The Indiscreet Charm of the Cinematic Eye in Samuel Beckett's *Film*

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In his *Diary of a Bad Year* John Maxwell Coetzee refers to a picture "of Samuel Beckett sitting in the corner of a bare room", published in Javier Marias' book *Written Lives*, as follows:

> Beckett looks wary, and indeed Marias describes his look as 'hunted'. The question is, hunted, hounded by what or whom? The most obvious answer: hounded by the photographer. Did Beckett really decide of his own free will to sit in a corner, at the intersection of three dimensional axes, gazing upward, or did the photographer persuade him to sit there? In such a position, subjected to ten or twenty or thirty flashes of the camera, with a figure crouching over you, it is hard not to feel hunted.
>
> (Coetzee 2007, p. 201)

In this picture Beckett is hunted by an Eye, the camera eye; in *Film*, Beckett's first and only movie, written in 1963 and shot in New York in 1964, the protagonist, Buster Keaton, is hounded by the Eye, a movie camera eye.

Film was commissioned to Beckett by his friend Barney Rosset[1], the publisher of Grove Press, who wanted to move into film production, and invited Beckett, Harold Pinter and Eugène Ionesco to write three new scripts to be produced in a feature-length trilogy by the Evergreen Theater, a separate film unit of Rosset's company. However, of the three the only one that made it as far as production was *Film* by Beckett[2], whose script was

[1] For a brief account of Rosset's experience in producing *Film* see Rosset 2001.

[2] Harold Pinter's screenplay (*The Compartment*) was adapted for a 1967 BBC TV production with the title of *The Basement*.

published for the first time in 1967 by Faber, along with "Act Without Words" and the television drama "Eh Joe". Beckett's passion for the Seventh art contrasted with his fear of writing on commission, a reticence heightened by a traumatic dispute over a film contract which he had signed in August 1962 for a film based on *Waiting for Godot*. James Knowlson mentions in his biography that "the trouble surrounding this proposal helped to harden Beckett's opposition to any small or large screen adaptations of plays written for the stage or radio" (Knowlson 1996 [1997, p. 505]), so much that in 1963 he refused Ingmar Bergman permission to stage the two radio plays *All That Fall* and "Embers".

In the first few lines of the screenplay "Outline" of *Film*, Beckett specifies that the story takes place "about [in] 1929. Early summer morning" (*Film*, p. 164), as detailed. In 1929, Beckett was in Paris, where, as he told Mel Gussow in 1984, "The Surrealists, André Breton, [were] laying down the law – the artistic law" (Gussow 1996 [2000, p. 47]). In 1929 Breton's 1924 *Manifeste du Surréalisme* was reprinted, whilst the latest poems by Tristan Tzara, Paul Éluard, and Breton himself were published in small journals. Beckett "could not feel any affinity with the surrealists mainly because [...] they were all cold or even hostile towards Joyce's 'Revolution of the Word'. On the other hand he identified with the atmosphere of experimentation and innovation which characterised the surrealist movement" (p. 47). The young Beckett must have been influenced by the importance placed by the surrealists on psyche and spirituality, capable of revealing an authentic reality free from all conditioning of reason, superior to what human beings are used to. He must also have had an understanding of the new role of the surrealist director-author who didn't attempt to please the audience and who, on the contrary, wanted to irritate the viewers, alienating them from the outside world, and leaving them at the mercy of the turmoil he had provoked. "He enjoyed Marcel Duchamp, who lived near him. I commented on Duchamp's *objects trouvés* – Mel Gussow recounts – such as the urinal he exhibited as a work of art. Beckett laughed: 'A writer could not do that'" (p. 47). According to some critics, the thinking behind a drama like *Endgame* can be found in the influence of Duchamp, an exceptional chess player and author of a chess treatise, based on the notion of Zugzwang, still considered significant today.

In April 1929 the film by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalì *Un chien andalou* was shown at the Ursulines cinema in Paris, and it was to stay on the screen of the "Studio 26" cinema for nine months. At the premiere, which brought together Pablo Picasso, Le Corbusier, Jean Cocteau, Man Ray, Tzara and René Magritte, just to name a few of the guests, one of the greatest scandals of the history of cinema took place, one that would eventually be part of the surrealist legends. The screenplay of *Un chien andalou* was published in the monographic number of the journal *This Quarter* dedicated to Surrealism, in 1932. In that same issue, Beckett published his translations of some writings by Breton, Éluard and René Crevel.

Setting his film in 1929, when the first sound film, *The Jazz Singer*, was shown, was for Beckett a way to support by contrast his decision to shoot a silent movie[3], and stress the pivotal role of images over words in his cinematic experience. However, the setting in 1929 is essentially a homage to *Un chien andalou*, and the reference to the surrealist masterpiece unveils the main character of the film, 'E', the eye.

Originally the film was to be called *Eye*, in reference to the eye that in close-up opens and closes *Film*, like that in the first scene of *Un chien andalou*, which Buñuel himself, this time as the actor, cuts open horizontally with a razor blade, thereby making one of the most famous sequences in cinema history. The eye is divided into two parts to make possible the use of double vision since the eyes cannot see everything, nor can they decipher the surrealist world of dreams: the visions and the hallucinatory distortions that Buñuel is about to show the audience. The main character of *Un chien andalou* turns his eyes backwards and inside his own head, showing the white of the eyes in a desperate attempt to understand through introspection. According to Buñuel, it is essential for human beings to switch on (in their own eyes) a new vision which can show what is normally just background, those characteristics which normal vision cannot capture. The death of vision therefore is equivalent to the denial of life as shown by bleeding eyes gouged out of the sockets of the dead and rotting cow. But,

[3] There is only one 'sound' in *Film*, at the outset, during the episode of the couple – the vocal instruction to 'sssh!', or be quiet.

as in *Film*, when the eyes succeed in revealing the ultimate truth of perception, and therefore the impossibility to escape from the eye mastering the self, this provokes such a deep fear in those watching as to cause blindness. In fact the eye which opens and closes *Film* is lifeless: a terrible vision has taken life away.

In 1929, while on the set next door Buñuel was filming his second film *L'âge d'or* at the film studio in Billancourt, Paris, Sergei M. Eisenstein worked as a consultant on a short musical film entitled *Romance sentimentale*. Around 1930, the Russian director was already well known abroad, and in the same year he spoke at the Sorbonne where nearly two thousand people crowded together to witness a private showing of *The General Line*, which the Parisian police banned a few minutes before the scheduled beginning. Beckett had always been very interested in films and in film theory and, during the difficult months between 1935 and 1936, he devoured books by Vsevolod Pudovkin (a precursor of film montage in Russian film), books on him written by the German theorist Rudolf Arnheim, and many by the director and montage theorist Eisenstein[4]. In the summer of 1936, Beckett wrote a letter to Eisenstein[5], proposing to go to Moscow, at his own expense, to live there for a month as a disciple in the State Institute for Cinematography. Unfortunately, Eisenstein never got to see that letter, as 1936 had been a bad year for the Soviet director. Several weeks before its completion, Eisenstein was ordered to suspend the production of his film *Bezhin Meadow*, attacked as 'formalistic' because of its poetic interpretation of reality. The production was stopped permanently by Stalinist officials in 1937 and the film remained unfinished; the sole surviving copy was destroyed, supposedly in a bombing raid during World War II, but more likely burned outright: the suppression of *Bezhin Meadow* was said to be part of an ongoing campaign against the artistic avant-garde in Soviet Union during Stalin's regime.

When it came to choosing the director of cinematography, one of the most important roles in the making of a movie and especially a black and white movie, Beckett's passion for the experi-

[4] See Bair 1978 [1990, pp. 215-216], and Knowlson 1996 [1997, pp. 226, 521].

[5] The letter is reproduced in Leyda 1985, p. 59.

ments of the Soviet filmmakers deeply influenced the final decision. Eventually the production called Boris Kaufman, the brother of the Soviet film-maker Dziga Vertov, the inventor of the "Cine-Eye", and Beckett felt very proud to have such an important technical contribution to his movie. Kaufman had worked on two films by Jean Vigo, *Zéro de conduite* (1933) and *L'Atalante* (1934), one of the groundbreaking masterpieces of cinema, and had later worked for Elia Kazan in *On the Waterfront*, for which he won an Academy Award for the best cinematography in 1954. Boris Kaufman's stylistic touch made a big contribution to the final result of Beckett's film. His characteristic use of light tended, in exteriors, to have the effect of condensing surfaces – he was famous for his fondness for filming walls and buildings in an expressionistic manner, whilst in interiors he used to build the space in a vertical and narrow way to emphasise the intensity of forces which work on the body in a closed space.

The decision to give the role of the protagonist to Buster Keaton, one of Beckett's favourite movie artists, seems to be based on the same grounds. Revered as much by Eisenstein, who considered him his favourite actor, as by the Surrealists, in the mid-Sixties Keaton was an old movie star of silent cinema, whose artistic life had apparently stopped in 1927, when his career had begun to tail off. In 1956, Keaton had turned down the part of Lucky in the first American production of *Godot*, calling the script incomprehensible and a waste of time. Nonetheless it had been suggested that *Waiting for Godot* could have been inspired by a minor Keaton film, *The Lovable Cheat* from 1949, adapted from *Le Faiseur*, a play by Honoré de Balzac also known as *Mercadet*, in which the protagonist waits impatiently for the return of his partner who is called Godeau[6]. When Beckett and Keaton met at a hotel in New York City in 1964, the actor was only vaguely aware of how famous the

[6] In her essay "Balzac to Beckett via God(eau/ot)", Mary Bryden points out that, in his 1966 edition of *En attendant Godot*, Colin Duckworth reported "Beckett's assurance to him that he had become familiar with Balzac's play only after his completion of *Godot*, but [added] cannily: 'It may seem a surprising gap in the knowledge of a Master of Arts in French, with a wide knowledge of French literature and culture. [...] It is not impossible that although Beckett's conscious memory has released its hold on *Mercadet*, the subconscious still retained the echo of it'" (Bryden 1994, p. 50).

Irish writer was, and certainly had never read any of his works. Talking about *Film*, Mel Gussow recalls an interview with Beckett in 1982: "[He] said that Buster Keaton had accepted the role simply as 'a job'. [...] Keaton did not know Beckett's plays. They could only talk about silent movies. Still Beckett seemed to like him, perhaps largely in memory of Keaton's comedy" (Gussow 1996 [2000, p. 41]). Alan Schneider referred to this meeting as one of those moments that seem inevitable before they happen, impossible when they take place, and incredible afterwards. They came from two totally different worlds and times, and probably they had nothing to say to one another.

Filming was not easy, at least at the beginning, since this was Schneider's first movie experience. However, with the exception of Boris Kaufman, always worried about the perfect light, everyone was sympathetic. Once they had overcome the initial difficulties with the outdoor shots, and started filming inside, everything was much easier. Schneider did not always know what he was doing but he thought things didn't seem too bad. Keaton's professionalism amazed everyone; he was indefatigable, although not very talkative, and he happily gave his full collaboration for the whole period of filming. Afterwards, Keaton said that he had understood only after the end of shooting that the film meant something, even if he didn't know what exactly and that it had, after all, been worth it[7].

An initial montage took place, not without confrontations with the film's editor Sidney Meyers (the crucial filmmaker of the New American Cinema who co-directed the pivotal *The Savage Eye* in 1960)[8], in the presence of Schneider and Beckett, in order to show the author a provisional version of the film before he left for Europe. The first cut was not, in the end, all that different from the final one, lasting a total of 22 minutes, and the technical defects, mostly in the outdoor section, are mainly due to Schneider's lack of experience.

[7] The first encounter between Beckett and Keaton, as well as the whole shooting of the movie, are extensively reported in Schneider 1969.

[8] Part drama and part documentary, *The Savage Eye* opens by introducing the camera lens as a character who will follow the leading lady throughout her day, along with a masculine voice assailing her with questions. Most of the characters are all too aware they are being photographed and thus cannot be taken as completely 'real'.

The biggest concern for a filmmaker is the distribution of the movie, when the whole production comes into life in the darkness of movie theatres, and *Film* was never properly distributed either in the States or in Europe[9]. Always a complex process, distribution was particularly difficult in the case of *Film*, a black and white, silent, short film, difficult to slot into one of the official Hollywood genres.

A typical film guide would possibly classify *Film* as a thriller, and *Film* does indeed seem to follow the aesthetics of the genre: a silent suspense movie in black and white. A genuine thriller is a film that relentlessly pursues a single-minded goal: to thrill the audience as the plot builds towards a climax, which usually is the epilogue. The tension usually arises when the main character is placed in a dangerous situation with no escape. In a thriller, the hero is essentially somebody ordinary whose life is threatened, usually because he is unknowingly involved in a dangerous or potentially deadly situation. The characters in a thriller often come into conflict with each other or with outside forces – the menace is sometimes abstract or shadowy.

The protagonist of Beckett's thriller is 'O', the object, hounded by a villain who, as in a typical suspense movie, presents obstacles that the hero must overcome. Despite the "General" indications of the screenplay, which relate that the same main character is divided in two, 'O' and 'E', the audience of the actual movie will acknowledge the mystery beyond the character only at the end, as in a typical thriller. 'E' is a one-eyed entity with a monocular vision: in the last shots the movie camera frames Keaton for the first time with a close-up, and the viewer discovers that the left eye of 'O' is covered by a patch. The hero – the perceived – desperately tries to escape from his hunter – the perceiver. In order to hide himself from the extraneous gaze, 'O' stays within what Beckett called the "angle of immunity" (*Film*, p. 164). This is the reason why Beckett establishes that the movie camera will chase 'O' only from behind,

[9] *Film* was awarded the Prix Filmcritica at the Venice Film Festival in 1965, and after this, it was shown at numerous European film festivals, gaining the critics' praise and several official awards, for example at the London Film Festival where it was named 'Outstanding Film of the Year', and at the Tours Film Festival where it was awarded the Special Jury Prize in 1966.

at an angle which will not exceed 45°. When this angle is exceeded 'O' enters *percipi*, experiencing, as Beckett defined it, the "anguish of perceivedness" (p. 163).

As the reference to George Berkeley's philosophical theory seems to fade away, the film theory reveals its presence in Beckett's vision of film experience. Actually the "Outline" opens with "esse est percipi" but in the second draft Beckett seems to place less importance on Berkeley's ideas, making clear that "No truth value attaches to above, regarded as of merely structural and dramatic convenience" (p. 163).

The outline divides *Film* into three parts:
the street;
the stairs;
the room.

Instead of these three parts indicated by Beckett, Gilles Deleuze, in his seminal essay *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Deleuze 1986 [2001]), proposes a different division according to the three types of cinematic *movement-images*: the *action-images* (a perception of action – medium shots), which include both the street and stairs scenes, the *perception-images* (or perception of perception – long shots), for the scene inside the room, and the *affection-images* ("the perception of oneself through oneself" – close-ups), for the hidden room and the scene when 'O' dozes off[10]. In the first and second part, all is the perception of 'E', which coincides with the camera and also with the audience's perception, with occasional interventions of the blurred and unfocussed vision of 'O' shown cinematographically through a lens gauze, which intensifies the mystery. In the third part, Beckett alternates the vision 'O' has of the room to the continual perception that 'E' has of 'O'.

Film opens with the extreme close-up shot of a wrinkled eye followed by the shot of the rough texture of a wall: the two conflicting shots create a new image, which is the feeling that a set of eyes could suddenly appear from the wall. In his essay *Film Form*, Eisenstein wrote that a new idea occurred "from the collision of independent shots" (Eisenstein 1949, p. 49), and these new ideas are produced in the mind of the spectators viewing a film. Ac-

[10] See Deleuze 1986 [2001, pp. 67-68].

cording to the Soviet filmmaker, "the basic indication of the shot can be taken as the final summary of its effects on the cortex of the brain as a whole" (Eisenstein 1949, p. 67), and in *Film* the effect is one of indefinite suspense which builds up right from the first shots as soon as the chase starts in the street with the indiscreet eye of the movie camera hounding the victim.

During the first part in the *street* and the second one on the *stairs*, Beckett gives the audience an important clue about the mystery: while running, 'O' bangs clumsily into an old couple, who, looking at the movie camera, 'E', in close-ups, have the same expression as the florist who meets 'O' on the *stairs*. The expression reveals the surprise mixed with horror, that Beckett defines as "an agony of perceivedness" (p. 165). They have exactly the same facial expression as 'O' in the *room*, during the third and last part of the film.

Beckett leaves out of the frame part of the action using the limited angle of 45°, and enlarges small details on his screen with extreme close-ups to make these details part of the action. This seems to echo the section of Rudolf Arnheim's *Film as Art*, published in 1933, dedicated to "an entirely new technique of close-ups" created by the Russian film artists:

> The possibility of varying the range of the image and the distance from the object thus provides the film artist with the means of splitting up the whole of any scene easily without interfering with reality. Parts represent the whole, suspense may be created by leaving what is important or remarkable out of the picture.
>
> (Arnheim 1933 [1957, p. 81])

'O' doesn't know from whom or what he is running, but his desperation grows minute by minute particularly during the first section of the third part, the *room* scene, which Deleuze called *perception-images* (or perception of perception). In this part 'O' tries to eliminate every possible gaze from the room, coming from animals, objects, walls, photographs, holes in the window curtain[11].

[11] After covering both the goldfish bowl and the parrot's cage with his overcoat, 'O' opens a folder, and after having turned 90° to avoid the gaze of the eyelets, he takes out some photographs. In the way that Krapp relives his past with recorded tapes, the protagonist of *Film* relives moments of his life by looking at photographs which capture him at different stages of his life. He feels threat-

The montage of this sequence alternates the circular movement of 45° of the camera with close-ups, and extreme close-ups of the indiscreet eyes of the objects. In the whole movie, Beckett used extreme close-ups only for the faces of the characters who perceive to be perceived (the couple, the florist and 'O' in the last shot), and for the animals and objects which give 'O' the perception of perception. In Eisenstein's film theory, the repetition with a degree of variation of a fragment, especially if identified with a close-up as in the case of *Film*, becomes an agent of unity, which also acts to create the rhythm of the work. In *Film* the use of repetition is not only a basic unifying principle, but it also has the advantage and impact of generating echoes. And the echoing – the tool, according to Eisenstein, for the artistic penetration of mind and body – forms a link throughout the film, a bridge between the rest of the shots, and a semblance of resonance or depth in the whole film.

The seemingly two characters are involved in a dramatic game of chase and escape which is in a way at the heart of Beckett's concern in his film experience. 'E' seems to chase 'O' as Beckett is looking for an art form able to represent the gap between observer and observed, a way to project this dual and conflicting perception while trying to give form to that reality. A film's capacity to leap beyond the limits of its material informed Eisenstein's writings and led to his claim – which deeply fascinated Beckett – that film brought to fruition all the yearnings of all other art forms. 'O' seems to escape the tyrannical condition of the object as prisoner in the perception of the perceiver, and as secluded from the events taking place around it. In Eisenstein, Beckett saw the possibility to free the object from its frozen condition at the moment of expression, and to make it part of the transformations happening while the object's relationship with the world changes. And this is the case of a sequence from *The General Line* by Eisenstein[12], released again in

ened by the gaze of the people who are observing him from photographs, and his trembling hands seem to interpret his thoughts. He ends ripping up the photographs irritably.

[12] In his essay "Beckett, Eisenstein and the Image: Making an Inside an Outside" (Antoine-Dunne 2004), Jean Antoine-Dunne reports of a letter dated 25th March 1936, where Beckett quotes a specific sequence from *The General Line*, defining his deep understanding of Eisenstein's pathos structure. In the letter

1929, in which the extreme close-ups within the pathos structure (fragmentation, reconstruction, leap, ecstasy) let the object (a milk-separator) come out of its materiality to a new dimension of meaning: the celebration of Stalin's agricultural reform. As the object, or better an extreme close-up of a detail of the milk-separator, leaps to another dimension through deformation, the close-ups of the "curiously carved headrest" (*Film*, p. 167) of a rocking-chair launch the object to a new stage and make it part of the whole action with its perceiving eyes.

The epilogue, which Deleuze defined the *affection-images* part, takes place in *the room*, where, taking advantage of the torpor of 'O' and therefore of the extinction of subjective perception, the movie camera 'E' manages to get in front of 'O', leading the audience to the climax, to the thrilling moment. 'O' is woken up with a start by the enquiring gaze of the eye shot in a blurred close-up, because now it is 'O' who perceives. The leap is accomplished. The movie camera 'E' is the double of 'O', and the only difference between the two can be noted just by facial expressions: the expression of 'E' is "neither severity nor benignity, but rather acute *intentness*" (p. 169), and the expression of 'O' is one of anguish. The unified character closes his eyes and covers his face with his hands. The mystery is solved, but this is not the end, since we do not know, as Gilles Deleuze pointed out, what will happen next, once the double face disappears into darkness:

> Will it die out and will everything stop, even the rocking of the rocking chair, when the double face slips into nothingness? This is what the end suggests – death, immobility, blackness.
> (Deleuze 1986 [2001, p. 68])

According to Deleuze, in *Film* Beckett reversed the idea of an evolution of subjectivity, switching off all the possible images – *ac-*

he refers to an evening spent with friends reading some poems: "One in which the rime mouth-drouth occurs repeatedly is the most remarkable, like the bull let loose among the cows in Eisenstein's *General Line*, a reference which I confess only occurs to me this moment, in the calm light of March winds caught up like sleeping daffodils. I understand that one evening at the Sinclairs' you paved the way for one of your explosions of reality" (Beckett Archive, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin).

tion-images, *perception-images*, and *affection-images* – in order to reach a primordial world before the existence of man proceeding towards the very materiality of the cinematic process, the purity of "the mother movement-image" (Deleuze 1986 [2001, p. 68]) through a symbolic system of simple codes: a road often followed by the so-called experimental cinema with much more complex technical methods, drawing attention to the very materiality of the cinematic process. One example is the American filmmaker Stan Brakhage, author of a seminal essay entitled *Metaphors on Vision*, published in 1963, whose incipit opens as follows:

> Imagine an eye unruled by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception. [...] Imagine a world alive with incomprehensible objects and shimmering with an endless variety of movement and innumerable gradations of color. Imagine a world before the 'beginning was the word'.
>
> (Brakhage 1963 [2003, p. 73])

Brakhage's investigation of the threat and inevitability of blindness, and as a consequence of "the distinctly ecstatic pleasures of obscurity", is part of a long tradition of ocular aggression in avant-garde cinema, "always implicitly aimed at the open eyes of the viewer" (Dworkin 2005, p. 137), which dates back again to the razor scene in *Un chien andalou*. His films "are intimate physical portraits of their viewers; they hold up a mirror [...] of the glaucous, carnal eye looking at its fragile fleshy self" (p. 139), raising crucial issues about the essence of the cinematic eye and about the nature of spectatorship. In his filmmaking Brakhage emphasised "the illusion of clear vision" (p. 137) and that even "the healthiest vision is less clearly transparent than we typically imagine" (p. 135), which he made clear in *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (1971) with the empty sockets in the autopsied skull. In *Film*, 'E' and 'O' are discovered to be *partially* blind. Yet their visions do not add up to a whole, since each is blind in the *same* eye, and this vision is partial for the spectator as well.

During the Fifties and Sixties, several directors, including Alfred Hitchcock, Michelangelo Antonioni and Michael Powell, fo-

cussed their efforts to explore the referentiality of cinema as an art form in three differently unconventional thrillers whose protagonists are all strictly related to the world of images. In *Rear Window* (1954), Hitchcock conceived his groundbreaking study of voyeurism as the purest expression of his idea of the cinematic experience, placing the protagonist, a photographer, in the same position of the movie spectator, right in front of a window. In Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966), the photographer's impossibility of seeing the truth in his pictures seems to suggest that for every moment made visible there is another that becomes invisible, and, given the slim line between objective reality and illusion, it also suggests the limits of art's power to interpret reality. In *Peeping Tom* (1960), the story of an obsessive cameraman who murders women while using a portable movie camera to record their dying expressions of terror, Michael Powell acts out "an extreme, a perversion of the cinematic look, but it also reflects outwards, onto the cinema's intrinsic fascination with looking, and the ease with which it can make peeping toms of us all" (Mulvey 2005, p. 144). In these works, the examination of the problems of the relationship between the spectator/perception/reality is included within the structure of the film, but in *Film* Beckett managed to master the basic conventions of the movie camera while visually redefining them on the screen frame in order to investigate the medium as a possible expressive solution to some of the problems of perception that no other medium can resolve.

During the production of *Film*, Beckett was completely absorbed into the medium, and despite the fact that at that time cinematography had made great advances both in terms of colour and sound, he decided to go back to the rudiments of silent black and white film, to the basic essence of cinema which he made clear right from the title of his movie: a piece of celluloid on which the images shot by the movie camera are fixed and which produces an illusion of the presence of something else. Deeply absorbed into *the indiscreet charm of the cinematic eye*, in *Film* Beckett scrutinized the visual perception of the movie camera as an effective method of rendering an unmediated image of one man's perception of himself, which is an image of rupture between self and other, an image shot right in the filmic distance between 'E' and 'O', in the gaps where the truth is to be found.

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