times he mentions the shared spaces, for they will always be "non-places" situated in the in-between spaces of memory and nostalgia, of past and present. And the space of the spectator-reader does not seem to be different: interacting with Beckett's work means interacting with a non-presence, with a non-place; it is seeing a melted time passing by, with no frontiers between past, present and future. Studying the space in **OI** will always be like digging in the

depths of our own mind, which reminds us of Caravaggio's words about his own painting in the movie *Caravaggio*, directed by Derek Jarman in 1996: "my painting is a wreck".

2.3. THE PICTORIAL SPACE IN *OHIO IMPROMPTU* (OI)

Having been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1969, Samuel Beckett stands as one of the founders of the "Theater of the Absurd", as well as the most important representative of the "literature of desperation". In fact, much has been said about his work in general and especially about *Waiting for Godot*, which is considered a turning point in modern drama, a revolutionary work in all aspects: setting, characters, language. The search for identity, the impossibility of communication, the disbelief in the power of language to express this state of desperation in a meaningless world, constitute the main aspects of Beckett's plays, and have been the focus of most theoretical works about the author.

Yet, in spite of being merely one of his short plays, also **OI** rises in importance for various reasons. Firstly, for its biographical elements, which have already been stressed by some authors, including references to his friendship with James Joyce, which are pointed out by Adam Seelig on his article "Beckett's dying remains: The Process of Playwriting in the Ohio Impromptu Manuscripts"[36].

> The details of Beckett's relationship with Joyce are the most heavily autobiographical elements of the final text. The wide-brimmed black hat, described in Reader's book as "an old world Latin Quarter hat" […], is reminiscent of the hat that Joyce used to wear on the left bank in Paris (and Stephen Dedalus in Ulysses). Many of the real geographical sites of Paris where Joyce and Beckett spent time together take on a more abstract form in the imaginative landscape in Reader's book. For instance, the two river arms in the book that "conflowed and flowed united on" […] near the Isle of Swans recall the two arms of the Seine merging after flowing around the Allée de Cygnes, where Beckett and Joyce used to take long walks together (Knowlson 107). The position of Reader and Listener, both hunched over an old volume, each with a hand on his forehead in deep meditation, is perhaps the

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[36] Published in *Modern Drama*, Volume 43, Number 3. Available at: http://samuel-beckett.net/remains3.html. Site visited on January 5th, 2009.

strongest clue that the play draws on the relationship between Beckett and Joyce, suggesting the days when Beckett served as Joyce's amanuensis in the early 1920s. At that time Joyce was nearly blind, and he occasionally dictated passages of his Work in Progress to Beckett, who would then read the words back to him. Richard Ellmann, Joyce's biographer, relates a humorous anecdote about a dictation session that could very well have influenced the staging of Ohio Impromptu:

[I]n the middle of one such session there was a knock at the door which Beckett didn't hear. Joyce said, "Come in," and Beckett wrote it down. Afterwards he read back what he had written and Joyce said, "What's that 'Come in'?" "Yes, you said that," said Beckett. Joyce thought for a moment, then said, "Let it stand." He was quite willing to accept coincidence as his collaborator. Beckett was fascinated and thwarted by Joyce's singular method.

Actually, none of Beckett's work evokes so much of his biography as **OI**: his passion for reading long hours alone – whether in the house or in the garden; he would "wander much farther afield to read, losing all sense of time as he devoured his stories", says Knowlson (1996, p. 44), which can be felt in the timeless environment presented in the reading pauses given; his states of mind as a teenager, considered moody, withdrawn, introspective, which can be seen in the figure of the two black-and-white characters equally introspective and withdrawn; his interest in music and in verse, which can be found in **OI** from the title (*Impromptu)* until the last sentence through their poetic rhythm; his literary taste and his interest in the Surrealist writers like Paul Élouard and André Breton whose works he translated, and his passion for Italian literature, specifically Dante whose work he studied with his dear teacher Bianca Esposito, besides practicing conversation, and who can also be seen in the figure of *Reader/Listener*, as much as in the image of the book and its power to "convey" truth. Although Beckett always saw himself as belonging to and drawing from a wide European literary tradition, which would include authors such as Balzac, Racine, Diderot, Stendhal, Rabelais, Swift, Fielding, Sterne, besides Joyce, Dante was his greatest love among Italian writers along with Leopardi, poet of pessimism (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 70). Other than that, we can identify Beckett's interest in the power of gesture, the importance of

"muscular dialogue generated by gesture" (KNOWLSON, p. 71), even when reduced to a few essential, repeated movements, as we can see in **OI.**

Secondly, **OI** is one of the first plays released as part of the "Beckett on Film Project", a unique project which has filmed all the nineteen of Samuel Beckett's stage plays, bringing together some of the world's most talented directors and actors. In 2001, that project received the "Best TV Drama" Award at the Sixth South Bank Show Awards ceremony in London, which is regarded as a celebration of artistic achievement on the highest level. The inclusion of the short **OI** in a project of such magnitude reinforces the importance of the pictorial aspects of the play, especially because the director Charles Sturridge, responsible for the movie version of the work, faithfully follows Beckett's recommendations. As Lois Oppenheim (2003) points out, not only do the Beckettian themes appear modeled on the sensory perspective of the eye but, for Beckett, painting is materialized as emblematic of the creative process itself; depiction is intimately related to, if not ultimately thwarted by, the primordial Being-in-the-world. The unifying force of all Beckett's work, says the author, is a preoccupation with the visual as a primary paradigmatic force which configures, in words, time, space, and the self's dwelling therein; and painting sanctioned that preoccupation. Beckett's art, states Oppenheim, is a process of materialization, for it "concretizes in allusions to painting the referentiality of language, figure both in metaphor and theme the empirical boundaries of seeing, and realizes in visible form the indeterminacy of the invisible" (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 45).

In the era of transdisciplinarity, **OI** is an outstanding example of transdisciplinary work, an authentic bridge connecting various visual languages such as photography, cinema, painting, performance, and theater. Therefore, drawing a visual poetics for this play means going beyond the words, through a careful analysis of its pictorial aspects (space

arrangements, the contrast of shade-light, setting, color, etc.), including the film version, and investigating the layers that are kept imprisoned in the apparent non-sense monologue/dialogue, in the silence between words. A visual poetics is a contemporary way of unfolding the totality of the play through the observation and analysis of its formal construction, making different views of the text possible, regarding it not only as literary or theatrical, but also as a visual artwork. The more we investigate, the more the twelve-minute **OI** reveals itself to be a multifaceted work. The more Beckett reduces all the elements, be it linguistically, be it visually, the more intense, more complex it becomes, more strongly it reveals what or how much the audience is not aware of and is not allowed to be. The stronger the visual is, the more it reveals its impotence to "tell", the resistance of the real to representation, which generates a sort of obsessive circle that endlessly and impossibly seeks expression; and this process is the force that keeps Beckett's plays on. Beckett's art, visually and linguistically, in its self-reflexivity, is the expression of this obsession with continuance, at the same time that the stories reflect their own incompletion. Therefore, if there is a way to unfold the text, including the reader/audience, it is through visual poetics, so every detail can be captured, every grade of light intensity or darkness in the play can be translated, or at least be considered as an important element to its interpretation. Consequently, every visual element during or between an attempt of communication, of movement, or of a moment of steadiness, can be taken into account for the understanding of the play, and function as elements of revelation for the reader/audience. Through the visual it is possible to understand Beckett's creative process – his awareness of the impossibility to communicate through language, the interference which words actually cause in their own saying, as he states in *Three Dialogues*; then the self-awareness of his art and its provisional "end", i.e., not the end of writing but the ultimate awareness of its failure, its own limitations as a creative tool. "To be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail" (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, p. 46).

Drawing a visual poetics for **OI** goes beyond the analysis of pictorial aspects such as photography, lighting, etc.; it leads to the disclosure of a stream of reasoning about one of the most significant issues that our society faces in the modern era: the relation of its body (social, cultural, and political structures) with time and space. As it was previously mentioned, sociologists such as Zygmunt Bauman have already outlined many of the changes provoked by this relation, pointing out fluidity as the main metaphor for the present moment, in many ways new, in the history of the modern era. Modernity, since the beginning, has been presented as a process of liquefaction, having as its main purpose profaning the sacred, repudiating the past and claiming for the destruction of beliefs and loyalties, going beyond all tradition that represented an armour against the damaging process of constant changes.

Following the same stream as Ulrich Beck who, in the 1990's, created the term "second modernity" to connote the phase when modernity started having its social structures melted, Zygmunt Bauman (2001, p. 13) clarifies that, in the beginning of modernity, no mold was broken without being replaced by another; that people were freed only to be admonished and censured in case they were not able to relocate themselves in the right new niche. Modernity's "power of melting", as Beck states, affects the institutions, the frames that define the limits of possible "actions-choices" in all levels of social life – familiar, professional, educational, and even religious institutions. Nowadays, the patterns and configurations are not "given" anymore, even less self-evident; they are many and are constantly shocking and contradicting each other, and this constant and conflictive movement deprives them of good part of their coercive power of compelling and restraining. The human condition has been deeply affected by the fact that the possibility of having a systemic structure to hold their values, beliefs and traditions is becoming increasingly remote. The actual social scenario is immersed in a fluid, non-structured state, requiring an effort to rethink all these living-dead concepts, and one of the crucial attributes that characterizes modernity – or post-modernity, as

some would name it – is the changeable time-space relation. And that is the attribute that pervades **OI** from the first line, which already expresses that changeability in the time-space relation: the introduction informs the reader-spectator that there is "little left to tell". The play moves on bringing the idea of moving away in order to find relief from unfamiliarity, and here the narrator defines it – "unfamiliar room. Unfamiliar scene" – showing through spatial change a change not only in chronological time but in the time of experience in a multidirectional way: "Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared". If possible, relief will not come from the power of "telling" the story, but from silence, from the empty spaces of unfamiliarity, where words cannot communicate because the experience cannot be narrated, for it remains locked between spaces, within pauses. Failure of representation, failure of expression, whether verbal or not, of the objective in art is what, according to Lois Oppenheim (2003), led to Beckett's conceiving of a "literature of the unword", which can be clearly described in his letter to Axel Kaun in which he asks,

> Is there any reason why that terrible materiality of the word surface should not be capable of being dissolved, like for example the sound surface, torn by enormous pauses, of Beethoven's seventh symphony, so that through whole pages we can perceive nothing but a path of sounds suspended in giddy heights, linking unfathomable abysses of silence? (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 47)

From Bauman's point of view, modernity starts when space and time are separated from the practice of life and from each other; therefore, they can be theorized as distinct categories, mutually independent. In this aspect, speed has played a main role in the time-space relation. Its mold is not the human leg, or the animal paw anymore, but it is totally dependent on technology and its development. Consequently, it becomes a fluid concept too, which inevitably leads us to another important contemporary process: McLuhan's philosophy of media.

In his book *Understanding Media* (1964), Marshall McLuhan proposes a new approach to the aesthetic form, relating it to the media and stating that new forms of media change the perceptions of societies, and that there are, in regard to the degree of the user's participation, two fundamental ways for perception: a homogeneous one, simple, lineal, visual, hierarchical, explosive, strictly related to alphabetical writing: the press, photography, radio, cinema, and automobile; the other way is pluricentric, participative, tactile, instantaneous, and implosive, which corresponds to electricity, telegraph, telephone, television, and computer. The homogeneous form, the so-called *hot medium,* takes a single meaning, the sight, to a high definition, which requires low participation from users, since they foster detachment. Conversely, *cool media* are those that require strong user participation, since they urge users to engage themselves completely in their use. Radio, for example, is defined as a hot medium, since listening does not require complete involvement from the user. In contrast, television is a cool medium, for it requires more user participation <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Understanding_Media>. The experience of a time, states McLuhan, is conditioned by the medium, which is an extension of us, of our senses and perceptive faculties; it technologically reproduces processes that belong to man, though turning them unrecognizable for him. Each medium produces either "amputations" or "extensions" to our senses and bodies, shaping them in a new technical form through adding themselves on to what we already are. As appealing as this remaking of ourselves may seem, it really puts us in a "narcissistic hypnosis" that prevents us from seeing the real nature of the media. Each extension means sleepiness, narcosis, and amputation: it is not I who feels something, but a technological extension of my senses that feel instead of me. The media have a much faster and surprising dynamics than the traditional aesthetic forms; for instance, the movie, speeding up the mechanical (a sequence of frames), carried us from the world of sequence and connections into the world of creative configuration and structure. Hence, on an

aesthetic level, we are also dealing with time-space changeability, visually expressed through sophisticated technology – the movie industry. Then, the message of the movie medium is that of transition from lineal connections to configurations. And what do we see in Beckett's **OI**? In spite of making use of Pop Art's most characteristic tool, which is resistance to narrativity through repetition, what we see is a mediatic dynamics carrying us away from a sequential world into a creative configuration of different times – present, past and future constantly interchanging – and spaces that go beyond local references, merging with the spaces of memory, desire and reverie. Although not making use of any technological effect in his plays, what Beckett proposes in **OI** is the time-space lived in the cinema.

Regarding the media dynamics, in his last book, *Laws of media* (1988), McLuhan divides it into four phases: growth, which is the intensification of any aspect of a situation in which a sight is enlarged; obsolescence, when the past situation has become impotent due to its removal; recovery, when something that was previously obsolete is put again into action; and inversion, which creates a new configuration with characteristics that are simultaneously similar and opposite to the departing point. Establishing a relationship between McLuhan's theory and Beckett's aesthetics in **OI**, it is possible to identify these four phases: we can relate the first phase to the intensification of the characters' mirror image, besides the intensification of contemplation time given to the spectator; obsolescence can be seen on a literary level through the removal of the story from the story itself, since it is never really told; recovery, through literary repetition and through the arrival of another character, a "man" who had been sent by the dear name carrying a book to be read until dawn, bringing about a new fragmentation of the already fragmented subject, and superposition of spaces as much as of levels of discourse; finally, we can see inversion, new configurations all over the play through moving forward and backward not only in time but by constantly reediting the narration by un-wording his words. As Lois Oppenheim states,

> in Beckett it is precisely the resurrection, alteration, and elaboration of a previous text within a subsequent one that not only defies any possible fixity of art but also renders both works-in-progress, each as temporally resistant to objectification as the *pour-soi* itself (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 21).

A postmodern process, which is described by Lyotard as a procedure in 'ana-': a procedure of analysis, anamnesis, anagogy, and anamorphosis that elaborates an 'initial forgetting', a method of "distorted self-recollection" which is auto-*ana*lytic, an autotextual elaboration of "an 'initial forgetting,'" (LYOTARD apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 21).

According to McLuhan's theory, the interaction of all senses would create a unifying involvement of the experience, and despite not making use of any electronic medium, Beckett seems to follow the same concept by provoking that unifying involvement in the theatrical experience through breaking its traditional narrative and playing with time and space as if it were in the cinema. From the point of view of the aesthetic of form, the importance of this theory lies on the fact that it highlights once more the nexus between form and transcendence; forms are not closed within themselves but constantly moved by a movement that exceeds them. That is why all the pictorial references present in **OI** are new, reconfigured, since new layers of references were added to them – the Renaissance perspective, the *chiaroscuro,* even the references to contemporary art, became all amputations and extensions to our bodies and senses, to our cultural and social identity. Beckett turned the stage into a *cool medium*, a pluricentric, implosive experience that requires full participation from its users. The dialogue perpetuated by the autotext, as Lois Oppenheim defines it, a dialogue of Beckett with himself, is as much deformative or detotalizing as constitutive, "for it amounts to endless undoing of every work posited as referent" (2003, p. 19).

Jean-François Lyotard, on the other hand, attributes to the *avant-garde* art the paradoxical task of manifesting the immateriality of the sublime through matter; therefore, this materiality cannot be but minimal. The mystery of the sublime lies effectively in distinguishing through the sensible anything that the sensible cannot present under the aspect of form. Analyzing both theories, Perniola (1998) states that a new chapter has been opened in the aesthetics of the form, referring to the aesthetics of feeling. In an era when the concept of parallel universes is considered as a true possibility as much as many other technologies to which we have become used through science-fiction movies, such as robots, force fields, as presented by physicist Michio Kako in his book *Physics of the Impossible,* we are even deprived of the belief that the sky is the limit, and being forced to re-define the concept of universal. Thanks to this new achieved flexibility, the modern time became mostly the weapon in the conquest of space, liquefying one of the most solid, because impassive and inert, concepts forged by the human being – their relation with space. Bauman states that the speed of movement and the access to faster ways of mobility became, in the modern times, the most important tools of power and domination. Space does not represent limitation for power anymore; concepts such as distant or near are bound to disappear, and with this, many other changes are bound to occur – more liquefaction of the social frames that used to define and help the human condition.

OI definitely brings to life a portrait of such situation: a struggle between memory and desire against change and, no matter how much effort had been made to keep remembrances alive, to keep the presence of the "dear one", everything has changed – the dear name cannot be said anymore, the facts cannot be unfolded, the story has reached its end – "nothing is left to tell". Nevertheless, we are still presented with two figures – the two characters (*Reader* and *Listener*) – frozen in their appearance, alike in every detail as if this visual procedure, the unfolding of the characters that leads to the fragmentation of the

Subject, would be able to stop the struggle, as if it would avoid the damage caused by the changes brought by time. Here, the visual aspects of the text – the similarity between the two actors, the black-and-white, the *chiaroscuro*, the Renaissance composition in a minimalist setting – are the elements which contribute to potentiate the drama lived by *Reader/Listener*, bringing to it a sociological dimension and revealing the cultural drama faced by contemporary society; like the fragmented, non-localized Subject, the reader-spectator remains in suspense, loose within an unfamiliar space, an uncomfortable time. Our cultural and emotional space has moved so much and so many times that we are not able to tell our history anymore; there is no time for us to recognize or hold our identity as a cultural, social body anymore. Consequently, at the same time their mirror effect brings about the fragmentation of their identity, *Reader* and *Listener* could also symbolize an attempt to create the armour mentioned by Bauman against the destruction caused by changes.

In fact, it is possible to say that **OI** stands as an antithesis of the liquid modernity; it seems that every visual element in the play is liable to restrain, even the audience's breath – we are put on hold, not only uselessly waiting for the story that will not be told, but also the reading time is slower and permeated with pauses. *Reader*'s face being kept almost all the time hidden, the stage darkness contrasted with strong lighting, and of course the two identical characters are details which contribute to hold our attention, our expectation, our desire to be included, introduced into the story. Through Beckett's effort to keep the play on hold, we are, in reality, confronted with Bauman's theories about the contemporary liquidity and dragged to a level of shocking, desperate awareness of the impossibility to hold no matter what aspect of human life. **OI** is the literary sum of all these meltings and the desperate struggle to resist them; time and space are constantly liquefied under the power

which the author majestically exerts from the beginning to the end of the play. And it is through the pictorial choices that this struggle becomes evident. Therefore, its transdisciplinary tenor, due to the variety of visual elements directly related to many art movements, justifies the importance of drawing a visual poetics for **OI**, as a way to unfold the various levels of reading which the play can afford to offer to a careful reader. **OI** offers us a contemporary space, like a computer-generated image that can be compounded and re-compounded *ad infinitum*, a virtual image because there is no space in the contemporary world – virtual because the world virtualized by the media has become image (BARDONNÈCHE apud DOMINGUES [org.], 1997, p. 198).

Contrarily to the traditional artist who would take his images from the real world, now it is the machine that proposes him a world on which he bases himself and inserts his imaginary; the open space of imagination in the play allows the reader-spectator to transform the image, completing it with their own repertoire. The space of the image, says Bardonnèche, does not unfold in correlation with form and matter anymore; it exists only because there is something else: it is a dimension that contains time – the time within the immobile, stagnated image. Yet, this time, states the author, turns into something else: the space of laziness, which is the space of the game, the space of desire, the space of god; like the empty space of the game, its time is a "time in parenthesis" – it is the ludicrous universe that makes us forget time, and where the activity is allowed in a sort of appropriation of an abandoned time (DOMINGUES, 1997, p.199). The space in Beckett is also the space of the game with its time in parenthesis, the space of laziness for "lazy spectators", a ludicrous universe whose simple "costumes" masquerade a variety of pieces in the game of desire and imagination. The contemporary space is the scenario for an art that is required to constantly break with tradition, permanently innovating, and it is this call for an eternal genius what

causes a de-synchronization and rupture always more evident between art, its avant-gardes, and the public. In order to minimize this effect, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed an approach to art that aimed at establishing a more immediate relation between art and its public, through making them participate in the elaboration of the artwork and, consequently, sharing the time of creation. The simplest form of participation, according to Edmond Couchot (DOMINGUES, 1997) was the installation: installing the spectator in the center of the artwork, the artist was inviting the spectator to adopt a different attitude towards it. This process was used also in conceptual art and Land Art, where the entire body of the observer, not only his eyes, is inscribed in the artwork; more drastically, we have the kinetic art, which approximates even more the spectator through retroactions: the artwork is sensible to different solicitations, manipulations, operations, triggered by the displacements of the observer, their contact, the sound of their voice, their presence, warmth, their heartbeat, etc. In the kinetic art, the spectator has a real participation in the artwork, not only mental (COUCHOT apud DOMINGUES, 1997). As Frank Popper states, in the aesthetics of participation, "the essential is not the object itself anymore, but the dramatic confrontation of the spectator with a perceptive situation"[37]; in this form of artwork, the existence and significance of the artwork depend on the intervention of the spectator. Moreover, the contemporary spectator is invited to move one step forward to the interactive art, through open (online) and/or closed (offline) devices. An example of offline device is the work of Jeffrey Shaw (**Plate 26**), which invites us to visit a city whose constructions are letters that compound a text, by pedaling a real bicycle; he makes us see with our feet and our legs as much as with our eyes. An artistic open device, on the other hand, is an interconnected network: many people can enter together the game of interactivity and the spectator participates through gestures, texts, images, sometimes sounds, which are inscribed in the

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[37] "O essencial não é mais o objeto em si, mas a confrontação dramática do espectador a uma situação perceptiva" (POPPER apud DOMINGUES, 1997, p. 137).

memory of the work whose identity constantly changes and evolves around a nucleus preconceived by the author, who assures its continuity and coherence.
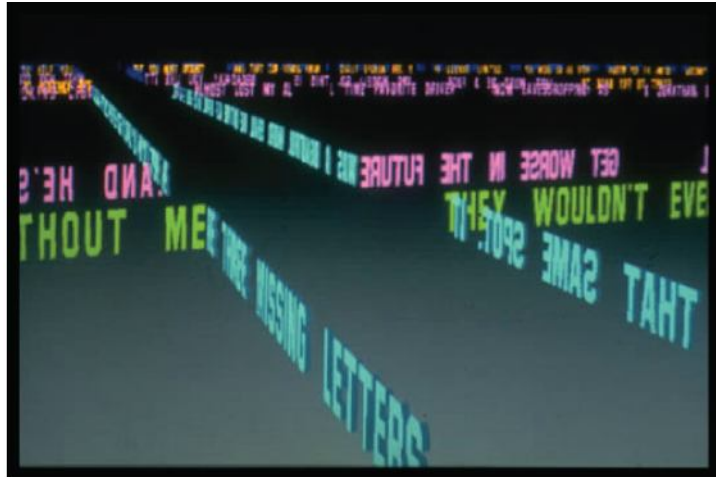
Plate 26a: *Legible City* - Jeffrey Shaw, 1989

Plate 26b: *Legible City* - Jeffrey Shaw, 1989

The first experiments took place in the 1980s, and so far these works have presented a strong trans-cultural vocation, but there are also those works that aim at some sort of mono-cultural re-territorialization, that is, actions that require, for example, the use of one specific language and culture. For this kind of work, the material used by the artist is not of a physical or energetic order, but symbolic: they are abstract materials, highly formalized, constituted by computer programs. The work is not fruit of the authority of the artist only; it produces itself throughout an almost instantaneous dialogue (in real time) with the spectator, who is not reduced to just looking at anymore; he has the possibility to act over the work and modify it, therefore becoming its co-author.

Although Beckett does not make use of any technological device in his plays, any computer generated image, the fact is that the empty space that permeates the play – the stage and pictorial spaces, and also the narrative space, the silent space between words and the fragmented subjects – constitute the abstract, and, in **OI**'s case specifically, highly formalized material that enables the reader-spectator to establish a dialogue with the play and its characters, filling in the blanks with their own material, their own memories. Solipsism becomes the fertile space where the spectator can work, mold, and even alter the contents of the play according to their own material, which is not only made of history and experiences, but also of shadows, ghosts, and haunting spaces of the past. In this territory, where the real resists expression, the reader-spectator becomes also the play's co-author. The more Beckett works to erase himself from the play; the more the space of his presence becomes uncertain, undefined, the wider and deeper becomes the space of the spectator in his plays.

2.3.1. Minimalism and *chiaroscuro* – the shades in *Ohio Impromptu*

"It is without a doubt only the artist who ends up seeing" (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 77). Among all the pictorial elements possibly identified in **OI,** Minimalism and the *Chiaroscuro* technique are the ones that first catch the audience's eye and it is worth mentioning that, although it emerged as a strong movement only in the 1950's, there are examples of Minimalism being exercised in art-work as early as the eighteenth century, when Goethe constructed the *Altar of Good Fortune* by simply combining a sphere and cube, both made of stone (**Plate 27**).

Actually, in the twentieth century we can find important examples of this movement since the 1920s, when artists such as Malevich and Marcel Duchamp produced art-works in the minimalist vein. When, in 1913, Malevich painted a black square on a white canvas, affirming that art would not serve the State or religion anymore and that it could exist by itself and for itself without things, he launched the foundations for a secular art, says Suzi Gablik (STANGOS, 2000), disconnected from utilitarian purposes and the ideological duty of representation. In this case, the square represented the basic Supremacist element which will never be found in nature, the representation of an art born in Russia that celebrated rationalism and a mathematical way of thinking and whose aesthetical approach was that the construction of an object would lead to a readable and immediate geometry (KRAUSS, 1977, p. 57). Besides, the minimalists, states Gablik, shared with Mondrian the belief that an artwork must be completely conceived by the mind before being executed; that art was a force through which the mind could impose its rational order to things. Consequently, the minimalists introduced an epistemological cube, symbolizing a commitment with clarity, conceptual strictness, literality, and simplicity, bringing up an idea of perfect balance, and producing a visual symmetry that never deviates from its space rigidly planned.

Plate 27: *Good Luck Stone* or *Altar of Agathe Tyche* - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1777

Despite the Russian influence, the movement became famous mainly with its American exponents, such as Dan Flavin (**Plate 28)**, Carl Andre (**Plate 29**), and Donald Judd (**Plate 30)**, who reacted in their canvases, sculptures, and installations against Abstract Expressionism, which basically aimed to express emotions through color. No emotional appeal, no concern with feelings, no subjectivity, no attempt to represent or symbolize any other object or experience; what we have in Minimalism is purely the study of formal concepts, shades versus light, geometry, and space arrangements, forms predominantly rectangular and cubic, repetition and neutral surfaces free from any metaphor or meaning. In fact, their main goal was to create works in which the whole would be more important than the parts, and in which the relational composition would be suppressed in favor of a simple ordination, all of this added by the minimalization of the artist's "handwork", which shifted the aesthetic value to a simple mental choice, like in Duchamp's *ready-mades*.

As it still happens today, strong voices rose against considering the minimalist work as art for its lack of creativity, inflexibility, mechanicism, nihilism, among other reasons. CarlAndre, for example, aimed at horizontality; he wished that his sculptures kissed the ground and in an interview he states that, in the beginning, he was cutting the wood to make something and then he realized that what he was cutting was indeed the cut itself; therefore, instead of cutting the material, he decided to use it as a cut in space (BOURDON, 1966, p. 15). On the same stream, Donald Judd states that it is not necessary for a work to have a bunch of things to be looked at, to be compared, to be analyzed one by one, to be contemplated; the thing as a whole, its qualities as a whole, that is what is interesting (STANGOS, 2000, p. 219), which, according to Gablik, replaces the cubist concept of simultaneity for a gestalt concept of instantaneity; composition becomes less important than scale, light, color, surface or format. In a minimalist work, the environment frequently turns into the pictorial space itself, like in Flavin's neon sculptures which reflect over the

Plate 28: *Installation (Untitled)* - Dan Flavin

Plate 29: *Copper and Magnesium Plain* - Carl Andre, 1969. Sculpture (36 pieces), 0,5 x 181.9 x 181.9 cm
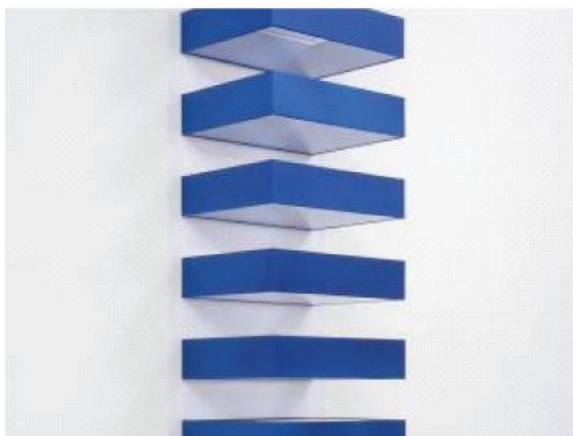

Plate 30: *Untitled* - Donald Judd, 1990. Anodised aluminium, steel and acrylic

surrounding walls. Modulation becomes a key element to understand the minimalist work, which will be expressed also in music, dance and theater, for it carries the idea of endless continuation, of future – as Carl Andre states, he produced a group of works that tend to generate their own future: "that is the definition of having a style, when the work we make becomes an objective condition for the work that will be made".[38] For Andre, Flavin and Judd, the future gradually reveals, in suspension, a whole past of growing density, like a cryptogram (STANGOS, 2000, p. 220).

Minimalism is also related to a number of other movements, such as: Conceptual art (**Plate 31**), in which the finished work exists merely to convey a theory; Pop art **(Plate 32),** that brings to the prosaic products of the industrialist culture the status of art-work, like Campbell soup cans, sharing with Minimalism also the fascination with the impersonal; and Land Art (**Plate 33),** in the way both movements focus on the construction of simple shapes and on the interference of the space in the art work. As a result, when we refer to Minimalism in the visual arts, we refer to reducing all the elements at the maximum, be it in content, be it in form, reaching a state of simplicity, clarity, formal purity, seeking to remove any sign of personal expressiveness and avoiding any distraction, so that the viewer can experience the work more intensely.

What is impressive in Beckett's play is that it holds a little of each of these movements. In **OI,** we have this formal reduction, this formal purity. The form wrapping the text becomes as important as the content, and it is carefully drawn in the minimum details. Everything is immersed in black and white, minimal in characters, stage set, and lighting: on stage, we have a plain white deal table (the minimalist basic element, the rectangle in its purity, occupies its fundamental space as the basis that will visually support the whole), two

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[38] Esta é a definição de ter um estilo, quando o trabalho que se faz torna-se uma condição objetiva para o trabalho que será feito.

Plate 31: *Vacant Apartment* - Ursula Sokolowska, 2007. Photography

Plate 32: *Girl with Hair Ribbon* - Roy Lichtenstein, 1965. Oil and magna on canvas, 121.9 x 121.9 cm

Plate 33: Land Art - Andy Goldsworthy

plain armless white deal chairs (again, the epistemological minimalist cube that could be reproduced *ad infinitum),* a black wide-brimmed hat at the center of the table, and two characters, whose performers, according to the author's instructions, must be as alike in appearance as possible **(Plate 34,35,36,37)**. Just like in a minimalist artwork, in **OI,** the ensemble simply exists – an object alive by itself, symmetrical, modular, clearly planned, created with simple geometrical forms, neutral industrial materials, and unitary independent forms. Like in Flavin's artwork, **OI'**s environment – the backstage – becomes also the pictorial space in which the ensemble spreads, diffuses itself through the play of light and shadows, and all the elements become even in importance so it is not possible to separate them anymore. Rectangle (table), cubes (chairs), triangles (characters), (half) sphere (hat): pictorially all these elements weigh as much as the open space backstage, and in a mix between dance, *happening*, and theatrical performance, the characters slowly and repeatedly perform their banal series of small movements (one turns the page of a book, the other synchronically knocks on the table; one raises his head, the other lowers it) – the "fundamental movement", as the minimalist choreographer Yvonne Rainer would call. And like in a minimalist musical composition, the one note unfolds itself through the long repetitive silent pauses; but here the *impromptu* visibly lacks the improvisation that the term suggests; on the contrary, it reflects the minimalist belief of art as a force capable of imposing itself over things – the power of mental choice. "All art aspires to the condition of music", states Walter Pater. Like in a Philip Glass's composition, the single musical phrase, which could be the silence, Beckett's silent music, as much as the rhythmical reading by *Reader*, modularly fulfils the space of the play by bringing density through repetition, but not exactly the ordering principle, as it would be expected from a minimalist artwork. As Celso Loureiro Chaves states in his column in Zero Hora newspaper, from February 14th, 2009, "music is the best measure of the plasticity of time", and the false *impromptu*, which **OI** in fact is, its

Plate 34: *Ohio Impromptu* - Samuel Beckett (Photo: Ana Boessio)

Plate 35: *Ohio Impromptu* - Samuel Beckett (Photo: Ana Boessio)

Plate 36: *Ohio Impromptu* - Samuel Beckett (Photo: Ana Boessio)

Plate 37: *Ohio Impromptu* - Samuel Beckett (Photo: Ana Boessio)

linguistic modulation[39], together with its visual modulation, is like a contemporary minimalist symphony, full of pauses and unexpected elements. Modulation in **OI** brings depth and labyrinth; and although it might lead to continuation as in a minimalist painting, here it disguises emotional/psychological chaos, struggle between memory and reverie, between presence and absence, a constant struggle against time. The black-and-white does not bring sharpness, clarity to the whole but creates *sfumato,* a myriad of in-between spaces occupied by the character's lack of identity, by the silence that permeates the play and by the shadowy openness that surrounds the visual composition.

According to Tassinari, it is the artistry of an artwork what promotes an aesthetic experience, as much as its power of inter-subjectivation, of pulling the spectator into an intersubjective net. The work by Donald Judd, for example, presents a horizontal movement, expansion and contraction through repetition, but it does not facilitate an aesthetic experience – austere, dull, it does not possess any strong emotional appeal, and consequently it stays under the suspicion whether it is or not art. In the same way, over Beckett's work lies the "is this…?" question: is this a play? Is this a poem? Is this a short prose? Like in Judd's work, the intersubjective net will not come out through the work itself because its simplicity of order and repetition turns it banal, which is a contradiction for, in reality, its artistry, its singularity comes from banality; in other words, by transfiguring the banal into the unexpected. At the same time it is a technical series; it can be sensed as a poetics of serial production, of a

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[39] As Adam Seelig questions, if we compare the reading rhythm of the following lines in **OI,** what is more logical: "he moved from where they had been so long together | to a single room," or is it "he moved from where they had been so long | together to a single room"? According to the author, the former is more logical; however, the rhythmic alliteration of "together to" invites the pairing of these words. "Moreover, the lyrical rhythm of the phrase suggests ending with the four even, iambic feet of the latter, invoking the sound of four feet, Beckett's and Joyce's, walking in harmony. This volatile relationship between "he" and "they" sets up the synecdoche for the remainder of the play, as "he" is the central part of "t-he-y" and, appropriately, stands in the collective's stead. The interchangeability of these pronouns is reinforced by the visual nature of the play, in that the two characters, although human in form, are hardly more animated than the words they study. Indeed, they are little more than an embodiment of these pronouns in the text. Subjected by the text, or, perhaps more precisely, objectified by it, Reader and Listener possess the dynamism of these dead nouns, 'as though turned to stone'." <SEELIG, p. 9>

technological production. Judd's sculpture, says Tassinari, detached from any use, reveals an artistry of technical basis: mirrored in one another, each unity has its position and, in the others, slight variations that reveal themselves according to the spectator's position. In **OI** as well, singularity comes from simplicity, from the banality of forms, of setting, and it is repetition that transfigures the banal into the unexpected, giving the spectator a special position – physically, for the perspective will be altered according to the point of view where the spectator stands, and metaphorically – which will alter each unity and their effect on one another; be it in regard to the characters, be it in regard to the visual elements. The intersubjective net has been set; the spectator has been pulled into it by simplicity and, as in Judd's artwork, can experience through its volumes as well as through the emptiness delimited by them a sort of aesthetic translation of a yes/no logic that, according to Tassinari, defines most of the contemporary industry. Here, the institutionalization of art comes conveniently in favor of the aesthetic experience, since it is the museum space that gives the necessary conditions for the artistic fruition – the museum is the space *par excellence* of an artwork; what is there is with no doubt an artwork and therefore will not be unnoticed, while, on the other hand, that same object might be totally ignored in the space of the ordinary world. And so is the stage compared to the play: it turns the white table and the black hat into something totally new, as well as the old men become figures deranged from each other, and even from the play itself and the audience. In this regard, Tassinari states that sharing its space with the ordinary space of the world is for the contemporary artwork at the same time a threat and an asset; in Judd's case, the museum protects it from being mistaken for an ordinary serial arrangement and, as a consequence, not awakening anything special in the spectator. In the same way, two men seated at a table would probably not provoke anything in the passersby if they were seated on a sidewalk or at a park. However, the lack of visual contextualization in **OI**'s scene is what awakens, disturbs the spectator – those men are seated

nowhere, with no time reference either, and that activates the contemporary presupposition of an intersubjective mutual living that can be or not replaced and renewed by art itself, creating also in the spectator an intersubjective net which will allow them to communicate with other dimensions of their own lives. The imitation of the making and technology of the work have turned the concept of art extremely vast, unlimited, transforming it into what it was in the beginning: the product of any human activity (TASSINARI, 2001, p. 134).

Reading or watching Beckett's play is similar to crossing a canal full of shades, darkness, and doubts. The minimalist visual concept is perfectly applied, surprisingly respecting the most famous canon of the Renascence art taught by Leonardo Da Vinci – the pyramidal perspective – one of the rules that represented a radical rupture from the medieval artistic and architectonic practices, and determined the way we saw things for four centuries, until the beginning of the twentieth century. With those rules, a new concept of infinite space arose, which brought up the idea and vision of the planet as finite but, at the same time, separated from religious concepts such as God's infinite wisdom; consequently, space and time turned into two independent identities, with two different approaches – scientific and religious.

> Renascence, breaking with this sacred vision of an immaterial and immutable divine order, starts a reflection about the world and about man. From that moment on, the world is considered as Nature, not a reflection of God's thought anymore. It is not about representing the outer world anymore, but the world. The divine laws are replaced by the laws of an autonomous world and the Middle Ages' aggregating space gives place to an exact construction, to a systematic space, a rational, infinite, continuous, and homogeneous space (BARDONNÈCHE, Dominique de).[40]

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[40] "A Renascença, rompendo com esta visão sagrada de uma ordem divina imaterial e imutável, entabula uma reflexão sobre o mundo e sobre o homem. A partir de então, o mundo é considerado como Natureza, não mais reflexo do pensamento de Deus. Não se trata mais de representar o além, mas o mundo. As leis divinas são substituídas pelas leis de um mundo autônomo e o espaço agregativo da Idade Média dá lugar a uma construção exata, a um espaço sistemático, um espaço racional, infinito, contínuo e homogêneo" (BARDONNÈCHE, D. apud DOMINGUES, D., 1997, p. 197).

According to Dominique de Bardonnèche, the first important rupture in the Renaissance system happens with Impressionism, which brings into question the scenographic space, breaking the single viewpoint that is switched for a multiple and approximated vision. The space of perspective, she adds, questioned by Impressionism, is mathematical, a constructed space that supposes a single and immutable eye which abstracts from reality. "Space is what makes the eye stop" (PEREC, G. apud BARDONNÈCHE, D., 1997), wherefrom we can see Beckett's concern about space in **OI**, which is reinforced by the silent time and lack of movement that permeate the play, and which offers the spectator a large canvas where they can lie their eyes for a long time. Actually, according to Oppenheim (2003, p. 123), "the unifying force of Beckett's work lies in a visual as opposed to conceptual thinking"; he restricts space so that also the spectator's vision can be controlled like the lens of a camera; in this way, as the author states, "Beckett played painter on the stage" to the point of defining even the angle of the artist's head (p. 125). Beckett forces us to stop and wait to be able to see in a world of numerical interactivity, where waiting has become unbearable for citizens of a society divided between the time of History – a time that refers to its time – and the real time, impatient and feverish, of interactive exchanges; a society divided between reflection and reflex, between sign and signal that lives according to an unreasonable logic of permanent innovation. In order to survive, says Couchot, art will have to find its own means to compound, with necessity and chance, the real time (COUCHOT apud DOMINGUES, p. 143). And as Oppenheim (2003, p. 128) states, one of Beckett's targets was precisely the "crystallized associations" which were also the Dadaist's and Surrealist's primary goal: the "destabilization of cultural habits of sign production".

On the other hand, David Harvey (2004) establishes a strong connection between perspectivism and individualism, for it gives the material foundation for the Cartesian principles of rationality integrated to the Illuminist project. As a result, space, although

infinite, seemed to be conquerable and containable for means of human occupation and action, and in art, once it fixes a viewpoint, perspective fixes a vision that differs from the natural one in many aspects – one of them is precisely the movement of the eye through the space of the painting with no movement of the space viewed; perspective makes possible that the eye visit the interior of the painting without the need of changing the viewpoint. As, in the Renaissance, the study of nature becomes the artist's main objective, it leads to the discovery of the exterior world, and it is through the methods used in art, such as mathematics and geometry, that science and art approximate. The treaties by Leon Battista Alberti and Da Vinci are examples of this approximation, for they present their knowledge in mathematics, physics, mechanics, hydraulics, military engineering, etc. – art, says Lionello Venturi (1998), is a way of knowing; the painter executes by hand after having first mentally understood. Actually, Leonardo considers drawing not only a science but also something that has a divine character; the painter's knowledge is a first truth that the philosopher must further elaborate. For Alberti and Leonardo, the artist does not dissolve himself in God, but almost turns into a god himself and, instead of imitating nature, they "know" it according to principles created by the human mind. In Leonardo's opinion, in order to be worthy to originate all art and all science, the artist must be universal; the knowledge of the human form is not enough, the painter must know and represent all aspects of nature: dusk, rain, dust, smog, the transparency of the water and the stars in the sky (VENTURI, 1998, p. 94). In his studies, Leonardo discovered the color's degree of luminosity, what the Greeks called *tonon,* and states that the shadow is the element which unites Man and the surrounding nature, as much as it should fulfill the perspective emptiness and involve the image.

> Four are the principal parts that must be considered in painting, to be known: quality, quantity, position and figure; for quality it is understood the shadow and what part of this shadow that is more or less dark; quantity, that is: what is the

extension of a certain shadow in relation to the neighboring ones; position, that is: in what way they must be situated and on what part of the members they must lean; figure, that is: what is the shape of a certain shadow, i.e., whether it is triangular or belongs to a circle or a square. (LEONARDO apud VENTURI, 1998, p. 95)[41]

Reducing all the elements to shadow, Leonardo poetically describes beauty as a gradation of shadow, and states that the contour shall have a mathematical nature, that is, it must be unreal and invisible: figure-ground must melt in their limits, with no contrast; however, to obtain a plastic form, it is necessary to circumscribe it within a precise contour. Consequently, the painter shall first draw a draft of the full figure, which expresses the effects of the shadows, and then complete its various parts. With this concept, a new relationship between form and its atmosphere is established by Leonardo, creating with dusk a principle of color without colors. Based on the same principle, he believed that the smallest thing could lead our spirit to various inventions; it was a matter of seeing through shadows created by spots.

"Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you" (**OI**, p.14); beauty will (might) go there, bringing new contours to the sad tale of the lonely man. Wait! The "painter of words" is working on its luminosity, so Man and Nature can be united on his canvas and then fulfill your emptiness, bringing color to where no color exists. Through **OI'** manuscripts, the author's labor to create his figures without rigid lines becomes more evident; their plastic form rises from unreal and invisible contours, like in Da Vinci's *sfumato[42]*,

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[41] Quatro são as partes principais que se devem considerar na pintura, a saber: qualidade, quantidade, posição e figura; por qualidade entende-se a sombra e qual parte dessa sombra que é mais ou menos escura; quantidade, isto é: qual a extensão de determinada sombra em relação às sombras vizinhas; posição, isto é: de que modo se devem situar e em que parte dos membros se devem apoiar; figura, isto é: qual é a forma de uma certa sombra, quer dizer, se é triangular ou faz parte de um círculo ou de um quadrado.

[42] *Sfumato* is another technique developed by Leonardo Da Vinci, which consists of attenuating the contour sharpness of the figures through the use of *chiaroscuro*. A great example of the use of *sfumato* is the famous painting *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo Da Vinci. Figuratively, it means something vague, not well defined, as memories, feelings, etc.

melting their limits with their figure-ground, which goes beyond the dark empty backstage – it reaches the interactive spectator, who becomes an active part of it, altering it according to their own History. In **OI,** acting must not materialize; it cannot interfere in the poetic communion, in the irradiation of the word into the spectator's reverial imagination. The stage must only offer some elements discretely just as references to each one's creative reverie. The supreme value remains in the word; in Beckett's case, in the dark spaces of the unword.

Later on, in the seventeenth century, the Baroque explored the use of the *chiaroscuro,* a technique which consisted of modeling and defining forms through contrasts of light and shadow while color contrast is used sparingly. It was created by Leonardo Da Vinci and stressed by Michelangelo Caravaggio (1573-1610) (**Plate 38**) and became a way to express artistic ideas and feelings, as a rebellion against the mannerist tradition, and expressing the absence of faith in the scientific truth. Retreating in passion, emotions, sensations, and turning completely towards nature, for these artists, color became the visual symbol of passion, and it was taken as a sensible guide in antithesis to the abstract plastic form considered as a rational guide. Some art historians attribute the change in Caravaggio's painting style to a dark and dramatic *chiaroscuro* to his desperate state of mind, and then connecting this technique to the feeling of night or darkness. Actually, Baroque was pejoratively defined as the commitment of those artists to the mannerist doctrines added by passionate elements, meaning a corrupt and confused taste. In reality, it was a new principle of taste of sensual and passionate origin, which opposed to the Renaissance, moved by the research on the unusual and exceptional. Baroque constituted an attempt to move forward beyond form: it signals the dissolution of the form, accomplished with total consciousness. According to Mario Perniola, the aesthetic baroque experience is an excitement that subverts the singular identity and throws whoever experiments it into an abyss, where any singular life is suppressed (PERNIOLA, M., 1997, p. 52). Formally, it is expressed through covering, occulting parts that are essential to what is

intended to be shown: what is underneath the forms, or even what is outside them, which excites the fantasy and introduces it into wonderful, inaccessible worlds. The baroque is the transcendence of all form, which constantly overcomes itself, surprising us, bringing to light what was intangible before – for example, the representation of the crowd, a beggar's dragged cape, or the wrinkled face of an old man. In architecture, mass lacks articulation and intends to elong without any solution of continuity to whatever is nearby; where the singular element cannot be agglutinated in the mass, it arises multiplied in identical copies, multiples that dissolve its identity. In the theater, the exaggerated and emphatic aspect of the Baroque would be a consequence of an impetuous effort, indispensable for those who do not want to succumb to a total wanness and degradation. Consequently, even being considered one of the few religious painters among the Italian artists in the 17th century, Caravaggio was many times refused by the churches for being considered *novel,* which meant suspect of heresy, for his works tended to represent the suffering of the martyrs of faith in such way that incited a sort of voluptuosity also called pleasure, a mix between pain and joy. The artwork, says Bachelard, arises always from whom has faced the danger and went to the extreme of an experience, until the point where no human being can cross over.

Baroque is the style of roots, says Maffesoli (2003), it is the expression of Pan, god of the fields and nature, it accentuates the *pathetic* as *common passions,* and Michelangelo majestically expresses this baroque in everyday life, which so well characterizes the experiences of postmodern life – expression of life and knowledge of the world that are not abstract, for they present the *ordinary* in its interity, including evil, suffering, i.e., the *shadow* that penetrates in each of us and in the social net as well. At the same time, in the Baroque painting it is easier to see that the world of the artwork is spatially different, not to be confused with the common world, states Tassinari (2001): the painting also calls the spectator

into the space of the artwork (**Plate 39**), but it does not mean that the Baroque pictorial space be the same where we live.

Later, Rembrandt (1606-1669) would also become a master of light and shadow, famous for his portraits characterized by strong lighting effects **(Plate 40).** And this is something that we see in **OI**, strong lighting effects setting the mood of the play. Initially, despite the free space around the characters, the audience is taken by a sense of confinement due to the stage darkness. Everything contrasts: the black hat against the white table, the white hair against the black coat, the light on the table against the darkness of the backstage, the book against the unspoken words. Light drives away darkness, and shades play an important role: as Da Vinci pointed out, shade is the obstruction of light; without it, solid and opaque bodies are barely defined and what is contained in its contours and the contours themselves would not remain clearly understood (Da Vinci, p.115-17, 2004). Therefore, shades would create the right contrast to clarify everything, revealing the characters and the story. Instead, the contrast that chiaroscuro creates in **OI** seems to provoke more darkness and a sense of *sfumato* (**Plate 41**), concealing, like a baroque painting, denying the audience the information, the revelation for which they are waiting; therefore, leading the spectator to an intangible world. "Could he not now turn back? Acknowledge his error and return to where they were once so long alone together" (**OI** , p.14). In the film the image constantly moves in a circle, as to force us to change our point of view regarding the characters, and we get to the end of the play moving from one to the other, trying to understand, hoping something is going to be unfolded. This is when we are given another moment of contemplation: *Listener* and *Reader* once more stare at each other for ten seconds, unblinking, expressionless. In the film, this is the only scene featured differently from the text; Sturridge adds color to the end and makes *Reader* vanish into light and color (**Plate 42**), exactly as the *chiaroscuro* canon proposes – little color against strong shades. If we follow this line of interpretation, the cinematic
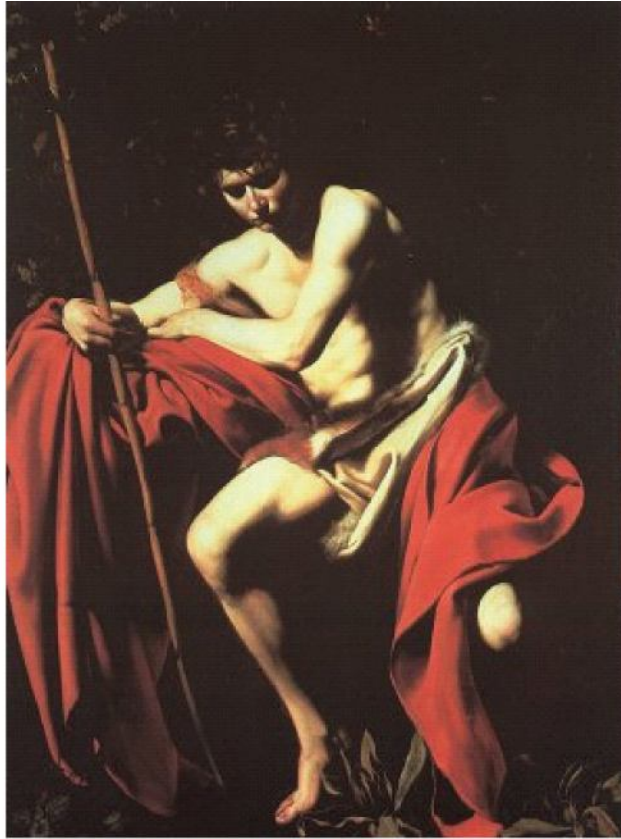
Plate 38: *St. John the Baptiste* - Caravaggio, 1609/10

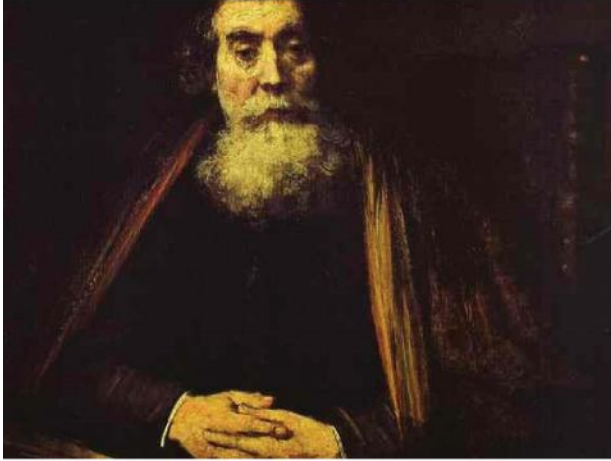Plate 39: *The Supper of Emmaus* - Caravaggio, 1600/01

Plate 40: *Portrait of an Old Man* -
Rembrandt, 1665. Oil on canvas, 104 x
86 cm

Plate 41: *The Madonna of the Carnation* -
Leonardo da Vinci, 1478-1480. Oil on
panel, 62 x 47.5 cm

Plate 42: *Ohio Impromptu* - Samuel Beckett (Photo: Ana Boessio)

resolution would somehow limit the play by giving a clearer possibility of a spiritual presence being released because the sad tale had been told for the last time. Beckett, instead, creates a stronger and enigmatic ending, making *Listener* and *Reader* face each other as a mirror reflection **(Plate 43)**, for the mirror symbolically reflects the truth, honesty, the contents of the heart and conscience, and those two faces mirroring each other are there to reflect the contents of their hearts. We are not allowed to directly participate in it though, only look at the reflections and contemplate the emptiness of the surroundings – the dark space of the untold sad tale. Excess of space, states Bachelard, suffocates much more than the lack of it, and that is exactly how the space in **OI** can be considered: excessive.

As it was said before, it is the unfolding of the characters, the mirror technique, that leads to the fragmentation of the Subject, and it is the juxtaposition that they provoke what breaks the perspective, altering the space of the scene – unlike in the portraits and mainly the self-portraits by Rembrandt, whose self-referentiality for four centuries represented the idealization of the Subject and kept the Renaissance perspective and space, here the repetition and juxtaposition of the characters' space breaks that pattern and launches the space of the play into postmodernity. Like Cindy Sherman's conceptual art, *Untitled Film Stills* **(Plate 44),** where the artist directs the work and makes herself be photographed in a series of roles, in different places, as an unnamed actress in shots that evoke old Hollywood pictures, B-movies and *film noir*, whose first six shots presented grainy and slightly out of focus images apparently played by the same blonde actress. The multiple disguise, as well as the multiple roles played by the artist herself in the work and the blurriness of the pictures, bring about this fragmentation of the subject, the many selves that are constituted from the imaginary. In the same way, the characters in **OI** express that rupture, not by embodying different visual references, like in Cindy Sherman's work; on the contrary, by also playing different roles

Plate 43: *Ohio Impromptu* - Samuel Beckett (Photo: Ana Boessio)

Plate 44a: *Untitled Film Stills # 6* - Cindy Sherman, 1978

Plate 44b: *Untitled Film Stills # 13* - Cindy Sherman, 1978

(*Reader* and *Listener)* through the same image, leads the spectator to use their own imaginary to constitute or re-constitute those subjects.

David Rokeby (1997), writing about interactive art and technology, states that we discover our many "I"s in the universe's mirror, like in the myth of "Eco and Narcisse" told by Ovid in *Metamorphosis,* which represents two types of reflection: the perfect mirrored reflection synchronic with Narcisse's reflection on the lake, and the delayed, distorted reflections from Eco's words. The reflections transformed are a dialogue between the "I" and the world, whereas the non-mediated feedback of the exact mirroring produces the closed system of self-absorption; the eco operates as a conscience's inconstant loop through which the image of somebody's self and their relation with the world can be examined, questioned and transformed.

Would that *collage* of Renaissance principles and Minimalism be a deviation, a wrong detour contradicting the author's minimal intentions? Definitely, no. The use of the pyramid gives such power to the text as much as to the stage photography. Da Vinci concluded, from his studies in optics, that the triangular composition, that is the linear perspective, would give to the viewer a visual result similar to the way the eye apprehends the image, with depth, considering an ideal spectator standing in front and at the center of the picture. He believed that vision was the most important of our senses. He states, "The soul accepts to be imprisoned in the human body because, thanks to our eyes, we can see things, for through the eyes all the various things in nature are represented to the soul".[43] Due to the pyramidal composition, once we look at the painting, our attention is drawn to the interior of the picture, forcing us to look at it in a deeper and steady way. And this optical effect is present in the scene construction of **OI** as well: the linear perspective brings authenticity – we

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[43] "A alma aceita ficar aprisionada no corpo humano porque, graças aos nossos olhos, podemos ver as coisas, pois através dos olhos todas as várias coisas da natureza são representadas à alma" (Da Vinci, 2004, p.102).

see the scene the same way that our eyes see the world; so what we see is "real" and we are kept within that view through an optical process. On the other hand, contrarily to a Renaissance painting, which is closed within the frame, the outer space becomes part of the composition and, like in a minimalist work, as important as the inner space, creating struggle where only focus and visual and psychological harmony would be found before.

In fact, in a play that starts with a character telling his identical partner a story beginning by its end, what would be more appropriate to capture the spectator's attention than a black-and-white pyramidal cinematography giving depth to the scene, carefully set with minimum elements and carefully controlled lighting? Moreover, the audience receives a differentiated visual treatment. We are introduced to the film via an abstract canvas, though lacking the most important element in abstract expressionism – the color. Second and more important, as if we were at a museum admiring a painting, the author gives us time, we have ten seconds to look, observe, analyze the picture before the first words are said. Perfect timing! When questions are about to form in our mind, words break the silence and start affect us, causing a deep feeling of derangement, for we are faced with an identity enigma concerning the characters and their ultimate condition, as well as the story, place, and especially the psychological level on which the play is set. Assimilar derangement we can find in Man Ray's work *Rrose Sélavy* (**Plate 45**)*,* a series of photographs of Duchamp dressed as a woman, from 1921, which holds also an identity enigma – like in Cindy Sherman's photographs, like in **OI'**s photography, the model/artist/character's fragmentation is wrapped up in disguise, requiring a second deeper look so that the viewer can "peel off" the various layers of the image, enabling its complexity to surface. The role played by the artist, his identity, since he occupies both sides of the process – he is the creator and also the model in Sherman's case – remains secured behind the mask, just like the *persona* in the theater; on the other hand, there are gaps that lead the viewer to track back the materiality of the work as

Plate 45: *Rrose Sélavy* - Man Ray, 1921. Photograph, 15.2 x 10.2 cm

Plate 46: Belle da Costa Greene by Helleu, 1913

much as the artist's presence, even if in a multifaceted way. The title itself, suggesting a person's name is a pun, or paronomasia, which in French sounds like "eros, c'est la vie", was later used by Duchamp as a pseudonym on written material. He signed several creations with it, such as sculptures (*Why Not Sneeze, Rrose Sélavy?* – an assemblage consisting of an oral thermometer and small cubes of marble resembling sugar cubes inside a birdcage), and a film, *Anemic Cinema,* from 1926). It is worth mentioning that also the inspiration for the title-name represents a cultural assemblage, for *Rrose* has been viewed to be a real social figure, Belle da Costa Greene (1883-1950, **Plate 46**), a librarian of the Morgan Library & Museum, who was famous for her extravagant life and dressing style and whose position placed her at the center of the art trade. Appropriation not only of the visual aspects, for Duchamp visibly reproduces one of her paintings, but of sexual gender and identity, besides rescuing the idealized self-referent subject from Rembrandt's portraits and self-portraits.

Beckett's mirroring portraits, however, erase the traits of the assemblage, it is not possible for the spectator to see what is behind the mask, to peel off the characters, for they would risk to be thrown into the void, into nothingness, self-referentiality itself becomes an enigma for it is not possible to know whose referentiality we are talking about – who refers to whom? Whose double are we facing – *Reader*'s or *Listener*'s? Is this something the author is concerned with? The concern that we can identify is in erasing any traits of identity; like the postmodern melted social subject, the characters lack identity, their history can never be told, it is tied up in some dark corridor of the past that, once enlightened by the present time, might fade away because there is no time consistent enough to hold the past. Like with the postmodern man, fear of disappearing becomes one of the greatest ghosts with which our society struggles, and *Reader* and *Listener* sum it up through lack of identity, or maybe should we say through a melted identity, and through the fear of failure via communication – as words may not be enough, it is better to rely on the visual and even here in a disruptive

way, breaking with verisimilitude, melting references to different periods of art and, consequently, leaving the characters, and spectators, even more alone in their self-reflective inner universes. In the same way that Duchamp, through the readymade, established a game involving sight, language, and what was conventionally considered artwork, as an attempt to undo the hegemony of sight, especially if we think of the words or sentences he usually inscribed on the Readymade which, instead of describing the object, would lead the spectator to make other associations, so does Beckett with his deconstructive process, provoking a shock between visual and verbal. Like Duchamp, Beckett decontextualizes language, and generates a distrust of the word, showing its insufficiency. We shall also remember that many of the artistic influences found in Beckett's work refer not only to artists with whom he had a personal relationship – Duchamp, for example, who Beckett met in 1937 and with whom he used to play chess; or Kandinsky, who he met in 1939, and whom Beckett described as a "sympathetic old Siberian"; or Alberto Giacometti, who would design with him the set for the Odéon Theater's revival of *Waiting for Godot* in 1961 (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 73), but especially to his strong and serious interest in art. According to Lois Oppeinheim (2003), these friendships followed years of visits to galleries, museums, and private collections, besides consistent readings on art history; he even applied for a post as assistant curator at the National Gallery in London in 1933. "He could spend as much as an hour in front of a single painting, looking at it with intense concentration, savoring its forms and its colors, reading it, absorbing its minutest details" (KNOWLSON, 1996, p. 186). Those references to art, which are of two types – those that are specific references to art works or artists, such as the ones previously mentioned here, and those that allude to imaginary art – have a great influence on Beckett's writing also as a valorization of art as a prototype.

> The ever increasing minimalism that characterizes the evolution of Beckett's fictive and dramatic style is a paradoxal result of his preoccupation with the visual as prototype. The specular model, in other words, while allowing his art to be, is precisely what subverts it, causing 'failure' […] to be more than a persistent threat. In this sense Beckett's reductionism confirms the conjecture – derived from Hegel and demonstrable, via Duchamp and Warhol – that art has reached an 'end' OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 29).

The artistic references in Beckett, be it as a material object, be it as a fictive image, states the author, are the ground where his entire investigation of language is modeled, whether as on epistemological or communicative tool, , for consciousness in both, inner and outer levels, and its articulation are fundamentally related to visualization. It is through the visual that Beckett's characters seek their identities, and once they face their lack of it, they realize that they are left with nothing but a sort of *collage* of it: in the *Unnamable*, for example, the character has only a photograph to rely on; in **OI**, *Reader/Listener* have only their mirror-image to rely on, as the words, the ones that could reveal them their past and their identity, awakening in them internal and external parameters to bring self-awareness, cannot help, for the story cannot be told, even the "dear name" cannot be said. Consequently, the dramatic tension remains. The allusions to art, says Oppenheim (2003, p. 33), demonstrate the dependence of meaning on specular associations; it is the visual art what offers Beckett a means of exploring language as the appropriation of imagistic representation. On the other hand, in his first published work in French, *La Peinture des van Velde ou le Monde et le Pantalon,* published just after World War II in *Cahiers d'art,* Beckett attacks the insincerity of some artists and critics, at the same time that he applauds others, such as Kandinsky and Yeats, making clear his an-aesthetic position: "There is no painting. There are only paintings. […] These not being sausages, are neither good nor bad. […] The work considered as pure creation, and whose function ends with its genesis, is doomed to nothingness". Further on, he makes clear his understanding of perception as a requirement to bring the artwork to life;

consequently showing the dependence of art on the viewer. He states: "As it is still only a painting, it lives only a life of lines and colors, offering itself only to its author. Take note of its situation. It awaits removal from there. It awaits eyes" (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 74).

"Little is left to tell", says the minimalist master. This is how we enter the play universe, by the end, vitrified by the stage scene and with no distractions, aware that there is a past minimally told, clearly painful, seeking relief from an impossible unfamiliarity. Formally, as it was mentioned before, we have repetition of elements - words, knocks, form-figures, just as two triangles would relate to a cube in a geometrical composition, or notes in a musical arrangement. But the simplicity of forms, unlike a visual minimalist artwork, does not bring clarity to the reader/audience, it does not make the story simpler, and it does not remove the author's personal signs, as it would do in a painting or sculpture. This is because every minimalist element which we find in the visual composition of **OI** is there to disguise, to delude the spectator with simplicity.

João A. Frayze-Pereira (SOUSA [org.], 2001), analyzing the relationship between plastic object and spectator refers to the concept of "intermediary zone of experience", brought up by the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, which basically means that an artwork, through what can be seen, creates an imaginary passage between the "I/spectator" and another one that becomes present in the plastic space, creating an imaginary alterity, a "non-I". This means that the artwork creates a multiple area of experience which articulates the psychological Self and the world; therefore, the visual experience evolves within the element originated from belief and illusion (here understood not as a deceiving appearance but as a necessary condition for a creative articulation between objective and desired realities). Materiality is what unveils the alterity in the artwork, like in Pierre Soulages's minimalist

paintings in which the movement of the brush is apparent, showing the passages from one layer to another and leaving clear to the viewer the route taken by the artist (**Plate 47**).

> His giant canvases, often presented as polyptychs, show nothing that may be exterior to them nor do they refer to anything other than themselves. Before them, the viewer is confronted head-on, encompassed within the space they secrete, struck by the intensity of their presence; a physical, tactile, sensual presence that gives off a powerful suppressed energy; but metaphysical too, which compels internalization and meditation.
> A painting of muffled and violent materiality, yet at the same time, a changing and vibrant "immaterial" which is constantly transformed depending on the angle from which it is approached. The art of Soulages is part of a direct act which seeks itself in the process of creation. But in the last analysis, he observes, *"The work lives through the way one looks at it. It limits itself neither to what it is nor to the person who produces it, but is also made by the person looking at it. My painting is a space for questioning and meditation where the meaning one gives it may come and go".* (JAUNIN, François. *Pierre Soulages: light "beyond black"*. Available at: http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/pierre-soulages-light-beyond-black_4767.html. Site visited on January 24, 2009)

Known as the "painter of black" (JAUNIN, 2009), Soulages constructs light through black strokes on the white canvas with brushes especially made (**Plate 48**), in order to leave behind his steps, to build transparency. According to Donald Kuspit (2009), Soulages uses blackness in a dramatized and at the same time transparent way, infused with light, which brings more isolation to his blackness, re-radicalizing the abstract painting and bringing up loneliness even more evidently, "overexposed and assaultive, violent and stubborn" – blackness in his paintings "has the force of irreconcilability: the transcendence of negation". Contrarily to decorative painting, what we see in Soulages's work is a radical abstract painting, and like the most radical ones, it remains indigestible, peculiarly "out of sight, useable, ironically invisible. It is too hard for ordinary perception, which seeks comfort before insight, to swallow", as much as it is for Beckett's audience who also lack comfort before insight. The discomfort does not come only because of the mirror effect caused by the characters but also because of the blackness surrounding them, contrasted with white's

Plate 47: *Composition* - Pierre Soulages, 1959. Oil on canvas,
129.5 x 88.6 cm

Plate 48: *Painting* - Pierre Soulages, 1967. Oil on canvas,
202.7 x 143.8 cm

simplicity, stoniness, which does not bring an insightful clarity. Beckett uses color, or increasingly lack of it, to heighten mood with a unique chromatic intensity, such as in *Murphy,* whose protagonist's lucky color is "vivid lemon"; in *Watt*, a red floor, red hat, blue days, blue flowers, etc. In *The Unnamable*, the eyes are "as red as live coals", the grey "shot with rose, like the plumage of certain birds"; in *Not I,* we have Mouth's red lips. Nevertheless, color, states Oppenheim (2003, p. 41), "does not offset the intended austerity – achieved by the interplay of light and dark, an often discreet half-lighting, and the striking contrast of white and black – of the late plays. Black and white, she continues, and the grays between them, suffice to render the nonvisible visible, touching the reader or spectator more deeply than might the whole spectrum of primary colors. Actually, it is their absence what "spatializes the existential dimension of Beckett's solipsistic world. Giving form to thought, structure to being, and rendering consciousness inhabitable, color succeeds by virtue of its lack, in arranging zones of visibility" (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 42). Yet, in **OI,** the transparency brought by white against black turns to be as violent and stubborn as in Soulages's paintings – a pictorial metaphor for what seems to be an eternal binomial social struggle: who is inside, who is outside the social net? Who belongs, who is the unfitted one? Who is inside the plot – *Listener* or *Reader*? Whose story is that? When color threatens in Beckett, states Stanton B. Garner (1994, p. 71), "it is carefully muted, its singularity of hue strictly minimized".

> It is through blackness that Soulages's abstract paintings articulate the social truth of their outsiderness, their nonidentity in a society that posits its own mythical self-identity--also symbolized by the uniformity of the decorative. Soulages's abstract black paintings do something more: they reveal negation inherent in the forced social march to self-identity, a negation articulating the truth that abstraction informs all real relations among men, as Adorno said. It is this ironical revelation of the ambiguity of abstraction--the fact that it is as much an instrument of conformity as of uniqueness, that it establishes the compact majority as well as the difference of the outsider individual--that makes Soulages's abstract black paintings truly radical. (KUSPIT, 1996)

The disguise, or shall we say delusion, brought up by the apparent simplicity of **OI**, reinforces the contemporary challenge to "see" in a world blurred by an excess of images. Seeing in Beckett is a thematic figuration constructed through recurring images of closing and opening (of eyes, windows) and of refuge, like in *Endgame* which, according to Oppenheim, reveal the rupture that separates inner and outer domains, "the quintessential I from the nonessential not I, while the motif of 'looking' ('looking at' and, by extension, 'looking for') marks the quest for a unity between them" (2003, p. 37). The eye, she says, indicates both the separation of inner and outer worlds and the potential for their integration. That is explicit in **OI**: *Reader,* as if looking for approval or recognition, recurrently looks at and for *Listener*'s eyes, which remain down, hidden until almost the end of the play; when the book is closed, they finally stare at each other, as if seeking for understanding, for what Carla Locatelli calls "the issue of translatability of the said into the seen, and vice versa" (LOCATELLI apud OPPEINHEIM, p. 39). Can *Listener* understand *Reader*? Can he "translate" *Reader*'s reading? Is it possible to unify their worlds through repeated readings and knocks on the table? Can they access each other's soul? Still according to Locatelli, "the complexity of seeing is literally portrayed as the modeling of the world, and the actual seeing, inextricably linked to saying, is shown to be the only means apt to establish a world, even when the borders and structure of seeing are problematic" (ib., p. 40).

Says Jean Starobinski (1961) that, among all senses, sight is the one that is more easily taken by impatience, and Frayze-Pereira states that what the act of seeing naïvely aims at is seeing all at once; and it is this process of hurry what makes us, spectators, see ordinary objects as unusual ones once they are presented as pictorial objects, for we are forced to look at them, to "see" them as if for the first time. The pictorial composition in Beckett forces us –

spectators in a hurry – to do the same: we are led to stop our attention, not just by the appearance of the characters, but also by the struggle between inner and outer space, by the frozen images, and even by the hat which, pictorially speaking, seems to have no other role in the play besides creating an area of contrast between volumes, like in a minimalist painting or sculpture. And if we think of the two characters, specifically, static, looking at each other, alike in every aspect, we can also establish a relationship with what Bazin (1983) calls "the mummy complex" – the act of embalming as an attempt to exorcise time, to resist the annihilation of time and cultural changes through form. A sort of black mirror which, like in Soulages's paintings, reveals what Kuspit (1996) would call "annihilating reality":

> "Annihilating reality" is revealed in all its self- annihilation, which does not mean the subject has the power to undo the annihilating effect of abstract reality on it--the feeling that it is unreal--but does give it the courage to recognize itself in the black mirror of its emaciation, to face the fact that continuous abstract relations have reduced it to a shadow of itself. But recognition of the fact that in everyday collective existence one has become an abstract, inwardly lifeless shadow of oneself, is to begin to recognize one's true self, for it is ironically mirrored by--hidden in--one's shadow. Such ironical recognition of one's shadowy reality gives one the courage to survive and feel real and emotionally full, rather than unreal and emotionally emaciated. (KUSPIT, 1996)

In the same way that Soulages architecturally constructs his identity, or a concept of it, through strokes and blackness, as Kuspit would say, an architecture that is always on the verge to collapse, for it changes once it stabilizes into self-identity, which means maintaining "the proportions of the interior" and at the same time becoming an exterior, in **OI** *Listener* and *Reader*'s identity is also on the verge to fall into nothingness, a slippery architecture of self-identity that has its basis altered every time there is an attempt to awaken time and reveal the story and, therefore, reveal those layers hidden behind discomfort, behind un-recognition. It seems that also for Beckett time and space are there to prevent one from earning their own identity; as if self-absence were the real living condition of any human being.

What we have in **OI** is a visual *collage* made of many layers taken from different and distant times in art history, as if in a non-verbal statement of commitment to the past, or perhaps an exercise to experiment that creative intermediary zone mentioned by Winnicott, where illusion, past experiences, and reality, melt to create a "transitional object" – our pictorial timeless experience. Contrarily to what Andre, Flavin and Judd believed, here we do not know whether what is being gradually revealed in suspension is a whole past of growing density like a cryptogram, or actually the belief in some sort of future; we do not know whether those past references are there to tell us a story, or to create more shadows among the layers of the play, so it becomes impossible for us (at least for the lazy spectators, as Beckett would define) to know which story is supposed to be told, in which level of the play we are thrown – in the time of memory, or in the time of wishes? Or maybe the time of reverie? In fact, the struggle comes from the pictorial evenness, which creates among the visual elements of the play a relationship in which what matters is not identifying which layer comes first or second in the *collage* but the conjunction "and" – outer "and" inner space, black "and" white, *Reader* "and" *Listener*. The presence of "and" in **OI** becomes a key element.

According to Deleuze (2004), the conjunction "and" penetrates all things, is everywhere, it drags all relationships, it is the creative stuttering, the diversity, multiplicity, the destruction of identities, for there are as many relationships, as many frontiers as "ands", and the more the frontiers, the less visible they become. The more contrast we identify in **OI**, the less clear becomes the amount of visual and metaphorical layers within the play – what we face as spectators is the impossibility of seeing the frontiers, of identifying what is presence and what is absence, what is the actual play and what is reverie within it. The game between actual and virtual images creates a Time-image, emptying the space, disconnected from movement and so establishes a relationship with a mental or mirror-image. With the suspension of all movement, there is a crystallization of the image and, consequently, of

signs, and what we first see is Time; it is the time of memory that determines the movement of the pages which *Reader* is reading, or the knock on the table by *Listener*; time does not result from movement anymore but, on the contrary, determines it. Moreover, the lack of movement dissolves the concept of spatial verticality even more, which concept is one of the strongest characteristics of modern painting, bringing up the predominance of horizontality, the abandonment of the Renaissance "window" in favor of an opaque plane on which data are inscribed, like in a diagram, says Deleuze (2004, p. 71) – actually, that is Beckett's formula: it is better to be seated than standing, lying than seated.

By playing with pictorial timing, Beckett ends up expanding the spectator's perception; therefore, empowering their eyesight and, further on, activating their ability to question their visual experience in all its complexity, all its shadows; and quoting J. Tanizaki, Frayze-Pereira states that playing with shades, the subtle manipulation of *chiaroscuro,* is what unveils beauty, and when an object is shaped by shadow, our eye is captured by a vertiginous emptiness dug between the object and ourselves. The eye, according to Deleuze, is already in everything, is part of the image, its visibility, it is not the camera but the "black screen" that holds the image, that prevents it from moving and propagating the light in all directions – a light which would never be revealed if constantly propagating itself. According to Starobinski (1961), the "occult fascinates" because, in dissimulation and in absence, there is a strange force which constrains the spirit to turn towards the inaccessible, and in this process we become what F.-Pereira calls "patient-spectators" – through time, we think; and through thinking, Eros triumphs over death; that is the "maintained illusion". And he questions: wouldn't the realization of this triumph be the main goal in Art? In Beckett, if this triumph happens it is through the spectator's eye as opposed to the usual blindness of his characters; although in **OI** they are not really blind, they seem not to be able to see through the shadows of memory, of the story for the last time told, they seem not to be able to know whether they

are still within the limits of the tale or whether they have already crossed its borders into the territory of reverie. Like the synthetic image computer-generated, the time of the image in **OI** is not only that of memory, but also the time needed so that the reconstruction process of image-imagination of what is seen can be fulfilled by those who see it – the spectators. Through the synthesis of these two processes, purely mental, the actual image is modified and the various consciences bring new and personal approaches to what has been shown; then, an emotional vision, an aesthetic pleasure is created; in Beckett's case, we may say an aesthetic discomfort. Similarly to a multimedia artwork, the spectator is invited to penetrate not the technically "virtual" universe but the imaginary ones and interact with them according to a non-linear route still conceived by the author; we are invited to follow the unfamiliar steps proposed by *Reader*: "Day after day he could be seen slowly pacing the islet. Hour after hour. In his long black coat no matter what the weather…" (**OI,** p. 13). In fact, all the visual elements, as much as the lack of movement, potentiate every word that has not been pronounced, all the details of that sad story that have been kept away from the audience, the unspoken words, the unnamed "dear name", the unrevealed shared moments, the relationship between *Reader* and *Listener*, who "grew to be as one with never a word exchanged." What we have is an extremely minimalist play full of abstract expressiveness, reinforced also by the use of mirror image. In this regard, Da Vinci states:

> …it is clearly proved that everything transmits its image to wherever it is visible and, inversely, this thing is capable of receiving all the images of the things that are in front of it. …the visible powers of the image in the eyes can project themselves to the object, as do the images from the object to the eyes. (2004, p.102)[44]

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[44] ...fica claramente provado que cada coisa transmite sua imagem a todos os lugares onde ela for visível e, inversamente, esta coisa é capaz de receber todas as imagens das coisas que estão em frente a ela. .... os poderes visíveis da imagem nos olhos podem se projetar para o objeto, como fazem as imagens do objeto para os olhos.

As it was mentioned before, it is known that, symbolically, the mirror is the instrument that reflects the truth, the contents of the heart and conscience. Once more, the visual solution comes against its regular meaning by veiling instead of revealing the truth, twisting the audience's expectations. The extreme visual simplicity of *Reader* and *Listener*, alike in every detail, fits into the minimalist concept and into the author's intention to tell a story from an impersonal, unfamiliar point of view, to incorporate the multiple layers of conscience into a heterogeneous narrative without reducing them to a single voice: *Reader* and *Listener* may be the same individual in different psychological levels; *Reader* may be a real person who was sent by "the dear name" to warn *Listener* about the changes that would follow; *Listener* may be the desperate spirit who comes to listen to his own memories once more, or vice-versa. In short, Beckett's minimalist geniality enabled the existence of a number of characters in one, an aspect which was well explored by Sturridge by choosing the same actor, creating the mirror image mentioned before. The identity of *Listener* and *Reader* loses importance; the pain emerging from each minimal word, from each knock on the table, from the *Listener*'s hidden face, from the need to forget, to erase each sweet memory is enough to make the audience submerge into that unfamiliar cave, sympathizing with such desperation, such need of hiding away. Beckett's "deranging" presence is more than just an unreliable narrator – it estranges the text from both author and reader – the author seems to know as much as the reader/spectator. And, definitely, it does not matter anymore if *Listener* is the Id or Alter ego, if he is alive or dead, or if *Reader* is just the result of *Listener*'s emotional reflections; the photography reveals all we need to know to reach a state of fruition and catharsis.

As Susan Sontag states (1981), photography does not apparently constitute proof of the world, but only of a fragment of it, a miniature of a reality which we all can build or acquire. Holding a camera turns us into an active person, a *voyeur*, and this is what we become when facing the static **OI**: some sort of amateur photographers with a camera in front of our eyes

who, perplexed, believe (or are led to) that we can interfere with the scene. In this game of spaces, the repeated pauses in **OI** seem to express the author's desperate scream so that we, passive spectators, as supposed photographers of a drama unfolding in front of our eyes, make use of the "ubiquity" mentioned by Sontag and continue there, willing to hear one more time and, consequently, supporting that dear past, which is submitted to the menace of the contemporary inevitable monster – disappearance.

Moreover, it is worth to remember the presupposition of veracity given to photography, and this provokes in us, spectators-photographers, the illusion of being in fact able to interfere in the plot. For Susan Sontag, through photography, each individual, each family construct a chronicle – a picture of themselves – a portable collection of images that testify their cohesion. The pauses in Beckett bring cohesion not only to *Reader* and *Listener*, but also to the relationship of the play with the spectator and, at the same time that the identity of the "dear name" and the knowledge of his/her past are denied to us, we are integrated to the drama, to the struggle to "retain" these fragments of the chronicle through the immobility of the characters and the frequent pauses offered by the author.

Susan Sontag also affirms that photographing people means to violate them and see them in a way that they can never see themselves, allowing the photographer to know them as they will never know themselves; it is like transforming them into objects whose possession we symbolically hold. In **OI,** this process might represent a frontier whose task of melting Beckett perceptively throws over the spectator, taking them out of their condition of anonymous passivity and forcing them to act, to look into the characters' "depths of mind" the untold story, the unspoken words, the revelation of a drama that, in the anonymousness of the characters, can be of anyone, including ours. However, also this appeal is but a *trompe l'oeil* –

we are called, seduced by a narrator-*Reader,* we are touched by the pain hidden in the face of *Listener* and, in a fraction of a second, we believe that the space of that pain and that time is ours too and we can and shall in fact keep it as a treasure. The same way as in the photograph, the pictorial pause in **OI** becomes a small portion of space and of time as well; actually, that is what can be retained from the past.

Analyzing Michael Snow's *Authorization* (1969 – **Plate 49**), Philippe Dubois affirms that, with photography, it is no longer possible for us to think about the image isolated from the act that makes it exist (DUBOIS, 1998, p. 15) – an image in process, an "image-act", which necessarily implies the issue of the "subject in process". In Snow's case, through a game of repetitions, mirror-images, and framing, each photo recapturing the previous, the consequence is an effect of abyss until there is a total fulfillment of the field of vision. According to Dubois,

> It is clear what is at stake in this dispositive: a problem of time and inscription, a problem of subject and mask, a problem of death and dissolution. There are two images and two temporalities. There is the mirror, which offers an always direct representation, which always remits only to the present here-and-now, to the singular present of who is looking at themselves (seeing themselves and being seen). There is the photo, always postponed which always remits to an anteriority which was retained, frozen in time and its place. (DUBOIS, 1998, p. 17)[45]

As in *Authorization,* also in **OI** there is a problem (or enigma) of time and inscription, of subject and mask. The difference is that, in Beckett's work, the mirror-image is symbolic, but it equally reflects and even potentiates the problem of death and dissolution – the two images equally reflect two temporalities, for, as it was mentioned before, the space of the

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[45] Vê-se bem o que está em jogo nesse dispositivo: um problema de tempo e inscrição, um problema de sujeito e de máscara, um problema de morte e de dissolução. Há duas imagens e duas temporalidades. Há o espelho, que oferece uma representação sempre direta, que sempre remete unicamente ao aqui-agora em curso, ao presente singular de quem está se olhando (se vendo e sendo visto). Há a foto, sempre adiada que remete sempre a uma anterioridade, a qual foi detida, congelada em tempo e seu lugar.

Plate 49: *Authorization* - Michael Snow, 1969. Black & white photograph and cloth tape on mirror in metal, 54.6 x 44.4 x 1,4 cm with integral frame

characters is in fact an in-between space; we do not know precisely who truly exists, *Reader* or *Listener*, whether one of them results from the other's imagination. The representation of this mirror created by Beckett, in opposition to the mirror in general, dissolves the concept of "here-and-now"; however, the pauses to which the spectator is forced creates the photographic space, and that space, like in Snow's work, also remits to an anteriority which was detained, not by a pictorial element, but by the absence of word; and the consequence is that the "sad tale" ends up frozen in its time and space, even when *Reader* affirms that it is for the last time told. Beckett seems to incorporate to his work the vision of his century about photography which, according to Philippe Dubois, insists more on the idea of transformation of the real through photograph than on the discourse of similitude predominant in the nineteenth century. Photography starts to be considered as eminently codified in all aspects, and this codification dislocates the notion of realism from its empirical fixation to what Diane Arbus calls the principle of "inner truth" (DUBOIS, 1998, p. 37). What for the critics of the nineteenth century was considered a failure of photography in its pretentiously perfect representation of the real world –the limits of the palette in color and shade – make photography the ideal instrument to represent the spaces of the human soul in Beckett's work. What in a real photograph would be represented in a rough way, or would not be represented – the half-tones around the objects, the nuances of depth, the plan illumination that only the human eye is capable of capturing and representing – turns into abyssal labyrinths for the reader-spectator who, for not having a real camera in front of them, can freely forage for the other dimensions of space, reflecting their story, their own soul on them.

Once more, in **OI**, the game of photographic space, that has its principles in the Renaissance perspective, creates zones of friction and what should be static acquires the unlimited spaces of the postmodern artwork. We can think of the treatment given by Beckett

to space in **OI** as the treatment given to a contemporary artwork, following the presuppositions of what should be an intervention in a public space. An example of this is the work developed by a group of Argentinean artists, *La Baulera,* as part of an annual event organized by the Sub-secretariat of the Patrimony and the City of Buenos Aires, which consists of the rotating revalorization of different "Porteño" neighborhoods through various artistic exhibitions. One of them seems to especially evoke the same game of derangement, of out-of-place so typical in Beckett's work: the series *Las barricadas invisibles,* held on November, 29 2004, at the Congress Library. The action consisted of eight people who would enter the library at the same time. Each one would take a book and sit down to read it. Suddenly, one by one, they would make a ping-pong ball bounce so quickly under the tables at which they were sitting that the authorities in the room would not be able to identify their origin, but one thing would be clear to all the people present – that "sound" did not belong in that place. Before they were identified, the eight artists would get up, return their books and silently leave the library.

What can be identified in this *happening,* as well as in Beckett's work, is that the awareness of something that does not belong, which is out-of-place, comes accompanied by a load of discomfort, but in **OI** there is also the possibility of abyss, as in Snow's work – the surrounding darkness functions as a "dark hole", creating a sort of suction area where the spectator feels abandoned. In fact, this game of spaces and times, together with the impossibility of verification of a possible reality has been considered the essence of Beckett's originality as playwright. According to Charles Lyons (KALB, 1989), many of the moments we witness at the theater carry two different significances: they represent a specific moment in time and, simultaneously, function as representations of typical moments in the characters' lives as a whole. That is, both work as full or self-sufficient representations of a temporal

unity and as metonymy of a major temporal unity (an illusory totality that cannot be represented). However, according to Lyons, its originality lies not in the use of temporal fragments but in the fact of leaving this relation between micro and macro unity without any possibility of verification and, therefore, misunderstood, be it by the characters or by the spectator. Beckett makes us exercise our tendency to construct a complete narrative from the fragments presented and, at the same time, recognize that the story created is a product of our imagination and, therefore, ephemeral and non-verifiable. In this way, our effort to handle the intangibility of the experience offered by Beckett raises the conflict of his characters as they fight their images from the past in the deceptive contexts of the present (KALB, 1989, p. 306). It is enough thinking of the ubiquitous figures of **OI** as examples of *Doppelgänger*, which in some traditions represents bad luck, sickness or danger, a death omen. A *Doppelgänger* is always a sinister form of ubiquity and **OI** is the first play by Beckett to present this figure, inaugurating a period of phantasmagoria in his work, where ghosts who echo the haunting side of memory and nostalgia mix up and are presented on stage.

We have simplicity of colors – black and white are enough to tell the story, and paradoxically it is exactly the greatest representative of abstract expressionism, Wassily Kandinsky, who comes to elucidate this aspect. The author states that color provokes a psychical vibration and one of the greatest color contrasts in a composition consists of the difference between black and white – white produces a movement approaching the spectator to the picture and provokes a reaction in our soul similar to that caused by absolute silence, which is not dead, but bursts in live possibilities; black, instead, distances the spectator, it is like "nothingness" with no possibilities, a dead "nothingness". And he adds:

> Like a "nothing" with no possibilities, like a "nothing" dead after the sun's death, like an eternal silence, without future, without even the hope of a future, the

> Black resounds internally. What in music corresponds to it is the pause that marks a complete ending, which maybe will be followed by something else – the birth of another world. For all that is suspended by this silence is finished forever: the circle is closed. Black is like an extinct bonfire, consumed, which stopped burning, immovable and insensitive like a dead body over which everything slips and nothing else affects. It is like the silence in which the body enters in after death, when life has been consumed till the end (KANDINSKY, 1996, p.96).[46]

According to Kuspit (1996), in the history of modernist painting, blackness has two faces, a split identity: it serves symbolism – emotional realism; on the other side, black is the color with the least harmony of all, a kind of neutral background against which the minimal shade of the other colors stands clearly forward.

Kandinsky also states that in art what is veiled is stronger, and combining it with what can be unveiled will lead to the discovery of a new *leitmotiv* for a composition of forms; and this is what the play unfolds through its shades – new possibilities, a new *leitmotiv*. All levels of the play are immersed in darkness, from the characters to the story. Who is *Listener*? Better, "what" is he? What did really happen to him and to the "dear name"? Is it about a woman who abandoned him, or maybe died? Who is or "what" is *Reader*? Are the "dear name" and the Parisian landscape a reference to Beckett's relationship with Joyce, as some writers have already pointed out? Or, would *Reader* be just an imaginative trick caused by *Listener*'s desperation and need for revisiting his own past? To which level of conscience do they belong? We do not know, and this is why it is so easy to connect with that sorrow, that darkness, that feeling of "nothingness" with no possibilities of having the shared moments back, or forgetting them. We are locked in the shades of **OI**, not only the stage shades but the black coat, the hat, the white table, the book pages we are invited to read as if everything were

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[46] Como um "nada" sem possibilidades, como um "nada" morto após a morte do sol, como um silêncio eterno, sem futuro, sem a esperança sequer de um futuro, ressoa interiormente o preto. O que na música a ele corresponde é a pausa que marca um fim completo, que será seguida, talvez, de outra coisa – o nascimento de outro mundo. Pois tudo o que é suspenso por esse silêncio está acabado para sempre: o círculo está fechado. O preto é como uma fogueira extinta, consumida, que deixou de arder, imóvel e insensível como um cadáver sobre o qual tudo resvala e que mais nada afeta. É como o silêncio no qual o corpo entra após a morte, quando a vida consumiu-se até o fim.

simply about a story tale. If we look at the symbolic meaning of the hat, for example, it is also related to power, the crown that reassures sovereignty to the one who wears it, but it also symbolizes the head, thought and identification. However, in the play, the hat is just laid on the table like a quiet spectator, nobody wears it, which leads us to believe that the one who thinks and holds the power is not there anymore; would this be the "dear name", *Reader*, or *Listener* himself, who gave up his power, his will? Who does the hat belong/relate to? Everything is obscure and, yet, still carries transparencies that can lead us somewhere – we cannot forget that the hat is the main icon of Beckett's most famous play, *Waiting for Godot*, with its two clown-like\pantomimic figures who wander around attached to the rest of their belongings*,* and which leads us to identify a self-quote, another layer in the play, for we must remember, as it has already been mentioned, that **OI** evokes a series of biographical elements related to Beckett's relationship with James Joyce. Consequently, another door is opened to another abyss of interpretation, a story within a story, perhaps a play within a play. This self-quote turns out to be the unveiling element that makes the issue of identity in the play even more slippery if we go back to *Godot* and the so long waited absence, in which context the hat represents the element that opposes the feeling of real and concrete with the psychic discomfort of an unreal abstract world – somehow, hope, the possibility to survive lies on the symbolic hat.

On the other hand, the table, or white rectangle, also called sun-square in Freemasonry Society, which may have been known by Beckett since his father was a free mason, was used for evocations, symbolizing the perfect relation between earth and heaven, and the desire of the society members to participate in that perfection. Consequently, the white rectangle plays an important role in the set, it has the function to be the sacred ground where the evocations of *Listener*'s past will be disclosed; it is around the table that *Reader* and *Listener* gather, and it is there that the mystique takes place, where the various layers of drama unfold and allow us

to take a minimalist part in it. This sacred ground must be white because white is the sum of all colors, the symbol of purity, and carries the absolute silence, the eternal resistance, so as to make the communication between *Listener* and *Reader* possible, and also to allow a little although strong approximation of the play's universe to the audience, giving them a tragic, or maybe sacred, dimension of the drama presented. Pictorially, the table stands as the basis of the pyramidal perspective, which means it is the element that holds the scene construction and the viewer's attention within the artwork frame. However, the mirror procedure used with the characters and the juxtaposition it creates provokes a breakage in the structure of the perspective, altering the space of the scene and opening it, like a spiral, to new dimensions – the dimensions of the unlimited modern space in art. Beckett's special brushes have left their track uncovered, so that we, the lazy spectators, can find his presence throughout the text, just like in Pierre Soulages's paintings.

Beckett is well known for his effort of self-erasure from his texts, and it is also a well known fact that the four-page **OI** has over twenty pages of drafts, contrasting with the title chosen. "Impromptu" means something done extemporaneously, improvised, a musical composition or a "jam session", more precisely, when musicians get together to make music through improvisation, for example. Instead, what we have is a careful work of peeling any residue of subjectivity, as to attempt effacing any autobiographical "fossil" in this process. The "I" does not speak; he only knocks, in a minimal gesture to relate to a third person, *Reader*, whose only response to it is repeating the last sentence or word. Minimal communication so as not to risk the author's intrusion, and the film director made good use of the cinematic possibilities exploring this derangement by not only using the same actor for both roles, but also by showing us the actual text of the book, precisely the letters on the page, and by *Reader* mentioning paragraph four, page forty (BECKETT, 1984, p.15). Well, in the Islamic culture, numbers represent letters, which contain a creative force – the force to prove

the truth. Once more, we receive a little piece of information, apparently with no importance, but then looking at the symbolism of numbers, we realize that the number four means something solid, tangible, while number forty is the number of the wait, the preparation, probation, or punishment. Consequently, what seemed to be an element to clarify the text, disguises it, and creates another shade – the truth is not there, there is no page forty to reveal anything at length. Thanks to this detail of pagination, we can understand the shock between full spaces, that is, the information given about the story and the setting, and empty spaces, i.e., all that is not said or shown, which consequently gives place to subjectivity. The piece of information that the spectator receives, as on page 14, seems to come to lighten the way, but, in fact, reveals the author's deranging presence through *Reader*, unfolding the complex composition of planes, the levels of communication and existence in the play. And *Reader* explains, "In his dreams he had been warned against this change".

Minimalism, linear perspective, *chiaroscuro*, and *sfumato*, these are some of the various components of a play that extricates itself from any attempt to be framed, closed in a single reading. The more we read **OI**, the more difficult it becomes to be embraced, enclosed by one single interpretation. The more we read Beckett's play, the more we immerse ourselves in its mourning, its darkness, in the depths of those minds, the more we want that sad tale not to be for the last time told. And it seems that Beckett predicted our response to his play by offering us a contemplation time at both its beginning and at its end, the wonderful ten seconds, for us to stay a little longer "buried in who knows what thoughts they paid no heed." We want to pay heed to those depths of mind. We want to dawn the "light through that single window." We want to understand that sad tale and be part of it. Beckett believed it was the artist's duty to express the totality and complexity of his experience regardless of the public's lazy demand for easy comprehensibility; he would even state that if they did not understand the work it was because they were too decadent to receive it, for they were not able to comprehend unless

form and content were totally separated. The *chiaroscuro*, the minimal stage-set are there to accomplish Beckett's goal of reawaking our sorrows, the depths of our minds or at least our decadence, and we will not have our comfort back, even it were it in our power. "No need to go to him again, even were it in your power. So the sad tale a last time told they sat on as though turned to stone" (**OI,** 1984, p.18).

3. THE BOOK, *READER,* AND THE READER-SPECTATOR

In the midst of postmodernity, or as the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman states, in the midst of the "liquid modernity", when all traditions that were capable of holding, retaining the past in a linear time sequence are melting, and consequently dissolving the frontiers of space and time; in a moment when quantic physics refers to parallel universes, Beckett makes use of memory fragments as a symbol of resistance to forgetfulness, to the total melting of belief in the human being. Similarly to Leonardo Da Vinci, playing with his power to reconfigure space while remembering another one, he organizes and at the same time dismantles his successive impressions. The difference is that Beckett seems to play with the ignorance and impotence of the reader/spectator, once he makes clear that his power as author is made of his own visions, for we are told a story which we will not have access to, unless we are able to decode some elements carefully hidden beneath the lines – in the haunting spaces of the drama. At the same time, in each pause, in each recapture of a story never totally told, the author of the absurd fights, resists; "little is left to tell", he keeps repeating as if he were warning us that it is not the "end" yet, and tirelessly *Reader* continues his reading. At each pause, like in a photograph (in some moments, Beckett specifies the time of ten seconds), the spectator/reader is pulled into the drama of the anonymous narrator, as much as of *Reader/Listener.* Words in Beckett, and especially in **OI**, as he defines, are his way to "this literature of the unword, which is so desirable to me…" (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 47).

"All needed to be known for say is known. There is nothing but what is said. Beyond what is said there is nothing. What goes on in the arena is not said. Did it need to be known it would be. No interest. Not for imagining" (BECKETT, 1995, p. 236). Aware that there is no equivalence between the right to remember and the affirmation of some truth from the

memory, through reading out loud, *Reader* masquerades the manufacturing of Beckett's visions, the codification of an experience, the creation of an artifact that results from the action of giving form to matter according to a specific intention. And if we think of the strict meaning of manufacturing, according to Rafael Cardoso (CARDOSO, 2007, Introdução), etymologically, the word corresponds to *in* + *formation* (literally, the process of giving form to something); in a broader meaning, manufacturing equals informing. Therefore, it can be understood that reading in **OI,** which corresponds to its intentional manufacturing, is the tool chosen by the author to unveil his process of creating form and specific meaning to his own writing – in **OI**, meaning comes from giving form to words, their shape, size, even repetition, through the rhythm of reading. Actually, it is interesting to remember that, throughout the different periods of history, reading out loud has gained a different meaning and importance, especially after the Middle Ages, when the increase in the number of readers and reading rooms favored the popularization of silent reading. The new paradigm has led to the contemporary concept of "illiteracy" as the inability to read silently and understand what was read. In spite of that, we must remember that what gives existence to the book is its materiality, which is not only the book properly but also a way of representing the text on stage, of any form of transmission linked to the practices of orality, such as reciting a text or simply reading it out loud – all of them, processes of producing meaning. Therefore, meaning comes also from the orality of the text; and in this case, would *Reader* be the element who tries to produce meaning, or would he be unable to understand and therefore in need of someone else to interpret for him, unable to apprehend the "sanctuaries of the secret", as Bachelard would call them? Would repetition here represent that inability to understand and, consequently, it became necessary a third element – *Listener* – between him and the book, to play the role of tutoring?

Certainly, this manufacturing process is not present only in Beckett's writings; the need of a reflexive rupture with the immediacy of the perceptions and experiences so that they can be represented, can be found also in Bertolt Brecht and the Russian formalists, who believed that art is capable of enlightening what surrounds us in a more immediate way as long as a cut, a rupture is made, through a distancing that provokes a deviation of perception from its usual path, forcing the observer/reader/spectator to question the usual. Beckett seems to follow Hannah Arendt's concept of "thinking with an open mind" in order to train imagination so that it can come and visit us – in this case, the writer as well as the reader/spectator. He who tells a story, states Beatriz Sarlo (2007), faces in the first place a matter that has become by its familiarity incomprehensible or banal, even when what is told is a personal experience. When imagination comes to visit, it breaks with the familiarity of the facts and, through distancing, captures the difference that allows the exploration of unknown possibilities, and from these new possibilities arises a new sense and meaning for the experience told, making it disorganized, contradictory, resilient. In order to know, says Sarlo, imagination needs this trajectory that leads it outward and turns it reflexive; in this journey, it learns that the story can never be totally told and will never have an ending because not all the positions can be covered, and its accumulation will not result in totality either. In this way, Beckett becomes not the master of the absurd, but, on the contrary, the master of awareness: he is not only aware of his limitations as a playwright, or the limitations of language, but also of the role of imagination as key factor for liberating the story from banality and giving its permanence as a meaningful and constantly renewed experience. Even more, as Oppenheim states (2003), there is in the unwording of Beckett's literature, a loosening of the boundaries between art and the outside world. The space of the "unword" is the space of imagination, the in-between space, the space of an eternally pursued and lost memory.

The space of imagination rises from the anachronism of testimony, which is comprised of anything that the subject allows himself to remember or might remember, anything that he forgets, intentionally silences, modifies, invents, transfers from one gender or tune to another, from all the experiences he knows, which confound themselves after some time with their own experiences. Anachronism here understood as "trivial", as Didi-Huberman calls it (HUBERMAN apud SARLO, 2007, p. 59), something that does not enlighten the past, but shows the limits that distance imposes to our understanding of that past. The space of imagination is the space of Bachelard's basements, attics, and dark corridors – this is where our imagination as spectators is activated, making each word of the play become an entire world for the reader-spectator. Yet, in the midst of shadows and labyrinths, the duty of memory remains, inducing an affective, moral relationship with the past: *Reader* will continue reading, whereas *Listener* will continue knocking on the table because of the story, the pain and torment of that unnamed man who, day after day, would pace the islet, hoping that relief would come from unfamiliarity. The duty of memory keeps functioning in all characters, in all levels of narration, within all the dimensions of the *Book*, and the more space it opens for imagination, the more we remain trapped in that labyrinthic world full of abyssal unfaithful voices. In fact, when it comes to explain memory in **OI**, we can evoke what James Young calls "memory in abyss": I remember what my father remembered, and so on; a memory with a vicarious nature; what Marianne Hirsh calls "post-memory", i.e., what comes after the memory of those who lived the facts and which, once it establishes a relationship with them, also presents conflicts and contradictions (YOUNG apud SARLO, 2007, p. 90).

In **OI**, the abyssal memory acquires a very material aspect, if we think of the image of the book within the book within the book. Literary pages are like immense houses full of labyrinthic corridors, roundabouts, and chapels filled with heavy air and an omnirically

complex basement; and, although they may easily get lost, it is the reader's duty to explore them with dreams that refer sometimes to the suffering of the corridors, sometimes to the amazement of the underground palaces. A complex geometry which, states Bachelard (2003), might be difficult for the reader to understand, but here is where the phenomenology comes to hand revealing its efficacy: it asks us to establish within ourselves a reading pride that will give us the illusion of participating in the author's work. However, such attitude cannot be easily taken in the first reading, since it is made with excessive passivity – the reader, says the author, is still a little infantile, and reading distracts them. The first reading, states Bachelard, is just a draft; it must be followed by a second, a third reading, etc. (the book within the book within the book) so that we can know the author's "problem". Each reading will teach us the solution of that problem and little by little, insensibly, we nourish the illusion that the problem and the solution are in our hands. And so we move on in our reading through **OI,** with the belief that the problem and the solution for the "sad tale" are in our hands, the reader-spectators, who have just been told that little is left to tell – this is the space mentioned by Bachelard, which we are supposed as attentive phenomenologist readers to fulfill with dreams that can take into account the empty labyrinths and chapels, the dark basement of never told memories. In **OI**, we are invited for a reading "in suspension", the in-between spaces among the words where the values of intimacy are un-wordly located, waiting to be fulfilled by our omnirical presence. This is the moment when the reader's eyes get away from the book, or in the silence between words in the play, when the author's "room" (or closet, or basement), phenomenologically speaking, may become a threshold full of omnirism for somebody else – that is, us, the reader-spectators. We are invited to inhabit the author's disappeared home, not as remembrance, but as one day, while we were reading, we had dreamed of it; now it is our power of reverie what will fulfill the spaces of the house. According to Adorno, Beckett's work is at the same time about a reflection – reproduction of the petty and mutilated world on

a second level, the imaginary one – and its re-elaboration in the form attributed to the (in)significant, denouncing the subject's and reality's lack of meaning (ADORNO apud ANDRADE, 2001, p. 30). The spaces of the story will receive the forms of our dreams – they will run through the corridors and labyrinths, and the air will become as heavy as our inner rooms and basement. Like in an electronic text, Beckett's reader-spectator can interfere in the content of the book, and not only in the empty spaces left by the typographic composition; they dislocate, cut, extend, re-compound the textual unities. As well as in an e-book, in **OI,** the observer is not reduced anymore to simply look; he acquires the possibility of acting over the work and modify it, "enlarge" it and become its co-author, since the primary meaning of the word author (*augere*) is "enlarge" – in the case of an electronic text, within the limits of the program; in the case of a play such as **OI**, the only limit is that of our imagination, or reverie. The author delegates to the co-author part of his responsibility, his authority, his capability of making the work grow (COUCHOT apud DOMINGUES org., 1997, p. 140-141). Like in the multimedia work, in the dialogical interactive **OI** there is a change in the relationship between work, author, and spectator; quoting the metaphor used by Couchot, the triangle tends to become a circle – the dialogical, states the author, allows the hybridization of the universe of numbers and the expressive gesture, emotion, ambiguity, of hesitation between signifying and enjoying, which is typical of any gesture. Over this mobile circle, the work, the author, and the spectator do not occupy strictly defined and rigid positions anymore; on the contrary, they constantly exchange them, over cross them, confound themselves or oppose to each other, contaminate themselves (ibid, p. 141).

Yet, unlikely the electronic text, in Beckett's work, the author does not disappear, he continues there, silently; and the more he gives space and freedom for the reader to participate in his text, the more his presence becomes evident, stronger, and omnipotent. Here we can

recall Roger Chartier (2003, p. 24) when he states that the writing itself pursues the possibility of freedom; it pursues a possibility to escape from the patriarchal, matrimonial or familiar order. In Beckett's **OI**, the text reveals itself as a space where the author, as much as the reader-spectator, can exercise the possibility of freedom, in some way exorcizing the fear that the text might be corrupted. Actually, we may say that **OI** is "corruption proof", since it is open to the reader's participation in the author's work and, therefore, any interference will be considered the reader's intervention within the space of imagination. Here, Beckett makes evident his poetics of indigence and his theories on the death of the subject, dissolving the figures of the narrator in first and third person, giving power to an imperative and impersonal voice, following an approach that is actually contemporary to the play – the so-called subjective swerve, a sort of democratization of the actors of the story, which gives voice to the excluded ones, to the untitled, to the voiceless ones. In **OI**, they can be the characters as well as the readers of any of the books within the book. As Jorge Luis Borges stated in a conference in 1978, a book only acquires existence when it has a reader who reads it, and its meanings change according to their readings.

> What are the words written on a book? What are those dead symbols? Nothing, absolutely. What is a book if we dot open it? It is just a cube of paper and leather, with sheets; but if we read it, something strange happens; I believe it changes every time we do it. Heraclitus said (I have repeated too many times) that nobody bathes twice in the same river. Nobody bathes twice in the same river because the waters change, but what is the most terrible is that we are not less fluid than the river. Each time we read a book, the book has changed, the connotation of the words is another one (BORGES apud CHARTIER, 2003, p. XI).[47]

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[47] "O que são as palavras postas em um livro? O que são esses símbolos mortos? Nada absolutamente. O que é um livro se não o abrimos? É simplesmente um cubo de papel e couro, com folhas; mas se o lemos acontece algo estranho, creio que muda a cada vez. Heráclito disse (o repeti demasiadas vezes) que ninguém se banha duas vezes no mesmo rio. Ninguém se banha duas vezes no mesmo rio porque as águas mudam, mas o mais terrível é que nós não somos menos fluidos que o rio. Cada vez que lemos um livro, o livro mudou, a conotação das palavras é outra (BORGES apud CHARTIER, 2003, p. XI).

We must remember also that when reading a story, the material presence of the book is like a historical reference to which we can always return, a window through which we can always look and try to understand the significances and the effects of the ruptures that the use of the book itself might have caused. The book, with its long history, is one of the strongest metaphors that humans have created; it has resisted all sorts of new technologies, living together with them and still retaining alive its first expressions as manuscripts, which were forged by the scribes of Pergamon, now called Bergama, in Western Turkey, and whose origin goes back to 280 BC. Its king, Attalus, and later on his son Eumenes, started to build the greatest library in the world to outdo the famous library in Alexandria, and as Egypt stopped supplying papyrus to Pergamon, and as they had a rich wool industry, plenty of sheep, they started writing more on sheepskin, or vellum – what they called *Charta Pergamene*, which meant *paper of Pergamon*. The words *Charta Pergamene* mutated into *parchment*. Yet, as it is harder to roll parchment into a scroll than it is papyrus, someone thought of folding parchment into rectangular pages and sewing those gatherings together; and so the modern book was invented. The library grew to 200,000 volumes, and ended up belonging to Egypt again, as a present from Anthony to Cleopatra, after the Romans took control of it and accidentally burned part of Alexandria's library. So we remember Alexandria and forget Pergamon, but their brief competition changed human history. According to John H. Lienhard, in his article *Metaphor of the Book,* Pergamon had given us the most efficient information storage technology ever known, and this was one of the few times a new user interface was good enough to change the technological metaphor. […] "the book – the codex – became metaphor unto itself. It well may be the most powerful technological metaphor of them all." Although the system has drastically changed after Gutenberg, who made print look just like the work of scribes, counterfeiting manuscript books, which often take a trained eye to tell an early printed book from a manuscript book, books today still keep most of those

features; as Lienhard states, we readers still receive information the same way they did in Pergamon, 2000 years ago <LIENHARD, 1996>.

We can think of the film *The Pillow Book,* by Peter Greenaway, where the book support becomes the human body ever since the young girl, Nagiko, receives a blessing from her father on her birthday, written on her skin while her aunt reads a "pillow book" by Sei Shonagon, a book written almost a thousand years before. From that moment on, the ritual will be repeated every year until her father's death. After that day, Nagiko will obsessively use her body as parchment on which enigmas will be written also as a way of sexual trade in a game of seduction, disguise, and power. The more she has her skin written on, the more she will be gasping for it, until she finally meets Jerome, an English translator who is capable of decoding the body manuscripts and unfolding the drama behind the book – her father's history, and her relationship with him. The book, the fragments written on her body, becomes the only path to unfold Nagiko's sad tale, and, like the anonymous character in **OI** who keeps retracing his steps, she keeps going back to it, seeking relief from the familiarity that repetition might bring. And it is not an accident that the only person able to really bring her relief is a translator: like Beckett-translator, he is the attentive reader, the initiated who knows how to "decode" the story from its fragments, avoiding distractions. As in Beckett's book, also in *The Pillow Book* it is necessary a reader-spectator who does not feel satisfied with the first reading, but continues like Nagiko exhaustively seeking understanding. Besides, we can see in the film a similar process of disintegration of the subject voices: Nagiko is not simply the main character; she is also the material support where the story is written, erased, and written again, although never the same. Her voice as a subject is as broken, dislocated, as the characters' in Beckett – the story that she keeps retracing is not really hers; the text written on her skin does not belong to her either, it does not have the authorial voice, it actually resembles the enigmatic and unreachable figure of the *dear name* in **OI**, which is always

there, constantly mentioned but never really visible. The book carries the struggle between past, present, and future; it does not represent the reality of the world; it does not tell a story, it just reveals the internal conflicts within itself and its characters, who remain immobilized in their restless movements – a sort of "fable of the tired man", like in *El libro de arena,* by Jorge Luis Borges, where the author comments in the Epilogue that the fable of the tired man is the "most honest and melancholic piece of the series".

In regard to this melancholic state, Chartier points out that it is so perhaps because everything that in the classic utopias seem to promise a better future – with no war, no poverty or wealth, no government or politics – leads to the loss of what defines human beings in their humanity: their name, memory, differences (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 15). In **OI**, memory is but a fragment; there is no identity, and the difference is lost through masquerading the characters; therefore, can we say that Beckett's characters are in fact in a process of losing their humanity? Maybe; however, we must also remember that Beckett's characters resist, endlessly fight against disappearance, and their most effective weapon is Time: through holding it by never telling the story they are about to tell, they remain in time itself and in space, since it is also kept on hold, for it is never really located, and consequently may be everywhere, anywhere, even the spaces of our reverie. Moreover, the postmodern world of the book, be it in the traditional form or the electronic one, is a world of textual super abundance and whose offer surpasses the reader's capacity of appropriation. Once again, the dialogue between Eudoro Acevedo and the man with no name, in *El libro de arena* (BORGES, 1977, p. 96-106), comes in handy: "… what matters is not reading, but reading again". Consequently, this is what Beckett's characters do, they keep reading again and again, starting from the end and never really getting through the story because this is how they will hold time and avoid total forgetfulness – that is what matters.

As it is well known, the image of the book in **OI** is not a random choice. Besides many artistic references that can be found, authors such as Hugh Kenner and Ruby Cohn have pointed out approximations between Beckett and Dante Alighieri, especially if we think of the *Canto V* in Dante's *Inferno,* which refers to the sin of luxury, adultery – the case of Francesca da Rimini e Paolo (**Plate 50**), a love story whose prohibition was ignored and, as a consequence, punished with eternity in hell. The reason Francesca gives for their weakness is what matters to us here: it consists in the act of reading a book out loud to each other. They would get together in the garden to read about Lancelot's love story with Guinevere, by Galiotto who, actually, was the friend who encouraged Lancelot to kiss King Arthur's wife. This episode seems to have made a strong impression on Dante's imagination, since he introduces it again in *Paradise, Canto xvi*. The power of the book and of knowing its story arises: the image of that loving smile between two lovers was so deeply involving that they were taken by it, forced by the power of words to give in to their own prohibited love. Francesca and Paolo, like the character in **OI**, had a story that should remain untold; not only their adultery, but what lies behind it – they had loved each other since childhood, and when the time for marriage came her father gave her to Paolo's brother.[48]

> From whence our love gat being, I will do
> As one, who weeps and tells his tale. One day,
> For our delight we read of Lancelot,
> How him love thrall'd. Alone we were, and no *125*
> Suspicion near us. Oft-times by that reading
> Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
> Fled from our alter'd cheek. But at one point
> Alone we fell. When of that smile we read,
> The wished smile so raptorously kiss'd *130*
> By one so deep in love, then he, who ne'er

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[48] Francesca, the daughter of Guido da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna, was given by her father in marriage to Gianciotto, son of Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, a man of extraordinary courage, but deformed in his person. His brother Paolo, who unhappily possessed those graces which the husband of Francesca wanted, engaged her affections; and being taken in adultery, they were both put to death by the enraged Gianciotto (The Harvard Classics. 1909–14). Available at < **http://bartelby.org/20/105.html >,** site visited on Aug. 23, 2009.

Plate 50: *Francesca da Rimini* - William Dyce, 1837. Oil on canvas, 218.0 x 182.88 x 15,24 cm framed

From me shall separate, at once my lips
All trembling kiss'd. The book and writer both
Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day
We read no more." While thus one spirit spake,   *135*
The other wail'd so sorely, that heart-struck
I, through compassion fainting, seem'd not far
From death, and like a corse fell to the ground.
(ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Divine Comedy.* Inferno, Canto V)

Francesca is the only woman who is given voice in the *Inferno,* and the only one in the entire *Divine Comedy*, besides Beatrice. She is the only character who in her desperation has the power to make Dante stop and listen to her story; and this fact provokes on him a strong reaction – he becomes so involved and disturbed by that sad tale that, at that moment, his beliefs tremble, making necessary the interference of his guide, the poet Virgil. Like in Beckett's play, the night is endless for Dante's characters; there is no hope for them, except that fleeting moment when the poet stops to listen to her – and she believes that hope would come from unfamiliarity, from the pity her story might have provoked on the pilgrim; but just for a fleeting moment, until Virgil's wisdom brought Dante back to light. "I saw the dear face and heard the unspoken words, No need to go to him again, even were it in your power" (**OI,** p. 17). At that moment, like *Reader* and *Listener,* Dante remains trapped in the infernal circular timing of the unfinished story. As it cannot be finished, the pain cannot be released, and the poet cannot go back there, as much as Francesca cannot acknowledge *her* error "and return to where they were once so long together. Alone together so much shared. No." (**OI,** p. 14). Like in **OI,** the book becomes the string pulled by the puppet master and which keeps the puppets together – Francesca and Paolo, Francesca and Dante, *Reader* and *Listener,* the unnamed character, the "dear name" and his/her messenger, as well as the reader-spectator. In this process, the materiality of the book is what keeps alive the belief in the possibility of change, just as Francesca and Paolo believed in the power of Galiotto's story, and all the layers of characters in **OI** continue believing that something or somebody will come and bring relief, like Clov and

Ham in *Endgame*, and many other puppet-characters by Beckett. Like Gutenberg counterfeiting manuscript, Beckett counterfeits the metaphor of the book itself, making the location of the real source impossible. Like in a parallel universe, meaning and form circulate freely through different levels of reading and visual understanding. **OI**'s book is like a library within one single book, a house of fun where one image generates and is generated by others – a game of mirroring visual layers that makes impossible for the spectator identify and truly reach the primary image. Like the artwork by the Brazilian artist Marina Camargo, entitled *Library* (**Plate 51**)*,* in which she presents photographs of the very library of the space where she was exhibiting her work, Centro Cultural São Paulo, and where reading, reaching the book, becomes impossible, blocked by its own image. Here, meaning comes from the image of the book and not from its real content that will be forever frozen within the picture of the library itself, which is already unreachable by the glass window from where the photo was taken but, at the same time, forever protected from changes, annihilation that time might bring, once it is frozen in time and space by the technological power of photography. In this artwork, the struggle with control and excess of information is solved: the entire library can be "read" at one glance; the lazy reader-spectator is safe.

According to Vilém Flusser (FLUSSER apud CARDOSO, 2007, p. 19), the basis of all culture is the attempt to deceive nature and fight against entropy, against the disaggregation of meaning and form, to overcome human physical limitations through technology, and that includes words, images and artifacts used by the human society to create a highly complex world whose logic remains occult to most of its inhabitants. The paradox is that all this excess of manipulated information leads to the disintegration of meaning and accumulation of trash, be it material or virtual. The human, states Cardoso (2007, p. 16), becomes slave of the forces of another "nature" artificially created with their help and which,

Plate 51: Library - Marina Camargo, 2009

in thesis, aimed to bring well-being to them; but the future is uncertain, since the machines, more efficient and intelligent, started to develop the ability to dispense with us and, as a result, complexity has grown in geometrical scale. Therefore, it is not possible to know whether we are moving toward a greater integration or disintegration, for they can be easily mistaken; what is known is just that the new frontier, from now on, is that of our own awareness of the system constructed, which has on us a paradoxical effect: at the same time it gives us the pleasure of any sort of comfort, it also takes control over us. And that is not related only to the industry of goods; we still have to learn how to deal with another type of industry which, as it happens with the other technologies in the overall system, offers us a series of facilities and comfort, at the same time it haunts us with its power to control us: the industry of information. However, we must remember as well that the printed book has represented since its first editions a resistance to the fear of loss, which justified, in the sixteenth century, the manuscripts to be recollected and multiplied into printed versions in order to fix them and rescue them from forgetfulness. On one hand, there is the fear of excess of a society completely invaded by its written patrimony and by the impossibility of each individual to manipulate and domesticate this textual abundance. On the other hand, according to Roger Chartier (2001), it is very strong the contradiction between the obsession of loss, which requires accumulation, and the concern with excess, which requires selecting and choosing – that is what was called for the first time in France, in 1890, the "crisis of the book", which is not related to other media but to the lag between an insufficient market and the increasing capacity of producing new books. On top of that, we must also think of another fear that has accompanied the book press from the beginning: the fear of text corruption, which already in the Middle Ages led authors such as Petrarch to create the "authorial publication" that put in circulation manuscripts copied and corrected by the authors themselves. This fear was reinforced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by the deep and

unfortunate awareness of the corruptions introduced by the press. The latter was frequently seen as triply corrupting: it deformed the letter of the texts, altered by the mistakes made by unable typographers; it destroyed the uninterested ethics of the text's Republic by giving them to dishonest bookers; it obliterated the true significance of the works by offering them to ignorant readers, incapable of understanding them properly. From this comes the mistrust toward the printed book and the preference for manuscript publications, which allowed a better control of the text, its circulation, and interpretation (CHARTIER, 2002, p.85). Anyway, what we see through the quarrels about the book throughout history is in fact the pursuit of a utopia – an obsessive attempt to reconstitute the past. Of course, literature does not have this duty of being faithful to history, to the experience lived by its narrator or any other person; it does not have to rescue the real past or past injustices. As Beatriz Sarlos states (2003, p. 119), in literature a narrator always thinks from outside the experience, as if human beings could appropriate themselves of the nightmare, and not only suffer it. The road is long and open to interferences according to the reader's background, intensity, and freedom of imagination. In fact, we do not have manuscripts easily available to guarantee that the word read will be in fact the author's; then, wouldn't Beckett's preference for writing in a foreign language, his concern with self-erasure and the concealing of the word itself be an expression of this old fear of the printed text, a desire to preserve his own text, as if he knew that once it was published its truth might have got forever lost, since he knew that his book would fall in the hands of "ignorant readers" and he had no ways to control that? Fear, we definitely can identify throughout **OI**, as well as how much the author cares for the words used beyond their meaning: they are carefully chosen also for their size and shape, their musicality, and even their power to hide meaning itself and metaphors.

Also according to Beatriz Sarlo (2007, p. 24), there is no experience without narration: it is the language that frees the mute aspect of the experience, redeeming it from its immediacy or its forgetfulness and transforming it into something communicable, that is, common. Narration, she adds, inscribes the experience in a temporality that is not of the event itself (threatened, from the start, by the passage of time and by the unrepeatable) but of its remembrance; it also inaugurates a temporality that at each repetition, at each variant, updates itself once again. And once again we fall into Beckett's repetition, the "abyssal memory", which happens in two different levels of the text: the repetitive reading of parts of the book by *Reader,* and repetition in the narration itself (day after day, night after night…). The narration in Beckett reflects how weakened the transcendent reasons behind the experience and its narration have become for the modern man, especially after the deep shock of World War II, leading to a process of muteness. Consequently, if the experience has become disconnected so has its discourse, for there is a rupture between the narration and the body, separating then the experience from its meaning – the shock dissolves experience; what we are facing is an "*objective* rest of inert temporality and subjectivity" (SARLO, 2007, p. 28). As it is stated by the author, this aporia does not find a closure because the conditions of redemption of a past experience are crumbling. The acceleration of time turned impossible the intercommunication between experiences and, therefore, turned them immeasurable; and that process of derangement is identified in Beckett's work, especially in **OI**, through the rupture in the narrative structure within its various levels: the story line is constantly interrupted by time swaps, not only from present to past but through past, present, and future, in different orders; the presence of three different narrators, or layers of narration – the narrator, properly; a second narrator, characterized in the figure of the man who comes at night bringing news from the dear name and carrying a book which will be read until dawn; and a third narrator, *Reader,* who is actually the only one to unveil the story to *Listener*-spectator. Aporetically,

Beckett's subject is dismantled, kept alive only through fragments of memory and mostly through artifices such as the pictorial references, especially the book, which in the film is offered to the audience as a proof of its existence, the written word, as if we were presented a biography – the illusion of a life as reference and, consequently, the illusion that there is a subject unified in time. Maybe this is why Beckett erased the first person from his first drafts, keeping the third person in his final text: to avoid autobiography, which is but a spectral structure in which someone who calls themselves "I" presents themselves as object. According to Sarlo (2007), this means that this textual subject takes into the scene an absent "I" and covers their face with a mask. And here we are presented with another contradiction: Beckett takes off the first person from his narration but keeps the spectral structure, including the mask – a concept that in the film reaches its extreme with the use of the same actor for both roles. The "I" in **OI** is covered with a multilayer mask; Beckett only pretends to escape from prosopopoeia – the trope that grants the word to a dead or absent person – when in reality this is what he does. He presents us an experience within a report, where little is left of authenticity, since prosopopoeia is a rhetorical artifice, inscribed in the order of procedures and forms of the discourse, and in which the masqueraded voice can play any role, without guaranteeing the identity between the subject and the trope, totally free from any pact of referentiality. Therefore, the masqueraded voice speaks but cannot be evaluated in regard to the authenticity of his speech, it cannot be judged according to his sincerity, for we cannot judge the actor but his performance of a state of "sincerity"; there is no truth, just a mask that affirms to be saying his truth. Also in this regard the author, as much as the film director, was careful with his choices: the book within the book brings the idea of authenticity, and the choice of an actor such as Jeremy Irons for the role of *Reader-Listener* guarantees the "sincerity" of the performance, but, in any case, the unified subject remains distant, lost or hidden between the textual layers. In this way, superposition has become a key word to

understand not only Beckett's literary process but the postmodern novel that constantly superposes different worlds among which prevails an "incommunicative alterity", as David Harvey would call it; in a space of coexistence, an emphasis on the ephemerid of *juissance*, an insistence on the impenetrability of the Other, a focus on the text better than on the work, a tendency towards deconstruction which nears nihilism, a preference for aesthetics over ethics. It is not difficult to read a postmodern novel like a metaphorical transversal cut of the social landscapes in fragmentation, of subcultures and local practices (HARVEY, 2004, p.109-112).

Beckett, in his "digging work", as he defines it, seems to search for the ideal reader/spectator that by any chance still exists in the depths of our mind, but this also only apparently – at the same time there is an appeal so we can be thrown into the drama and even into the book, we are blocked by a paradox that, in Gontarski's words, became a sort of Beckett's literary signature: by starting the text informing the spectator that "little is left to tell". At this moment, we realize that our space is not the space of the book, the space of listeners around the table. For us, spectators, there is just one space, the space of darkness that surrounds the scene, the space outside the painting, the space of modern artwork; as if it were some sort of punishment for the fact that we cannot hold the melting, as we have no competence to find the ways to enter the space of the work. Then, let us be exposed to the discomfort of the game of forces present in there, the game of parallel universes among the subjects of the work – between the space of *Reader* and *Listener,* between the inclusive space of the spotlights and the exclusive space of shadows; between reality and reverie; between work and spectator; between characters and narrator. Anyway, in **OI**, the reader-spectator becomes aware that their expectations cannot be toward the world represented by Beckett, but toward the world of the game, of substitutions of signs within language. As Bella Jozef states (2006), the game brings freedom, and the narrative hides/unveils the game of sign. Therefore,

the literary art turns to be the privileged space to donate meaning through the interrelationship of all the elements of the text, once reading is not redoing passively the writing's path; meaning is not beginning or origin; it is product. It does not exist to be discovered or restored, but to be produced by new combinations. Writing, then, and especially in **OI**, becomes the contradictory process of revealing-occulting. In this way, Beckett lets the work speak so that the text can exist from its reader-spectator, as long as they are able to donate meaning through their own combinations.

Beckett's experimentation with form, states Lois Oppenheim (2003, p. 16), revealed an opposition to the rules of narrativity that resulted in a crisis of genre unparalleled in literary history. Contrarily to the traditional novel of the twentieth century, which made use of the hiatus between narrative voice and character consciousness, Beckett, increasingly faithful to Adolf Loos's principle "less is more", dissolves their identity, merging them and, consequently, disrupting coherence through fragmentation in both levels – content and form – a fragmentation that, instead of separating the parts of the play, actually fuses them, making impossible to individualize them. As the author states, "if anything, postmodernism is a symptomatic move away from homogeneity and the threat of absolute presence" (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 19); therefore, decomposition seems to be the only way out for the playwright and it is mainly done through language, a language that is constantly "unworded" by an untold story, an unseen character, an unspoken "dear name". In this diffracted process, we are presented with a large door that will lead us to the haunting poetic spaces mentioned by Gaston Bachelard, the spaces of reverie that are but labyrinths full of shadows and where the story reveals itself to be another one, and another, and another. The narrator is diffracted into *Reader,* who is diffracted into *Listener*, and vice versa; the story is diffracted into the two narrative levels – the book that is being read and the story that cannot be told but can be

inferred; and so we can go on reading in an attempt to finally reach the real story. But Beckett continues his work of "unmaking" to make sure to the spectator, or maybe himself, that the narrator's absolute presence will never be more than a haunting presence, and in order to assure that, he goes even further: he dissolves the boundaries between novel and theater, between prose and poetry. That is what we see in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, in which the act of waiting is the actual theatrical experience; that is what we see even more strongly in **OI**, through the reading, its pauses and repetitions. **OI's** prose merges with a poetic reading, and the poetic word, says Bachelard, is the phenomenological material *par excellence*. Words in **OI** do not simply reveal – actually, they never reveal – they embroider and paint ideas in a *Gestalt* process.

According to Rudolf Arnheim, the sensible form carries within itself aspects that make it participant in the most abstract and elevated mental and spiritual activities; each external vision is already an inner vision, it transcends the configuration of an image and becomes *form* of a particular content. Only with form, he states, we enter the scope of true art; the specificity of art is exactly the invention not of a subject and even less of a configuration, but of a form, whose faculty is imagination, defined by Arnheim as the activity that makes it possible to translate things into images. He goes even further and states that all thought is fundamentally of a visual nature (ARNHEIM apud PERNIOLA, 1998). Visuality that in Beckett emerges also from the construct of word form, through self-erasure and through playing, in most of his plays, with the form of both French and English words in a work of self-translation, as it is well known, which creates gaps between the original and final work. Like in a *Gestalt* process, these gaps carry a sort of "inner visions" where new forms will emerge; in this case, a new text for, in Beckett, dealing with a foreign language gives him more freedom to play with it. This is a process that can be identified also in **OI**: originally

written in English, it has gone through a similar process of cleansing, of self-erasure through literally the erasure of words and ideas, which here is more radical than a translation itself. He even adds: "I have the consolation […] of sinning willy-nilly against a foreign language, as I should love to do with full knowledge and intent against my own – as I shall do – Deo juvante" (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 22). Once more, we are trapped in Beckett's words, full of apparent indifference towards his own writing, as if he were merely led by a random stream of ideas and limitations, with no conscious or controlled participation in his own work: whether desired or not, with "God's help", there he goes playing with language, playing with words in his digging process of writing, which ends up being more like a process of un-writing, since the twenty-five pages of draft resulted in less than five – "art loves leaps" (" l'art adore les sautés"), he wrote in *La Peinture des van Velde ou le Monde et le Pantalon* (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 24), and in a letter to Axel Kaun (BECKETT apud ANDRADE, 2001, Anexos, p. 169) he states that his own language appeared to him "like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it". Grammar and style, he continues, have become as irrelevant as a Victorian swimming suit: a mask. Language in Beckett is not simply the vehicle of storytelling but the pictorial, or shall we say sculptural, construct of the visual (OPPENHEIM, 2003); words became pieces, fragments of a visual artwork. As Enoch Brater states:

> The theater event [in Beckett] is reduced to a piece of monologue and the play is on the verge of becoming something else, something that looks suspiciously like a performance poem. All the while a story is being told, a fiction closely approximating the dramatic situation the audience encounters in the theater. It is no longer possible to separate the dancer from the dance. (BRATER apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 17).

"Full object, complete with parts missing, instead of partial object": this is how Beckett, in a letter to Duthuit from 1949, defines Pierre Tal Coat's painting; and this is how we can define **OI**, as well; "a movement towards a more adequate expression of the natural experience" – natural here understood as a combination between the one who perceives and what is perceived; an experience. This is Beckett's way of defining the artistic process, an art that, disgusted, turns its back to the feasible plan, tired of its explorations, of pretending to be capable, of doing a little better the same old thing, and choosing instead the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing to express with, nothing from which to express, no possibility to express, no desire to express, allied to the obligation of expressing (BECKETT apud ANDRADE, Anexos, p. 174-75).

Closed place.
All needed to be known for say is known.
There is nothing but what is said.
Beyond what is said there is nothing.
What goes in the arena is not said.
Did it need to be known it would be.
No interest. Not for imagining.

Samuel Beckett (*Fizzle 5*)

CONCLUSION

As it was stated above, it was not the aim of this dissertation to label Beckett's work as modernist or post-modernist. Yet, the fact is that, if we follow the postmodern logics of "and…and", **OI** perfectly represents our postmodern time and space, especially if the focus is on the pictorial aspects of the work: its unique aesthetic singularity, which sums up a variety of visual references in a perfect *collage* of art history, besides a variety of literary references that range from Dante to twentieth century writers; the sophistication of his work of "unwording language" (OPPENHEIM) to which he aspired and appeared to him, as he said in a letter to Axel Kaun (*Disjecta*, 171) "like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it", bears the mark of a time that can only be understood and described within a postmodern logics of conjunction. Beckett's postmodern work, actually, fits into the concept of representation of the unrepresentable, defined by Lyotard:

> The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable (LYOTARD apud OPPEINHEIM, 2003, p. 27).

What would be then the best tool to represent the unrepresentable if not a process of unwording? Through emptying words from their usual meaning, new empty spaces arise – spaces of nothingness which carry within feelings of fear, individualism, loneliness, and inadequacy, of belonging nowhere – all of them well known by the contemporary man. The in-between spaces created by Beckett open the doors for an in-between time, the time of reverie, which are the haunting spaces of our imagination mashed up with fragments of our already faded memory. Beckett's characters live in the time and space of alterity, which is indeed the mark of postmodernism – cultural unification in the "new world", as Harvey (HARVEY, 2004, p. 19) would call it, is the product of diversity. We, postmodern human beings, live in a state of fragmentation, indeterminacy, inhabiting at least two cultures and, consequently, two spaces and different times, a state of intense distrust in regard to universal discourses. As Michel Maffesoli (2003, p. 135-136) states, Western tradition has been characterized by multiple "transworlds" – through an incorporated knowledge, we know that life cannot be split; it includes shadows and lights, generosity and ruthlessness; and life, in its banality, as much as in its cruelty, scares those who have, or took, the task to tell it. **OI**'s characters hold that contemporary attitude which, according to Maffesoli (2003, p. 58), nears that of a tragic hero, who does not demand anything from destiny; there is an acceptance of their destiny, the recognition of existence for what it is: precarious, finite, always submitted to the inexorable law of death of everything and everybody. Indeed, according to the author, it is said that the whole existence is nothing but a long learning process of "regression into the womb of the running time"[49]. It regards what Jungian thinkers call *régrédience*, which is a march that does not happen towards one single direction, but following the multiple paths of

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[49] "[...] a existência inteira não é mais que uma longa aprendizagem da 'regressão ao seio do tempo em marcha' (MAFFESOLI, 2003, p. 62).

human nature. Regression, states Maffesoli (2003, p. 63), indicates what is at stake in the integration of the various dimensions of human life at an individual and social level – their shadowy side, their imaginative, passionate, or emotional dimensions. This plurality of movements expressed through regression, takes place in the everyday, banal life, which ends up becoming a niche, a refuge where we return when life hurts us, or when the political, economic, professional pressures become too strong. However, it is a founding, or at least comforting regression, since it allows recognition and new departure.

Notwithstanding, there is an impossibility to unify past, present, and future, and that will lead to the aesthetic alienation of the Self that we see in **OI**'s characters, as a consequence of the dislocation of the contemporary Subject. They are thrown into the eye of a time eddy where it is never possible to find a comfort zone – the space of belonging; on the contrary, there is always this feeling of exhaustion and darkness that must be fought, and their strategy is moving backward-forward "out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared" (**OI**, p. 13) without realizing that this movement in time is actually what destroys space. We are back to the mystical time of repetition: in the image of the resurgent myths, says Maffesoli (2003, p. 15), it is necessary to find the repetition of obsessive ideas, and to be able to repeat those same facts in a no less obsessive way. The ritualistic repetition, the everyday routine are identical ways of expressing and living the return of the myth and, therefore, escaping from a temporality extremely marked by utility and linearity. In each of these cases, there is absorption of the individual, of history, and functionality through a sort of eternity lived in the everyday life; the everyday rite leads then to a non-time, the time of the community (MAFFESOLI, 2003, p. 65). And this is the world in **OI**, a space that turns out to be a labyrinth where people lose their North and, yet, keep moving nowhere, masquerading nothingness with banality – empty conversations, deprived of meaning, at least for the reader-

spectator; repetitive movements of coming and going, or actions such as repetitively reading the same book or the same page, or even the same paragraph. In fact, Beckett makes evident this human condition of being thrown into Nothingness, and the consequence is fear, individuation, and loneliness, for we are left with no possibility of the comfort that we used to get from tradition; therefore, we are deprived of the pleasure of recognizing our time and space, our own world.

Literarily, it is in the emptiness that Beckett's sophistication lies; the space of ab-reaction, as Passeron calls it, of liberating repetition of the old traumatic act, which stimulates a passion for confession, the memorial conscience that embroiders over the past and even invents false remembrances: does the "dear name" exist? And how about the "single room on the far bank", is it a reliable memory? Does *Listener* exist? And how about *Reader*, can we be certain of his existence? Do the story and the book really exist, or existed? Actually, none of these questions really matters; in Beckett they are just a *leitmotif*, a trap for the "lazy readers", as he would refer to us, his spectators. "Avec les mots on ne fait que se raconter" (with words, we do no more than tell of ourselves) wrote Beckett in his essay from 1945, related to stopping writing about Bram van Velde, with whom he considered having a lot in common. In the same way, words in **OI** are not there to tell a story; they are carefully located in the space of the story so that the author, intertwined with the characters and their masks, can tell of himself, and through emptiness, pauses, and silences, also give space for his reader-spectators to delineate their own story, as well. And that is the real story behind the story: our human condition of dislocated Subjects, alienated from our own Self and, consequently, lost, inadequate, totally unprotected, with no walls capable of holding us as individuals, as identities. We, as much as Beckett's characters, are buried in the time-space labyrinth of postmodernity, and he who buries a treasure, says Bachelard (2003, p. 100), buries himself

with it; the secret is a tomb, and it is not for granted that the discrete man gloats for being a tomb of secrets. All intimacy hides itself, he continues, quoting Joë Bousquet: "Nobody sees me change. But who sees me? I am "*my own hiding-place*"[50] (BOUSQUET apud BACHELARD, 2003, p. 100).

In Beckett, man equals language; therefore, following Bella Jozef's concept, he and his production are real masks, since the word functions as a mask that covers the lack of meaning, reflected in the absence of a story or of an essential time – and this is what we see in **OI**. In reality, we enter not the space of the story or of a real past, but the space of reverie, the space of the dream of belonging. In **OI**, we enter the universe of a literary house, home of immensity in which the walls went on vacation, as Bachelard would say, and sometimes it is healthy to inhabit them because in such houses we heal our claustrophobia (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 67).

> Then, an immense cosmic house exists potentially in every dream of a house. From its core irradiate the winds and the seagulls run out the windows. Such a dynamic house allows the poet to inhabit the universe. Or, in other words, the universe comes to inhabit his house (BACHELARD, 2003, p. 67).[51]

Well, claustrophobia is something of which the reader-spectator of **OI** should not be afraid; on the contrary, we are much more like astronauts thrown in the outer space, held to the spaceship only by a fragile cable, feeling their vulnerability in contrast to the dark and empty immensity of the universe. There, if there is fear, it is not of suffocation but of abandonment, of not being able to come back to whatever we might consider familiar – a dear

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[50] "Ninguém me vê mudar. Mas quem me vê? Eu sou o *meu esconderijo.*"
[51] "Assim, uma imensa casa cósmica existe potencialmente em todo sonho de casa. De seu centro irradiam-se os ventos e as gaivotas saem pelas janelas. Uma casa tão dinâmica permite ao poeta habitar o universo. Ou, noutras palavras, o universo vem habitar sua casa."

room, a dear face, a "dear name". Beckett, the poet, creates a space not only for his own hiding-place, or maybe we should say his tomb of secrets, but also a space big and dynamic enough so that the universe can fit into his and our house, our spaces of reverie, where we become much more than meaningless and hopeless clown-figures. In this house, we can also dream of happiness, completeness; we can even dream of a different future not only for ourselves as individuals, but also for us as society – all we have to do is fulfill the dark, empty spaces left by the poet with our own memories and desires. In this regard, instead of disillusion, if we dig deep inside Beckett's universe, what we will find is humanity with all its weakness, fragility, but also a moving ability to endlessly overcome its own limitations. As Sidney Feshbach states,

> No matter how reduced Beckett's characters become over the years, no matter how much the self is dissolved into, say, objects or words, there always remains a human factor and warmth; accounting for that quality […] is the primary task for Beckett criticism (FESHBACH apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 188).

When it comes to the fictional space in **OI**, whether of the house (the "room on the far bank") or the pictorial one, we can see that it is through it that reality and art merge, creating a new concept of spaciousness characteristic of the contemporaneity. Indeed, what we call art today is the result of a long process of changes in the space relation within the painting, especially through the rupture with the concept of perspective. Art, like architecture, and like the space in **OI**, has become a fragmented tissue, a multiplied structure *ad infinitum* that will result in a gigantic *collage*, turning our spaces, at all levels, into an immense masquerade. That leads us back to the concept of mask: as it allows us to be or pretend to be whoever we decide, we can also see the image and feed it according to our own "visions", our previous visual experiences. Our instant world offers us the possibility to accumulate numberless past,

present, and future images with one click on our television set or computer in a very eclectic way, and in no time line. The contemporary time-space *collage*, present in **OI** through the variety of pictorial references, makes possible a state-of-the-art level of simulacrum – a state of replica so close to the original that we cannot separate the real image from the fake, as it happens with *Listener* and *Reader*. Therefore, space is not an ideal category of understanding anymore; modern painting, and we may say art in general, "confuses all our categories" (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1964, p. 35).

As Osvaldo Fontes Filho states <2008, p. 3>, space must return to its condition of a non-perceived background of our sensorial experiences. The intentionality of the space in contemporary art, unwary of a measurable depth, according to Merleau-Ponty (1964), evolves within what the author calls "voluminosity", a primary dimension where things mold themselves in instability, free from their canonic limitations. This is why an abstract background, as much as a pyramidal perspective, fits perfectly into a minimalist play such as **OI**. *Chiaroscuro* and pop art, modulation and fragmentation are all possible conjunctions in Beckett's pictorial universe; categories that are set together to confuse, to cause discomfort but most of all to break the limits between fields, to melt untouchable edges and make possible connections that could not be imagined before. Renaissance and minimalism are there to create "volume" for a new story that rooted in another one previously told. Like the unconcluded stories in *Endgame*, in **OI** form and meaning come from the "voluminosity" born from the melting *collages* of pictorial and literary references, giving space for a poem-play-*happening*, for **OI** could comfortably fit in any of these categories at the same time due to the rhythm and modulation of the words, its dramatic dimension, its length (12 minutes), and lack of movement. In modern painting, the line becomes a "certain constituent emptiness" where matter vibrates; through this emptiness, any visible form starts to carry the elision of a

figure or of a sense, as we see in **OI**: the materiality of *Reader* and *Listener* vibrates in the emptiness of the backstage and actions, in the contrasting voluminosity of the almost empty white table. Free from contours, in the modulation of the colors and forms that it proposes, the line in contemporary art sketches an elopement from sense, as if the trace made evident that from that moment on sense would constitute itself on the background of absence. Painting is considered a "spectacle of nothingness" <MERLEAU-PONTY apud FONTES, 2008, p. 2>; however, there is a way to present that visible "that is always farther away": it stops being inaccessible if it is conceived, not by approximation, but by "lateral investment" <MERLEAU-PONTY apud FONTES, 2008, p. 3>. In Beckett and in **OI** specifically, this "lateral investment" is his own intangible and at the same time unveiling presence in the text through his personal background – his art and literary expertise, and all his personal experiences, his relationships, especially with his mother, his nanny, his wife, James Joyce, and even his country. Well, if the visible is a "momentary crystallization of visibility", then any crystallization is "illusory under any aspect", since "vision is the crystallization of the impossible", for "the pretentious positivity of the sensible world […] occurs exactly as something intangible" (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1964a, p.327 e 267-8). With this statement, according to Osvaldo Fontes <2008, p. 6-8>, it becomes clear that the distortion of appearance represents an impossibility of absolute veiling of the inside by the outside, and vice-versa. Merleau-Ponty's "nothingness" is that zone of emptiness and invisibility in which any visible manifestation fills in; it is not frontal denial of the full and solid being – actually, it is a condition for the possibility of the arousal of the Being. In this way, we may see *Reader* and *Listener* as an impossibility of veiling the different dimensions of the Self, the voice which, no matter how much deprived of words, still carries sense and resists to a complete annulment. Emptiness gains a value of operationality in the plastic language of modern art, says Fontes, just as we see in **OI**: the entire play is built – or we might say, operated – on the

empty spaces; visually and linguistically, it is through the in-between spaces, that is, emptiness, that the unveiling presence of the author reveals itself, through the distortions in time, space, language, and icons. In time, when creating a circular movement between past, present, future, and times between them ("Day after day he could be seen slowly pacing the islet. Hour after hour. […] Then turn and his slow steps retrace. […] In his dreams" – **OI,** p. 13) – the times of reverie that allow us, reader-spectators, to fill in those time-spaces with our own crystallizations, our intangible visions. With space ("Relief he had hoped would flow from unfamiliarity. Unfamiliar room. Unfamiliar scene. Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared" – **OI**, p. 13), Beckett prevents closure and creates spaces of pregnancies in the emptiness of his pauses and in the black-and-white of his stage-canvas. In this regard, José Gil states that:

> the relation emptiness-form from now on is part of the painter's language: the variations in this relation will create other languages, other painters within a painter, "heteronymous". What makes it possible to pass from one heteronymous to another, from one period to another, is not the similitude of forms, but what stresses the *unique* and single *difference* that crosses the painting of one author, their way of constructing discontinuities and intervals: such is their *style*, the difference that supports the relationship between the visible forms (GIL, 1996, p. 166).[52]

OI's pictorial sophistication turns space into a painting whose uniqueness comes from the way Beckett constructs discontinuities and intervals to support the relationship between the visible forms. Therefore, Da Vinci's perspective, Caravaggio's *Chiaroscuro*, Duchamp's *ready-made*, or Johns's spatial transparencies and ruptures are but the Beckett-painter within other painters that inhabit him. Here, in his process of appropriation of a range of references,

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[52] "a relação vazio-forma faz doravante parte da linguagem do pintor: as variações nesta relação criarão outras linguagens, outros pintores no interior de um pintor, "heterônimos". O que permite passar de um heterônimo a outro, de um período a outro, não é a semelhança das formas, mas o que marca a *diferença única* e singular que atravessa a pintura de um autor, a sua maneira de produzir descontinuidades e intervalos: tal é o seu *estilo*, a diferença que sustenta o parentesco entre as formas visíveis" (Gil, 1996, p.166).

processing them in his unique way, Beckett's presence unveils itself in the text, since according to Oppenheim,

> it was primarily the many hours spent before the paintings themselves and his extraordinary memory of what he had seen that were the source of this extensive knowledge. […] the allusions in his fiction also allow us to trace his path through the galleries and museums of much of Western Europe (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 31).

Moreover, the entire pictorial references that we identify matter also because they represent lateral entrances to the text and its many layers. Actually, in regard to this visual derangement, Merleau-Ponty (1964, p. 63) admits that any iconic mode can count for an emblem of a "mutation in the relations of the man with the Self", and this is an aspect in which Beckett is an expert: expressing the various mutations that occur in our relationship with our Self through visual discontinuities. After all, what concerns Beckett has never been telling stories but thinking and questioning our very ability to exist despite all the odds against it. And the author himself is able to clarify this process: "So you can't talk art with me; all I risk expressing when I speak about it are my own obsessions" (BECKETT, letter to Duthuit in 1954).

Speaking of discontinuity, José Gil refers to the change which occurs especially in Conceptual Art, from the evidence of sense of figuration to an "essential emptiness",

> not only in this evidence, but in the very core of the painting, as if the latter could not be self-sufficient anymore. Modern painting will feed itself from the tension [...] between completeness and incompleteness, between finished work and fragment. Inducing an unceasing movement of invention of forms, the work of the void produces multiplicities. It is a disseminated and ubiquitous void which is found, for example, in decontextualization, in exile, and in the antifunctional position of the *readymade* […]. A restless void that agitates the forms and the look, which prevents

adherences, accelerates velocities, always searching for a new plan of expression <GIL apud FONTES, 2008, p. 9>. [53]

This condition of the painting – of not being self-sufficient – is not an uncommon feeling for the contemporary spectator who more and more needs the help of a visual poetics as a bridge to communicate with the artwork. Through its "translation" into words, or through the unfolding of the process, showing it step-by-step, art communicates with its spectator; and in **OI** the Beckett-painter unfolds his work to us through the pictorial references – there, we will find the keys to find resilience instead of despair, warmth beneath bitterness in the Beckettian human figures; we will meet his own obsessions. And it seems that this is what he expects from his spectators, an excavatory process of thinking and questioning their own condition: "The work removed from the judgment of men ends up dying, in dreadful agony" (BECKETT, *La Peinture des Van Veldes)*. Therefore, his deaf scream through his artwork is not only of disillusion with the human condition but a way of preventing us from the dreadful agony of abandonment and consequently forgetfulness – in Beckett, we see the "primacy of art as metaphor", a metaphor of being in the world.

> "His most consistent metaphorical referent is a visual gestalt, a seeing of everything, for all eternity, whole. What he claimed to have found most worthwhile in the Belgian Cartesian philosopher Arnold Geulincx, in fact, was the very conviction that the *sub specie aeternitatis* vision is the only excuse for remaining alive (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 37).

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[53] não só nesta evidência, mas no próprio ser da pintura, como se esta última doravante nunca mais pudesse bastar-se a si própria. A pintura moderna vai alimentar-se da tensão [...] entre completude e inacabamento, entre obra acabada e fragmento. Induzindo um movimento incessante de invenção de formas, o trabalho do vazio produz multiplicidades. É um vazio disseminado e ubíquo, que se encontra, por exemplo, na descontextualização, no exílio e na posição antifuncional do *readymade* [...]. Vazio inquieto que agita as formas e o olhar, que impede as aderências, que acelera as velocidades sempre em busca de um novo plano de expressão (Gil, 1996, p.166).

In Beckett, thought and language evolve through superpositions in a reciprocal and interactive relation, causing a movement that is not linear but integrative of the various layers and depths of the text. In this regard, José Gil (1996, p. 305) states that in modern painting the eye stops being fixed on the body because the spaces of the painting have become spaces of vision; the eye is full vision in them, it does not rest in one or another point; this plan which unites eye and painting has become a body where seer and seen belong to one single and multiple vision. There is no point-of-view anymore because there is not a body anymore. We do not see the painting anymore, we participate in the "total vision", as Merleau-Ponty would say, that the body-plan offers. There is not point-of-view anymore because we become color, form and movement of the forms and colors; we do not *see* them, we become their very visibility. Actually, in regard to color, Sturridge, by adding color to the final image of the play, seems to have followed the same line as Oppenheim, who states that color

> in the late plays does not offset the intended austerity – achieved by the interplay of light and dark, an often discreet half-lighting, and the striking contrast of white and black – of the late plays. But they do serve as a reminder of a better place, a colourful world that once was, recalling vitality where debility has become the norm (OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 41).

In this way, the role of the spectator becomes crucial for the very existence of the artwork as they become part of its "total vision", even when it comes to color. Like the literary critic who does not simply identify and list characteristics of the texts but relate them and create transparencies between them, the art spectator dialogues with the artwork, embodies it and becomes himself an element that creates other transparencies for the work. As Beckett states in a 1936 review of Yeats's *The Amaranthers*, when it comes to images "there is no symbol, but stages of an image", so they will come to light according to the spectator's ability. He goes even further in a 1938 Benis Devlin review, stating that "art is but an

'approximately adequate and absolutely non-final formulation'" (BECKETT apud OPPENHEIM, 2003, p. 31). And it is so because of the vital role that the spectator takes in Beckett's play as a key element that will assure its continuity and avoid "agony"; and then we must ask: whose agony, the spectator's? Or perhaps the very author's who could not erase himself completely from the text and ended up talking about his own obsessions? Beckett's spectator is the postmodern spectator who cannot stay in that old comfortable position of anonymity and indifference; their participation is mandatory, even if they remain quietly seated. They will have to fulfill the in-between spaces of the play, that is, between the broken dialogues, the semi-told story, between the *Listener-Reader* image construction and Caravaggio, they will have to add their own story, their own knowledge. It is so because, as Fontes Filho <2009, p. 15> states, what is lived by the Other escapes our eye, it is debris in the fulfillment of our intentionality, they are differentiations of a single dimension, moments of a single openness to the world, referred in their own singularity to other possible gestures. Therefore, the visible that we see and talk about is the same that Plato and Aristotle saw, for behind each landscape that my eye captures there are hidden the landscapes captured by all the other men that existed, will exist, and all those men who could have been or could be undivided between these landscapes and us, like the object that we hold between our right and left hand. The artwork is like a case that holds a peculiar emptiness, since it is more than absence of matter: it is life lived somewhere else, in simultaneity with mine, in hiatus with it. "Once it is there, where the Other is sheltered, it is from there that they speak to me" <FONTES FILHO, 2009, p. 13>. And Merleau-Ponty explains, drawing an analogy with the artwork, that what we must understand are not "people" but "existentials" that constitute the (replaceable) *meaning* of what we say and listen; they are accordingly to what we understand they are, and which represent the established meaning of all our voluntary and involuntary experiences. Actually, the author says where the Other is in the body that I see: he is

immanent to the body and, yet, he is more than the sum of the signs or significations that are transmitted \veiculados by it. He is the partial and non-exhaustive images that the significations represent, and which proves to be fully in each of them – an unfinished incarnation always ongoing (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1964, p. 263).

> They are the armor of this "invisible world" which, with the speech, starts to impregnate all the things that we see, - like the 'other' space for the schizophrenics appropriates itself of the sensorial and visible space – Not that, in its turn, it may be it: there is never in the visible but ruins of the spirit, the world will always look like the Forum, at least to the eyes of the philosopher, who does not live in it entirely.[54]

In conclusion, surely there are other ways of reading and capturing Samuel Beckett's work, which happens to occupy the center of our study. However, it was by drawing a visual poetics for **OI** that I could identify Caravaggio and Leonardo Da Vinci in the *Reader-Listener* composition, Kandinsky's abstractionism in its opening image, Johns's contemporary outer space of the painting, and many others, in its backstage. And by doing this, not only new biographical elements arose but also literary influences such as Dante's through the image of the book and, most of all, the author's own vision of the contemporary human space. A fragmented space in which **OI** was conceived and built, a *collage* of spaces, experiences, fragments of memories and identities overlaid, and whose transparencies stay there as a hint to its spectators so we can find a way to the core of the text and even to the disguised presence of its author. **OI**'s multilayer space also leads us to identify the author's resistance to self-erasure, and to total forgetfulness and disbelief in the human condition, showing that time

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[54] São eles a armadura deste "mundo invisível" que, com a fala, começa a impregnar todas as coisas que vemos, - como o "outro" espaço nos esquizofrênicos toma posse do espaço sensorial e visível - Não que, por sua vez, ele o venha a ser: nunca há no visível senão ruínas do espírito, o mundo sempre se assemelhará ao Fórum, pelo menos aos olhos do filósofo, que não mora nele inteiramente. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.233-4)

melts, memories become intangible but, like in **OI**, as *Reader* continues reading and *Listener* remains listening, we too will continue, not in linear time. *Chronos*, the chronological, sequential time of the ordinary man does not exist in Beckett's play, and if it does it is only to disguise the author's hidden intentions. Through a visual poetics, we find Beckett's time: *kairos* (καιρός – **Plate 52**), an ancient Greek word meaning the right or opportune moment (the supreme moment), "a time in between, a moment of undetermined period of time in which something special happens. What the special something is depends on who is using the word. While *chronos* is quantitative, *kairos* has a qualitative nature." In Rhetoric, *kairos* is "a passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved." In the New Testament *kairos* means "the appointed time in the purpose of God", the time when God acts (e.g. Mark 1.15, the *kairos* is fulfilled) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kairos>.

Kairos was central to the Sophists, who stressed the rhetor's ability to adapt to and take advantage of changing, contingent circumstances. In *Panathenaicus*, Isocrates writes that educated people are those "who manage well the circumstances which they encounter day by day, and who possess a judgment which is accurate in meeting occasions as they arise and rarely misses the expedient course of action".

Kairos is also very important in Aristotle's scheme of rhetoric. Kairos is, for Aristotle, the time and space context in which the proof will be delivered. Kairos stands alongside other contextual elements of rhetoric: *The Audience*, which is the psychological and emotional makeup of those who will receive the proof; and *To Prepon*, which is the style with which the orator clothes their proof.

Καιρος - kairos […] means weather in both ancient and modern Greek. In plural it is καιροι -kairoi (keri) and it means "the times" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kairos>.

We may say that, in his play, Beckett is that man who manages properly the circumstances that he encounters day by day because this is the main environment of Beckett's characters – their everyday life and their living day by day, "night after night", looking for the right time, the "supreme time" when something special will happen, even if

Plate 52: *Kairos* - Francesco Salviati, 1552-1554. Fresco

only in their dreams, even if only to hear that man who "appeared to him and said. I have been sent by – and here he named the dear name – to comfort you" (**OI**, p. 16). We may also follow a theological approach in which *kairos* expresses God's time to act, as we can see in the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches: before the Divine Liturgy begins, the Deacon exclaims to the Priest, "*Kairos tou poiesai to Kyrio*" ("It is time [*kairos*] for the Lord to act"), indicating that "the time of the Liturgy is an intersection with Eternity". Actually,

In *The Interpretation of History*, neo-orthodox Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich made prominent use of the term. For him, the *kairoi* are those crises in history (see Christian existentialism) which create an opportun

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ity for, and indeed demand, an existential decision by the human subject - the coming of Christ being the prime example (compare Barth's use of *geschichte* as opposed to *historie*). In the Kairos Document, an example of liberation theology in South Africa under Apartheid, the term *kairos* is used to denote "the appointed time", "the crucial time" into which the document or text is spoken. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kairos>

"In this extremity hid old terror of night laid hold on him again. After so long a lapse that as if never been. […] Now with a redoubled force the fearful symptoms described at length page forty paragraph four" (**OI**, p. 15). Whether we see them from a rhetorical or theological perspective, times in Beckett are crucial, always eternal in the instantaneity and immensity of each moment. And the moment in **OI** is the supreme one, the time in-between that creates holes in time itself, the *kairos* openings, and entering them, or trying to, means falling into a dark labyrinth, spaces of reverie, in-between time-spaces of crisis at a personal and historical dimension. Through a visual poetics, in Beckett we can find how time and space melt into a single entity. A visual poetics for **OI** led me to Beckett's *kairos.*

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ANNEX DOCUMENTS

The following manuscripts (MS) were extracted from Adam Seelig's article:

> The Samuel Beckett Collection holds over twenty pages of Beckett's early drafts of
> Ohio Impromptu, which are filed in two groups. The first group is MS 2930, titled
> "false starts," which includes nine holographs and one typescript, all written on

nondescript white paper, except for one passage written on half a sheet of grid-paper. Six of these manuscripts are ordered (2930/1–6) and four are left unordered, although Reading's sequencing cannot be taken for gospel. The second group, listed as MS 2259, consists of one holograph (MS 2259/1) and three typescripts (MS 2259/2–4). (All four are published in Beja, Gontarski, and Astier.) From these two groups emerge three distinct groups of monologues: (1) "I am out on leave" includes MS 2930/1, MS 2930/2, and the verso of leaf one of MS 2259/1. MS 2930/1 is little different from the holograph on verso of leaf 1 of MS 2259/1. MS 2930/2, on the other hand, incorporates some variations on and digressions from the same themes, with generally more deletions. (2) "Needle and Thread" consists of MS 2930/3–6 and the four unordered manuscripts of the same series. (3) "Last drafts" includes MS 2259/1 (excluding the verso of leaf one) through MS 2259/4, which resemble the final text of Ohio Impromptu but differ considerably from groups 1 and 2.

(MS 2259/1, holograph on verso of leaf 1)

I am out on leave. Thrown out on leave.
Back to time, they said, for 24 hours.
Oh my God, I said, not that.
Slip into on this shroud, they said, lest you catch your death
of cold again.
Certainly not, I said.
This cap, they said, for your deaths head skull.
Definitely not, I said.
The New World outlet, they said, in the state of Ohio. We
cannot be more precise. Pause.
Proceed straight to Lima the nearest campus, they said, and
address them.
Address whom? I said.
The students, they said, and professors.
Oh my God, I said, not that.
Do not overstay your leave, they said, if you do not wish it to
be extended.
Pause.
What am I to say? I said.
Be yourself, they said, you're [ ] say8 yourself.
Myself? I said. What are you insinuating?
Yourself before, they said.
Pause.
And after.
Pause.
Not during? I said.

(MS 2259/2)
"Little remains to be told tell"

(MS 2259/3).
"Little remains is left to tell"

MS 2930

(Opening block paragraph of the monologue)

{in hand} White face
Black eyelids

(Raises shaky R.H.) In his right hand, for he is – (Lowers RH.) Too loud. (Raises RH. Equally loud.) In his right hand for he is – . (Lowers RH.) Good. Now he may seem to be communing. With himself. (Raises RH.) In his right hand, for he is left-handed, he grasps the needle. (Raises shaky LH.) In his left the thread. (Pause.) Between forefingers and thumbs, mercifully spared by his contracture. Till now. (Pause.) Next he brings them propinquous >close<. Thus. (Does so.) Before his one good eye, the right – no, wrong, the left, against whatever light there may happen to be, at the time, and steadies himself for the attempt. (Pause.) Could he now close his right eye matters would be improved. But he cannot. For if he did, the left would close too. Thus (Moves hands apart.) Thus.

MS 2930/2

Let me first explain my pretense my presence in your midst.
 "Let me first explain my pretense my presence in your midst this evening, or perhaps this afternoon, or even this morning."
…
Take the New World outlet, they said, proceed straight to Austin and show them what you were made of.
…
Now I may sit.
Sits abruptly.
Halo please!
Light on head above & immediate periphery.
Before we begin do not be alarmed if I disappear go from time to time. Thus.
Light suddenly out & on suddenly again.