

Oh the Sorrow...

During the 20th century, there was an evident disillusion and disintegration in religious views and human nature due to the horrific and appalling events and improvements in technology of this time, such as the Holocaust and the creation of the atom bomb. This has left people with little, if any, faith in powers above or in their own kind, leaving them to linger in feelings of despair and that life is an absurd joke. From these times grew the Theater of Absurd. Here they attempted to depict the very illogical and ridiculous life they were living. In comparison to traditional characteristics of earlier plays, the plots are seemingly deficient, if not sparse with little resolution. Yet despite this, these plays make very bold and philosophical statements about life in the 20th century. The playwrights indiscreetly utilize metaphoric and symbolic details to support their message. In "Krapp's Last Tape," Samuel Beckett exploits such techniques in expressing his own bleak and pessimistic view of the world.

In his middle years of his life, Krapp retained this rigid and anal retentive nature. He kept these tapes in which he would constantly reevaluate his own life and try to always improve it, using these tapes as "help before embarking on a new retrospect" (1629). He had also stored these various tapes organized in boxes with their location written in a ledger. Yet in his latter years, there is an apparent decay of this regimental attitude. His very appearance is an indication of this decline. He is described as wearing "Rusty black narrow trousers too short for him. Rusty black sleeveless waistcoat. Surprising pair of dirty white boots. Disordered gray hair. Unshaven. Very near-sighted (but unspectacled)," which is not the description of an anal retentive person (1627). Also despite the ledger and the boxes, he still cannot find the tapes which evidently have obviously become disorganized over time. And in his ledger, he has made various notes about the subject matter of tapes, but he fails to understand them. In addition, while reviewing his last tape, his younger self begins to speak of his profound revelation that has changed his life, but impatiently the elder Krapp forwards past it. His goal of self-improvement has unmistakably been abandoned and replaced by an uncaring and callous temperament. These remnants of his once fastidious nature, further support the deterioration of his former self.

Beckett also bestows the use of color to further uphold his view on life. He manipulates imagery of the color black to further intensify the mood of pessimism and death. By the house on the canal, Krapp recollects of a "dark young beauty with a black hooded perambulatory" (1630). Beckett describes this baby carriage as being a "most funeral thing," resembling the lack of hope that baby has as if it would better off dead (1630). This usage of color can also be seen when his mother had passed away. At the very moment his mother was "all over and done with," Krapp is sitting holding onto "a small, old, black rubber ball" that he had been playing with a dog with (1630-1). For a moment, he considers keeping this as a cherishable memento of his mother's death which he would "feel until his dying day. But I gave it to the dog" (1631). He simply imparts these reminiscent and sentimental thoughts of his mother to a dog, reflective of the relationship and his feelings towards his mother.

Further use of color as symbolic imagery is seen with the various women Krapp encounters in his life. As he attempts to find happiness in his various relationships, he merely just falls further from this goal, which is represented in the decline of color. During his youngest years, he is involved in a relationship with Bianca, "a girl in a shabby green coat" which ends up failing (1630). He next

encounters a nurse "all white and starch," representing her purity and perfection (1630). Though despite her beauty, she is unattainable for Krapp for she threatens to a call a policeman. He is next in a relationship with Effe, who is not physically described besides the scratch on her thigh. For Krapp, because of this flaw, she is imperfect, therefore he cannot find any happiness with her. Then finally, he resorts to Fanny, "a bony old ghost of a whore" (1633). Their relationship is not even described, but is merely implied as purely sexual on Krapp's part. As the colors disappear to nothingness so does his chances of acquiring any possible happiness.

Though Samuel Beckett does not yield any kind of complex profound plot, he provide an intriguing and outstanding job of exploiting the details of imagery and dialogue to express his despairing and cynical interpretation of the world. Because of his emphasis upon the "trifles" of the play, he is able to reemphasize and convincingly convey Krapp's disenchantment with his own life.

Works Cited:

Beckett, Samuel. "Krapp's Last Tape," *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. Ed. Michael Meyers. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993. 1627-1633.