

Translating Performability: Samuel Beckett's  
*A Piece of Monologue*



Emily Brouwer  
4140001  
MA Thesis - Translation  
Supervisor: Dr. Onno Kusters  
Second Reader: Dr. Cees Koster  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the notion of ‘performability’ in drama, and how this can be processed in translation. The focus lies on the short play entitled *A Piece of Monologue* (1979) by Samuel Beckett. The text is analysed and the translation problems are categorised using Christiane Nord’s four categories (pragmatic, culture-specific, linguistic, and text-specific problems). The entire text has been translated into Dutch with regard to its performability accompanied by explanatory footnotes. A brief comparison follows between the translation by Ruud Hisgen and Paul Regeer published in the magazine *Raster*, and the translation executed for this thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1977, actor David Warrilow wrote a letter to playwright Samuel Beckett, requesting him to write him a solo piece. Warrilow had “had an image of a man standing on stage lit from above. He’s standing there in a sort of cone of light. You couldn’t see his face and he’s talking about death” (Knowlson 649). Beckett liked the idea, but was unsure he would be able to write a whole piece about death. He advised Warrilow to make a selection from existing texts, but started writing a new piece beginning with: ‘My birth was my death’; a text he entitled ‘Gone’ (Knowlson 649). Beckett wrote in the first person singular and used images of memories from his childhood:

[H]is father teaching him how to strike a match on his buttocks; the various operations involved in lighting an old-style oil lamp [...]; what his mother had told him about how he was born just as the sun was sinking behind the larches; a gleam of light catching the large brass bedstead that had stood in his parents’ bedroom at Cooldrinagh. (Knowlson 650)

Beckett also wrote out how many days he had lived, and the funerals he had attended for his father, mother, uncle and other relatives at the Protestant cemetery at Greystones (Knowlson 650). He worked on ‘Gone’ for a while, but left it unfinished for over a year until Martin Esslin wrote to him, asking him if he “had an unpublished piece that could appear in the *Kenyon Review*” (Knowlson 650). Beckett replied:

It broke down as usual after a few thousand groans, but is not perhaps definitely down the drain. Just text, no stage directions, but I could manage one or two to give it an air. It could be entitled *From an abandoned (interrupted) soliloquy*. I’ll dig it up and clean it up, or the best of it, when I get back to Paris end of this week, and send it on. To give you a little pleasure wd. give me much. (Knowlson 651)

Beckett retyped the piece, revised it and added some stage directions. He sent a copy to Esslin and one to Warrilow. Eventually it was entitled *A Piece of Monologue* and was first performed by Warrilow in December 1979 at La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, New York.

## METHOD

This thesis will offer an annotated translation of *A Piece of Monologue* (hereafter referred to as APM) into Dutch. The focus will lie on the performability of the text in Dutch and which changes need to be made from source text to target text in order to make the play performable in Dutch. Firstly, the concept of performability will be explained and the difference between a written text with readers and a performance with an audience will become clear with regards to what needs to be taken into consideration when translating a play. Secondly, APM will be contextualised within Beckett's oeuvre and the different themes and motifs of the play will be discussed. The third part of this thesis will highlight the main translation issues using Christiane Nord's categorisation of pragmatic, culture-specific, linguistic and text-specific problems. It will then go on to discuss my translation strategy. My own annotated translation will be the fifth part of this thesis. After having translated the piece, the existing translation by Ruud Hisgen and Paul Regeer from 1986 will be compared to it. Finally, conclusions will be drawn as to the effect of performability of the translation of APM into Dutch.

## 1. PERFORMABILITY

### 1.1 Performability in Translation

Much has been written about translating theatre texts. One of the most important aspects to take into consideration when translating for the stage is the concept of ‘performability’. This term has no clear definition and there are many different interpretations of what it entails. Susan Bassnett, who has written many articles about performability in relation to translating plays, claims that the term is often used “to describe the indescribable, the supposedly existent concealed gestic text within the written” (1991: 102). According to Bassnett, because the term has never been clearly defined and does not really exist outside of the English language, it often comes to mean that the target text needs fluent speech rhythms. The term ‘performability’ is therefore often linked to ‘speakability’. Bassnett concludes that “[w]hat this amounts to in practice is that each translator decides on an entirely *ad hoc* basis what constitutes a speakable text for performers. There is no sound theoretical base for arguing that ‘performability’ can or does exist” (1991:102).

Josep Marco agrees with Bassnett that performability is a difficult term, but he feels that it should be tried to be defined through research. He suggests looking at what directors and actors do in performance, “as well as to study the criteria that have made a play performable, rather than to analyse the theatrical potential of the text *a priori*” (61).

However, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt is of the opinion that “[a] play is written for a performance and must beactable and speakable. Therefore, non-verbal and cultural aspects as well as staging problems have to be taken into consideration” (8). If the symbolic signs, or as Bassnett calls it ‘gestic text’, are not translated properly into the target culture, the meaning of the play can be “distorted and misinterpreted” (Zuber-Skerritt 8). These symbolic signs entail the visual (for instance, certain movements described in the stage directions), acoustic (for instance, the use of different dialects for different characters) and linguistic (for instance, repetitions) signs.

Eva Espasa agrees with Bassnett that performability is often associated with speakability or ‘breathability’. However, she also claims that performability “is synonymous to and interchangeable with theatricality, playability, actability and theatre specificity” (qtd. in Che 262). Joseph Suh Che elaborates on this by stating that performability is therefore not “a quality or an essence inherent to the text but rather a pragmatic use of the scenic instrument. [...] [O]ne cannot therefore talk about an abstract, universal notion of performability and this

is bound to vary depending on the ideology and style of presentation of the company or the cultural milieu” (262). Bassnett has also written about the impossibility of finding criteria to define the performability of a text, claiming that “those criteria would constantly vary, from culture to culture, from period to period and from text type to text type” (1991: 102). Trying to find universal criteria to fit into all the different theatre traditions would be impossible. Bassnett believes that, because performability is an undefinable term that translators seem to use as justification for their translations, performability must be set aside “as a criterion for translating” (2014: 102), and that the focus must be on “the linguistic structures of the text itself” (2014: 102). She concludes:

For, after all, it is only within the written that the performable can be encoded and there are infinite performance decodings possible in any playtext. The written text [...] is the raw material on which the translator has to work and it is with the written text, rather than with hypothetical performance, that the translator must begin. (2014:101-102)

In making the translation for this thesis the performability will be abstracted from the source text. Following Bassnett’s advice, the focus will lie on the linguistic elements of the source text, which will be translated into the target text. However, the notion of semiotics must also be addressed briefly. Elam Keir writes about theatrical semiosis, using Petr Bogatyrev’s influential essay: “the stage radically transforms all object and bodies defined within it, bestowing upon them an overriding signifying power which they lack – or which at least is less evident – in their normal social function” (5). Keir calls this the “semiotization of the object” (6): the object shown on stage is no longer only practical, but becomes symbolic or signifying (Keir 6). Although APM has very few objects on stage, they do play a significant role. The lamp is as tall as the Speaker and has a “skull-sized white globe” (APM 1), which obviously acts as a kind of double for the Speaker. APM does not contain many significant details, simply because there are not many objects on stage (a lamp, a bedframe, the actor with white hair wearing white socks and a white nightgown). The objects that are present can be quite easily transposed into a Dutch theatre setting, because they will have the same semiotic significance for a Dutch audience.

## 1.2 Theatre Translation

Most scholars agree that translating for the stage is very different to translating other literary genres. First of all, the text will be heard by an audience instead of read by a reader.

Bassnett argues that:

a theatre text exists in a dialectical relationship with the performance of that text. [...] The translator is effectively being asked to accomplish the impossible – to treat a written text that is part of a larger complex of sign systems [...] as if it were a literary text, created solely for the page, to be read off that page. (2014: 87)

She continues this argument by stating that often in prose and poetry it is claimed that things get lost in translation. However, for a theatre text it is quite the opposite. She states: “What we have instead is the notion of the playtext that is somehow incomplete in itself until realised in performance. The play is therefore something that fails to achieve wholeness until it is made physical” (1998: 91).

According to Loren Kruger, the translation of theatre texts is not about being faithful or free, but rather a negotiation between “effacing the work of translation in the interest of immediate communication with the local audience, and disclosing that work so as to communicate the challenge to communication posed by differences in language and culture” (355). She claims that it is not possible to remain true to an original text, because that original is not timeless and the norms of performance change throughout time (355). Her solution is that “the text must anticipate not only the linguistic codes of the target language but also the conventions governing actors and audiences in the receiving house” (355). Accordingly, the effect of the performance of APM in front of a Dutch audience must be as equivalent as possible to a performance to an English audience.

### 1.3 Types and Strategies of Theatre Translation

Louis Nowra states there are three types of theatre translation (14). The first one is the literal translation, which he claims does not work on stage because these texts become unspeakable. The second type is the direct translation. The translator tries to translate the text as if it had been written in the target language without changing the structure of the play or the meaning of the words. Nowra claims this is the most difficult type of translation, because the translator constantly has to choose between “recording the words of the original or giving their meaning” (14). The third type is the free translation, where the meaning is given preference over the actual words of the author. This strategy distorts the content and is often seen as an adaptation rather than a translation (14).



Bassnett, in her article ‘Ways through the Labyrinth’ (originally published in 1985), offers five different translation strategies for translating theatre texts. The first one is “treating the theatre text as a literary work” (2014: 90). She claims this is the most common form, often used when complete works of a certain playwright are translated or when the translation is used for publication, not for actual performance. The second strategy is “using the SL [source language] cultural context as frame text” (2014: 90), which means that stereotypical images from the target culture are used to create a comical, farcelike frame. The third option is “translating ‘performability’” (2014: 90), whereby translators claim to take the ‘performability’ or ‘speakability’ of a text into account. However, as indicated before, the term ‘performability’ is never clearly defined. According to Bassnett the term implies “an attempt in the TL [target language] to create fluent speech rhythms and so produce a text that TL actors can speak without too much difficulty (at least in the opinion of the translator)” (2014: 90-1). As an example Bassnett mentions changing an accent or dialect from the source language into an equivalent one in the target language. The fourth strategy is “creating source language verse drama in alternative forms” (2014: 91). The main focus lies on the verse form, but this can often result in very “obscure, if not downright meaningless” (2014: 91) texts, because the dynamics of the source text change. The last strategy Bassnett suggests is “co-operative translation” (2014: 91). In her opinion this creates the best results and should involve either a native speaker from the source language and one from the target language, or someone “with knowledge of the SL who works together with the director and/or actors who are to present the work” (2014: 91). The notion of ‘performability’ is then not incorporated into the written text beforehand; the translator is able to work on the written and spoken versions at the same time. Different theatre conventions and audience expectations can be taken into account.

#### 1.4 From Page to Stage

It can be said with certainty that APM is not a standard theatre text. The text was originally written as prose and later converted to fit the stage. It contains specific stage directions at the beginning concerning setting, lighting and the visual appearance of the Speaker, but throughout the text itself there are no other explicit stage directions. Martha Fehsenfeld claims that “[i]t reads as if it were prose” (356).

According to Marek Kedziński, Beckett was able to adapt the prose text for the stage, making it performable, in a simple way:

His method in this case is not to try to recreate the dramatic within the prose, not to create the stage situation out of the narrative, but rather to add a new dimension: to place the prose text within the co-ordinates of the stage. He supplements the text with a specific stage situation. This situation bears a certain resemblance to the one described in the text, a resemblance that cannot be ignored. Yet, what we see on stage does not so simply illustrate the scenes from the narrative. (306)

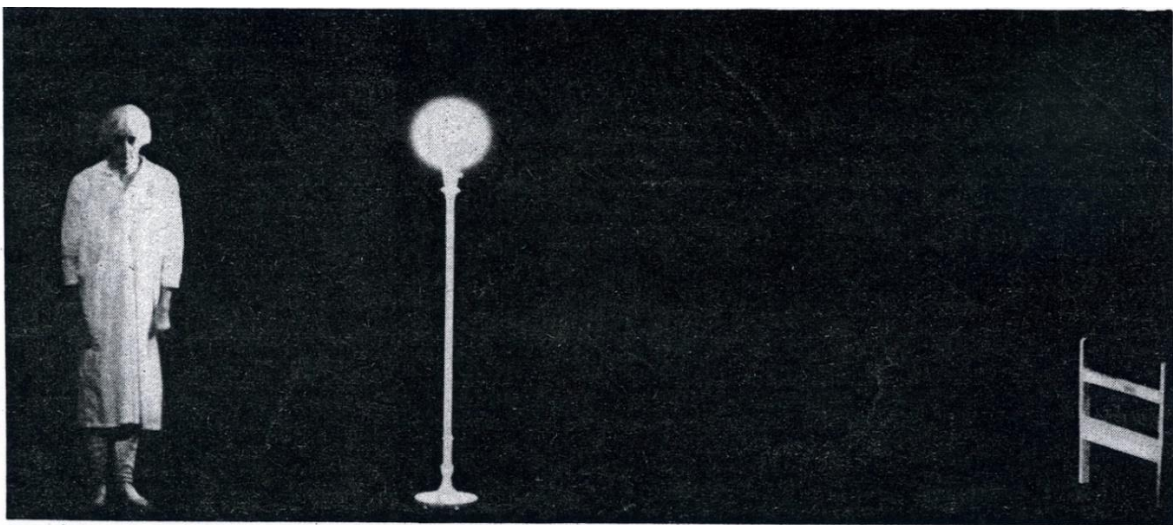
This can be seen in APM, where the Speaker describes certain actions, but they never actually occur on stage. However, because of the setting it becomes clear that the Speaker is talking about himself in his room. He talks about lighting the lamp which is next to him, the glimmer of the brass bedrail which is on the far side of the room. The audience sees everything he describes, yet there is never actually any movement or action on stage.

In APM Beckett uses poetic language, which “characterizes the reality in which the performance and audience participate as fictitious or as something outside or ‘beyond’ everyday reality” (Link 27). Franz H. Link claims that “[t]he particular language can, in this case, be considered as accepted by them [the audience] as communication in a particular kind of reality” (28).

What is striking in APM is that Beckett only put some stage directions before the actual monologue, and throughout the monologue itself there are no further stage directions. However, some of the phrases the Speaker announces seem like stage directions: “Match one as described for globe. Two for chimney. Three for wick. Chimney and globe back on. Turns wick low. Backs away to edge of light and turns to face wall” (2-3). He also uses the word ‘fade’ numerous times and talks of “edge of frame stage left” (3) and “coffin out of frame” (3). According to Kristin Morrison, “[t]he narrator is part of a play, and narrating he sounds like the stage directions of a play. Here Beckett compresses not only the syntax of his language but the two forms, the narrative and the dramatic, which he has employed throughout his work” (351).

Morrison claims that a performance of APM clearly shows the important relationship between the Speaker and the lamp: he talks about a man moving around and lighting the lamp, yet in the actual production the actor stands motionless throughout the entire play. The lamp in the narrative is lit and relit, dimmed or out, but on stage the light remains steady and only fades out at the end of the production.

It is often thought that the text is the most important part of a performance. However, the example above shows that there are other factors which are equally important. Tadeusz Kowzan distinguishes five different categories needed to make a performance: 1) the spoken text, 2) bodily expressions, 3) the actors' external appearance, 4) the playing space, and 5) non-spoken sound (Kowzan qtd in Bassnett 2014: 88). He claims that these categories are not hierarchical and all play an equally important part in the making of a performance.



David Warrilow in *A Piece of Monologue*

Setting for *A Piece of Monologue*

## 2. THEMES & MOTIFS OF A *PIECE OF MONOLOGUE*

There are several themes and motifs present in APM, which Beckett has used in many of his other works as well. Before the translation is made, it is relevant to know which are the key elements in the play text, so the translator can foreground these in his translation, if deemed necessary.

### 2.1 Birth

In his biography on Beckett, *Damned to Fame* (1996), James Knowlson writes about Beckett's curious notion of birth, especially his own birth. Beckett claimed that he had memories of being in his mother's womb. However, these were not positive memories. Knowlson writes: "the memories that, as an adult, he claimed to have of the womb [...] were associated more often with feelings of being trapped and unable to escape, imprisoned and in pain" (2). Beckett used these feelings in his works and "offered several different versions of his own birth" (Knowlson 2), yet all of them contained pain. He associated this pain not only with childbirth, but also with "the beginning of a long and painful Odyssey" (Knowlson 2). Beckett was born on Friday 13 April 1906, which also happened to be Good Friday. Knowlson claimed this gave him "a view of life which sees birth as intimately connected with suffering and death and which sees life as a painful road to be trod" (2).

The first sentence in APM can be seen as one of the most, if not *the* most, important sentences of the play: "Birth was the death of him" (1). Warrilow had requested a play about death and with this sentence it becomes clear that Beckett saw his own birth very closely linked with death. The sentence is repeated throughout the play. In particular the word 'birth' is important in APM. The Speaker describes how the word is formed in his mouth, almost as if it were a birth in itself, the tongue thrusting forward between the lips.

This connection between words and life is also something Beckett has previously used in works. According to Linda Ben-Zvi, "Beckett connects birth and life with man's need to find words to talk about his living" (par. 18). Ben-Zvi even goes so far as to analyse the following sentences from APM: "Words are few. Dying too. Birth was the death of him. Ghastly grinning ever since. Up at the lid to come. In cradle and crib. At suck first fiasco" (1). She claims these sentences develop in the same way as human speech develops: "the velar stops g and c, followed by the more sophisticated fricative f, and finally giving way to rhyme

and more complex language structures and transpositions: ‘From mammy to nanny and back.’ (1)” (par. 18).

## 2.2 Death

As mentioned above, Beckett felt that birth and death were very closely connected. Ben-Zvi uses the sentence from APM “Born dead of night” (1) as an example of a Beckettian device. Beckett connects ‘born’ and ‘death’ within a cliché and he uses this device to “image man’s entrapment in language as a corollary of man’s entrapment in the life cycle” (Ben-Zvi par. 17). The connection between birth and death also becomes apparent in “Sun long sunk behind the larches. New needles turning green” (1). Ben-Zvi argues that “[t]he death of the day is contrasted with the birth of the year” (par. 17).

In APM a funeral is mentioned several times and each time the image becomes more ominous: “Grey light. Rain pelting. Umbrellas round a grave. Seen from above. Streaming black canopies. Black ditch beneath. Rain bubbling in the black mud. Empty for a moment. That place beneath” (3). The second time the Speaker talks of a “Coffin out of frame” (3), and the third time it becomes “Coffin on its way” (4).

Birth and death are also juxtaposed by the detail in which they are mentioned. The play starts with the Speaker using ‘birth’ in full sentences, but as the play progresses, he is only able to utter the word until he cannot utter it at all. As the examples above show about death, the funeral becomes a more and more prominent image towards the end of the play. The focus on birth turns into a focus on death (Ben-Zvi par. 20).

## 2.3 The Self

Some of Beckett’s works revolve around the self, the human consciousness and the different layers of a personality. Beckett often uses doubles or recorded voices to show different sides of one person. Ben-Zvi claims that

[i]n earlier works, the verification of self often took the form of external testimony. One of the functions of the Beckettian couple was to provide evidence of an ongoing ego through the witness of an ‘other.’ If a character could not remember yesterday, there was always a companion to act as verifier to another time and another place. (par. 1)

Wilma Siccama points out that “[t]he exact repetition of the voice [through recordings] supposedly secures the reproduction of [the character’s] authentic self: self-presence is induced by hearing oneself speak, as the voice is the most authentically personal property” (176). According to Jane Alison Hale, APM is the first of Beckett’s works in which he manages to show the inner workings of a character’s mind without using other characters or recorded voices “to represent the multiplicity of the human personality” (114). The audience gets to see inside the Speaker’s mind. He becomes “not only the chronicler, but also the actor, director, and spectator of the character he presents to our eyes, ears and imagination” (Hale 114). Ben-Zvi even talks about a “schismatic self” (par. 5), with which Beckett “allow[s] the two parts of the self to exist simultaneously” (par. 9). It could be argued that the standard lamp in APM represents a kind of double for the Speaker, seeing as it is the same height as him and has a globe the size of a skull. However, it is the Speaker that talks about himself in the third person. Ben-Zvi argues that the Speaker represent the inner self, “that objective self that watches and reports but has no means of independent articulation of being” (par. 9). The Speaker remains motionless throughout the play, yet he describes a great deal of action: the figure “remains impassive, [...] while the voice within describes the man without” (Ben-Zvi par. 9).

#### 2.4 Dramatic Poetry

Beckett uses numerous poetic techniques and linguistic elements in his works. He plays around with language, as is also mentioned before. The Speaker talks about “thirty thousand nights” (1) and “two and a half billion seconds” (1), but those numbers do not correspond, because the nights work out to eighty-two years and the seconds to seventy-nine years (Ben-Zvi par. 9).

In Mel Gussow’s opinion, APM reads like a poem (*The New York Times* 1979), and Hale quotes Martin Esslin, who calls it a “visually fixed poem” (114): “[it] presents a single, immobile visual image accompanied by a meticulously crafted text whose skilful use of a variety of linguistic techniques clearly places it within the category of dramatic poetry” (114). Kedzierski debates about whether Beckett’s texts, such as APM, will be seen as “drama in the shape of poetry or poetry in the shape of drama” (309):

If it is drama in the shape of poetry, we are dealing with works which seriously modify our notion of theatricality, with a theatrical form in its own right, the *modus existientiae* of the

drama of the mind (embodied thought). In this case, one might say that, in order to solve his all-time dilemma of how to present the inner reality, Beckett subverts and deconstructs (systematically, so to speak) the principles and categories of our dramatic convention (such as character, dialogue, spacio-temporal referentiality, and of course plot). If it is poetry in the shape of drama, we are dealing with lyrical stage visions, extremely compressed in form and full of universal compassion, mutations of the soliloquy, wonderfully performable, yet undramatic. (309)

Morrison claims that “[t]he play is so highly condensed that it is virtually poetry” (352). Some of the poetical techniques Beckett uses in APM are alliteration (“ghastly grinning”), repetition (“This night”), rhyme (“Words are few. Dying too”), rhythm (“From mammy to nanny and back”), and plays on words (“Dying on”).

## 2.5 The Self-Translator

Beckett wanted to retain much control on his work. Not only did he translate most of his own works from English into French or vice versa, he also liked to direct his own plays. It was of great importance to him to have his original ideas and visions expressed in performances of his works (Siccama 181). As Wilma Siccama remarks, he wanted to preserve his authentic voice (Siccama 175). This is very difficult, because to go from paper to stage there will always be something lost and something gained. Although Beckett wanted to retain his own ideas, there are quite some differences between some of his English and French versions of plays. Siccama claims that “[t]his makes it difficult to decide which version, the English or the French, contains Beckett’s ‘primal word’, or which one presents the maker’s most authentic intentions” (182). Sometimes Beckett already started translating before he had even finished the original. The texts were made almost simultaneously. This was also the case with APM, which in French is titled *Solo* (Siccama 183). By self-translating, Beckett tried to reconstruct the self in language and narrative (Krance 135). One of the reasons Beckett wrote in French was to distance himself from his mother-tongue and with this distance he could, according to Charles Krance, “recreate for himself his own language and voice” (136). However, APM proved more difficult to translate into French, which Beckett thought of as “insoluble problems” (Knowlson 677). In the end it was “reduced to a free version, shorter” (Knowlson 677). According to Knowlson, the biggest problem was the word ‘birth’ and the description of its pronunciation: “[n]o similar word is vocalised in this way in French. So Beckett omitted whole passages from the French version which he called an ‘adaptation’,

rather than a translation” (677). In the first four manuscripts of APM, the Speaker talks in the first person, and the play opens as follows:

*My birth was my death. Or put it another way. My birth was the death of me. Let me say that again. Words are scarce. My birth was my death. Or put it another way. My birth was the death of me. Words are scarce. Scarcer than ever before. But not as scarce as they will be. The death of me. Titters ever since. With doleful countenance. In cradle and crib. At suck. That only fiasco. The first totters. From mammy to nanny and back. Sullen silent child. And it in titters. So tittered and tottered on. From funeral to funeral. To this evening.* (qtd. in Krance 136)

In the second draft there is more distance:

*Birth was my death. Put it another way. The death of me. Let him say that again. Words are few. Dying too. Birth was my death. The death of me. Smiling ever since. Woe-begone. Sickly smiling. In cradle and crib. At suck first fiasco. With the first totters. From mammy to nanny and back. Silent sullen child. So tottered on sickly smiling. From funeral to funeral. To tonight.* (qtd. in Krance 136)

Krance writes that Beckett changed the first person into the third person in the typescripts. Siccama concludes that: “Beckett tried to guard the uniqueness of his work through self-direction and self-translation, but these activities postpone and disperse the originality of his texts. Beckett only succeeded in creating new versions and more varieties” (184).



### 3. TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

In order to be able to create a translation-relevant source text analysis, Christiane Nord recommends the translator to classify translation problems into four different categories: 1) pragmatic translation problems, 2) culture-specific problems, 3) linguistic problems, and 4) text-specific problems. The translation problems found in Beckett's APM are mainly linguistic and text-specific.

#### 3.1 Pragmatic Translation Problems

Pragmatic issues mainly revolve around the reader's foreknowledge. Sometimes the time and place of when and where the text was written or takes place can be important and the target text reader should be (made) aware of this. In APM it could be useful for the target audience to know something about Beckett's work and the reoccurring themes, but this is not necessary to understand the play itself; it only helps to give a deeper understanding of the monologue, yet it can be understood without any foreknowledge as well. A pragmatic problem might be the gas lamp that is referred to. The Speaker describes numerous times how the lamp is lighted and which parts are lifted off in order to light the lamp. A contemporary audience might not know or might not have seen how an oil lamp works, but this becomes quite clear from the monologue and is therefore not a considerable problem for the translator.

#### 3.2 Culture-Specific Translation Problems

Cultural problems occur when there are differences in conventions or habits between the source culture and the target culture. In APM there are no significant culture-specific elements which could lead to translation problems, except for maybe the stage directions at the beginning, which are theatre conventions that are different in every culture. However, the English and Dutch conventions are quite similar and do not cause significant problems.

#### 3.3 Linguistic Translation Problems

These are problems to do with grammar and all linguistic aspects of language. In APM Beckett uses very short sentences, sometimes half sentences without a subject or even without a verb. He leaves out most of the articles, which sounds fine in English, but can sound very

staccato, incomplete or ungrammatical in Dutch. Especially in a spoken text it is important that the sentences sound clear. The audience only hears it spoken once, which is why the sentences should make sense (or as much sense as they do in the source text). It will probably be necessary to add some articles, subjects and verbs to some of the sentences in the translation for the text to be clear.

Many of the words which are repeated throughout the text are monosyllabic (i.e. 'birth', 'death', 'light', 'white', 'faint', 'dark', 'night', 'wall', 'gone', 'globe'). It is not possible to use one syllable words in Dutch for all these English words. Maybe it is also not really that important, but it does change the rhythm when longer words are used, and Beckett is known for using one syllable words, so it is also a part of his style of writing which should not be ignored.

Another element in APM which causes an issue is the use of personifications. The Dutch language, in general, does not use personifications as liberally as English. Therefore, some of these have to be altered in the translation. This, as above, might require a subject to be added to the sentence which is not an inanimate object.

A grammatical problem is the use of the progressive in APM, which the Dutch language does not really have a good equivalent for. When these occur, they must be translated differently depending on the rest of the sentence and the context.

### 3.4 Text-Specific Translation Problems

The last category are usually the translation problems that do not fit into any of the other three categories and are specific for one text only. The main text-specific problems are probably the poetical techniques Beckett uses in the monologue. There is quite some rhyme present, especially at the beginning of the piece. Beckett also, as indicated above, uses a great deal of alliteration and repetition. He repeats words and sentences, but the sentences are often slightly different or combine words that he has used before in a different sentence.

Another element which causes quite some difficulty in translation is the word 'birth' and the pronunciation of the word, which is described in detail and resembles a sort of birth in itself.

It seems as though, although there are no stage directions given in the body of text itself, that Beckett uses stage directions in the monologue, such as the words 'fade' and 'frame'.

There are a few other specific words Beckett uses which are quite unusual, such as the ‘rip word’, ‘pinpocked’ and ‘nevoid’ which do not have a direct equivalent in Dutch. There is also some discussion about what the ‘rip word’ means or refers to.

At the ending of APM, as mentioned above, Beckett uses the term ‘rip word’: “Waiting on the rip word” (4). According to Ben-Zvi this is connected to the “tearing of the blackness” (par. 21), but it also contains a reference to R.I.P. (*resquiescat in pace*, rest in peace), which “suggests that death is the final way of ripping the dark, of piercing that ‘other blackness’” (Ben-Zvi par. 21). Morrison has written a whole article about the ‘rip word’ and what it could signify. She believes it is in some way connected to ‘rip-tide’:

Thus just as one "waits on the tide" for an appropriate flow, so here the speaker waits on the rip word, that word which will lay bare what is at the critical center of his monologue. The rip word is that disturbance in the flow of language which reveals what is hidden, the unpleasant or discreditable truth which may be disguised or submerged but never completely evaded. The rip word is a break in the surface of the drama which reveals the truth of motives, feelings, themes. (349)

Morrison believes that the word which is referred to is ‘begone’ (APM 4), with which the Speaker “dismisses from his life that which he has always really wanted” (349). He is unable to face himself, speaking about himself in the third person instead of the first.

#### 4. TRANSLATION STRATEGY

For the translation of APM I will attempt to use Bassnett's third strategy, which is trying to translate 'performability' (2014: 90). For me, this entails that my translation is speakable and that it contains as many of the linguistic, poetical and text specific elements as possible. The aim is to make what Nowra calls "*direct* translation" (14), but there will also be some "*free* translation" (14) involved, because of the untranslatability of some of the textual elements, such as the word 'birth' and its pronunciation which will have to be changed in a Dutch translation. Of course, the best thing would be if I had had an actual theatre company to translate for and a director to cooperate with, but I have just translated the performability to how I think it comes across the best. With this in mind, I have therefore mainly focused on 'speakability' and keeping Beckett's poetical devices intact. The speakability was accomplished by reading different translation options out loud and choosing which one sounded better, which is of course very subjective. The poetical devices I have tried to maintain in the Dutch translation are: alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and consistency throughout the monologue. I have also tried to retain the themes of the play discussed in the chapter above.

The text has been translated with the idea that it will be performed on stage, and not read as a published literary work. It will be translated for a big theatre company, such as Toneelgroep Amsterdam.

Using Kowzan's five categories for performance, even though they are not hierarchical, I aim for the spoken text to have the main focus, because that is all I can actually work with for now. The second category, bodily expressions, can remain the same as in the original work: the Speaker stands motionless and has very few different facial expressions. The third category is the actor's external appearance. This can also remain the same as in the original play: an elderly man with white hair, white socks and a white nightgown. The playing space, the fourth category, has to be quite small and very dark. I think it would look strange if the actor was standing on a huge stage, because this does not fit with the play which takes place in a small dark room. The last category is non-spoken sound, but in APM there is no other sound besides the Speaker's voice. The staging for the translated piece can be the same as for the original work: an elderly man on a dark stage standing next to an old-fashioned oil lamp and the foot of a pallet bed.

Because there is only one character speaking, it will not be necessary to have different tones of voice or dialects from numerous characters. There is only one voice which needs to be transposed into Dutch.

I started the translation by reading the theatre text a few times, underlining repetitions and marking the alliterations and rhymes. I highlighted words which were repeated many times (“faint”, “light”, “night”, “white”, “globe”, “again”, “wall”, “gone”, “dark”). These words are almost all just one syllable, which I tried to retain in my translation, because it is something Beckett is known for. I watched the performance by Warrilow on Youtube several times, which helped in giving me a better understanding of the text. Then I did research on Beckett, his works and APM, which I used for the theoretical framework above. I started translating the first draft, trying to stay very close to the source text, when I had not finished all of the research. I then finished the theoretical framework and went back to my translation to change and fine-tune it. I wrote the additional footnotes as I was finishing my translation.

The hardest components of the translation were rhyme and alliteration. Here I had to choose between translating the actual meaning of the words or using the same poetical device as Beckett. I tried to compromise, but often let the poetical device overrule, even though I did try to find words with a similar meaning. The problem of the word ‘birth’ and its pronunciation was quite difficult to find a good solution for. I took inspiration from the Polish translator Antoni Libera. He thought about describing all the sounds of the Polish word for ‘birth’ (*urodzil sie*), or to describe a few of the sounds as Beckett has done. However, Libera felt that neither solution was good enough as it would disturb the rhythm of the text and would not have the same connection as ‘birth’ does to its pronunciation (Libera 1). Libera considered leaving the fragment out, just as Beckett had done in the French translation entitled *Solo*, but felt that “such a peculiar and interesting linguistic and poetic phenomenon is worth reproducing even if only halfway” (2). Libera chose to describe the articulation of the first sound of the word (an ‘u’ sound), as this is the turning-point and it can be “associated with the screams of a woman in labor” (2). His solution is: “*Wysuwa wargi i tworzy między nimi niewielki otwor* (he rounds his lips and opens them slightly)” (2). In my translation I have used two sounds of the Dutch word for birth (*geboorte*) and have tried to describe how they are formed in the throat and mouth.

## 5. ANNOTATED TRANSLATION

Een stuk monoloog

*Doek.*

*Zwak diffuus licht.*

*Spreker staat ver van het midden op het voortoneel, links vanuit publiek<sup>1</sup>.*

*Wit haar, wit nachthemd, witte sokken.*

*Twee meter links van hem, op dezelfde positie, dezelfde lengte, vloerlamp, witte bol ter grootte van schedel, zwak verlicht.*

*Net zichtbaar uiterst rechts, op dezelfde positie, wit voeteneinde strobed.*

*Tien seconden voordat monoloog begint.*

*Dertig seconden voor einde van monoloog neemt het lamplicht in sterkte af.*

*Lamp uit. Stilte. Spreker, bol<sup>2</sup>, voeteneinde bed, nauwelijks zichtbaar in diffuus licht.*

*Tien seconden.*

*Doek.*

SPREKER. Geboorte<sup>3</sup> was zijn dood. Opnieuw. Schaarste aan woorden. Die eveneens smoorden<sup>4</sup>. Geboorte was zijn dood. Sindsdien een grimmig grijnzen<sup>5</sup>. Naar het naderende

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<sup>1</sup> Beckett geeft vaak toneelaanwijzingen vanuit het publiek gezien. Ik heb deze behouden om verwarring te voorkomen met de toneelaanwijzingen hierna ('links van hem', 'uiterst rechts').

<sup>2</sup> Het was moeilijk te vinden hoe zo iets in het Nederlands genoemd wordt. Ik had 'stolp', 'bol' en 'kogel' en ben uiteindelijk voor 'bol' gegaan, omdat dit één lettergreep is en mijns inziens het duidelijkst weergeeft wat er bedoeld wordt.

<sup>3</sup> Ik wilde dat deze zin met het woord 'geboorte' begon aangezien het een van de belangrijkste woorden/thema's is van het stuk. Ik twijfelde tussen 'was' en 'betekende', maar ik vond dat 'was' ritmisch beter liep.

<sup>4</sup> Het rijm vond ik hier belangrijk en ik denk dat de betekenis zo ook nog wel overkomt.

<sup>5</sup> Ik wilde de alliteratie behouden.

deksel. In wagen en wieg<sup>6</sup>. Bij zuigen het<sup>7</sup> eerste fiasco. Bij het eerste wankelen. Van mama naar oma<sup>8</sup> en terug. Helemaal. Heen en weer getild. Zo verder grimmig grijzend. Van begrafenissen tot begrafenissen. Tot nu. Deze nacht. Twee en een half miljard seconden. Opnieuw. Twee en een half miljard seconden. Nauwelijks te geloven zo weinig. Van begrafenissen tot begrafenissen. Begrafenissen van... hij zei bijna dierbaren. Dertigduizend nachten. Nauwelijks te geloven zo weinig. In het holst<sup>9</sup> van de nacht geboren. De zon al lang gezakt achter de lorken. Nieuwe naalden worden groen. In de kamer neemt duisternis toe. Tot zwak<sup>10</sup> licht van vloerlamp. Vlam laag gedraaid. En nu. Deze nacht. Op bij het vallen van de nacht<sup>11</sup>. Elke nacht. Zwak licht in kamer. Waarvandaan onbekend. Geen van raam. Nee. Bijna geen. Niet zoiets als geen<sup>12</sup>. Op de tast naar raam en staart naar buiten. Staat daar te staren. Doodstil staren. Niets beweegt in die zwarte leegte<sup>13</sup>. Op de tast uiteindelijk terug naar waar de lamp staat. Stond. Toen ze voor het laatst uitging. Losse lucifers in rechterzak. Strijkt er een af aan zijn bil zoals zijn vader hem dat geleerd heeft. Haalt de melkwitte bol eraf en zet die neer. Lucifer dooft. Strijkt een tweede af als tevoren. Haalt lampenglas eraf. Troebel door rook. Houdt het in linkerhand. Lucifer dooft. Strijkt een derde af als tevoren en houdt hem tegen lont. Plaatst lampenglas terug. Lucifer dooft. Plaatst bol terug. Draait vlam laag. Loopt achteruit naar rand van licht en draait zich naar het oosten. Kale muur. Elke nacht weer. Op.

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<sup>6</sup> Alliteratie behouden.

<sup>7</sup> Ik heb bij meerdere zinnen een lidwoord toegevoegd om de zinnen wat natuurlijker te laten klinken en beter te laten lopen. In het Engels is het makkelijker om het lidwoord weg te laten, maar in het Nederlands klinkt de zin dan heel hikkelig of half af.

<sup>8</sup> Met *nanny* wordt eigenlijk kindermisje bedoeld, maar voor de klank vond ik 'oma' beter passen.

<sup>9</sup> Hier verlies je de verwijzing naar de dood (*dead of night*), maar in het Nederlands kun je dit niet idiomatisch zeggen en naar de dood verwijzen.

<sup>10</sup> Ik wilde het woord *faint* op alle plekken met hetzelfde woord vertalen in het Nederlands en heb daarom voor 'zwak' gekozen, wat op de meeste plaatsen goed werkt. Waar het niet werkte, heb ik voor 'vaag' of 'dof' gekozen.

<sup>11</sup> 'Vallen van de avond' is idiomatischer, maar ik wilde het woord 'nacht' behouden als er in de brontekst *night* stond.

<sup>12</sup> Ik twijfelde om hier 'Er is' voor te zetten ('Er is niet zoiets als geen'), maar vond dat het zonder ritmisch beter overkwam.

<sup>13</sup> Het woord *beyond* was lastig te vertalen en komt ook vaker terug in de tekst. Ik ben voor 'leegte' gegaan, omdat dit op alle plekken goed past.

Sokken. Nachthemd. Raam. Lamp. Loopt achteruit naar rand van licht en staat met gezicht naar kale muur. Ooit bedekt met foto's. Foto's van... hij zei bijna dierbaren. Niet ingelijst. Niet verglaasd. Aan muur genageld met nagels<sup>14</sup>. Alle soorten en maten. De een na de ander neer. Weg. Aan flarden gescheurd en verspreid. Verstrooid over de vloer. Niet in één zwiep. Niet in een vlaag van... geen woord voor. Van de muur gerukt en een voor een aan flarden gescheurd. Door de jaren heen. Jaren van nachten. Niets aan de muur meer slechts de nagels. Niet allemaal. Sommige losgewrikt met de tang. Sommige prikken nog een flard vast. Zo staat hij daar met gezicht naar de kale muur. Stervend. Niet meer niet minder. Nee. Minder. Minder om te sterven. Aldoor minder. Als licht bij het vallen van de nacht. Staat daar met gezicht naar het oosten. Kaal nagelgatig<sup>15</sup> oppervlak ooit wit in de schaduw. Kon ze ooit allemaal benoemen. Daar was vader. Die grijze leegte. Daar moeder. Die andere<sup>16</sup>. Daar samen. Glimlachend. Trouwdag. Daar alle drie. Die grijze vlek. Daar alleen. Hij alleen. Niet nu. Vergeten. Allemaal zo lang weg. Weg. Van de muur gerukt en aan flarden gescheurd. Verstrooid over de vloer. Aan de kant geveegd onder het bed en daar gelaten. Duizend flarden onder het bed met het stof en de spinnen. Alle... hij zei bijna dierbaren. Staat daar met gezicht naar de muur starend naar de leegte. Daar ook niets. Daar beweegt ook niets. Nergens beweegt iets. Nergens iets te zien. Nergens iets te horen. Kamer ooit vol geluiden. Doffe<sup>17</sup> geluiden. Waarvandaan onbekend. Minder en doffer<sup>18</sup> naarmate de tijd verstreek. Nachten verstreken. Nu niets. Nee. Niet zoiets als niets. Regen viel sommige nachten stil schuin tegen de ruiten. Of druppelde zachtjes op het pleintje beneden. Zelfs nu. Lamp walmt maar de vlam laag. Vreemd. Doffe rook vloeit uit opening in bol. Laag plafond bekleet door nacht na nacht

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<sup>14</sup> De herhaling van *pin* heb ik geprobeerd te behouden door 'nagel' te gebruiken.

<sup>15</sup> *Pinpoked* is geen bestaand woord, maar betekent zoiets als 'pokdalig door de *pins*'. Ik had hier als opties 'pokdalig', wat een bestaand woord is of 'nagelgrof', 'nagelruw', 'nagelgatig'.

<sup>16</sup> Rijm gaat hier verloren (*mother – other*), maar dat zou te geforceerd worden. Hier heb ik voor betekenis boven rijm gekozen.

<sup>17</sup> Bij geluiden en rook vond ik 'dof' geschikter dan 'zwak' voor de vertaling van 'faint'.

<sup>18</sup> Verlies van alliteratie, maar nog wel de d-klank die overeenkomt.



hiervan. Donkere vormloze vlek op vlak<sup>19</sup> elders wit. Ooit wit. Staat met gezicht naar muur na de verschillende beschreven handelingen. Dat wil zeggen op bij het vallen van de nacht en hemd en sokken aan. Nee. Heeft ze al aan. Heeft ze al de hele nacht aan. De hele dag. De hele dag en nacht. Op bij het vallen van de nacht in hemd en sokken en na het bepalen van zijn positie op de tast naar het raam. Zwak licht in de kamer. Onuitspreekbaar zwak. Waarvandaan onbekend. Staat doodstil te staren. Naar de zwarte leegte. Niets daar. Niets beweegt. Voor zover hij kan zien. Horen. Blijft zo staan alsof niet in staat opnieuw te bewegen. Of geen wilskracht meer om opnieuw te bewegen. Niet genoeg wilskracht meer om opnieuw te bewegen. Draait uiteindelijk om en op de tast naar waar hij weet dat de lamp staat. Denkt dat hij het weet. Voor het laatst stond. Toen die voor het laatst uitging. Lucifer één zoals beschreven voor bol. Twee voor lampenglas. Drie voor lont. Lampenglas en bol terug erop. Draait vlam laag. Loopt achteruit naar rand van licht en draait naar de muur. Het oosten. Stil als de lamp naast hem. Hemd en sokken wit om het zwakke licht te vangen. Ooit wit. Haar wit om het zwakke licht te vangen. Voeteneinde strobed net zichtbaar aan rand van beeld. Ooit wit om het zwakke licht te vangen. Staat daar starend naar de leegte. Niets. Lege duisternis. Tot het eerste woord altijd hetzelfde. Nacht na nacht hetzelfde. Geboorte. Dan langzame verschijning van een vaag<sup>20</sup> figuur. Uit de duisternis. Een raam. Op het westen. De zon al lang gezakt achter de lorken. Licht sterft. Straks niks over om te sterven. Nee. Niet zoiets als geen licht. Sterrenloze maanloze hemel. Sterft door tot aan dageraad en sterft nooit. Daar in de duisternis dat raam. Nacht valt langzaam<sup>21</sup>. Ogen naar het kleine venster aanschouwen die eerste nacht. Uiteindelijk draait hij weg met gezicht naar de verduisterde kamer. Daar

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<sup>19</sup> Alliteratie toegevoegd (drie keer v-klank).

<sup>20</sup> Hier kon ik 'zwak' niet gebruiken, omdat een 'zwak figuur' andere connotaties oproept, namelijk iemand die niet sterk is in plaats van een vage verschijning.

<sup>21</sup> Personificatie, maar gerechtvaardigd door voorgaande zinnen ('bij het vallen van de nacht').

uiteindelijk langzaam een vage hand. Houd een aangestoken fidibus<sup>22</sup> omhoog. In licht van fidibus de hand en melkwitte bol vaag. Dan tweede hand. In licht van fidibus. Haalt bol eraf en verdwijnt. Verschijnt weer leeg. Haalt lampenglas eraf. Twee handen en lampenglas in licht van fidibus. Fidibus naar lont. Lampenglas terug erop. Hand met fidibus verdwijnt. Tweede hand verdwijnt. Lampenglas alleen in halfduister. Hand verschijnt weer met bol. Bol terug erop. Draait vlam laag. Vale bol alleen in halfduister. Glinstering van koperen ledikant. Sterft weg<sup>23</sup>. Geboorte zijn dood. Die glimlach als een geboortevlek<sup>24</sup>. Dertigduizend nachten. Staat aan rand van lamplicht starend naar de leegte. In duisternis opnieuw heel. Raam weg. Handen weg. Licht weg. Weg. Opnieuw en opnieuw. Opnieuw en opnieuw weg. Tot duisternis opnieuw langzaam verdwijnt. Grijs licht. Regen plenst. Paraplu's rondom een graf. Van bovenaf gezien. Stromende zwarte gewelven. Zwarte kuil eronder. Regen borrelt in de zwarte aarde. Op dit moment leeg. Die plaats eronder. Welke...hij zei bijna welke dierbare? Dertig seconden. Om bij de twee en een half miljard te voegen. Dan sterft het weg. Duisternis opnieuw heel. Verdomde duisternis. Nee. Niet zoiets als heel. Staat starend naar de leegte half horend wat hij zegt. Hij? De woorden vallen uit zijn mond. Zich behelpen met zijn mond. Steekt lamp aan zoals beschreven. Loopt achteruit naar rand van licht en draait naar de muur. Staart naar de leegte in het duister. Wacht op het eerste woord altijd hetzelfde. Het zwelt aan in zijn keel. Hij opent zijn lippen en laat er lucht uit<sup>25</sup>. Geboorte. Spreidt het duister. Langzaam het raam. Die eerste nacht. De kamer. De fidibus. De handen. De lamp. De glinstering van koper. Sterft weg. Weg. Opnieuw en opnieuw weg. Mond wijd open. Een schreeuw. Onderdrukt door neusbotje. Donker. Grijs licht. Regen plenst. Duisternis verdwijnt.

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<sup>22</sup> Ik heb lang gezocht naar een ander woord voor 'fidibus', maar er bestaat geen passend synoniem voor. Het wordt nu eenmaal zo genoemd in het Nederlands. De reden dat ik een ander woord wilde, is omdat ik denk dat een hedendaags publiek wellicht niet bekend zal zijn met dit woord.

<sup>23</sup> Verwijzing naar het thema 'dood'.

<sup>24</sup> *Nevoid* is een bijvoeglijk naamwoord dat in het Nederlands geen equivalent heeft. Het is afgeleid van *nevus*, wat zoiets als 'moedervlek' of 'wijnvlek' betekent.

<sup>25</sup> Ik heb ervoor gekozen om de klanken 'g' en 'b' te beschrijven van het woord 'geboorte', omdat dit vanuit de keel naar boven komt en tussen de lippen door naar buiten komt als een soort van geboorte.

Stromende paraplu's. Kuil. Borrelende zwarte aarde. Doodkist buiten beeld. Van wie<sup>26</sup>? Sterft weg. Weg. Ga verder met andere kwesties. Probeer verder te gaan. Met andere kwesties. Hoe ver van de muur? Hoofd raakt hem bijna. Zoals bij het raam. Ogen gevestigd op venster naar buiten starend. Niets beweegt. Zwarte leegte. Staat doodstil te staren alsof niet in staat opnieuw te bewegen. Of de wilskracht weg om opnieuw te bewegen. Weg. Doffe schreeuw in zijn oor. Mond wijd open. Gesloten met uitstoot van adem<sup>27</sup>. Lippen op elkaar. Voel de zachte aanraking van lip op lip. Lip lippende lip. Dan gescheiden door een schreeuw zoals daarvoor. Waar is hij nu? Terug bij het raam naar buiten starend. Ogen gevestigd op het venster. Alsof hij voor het laatst kijkt. Keert uiteindelijk weg en op de tast door zwak onverklaarbaar licht naar ongeziene lamp. Wit nachthemd beweegt in het halfduister. Ooit wit. Steekt haar aan en beweegt om met gezicht naar de muur te staan zoals beschreven. Hoofd raakt hem bijna. Staat daar starend naar de leegte wachtend op het eerste woord. Het zwelt aan in zijn keel. Rolt lippen over elkaar en spreidt ze. Voelt hoe de warme adem naar buiten glijdt. Over zijn tong<sup>28</sup>. Staar naar de leegte door de kloof in het duister naar andere duisternis. Meer duisternis. De zon al lang gezakt achter de lorken. Niets beweegt. Niets beweegt vaagjes. Doodstil ogen gevestigd op het venster. Alsof hij voor het laatst kijkt. Naar die eerste nacht. Van zo'n dertig duizend. Waar binnenkort zal zijn. Deze nacht zal zijn. Fidibus. Handen. Lamp. Glinstering van koper. Vale bol alleen in halfduister. Koperen ledikant licht vangend. Dertig seconden. Om de twee en een half miljard te laten toenemen. Sterft weg. Weg. Schreeuw. Opgesnoeven met adem door neusgaten. Opnieuw en opnieuw. Opnieuw en opnieuw weg. Tot het graf van wie? Welke... hij zei bijna van welke dierbare? Hij? Zwarte kuil in plensende regen. Ver van de grijze kloof in het duister. Van bovenaf gezien. Stromende gewelven. Borrelende zwarte aarde. Doodkist onderweg. Dierbare... hij zei bijna dierbare op zijn weg. Haar weg. Dertig

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<sup>26</sup> Ik twijfelde tussen 'wiens' en 'van wie', maar 'wiens' is iets meer schrijftaal dan spreektaal, dus ben ik voor 'van wie' gegaan.

<sup>27</sup> Dit is de 'te' in 'geboorte', waarna de mond weer sluit en de lippen op elkaar zijn.

<sup>28</sup> Hier heb ik weer gebruik gemaakt van de 'g' en 'b' in 'geboorte' en heb ik vrij vertaald.

seconden. Steft weg. Weg. Staat daar starend naar de leegte. In duisternis opnieuw heel. Nee. Niet zoiets als heel. Hoofd raakt bijna de muur. Wit haar vangt licht op. Wit nachthemd. Witte sokken. Wit voeteneinde rand van beeld rechts op toneel. Ooit wit. Een beetje... toegeven en hoofd leunt op de muur. Maar nee. Doodstil hoofd omhoog starend naar de leegte. Niets beweegt. Niet beweegt vaagjes. Dertig duizend nachten van spoken in de leegte. Voorbij die zwarte leegte. Spooklicht. Spooknachten. Spookkamers. Spookgraven. Spook... hij zei bijna spookdierbaren. Wachtend op het rijtwoord<sup>29</sup>. Staat daar starend naar de leegte naar die zwarte sluier lippen bevend om half gehoorde woorden. Behandelen van andere kwesties. Probeert andere kwesties te behandelen. Tot hij half hoort dat er geen andere kwesties meer zijn. Geen andere kwesties ooit waren. Nooit twee kwesties. Niets behalve die ene kwestie. Dood en weg. De doden en het weggaan. Vanaf het begin. Vanaf het begaan.<sup>30</sup> Zoals het licht nu weggaat. Begint weg te gaan. In de kamer. Waar anders? Onopgemerkt door hem starend naar de leegte. De bol alleen. Niet het andere. Het onverklaarbare. Nergens vandaan. Aan alle kanten nergens. De bol alleen. Alleen weg.

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<sup>29</sup> Er bestaan veel verschillende ideeën over wat *rip word* nou eigenlijk is. Ik denk zelf dat het verwijst naar r.i.p., maar dat het ook met de duisternis te maken heeft en het naderende einde. Ik heb gekozen voor 'rijtwoord', omdat de duisternis wordt opengereten (*ripped*) en de Spreker als het ware ontwaakt uit zijn nachtmerrie en mag sterven.

<sup>30</sup> Het was lastig deze twee zinnen te vertalen, omdat er zoveel verwijzingen in zitten: geboorte en dood en de herhaling van het woord *gone*. Ik ben niet geheel tevreden met deze oplossing, maar ik vind het ritmisch wel mooi klinken en ik denk dat de betekenis er ook een beetje in gevat zit.

## 6. COMPARISON EXISTING TRANSLATION

The existing translation was made by Ruud Hisgen and Paul Regeer and was published in the magazine *Raster* in 1986. It is not clear whether this translation was made for the stage or for publication, but seeing as it can only be found in the magazine, it can be assumed that the translation was especially made for publication. When comparing the translation to the source text it is immediately noticeable that the translators did not use the poetical devices Beckett uses, except for the repetitions. Alliteration and rhyme are left out completely.

An example of where it is clear that Hisgen and Regeer do not retain the rhyme which is in the source text is in the translation of ‘Words are few. Dying too.’ They translate this as “*Woorden schieten tekort. Sterven ook*”. My translation: “*Schaarste aan woorden. Die eveneens smoorden*.”

The alliteration is gone in ‘In cradle and crib.’ (“*In wieg en ledikant*”), and ‘ghastly grinning’ becomes “*lijkegrijns*”. However, this loss is compensated by the use of assonance.

Something I like about the translation is the solution they found for ‘he all but said’ which is repeated numerous times throughout the text. Hisgen and Regeer choose a very idiomatic solution: “*haast had hij gezegd*”.

There is one example of where Hisgen and Regeer interpret something differently. The sentence ‘Not at one sweep’ is about the pictures on the wall. I interpreted the sweep as the Speaker ripping the pictures off with one swipe of his arm, but the other translators thought of it as sweeping the floor with a brush and cleaning up the pictures.

There is one inconsistency in the published translation, which is that ‘nightfall’ is once translated as “*bij het vallen van de avond*” and all the other times as “*bij het vallen van de nacht*”.

Hisgen and Regeer also keep some of the personifications: “*De woorden vallen uit zijn mond*” and “*Wit hemd dat beweegt door dat duister*”.

The description of the pronunciation of the word ‘birth’ remains the same as in the source text: it is described how the ‘b’ and ‘th’ are pronounced, which is quite strange considering that it now does not refer to “*geboorte*” anymore. The translators have chosen to stay close to the source text, but this means that there is a loss in meaning.

The translation of the ‘rip word’ is actually quite similar to my solution. They chose “*splijtwoord*”, and I used “*rijtwoord*”. In their translation they use the word “*splijt*” to describe the parting of the dark, so it makes sense that they would use it here as well.

They have found a good solution for the sentences with ‘going’ and ‘begone’: “*De gestorvenen die heen zijn gegaan. De stervenden die heen gaan. Vanaf het woord: ga. Het woord: ga heen.*” Although the last one is not one word, they have found a good way to use similar words and keep the meaning as in the source text.

Overall, I think the translation is adequate to be read. It remains very true to the meaning of the source text and uses idiomatic expressions. However, in terms of performability I believe that this translation is not suitable, because it has lost most of the poetical elements, which typify Beckett’s works and which make the text more interesting to be heard in performance.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The notion of ‘performability’ is a difficult one, as it is hard to find a clear definition of the term. Many scholars believe it is connected to ‘speakability’, and that a theatre text is always connected to a performance of that text; the gestic signs within the text must be taken into account.

When it comes to translating a theatre text, there are many different strategies which can be used. Bassnett and Nowra have both named a few of those strategies and argue that some work better than others, depending on the aim of the translation.

All these different ideas of what performability entails make it quite difficult for a translator to know what to focus on. The linguistic elements are an important part of a theatre text, but there are many other factors that are equally as important, as Kowzan has claimed. Maybe some set criteria could aid the translator, yet Bassnett already overturned this idea by claiming that these criteria would differ from each culture and time period. Ideally, the translator should work on his translation with a whole team behind him of theatre makers, such as a director, dramaturge, and actors (or in the case of APM, one actor). This could help the translator in making decisions and discussing his ideas and choices with professionals.

Within *A Piece of Monologue* there are many different themes that Beckett has used in numerous works. Birth, death, the self, dramatic poetry and the self-translator are the most significant subjects to be found in this monologue. Beckett used many autobiographical elements in the text.

Translating APM brings up a number of problems; mainly text-specific issues. Because performability has no clear definition, the translation was largely based on the linguistic elements. To translate this text with performability in mind, there are a number of textual elements which were of importance, namely alliteration, rhyme, rhythm and repetition. Articles and personal pronouns needed to be added in order for the target text to be more understandable and fluent. Some passages needed free translation so they would make sense in the Dutch monologue. A comparison with the published translation by Hisgen and Regeer showed that they paid very little attention to the textual elements mentioned above.

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APPENDIX 1: Source Text *A Piece of Monologue* - Samuel Beckett

*Curtain.*

*Faint diffuse light.*

*Speaker stands well off centre downstage audience left.*

*White hair, white nightgown, white socks.*

*Two metres to his left, same level, same height, standard lamp, skull- sized white globe, faintly lit.*

*Just visible extreme right, same level, white foot of pallet bed.*

*Ten seconds before speech begins.*

*Thirty seconds before end of speech lamplight begins to fail.*

*Lamp out. Silence. Speaker, globe, foot of pallet, barely visible in diffuse light.*

*Ten seconds.*

*Curtain.*

SPEAKER. Birth was the death of him. Again. Words are few. Dying too. Birth was the death of him. Ghastly grinning ever since. Up at the lid to come. In cradle and crib. At suck first fiasco. With the first totters. From mammy to nanny and back. All the way. Bandied back and forth. So ghastly grinning on. From funeral to funeral. To now. This night. Two and a half billion seconds. Again. Two and a half billion seconds. Hard to believe so few. From funeral to funeral. Funerals of . . . he all but said of loved ones. Thirty thousand nights. Hard to believe so few. Born dead of night. Sun long sunk behind the larches. New needles turning green. In the room dark gaining. Till faint light from standard lamp. Wick turned low. And now. This night. Up at nightfall. Every nightfall. Faint light in room. Whence unknown. None from window. No. Next to none. No such thing as none. Gropes to window and stares out. Stands there staring out. Stock still staring out. Nothing stirring in that black vast. Gropes back in the end to where the lamp is standing. Was standing. When last went out. Loose matches in right-hand pocket. Strikes one on his buttock the way his father taught him. Takes off milkwhite globe and sets it down. Match goes out. Strikes a second as before. Takes off chimney. Smoke-clouded. Holds it in left hand. Match goes out. Strikes a third as before and sets it to wick. Puts back chimney. Match goes out. Puts back globe. Turns wick low. Backs away to edge of light and turns to face east. Blank wall. So nightly. Up. Socks. Nightgown. Window. Lamp. Backs away to edge of light and stands facing blank wall. Covered with pictures once. Pictures of . . . he all but said of loved ones. Unframed. Unglazed. Pinned to wall with drawing-pins. All shapes and sizes. Down one after another. Gone. Torn to shreds and scattered. Strewn all over the floor. Not at one sweep. No sudden fit of . . . no word. Ripped from the wall and torn to shreds one by one. Over the years. Years of night. Nothing on the wall now but the pins. Not all. Some out with the wrench. Some still pinning a shred. So stands there facing blank wall. Dying on. No more no less. No. Less. Less to die. Ever less. Like light at nightfall. Stands there facing east. Blank pinpocked surface once white in shadow. Could once name them all. There was father. That grey void. There mother. That other. There together. Smiling. Wedding day. There all three. That grey blot. There alone. He alone. Not now. Forgotten. All gone so long. Gone. Ripped off and torn to shreds. Scattered all over the floor. Swept out of the way under the bed and left. Thousand shreds under the bed with the dust and spiders. All the . . . he all but said the loved ones. Stands there facing the wall staring beyond. Nothing there either. Nothing stirring there either. Nothing stirring anywhere. Nothing to be seen anywhere. Nothing to be heard anywhere. Room once full of

sounds. Faint sounds. Whence unknown. Fewer and fainter as time wore on. Nights wore on. None now. No. No such thing as none. Rain some nights still slant against the panes. Or dropping gentle on the place beneath. Even now. Lamp smoking though wick turned low. Strange. Faint smoke issuing through vent in globe. Low ceiling stained by night after night of this. Dark shapeless blot on surface elsewhere white. Once white. Stands facing wall after the various motions described. That is up at nightfall and into gown and socks. No. In them already. In them all night. All day. All day and night. Up at nightfall in gown and socks and after a moment to get his bearings gropes to window. Faint light in room. Unutterably faint. Whence unknown. Stands stock still staring out. Into black vast. Nothing there. Nothing stirring. That he can see. Hear. Dwells thus as if unable to move again. Or no will left to move again. Not enough will left to move again. Turns in the end and gropes to where he knows the lamp is standing. Thinks he knows. Was last standing. When last went out. Match one as described for globe. Two for chimney. Three for wick. Chimney and globe back on. Turns wick low. Backs away to edge of light and turns to face wall. East. Still as the lamp by his side. Gown and socks white to take faint light. Once white. Hair white to take faint light. Foot of pallet just visible edge of frame. Once white to take faint light. Stands there staring beyond. Nothing. Empty dark. Till first word always the same. Night after night the same. Birth. Then slow fade up of a faint form. Out of the dark. A window. Looking west. Sun long sunk behind the larches. Light dying. Soon none left to die. No. No such thing as no light. Starless moonless heaven. Dies on to dawn and never dies. There in the dark that window. Night slowly falling. Eyes to the small pane gaze at that first night. Turn from it in the end to face the darkened room. There in the end slowly a faint hand. Holding aloft a lighted spill. In light of spill faintly the hand and milkwhite globe. Then second hand. In light of spill. Takes off globe and disappears. Reappears empty. Takes off chimney. Two hands and chimney in light of spill. Spill to wick. Chimney back on. Hand with spill disappears. Second hand disappears. Chimney alone in gloom. Hand reappears with globe. Globe back on. Turns wick low. Pale globe alone in gloom. Glimmer of brass bedrail. Fade. Birth the death of him. That nevoid smile. Thirty thousand nights. Stands at edge of lamplight staring beyond. Into dark whole again. Window gone. Hands gone. Light gone. Gone. Again and again. Again and again gone. Till dark slowly parts again. Grey light. Rain pelting. Umbrellas round a grave. Seen from above. Streaming black canopies. Black ditch beneath. Rain bubbling in the black mud. Empty for the moment. That place beneath. Which . . . he all but said which loved one? Thirty seconds. To add to the two and a half billion odd. Then fade. Dark whole again. Blest dark. No. No such thing as whole. Stands staring beyond half hearing what he's saying. He? The words falling from his mouth. Making do with his mouth. Lights lamp as described. Backs away to edge of light and turns to face wall. Stares beyond into dark. Waits for first word always the same. It gathers in his mouth. Parts lips and thrusts tongue forward. Birth. Parts the dark. Slowly the window. That first night. The room. The spill. The hands. The lamp. The gleam of brass. Fade. Gone. Again and again gone. Mouth agape. A cry. Stifled by nasal. Dark parts. Grey light. Rain pelting. Streaming umbrellas. Ditch. Bubbling black mud. Coffin out of frame. Whose? Fade. Gone. Move on to other matters. Try to move on. To other matters. How far from wall? Head almost touching. As at window. Eyes glued to pane staring out. Nothing stirring. Black vast. Stands there stock still staring out as if unable to move again. Or gone the will to move again. Gone. Faint cry in his ear. Mouth agape. Closed with hiss of breath. Lips joined. Feel soft touch of lip on lip. Lip lipping lip. Then parted by cry as before. Where is he now? Back at window staring out. Eyes glued to pane. As if looking his last. Turns away at last and gropes through faint unaccountable light to unseen lamp. White

gown moving through that gloom. Once white. Lights and moves to face wall as described. Head almost touching. Stands there staring beyond waiting for first word. It gathers in his mouth. Parts lips and thrusts tongue between them. Tip of tongue. Feel soft touch of tongue on lips. Of lips on tongue. Stare beyond through rift in dark to other dark. Further dark. Sun long sunk behind the larches. Nothing stirring. Nothing faintly stirring. Stock still eyes glued to pane. As if looking his last. At that first night. Of thirty thousand odd. Where soon to be. This night to be. Spill. Hands. Lamp. Gleam of brass. Pale globe alone in gloom. Brass bedrail catching light. Thirty seconds. To swell the two and a half billion odd. Fade. Gone. Cry. Snuffed with breath of nostrils. Again and again. Again and again gone. Till whose grave? Which . . . he all but said which loved one's? He? Black ditch in pelting rain. Way out through the grey rift in dark. Seen from on high. Streaming canopies. Bubbling black mud. Coffin on its way. Loved one . . . he all but said loved one on his way. Her way. Thirty seconds. Fade. Gone. Stands there staring beyond. Into dark whole again. No. No such thing as whole. Head almost touching wall. White hair catching light. White gown. White socks. White foot of pallet edge of frame stage left. Once white. Least . . . give and head rests on wall. But no. Stock still head haught staring beyond. Nothing stirring. Faintly stirring. Thirty thousand nights of ghosts beyond. Beyond that black beyond. Ghost light. Ghost nights. Ghost rooms. Ghost graves. Ghost . . . he all but said ghost loved ones. Waiting on the rip word. Stands there staring beyond at that black veil lips quivering to half-heard words. Treating of other matters. Trying to treat of other matters. Till half hears there are no other matters. Never were other matters. Never two matters. Never but the one matter. The dead and gone. The dying and the going. From the word go. The word begone. Such as the light going now. Beginning to go. In the room. Where else? Unnoticed by him staring beyond. The globe alone. Not the other. The unaccountable. From nowhere. On all sides nowhere. The globe alone. Alone gone.

## APPENDIX 2: Translation by Hisgen and Regeer (1986)

Een stuk monoloog

Samuel Beckett

Vertaling: Ruud Hisgen en Paul Regeer

Raster #38, 1986

Doek.

Zwak diffuus licht.

De spreker staat voor op het toneel, links van het midden gezien vanuit het publiek.

Wit haar, wit nachthemd, witte kousen.

Twee meter links van hem, even lang en op dezelfde hoogte, een schemerlamp, een witte bol ter grootte van een schedel, met zwak licht.

Net zichtbaar uiterst rechts, op dezelfde hoogte, het witte voeteneinde van een veldbed.

Tien seconden voordat de monoloog begint.

Dertig seconden voor het einde van de monoloog begint het licht van de lamp zwakker te worden.

Lamp uit. Stilte. Spreker, bol, voeteneinde van veldbed, nauwelijks zichtbaar in het diffuse licht.

Tien seconden.

Doek.

SPREKER: Geboorte werd hem zijn dood. Nog eens. Woorden schieten tekort. Sterven ook. Geboorte werd hem zijn dood. Sindsdien die lijkegrijns. Op naar het deksel dat komen zal. In wieg en ledikant. Aan de borst de eerste afgang. Bij de eerste misstapjes. Van mamma naar juf en weer terug. De hele weg. Heen en weer gekeerd. En zo voort met die lijkegrijns. Van uitvaart naar uitvaart. Tot nu. Deze nacht. Twee en een half miljard seconden. Nog eens. Twee en een half miljard seconden. Haast niet te geloven zo weinig. Van begrafenissen naar begrafenissen. Begrafenissen van ... haast had hij gezegd van dierbaren. Dertigduizend nachten. Haast niet te geloven zo weinig. Geboren in het holst van de nacht. De zon reeds lang onder achter de larken. Nieuwe naalden die groen worden. In de kamer wint het duister veld. Tot het zwakke licht van de schemerlamp. De pit laaggedraaid. En nu. Deze nacht. Op als de nacht valt. Elke keer als de nacht valt. Zwak licht in de kamer. Oorsprong onbekend. Niets van het raam. Nee. Bijna niets. Niet zoiets als niets. Op de tast naar het raam en staart naar buiten. Staat daar naar buiten te staren. Doodstil naar buiten te staren. Niets beweegt in die zwarte leegte. Op de tast tenslotte terug naar waar de lamp staat. Stond. Toen hij het laatst uitging. Losse lucifers in rechterzak. Strijkt er een af op zijn bil zoals hij van zijn vader had geleerd. Haalt de melkwitte bol eraf en zet hem neer. Lucifer gaat uit. Strijkt een tweede af op dezelfde manier. Haalt het lampenglas eraf. Rookberoet. Houdt het in zijn linkerhand. Lucifer gaat uit. Strijkt een derde af op dezelfde manier en houdt hem bij de pit. Zet glas terug. Lucifer gaat uit. Zet bol terug. Draait de pit laag, wijkt terug tot de rand van het licht en draait zich om naar het oosten. Kale muur. Elke nacht zo. Op. Kousen. Nachthemd. Raam. Lamp. Wijkt terug naar de rand van het licht en staat daar met zijn gezicht naar de kale muur. Ooit bedekt met foto's. Foto's van... haast had hij gezegd van dierbaren. Zonder lijst. Zonder glas. Aan de muur geprikt met punaises. Alle maten en soorten. De een na de ander eraf. Weg. In snippers gescheurd en verspreid. Verstrooid over de hele vloer. Niet ineens opgeruimd. Geen plotse aanval van ... geen woord voor. Van de muur gerukt en in snippers gescheurd, een voor een. Een proces van jaren. Jaren van nachten. Niets aan de muur nu behalve punaises. Niet allemaal. Sommige gingen los bij het rukken. Sommige prikken nog een flard vast. Staat

daar dus gezicht naar kale muur. Aldoor stervend. Niet meer of minder. Nee. Minder. Minder te sterven. Aldoor minder. Zoals het licht bij het vallen van de avond. Staat daar gezicht naar het oosten. Kale pokdalige oppervlakte ooit wit in de schaduw. Kon ze ooit allemaal benoemen. Daar was vader. Die grijze leegte. Daar moeder. Die andere. Daar samen. Glimlachend. Huwelijksdag. Daar alledrie. Die grijze vlek. Daar alleen. Hij alleen. En zo voort. Nu niet. Vergeten. Allen zo lang heen. Weg. Erafgerukt en in snippers gescheurd. Over de hele vloer verstrooid. Weggeveegd onder het bed en daar gelaten. Duizenden snippers onder het bed met het stof en de spinnen. Alle... haast had hij gezegd dierbaren. Staat daar gezicht richting muur naar gene zijde te staren. Ook daar niets. Ook daar beweegt niets. Nergens beweegt iets. Nergens is iets te zien. Nergens is iets te horen. De kamer ooit vol geluiden. Zwakke geluiden. Oorsprong onbekend. Minder en zwakker al naar de tijd verstrekt. De nachten verstreken. Niets nu. Nee. Niet zoiets als niets. Sommige nachten slaat de regen nog schuin op de ruiten. Of valt kalmpjes hier beneden. Zelfs nu. De lamp walmt en toch is de pit laaggedraaid. Vreemd. Zwakke rook komt naar buiten door gat in bol. Laag plafond vol vlekken door nacht na nacht ditzelfde. Donkere vormeloze vlek op oppervlakte die verder wit is. Ooit wit was. Staat gezicht naar muur na de verscheidene handelingen als beschreven. Dat wil zeggen, op bij het vallen van de nacht, trekt hemd en kousen aan. Nee. Heeft ze al aan. Heeft ze de hele nacht aan. De hele dag. De hele dag en nacht. Op bij het vallen van de nacht in hemd en kousen en na een tijdje om zijn positie te bepalen op de tast naar het raam. Zwak licht in de kamer. Onuitsprekelijk zwak. Oorsprong onbekend. Staat doodstil te staren naar buiten. De zwarte leegte in. Niets daar. Er beweegt niets. Dat hij kan zien. Horen. In een houding alsof hij niet in staat is weer te bewegen. Of, geen wil meer heeft om te bewegen. Niet genoeg wil meer heeft om nog te bewegen. Draait zich tenslotte om en gaat op de tast naar waar hij weet dat de lamp staat. Denkt dat hij weet. De laatste keer stond. Toen hij de laatste keer uitging. Lucifer één als beschreven voor de bol. Twee voor het lampenglas. Drie voor de pit. Glas en bol er weer op. Draait pit laag. Wijkt terug naar de rand van het licht en draait zich om, gezicht naar muur. Naar het oosten. Stil als de lamp aan zijn zijde. Nachthemd en kousen wit om zwak licht op te vangen. Ooit wit. Haar wit om zwak licht op te vangen. Uiteinde van veldbed net zichtbaar aan de rand van de lijst. Ooit wit om zwak licht op te vangen. Staat daar naar gene zijde te staren. Niets. Leeg donker. Tot het eerste woord altijd hetzelfde. Geboorte. Dan het langzaam opdoemen van een vage vorm, vanuit het duister. Een raam. Dat op het westen uitkijkt. De zon reeds lang onder achter de lariksen. Het licht dat sterft. Al gauw niets meer om te sterven. Nee. Niet zoiets als geen licht. Sterreloze, maanloze hemel. Sterft aldoor tot de dageraad en sterft nooit. Daar in het donker dat raam. De nacht die langzaam valt. Ogen op de kleine ruit uren naar die eerste nacht. Keren er zich tenslotte vanaf, om de verduisterde kamer te aanschouwen. Daar tenslotte langzaam een vage hand. Die een brandende fidibus omhoog houdt. In het licht van de vlam vaag de hand en de melkwitte bol. Dan een tweede hand. In het licht van de vlam. Haalt de bol eraf en verdwijnt. Verschijnt opnieuw, leeg. Haalt lampenglas eraf. Twee handen en glas in het licht van de vlam. Vlam naar pit. Glas er weer op. Hand met vlam verdwijnt. Tweede hand verdwijnt. Glas alleen in duister. Hand verschijnt opnieuw met bol. Bol er weer op. Draait pit laag. Verdwijnt. Bleke bol alleen in duister. Glans van koperen beddestang. Beeld vervaagt. Geboorte zijn dood. Die stigmatische glimlach. Dertigduizend nachten. Staat aan de rand van het lamplicht naar gene zijde te staren. Het volledig duister weer in. Raam weg. Handen weg. Licht weg. Weg. Steeds opnieuw. Steeds opnieuw weg. Tot het duister weer langzaam splijt. Grijs licht. Striemende regen. Paraplu's rond een graf. Van bovenaf gezien. Druipende zwarte baldakijnen. Zwarte kuil eronder. Regen borrelend in de zwarte modder. Even nog leeg. Dat gat hier beneden. Welke... had hij haast gezegd welke dierbare? Dertig seconden. Om aan de ruim twee en een half miljard toe te voegen. Beeld vervaagt. Opnieuw volledig duister. Gezegend duister. Nee. Niet zoiets als volledig. Staat naar gene zijde te

staren en hoort maar half wat hij zegt. Hij? De woorden vallen uit zijn mond. Moeten het stellen met zijn mond. Steekt lamp aan zoals beschreven. Wijkt terug naar de rand van het licht en draait zich naar de muur. Staart het duister in naar gene zijde. Wacht op het eerste woord altijd hetzelfde. Het pakt zich samen in zijn mond. Het splijt de lippen open en het stoot de tong naar voren. Geboorte. Splijt het duister. Langzaam naar het raam. Die eerste nacht. De kamer. De brandende fidibus. De handen. De lamp. De glans van koper. Beeld vervaagt. Weg. Steeds weer opnieuw. Steeds weer opnieuw weg. Mond wijdopen. Een schreeuw. Gesmoord in neusklank. Het duister splijt open. Grijs licht. Regen slaat neer. Druipende paraplu's. Kuil. Borrelend zwarte modder. Lijkkist buiten de lijst. Van wie? Beeld vervaagt. Weg. Over op andere zaken. Proberen over te gaan. Op andere zaken. Hoe ver van muur? Hoofd er bijna tegenaan. Net als bij het raam. Ogen op de ruit staren naar buiten. Niets beweegt. Zwarte leegte. Staat daar doodstil naar buiten te staren alsof hij niet in staat is nog te bewegen. Of, alsof de wil weg is nog te bewegen. Weg. Zwakke schreeuw in zijn oor. Mond wijdopen. Gesloten met het sissen van adem. Lippen op elkaar. Voel zachte aanraking van lip op lip. Lip die lipt aan lip. Dan opengespleten door schreeuw zoals zojuist. Waar is hij nu? Terug bij het raam naar buiten starend. Ogen strak gericht op ruit. Alsof hij voor het laatst kijkt. Draait zich tenslotte om en tast zich een weg door het zwakke onverklaarbare licht naar de ongeziene lamp. Wit hemd dat beweegt door dat duister. Ooit wit. Steekt hem aan en draait zich om naar muur als beschreven. Hoofd er bijna tegenaan. Staat daar naar gene zijde te staren en wacht op het eerste woord. Het pakt zich samen in zijn mond. Geboorte. Splijt de lippen en stoot de tong naar voren. Puntje van de tong. Voel de slag van de tong op de rand van het gehemelte. Voel gehemelte op tong. Opdoemen in het duister van buiten het raam. Staren door het gespleten duister naar het andere duister aan gene zijde. Dat duister verder weg. De zon reeds lang onder achter de lariksen. Niets beweegt. Niet beweegt ook maar zwakjes. Doodstille ogen strak gericht op ruit. Alsof dit zijn laatste blik is. Op die eerste nacht. Van die ruim dertig duizend nachten. Draait zich tenslotte om naar de verduisterde kamer. Waar al gauw zal zijn. Deze nacht zal zijn. Brandende fidibus. Handen. Lamp. Glans van koper. Bleke bol alleen in het duister. Koperen beddestang die het licht opvangt. Dertig seconden. Om aan de ruim twee en een half miljard toe te voegen. Beeld vervaagt. Weg. Schreeuw. Geworgd in de huid. Steeds opnieuw. Steeds opnieuw weg. Tot aan het graf van wie? Van welke... had hij haast gezegd van welke dierbare? Hij? Zwarte kuil in de striemende regen. Uitweg door de grijze spleet in het duister. Van hoog daarboven gezien. Druipende baldakijnen. Borrelend zwarte modder. Lijkkist onderweg. Mijn dierbare... haast had hij gezegd mijn dierbare onderweg. Haar weg. Dertig seconden. Beeld vervaagt. Weg. Staat daar naar gene zijde te staren. Opnieuw het volledig duister in. Nee. Niet zoiets als volledig. Hoofd dat de muur bijna raakt. Wit haar dat het licht opvangt. Wit hemd. Witte kousen. Wit voeteneinde van veldbed aan de rand van de lijst links op het toneel. Ooit wit. Even ... toegeven en het hoofd rust tegen de muur. Maar nee. Doodstil hoofd staart verheven naar gene zijde. Niets beweegt. Beweegt zelfs maar zwakjes. Dertigduizend nachten van geesten aan gene zijde. Voorbij het duister aan gene zijde. Spooklicht. Spooknachten. Spookkamers. Spookgraven. Spokende ... haast had hij gezegd spokende dierbaren. Wachtend op het splijtwoord. Staat daar naar gene zijde te staren naar die zwarte sluier met lippen die beven bij half gehoorde woorden. Die het hebben over andere zaken. Het proberen te hebben over andere zaken. Totdat hij half hoort dat er geen andere zaken zijn. Er nooit andere zaken waren. Nooit twee zaken waren. Nooit iets dan dat ene. De gestorvenen die heen zijn gegaan. De stervenden die heen gaan. Vanaf het woord: ga. Het woord: ga heen. Zoals het licht dat uitgaat. Op het punt staat uit te gaan. In de kamer. Waar anders? Onopgemerkt door hem die naar gene zijde staat te staren. Alleen de bol. Niet dat andere licht. Het onverklaarbare. Nergens vandaan. Aan alle kanten nergens. Onuitsprekelijk zwak. Alleen de bol. Alleen weg.