THE BECKETT CIRCLE
LE CERCLE DE BECKETT
Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

Beckett in Sydney

The Public Face of Beckett "Down Under"

Held for three weeks each January, the Festival of Sydney is Australia's most attended annual cultural event. This year the festival happened to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the world premiere of *En attendant Godot*, on 5 January 1953, at the Théâtre de Babylone in Paris. Company B's anniversary production of *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Neil Armfield at Sydney's Belvoir Street Theatre (5 January –– 23 February), thus became the centerpiece within the Sydney Festival proper of a mini-Beckett Festival that also included a major production of *Endgame* by Sydney Theatre Company, the Biennial International Samuel Beckett Symposium, attended by more than a hundred delegates, the Australian premiere screening of all nineteen works from *Beckett on Film*, and several other stimulating Beckett-related events.

A Beckett Public Lecture held at Sydney Town Hall featured the Booker-Prize-winning novelist J. M. Coetzee (who wrote his PhD dissertation on Beckett) and the performance theorist and theatre practitioner Herbert Blau, Professor of English at the University of Washington, who directed the famous San Quentin *Godot* in 1957. Coetzee and Blau spoke on "paths to and from Beckett." They were joined by the prominent French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray via video-link in an interactive lecture on Coetzee and Beckett and "the philosophical question of relations with other people."

The Beckett "mini-festival" received widespread advance publicity in the national media. Festival director Brett Sheehy had reportedly "battled for two years" to obtain rights from the Beckett estate. The Oscar-winning film actor Geoffrey Rush had agreed to take part, and was perceived as the main attraction and likely "rescuer" of *Godot* from its history of arcane interpretation. (Rush once played Vladimir opposite Mel Gibson's Estragon, in a 1979 student production, and has a long history of collaboration with Armfield and Company B). Then, in August 2002, Rush abruptly withdrew from the production on account of a clash with his work on a forthcoming Hollywood adventure movie. As it turned out, Armfield's *Godot* was a sell-out anyhow on its own merits and led the Beckett celebration to an undreamt of position as national talking point.

Armfield's innovation of occasional pieces

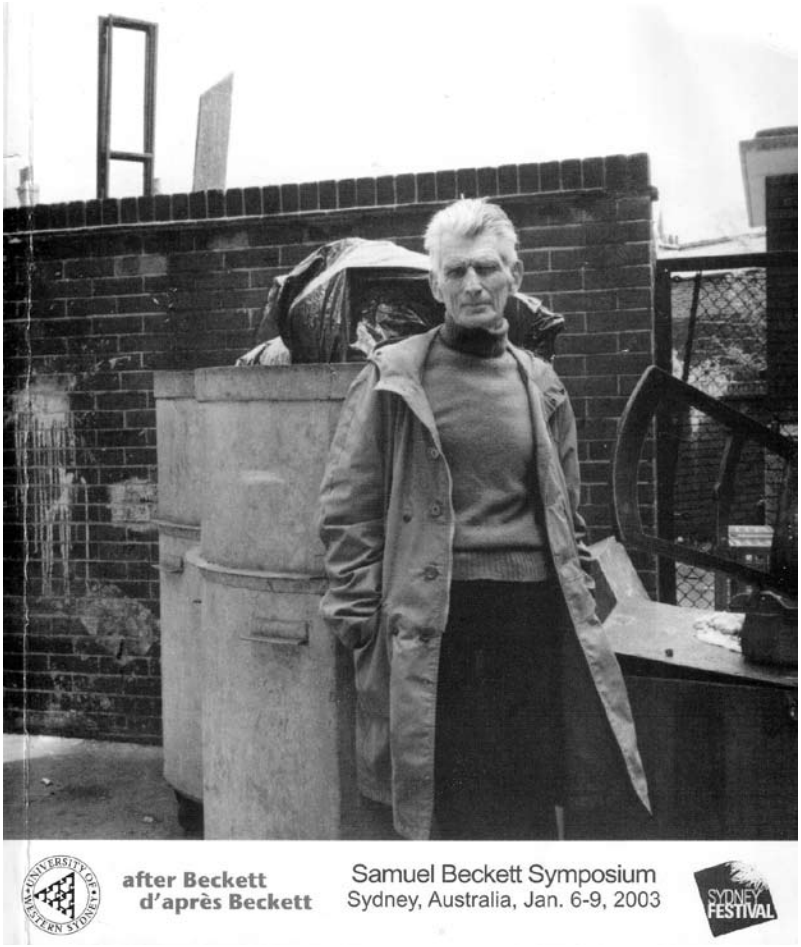

Photo credit: Paul Joyce, 1979

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Spring 2003
Volume 26
No. 1

of improvised music contributed to the play's impact on the Australian public, after provoking Beckett's nephew and sole executor, Edward Beckett, to threaten an injunction to close the production down. Mr. Beckett was the guest of honor at the Symposium. In his speech at the opening session, he focused on what he perceives to be "aberrations" of Beckett's work, making special mention of productions that diverge from the specified number and gender of characters, and those that attempt to stage Beckett's prose. Later, at the launch of the Sydney *Godot*, he attracted attention by sitting "stony-faced throughout … before abruptly getting up and leaving as the rest of the audience applauded," Sharon Verghis wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He refused to meet the cast backstage for a planned photo opportunity, and he told Armfield either to remove the music before the next performance or else face being shut down. According to Armfield, Edward Beckett asked him whether he'd read the contract. Armfield said, no, he'd read the play, which is his usual starting point.

Hence, some attention was drawn away from Australia's drubbing at home by the Sri Lankan national cricket team (where Samuel Beckett's spirit would probably have been hovering, according to his nephew) by a heated public dramatization of the issues of control and litigation in the arts. These are already well known, of course, in the Beckett world. Australians tend traditionally to love an underdog as much as they loathe authority, so Armfield's role of the artist oppressed by a formidable, injunction-wielding "enemy of art" struck a sympathetic chord with the media and the public. The Symposium's convenor, Anthony Uhlmann, contributed a conciliatory tone, pointing out that there was more to the issue than had been suggested by its popular reduction to a case of good versus evil. Concerning the question of the current production of *Godot*, Uhlmann wrote in the *Herald*, Company B were clearly in the right, since their contract did not, in fact, prohibit music: a jet-lagged Edward Beckett had been mistaken on that point. Furthermore, Uhlmann pointed out, the issue was far broader in significance than many seemed to acknowledge, and if one took to its logical conclusion the argument that artists' estates should surrender control over works, "there would be no role for contracts or estates — no copyright, in fact."

Nevertheless, on the final day of the symposium, Armfield gave an impassioned talk, claiming that the Beckett estate would eventually kill the work. He concluded, "In coming here with its narrow prescription, its dead controlling hand, its list of 'not alloweds,' the Beckett estate seems to be the enemy of art. If there is something to hope for at this watershed 50th anniversary of the play that broke the rules, it is that Edward Beckett gives his work back to artists to work with. After all, if he doesn't let go, he's consigning it to a slow death by a thousand hacks."

The audience responded as ardently. Stan Gontarski thought the issue a "tempest in a billy-can" (a billy-can is an Australian bush teapot). There was no call for Armfield to be playing the role of repressed artist, and this kind of problem just goes with the territory. "Freedoms are earned," Gontarski said to me later. "If you've got confidence in your work, just let it stand." Don Anderson, Australia's best-known and most-respected public critic, took an opposing view, likening the practices of contemporary literary executors to those of the post-war East German Stasi. "They are the political police of intellectual debate and performance," he told me. "What you've got is literary executors behaving in illiberal ways that completely contravene the spirit of the people whom they represent."

Samuel Beckett Symposium, 6-9 January

The Sydney Samuel Beckett Symposium was hosted by the University of Western Sydney in association with the Sydney Festival and held at the Sydney Theatre Company's Wharf Theatre complex. Convened by Anthony Uhlmann, the symposium featured some of the leading figures in Beckett studies and theatre arts, such as Herbert Blau, Ruby Cohn, Mary Bryden, Xerxes Mehta, Stephen Connor, Porter Abbot, Stan Gontarski, Colin Duckworth, Angela Moorjani, and many others. The symposium was designed not only to highlight aspects of Beckett's life and work as such, but also to incorporate the influence of Beckett upon various artistic fields, and "the nature of the road ahead for writing, performance and the visual arts in the wake of Beckett." Hence, in addition to thematic sessions on Beckett's literature, approaches to realizing his drama, and so on, were sessions on his legacy in the United Kingdom, his influence upon Australian writers, as expressed by themselves, and meditations on "after Beckett d'après Beckett" in France and Japan.

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Hailed as one of the most important humanities conferences ever to be held in Australia, the symposium was intensive and stimulating, incorporating lunchtime film screenings and linking up with the Sydney Festival productions of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. It was all the more vigorous for its role as a forum for opinions on the controversy that surrounded Neil Armfield's *Godot*; and from its earliest moments it promised to be lively. Ruby Cohn chaired the first plenary session, which featured Linda Ben-Zvi, Colin

Duckworth, David Hayman, Xerxes Mehta, and Antonia Rodriguez-Gago, whose talks revolved about their initial exposure to Beckett. Mehta said that *Waiting for Godot* had "upended his professional life"; Rodriguez-Gago recalled the general reaction to the play, when it was first performed in Spain, as "rubbish" and "Ravel's *Bolero* of the theatre," though it was identified with by a politically resistant minority of intellectuals; Ben-Zvi reflected that Beckett "showed us what it is to feel – what it is to be a human being."

Then Duckworth was asked to describe his experience in Paris, 1965, when Beckett allowed him three hours to examine the original manuscript of *En attendant Godot*. Duckworth said he worked furiously, in the full knowledge that he was holding something like the equivalent of a contemporary manuscript of *Hamlet* about to be consigned to the mists of time. "But anyway," someone asked, "where's the manuscript kept these days?" From a front row, Edward Beckett explained that it was in safe-keeping in a deposit box, but. . . ahem, not easily accessed. "What . . . ?" Duckworth quipped, "Do you mean you've lost the key?"

Shortly afterward, an audience member demanded that the visiting academics report back their appraisals of the Sydney Beckett productions, to the effect: "We want you experts to let us know if they are any good or not." Dramatic criticism is not a matter of "giving grades," came the consensual reply, which met with further furor. When I later recalled to her the voluble interjections, Professor Cohn assured me she had found the session marvelous.

David Hayman's contribution to the "Genetic criticism and *Watt*" session, entitled "How Two Love Letters Elicited a Singular Third Person: Generating an Ur-*Watt*," was riveting. Hayman incorporated such minutia as manuscript doodles into his elegant and original analysis of Beckett's development and, in particular, his "creative turning points." Also most notable was Dirk van Hulle's talk in the same session, "Nonetheless: The Textual Genesis of *Stirrings Still*," an extraordinarily close analysis of the French and English manuscripts of the late, very small work that took Beckett five years to compose. Van Hulle demonstrated the complexity of the process that produced the final piece, commenting that Beckett's "writing about the end proved to be an excellent way to delay it."

Naturally still saddened by the recent passing away of our great friend and mentor Professor Yasunari Takahashi, the contributors to two Japanese panels demonstrated the depth of content and reference in Beckett's work, as well as something of the diversity of Beckett studies in Japan. In the session "Seeing in Beckett," Yoshiyuki Inoue spoke on the nature of microscopic vision in *The Lost Ones*, with some fascinating minute references to Beckett's library and the contents of an encyclopedia he once gave as a gift, and Naoya Mori saw in Beckett's windows a paradoxical use of Leibnitz's monadology. Masaki Kondo focused on the relationship between *Ill Seen Ill Said* and Mallarmé's *Igitur*, and Minako Okamuro on Beckett's alchemical symbolism in *Quad*, which, she argued, has a source in his elderly interest in Yeats. On the panel "After Beckett in Japan," Mariko Hori Tanaka, Yoshiki Tajiri and I presented echoes and interpretations of Beckett to be found in Butoh dance, and in the work of such novelists of the Japanese avant-garde as Yumeno Kyusaku and Abé Kobo, respectively.

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The plenary session chaired by Paul Davies, with Gerry Dukes, Stan Gontarski and H. Porter Abbott, brought together three wide-ranging, sophisticated and authoritative viewpoints. Dukes' paper emphasized the evolution and mutability of the *Godot* playtext, with particular reference to the Pike Theatre Typescript, which is held at Trinity College in Dublin — a rare piece of pre-publication documentation to have become publicly available to scholars. According to Dukes, in 1953 the Dublin Pike Theatre's Alan Simpson asked Beckett for a copy of his English translation, in order to produce the play at the Pike (the production eventually opened a week after the opening in the Arts Club, London, in August 1955).

The typescript, with its alterations in Beckett's hand, thus interacts with the French edition, the American Grove Press text, and the London script, producing extraordinary historical-critical nuances in addition to the aesthetic ones (particularly given the censorship that *Watt* and *More Pricks Than Kicks* were experiencing at the time). Dukes related a charming, yet profound, instance, when a *Godot* cast in Cork asked that Didi and Gogo's "Tied to whom?" "To your man" be changed, because the expression would undermine the importance of Godot, due to its pejorative connotation in Cork. Instead, the phrase "To himself" was used. Dukes said that when he told Beckett about the alteration, the author approved, but added he had always worried about that line, and had another version: "We're not tied to his nibs." As well as the Hiberno-English sense of a VIP, "his nibs" may also be used to refer to the Devil himself — a spine-tingling authorized connotation, indeed.

Stan Gontarski spoke on Beckett's plurality of voices, through which the author comments on his work while ostensibly refraining from doing just that. Gontarski referred substantially to Beckett's early (1956-7) correspondence with Alan Schneider, mostly on *Endgame,* for Schneider's off-Broadway production ("I never talked so unrestrainedly and uncautiously as with you," Beckett wrote) and also to Beckett's notes for his own first direc-

tion of *Endgame*, as *Endspiel,* in Berlin, 1967. According to Gontarski, Beckett took advantage of fifteen opportunities to direct in the theatre, and another seven to direct in the television studio, enabling him "to refine if not redefine the play's creative vision, to continue to discover latent possibilities in the text."

H. Porter Abbott reviewed and recreated Wolfgang Iser's reader-response gap, demonstrating how Beckett seems to turn much of such theory on its head, by inserting entire narratives into the gap itself. Abbott sketched out a typology of "gaps," the most paradoxical of which he terms the "egregious gap." Abbot drew Beckett's narrative into a traditional context of such blanks, gaps within gaps, the semiological nature of which is simply not to be able to know. Does Becky kill Jos Sedley in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*? Does Heathcliff murder Hindley Earnshaw in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*? Abbot observed that canonical instances such as these prefigure Beckett's egregious gap, except that "Beckett handles the gap by filling it. And the more he fills it, the greater and more intense our sense of ignorance grows."

"Beckett on Vinyl" — a contemporary installation and happening, directed by Clara Mason, the artistic director of the James Joyce Foundation in Australia — was a most innovative part of the symposium and festival. In 1997 Mason collaborated with the Bundjalung Aboriginal community on a translation of *Waiting for Godot* ("Ngundalelah Godotgai") for that year's Festival of the Dreaming. Mortuary Station — a disused, beautiful rococo sandstone railway station — was the venue for the current project. A landmark half sunk in Sydney's unconscious, the station supported a funeral-train service that operated in the city between 1867 and 1948. This would surely have been the platform on which Watt first appeared had he appeared in Sydney; and it was a stroke of brilliance on Mason's part to select it as the space for students and DJs to engage with the infinite creative possibilities resonating in Beckett's novel *Watt*. Linking *Watt's* themes of transience and the cosmos (". . . heavenly bodies poured down on Watt"), performances incorporating projections and a light-show began at sunset and finished at dawn; individual performances were scheduled to link with the phases of the moon. At the same time, trains "coming and going" from Central Station, some hundreds of yards away, enhanced the sense of place for spectators loitering Watt-like in the Mortuary Station waiting-room and platform, while enjoying servings of Murphy's Irish Stout and fish.

The installation reflected the meditative, the eccentric, and, best of all, the wonder in *Watt*. Mini-installations about the platform were mostly on a sub-theme of Mason's, "food is not a philosophy." One consisted of a number of glasses of milk arranged in two perfectly concentric circles, evoking an image of the breast as well as reminding us of Watt's penchant for milk and his accident with the porter when he first arrives; another was an ersatz Aeolian harp, which incorporated the waiting room wall and a half watermelon as a bridge for the strings, which were stretched across the platform. DJs scratched over vocal samples from Alan Greenspan, George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld, foregrounding the Beckettian features to be found in contemporary public discourse: "There are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns — that is to say there are things that we now know we don't know but there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we do not know we don't know" (Rumsfeld, 2001). In all, in demonstrating something of Beckett's potentials for political intervention at the same time as it affirmed the perennial value to be found in straying from the beaten track, "Beckett on Vinyl" presented an ephemeral taste of the uncontrollable and regenerative in art.

Company B's Waiting For Godot

The house lights are extinguished, plunging an ebullient audience into a depth of darkness and a shocked silence. Out of the blackness issues first a whistling of wind, then a rumble and sudden shriek of a generator as the lights switch on, with Estragon sitting on the rock, struggling with his boot. Neil Armfield's opening transition into Beckett's world is the first indication of his bold and decisive approach to the play. Robert Cousins' set design in Sydney's Belvoir Street Theatre — a theatre with which Armfield is intimately familiar, having helped save it from demolition in 1984 — is, if lacking a "low mound," honest and basic. One looks down upon a plain, dusty floor, rubble piled up in the rear corner of the drama space. The slender form of the tree is derived from the image of Christ on the cross, a series of design permutations having reduced the motif to a subliminal trace.

The first few seconds of the exchange between Vladimir (John Gaden) and Estragon (Max Cullen) are anxious, when the actors strike one as slightly off the beat, but then all is well. In retrospect, it seems the ear may take a moment to tune in to the tones and rhythms of Australian English, in the context of a conception of *Godot* that is conditioned by other accents (American and British at least as much as Irish ones). This is not such a trivial point as one may suppose, since accents evoke particular associations of character and culture that cannot help but influence the reception of a performance. The accents of Vladimir and Estragon are neither broad nor "educated Australian." Didi and Gogo are by no stretch of the imagination "swaggies," the traditional Australian version of outback tramps, but gents, so-called "old bastards" whom we might run into at Randwick Racetrack or the bar at Central Station, Sydney — confident, verbose, neurotic, sometimes extremely poetic sorts of men. Caked with dust, yet decked out with a certain degree of down-at-heel flair, in dirty coat, scarf, hat, woolen vest, Didi and Gogo's apparent itinerancy refers us to the venerable institution of the Australian travelling circus.

Estragon's eyebrows in particular associate his brilliantly funny and canny, world-weary demeanor with the folk tradition of the noble Australian clown. He brings a specifically Australian flavor to phrases such

Company B's production of Waiting for Godot featured (from left to right) Bogdan Koca as Pozzo, John Gaden as Vladimir and Max Cullen as Estragon.

as "Help me off with this BLOODY thing!" and "I remember a lunatic who kicked the SH-T out of me!" –- the sense that resounds through his uttered words, Beckett's "kicked the shins off me." Pozzo (Bogdan Koca) compensates for his ordinary stature with a whip, an imposing personality and a European (or "New Australian") accent. The working-class Aussie might tend to identify with the hapless Lucky (Steve Le Marquand) as a kind of colonial second-class citizen, but at the same time experience an instant of perplexity, perhaps a twinge of guilt, at this subordination of the Aussie to the European immigrant, who was in his own day a target of prejudice in Australia.

The production highlights the subtle possibility of a homosexual relationship between Didi and Gogo, which is quite clear in the text. In this performance, when the question of age comes up, Didi preens himself effeminately. On the cue to "embrace," Didi presents an open-mouthed kiss, from which the generally more lascivious Gogo retreats (too "gritty" for him, perhaps, like the constable in the risqué joke to which they allude, "the story of the Englishman in the brothel"). The theme is by no means overstated, however, and we may continue to think of them more innocently, merely as two gents who enjoy each other's company.

Armfield heightens the circus element –- which is a far more familiar form "down under" (Beckett's phrase for Australia) than vaudeville –- with occasional pieces of improvised music based on the circus convention of what Armfield terms "supportive percussion," punctuated with a raucous clown's whistle. These effects are associated mostly with Lucky's movements. One hears, too, occasional vibrato chords and melody from a keyboard. The first occurrence is a brief, faint sound on the breeze that motivates Vladimir's "Listen!" – and the pair "*listen, grotesquely rigid*" and, hearing nothing, are relieved. Beckett's cerebral sequence is deflated, but perhaps with good reason: Didi and Gogo fail to hear a non-signifier that doesn't herald the entrance of Pozzo and Lucky. Contrary to Beckett's totalitarian director in *Catastrophe* who deplores the "craze for explicitation," Armfield uses the music to make dramatic logic of the implicit textual link.

The percussion is vulnerable to a charge of being intrusive or distracting during Lucky's speech, when it threatens to obscure the words. It contributes more to the buildup of the mêlée than the speech itself, which grinds along with a psychotic doggedness, while Lucky's feet continue to batter against the rock, which blocks his progress. The weird keyboard effect is at its height during Pozzo's lament about Lucky's ingratitude, in the first Act, where it helps exaggerate his complaints to a very funny melodramatic effect.

Sydney Theatre Company's Endgame

"Between the beginning and the end lies a small distinction which is that between 'beginning' and 'end'" – Samuel Beckett

The production's director, Benedict Andrews, has reduced the size of the auditorium at Sydney's Wharf Theatre to accommodate only a hundred spectators per performance, promising an "intimate experience of Beckett's own favourite play." One tramps over a temporary wooden bridge to enter a physically emptied and, in this respect, alienated space. We pass through a storage area, in which the Wharf's comfortable theatre seats are tilted over and stacked up. Inside the theatre, they have been replaced by kitchen chairs, donated or dumped: the chairs have their own past. Andrews did not wish Beckett's *Endgame* to be viewed from the point of view of a comfortable backside. The steeply raked seating faces

The Sydney Theatre Company's production of Endgame featured Matthew Whittet as Clov and Jacek Koman as Hamm.

directly on to a shallow rectangular stage. "I think they want a claustrophobic effect," someone near me jokes. Yet we remain physically separated from the stage-space by a plane delineated by a few vertical strings, which guide the curtain's opening fall and which will stay there throughout the performance, anticipating the inevitable end.

Hamm (Jacek Koman) cuts an extraordinary figure: indeed, he is so imposing in his utter egotistical self-absorption as to give the impression that the darkness of the auditorium (with "zero" outside, of course) may be an illusion within his very blindness –- as though other figures, including ourselves, are figments of his own subjectivity; and it is in that sense he is the King, the ego. Clov (Matthew Whittet) is, in contrast, young and nervously tense, and he seems to lack any individual volition except the motion his master imparts to him. Scraps of flesh peel off Clov's poxy face, beneath the lank, greasy hair with which he fidgets. The two are mutually interdependent ("Every man his specialty"), or perhaps they personify complementary, psychological functions. The chess motif reiterates the theme, and Andrews subtly gears the actions and gestures of the characters symbolically to the determined sets of possibilities inherent in pieces and pawns. Clov galvanizes the motif of the lost endgame from time to time, when he assumes an attitude of attention and positions himself at a respectful distance at Hamm's side. Momentarily the two appear to be King and Bishop holed up somewhere behind two immobilized –- hence essentially dead –- pawns, represented by Nagg and Nell in their bins.

The rectangular set looks about twenty feet by ten. Long dulled by time, drab patterned wallpaper lines the walls beneath a picture rail, which supports a single picture facing the wall. The room's dismal mood is poignant too, in appearing to have been once rather cozy, perhaps brightened by the female touch of the long-deceased Mother Pegg (Hamm's ruthlessly sacrificed queen?). Clov's movement and behavior imply an obsessiveness which, given his atomistic memory, is necessary to keep him barely functioning. In the opening scene, Clov out-Becketts Beckett and counteracts the narrow dimensions of the stage with the mind-numbingly painstaking logistics he needs to move the ladder back and forth between two small windows set high into each side wall.

A nice running-gag on the theme of text as material "trace" dovetails into the narrative symbolism of the room itself. Each time Clov climbs to the top of the ladder to take a look, he comes so close to the wall that manipulating the telescope is a problem, encountered each time as though the first, which he solves by putting it to his eye and pivoting toward the window. The procedure requires him to shove the end of the instrument against the wall and then scrape it roughly across, which has left a white slash gouged to the front or rear of each window – further testimony to the time he has spent performing the ritual. The gag is a good indicator of director Benedict Andrews' sensitivity to the play's range of dramatic possibilities, combining the dimensions of physical, head-banging obsession with a refined sense of Beckett's semiotic play, a combination that is at its most transparent in the script in Hamm's pathetic imputation of significance to his "dog."

The characters reminisce, quiver, gaze and strain to kiss, but can never touch, confined as they are to their bare and solitary existence in this their discarded hell of representation.

One cannot imagine a more stunning realization of Nagg (Peter Carroll) and Nell (Lynne Murphy), in terms of both acting and direction. Andrews positions them right on the edge of the stage, all but face-to-face with audience in the front row; when their heads emerge, their eyes, which are oblivious to ours, focus on another, far-distant or far-inner, horizon. The characters reminisce, quiver, gaze and strain to kiss, but can never touch, confined as they are to their bare and solitary existence in this their discarded hell of representation. The lids of the bins are connected by hinges at the rear, so that when the actors' heads emerge, the metal lids stand slightly back from the perpendicular and frame their heads generously, exactly in the position of halos. In their frozen attitudes of grin and grimace, Nagg and Nell resemble Byzantine icons, while the silhouettes of their open bins evoke the form of the Staunton pawn –- a further stroke of finesse in this enthusiastically received production.

— Michael Guest

Yasunari Takahashi (1932-2002)

Yasunari Takahashi was one of the most brilliant of a remarkable generation of Japanese scholars of Western culture which came to maturity about 10 years after the end of the Second World War. Born in Tokyo in 1932, he lost his home there in the ferocious fire-bombing of early 1945. In the immediate post-war restructuring of the educational system, he managed in 1949 to gain entrance to what had been the old Imperial University of Tokyo, at its Komaba campus. He graduated in English in 1953, and then went on to study for his MA at the Hongo cam-

pus of the university. It was there that I first met him towards the end of 1955, when my wife and I had newly arrived in Japan. As a so-called "Visiting Professor in English Literature," I was encouraged to take on a voluntary weekly seminar with postgraduate students, discussing poems in detail. Takahashi made an immediate impression. With bountiful gentle manners, fluent but hesitantly exact English, and considerable quiet wit, he illuminated whatever was under discussion.

What I couldn't have predicted was how widely his literary intelligence and skill would range. He went on with research, and began teaching, at the Komaba campus, in 1962; but almost immediately he was selected for one of the newly established British Council scholarships. He was British Council Visiting Scholar at Birbeck College, London, in 1962-63, where he began to extend his interest in Shakespeare and in Coleridge in a new direction. He discovered the work of Samuel Beckett, and soon met, talked with, and got to know Beckett: he became, as Takahashi's friend and colleague Yasunari Takada rightly comments, Beckett's "translator and interpreter" in Japan, trusted by that secretive and taciturn genius.

But Takahashi went on to extend his range: "nonsense" (particularly Lewis Carroll), John Donne, and further ranges of his original passion, Shakespeare. He made the most ingenious and brilliant version of the Alice books. (I have a lovely memory of Takahashi visiting us in Norfolk, when he and one of our small grandsons simultaneously read an "Alice" poem, one in Japanese, the other in English, to see how long they took.) In the early 1990s, he wrote a kyogen (Noh "mad" play) version of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which had a considerable success in Tokyo, Cardiff and (at the Mermaid) London. Later, he turned this into an English version, *The Braggart Samurai*.

His main academic base was Tokyo University, from his appointment as Professor of English Literature in 1976; but he had visiting appointments at the University of Toronto in 1981, and as Visiting Fellow Commoner of Trinity College, Cambridge, 1986-87. He was active, too, in the busy academic society world; he was President of the English Literary Society of Japan, the largest and most powerful body of its kind, from 1989 to 1992, and President of the Shakespeare Society of Japan for many years from 1989. When he retired from Tokyo University in 1992, he was appointed Professor Emeritus. He went on to teach at Showa Women's University, from 1992. Recognition of his important role in Anglo-Japanese cultural relations came with his appointment as an Honorary CBE in 1993.

None of this listing of honours and distinctions gives a proper picture of what made Yasunari Takahashi such a brilliant companion and friend. He drew subtle and dazzling comparisons between things, such as the piece on Beckett and the Noh ("The Theatre of the Mind") which he contributed to *Encounter* in 1982. He was a profound and knowledgeable musician, both in the area of Shakespeare and his musical contemporaries, and of

Wagner and romanticism. The abundance of his intellectual interests is borne out in the Festschrift that was produced for his 60th birthday, *Surprised by Scenes* (1994): The contributions range from the Nobel Literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe ("Yasunari Takahashi My Contemporary") through Frank Kermode, Jonathan Bate, Anne Barton, John Casey and Earl Miner, to the leading Japanese scholars of English who followed him.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Takahashi's life was the religious. Having discovered Beckett, and become deeply interested in him, he searched out what Beckett was rejecting too. In the process, Yasunari joined his wife, Michi, in embracing Roman Catholicism. Indeed, I last saw him earlier this year, in April, at the funeral in Tokyo of our mutual friend Shinsuke Ando, the Chaucerian scholar, which took place in the Catholic church in Shibuya. By then, Takahashi was very weak; but he was determined to say goodbye to his old friend, as he was determined to come and see my wife Ann and me in our Shinjuku hotel — bravely towing his oxygen cylinder.

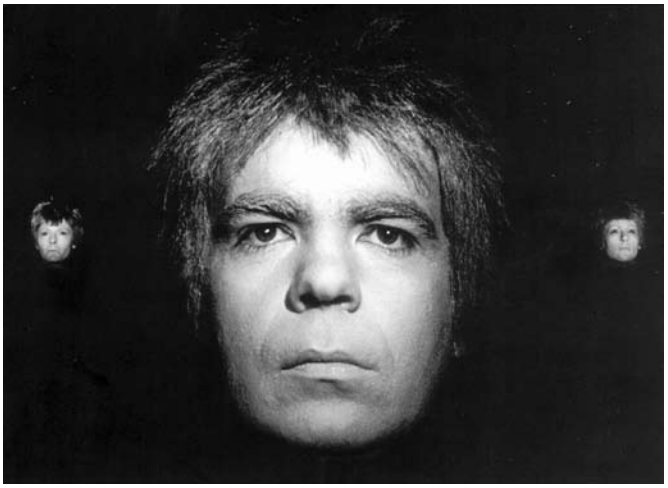
— Anthony Thwaite

Reprinted from *The Independent* (London), 27 June 2002.

Marin Karmitz's Comédie

In the early 1960s, during one of my unforgettable meetings with Samuel Beckett on the Boulevard St. Jacques, I dared – being young and disrespectful at the time – to point out to him how difficult it was for actors in one of his plays to move around on the stage while at the same time speaking the dialogue that he had written for them. Smiling at me in a way that was both mischievous and reassuring, he replied: "Vous ne devriez plus avoir de soucis de ce genre; je suis justement en train d'écrire une pièce où j'ai enfermé mes personnages dans des jarres. Ainsi, seront-ils d'une manière ou d'une autre à jamais immobilisées." His subsequent description of *Comédie* greatly intrigued me.

The play itself, as is well known, had its Paris premiere — directed by Jean-Marie Serreau and featuring



Michael Lonsdale, Eléonore Hirt, and Delphine Seyrig — in June 1964. Much less well known is the fact that, two years later, the Roumanian-born French filmmaker Marin Karmitz used this same cast for a film version of *Comédie* on which he collaborated with Beckett, to whom he had been introduced by Jérúme Lindon. Presented in the same year at the *La Mostra* festival in Venice, this film provoked heated debate that led in some instances, according to Karmitz himself, to actual fighting. After many years during which it was not shown at all, Karmitz's *Comédie* was featured once again at the *Voilà* exhibition held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2000. Since then, it has been presented in museums and art galleries (including the Anthony Reynolds Gallery in London) as well as at international festivals of contemporary art. The award that it received at the Venice Biennal in 2001 was a much-deserved recognition after so many years of neglect. Adrian Searle – taking particular aim at the Anthony Minghella version of *Play* — concluded his rhapsodic review of Karmitz's film in *The Guardian* (London)by describing it as "a rejoinder to the current project to film all Beckett's plays."

The showing of *Comédie* on 15 January 2003 at the Théâtre de la Cité Internationale in Paris, which Karmitz himself attended, drew a packed house of curious Pa-

risians, most of whom had never had the opportunity of seeing it. During the discussion that followed, the director explained the many technical problems inherent in this project and spoke warmly of the fortuitous and generous help that Beckett gave him in dealing with these. Creating a genuinely independent film version of Beckett's play required a number of complicated transformations. The sound track, for example, was recorded separately and the tempo of the voices was speeded up using a "phonogène" (a special kind of tape-recorder, still in use today, which allows the tempo of the dialogue to be quickened without distorting the actors' voices). This created the accelerated rhythm which Beckett wanted but which is not possible in the theater. Having made the initial recordings, Karmitz and Beckett then moved on to the mixing of sound and image and to a cinematic "mise en scène" whose final result is, as the audience readily appreciated, quite extraordinary. This film deserves, on many counts, to be officially classified as belonging to the "patrimoine culturel français."

— Bogdan Manojlovic

MLA 2002

Beckett and Bernhard Panel

Since Martin Esslin's seminal study of the literary relationship between Samuel Beckett and Thomas Bernhard in 1985, the names of the two writers have often appeared together (see, for example, Pierre Chabert's account of his stage adaptation of Bernhard's *The Loser* in the Fall 2002 issue of *The Beckett Circle*). In order to examine more closely the relationship between these two writers, Thomas Cousineau chaired a panel on "Beckett and Bernhard" at the MLA Convention in New York.

In his preliminary remarks, Cousineau spoke of his own sense that many admirers of Beckett's work seem also to be drawn instinctively to Bernhard's. He recalled having been told by Beckett's French publisher Jérôme Lindon that Bernhard was one of the few contemporary writers for whom Beckett had expressed high regard. He also remarked that, in an obituary tribute to Beckett, Walter Asmus recalled Beckett's having read Bernhard's novel *Wittgenstein's Nephew* with great interest. For his part, Bernhard is known not to have entirely appreciated the sobriquet of "Alpine Beckett" that the German magazine *Der Spiegel* attached to him. Cousineau then introduced the panelists — who included Daniel Katz (Université de Paris VII-Denis Diderot), Tyrus Miller (UC Santa Cruz) and Jean-Michel Rabaté (University of Pennsylvania) –- and Marjorie Perloff (Stanford University), who served as the respondent.

In "On Beckett, Bernhard, and the Imitation of Voices," Katz explored the relationship in the work of both writers between the "missed encounter" – as found in such works as *Molloy*, *The Unnamable*, *Wittgenstein's Nephew* and *Extinction*) — and the "seemingly interminable and insatiable monologuing voice, which, with uncanny or perhaps even annoying regularity, recurs from book to book." The repetitive stories (which are themselves repeated from novel to novel) that structure Bernhard's *oeuvre* contribute, as Katz argued, to the disavowal of the status of each work as an independent, coherent and autotelic literary object. Like Beckett, Bernhard demystifies the work as an autonomous artifact. He also questions the concept of a stable and "real" authorial subject situated "behind" the shallow screens formed by the multiple characters and narrators in his work. The non-coincidence between the authentic voice and its "imitators" — one thinks of Bernhard's *The Voice Imitator* as well as of Beckett's *The Unnamable*, with its desire to put away with "all these Murphys, Molloys and Malones" — is inevitable. It is impossible to imitate one's own voice, as Bernhard's professional impersonator, or "voice imitator," comes to realize. This is why, as Katz put it in the case of Beckett, "the person who arrives is always someone different from the one we expect, most especially when it is the one we expect." According to Katz, this feeling of an essentially failed encounter is problematized in Beckett's writing by strategies of deferral and in Bernhard's by concern with the text as a written trace.

In "What is a Disintegration? Monologue and Subjectivity in Beckett and Bernhard," Miller began by alluding to the contrasting stereotypes of the two writers — "Beckett as the experimental metafictionalist, Bernhard as the cultural polemicist who is only marginally novelistic" – that influence the interpretation of the historical and political significance of their work. In confronting this simplified distinction, Miller argued that the narrative techniques employed by both writers are "are in illuminating ways comparable" and that they both use the first-person narrator, not so much to create a fictional character who is capable of communicating his insight to the reader as to "question the historical, generic, linguistic, and psychological preconditions and limitations of self-knowledge." Through his analysis, Miller argued convincingly that "the gaps, the divisions, the blank spots, the repetitions, and the syntactic oscillations of the narrating self" which one finds in Beckett as well as in Bernhard provide a figural "depiction of the structure of domination in those societies of which these subjects are the literary precipitations." In his interpretation of Beckett and Bernhard, Miller also stressed the point that fiction, instead of being removed from history, is in fact a privileged entry into it. In this sense, one might argue that reading Beckett enables us to be more attentive to the narrative strategies which are at work in Bernhard's writing, whereas reading Bernhard allows us to understand more fully the deeply historical dimension of Beckett's works.

In the third contribution of the panel, "Walk in Progress: Beckett/Bernhard," Rabaté suggested that the theme of walking offered a "fruitful comparison" between Beckett and Bernhard. He illustrated this point by juxtaposing the famous episode in *Watt* describing "Watt's way of advancing due east" with a passage from Bernhard's *Gehen*, which he described as "one of Bernhard's most directly 'Beckettian' prose texts." Pointing to Beckett and Bernhard's shared vision of laughter as the highest of human achievements, he then compared Reger's argument in Bernhard's novel *Old Masters* that "in art *anything* can be made to look ridiculous" with Arsene's definition in *Watt* of "the mirthless laugh." He further argued that Bernhard shared Beckett's belief, as stated in his 1937 letter to Axel Kaun, that language is "a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it." According to Rabaté, "Bernhard would add to this program of negation a dose of anger, an ethical rage that attacks German understood as the modern Greek, or the language of thought (for

For his part, Bernhard is known not to have entirely appreciated the sobriquet of "Alpine Beckett" that the German magazine Der Spiegel attached to him.

Heidegger at least)."

Rabaté also insisted, however, on the fact that the obvious proximity between Beckett and Bernhard conceals a radical difference that can be related to Gilles Deleuze's distinction between "exhaustion," in which one combines all the possible variables of a situation without making selections or imposing a significance on them, and "fatigue," which is induced by the wearying obligation of making choices between opposing possibilities. From this perspective, Rabaté argued, "Beckett's work moves in the direction of exhaustion whereas Bernhard's is only 'tired' –- which is why he is also often 'tiring' — and that makes him 'inexhaustible.'"

According to Katz, this feeling of an essentially failed encounter is problematized in Beckett's writing by strategies of deferral and in Bernhard's by concern with the text as a written trace.

In responding to these papers, Marjorie Perloff read passages from *Molloy* and Bernhard's *Correction* that highlighted important tonal differences between the two writers. She suggested that the crucial historical event separating the two was the Second World War, to which she traced the much greater grimness and skepticism that one finds in the work of Bernhard, whose formative adolescent years were strongly marked by his experience of the war. The discussion that followed focused on the different forms of humor that one finds in the work of each writer, their common predilection for repetitive narrative forms, the applicability of the distinction between exhaustion and fatigue, and the comic effects to which Bernhard turns certain properties of the German language.

— *Thomas Hunkeler*

Conor Lovett's Molloy

The vast hotel ballrooms afforded by MLA venues are not always ideal spaces for theatrical performances, especially one-man shows. Nevertheless, the staging of Conor Lovett's *Molloy* demonstrated how to turn an unpromising location into an advantage. Lovett's slight figure, suffocatingly and amusingly over-wrapped in layers of coats, old black trousers and brown clodhoppers, was lit from the front by just one angled lamp, thus throwing a gigantic black shadow onto the back wall. The animated shadow was by turns comforting and menacing; in dogging the actor, it seemed both to reinforce his gestures and to loom over them. From the beginning, therefore, there was a visual doubling, on a magnified scale, which removed any monolithic status from the actor.

This process continued as Lovett peopled the stage with voices and identities who, splintering away from him, engaged him in uneasy transactions. There was the squeaky-voiced mother, supposedly trained by communicative bludgeoning, a comic gift to an actor. The voice of Lousse – pronounced here like "louse" the bloodsucker - attained an even squawkier pitch. Then there was the policeman, designated by the posture Lovett adopted of curmudgeonly, torso-bending intervention. Once at the police station, Lovett alternated hilariously between the sergeant's peremptory questioning, fingers hovering and jabbing over the imagined typewriter, and Molloy's querulous attempts to comprehend these new and challenging circumstances.

Clearly, in an event with a maximum running time of one hour, the choice of material is an immediate concern. Selections were made from only the first, pre-Moran, half of the novel. Lovett made no attempt to contrive a smooth, continuous narrative, but took care to delineate shifts, changes of mood, and other transitions, by means of pause and contrast. He demonstrated that those tyrannical little sucking stones – accustomed to being regarded as *de rigueur* in any reading from *Molloy* – could be omitted, whereas the foul-mouthed, guffaw-raising parrot *was* permitted to make its appearance. More important than exhaustiveness was exhaustion: the ways in which the narrative is in constant danger of running out of impetus, of imploding or short-circuiting. Lovett communicated well the recurrent dilemma summed up in the lines: "I avoid speaking as much as possible. For I always say either too much or too little." His delivery stuttered, bawled, stuttered again, always appropriately provisional.

Lovett may have succeeded in maintaining an aptly improvisational tone, but the performance was nevertheless meticulously prepared, as the actor explained in response to later questions from the audience. In early engagements with Beckett, he revealed, he had tended to an over-busy style, delivered in an assumed Dublin accent rather than in his natural Cork accent. During rehearsals for *Molloy*, he realised, in his own words, that "Beckett has already done it for you in his writing." He began then to allow the inherent rhythms to hold sway, following Beckett's dictum: "If in doubt, do nothing." Lovett applied this precept not just to the vocal element but also to his on-stage movements. Though these might vary slightly from performance to performance, he regulated carefully what he called "the dosage of movement," so that a specific move was enabled to stand out in contrast to sparser, more economical gestures.

Lovett is gradually building up an impressive portfolio of Beckett roles, including Vladimir, Hamm, and Lucky. His work on the Trilogy demonstrates a corresponding affinity with Beckett's prose. Lovett still has a long way to go in the wizening process, which means that audiences can anticipate many future engagements with Beckettian creatures endowed, as Xerxes Mehta deliciously observed in his introduction to the performance, with "scintillating decrepitude."

— *Mary Bryden*

Beckett and Ussy

On the afternoon of 27 October 2001, more than one hundred people gathered together on the Colline de Molien in front of the high gray wall surrounding Samuel Beckett's "petite maison" in Ussy-sur-Marne. On the south wall, which faces the distant "Monts Moyens" hills, branches of honeysuckle brushed against a large white veil behind which awaited a memorial made from a piece of local stone that commemorated the nearly forty-year presence of Samuel Beckett in Ussy. The weather forecast had called for wind and rain. As it happened, a few white clouds floated overhead from time to time; they were, however, quickly chased away by an autumnal breeze, so that sunny skies were with us throughout the ceremony.

Silence fell upon the assembled group. Standing in front of the veil, Christian Xatrec, a member of the Association pour la Sauvegarde d'Ussy, read from Beckett's "mirlitonnades," including the poem in which he says:

fleuves et océans
l'ont laissé pour vivant
au ru de Courtablon
près la Mare-Chaudron.

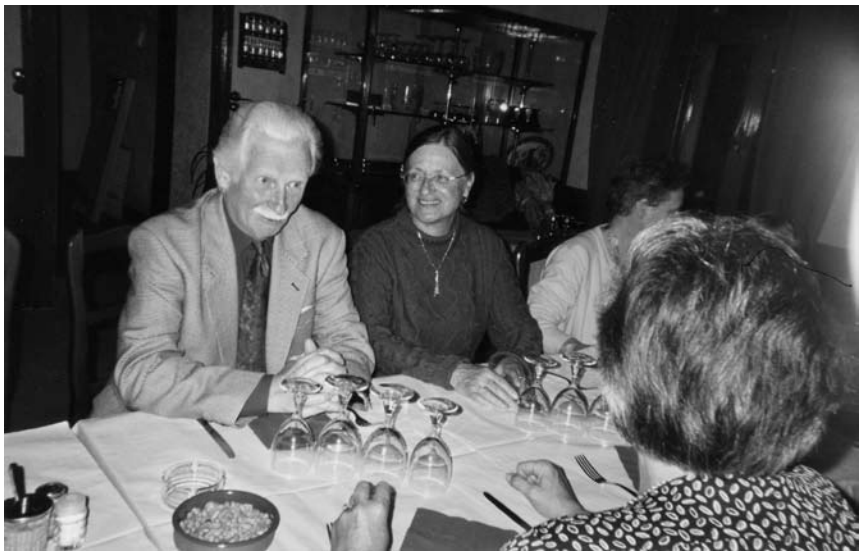
The Mare-Chaudron — within sight of which Beckett had his house built in 1953 — is no longer there. As for the ru de Courtablon, it still winds its way through the field at the end of the rue de la Dehors where Beckett and Suzanne rented a house before building their own.

Guy Prisé, the mayor of Ussy, lifted the veil before the expectant eyes of the assembled participants, who, while applauding, also expressed some surprise when they saw the rough, jagged edges of the stone. Nicole Greub (who took care of Beckett's house during his absence and is now its owner) and Paule Savane (president of the Association pour la Suavegarde d'Ussy) purposely chose to leave the stone in this unfinished state in order to respect as much as possible Beckett's own predilection for untouched nature. They had wanted a piece of sandstone, like the one that Beckett had in his "prairie-jardin," but were unable to find one capable of bearing an inscription. In keeping with Nicole Greub's wishes, the commemorative plaque was placed next to the honesuckle bush that will wreath it during the summer months.

The group of spectators included reporters, publishers, actors, local political figures and representatives of various cultural associations. James Knowlson made a special trip from England. Edward Beckett and Josette Hayden had planned to attend but were prevented by personal circumstances. Nicole and Jean Greub invited us all into the garden where Beckett used to enjoy watching and listening to the birds, along with the more mundane gardening activities of digging, planting, raking, and chasing away the moles. A titmouse had once decided to make its nest in the Becketts' mailbox. No question, to be sure, of disturbing it! A red cloth above the box informed the mailman that he should bring the mail down to the Greubs.

The plaque commemorating Beckett's years in Ussy will be wreathed by honeysuckle during the summer months. Photo credit: Yvonne Ampen

There was now a slight chill in the afternoon air. The group made its way down the hill towards "La Maison du Temps Libre," where a reception sponsored by the village awaited it. The room was decorated in the colors of Ireland and on a table next to the speaker's platform the Association pour la Sauvegarde d'Ussy had placed several of Beckett's works along with James Knowlson's biography, Christian de Bartillat's *Les deux amis: Beckett et Hayden*, and the association's own brochure, *Beckett à Ussy*. A large photograph of Beckett had been placed



James Knowlson discusses Beckett's life in Ussy with Paule Savane and other dinner guests at Au Bon Pêcheur. Photo credit: Yvonne Ampen

on the wall behind the platform where the mayor, the president of the association, and James Knowlson were to speak. The mayor warmly thanked the invited guests and the group as a whole for honoring this great writer by their presence. The president of the association recalled that Beckertt especially appreciated, in his own words, "le calme et la tranquilité d'Ussy," in which he found, not the pretext for a sterile withdrawal into himself, but an alternative to the sounds and the furies of the world. He especially enjoyed his long daily walks in the surrounding hills, which continue to offer the "quelque chose de l'éternité et de la paix des grands espaces" that his friend Henri Hayden had immortalized in his paintings.

The "Monts Moyens" hills as Beckett would have seen them from the window of his study.

James Knowlson, who then told us the story of Beckett at Ussy, suggested that we should not underestimate the importance of "la petite maison" for his life as a writer. A great number of his novels and his plays, as well as some of his short poems, were written at his old worktable there. Short prose texts such as *Bing* and *Le Dépeupleur*, as well as *Comment c'est*, were composed in large part in Ussy. As Beckett's five notebooks for this novel indicate, it simply could not have been written anywhere else. Likewise, *All that Fall* and *Eh Joe* had their beginnings, or their "découverte," in Ussy. Beckett also worked meticulously in this house on the translations of these and other works. His visits to Ussy were sometimes limited to the few days that he was able to snatch from his busy life filled with engagements in Paris. More often, they were for longer periods during which he had no scheduled obligations and that he could spend at Ussy planning and writing his new work.

Many of the participants, who warmly applauded these presentations, wanted to know more about Beckett. Some visited the display of his work and made purchases. Others asked questions of the speakers, especially James Knowlson, who was much sought after. People gathered in small groups to discuss what Beckett meant to them personally as they nibbled on petits fours and canapés and sipped sparkling wine or Jameson's Irish whiskey. This memorable day in Ussy ended with dinner at Au Bon Pêcheur, the café-tabac-restaurant-hôtel where Josette, Henri, and Sam would meet before the Haydens bought their house in the nearby village of Teuil-en-Brie.

— *Paule Savane*

Translated by Thomas Cousineau

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De Bartillat, Christian. *Deux amis: Beckett et Hayden*. Etrepilly: Les Presses du Village, 2000.

Knowlson, James. *Beckett*, translated by Bonis Oristelle. Arles: Actes Sud, 1999.

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Gielgud and Beckett

The death of John Gielgud on May 21, 2000 marked the end of a remarkable era in theater history. He was the last of the great kings of classical drama, especially the plays of Shakespeare. When he died at the age of ninety-six he had more than seventy years of acting behind him. The very last piece of acting he did, a few months before his death, was in the film version of Beckett's *Catastrophe*, directed by David Mamet and also starring Harold Pinter. This coming together of Gielgud and Beckett reflects the remarkable evolution of twentieth-century theater. Back in 1958 Gielgud was asked to play in the British premiere of Beckett's *Endgame*. He refused, and it wasn't a polite refusal—"I couldn't find anything I liked in the play. . . . it nauseates me." When Gielgud's close friend and fellow-actor, Ralph Richardson, another giant of the theater, asked Gielgud's advice about appearing in *Waiting for Godot* Gielgud dissuaded him, saying that *Godot* was "sordid and pessimistic." Later, Richardson was filled with regret at having, in his own words, lost the opportunity to perform in "the greatest play of our time." Years later, Gielgud himself, admitting that he was wrong, regretted the harsh words that he had spoken about Beckett's plays. Then, at the limit of his life — "the last moment" — Gielgud was asked to perform the non-speaking role of Protagonist in *Catastrophe*. The character is silent throughout the play, with his face containing and revealing all. So, the last performance of our great classical actor, the one whose voice captured his audiences through the years, was a performance without voice. Gielgud moved from his early overly-eloquent style of delivery through beautifully modulated performances of such remarkable artistry that he was acclaimed *the* Shakespeare actor of our time to, finally, the silence of Beckett. This is a process that began in the Edwardian era and ended in the avant-garde theater of today.

— Normand Berlin

Addendum

The following notes complete John Fletcher's article, "Beckett and Burgess: A Literary Encounter," which appeared in the Fall 2002 issue of *The Beckett Circle*:

(1) 1962 "Reprints for Novel Addicts" (review inter alia of the Penguin reprint of *Malone Dies*). *The Observer*, 30 December, p. 11.
(2) 1964 "The Universal Mess" (review of *The Novels of Samuel Beckett* by John Fletcher). *The Guardian*, 24 July, p. 9.
(3) 1965 *Here Comes Everybody*, p. 12.
(4) 1966 "The First JJ" (review, inter alia, of *A Question of Modernity* by Anthony Cronin, which concentrates on Joyce and Beckett). *The Spectator*, 18 March, p. 332.
(5) 1966 "Enduring Saturday" (review of *The Testament of Samuel Beckett* by Jacobsen and Mueller). *The Spectator*, 29 April, pp. 532-3; reprinted in *Urgent Copy* (1968), pp. 85-7.
(6) 1967 "Master Beckett" (review of *No's Knife* and *Beckett at Sixty*). *The Spectator*, 21 July, pp. 79-80.
(7) 1967 *The Novel Now*, pp. 72, 75-7, 79.
(8) 1973 *Joysprick*, p. 126.
(9) 1974 *English Literature: A Survey for Students*, pp. 206, 228.
(10) 1986 "The Master of Erudite Silence." *The Times*, 10 April, p. 10.
(11) 1987 "Neither God nor Fish nor Flesh" (programme article on *Waiting for Godot*, National Theatre, London).

THE SAMUEL BECKETT ENDPAGE

A multiple resource website for anyone and everyone interested in Beckett and his work, the Endpage is always in progress and infinitely expandable. Contributions, postings, criticism, or suggestions are encouraged and can be made onsite at:

http://beckett.english.ucsb.edu

Or by contacting Porter Abbott (pabbott@humanitas.ucsb.edu). The Endpage contains the official homepage of the Samuel Beckett Society.

CURRENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

Samuel Beckett Festival at the University of Delaware

Performances by Billie Whitelaw and Pierre Chabert and an inaugural lecture by Ruby Cohn headline the University of Delaware Samuel Beckett Festival, 9-11 October 2003, on the occasion of the University Library's Exhibition of the Sir Joseph Gold collection of works by and about Beckett. Billie Whitelaw will present a retrospective on her career with Beckett through commentary and a performance similar to the one she staged to great acclaim at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1999. Pierre Chabert will perform *La Dernière bande*, reviving the play that he performed under Beckett's direction in 1975. Ruby Cohn will explore the Protean essence of Beckett's artistic sensibility. In addition, reflecting the range and emphases of the Gold collection, there will be panel sessions on criticism (Thomas Cousineau, S. E. Gontarski, and Enoch Brater), translation (Lois Oppenheim, Tom Bishop, and Jean-Michel Rabaté), and performance (Pierre Chabert, Xerxes Mehta, and Daniel Labeille). The Library Lecture, sponsored specifically in conjunction with the Exhibition, will be presented by the co-editors of the Correspondence of Samuel Beckett, Lois Overbeck and Martha Fehsenfeld.

Sir Joseph Gold's wide-ranging collection of over 3,000 items is notable particularly for its representation of Beckett's livres d'artistes, the fine press editions he produced in collaboration with visual artists, printers, and book designers, and also for its numerous foreign language editions of Beckett's poetry, fiction, and drama. Playbills, photographs, and news clippings from productions of Beckett's plays throughout the world make up another important component of the collection.

The University of Delaware Samuel Beckett Festival will run from the afternoon of Thursday, 9 October 2003 through noon of Saturday, 11 October 2003. The events, funded in part by the Delaware Humanities Forum and the Delaware Division of the Arts, are free and open to the public. Additional details, including a registration form to reserve a space at the performances, may be found on the University Delaware Samuel Beckett Festival WEB Page (http://www.english.udel.edu/beckett). Please direct questions to Robert Bennett, Program Coordinator, Department of English, at 302-831-3653 or email address: rbennett@udel.edu. For further information about the Sir Joseph Gold Samuel Beckett Library Collection, contact Timothy Murray, Head of Special Collections, at 302-831-6952, FAX 302-831-1046, or email tdm@udel.edu.

Page and Stage: Fifty Years of Performing Beckett

Royal Holloway, University of London, will host a day-long conference on 22 June 2002, which, taking into account the two-day conference on 20-22 June 2003 at the Workshop Theatre, School of English, University of Leeds, will look both at Beckett's own practice in the creation of performance texts, the various ways in which practitioners have engaged with Beckett's theatre, and issues that arise in the rehearsal rooms and auditoria where his work is confronted, negotiated and enjoyed. Papers at this conference, it is hoped, will take either of two forms: Traditional twenty-minute readings, and one-hour "workshop" papers, for which presenters will invite delegates to participate or to witness performed interrogations on pieces or fragments of Beckett's writings. Plenary Speakers include Enoch Brater, David Bradby, S. E. Gontarski, Lois Oppenheim, and Philip Zarilli. For more information, visit: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/beckett.html. Contacts: Mark Batty (m.j.batty@leeds.ac.uk) and David Pattie (d.pattie@chester.ac.uk).

Dublin Beckett Forum

The Dublin Beckett Forum, which meets monthly during the academic year, tends toward informal discussion rather than presentation. We welcome new participants and discussion topics. Recent meetings have included a discussion of *Waiting for Godot* in Mongolia led by Sarah Jane Scaif and one on "Poetic Translations" by Elizabeth Drew. To subscribe to the mailing list or to receive more information about the forum, please contact Ben Keatinge (keatinbg@tcd.ie) or Elizabeth Drew (drewe@tcd.ie).

REVIEWS

It is with great pleasure – as well as with appropriately Beckettian belatedness — that I welcome as the new book-review editor of *The Beckett Circle* Lance Butler, who began this new service to the Beckett community with the Fall 2002 issue of the newsletter. After lecturing for thirty years at the University of Sterling in Scotland, Lance was recently appointed as Professor of British Literature at the Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour in France. Among his many contributions to Beckett studies, readers of *The Beckett Circle* will especially recall his *Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being: A Study in Ontological parable* (1984), the three volumes of essays that he has edited on Beckett, and the two conferences that he organized at Stirling University: in 1986 on the occasion of Beckett's eightieth birthday and in 1999 on the subject of "Beckett and Religion," whose proceedings were published in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*. I was delighted when Lance accepted my invitation to become the new editor following Angela Moorjani's distinguished editorship and look forward to continuing what has already been a rewarding collaboration.

Samuel Beckett, Dante und der Hummer. Gesammelte Prosa, tr. Elmar and Erika Tophoven. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2000. ISBN 3-518-41159-4. 365 pp. € 24.80.

This collection, which celebrates the silver jubilee of Beckett's German publisher Suhrkamp on 1 July 2000, brings together the German translations of the author's shorter fictional prose. The texts range from Beckett's parodistic lecture on "Concentrism," which he presented to the Modern Language Society of Trinity College Dublin in 1930, to his last prose works, *Worstward Ho* and *Stirrings Still*. This volume – which reflects new editorial policies that have made single editions (or reprints) of the short but complex prose texts impossible — allows one to trace elements that, as the translator Erika Tophoven pointed out in our conversation about this edition, remain constant throughout Beckett's *oeuvre*.

Most of the works in this volume are reprints of Elmar Tophoven's translations, which makes it perhaps a little odd that the title is borrowed from "Dante and the Lobster," one of the two stories translated by Christian Enzensberger, whose renderings introduce a slightly different tone. Three texts have been newly translated for this edition by Erika Tophoven: *L'Image* (the prose work which derives from Beckett's work on *Comment c'est* and which was – after its first publication in the journal *X. A Quarterly Review* in 1959 – rediscovered by Les Editions de Minuit in 1988), Beckett's last text, *Comment dire,* and the poem "neither." While the German *Comment dire* is used as an epigraph and therefore has a clear-cut function to perform, the inclusion of the second poem in this prose collection (in correct chronological order as if there was no genre difference), which is not explained in the editorial comments, seems rather arbitrary. But this detail does not make the ground covered by the volume and the connections it encourages Beckett's German readers to seek any less impressive.

Such comparisons are invited with regard not only to Beckett's works themselves, but also to their German renderings, especially since – apart from the new translations – Erika Tophoven has also revised her husband's 1984 version of "Le Concentrisme," originally published in the journal *Akzente* in 1986. Frau Tophoven, who started her own Beckett translations with *All That Fall* in the winter of 1956-57, did not contribute to this German text. The publication of *Dante und der Hummer* gave her the chance to revise a translation which she thought contained a number of loose ends. When reading the two translations together with the original, one can only conclude that she has succeeded admirably with this (deliberately) obscure text. Many revisions serve to clarify either grammatical relations or exact shades of meaning, and some of the alterations show that — in contrast to her husband, who could only work with the French text published in *Disjecta* — she had access to Beckett's typescript in the Reading collection.

It is also worth noting that Erika Tophoven has tried to bring out the intense "iridescent ambiguity" – as she called it in our conversation – of words and phrases. She has, for instance, paid special attention to warped proverbs like "Chacun à sa gouttière," which abound in the text. Such linguistic playfulness (clearly one of the constant qualities to which Frau Tophoven alludes) is, of course, typical of Beckett; not surprisingly, it is especially pronounced in this parody of the learned discourse of the imaginary figure, Jean du Chas. Beckett himself called him a poet and reported amusing himself for a while by inventing poetical works for him (those experiments unfortunately do not seem to have survived).

In "Le Concentrisme," on the other hand, the main concerns seem to be of a philosophical nature, an emphasis that is reflected in the Latin-derived jargon permeating the text. As Erika Tophoven notes, this sometimes makes it doubtful whether the paper could be understood when read aloud (though one might argue cynically that this only emphasizes its close relationship to "real" academic discourse). Her German version consciously accentuates

this obscurity by inventing complicated technical terms and by transposing some phrases in the original French with German annotations, where necessary, in a footnote.

At the same time, she has discovered a completely different level in "Le Concentrisme," which already makes itself felt in the omnipresence of the prefix "con-" that is highlighted in the title. For Beckettians, this syllable is obviously linked with its masculine French homonym. It is, of course, also characteristic that the oscillation between vulgarity and philosophy is not restricted to one language. The reference to "la Chose de Kant" in the final sentence, for instance, produces similar reverberations in English. The work itself establishes an explicit link with Germany as well, since the mother of the imaginary "protagonist" is of German extraction.

For Erika Tophoven, this was another reason to engage with the text in greater detail, especially since around that time she was also working on a transcription of selected passages from Beckett's 1936 "German Diaries," which will be published this year by Roswitha Quadflieg's Raamin-Presse. Against this background, it is even possible to perceive the aristocratic French name "du Chas" as an allusion to Beckett's connections with the city of Kassel – among a wealth of other potential readings that Frau Tophoven has tracked down in the translation process.

As she explains, the principles of her work are still very similar to those of the period when she and her husband collaborated with Beckett himself. Ever since the German *Godot* of 1953, Elmar Tophoven would go to see Beckett with the best possible German translation he and his wife could achieve on their own. They would then play it to him on tape and discuss his reactions. As in those translations, Erika Tophoven's main aim is to bring the German version as close as possible to Beckett's original; this principle governs her work in all literary genres. In this respect, Beckett's own English or French renderings of his works can help the translator to gauge how much scope for deviation is allowed.

Frau Tophoven and her husband also valued Beckett's self-translations, because they made him sensitive to the difficulties and achievements of translating. During his stay in Hamburg in 1936, he produced a German version of his poem "Cascando" (to be included in the Raamin-Presse volume) that, according to Erika Tophoven, shows how much each word counts in the original. Similarly, in the Tophovens' work, rhythm, the cadences of Beckett's language and the flow of the text were and are at least as important as the semantic level. In their experience, purely lexical problems are rare with Beckett. The etymological dictionary becomes the translator's most important tool, as the obsolete meanings listed suggest how the word in question can be given its typical iridescent quality in another language.

Far greater difficulties occur with regard to sentence construction, since German tends to be both more long-winded and more concrete than Beckett's two languages. With respect to concreteness, for example, the linguistic category of gender forces the translator to make decisions where – as, for instance, in "Bing" – the original remains ambiguous. Frau Tophoven indeed remembers how Beckett marked the first version of *Glückliche Tage*, the corrections of which she read while in hospital to give birth to one of her sons, with the self-illustrating note "shorten." She now considers *Worstward Ho* the most pointed example of this paring down of linguistic resources, as it demonstrates how much can be omitted even on the grammatical level.

At the same time, this work epitomizes many recurrent motifs of Beckett's *oeuvre*. As the translator herself pointed out, for instance, it takes up the characteristic camera image, which she has also foregrounded in translating the cinematic language of *L'image* (rendering "brouillard," for example, as the more explicitly filmic "Blackout"). The present volume thus allows one to follow the unbroken line from the relative explicitness and linguistic abundance of the initial "Le Concentrisme" to the penultimate *Worstward Ho*, where the concentration process implied in the title of the first work is brought to perfection.

— *Merle Tönnies*

Richard Lane, ed. Beckett and Philosophy. Houndsmill and New York: Palgrave, 2002. 184 pp. $58.00.

This volume is an interesting addition to the existing body of critical works, produced mostly since 1980, which have analyzed and interpreted Beckett's relation to philosophy in a (post)modernist frame. It confirms the polyvalence of the complex theme, "Beckett and philosophy." Some of the contributors make it clear that the issue of that "and" provides an excellent opportunity for interpretation.

The first part of the volume concerns "literature and philosophy" in its many thematic variants such as "speech-writing," "thinking and writing (about literature)," "naming" and "voice." The main issue is about the relation of some specific philosophical work (often understood as "the thought of an author") to Beckett. French and German thought is, in that order, the declared focus of the second and third parts of the volume. Richard Begam's interesting opening essay provides his interpretation of the "and" linking philosophy to Beckett

as follows: "A large and impressive body of commentary exists on the subject of Beckett and philosophy. Generally, this literature has proceeded along one of two lines: either it has been genetic, detailing the kinds of intellectual influence a particular philosopher exercised over the writer . . . or it has been intertextual, mapping areas of theoretical confluence that connect Beckett with thinkers" (13). This is an important perspective, even if one chooses not to interpret "genealogies" strictly as "influences," nor "intertextualities" as theoretical or cognitive "confluence," and even if one resists the dichotomy underlying the notion of "two lines" of critical development.

Begam deserves praise (though he is alone in the volume in this) for referring to criticism outside the Anglo-American and French-German fields.

Begam deserves praise (though he is alone in the volume in this) for referring to criticism outside the Anglo-American and French-German fields. A lot of Beckett criticism now comes from such countries as Spain, Italy, The Czech Republic and Japan. Begam is also right that Beckett and Philosophy provides both a "philosophizing with Beckett" and an evocation of various philosophers brought into a dialogue with him either because of what they have said of his work or because of some conceptual affinity. The latter thematic option is more successful in this volume because in the former case most contributors do not define their specific "borderlines of reading" and do not explicitly indicate what is theoretically (not thematically) at stake in their reading strategies. There is often no discussion of the theoretical choices they make when they relate literature or Beckett to a philosophical system.

Why, after all, should Beckett and philosophy be related? Are thematic similarities to be taken as sufficient for the establishment of a relation, with no further theoretical "legitimizing" of this relational choice? I resist the notion that reading practices are self-sufficient and self-legitimating. Even indicating a "ground" or "setting" for comparison does not seem enough, if that very "ground" or "setting" is not addressed as a problematic object. If, as Mary Bryden points out in her distinguished essay, "Beckett wished to explore the process of 'épuisement' on as many fronts as possible" it is ultimately the reader's responsibility to interpret this "exhaustion," and not merely to find it in all its ramifications. This seems the area in which postmodern readings can renew themselves, and provide hermeneutical innovation.

Also, if the conceptual challenge is to address the question of a "transitory ontology," as Alain Badiou calls it, such indetermination cannot resolve itself into a mere critique of the Cartesian cogito (present in Beckett criticism since the 1960s), nor can it fit the alternative option of the oscillation between signifier and signified. As Ulrika Maude cogently points out, "In the negative bodily experiences we so frequently encounter in Beckett, the habitual body, the body in its stative aspect, functions as a signifier that is out of sync with its signified." I think it is worth asking how and why the body is the locus of that polemical gap? It is in the light of this polemic that we can understand why habit and consciousness do not exhaust a sense of "in-body-ed" subjectivity. Maude's contribution to this volume extends the scope of this thematic discussion, with "a distinction between being merely aware of the body" and "paying conscious attention to it." "Habit" and "conscious attention" are not merely exclusive categories in Beckett but have mutually negotiable implications that constitute a Beckettian "pre-reflective realm."

All of the critical readings in this volume make a common (if unstated) point: the body is a hermeneutical field, and it is precisely in reading the body in Beckett that we realize that generic references to indeterminacy and aporias are too metaphysical. For example, Beckett is fascinated by Kant but does not believe in the "sublime" (a form of absolute indeterminacy), nor does he accept "aporia" as a definitive end: "What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation, how proceed? By aporia pure and simple? . . . There must be other shifts" (*The Unnamable*). This conception of a "shift" as the production of a "work-character work" is central to the understanding of Beckett's work. I appreciate Richard Lane's reminder, in this respect, of Critchley's observation: "Derrida is suggesting that the work of Beckett's work, its work-character, is that which refuses meaning and remains after one has exhausted thematization." Gary Banham provides a number of accurate and relevant insights on this topic, particularly as it locates the very problem of meaning at the level of a philosophically understood "language":

The very fact that the larger theme of "Beckett and philosophy" is not reducible to certain specific thematic coordinates only highlights the complexity of the issue.

"language itself is an edge which cuts between the world and the one who speaks."

In the chapter on "Beckett and Foucault" Thomas Hunkeler provides a welcome reminder of the fact that seeking the speaker cannot simply translate itself into finding a referential or empirical subject, nor does it warrant the understanding of such a subject as a mere "grammatical fold." I find it interesting that at the moment in which Foucault is evoked as a reader of Beckett, some of the problematic aspects of his technologies of self are re-played in a Beckettian context. Again on a meta-thematic note, one can ask: why is a certain philosopher related to a discussion of Beckett's work? In a body of work that addresses the Beckett canon on this theme, innovation could be located precisely here, in a discussion of the singularity of the text(s) evoked.

Further, does the very definition of "episteme" imply a sharing of general cultural and conceptual presuppositions? If we believe that Beckett provided (new) "philosophemes," we should specify whether or not they enhance somebody's work (in spite of the chronological retroactivity that Richard Lane describes as "ignoring a certain chronology") or if they attest to an unacknowledged cultural "debt of thought." Exemplary in this sense is Philip Tew's wonderful discussion of Beckett's prose fragments via Habermas in which he analyzes "the transformative capacity of negativity and the avant-garde" in cultural terms, pointing to shared socio-historical presuppositions.

My questions transcend the thematization of philosophical implications of/in the specifically Beckettian literary production; perhaps though, that thematization is the major scope of this volume. So, if I am not getting answers here, it is probably because I am asking broader extra-textual questions, and I therefore deserve not to get an answer. However, I would point out that David Cunningham's reading of the (im)possibility of understanding comes close to the kind of questions I am posing here; his brilliant contribution addresses the main issue: "on what basis is it possible to 'try' to read Beckett's work, philosophically?"

The very fact that the larger theme of "Beckett and philosophy" is not reducible to certain specific thematic coordinates only highlights the complexity of the issue, and the volume's solid, exemplary thematic mapping remains. What these essays valuably highlight is the fact that Beckett plays with received "philosophemes." Steve Barfield's discussion of Beckett and Heidegger provides precisely this solid mapping as a spectrum of motifs and themes, comparatively revisited. After all, re-assessing the multiplicity of the interpretive readings Beckett allows is a way of keeping alive the debate about the relevance of his work and its understanding as a major contribution to the contemporary episteme. References to a variety of modern and contemporary philosophers in this volume highlight the "inclusive disjunctions" that Beckett performs, and the variety of different readings that in his brilliance he concedes.

— Carla Locatelli

New & Forthcoming

- Brater, Enoch. *The Essential Samuel Beckett: An Illustrated Biography*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2003. 144 pp. ISBN 0-500-28411-3. $19.95. 122 Illustrations. Distributed in the USA by W.W. Norton. Revised and updated edition of *Why Beckett*.

- Buning, Marius, Matthijs Engelberts, Sjef Houppermans, eds. *Pastiches, Parodies, and Other Imitations*. Vol. 11 of *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002. 325pp. ISBN 90-420-1094-0 (hardcover). $75; ISBN 90-420-1084-3 (paper). $35.

- Fletcher, John. *About Beckett: The Playwright and the Work*. London: Faber and Faber, 2003. ISBN 0-571-20124-5 (paper). £8.99

- McDonald, Ronan. *Tragedy and Irish Literature: Synge, O'Casey, Beckett*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 215pp. 0-333-9293-6 9. $62.00

The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays. Project Director: Everett Frost. A Voices International production presented by Evergreen Review, Inc. Six CDs featuring All That Fall, Embers, Words and Music, Rough for Radio II, and Cascando.

The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays was originally planned for Beckett's eightieth birthday. Martha Fehsenfeld, prime mover, assembled the production and consulting team. The project took some time to get off the ground but in April 1989 it was ready to be aired nationwide by National Public Radio member stations. The casts were

replete with names of solid Beckettian standing and so were the background documentaries broadcast after the plays. Cassette copies of the five plays *cum* background were marketed by NPR.

The festival as a whole seems to have been a lasting success in one very important respect. All five productions were national premieres. What had been an ignorable part of Beckett's work, particularly in the US, suddenly moved up front to command attention. *Embers*, starring Barry McGovern and Billie Whitelaw, got a gold medal from the NY International Radio Festival in 1989. The canon expanded. With *All That Fall* a sizeable play was added to it, and much unexpected motion to boot –- another "oeuvre très mouvementée, une sorte de western," as Beckett once characterized *Godot* for Roger Blin. And the radio plays from the early sixties were found to be paradigmatic articulations of a focal theme, that of the compulsion to create. "It does in a way show what passes for my mind and what passes for its work," Beckett said of *Cascando.*

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This newsletter was not deaf to the virtues of the festival when it came about, as witness *TBC* 10:1-2 (1988-1989). But how have the productions withstood the test of time? Splendidly, I would say, but there's no need to take my word for it: the cassettes have now been reissued in CD format for all to hear. There is a wealth of good radio acting on them. Still I do think the Whitelaw–David Warrilow tandem in *All That Fall* should be singled out for special praise. Their act is convincingly underpinned by Everett Frost's adept microphoning (the rationale for which he has presented at length in Lois Oppenheim's *Directing Beckett*, 1994).

In this deft production one both hears and senses the relatedness of man falling from grace and of rain falling from heaven, lapsarian and diluvian rolled into one. The Frost version takes its time, richly pausing on its way in a manner yet unheard of on American airwaves. Frost thinks that, at 78:15, it is the longest version on record in any language. In fact the NDR (Hamburg) 1957 production was exactly the same length. *Words and Music* is another festival treat. Getting a score for it from Morton Feldman was Beckett's idea: the 1961 music by his cousin John Beckett had failed to satisfy either author or composer.

A festival of five is fine, yet a whetted appetite might ask for more. *Rough for Radio II* is part of the programme, the first rough is not. It is sketchier, to be sure, than the second, and it is easy to see why it was abandoned: *Cascando*, a less "naturalist" thematization of ceaseless storytelling, took its place. The author didn't want this rough to be part of the festival. Even so, he translated the original French into English as late as 1975, thus somehow acknowledging it. And of course it's been done on radio, in the Netherlands for instance, with music by Richard Rijnvos. But more than anything else, the difference between the first rough and *Cascando* is singularly instructive about abstraction in Beckett, both as precept and as practice. My other desideratum would be *The Old Tune*, a Hibernian version of Robert Pinget's *La manivelle* (1963). This little text is not just a translation but an adaptation which, as Vivian Mercier said, has some of the purest Dublin dialect to be found outside O'Casey and Behan.

What we do get, however, is fine enough. The productions have aged better than their entourage has. Something in the actors' and academics' soundbites that sprinkle the presentations and in the documentaries that follow the plays is a shade more reverent than one would want them today. Methinks they protest too much. The print in which these CDs are wrapped jars badly with the products it is supposed to cover. What little text is provided has never seen a proofreader. The "lively banter" of the Rooneys in *All That Fall*, we learn, is "sometimes heart rendering." This may be compared with other CD producers: Auvidis Montaigne, e.g., tucked a trilingual seventeen-page cover booklet into their 1996 disc *Words and Music*, called *morton feldman 2* (1 CD MO 782084). Among other things, it includes segments of the Frost/Feldman conversation which had to be left out from the Festival documentary appended to the *Words and Music* CD. The Beckett festival CD release might have made more use of this opportunity to address new audiences both in sound and in print. "The play increases in intensity and you'll have to tune in to find out if they [Voice and Music] manage to finish or not." That blurb, I think, could be bettered.

— *Clas Zilliacus*

Paul Heinemann, Potenzierte Subjekte – Potenzierte Fiktionen. Ich-Figurationen und ästhetische Konstruktion bei Jean Paul und Samuel Beckett. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001. 422 pp. € 51.00.

Based on the discovery in the 1960s of Jean Paul as an important precursor of contemporary fiction as well as on his interest (shared by Beckett) in eighteenth-century English novels, Paul Heinemann's book, a slightly revised version of his 2000 PhD thesis, examines the parallels between Beckett's and Jean Paul's concepts of subjectivity. According to Heinemann, both *oeuvres* construct "universes of the I" in which the "I-figurations" created by the artist's own subjectivity multiply in the fictional world, attributing to themselves the role of creators/narrators, and even transcending the limits of individual works. The result is constant play with different fictional levels, which imparts a fundamental ontological instability to the texts and makes the self-reflexivity of the narration predominate over any remnants of plot in the traditional sense. Heinemann traces these characteristics throughout the entirety of each writer's *oeuvre*. This extensive corpus of primary material can sometimes make his examples seem a little eclectic, especially when they are drawn from different periods of the author's work, and –- in Beckett's case –- from both prose and drama, without any attempt to examine a potential development and/or genre differences.

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The main body of the text is preceded by introductions to the debate on subjectivity between philosophical idealism and early romanticism and to the changing function of narration in modern literature. With regard to the latter section, the reviewer can only regret that the approaches presented are not applied in the ensuing analysis. The theory of Gérard Genette, in particular, would have provided a very useful basis for describing how exactly the sense of instability is produced in a specific work –- as indeed Heinemann himself hints briefly in this introductory section. Before addressing the "I-figurations" in the novels and plays, he then sets his two authors' concepts of subjectivity in the context of the philosophical discussion of their respective period and summarizes the basic elements of their "poetic theory." The latter is, of course, a rather dubious endeavor with regard to Beckett, but the short treatment in this section of how Beckett's relationship with subjectivity manifests itself in self-reflexive elements in his works of different genres yields convincing results that already pre-empt many of the points to be made later.

The main structural principle of Heinemann's approach is already established here: he constantly jumps back and forth between Jean Paul and Beckett, analyzing each issue first with one author and then with the other, but failing to set up any significant cross-references between the different parts. This leads to a fair amount of repetition. The binary structure becomes especially problematic when Heinemann deals with the concrete manifestations of "I-figurations" in the writers' works. *Doppelgänger* can be found in both *oeuvres* with regard to the author and the artist-protagonists as well as among the characters themselves, and the respective sections of the study therefore go together fairly well, as do the analyses of the different levels of narration constructed by both writers.

Heinemann's attempt to equate metaphors of flying and seeing in Jean Paul with Beckett's "poetics of the look," however, seems rather forced; flying is clearly the predominant image in the first case, but is completely absent in the second. Similarly, Heinemann himself admits that dreams, the importance of which he has just examined with regard to Jean Paul, play only a marginal role with Beckett. As a result, he simply replaces them with "visions" as far as Beckett's works are concerned. As these rather mechanical equations indicate, the main problem of Heinemann's approach is that it stresses similarities between the two writers to the point of glossing over their differences. The individual parts thus do allow the reader to obtain a sense of each author's specific qualities, but since – apart from a few very general hints that Beckett "radicalizes" Jean Paul's techniques – there is no attempt to relate these findings to each other (not even in the conclusion), one has to work out the exact relationship between the two writers oneself. How productive a more thoroughly comparative approach could have been becomes clear from Heinemann's treatment of each author's relationship with the reader. Here, he uncharacteristically strikes a balance between similarities and differences and relates the two individual analyses to each other, observing that while both writers introduce a high degree of freedom into the reception process, Jean Paul seems to dream of establishing a community with an ideal reader, while Beckett evokes a '"compulsion to interpret" at the same time that he refuses all relations with his potential recipients.

On the whole, Heinemann's monograph is thus a worthwhile contribution to comparative literary studies and has its value for Beckett criticism as well. However, it would have been greatly improved if its author had been less strict in adhering to his binary structure and had followed through his own ideas with greater stringency. As it stands, the book sometimes reminds one of Heinemann's own observation that Jean Paul made his readers do a fair share of the work themselves.

— Merle Tönnies

Peter Brockmeier. Samuel Beckett. Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2001. 240 pp. € 12.90

For at least two decades, Beckett's work has lost its edge, and its study now is very much an academic enterprise. But when Beckett became famous in the mid-1950s and 1960s, first in France and then in West Germany, his plays, and then the prose works, were the battle-ground on which many of the political, philosophical and cultural debates of post-war Western Europe were fought, with catchwords like *existentialism, the absurd, alienation, late bourgeois* and such like. This state of affairs is difficult to bring to mind now that Beckett's obsessions and artistic innovations, e. g. the *mis en abîme* structure and (con)fusion of logical levels, have become the omnipresent and facile devices of post-modernist fiction and culture. When I first saw *Waiting for Godot* as a young schoolboy in Dusseldorf in 1957 and, on coming home, was asked what this famous, or infamous, play was all about, I was unable to summarize a plot or make any other meaningful statement, except that I had been deeply moved by Lucky's net dance and monologue.

Then, after innumerable drama and book reviews, magazine essays, learned articles and several books on Beckett had created the beginnings of a critical consensus in Germany, the first introductions appeared, with plot summaries and character portraits, biographical sketches and bibliographies, thereby making Beckett accessible to a wider public of students, high-school teachers, theatre people and *Bildungsbiirger*. The first such German overview was by Georg Hensel (1968), and since then, there has been one in every decade: Trudis Reber (1971), Henner Laass and Wolfgang Schroder (1984), Friedhelm Rathjen (1995), and now Peter Brockmeier (2001).

Brockmeier, professor emeritus of Romance literatures at the Humboldt-Universität Berlin, presents the first comprehensive German introduction to Beckett. Hensel dealt with the dramatic works only, Laass and Schroder confined themselves to a representative selection of works, and Rathjen was much less detailed and professional. So there is certainly room for a new attempt. Brockmeier subdivides his overview into eight chapters dealing, respectively, with Beckett's life, his explicit and implicit literary theory, the prose works up to the *Trilogy*, the *Trilogy* and *How It Is* (which Brockmeier sees as a kind of tetralogy), the plays for theatre, radio and TV, the late prose, the poems, and, finally, Beckett criticism. Two bibliographies (in which Brockmeier appears as the most-widely cited Beckett scholar) follow.

The chapters three through seven, which constitute the central part of Brockmeier's book, are general introductions to each of Beckett's works. There is no central thesis and no ongoing argumentation, so a brief description of one sub-chapter will suffice to give an idea of the whole. Discussion of *Krapp's Last Tape*, which gets two pages, begins with the dates of composition, publication and first performance, both of the English original and of the German version; then follows an account of what Beckett thought about the play; next comes one paragraph of plot summary; all this information is then rounded off with a paragraph of interpretation. Although obviously very basic, this will do as a first introduction to the play.

However, there are some weaker sections. The biographical sketch — although it has the advantage of the publication of James Knowlson's biography — is pedestrian in style, and the text often jumps from one topic to the next without connection or transition. Deirdre Bair's early attempt at a biography of Beckett is cited as being on a par with Knowlson's definitive volume, while Anthony Cronin's book — flawed, but well-informed about the Irish background of Beckett's *oeuvre* — is not even mentioned. (Discussion of the Irish aspect of Beckett's life and work is deficient throughout Brockmeier's book.) Beckett the man is lost sight of after 1945. He dies after he has received the Nobel Prize. A mere list of facts, dates and titles would have been better suited to this loveless approach. There are also some typographical errors, discrepancies and mishandlings of grammar. The three-page chapter on the poetry is useless and does not even begin to attempt an overview.

I also have reservations about the last chapter, a short review of research. I will not quarrel with the choice of books (plus a few articles) discussed by Brockmeier, because this is always a matter of subjective emphasis, and his individual assessments are reliable. Less convincing, however, is the order of presentation. The criteria according to which the titles presented are grouped are quite heterogeneous. Early Beckett criticism is grouped according to chronology, later criticism according to national traditions (with special emphasis on criticism in German), then according to subject matter (alienation, for example), followed by a paragraph where works are grouped according to format (a few general introductions are mentioned). To a beginner looking for orientation, this chapter should prove rather difficult to follow.

Brockmeier, professor emeritus of Romance literatures at the Humboldt-Universität Berlin, presents the first comprehensive German introduction to Beckett.

Generally, it is conspicuous that the weaker chapters are those for which there is (as yet) little secondary literature to profit from. Whereas the sections on *Molloy* or *Endgame*, for instance, are rather extensive and detailed, later prose works like *Quad 1* and *2* do not even get the bare outlines of an introduction. So, while Brockmeier's *Samuel Beckett* is useful and reliable in many ways, there is still room for a companion piece to Wilhelm Füger's *James Joyce* (1994). Perhaps one is in the making somewhere to coincide with the Beckett centenary in 2006?

— *Rolf Breuer*

Presidential Message

As I begin my two-year term of office, I would like to take this opportunity to pay a warm tribute to my predecessor, Professor Xerxes Mehta. Under his leadership, the Society has continued to flourish and to develop in new directions. Being not only a committed academic but also one of the most distinguished contemporary Beckett directors, Xerxes brings keen insights to bear upon both page and stage, theory and practice. As such, he has been able to respond perceptively and helpfully to the many individual enquirers who approach the Society all the year round, as well as to draw the Board's attention to the range of issues and perspectives which may face the Society in the future. On a personal level, I want to thank Xerxes for his quiet and unobtrusive advice. I also wish to express my gratefulness both to him and to his assistant, Catherine Kafer, for the thorough and efficient way in which they have ensured a smooth transatlantic transition of the Society's affairs.

One of Xerxes' last tasks as President was to initiate the election for two vacancies on the Executive Board, to replace himself and Marjorie Perloff, whose term of office had come to an end. The Society is grateful to Marjorie for her service on the Board and for the help and advice she continues to offer. The election has produced two new appointees to the Board: Enoch Brater (who will succeed me as President in 2005), and Anna McMullan. I and the remaining Board members, Tom Cousineau and Toby Zinman, look forward to working with Enoch and Anna over the years ahead.

Beckett research and scholarship continue to thrive. This is measurable in multiple ways. Those of us lucky enough to meet at the Wharf Theatre in January, atop the glittering waters of Sydney Harbour, were able to witness this at close hand in the standard and variety of papers given. The Society congratulates Anthony Uhlmann, and his team at the University of Western Sydney, for the programme they put together, the welcome they offered, and the fact that so many delegates showed a curious reluctance to depart.

— Mary Bryden

Contributors

- Normand Berlin is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He is the author of five books on drama and serves as Theater Editor of *The Massachusetts Review*.
- Rolf Breuer is Professor of English at the University of Paderborn, Germany, and author of numerous articles on Beckett.
- Mary Bryden is President of the Samuel Beckett Society and Professor in the School of European Studies, Cardiff University.
- Michael Guest is a professor in the Department of Information Studies at Shizuoka University, Japan, where he teaches Media and Cultural Studies. He presented his research into Beckett's reception in popular cinema at the 2003 Annual Conference of the Popular Culture Association in New Orleans.
- Thomas Hunkeler teaches French literature at the Universities of Zurich and Sankt Gallen. He is the author of *Echos de l'ego dans l'oeuvre de Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Harmattan, 1997).
- Carla Locatelli teaches at the Università di Trento in Italy, is an adjunct professor in the English Department at the University of Pennsylvania, and was recently a Senior Fulbright Fellow at the University of Notre Dame.
- Bogdan Manojlovic is a professor of physics at the Ecole Centrale in Paris. His friendship with Beckett began in 1958 in connection with the first Yugoslavian production of *Endgame*, in which he was involved as translator (into Serbian), director, and actor (in the role of Clov).
- Paule Savane is president of the Association pour la Sauvegarde d'Ussy-sur- Marne in France.
- Anthony Thwaite, poet, critic and editor, has published fourteen volumes of poetry, including *Selected Poems 1956-1996* and, most recently, *A Move in the Weather* (2003).
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The Beckett Circle
Le Cercle de Beckett

ISSN 0732-224

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