

[Editor's Note: Lois Gordon's manuscript, *Krapp's Last Tape: A New Reading*, was originally published in Vol. IV, No. 2 of *JDTC*. Due to a printing oversight, an unproofed edition of Gordon's manuscript was published in place of the final, edited, manuscript. We apologize for this error and have reprinted *Krapp's Last Tape: A New Reading* as it should have originally appeared.]

## Krapp's Last Tape: A New Reading

Lois Gordon

I could be bounded in a nutshell and  
count myself a king of infinite space,  
were it not that I have bad dreams.

--Hamlet

*Krapp's Last Tape* portrays the extreme loneliness and fragmentation of identity which a man devoid of religious, social, or biological purpose will endure. Sixty-nine-year-old Krapp, despite obvious intellectual and emotional potential, has never experienced more than a momentary sense of fulfillment or peace of mind. No religious or secular ideals, and no sexual or creative urges, have sufficiently energized or motivated him toward a sustained life goal. His parents' deaths have served only as reminders of the meaninglessness of life, and although one senses their mutual affection, Krapp has gained no sense of purpose from their world--in terms of social, cultural, or religious convictions, the ideals of art, or even what Karl Popper calls that most "democratic project of all," the wish to create and sustain a family.

From time to time, Krapp has tried to soothe or stimulate himself with romance, creativity, and religion, but in the end, has found transient comfort in only the ritual reiteration of his recorded past and the obsessive ingestion and fondling of words and bananas. He has no wish to be young again, because he has found no mature wisdom that would better enable him to invest the vigor of youth. Unlike Oedipus at Colonnus, he will never say that

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