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Schopenhauer meets Beckett's Leading Men: The Will-Less Aspect as Performed
by Queer Sexuality and Involuntary Memory

In his essay, "Proust," Samuel Beckett writes, "The influence of [Arthur] Schopenhauer on [the will-less] aspect of the Proustian demonstration is unquestionable" (70). Inarguably, Beckett's theater is largely informed by Proustian themes and strategies, especially those explored and implemented in Marcel Proust's "timeless" novel, A la recherche du temps perdu. Apparently, Beckett was influenced by Proust just as Proust was influenced by Schopenhauer. In this essay, I will cut the Proustian thread that connects Schopenhauer to Beckett, focusing on the presence of Schopenhauer's will-less aspect in Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape, Endgame, and Waiting for Godot. In the interest of applicability and accessibility, I will bifurcate my treatment of Schopenhauer's theory of the will-less aspect, demonstrating that the concept's categorical rejection, effectual purity, and a-historic nature are equally present in queer (i.e., non-hetero) sexuality and in aesthetic contemplations-cum-involuntary memories.

In the third edition of Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation, the philosopher added to his chapter on the "Metaphysics of Sexual Love" an addendum that discusses the nature of male homosexuality. In this addendum, Schopenhauer relays his belief that, because adolescent and elderly men are too young and too old to produce strong and healthy children, Nature afflicts the men of these age groups with homosexual

inclinations. In other words, Nature *rejects* adolescent and elderly men from the otherwise universal “will to live,” and, thereby, from the continuation of the human species (Magee 346-9). If Schopenhauer were alive today, he would define queer sexuality as he defines male homosexuality in his addendum on the subject. That is, the philosopher would posit that one who possesses a queer (i.e., a non-reproductive) desire is a naturally selected outcast.¹ By implanting a “deviant” desire in the queer, Nature has, in a sense, forbidden her or him from participating in the act of potentially generative (heterosexual) sex. Thus, like the male homosexual, the queer is naturally *rejected* from the will-motivated evolution of humankind.

Schopenhauer argues that, just as the queer is rejected from the *will* of Nature, involuntary memories (and their constituting contemplations) are rejected from the mind’s fluid storehouse of *will-motivated* remembrances. In an essay called “Beckett, Proust, and Schopenhauer,” James Acheson boils down Schopenhauer’s theory that voluntary and involuntary memories refer to, respectively, past perceptions and past contemplations. The past perceptions that comprise voluntary memories are perceived and retained by the “will to live.” The contemplations that constitute involuntary memories are, on the other hand, experienced disinterestedly. Notes Acheson on Schopenhauer’s philosophy:

¹ Throughout this paper, I use the term “queer” (as a free-standing noun and as a modifier for “sexuality” and “desire”) to denote all sexual identities, desires, and behaviors that do not correspond, metaphorically or actually, to the understanding of sex as reproductive genital intercourse between a female and a male. My essentializing use of the term (to refer to feelings and practices that are essentially “other” than heterosexual) is necessary and self-conscious; that is, I understand that, in the realm of literary theory, the term “queer” signifies sexualities that are functions of representations (Harmon and Holman 424); this definition challenges the idea of essential difference, sexual or otherwise. By re-appropriating the term “queer” to refer to all sexualities that are *not* heterosexual, I mean to incorporate the Schopenhauerian notion of the homosexual outcast (with its underlying binary logic) into the contemporary theoretical consciousness.

When we engage in perception, it is our willing aspect that becomes aware of the sense data selected by Habit: it knows nothing of the data Habit rejects. Yet the rejected data is not altogether lost, for our will-less aspect...preserve[s these sensations and impressions] from the scrutiny of voluntary memory. (172)

Acheson presents Schopenhauer's view of Habit as that which acts as an anamnestic filter, retaining perceptions that are palatable and pleasant and *rejecting* contemplations that are incompatible or destructive to our "will to live" (169).

"*Aesthetic* contemplation" is the specific term that Schopenhauer uses to describe the data that is filtered out of conscious memory by Habit's anamnestic sieve. When an aesthetic contemplation of the past collides with an aesthetic contemplation of the present, an involuntary memory is occasioned. Because aesthetic contemplations are discarded from our voluntary memories, the involuntary memories that these contemplations produce are, like their constituents, rejected from the storehouse of will-motivated remembrances. In other words, aesthetic contemplations (from the past and the present) that are rejected from our voluntary memories generate involuntary memories that are, likewise, rejected.

Furthermore, because the perceptions that Habit *consciously* retains are ordered sequentially (in a *timeline*), the contemplations that it rejects are *cast out of both consciousness and the temporal order that this consciousness obeys*. Consequently, the involuntary memories that aesthetic contemplations occasion and constitute are unconscious and atemporal as well. The involuntary memory, quite unlike the voluntary memory, which contributes to a neat chronological history, "...chooses its own time and place for the performance of its miracle" (Beckett, "Proust" 21). Appearing in an all-

consuming flash, involuntary memory is only retrospectively conceivable (Tukey 401). Simply stated, while voluntary memories consciously obey the order of sequential time, aesthetic contemplations and involuntary memories, being unconscious and atemporal, do not. As we have seen, Schopenhauer's male homosexual (or any non-reproductive "queer") is, in terms of her/his natural inclination, analogous to aesthetic contemplations and involuntary memories as both queers and aesthetic contemplations/involuntary memories are rejected from the "will to live" and, by extension, the habituated structures of a linear temporality dominated by reproduction. While the queer is rejected from the otherwise universal desire to take part in procreation, aesthetic contemplations/involuntary memories are rejected from our conscious, voluntary memories (and from the temporal sequence that keeps these memories in order).

In Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape, Endgame, and Waiting for Godot the focal characters reject themselves from (or are rejected by) a principal feature of the will to live. Krapp of Krapp's Last Tape rejects himself from heterosexual love; Endgame's Hamm is, by virtue of his name, understood to be an allegory for all rejected offspring; finally, Waiting for Godot's Vladimir and Estragon reject themselves from the struggle for survival that epitomizes the will to live. As Schopenhauer suggests, the evidence, effect, and essence of the will to live are, respectively, heterosexual love affairs, children, and the human struggle. As a result of being rejected from the features that substantiate the will to live, Beckett's dramatic characters are, in effect, queered (or "out"ed) from the otherwise universal striving force that is Nature's will.

In Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape, the title character is a sixty-nine-year-old man who "...has *rejected* love and a bourgeois world for higher spiritual ends, the desire

to write his magnum opus” (Ackerley and Gontarski 302 italics mine). Krapp’s “Farewell to love” (Beckett 57), issued in his late twenties (58), marks the character’s endeavor to take control of his own life, forfeiting carnal (heterosexual) pleasures for a life of the mind (or spirit). Krapp’s rejection of love is significant in light of the fact that, for Schopenhauer, heterosexual love-making is not in the interest of the individual, but in the interest of the species.²

In Arthur Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Idea, sometimes translated as The World as Will and Representation, there appears a chapter entitled “Metaphysics of the Love of the Sexes.” In this selection, the philosopher discusses his belief that the description of the sex drive as a spontaneously occurring and self-serving “instinct” is a necessary fiction constructed by Nature (345-6, 371). As R.K. Gupta poignantly summarizes, “Schopenhauer...looks upon [heterosexual] sex as the lure whereby nature deludes the individual into contributing to its nefarious goal of perpetuation of the species. It is the reproductive hunger of the individual which keeps us chained to the wheel of life” (724). Krapp’s rejection of heterosexual love marks his liberation from a will that enslaves him to the desire of nature (i.e., the interminable development of the species). Krapp’s refusal to love is, thus, self-empowering. By willing himself out of the will to live, Krapp has “queered” himself. He is, as an unloving man, no longer subject to the master design of nature.

² The reader may take issue with my statement that Krapp has rejected heterosexual pleasures. Specifically, the reader may point out that Krapp’s sexual relations with the prostitute, Fanny, signify the character’s will to live and, thus, his enslavement to Nature. To this objection, I would argue that Krapp’s relations with Fanny are to be regarded as poor substitutes for, or flat representations of, the sexuality that the character has repressed. Krapp’s blunt and bitter descriptions of his interactions with Fanny combined with his compensatory banana fetish, which we will explore later, stand as testimony to the fact that, for the most part, Krapp defines himself as (and acts the part of) an unloving and asexual “man of the mind.”

While Krapp's rejection from reproductively oriented pleasure is self-imposed and literal, the rejection of Endgame's Hamm from the will to live is entirely allusive. Beckett's Endgame, the play that the dramatist "dislike[d] the least" (qtd. in Brater 85), revolves around a character named Hamm. As the authors of The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett tell us, this appellation is a Biblical allusion to "Ham, the accursed son of Noah" (Ackerley and Gontarski 176). According to *Genesis* 9:20-25, Ham saw his father naked and told his brothers about it. When Noah found out that his son had "uncovered his nakedness," he cursed Ham's son, Canaan, to be a servant. Interestingly, because the scriptural passage reads that Noah "knew what had been done to him," Biblical interpreters have argued that Ham's taboo was sexual in design. Specifically, the Talmud posits two justifications for Noah's cursing of Ham via his son; one theory maintains that Ham castrated Noah while the other contends that the young man sexually abused his father ("Ham, son of Noah"). Regardless of the circumstances surrounding Noah's imprecation of his son, "Ham" is a name that has long been associated with the curse (or *rejection*) of a son by his father.

Because the most prominently featured character of Endgame bears a name that connotes patriarchal rejection, it is easy to symbolically "queer" Hamm as one who is rejected by Nature. That is, if we understand Endgame's Hamm to be the dramatized surrogate of the Biblical Ham, who was rejected by his progenitor (and, thereby, from the sequential development of the species) then we can see how Beckett's character is analogous to Schopenhauer's homosexual and the present-day queer.

As we've seen, the rejection of Krapp is self-imposed and literal whereas the rejection of Hamm is externally inflicted and allusive. In rejecting hetero love, Krapp

rejects potentially procreative intercourse, the *evidence* of the will to live; in being metaphorically rejected by his father, Hamm is rejected from his genealogical lineage, the *effect* of the will to live. Thus, both Krapp and Hamm are “outed” from an integral aspect of the Schopenhauerian will to live. Krapp and Hamm’s exemptions from, respectively, the evidence and effect of the will to live cast these characters in the role of the queer.

The fundamentality of rejection is clearly a shared feature of Schopenhauer’s male homosexual and the central characters of Krapp’s Last Tape and Endgame. In Beckett’s Waiting for Godot, the act of rejection is explored even more complexly and manifested far more dramatically than it is in the plays already discussed. In Waiting for Godot, the main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, endure the Sisyphean pseudo-task of waiting for a presence that never comes. At the end of every day, the characters face another rejection (palatably delivered by a polite messenger boy) from Godot, the one for whom they have dutifully waited. And why is Godot worth this interminable wait? At the end of the play, Estragon inquires of Vladimir, “And if [Godot] comes?” to which Vladimir replies, “We’ll be saved” (61). Vladimir does not go on to specify the condition or circumstance from which the two will be saved if Godot comes and Estragon does not ask his friend for elaboration. The implication is that the presence of Godot will “save” the characters from waiting for him; Godot is, therefore, understood to be the concept of telos (i.e., “the end term of a goal-directed process”). Thus, Vladimir and Estragon enact the tragedy of being continually *rejected* by the promise of finality.

If “all mankind” is, in fact, represented by Waiting for Godot’s Vladimir and Estragon (Beckett, Waiting 51), then the characters’ repeated rejection by Godot (the

symbol for telos) suggests that, as a teleologically-motivated species, we are all bound to be rejected by the endpoint that we strive to reach. This notion of an inevitably aimless (non-teleological) life process is a cornerstone of Schopenhauer's philosophy. For Schopenhauer, the will is not purposive; it is not a *will to some end*. It is, rather, unconscious and undifferentiated, functioning more as an instinctive drive than as a conscious motive. In his article, "Schopenhauer and Individuality," Bertram M. Laing discusses Schopenhauer's philosophy concerning the aimless nature of will:

The world as a whole has no purpose. The will has no ground, no object toward which it strives. Schopenhauer...denies that a motive explains the will or determines it. The motive only shows the direction of the will at a particular moment. To ask why an individual wills is absurd. We can only say that he wills because his essence is will; and this is ceaseless striving, endless activity.

Accordingly, in the world there is nothing but eternal becoming and endless flux, continual birth and decay. (174-175)

Thus, from Schopenhauer's phenomenological perspective, all Nature is fueled by the desire to survive. Therefore, every waking moment is, at once, working toward and fulfilling the will to live. In the concept of the will to live, which suggests that the means is entwined with the ends, there is no possibility of an ideal evolutionary endpoint. As Laing lucidly states, "The seeming teleology in the world or the existence of means to ends simply reveals the *one will* which constitutes the inner nature of the world and is purely relative to the intellect" (174). In the midst of an ultimately aimless world, Vladimir and Estragon have constructed a teleologically-motivated microcosm. The designated endpoint of this microcosm is the arrival of Godot. Like all human subjects

who are preoccupied with “seeming teleologies,” Vladimir and Estragon exist within a temporary eschatological framework. As soon as Godot arrives, the characters will appoint a new concept, personage, or object as their temporary telos.

What differentiates Vladimir and Estragon from the rest of will-motivated humanity is the *kind* of activity that the characters pursue in order reach their provisional endpoint of meeting Godot. While the rest of humanity *struggle* toward a temporary finality, Vladimir and Estragon simply *wait* for it. By waiting for Godot (and, therefore, remaining inactive), Vladimir and Estragon defiantly reject themselves from the strenuous struggle for survival. More significantly, by subtracting all action from the teleological imperative, Vladimir and Estragon illustrate the recipe of the human condition (eschatology), independent of its active ingredients (the human struggle). In short, Vladimir and Estragon’s wait, which rejects activity and embraces teleology, provides a clear depiction of the human condition, devoid of its substance.

Krapp, Hamm, Vladimir, and Estragon, all of whom are characterized by their relationship to the act of rejection, occupy the position of Schopenhauer’s homosexual and the modern-day queer, whose existence is independent of the will to live. Krapp rejects reproductive love, thereby “outing himself” from sex, the *evidence* of the will to live; Hamm, as an allegory for the allegorical figure of Ham, represents all children who are cast out of their ancestral lineage, a lineage that is the *effect* of the will to live; finally, by constructing a teleologically-oriented microcosm devoid of strenuous activity, Vladimir and Estragon reject the struggle for survival, the *essence* of the will to live that would otherwise enslave them. So, we’ve got four rejects on our hands. How, if at all, do these outcasts “perform” their ostracism? To what kinds of experiences do the rejected

gravitate? Since these questions originate in Schopenhauerian philosophy, in order to answer them, we must return to the philosopher.

Schopenhauer contends that any sexuality that is not will-motivated (i.e., not heterosexual) is oriented toward pure sensations, which are, at once, positive and painful. To explain, Schopenhauer believes that pleasurable sensations (which are represented in heterosexual acts) are simply cessations of pain (Gupta 724). Thus, naturally and ethically sanctioned heterosexual pleasures "...are not positive, but are merely relief from something else that is itself unpleasant..." (Magee 219) If pleasure is particular to sexuality and if, as Schopenhauer argues, sexuality should be particular to heterosexuals, then it follows that a non-heterosexual sensation is not pleasurable. Further, because pleasure is negatively valued (as *not* pain), a non-pleasurable experience is positively valued (as pure pain). Therefore, if an apt metonym for the heterosexual is the sensation of negatively valued pleasure, then the most befitting synecdochic representation of the queer is positively valued (i.e., pure) pain.³

We have already seen how queers and an aesthetic contemplations-cum-involuntary memories share a rejected status; another striking similarity between the non-heterosexual experience and the aesthetic contemplation/involuntary memory is the fact they are characterized by a purity that is positive in value and oftentimes painful in effect. In order to establish a solid understanding of the "pure factor" exhibited by queer sexuality and aesthetic contemplations/involuntary memories, we must first consider Schopenhauer's notion that earthly things are mere representations of the supreme and

³ I do not intend for my associations of the heterosexual with pleasure and the queer with pain to suggest that heterosexuals delight in pleasure while queers suffer from pain. Rather, I wish to *metaphorize* the idea that queers, as naturally selected outcasts, are exempt from the "will to live," which is represented to humans through experiences of negatively valued pleasure. The natural exemption of the queer from the possibility of pleasure links her/his sexuality to the signifiers of purity, positivity, and *pain*.

singular Idea; this Idea is to be understood as the pure objectification of the will. Schopenhauer believes that our interested *wills* function as screens that prevent us from perceiving things as they are (i.e., as objective incarnations of the *will*). A simple encapsulation of Schopenhauer's view is the dictum, "One will repels another." That is, if the human will is active, then the objectified will cannot be glimpsed and if the objectified will is being viewed, then the human will must be lying dormant (Schopenhauer 32-47). In our conscious lives, only an *aesthetic contemplation* can immobilize the self-interested human will and, thereby, provide a view of the objectified will. Schopenhauer calls one who entertains an aesthetic contemplation a "subject of knowledge." Unlike the subject who's driven by a will to protect him/herself from the external world, the disinterested subject of knowledge is "at one with the object of contemplation" (Acheson 170). Thus, aesthetic contemplation affords the subject of knowledge an uncensored, or *pure*, view of the Idea (which is, argues Schopenhauer, the unadulterated, aspatial, acausal, and atemporal will) (170, 171).

We've already learned that involuntary memories are comprised of aesthetic contemplations; we now understand that aesthetic contemplations are comprised of experiences that are *not* in the interest of our will to live. Rather than being will-motivated, pleasurable, and negatively valued, aesthetic contemplations are often painful and always positive and pure. Therefore, painful, positive, and pure aesthetic contemplations produce involuntary memories that possess these same characteristics.⁴

⁴ At this point, it is crucial to note that Arthur Schopenhauer and Marcel Proust differ in their interpretations of the nature of involuntary memory. While, in *The World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer maintains that we tend to "cast an enchanting glamour" over all memories, whether experienced involuntarily or not (256), Proust argues that involuntary memories simply and objectively excavate the rejected sensations of the past (Beckett, "Proust" 74). In my argument that involuntary memories are aligned with pure (and often painful) sensations, I lean toward the Proustian definition of the phenomenon.

We can now gather that a queer (i.e., a non-will-motivated) sensory experience finds its cognitive equivalent in the aesthetic contemplation. We've seen that the queer sensory experience, like queer sexuality in general, is independent of the will to live and, thus, free of the negatively-valued pleasures that perpetuate this striving force. The queer sensory experience is, in Schopenhauer, the opposite of pleasant, negative, and duty-bound; it is painful, positive, and *purely* autonomous. Correspondingly, the aesthetic contemplation, which fuses the subject of knowledge and the object of contemplation, affords an uncensored (pure) view of the objectified will. In turn, the collision of two aesthetic contemplations generates an involuntary memory that is, correspondingly, pure. In Krapp's Last Tape, Endgame, and Waiting for Godot the characters of Krapp, Hamm, Vladimir, and Estragon vary considerably in their respective abilities and desires to experience pure sensations (physical and cognitive).

We have already discussed the fact that, in Krapp's Last Tape, the title character has "outed" himself from the will to live, a will that is characterized by negatively-valued pleasures. The character's voluntary renunciation of negatively-valued pleasures is represented and compensated for in his banana fetish. The play's stage directions read that, on two directly consecutive occasions, Krapp "strokes [a] banana" (55, 56) and then "puts [the] end of [the] banana in his mouth and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him" (56). Furthermore, in one of his recordings, Krapp remarks, "Have just eaten I regret to say three bananas and only with difficulty refrained from a fourth" (57). Given the fact that Beckett was a patient of the soon-to-be-President of the British Psychoanalytic society (Brater 35), the psychoanalytic significance of the playwright's obvious fetish of the phallic banana cannot be overlooked. Sigmund Freud argues that

“...the fetish is a substitute for the penis” (953), or, more accurately, a substitute for the mother’s *lack* of a penis. On the subject of the phallus, Jacques Lacan argues that the term is a signifier for a signifier, which signifies “something missing” (1283).

Given our Shopenhauerian reading of Krapp as a self-ostracized queer who willingly rejects will-motivated pleasures, we might interpret Krapp’s bananas as fetishized phalluses, signifying a *lack* of negatively-valued pleasures.⁵ In lieu of heterosexual pleasures, Krapp indulges in his fetish, which offers him pure (aesthetic) gratification, as opposed to a purposive satisfaction, which operates *not* in the service of the individual, but in the service of the species.

In addition to the physically pure sensations of holding, stroking and eating bananas, Krapp engages in a cognitively pure sensation as well. Throughout his listening sessions, Krapp generally self-censors his tapes (by rewinding and fast-forwarding them), thereby exercising his voluntary, will-motivated, highly discriminating mnemonic faculty. Yet, at one point in the play, Krapp is overcome by the memory of an aesthetic contemplation that he entertained while having an erotic experience with a “dark young beauty” (59). Krapp’s disinterested contemplation of an earlier aesthetic contemplation produces an involuntary memory, which is signified by the “recording [of] silence” (62). This occurrence is testimony to the fact that Krapp’s condition of being a *self*-outcast “frees him up” to the possibility of pure experiences, both physical and cognitive.

Conversely, due to circumstances beyond his control, Endgame’s Hamm is incapable of experiencing both physically and cognitively pure experiences. Physically,

⁵ I already noted that, considering Krapp’s life-altering decision to forfeit pleasure for purity, the character’s sexual relations with Fanny are relatively inconsequential. I believe that Beckett included Krapp’s reflections on Fanny to provide contradistinction to the more meaningful love affairs that Krapp experienced in his youth.

Hamm is not able to take part in corporeal enjoyment. Confined to a wheelchair, catheterized, enduring insufferable pain, and continually bleeding “from a cerebral hemorrhage or an aneurism” (Ackerley and Gontarski 175), Hamm is in no position to “get physical,” sexually or otherwise. Thus, the character can only dream of physical intimacy. States Hamm to his parents, Nagg and Nell, “If I could sleep I might make love. I’d go into the woods. My eyes would see...the sky, the earth. I’d run, run, they wouldn’t catch me. Nature” (18)! Just as Schopenhauer’s homosexuals are naturally ostracized from the realm of procreative love making, Hamm’s physical (natural) condition has exempted him from a sexual life in which he would otherwise delight.

Hamm’s condition of being a symbolic outcast and a literal invalid foreclose his ability to take part in physically pure sensations. Furthermore, Hamm’s metaphysical predicament of being a character trapped in a frozen denouement condemns him to an existence devoid of cognitively pure experiences. Just like the final stage of chess from which the play takes its name, Endgame plays out a game that has been “stalemated” by some kind of apocalyptic event, material and/or metaphorical. Nell, Nagg, and Clov represent the pawns who “may not move backwards” (“Pawn (chess)”) and Hamm is the king who is “...brought to the center of the board [to be] a useful attacking piece” (“Endgame”). That is, while the other characters of Endgame constitute the moribund pawns of an already dead game, Hamm, who insists on being “more or less” in the center of the stage (26), dominates Endgame with his imperial commands as well as his self-laudatory rhetoric. As a consequence of Hamm’s fateful circumstances, the character is deathly afraid of relinquishing his control over his peon-like subjects. Paralyzed by a “fear of not ending, of a cyclical, recurrent, repetitious existence” (Ackerley and

Gontarski 176), Hamm is unable to open himself up to the possibility of experiencing a pure aesthetic contemplation and, in turn, an involuntary memory.

In direct opposition to the paradox of Hamm's powerlessness to relinquish his power is Nell's spontaneous reflection on Lake Como, which results in her figurative and literal self-abnegation. Rather early in Endgame, Hamm's mother and father, Nell and Nagg, recall their experience on Lake Como one spring day. While Nagg's memory of the event amounts to a recounting of the bawdy tale he told that day, Nell's rendering of the experience clearly falls under the "aesthetic contemplation" category. Nell wistfully laments of the lake, "It was deep, deep. And you could see down to the bottom. So white. So clean" (21). Shortly after Nell's reminiscence, Clov reports that "[s]he has no pulse" (23). The reader/audience is to gather that Nell, who is tied to her pristine past, cannot survive in the apocalyptic wasteland in which Endgame is set. Through the miracle of aesthetic contemplation-cum-involuntary memory, Nell becomes "at one" with the past for which she longs. (In Schopenhauerian terms, the subject of knowledge has become indistinguishable from the object of contemplation.) Therefore, because the past is dead, Nell, who is indistinguishable from this past, must perish as well.

For Endgame's Hamm, physically pure sensations are impossible and, as Nell evidences, an aesthetic contemplation is tantamount to self-sacrifice. In short, the symbolic circumstance of being an outcast, the physical circumstance of being diseased and wheelchair-bound, and the metaphysical circumstance of being confined to an insignificant and eternal endgame all render Hamm incapable of experiencing purity of the flesh or the spirit.

In Waiting for Godot, which has been widely interpreted as the precursor to Endgame, the crisis that impedes Vladimir and Estragon's ability to experience aesthetic contemplations is the duo's loss of memory. In the first act, Estragon forgets the name of the man for whom he and Vladimir are waiting (14) and he doesn't remember having met Pozzo and Lucky, although Vladimir insists that he has; further, in the second act, Estragon doesn't recognize the place at which the two waited the day before (39). Vladimir cannot remember the man for whom he and Estragon picked grapes nor can he recall the name of the place at which they picked them (40). Pozzo addresses the issue of his memory loss explicitly when he remarks, "You see my memory is defective" (25) and proves his point when he claims not to recognize Vladimir and Estragon (both in Act 1 (32) and in Act 2 (54)). As a consequence of Vladimir and Estragon's shared mnemonic crisis, the pair is constantly trying to "get their bearings," referring to the changes and/or consistencies in the objects they perceive (e.g., the tree and the boots). Yet, despite their continued and concentrated efforts to remember the past, there is only one event in the play that is recalled vividly.

In the second act of Waiting for Godot, after Vladimir declares that his friend has "forgotten everything" from the day before, Estragon remarks, "I remember a lunatic who kicked the shins off me. Then he played the fool" (39). The fact that Estragon's memory is entwined with the sensation of pain suggests that the character is also linked to the queer experience, which is signified *not* by the will to live and the negatively-valued pleasures that this will incorporates, but by pure, painful, and, therefore, positively-valued sensations.

As we've seen, Vladimir and Estragon suffer from a profound memory loss that forces them to focus on external stimuli perceptively (as opposed to contemplatively). That is, the characters must perceive objects in the *interest* of both orienting themselves in a causal, historical sequence and proving that "today" is *different* from or *similar to* but *not the same as* "yesterday." Because Vladimir and Estragon are unable to entertain aesthetic contemplations, which would derail the pair's quest to find their temporal bearings, these characters pursue *physically* pure sensations, sensations that Schopenhauer would regard as exclusively queer.

Thus far, we have seen that Krapp's Last Tape's Krapp has literally rejected himself from heterosexual love; as a self-renounced outcast, Krapp is able to experience both physically and cognitively pure sensations. Endgame's Hamm has been metaphorically rejected from his ancestral lineage. Because his rejection was externally imposed (and not self-chosen), Hamm is condemned to play out a symbolic role; immobilized in this role, Hamm can engage in neither physically nor cognitively pure sensations. Finally, Waiting for Godot's Vladimir and Estragon adhere to a teleological agenda, yet refuse to struggle toward their designated endpoint. They, therefore, retain and reject two fundamental aspects of the will to live (respectively, provisional teleologies and the human struggle). Because Vladimir and Estragon have only partially "out"ed themselves from the will to live, they cannot experience aesthetic contemplations/involuntary memories, yet they *can* experience physically pure sensations.

We have seen how queer sexuality and aesthetic contemplations/involuntary memories are analogous in terms of both their categorical rejection from the will to live

and their effectual purity. The final correlation between queer sexuality and the aesthetic contemplation-cum-involuntary memory is these experiences' a-historical natures. This correlation can only be understood by, first, examining the synonymy of Schopenhauer's "seeming teleology" and the definition of history. Earlier in this essay, we addressed Schopenhauer's belief that the "seeming teleology" of the world is, in fact, a mere representation of the "one will," which is an unconscious, undifferentiated, and unfocused striving to survive. For Schopenhauer, teleologies function as necessary fictions that distract us from the ultimately aimless design of Nature. Synonymous to Schopenhauer's "seeming teleology" is the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "history," which identifies the term as "the study of the formation and growth of communities and nations." With its obvious evolutionary connotation, history is, thus, comparable to Schopenhauer's "seeming teleology," which adheres to a progressive, ends-oriented agenda.

Bryan Magee would argue that, for Schopenhauer, queer sexuality, like male homosexuality, does not operate in the "primary and unconscious" interest of the species, and is, therefore independent of the *seeming teleology* of life (i.e., history) (Magee 217). As a sexuality that is supposedly concerned with its present (synchronic) gratification, queer sexuality deviates from history, understood to be a holistic (diachronically considered and goal-oriented) narrative. Thus, while the potentially generative sex acts of heterosexuals have historical significance (they can lead to the conception of a new human specimen), queer sex acts, on the other hand, "merely happen." They do not signify anything outside of their immediate context. Therefore, while heterosexual acts are to be *historicized*, queer sex acts are only to be *chronicled*. Just as queer sexuality is

rejected from linear, teleologically-motivated history, aesthetic contemplations and involuntary memories are rejected from the sequentially structured storehouse of remembrances that is voluntary memory. We have already addressed how, for Schopenhauer, Habit functions as an anamnestic filter, retaining the pleasurable and useful and rejecting the pure and useless. Schopenhauer's highly discriminating description of voluntary memory retention is generalized in Hayden White's "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact." In this essay, White identifies the process of emplotment as that which converts a value-neutral *chronicle* into a plot-structured (and value-specific) *history*, which must conform to one of the four archetypal narratives outlined in Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism. White posits that the events that constitute a chronicle

...are *made* into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone and points of view, alternate descriptive strategies... – in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play. (1715)

So it seems that White's history, which subordinates certain events and highlights others, is a macro metaphor for voluntary memory, which filters out data that detracts from the temporal, causal, and seemingly teleological will to live.

The chronicle, which White defines as a disinterested assemblage of data, can be understood as a collection of aesthetic contemplations (and potential involuntary memories). That is, aesthetic contemplations and the involuntary memories that they produce have no referential/purposive value beyond their own self-originating contexts.

As outcasts from will-motivated memory and history, aesthetic contemplations and involuntary memories can be collectively considered only as chronicles.

Returning to Schopenhauer's theory on the will of the species as manifested in procreative sex, the philosopher maintains, "That which is decided by [the love affair] is nothing less than *the composition of the next generation*. The *dramatis personae* who shall appear when we are withdrawn are here determined, both as regards their existence and their nature, by these frivolous love affairs" (340). Given White's distinction between a chronicle that compiles and a history that signifies, Schopenhauer's use of the term "dramatis personae" to describe a succeeding generation is particularly telling. That is, the philosopher acknowledges that, in order to function as will-motivated subjects, humans must regard the development of time historically, as a narrative that develops in accordance to pregeneric plot structure. Any act that deviates from this history falls under the category of the "chronicle."

Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape, Endgame, and Waiting for Godot each dramatize the inevitability of the chronicle subsuming history. As the focal characters of these plays attempt to construct personal histories, their efforts are subverted by their realization that their lives (past, present, and future) are meaningless in the "grand scheme of things." Thus, these characters, to various extents, resign themselves to the fact that the construction of a valuable and purposive history is futile and that their actions and memories are not to be historicized, but chronicled. Krapp's Last Tape is all about the eponymous character's attempt to compile a personal history. Yet, because Krapp is always forming "new retrospect[s]" (58) and never reflecting on his current personality, he has unwittingly foreclosed the possibility of developing new self-

incarnations. Ackerley and Gontarski argue this point when they note that Krapp depicts “...the inability of the self to perceive itself accurately. Krapp-sixty-nine sneers at Krapp-thirty-nine, who laughs at an even younger Krapp. Each sees the fool he was rather than the fool he is” (303). *Historically speaking*, Krapp is a stagnated figure condemned to an unchanging circumstance. Yet, by willingly forfeiting a life of the flesh for one of the mind, Krapp has freed himself from the illusion that life is teleologically motivated. Being a “man of the mind” (as opposed to a pawn of the will), Krapp no longer contributes to a false history; rather, he is a subject of knowledge whose existence is disinterestedly and contemplatively chronicled.

While the main character of Krapp’s Last Tape chooses a life of the mind, which lends itself directly to the assembly of an endless chronicle, Endgame’s Hamm struggles against the inevitability of a life that is valueless and futile...a life that isn’t worth being historicized and can only be chronicled. Like Krapp, Hamm attempts to construct a personal history. The character’s endeavor to combat nothingness by creating a substantive and purposive personal account is contrasted against his mother’s preceding reminiscence of Lake Como. In sharp juxtaposition to his mother’s involuntary lamentation for the death of yesterday (a “yesterday” that signifies both the past and the concept of the past as a distinct temporal frame) is Hamm’s lengthy tale; clearly, Hamm’s story is delivered in order to reveal, to remind, and to retain the central character’s power over his pawn-like subjects. Because Hamm must retain his power over his fellow characters, he cannot afford to surrender himself to the possibility of experiencing an aesthetic contemplation, which could occasion an involuntary memory. Therefore, rather than disinterestedly contemplating the past, Hamm not only forces his

memories into a narrative construction, but tyrannically demands that his father be the audience for his delivery of the account.

The context and nature of Hamm's story smack loudly of the hypnotic rhetoric issued by The Tempest's Prospero to his subjects of Miranda, Caliban, and Ariel. (This allusion is made evident by Hamm's closing remark, "Our revels are now ended" (56), which is, Brater reminds us, lifted directly from one of Prospero's speeches (81).) Just as Prospero exerts and maintains his power by controlling how his subjects understand their histories, Hamm controls Nagg and Clov (respectively, his progenitor and his adopted offspring) by forcing them to listen to and, thus, to be complicit in his personal rendering of his, and their, histories. Like Prospero's rhetoric, which features himself as the hero of Miranda, the savior of Ariel, and the loving master of Caliban, Hamm's narrative, which details his adoption of "the brat" (presumably, Clov) is similarly self-laudatory.

Yet, there is a clear disparity in the overall significance of Prospero's and Hamm's stories. That is, Prospero's narrative, however dubious, contributes to history at large, while, in Hamm's story, which starts and ends at zero by, respectively, the thermometer and the hygrometer (51, 53), "[t]he end is the beginning" (69), atmospherically speaking. Correspondingly, Hamm's story amounts to nothing, as signified by the character's suggestion that the life cycle of humanity may very well begin anew with the birth of the flea (Beckett, Endgame 33; Ackerley and Gontarski 176). If, in fact, the generation of the flea marks the advent of a new evolution, with its own will to live, then the lives of Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell will be rendered utterly insignificant in the grand scheme of things, which is, it turns out, insignificant itself. In

short, Endgame traces Hamm's realization that he cannot assign importance, or value of any kind, to his memories. Therefore, the character has no choice but to recast his "story," which is, essentially, "...all...for nothing" (Beckett, Endgame 33) as his "chronicle."

Both Krapp's and Hamm's endeavors to construct personal histories are framed by the realization (if not of the characters, then of the audience) that their lives are ultimately meaningless and, therefore, have no place in a discriminatively emplotted and goal-directed history, but, rather, belong in a value-neutral and aimless chronicle. This trope of the inevitable chronicle subsuming a personal history is explored even more overtly in Waiting for Godot. We have already noted the fact that the memories of Vladimir, Estragon, and Pozzo are debilitatingly short-term. The limited mnemonic capacities of Waiting for Godot's characters condemn them to a perpetual present. As Ackerley and Gontarski note, the characters of Waiting for Godot demonstrate "...the paradox of *percipi* [in which] the world exists only in the specious present of consciousness, re-created at every moment and with its partial memories, to provoke an illusion of dubious continuity" (364). Because Estragon, Vladimir, and even Pozzo are tied to an enduring present, recognition (literally "knowing *again*") is impossible. To explain, memory is the conduit to the past. If memories are lost, so is the past. If the past is lost, so too are its original references that make the concept of "repetition" (i.e., experiencing or knowing "again") conceivable. Because they are in the process of losing their connection to the past, the characters of Waiting for Godot are incapable of contributing to a diachronically considered history. Thus, the figures are in the process of becoming constituents of a value-neutral chronicle.

Schopenhauer's concept of the will-less aspect (as evidenced in the philosopher's treatment of queer sexuality as well as aesthetic contemplations-cum-involuntary memories) is clearly dramatized by the focal figures of Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape, Endgame, and Waiting for Godot. Through Beckett's characters, we have seen that queer sexuality and aesthetic contemplations/involuntary memories:

- (1) ...are always already rejected (from, respectively, the continuation of the species and the will-motivated memory).
- (2) ...gravitate toward pure (i.e., positive and painful) sensations, as opposed to pleasurable (and, therefore, negative) ones.
- (3) ..., when diachronically considered, lend themselves more easily to a chronicle than to a history.

Whether or not they are capable of experiencing them, the *rejected* figures of Krapp, Hamm, Vladimir, and Estragon gravitate toward *pure* (i.e., positively valued and, therefore, sometimes painful) sensations, which are *chronicled* disinterestedly, as opposed to historicized willfully. Thus, by performing (or simply tending toward) the sexuality of the queer and the experience of involuntary memory, Beckett's leading men have each dramatized the Schopenhauerian will-less aspect...and aspect that, for Schopenhauer, Beckett, *and* Proust "is...a condition of the artistic experience" (Beckett, "Proust" 69).

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