



THE BECKETT CIRCLE LE CERCLE DE BECKETT

Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

Peter Brook's Glückliche Tage

Directing for the first time in German (and in Basel), Peter Brook has brought out a new version of the Beckett play that he staged with such success in Lausanne in 1995. Having wanted for some time to stage *Glückliche Tage* with Miriam Goldschmidt — an actress with whom he has had a long-standing professional relationship — in the role of Winnie, Brook decided that the time was now right. As he told the *Baseler Zeitung*, Goldschmidt had reached a point in her artistic career where she could make her own unique contribution to the play. She had, in particular, developed a fine sense for linguistic nuances that she could bring to a play that imposes severe restrictions on bodily forms of expression. German (Goldschmidt's mother tongue) was chosen, for this reason, as the language for this production, a choice that also tied in well with Brook's more general interest in crossing boundaries and exploring different cultures. His assistant director Hendrik Mannes told me that Brook greatly enjoyed directing in German, often switching to it even though the official working language of the team was English.

Brook himself told the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* that he situates German, as a theatrical language, somewhere between (Irish-)English and French: less direct and rough than the former and without the latter's transparency. Brook also enjoyed the challenge of attempting to express ambiguities and subtexts in German. He compared this change of language to playing a musical composition with a different set of instruments.

This metaphor goes together well with Brook's general approach to Beckett's play. As he repeatedly told the press, he treated the text like a musician dealing with a musical score, trying not to change anything in it (since that would only harm the result), but to "play" what is given with the greatest possible precision. According to Mannes, Brook concentrated on technical details, putting the play's ambiguities to the side and gently, but firmly, steering the actors away from questions of motivation and meaning. Brook stressed the theatrical effect itself as the ultimate test for any new ideas, and even his assistant director did not entirely know what overall concept lay behind specific decisions. Much of this seems close to Beckett's own approach to his plays as a director, and Brook in fact included the revisions that Beckett had made for the "score" of his 1979 Royal Court production of *Happy Days* (as published by James Knowlson in 1985). In keeping with this insistence on "musical" faithfulness, he only deviated from this basic text in a few isolated cases.

The most obvious of these concerns the stage set. Winnie's mound is back in the center, since Brook thought the visual arrangement would not "work" without symmetry. It is perhaps not surprising that this advocate of "the empty



Winnie (Miriam Goldschmidt) celebrates another happy day in the tenuous company of Willie (Wolfgang Kroke) in Peter Brook's German production of Beckett's play.

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space" reduced the sky to a turquoise ribbon on Winne's hat (and a similar decoration on her dress in Act I). Mannes reports that Brook considered the original trompe-l'oeil backcloth as belonging too much to the "theater of the absurd" of the previous century. In the stage-set designed by Abdou Ouologuem, uniformly dark-brown fabric emphasises the walls at the back and at the two sides of the set. Brook's Winnie is thus always also an actress at the centre of what appears to

be a conventional

fourth-wall stage.

The mound itself

is made of goat

and sheep hides,

which were imported

directly from

Mali. At the edges,

the stage-floor remains visible, thus highlighting the metatheatrical level. Although some dried-up plants are there to suggest scorching heat, the overall colour range of warm-brown and ochre seems much more welcoming than Beckett's stage directions indicate; it also differs from the bleached-out set of Brook's 1995 production. In contrast to the complete barrenness conveyed by sand and stones, the animal hides – though dead – are at least associated with past life, just as the glowing yellow of Philippe Vialatte's lighting lacks the glaring harshness to which Beckett subjected both his characters and his audience. Similarly, the universe seems kinder to Winnie with regard to the objects that are still at her disposal. Instead of a bag, the depths of which she can never penetrate, she is equipped with an open, box-like construction that allows her to survey her possessions at any given moment. According to Mannes, Brook did not see this change as problematic, because for him the bag was a "secondary" prop, less central to the orchestration of the play than the "primary" ones of revolver, toothbrush, and parasol.

The suggestions of greater vitality in the stage-set fit in well with the protagonist herself, especially in comparison with Natasha Parry's 1995 Winnie. Goldschmidt's character oscillates between her philosophical thoughts and her very down-to-earth attitude to life. According to Mannes, Brook paid special attention to creating a tension between these two extremes; Winnie is part of earth *and* of heaven, always pulled down again when she feels she is about to float upwards into the light. Thus, her laughter has a distinctly vulgar touch, like her make-up and her manner of speaking in a number of scenes. In the first act she touches her bosom and fiddles with her dress to draw attention to her living body. It is, to be sure, no coincidence that her delight during the postcard scene is played up in this production, with only the most perfunctory attempt to hide it behind righteous indignation. Brook himself stressed that Goldschmidt should have a fleshly presence on stage; similarly, he made not only the head of Wolfgang Kroke's Willie visible behind the mound, but his bare shoulders as well.

The physicality of this production is accentuated as well by the fact that Winnie is bursting with energy. Her gestures when brushing her teeth are as exaggerated as

the voices that she adopts for Mr Shower/Cooker and his wife, as well as for Milly's story, which verge on ham acting. Miriam Goldschmidt worked with Mannes to develop these different registers, and Brook readily accepted them when he came to Basel. It is not surprising that, given such an approach, laughter was prominent among the audience's reactions – much more so than in the 1995 version. In commenting on the Basel production, Brook

drew a parallel between

the comic elements

in Beckett's

works and the

South African

theatre in the

Apartheid era:

both combine an

unmitigated focus

on the horrid facts of existence with an encouraging buoyancy. According to Mannes, audiences at all of the Basel performances laughed at the same places in Act I while in Act II their responses varied from day to day. In the performance that I saw, the audience quickly overcame the shock of Winnie's even more extreme confinement in Act II and continued to laugh, just as she kept on playing for theatrical effect with the diminished means at her disposal. Although an air of desolation always lurked in her wide-open eyes, her breakdowns were hardly more frequent than in the first act and almost as fleeting. Even the screams that Winnie emits while recounting the story of Milly lacked any "piercing" quality and appeared almost ridiculously artificial. Throughout, she always seemed to rally a bit too quickly, just before rather than just after she had glimpsed the appalling emptiness of her situation. Thus, instead of expressing despair, her voice was harsh, almost sarcastic when she twice qualified her "happy day" with "trotz allem" ("after all") in the last scene. This Winnie stayed mentally in control until the very end.

It seems tempting to make a connection here with Brook's statement in "Dire oui à la boue" – a translation of which is reprinted in the programme — that Beckett's plays show an acceptance of fate. Winnie expresses an optimism that makes her tragically blind to her living conditions. As Brook had already explained in *The Empty Space*, the spectator falls prey to a related delusion when s/he accuses Beckett of pessimism. Of course, my impression may also be due to the specific performance I saw. Mannes assured me that the contrast between the two acts had been much more pronounced in the previous day's performance, in which the audience was unable to laugh during Act II. Personally, I would have preferred a greater emphasis on Winnie's anguish towards the end, such as was found in Brook's 1995 version. The performance that I saw sometimes made it too easy for the audience, encouraging it to laugh at times at a clichéd marital situation in which a chattering, overbearing wife complains that her husband is not listening to her.

Brook may occasionally have stressed Winnie's "earthy" side rather too much – or perhaps allowed the "holy" light to prevail too strongly over any "hellish" implications. At any rate, the production provides an

extremely powerful theatrical experience, and Miriam Goldschmidt's unforgettable stage presence leaves one with vivid images of intense lucidity. In keeping with the actress's style and personality and with the greater sonority which he sees in German (as compared with French, the language used in the 1995 production), Brook created a captivating "symbol" (to adopt his own term) of resilience, which he quite explicitly encouraged the Basel audience to take with them into "real life": During the applause, Goldschmidt first used a blackout to free herself from the additional burden imposed on her in Act II and then climbed completely out of the mound with Kroke's help. She was now free to bow and leave the stage – a picture of unbroken energy and of an actress finally restored to her full physical potential.

Like the 1995 French production in Lausanne, the Basel *Glückliche Tage* is also scheduled to go on tour. Since Brook always considers his productions to be works-in-progress, one can only speculate as to how a text that Mannes calls "alchemical," and which Brook considers Beckett's dramatic masterpiece, will evolve for him and his actors.

– Merle Tönnies

John Calder's "The Godot Company"

The indefatigably self-renewing John Calder recently announced the formation of a new theatre group in London, "The Godot Company." It operates from the Calder Bookshop near Waterloo, and indeed holds its rehearsals there. No respectable Becketeer would confuse it with Taiwan's "Godot Theatre Company," which has apparently never produced any Beckett play.

The London company's main *raison d'être* is — as the inaugural programme explains — "to perform a definitive production of what many consider to be the most significant play of the twentieth century." No small claim and feat, one may think, which may be either assisted or hindered by the company's constitution: it is a cooperative of directorless actors. The pros and cons of this arrangement immediately spring to mind: no danger of an ambitious megalomaniac imposing his/her ego on the text, but no one "out there" to assess the overall effect, unity of approach and, well, direction.

No company can subsist, of course, on a single play, and the intention is to perform other Beckett plays as well as undertaking other projects to be decided by the members. Democracy reigns supreme here; Calder admits without rancour that he has been on the winning side of the voting on only about 50% of occasions. His actual rôle is a bit of a mystery. He will admit to being only a "co-director" of *Godot*, or as he wryly puts it, *pares inter pares*.

Its first venue is the Southwark Playhouse, a small well-established theatre-space some fifteen minutes' walk from

the bookshop. Calder admits that a large proportion of the excellent houses have emanated from the regulars at his "Calderevents," weekly cultural/literary meetings held in the large room behind the bookshop. It remains to be seen what will happen when the company moves to theatres outside this catchment area. I interviewed Calder when the production of *Godot* was into its third week. I first asked him what gave him — or somebody — the idea of a "Godot Company," to which he replied:

I was doing a tour of Ireland with the actor Peter Marinker. It was to launch the Beckett *Complete Poems*, a much enlarged edition. One night, in Sligo, at dinner in a semi-deserted little hotel, we were talking generally about what we hadn't done, and I said that I had always wanted to either direct or be involved in an absolutely authentic production of *Godot*. Peter Marinker said, "Well, why don't we?" I said, "Well, you know, I'm a bit long in the tooth right now so there won't be any opportunities." But Peter followed up the idea and contacted other actors. In the autumn of 2002 we had a meeting of a number of actors who were interested in doing it, and we formed a cooperative. As for the name, I said, "Let's keep it simple and just call it 'The Godot Company.'"



The Godot Company's production of *Waiting for Godot* features, from left to right, Oengus MacNamara, Peter Pacey, Anthony Jackson and Peter Marinker.

The idea was to have twelve actors, each one able to learn more than two rôles, so that they could field on occasion three entire companies and always fill in when one actor was booked to do something more lucrative: a film or television or another stage play (or, of course, was ill). So far, ten actors have been chosen, and several others are being auditioned by the existing cast.

We talked about the practicalities of setting up a theatre company (especially one with such an apparently narrow brief), and naturally I was inquisitive about the financial side: "We have no money," Calder stated blithely, "just a lot of enthusiasm." But there must be outgoings? What about theatre hire, for example? He explained that they agreed to a 50-50 split of box office takings with the Southwark Playhouse, but as it has turned out, if they had taken the risk and rented, they would have done better.

The actors take responsibility for obtaining props and costumes, and for the set; Calder has paid for a few things and put up the money for the advance to the Beckett estate (of which 40% has already been covered). 60% of their half of box office takings goes to the current cast, 20% to the other actors (who are not performing but have done the work), 10% goes to general expenses, designer, stage manager, electrician. And 10% to the Trust controlling everything Calder is involved in, for administration, telephoning, mailing, theatre bookings, negotiations, and so on.

What about the future? Calder is very optimistic: "The idea is that it will be a permanent company. Next summer we will be going round Irish festivals, then round English provincial towns, then Europe, the United States perhaps, and perhaps Australia in 2005." As for repertoire, they intend to work up a few more Beckett plays to alternate with *Godot*, enough for four or five different evenings. As Calder explained, "Whether we do other things or not depends on the cooperative, since everything is done by vote."

I was allowed — presumably by vote — to attend a rehearsal before the first performance of *Godot*, and (fortunately for me, or I would have kept my mouth shut) before I realised that this was directorless theatre. It was immediately clear that Calder's reply to my question, "What do you think about directorless theatre?" applied to this group: "It depends how good the actors are. Most of these actors have directed. The interaction between them is very good, and they're good at knocking each other's ideas down."

At the first performance I was impressed by the tremendous improvement over the intervening week. The interaction had evidently worked its magic. Peter Pacey's Pozzo was as good as Alan Stanford's, and one cannot give higher praise than that. Peter Marinker (Didi) and Anthony Jackson (Gogo) were getting into the variations of pace, pause, and intensity. Oengus MacNamara's Lucky was still too bold at the start of his speech, leaving him nowhere to go. But by the second week, it was near perfection, extremely powerful.

A self-production all could be very pleased with, and one that will continue to grow as good professional en-

semble work can. They are already rehearsing switched rôles and facing up to availability challenges— for instance, MacNamara is going elsewhere to do *Playboy of the Western World* until January. But that was the whole idea: to allow actors that freedom to take on other work and to have a substitute ready to step in.

— Colin Duckworth

Roussillon Celebrates Godot

La Maison Samuel-Beckett de Roussillon gambled and won. More than two hundred people joined it in celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of *En attendant Godot* by watching a performance of the play in the unusual, yet also quite magical, setting afforded by the former Usine Mathieu, a site that had once been used for the manufacture of the ochre pigments for which the village is famous. In past years, the association had presented its Beckett performances in conjunction with the well-established annual summer festival in the neighboring village of Gordes. This year, however, it decided to declare its independence by staging *Godot* in one of the open-air decanting pools of the former factory (situated just on the edge of the village), a decision that provided the play with an especially appropriate ochre-colored setting. The fear of losing the audience that regularly attends the Gordes festival proved to be entirely unfounded.

The direction of the play by Andonis Vouyoucas and the performances by the actors of his Compagnie Chatôt-Vouyoucas de Marseille (Alain Choquet, Jacques Germain, Alexius Moati, and Ivan Romeuf) was applauded by all, and the wine provided by M. Bannelly during the intermission was greatly appreciated as well. For the spectators — many of whom were discovering Beckett for the first time — the experience was clearly a great success. Basing his own production on Beckett's, Vouyoucas placed the emphasis more on the author's playfulness and his derisive humor than on despair. The play's meta-physical clowns — reminding one at times of Laurel and Hardy and at other times of actors in low-budget westerns — memorably portrayed the human condition in all its absurdity.

On the afternoon before the performance, the association sponsored a roundtable that included invited specialists, as well as local residents who had seen the 1953 production of *Godot* at the Théâtre de Babylone. Vouyoucas himself, Gérard Gélas, director of the Théâtre du Chêne Noir d'Avignon, Michel Archimbaud, the editor of the association's publications, and Tom Cousineau were joined by Henri Marcou, the mayor of Roussillon, and the journalist Jean Lambertie, both of whom regaled the audience with their eye-witness accounts of this performance.

— Annie Joly

Translated by Thomas Cousineau



Alain Choquet (Pozzo), Ivan Romeuf (Vladimir), Jacques Germain (Estragon), and Alexis Moati (Lucky) perform *En attendant Godot* at l'Usine Matthieu in Roussillon.

Page and Stage – Fifty Years of Performing Beckett

Hosted by Leeds University, this was a conference with a difference – one that made as much room for live performance and workshop presentations as it did for academic papers. Throughout each of its two days, the packed programme allowed participants the choice between attending a workshop demonstration or a more traditional session in which papers were read. In addition, we were treated to a performance of *Not I* given by a young Northern Irish actress, Patricia Logue, and directed by Gerry McCarthy. The conference attracted nearly one-hundred participants, mostly from Britain and the United States, with other contributors and participants from Argentina, Australia, Hungary, Israel, Kuwait, and Spain.

Some of the most revealing moments of this meeting emerged from practical workshop sessions. Outstanding among these was the demonstration by Craig Edwards of the first sequence of *Endgame*. Edwards had performed the role of Clov at the Bristol Old Vic theatre, and demonstrated his opening routine, bent over so that he seemed in constant danger of falling, but manipulating the step-ladder with dogged precision. Carol-Anne Upton then explained the premise of the workshop, which was to investigate whether performing this sequence as a clown, following the definition of Jacques Lecoq, would help to open up a new dimension in the role. Brian Parsons spoke of the idea that the clown is indestructible: however much he may be slapped down, he always returns as if nothing had happened to him. He lives in a permanent present. In this

play, he suggested, Beckett went as far as he possibly could in attempting to break the clown down, to “have done with him,” but, of course, in the end he fails.

Other workshops explored the process involved in interpreting several of Beckett’s dramas, including *Rockaby*, *Not I*, *Happy Days*, *Catastrophe*, and the mime piece *Act Without Words I*. The latter was performed at the opening of the plenary workshop session offered by Philip Zarrilli and Patricia Boyette. After his opening demonstration, Zarrilli went on to show some of the psycho-physical training processes on which he has been working for many years now and which, he argued, were of particular use for training an actor in the particular techniques needed to perform Beckett. He and Boyette demonstrated some of their exercises and showed excerpts of work in progress on *Not I* and *Happy Days*. Their entertaining and informative session was preceded by Shimon Levy’s presentation on layers of authority and the consequent implications for interpretation in *Catastrophe*. This took place during a participatory workshop session in which one delegate was slowly derobed and manipulated by a volunteer assistant who was goaded by a director figure, all three manoeuvred by Levy himself in a show of interpretative exercises and abuses.

The very rich array of conference papers included discussions of the staging of every one of Beckett’s plays, and of sections of his prose writing as well. Plenary sessions were given by David Bradby, who focused on audience expectations in defining how *Waiting for Godot* was perceived; by Enoch Brater, who discussed Billie Whitelaw’s performances of Beckett on television; by Stan Gontarski, who discussed Beckett’s suppressed voice as commentator on his own work and the value of what he termed the “grey canon” to an understanding of his position as author and director; and by Lois Oppenheim, who offered a fresh reading of Beckett’s later drama informed by neuroscience and the application of

theories of consciousness to Beckett's preoccupation with the inexpressivity of words and the elusiveness of identity.

Papers were loosely grouped according to the particular concerns that their authors wished to address. A number of speakers provided intercultural perspectives on Beckett's plays, most notably Cristina Cano Vara in her comparison of Beckett's

Not I to Del Amo's

Yo no, which

examined the

cultural adjust-

ments to Beck-

ett's guidelines

within the text of

Not I or set forth

after his directorial in-

volvement. Elham Albassam contributed a comparative study of the writings of Beckett and Egyptian playwright Yusef Idris, whilst Nick Walton provided a different form of intercultural perspective by considering the impact of an established Beckettian theatrical discourse on recent productions of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*.

Another theme shared by a number of the papers concerned the dilemma of the actor in Beckett's theatre.

The general predicament of an actor who is required to represent beings seeking or destabilising self-representation was first raised in Anthony Shrubsall's workshop on *Rockaby*, then considered in a performed format by Julie Bokowiec in her piece *Remain Standing*, and further elaborated upon in Mark Batty's pastiche of the *Duthuit dialogues*, in which a student argued with her lecturer to justify modifications to Beckett's *Not I* and *Footfalls*. Focusing on *Happy Days*, Julie Campbell asked just what the body of the actor is called upon to do in that play. Drawing on ideas contained in Jung's third Tavistock lecture (the one attended by Beckett in 1935), she concluded that Winnie should be seen as "dead from the waist down" – she has repressed her sexuality, but even a Jungian complex can be seen to have a body of its own; maybe this is the kind of body that the actress should aim to present? Natahlie Kon-yu began with an account of an interview with the Australian actress Louise Cracknell, who said that Winnie was the hardest role she had ever undertaken. Kon-yu went on to explore the different ways in which the Beckettian character is always *difficult* to embody. Gerry McCarthy added his insistence that to perform Beckett is to engage in intelligent practice without reliance on questions of significance or the authority of the director: the actor may lack a fictive "reason" for activity that is demanded by the text, and must, for this reason, rely on his/her own embedded knowledge in the immediate context of the performance itself. Toby Zinman added an original twist to these thoughts by suggesting that *Quad* should be seen as choreography of the cosmos in which the four walkers make the movement of astronomical bodies visible through their patterns of movement.

The very rich array of conference papers included discussions of the staging of every one of Beckett's plays, and of sections of his prose writing as well.

Other contributors considered various issues of performativity in Beckett's work, and his relationship with the range of media for which he wrote. Juliette Taylor provided a fresh assessment of the function of performative language utterances in the Trilogy and spoke to Beckett's bilingualism. Christina Adamou compared the Sud Deutsche Rundfunk and Beckett on Film

productions of *What*

Where; Garin Dowd

argued that the

Beckett on Film

version of *Ohio*

Impromptu suc-

ceeded not only

in cancelling the

critical reflection

on the nature of genre

often located in the play, but also in eradicating the very disjunction upon which the play depends. John Keefe discussed Beckett's work in the light of the concept of "total theatre," John Reid explored the ways in which Beckett's plays should be understood as parodies, and Antje Diedrich discussed George Tabori's stagings of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* as rehearsals.

Far from being an indulgent celebration of Beckett's achievement, the weekend was not without its provocations. Peter Billingham offered a performed paper in which, whilst chewing on bananas and offering a stand-up routine in a pastiche of Lucky's speech, he deposited seemingly accusatory suggestions of Beckett's political responsibility as a post-war writer by contrasting modernist and postmodernist readings of *Krapp's Last Tape*. More straightforwardly provocative was Graham Saunders' paper, elucidating and articulating Edward Bond's antipathy to Beckett's *oeuvre*, passing on to the gathered crowd the writer's appraisal of the academy that perpetuates Beckett scholarship: "[They] are disaster and menace to [their] unfortunate students."

The weekend event concluded with an informal final session in the foyer of the School of English at Leeds. With the remnants of lunch and drinks in hand, the gathered participants formed an extended circle of seats to discuss the presiding themes of the weekend and enter into extended dialogue over specific areas of agreement or disagreement. The discussion touched on Beckett's increasingly iconic status in the canon of twentieth-century performance, the specific problems and possibilities that his work opens up for the actor, the director and the audience, and the place that his plays are likely to occupy in the theatre of the future. This session, which afforded space for practitioners and academics to consider the future of Beckett scholarship and of the performance of his dramatic *oeuvre*, also provided a convivial and collegiate informality to round off proceedings.

— Mark Batty and David Bradby

The Beckett/ Feldman Radio Collaboration: Words and Music as Hörspiel

Beckett's third radio play, *Words and Music*, written for BBC Radio and broadcast in November 1962, presents a curious anomaly in the Beckett canon, for a good portion of this radio play is given over to a musical score, to be written by a collaborator. For its first BBC production, the musical score was written by Beckett's cousin John Beckett. This score, evidently considered less than satisfactory by all concerned, was withdrawn shortly after the premiere. In the early seventies, the Beckett scholar Katharine Worth produced a new version of *Words and Music* for the University of London Audio-Visual Centre with music by Humphrey Searle. But this production, described at some length by Worth in an essay called "Words and Music Perhaps,"¹ was recorded for archival purposes only, and it was not until 1985, when Everett Frost undertook the production of *The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays* that the Beckett collaboration with Morton Feldman took place.

Feldman and Beckett had first met in 1976 in Berlin, where the latter was directing a stage version of *The Lost Ones*. They discovered that they shared a mutual hatred of opera. Beckett further told Feldman, "I don't like my words being set to music," to which Feldman replied, "I'm in complete agreement." In fact it's very seldom that I've used words. I've written a lot of pieces with voice, and they're wordless." Encouraged by these remarks, a few weeks later, Beckett sent Feldman a card bearing a handwritten text (not quite a poem) called "Neither," which began with the words "to and fro in shadow / from inner to outer shadow / from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself / by way of neither." These short phrases became the germ of Feldman's 1977 "anti-opera" *Neither*, the composer's first work to consist entirely

of the repetition and mutation of tonal forms. The composer thus became the logical choice

to be Beckett's collaborator on *Words and Music*; indeed it was Beckett who recommended him to Frost. The radio piece was followed by a long composition called *For Samuel Beckett* (1986), which was Feldman's last work; he died a year later, before taking on Beckett's other "musical" radio play *Cascando*, as the two had planned.²

The relation of spoken word to music in *Words and Music* and *Cascando* has received curiously little critical discussion. Jonathan Kalb observes:

Beckett further told Feldman, "I don't like my words being set to music," to which Feldman replied, "I'm in complete agreement."

... Its action consists of a relatively conventional dialogic exchange, but the dialogue is missing half its lines—lines that the play implies should match, sentence for sentence, in musical terms, the specificity and subtlety of Beckett's language.

It is hardly surprising that neither his cousin nor subsequent composers have been up to the task. In one case (John Beckett's score) the music proved unable to communicate ideas specific enough to qualify as rational lines, much less repartee, and in another (Morton Feldman's score for Frost's 1988 production) the composer came to feel constrained by the text's requirements. . . . Unless *Music* convinces us that it has at least held its own in the strange mimetic competition with *Words*, the action of the play lacks dramatic tension. Beckett once reportedly said to Theodor Adorno that *Words and Music* "ends unequivocally with the victory of the music." Yet far from proving the superiority of music as pure sound, liberated from rational ideas and references, the play confines it to a function very similar to that of a filmic signature score.³

Here Kalb is making some curious assumptions. First, the reference to the various composers not being "up to the task" implies that the work is really Beckett's and that the composer, whoever he or she may be, is merely an accompanist.⁴ Thus Kalb does not discriminate between John Beckett (a relative who had done a little composing), Humphrey Searle (a fairly obscure Romantic serialist who had once studied with Webern), and Morton Feldman, one of the great avant-garde composers of the century.

For Kalb, *Words and Music* is, in any case, a "play," whose "dialogue is missing half its lines—lines that, the play implies, should match, sentence for sentence, in musical terms, the specificity and subtlety of Beckett's language." But Beckett said nothing at all about such a "match" or about the "mimetic competition with *Words*" that music ostensibly "loses." In taking Feldman's composition to resemble filmic background music, Kalb, like Worth and other commentators, is assuming that the radio play is

a vehicle for a particular theme—the familiar Beckett theme (see, for example *Krapp's Last Tape*) of the missed opportunity to have loved and been

loved. But the fact is that in *Words and Music* frustrated love becomes, in its turn, the occasion for an analysis of the relative power of words and music to produce an emotional charge. And here radio has its field of action. In Gregory Whitehead's words:

If the dreamland / ghostland is the natural habitat for the wireless imagination, then the material of radio art is not just sound. Radio *happens* in sound, but sound is not really what matters about

Words and Music . . . presents a special problem.

radio. What does matter is the bisected heart of the infinite dreamland /ghostland. . . . the radio signal as intimate but untouchable, sensually charged but technically remote, reaching deep inside but from way out there. . . .⁵

Radio sounds are intimate, but from where do they emanate and to whom do they belong? When the sound source is uncertain, spoken word and musical sound can achieve a heightened interaction.

Consider, for starters, the role of “character” in the phantasmagoria of *Words and Music*. The “play” has three characters: Words, also called Joe, Music, also called Bob, and a mysterious third person named Croak, who issues commands to both. In the Beckett literature, Croak is usually considered a variant on the Master with Two Servants motif, as a Medieval Lord directing two minstrels, or as a Prospero figure with Words as his Caliban and Music as his Ariel. Or again, he is considered to be the Director who has commissioned Words and Music to “speak” their parts.⁶ All of these readings assume that there are in fact three separate “characters” with separate identities. True, *Words and Music* still uses such naturalistic radio sounds as the shuffling of Croak’s carpet slippers, the thump of his club on the ground, the rap of the baton prompting Music to play, and a series of groans on Croak’s part, throat clearings and sighs on Joe’s. But unlike the “real” characters in *All that Fall*, or even Henry and Ada in *Embers*, Croak, Joe, and Bob are not “individuals” at all, but three dimensions of the same “voice,” sometimes speaking, sometimes responding via musical sound. Indeed, when the play is heard rather than read, the voices of Joe and Croak are often indistinguishable, as in the “Joe”/“My Lord” interchanges near the beginning. Croak, for that matter, is regularly referred to as an old man, a designation that amused Morton Feldman when he first read *Words and Music* because the Beckett who wrote the play was only in his mid-fifties. Yet both Croak and Words are given “old” voices, rather like the voice of Krapp in *Krapp’s Last Tape*, not so as to present the dialogue of two old men (with musical interruption) but to heighten the difference between present and past and to stress, as radio perhaps best can, the gap between the discourse of memory and the actual past.

Claz Zilliacus has rightly observed that Croak “instigates two of his faculties at odds with each other, to provide him with solace and entertainment” and that the process described is that of “artistic creation.”⁷ But even here the notion of “solace and entertainment” is not quite accurate for there is nobody to comfort or to entertain. It is best, then, to think of Croak as no more than the stimulus

In concert, they constitute the quintessential Beckett voice—a voice we know from *Embers* or *Malone Dies* or, most immediately, from *Krapp’s Last Tape*. But in *Words and Music*, the setting is not an empty room as in *Malone* or *Krapp* but an abstract space.

that prompts the complementary responses of Words and Music; indeed, we can’t differentiate the three. In concert, they constitute the quintessential Beckett voice—a voice we know from *Embers* or *Malone Dies* or, most immediately, from *Krapp’s Last Tape*. But in *Words and Music*, the setting is not an empty room as in *Malone* or *Krapp* but an abstract space. “The scene,” writes Zilliacus, referring

to Words’ s reference, in the memory passage, to “the rye, swayed by a light wind [that] casts and withdraws its shadow,”⁸ is “a field of rye, the action of the scene is postcoital recuperation as re-

lected in the face of the woman” (109). Again, this is to mimeticize what is largely abstract: when we hear the words in question, we focus, I think, on the astonishing shift in Words’s discourse, willing, as he suddenly is, much to Croak’s anguish, to tell his story. It is the *telling*, not the details of landscape or face, that is foregrounded. Indeed, we never know what the lost girl looked like: except for her “black disordered hair,” her features are merely listed as brows, nostrils, lips, breasts, and eyes, without any specification.

Feldman’s score, made up of thirty-three fragments, calls for two flutes, a vibraphone, piano, violin, and violincello. These fragments must be understood, not as isolated units, but as relational properties that play with and against the words they modify. Croak dominates only as long as Words and Music work against one another; as soon as they follow his order “Together!”, Croak begins to lose control. In the final moments of the play we hear his club fall, his slippers shuffling away, and a “shocked” Words says, “My Lord!” for the final time. But the shuffling suggests that Croak has not died; rather, his commands are no longer necessary, for Words and Music now sing together, their song invoking the depths of memory and desire.

In the case of opera—and, technically speaking, *Words and Music* is an opera—the question as to which takes precedence, the words or the music, has been hotly debated for centuries. Herbert Lindenberger cites composers from Monteverdi to Wagner and Berg as claiming that music must always serve the verbal text, whereas Berlioz, declared that Wagner’s crime was to make music “the abject slave of the word” rather than letting the music be “free, imperious, all-conquering.”⁹ *Words and Music* playfully alludes to these debates, rather in the spirit of John Cage’s *Europeras*, first performed in Frankfurt in the very same year, 1987.

Thus the radio play opens with a compact fragment of orchestrated dissonance that subtly “improves” on the actual sounds of an orchestra tuning up. “Words” interrupts this bit of music with the single angry and anguished word “Please!” –Bolton’s leitmotif in *Embers*—repeated

so as to force the orchestra to stop. And the words that follow are, "How much longer cooped up here in the dark? [*With loathing.*] With you!" (127). The two personae could thus not be further apart, and to make that point Words now embarks on his first set text on a required theme, an absurd scholastic exercise, the set topic *Love* being lampooned, in the absence of Croak, by the substitution of the word sloth: "Sloth is of all passions the most powerful and indeed no passion is more powerful than the passion of sloth. . . ." where *passion* is repeated three times in the first sentence alone, Words's voice being hoarse and "tuneless" as he pronounces *passion* in a dull monotone. The love theme thus hangs fire until Croak makes his entrance, shuffling into the blank space of Words and Music and calling on both as "My comforts." The address to Bob ("Music"), whose response is defined by Beckett as "*Humble, muted adsum,*" produces the repetition of a single atonal chord, led by woodwinds, and then a slight variation on the same, this time with strings. Music's role is surprising because Croak now asks both parties to "Forgive" (three times), and yet Music responds with the same soft and lovely chords as if to say that there is nothing to forgive. It is now Words's turn to speak his piece, given Croak's prompting: "The face" and "In the tower"—both references to the lost beloved who will haunt the rest of the piece, very much as she does in *Krapp's Last Tape*, where we hear "The face she had! The eyes! Like . . . (*hesitates*). . . chrysolite!" (60).

The "theme tonight," Croak informs Joe, is "Love," and so Words repeats his first speech, now substituting "love" for sloth but slipping at one point and declaiming that "sloth is the LOVE is the most urgent. . ." (128). So heated does Joe become that when Croak thumps his club and calls on Music (Bob), Words (Joe) keeps on talking. Croak has to reprimand him and call on Bob again. And now Music gets his chance: in a pattern of irregularly spaced intervals, woodwinds and strings combine to produce resonant chords worthy of love. These are interrupted, as at the play's opening, by protestations of "Please!" and "No!" from Joe, but now these agitated negatives sound more orgiastic than dismissive, and he himself waxes poetic with the line, "Arise then and go now the manifest unanswerable," a play on the opening line, "I shall arise and go now," of Yeats's "Lake Isle of Innisfree." The presence of Yeats, the quintessential poet who writes of age and unfulfilled desire, has already been conjured up by the reference to "In the tower."

Croak repeatedly groans as Words dredges up the memory of the "love of woman" that his "master" is experiencing. In an absurdist passage, Words asks bombastically, "Is love the word? [*Pause. Do.*] Do we mean love, when we say love? [*Pause. Pause. Do.*] Soul, when we say soul?" (129). The referent of these basic words—*face, love, soul, age*—cannot be found. Croak realizes this and calls on Music, who responds with a strain played by the violin accompanied by the pedaled piano and then a more dissonant passage, its minimalist hypnotic repetitions mirroring Joe's halting words on age: "Age is . . . age is when . . . old age I mean . . . if that is what my Lord means

. . . is when. . ." Interestingly, here, for the first time, Music echoes Words, prompting Croak to issue a new directive—"Together"—(three times), the third adding the word "dogs." In response, Words tries, for the first time, to sing or at least intone the poem we will soon hear—a trimeter sonnet that begins with the line "Age is when to a man." Music now gives the cue with the note *La*, and Words responds with jagged *Sprechstimme*, in its turn "improved" with an ascending scale provided by Music that Joe's words now mimic. Music now follows Words's lead, taking up Joe's suggestion as he tries to intone the whole song. But halfway through this sequence, it is Music who makes the "suggestions" that Words now follows. And so Words is soon letting Music take the lead.

In its written form, the words and rhythms of Beckett's song recall both the Yeats of *Words for Music Perhaps* and the young Stephen Dedalus, who mourns for his dead mother in *Ulysses*:

Age is when to a man
Huddled o'er the ingle
Shivering for the hag
To put the pan in the bed
And bring the toddy
She comes in the ashes
Who loved could not be won
Or won not loved
Or some other trouble
Comes in the ashes
Like in that old light
The face in the ashes
That old starlight
On the earth again. (131)

The ungainly syntax ("Age is when to a man. . .") and archaicizing language ("huddled o'er the ingle") give Beckett's poem a parodic edge: old men shiver, their "hag" brings them the bedpan and toddy, the beautiful girl emerges from the ashes, her face recalling "that old starlight / On the earth again." As such, the poem forces the listener to take each word like "toddy" separately, refusing the "flow" of the incorporating stanza. And meanwhile Music provides no more than an ascending line of plucked piano notes, repeated with the accompaniment of the vibraphone and then flute, as minimal and separate as the poet's words. Each monosyllable—"Who loved could not be won" or "Like in that old light"—has its own life. Like the incisions made by a sharp instrument, words and musical notes are etched into the mind.

This, at least, is the response of Croak to what are, after all, his own words and music. Having heard the familiar song, he can no longer give orders, no longer address Words and Music as his "Dogs" or "Comforts" or "Balms." Indeed, Croak no longer seems to be aware of Joe and Bob's presence, which has now been thoroughly internalized. He now enunciates only two words, repeated four times and punctuated by pauses: "The face [*Pause.*] The face [*Pause.*] The face [*Pause.*] The face" (131). For words and music have succeeded in bringing

the woman in question back to life. And so music now plays for an entire minute, a series of repetitive chords, shifting pitches just slightly, after which Croak again says, now quietly, “The face.”

It is as if these two little words give Joe (Words) license to speak. We now hear one of those agitated but perfectly “reasonable” and scientific formal set pieces, a description of the long lost night of love-making—first the face, framed by “black disordered hair as though spread wide on water,” then “the brows knitted in a groove suggesting pain but simply concentration more likely all things considered on some consummate inner process, the eyes of course closed in keeping with this, the lashes. . . . *Pause*]. . . the nose . . . [*Pause*] . . . nothing, a little pinched perhaps, the lips. . . .” (132). The mention of the word “lips” is too much for Croak, whose groans have been getting more and more pronounced. He cries in anguish the single word “Lily!”, evidently the girl’s name. Now the rest of the narrative spills out, with the memory of “the great white rise and fall of the breasts, spreading as they mount and then subsiding to their natural . . . aperture.” The listener is expecting something like “natural condition” or “natural size,” but the mention of the “aperture,” which is, of course, not between the breasts but between the legs, arouses the hitherto soft-spoken Music, who now reappears in an agitated flute solo that is overwhelmed by percussion, even as Words interjects “Peace?” “No” and “Please!” yet again.

Words is now confident, his speech having such a marked effect on both Croak and Music. Accordingly, he places his love scene against the backdrop of the entire earth, illuminated, on this particular autumn night by the variable star Mira, located in the constellation Cetus (the Whale), and known for being invisible half the time. Here Mira shines “coldly down—as we say, looking up” (132). Croak, recognizing that, in Words’s narrative, the sexual union is about to be consummated, speaks his last word in the play, the loud and anguished “No!”, the open “o” reverberating in the listener’s ear (133). But Words, now in league with Music, pays no attention to the “master.”

WORDS:—the brows uncloud, the lips part and the eyes. . . [*Pause*] the brows uncloud, the nostrils dilate, the lips part and the eyes. . . [*Pause*] . . . a little colour comes back into the cheeks and the eyes. . . [*Reverently*] . . . open. [*Pause*] Then down a little way. . . . (133)

It is generally held that the radio listener automatically tries to visualize a scene like this one, to picture the lovers in the field of rye, coming together. But I think the speech just quoted, far from evoking a scene, is like a sound poem: the repetition of the assonantal “the brows uncloud” and the intricate sound structuring of *li* in “the nostrils dilate, the lips part,” leading up to the repetition of “the eyes,” which, the third time round, “open.” Words now has all the music he needs to complete the story. And, with Croak gone, Words can indulge himself and let the

Proustian involuntary memory take over. One cannot, the sound piece suggests, invoke *The Face* or *Love* intentionally, for such invocation leads to nothing but *talking about*. But to let go, to let, as it were, non-semantic sound take the lead, produces the epiphany of the second song, which begins:

Then down a little way
Through the trash
Towards where . . . towards where. . . . (133)

Compared to the previous ballad, this poem, written in even more minimal lines, bearing two to four stresses, takes us, in language much more chaste than “Age is when to a man,” to the bedrock of feeling. The poet, transfigured by love, can now accept the descent “down a little way / Through the trash.” The soul empties out: “All dark, no begging, no giving, no words, / No sense, no need.” Music, playing soft chromatic scales leads the way while the poet sings, “Through the scum / Down a little way / To whence one glimpse / Of that wellhead.” The sentence is left in suspension: the “wellhead” as goal remains a mystery. When these words are repeated, it is Music that announces the melody and then becomes a discreet accompanist to Words. It is the final consummation: both parties now note that Croak is gone. “My Lord,” Joe repeats twice, anxiously looking after Croak, and, turning for the first time to “Bob,” begging him to respond.

It is a remarkable moment: Joe reaches out to his former antagonist Bob with a certain deference. Bob makes a brief “rude” musical flourish and suddenly becomes silent so that it is now Words who summons Music with a sense of urgency. The situation of the radio play’s opening has been completely reversed. When Music plays a short teasing chord, Words begs “Again! [*Pause*. *Imploring*.] Again!” Music obliges but only for a moment, the soft piano notes trailing off and Words concluding with a short satisfied sigh. The rest is silence—a silence that makes the very idea of competition between Words and Music seem foolish. And this, I think, is the thrust of the Beckett-Feldman collaboration.

It may be argued, of course—and here Kalb has a point—that the dependence on collaboration makes *Words and Music* a less important work than, say, *Embers*, that Beckett is at his best when he lets his own words do all the work, creating the semantic resonances and ambiguities that define the complex monologue of a Henry in *Embers*. But if we think of *Words and Music* as an experiment, a move, contrary to Beckett’s own purist instincts with regard to media, to create a new kind of *Hörspiel*—a *Hörspiel* that anticipates such later works as the John Cage *Roaratorio*—then we need not choose between *Words and Music* and *Embers*—both of them such superb examples of what Beckett’s first master, James Joyce, called “soundsense.”

— Marjorie Perloff



Photo Credit: François-Marie Banier

This photograph, entitled "Samuel Beckett. Tangier, 1978" was to be seen on kiosks everywhere in Paris last spring. Taken by writer and photographer François-Marie Banier, it advertised an exhibition of his work at La Maison Européenne de la Photographie.

Notes

- 1 See Katharine Worth, "Words for Music Perhaps," in *Samuel Beckett and Music*, ed. Mary Bryden (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 9-20. This collection is subsequently cited in the text as Bryden. I have not heard the Searle score, but Worth's discussion suggests that it was much more mimetic than Feldman's in its treatment of the Beckett text.
- 2 For the background of the relationship, see Everett Frost, "The Note Man on the Word Man: Morton Feldman on Composing the Music for Samuel Beckett's *Words and Music* in *The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays*," in Bryden, pp. 47-55. The bulk of this article is an interview with Feldman, most of which is reproduced on the cassette tape itself. See also KN, 557-58.
The Apnomia website compiled and written by A. Ruch, (http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/beckett_feldman.html) contains key biographical information about Feldman as well as analyses of each of the "Beckett" pieces.
- 3 Jonathan Kalb, "The Mediated Quixote: The Radio and Television Plays, and Film," in *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*, ed. John Pilling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 132.
- 4 Katharine Worth implies the same thing throughout "Words and Music Perhaps." Humphrey Searle is praised for underscoring Beckett's meanings; his position is assumed to be secondary.
- 5 Gregory Whitehead, "Out of the Dark. Notes on the Nobodies of Radio Art," in *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-garde*, ed. Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1992), p. 254.
- 6 See, for example, John Fletcher and John Spurling, *Beckett: A Study of his Plays* (London: Hill & Wang, 1972), pp. 99-100; Eugene Webb, *The Plays of Samuel Beckett* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 102; Vivian Mercier, *Beckett \ Beckett: The Classic Study of a Modern Genius* (London: Souvenir Press, 1993), p. 155.
- 7 Clas Zilliacus, *Beckett and Broadcasting: A Study of the Works of Samuel Beckett for and in Radio and Television* (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1976), p. 95.
- 8 See "Words and Music," *Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), p. 132. All subsequent references to the play are to this text.
- 9 Herbert Lindenberger, *Opera, The Extravagant Art* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 108-109 and see Chapter 3 passim.

Recent & Upcoming Events

Beckett's German Diaries

In autumn 2003, artist and writer Roswitha Quadflieg's Hamburg-based Raamin-Pressé will publish a limited and numbered edition (150 copies) of the "Hamburg" chapters in Beckett's German Diaries, which, although known to the public through James Knowlson's biography, were until now unpublished. The volume – entitled *Alles kommt auf so viel an* – contains these chapters in the English original as transcribed by Erika Tophoven. It also includes the poem "Cascando" in Beckett's own German translation and with an afterword (in German) by Tophoven as well as extensive marginal notes (compiled, in German, by Roswitha Quadflieg and Harald Butz) on the literary works, persons, institutions, and events mentioned in the text. These notes also use information drawn from two hitherto unknown letters by Beckett from the years 1936-37 that were found in the personal effects of the Hamburg bookseller Günter Albrecht.

Alles kommt auf so viel an is a special edition for bibliophiles and collectors, set in hot-metal composition by Ofizin-Haag Drugulin in Leipzig and printed in two colours on handmade paper. It contains pictures that Roswitha Quadflieg handprinted in seven colours (black, white, yellow, and different shades of grey) from the original plates. These total about two metres in length and are folded into a 25 x 35 cm cloth-bound volume, produced by the Hamburg bindery Christian Zwang. The price is €1,000. Further information may be obtained at: www.raaminpresse.de; email: rq@raaminpresse.de.

In order to celebrate the publication of this book (which coincides with Raamin-Pressé's 30th anniversary), the Freie Akademie der Künste in Hamburg (Klosterallee 23, 20095 Hamburg) will host an exhibition entitled "Beckett in Hamburg – 1936." It will include not only photos, articles, books, and Beckett's two hitherto unknown letters, but also – thanks to generous loans – paintings by the seven artists whom Beckett met personally during his time in Hamburg and on whom he commented in his diary: Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann, Karl Ballmer, Eduard Bargheer, Paul Bollmann, Willem Grimm, Karl Kluth and

Gretchen Wohlwill. All seven were branded as "entartet" ("degenerate") at the time, and the 'Hamburgische Sezession,' of which they were members, was dissolved in 1936. The exhibition will run from 24 November 2003 to 15 January 2004.

Beckett at Cerisy-la-Salle

A conference entitled "Présence de Samuel Beckett," to be held 2-11 August 2005 at the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-la-Salle in Normandy, is currently in the planning stages. Having chosen as its theme the "perturbations" that Beckett produced in the multiple realms of his creative activity, the organizers of this conference are especially interested in receiving papers (in French) that deal with such topics as philosophical and psychoanalytical questions, Beckett's relationship to France, Beckett and translation, "after Beckett," Beckett's correspondence, and linguistic and aesthetic approaches to his work. The "comité scientifique" for this conference includes: Tom Cousineau, Sjef Houppermans, Marie-Claude Hubert, Yann Mével, and Michèle Touret. Its proceedings will be published in 2006 by *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*. For further information, please contact Tom Cousineau at tcousineau2@washcoll.edu.

Foxrock CDs

The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays (reviewed in the Spring 2003 issue of *The Beckett Circle* by Clas Zilliacus) includes CDs of *All that Fall*, *Cascando*, *Embers*, *Rough for Radio II*, and *Words and Music*. Directed by Everett Frost, with original music by Morton Feldman and William Kraft, it features Billie Whitelaw, David Warrilow, Alvin Epstein, Barry McGovern, Frederick Neumann, Amanda Plummer, and George Bartenieff. Information on ordering these CDs is available at: www.evergreenreview.com

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@english.ucsb.edu). The Endpage contains the official homepage of the Samuel Beckett Society.

Beckett and Joyce in Antwerp

The European Science Foundation sponsored a conference entitled “James Joyce and Samuel Beckett: Translating Europe” on 23-25 October 2003 at the University of Antwerp. The main objective of this “exploratory workshop” was to examine the writings of Beckett and Joyce from a supranational, European perspective, thus avoiding the tendency among critics to claim them as authors of a specific nationality.

Putting biographical considerations aside, the workshop called attention — through a study of their compositional methods, their manuscripts, the genesis of their writings, and the poetics behind their multilingual and distinctly trans-cultural creations — to the ways that Joyce and Beckett gave shape to their “European” writing. Dirk Van Hulle

Les Cahiers de la Maison Samuel-Beckett

The Beckett association in Roussillon has published the first volume of its annual journal, *Les Cahiers de la Maison Samuel-Beckett*. The publication of this volume — which features reminiscences of the premiere of *En attendant Godot* by Jean Martin and Geneviève Lator — was timed to coincide with the associations’ celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of this production. Edited by Henri Vart, the association’s president, and published by Michel Archimbaud, it also includes critical articles by Alain Satgé (“Cinquante ans de mise en scène: une évolution révélatrice”), Tom Cousineau (*En attendant Godot: pour en finir encore avec les rites sacrificiels*), and Raymonde Temkine (“Voit-on toujours le même *Godot*?”). For further details, contact Annie Joly at beckett.roussillon@wanadoo.fr.

(dirk.vanhulle@ua.ac.be) and Geert Lernout (lernout@uia.ua.ac.be) organized a program that brought together such well-known Joyce and Beckett scholars as: Daniel Ferrer, John Pilling, Sjeff Houppermans, Gerry Dukes, Matthijs Engelberts, David Hayman, Stan Gontarski, and Hans-Walter Gabler.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Lois Gordon. *Reading Godot*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. 224 pp. \$26.00.

Lois Gordon, author of *The World of Samuel Beckett*, has written an illuminating introduction to Beckett's masterwork that is critically sophisticated and informed by linguistic, philosophical, and biographical insights. Gordon proposes that *Waiting for Godot* is the twentieth-century's exemplary play because it embodies two crucial modern thought systems, Freudian psychology and existentialism, in characters whose dialogues and speech patterns demonstrate "the simultaneous operation of conscious and unconscious thinking" (7-8). This places us in a world in which the dream state vies with attempts at rational understanding. Gordon makes a convincing case that Beckett drew on the psychological knowledge of his era when he wrote *Godot*, a play in which Estragon exclaims, "we are all born mad – some remain so," signifying not only the ubiquitous workings of the unconscious throughout our reason-driven lives, but also our essentially absurd condition as existentialism has defined it. When awareness of the human situation breaks through our daily routines and role-playing — in moments of despair or moments of heroic self-awareness (and Gordon studies both in *Reading Godot*) — we face a state that is akin to clinical madness, but which Gordon prefers to term "folly," following Beckett's last poem ("what is the word"). Folly acknowledges the humor and self-mockery which Beckett affords his humble figures, and it suggests their social existence, their capacity for mutual forbearance, and their support and succor of each other, these being humane and ameliorative qualities which Gordon finds throughout *Godot* and in Beckett's biography as well.

While Gordon shows how Beckett advances beyond Sartre's and Camus's discursive explanations of existential precepts by embodying them in the structure and language of his plays, the book's most original achievement is its correlation between Freudian dream analysis and *Godot's* skewed dialogues and phrasing, character constructs, and theatrical deployment of space and time. Gordon grounds her case both in skillful literary analysis and in Beckett's own fascination with Freud's writings and with clinical psychology (he worked as a psychiatric hospital attendant for a year, underwent psychoanalysis, and sympathetically observed Lucia Joyce's schizophrenic condition as her father's friend and surrogate son). Gordon devotes several chapters to Freud's usefulness in reading *Godot*, particularly to the play's uncanny mingling of conscious and unconscious thought. Beckett maintains a continuous linguistic balance between the mental operation of secondary process—Vladimir's position, which acknowledges waking, conscious life, Aristotelian logic, and goal-direction—and primary process—Estragon's modality, which is expressed through the language of the

unconscious, dreams, and even schizophrenia.

A key concept in Gordon's book is Freud's notion of "conglomeration." She devotes four chapters to its presence in the play's employment of the unconscious language, in archetypal myths (particularly to Cain and Abel, emphasizing God's arbitrary and negligent relation to Cain—a parallel to *Godot's* relationship with Didi and Gogo, and the sense that Cain and Abel as a composite are both "all humanity" and are "us"), and the conglomerative effect's presence in the play's dream-logic; finally, she shows how Beckett's own staging of *Godot* became a theatrical realization of this effect. Conglomeration (similar to secondary revision, which gives final shape and form to the condensed dream image) is marked by processes that Gordon finds ubiquitous in *Godot*, including condensation, displacement, substitution (especially plastic or visual representations for concepts), reversals, and paralogical thinking. She illuminates dozens of poetic effects in the dialogue, in the play's scenic moments, and in its spatial and temporal paradoxes, thereby constructing an anatomy of the play's symbolic elements, but also revealing how Beckett's characters struggle with absurdity and try to persevere on a moment-to-moment basis, not just in the grand scheme. As an example of Gordon's skill in reading *Godot's* linguistic richness, note her observation that when Estragon is affected by the rising of the moon, his phrase casts him as both subject and object in the observation "pale for weariness... of climbing and gazing at the likes of us"—the moon is such, but so is Gogo, here. For Gordon, the overarching conglomerative refrain in *Godot* is that life is experienced existentially as unfinished, having no transcendent goal, and as she elaborates, "[u]nfinished describes the relationship of each character to the universe, to nature, to his partner, and to himself, in terms of the complexities of mind function" (76). We see this in the constant unsynthesized antithesis between "Let's go" and "They do not move."

While Freudian psychology and existentialism of the 1940s are at the intellectual core of Gordon's book, she also traces cultural and historical influences from the modernist period to *Godot*. Gordon is wise to argue that our understanding of *Godot* should commence from this context, even if recent interpretive trends have favored subsequent intellectual currents. Beckett's play gains specificity and texture in Gordon's multifaceted contextual readings, for example when she links its figures to Jack B. Yeats' pictorial depictions of tramps and clowns who were subject to the indifference of nature within an unlocalized landscape, or more boldly, her comparison between *Godot's* sense of temporal flux and Cezanne's apples that decayed as he painted them (which he captured in simultaneous stages in one image—much like Beckett's view of his own subjects).

Gordon also discusses Beckett's experience of the war

and his appalled reaction to the Holocaust as significant contexts for reading *Godot*. She elaborates on Beckett's heroism in the French Resistance and his postwar relief work building a hospital at Saint-Lo. She traces Vladimir's recurrent calls to intervene in the suffering of fellow humanity to Beckett's wartime example. Gordon concludes that in spite of the provisional universe in which we reside, equally constant are our acts of generosity and our attempts to support fellow-sufferers with Beckett's characteristic "smile that derides the conditional" (53).

— Timothy Wiles

Jonathan Boulter. *Interpreting Narrative in the Novels of Samuel Beckett*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001. 158 pp. \$55.00 (cloth).

The title of Jonathan Boulter's ambitious new book, in its very syntax, poses from the outset a hermeneutic conundrum: is it a question of taking narrative as an object of interpretation, or, rather, should we read "interpreting" as an adjective modifying the sorts of narrative Beckett offers? The answer is both: Boulter is concerned with an explicitly hermeneutic approach, informed mostly by Gadamer and Ricoeur, in his efforts to "interpret" the narratives of Beckett's major novels. At the same time, Boulter fully explores the extent to which Beckett's narratives *themselves* are concerned with and engage in the hermeneutic enterprise of interpretation. This self-reflexivity, Boulter argues, along with other notorious elements of Beckett's prose, makes the latter a particularly fecund proving ground for the basic notions of hermeneutics: "The book is not intended to be a reading of Beckett through Gadamer but rather an extended exploration of the viability of hermeneutics in texts that resist even the first premises of a philosophical or revelatory hermeneutics" (4). The value of a hermeneutic approach to Beckett, Boulter implies here, lies in its very inappropriateness, its lack of pertinence, the rejection of its premises by Beckett's texts themselves. I don't see how anyone enamored of the Beckettian takes on expression, method, failure, and occasion, could resist such a gambit.

Thus, through his extended readings of *Watt*, *Mercier and Camier*, the trilogy, and *How It Is*, Boulter attempts to make hermeneutics fail better, as it were, and his sense of the problems Beckett poses for a hermeneutical approach is acute. Boulter's sensitivity as a reader and sophistication as a critic are never in doubt, and the book contributes many interesting local insights into Beckett's work. The problem, however, is the articulation *between* the discussions of hermeneutic theory and the actual textual wrangling Boulter engages in. The confrontation promised by the introduction is never satisfactorily explored, and rather than developing a better idea of *how* hermeneutics might or might not be viable for Beckett

(and vice versa), the book left this reader, at least, feeling they simply weren't.

To dispel such an impression, Boulter would have had to expand this rather short book to more fully explain how his "hermeneutic" approach differs from and improves upon the "post-structuralist" or psychoanalytic approaches which his own readings sometimes border, and which are found in the work of the critics with whom he most often dialogues (and, indeed, the book is sorely lacking in exchange with the critical corpus in general), while demonstrating more clearly how hermeneutic insights fuel his own regarding Beckett. Second, if it is wholly to Boulter's credit that the force of his investigation of the Beckettian subject through a hermeneutic lens so often leads him to the problematics of psychoanalysis, it is unfortunate that he fails to follow through on these implications. For example, his theorization of "play" in his chapter on *Malone Dies* would have greatly benefited from some consideration of the psychoanalytic tradition of enquiry on this subject, burgeoning since *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* at least. All the more so, as the Gadamerian sense of "losing" oneself in play (84) and Huizinga's account of play as the creation of "order" (86) both seem to presuppose some sort of notion of the unconscious.

The lack of adequate discussion as to *why* one desires "order," or what it is that gets "ordered," or why one wants to lose oneself, and where one is when one is thus lost, robs this discussion of all theoretical rigor. Likewise, Boulter's frequent recourse to the term "affect" remains mysterious throughout. In fact, it is only half-way through the book that Boulter, with admirable insight and cogency, suggests what might very well be the central difficulty that Beckett poses to the Gadamerian view of the subject-object relationship. Speaking of *Molloy*, Boulter asserts: "The situation here thus seemingly fits perfectly the Gadamerian understanding of the hermeneutical situation in which the object to be understood inhabits an alien "world" or discourse, although, as far as I can gather, Gadamer never overtly posits the hermeneutical subject *as object* (Molloy) being at a remove from his or her own discourse, despite the fact that for Gadamer understanding the object is always an understanding of the hermeneutical self" (69). The question of the hermeneutical subject's auto-discursive "remove," so deftly outlined here, could perhaps have been the starting point, and focal point, for the necessary project Boulter wished to undertake.

Despite these overall problems, Boulter's strengths as a reader contribute much of value. He is the first I know of to adequately address an oddity in the first sentences of *Molloy* which I, at least, have long found mystifying. After stating "I am in my mother's room," Molloy goes on, "It's I who live there now," rather than using the more grammatical "here." Boulter's analysis of deictics in these passages, and the discrepancies between "textual" and

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“spatio-temporal” groundings, is excellent. Likewise, his chapter on *How It Is* dispenses with much obfuscation and opens the way towards new readings by clearly defining the violence of the discrepancy between the book’s “memories” and its description of the “present condition,” showing that the “fairly clear and readable images of conventional life stand . . . in absolute, one might even say *generic*, antithesis to the absurd present moment” (114), thus rendering any attempt at restoring a mimetic temporality to the book’s narrative equally absurd. Boulter’s ability to zero in on the key fault-line structuring this work is admirable, and there is much else in *Interpreting Narrative* to retain the attention; I am not sure how much, though, pertains to the properly hermeneutic inquiry Boulter chooses to lead.

— Daniel Katz

Angela Moorjani and Carola Veit, eds. Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000 / Samuel Beckett: Fin Sans Fin en l’an 2000, Volume 11 of Samuel Beckett Today/ Aujourd’hui. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002. 493pp. €110 ; \$103 (cloth); €45; \$42 (paper).

Volume 11 of *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd’hui* contains updated versions of fifty-two (!) of the presentations from the symposium included in the Beckett in Berlin 2000 festival (reviewed by Dario Del Degan in the Fall 2001 issue of *The Beckett Circle*). It offers well-edited and substantively wide-ranging perspectives on topics that exercise Beckettians, from seasoned to beginners, including Beckett in/and: theory, the body, theatre/performance, dialogics with the reader, music, media, film, other arts, philosophy, text(s), mathematics, mysticism etc. The overall quality of the thinking and writing rises above both periodical and conference ephemera into a genuine anthology of essays of lasting value that will be much read and much cited.

Essays are mostly organized according to (while refusing to be contained by) the symposium panels into which they were originally slotted for delivery, and one wishes that the editors in their too-brief introduction might more extensively have illuminated the cross-talk among them — How, for example, Elin Diamond’s persuasive defense of the controversial Susan Sontag Sarajevo *Godot* (grouped, perhaps not to best advantage, with “Philosophic/Psychoanalytic Reflections”) and her “hypothesis that Beckett’s rejection of political identifications does not mean he was not seriously engaged in exploring the dynamics of political behaviour,” is in dialogue with, say, Jonathan Kalb’s “Samuel Beckett, Heiner Müller, and Post-Dramatic Theatre” — which is not in the “Beckett in Performance” section at all, but in the one devoted to “Beckett in the German Context.” This is but one example of such cross-

talk among many that might have been mentioned. The cross-talk that does appear in this volume is, for me, one of its major strengths.

In a concise chronicle of the evolution of Beckett criticism, Lois Oppenheim’s introduction to the “Roundtable” of veteran Beckettians effectively conveys the historic significance of convening for the last time so many of Beckett’s long-standing friends and pioneer interpreters amid subsequent generations of Beckettians. Sadly, between the time of the delivery of their remarks in Berlin and their publication in *SBT* 11, we had to mourn the passing of Martin Esslin, whose essay forcefully reminds us of Beckett’s resistance to totalitarianism and fanaticism of all kinds (more cross-talk with Diamond and Kalb); Yasunari Takahashi who looked from the perspective of the East to argue that “Reading (Beckett), we feel as if we are retracing the whole trajectory of arduous self-critique of the Western mind from Descartes to Deleuze”; and Gottfried Büttner who, though not part of the roundtable, contributes an essay on Beckett’s debt to Schopenhauer in the “German Context” (not philosophy — more cross talk) section of the volume.

The absence of Ruby Cohn’s virtuosic panel remarks (on the intersection of Beckett’s universality with the particularities of the twentieth century) is to be regretted. The volume does, however, include other historically important assessments of the state of Beckett studies: Tom Bishop presented a first-hand report of Beckett’s post-*Godot* contributions to Paris theatre in order to demonstrate, from historical example, the importance of insisting on the integrity of Beckett’s theatrical texts; Manfred Pfister’s reflections on the role of laughter in Beckett; and Jim Knowlson’s impassioned and very important reminder that the significance of Beckett’s prodigious scholarly investigations needs to be better understood and that this requires more general access than now obtains to adequate scholarly editions of works, manuscripts, and correspondence. Regrettably the historically important address by Walter Asmus (himself another long standing Beckett pioneer) formally opening the Berlin Festival proceedings is also absent from the volume.

It seems odd to have tucked Xerxes Mehta’s inaugural address into the section on “Beckett in Performance,” since it surveys the entire Berlin Festival. Mehta undertakes to define “the one goal that we (artists and scholars) share — to burn (Beckett’s) creations into the souls of as many people as possible, and, in the process, to alter history and human consciousness, if only by a hair.” I’m not sure who is “we” here, but I’ve never had such a goal and find this definition of one highly problematic (more cross-talk with Diamond, et al. on the difficulty of recruiting Beckett to, even modest or Sisyphean, salvationist agenda).

Be that as it may, Mehta’s courageous effort actually to address the crucial, thorny issue of how artists and

scholars who take Beckett seriously might overcome their mutual anxieties about each other deserves to be further reflected upon. So, indeed it is, at least implicitly, in many of the papers in this volume. For *Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000* continues (in all the remaining and worthwhile papers for which no room to discuss in this necessarily brief review) interrogating the endless ends for which we pursue and contextualize Beckett performance and study.

— Everett Frost

Caroline Bourgeois, ed. *Comédie / Marin Karmitz / Samuel Beckett*. Paris: Editions du Regard, 2001. 88 pp. \$21.00.

Over the course of his career, Samuel Beckett became increasingly engaged in directing his own plays. The importance of his practical experience as a director, both in shaping his subsequent compositions and in reshaping his existing canon for production, can scarcely be overstated. Central to his artistic development on this front was *Play* (in French, *Comédie*). In 1964, Beckett offered major directorial assistance on the English and French premieres of the play, and in 1966 he was essentially handed over the reins for Jean-Marie Serreau's reprise of *Comédie*. In *Damned to Fame*, James Knowlson characterizes the importance of these early directorial experiences: "This period of intensive collaboration with directors of his plays was vital for Beckett. Above all, it made him appreciate that there were elements that he would never get right until he had staged the plays himself, and that, consequently, at some point in the future he needed to take sole responsibility for a production so as to identify the problem areas and ensure that at least one production conformed with his overall vision of the play" (461). Beckett went on to do precisely that. Beginning in the mid-1960s, this "self-collaboration" (to borrow Stan Gontarski's term) between Beckett the Writer and Beckett the Director/Reviser set the terms for the Beckettian aesthetic, generating the late plays and regenerating the early ones.

A lost artifact from this seminal period has recently resurfaced. In 1966, Beckett collaborated with French filmmaker Marin Karmitz to adapt *Comédie* for the cinema. The resulting film was shown (unsuccessfully) at the Venice Biennale of that year and then essentially lay dormant for thirty-four years. The film reappeared in Paris at the Museum of Modern Art's *Voilà* exposition of 2000, and has since been screened at various metropolitan museums, galleries, and theatres, including a triumphant return to the Venice Biennale in 2001. (For details on one Paris screening, see Bogdan Manojlovic's account in the Spring 2003 issue of *The Beckett Circle*). Caroline Bourgeois has assembled a record of the film in book form which should prove of interest to many Beckett scholars.

The striking visual quality of *Comédie / Marin Karmitz / Samuel Beckett* is reason enough to recommend it. The brief but handsome edition opens with a complete holograph reproduction of the *Comédie* manuscript donated by Beckett to Karmitz. The middle portion of the book contains thirty photographic stills from the film. This stunning sequence of images confirms, even for those who have not had an opportunity to see the film, that in 1966 Beckett was already experimenting with the lighting and iconographic techniques which he would further refine in *Not I*, *That Time*, *...but the clouds...*, *Nacht und Träume*, and *What Where* (especially the television version).

Comédie / Marin Karmitz / Samuel Beckett also contains two articles (in both French and English), one a useful interview with Karmitz, the other an uneven film analysis by Michaël Glasmeier and Gaby Hartel. The interview recounts the history of the film project, from Karmitz's introduction to Beckett by Jérôme Lindon, through their intense and exacting collaboration during shooting and editing, to the filmmaker's final thoughts about the relevance of this experimental film in today's digital age. Scattered throughout these comments are revealing anecdotes about Beckett's working methodology, and about the rewards and difficulties of meeting his precise artistic requirements. In "'Three Grey Disks': Samuel Beckett's Forgotten Film *Comédie*," Glasmeier and Hartel attempt

New & Forthcoming

- Adelman, Gary. *Naming Beckett's Unnamable*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2004. ISBN 0838755739. (Price not available).
- Albright, Daniel. *Beckett and Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. ISBN 05218290989. \$60.
- Arsic, Branka. *The Passive Eye: Gaze and Subjectivity in Berkeley (Via Beckett)*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003. ISBN 0804746427 (cloth). \$45; ISBN 0804746435 (paper). \$19.95
- Keller, John. *Samuel Beckett and the Primacy of Love*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003. ISBN 0719063124 (cloth). \$74.95; ISBN 0719063132 (paper). \$27.95.
- Oppenheim, Lois, ed. *Palgrave Advances in Beckett Studies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. ISBN 1-4039-0352-2 (cloth). £50.00; ISBN 1-4039-0353-0 (paper). £15.99.

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to justify their christening of *Comédie* as “a rediscovered masterpiece of modernity” (85). In their careful consideration of the film’s “rhythmic montage” and “structured noise,” they do justice to their theme. However, having established the modernist sensibilities which underwrite *Comédie* —“Content is thus conquered by aesthetic form,” they write (80)—the authors then seem at pains to rescue the film for a postmodern audience as well. When Glasmeier and Hartel go fishing for the film’s contemporary spawn, and haul in the likes of soap operas, reality-TV shows, and rap music, one wonders if their overeagerness to prove Beckett’s chic contemporaneity has not come at the expense of their earlier formalist argument’s credibility.

On the issue of strained credibility, I should also add that neither article is served particularly well by its English translator. Awkward constructions abound. The publishers are to be commended in theory for catering this volume to the bilingual needs of Beckett’s readership. But in practice, the English translations leave much to be desired; fluent readers of French are advised to bypass them altogether.

But do not bypass the book. Reservations aside, *Comédie / Marin Karmitz / Samuel Beckett* (currently available for purchase online from Dia Bookshop in New York) would make a valuable addition to most Beckettian bookshelves. Those interested in Beckett’s fledgling work as a director will find a partial record of one of his earlier efforts. Those interested in his work behind the camera will discover an iconographic source for many of his later studio productions. And those spectators, old and new alike, who are currently responding to the *Beckett on Film* project will now be able to consult a sourcebook keyed to Beckett’s only big-screen adaptation of one of his own stage plays. *Comédie / Marin Karmitz / Samuel Beckett* should whet the critical appetite for further consideration of this important rediscovered film.

— Graley Herren

Carola Veit. *Ich-Konzept und Körper in Becketts dualen Konstruktionen*. Berlin: Weidler Buchverlag, 2002. 247 pp. €22.00.

This study sets out to provide a comprehensive picture of dualisms in the whole of Beckett’s *oeuvre* by offering detailed studies (chronologically ordered) of individual works. Veit’s analysis reveals three successive main phases and two intermediary stages, which are then summed up in the concluding section. It is especially helpful that she presents her findings in the form of diagrams that allow the reader to abstract from the compelling wealth of specific details presented in the preceding chapters.

For Veit, the central dualism of Beckett’s work is the

conflict between self and others. She shows that in his early work, there is a primary split in the “I” between sexual desire and internalised social taboos. In *Murphy*, the protagonist tries, as a result, to exclude his body and, with it, his sexual desire as well as the representatives of social repression. As a compensation, he creates a perceiving other within his own consciousness, which then leads to a secondary split. The search for an ideal self can, however, never succeed; this realisation forms the basis for Beckett’s next phase. By the time of the trilogy and *Waiting for Godot*, the failure of the quest becomes part of the writing itself, which accords primary importance to subjectivity and integrates the conflict between self and others into the protagonist himself. With *L’Innomable*, Beckett reaches an impasse: the self is now perceived not only as fragmented, but as fully conditioned by others. The theatre offers a way out by allowing Beckett, from *Fin de partie* onwards, to situate the self within the concrete space of the stage. The radio plays of the 1950s and 1960s take this subjective focus still further, as they dispense with the outward reality manifest in the stage works.

After this transitional period, *Comment c’est* marks the beginning of the third phase in which the disintegration of the self yields four elements that become the constituents of the late *oeuvre*: skull, voice, gaze and listener. The internalised manifestations of the outside world are then split off again in the television plays, where an (apparently) external voice imposes itself on a passive listener. Once more, Veit demonstrates how a specific medium turns out to be ideally suited to Beckett’s current concerns. He employs the camera as an inanimate but palpable observer. In the 1980s, the constituent units of the third phase then show a tendency to merge confusingly. On the whole, Beckett’s “neither” thus indeed sums up the “one theme” in his life, moving — as both his protagonists and his *oeuvre* do — from quest to resignation and then managing to accommodate the “neither” of nothingness.

As this brief overview demonstrates, Veit fulfils her ambitious task of charting the author’s journey towards radical constructivism with admirable success. While one might quibble about some details (like Winnie and Willie’s relationship and the mirror images of Listener and Reader in *Ohio Impromptu*), the well-argued analysis certainly constitutes a valuable contribution to Beckett studies in both its breadth and its depth. By bringing in large-scale developments like poststructuralism and postmodernism from time to time, it even offers useful insights to academics outside the Beckett circle.

— Merle Tönnies

Linda Collinge. *Beckett traduit Beckett. De Malone meurt à Malone Dies, l’imaginaire en traduction*. Genève : Droz, 2000. 297 pp. 50F (Swiss).

“Extended from burned grass swelling to the center in small nipple,” the translation proposed by a computer programme for the description of Winnie’s mound in *Oh les beaux jours*, is the proof Linda Collinge puts forward in her introduction that literary translation is not a simple switch from one arbitrary linguistic system to another. Invoking the theory of reading as play, Collinge proposes to envisage the translator as a reader and his reading as a transitional space, which allows the reader-translator’s imaginary to perform four functions. She then enumerates these functions as they appear in Beckett’s translation of *Malone meurt*: the recreational function creates a distance between experience and text, the transgressive function allows the translator to transgress the authority inherent to the mother tongue, the management function helps the translator avoid pain, and the alienating function transforms the text into a pretext for expressing the translator’s preoccupations.

The first brief chapter presents instances where Beckett translates literally rather than introducing the kinds of differences that will be discussed in subsequent chapters. This approach may result in rigidities, which Collinge interprets as the consequence of Beckett’s fear that he may not be able to control his imaginary. She then considers differences between the French and English versions of the novel with respect to three categories: humour, authority and the choice between speech and silence. She considers humour from two different angles: Beckett’s tendency not to translate word-play from the original French into English, on the one hand, and his introduction of additional humorous elements, on the other. According to Collinge, the humour which is characteristic of Beckett’s translations into English is self-mocking. This, she claims, is a manifestation of childhood fragility linked to a return to the mother tongue.

The chapter devoted to authority describes the translation of passages concerning incest, guilt and the fear of castration. References to incest are attenuated in the English version because, Collinge argues, Beckett’s imaginary actively avoids an incestuous confrontation with his mother. Thus, the female characters in the English translation are less repulsive than they had been in the original French. Similarly, Beckett is more willing to introduce and play with the notion of castration in English because he had a good relationship with his father. This may be seen in the transformation of the benign Louis into a more frightening Lambert.

Collinge approaches the problem of saying or not saying through a reading of additions and suppressions. Some of the interpretations that she proposes are interesting and convincing: the use of two synonyms as an attempt to find the right word, for example. She concludes, on the basis of her analysis, that Beckett’s choices are guided as much by personal as by aesthetic considerations: “même

si l’on admet que Beckett avait un réel souci d’esthétique [...] les suppressions de Beckett le rattachent aussi à son histoire personnelle, ses préoccupations, ses douleurs, ses angoisses” (151-2). She further argues that when Beckett translates from French to his mother tongue, he is manipulated by his unconscious: incapable of imagining himself, he is imagined by his mother, and is less translator than translated.

While Collinge recognises that the author of *Malone meurt* is distinct from its narrator, Malone, she sees *Malone Dies* as being narrated by a translator, and not by a translated narrator, still called Malone. This renders a biographical reading somewhat inevitable. The appendix presents a list of and a commentary upon all the differences noted between the two versions; one can only appreciate the meticulousness of this reading of the novel and the insight of some of the comments presented there, many of which are more interesting than the analyses presented in the body of the text. Here is significant food for thought and further reflection on how Beckett translated *Malone meurt*.

—Helen Astbury

Pascale Sardin-Damestoy. Samuel Beckett auto-traducteur ou l’art de l’«empêchement». Arras : Artois Presses Université, 2002. 319 pp. €20.

As Pascale Sardin-Damestoy announces in her introduction, her approach will be doubly comparative: she proposes to compare not only the final versions of the texts of her corpus in French and in English, but also the manuscript development of original and translation. The corpus is vast, including all the “short texts” (be they in prose or for the theatre) written between 1946 and 1980. Her first chapter interestingly compares Beckett’s approach to self-translation to the movements described in “Enough.” The English and French versions of a text may be “immediate continuous communication with immediate redepture. Same thing with delayed redepture,” etc. depending on the lapse of time between the composition of the original and its translation, and on the extent of interference between composition in language 1 and translation into language 2. Sardin-Damestoy employs the terms of translation theory, but indicates the problems linked to applying them to Beckett’s self-translations, her hypothesis being that, far from seeking out fidelity and truth, Beckett’s aim is “contamination,” or “perversion, » in the sense both of turning away and of corruption.

She next explores both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic aspects of such an approach. The syntagmatic dimension is studied as a movement towards a less standard language, marked by disjunctions, repetitions and rhythm: through each writing and re-writing the text is reduced,

even if it never disappears completely. The paradigmatic dimension is seen in changes in tone and register from one language to another. The tone may become more sombre or derisive; sarcasm comes to play a more important role, as do humour and religion. The final chapter, which uses a more psychoanalytical approach, considers the existence of a double inscription of the texts as a doubling of the Ego, which leads to depersonalisation. Sardin-Damestoy interprets developments in the manuscripts – including massive suppression of pronouns, and of references to sexuality — in terms of negative narcissism and autism. Her conclusion, which precedes an extremely detailed appendix, refers us back to the title of the study: Beckett's art is one of incompleteness. Both writing, rewriting and that particular form of rewriting which is translation, are incapable of saying the final word. They are "arts de l'empêchement": as the translations continue the work started in the manuscripts, so the final bilingual texts refer to each other infinitely.

The arguments, which Sardin-Damestoy sets forth clearly and convincingly, are supported by references ranging from Deleuze to Foucault, translation theory and

psychoanalysis. One might almost complain that we hear those voices more often than we hear the author's, and this problem is compounded by the sometimes vague footnotes, which make following up some of the references difficult, especially those where the authors and/or titles are given with spelling mistakes.

This study of the bilingual and manuscript versions of the short texts does not bring to light any particularly new elements, but convincingly confirms what one had intuited from a reading of the *oeuvre* in one language. While it is indeed interesting to study prose and theatre written first in English and French without discrimination, one cannot help wondering if any of the differences mentioned are specific to genre or language, and hoping that further works on Beckett's self-translation will be forthcoming to answer those queries.

— Helen Astbury

Presidential Message

The Samuel Beckett Society has continued to attract new members, from a variety of countries, during the course of 2003. Perhaps it would be useful to draw to the attention of these new members the multifarious functions of *The Beckett Circle*. It acts as the organ of the Samuel Beckett Society, it provides a meeting-ground for all who share an interest in Beckett, and, under the capable editorship of Tom Cousineau, it is increasingly publishing longer articles in addition to the shorter, bulletin-style pieces which have always characterised it. One vital task of the *Circle* is to coordinate and disseminate information about Beckett-related activities and scholarship which arise throughout the year. This is partly achieved by publishing reviews and reactions after the event. However, one much-appreciated service the *Circle* can offer is to announce and publicise such activities in advance. This is valuable not only because it keeps readers informed of current ventures, but also because it maximises potential participation in the event. Unfortunately, because of the lead-in time between submission and publication, the amount of notice which can be given is sometimes short. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to invite members to send to the Editor, *as early as possible*, information about Beckett-related publications, colloquia, productions, etc. Clear details, if they are known, should be given. However, gleams in the eye are not excluded! It may be beneficial to flag activities which are still in the planning or gestation period.

In the light of the above, this is the appropriate time to publicise one of the regular events in the Society's year. As an MLA-allied organization, the Samuel Beckett Society holds two sessions in the course of the An-

nual Convention, which this year will be held in San Diego, between 27 and 30 December. The panels are as follows:

Samuel Beckett and Irish Poetry

Saturday 27 December, 5:15-6:30 pm.

Madeleine A, Manchester Grand Hyatt

Presiding: Marjorie Perloff, Stanford University

1. "Vespers and Viduity: Samuel Beckett and Paul Muldoon," Stephen Watt, Indiana University, Bloomington
2. "Slippery Sam and Tomtinker Tim: Beckett and MacGreevy's Poetry of the 1930s," David Wheatley, University of Hull, England
3. "In One Ear and Out the Others: Beckett, Mahon, Muldoon," Adrienne Janus, Stanford University.

Samuel Beckett and Censorship

Monday 29 December, 10:15-11:30 am.

Cunningham B, Manchester Grand Hyatt

Presiding: Raymond Federman, State University of New York, Buffalo

1. "Beckett's Filthy Synecdoche: The Sadean Subtext in *Murphy*," Richard Begam, University of Wisconsin, Madison
2. "'It Is Not Me': From a Refusal to Speak of Oneself to X, 'Paradigme du genre humain,'" Diane Lüscher-Morata, University of Reading, England
3. "Early Beckett and Censorship," James McNaughton, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Both sessions promise to be fascinating. If you are planning to be at MLA, *venez nombreux!* If not, the next *Beckett Circle* will provide your retrospective window on events.

— Mary Bryden

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- David Bradby is Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies in the University of London. His research and publications focus on twentieth-century theatre in France. His most recent book, *Beckett: Waiting for Godot* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) is a study of the performance history of Beckett's play.
- Colin Duckworth wrote the critical edition of *En attendant Godot*, *Angels of Darkness: Dramatic effect in Beckett and Ionesco*, and many articles on Beckett. He has directed several Beckett plays in English and French, including the Australian premiere of *En attendant Godot*.
- Everett Frost is working on a catalogue of Beckett's notebooks at Trinity College Dublin to be published next year by *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*.
- Graley Herren is Assistant Professor of English at Xavier University in Cincinnati. He specializes in Modern Drama, with a particular interest in Samuel Beckett's work for film and television. His publications on Beckett appear in various journals, including the *Journal of Beckett Studies*, *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, *Modern Drama*, and the *Journal of Dramatic Theory & Criticism*.
- Annie Joly is the secretary of the Association pour la Maison Samuel-Beckett in Roussillon, France.
- Daniel Katz is the author of *Saying I No More: Subjectivity and Consciousness in the Prose of Samuel Beckett* (Northwestern University Press, 1999). His article "Beckett's Measures: Principles of Pleasure in *Molloy* and 'First Love'" was published in *Modern Fiction Studies* (Summer 2003). He currently teaches at the University of Paris VII-Denis Diderot.
- Marjorie Perloff is Sadie D. Patek Professor Emerita of Humanities at Stanford University. Her most recent book is *21st Century Modernism* (Blackwell Manifesto Series). Her *Vienna Paradox* is forthcoming from New Directions. She wrote the program notes for Carey Perloff's production of *Waiting for Godot* (ACT, Oct.-Nov. 2003).
- Merle Tonnies is Assistant professor in British Literature and Cultural Studies at the university of Bochum in Germany. Along with articles on Beckett's plays, she has published *Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Strategy. Audience Laughter and the Postmodernist Debate* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1997).
- Timothy Wiles, Associate Professor of English at Indiana University for thirty years, published articles on Eastern European Theater, American Drama, and Performance Theory and was the author of *The Theater Event* (University of Chicago Press, 1980). At the time of his death in July 2003, he was working on a book on the Cold War in American Drama.

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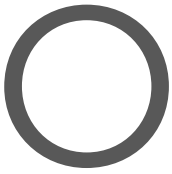
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