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**An Examination of the Relation of Scientific Thought to Changing
Notions of Time, Space and Character in 20th Century Drama:
Chekhov, Beckett, Foreman.**

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award of the degree of Master of Drama

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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ABSTRACT

This study examines and investigates the relation of scientific thought to changing notions of time, space and character in twentieth-century drama. The aim of the study is to illustrate the influence scientific thought had on the *zeitgeist* of the twentieth-century and how this in turn is reflected through the drama in the treatment of the dramatic elements of time, space and character. The focus of the study rests on three case studies, each of which can be seen as a precursor to the following in a linear timeline of the development of twentieth-century drama. The analysis of the three texts, namely Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Richard Foreman's *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, will show how the philosophical notions of the twentieth-century, namely relativity, uncertainty, ambiguity, paradox, complexity and causality (which stemmed from the changing worldview offered by the theory of relativity) is reflected in the dramatists' handling of the notions of time, space and character.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It would be very difficult to stake and prove a claim that the philosophy of science has definitively influenced the development of modern drama as it developed through the twentieth-century.¹ Perhaps a more reasonable proposal would be to suggest that there exists the possibility that modern drama reflects certain aspects of scientific thinking emerging over the period spanning the twentieth-century, especially thoughts relating to time and space, and to the extent that these affect the notion of character. The aim of this study is to investigate whether this is a feasible claim and to what degree such a reflection can be perceived. In light of the above, my main research question reads as follows: Does the development of time, space and character in modern drama reflect changes in the philosophy of science over the period of the twentieth-century?

In an attempt to answer this research question, I will analyse and study three theatre texts, written by prolific and seminal theatre practitioners, who each had a significant influence on the development of modern drama at various stages of the twentieth-century. Anton Chekhov, Samuel Beckett and Richard Foreman are all playwrights who can be seen as innovative leaders in very different forms of theatre. Where Chekhov's plays can be said to be examples of proto-modernism, Beckett's oeuvre can be said to exemplify modernism (specifically the existential strand of modernism) and Foreman's work postmodernism.² These movements, each

¹ By 'modern' drama, I refer to the various styles of theatre that have developed over the past one-hundred and twenty years, which move away from Aristotle's classical ideas of representation as defined in the *Poetics*, in an attempt to create new and innovative techniques of representation in its treatment of the elements of drama.

² My use and understanding of the prefixes post- and proto- in relation to the term Modernism is indicative of a particular time period and does not mean to suggest that these movements bear no relationship with the ideas contained within Modernism. These movements have influenced the development of each other. Shannon Jackson references Hans-Thies Lehmann who stated that "the 'post' never denotes complete rejection but always exists in productive tension with precedents and histories" (2011: 147).

encompassing a specific and directional shift in ideology and philosophy, reflect the *zeitgeist* of a particular era through expression in for example the theatre, literature, music or art emerging in that era. Referring to the role of time and space in interpreting texts, Said claimed that:

no reading is neutral or innocent, and by the same token every text and every reader is to some extent the product of a theoretical standpoint, however implicit or unconscious such a standpoint may be. [...] [T]his means that theory has to be grasped in the place and the time out of which it emerges as a part of that time, working in and for it, responding to it. (1991: 241)

Zeitgeist thus refers to a collective, particular way of thinking and is often mirrored in the literature of a time. My argument is that it is possible that the scientific discoveries of a particular era also contribute to its *zeitgeist* and therefore may be reflected in its literature. Doreen Massey quotes Zohar on the question of complexity theory and *zeitgeist*:

[L]ike Newtonian science before it, 20th century science has grown out of a deep shift in general culture, a move away from absolute truth and absolute perspective toward contextualism; a move away from certainty, toward an appreciation for pluralism and diversity, toward an acceptance of ambiguity and paradox, of complexity rather than simplicity. (Massey, 2006:126)

This research proposes that the characteristics of twentieth-century scientific thought namely relativity, uncertainty, pluralism, diversity, ambiguity, paradox and complexity are elements that are also present in twentieth-century drama.

RATIONALE

According to Frijtof Capra, in *The Tao of Physics* (1982), the roots of physics are to be found in the sixth-century B.C. in a Greek culture where science, philosophy and religion were viewed as one, composite attempt to discover the essential nature of things. David Bohm supports Capra's argument. He proposes that "primitive"

man's need to understand the universe led him to view religion, science and the arts as aspects of the same truth.

Science was concerned not only with practical problems of assimilating nature to man's physical needs, but also with the psychological need to understand the universe—to assimilate it mentally so that man could feel “at home” in it. Early creation myths, which were as much scientific in their aims as religious, certainly had this function. (Bohm, 2009:34)

If science and religion were one in ancient Greece then it is possible to argue that theatre was treated as an equal to science, as theatre initially formed an integral part of Greek religion. “Greek tragedy has been understood as an outgrowth of rites celebrated annually at the Festival of Dionysus. Those rites have been investigated both in their relation to the God Dionysus and in their relation to the primitive religion of the Greeks” (Fortier, 1997: 56). However, as modern science developed, its course gradually moved away from religion and philosophy to a point where it was viewed and researched as an independent discipline.

Bohm (2009:47) argues that beauty and truth are the link between science and the arts. Thus, through an unbiased representation of things as they are, the viewer is confronted with the truth of the work. According to Babich (2007:207), Friedrich Nietzsche argued that “science and art draw upon the same creative powers and both science and art are directed to life ... science can be seen as a subtle form of self-defence against the truth” to which Martin Heidegger responded “thus we have need for art, so that we are not done to the ground by the truth” (cited in Babich, 2007:207). Nietzsche and Heidegger were philosophers and Bohm is a physicist. Although specialists in very different fields, it is evident that these researchers share the belief that there are undeniable links between the foundational core of science and the arts that are worth investigating.

Today, the essential function of science is to formulate a way in which to “describe the whole universe” (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008:14) which would explain all aspects of the nature of that universe. Even the sages of antiquity were concerned with finding and examining the essential nature of things, which they

termed *physis*. Likewise, in the theatre, the playwright strives to uncover the essential nature of human behaviour. Some styles of theatre (specifically the works of the three playwrights in question) do not hesitate to expose that which can be questioned or analysed and have the ability to offer a glimpse into the human condition. By analysing the texts and their relationships with the philosophical and scientific concepts of time and space, that which binds the seemingly disjointed theories of science and theatre may become evident.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton are considered to be the first, great 'modern' scientists, although they considered themselves to be philosophers of the natural world (Pigliucci, 2008:7). However, regardless of occupational terminology, their scientific discoveries initiated new ways of thinking. Philosophers of science (like Bacon, Galilei and Newton) "are propelled by the belief that science provides the best means of discovering truths about, or, at minimum, correctly describing, Nature" (Pinnick & Gale, 2000:111).

As a framework for analysis, I would like to focus on how the philosophy of science, particularly that which questions the nature of time and space, has influenced the way in which we think about time, space and character and how this is reflected in the dramatic literature of the twentieth-century. In particular, the objective of this research is to investigate whether the new way of thinking offered by the theory of relativity (as well as scientific theories enabled by the theory of relativity)³ can be discerned in the dramatic literature of this time.

We come to a new formulation of the laws of nature, one that is no longer built on certitudes, but rather on possibilities. The evolutionary character of the universe has to be reflected within the context of the fundamental laws of physics. (Prigogine, 1997:29)

³ Scientific theories which came into being due to the postulations of the theory of relativity and which are mentioned in the course of my argument are for example the Mach Principle, Feynman Laws, Quantum Theory and the Twin Paradox.

An ever-changing world in which nothing is certain alludes to a constantly changing worldview. This notion holds interesting ideas about how we view the structure⁴ of our daily lives. Time, it is argued, is the starting point of order and order a prerequisite for structure. In other words, the concepts of time and space are invariably linked to structure. This could possibly begin to explain the evolution of modern drama's treatment of structure over the last one-hundred and twenty years. David Bohm suggests that a possible link to reconnect the world of science and of art lies within structure.

The fact is that the deepest and most general scientific ideas about space, time, and the organization of matter have their roots largely in abstraction from perceptual experience, mainly visual and tactile. The new evolution of art can help open the viewer's eyes to seeing structure in new ways [...]. Vice versa, new scientific notions of structure may be significant to the artist, not so much because they suggest particular ideas to be translated into artistic form, but, rather, because if they are understood at a deep level they will change one's thinking about *everything*. (Bohm, 2009:47; italics in original)

In 1905 the world underwent a profound change. Albert Einstein developed the special theory of relativity, revolutionising the way humanity thought about life. The theory explained how the speed at which time happens is mutable; that space and time are not absolute, but relative concepts; and that time, space, and motion (i.e. movement through space) collapse into a fourth dimension⁵, in which all act upon one another. However, the special theory of relativity was inconsistent with Newton's gravitational laws. Newton's view of time⁶ was proven to be incorrect by this new theory, but his body of work served as a precursor for Einstein's scientific theories. The latter was filled with respect for Newton's genius and once wrote in a journal: "Newton, forgive me" (Paris, 2005:14).

⁴ With the term structure, I am referring to the way in which separate entities are organised and arranged to become part of a whole.

⁵ The space-time continuum is considered to consist of four dimensions; time is seen as the fourth dimension after the three dimensions of space namely length, width and height.

⁶ Newton viewed time as absolute and argued that there could be no variables of time as time was experienced by all in exactly the same manner regardless of their positions in space.

Einstein continued with his research and in 1915 introduced the general theory of relativity. The theory successfully explained the “force of gravity in terms of the curvature of a four-dimensional space-time” (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008:150). This newfound knowledge transformed the fields of science and mathematics and, I would suggest the development of visual and performance art in the twentieth-century. It is this development that I wish to investigate in my study, with specific reference to three theatrical texts, namely Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*; Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and Richard Foreman’s *Bad Boy Nietzsche*.

If we are to have a broader understanding of the essence of reality, it is essential to study some ideas pertaining to the notion of time and space. The ideas of time and space have been enigmas for centuries, questioned in order to understand their form, nature, meaning and origin. Philosophies about the nature of time have developed and changed over the centuries. Aristotle equated time to motion and questioned whether the past or future really exist. St. Augustine shared Aristotle’s viewpoint as he was of the opinion that only the present can exist and that only by our awareness of its passing. He suggested that there are three times: “a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future” (O’Conner & Robertson, 2002: np) and argued that time can only exist as long as a human being can think about things past, present and future. Kant developed this argument further by proposing that time is “a purely subjective condition of our (human) intuition ... and in itself, apart from the subject, is nothing” (Alweiss, 2002:120) and therefore time cannot exist beyond human experience. Heidegger argued that “time ‘is’ only because we are mortal”, which implies that time finds its meaning in death rather than in eternity (Alweiss, 2002:122). Today, time is defined as a measurement for change and stability, motion and stillness, order and chaos, it is mysterious and tangible; it “is repetition with variation” (Adam, 1994:53). The theory of relativity brought about a whole new way of thinking about time: absolute time (which is bounded by and repeated in the past, present and future) was replaced with the idea of relative time.

Space is the vessel that hosts the journey which I described above. It is the milieu, environment or atmosphere that contains all material objects and orders our world. Space is that which you can fill with something else. In essence, the concept of space is dualistic as it only exists once it contains an object of sorts, yet space is eternal and always present. It is the void that contains the possibility of physical presence. In the same way that time is a measurement for change, movement of any kind is indicative of change occurring in space. The existence of all beings (whether inanimate or animate) not only depends on their coordinates in space but also on their duration in time. And it is important to note that time in its turn is dependent on space for its survival—hence the theory of relativity’s justification of the model of space-time. One of the viewpoints that make this model interesting is that there can not be an absolute definition of the relationship between any two coordinates in space and time because of the position of the observer. According to some metaphysicists, space-time is the matrix for all life forms and for that reason can be seen as the genesis of creation. Stephen Hawking states that his goal as a scientist is to discover “nothing less than a complete description of the universe we live in”(Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008:18).

If one is to reconnect the world of the physicist with that of the theatre practitioner, the world of the eastern mystic can serve as a very valuable bridge or connection point between these seemingly opposite realms. Ancient Greek philosophers and scientists viewed geometry as an almost ‘holy’ source of eternal truth. In contrast to this, ancient Eastern philosophers have always:

maintained that space and time are constructs of the mind. Eastern mystics treated them like all other intellectual concepts; as relative, limited and illusory. In a Buddhist text, we find the words: the past, the future, physical space and individuals are nothing but names, forms of thought, words of common usage, merely superficial realities. (Capra, 1982:179)

One of the most groundbreaking aspects of Einstein’s theory of relativity is that it proved that geometry was a product of man’s intellect and not predetermined by nature, as had been suggested by the ancient Greeks. Thus it could be argued that

Einstein merely proved what Eastern mystics had known, believed and practised for thousands of years. Through meditation, they had arrived at the enlightened knowledge that space and time are but concepts related to consciousness. Space remains a vacuum until it gains its properties and boundaries through the consciousness of the observer: it only becomes that which we recognise through the eyes of the observer. The idea of an observer thus forms an integral part in the validation of the theory of relativity. Any coordinate in space is relative to the position of an observer. For example, if two observers (stationed in two different points in space) view the same object, the coordinates of the object in space will be influenced by, and hence relative to, each individual observer. And as time forms the fourth dimension in the space-time continuum, the position of the object will be relative to its duration at that particular point in space.

It is important at this point to comment on the influence that the travelling speed of light has on our understanding of the theory of relativity. If one of the observers mentioned above is moving whilst viewing the object, one must calculate the time it takes for light to travel from the object to the moving observer. The speed at which light travels is 186 000 miles per second and from this it can be calculated that it takes light travelling from the sun eight minutes to reach the earth. Therefore, when looking at the sun on any particular day at any given time, we are looking at it as it appeared eight minutes ago. We look back in time and receive a very small glimpse of what the past looks like. From this it could be argued that the science of astronomy not only studies stars and galaxies, but, more interestingly, the past.

Three concepts of Albert Einstein's work namely *Eigenzeit* (system-specific time), curved space-time⁷ and the finite speed of light have collectively affected "not only our understanding of time but of reality, causality, and the relation of observer and observed" (Adam, 1994:55). This means that findings in science influence the

⁷ "The gravitational field is represented by curved space-time: particles try to follow the nearest thing to a straight path in a curved space, but because space-time is not flat, their paths appear to be bent, as if by a gravitational field" (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008: 102).

way in which we view our realities and the world around us, and form the basis for us to examine the relationship between cause and effect in a world in which nothing is definite.

Non-temporal time, motion of inert matter, causality, truth, and objectivity have had to give way to temporality, fundamental uncertainty, the relevance of the future dimension, becoming and extinction, the fusion of action, energy and time, and the mutual implication of observer and observed. (Adam, 1994:60)

With the theory of relativity, scientists proved that the world in which we live is uncertain, constantly changing and that time cannot exist without space or space without time. It illustrated how an experience is relative to only one observer and that what appears to be stationary, is in fact continuously moving. The literature of the time in which these theories came to light (the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), reflects these attributes. The works of Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Thornton Wilder and Maurice Maeterlinck, for example, all treat time and space with fluidity. In this passage from her novel, *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf eloquently describes the effect time (past, present, or future), memory and space have on how we experience events:

With her foot on the threshold she waited a moment longer in a scene which was vanishing even as she looked, and then, as she moved and took Minta's arm and left the room, it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past. (Woolf, 1992 [1927]:121)

Furthermore, the writing of these authors creates worlds in which the only thing that is definite is the uncertainty of a universe that continues to be an unfamiliar and ever-changing landscape to its inhabitants regardless of the amount of knowledge gained. It is a case of the Latin maxim: *Ignoramus et ignorabimus*, which translates as we do not know and we will not know.

The concept of memory encapsulates our perception of all consciousness which has its roots in the passing of time. Time plays a vital role in the capturing and

storing of memories, as the creation of memories is connected to a specific reference point in time. But science tells us that it is impossible for an event to occur in a time frame independent of a specific locale or space: all memories need a cradle in which to be born. Scientific thought has also influenced the modern geographer's idea and understanding of space. One of Doreen Massey's opening statements in her book *For Space* (2006) is that:

Time and space must be thought together: that this is not some mere rhetorical flourish, but that it influences how we think of both terms; that thinking of time and space together does not mean that they are identical, rather it means that the imagination of one will have repercussions for the imagination of the other and that space and time are implicated in each other. (18)

She proposes that space is the result of interrelations; that without space multiplicity cannot exist, that space is always in the process of being created and that space "provides the condition for the existence of those relations which generate time" (Massey, 2006:56). Thus the concept of space also has a very powerful influence and an inescapable grasp on the creation of memory.

A good and obviously overt example of the influence of scientific thought on the development of theatre is Robert Wilson and Philip Glass's seminal piece from 1976, *Einstein on the Beach*. The piece pays homage to Albert Einstein, the father of nuclear physics, who was a genius mathematician but, it is said, at the same time a dreamer. The subject matter of this piece is Einstein's personality and "mathematical and scientific models and instruments; the products of technological progress, such as trains, spaceships, and atomic explosions" (Owens, 1977:24). The freedom with which Einstein viewed time and space is reflected in Wilson's piece, which breaks with traditional Aristotelian dramatic form. Aristotle states that it is necessary for Tragedy "as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit" (Friedland, 1911:56). This is called the Unity of Time. Due to the practicalities of ancient Greek stage practice, a single locale was suggested to ensure the Unity of Place. In *Einstein on the Beach*, the "spectator's sense

of both scale and duration was altered, perhaps in demonstration of the central hypothesis of Einstein's thinking—that dimension and velocity are interdependent" (Owens, 1977:24). This stands in stark contrast to Aristotle's prescriptive utilisation of the Unities of Time and Place.

Waiting for Godot has been described by Vivian Mercier as a play in which "Nothing happens. Twice" (1956:6). The character Estragon exclaims: "*Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful*" (Beckett, 1981[1954]:41). These and similar statements throughout the play have caused theatre critics to analyse this nonconformist play in terms of the theory of relativity. Kundert-Gibbs (1999) and Wilkinson (2009) have shown that it is possible to analyse *Waiting for Godot* as a text that illustrates the concepts of time and space in a scientific realm.

Like Richard Foreman's other works, *Bad Boy Nietzsche* searches "for a form that will expose an inarticulable depth" (Harries, 2004: 86) through the manipulation of space and time in an attempt to materialize the playwright's thoughts. Foreman does this by creating a space in which he can suspend the effects of time in order to truly deal with the questions posed by ontology. Studies by Falk (1977), Dasgupta (1985) and Harries (2004) discuss the influence scientific thought has had on Foreman's oeuvre.

Similar studies applying to *The Cherry Orchard* have not—to the best of my knowledge—been conducted. Yet few characters muse about the passing of time as often as those created by Chekhov. His characters are obsessed with the passing of time, and they survive the present by escaping to the past or the future.

The characters in *The Cherry Orchard* are (like Beckett's and Foreman's) bound to a specific place from which they cannot depart. The characters in *The Cherry Orchard*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Bad Boy Nietzsche* are confined to and bound by their respective landscapes. They are at the mercy of space. The world they reside in is a cursed safe-haven from which they cannot be separated, and the landscape influences their physical, verbal and emotional actions and motivations. Characters can only exist within space, and because of the body's sensitivity (its direct

emotional and physical reaction) to its environment it follows that memory (like almost everything else we experience) is inseparable from landscape. Memory also serves as a psychological blueprint or map of the characters' journeys within an environment. We can identify who the characters are by observing and understanding the space that they occupy. It is therefore important for the purposes of this study to consider the development of character alongside the changes that occurred in the dramatic form's use of time and space.

Because of these similarities, this study might illustrate how the three plays, written fifty years apart from one another, and in vastly different theatre styles can be read together to illustrate the development of modern drama's use of time, space and character in the last one-hundred and twenty years. Therefore, the theoretical framework of the research has been structured around the philosophy of thought offered by the theory of relativity and conducted through a non-empirical conceptual analysis of the chosen texts.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this research is to investigate the philosophic thought offered by physical laws of science and to explore to what extent the philosophical stimuli they offer is reflected within the chosen texts. Although it is not always possible to separate the concept of performance from that of a dramatic text, my primary focus throughout the thesis will be on the texts as literary works.

In order to answer the research question, I have made use of the following research methods. Through conceptual analysis, I analysed the different dimensions of meaning offered by a close reading of the texts. The form of conceptualisation that proved to be most useful in this study was the philosophical tradition of Phenomenology.⁸ The strong point of using this particular approach was that it

⁸ In order to differentiate the philosophy of Phenomenology from that which is considered phenomenological, I will capitalise the word throughout this study.

enabled conceptual clarity. Husserl (1911:311) argued that Phenomenology attempts to create conditions for the objective study of topics usually regarded as subjective: consciousness and the content of conscious experiences such as judgments, perceptions, and emotions which is much of the subject matter of the three plays in question. As Fortier comments:

Beckett and Chekhov were not phenomenologists; nor were they influenced by phenomenology. The concerns of their work, however, are elucidated by a phenomenological perspective [...] that shows similar concerns, especially with the truth of lived experience and the place of living theatre in human spirituality and ritual. (Fortier, 1997:54)

The idea of consciousness is strongly linked to the concept of 'being' and 'being in time,' and as the philosophy of Existentialism has its roots in Phenomenology, this form of conceptualization is best suited to answering the question at hand as the plays *The Cherry Orchard*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Bad Boy Nietzsche* are shrouded by Existentialism. This philosophy views both mankind and his journey through life with the knowledge that eternity is more important than time. Hope and despair, nostalgia, the quest for one's identity, the liberation of body and soul, the struggle over memory, and living in an apathetic world, are existential themes that occur in all three plays and are directly related to the question of time passing. The playwrights also use language to point out the deterioration in communication in order to comment on the degenerative effect time has on man's ability to make meaningful and lasting human contact.

In the theatre, a phenomenological approach doesn't "only search out a fully present human existence but also the failure to achieve this existence, which is more often than not the condition in which we live" (Fortier, 1997:44). I approached the texts through the use of Phenomenology in order to observe the reflection of scientific thought in the dramatic texts. I read the texts, in the manner of *reductio* or reduction, which is a part of the methodology of Phenomenology (Van Manen, 2011: np). Through reduction, I aimed to defer all preconceived notions of the texts in

order to look at the texts afresh, as a whole, in order to derive a 'new' or alternate meaning of the text. The theatre phenomenologist Bert O. States argues that:

theatre must be a reconquest of the signs that exist, its object is to strip signs, to empty them of received content and to reconstitute them as a beginning, a birth...in that it seeks to retrieve a naive perception of the thing—its objective aspect—before it was defined out of sight by language. (1985:109)

Therefore, reduction helped me to deconstruct and 'strip' the text of signs in order to steer away from any presumptions or preconceived ideas I might have had which could influence the reading of the text and thus prevent me from perceiving the text as a phenomenon or a 'thing in itself'. According to Jan Hendrik van den Berg, "if we want to understand man's existence, we must listen to the language of objects. If we are describing a subject, we must elaborate on the scene in which the subject reveals itself" (1972:40). Therefore, in order to perceive to what extent the changes in the treatment of the dramatic elements of time, space and character reflect the scientific *zeitgeist* of a particular era; all previous assumptions regarding the texts in question had to, as far as possible, be suspended. Reduction was therefore a useful way to approach the plays as it was important to read the plays with openness in order to view the concepts of time, space and character in a new light. The texts were placed and compared in their respective contexts alongside the worldview and intentions of the playwrights. Textual analysis, according to what has been perceived as Aristotle's essential dramatic Unities (namely Time, Action, and Place), was used to determine the differences and similarities between the plays in terms of their use of time and space and handling of character. I then proceeded to study and explore these findings using the scientific concepts/thinking that underpins the theory of relativity.

For centuries the playwright, a practical philosopher, has grappled with creating an event in an artificial space that simulates the essence of being. Tracing the origin of the word 'theatre' back to its Greek roots, (namely, *teatron*: the seeing place), it becomes evident that this ancient theatre's most basic function was to create

a space in which society could view a mirror image of its own existence. Whether the reflection in the mirror is humorous, cautionary or satirical is not important; what is important is the fact that it serves as an indirect form of 'mass-therapy' which was deemed vital for the survival of humanity.

The three plays, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, leave little to the imagination as to the respective playwrights' judgements of the condition of mankind. Anton Chekhov, Samuel Beckett and Richard Foreman all strive to examine the nature of humanity and what it means to be human in a particular age through the characters and spaces they create in their work. Each character, setting and event, created to live only within a theatrical framework, now serves as a means to investigate and reflect upon the consciousness we have of our existence. The intentions of Beckett, Chekhov and Foreman are to reveal the 'unrevealable,' to lay bare the troublesome questions regarding the state of humanity and to attempt to answer the unanswerable. In a similar vein, Albert Einstein, who lived through two world wars, felt in order for physics to have any value at all, it "had to satisfy his need to escape the tragedy of the human condition" (Prigogine, 1997: 186).

Oral and written words serve only to express relative knowledge—relative knowledge or conditional truth being that, which we can analyse, intellectualise and question. In contrast to this is what the Buddhists term absolute knowledge or transcendental truth, which is knowledge that can only be experienced as it is a non-intellectual, direct experience of reality which cannot be communicated through words (Capra, 1982: 37). "Because our representation of reality is so much easier to grasp than reality itself, we tend to confuse the two and to take our concepts and symbols for reality" (35). Thus it is necessary to go beyond all cerebral and sensory boundaries in order to connect with the experience of reality. This idea can be affirmed by Suzuki when he states: "The contradiction so puzzling to the ordinary way of thinking comes from the fact that we have to use language to communicate our inner experience which in its very nature transcends linguistics" (cited in Capra,

1982:53). One stream of thought or way of thinking is not sufficient in order to form a worldview that encompasses all, and as a result it is crucial to incorporate a diverse range of analyses in order to grasp the concept of the essence of reality comprehensively.

It is in the world of theatre that consciousness is able to meet reality. In the process of creating a world that reflects on reality and at the same time exists beyond the borders of reality, the viewer becomes aware of a heightened consciousness that can be unveiled through the phenomenon of the theatre. In the theatre one can easily move from the past to the future, blurring all conventions regarding space and time.

In a stroke he (the dramatist) has altered our customary orientation to time and space. What we call the exposition is really the surreptitious planting of an embryo future in a reported past and the sealing off of time in an inevitable space. It is what Paul Ricoeur calls the past absolute, an unstable mixture of certainty and surprise in which the past, freed from the infinite contingencies of reality, now corners the future and eliminates it as a category of care. (States, 1985:48)

The medium of the theatre therefore holds the power to alter all preconceived notions regarding space and time because of its transient nature. The very nature of the theatrical worlds created by Chekhov, Beckett and Foreman allow the observer to view a presentation of reality stripped of all boundaries in order to attempt to understand the essence of the world and humanity. "According to Husserl, to know an essence is to know that which is necessary and hence eternally true" (Lauer, 1958:15). The theatre, rich in symbols and metaphors, can be seen as an attempt to create a visual translation of this truth in order to derive at the essence of this truth.

Therefore, this study can be seen as an exploration of how the fate of the characters a playwright creates are intertwined with that of time and space and how these elements reflect the scientific *zeitgeist* of a particular era. What follows in the ensuing chapters is an attempt to view the worlds of science and theatre from different perspectives in order to create a worldview in which these alternate realities become complimentary facets of each other. It is a phenomenological and relativistic investigation to establish to what degree the philosophy of the theory of

relativity influenced the development of modern drama's utilisation of time, space and character.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is, firstly, a collection of studies which influenced my understanding of scientific thought, space, time and character. Secondly, it reviews the literature which offered useful information about the three plays. As the texts often serve as examples in studies pertaining to various dramatic styles and ideas, these findings have served as a foundation for comparison that has assisted my attempt to answer the research question. And, thirdly, it comprises of a selection of studies that illustrates how aspects of the theatre have been analysed through scientific metaphors.

As part of my research, it was essential to broaden my knowledge of the theory of relativity in order to grasp the scientific philosophy of thought offered by this theory. The principal sources to support, strengthen and validate my understanding of scientific thought were books by Fritjof Capra (1982), Stephen Hawking (2008; 2010), Stan Gibilisco (1991), John Gribbin (1995), and Albert Einstein (2009[1934]). References to these books will be found throughout the thesis.

Ilya Prigogine states that “the dream of my youth was to contribute to the unification of science and philosophy by resolving the enigma of time” (Prigogine, 1997:72). His work on time not only assisted my understanding of the development of thought from Newtonian science to what he calls the “science of becoming”, but also of the philosophical consequences of his hypothesis which explains the irreversibility of time. Another physicist, whose research offered important insight into the nature of scientific thought, is David Bohm (2009). His philosophical writing on the nature of creativity demonstrates the link between the humanities and science and served as a valuable example to refer to in my search for the reflection of scientific thought in modern drama.

Doreen Massey's work has enabled me to have a broader understanding of the concept of space which necessitates the inclusion of the geographical, social, economical, scientific and philosophical in order to view space from a range of perspectives.

It may be useful to think of places, not as areas on maps, but as constantly shifting articulations of social relations through time; and to think of particular attempts to characterise them as attempts to define specific pockets of space-time. (Massey, 1995:188)

She argues against the postmodern idea that time is annihilating space and for the idea that a sense of place/space forms the foundation for how we think about the past, present and future.

Barbara Adam (1994) analyses time from the perspective of a social theorist in order to contextualise our understanding of the multiplicity of time within contemporary society by illustrating the links between human time and scientific time. Her work has illustrated to me the importance of viewing time as a complex and multi-layered entity encompassing ideas relating to timing, tempo, temporality, measure, margins, resource and sense in order to understand the influence space-time has on social time.

The idea of the 'play as landscape' was first introduced by Gertrude Stein, whose body of work serves as the primary influence on the theatrical style and writings of Richard Foreman, who called Stein the "major literary figure of the 20th century" (Davy, 1978:108). Stein used the word "landscape as a metaphor for a phenomenological spectatorship of theatre, a settled-back scanning or noting, not necessarily of a natural scene, but of any pattern of language, gesture, and design as if it were a natural scene" (Fuchs, 1994:44). Elinor Fuchs develops this idea when explaining that a play in performance actually becomes another world in time and space, passing in front of its audience's eyes. Yet, this world does not adhere to the rules of our world, for apart from what has been determined by the playwright, nothing else is possible in the world of the play. This implies that questions about

space and time have to be pre-determined by the playwright and that the characters' actions will not be able to change their fates as these have been fixed too. However, this does not mean that change does not occur in the world of the play. This idea, together with Fuchs's guidelines to create meaning in the world of the play (2004:7), have been useful to me in extracting images and metaphors from the plays in order to understand the respective playwrights' use of time and space and their resultant treatment of character .

The work of George Hunka aided my research as it illustrated the influence Beckett had on Foreman's writing and how the latter's work can be seen as a progression from where Beckett's work stopped. "If Beckett fragments and deconstructs the body in post-war Western culture, then Foreman attempts to reconstruct it" (Hunka, 2010: 21). Hunka argues that both playwrights use language in order to connect the external and internal, through the physical, in search of nothingness.

Beckett and Chekhov both termed their respective dramas as tragicomedies and this has been the ground for some analysis and comparison between the plays *The Cherry Orchard* and *Waiting for Godot*. In 'The Tragicomic: Concern in Depth' (1965:295), for instance, author Albert Hofstadter comments that both Beckett and Chekhov create an indistinct blending between the serious and the light-hearted in their dramas. His focus, however, is an investigation into the genre of tragicomedy and not a comparative study pertaining to the playwrights in question.

Warren Lee discusses the concept of waiting as a parallel between the two texts in his review article, 'The Bitter Pill of Samuel Beckett' (1957:77). According to Lee, Chekhov's portrayal of his characters may be deceptively realistic in terms of their actions, dialogue and desires but essentially they are the forefathers of the everyman characters Beckett embedded in Vladimir and Estragon. The characters in all three plays fill their days with various means of passing the time, to make the process of waiting more bearable. In the process, they experience "the *taedium vitae* of everyday activities" (Wegener, 1967:151).

The common denominator that links the texts to each other and to the metaphysical concepts of time and space is the philosophy of Existentialism. It was therefore essential to study the influence and the effect this philosophy has had on the theatre. Richard B. Vowles examines this phenomenon in relation to the theatre works of Jean-Paul Sartre, in his article 'Existentialism and Dramatic Form' (1953). For Vowles, the existentialist drama is based on the premise of "existence precedes essence" (215). The consequence of this idea is a theatre predominated and structured by its ethical essence. This ethical essence proclaims that man is always alone and accountable only to himself, with the presence of death always looming. Therefore the existential play can be described as the ultimate tragedy of modern man in which the characters attempt to realise themselves:

I emerge alone and in dread in the face of the unique and first project which constitutes my being. [...] I have not, nor can I have, recourse to any value against the fact that it is I who maintain values in being; nothing can assure me against myself; cut off from the world and of my essence by the nothing that I am, I have to realize the meaning of the world and of my essence: I decide it alone, unjustifiable, and without excuse. (Vowles, 1953:218)

Although Vowles focuses on Sartre's *oeuvre*, his study aided my research as *Waiting for Godot*, *Bad Boy Nietzsche* and to a lesser extent *The Cherry Orchard* are examples of existentialist theatre.

Martin Esslin argues, in his article 'The Theatre of the Absurd' (1961:3), that evidence of the first predecessor of Absurd Theatre can be found as early as 1896 with the premiere of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. It is possible that Chekhov might have been familiar with this work and aware of the trend in theatre circles to move away from Realism in order to develop a new form of theatre. Although the ideas established by the absurdists were only coined in the 1950s, some of the underlining principles characteristic of Absurd Theatre are also present in the plays that Chekhov wrote for the theatre. Esslin suggests that the absurdist plays are prime examples of "pure theatre" (1961:234) as the plays tend to reveal the irrationality of the human condition and the futility of the human effort, and to communicate the

sense of isolation which is an undeniable characteristic of the human condition. This theme also serves as an underlying question posed by Chekhov's characters and is echoed through Foreman's oeuvre, as his plays tend to focus on "the emptiness of unavoidably frustrated human effort and desire" (Foreman, 2003: np). Esslin quotes Eugene Ionesco, from an essay the latter wrote about the theatre of Antonin Artaud:

[A]s our knowledge becomes increasingly divorced from real life, our culture no longer contains ourselves [...]. It becomes necessary to break up our language so that it may become possible to put it together again, and to re-establish contact with the absolute, with multiple reality. (1961:11)

In other words, the act of theatre is an attempt to reconnect with the essence of multiple consciousnesses, a consciousness that extends to all aspects of life, especially philosophy, psychology and science. This attempt is not only seen in Foreman and Beckett's work, but I would suggest that it is also present in the works of Chekhov. In my effort to answer the research question, Esslin's body of work has served as an integral catalyst in the analysis and comparison of the texts according to the above-mentioned multiple realities.

In her review, Christine Saal-Losq suggests that Ingrid Dlugosch's book, *Anton Pavlovic Chekhov und das Theater des Absurden* draws various comparisons between nineteenth-century realism and the Theatre of the Absurd (1979:127). Dlugosch argues that Chekhov's plays were grossly misunderstood in terms of style and form by his contemporaries, who viewed these 'modern' conventions as a failure to handle the dramatic genre predominant at the time—and as a result missed Chekhov's revolutionary dramatic genius. To support her thesis, Dlugosch discusses various dramatic techniques that are present in both genres. For example: the way in which the dramatic form of the plays dictates the content of the plays; characters that speak past one another instead of with one another; internal and external monologues and dialogues that occur concurrently; as well as the characters' internal and invisible action, which is the predominant action that drives the drama. This, together with an undercurrent of existentialist 'angst' that attempts

to create meaning in a seemingly meaningless world, achieves the goal of creating characters that are alienated from one another and the world around them.

Chekhov's works are characterized by a style that closely resembles Naturalism on the surface. However, upon deeper analysis it becomes evident that Chekhov moves beyond the principles of Naturalism in order to view his subjects through an objective and clinical lens and to create theatre where "life on stage should be as it really is, and the people, too, should be as they are and not on stilts" (Magarshack, 1980 [1952]:40). Emile Zola, quoted by John Lahr, (1968:137), states that in Naturalism, "the work becomes an official record, nothing more; its only merit is that of exact observation, of the more or less profound penetration of analysis, of the logical concatenation of facts [...]". We can clearly see how the Chekhov *oeuvre* has departed from this point, when one considers how important the internal world is in the shaping of meaning that is created in the external world.

"Naturalism has its roots in a scientific approach which melds man inextricably to his environment", writes Lahr in a comparative study entitled 'Pinter and Chekhov: the Bond of Naturalism' (1968:137). When considering Chekhov's work it is important to note that he wrote at a time when this "scientific approach" was rapidly changing. This change is evident in his use of supra-realism, silence and pause in order to create a world which offers no fixed meaning but rather an existential deadlock in which the limitations of human imagination and the idea that memory holds no salvation are charted. Lahr argues that Chekhov's characters are both victims of nature's indifference and witnesses to its glory, and that they reside in a world where momentum is created by the counterpoint between situation and environment. He further states that the characters' dialogue is an indication of how neither language nor memory are capable of isolating the past. By the same token, the characters use language in an almost heightened future tense. This is an indication of the characters' dreams and desires that nature will respond to their calls for a brighter future. Although Lahr compares these points to characteristics found in the works of Harold Pinter, I believe it is possible to stretch some of these

comparative ideas beyond the borderline, absurd world of Pinter's characters to the absurd world in which Beckett and Foreman's characters reside.

W. Gareth Jones, in an article entitled 'Chekhov's Undercurrent of Time' (1969), analyses the presence and significance of the concept of time in Chekhov's *oeuvre*. His characters are all obsessed with the idea of time passing and therefore much of their dialogue and actions are centred on ideas relating to their past and their future, to recollecting their memories and to the inescapable doom of ageing. Jones discusses the many functions that time plays in Chekhov's work and how the reader cannot begin to understand the characters and their journeys without viewing them in relation to the governing role time plays in their lives. The article focuses mainly on the 'superficial', one-dimensional and often ambiguous use of time by Chekhov's characters.

'Chekhov and Geography' by Ian M. Matley (1972:376), illustrates the predominant role geography plays in the shaping of the world of Chekhov's plays. The natural world, the geography of an area and the environment are argued to have a distinct influence on the temperament of his characters. Although geography and nature are indicators of space, this article focuses on a physical and not a metaphysical landscape. It also offers insight into Chekhov himself, who was believed to be a great environmentalist with a keen interest in cartography. As the metaphysical cannot be viewed separately from the physical, I address the concept of the actual landscape in my study and for that purpose Matley's work proved insightful.

In addition to the above-mentioned resources, I found the works of the theatre phenomenologist Bert O. States (1985) and the literary critics Leslie Kane (1984) and Martin Harries (2004) particularly useful. The critique of Harries served as foundation for my understanding of the theatre of the Avant-Garde, which was necessary for a comprehensive analysis of Foreman's work. The countless interviews with and articles by Foreman himself, as well as the website for the *Ontological-Hysteric Theatre* presented me with invaluable information that shaped my

perception of Foreman's work in relation to my research question. Kane's *The Language of Silence* (1984) was an important source in order to draw effective comparisons between the texts regarding the playwrights' use of language and silence. States's *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* (1985) offered insight into the concept of theatre phenomenology. In particular, States's explanation of the use and presence of symbols in the theatre assisted me in viewing the various symbols (present in the three plays) in a different light. States explains his argument regarding theatre symbols with reference to the dog in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: "the act of theatricalising it—putting it into an intentional space—neutralizes its objectivity and claims it as a likeness of a dog" (States 1985:35). This approach facilitated my research as I approached the reading of the texts through the Phenomenological principle of reduction as explained in chapter 1.

The following books and articles were useful resources as they offered insight as to the extent to which one could use scientific metaphors to analyse the literary/artistic. Furthermore, these studies support my thesis and serve to illustrate that some aspects of the research question have been considered in previous scholarship.

The book *No-thing is left to tell. Zen/Chaos Theory in the Dramatic Art of Samuel Beckett* (1999), by John Kundert-Gibbs, is one of the few sources that investigates and analyses the works of Samuel Beckett from a scientific and philosophical viewpoint. The hypotheses put forth in this book are structured around analyses of Beckett's *oeuvre* through the principles of chaos theory and Zen Buddhism. The format of the research is structured according to the lessons laid out in Eugen Herrigel's book *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1953). Kundert-Gibbs illustrates how Beckett's renewal of dramatic elements, such as narrative and action, can be viewed according to the worldview of Zen Buddhism and the scientific perspective of chaos theory "by which the world changes only through changes in our own means of seeing" (Davies, 2000:1074). Kundert-Gibbs argues that:

the Zen/Taoist contention that disorder, or chaos, deserves an important, positive place in the scheme of things is linked directly with the findings of chaos theory: chaos is not the opposite of order; rather it is “order’s precursor and partner.” In this complex interaction between order and disorder, we again find a direct link with the *Weltanschauung* expressed in Beckett’s drama: the plays are not a movement away from order to its opposite; they are, instead, an investigation of the richly complex, chaotic realm of life at the boundaries of order—life in the “real” world. [...] In his plays, as well as in Zen and chaos theory, it is life “at the edge” of the order-disorder paradigm that is being studied. (Kundert-Gibbs, 1999:50)

Even though this study focuses on a different scientific theory it supports my hypothesis that it is indeed viable to analyse a theatre text in relation to scientific philosophy.

Guy Wilkinson conducted a research study entitled *Godot and the New Physics* (2009). Wilkinson’s field of expertise is that of particle and nuclear physics and he uses the text of *Waiting for Godot* as a parable of the search for a new physics. The text only serves as a metaphor in the physicist’s quest to detect particles, like the Higgs boson, a hypothetical atomic particle whose existence is yet to be proved by physicists. Wilkinson does not offer an alternate reading of Beckett’s play, but the metaphorical use of the element of waiting (for an experiment to succeed) and the aloofness of Godot (the near-impossible detection of the Higgs boson particle) illustrates the universal quality of Beckett’s text. However, this metaphoric parallel is the extent to which Wilkinson’s study references *Waiting for Godot*, as his paper is highly scientific in nature and based on intricate mathematical theorems and formulae.

Virginia Woolf’s *oeuvre* has been the subject of numerous studies that illustrate how Woolf’s own understanding and awareness of space-time and relativity are interwoven within her work. Paul Brown (2009) analyses her 1927 novel *To the Lighthouse* through the perspectives of relativity, quantum physics and consciousness. He uses the character of Mrs. Ramsay as the focal point for his research and explains how this character embodies characteristics of the special and general theories of relativity. According to Brown, Mrs. Ramsay’s actions can be

equated to the wave-particle dualities of light, as her being moves between reality and objectivity and an acute consciousness of her environment. Although this case study is based on a novel, Brown explains the various laws of science that pertain to my study and presents insight into how one can read a text from a different point of view and specifically, how the philosophical insights offered by the theory of relativity can be incorporated into the reading of a text.

A contrasting viewpoint to Brown's is that of Tobin Nellhaus, who investigates the possibility of the existence of valid parallels between science and theatre through a historiographical study. His research is conducted through an anti-positivist point of view and focuses on the works of Michal Kobialka and Rosemarie Bank as case studies. Kobialka analyses the history of the medieval liturgical trope *Quem quaeritis* by means of quantum mechanics and Bank traces the historiography of Jacksonian⁹ theatre through the metaphorical elements offered by the world of quantum mechanics. Bank and Kobialka make use of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle in their respective studies.¹⁰ According to Nellhaus, Bank and Kobialka use the Heisenberg uncertainty principle to motivate and support the idea:

that the observer changes and determines what is observed [and that] historians do not deal with "facts," but shape the evidence and arrange it into stories in accordance with the historian's own understandings. (Nellhaus, 1993:509)

Nellhaus's concern is that this has serious implications for the concept of reality and that both authors use a scientific means of analysis in order to "obtain the sonority of science" (1993: 512). He argues that cultural and historical studies have been overshadowed by a research culture dominated by mechanistic models (which are based on physics), and requests the deposition of such a culture, especially when this model is used to lend credibility and gravitas to a study. Nellhaus's thesis is that one

⁹ Jacksonian theatre refers to theatre in the time of the Jacksonian American 'clean living movement' from 1830-1860, which promoted abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and prostitution.

¹⁰ The Heisenberg uncertainty principle explains how one can never measure the position and speed of a subatomic particle at the same time, for as soon as its position is established its velocity changes, and vice versa.

should study historiography through realism, for “when theories change, the world of knowledge changes, and with it sometimes social reality—but not reality *in toto*” (Nellhaus, 1993:519). In the ensuing chapters of this thesis, I hope to illustrate the bond that links the realities of scientific philosophy, the metaphysical and theatrical worlds.

Florence Falk reviews Foreman’s work in order to illustrate how the margins between the arts and sciences are continually being shrunk by avant-garde theatre practitioners who approach the traditional concepts of narrative, character and structure with a sense of liberation and experimentation. “Richard Foreman more than just metaphorically accedes to the role of modern physics in his theatre. Indeed, the structure of Foreman's plays - particularly *Particle Theory*, written in 1972 - has been influenced by several principles central to modern physics” (Falk, 1977:395). Falk’s research presented an excellent underpinning for my own questioning into the *oeuvre* of Foreman and aided my analysis of *Bad Boy Nietzsche*.

A thesis that further supports my reasoning is that of Gautam Dasgupta. He analyses the theatrical works of Richard Foreman and Robert Wilson (whose works radically break with the concept of ‘traditional’ theatre) in a paper entitled ‘From Science to Theatre: Dramas of Speculative Thought’ (1985). Dasgupta’s research is based on the premise that science and theatre cannot be viewed as separate entities, for both seek to understand the nature of the world. This view is in accordance with the argument expressed in my own study. He suggests:

that it might help us understand from the dominant perspective of scientific development through the ages what brought about the emergence of certain styles of drama at given historical periods. We may then, at one stroke, be able to overcome the traditional bias against the unification of science and theatre, a deeply ingrained prejudice that continues unabated not only in the minds of the general public but on the part of artists and scholars alike. (1985: 238)

Through his study, Dasgupta illustrates how Foreman incorporates atomized spatial configuration, Cartesian coordinates, kinematics and algebraic equations in the

creation of his works and suggests that Foreman's "theatre is a black hole into which is poured the density of his thought-energies" (Dasgupta, 1985:241). He argues that Wilson's spectacles are visual examples of the blurring of time and space, and therefore they illustrate the worldview of quantum mechanics through the simultaneous representation of multiple realities. Dasgupta's conclusive plea is that ideas are to be shared and that "the most adventurous artists incorporate the advanced thought of their times into their work" (Dasgupta, 1985:246). My hope is that my study will illustrate to what extent Chekhov, Beckett and Foreman have incorporated, or perhaps more accurately been influenced by, "the advanced [scientific] thought of their times", whether consciously or unconsciously.

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CHAPTER 3

DRAMATIC ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I will draw comparisons between the three texts mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, which serve as the case studies for the research, namely, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Bad Boy Nietzsche*. The comparison will rest on the similarities that exist between the texts in terms of various dramatic principles such as language, genre and structure. Furthermore, the use of silence, the manifestation of Existentialism and the act of waiting will be explored to illustrate how *zeitgeist* has a direct influence on art and how the work of Chekhov laid much of the foundation for the development of twentieth-century drama, on which Beckett and Foreman build their *oeuvres*.

Ultimately, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the three texts in question and to offer some conventional dramatic analysis of the texts. Furthermore, it introduces the reader to the main qualities and characteristics of the *zeitgeist* of the period during which the three plays were written. This analysis is hugely important as it serves as the foundation for the research to follow: of how twentieth-century drama texts have changed in their treatment of time, space and character against the background of changes in scientific thought.

THE USE OF SILENCE

One of the first elements that characterises twentieth-century drama is the utilization of silence as an active feature in the dialogue between characters and the idea that silence can carry as much weight as the spoken word. This development was not one that came about by chance, for it stems from a worldview that was dramatically shifting on all terrains. Modernity came at a costly price. Through the ages the human race has depended on its ability to be violent in order to progress. But in the

twentieth-century, it was as if man had finally exchanged his humanity for “political inhumanity” (Kane, 1984:15). ‘Political inhumanity’ is a term used by Leslie Kane to describe events such as the barbaric trench war of 1914-1918 and the Holocaust.

For the first time in the history of civilisation, for periods during the twentieth-century, most parts of the world were at war. This meant that the number of lives affected by war (be it directly or indirectly) rose proportionally. Coupled with this the increased power of news reporting from the end of the nineteenth-century was startling as improvements in the technology of the time allowed for the graphic reporting of news from the front as well as the horrors of genocide by means of photographic images, film reels and the radio. The world had to process political and personal loss on a global scale. Society was shocked to its core and only silence could accurately describe its response to the inhumane deeds with which it was faced.

[T]he clearly traceable pattern of the retreat from the word is, in [George] Steiner’s opinion toward progressive untranslatability because of an unbridgeable chasm between scientific and psychological reality and poetic statement. Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud, Einstein, the Industrial Revolution and the improved technology which it precipitated, challenged every established view of God, human nature, social organisation and the physical universe. Specifically, the space-time continuum, the atomic structure of all matter, the wave-like particle state of energy – all illustrate that in cardinal respects reality now begins outside verbal language. (Kane, 1984:21)

Kane agrees with Steiner that the developments made in the worlds of science, psychology and philosophy had a direct influence on the way in which people were able to communicate their experiences. The discovery of the theory of relativity, together with the viewing of the world in terms of quanta¹¹, required a new perspective on perceived reality. A worldview that is in agreement with modern physics has to treat reality, and all that is associated with it, as ‘relative.’

This implies that reality is relative to a specific observer and lays doubt on the concept of a shared or collective reality. The general theory of relativity teaches us

¹¹ Quanta are ‘energy packets’, which describe the way in which heat radiates energy.

that there is no such thing as absolute time. Isaac Newton explained that absolute time is time that “by its own nature flows uniformly, without regard to anything external” (Capra, 1982:63). Aristotle believed in absolute time and Newton described the concept, but the theory of relativity has proven them both wrong, for time cannot operate separately from or independently of space.

Therefore, in a world in which time is relative, what one observer recognises as reality may differ greatly from another’s view, but to each observer his perception is as valid as the other’s. This casts doubt on the idea of one ultimate truth. The lack of a shared belief system instils uncertainty within a society. It is not surprising that a world reigned over by science and scientific contradiction was losing its familiar shape and structure. One such scientific contradiction is the fact that quantum matter can be seen as both a particle and a wave. It was in this changing world that events, for which words could find no explanation, were occurring in alarmingly rapid succession.

This might explain why some forms of twentieth-century drama, had to turn to silence in order to communicate the unspeakable. In *The Cherry Orchard* (Chekhov, 1962[1904]), the playwright calls for 33 moments of pause and 4 points of silence. There are also 318 points in the text where Chekhov included the ellipse as part of the characters’ dialogues. Beckett (1981[1954]) makes use of the ellipse 185 times during the course of *Waiting for Godot*. In Act I, alone, there are (according to Beckett) 53 suggestions to pause and 56 moments of silence are to be observed, and in Act II the same trend can be noticed with 31 indications of pause and 62 moments of silence.

This use of silence however, stands in stark contrast to the visual and aural spectacles that Foreman creates. In the play *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, there is no reference made to pauses or silences and the ellipse occurs only 10 times within the script. In an effort to visualise and stage consciousness, silence is abolished and drowned with ‘noise’ and the viewer is bombarded with sound, music and text. It is as if Foreman wishes to drown out the possibility of silence through the use of buzzers, bells,

voice-overs and, in *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, continuous loops of sound that alter between militaristic and childlike music.

Perhaps the increased need for the use of silences and pauses from *The Cherry Orchard* (written in 1903), to *Waiting for Godot* (which premiered in 1953), is an indication of the mounting chaos of the first fifty years of the twentieth-century, whereas *Bad Boy Nietzsche* (first performed in 2000) responds to this chaos by creating a reverberating soundtrack for humanity's consciousness which holds no place for silence as it is filled with (amongst other things) hysteria, terror, fear of death, sexuality and self-assessment.

Chekhov was born in 1860 and lived in a tumultuous era of Russian history. In 1861, Tsar Alexander II published a manifesto announcing the reform of serfdom, which was followed by governmental reforms in 1864. Although he was known as 'Tsar Liberator,' Alexander II was assassinated in 1881 by revolutionaries. During the reigns of Alexander III and his son Nicholas II, Russia asserted a violent foreign policy to increase its borders, and relied on fierce policing on the home front to uphold the status quo. Marxist ideas inspired violent strikes and the spirit of rebellion spread through Russia, leading to the revolution of 1905. The Russia into which Chekhov was born changed dramatically on political and social grounds during his lifetime, and this change is felt and reflected throughout his *oeuvre*.

Born in 1906, Beckett, too, grew up in and witnessed the changing of a familiar world. The carnage of the trench war in WWI and the Holocaust and detonation of two atomic bombs in WWII (the most prominent horrors of this war) are examples of the inexpressible turmoil that society had to process during this time. Man's vocabulary was inadequate to articulate these horrors. Instead of inventing new words, Beckett reverted to silence.

In contrast to this, Foreman (who has lived through the Cold War; Vietnam; the Gulf War and the American war on terror) views himself as a spectator who does not respond to what is happening in society (Foreman & Schechner, 2002:115) and has no qualms to invent new words or syntax to describe the explorations of his own

mind. Foreman's *Bad Boy Nietzsche* is a cacophony of noise where silence only reigns before the curtain rises. It is the extreme example of Jean-Louis Barrault's statement that "theatre is interrupted silence" (Lutterbie, 1988:473).

The character of Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* is an excellent example of the reversion to silence. With his refusal and later his inability to speak, Lucky embodies silence. When he eventually does speak, it is a formless and disturbing ramble that highlights man's failure to express what he experiences. It is interesting to note that, in the first section of his speech, Lucky refers to the idea of divine aphasia, which is the inability to talk. He connects this idea to the concept of a silent god, but he could also be commenting on his own aphasia. Lucky did not always experience aphasia; according to Pozzo's testimony, it was Lucky who taught him about the beauty of life:

Guess who taught me all these beautiful things. (Pause. Points to Lucky.)¹² My Lucky! But for him all my thoughts, all my feelings, would have been of common things. (Beckett, 1981[1954]:33)

He even used to think very prettily once, I could listen to him for hours. (Beckett, 1981[1954]:39)

The structure of Lucky's thinking indicates a gradual deterioration of mind, which increases towards the end of his monologue and climaxes in Act II with his submission into absolute aphasia.

The speech has three distinct parts. Parts I and II are discrete units, each with its own recognizable syntax. Part III lacks syntax, has many more aphasiac interjections than the first two parts, and is richer in poetic imagery connotative of death, decline and pathos. (Atkins, 1967:426)

It is through this speech that the playwright is able to comment on the absurdity of a world ravaged by two world wars. The speech emphasises all the themes of the play and according to Anselm Atkins, leaves the reader with the knowledge that the existence of god (Part I), man (Part II) and the world (Part III) are fated to

¹² In order to differentiate between dialogue and stage directions in the quoted texts, the dialogue will be placed in italics throughout the thesis.

disintegrate and finally terminate. The thematic importance of this speech is echoed when Lucky returns and remains silent in Act II. Silence should be seen as unspoken words of the text, and is therefore as important as the verbal dialogue that demands our attention. When the subtext of silence starts to draw our awareness with the same force as the subtext of the character's verbal dialogue, then, I would suggest, it is worth investigating.

When Beckett directed *Waiting for Godot* in 1975 at the Schiller Theatre in Berlin, he introduced "fixed points of waiting", which he termed *Wartenstellen*. These points were not specified within the written text, but were indicated by Beckett in his director's notebook. As a director, Beckett used the *Wartenstellen* to accentuate the action and to emphasise the thematic concerns of the play.

There are fixed points of waiting, where everything stands completely still, where silence threatens to swallow everything up. Then the action starts again. [...] These moments, in which everything stopped and the stage presented a tableau frozen in time, were introduced at the beginning and end of each act and at four further points within each of the acts. (Bradby, 2003:116)

To achieve this, Beckett wanted his actors to freeze completely, not in a metaphorical sense but in a metaphysical sense. In his book, *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard writes that "immensity is within ourselves ... as soon as we become motionless, we are elsewhere; we are dreaming in a world that is immense. Indeed, immensity is the movement of motionless man" (cited in States, 1988:456). The aim of Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric productions is to give shape to this dream world described by Bachelard in order to comprehend the nature of being. Through the *Wartenstellen*, Beckett intended to create a moment in which the actors ceased to be by melting into the landscape and emerging from it again. The effect of these points was to create hallowed moments of absolute silence and stillness within the play, moments in which nothing happened.

It is evident in all three plays that the use of silence does not merely indicate a hiatus or impasse of the spoken word. We witness the passing of time in its most

tangible form, because during the moment of silence the illusion that we can control time is created.

What happens in a Chekhov silence is that the tactile world, the visible world, quietly encroaches on the human. Suddenly, you can hear the ticking of the objects and the ceaseless flow of future into past: the world is no longer covered by conversation ... silence is the same warfare by other means. But when stage conversation is filled with emptiness, silence, when it falls will be the "negative" equivalent of this emptiness. (States, 1985:74)

This is because the act of silence creates anticipation that something will follow. We wait with bated breath for the silence to dismantle, our heartbeats indicating the passing of time. Nothing happens and then something does, breaking the silence and allowing time to flow again. How the authors choose to make use of silence is one of the aspects that make the plays so interesting. In her book, *The Language of Silence*, Leslie Kane explores the diversity and complexity of silence with the following passage:

The dumb silence of apathy, the sober silence of solemnity, the fertile silence of awareness, the active silence of perception, the baffled silence of confusion, the uneasy silence of impasse, the muzzled silence of outrage, the expectant silence of waiting, the reproachful silence of censure, the tacit silence of approval, the vituperative silence of accusation, the eloquent silence of awe, the unnerving silence of menace, the peaceful silence of communion, and the irrevocable silence of death illustrate by their unspoken response to speech that experiences exist for which we lack the word. (Kane, 1984:15)

Kane implies that the presence of silence is not an indicator of emptiness. What is most important is not the act of silence, but what is communicated through the silence or the constant breaking of the silence (in Foreman's work). The reader needs to analyse these moments in terms of the characters' motivation to remain silent and the manner in which they choose to do so, as loaded silence carries a strong communicative force.

THE CONCEPT OF WAITING

In *Waiting for Godot*, *The Cherry Orchard* and to a much lesser degree *Bad Boy Nietzsche*; waiting becomes the action of silence. Waiting is not an unfamiliar idea to human beings as it forms an integral part of our daily lives. It is an ever-present shadow that serves to remind us, at times, of our own mortality:

Waiting, to the ancients, signified not only the projection of human life onto larger meanings and distant purposes, but also correlated one's personal existence with the divine powers sustaining the universe. (Corcoran, 1989:509)

'To wait' is a state of being, like the concepts of time and space, which unavoidably influence our lives on some level. Even if we are fortunate enough not to have to wait for news from an auction or for a man called Godot, we are all subjected to the act of waiting due to the transient nature of our lives, because our ultimate destiny is to die. This holds true for the characters in all three plays. They are all waiting and while they wait they are reminded of the fact that according to Lucky in Act I of *Waiting for Godot*, "man in brief in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation is seen to waste and pine waste and pine" (Beckett, 1981[1954]:43). The title of the play *Waiting for Godot* is itself an indication of the importance that waiting will have in the play. In fact, the idea of waiting is the premise on which the whole play is based.

In Act II as in Act I, Vladimir and Estragon wait by the tree for Godot to arrive. They have nothing else to do, but to wait.

VLADIMIR: *That passed the time.*
ESTRAGON: *It would have passed in any case.*
VLADIMIR: *Yes, but not so rapidly.*
Pause.
ESTRAGON: *What do we do now?*
VLADIMIR: *I don't know.*
ESTRAGON: *Let's go.*
VLADIMIR: *We can't.*
ESTRAGON: *Why not?*
VLADIMIR: *We're waiting for Godot.*

ESTRAGON: (despairingly). *Ah!* (Beckett 1981[1954]:48)

Even though the action of waiting suggests inactivity, it is a verb which semantically and immediately implies action of some kind. Waiting is thus active and inactive, somewhat like atomic matter which is at rest whilst in motion. This duality can be explained by quantum mechanics, which indicates that particles may at times behave like waves, and waves like particles. The concept of duality is part of the natural order of our universe and was proven by Einstein in the early twentieth-century when he explained the photoelectric effect by means of wave/particle duality. "Dualities like this—situations in which two very different theories accurately describe the same phenomenon—are consistent with model-dependent realism" (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2010:58). It is therefore not surprising that in our everyday lives this duality can be observed through something as commonplace as waiting.

In *Waiting for Godot*, the action of waiting is weighed down with frustration because Vladimir and Estragon have to wait for Godot and that is why they cannot do anything else. The frustration offered by waiting is particularly seen through the character Estragon. Of the pair, he is the one who needs constant reminding that they are waiting for Godot, as well as constant consolation that things will improve. Vladimir has to protect, feed and appease Estragon, who tends to react to their situation in a childish manner. It is his childlike temperament that gives rise to his feelings of irritation and dissatisfaction with their endless occupation of waiting.

In *The Cherry Orchard*, the characters are overwhelmed and debilitated by their situation, to such an extent, that it would be easier for them to continue waiting in order for someone else to decide their fate. To actively wait is to kill time, but to be waiting is to be expectant, looking ahead into the future. Therefore it is also a strong indicator that there is hope. To continue to wait is to continue to hope, to believe that something will eventually happen, be it in the immediate, near or distant future. Vladimir and Estragon continue to be expectant of the unlikely arrival

of Godot, and Madame Ranevsky continues to wait in hope that her estate will be saved. Likewise, the character Nietzsche awaits salvation from his impending madness and the suffering he endures because of his nervous breakdown. The concept of waiting forms the thematic foundation for the existential nature of all three plays.

Waiting is a meek posture compared to the ethical heroism of spontaneous existential freedom. One imagines that waiting, for Sartre, would be worse than hell: a life of reflexive bad faith, self-denial and unfreedom. Similarly, Heidegger contrasts the “complacency of the everyday” with authentic “ek-sistence,” the “ek-static” life beyond the self. Yet the idea of waiting as antipathetic—a repression of will, suppression of action and postponement of gratification—is not simply a philosophical notion. (Corcoran, 1989:516)

By stating that waiting “is not simply a philosophical notion”, Corcoran tries to emphasise the point that although waiting might be perceived as inactive it is still an action which requires commitment and discipline. The idea of ‘unfreedom’ holds true for the situation in which the characters of *The Cherry Orchard*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Bad Boy Nietzsche* find themselves. According to the philosopher and phenomenologist Georg Hegel, the substance and truth of the spirit lies in freedom (Hegel, 1953:22). The characters’ inability to recognise and comprehend the truth of their situation keeps them from being free. This, in turn, deters them from understanding the truth about themselves. They are caught in a pattern that will continue to repeat itself. The characters have nothing to do but wait, and this is what they do for most of the duration of the plays. To break the monotony, they engage in conversations or actions that are in essence meaningless and ineffectual.

For the fallen gentry, represented by the characters of *The Cherry Orchard*, the act of waiting offers some form of security in their uncertain lives; it gives them an occupation of sorts. The paradox of the security that waiting presents, according to Corcoran, is that it becomes much like a lifelong prison sentence. The existentialist idea that “existence precedes essence” (Vowles, 1953:215) can be identified here. If the characters are fated to wait, then attention must be paid to the manner in which they wait. The characters in *The Cherry Orchard* choose to drink tea, play guitar,

invest in romantic relationships that will never be realised, reminisce about their innocent childhoods, philosophise about the future or arrange musicians for a dance in order to forget that they are actually waiting. Entrapped in a false sense of security and unable to do anything about their fate, the characters start to embody behaviour such as:

a concentration upon immediate events and loss of any long-term perspectives; rapid emotional oscillation swinging from elation to depression; and a reversal of the serious and trivial, whereby apparently minor events would be attributed with more significance than ones of greater consequence. (Corcoran, 1989:515)

In *The Cherry Orchard*, these distinctive traits identified by Corcoran can be seen in Act II, when Charlotta Ivanova's state of melancholy regarding her unknown heritage is underscored by Yephikhodov and Dunyasha's playful bickering. In Act III, Charlotta shows the group frivolous card games and magic tricks while Madame Ranevsky agonises about the outcome of the auction. One of the best examples is the following scene towards the end of Act III, between Madame Ranevsky and Trofimov:

RANEVSKY: *I am sinking with it to the very bottom, but I love that stone, and I cannot live without it. (Pressing Trofimov's hand) Don't think hardly, Petya, don't say anything to me, say nothing...*

TROFIMOV: *(Through tears) Forgive my frankness, for the love of God; but he has fleeced you.*

RANEVSKY: *No, no, no, you must not say such things! (Covering her ears.)*

TROFIMOV: *But he's a blackguard, you alone don't realise it! He's a pretty blackguard, a nonentity....*

RANEVSKY: *(Angry, but restrained) You're twenty-six or twenty-seven, but you're still a schoolboy in the second form!*

TROFIMOV: *All right!*

RANEVSKY: *You should be a man, at your age you should understand those who love. And you yourself should love... you should be falling in love! (Angry) Yes, you should! And there's no purity in you, you are just a prude, a ridiculous freak, a monster...*

TROFIMOV: *(In horror) What is she saying!*

- RANEVSKY:** *"I am above love!" You are not above love, but simply as our Fiers puts it, a nyedotyopa. At your age, not to have a mistress!...*
- TROFIMOV:** *(In horror) It's terrible! What is she saying? (Goes quickly up into the drawing-room, clutching his head) It's terrible... I can't, I am going for good... (Exit, but returns at once) All is over between us! (Exit.)*
- RANEVSKY:** *(Shouts after him) Petya, wait! You funny boy, I said it all in fun! Petya! (Chekhov, 1962[1904]:36).*

The "reversal of the serious and trivial" is best seen through Madame Ranevsky's exclamation at the end of the scene: *"Petya, wait! You funny boy, I said it all in fun"*. This stands in stark contrast with her serious and judgemental outcry a moment before: *"there's no purity in you, you are just a prude, a ridiculous freak, a monster [...]"*. This scene illustrates the "rapid emotional oscillation" mentioned by Paul Corcoran, as it swings from empathetic camaraderie, in which the characters bare their souls to one another, to patronising insults and light-hearted teasing.

The time it took Chekhov to write *The Cherry Orchard* was laboriously long and, during that period, Chekhov too was waiting. Suffering from tuberculosis, he knew he was dying, and his failing health and strength consumed all of his focus. His letters to his wife, friends and family bear witness to his suffering. Yet, amidst his ill health, he wrote to Stanislavsky's wife: *"What has emerged from me is not a drame [sic] but a comedy; in certain places even a farce"* (Valency, 1969:262). Although the waiting experienced by Chekhov was of a far graver nature than that suffered by his characters, it is evident that his own 'unfreedom' infused the lives of his characters.

Although the world of Foreman's plays is inhabited by beings that "represent certain states of mind or currents of thought circulating through consciousness" (Rabkin, 1999: 41) rather than characters, Satre's idea of 'unfreedom' can be observed, specifically through the musings of the 'character' Nietzsche.

NIETZSCHE: *Let's face it. Nobody likes being chained to the wall by somebody else's imagination. Please! Wipe me out!* (Foreman, 2007:10)

Nietzsche is reminded of his unfreedom through three 'characters' who all embody an aspect of that which he is lacking or lusting after. The Child, The Dangerous Man and The Beautiful Woman contemplate and misunderstand all that Nietzsche utters, and thus through them, Nietzsche is tormented, mocked and questioned and further imprisoned in his own madness.

THE USE OF LANGUAGE

If one studies the structure and use of language in *The Cherry Orchard* according to the following list of criteria, created by the literary critic Leslie Kane, it becomes clear to what extent the dramatic works (of the rest of the twentieth-century) have been influenced by Chekhov's manipulation of the spoken word.

1. Disjunctive, indirect speech
2. Colloquial dialogue
3. Negation
4. Repetition and echoing
5. Pauses
6. Counterpointing through overstatement and understatement
7. Silent scenes
8. Mute characters
9. Silence as a metaphor for isolation
10. Silence as a metaphor for evanescence
11. Silence of the playwright

(Kane, 1984:54)

Disconnected dialogues occur on numerous occasions in *The Cherry Orchard*; for example, on their arrival, Charlotta shares with Pishchik that her dog eats nuts, but his reply could be to her, or to Gaev who is complaining about the train's delay. Dunyasha confides in Anya about the marriage proposal she received from Yepikhodov, but Anya responds by mumbling about her lack of hair accessories and

need for sleep. All the characters use language in an informal manner in order to establish and maintain a conversational tone throughout the play.

The play is full of contradictions or negations, which take place within the dialogue as well as in the characters' actions. Trofimov spends his time in conversation, philosophising about the need for people to work and, as a result, ends up doing nothing. Madame Ranevsky talks about saving her beloved orchard, but never does anything productive in order to rectify the situation. At the end of Act IV, Lopakhin agrees to ask Varya for her hand in marriage, but instead he talks to her about the weather. A classic case to show Chekhov's use of repetition and echoing to create mood, can be found in the following extract from Act II:

RANEVSKY: *You want giants... They are all right in fairytales, but out of fairytales they are a horror. (Pensively) There goes Yepikhodov.*
ANYA: *(Pensively) There goes Yepikhodov*
GAYEV: *The sun has set. (Chekhov, 1962[1904]:27)*

In *The Cherry Orchard* there are no mute characters as such, but Madame Ranevsky's brother Gaev and the servant Fiers might be viewed as if they were mute. Their muted, peripheral status can be ascribed to the fact that most of the characters do not listen to what they say:

PISHCHIK: *Let me see them, please.... (Taking the pills, turns them out into the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them into his mouth, and drinks some kvass) There!*
RANEVSKY: *(In alarm) You must be mad!*
PISHCHIK: *I've taken them all.*
LOPAKHIN: *What an appetite! (All laugh.)*
FIERS: *The gentleman paid us a visit here in Easter week, and he ate a whole pailful of cucumbers. (Muttering.)*
RANEVSKY: *What's he saying?*
VARYA: *He's been muttering like that for the last three years. We've got accustomed to it. (Chekhov, 1962[1904]:13)*

Anya instructs her uncle Gaev in Act I to be still, which sums up how the characters perceive him: they would find it easier to tolerate him if he was silent. Gaev's inability to express himself escalates throughout the play and reaches a climatic point at the end of Act IV, when he mutes himself:

GAEV: *My friends, my kind dear friends! Leaving this house for ever, can I pass over in silence, can I restrain myself from expressing at parting those feelings which fill now my whole being-*
ANYA: (imploringly) *Uncle!*
VARYA: *Uncle dear, please don't.*
GAEV: (dejectedly) *I double the yellow into the middle pocket! ...I am silent... (Chekhov, 1962[1904]:51)*

Chekhov uses silence to act as a metaphor for the isolation and evanescence experienced by his characters. The characters have to face the dawning of a new age in the social structure of Russia. This new age predicts the end of a familiar life. The characters witness and partake in their own demise by remaining silent and by evoking stories from their past. They consciously experience their inability to act and this leads to a feeling of depression and helplessness which emphasizes the frailty of their mortality. They are unable to live a life in the new Russia and so, grasping onto their pasts, they are isolated wanderers who do not belong anywhere. Chekhov explained to Stanislavsky that he strived to present "life as it is" (Gilman, 1995:203) and therefore his characters are manifestations of the Russian *zeitgeist* of the late nineteenth-century. His characters illustrate the same tendencies as the fictional beings created by his fellow countrymen, Tolstoy, Gorky and Dostoyevsky – torn by two ideals to such an extent that all potential action is paralysed.

Kane specifically identifies these features in the language usage of the works of Chekhov, but it is possible to detect the presence of these elements within the texts *Waiting for Godot* and *Bad Boy Nietzsche* too. The dialogues between Vladimir and Estragon are often disconnected as the characters are inclined to speak past one another instead of with one another:

ESTRAGON: *Abel! Abel!*
POZZO: *Help!*
ESTRAGON: *Got it in one!*
VLADIMIR: *I begin to weary of this motif.*
ESTRAGON: *Perhaps the other is called Cain. Cain! Cain!*
POZZO: *Help!*
ESTRAGON: *He's all humanity. (Silence.) Look at the little cloud.*
VLADIMIR: *(raising his eyes). Where?*
ESTRAGON: *There. In the zenith.*
VLADIMIR: *Well? (Pause.) What is there so wonderful about it?*
 Silence.
ESTRAGON: *Let's pass on now to something else, do you mind? (Beckett, 1981[1954]:83)*

Foreman's texts should be seen as information about being rather than character lines. Because of this phenomenological quality of the text and the lack of narrative, the dialogue between characters tends to be detached as seen in the following extract. This extract might be symbolic of Friedrich Nietzsche's witnessing the beating of a horse in Turin, which resulted in his nervous breakdown:

THE CHILD: *(lifting a whip). You've never been to China, you bad bad bad boy.*
NIETZSCHE: *Whip me, sir, and you whip my horse. (She whips) Whip my horse, sir – and I, also, suffer those same blows. Remember – I'll pay you very well.*
THE CHILD: *(Backing away; singing) Jews in my bread... (Falls over a horse, cries out, and then recovers) I have wonderful – Jews in my bread.*
THE DANGEROUS MAN: *This does not look like China, you crazy man!*
NIETZSCHE: *Maybe not...but – I'm on my way. (Foreman, 2007: 23)*

Vladimir and Estragon's language usage is informal and colloquial throughout the play, in contrast with the manner in which Pozzo uses language. His is a good example of speech that is riddled with overstatements and understatements. The contrasting manner in which the characters in *Waiting for Godot* use language is especially evident in the following extract:

VLADIMIR: *You want to get rid of him?*
POZZO: *He imagines that when I see how well he carries I'll be tempted to keep him on in that capacity.*
ESTRAGON: *You've had enough of him?*
POZZO: *In reality he carries like a pig. It's not his job.*
VLADIMIR: *You want to get rid of him?*
POZZO: *He imagines that when I see him indefatigable I'll regret my decision. Such is his miserable scheme. As though I were short of slaves! (All three look at Lucky.) Atlas, son of Jupiter! (Silence.) Well, that's that, I think. Anything else?*
VLADIMIR: *You want to get rid of him?*
POZZO: *Remark that I might just as well have been in his shoes and he in mine. If chance had not willed otherwise. To each one his due.*
VLADIMIR: *You waagerrim?*
POZZO: *I beg your pardon?*
VLADIMIR: *You want to get rid of him?*
POZZO: *I do. (Beckett, 1981[1954]:31)*

Throughout *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, the speech of the characters Nietzsche and The Beautiful Woman have a poetic and philosophical quality, partly because much of the text they speak is extracts from Nietzsche's own poems and letters which according to Foreman (2007:5) "reveal secret fears and obsessions":

My dear friend. After you discover me, you find me. The difficulty is now to lose me.

The divine art is flying – to great heights, from which one throws what is oppressive into the ocean, into the depths of the ocean.

The one thing necessary / is to keep pen in motion, over the paper. / The pen scribbles? / I say to hell with that. / And I say no / to belief systems of all kinds. / Am I condemned to scrawl? / Boldly I dip it into the well / and with thick strokes / my writing flows / so full and broad / So what if it's illegible / Who read the stuff I write?

This is contrasted by the often crude and insensitive use of language by The Dangerous Man and The Child. As "the balance between image and word is at the heart of Foreman's work" (Rabkin, 1999:15), the characters' verbal communication tends to be founded in reversals as their actions contradict the text in order to illustrate the complex, mental process of consciousness:

THE DANGEROUS MAN: (Stopping suddenly and whirling about suspiciously)
Why is everybody looking at me!
 (A lightning flash – all react with a scream and a whirl to protect their eyes, except Nietzsche, who cannot move.) *How the hell do I know what kind of movements to make next?*
 (A high Voice sings: “Hello!” The Dangerous Man and The Child go and thrust their chests against probes, and the dangerous man whispers: “Stage fright!” The Voice sings: “Hello!” and the Scholars hold a target in front of Nietzsche’s face.

ALL: (Shouting in fear) *Stage fright!*
 (Other Scholars spin the child and the dangerous man in a fast whirl. The Child cries out: “Help!” All are suddenly frozen.)

THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN: *Thought has now come to faraway China.*
 (The sign in front of Nietzsche switches to a kabbalistic sign.) *Thought is now upside down, of course – (Another flash of light startles everyone. The Voice sings: “Hello!” – on the other side of the world – (Nietzsche moans as the sign reverses to the target. The others gently wave their arms like slow-flying vultures.) – something wiped out – immense – where death rules things.*

NIETZSCHE: (Peeking out from behind the target) *This does not mean that death rules things.*
 (The scholars detach Nietzsche from his tent of sticks.)

THE DANGEROUS MAN: *Death? I better look that up in my Chinese dictionary. But in the meantime, let’s have drinks! Drinks for everybody!*
 (Foreman, 2007:25)

The above extract also illustrates the elements of repetition and echoing which occur throughout the play. Foreman uses The Voice (a pre-recorded voice-over) as a tool to interfere, direct and interject in the action of the play, much like a *Deus ex Machina*.

In *Waiting for Godot*, the idea of negation is seen at the end of both acts: they agree to go, but do not move. The strong poetic quality of the text can be ascribed to the extensive use of repetition and echoing in their ‘canters’:

ESTRAGON: *Then adieu.*
POZZO: *Adieu.*
VLADIMIR: *Adieu.*
POZZO: *Adieu.*
 Silence. No one moves.

VLADIMIR: *Adieu.*
POZZO: *Adieu.*
ESTRAGON: *Adieu.*
 Silence.
POZZO: *And thank you.*
VLADIMIR: *Thank you.*
POZZO: *Not at all.*
ESTRAGON: *Yes yes.*
POZZO: *No no.*
VLADIMIR: *Yes yes.*
ESTRAGON: *No no.*
 Silence.
POZZO: *I don't seem to be able . . . (long hesitation) . . . to depart.*
ESTRAGON: *Such is life. (Beckett, 1981[1954]:46)*

I have already mentioned Beckett's frequent use of pauses and silences within the text as well as the absence of pauses and silences in Foreman's text. In *Waiting for Godot*, Lucky is one of the best known mute characters ever to cross a Western stage. Foreman also makes use of the mute character identified in Kane's list. In *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, there are four Scholars who randomly fill the space, act as stage hands, assist and hinder Nietzsche and contribute as figures in the overcrowded landscape of Nietzsche's madness.

Throughout *Waiting for Godot*, the characters experience the silence of isolation and evanescence:

POZZO: (suddenly furious.) *Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Calmer.) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (He jerks the rope.) On! Exeunt Pozzo and Lucky. Silence. Vladimir goes towards Estragon, contemplates him a moment, then shakes him awake.*
ESTRAGON: (wild gestures, incoherent words. Finally.) *Why will you never let me sleep?*
VLADIMIR: *I felt lonely.*
ESTRAGON: *I was dreaming I was happy.*
 ...
ESTRAGON: *Let's go. We can't. Ah! (Pause.) Are you sure it wasn't him?*
VLADIMIR: *Who?*

ESTRAGON: *Godot.*

VLADIMIR: *But who?*

ESTRAGON: *Pozzo.*

VLADIMIR: *Not at all! (Less sure.) Not at all! (Still less sure.) Not at all!*

ESTRAGON: *I suppose I might as well get up. (He gets up painfully.) Ow! Didi!*

VLADIMIR: *I don't know what to think any more.*

ESTRAGON: *My feet! (He sits down again and tries to take off his boots.) Help me!*

VLADIMIR: *Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? (Estragon, having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again. Vladimir looks at him.) He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (Pause.) Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (He listens.) But habit is a great deadener. (He looks again at Estragon.) At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (Pause.) I can't go on! (Pause.) What have I said? (Beckett, 1981[1954]:89)*

The last two extracts serve to illustrate how the characters voice their concern with the transitory nature of their frail existence. It appears as if Pozzo has made peace with his fate of evanescence, but Vladimir and Estragon still need each other to make their isolated lives somewhat bearable. The dream is the only place where Estragon experiences happiness, but Vladimir has to wake him from it in order to ward off his own loneliness.

Nietzsche's feverish attempts to scribble and write illustrate man's fear of being forgotten. His character symbolises the very core of isolation and evanescence. Through his self-destructive nature, inquisitiveness and madness, Nietzsche is isolated from the rest of the world and entrapped within his own consciousness, which is as doomed as his existence as he "is a man who sees the darkness, where other people think there is a light still shining" (Foreman, 2007:23).

THE CONCEPT OF GENRE

Beckett termed his play a 'tragicomedy' and even though Chekhov explicitly stated that *The Cherry Orchard* is a comedy one cannot fail to recognise the tragic elements within the play. Just so, *Bad Boy Nietzsche* dwells within the realms of both the tragic and the comic. The union between these vastly different genres occurs when the tragic becomes so tragic that it becomes somewhat absurd, and as a result turns comical. In life, some people tend to revert to laughter as a last resort or coping mechanism when faced with intense grief. It is through the tears that new perspective is found, which brings relief and with it mirth. An example of this duality is Gaev's comical and imaginary billiard game throughout the entire play, *The Cherry Orchard*, which stands in stark contrast to his nostalgic address to the bookcase in Act I:

- GAEV:** *And do you know, Luba, how old this case is? A week ago I took out the bottom drawer; I looked and saw figures burnt out in it. That case was made exactly a hundred years ago. What do you think of that? What? We could celebrate its jubilee. It hasn't a soul of its own, but still, say what you will, it's a fine bookcase.*
- PISHCHIK:** *(Astonished) A hundred years.... Think of that!*
- GAEV:** *Yes... it's a real thing. (Handling it) My dear and honoured case! I congratulate you on your existence, which has already for more than a hundred years been directed towards the bright ideals of good and justice; your silent call to productive labour has not grown less in the hundred years (Weeping) during which you have upheld virtue and faith in a better future to the generations of our race, educating us up to ideals of goodness and to the knowledge of a common consciousness.*
- (Pause.)*
- LOPAKHIN:** *Yes....*
- RANEVSKY:** *You're just the same as ever, Leon.*
- GAEV:** *(A little confused) Off the white on the right, into the corner pocket. Red ball goes into the middle pocket! (Chekhov 1962[1904]:13)*

Gaev's address to the bookcase underpins one of the thematic concerns of the play. His lament serves as a metaphor for the state of Russia and her people. In Gaev's mind, the bookcase has accomplished what his fellow countrymen are still striving

towards. The bookcase has achieved the very state of being which Trofimov urges everyone to aspire to: an existence in which labour, justice and freedom are seen as virtuous and noble qualities. Yet, the idea that he is talking to a bookcase is comical. It emphasises his inability to relate to those around him, resulting in his turn towards an imaginary world where billiards are always being played. In retrospect he calls this speech '*stupid,*' but in the moment of deliverance he is completely earnest.

In *Waiting for Godot*, an example of this duality is the arrival of Pozzo and Lucky in Act I. Vladimir and Estragon are distressed and distraught about the heavy burden Lucky has to carry as well as his piteous and tragic physical condition. They attempt to ask Pozzo why Lucky does not put down his bags and Pozzo's inability to answer them directly gives rise to the comical. Another example of the duality of tragicomedy is Didi and Gogo's attempt to hang themselves with Gogo's belt at the end of Act II. The belt breaks and Gogo is left, buffoon-like, with his pants crumpled around his ankles. Fundamentally, this is tragic as it is the second time we see the pair contemplate suicide. They have become so despondent with their shared fate that no life seems a better option than a life lived in waiting. However, we cannot help but smile at their pathetic and unsuccessful attempts to end their lives.

In *Bad Boy Nietzsche* the presence of stuffed toy horses is absurd and comical, yet they serve to taunt the main character and refer to Friedrich Nietzsche's mental breakdown in the streets of Turin when he rushed to embrace a horse that was being beaten. A stuffed toy horse dangles from the ceiling and throughout the play the image of the toy horse recurs in various forms to haunt and provoke the frail old man. One of the last images of the play is that of The Child and The Beautiful Woman beating the stuffed horse violently. The fact that it is a stuffed toy is ridiculous and comical, yet the violence with which it is done reverberates in our beings to recall the tragic and obscene. This image is accompanied by the giggling of The Child:

THE CHILD: *Then we can beat the shit! – out of this poor little horse as much as we like, and nobody’s going to stop us. Right, Mr Nietzsche? Right? Right?* (Foreman, 2003:37)

Examples like these occur throughout all three plays and illustrate how “the pathos and the comicality sharpen each other” (Hofstadter, 1965:299). The evocation of pathos and comedy, simultaneously, allows for the plays in question to be viewed through the lens of irony. Irony, through duality, enables the reader or viewer to perceive the characters and their actions as both heroic and pathetic at the same time. Thus the playwrights make use of what the genre of tragicomedy offers them by “creating a tragic situation and inviting us to laugh at it; creating a ridiculous situation, and making it end in tragic breakdown” (Williams, 1966:146). Perhaps all three plays can be seen as comedies with vastly tragic endings. The result of this is three stage plays with such strong reflective qualities that they become as authentic and believable as life itself—or by the same token, as unbelievable as life itself.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENTIALISM

Another element that offers a point for comparison is the presence of existential philosophy within the texts. The question of life and living is constantly being debated by the characters. For example, in *The Cherry Orchard*, the drifting friend of the Ranevsky family whom they refer to as “twenty-two miseries” says:

YEPIKHODOV: *I’m an educated man, I read various remarkable books, but I cannot understand the direction I myself want to go—whether to live or to shoot myself, as it were. So, in case, I always carry a revolver about with me. Here it is.* (Shows a revolver.) (Chekhov, 1962[1904]:20)

Yepikhodov is not trying to be witty or melodramatic. We might laugh at his predicament as it is somewhat absurd to always carry a revolver, just in case one is suddenly overwhelmed by the desire to end one’s life! But his dilemma is a valid

one and the source of great despondency within him. This feeling of hopelessness is frequently echoed in Beckett's text between Vladimir and Estragon:

VLADIMIR: *You must be happy too, deep down, if you only knew it.*
ESTRAGON: *Happy about what?*
VLADIMIR: *To be back with me again.*
ESTRAGON: *Would you say so?*
VLADIMIR: *Say you are, even if it's not true.*
ESTRAGON: *What am I to say?*
VLADIMIR: *Say, I am happy.*
ESTRAGON: *I am happy.*
VLADIMIR: *So am I.*
ESTRAGON: *So am I.*
VLADIMIR: *We are happy.*
ESTRAGON: *We are happy. (Silence.) What do we do now, now that we are happy?*
VLADIMIR: *Wait for Godot. (Estragon groans. Silence.) (Beckett, 1981[1954]:60)*

The subject matter of the play *Bad Boy Nietzsche* is the life of a poet and philosopher whose work laid much of the foundation of the philosophy of Existentialism and influenced the works of the writers Sartre, Camus and Heidegger. Nietzsche believed "that only that life is worth living which develops the strength and integrity to withstand the unavoidable sufferings and misfortunes of existence without flying into an imaginary world" (Runes, 1965: 210). Ironically, the staging of the play, *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, conjures this imaginary world and communicates the notion that it is near impossible to bear the brunt of existence unscathed, as exclaimed by Nietzsche towards the end of the play:

NIETZSCHE: *Was I ill? Have I got well?
Oh my memory is rotten
But those are well who have forgotten! (Foreman, 2007:36)*

The human condition that all three playwrights wish to encapsulate is one of deterioration. In *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, it is the deterioration of a genius mind and the desperate attempts to leave a meaningful legacy that is being communicated. This is

seen through Nietzsche's desperate and fanatical scribbling on walls, screens and sheets of paper throughout the play. "In a disintegrated society, individuals carry the disintegration process in themselves" (Williams, 1966:145). This holds true for both Chekhov and Beckett, who were deeply affected by their first-hand experiencing of the collapse of their societies. Chekhov witnessed the fall of the old Russia and Beckett was a sensitive observer of the unavoidable breakdown of European society after two world wars. This witnessing finds its way into the plays and is reflected through the crumbling relationships characters have with one another, their ineffectual attempts to communicate with one another, and their inability to do anything but wait. If the characters were chess pieces on a board, then they would be caught in checkmate—still alive, but with no means to move in order to escape their looming fates.

"For Chekhov to live is to grow old; to recognise that we live alone, and that if life has any meaning we are not likely to discover it" (Gaskell, 1972:94). For Beckett, "the hope of salvation may be merely an evasion of the suffering and anguish that spring from facing the reality of the human condition" (Esslin, 1980:61). For Foreman, "mastery can be a prison, a deadening habit. You can free yourself by exploiting and glorifying your limitations" (Rabkin, 1999:135). Metaphorically, Existentialism can be seen as the river that flows through the contours of the landscapes of these three plays. The plays illustrate how life is essentially devoid of meaning and this is probably best shown through the characters' life experiences and daily activities, which communicate relentless boredom. Vladimir sums it up best in Act II of *Waiting for Godot*:

VLADIMIR:

We wait. We are bored. (He throws up his hand.) No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come, let's get to work! (He advances towards the heap, stops in his stride.) In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness! (Beckett, 1981[1954]:81)

THE USE OF STRUCTURE

Like all rivers that cause erosion, Existentialism has a definite influence on the structure of the plays.

Things happen in *Waiting for Godot*, but these happenings do not constitute a plot or story; they are an image of Beckett's intuition that nothing really happens in man's existence. The whole play is a complex poetic image made up of a complicated pattern of subsidiary images and themes, not, as in most well-made plays, to present a line of development, but to make in the spectator's mind a total, complex impression of a basic, and static, situation. (Esslin, 1980:403)

In the texts, the haunting fact that man is in effect alone in this world is reflected in the structure and images presented. The tree in *Waiting for Godot*, the orchard in *The Cherry Orchard* and the writing in *Bad Boy Nietzsche* are "complex poetic image(s)" that play an integral part in the development of the structure and thematic content. The tree is indicative of place and Didi and Gogo's possible redemption, as well as the passing of time. The orchard and its destruction are visual metaphors for the discarding of the past and the embracing of the future rebirth of a society. Illegible writing across the walls, block letters spelling out fragments of words and three dimensional letters floating in the air are visually evocative of Nietzsche's torturous journey as a philosopher who stated that "God is dead" in the second prologue of his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1954[1883]:124).

In *Waiting for Godot*, the play's structure is defined by two acts in which "the movement of the play is the action of waiting" (Williams, 1966:154), with each act being an example "of movement and of rest. The couple Didi-Gogo waits. The couple Pozzo-Lucky is perpetually on the move, without advancing except in age" (Kern, 1971:23). The perpetual motion "of movement and of rest" is also evident in the four-act structure of *The Cherry Orchard*, comprised of the characters' arrivals at and departures from the estate. The one act structure of *Bad Boy Nietzsche* can be seen as a "series of beginnings", where each new beginning is in essence a repetition of the previous one.

This device is one means of creating a continuous present within a landscape setting. A series of beginnings can create a picture in words, or a total situation on stage, eliminating memory since a "beginning," by definition, has no history — it is concrete because it is simply "there" — and a series of beginnings strung together does not go anywhere. (Davy, 1978: 117)

In each new beginning, Nietzsche is hindered by The Dangerous Man, The Child and the Beautiful Woman in attaining that which he wishes for and desperately needs, namely acceptance.

"Many of the plays of the Theatre of the Absurd have a circular structure, ending exactly as they began; others progress merely by a growing intensification of the initial situation" (Esslin, 1980:415). Even though *The Cherry Orchard* preceded the Theatre of the Absurd by about fifty years, this statement regarding the structure of Absurd Theatre holds true for it as much as for *Waiting for Godot*. The circular structure of *Waiting for Godot* cannot be disputed. In Act I, Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot. Two travellers named Pozzo and Lucky pass them by, after which a boy appears with a message that Godot will not be arriving. Act II resembles the same pattern in terms of its structure: Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot, a changed Pozzo and Lucky travel past, and the pair's exit is followed by a messenger who announces Godot's failure to arrive.

Although the structure of *The Cherry Orchard* consists of four acts, there are traces of a cyclical pattern. The Ranevsky family arrives on the estate in May. Apart from the sale of the estate and the changing of the seasons from spring through to autumn, nothing really happens and so they depart again in October. The circularity of the structure of the play is realised when the play opens with an empty, silent stage and when this state is mirrored again by the empty stage at the end of Act IV. One can also argue that there is a distinct "intensification of the initial situation" in *The Cherry Orchard*. This initial situation is the question of the livelihood of the cherry orchard and how to save it. The situation becomes intensified when they fail to save the orchard, resulting in the auctioning of the estate in order to pay the family's debt. This forces them to leave.

Charles du Bos, a French author and respected literary critic, wrote in his journals that the essence of Chekhov's work lies in "the flow of water. In its neutral malleability, which are the very characteristics of life itself" (1967:192). This "malleability" which Chekhov applies in the creation of structure, stems from the way in which he uses and presents the flow of time within his dramas. He "chronicles an existential stalemate, a problematic condition rather than a proposed answer" (Lahr, 1968:144). Because Foreman breaks with the predictability of the 'well-made' play in his search "for a form that will expose an inarticulable depth" (Harries, 2004:86), the use of language becomes more important than structure. Through a frequent return to and repetition of the same climatic point, Foreman strives to create a structure that will best simulate and mirror the often chaotic essence of being, a structure that will reflect the "fact that we are broken" (Harries, 2004:88).

Through his plays, Chekhov does not wish to show a life more glamorous than our own and therefore his characters have to suffer at the hand of time as we do in real life. "The bitter taste of life for these people consists not in a particular sad event, but precisely in the drawn-out, habitual, drab, monotonous dullness of everyday" (Skaftymov, 1967:77). Like Beckett, Chekhov creates a dramatic structure for his plays comprised of very little action and does not rely on specific events to indicate the progression of time. In contrast to this, Foreman's dramatic structure – or lack thereof – is filled with lots of frenzied (though often meaningless) action; yet all three dramatists illustrate that the cyclical nature of the universe guarantees that time will pass regardless of man's ability to do something (or nothing) in order to make it pass.

As explained in Chapter 1, a world governed by a single understanding or ultimate theory of the universe has (in principle) already existed in the Western world. Although this was more than 2000 years ago, we cannot ignore the fact that such a theory guided the research of the ancient Greek scientists and philosophers. "If we view [the Greek theatre] as an institution among other institutions in a

culture, we note that it supplements the school, the temple, the government and the academy" (Henry, 1958:1). Obviously, the ancient Greeks had a shared belief system and religious outlook on life which supported the sustainability of a unified worldview. When the Polish theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski stated that he "did not want to discover something new, but something forgotten" (Schechner, 1993:254), he was referring to his quest to create theatre that had the same ritualistic power as the performances done by the ancients. At the beginning of the twentieth-century, the 'forgotten' element for which the theatre practitioner was searching was the positivist idea of scientific truth.

[B]eing a sort of scientist, the naturalist found himself in the position of the physicist searching for the elementary particle: every time he thought he had found it, a still more elementary particle signalled its existence. (States, 1985:83)

The playwright and the scientist are both researchers who wish to explain the unknown aspects of the mysteries of the universe. Although their fields of research are seemingly removed from one another, their common goal is to equate the invisible with a tangible explanation.

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged ... art is a way of bringing us home via the unfamiliar. (States, 1985:20)

Although I have no evidence that Samuel Beckett read the plays of Anton Chekhov, the similarities between the two writers are prolific. In 1888, Chekhov wrote to his friend Suvorin: "You confuse two conceptions: the solution of a question and the correct setting of a question, the latter alone is obligatory for the artist" (Chekhov 1965[1925]:127). To this Beckett seems to reply fifty years later in an essay on the poet Denis Devlin, that "art has always been this—pure interrogation, rhetorical question less the rhetoric ... art has nothing to do with clarity" (Pilling, 1976:18). And

fifty years later, the question asked by the avant-garde theatre director and playwright, Richard Foreman, is how art could “provide a field for discovering a different kind of human attention, one that reflects the unfocused nature of the world perceived as a web of interrelated energies” (Davy, 1978: 123).

From the end of the nineteenth-century, the race to find one law of science that could explain all the phenomena of the natural world accelerated. The acceleration of scientific discoveries and the rapid developments in the world of technology were mirrored by the creation of new techniques and styles in the world of theatre, which were often experimental and outlandish in nature.

The search for innovation, for new methods and techniques, the experiments with new modes of expression in our time, are, in my opinion, an indication of the theatre’s vitality, its awareness of the boundless opportunities of a world rapidly transforming itself under the impact of new technologies. Under such conditions no art can survive which complacently falls back on past traditions and standards—least of all the theatre, which is the most social of the arts and most directly responds to social change. (Esslin, 1980:435)

Through their works, Chekhov, Beckett and Foreman pose questions about the nature of the world, our existence in the world and what it means to be human in a particular time period. They do this by using and manipulating the dramatic concepts of time, space and character.

As a proto-modernist, Chekhov created psychological, realistic characters in a biographical sense. His characters are individuals who each have their own detailed life story behind them.

An essential feature of the characters of Ibsen and Chekhov is that each carries and gives off a sense of doom. Because what was doomed was a whole culture, they are both in the widest sense social dramatists. Their people typify a civilization and an epoch. (Bentley, 1969:58)

As individuals, Chekhov’s characters represent the epoch of the fallen gentry of Russia.

In contrast to this, Beckett takes the notion of typifying an epoch or civilization one step further, by creating characters that represent all of humanity

and a state of being, rather than specific or singular human beings. He does this by creating characters that function as symmetrical pairs, each with some form of disability that indicates deterioration.

In his postmodern theatre, Foreman de-humanises the idea of character even further by creating “self-enclosed units” that “do not have feelings, needs, goals, or ambitions” (Davy, 1978:121). He completely breaks with Chekhov’s psychological treatment of character as well as Beckett’s view of character, which, although abstract, still displays feelings and needs. Foreman supports the notion of the French poet Max Jacob and argues that:

Character is an error [...]. I have always been interested in trying to write form and evoke that level of the self that underlies character, that level of consciousness that we all share, upon which is superimposed the accident of character. (Rabkin, 1999:121)

Chekhov was one of the first dramatists to attempt to present the timelessness of time. In his dramas, time as a dramatic situation, prevents the drama’s plot from developing because it creates tension between the future, past and present. Chekhov’s treatment of time as an aloof barrier to happiness is further developed by Beckett’s use of time. “For both Chekhov and Beckett the way to overcome the monster, time, is by refusing it its prerogatives, by not allowing it, *in their plays*, to save or damn” (Gilman, 1995: 148; italics in original). In Beckett’s plays, time is seen as circular, with no means of change. In a world with no past or future, his characters are stuck in a continual present with only one escape, namely death.

With no possibility of purpose, a future goal, human action cannot move forward in time. In a world without purpose time becomes a dimension of pure decline [...]. Beckett represents the end of rationalist and theological time, the demise of those world views which seek to bind the present to the past and future to form a meaningful continuity. (Counsell, 1996:123)

In his Ontological-Hysteric theatre works, Foreman presents his audience with a view of time that does not adhere to the laws of physics of our daily existence. By presenting images and sequences in slow or fast motion, Foreman warps our perception of time. He recognises Gertrude Stein as a major influence in his attempts

to remove the idea of progress from his work by staying in the present. Foreman's treatment of 'time as the present' can therefore be seen as a continuation and development of Chekhov and Beckett's ideas about time.

If it can be argued that Foreman developed Chekhov and Beckett's notion of fluid time, the reverse could be said of his use of space as he fragments and splinters space in the theatrical world he conjures. Although he makes use of the concept of the landscape play as described by Stein, it is a foreign landscape that can only exist within the psychic realm. Foreman plays with different planes, scales and perspectives. He continuously varies the depth of field and frequently divides the space in subdivisions.

Visual patterns overlap, are superimposed, or repeated, so that the eye (and mind) wander over a constantly shifting theatre-scape or field. As a result, foreground and background become ambiguous locations and perpetual experience tends to become more diffuse. [...] One of Foreman's achievements is to create sensed space, space *retrovée*. The spectator becomes conscious of space as an entity with form and density. Instead of watching only stage space, the spectator has discovered a nest of space that might yield some new discovery. (Rabkin, 1999:41-43)

Although the space Beckett creates is abstract and absurd, it is less so than the 'theatre-scape' described above. His use of space suggests a vacuous wasteland and bears a strong relation to death. Beckett's use of space is hostile as it holds the fate of the characters that inhabit the space. Like the creation of his characters, the space Beckett evokes, is that of all spaces. It is no place and therefore, it is all places. In contrast to this, the use of space in Chekhov's *oeuvre* is much more specific as the landscape becomes a figure in the drama and holds as much power as any of the characters that form part of this landscape.

In this chapter I have presented a dramatic analysis of the three texts in order to illustrate the similarities that exist between the texts in terms of their use of the philosophy of Existentialism and how this philosophy underpins much of the playwrights' treatment of genre, structure, language, silence and noise and influences the handling of time, space and character. In the next three chapters, I will

examine each play in turn in greater detail in an attempt to discuss how the changing notions of time, space and character are treated with more and more fluidity as the drama of the twentieth-century develops, and how these changes are aligned to the changing scientific and philosophical *zeitgeist* of the last one-hundred and twenty years.

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CHAPTER 4

THE CHERRY ORCHARD by ANTON CHEKHOV - 1903

In this chapter, I will strive to identify the moments within Anton Chekhov's last play, *The Cherry Orchard*, that could possibly reflect how the changes that took place in the treatment of time, space and character in early twentieth-century drama could have been influenced by changes occurring in scientific thought. Furthermore, this chapter will argue how through his treatment of the notions of time and space, Chekhov has emphasised these notions, to such an extent, that they can be viewed as part of the thematic layering of the play.

Chekhov was a passionate physician and the worldview that he favoured is one that had "unlimited faith in the power of knowledge, in the infinitude of science and searched for a philosophy whereby man can exist on his own" (Jackson, 1967:7). This is evident throughout his *oeuvre*, his journals and the letters he wrote to his family and friends. Einstein argued that the biggest motivating force that leads men to science and art is the desire to escape the monotony of the reality of everyday life. (Einstein, 2009[1934]: 2). This statement also holds true for the dramatic *oeuvre* of Anton Chekhov, because:

from his work, we can trace an important 20th century tradition, in which realism is almost wholly rejected. To understand this paradox, we must look carefully at the nature of this realism, and at its critical relation to actual developments in its society. The condition of realism in the 19th century was in fact an assumption of a total world. (Williams, 1966:139)

The *zeitgeist* of this "total world" of the nineteenth-century, in which Chekhov lived, was one that was in the process of being radically altered by groundbreaking discoveries in science, which in turn influenced the development of new trends in philosophy. In 1866, six years after the birth of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, an Austrian monk named Gregor Mendel discovered the principles of heredity through a series of experiments with garden peas which laid the foundation for the development of modern genetics. In 1900, a mere two years before Chekhov started

work on his last play, Sigmund Freud published his controversial manuscript, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which changed the course and implementation of psychoanalysis dramatically. In the same year, German scientist Max Planck formulated the energy theory that suggested the existence of *quanta*, or 'energy packets', which described the way in which heat radiates energy. This postulation laid the groundwork for Einstein's development of what is perhaps the world's most famous scientific equation, namely $E=mc^2$. In 1901, Guglielmo Marconi was able to receive wireless signals and Wilhelm Röntgen discovered Röntgen rays (now called X-rays). For the first time in the history of man's quest to scrutinize the origin of life, that which was invisible to the naked eye became apparently visible.

In the world of theatre, Chekhov's colleague Konstantin Stanislavski called for a new methodology of acting, which challenged the actor to portray the essence of real life within the theatrical context by recalling his own emotional memory. The world was changing at a rapid pace and literature reflected this. Therefore, it is not surprising that the plays of Doctor Anton Chekhov, a scientist in his own right, bear witness to these world-changing events. Gautam Dasgupta argues, in his research paper 'From Science to Theatre' (1985:238), that if the ultimate goal of science and theatre is to come to understand the nature of reality, then at some point the two individual searches should be able to contact and reference one another.

Throughout his literary career, Chekhov expressed his concern about the state of Russian theatre and the need for renewal: "the contemporary theatre is an eruption, a nasty disease of the cities. It is covered inches thick in dust and enveloped in fog and tedium" (cited in Gilman, 1995:124). His letters and journals are filled with statements like these and articulate his active desire to search for and create a new form of drama that could accurately reflect and comment on contemporary Russian life. This new dramatic form which he pursued was deceptive, for although his plays appear to be written in the style of realism, his handling of time, space and character deviates from the norm as they are treated and presented with a sense of fluidity. Although Chekhov was an ardent admirer of the

great Naturalists, I would argue that it is incorrect to view his characters as following in the vein of the characters created by Ibsen and Strindberg. Rather, his characters should be viewed as precursors for the characters created by Absurdist such as Beckett and Ionesco. Characters in the Theatre of the Absurd are structured around the idea that a character is representative of a group of people or a part of humanity. This notion could well have developed from Chekhov's treatment of character. Where Ibsen's Nora or Strindberg's Miss Julie stand out as iconic individuals, the same cannot be said of Chekhov's characters for they are representative of a group of people. They represent and speak for the fallen gentry of Russia at the turn of the twentieth-century. Chekhov's aim was to dramatize the structure of feeling experienced by his characters, namely hopelessness. The circularity of the structure of Chekhov's drama therefore mirrors the characters' obsessive longing for change and their inability to effect this change. In order to create this new form of drama, his methodology consisted of the following:

First, there will be no isolated, contrasting characters; the crucial emotion is that of a group. Second, there will, so far as possible, be no action: things will happen, but as it were from outside: what happens within the group is mainly gesture and muddle. Third, the contradictory character, of the group and its feelings, has to be conveyed in that tone: a kind of nobility, and a kind of farce, has to co-exist [...]. He is attempting to dramatize a stagnant group, in which consciousness has turned inward and become, if not wholly inarticulate, at least unconnecting. He is attempting to dramatize a social consequence—a common loss—in private and self-regarding feeling.
(Williams, 1973:117)

This explanation of the form of a typical Chekhovian drama illustrates how the form and structure of Chekhov's plays can be viewed as precursors to the Theatre of the Absurd. For Raymond Williams's explanation can just as well be a description of the structure of Absurd theatre. For example, in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, there are no isolated characters; as Vladimir and Estragon and Pozzo and Lucky can only function as part of a pair. The premise of the play revolves around waiting: which in itself limits the possibility of action. Through his tragi-comedy, Beckett wished to dramatize the sufferings of man in a post-war society, a society which has become

“stagnant” and “unconnected”, whilst trying to fathom and come to terms with “a common loss”. Like most of Chekhov’s characters, the characters in *The Cherry Orchard* are a stagnant group: trapped in the past and unable to live in the present as they grapple with and mourn the loss of a social order. “An essential feature of the characters is that each carries and gives off a sense of doom that is more than his own doom. Because what was doomed was a whole culture... [the characters] typify a civilization and an epoch” (Bentley, 1969:58).

THE CONCEPT OF SPACE

Thematically, there is one constant to be found in Chekhov’s four major plays: *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*; the characters born from Chekhov’s pen all yearn for and eternally seek some form of contentment with the life that they lead. The Russian philosopher Leon Shestov wrote an essay shortly after Chekhov’s death, entitled ‘Creation from the Void’, in which he stated that

Chekhov was *a singer of hopelessness*. Stubbornly, dolefully, monotonously, in the course of his literary career of almost twenty-five years Chekhov did only one thing: in one way or another he smashed human hopes. (cited in Jackson, 1967:8; italics in original)

It is this sense of prevailing hopelessness that immediately distinguishes Chekhov’s characters from those created by other playwrights. The Russian writer, Maxim Gorky described Chekhov’s characters as:

slaves to their love, their stupidity and laziness, their greed for the good things of this earth; they move along in clouded anxiety filling life with incoherent speeches about the future, feeling that there is no place for them in the present. (Gorky, 1967:205)

The characters continue to dream of how the world will be in a hundred or two-hundred years, but their longing for this future world blinds them to the realisation that one has to work and not dream in order to effect this change. Chekhov’s characters resemble the quiet murmuring of a melancholy and forgotten stream in

the woods. For example, Nina in *The Seagull* longs to become a great actress for only then will she be truly happy; in *Uncle Vanya* Sonya longs for her unrequited love to be returned by the doctor Astrov; and the three sisters, Masha, Irene and Olga, (from the same-titled play) all desperately desire to return to Moscow where life will undoubtedly be better. In *The Cherry Orchard*, most of the characters are dissatisfied with their present state of being. They long for elusive happiness, which they believe can only be found in their pasts or futures.

In Chekhov's plays we can see phenomenological concerns [...] on the level of theme and subject matter: time, action, the impact of others, the emptiness of the day-to-day, the longing for a fuller life. Chekhov's characters long for a rich existence – a real life – in the face of a life which they find empty, dull, indeed lifeless. They are driven by a pessimistic phenomenological longing. (Fortier, 1997: 50)

Fortier describes how Chekhov's plays, including *The Cherry Orchard*, can be seen to be phenomenological in nature, due to the manner in which Chekhov strives to capture the meaning of the existence of his characters and their relation with and perception of the world in which they live. It is the presence of Phenomenology in the play's subject matter, which enabled me to view the concepts of time and space in a different light. Einstein argued that space is not "the passive container of all events", but rather an active practitioner in "all physical happenings" (Einstein, 2009[1934]:66). This statement supports the idea that the characters' longing is entwined within the landscape, for their feeling of hopelessness cannot be separated from the space they occupy.

In Act II, the characters' dialogue is concerned with the concept of space, to which their existence is bound. In a chapter entitled, 'The Politics of Home and the Poetics of Exile', Una Chaudhuri comments on the fact that within Chekhovian dramas the characters experience a feeling of homelessness whilst at home: "they are not exiled *from* where they belong but exiled *to* where they belong" (Chaudhuri, 2000:12; italics in original). The importance which the cherry orchard holds in the life of the characters is illustrative of how Chekhov's treatment of the notion of space

deviates from that of playwrights such as Ibsen and Strindberg. For in *The Cherry Orchard*, the concept of space is presented with such importance, that it becomes one of the central themes of the play.

The relationship between the characters and the orchard is a classic example of 'obligate symbiosis', as found in nature. From the Greek words 'syn' and 'biosis' (living with), 'obligate symbiosis' means that two species are mutually dependent on each other for survival. The characters' sweat and tears are the water that gives life to the orchard, and the air they breathe is in turn a product of the orchard. This offers some explanation as to why the characters are so obsessed with the space that they occupy, as well as the importance the orchard has in their lives. For Madame Ranevsky and her family, the orchard is a frame of reference through which they view the world and representative of the life they have led up until now. If the estate is to be sold and the orchard destroyed, they too will cease to be the people they are.

The following extracts I have selected serve to show how this constant longing, as explained above, is experienced by the majority of the characters and is a direct or indirect result of the landscape for "places can be understood as articulations of social relationships" (Massey, 1995:186).

The owner of the cherry orchard, Madame Ranevsky, also referred to as Lubov, longs to forget her past and live a life of unburdened frivolity:

(Looks out into the garden) *Oh, my childhood, days of my innocence! In this nursery I used to sleep; I used to look out from here into the orchard. Happiness used to wake with me every morning, and then it was just as it is now; nothing has changed. (Laughs from joy) It's all, all white! Oh, my orchard! After the dark autumns and the cold winters, you're young again, full of happiness [...].* (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:15)

Her daughter Anya wishes for a future that is independent of the aristocratic lifestyle her parents have led:

What have you done to me, Peter? I don't love the cherry orchard as I used to. I loved it so tenderly, I thought there was no better place in the world than our orchard. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:29)

Varya suffers from her unrequited love for Lophakin and feels that if her love is not to be returned, happiness will elude her for as long as she remains on the estate:

I go about all day, looking after the house, and I think all the time, if I had some money, even a little, even only a hundred roubles, I'd throw up everything and go away. I'd go into a convent. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:34)

But Lophakin is pursuing a life that is dramatically removed from the fate suffered by his parents as peasants:

I bought it! Wait, ladies and gentlemen, please, my head's going round, I can't talk [...]. I bid ninety more than the mortgage; and it stayed with me. The cherry orchard is mine now, mine! (Roars with laughter) My God, my God, the cherry orchard's mine! Tell me I'm drunk, or mad, or dreaming [...]. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:41)

Charlotta wishes to find her roots in order to belong:

So please find me a new place. I can't go on like this. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:48)

The manservant Fiers longs for the return of the old ways of serfdom, when life was uncomplicated:

And then we'd send the dried cherries off in carts to Moscow and Kharkov. And money! And the dried cherries were soft, juicy, sweet, and nicely scented [...]. They knew the way [...]. They've forgotten. Nobody remembers. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:12)

And Trofimov longs for a world in which people are free and inspired to work:

All your ancestors were serf-owners, they owned living souls; and now, doesn't something human look at you from every cherry in the orchard, every leaf and every stalk? Don't you hear voices [...]? Oh, it's awful, your orchard is terrible. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:29)

The existential meditations above demonstrate the constant longing for that which will always be beyond the reach of the characters and how the characters' longing is thematically inseparable from the space that surrounds them.

The characters rarely mention the future, yet when they do refer to it, they only speak about the future of the cherry orchard. This is sadly ironic, for when they should be concerned about their own futures they spend their energy fretting about the orchard. Yet the Ranevsky family's inability to embrace change has eliminated any possibility of a future for the orchard.

If the past transforms the present, helps thereby to make it, so too does the present make the past. All of which is really a way of saying that in trying to understand the identity of places, we cannot – or, perhaps, should not – separate space from time, or geography from history. (Massey, 1995: 187)

Yermolay Lophakin, who was once a poor peasant boy, returns from the auction at the end of Act III in an energetic and ecstatic manner. His state of euphoria radiates light. The fact that Lophakin is able to buy the estate marks a momentous occasion in Russian history for it pre-empts the fall of a particular way of life. It was then unheard of for a serf or descendant of a serf to own land, and that is why Lophakin is so triumphant about his deed. It marks the end of an era and serves as a luminous beacon, spreading its brilliant light across Russia with the message that change is imminent.

LOPHAKIN:

If my father and grandfather rose from their graves and looked at the whole affair, and saw how their Yermolay, their beaten and uneducated Yermolay, who used to run barefoot in the winter, how that very Yermolay has bought an estate, which is the most beautiful thing in the world! I've bought the estate where my grandfather and my father were slaves, where they weren't even allowed into the kitchen. I'm asleep, it's only a dream, an illusion [...]. It's the fruit of imagination, wrapped in the fog of the unknown [...]. (Picks up the keys, nicely smiling) She threw down the keys, she wanted to show she was no longer mistress here[...]. (Jingles keys) Well, it's all one! (Hears the band tuning up) Eh, musicians, play, I want to hear you! Come and look at Yermolay Lophakin laying his axe to the cherry orchard, come and look at the trees falling! We'll build villas here, and our grandsons and great-grandsons will see a new life here [...]. Play on, music! (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:41)

Lophakin's plans for the future of the estate are even more revolutionary in the eyes of Madame Ranevsky and her entourage. Even though the relationship between Lophakin and Madame Ranevsky is amicable, the inherited hierarchical system of their society prevents them from ever viewing each other as equals. The liberation of serfdom has taken place, but to Madame Ranevsky and Gaev, who are stuck in the

past, Lophakin will always remain the son of a serf, and therefore one who cannot own land. The reply of Madame Ranevsky and her brother to Lophakin's advice in Act II (as to how they could save the estate) expresses their aversion to Lophakin's 'modern' way of thinking:

RANEVSKY: *Bungalows and bungalow-dwellers — it's so banal. Forgive me for saying so.*

GAEV: *I quite agree with you.* (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:23)

But it is this 'modern' way of thinking that led to the change the characters now face. Not only does this change upset the old way of life, but it also enforces action. The sale of the estate is catalytic in nature, for it enables and promotes the foundation and growth of new life. Lophakin's vision for his newly acquired land is the creation of a world where labour is seen as a noble act and where people will be free and treated fairly.

In Act I, Fiers recalls a time when the orchard was productive and a financially viable asset. He relates an anecdote about the delicious jam that was produced from the cherries but, unsurprisingly, the recipe has been lost, and no one remembers it. Madame Ranevsky's opinion is that their orchard is the only remarkable thing in the entire province and, according to Gaev, the orchard is even mentioned in an encyclopaedia. Yet the orchard only delivers a successful crop every two years and even that is a hindrance, for nobody buys the fruit. "The orchard [was] once the symbol of a luxuriant, safe world [but is] now an accusation of their [the family's] indifference to the environment which once sustained them" (Lahr, 1968:140). Although the cherry orchard is beautiful, it is utterly unproductive and that is why it must be destroyed to make way for a new order.

The outcome of the auction also acts as a catalyst for the Ranevsky family to create a new life which will be unburdened by the past. Their past is rooted in the estate, and they are so stagnated in this past that (had they had the choice) they would have happily continued living on the estate in misery, daily complaining

about their fate. But as it is no longer an option for the Ranevsky family, they are forced to look towards the future and to start laying the foundations for a new life in a new world.

Time and space are integrated within one another and it is impossible to view these concepts as separate entities, especially given the scientific realisation that time can behave like space. The theory of relativity introduced the concept of space-time, which explained how time cannot operate separately or independently from space. Some scientists, like Hawking, even argue that space-time marks the start of our universe. Space and time can exist without our being aware of them, but it is our very awareness that shapes them into that which we know. "Space and time are not things in themselves or their qualities, but belong merely to the appearances of the things in themselves" (Kant, 1950[1783]:124). In other words, that which we classify as space and the objects we identify in space are representations of that which is intuited by us as space.

Time cannot exist without the presence of space and space cannot exist without the presence of time. If time is a cruel reminder of the fate that awaits human beings, space can be viewed as that fate (States, 1985:69). Therefore, to reiterate, the lives of the characters are interwoven within the space they inhabit as their destinies cannot be separated from the space. Madame Ranevsky and her family are the cherry orchard. "In the graphic economy of theatre symbolism, rooms, like all images, must eventually justify their presence: they must inhabit the people who inhabit them" (States, 1985:46).

THE CONCEPT OF TIME

Chekhov's treatment of time is related to his representation of character. The following discussion of the various characters in *The Cherry Orchard* will illustrate how Chekhov's treatment of character reflects Einstein's idea about relative time. An important aspect of the scientific *zeitgeist* of the twentieth century was the

abandonment of Newton's concept of Absolute time. Through his hypothesis of Absolute time, Newton argued that there could be no variables of time as time was experienced by all in exactly the same manner regardless of their positions in space. Einstein changed all of this by proving that time is not a fixed entity, but dependant on space and gravity for its variables. This idea is reflected through the characters and the relationship that they have with the space that surrounds them, for although all the characters are physically in the present moment, some experience it, as if it were already the future, and others, as if it were still the past. Because of this, Lopshakin's experience of time differs dramatically from Madame Ranevsky's, as their relationship with the space that surrounds them is different.

Through their actions, the characters illustrate how difficult it is to experience the active passing of time, because the immediate; the 'now' is always beyond their reach. For as their awareness is turned to an experience in the present, that moment has already moved on to become the past.

Our own past, even the most recent, even the previous day, is only an empty dream of the imagination. [...] What was? What is? [...] Future and past are only in the concept [...]. No man has lived in the past, and none will ever live in the future; the present alone is the form of all life. (States, 1978:98)

Therefore, it is important to note that the idea of the present moment is a concept that the characters in *The Cherry Orchard* prefer to ignore. For them the present only contains the prospect of boredom, whereas the past can offer escape and the future, hope. In a letter to Olga Knipper, Chekhov even described Madame Ranevsky in the following words: "The central female role is an old woman who lives entirely in the past and has nothing in the present" (Gilman, 1995:222). Act I of *The Cherry Orchard* opens with a reference to time and even though the characters often refer to time, they are incapable of living in the present. This explains their inability to ever be specific as to what the time is. This vagueness concerning the time, which is noticeable throughout *The Cherry Orchard*, stands in stark contrast with Lopshakin's exclamation of timeous precision at the end of Act IV:

LOPAKHIN: *Don't forget my friends, there's only forty-seven minutes left before the train!* (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:44)

Of all the characters in the play, it is only Lopakhin who is ever on time, who takes specific note of the time and who constantly looks at his watch. His character embodies the metaphor that time represents change and so it is apt that his character enforces change by purchasing the estate. In the play, this change is figurative as well as literal and announces the arrival of the reality of the present moment.

The nature of Lopakhin's statement is particularly interesting when one considers Aristotle's idea "that time is an aspect of change" (Aristotle, 1996:105). Lopakhin's ability to accurately refer to time echoes this. He "reveals his business sense and rationalism through his exactitude with time" (Jones, 1969:121). He is entering the new Russia, where time is money, and therefore he has to ensure that the Ranevsky family (which floats in a timeless world representative of the old Russia) leaves the estate and departs on time. The clock (and axe) has struck and the timeless has to make room for the timely in order to guarantee the progression of society.

This illustrates how time becomes entwined within the fibre of our beings. The second hand of the watch becomes the beating of the heart; the beating of the heart becomes the metronome of life and death. When the clock ceases to tick, it announces the stoppage of time which, in turn, implies an end. This is in accordance with the philosophy of Existentialism and further confirms how the play in question can be seen as a mouthpiece for this movement. The existentialist's viewing of time becomes evident when one studies the dualistic nature of time. When we wish for time to pass swiftly, it will stretch endlessly ahead of us. By the same token, a moment in time which we would like to cherish and conserve will vanish in a split second.

Although the cherry orchard is filled with aesthetic beauty, nostalgic relevance, historical and social significance, time appears to run so slowly in relation

to it that the characters are locked either in reliving the past or in dreaming of a better life to come. Madame Ranevsky is a prime example of this phenomenon. She revels in the past in order to avoid confrontation with the present. She takes pleasure in recalling the elevated sense of happiness she experienced as a child on the estate and she shares her memories of misery and suffering abroad in Paris with those who will listen. The only reason for her continuation of life is that she can remember the past. Because of this, she lives removed from her life in the present and blind to the problems that she should be facing. Thus, even if she is aware of the severity of the situation, she is not able to act on it in order to save the estate and secure a better future for her family.

Chekhov's plays have been termed plays of "indirect action" (Magarshack, 1980:163), where physical activity makes way for the pensive mumbling of characters who are often deep in thought. The dialogue between characters is usually evocative of a state of being and often serves no purpose, yet it arouses an emotional response from its audience. An important element of the indirect action of the play is the presence of invisible characters. These characters never appear onstage, yet they are forever present in the lives of those we do meet onstage. Their existence serves as motivation for the decisions that the onstage characters make, and plays an integral part in the *denouement* of the lives and fates of these characters.

In *The Cherry Orchard*, Madame Ranevsky's lover abroad and her rich aunt are examples of the power that invisible characters hold over the characters that appear onstage. The power and influence they have on Madame Ranevsky's emotional well-being guides her actions. Although she wishes to escape a life that is dependent on a relationship that is destructive, Madame Ranevsky is unable to do so due to some unexplainable force. Try as she may, Madame Ranevsky is unable to lead an existence away from her lover as her life is irrevocably bound to him. At the start of Act I, soon after their arrival on the estate, she tears up two telegrams that have arrived from him. Towards the end of Act II, she admits the following and tears up yet another telegram:

RANEVSKY: *I fell in love with another man and went off with him, and just at that time... here, in the river... my boy was drowned, and I went away...never to see this river again... but he ran after me... without pity, without respect. I bought a villa near Mentone because he fell ill there, and for three years I knew no rest either by day or night; the sick man wore me out, and my soul dried up. And last year, when they had sold the villa to pay my debts, I went away to Paris, and there he robbed me of all I had and threw me over and went off with another woman. I tried to poison myself.... It was so silly, so shameful.... And suddenly I longed to be back in Russia, my own land....(Wipes her tears...Takes a telegram out of her pocket) I had this to-day from Paris.... He begs my forgiveness, he implores me to return.... (Tears it up) (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:24)*

In a confessional conversation with Trofimov at the end of Act III, Madame Ranevsky declares her love towards the man whose very presence in her life devours her. She compares her love for him to that of a millstone around her neck that will gradually draw all life from her and eventually, inevitably, drown her. When the sale of the cherry orchard is announced at the end of Act III and the family is forced to leave the estate, she shares with Gaev that she will be returning to Paris, ultimately to be reunited with her lover, her 'millstone'.

RANEVSKY: *This telegram's from Paris. I get one every day. Yesterday and to-day. That wild man is ill again, he's bad again...He begs for forgiveness, and implores me to come, and I really ought to go to Paris to be near him. You look severe, Peter, but what can I do, my dear, what can I do; he's ill, he's alone, unhappy, and who's to look after him, who's to keep him away from his errors, to give him his medicine punctually? And why should I conceal it and say nothing about it; I love him, that's plain, I love him, I love him....That love is a stone round my neck; I'm going with it to the bottom, but I love that stone and can't live without it. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:35)*

Time is the convention that man uses to document and measure his own existence; it is "a human condition" (Gilman, 1995:207). If this convention or condition ceases to exist, in other words, if it stops, then the only thing that remains is what we have

termed 'death'. Madame Ranevsky's words, in the extract above, are therefore even more noteworthy and hold great prophetic significance, for the end of time is what awaits her on her fateful return to Paris.

As long as the cherry orchard remains a force in the characters' lives, the present and future elude them: they will be in limbo, paralysed and unable to do anything. The orchard can be seen as a dividing line between talking and dreaming about a particular way of living on the one hand and actually living that life on the other. Even when the orchard is sold, the family is unable to depart immediately. It is only when an axe serves the first blow to the trees that the umbilical cord is cut.

Thus it is only at the start of Act IV, through the sound of an axe striking a tree, that time flows again. This enables the characters to finally shake free the manacles with which the cherry orchard has bound them to the past and that which it represents. The sound of the axe not only serves as a catalyst for time to flow again but also as an emotionally cathartic moment for all the characters (and the audience). Therefore it is noteworthy to pay closer attention to the final moments of the play:

(In the distance is heard the sound of an axe striking on a tree.)

LOPHAKIN: *Well, goodbye, my dear friend. It's time to start. We show off in front of each other, and life passes by unheedingly. When I work, for a long spell, without rest, then my thoughts are clearer and I begin to fancy that I too know what I live for....*

ANYA: *(in the doorway) Mother asks you not to cut down the trees until she has gone. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:45)*

The auction of the estate was perceived by some as a joyous occasion, while others experienced it much like a funeral. Even the sound that announces the end of an era is unbearable for Madame Ranevsky to hear. She sends her daughter with the plea to cease with the cutting in order to observe some form of silence in which she can pay her last respects to the memories buried deep within the soil like the roots of the cherry trees. It is the uprooting of her memories which she cannot bear to witness.

RANEVSKY: *My dear, my gentle, beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye! Good-bye!*

ANYA'S VOICE: *(Gaily) Mother!*

TROFIMOV'S VOICE: *(Gaily, excited) Coo-ee!*

RANEVSKY: *To look at the walls and the windows for the last time.... My dead Mother used to like to walk about this room....*

GAEV: *My sister, my sister!*

ANYA'S VOICE: *Mother!*

TROFIMOV'S VOICE: *Coo-ee!*

RANEVSKY: *We're coming! (They go out. It grows quiet.) (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:52)*

The character Fiers represents the old Russia. He is a servant who denied his own freedom when the liberation of the serfs was proclaimed, and now serves as a metaphor for that which can no longer be. Therefore, it is thematically correct that the Ranevsky family leaves him behind, and that he curls up weakly with the words "you've no strength left..." as the sound of the hacking axes confirms the end of his existence as well. The force that kept this existence intact was the cherry orchard, and its destruction makes room for a new way of life but one that he cannot or will not be part of.

(The stage is empty. The sound of keys being turned in the locks is heard, and then the noise of the carriages going away. It is quiet. Then the sound of an axe against the trees is heard in the silence sadly and by itself. Steps are heard. FIERS comes in from the door on the right. He is dressed as usual, in a short jacket and white waistcoat slippers on his feet. He is ill. He goes to the door and tries the handle.)

FIERS: *It's locked. They've gone away. (Sits on a sofa) They've forgotten about me....Never mind, I'll sit here.... And Leonid Andreyevitch will have gone in a light overcoat instead of putting on his fur coat.... (Sighs anxiously) I didn't see.... Oh, these young people! (Mumbles something that cannot be understood) Life's gone on as if I'd never lived. (Lying down) I'll lie down....You've no strength left in you, nothing left at all.... Oh, you... bungler!*

(Without moving. The distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, of a breaking string, dying away sadly. Silence follows it, and only the sound

is heard, some way away in the orchard, of the axe falling on the trees.)
Curtain. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:52)

The inclusion of the stage directions (in the extract above), serves to highlight how a moment in time, which is emphasised through sound, can determine the destiny of characters. Actions speak louder than words, but at the end of Act IV, the isolated sounds of a breaking string and an axe drown all actions with what seems like a reverberating echo, and announce the fall of a hierarchical era. The breaking string and felling axe at the end of *The Cherry Orchard* are as powerful a sound and carry as much thematic weight in the play as when the character Nora Helmer slams the door in the final moments of Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*. Chekhov himself reiterated the importance of the sound of the breaking string on numerous occasions, and is said to have had a few arguments about its significance with Stanislavski. Batyushkov recalled one of these arguments:

In one act there must be heard off-stage a sound which is complex and not easily describable in a few words, but it is important that it is exactly as I want it [...]. Surely this sound is not important? I asked. Anton Pavlovich looked sternly at me and answered curtly: It is necessary. (Cross, 1969:511)

When the sound of the breaking string is heard for the first time in Act II, it is ironic that of all the explanations for what it might be, the one offered by Fiers is the correct one. He links the sound with the liberation of the serfs, which he regards as a troublesome event. Now, at the end of Act IV, the consequences of that liberation have come full circle. Furthermore, it demonstrates the extent to which the sound of the axe striking a tree in the cherry orchard and the sound of the breaking string are entangled within the concepts of relative time and space, as indicated by the abandoned character Fiers, who finally realises the truth of his being: his whole life has been lived in vain.

THE CONCEPT OF STRUCTURE: TIME ENTWINED IN SPACE

If, as Einstein has shown, time and space can no longer be viewed as separate entities as the existence of one depends on the other, and if this is reflected in Chekhov's handling of time and space, it is then important to consider the structure of the play as a whole if one is to observe reflections of how time and space correlate and interrelate with the physical movements that occur in each act. The play, divided into four acts, consists of the arrivals and departures as well as the gatherings and dispersals of an array of characters. With that in mind, consider the characters' movements in the first act, as related by Richard Gilman:

Anya and Dunyasha on stage. Then Varya on, Dunyasha off; Anya and Varya together with a "moo-oo-oo" in the middle from Lophakin, "sticking his head in the doorway," Anya speaking from her adjoining bedroom; Dunyasha back; Varya going into the bedroom; Yasha on; Dunyasha with Yasha; Anya and Varya back on; Fiers on and Dunyasha off (she's forgotten the coffee cream); and then Lubov, Gayev, Pishchik and Lophakin back on. Anya off to bed, after which the situation becomes more stable ... we will see this happen again, at a swifter pace and even a little hysterically for a time in the third act and more quietly in the fourth, after the relatively sedate traffic of Act II. (Gilman, 1995:216)

Through the quotation above, Gilman demonstrates how Chekhov creates a non-linear plot by constantly filling a theatrical space. The characters' patterns of movement are interesting to investigate, as the comings, goings, and exchanges of the characters resemble the activity of particles in motion. Capra (1982:249) describes the continuous action of particles in motion as a cosmic dance in which all particles can be viewed as combinations of other particles. By using the word 'dance', Capra creates a visual metaphor for the movement and rhythm with which energy flows through the patterns of the particle world.

The initial slow start of the first act serves as exposition. But then the rhythm is quickly transformed by the activity of characters entering and exiting the stage amongst the disorder of bags, suitcases, umbrellas and even a dog. The motion of this act borders on the chaotic in contrast with the lack of activity in Act II. Chekhov

was aware of the lethargic rhythm of this act and wrote a letter of concern to his wife in the autumn of 1903. He was eagerly awaiting feedback from Nemirovich-Danchenko about the play, and in the letter he states that “the things that worried me most of all were the second act’s lack of movement” (cited in Brahm, 1976:114). But despite his concern, Chekhov chose not to change the rhythm of this act. In his work, he always strived to “truthfully depict life” as it is (Jackson, 1967:7). The pace of Act II is as even and monotonous as the pendulum swing of a grandfather clock and therefore the act serves to bring to life the dull tediousness of everyday routine. In the particle world, this lack of motion could be reflective of the amount of energy a particle has, as its speed of motion is directly related to its energy.

It is evident, when one studies the play’s dialogue in Act II, that it is centred on the philosophical questions and dilemmas that arise from being alive. The characters’ musings in this act are existential in nature, to such an extent that the issues raised in the conversations have a debilitating effect upon the characters. This is evident in the following extract:

TROFIMOV: *Yesterday we talked for a long time but we didn't come to anything in the end...what sense can there be in it, if a man is imperfectly made, physiologically speaking, if in the vast majority of cases he is coarse and stupid and deeply unhappy? We must stop admiring one another. We must work, nothing more.*

GAEV: *You'll die, all the same.*

TROFIMOV: *Who knows? And what does it mean—you'll die? Perhaps a man has a hundred senses, and when he dies only the five known to us are destroyed and the remaining ninety-five are left alive. (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:26)*

Some references are made to the past and present but it is interesting to note that the characters neglect to talk about the future. Rather, they philosophise in a formless manner about what it means to be alive in a rapidly changing Russia and the responsibility they ought to have (according to Trofimov) to implement this change.

A further justification for the lack of action in Act II could be traced back to Chekhov's prime intention as a playwright which was to truthfully reflect life on stage, as it occurs off stage in the world. In a letter to Pleshcheev (cited in Jackson, 1967:7) dated April 9, 1889, Chekhov explained that he wanted to portray ordinary life in his plays, that is, life filled with excitement as well as monotony, and to truthfully show the transitions between these states of being.

Act III shows a return to motion. There are numerous interactions and frenetic activities, including the news of the sale of the orchard and the house dance with hired Jewish musicians, which is followed by preparations to leave the estate in Act IV. Here the characters' conversations engage more actively with the issues offered by the here and now of the present as well as the future. The concept of space-time is reflected through the selling of the orchard. The orchard will be destroyed and with it the past in which the Ranevsky family is entrapped. The characters are now forced to seek a space which will enable them to face the future:

LOPHAKIN: *Come and look at Yermolay Lophakin laying his axe to the cherry orchard, come and look at the trees falling! We'll build villas here, and our grandsons and great-grandsons will see a new life here....* (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:41)

This tide of motion continues to swell in Act IV: the dialogue in this act not only remains concerned with the present but, for the first time in the play, also refers extensively to the future. Their life on the estate has finally come to an end; they have to let go of the past as it is being cut down along with the orchard. This leaves Madame Ranevsky and her family no other choice but to envision a life in the future:

ANYA: *Good-bye, home! Good-bye, old life!*
TROFIMOV: *Welcome, new life!* (Exit with ANYA.) (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:51)

Once the characters have departed, only silence and stillness remain.

The ebb and flow of motion from Act I through to Act IV in *The Cherry Orchard* can be described metaphorically by the following scientific rule, which holds true for the activity within an atomic nucleus. "A proton proceeding quietly on its way can explode into a buzzing network of virtual particles all interacting with one another and then subside back into itself" (Gribbin, 1995:200). Therefore, the dawning silence at the end of Act IV recalls the silence in which the stage was suspended in the opening scene. The structure of the play has come full circle, for Act IV can be seen as an inversion of Act I. The first act consists of the gradual filling of the space, whereas Act IV shows the gradual emptying of that same space. At the start of Act I, the audience is met with an empty and silent stage, which will soon be transformed by the flurry of activity caused by the arrival of the Ranevsky family. Although a sense of emptiness prevails, Act IV begins with the hustle of the departing family and ends with the stage bare, save for the sound of the falling cherry orchard and the presence of the forgotten Fiers. The circular structure of the play can be seen to reflect a proton's journey as described by Gribbin (1995). The quiet start of Act I could be illustrative of a single proton on an uninterrupted journey. Metaphorically, this journey is interrupted by the arrival of the Ranevsky family which marks the explosion of the proton into a network of particles, just to subside back into itself for the duration of Act II. This process is repeated again during Act III and Act IV, just as a particle in motion continues to interact and retract with other particles on its path of motion.

Anton Chekhov was a man passionate about knowledge, who waged war against banality and fought for the essential truth of being with his writing. His close friend Maxim Gorky described him as a "great wise man, aware of everything" and recalled how any person who was in Anton Pavlovich's presence, "unwittingly felt an inner longing to be simpler, more truthful, to be more himself" (Gorky, 1967:198). In a letter to Suvorin, written early in his literary career and dated 7th May, 1889, Chekhov expressed his concern with the nature of the priorities of the world:

Beings of a higher order, thinking men, are also bound to be materialists. They seek for truth in matter, for there is nowhere else to seek for it, since they see, hear, and sense matter alone. Of necessity they can only seek for truth where their microscopes, lancets, and knives are of use to them. To forbid a man to follow the materialistic line of thought is equivalent to forbidding him to seek truth. Outside matter there is neither knowledge nor experience, and consequently there is no truth [...]. (Chekhov, 2008 [1905]:143)

During the first years of his career as a physician, Chekhov often helped fellow doctors with the execution of autopsies. On a physical level, this allowed him access to the unseen world (for most) of the wonder and workings of the human body. He gained intimate knowledge about the fibres that support and create life in the physical world. Through his writing, Dr Chekhov sought to replicate the idea of an autopsy of the human soul in order to discover the truth of being. He did this in an attempt to understand the workings of and motivational forces behind the actions of the human heart and mind. His probing into the realm of the soul was an effort to understand his own, as well as his fellowman's, existence on this earth.

This interpretation of *The Cherry Orchard* is an attempt to reveal a way of thinking (pursued by Chekhov) that supports the idea that a materialistic and scientific approach to investigation must involve both that which is on the outside and can be seen, heard or sensed as well as that which is on the inside: unseen or hidden from the human eye. "What the drama, of all the arts requires is a way of allowing the stage to contain things outside of it and to make visible things that are invisible" (States, 1985:65). By reuniting the theatrical with the scientific, and the unseen with that which is seen, this study pays homage to a playwright who was a passionate believer in the philosophy of unseen truth and whose unique worldview supports the concept of a unified universe. This concept stipulates our inevitable and undeniable link with the world of atomic matter and challenges the reader to view the phenomena of life and the essence of being in a different light.

Furthermore, this 'reading' of *The Cherry Orchard* illustrates how Chekhov broke with the conventional application of time, space and character of theatrical

realism in order to create a new form of drama. In this chapter, I have illustrated how Chekhov, in his striving for renewal in the theatre, treated the elements of time, space and character not as individual elements, but rather, as complimentary aspects of one another in order to attempt to truthfully reflect the *zeitgeist* of his time which was one of complexity and uncertainty. The following chapter will illustrate how Chekhov's handling of time, space and character has been developed, changed and extended by the playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd, particularly Samuel Beckett, to reflect their own worldview.

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CHAPTER 5

WAITING FOR GODOT by SAMEUL BECKETT- 1953

Although there is no single explanation for the phenomena that enshroud the concept of 'being', it remains the ultimate goal of scientists to find one such explanation or theory, that could describe the whole universe. The world is not as fixed and unidimensional as it appears on the surface, for the invisible (to the naked eye) atomic matter that shapes our world is continually moving and changing. Scientists have acknowledged that some of the mysteries of the workings of the universe might be deciphered, while others could well remain unanswered. It is in this world— which has accepted this knowledge— that Samuel Beckett wrote the play *Waiting for Godot*. Martin Esslin describes the Theatre of the Absurd as a response to the scientific attitude which he defines as, "the postulate of a wholly coherent and simplified explanation that must account for all the phenomena, purposes and moral rules of the world" (Esslin, 1980: 425). He suggests that:

The Theatre of the Absurd can be seen as an attempt to communicate the metaphysical experience behind (this) scientific attitude and, at the same time, to supplement it by rounding off the partial view of the world it presents, and integrating it in a wider vision of the world and its mystery. (1980:425)

Practitioners of Absurd theatre attempted to create work that could portray the physical *and* metaphysical aspects of the universe simultaneously. In this chapter, I intend to examine to what extent the play *Waiting for Godot's* treatment of time, space and character reflects the aspects of relativity, uncertainty, ambiguity, complexity and causality, which contributed to the *zeitgeist* of the twentieth-century. Apart from the influence of renewed thinking in the worlds of science and invention, the *zeitgeist* of the twentieth-century was also strongly influenced by the horrors of WWI and WWII which highlighted the "absurdity of the human condition" (Esslin, 1961:17) and the ultimate fate of all humans which is to die. A visual illustration of this degenerative process of mortality, which Vladimir and Estragon experience every

day, is Salvador Dali's 1931 painting, *The Persistence of Memory*, which he described as the "camembert cheese of space and time" (McNeese, 2006:70). In this painting, clocks, which are indicative of time, are literally melting, which communicates the idea that time is transient, aloof and only binding in terms of the memories that can be connected to it.



Figure I (McNeese, 2006:68)

In 1954, Dali completed, *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory*, which illustrates the changing landscape of human consciousness and the effect that it has on memory, after the destructive nature of atomic energy became a reality. In the second painting, the landscape is literally imploding and disintegrating, an artistic interpretation of the splitting of atoms and the resultant destruction it causes.

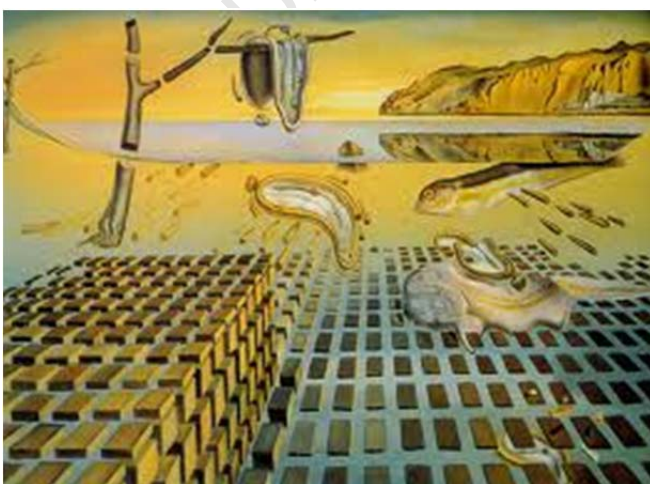


Figure II (Wach, 1996:100)

It is important to note that by 1931 (when Dali created the first painting) the world had accepted Einstein's idea that the concept of absolute time does not exist, and this is evident in the painting through the melting of clocks—or, scientifically speaking, the melting of absolute time. When Dali created the second painting, the ultimate power of Einstein's theories had already been displayed through the destruction caused by the atom bombs in WWII, and again this is clear in the artwork.

Written in 1952, *Waiting for Godot* can be seen as a literary interpretation of man's purpose in a world changed by the power of atomic energy¹³. And as theories pertaining to atomic energy are founded in the general theory of relativity, it becomes impossible to read the text without considering the scientific realm which shaped the world on which the literature is commenting. Although Beckett and Dali never joined creative forces while in Paris, their work shares a common view, namely that of an apocalyptic post-war world. Therefore, like Dali's work, Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo and Lucky are metaphors and symbols for the degenerative and ailing human condition on which Beckett wished to comment.

THE CONCEPT OF SPACE-TIME

"A country road. A tree. Evening". These cryptic phrases shape the isolated world of the play which Vladimir and Estragon inhabit. It is a sparse and barren landscape holding only empty promises. Vladimir describes the space as "indescribable", claiming that there is nothing. Yet, there is a country road, a tree, and four human beings "*made in God's image*" (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:23). Asked why no traffic passed by on the road, Beckett replied, "it isn't a road. It's a track on [a] wasteland" (Bradby, 2003:170).

POZZO: *Where are we?*

¹³ Atomic or nuclear energy refers to energy which originates from the inner core of the atom.

VLADIMIR: *I couldn't tell you.*
POZZO: *What is it like?*
VLADIMIR: *(looking round). It's indescribable. It's like nothing. There's nothing. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:86)*

VLADIMIR: *And where were we yesterday evening according to you?*
ESTRAGON: *How do I know? In another compartment. There's no lack of void. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:66)*

Fuchs (2004:6) asks us to consider the space of a play in order to understand the world of the play. In *Waiting for Godot*, the space that the characters occupy acts as a void, for as Vladimir sardonically points out; it contains something and nothing simultaneously. His words reflect the philosophy of relativity according to which there is "no such thing as empty space" (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2010:113).

According to Capra, "Einstein's field theory of gravity and quantum field theory both show that particles cannot be separated from the space surrounding them" (Capra, 1982:245). It is possible to recognise a reflection of this idea within the text when one observes the characters and the space that they inhabit.

VLADIMIR: *We're waiting for Godot.*
ESTRAGON: *(despairingly). Ah! (Pause) You're sure it was here?*
VLADIMIR: *What?*
ESTRAGON: *That we were to wait.*
VLADIMIR: *He said by the tree. (They look at the tree.) Do you see any others?*

ESTRAGON: *In my opinion we were here.*
VLADIMIR: *You recognise the place?*
ESTRAGON: *I didn't say that.*
VLADIMIR: *Well?*
ESTRAGON: *That makes no difference.*
VLADIMIR: *All the same...that tree... (turning towards the auditorium)...that bog. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:15)*

Vladimir and Estragon cannot be separated from the space surrounding the tree because the very fibre of their being and existence depends on it. The space surrounding the tree exists because they occupy it. On the one hand, Vladimir and Estragon determine the structure of the space. It is a hellish and merciless space

because they experience it as such. For them the space is doomed because of the appointment that committed them to this place. On the other hand, they cannot be viewed as isolated bodies, for all bodies need a space in which to exist and that space is continuous, eternal and ever-present. With this in mind, it is sadly ironic when one considers Vladimir's desperate attempt to explain the tree bearing leaves as a positive indication that time has passed. This is an example of how the characters experience space-time: Vladimir is experiencing time as a solidified entity; for him time has stopped, and because of this he restructures the space that he occupies in order to create the illusion that time is passing. Vladimir's desperate hope that redemption will prevail gives new meaning to the famous Descartes quote: "Cogito ergo sum" (Morton, 2004:70). Cartesians state that man exists because he is capable of consciously thinking about his existence, and Platonic realism argues that "ideas have a status of possibility" (Runes, 1965:264). Thus, all objects and structures that man is able to think about contain the possibility to exist. Conclusively, in the world of the play, the tree bears leaves because Vladimir thinks them into existence and needs it to do so:

ESTRAGON: *And if he doesn't come?*

VLADIMIR: (after a moment of bewilderment). *We'll see when the time comes. (Pause.) I was saying that things have changed here since yesterday.*

...

VLADIMIR: *Look at it.*

They look at the tree.

ESTRAGON: *I see nothing.*

VLADIMIR: *But yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now it is covered with leaves.*

ESTRAGON: *Leaves?*

VLADIMIR: *In a single night.*

ESTRAGON: *It must be spring.*

VLADIMIR: *But in a single night.*

ESTRAGON: *I tell you we weren't here yesterday. Another of your nightmares. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:60; 66)*

This again is a good example of how we influence and determine the shape and structure of the space in which we reside. Vladimir is desperate for some sign and therefore he alters his space in order to cater for this need. Estragon's inability to note the change could be an indication of his wish to avoid and disinherit any space from his life that bears a connection with Godot, for the space in which he has to wait for Godot is a tormenting one.

ESTRAGON: *Recognise? What is there to recognise? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about the scenery!*
(Beckett, 1981 [1954]:61)

As mentioned before, people play a significant role in structuring the space in which they operate, yet their being is severely influenced by their environment. Therefore, people and the space they occupy are dependent on each other for their existence. The space will not be there if there is no being in it to define the space as space and by the same token, s/he who defines the space cannot exist outside of space. Therefore, just as in Chekhov's drama, *The Cherry Orchard*, in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* space becomes so important that it is treated as part of the thematic concern of the play.

The existence of wave packets is another case in point to illustrate how the philosophic consequences of space-time are reflected through the characters' relationship with the space that they occupy. In quantum theory, particles are represented by what is known as wave packets. Subatomic particles can be identified by their wave-like nature, which means that all particles are constantly moving. This implies that all matter is always experiencing some form of dynamic activity. In the world of relativity, where space and time are unified, it can be concluded that it is impossible to detach matter from motion. When a particle is confined to an area of space, it reacts by moving around. If the area of space, available for movement, is reduced, the particle will in turn react by moving faster in its new restricted space.

We do not know where Vladimir and Estragon go at the end of a day's waiting or where they spend the night. However, for the sake of scientific philosophy, I would like to propose that the space that they occupy at night offers them some freedom from their arduous task of waiting and enables them to experience some form of rest. When they return to the waiting place in the morning, it is as if the space confines them, and they react just like wave particles forced into a smaller surface area. For the duration of the day, they are imprisoned in this space, for their lives depend on honouring their commitment to wait for Godot. This curbed space drives them to constant, restless and frenetic activity, which they perform in order to make the process of waiting more bearable and to create the illusion of time passing. Examples of these frenzied yet futile activities would be the inspection and passing of hats and the fitting of boots. A climactic point to illustrate this hypothesis would be when Estragon attempts to escape persecution by the unknown:

VLADIMIR: (enter Estragon left, panting. He hastens towards Vladimir, falls into his arms.) *There you are again at last.*

ESTRAGON: *I'm accursed!*

VLADIMIR: *Where were you! I thought you were gone forever.*

ESTRAGON: *They're coming!*

VLADIMIR: *Who?*

ESTRAGON: *I don't know.*

VLADIMIR: *How many?*

ESTRAGON: *I don't know.*

VLADIMIR: (Triumphantly). *It's Godot! At last! Gogo! It's Godot! We're saved! Let's go and meet him!* (He drags Estragon towards the wings. Estragon resists, pulls himself free, exit right.) *Gogo! Come back!* (Vladimir runs to extreme left, scans the horizon. Enter Estragon right, he hastens towards Vladimir, falls into his arms.) *There you are again.*

ESTRAGON: *I'm in hell!*

VLADIMIR: *Where were you?*

ESTRAGON: *They're coming there too!*

VLADIMIR: *We're surrounded!* (Estragon makes a rush towards back.) *Imbecile! There's no way out there.* (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:73)

This incident, which occurs towards the end of Act II, illustrates the strenuous effect the hours and days of waiting have on Vladimir and Estragon. The action of doing nothing, of endlessly waiting, drives them to the utmost boundaries of their sanity. The continuous absence of any significant activity eventually takes its toll in this extract where the pair displays absolutely irrational behaviour, as they are imprisoned by the space in which they have to wait. They are like caged animals desperately desiring freedom:

Space and time find them, though space is empty, save for a mound and a tree; and time is no longer the measure of motion but an arbitrary imposition through which men crawl to a death they can never know. (Doherty, 1971:87)

The cyclical and circular structure of *Waiting for Godot* originates from the characters' action of waiting, and it is through waiting that time can be viewed in its clearest form. This implies that the shape of the drama has its roots in the manipulation and use of time. But the theory of relativity's laws, regarding time and space, state that these entities cannot be viewed as separate absolutes. They have to be viewed as interdependent on one another in order to form the four-dimensional concept of space-time. Therefore, absurd drama and the experiences of the characters can be seen to reflect the concept of space-time.

Furthermore, the general theory of relativity suggests and predicts that time moves more slowly near a massive body, like the earth (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008:44). This phenomenon occurs because of the presence of a gravitational field and Einstein explained it through his principle of equivalence. This principle states that the stronger the gravitational field, the bigger an influence it will have on the flow of time. When analysing dramatic structure, Elinor Fuchs advises us to look at the world of a play as if it were a planet of its own. And on this planet time will behave in its own unique way. Fuchs asks us to consider the following questions about the use of time in a play:

How does time behave on this planet? Does "time stand still?" Is time frantic and staccato on this planet? Is it leisurely, easy-going time? How is time marked on this planet? By clock? By the sun? By the sound of footsteps? What

kind of time are we in? Cyclical time? Eternal time? Linear time? What kind of line? One day? One lifetime? (Fuchs, 2004:6)

Considering this, I would like to propose that, in the world of the play *Waiting for Godot*, time moves slower near the tree just as in the (real) world, time moves slower near the earth and that this reflects the notion of scientific equivalence as outlined by Einstein in the general theory of relativity. The following extracts support this idea:

VLADIMIR: *Will night never come?*
All three look at the sky
POZZO: *You don't feel like going until it does?*

VLADIMIR: *Time has stopped.* (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:36)

ESTRAGON: *We came too soon.*
VLADIMIR: *It's always at nightfall.*
ESTRAGON: *But night doesn't fall.* (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:71)

POZZO: *What time is it?*
VLADIMIR: (Inspecting the sky.) *Seven o'clock... eight o'clock...*
ESTRAGON: *That depends what time of year it is.*
POZZO: *Is it evening?*
Silence. Vladimir and Estragon scrutinize the sunset.
ESTRAGON: *It's rising.*
VLADIMIR: *Impossible.*
ESTRAGON: *Perhaps it's the dawn.*
VLADIMIR: *Don't be a fool. It's the west over there.*
ESTRAGON: *How do you know?*
POZZO: (anguished). *Is it evening?*
VLADIMIR: *Anyway, it hasn't moved.*
ESTRAGON: *I tell you it's rising.*
POZZO: *Why don't you answer me?* (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:85)

In *Waiting for Godot*, the only reference to a clock (which is the man-made guardian of time) occurs in Act I. Pozzo consults his watch, an heirloom half hunter¹⁴, in order to observe his schedule to which Vladimir replies that "*time has stopped*" (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:36). Later in the scene, before his departure, Pozzo searches for his watch with the help of Vladimir and Estragon. They attempt to detect its whereabouts by

¹⁴ A half hunter is a pocketwatch in a protective hinged casing, with an opening in the centre of the casing, allowing the owner to tell the time without having to open the case.

listening for the “tick-tick”, but find only silence, which is disturbed by Pozzo’s beating heart. Pozzo’s estimate that the watch has stopped creates a probable foundation for Vladimir’s statement that “time has stopped” to become an ironic reality. The characters experience the passing of time in inertia, so much so that Vladimir can exclaim that it has stopped. Esslin describes this process in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd*:

Waiting is to experience the action of time, which is constant change. And yet, as nothing real ever happens, that change in itself is an illusion. The ceaseless activity of time is self-defeating, purposeless, and therefore null and void. (Esslin, 1980:52)

This description of the use of time epitomises how the characters in *Waiting for Godot* experience the passing of time, as well as how the absurdist writer employs the concept of time as a means to comment on the desolate and meaningless world in which he resides. For this reason, the Theatre of the Absurd disregards all conventional ideas regarding the Unities of Time, Place and Action in order to create a new school which can focus on portraying the dilemma of human existence rather than representing a linear progression of events.

This is reflected in the way in which the ideas and philosophies of Existentialism intertwine within the dialogue of all, but especially one, of the characters in the play. Lucky’s “Think” is the play’s “most sustained reference to the real world of men and nature” (States, 1978:40). When Beckett directed the play in 1975 at the Schiller Theatre in Berlin, he prioritised Lucky’s speech to such an extent that he started rehearsals with this section of the play. His production workbook also bears evidence of the detailed attention with which he treated this monologue (Bradby, 2003:112). After a pained silence, Lucky responds to Pozzo’s command, “Think, pig!” with a speech, that lengthily and brutally examines man’s predicament on earth and his ultimate salvation, or lack thereof.

Commanded to think, Lucky transcends his assignment, like the poet Plato, he “dreams into being” an image of “the spirit” of the world as seen in the

infinite regression of its forms—much as the play at large, trading vaguely in theology, converts theology into mythic poetry. (States, 1978:44)

The content of Lucky's speech can be seen as a summation of the elements of the scientific *zeitgeist* of the twentieth-century. His speech reflects and comments on the concepts of uncertainty, complexity, causality, and ambiguity as well as man's desire to increase his knowledge about the material world in order to control it.

The philosopher and physicist Ernst Mach conducted a series of investigations into the idea of inertia, which today is known as the Mach principle. This principle argues that "the inertia of a material object—the object's resistance against being accelerated—is not an intrinsic property of matter, but a measure of its interaction with the rest of the universe" (Capra, 1982:231). In the play *Waiting for Godot*, the philosophic implication of the concept of inertia is reflected through the character Lucky.

Lucky's failure to speak or move beyond that which he is commanded to do is an indication of his complex interaction with the rest of the universe. His resistance against being moved illustrates his interaction with his universe and this interaction and relationship with the universe is one of lethargy and hopelessness. He cannot be inspired or motivated to move because there is no remedy for his condition. He will not benefit from being accelerated as his universe has nothing to offer him and thus his destiny is to remain in inertia. If one tries to understand Lucky in terms of what his hostile universe has to offer him, it is not surprising to note that he is powerless and therefore has no driving force to strive for the alteration of his environment. Lucky personifies inertia. His physical appearance is that of apathy and his inability to answer Vladimir and Estragon, to put down the heavy burden that he carries or to claim the chicken bones as his own, confirms this. He has accepted his fate as Pozzo's slave as well as the consequential duties that accompany this numbing identity.

The question arises why Lucky chooses to utter what he does when he eventually speaks. His monologue could be interpreted as a testimony of the

unconscious inertia suffered by all. His gibberish is a translation of the force that confounds all of humanity as well as man's incapacity to overcome this force in order to create a meaningful existence. Perhaps his is the only voice of reason to be heard for the duration of the whole play. In addition, that might be the explanation for why he becomes completely dumb in Act II.

LUCKY: *Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaquaqu with white beard quaquaquaquaqu outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing [...] (Beckett, 1981[1954]:42)*

Lucky's emotional tirade not only passes judgement on an apathetic god who is himself speechless and incapable of experiencing fear or amazement, but it also comments on man's inexhaustible, yet futile, efforts to create a meaningful existence in a meaningless world. The tone of the monologue is one of deep melancholy, which communicates the nostalgic longing for something that is obtainable only once one has travelled beyond calmness. The previous extract illustrates that it is our fate as humans to suffer either ruin or redemption in a chaotic, unforgiving and hostile world.

The realisation of this doomed state of being, uttered by Lucky in his monologue, might well be the catalyst for Estragon's exclamation later in Act II: "*I'm accursed*" (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:73). In Greek mythology, Cassandra's punishment for speaking the truth is that no one believes her prophecies. Lucky's punishment for speaking the truth might be that he loses the ability to speak completely. Or does he? Perhaps he willed this fate, choosing to bear his cross in silence, submitting himself wilfully to the consequences of his apocalyptic revelations rather than fighting them. However we choose to interpret Lucky's muteness, the fact remains that he is

forced or enticed to surrender yet again to the environment's domination over him, and his fate of eternal inertia continues.

On a first encounter with the play, one might ask: 'Why don't they just go?'

Act I ends with the words:

ESTRAGON: *Well, shall we go?*
VLADIMIR: *Yes, let's go.*
They do not move. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:54)

And even though the speakers are reversed, Act II ends with the same phrases:

VLADIMIR: *Well? Shall we go?*
ESTRAGON: *Yes, let's go.*
They do not move. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:94)

But when analysing the play by means of the thought behind the concept of inertia, these two moments become pivotal in our understanding of the play. Vladimir and Estragon's inability to leave at the end of Act I and II, their reluctance to part from one another throughout the play, as well as all four characters' futile attempts to get up after falling down in Act II, all reflect the philosophy behind Mach's principle. It is not that the characters do not want to go; it is that they cannot go as they are overcome by lethargy. Vladimir and Estragon's interaction with their universe is characterised by apathy, futility and hopelessness and this in turn leads to their state of inertia. This correlates with Mach's principle which explains the inertia of a material object as a gauge of its contact with its universe (Capra, 1982:231).

THE COMPLEXITY AND AMBIGUITY OF THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER

When one considers the creation and formulation of characters in the style of the Theatre of the Absurd and especially the characters in *Waiting for Godot*, it becomes possible to examine the pairs of characters according to the thought behind the quantum field theory. According to this theory, all particles within the quantum

field are merely “concentrations of energy which come and go, thereby losing their individual character and dissolving into the underlying field” (Capra, 1982:233).

A quantum field can be seen as the essence of matter and is forever present throughout space. Matter or, more specifically, particles, disperse and connect, but the quantum field is that which will always remain constant in the interval between diffusion and unification. It is the force between interacting particles and could perhaps be seen as the ultimate life source.

If Chekhov’s characters must be viewed as a group, representing the fallen Russian gentry, then the characters created in the style of the Theatre of the Absurd must be seen as a type of Everyman. Rather than symbolising one specific human being, the characters represent an abstraction of human qualities. They are amorphous, without past or future and exist only in the present moment where what they do defines who they are (Esslin, 1980:401). The characters in *Waiting for Godot* are not individuals but embody the concept of waiting. It is this process of eternally waiting that has caused these characters to melt away in the landscape and lose their chance at individualism. A description of the quantum field theory states that:

All interactions involve the creation and destruction of particles...and that there is a basic symmetry between particles and antiparticles. For every particle, there exists an antiparticle with equal mass and opposite charge. (Capra, 1982:199)

Vladimir and Estragon’s relationship is based on a mutual dependency. The qualities which embody each character are structured in such a way that they enhance, fulfil and balance each other. The characters function and survive in a yin-yang manner: where one is a rational thinker and the other intuitive; Estragon longs to dream, yet Vladimir cannot stand dreams; and where Estragon tends to forget everything, Vladimir remembers the past. Metaphorically, this ambiguity could be compared to the scientific equilibrium that can be observed between particles and antiparticles. Each one of the pair waiting endlessly by the tree is unable to continue to exist without the other and this is what keeps them joined together.

The 'diagram of the supreme ultimate' or *T'ai-chi T'u* is a Chinese symbol that illustrates the black and white opposite forces of the yin-yang (Yu-lan, 1983:435) and looks like this:

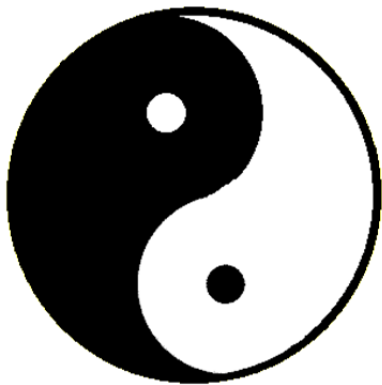


Figure III (Capra, 1982:119)

In this diagram, two forces are continuously moving within a circle, simulating the ebb and flow of the ocean. The dark yin represents, among other things, a negative force, femininity and rest, and in contrast to this the light yang is representative of a positive force, masculinity and movement. This diagram illustrates symmetry that is not static, but in continuous and recurring movement between the dark yin and the light yang.

The yang returns cyclically to its beginning, the yin attains its maximum and gives place to the yang. The two dots in the diagram symbolise the idea that each time one of the two forces reaches its extremes, it contains in itself already the seed of its opposite. (Capra, 1982:120)

This description bears a strong correlation to the close relationship between ancient metaphysics and the 'new' science as well as the way in which characters and their relationships with one another are shaped in the Theatre of the Absurd and can be illustrated in the following extracts:

VLADIMIR:	<i>You're a hard man to get on with, Gogo.</i>
ESTRAGON:	<i>It'd be better if we parted.</i>
VLADIMIR:	<i>You always say that and you always come crawling back.</i>
ESTRAGON:	<i>The best thing would be to kill me, like the other.</i>

VLADIMIR: *What other? (Pause.) What other?*
ESTRAGON: *Like billions of others.*
VLADIMIR: *(sententious). To every man his little cross. (He sighs.) Till he dies. (Afterthought.) And is forgotten. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:62)*

ESTRAGON: *We don't manage too badly, eh Didi, between the two of us?*
VLADIMIR: *Yes yes. Come on, we'll try the left first.*
ESTRAGON: *We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist? (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:69)*

The first extract alludes to the constant friction that exists between the two characters and the numerous attempts the characters have made to live separate lives. It is the fact that they are one another's extreme opposites that causes so much distress and annoyance between them and makes it so frustrating to co-exist. However, as they are bound together, it is impossible for them to split from one another.

The second extract illustrates the reconciliatory force, symmetry and harmonious balance that exist between the characters. It is the knowledge that they cannot function apart that gives rise to momentary peace. Although the extracts demonstrate the two poles of the yin and yang, both extracts end with a reference to the question of existence and mortality which underpins the thematic concern of the play.

THE CONCEPT OF CAUSALITY

Vladimir and Estragon are forever striving to 'cause' meaningful and lasting contact with each other but the 'effect' of their attempts always ends in silence. Their verbal banter and physical antics throughout the play, not only serve as a means to pass the time, but also as a way for them to try to connect with each other on a deeper level. Yet each attempt fails. The attempt to connect, by striking up a conversation which on the surface level seems useless, can be identified as the 'cause'. The 'effect' then is the moment in time and space in which deadening silence overwhelms the

characters, rendering their attempt to communicate futile. As always, their 'canter' is an inadequate attempt to console one another and to avoid the return of silence.

Silence.

VLADIMIR: *What is terrible is to have thought.*
ESTRAGON: *But did that ever happen to us?*
VLADIMIR: *Where are all these corpses from?*
ESTRAGON: *These skeletons.*
VLADIMIR: *Tell me that.*
ESTRAGON: *True.*
VLADIMIR: *We must have thought a little.*
ESTRAGON: *At the very beginning.*
VLADIMIR: *A charnel-house! A charnel-house!*
ESTRAGON: *You don't have to look.*
VLADIMIR: *You can't help looking.*
ESTRAGON: *True.*
VLADIMIR: *Try as one may.*
ESTRAGON: *I beg your pardon?*
VLADIMIR: *Try as one may.*
ESTRAGON: *We should turn resolutely towards Nature.*
VLADIMIR: *We've tried that.*
ESTRAGON: *True.*
VLADIMIR: *Oh it's not the worst, I know.*
ESTRAGON: *What?*
VLADIMIR: *To have thought.*
ESTRAGON: *Obviously.*
VLADIMIR: *But we could have done without it.*
ESTRAGON: *Que voulez-vous?*
VLADIMIR: *I beg your pardon?*
ESTRAGON: *Que voulez-vous.*
VLADIMIR: *Ah! que voulez-vous. Exactly.*
Silence.
ESTRAGON: *That wasn't such a bad little canter.*
VLADIMIR: *Yes, but now we'll have to find something else. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:64)*

The focus of Richard Feynman's theory, which he established in 1949, is the creation and destruction of particles. This theory's philosophical implication is that of causality. Causality refers to the relationship between cause and effect, which is illustrated through the interaction that takes place between particles. If two electrons move towards each other and the one electron produces a photon at point A (seen as

the point of creation and cause), then that photon will be demolished at point B when it comes into contact with the second electron which marks the destruction and effect of the initial emittance of the photon (Gribbin, 1995:196).

Vladimir and Estragon's inability to make meaningful conversation with one another (cause) forces them to return to silence (effect). The two characters will always be in search of a connection point but will never be able to sustain it. On a close reading of the text, it is possible to detect 27 instances in Act I and 34 similar instances (to prove the case in point) in Act II, that illustrate the characters' constant attempts to connect with one another. Their continuous efforts to make significant contact with one another can therefore be seen to be reflective of Richard Feynman's theories regarding the behaviour of particles when they interact with one another by exchanging photons. The destruction of the photon can be related, metaphorically, to each time the characters fail to maintain conversation. The destruction of their exchange and their inability to make meaningful conversation is symbolised by point B, where the photon is destroyed on contact with the second electron. As a result, the two electrons continue to move, though in opposite directions. The two characters, reflective of the electrons, will always be in search of a connection point but will never be able to sustain it.

THE CONCEPT OF UNCERTAINTY

The twin paradox is a scientific metaphor to visually explain the principle of equivalence as well as the idea that time moves slower the closer its contact with a gravitational force. The twin paradox proposes that if one twin were to stay on the top of a mountain and the other twin at sea level, there would be a difference in the speed with which the twins aged. Admittedly, this difference would have to be measured over a very long period of time. However, the principle of equivalence has proved that, as the second twin would be closer to the gravitational pull of the earth, s/he would experience the flow of time slower than the first twin and as a result s/he

would age more slowly. If the first twin, however, were to journey on a space ship at almost the speed of light while the second twin remained on earth, s/he would return much younger than the sibling s/he left behind. They might not even recognise each other.

It is on this last point that I would like to draw a parallel with the text:

VLADIMIR: *How they've changed.*
ESTRAGON: *Who?*
VLADIMIR: *Those two.*
ESTRAGON: *That's the idea, let's make a little conversation.*
VLADIMIR: *Haven't they?*
ESTRAGON: *What?*
VLADIMIR: *Changed.*
ESTRAGON: *Very likely. They all change. Only we can't. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:48)*

Perhaps Estragon's statement about their unalterable state of existence could be interpreted as a direct result of Vladimir and Estragon experiencing the flow of time slower than everybody else. The rest of the world changes, but they are unable to do so because of the constant and inescapable inertia they experience due to the manacles placed on them by the flow of time, or the lack thereof. This idea is reinforced when Pozzo and Lucky reappear in Act II and Vladimir asks:

VLADIMIR: *And you are Pozzo?*
POZZO: *Certainly I am Pozzo.*
VLADIMIR: *The same as yesterday?*
POZZO: *Yesterday?*
VLADIMIR: *We met yesterday. (Silence.) Do you not remember? (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:88)*

Pozzo is now blind and cannot recognise Vladimir and Estragon—but he also fails to remember them. This brings uncertainty to Vladimir and Estragon as they now have reason to doubt the whereabouts of their own existence. In scientific terms, uncertainty refers to scientists' inability to determine the speed *and* the position of a particle at the same time. For the process of determining the particle's position will

influence the speed of its movement and vice versa. In the play *Waiting for Godot*, the question of uncertainty is further reflected by the two-fold appearance of the boy who also fails to recognise Vladimir and Estragon from Act I to Act II.

VLADIMIR: *I've seen you before, haven't I?*
BOY: *I don't know, Sir.*
VLADIMIR: *You don't know me?*
BOY: *No Sir.*
VLADIMIR: *It wasn't you came yesterday?*
BOY: *No Sir.*
VLADIMIR: *This is your first time?*
BOY: *Yes Sir.*
Silence.
VLADIMIR: *Words words. (Pause.) Speak. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:50)*

VLADIMIR: *Off we go again. (Pause.) Do you not recognize me?*
BOY: *No Sir.*
VLADIMIR: *It wasn't you came yesterday.*
BOY: *No Sir.*
VLADIMIR: *This is your first time.*
BOY: *Yes Sir. (Beckett, 1981 [1954]:91)*

Just as there is no evidence to prove that the boy in Act I is the same boy as in Act II, nothing definite can be used to verify that he is *not* the same person. Beckett's character list at the start of the play refers to 'a boy', that is, a singular boy, which indicates that in Beckett's mind the boy in Act I and the boy in Act II are indeed the same person. But the boy emerges from a void as from nowhere and his origin remains a mystery. Moreover, upon the completion of the deliverance of his message, he disappears again into the void.

When the boy disappears again into the void, one would assume that he returns to Godot. The uncertainty and questions surrounding the whereabouts and identity of Godot are probably some of the most debated issues in modern literature. Beckett's response to the countless enquiries as to what Godot symbolised was one of tenacity:

I do not know who Godot is. I do not even know if he exists...confusion of mind and of identity is an indispensable element of the play and the effort to clear up the ensuing obscurities, which seems to have exercised most critics to the point of blinding them to the central simplicity, strikes me as quite nugatory. (Cited in Fletcher, 2003:82)

The idea of Godot reflects the very essence of the uncertainty principle as interpreted by the scientist Werner Heisenberg, namely that atomic matter can be viewed as a particle and as a wave simultaneously. Godot may or may not exist. He may or may not arrive. The only evidence that confirms his presence is based on the deteriorating memories of Vladimir and Estragon and the vague accounts of the boy. According to these, Godot (with a black or white beard) might be cruel and/or kind; he could be doing nothing or something; and Vladimir and Estragon may or may not be tied to him. They will only know who Godot is and what they want from him when they actually see him in flesh and bone. The question of his existence and his nature reflects the unpredictability of quantum mechanics.

Just as scientists had to make peace with the idea that the nature of atomic physics is one of paradox and unpredictability, theatre scholars have come to accept that there are numerous ways in which one of the most famous plays of the twentieth-century can be analysed and interpreted. I conclude this chapter with the words of Samuel Beckett himself:

If life and death did not both present themselves to us, there would be no inscrutability. If there were only darkness, all would be clear. But where we have both dark and light we have also the inexplicable. The key word in my play is "perhaps." (Cited in States, 1978:92)

Because of this, we will all be eternally looking for the answers and, in the process, be waiting for Godot.

In this chapter I have shown how the key aspects that characterise the *zeitgeist* of the twentieth-century, namely relativity, uncertainty, ambiguity, causality and complexity, stem from the influence of the theory of relativity and have been reflected in the play *Waiting for Godot* in its treatment of time, space and character. The following chapter will illustrate how the absurdist's fragmented and

deconstructed treatment of time, space and character has completely disintegrated in postmodern theatre's application thereof, which in turn strives to simulate a worldview of relative timelessness and spacelessness.

CHAPTER 6

BAD BOY NIETZSCHE by RICHARD FOREMAN- 2000

By discussing Richard Foreman's text *Bad Boy Nietzsche* in more detail, this chapter will illustrate how the concepts of time, space and character have been treated with more and more fluidity in post-modern theatre resulting in fragmentation and deconstruction.

Postmodern theatre developed in a world in which the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics were established concepts. I do not mean to say that the theory is understood by all, but that its existence has become common knowledge which has filtered through in the way in which academics view aspects of reality. The main feature of the theory of relativity that has become a familiar concept with the layman is the equation $E=mc^2$, which places emphasis on how everything that we do is relative to our relationship with time and space in a particular moment.¹⁵

Furthermore, postmodern theatre arose at a time when the growth and development of the cyber-age has also altered our perception of the world dramatically. Through the internet, the world has become instantly accessible and inter-connected. This technological revolution thrives on the concepts of multiplicity and globalisation and it measures information as data, in bytes, gigs and pixels. However, even though the age of the computer enables easy means of communication and quantum mechanics enables us to view life in its smallest forms, it appears as if humanity is spiritually starving. According to Schechner, Foreman argues that:

The problem with the web is that all these alternatives are put there by consciousness. So you're choosing among alternatives that are only bits and

¹⁵ The equation $E=mc^2$, explains the relation between a proton's mass and the energy it carries mathematically. A proton is a particle which possesses mass. Its mass increases as the speed with which it travels increases. This implies that one will need an infinite amount of energy in order to accelerate a particle to the speed of light. E represents the proton's energy and m its mass. E and m are the two variables within this equation and the constant is represented by c , which is the speed of light.

pieces of what has consciously been wrought. People who project totally into the web are only dealing with “bits,” and each bit is defined. And this leaves a great void in people’s lives. (Cited in Schechner, 2002:118)

It is in this fragmented world of information overload that Foreman pursues his ontological quest to hold onto and question the essence of being.

THE CONCEPT OF DECONSTRUCTED SPACE

Where Chekhov created detailed and realistic spaces for his characters to reside in, Beckett’s creation of space is characterised by a sense of vagueness offered through the creation of a symbolic wasteland, that may or may not exist as a ‘real’ space. In contrast to this, Foreman does not aim to recreate a specific place or symbolic location but rather to construct a space that would reflect his own mental experiences of the world: “that is, the world as being pieces of things, awkwardly present for a moment and then either re-presented by consciousness or dropped in favour of some other momentary presentation” (Davy, 1978:114).

In *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, the space is a busy and cluttered one and serves to become an extension of the inner workings of the character Nietzsche’s mind. The reader should bear in mind that Foreman’s theatrical productions are detailed visual spectacles that are probably better viewed and experienced than read as a playtext. The meticulous set description illustrates the idea of a fragmented world compiled out of what on the surface appears to be random bits and pieces. As illustrated below, one of the ways in which Foreman visually creates fragmentation is through the division of the performance space by means of strings and wires. These strings and wires serve to measure and compartmentalise the space. A further device is the creation of perspective and depth by using different levels and plains.

The stage is a large dark room, with faded painted targets covering the walls like wallpaper. In addition, skulls and pillows are tacked up on the walls as

decorative motifs. All over the painted walls, scrawled illegible writing in chalk – as if a deteriorating Nietzsche had allowed his scribbling to escape from his notebooks and cover the walls as his feverishly productive mind overpowered his self-control. Half of the rear wall of the room is missing, replaced by a series of vertical planes lined up behind each other, each succeeding plane getting higher as they recede into the distance, all painted a reflective black, as if they were the planes of a stylized black ocean. Above the ocean is a decorated arch, beneath which a red sun framed by dark wings, festooned with skulls, rises over the ocean's horizon. In the shadows stage right sits a large cabinet with a protruding cannon. Pillowed benches line the walls of the room. Angling down from above the audience are two twelve-foot-long metal probes. Their rods, padded at one end like a swab, arrive at the front edge of the stage, tilting downward, with the padded end at chest height. The floor is coral pink, in shocking contrast to the dark walls, and at intervals on the walls and floor, large block letters spell out fragments of words. The name "Friedrich Nietzsche" in three-dimensional script, floats over the stage, as do many lamps. (Foreman, 2007:7)

For Foreman, the purpose of the various elements in his designs is most importantly to have function, which then could stimulate the creation of meaning through its functionality. He argues that “the complexity of the scenery is a major resource that enables me to suggest the jump from one level of meaning to another during the moment—by—moment action of the play” (Drain, 1995:69). This correlates with one of the key aspects of quantum mechanics namely the concept of unpredictability and randomness, which has influenced philosophic thinking in the twentieth-century. “Quantum mechanics predicts a number of different possible outcomes and tells us how likely each of these is” (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008: 92). To the audience, the landscape of *Bad Boy Nietzsche* appears unpredictable and random, but it is through the unpredictability and randomness, that Foreman offers a number of scenarios for our viewing, each containing the possibility of being significant.

While the audience watches, the space is manipulated to alter and contort, continuously making new meaning. It is as if the map of the internal world is being drawn whilst on the journey towards it, with the destination continuously shifting or changing. The text in performance becomes an ongoing composition. This contributes to the creation of what Gertrude Stein termed the “continuous present” (Davy, 1978:110) within a landscape rather than a space.

For Stein, the stage presented the possibility of fusing poetry and portraits and description, examining the ways we hear, see or read in the theatre. The notion of the landscape play was to provide the basis for the fusion of all these ideas. The materiality of the poetry, the actor and the stage would all fuse into the idea of a landscape. (Taxidou, 2007: 93)

Foreman hails the work and writings of Stein as one of the most important influences on his own theatre practice. Like Stein, Foreman wants to capture that consciousness which lies at the heart of metaphysical being. The play's landscape is a link or pathway to another realm, much like a scientific wormhole¹⁶. The audience has to jump from one landscape to the next in order to connect to the actual world of the play, which is the metaphysical world in which the concept of being can be investigated. Foreman wants to introduce his audience to the world of the ontological.

To achieve this, Foreman manipulates the audience's sense and experience of space through the use of sliding walls, moving screens and distortion of scale. For example, in *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, a wall slides into the space and hides the room behind it, as it slides out, it reveals four giant eggs. A moment later, the wall slides in and out, revealing an empty room again. Foreman alters the landscape's depth of field by changing the size and perimeters of the space, creating a new landscape. Foreman "corporealize[s] space" (Rabkin, 1999: 43) by confining his actors to particular positions within the space. In other words, space acquires the qualities of the physical when, for example, The Beautiful Woman is perched above the black ocean, or when first the Beautiful Woman, the Child and the Dangerous Man and later Nietzsche are confined within the cupboard. Nietzsche is also placed within a 'tent of sticks' (a belt strapped around his chest with long sticks attached to it) that confines and restricts his movements.

Foreman works with scale to shrink and contract his landscape. By using a giant pencil, giant egg heads, a giant cut-out puppet, a big loaf of bread, a large knife

¹⁶ A wormhole is a thin tube of space-time connecting distant regions of the universe (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008:109).

and oversized wooden phalluses in *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, Foreman alters our perspective of the space by making the rest of the objects in the space appear smaller than what they are. Furthermore, the floating lamps, letters and cabbalistic signs, the miniature boat and the sliding giant cut-out puppet frame the performers within the landscape by flying in and out of the space. Foreman describes:

the centre of his lust for the theatre as the manipulation of three-dimensional space, the desire to have moving three-dimensional objects and three dimensional space in relation to the objects. [...] I'm interested in the different ways people can be arranged in time in a particular space. (Cole, 1992: 131)

Ultimately, it is our *experience* of the space which creates meaning rather than what the space represents. This idea links with the philosophy of relativity where each observer has his own measure of space and time. For Foreman, we must look at each thing within the landscape as 'the thing in itself'. To do this, we have to approach the work through a Phenomenological perspective: discarding all previously taught and programmed ideas about the 'thing' encountered in order to come to an understanding of the essence of that 'thing'. Therefore, when we look at the skulls, pillows, black ocean and red sun which form part of the landscape of *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, we have to look past the symbols and meanings that each of these things initially conjure in our imaginations and engage with them as things (phenomena) in their own right.

There are, however, instances within the play where the audience have to rely on their imaginations. This is when Foreman makes use of what Jane Bowers terms "lang-scapes" (Fuchs & Chaudhuri, 2002:130) in order to create a landscape. It is the conjuring of a physical space through the use of language. The suggestive quality of language seduces the audience to believe that there is an ocean, boat and shipwreck in *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, though the only actual reference to these things are within the spoken text. Foreman uses the concept of the "lang-scape" on two other occasions in the play: Nietzsche arrives in paradise (Foreman, 2007:14) and later he walks upside down in China (Foreman, 2007:24).

Foreman's theatrical world simulates a self-contained universe where everything can just 'be'. The notion of a self-contained universe stems from the worldview offered to us by quantum mechanics. This theory proposes that if there is no boundary to space-time, "there is no need to specify the behaviour at the boundary—no need to know the initial state of the universe" (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008:103). A universe with no beginning and no end will be self-contained as it cannot be created, destroyed or affected by anything outside of it. This is much like the universe created by the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre.

THE CONCEPT OF FRAGMENTED TIME

In Chekhov's plays, dramatic time becomes real time as "time flattens out distinctions, renders human ambition futile, and forces us into a confrontation with the exact, and not the hoped for, quality of our lives" (Gilman, 1995:143). In Beckett's plays, the characters (trapped in a cyclical world where time has stopped) are at the mercy of time as they are victims of the "time cancer" (Counsell, 1996: 124) which brings about decay, decline and suffering. In Foreman's plays, there is an attempt to break away from what Gertrude Stein termed "syncopated emotional time" (Davy, 1978: 117), and in its place, to create a sense of the continuous present.

The aim of the continuous present is to limit an emotional response in the audience by preventing them from experiencing emotions ahead of or after a particular moment, which takes attention away from the 'now moment' of the play. Through the continuous present one should be able to observe consciousness, as, according to Stein "the human mind (being) is eternal and timeless, while human nature (existence) is time-bound" (Davy, 1978:111). If the action in the space does not progress and therefore remains in the present, the audience is able to literally zoom in and out of the presented images without falling victim to the jeopardy posed by "syncopated emotional time". Foreman argues:

I like to assume that the spectator is watching the entire stage at all moments of the play, so I try to make a stage picture in which every inch of the stage dynamically participates in the moment-by-moment composition of the piece. I might carefully adjust the tiniest detail, far away from what seems to be the focus of attention in the scene, because I want to maintain the compositional attention across the entire panorama of the stage. (Whitmore, 1994: 131)

In a world where the continuous present reigns, time gives way to space and spatial composition, for in the eternal present, the boundaries of time seem to fall away, leaving us with only space. However, this is an illusion for in reality time does not in fact stop. It is this illusion that creates, in the terms of scientific philosophy, a sense of space-time in the aesthetic world of the theatre. This enables the characters in *Bad Boy Nietzsche* to be in a shipwreck, in paradise or in upside Down China within a matter of seconds. Foreman alters our perception of time by creating slow motion and fast motion sequences that contrast with sequences played in real time. This results in:

the audience's perception ... of time [being] stretched, the ordinary laws governing phenomena [being] warped or suspended. The stage world is thus presented as a realm where events proceed according to principles different from those of the auditorium and its status as other-place is reinforced. (Counsell, 1996:187)

By using repetition, Foreman manipulates our experience of the progression of time with the result that everything remains in the present. It is what Stein termed "beginning again and again" (Davy, 1978:117). In *Bad Boy Nietzsche* the performers engage in the same actions throughout the duration of the play, which contributes to the play's cyclical use of time, by beginning again and again. As there is no narrative, this malleable treatment of time does not hinder the playwright's ability to portray ideas, rather, it enhances it. As much of our daily lives consists of repetition, Foreman's obsession with the concept is apt as it shows the pathway to an aspect of our consciousness and state of being. Throughout the play, Nietzsche throws sheets of paper up into the air and the scholars rush in to catch them. He also throws

himself onto the probes on the edge of the stage resulting in the scholars saving him. The sequence of the Dangerous Man whacking Nietzsche off his high chair with a golf club is repeated three times. The violence of this action, paired with the casual conversational tone of their dialogue, combine to create the absurd which is heightened through the repetition of the scene.

In the forty year period in which Foreman has created theatre, our understanding about the nature and qualities of time has shifted dramatically from the Newtonian worldview of absolute time. The theory of relativity has shown that the concept of absolute time is flawed as it does not allow for any variables. Instead of absolute time, physicists are in agreement that the idea of relative time is a more accurate model to describe the nature of time in our universe. This model places emphasis on the inseparable qualities of time and space, and that all perceptions about time and space are relative to each individual observer. According to the theory of relativity, time cannot be viewed separately from space as it joins with space in order to create space-time.

In the space-time of relativity, any event—that is, anything that happens at a particular point in space and at a particular time—can be specified by four numbers or coordinates. Again, the choice of coordinates is arbitrary: we can use any three well-defined spatial coordinates and any measure of time. But in relativity, there is no real distinction between the space and time coordinates, just as there is no real difference between any two space coordinates. (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008:35)

Furthermore, this model proves that the speed of light is constant, that gravity slows time down and that the idea of time travel is a viable theory and an actual possibility. According to relativity, if we could find a means to journey at nearly the speed of light, we will be able to travel into the future. And if you could journey at a speed faster than light, science argues that you will travel backwards in time, into the past. However, travel faster than the speed of light is an unlikely proposition and therefore we would have to warp space-time in order to create a wormhole that will allow travel back in time. Time can therefore no longer be seen as a constant unit

which can be accurately measured by a single clock. Time is variable and co-exists with space.

It is within this world, (which has accepted these theories as truth), that Richard Foreman strives to create theatre that communicates something about the essence of being. Foreman's use and manipulation of time, therefore, correlates with that view of time held by contemporary physicists. Through his use of repetition, jumping from one locale to the next and playing sequences in fast and slow motion he bends conventional dramatic time in order to present his audience with a sense of time that exceeds all traditional boundaries.

THE CONCEPT OF 'THE DEATH OF CHARACTER'

The section heading above refers to Elinor Fuchs's book, *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theatre after Modernism* (1996). In this book she explains that the kinds of theatre which strive to create psychologically-conceived characters (intended to reflect human beings in reality) are either dead or dying (Blum, 2011:1). The following discussion will illustrate how Foreman's treatment of the notion of character reflects the cultural trends of postmodern theatre that do not require the presence of character in order to convey meaning. In Fuchs' book:

the overarching thematic point is of course the death of humanist conceptions of character, which [she] traces to Nietzsche's proto-deconstructive rejection of German Romantic devotion to "inwardness." From this, she argues, three "tendencies" emerge: first, the "modernist mysterium"(individual character replaced by allegorical patterning, from the symbolists to Strindberg to Beckett); second, a Brechtian tendency (with its postmodern inversion into culinary excess which [she] calls "theater as shopping") and third and most persuasively-"theatricalism," this century's "favored dramatic mode to express the relative and multiple nature of self-identity." (Diamond, 1997:111)

In the current study, one only has to look at the three playwrights' initial description of character at the start of each text, in order to note the progressive fragmentation of the notion of character as mentioned in the extract above. Chekhov introduces his characters with detail, which indicates that each of these characters is an individual

with his/her own thoughts, emotions, desires and goals. For example: "Mme Ranevsky, Lyubov Andreyevna, the owner of the cherry orchard; Anya, her daughter, aged seventeen; Varya, her adopted daughter, aged twenty-two" (Chekhov, 1962 [1904]:3). In contrast to this Beckett merely lists his characters sparsely as: Estragon, Vladimir, Lucky, Pozzo and a boy. Although they are named, we are given no information as to who these characters are or where they come from. In Foreman's text, the reader does not get introduced to the presence of each character, but rather to the set. It is within the detailed set description, that the characters are mentioned as if they are props on stage.

In the play *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, the audience is presented with four ideas, rather than characters as Foreman argues that "character is an error" (Rabkin, 1999:121). These 'characters' have no names, history or back-story to which they belong and are simply named: The Child, The Dangerous Man, The Beautiful Woman and Bad Boy Nietzsche. Like the props in his plays, the characters are functional: they exist in the play's world to serve as mouthpieces for what the playwright wishes to communicate. But in a Foreman production, the delivery and presentation of text is not dependent on the actors or characters. Cabalistic signs, letters, fragments of words and phrases float in the space, which renders the actors need to speak almost redundant. The presence of physical text in the space, which is part of the "visual components of postmodern performances" (Blum, 2011: 2), is presentational just as the presence of the characters in the space is presentational rather than representative. According to Fuchs, the 'physical' presence of text and words in the performance space "complicate[s] the spectator's experience of theatrical presence [and] has important implications for dramatic character [as] character [becomes an] impression or inscription" (Fuchs, 1996, 74). This contributes to the postmodern view that the concept of psychologically-conceived characters is not crucial in order to communicate meaning.

The effect of Foreman's staged deconstruction of the speech/writing binary, and of his many forms of notation is not simply to disrupt the illusion of

presence and of autonomous characters. His penetrating interest in Being, in the “ontological,” is active sub-characterologically, attending to subtle shifts of consciousness and body sensation. To him, fragments of writing that are given an illusory coherence by his actors are not “characters” but constellations of impulses ontologically inflected. (Brater, 1990:84)

This, together with Foreman’s method of electronic manipulation of the voice, estranges the audience from the concept of character. At the start of a rehearsal process, Foreman habitually records his actors speaking the lines of the text. He then uses these recordings as a soundtrack to which he ‘choreographs’ the play. In performance the recordings are played at altering speeds and volume. Together with the voice-overs of *The Voice* (which are done by Foreman himself), extracts of music and sound effects, these recordings form part of the production’s intricate sound landscape.

The sound tracks for my plays became very loud, even assaultive, to echo the world as I experience it. I felt I needed something in my art that could match the degree of aggressiveness that washed over me as I walked the streets of New York. (Whitmore, 1994:183)

Apart from Gertrude Stein, Foreman hails the German playwright Berthold Brecht as one of the major influences on his work. This is especially evident in Foreman’s treatment of character, which can be seen as an extension of Brecht’s idea that the audience should be distanced from a character in order to avoid any emotional connection with what the character is experiencing. If Brecht’s characters are types, then Foreman’s characters can be seen as fragments of types. Foreman shares Brecht’s views about the danger of an audience experiencing empathy as he argues that empathy hinders an audience’s ability to engage objectively with the spoken word.

Another way, in which Foreman downplays and prevents the establishment of character, is by using untrained actors. Foreman does not allow his performers to invest emotionally in their text and the Stanislavskian concept of character analysis

is a taboo. Instead, he urges his performers to focus their attention on the creation of rhythm and structure and to let the space determine their being:

Richard Foreman works hard at breaking traditional horizons of expectations in order to get the spectator to see differently. He uses unexpected gestures as one of the chief means by which to bring the audience into a new mode of perception. "I frequently give the performers positions that put the body in a state of tension. Or I do the opposite; I give them positions that suggest a degree of relaxation inappropriate to the situation. Both options break through the shell of normal behaviour". (Whitmore, 1994:98)

In *Bad Boy Nietzsche* the three characters: The Child, The Dangerous Man and The Beautiful Woman serve as tools in an attempt to understand the complex nature of being. These three characters can be seen as aspects of Sigmund Freud's theory relating to the functions of the mind, namely the id, ego and superego. When one considers Foreman's quest to explore his mind through the medium of the theatre, it is apt that the three elements of Freud's structural model of the psyche are present within the play. The id could be represented through The Beautiful Woman, the ego through The Dangerous Man and the Child could be representative of the super-ego.

In the play, The Beautiful Woman represents passion and lust. Through her presence, Nietzsche's sexual desires and fantasies are expressed. The Beautiful Woman, with her bare breasts and alluring voice, is a symbol of man's instinct to procreate.

THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN: (As frantic music quiets, she leans seductively toward Nietzsche) *Say "need," Mr. Nietzsche. Say, "What do I need?!"*

NIETZSCHE: *Well I need you—looking at "me."*

THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN: *Well. I NEED it, too, Mr. Nietzsche—you (whips him once and he screams)—looking at me. (Foreman, 2007:25)*

The ego signifies common sense, reality and order and its function is to taper and control man's basic instinct which is aroused by the id. In the play, this aspect of the mind is embodied through The Dangerous Man who often belittles and ridicules

Nietzsche in order to curb his ache for The Beautiful Woman. In *Bad Boy Nietzsche*, the rational voice of reason belongs to The Dangerous Man:

NIETZSCHE: *Right this minute, guess what I'm experiencing.*
THE DANGEROUS MAN: *I really don't want to know about this, Mr. Nietzsche.*
(Foreman, 2007:10)

The presence of The Child completes the third part of Freud's model, namely that of the super-ego. The role of the super-ego is much like the role of a parent. It is our conscience which questions and criticizes all that we think and do. By moralising all our actions, the super-ego activates our ability to experience guilt.

THE CHILD: *Let's make a test. Suppose I climb up toward that little horse hanging from the ceiling, and start beating it and beating it – would you protect that poor little horse, Mr. Nietzsche?*
(Foreman, 2007:9)

The death of character can therefore be seen as “directly derived from notions reflective of postmodern thought such as relativity, indeterminacy, perspective, and plurality” (Blum, 2011: 2). This treatment of the notion of character, (as fragments of a whole), is illustrative of how our growing knowledge about the presence of atomic matter has influenced our perception of the world around us. Matter is made up out of atoms, which is the basic constitutive unit of everything that we can touch and see. “Atoms are made of smaller particles: electrons, protons, and neutrons. The protons and neutrons themselves are made of yet smaller particles called quarks” (Hawking & Mlodinow, 2008:70). Quantum mechanics has broadened our understanding of the world we live in by allowing us to conceptualise all the complex levels and parts of this world in its smallest forms. When we think about this world, we have to take all these aspects into consideration if we want to obtain a complete worldview. Although an atomic particle is just one aspect of this world, its existence is crucial for the existence of this world as well as our understanding of it. It is the presence of a multitude of particles which creates stability in the universe.

This philosophy, about how we view the world as a unit consisting of various particles, is reflected in Foreman's treatment of character. The characters in a Foreman production are like particles whose presence is crucial for the creation of a specific world. Although they are deemed (to an extent) unimportant by the playwright, the world of the play will not be able to function without their presence as they are part of something bigger and serve to complete the picture of the world of the play. For Foreman, it is more important to present his audience with an image of a total world which will communicate the essence of being, rather than to focus on the various aspects out of which this world is created.

In conclusion, this chapter illustrates how, in postmodern theatre, there is an absolute collapse and fragmentation of all the conventional elements of drama, resulting in a refusal of any sense of stability in terms of the playwright's treatment and the audience's recognition of time, space and character. In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate how, in Foreman's work, the notions of time, space and character become as relative and shifting as the worldview on which Foreman is commenting.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to examine how changes in scientific thought have influenced the *zeitgeist* of the twentieth-century and how this *zeitgeist* is reflected through the drama of the twentieth-century. In particular, how changing notions of time, space and character are reflected in twentieth-century drama, with specific reference to works by Anton Chekhov, Samuel Beckett and Richard Foreman. The study has attempted to show how particular philosophical notions that emerged in the twentieth-century, namely relativity, uncertainty, ambiguity, paradox and complexity stem from the changing worldview offered by the theory of relativity as well as the scientific theories which were enabled by the theory of relativity such as the Mach principle and the Feynman laws.

Scientific thinking regarding space and time has changed and developed dramatically over the past one-hundred and twenty years. Published in 1687, the Newtonian laws of physics dominated the world of science, as the most plausible description of the universe, for nearly three-hundred years. Newton believed that our universe was governed by absolute time and space. He described absolute time as follows:

absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without regard to anything external, and by another name is called duration: relative, apparent and common time, is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequal) measure of duration by the means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time, such as an Hour, a Day, a Month, a Year. (Born, 1962 [1924]:57)

Newton explained absolute space as follows:

absolute space, in its own nature, without regard to anything external, remains always similar and immovable. Relative space is some movable dimension or measure of the absolute spaces; which our senses determine by its position to bodies: and which is vulgarly taken for immovable space. (Born, 1962[1924]: 57)

The concepts of absolute time and absolute space argued that space and time were independent aspects of reality which could not be altered or influenced by external forces. They supported a worldview in which a sense of stability and certainty about the universe reigned. But the worldview which supported these laws had to be abandoned when Einstein was able to prove his theory of relativity.

Einstein's theory of relativity had a significant influence on the way mankind viewed the universe, for its theories and what these theories implied enabled a completely different worldview. Relativity reiterated the complexity of our universe as it proved that the concepts of time and space are relative and that the relation between things will never be a fixed constant. Furthermore, relativity illustrated that the world is filled with irregularities and that 'reality' will be experienced differently by different observers. Consequently these new insights, about the nature of the universe, influenced the 'spirit of the times' or *zeitgeist* of the twentieth-century. It prompted scholars in philosophy, literature and the arts to view their work and their work's relation to this relative world in a completely different light.

The premise of this thesis was to establish to what extent these changing notions in scientific thinking, specifically those pertaining to time and space, are aligned with the playwrights' handling of these concepts within the drama (whether consciously or unconsciously), and how the treatment of these notions in turn have influenced the role and function of the dramatic element of character.

Gilman draws the following comparisons between the *oeuvres* of Chekhov and Beckett:

For whatever the differences in their work of utterance, gesture, and *mise en scène*, the geniuses of Chekhov and Beckett share some common grounds and intentions: they will not make theatre as they have seen it being made; they will present new relationships and not new tales; they will use the stage for the creation of consciousness and not for its reflection; and they will offer neither solutions nor prescriptions, not even heightened emotion, but mercilessly stripped artefacts of the imagination that will present our "deepest" story. (Gilman, 1995:123)

I have argued that it is possible to include the *oeuvre* of Richard Foreman in Gilman's comparative description of the works of Chekhov and Beckett above. Although the *mise en scène* of Foreman's work differs significantly from that of Chekhov and Beckett, the desire to create something new is shared by the postmodern director, Foreman. The latter's theatre is devoid of narrative (or as Gilman puts it 'tales') in order to visually and aurally explore the multitude of relationships with our surroundings, created through the various levels of our consciousness. Like his predecessors, Foreman's theatre concentrates on eliminating the audience's emotional involvement in order to journey to a realisation of the essence of being and consciousness. For the quest of the Hysteric-Ontological theatre is to tell humanity's most private and innermost story.

In summary, I have tried to illustrate how the works of the playwrights Anton Chekhov, Samuel Beckett and Richard Foreman ask questions about what it means to be human in a particular era of the twentieth-century and how each of them responds to the questions in a different manner which corresponds to his lived experience of that particular time. In their work, this is reflected in the way in which they use and manipulate the dramatic concepts of time, space and character.

At the start of the twentieth-century, the proto-modernist Anton Chekhov created characters and used the concepts of time and space in a way which was frowned upon by his contemporaries as it reflected the abandonment of the idea of absolute time. His treatment of these concepts illustrated a sense of fluidity and freedom which steered away from the realistic and representational approach of the Naturalists, but rather mirrored the relativistic and uncertain qualities of man's existence at the turn of the century.

Fifty years later, after two world wars and the detonation of the first atom bomb, the absurdist Samuel Beckett wrote a prolific play which reflected a world immersed in paradox and ambiguity. By creating paradoxical characters and placing them in a vacuous wasteland ruled by the ambiguity of circular time, Beckett's work

reflects and comments on the existential obsessions that characterise the *zeitgeist* of the twentieth-century.

Towards the end of the twentieth-century, the avant-garde and postmodern theatre practitioner Richard Foreman's work is synonymous with the philosophical ideas of complexity and uncertainty. Through a fragmented approach to time and space and a deconstructed representation of character, Foreman searches for meaning in a meaningless world. He comments on how, in a world which has been disjointed by war, terrorism and the cyber-age, humans have lost contact with the very nature of their beings because of the uncertainty brought about by the relativity of being itself.

The development of scientific thinking, over the last one-hundred and twenty years, has had an undeniable influence on the way in which we view the world, as it has offered us a means to understand more about the complexity of the world. It is my contention that as a result of this influence, the use and treatment of the dramatic notions of time, space and character have also changed and altered over the last one-hundred and twenty years of theatre making and that the examples in the current study bear this out.

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