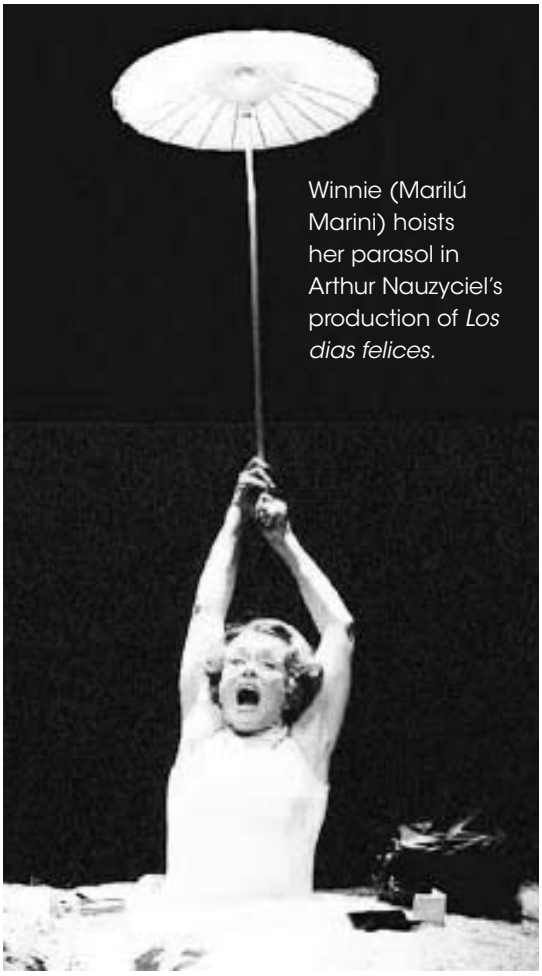
THE BECKETT CIRCLE
LE CERCLE DE BECKETT
Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

Los dias felices in Buenos Aires

Arthur Nauzyciel's production of *Los dias felices* with Marilú Marini in the role of Winnie was not a typical production of Beckett's play. It did not feature, in the manner of Madeleine Renaud, an ethereal old lady juggling with her parasol and other possessions. Nor did it attempt to copy, as I have seen more than once, the inimitable Billie Whitelaw performing an excitable, accelerated, earthy, slightly vulgar Winnie and going through a broad gamut of voices that made a music of their own.

Marini's Winnie was, rather, a poised and well-spoken suburbanite who went about her everyday business in a most casual way. So much so that after the first few minutes I feared that a rather boring evening was ahead. She looked like an average well-to-do Argentinian housewife, with a conventional coiffure and make-up, who was musing ineffectually about life in her beautiful garden. The stage-lighting, however was almost unbearable, and her mound suggested a desert. As Marilú plodded on through the text, her facial expressions and her voice grew in intensity. Words started to take on meanings of which she herself seemed at first unaware, but which would gradually force her to confront the pointlessness of (her) life.

This production succeeded in creating a strong contrast between the codes of bourgeois life and the desolation of the landscape, as well as between Winnie's solemn manner of speaking and the humourous details that conveyed her recognition of the bad joke that life was playing on her. Willie provided a contrast to Winnie's upper middle class style with his almost surrealistic apparitions, half naked and with a wounded head, reminiscent of a World War I refugee from the trenches. As Marini progressed unrelentingly through the words, their weight and density became unbearable. No stridency, no superfluous emphasis: just the right amount of awe and nemesis. The unthinkable had taken place: the aura of Greek tragedy arising from such homely, prosaic language.



Winnie (Marilú Marini) hoists her parasol in Arthur Nauzyciel's production of *Los dias felices*.

Photo Credit: Elán Bachini

Marini's French performance of *Happy Days* was first presented at the Théâtre de l'Odéon and then later in Morocco, and in Buenos Aires in 2003, during the 4th International Theatre Festival. Having seen the French staging, I can say that the passage into Spanish was an unexpectedly fine and enriching experience. The excellent translation was by the Spaniard Antonia Rodríguez Gago. Marini's Argentinian-inflected revisions of this translation are among her priceless contributions to the staging of this play. Marini herself commented on this adaptation:

> The French text inhabits a realm of cultivated allusions, appealing to people who know their classics, such as Shakespeare or Auden, but it also explores other, more popular sources in which everyday idi-

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oms appear. I chose an "Argentinian version" to achieve a greater intimacy between Winnie and that other to whom she speaks, whether it be her husband, or death, or whatever life-supports she chooses to imagine. It was a risky decision. At times I was afraid the text would seem too much like something from a soap opera.

But her fears proved unfounded: her version really succeeds in blending a highly universal quality, always present in a Beckett play, with the necessary concreteness given to it by these colloquialisms. I believe this to be one of the reasons for its great success in Buenos Aires. At last, we had a Beckett play performed to a packed house in a major theatre. Many theatregoers who were seeing Beckett for the first time suddenly became aware of the menacing subtext beneath Winnie's seemingly pointless and superficial babble. In the context of the self-questioning and self-criticism that has recently marked the middle class in Argentina, this voice of a conventional woman who, while submerged in her closed universe, is beginning to get an inkling of a different reality, hit home in a way that is not always achieved by other Beckettian stagings.

— *Laura Cerrato*

"We have been asked for Beckett's e-mail address and, once, to suggest a quotation from any of Beckett's works that might be read at an Irish wedding."

Apmonia

What would we call it, Allen wanted to know. Allen Ruch, webmaster and editor-in-chief of *The Modern Word* (www.themodernword.com), an online archive of writings, sounds, images, and ideas about such writers as Borges, Joyce, and Pynchon, left me to solve this problem. We had met face to face, after a couple of years of correspondence, in London in 2000. A visit to the local pub and a couple of pints later, we were vigorously agreeing that TMW needed a good and thorough site for Beckett; after perhaps another pint I found myself agreeing to make and run it with him. It would need a distinctive name, Allen said. And like TMW's other major sites, like *The Garden of Forking Paths* (the Borges site) and *The Brazen Head* (a pub for Joyce), it would also need a suitable motif, a kind of architectural or spatial metaphor.

Apmonia materialized in the summer of 2001. This perplexing word is drawn from an early scene in *Murphy* in which Neary, "at that time a Pythagorean," tries to fathom Murphy's "irrational heart." He calls the mediation between the heart's extremes of near-seizing labour and near-bursting ebullition "Apmonia":

> When he got tired of calling it the Apmonia, he called it the Isonomy. When he got sick of the sound of Isonomy he called it the Attunement. But he might call it what he liked, into Murphy's heart it would not enter. Neary could not blend the opposites in Murphy's heart.

This is an early example of Beckett's challenge to all kinds of naming, to the very relation (or lack thereof) between the words we speak and the world we endure. Insofar as the website had to have a "name," Allen and I chose this makeshift and dispensable word of little tangible meaning, and we have since characterized the site as "a medical-musical condition." Using the metaphor of the chambers of the heart as the site's structural conceit seemed appropriate, since Beckett's work is filled with notices of the organ that Alice James once hauntingly called "the bewildered little hammer." Indeed, Beckett's prose is at times reminiscent of nothing so much as a pulse, a measurement of life, comparable to the way Proust's sentences approximate his asthmatic breathing.

Apmonia offers pages on Beckett's life; summaries of each of his works; reviews; volumes of Beckett criticism; selected quotations and photographs; incarnations on stage, on film, and on audio recording; indices of musicians and recordings relevant to Beckett; notes on authors influenced by Beckett; links to other websites and online discussion groups; and an option to purchase any of the items available via Amazon. We also house –and welcome further contributions to– a growing repository of scholarly papers and journalistic articles, including works by Stanley E. Gontarski, Marjorie Perloff, Fintan O'Toole, and Michael Guest. Recent acquisitions include David Tucker's "Beckett's Middle Period: Authority, The Quest and Dualism," and an English translation of John Fletcher's comparison of Swift and Beckett.

Running a popular website is, in one respect, a little like being what used to be called in the world of newspapers an agony aunt. Having one's mailbox just the click of a mouse away for absolutely anyone who happens upon one's site means being often consulted for advice, not all of it obviously connected to the site's subject, and with varying degrees of desperation in tone. ("Can you tell me which Beckett plays have never been performed in South America? By tomorrow please"). Apmonia has thousands of visitors every month, and on average we receive three to six emails a week. Most common are those from students and teachers scratching their heads, some asking not just for answers or tailor-fit interpretations – despite the clearly marked FAQ page which explains that we are not and never will be an essay-writing service – but even for the texts themselves (free of charge, that is: "I have no credit card"). I say "most common," but that grouping is a slim majority: we have heard from writers, musicians, actors, photographers, monks, psychiatrists, you name it. Occasionally we get anecdotes or idiosyncratic requests that run the gamut from fascinating to disturbing – never boring, though. We have been asked for Beckett's e-mail address and, once, to suggest a quotation from any of Beckett's works that might be read at an Irish wedding. (I admit, I drew a blank there. *Happy Days* might not ring the right bell).

We get a lot of news about Beckett-related events, pub-

Anna DeAcetis performs *That Time* while standing in a rowboat.

Photo credit: Tasja Keetmen/ XO Projects, Inc.

lications, and productions from all over the world, and with commendable speed, Allen manages to update the site accordingly to spread the word about them. This is not to suggest that we haven't been behind on all sorts of things, that (for example) our list of play performances is anywhere near exhaustive, or that our index of critical works on Beckett anything more than skeletal. Nor do we find ourselves in the comfortable position of being able to answer correctly every poser launched in our direction. Our ambition, however, will mean change, addition, improvement, and we very much hope that Beckett readers and scholars will continue, as many generously have done, to enliven and enrich *Apmonia*.

— Tim Conley

Beckett Shorts in Brooklyn

Founded in Chicago in 1966, relocated in New York five years later, Division 13 Productions is an exciting company of young actors and directors determined to bring new approaches to modern classics as well as to work on new materials. A startling program entitled *Beckett Shorts* enticed the New York happy few in November 2003 to the remote depths of Brooklyn to view *Act Without Words I, Breath, Rockaby,* and *That Time*, outdoors and indoors in a giant abandoned factory complex. Finding himself in a strange land for a series of "environment-specific" productions may have given the typical Beckett spectator pause and some concern about fidelity to the author's works, but as Division 13's managing director Katie Taber points out, her company is interested in new audiences, in young people who do not necessarily know Beckett and, at best, are not familiar with his writings.

The forty spectators (the limit for each performance) were taken from one site to another for each play. An imaginative staging of *Act Without Words I* served as a fine, non-verbal introduction into Beckett's universe, rendered fairly faithfully except for the active presence throughout of a fiddler. Very small groups were then led to glimpse a deserted inner space for the fifty seconds of *Breath*, perfectly done.

The final two pieces—and the evening's two major presentations—posed greater problems, at least to the Beckett purist. *Rockaby* was performed on a rooftop, by a woman (Katie Taber) whose evident youth was unexpected. She rocked against a backdrop of "other windows" lit and fully visible—a superfluous and unpoetic explicitness—and New York night lights glimmering. The feeling projected was far from the sense of solitude so strongly signified by the text, and the leitmotif of "going down" was necessarily and unfortunately sacrificed on a rooftop.

The evening ended with a fascinating version of *That Time*, performed by a woman on a rowboat on a pond. It provided a striking theatrical image, but it is difficult to imagine the neophyte Beckett spectator reacting more positively to this version than to Beckett's more abstract concept, especially since the source, and therefore the meaning, of the three voices lost considerable clarity. And after all, the stage image created by Beckett for *That Time* is so strong that it remains deeply engraved in one's memory.

The notion of "site specific" would work better if the site were rigorously selected for the needs of each play—as was the case here for *Breath*. But with *Rockaby* and especially *That Time,* the interpretation of each play seemed to be a function of the site, not vice-versa. Still, Division 13 has shown its unquestioned capacity to stage Beckett provocatively, intelligently, and with real theatrical imagination. Much of the *Beckett Shorts* evening does not correspond to what Beckett wanted, but at no point does the spectator feel that Beckett has been betrayed. Experimentation with the canon needs to be encouraged and especially by those, like Division 13, whose vision is respectful of the spirit even while seeking new expressions and new overtones. This is a theatrical enterprise that should be encouraged; they should do more Beckett.

— Tom Bishop

ESSAY

After Modernism: Kenner's Beckett/ Beckett's Kenner

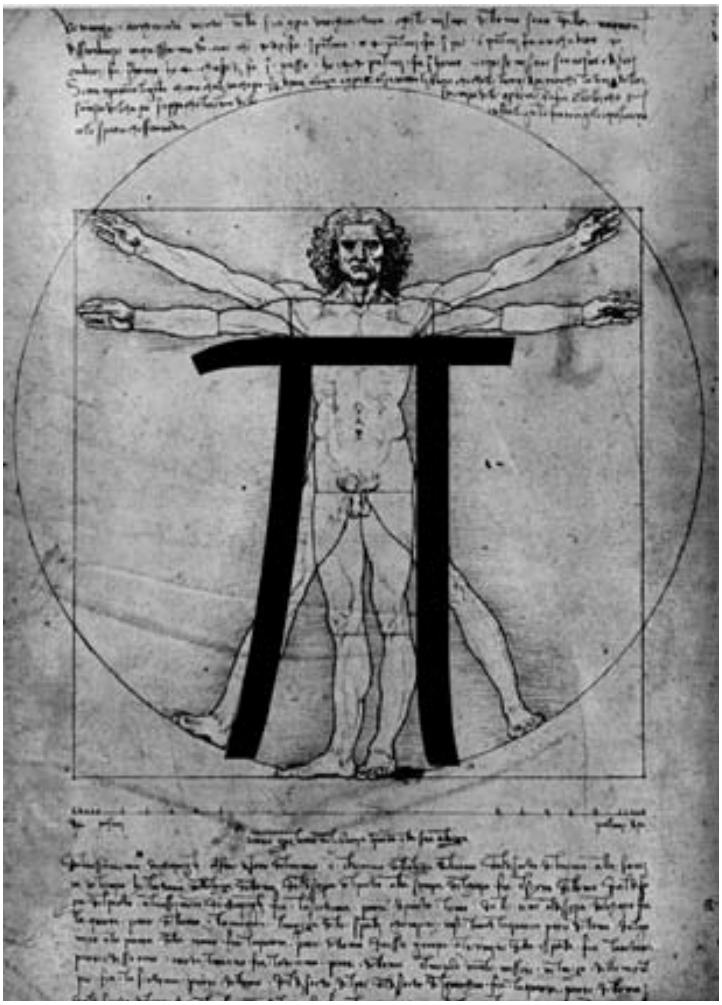
In his writing about literary modernism after 1960, Hugh Kenner looked through glasses that were tinted Beckettian. I say this despite the fact that Kenner's work on modernism was so prolific and extensive that it is not possible to single out absolutely one figure that defines his perspective. Even that fact has a revealingly Beckettian quality: "Chameleon in spite of himself, there you have Molloy, viewed from a certain angle." Various professional groups with allegiances to individual authors claim Kenner, primarily the Joyceans, the Poundians, and the Beckettians. Many nations besides Ireland have also claimed Joyce, who is considered one of them by the Italians, the Swiss, and the French. But Joyce was an Irish writer who moved away, as did Beckett. And Kenner was a Canadian who moved away and then moved around literally (California, Maryland, Georgia) and literarily as a critic. Kenner's early book on Pound (1951) and *The Pound Era* (1971), considered by many his most important critical work, put Pound at the center of his career and his influence. The early book on Joyce (1956), two later, smaller but important books (*Joyce's Voices*, 1978, and *Ulysses*,1980; rev. 1987), and the widely reprinted commentaries on *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* insure Kenner's place among the Joyceans. Since his death less than a year ago, there have been roundtable tributes to Kenner at two Joyce conferences, in Miami and Dublin. The books focusing on Pound and Joyce are in addition to those on Chesterton, Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and Buckminster Fuller, among other writers and topics, making a total of over two dozen volumes, large and small, with about a thousand shorter contributions surrounding them. Many colors shine through the prismatic lenses of this work.

Kenner's substantial writing on Beckett comes comparatively late, only after the books on Pound, Joyce, and Eliot had established him in the 1950s as a significant interpreter of modernism. Even for such an accomplished and prolific critic as Kenner, it must have been a bit of a risk in 1961 to write about a contemporary figure whose career in the public eye was so much shorter than Pound's or Eliot's. Recognition had come for Beckett less than a decade earlier. Kenner's views were probably always in transition, but never more than during the 1960s, when he reconsidered his reading of Stephen Dedalus's relation to Joyce and had difficulty making progress on *The Pound Era*, under contract from 1962 first with one publisher and then, after a long delay, with a new one. He was beginning to see modernism as part of the process by which something more contemporary, eventually called postmodernism (though usually not by Kenner), had come into being. That something more contemporary included Samuel Beckett, who has been variously understood as a modernist and a postmodernist. The encounter with Beckett affected and may have engendered some of Kenner's new perspectives.

Kenner's affinity for Beckett had recognizable features that were not limited to the character of Beckett's writing, including age, a mathematical sensibility, and an attachment to popular culture, especially vaudeville and the circus. Comparative closeness in age is no guarantee of attraction, but it can affect the quality of the response. Kenner (b. 1923) was closer in age to Beckett (the youngest of the so-called modernists, yet to be labeled High Modernists) than Beckett was to Joyce. Kenner stood at a much further remove from Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Lewis, all born in the 1880s, than he did from Beckett. Beckett turned seventeen in the year of Kenner's birth, while Joyce celebrated his forty-first birthday. The differences in cultural backgrounds would have been more pronounced had Kenner been an American rather than a Canadian with a classical education. In *A Colder Eye* (1983), Kenner lets his discussion of Beckett as "terminator" (before Arnold Schwarzenegger appropriated the designation) stand in the place of a conclusion. By doing so, Kenner projects upon Beckett as the last word a version of his own position as critical observer. Both terminator and *immobilist* (according to the book's index), Beckett is a kind of foreigner at some distance from the Irish context: post-Irish revival; post-Easter Rising; not Catholic. The fact that Kenner was Catholic did not affect his skepticism about many things Irish. When I suggested to him once that he could call his possible book on the Irish Revival "A Half-Baked World," he laughingly responded, "not far wrong." There seems to be an allegory about himself at work when Kenner stresses that Beckett's father was, as a surveyor, mathematical; and again, when he juxtaposes arithmetic and "a passion for calculation" with an attachment to Chaplin, Keaton, and Laurel and Hardy that was distinctly different from Joyce's engagement with opera and Yeats's involvement with the Abbey Theatre. Though Kenner is more acerbic and usually less antic (though not in his book on Chuck Jones) than Beckett, the skepticism he finds in Beckett is also his own, either reinforced or influenced or even engendered by what he recognized about himself in Beckett.

From 1961 on Kenner's engagement with Beckett in his major writings about literature is steady and evident, with the possible exception of *The Pound Era*, where Beckett, mentioned only four times, plays no significant part. I say "possible exception," because Kenner himself comments in *The Counterfeiters* (1968) on the role that writing

that book played in his moving forward finally with *The Pound Era*. He describes the book as a reconsideration of *The Stoic Comedians* (1962), a study of Flaubert, Joyce, and Beckett in which the Beckettian lens is on display. The stoicism central to the book derives from reading Beckett and making retrospective sense of the earlier writers. Beckett is not discussed at length in *The Counterfeiters*, but Buster Keaton is, specifically in terms of the impasse, the term that Kenner used earlier to describe Beckett's stoicism. Despite its small scale by comparison with *The Pound Era*, *The Counterfeiters*, a postmodern work of cultural and intellectual history, may well be Hugh Kenner's most original and memorable book. In the 1985 Epilogue, he identifies it as his favorite. *The Pound Era* emerges out of Kenner's thinking about Beckett and impasse. In 1968, a revised edition of S*amuel Beckett* was issued, with a new chapter. The book that follows *The Pound Era* is *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett* (1973). Beckett is given a chapter in *The Mechanic Muse* (1987), as well as in *A Colder Eye*. In short, after 1960, Kenner published more on Beckett than on Joyce in his monographs and his book-length studies of groups of authors. Only his work on Pound is more elaborated, and even there Beckett was part of the process of gestation.



Graphic artist Marie-Anne Verougstraete's amalgam of Leonardo DaVinci's Vitruvian Man and the symbol for pi evokes Molloy on his crutches.

Kenner's response to Beckett was mathematical from the start, and also a post-modern response to a post-modern writer who, like the critic writing about him, enjoyed the circus and vaudeville. Writing about Beckett enabled Kenner's own apparently incompatible proclivities to emerge together. The non-referential, even anti-referential, character of theoretical mathematics gave Kenner an entrée into Beckett's anti-realistic writing. The link Kenner recognized between mathematics and contemporary literature, specifically Beckett, comes out in the preface to *The Stoic Comedians* when he remarks that "the language of printed words has become, like the language of mathematics, voiceless" and "implies nothing but silence." In *Samuel Beckett*, he had already touched on Beckett's evocations of mathematical enigmas in the fiction through *The Unnamable*. The double and antithetical character of the trilogy is for Kenner a matter of rational and irrational numbers coexisting. The intellectual fashion for existentialism after WWII made the misreading of Beckett as an existential humanist inevitable, but Kenner recognized in Beckett a different vision of "irrational man" (the title phrase of William Barrett's 1958 study of existential philosophy). The irrationality of man for Beckett was inherent in his juxtaposed evocation in *Molloy* of pi, the irrational number produced by dividing 22 by 7, and the figure of Molloy on crutches in a posture that must resemble visually the Greek letter. The juxtaposition involves no tragic existential situation, no alienation or misery of the kind that Beckett distances himself from in "Three Dialogues." The irrationality is part of a serious joke produced by a writer that Kenner calls in *A Colder Eye* "a metallic-voiced upbeat pessimist," a kind of post-Joycean Buster Keaton. That's "upbeat," not beaten up, as the existentialist version might claim.

In *The Mechanic Muse*, Kenner's formulations about the implicitly mathematical character of Beckett's writing move in a cybernetic direction that helps clarify the trajectory his thinking has taken about Beckett and about modernism. The cybernetic treatment distinguishes Beckett from the other writers, Eliot, Pound, and Joyce, whose muse was mechanical, or perhaps a mechanic (by contrast, presumably, with Marshall McLuhan's "mechanical bride"). Kenner had already begun splitting Beckett off emphatically from other modernists in *A Colder Eye*, where he distinguishes International Modernists from national or regional ones.

On the one hand, he says early in the book that Beckett was "the last of the International Modernists." On the other, he modifies that claim in the last chapter with the proviso that the term *Modernism* "in his case retains too strident a sound of willful desire." Desire, will, stridency, and maybe even retention (as opposed to letting go) and sound (as opposed to silence and the voiceless) are not compatible with Beckett's writing. Without quite accepting the label "Post-Modern" for Beckett, Kenner remarks, in the final paragraph of the introduction to *The Mechanic Muse*, that "High Modernism did not outlast transparent technology," and that Beckett "carries it into the intangible realm of information theory." He makes no such claim for Joyce or Pound. By contrast with "transparent," "intangible" suggests something simultaneously counterintuitive (rather than immediately grasped) and opaque (that is, visible, unlike a pane of clear glass). The opacity invites us to respond by thinking about the strange relation of Beckett's writing to the technology of its time, which is not mechanical in the usual sense.

"The linguistic and conceptual space that Kenner looks into and illuminates is essentially non-Euclidean and non-Cartesian."

When Kenner predicated the word *terminator* of Beckett in 1983, he could hardly have had the cyborg of the 1984 movie in mind, but in *The Mechanic Muse* he claims that the crossover between people and machines has been in preparation in the West for centuries. Calling Beckett's efforts a process of "deconstructing," he cites Krapp, whose relation with the tape recorder is closer than close. What comes into view is a style of writing that Kenner can transcribe easily as a "Calculus of Propositions . . . close to the languages of digital computers" and as statements that resemble the programming language Pascal. The particular vision expressed is tragicomic, an upbeat pessimism where "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness" and where the situation of the actors replicates the situation being minimally represented. The doubling evokes laughter but also a sense of potential madness. Always attentive to the details of style, Kenner closes by commenting on a sentence from *Malone Dies* that folds back on itself and reverses itself "with the sudden logic that attends a switched point of view":

> It is right that he too should have his little chronicle, his memories, his reason, and be able to recognize the good in the bad, the bad in the worst, and so grow gently old down all the unchanging days, and die one day like any other day, only shorter.

As Kenner presents it, the statement is a self-correcting version of the periodic sentence, a type of sentence whose meaning is withheld until the end. But the meaning that emerges in Beckett's sentence is a significant adjustment, or even a reversal, of what has preceded it. The linguistic and conceptual space that Kenner looks into and illuminates is essentially non-Euclidean and non-Cartesian. And it is minimalist in a post-Joycean, post-modernist mode, especially in Beckett's late prose, where sentences are "already written in a proto-computer-language" in which "verbs and nouns" are effaced.

In his late work on Beckett, Kenner recognized how distant the critical meditations on modernism, including his own, were from reflecting adequately on the compelling enigma of Beckett's writings. Kenner reproduces a barely discursive, even non-discursive, critical version of the enigma in his mathematical and cybernetic formulations, which provide an interpretive lens with a Beckettian tint. As with the situation of Beckett's actors in Kenner's evocation of it, the critic's situation replicates the writer's. There is, finally, no coherent explanation or response possible in positivist, discursive, or referential terms. There is, however, a rapture to be derived, from Beckett, from Kenner. It is cognate with the rapture that Moran expresses as a matter of performance when he says the following about his memory of the dance of the now dead bees: "And in spite of all the pains I had lavished on these problems, I was more than ever stupefied by the complexity of this innumerable dance, involving doubtless other determinants of which I had not the slightest idea. And I said, with rapture, Here is something I can study all my life, and never understand." There we have Kenner's Beckett and Beckett's Kenner, viewed from a certain angle.

-- John Paul Riquelme

Samuel Beckett and German Culture

Germany was Samuel Beckett's first love and also his last one. He visited Germany regularly between 1928 and 1936, and he returned there after the war to work with such German theatre companies as the Berliner Ensemble through the 1980s and with Süddeutscher Rundfunk, where he produced one of his last works, a television play with the German title *Nacht und Träume*. It was not only his cousin Peggy Sinclair who caused – and healed at the same time – his "German fever" before World War II, but also his encounter with German culture as the completely "other." Beckett studied the German language, German literature, art, philosophy, psychology, and music with great enthusiasm and success.

Beckett's interest in German culture became quite well known after the publication of James Knowlson's biography *Damned to Fame. The Life of Samuel Beckett* (1996), particularly its tenth chapter, entitled "The Unknown Diaries." Six volumes of unpublished notes taken during Beckett's longest and last trip through Germany before the war became known as the *German Diaries*. The so-called *Whoroscope Notebook* in the Archive of the Beckett International Foundation in Reading, with his notes and excerpts on Fritz Mauthner, and the Beckett material at Dublin's Trinity Library, together with his correspondence

with McGreevy are additional autographic witnesses of Beckett's early interest in German culture.

Therese Fischer-Seidel, Chair of the English Department at Heinrich-Heine Universität Düsseldorf, a Beckettian herself as well as director of the university's partnership with the University of Reading, took the long-standing relationship between the two universities as a starting point to set up an interdisciplinary and international conference under the heading *Samuel Beckett und die deutsche Kultur / Samuel Beckett and German Culture*, which took place 11-13 March 2004 in Düsseldorf. Supported by Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Betz-Stiftung, and by the Beckett International Foundation, this conference featured three days of lectures, discussions, and social activities at Düsseldorf's Universitätsbibliothek. It also included a small exhibition of letters, books, and posters on the topic. Of particular interest were a letter written by Beckett's Hamburg correspondent Günther Albrecht, whose brother Klaus also attended the conference, and letters exchanged between Beckett and Karl-Heinz Stroux, director of the first Beckett play in Germany (Berlin 1953, *Wir warten auf Godot*) and later artistic director of Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, given to the organizers by Stroux' widow Eva Stroux. The conference attracted quite a large audience each day, although it took place during the semester break.

Beckett and German Culture also became the leader for the University magazine, which featured Jerry Bauer's photograph of Beckett. A volume of essays from this conference, edited by Therese Fischer-Seidel and Marion Fries-Dieckmann and titled *Der unbekannte Beckett. Samuel Beckett und die deutsche Kultur*, has been announced for March 2005 with Beckett's German publisher Suhrkamp. A connection between Düsseldorf and Reading in Beckett matters can also be found in a course of studies in literary translation – unique in Germany – the *spiritus rector* of which was Beckett's German translator Elmar Tophoven, who lived in Straelen not very far from Düsseldorf. Erika Tophoven points to the fact that Beckett supported her husband in his endeavours to found the Übersetzerkolleg Straelen.

The academic programme was divided into four panels: Biography and Art, German Literature and Philosophy, Language and Culture in Manuscript and Translation, and Film, Television, and Music. The opening panel had as its keynote presentation James Knowlson's "Beckett in Kassel: First encounters with Expressionism." Using Beckett's *German Diaries,* Knowlson followed up the question as to why Beckett visited Germany in 1936-37. He saw in Beckett's visits to Kassel between 1928 and 1932 – during which he was introduced by his uncle William ("Boss") Sinclair to German expressionism – the first and lasting influence on his taste for avant-garde art.

Mark Nixon, a Ph.D. student in English under the supervision of John Pilling at the University of Reading, presented the lay-out of Beckett's *German Diaries.* His chronicle of the *German Diaries* will be an important part of the Suhrkamp volume, *Der unbekannte Beckett.* Marie Luise Syring, a leading art historian from Düsseldorf's *Museum Kunst Palast*, investigated, in her paper on Beckett

Photo Credit: Jerry Bauer

Samuel Beckett und die deutsche Kultur

Interdisziplinäre Tagung

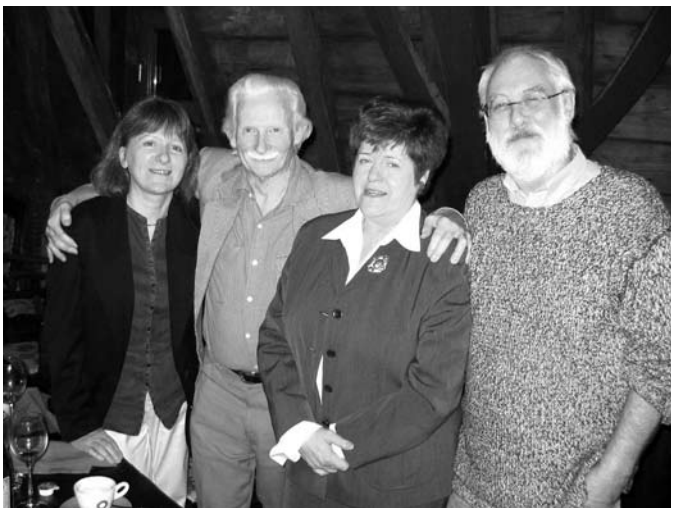
des Anglistischen Instituts IV
Heinrich-Heine-Universität
Düsseldorf

10. bis 14. März 2004

and German art, the fundamentally anti-mimetic nature of Beckett's artistic and literary theory and its resemblance in this respect to the theories of Giacometti and the van Velde brothers. Roswitha Quadflieg, the book-artist from Hamburg, who edited and illustrated with Erika Tophoven`s transliterations the Hamburg parts of the *German Diaries* in a circulation of 150 copies in December 2003, provided insights into the process of finding Beckett's traces in Hamburg. John Pilling, in his talk "Beckett and the'German Fever': Crisis and Identity in the 1930," followed up the question of the function of Beckett's "German fever" (quoting Beckett himself from the MacGreevy correspondence) and diagnosed its value with respect to Beckett's quest for identity.

The second panel included papers on Beckett's use of Fontane and his negative reception in Germany by Adorno (Martin Brunkhorst, Potsdam), on his reading of modern German literature in the *German Diaries* (Mark Nixon), on Beckett's unfavourable reception by German authors like Grass and Böll after the war (Peter Brockmeier, Berlin), and on the influence of —and finally the distancing from—Schopenhauer's philosophy in the formation of the aesthetics presented in *Proust* (Ulrich Pothast, Hannover).

The third panel started with a presentation by Marion Fries-Dieckmann (Düsseldorf) on Beckett's method of



Conference organizer Therese Fischer-Seidel welcomes Mary Bryden, James Knowlson, and John Pilling to Düsseldorf.

learning German as can be observed in his *Exercise Books.* Wiebke Sievers (Vienna), like Marion Fries-Dieckmann a literary translator, looked into Beckett's relationship with his German translators and his publisher Siegfried Unseld of Suhrkamp and also used Tophoven's archive in Straelen for evidence of the translation process. Monika Gomille (Düsseldorf) compared Beckett's own translation work to contemporary theories of translation. Everett Frost (New York) – in a paper titled "'Jeder Unmut ist eine Geburt, ein Zögling der Einsamkeit': Reading Beckett's Reading of Goethe's Autobiography"—saw in Beckett's reading of Goethe's autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* primarily the process of self-construction. His paper drew upon Beckett's unpublished philosophical notes from the Trinity College Archive. Since Julian Garforth (Reading Archive) was unable to attend the conference, his paper on Karl Valentin was read, fittingly, by an Irish-Bavarian lecturer in Düsseldorf, Conor Geiselbrechtinger. This paper – dealing with Beckett's relationship to this Bavarian "Volksschauspieler"—was particularly appreciated by the large German audience.

The last day of the conference was dedicated to film, television, and music. Mary Bryden (Cardiff), President of the Samuel Beckett Society, discussed Beckett's musical preferences among German composers. Consulting Beckett's notes about productions of Strauss, Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Brahms during his "Deutschlandreise," she discovered his dislike of ballet and opera, which he found too expressively mimetic. Gaby Hartel (Berlin), art historian and journalist, looked into Beckett's interest in the early German experimental film of the 1920s and found already an early interest in visual perception in these silent films. Therese Fischer-Seidel's paper directed the audience's attention towards Beckett's contributions to the development of television as an artistic medium. Concentrating on the version of *Nacht und Träume* that Beckett directed for *Süddeutscher Rundfunk* in 1983, she interpreted this small and moving piece as his self-epitaph: an optimistic revisiting of his old theme of salvation in which he says farewell to his audience.

— Therese Fischer-Seidel

The Samuel Beckett Working Group in St. Petersburg

The staggeringly beautiful city of St. Petersburg was the venue this year of the Samuel Beckett Working Group, which met 23-27 May 2004 under the umbrella, as in the past, of the International Federation of Theatre Research Annual Conference. The participants in the Working Group—whose papers tended to reflect the general theme of this year's conference, "The Director in the Theatre World," —were Herbert Blau, Julie Campbell, Irit Degani-Raz, Mariko Hori Tanaka , Catherine Laws, Thomas Mansell, Xerxes Mehta, Angela Moorjani, Eric Prince, and Antonia Rodríguez Gago, with Linda Ben-Zvi as convener and chair.

The main conference took place in the Alexandrinsky Theatre, a striking building at one end of Ostrovsky Square that boasts an impressive statue of Catherine the Great. The first meeting of the working group took place in the Russian Drama room of the St. Petersburg State Theatrical Library, situated just behind the Alexandrinsky Theatre. It is a beautiful room, lined with some of the library's vast collection of plays, with a winding cast-iron stairway and a balcony with an elaborate cast-iron railing, The booklet charting the history of the archive declares that "no serious research into Russian drama or theatre history is possible without referring to this collection."

After Linda Ben-Zvi's warm greeting to group members, Eric Prince began the proceedings by discussing his paper, entitled "Directing Beckett: Issues of Freedom, Control, and Artistry," which dealt with directorial freedom in the staging of Beckett and with both Beckett's and the Beckett Estate's intervention in a number of controversial productions over the years. Arguing that "Beckett, like Shakespeare, is big enough to resist and survive endless misconceptions, and profound enough to embrace countless more re-readings and re-workings," Prince concluded that directors should be allowed the freedom to reinterpret and reevaluate his drama,

Angela Moorjani, however, in a paper entitled "Directing or In-directing Beckett: In Search of a Pragmatics of Indirection," suggested that "directors may be criticized for betraying their audience's agency." What concerned Moorjani is that directors, by placing too much stress on their own reading of the play, can prevent their audiences from witnessing what Beckett can so outstandingly provide: the "unsaid" and "unstated" and the kind of "free-floating attention that is more productive aesthetically, conceptually, socially, and emotionally" than a director's imposed and more limiting vision. Rather than advocating the freedom of the director as Prince did, Moorjani stood up for the freedom of the theatre audience, suggesting that directors should "do less, rather than more," in order to bring "the unspoken to light for the audiences, leaving them . . . to grapple with glimmerings in the dark."

In another paper addressing the subject of directorial freedom, "Beckett's Pursuit of a New Language," Irit Degani-Raz concluded that, because of the interrelationship between the "visual and verbal" in Beckett's theatre, there is a "fundamental restriction in the degree of freedom … for the interpretation of the director." Focusing on *Not I* to illustrate her point, she discussed theories concerning possible worlds and the ways in which fictional, dramatic worlds do retain a relationship to the real world. Without the familiarity of mouths as real entities in the real world ,the audience would not be able to appreciate the shock of the defamiliarized and isolated image of a mouth that the play presents, along with the shock of the stream of words that the mouth emits. These three papers stimulated a very useful discussion about an area in which I doubt that Beckett scholars will ever achieve consensus, and perhaps never should.

Photo credit: Julie Campbell

St. Petersburg's Alexandrinski Theatre was the setting of the working group's annual meeting

Catherine Laws discussed Beckett in relation to the Hungarian composer György Kurtág. Always an interesting speaker and able, as a practicing musician and composer herself, to speak about Beckett and music in a genuinely informed manner, Laws manages not to exclude an audience that is far less well versed in musical form and effects. We learned that Kurtág has written three compositions using Beckett texts: two settings for *What is the Word* (1990 and 1991), and more recently his *. . . pas à pas—nulle part . . .* (1993-8), which is based on a number of *Minitonnades*, two of Beckett's early poems ("Dieppe" and "elles viennent") and nine of his translations of the maxims of Sebastien Chamfort. The similarities between Beckett's and Kurtág's approaches to creation to which Laws convincingly pointed include the fragmentary nature of their work, the way in which the struggle to express and to find meaning is articulated through the works of both artists, and the small scale of Kurtág's work, which is reminiscent of Beckett's, especially his later work. Kurtág also uses the texts in different translations, which involves re-writing and intratextual allusions. Laws made a convincing case concerning the artistic affinity between the two artists.

Thomas Mansell also drew upon his experience as a practicing musician in his paper, entitled "The Director as Conductor: Beckett's Musical Theatre." Quoting Billie Whitelaw and Rosemary Pountney, who have both described Beckett's directing as "conducting," Mansell spoke of Beckett's own propensity to use musical terms during rehearsals, in order, he contended, "to strive for abstraction in the theatre" and to control the pace and the lengths of pauses and silences. Mansell also discussed the parodoxes and tensions involved in the fact that music is not only abstract, but also expressive, and concluded by suggesting that it is perhaps best to think of Beckett as a conduit. In Mansell's words, "Beckett has created an electric aura of integrity which continues to exert its influence even after his absence."

Delegates from the main conference were next invited to attend an Open Meeting in which Herbert Blau presented a paper entitled "Among the Deepening Shades: The Beckettian Moment(um) and the Brechtian Arrest." This proved to be an interesting and well-attended talk that drew upon Blau's long career of practical work in the theatre, his academic studies, and his extensive knowledge of both Beckett and Brecht.

Our group meetings then resumed in the Alexandrinsky Theatre, where again we could sit around a large table that facilitated lively discussions. Antonia Rodríguez Gaga's paper, entitled "Transcultural *Endgame*/s," focused on productions of *Endgame* in Spain directed by Julio Castronovo (1980), Miguel Narros (1984), and Rodolfi Cortizo (2001). Rodriguez Gaga has translated Beckett's work into Spanish and also has close links with theatre practitioners in Spain. Having interviewed certain directors, she was able to give us a strong sense of the issues involved in adapting this play to a different culture, with its different traditions, experiences, and theatrical techniques. In crossing cultures, a director must, as Beckett has said, "contribute his own music." She convincingly argued that these three productions of *Endgame* are translations, adaptations, and, as such, "cultural hybrids." She also made a convincing case for Beckett's work surviving and enduring "all kinds of stage changes and adaptations" as long as the "poetic meaning/s of the play remain."

My own paper, "The entrapment of the body in *Happy Days* and other plays in relation to Jung's Third Tavistock Lecture," was one I had presented the previous year at Leeds University. I discussed Jung's lecture, which Beckett attended in 1935, mainly in terms of its relevance to Winnie's peculiar indifference to her strange predicament, as seen in the repression of her feelings and her loss, in Jung's terms, of "the most precious connection with the unconscious."

Hori Tanaka's paper, "The Spiral Movement of Beckett in the Directorial Process of *What Where*," began with the quotation from "Dante . . . Bruno . Vico . . Joyce," in which Beckett presents the paradox that "Maximum speed is a state of rest," which Tanaka considers to be Beckett's "lifelong motto." She explored Beckett's "journey to the point zero," focusing on *What Where* and the television play *Was Wo*, which she sees as a further movement and transformation of the stage play into something "far more poetic, abstract and image-centred." She described this journey as "never-ending" and as "spiralling" since the actual point zero can be approached, but never actually reached, by a process of continual reduction. Of great interest was the way in which she introduced references to Noh theatre and Zen, concluding with "Zeami's famous phrase, 'There is an end to one's life, but there is only an endlessness in Noh,' which means that art can never be completed even if the artist dies, which seems to me a fitting description of Beckett's art—a 'never-ending journey.'"

> "Beckett, like Shakespeare, is big enough to resist and survive endless misconceptions, and profound enough to embrace countless more re-readings and re-workings."

The last paper, Xerxes Mehta's "Beckett's Early Style in the Theatre: *Waiting for Godot*," proved a fitting finale. Discussing some of Mehta's ideas in relation to those put forward by earlier participants will demonstrate the interplay of voices and ideas that such a discussion group encourages. Adopting the point of view of one "who toil[s] in the profession," he pointed to the "anxiety" that accompanies directing plays, and, in relation to *Godot*, the need to look for "sources of unity, principally by searching for the play's organic life, that which in some way captures the vitality of living and to which, therefore, a spectator might be drawn." He quoted from Hugh Kenner, who links *Godot* with "war-ravaged France," and from Antoni Libera, who considers that "the ruins in Beckett's plays struck post-war audiences in his beloved Warsaw as very natural and real." But as Moorjani suggested, if *Godot* is directed according to such ideas, which, in Mehta's words, "root the work in the time and place of its origin," this simultaneously limits the audience's ability to respond to those parts of the play that transcend such a specific reading. Stressing the "less is more" that we associate with Beckett's work, Tanaka suggested that a performance focusing on the specifics of the second world war will produce a form of "more" that actually presents the spectator with "less." Degani-Raz was also concerned about the loss of the "dialectical tension between the visual and the verbal," which could be risked by directorial imposition. On the other hand, Rodriguez Gago made an eloquent case for productions of Beckett that "often function as mirrors of the culture of a given period in a given country and relate to the historical, cultural, experimental, and even political situation of this country" and suggested "that we have as many *Endgames* as there are theatre productions of this play." Prince also advocated directorial freedom, even when misconceived, as Beckett "is big enough to resist and survive them."

What seems to me to be crucial here has to do with just whose freedom is being defended. Mehta, in his emphasis on the representational elements in *Godot*, can reasonably maintain that "*Godot*'s abstractions are not so abstract." But we have to consider interpretations that cause the abstractions to seem less abstract: are these to be the province of the director or the spectator? Mehta, Prince, and Rodriguez Gaga support the director in choosing to concretize the abstractions, while Moorjani is concerned that such concretization can override the ability of spectators to interpret in their own fashion.

It is a pleasure to be part of the working group and to witness the openness, respect for alternative views, and willingness to listen that is so pervasive among Beckett scholars. Distributing the papers before we met proved to be an effective way of facilitating discussions, as we all had time to get to grips with the arguments set out and to think about the issues presented. It is also useful to have as members of the group people like Prince, Blau,and Mehta, who have practical experience in directing Beckett and who can bring new insights to bear on his work in performance. Beckett's less will surely always be more: the endlessness of his art is reflected in the discussions and interpretations his work will continue to inspire, endlessly.

— *Julie Campbell*

Beckett Seminar in Buenos Aires

In response to Tom Cousineau's inquiry about my Beckett Seminar at the University of Buenos Aires, I have jotted down some notes, an endeavor that has required me to exercise my none-too-good memory but also rewarded me with the rediscovery of things that I had forgotten. The idea of a seminar consecrated to the work of Samuel Beckett followed very naturally from a series of seminars on avant-garde theatre (a subject that attracted many students after the repressive years of the military government) that I had directed at the end of the eighties. Student interest evolved from provocatively transgressive drama to a kind of writing that had a more subtle deconstructive effect.

After the success of my first seminar on Beckett – titled "Beckett: humour and metaphysics"—in1992, I proposed to the administration of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of the University of Buenos Aires a permanent Beckett Seminar, but for some reason they didn't approve of the term "permanent." So, year by year, I continued directing various Beckett seminars, focussing each time on the aspects of

his work that I, my assistants, and some of the graduate students considered of special interest at the moment. These have included "Beckett: Humour and Metaphysics," "Beckett and Joyce," "The Theatre of Samuel Beckett," "The Poetry of Samuel Beckett," "The Manuscripts of Samuel Beckett," "Samuel Beckett and Postmodernism," "Intertexts in the Work of Samuel Beckett," "Samuel Beckett's Essay Writing," and "Philosophical Driftings in the Work of Samuel Beckett," which is our current research subject.

I am happy to say that the Seminar helped a lot, not only to spread and improve our students'knowledge of Beckett, but also to establish a closer relationship between academic and theatrical issues, which had until then been very neglected. This was to the advantage of both parties: actors and directors began attending the seminar and contributing their own perspectives. Some of our students started to write for the theatre, and even staged their own productions. It was as though Beckett had provided the setting for these encounters. It was also stimulating to find out that, in some drama schools, Beckett's plays were finally being acknowledged as appropriate subjects for dramatic exercises by novice students rather than as esoteric plays for the initiated.

The Seminar's interests included extra-academic activities, such as hosting drama groups working on Beckett, producing plays at the University of Buenos Aires, and attending rehearsals as well as most stagings of Beckett's plays in Buenos Aires. I have recently introduced the writing of theatre reviews for these occasions, some of which can be read at the site of Seminar 2003, which was created by last-year students: http://www.seminariobeckett.com. We have also had guest-lectures on Beckett or Beckett-related subjects by such Beckett directors as Miguel Guerberoff, Luis González Bruno, Sergio Amigo, and Berta Goldenberg. On the occasion of his concert staging of selections from *Texts for Nothing, Endgame, Lessness, The Lost Ones*, *Ill Seen Ill Said,* and *Breath*, the composer and orchestral conductor Martín Bauer explained to participants in my seminar his own experience of composing music based on Beckett's texts. Some of our guests came from afar: Enoch Brater, when he attended a Beckett Conference in Buenos Aires in 1996, Chris Ackerley from New Zealand, and Eli Rozik from Israel. My assistants and I have also been helping young directors and actors make their first contacts with the Beckettian world, advising them about choices, and trying to improve current translations of his plays, and even translating texts that had not already been translated.

In 1999, the Seminar organized a Beckett Festival for the 10th anniversary of his death, with the intention of having more plays *by* Beckett and fewer papers *on* Beckett. The Festival was a success, with both full- and partial-stagings of plays (*Rockaby*, *Footfalls*, *Ohio Impromptu*, *Acts without words I and II*), video screenings (of *Film*, and *Pour finir encore* by François Lazaro), and readings of his poetry and prose. Since 1995 the University of Buenos Aires has funded my research projects on the work of Samuel Beckett. It is a very modest contribution (not enough for travel to conferences), but it has helped to buy books for the library, both for my research group and our Seminar students. The Seminar has proved to be an ideal place for discussion as well as a testing ground for my team's work, and it has offered graduate students who attend it the opportunity of contributing to and eventually of joining our research group. One of the recent outcomes of this activity is the edition of a multimedia CD-ROM, *Around Beckett*, which presents the results of our research on Beckettian intertextuality and which also includes photographs, paintings, and fragments of videos and music related to his work.

But perhaps the most important consequence of the Beckett Seminar is the publication of *Beckettiana*, its annual review, which includes such course-materials as research papers by my group and myself, contributions from abroad, and documents, translations, and reviews concerning Beckett's *oeuvre*. The contents and abstracts of the issues already published can be read at http://www.seminariobeckett.com.ar or (when it works!) at the webpage of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, http://www.filo.uba.ar. We also intend to publish selected articles on the web.

On the whole, this has been a very encouraging experience despite the hard work involved in sustaining this effort over so many years and the difficulties inherent in a country where teaching involves extra-academic duties that would be unimaginable in other countries. But when you succeed in discussing Beckett in terms that are relatively akin to his own world-view, poetics, and sensibility, it seems that you have gotten somewhere, in spite of my profound conviction that there is, finally, nowhere to go.

— *Laura Cerrato*

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.

Current & Upcoming Events

Beckett in Boston

As part of its current season of important Irish plays, Devanaughn Theatre will present *Voices in the Dark: Three Plays by Samuel Beckett*. For this enterprise—which includes *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Ohio Impromptu* and *Cascando* (presented as a radio play, live and in the dark)—it has engaged director David J Dowling. Currently residing in Los Angeles, Dowling was a founding member of Boston's Theatre Cooperative, where he directed their critically acclaimed production of *Endgame*.

The performance of *Krapp's Last Tape* will be based on James Knowlson's "revised" text of the play, which incorporates many changes and refinements made by Beckett while consulting on and directing the major productions. This text, previously unperformed in Boston, provides most audiences with a fresh look at *Krapp* and Beckett. Boston theatre veteran, George Saulnier III (Hamm in Dowling's *Endgame*) will be starring as Krapp.

Panel discussions with the cast and production team as well as Beckett scholars and enthusiasts will follow some performances. Beckett Society members in the Boston area interested in sitting on a panel should contact David J Dowling at voices@unnameabletheatre.com. *Voices in the Dark* plays Feb. 3-20 at Devanaughn Theatre in the Piano Factory, 791 Tremont Street Rear, in Boston's historic South End. For additional information or to purchase tickets, please visit www.devtheatre.com or call (617) 247--9777.

Présence de Samuel Beckett

The organizers of the *Présence de Samuel Beckett* conference, which will be held 1-11 August at the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-la-Salle, met last summer in Paris to plan details of the program. Potential participants whose papers were selected have been notified; approximately forty presentations, each one-hour in length (including discussion), are expected. Each day will be organized around papers dealing with one of the topics chosen for the conference: "Beckett dans l'histoire: influences et confrontations"; "Beckett entre deux langues"; "Présence du corps chez Beckett"; "Présence philosophique de Beckett"; "Beckett dans le polylogue des arts"; "Beckett dans la recherche esthétique"; "Présence et representation chez Beckett"; "Beckett et ses continuateurs." A free day midway through the conference will be devoted to "Présence des Beckettiens en Normandie." The organizers will meet again on 3 January 2005 to finalize the program and to discuss possible cultural activities related to the conference. Updated information on this conference may be found on Cerisy's webpage: www.ccic-cerisy.asso.fr/. Those interested in being placed on the conference's waiting-list should contact either Tom Cousineau or Sjef Houppermans (J.M.M. Houppermans@let.leidenuniv.nl).

The Godot Company at The Cockpit Theatre

John Calder's The Godot Company recently organized "A Samuel Beckett Festival" at London's The Cockpit Theatre. In addition to the company's own performances of *Ohio Impromptu* and *Roughs for Theatre One* and *Two*, Pierre Chabert performed *La dernière bande*. Related events included stage readings of *Roughs for Radio One* and *Two*, *Embers*, *First Love*, and *The Duthuit Dialogues*; a lecture on Beckett's fiction by John Pilling and one on his drama by John Calder; and panel discussions on topics such as "Why and Wherefore Beckett" (chaired by John Calder and including Michael Bakewell, Pierre Chabert, Leonard Fenton, Ronald Pickup, John Pilling, and Billie Whitelaw) and "Beckett in the 21st Century" (with Alfred Alvarez, Edward Beckett, John Calder, Anthony Page, and Dave Wybrow). The program notes describe the reaction of audiences to Beckett's work as revealing "a hunger for reality and truth that revolts against consumerism and trivia-peddling."

The Samuel Beckett Working Group

The Samuel Beckett Working Group of the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR/FIRT) will meet at the next IFTR conference to be held at The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, at the University of Maryland, in the Washington D.C. suburb of College Park, Maryland, June 26 - July 2, 2005. For this meeting, the group has chosen to focus attention on a specific Beckett play: *Krapp's Last Tape*. The following are only a few of the many possibilities for discussion: textual studies, theoretical approaches to the play, thematic issues, visual and verbal imagery, intratextual and intertextual analyses, theatrical borrowings, performance history, specific productions, theatrical issues: acting, directing, staging, the opera version, and the play on film, as well as the connection between the play and the general theme of the conference: "Citizen Artists: Theatre, Culture and Community."

Since this is a working group, all papers for discussion should be no longer than 15 pages, preferably 10-12 pages. Participants are responsible for distributing their papers to other members via email attachment by 15 May at the latest. At the sessions, each paper will be allotted approximately 45 minutes, depending on the number of participants: 15 minutes for the presenter to summarize (not read) the work, and 30 minutes for group comments and suggestions.

All registration and housing accommodations are to be made through IFTR. Please check their website: http://www.firt-iftr.org. Paper selection and individual dates for submission are arranged by each Working Group. The day preceding the opening session is usually set aside for Working Groups, and special sessions during the conference are assigned. Please send titles and one page abstracts to Working Group Convener Linda Ben-Zvi (lindabz@post.tau.ac.il) by 15 January, 2005.

The Endpage

After eight years of service, the *Samuel Beckett Endpage* is looking for a new home. Porter Abbott reports that — while it has been a pleasure staying in touch with so many Beckettians from all over the world, whose encouragement so much to himself and to co-founder Ben Strong— the time has come for him to step down and for the site to move to another home in another institution. If you are interested in managing the site and building on its rich potential, please drop Porter a line at pabbott@english.ucsb.edu or give him a call at 805-893-3791.

The Beckett Centenary

As Samuel Beckett's Alma Mater, and a crucial formative influence on the future writer, Trinity College is planning an academic programme of events focused in April 2006 in collaboration with the Dublin Gate Theatre's Beckett Festival 2006. We hope to host a meeting of the International Beckett Working Group directed by Linda Ben-Zvi at that time.

The Dublin Gate Theatre will celebrate the Beckett Centenary by hosting international festivals in Dublin, London, and New York. It was with blessings from Beckett himself that the Gate Theatre presented the first ever Beckett Festival in 1991. This Festival was revisited in New York at the 1996 Lincoln Center Festival, New York and at the Barbican Centre in London in 1999; each festival covered every aspect of Beckett's life and work, including work for television and radio as well as the poetry and prose, and, of course, the staging of the full nineteen plays. Besides these three major festivals, the Gate's productions of Beckett plays have also been seen in many cities throughout the world and at many Festivals, notably Chicago, Toronto, Melbourne, and Shanghai. In addition, Michale Colgan, the director of the Gate, and Alan Moloney formed Blue Angel Films in 2000, specifically to produce Beckett on Film in which all nineteen of Beckett's plays were filmed using internationally renowned directors and actors. Individual films have been shown in Cannes, Toronto, Venice, Beijing, and New York, and so far all nineteen have been screened in festival format in Dublin in 2000, in London in 2001, and in Sydney in 2002. The series has won the South Bank Show Award in 2002 and, in the United States, the prestigious Peabody Award in 2003.

The 2006 festival will draw on this rich history of promoting Beckett and presenting his work, while being even more comprehensive than those that have gone before. For the first time, the plays will be staged alongside the full *Beckett on Film* series, and the plan is for these to be accompanied by a combination of some of the following strands: an academic symposium, educational programme, audio/visual library, the radio plays, plays for television, a new production of the film *Film*, a book fair, poetry and prose readings, and a major art exhibition. In London and New York, the Gate plans to again collaborate with the Barbican Centre and Lincoln Center respectively, and in Dublin, the Gate hopes it will have a partner in Trinity College. It also hopes to work in tandem with RTÉ, the Irish Film Institute, and the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

BOOK REVIEWS

Daniel Albright. *Beckett & Aesthetics.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. vii + 179 pp. $60.

The title of Daniel Albright's new book will prove somewhat misleading for readers, like myself, expecting an extended discussion of Beckett's explicit and implicit dialogues with aesthetic philosophy, a subject in which he was extremely well versed. Here, relatively little is made of the *Three Dialogues* and *Proust*, and less of *Dante . . . Bruno . Vico . . Joyce*; nor does Albright dwell on the innumerable relevant philosophical tags which litter Beckett's work. Rather, by "aesthetics" Albright means the pragmatic production of aesthetic *effect*, and this in turn implies Beckett's concrete engagement with the technical possibilities of the media that interested him. For Albright, the specificity of Beckett is that rather than attempting to exploit to the utmost the potentialities of the different media in which he worked, he strove to emphasize their very limitations, forcing stage, radio, and television, for example, to do what each is least good at, thereby ensuring that art always "fail better," a motto which for Albright implies that according to Beckett ". . . the true failure lies not with Beckett the particular artist but with art itself, always at the mercy of decomposing and perverse media" (8). It is this positing of Beckett's desire to show each medium's "inadequacy" (1) that allows Albright somewhat narrowly to equate "aesthetics" with "technique" —"I will concentrate instead on Beckett's aesthetics, his extraordinary doting on technique" (3)—and Albright genially shows how Beckett makes the least of the resources of stage, radio, and screen.

Albright's sense of technique and medium is extremely materialist, and this explains why, if he often makes reference to the prose, no chapter of his book is devoted to it. Instead we have a provocative but not fully elaborated introductory chapter on "Beckett and Surrealism," followed by two long chapters, the first on the stage and the second on radio, tape-recording, and television, before a shorter concluding chapter on music. Albright is interesting and engaging throughout, and this well-written book is free of the torpor of so much academic writing. Beckett specialists might be annoyed by Albright's somewhat limited interest in other works of Beckett criticism, to which he makes only infrequent allusion, but he compensates with an impressive general erudition that allows Beckett to be contextualized in new ways, and causes new features of his work to stand out. This is probably most evident in the chapter on broadcasting and recording, and indeed, "technology" in the word's more limited sense seems to be the real center of Albright's interest.

Albright is at his most enlightening when outlining varying theories of radiophonic aesthetics, and his fine discussion of *The City Wears a Slouch Hat*, a radio collaboration between Kenneth Patchen and John Cage, provides an unexpected and fascinating point of comparison from which to consider Beckett's radio plays. Likewise, his exploration of the curious reluctance of Beckett's television plays to make use of differing camera angles, montage, or motion in general, is very much to the point, and well worth the extended consideration he gives it. If intuitively we might think that radio is the place for blindness, but surely not silence, and television perhaps the place for silence, but surely but not blindness, Albright shows how often Beckett works in the opposite direction, reducing the potentialities of the aural in his radio plays, dissolving the visual in his works for television.

The chapter on the stage, "Resisting Furniture," is both less programmatic and less original, as Beckett's subversion of standard theatrical protocols is well-covered terrain. Here, it is particularly the lengthy and subtle discussion of *Eleutheria* which stands out, and Albright's ability to tease out the complexity of its engagement with Ibsenite theater should go a long way to spurring further interest in this work which, if eventually marginalized by Beckett himself, was largely contemporaneous with *Waiting for Godot* and, as Albright reminds us, could very easily have been produced by Roger Blin in its stead. Albright deserves great credit for his ability to restore freshness to what are now clichés of Beckett criticism when he discusses the various forms of avant-gardist rupture Beckett effected, and his reading of Kafka's abortive dramatic projects against Beckett's early efforts in the genre revitalizes this crucial but well worn comparison. Throughout the chapter, it is the consistently high quality of Albright's incidental observations and the sharpness of his prose that take precedence over extended argument, and with its overview of all Beckett's major plays, the chapter is an excellent introductory primer to the theater.

The final chapter, on music, discusses various accompaniments to and adaptations of Beckett's work, including those by Philip Glass, Morton Feldman, and Earl Kim, while also convincingly suggesting that an allusion to Schoenberg's twelve-tone system lies behind the complicated and oft-cited musical allegory of novel-writing in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. Non-specialists such as myself might have trouble following Albright's analyses of the musical scores he includes, but his investigation of the structural complexities of Beckett's syntax in light of musical models manages the rare feat of augmenting descriptive rigor, rather than lapsing into impressionistic metaphor, as is so often the case when the "musical" qualities of language are invoked. If Albright's book fails to establish any major claims regarding the "aesthetics" of Beckett, its ability to pinpoint the intersections of technique and technology helps show how Beckett's later works remain on the cusp of contemporary artistic practice. Even in the twenty-

first century, Beckett fails best among the craftsmen of the worst.

— *Daniel Katz*

Marius Buning, Matthijs Engelberts, Sjef Houppermans, and Danièle de Ruyter-Tognotti, eds. *'Three Dialogues' Revisited. Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 13. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003. 278pp. 35€ / $44

Almost half a century after *Endgame*, Beckett's readers do not need to despair and ask themselves what is there to keep them here, if "the dialogue" is a reply they can live with. They can even take "three dialogues" for an answer. The first part of the thirteenth issue of *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* is based on selected papers of the conference "Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit" organized by Richard Lane (London, 11 November 2002). If criticism can be roughly divided into the "this-reminds-me-of" and the "evidence-suggests-that" variant, most essays in this volume correspond to the latter type, showing a special concern for the material circumstances in which Samuel Beckett's texts came into being.

Many of the contributions (by Steven Barfield, David Cunningham, Andrew Gibson, David A. Hatch, Lois Oppenheim, Jeremy Parrott, Philip Tew) draw attention to the context of the three dialogues' publication. For instance, in *transition 49* they were preceded immediately by André du Bouchet's "Three Exhibitions: Masson – Tal Coat – Miro" – an arrangement that "is designed to encourage comparison" (58), as David A. Hatch points out. Lois Oppenheim regrets that the name of Georges Duthuit is omitted in the title of the most recent edition of the text (1998 by Editions de Minuit). In the December 1949 issue of *transition*, both Beckett and Duthuit were mentioned; moreover, the correspondence and preliminary drafts show "clear evidence" (76) of Duthuit's active involvement: "Entire passages from Duthuit's letters to Beckett, in fact, were extracted to appear in print" (76). Evidently Beckett was the principal author of the text, but what the evidence suggests is that "the deletion profoundly diminished the spirit of the text, and any reduction of the intellectual fervor that set the tone of the Beckett-Duthuit exchange promotes misapprehension of its content" (76). Also the fact that this text is presented in the form of dialogues is important because it "*performatively* alludes to and even mimes psychoanalysis as therapeutic and clinical practice" (16). Steven Barfield emphasizes the often comic character of this allusion and its dramatic effects, notably in remarks such as "Perhaps that is enough for today" or "B. – (*Exit weeping*)." This comical element – both the "funny peculiar" and the "funny ha-ha" – is further explored by Philip Tew.

A surplus value of these articles is the careful examination of obscure references in the dialogues, such as the Sufist concept *al-Haqq* (examined in Andrew Gibson's essay) or the ambiguous meaning of the archaic Italian word *disfazione*, which Beckett probably first encountered in MacGreevy's translation of Valéry's *Introduction à la Méthode de Léonard de Vinci*, as David Hatch notes. According to Steven Barfield, Beckett's use of the unusual, nineteenth-century psychological term "coenaesthesia" – "the general sense of experience arising from the sum of bodily impressions, the vital sense" (*OED*) – reinforces the link between psychology and aesthetics that Beckett apparently wishes to establish, suggesting a similarity with regard to the notion of "unrepresentability" in both art and psychoanalysis, and "the need for a radically less secure relationship to the real, as a pre-condition for artistic exploration" (25). Against the background of the discussion on the (un)representability of the void, Jeremy Parrott refers to Derrida's emphasis on the homophones "nom" and "non," and investigates the importance of names in Beckett's works. The articles in this volume are interspersed with twelve samples of his so-called "concritiques" – an exercise in concrete criticism, consisting of graphic explorations of naming in Beckett's works.

The second part of this volume, "Beckett and Modern Theatre," contains selected papers (by Catherine Laws, Aleks Sierz, Paul B. Kelley, Garin Dowd, and John Deamer) from two conferences, organized in Westminster (12 January 2002) and London (22 June 2002). Several of these contributions reflect on the film versions of Beckett's plays (the RTE *Beckett on Film* project), providing, for instance, extra information from unpublished interviews with contributors to the project (Sierz); or comparing the mimicry structure of *Ohio Impromptu* to karaoke, meaning "to orchestrate" (*oke*) the "void" (*kara*). This is what the *Beckett on Film* version, with its changed ending, fails to do, argues Garin Dowd, taking into account that this play is closely linked to the occasion that determined its first performance (Stan Gontarski's invitation to write something for the 1981 conference hosted by Ohio State University), which is "impossible to repeat" (171). Traces of these specific circumstances can indeed be found in Beckett's abandoned first attempt at writing a text for the conference: "Proceed straight to the nearest campus, they said and address them. / Whom? I said. / The students, they said, and the professors. / Oh my God, I said, not that" (171). The thematization of the creative process is also dramatically presented in *Cascando*, which Paul B. Kelley's reads in comparison with Canto XXIV of *Inferno*, where Dante is encouraged by Virgil to "come on."

The third part, "Free Space," consists of five spontaneous submissions (by Jean-Pierre Ferrini, Darren Gribben, Chiara Montini, María José Carrera, and Marie-Hélène Boblet-Viart) that connect surprisingly well with some of the concerns in the first two parts. For instance, Jean-

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Pierre Ferrini demonstrates how Beckett's ante-purgatory has no capital and does not lead to Purgatory since his characters never meet their Virgil; Chiara Montini offers a plausible explanation for the narrative organization of *Watt*; and Marie-Hélène Boblet-Viart shows how the narrative is deconstructed in Beckett's next novel because it drowns in an abundance of dialogues. Thus this rich volume on "*Three Dialogues* Revisited" comes full circle, broaching more than enough issues to further the dialogue – "Keep going, can't you, keep going!" – between French and English Beckett criticism.

— *Dirk van Hulle*

Jean-Pierre Ferrini. *Dante et Beckett.* Paris: Hermann, 2003. xvii + 240 pp. 23€.

In a perceptive preface, Dante scholar and translator Jacqueline Risset writes that Jean-Pierre Ferrini has applied the skills of "un limier" [a sleuth] to the pursuit of Dantean resonances in Beckett. Dogged he may be, but Ferrini is no bloodhound. He does not pounce upon inter-textual phenomena and drag them home for proud, mystery-solving display. On the contrary, having scented them out with a keen and informed sense of discernment, he keeps his distance, always concerned to glance away from easy affiliations. This is the great strength of this book. In it, as Risset observes, the status of Dante for Beckett emerges as something akin to that of Nietzsche for Bataille: an earth-tramping companionship, with the caveat that "une *compagnie* beckettienne ne saurait être autre qu'ironique et paradoxale" (xiii).

What, then, does "Dante *and* Beckett" imply? Not conjunction, according to Ferrini in a first chapter whose title is "…Et…," but disjunction. "Eh?," to use Deleuze's pun. Why not, then, "Dante *or* Beckett"? Ferrini's answer is careful: in this study, he is not dealing with unproblematic union or coincidence. Rather, he is pointing to a principle that he regards as underlying all intertextuality in Beckett's work: quotations are "*inter*-dites" [in one sense, "forbidden"; in another, "said between"]. They loiter between one source and another, they "bruissent dans la tête" (153), murmuring like Estragon's leaves. Perhaps recourse to music is useful here, where a disjunction denotes an interval greater than a second. In other words, Dante and Beckett participate in co-resonances which imply connectivity, even intimacy, but which also differ in destination.

The destination for Dante the pilgrim is Beatrice, and heaven. *En route*, he must witness both the hapless, hopeless sufferings of Hell and the rigours of Purgatorial cleansing. And, in Dante's innovative schema, there is even a waiting-room for Purgatory, termed "Antepurgatory." For Ferrini, a more fruitful term in the context of *The Unnamable* would be "*Anti*-purgatory," in the sense of its inefficacy as a springboard to Heaven (70). Belacqua, one of Antepurgatory's inhabitants, provides Ferrini with a model that sustains him for a fruitful portion of his Beckettian pilgrimage. In chapter 3, entitled "La question Belacqua," the opportunity that Antepurgatory affords of waiting and wandering is seen as peculiarly apt in a Beckettian landscape in which transitions between lounging, lingering, moving, or halting are hedged around with uncertainty. Belacqua's *attitude* (understood in both its physical and psychological senses) provides a route-path between texts, including *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, *More Pricks Than Kicks*, *Murphy*, *Molloy*, *L'Innommable*, *Comment C'est*, *Le Dépeupleur*, *Company*, *Words and Music*, *Imagination Morte Imaginez*, *Bing* and *Sans*.

The indolence of Belacqua is a manifestation of the sin of Sloth. Of the seven so-called deadly sins, Ferrini points out that, while Pride, Envy, and Anger are marked by a love for the downfall of others, and Avarice, Greed, and Lust by a love of transient joys, Sloth alone loves good, but too slowly. This leads to an interesting consideration of the relationship between Love and Sloth, in the context of *Paroles et musique*, where Ferrini, quoting the passage, "De tous ces mouvements et ils sont légion la paresse est *l'amour* est celui qui meut le plus," speculates as to whether "la paresse est *l'amour*" amounts to a definition, or at least an association, of one by reference to the other. Ferrini does suggest that the italicisation of "*l'amour*" provides an obstacle to equivalence. If one were to extend the intertextuality further, one could point out that, in *Words*

New & Forthcoming

- Evelyne Grossman. *La défiguration: Artaud, Beckett, Michaux*. Paris: Minuit, 2004. ISBN 2-7073-1867-1 (paper) 15€.

- Ciaran Ross, *Aux frontières du vide. Beckett: une écriture sans mémoire ni désir.* Amsterdam/New York, NY:Rodopi, 2004. ISBN 90-420-1782-1 (paper) 62€ / $78.

- Uhlmann, Anthony, Sjef Houppermans, Bruno Clément (Eds.). *After Beckett / D'après Beckett.* Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2004. ISBN 90-420-1972-7 (cloth) 124€ / $155.

- James Campbell. *Exiled in Paris - Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett, & the Others on the Left Bank.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 ISBN 0-520-23441-3 (paper) $19.95.

and Music, the relevant passage "sloth is the LOVE" could not operate as equivalence, since the definite article is not used in English as it can be in French to denote abstract qualities. Posited equivalence would produce "sloth is LOVE." *Words and Music* thus suggests "LOVE" as a freshly-begun or corrected clause rather than as a continuation of the previous one. Nevertheless, syntax apart, the terms are recurrently used in close proximity with one another, and thus justify a focus on their collocation. As elsewhere in this volume, however, Ferrini wisely allows enigma to prevail over resolution in the closing words of this section.

In the last analysis, there can be no last analysis. This is, perhaps, the most significant divergence between the Beckettian and Dantean projects. *The Divine Comedy* provides a journey, albeit a taxing one, to Paradise. Ferrini points out that, if Dante's goal was to divert the gaze of the living away from their wretchedness towards an ultimate stage of celestial happiness, Beckett's appears to be the opposite: "détourner les vivants du bonheur céleste pour les conduire à la misère de cette vie" (10). Beckett, in Ferrini's reading (93), abandons us to Purgatory, since Paradise (as Beckett says of Proust) is, despite rumours and resurgences, irrevocably lost. For Beckett, it is not the love of Beatrice that animates all activity, but compassion for the damned (88). If Dante's poetic impulse is love, Ferrini ponders in a later chapter, is that of Beckett its absence (123)?

There is, of course, a worse place to be than Purgatory. Both Dante and Beckett find hope amid the teeth-gnashing, though for different reasons. For Dante, Purgatory at least offers a secure outdistancing of Hell, and an eventual prospect of Paradise. For Beckett, the sealed-off zone is Paradise, not Hell. Nevertheless, Purgatory affords a variety of modes of being. As Ferrini observes, Beckett, while making few overt references to Purgatory and Antepurgatory, pluralises and paganises the purgatorial experience. He also endows it with near-permanence: Beckett's creatures cannot be said to die, but, in Ferrini's pleasing formulation, to "languir" (145). As they do so, the question "Où maintenant?" remains unresolved, always in play (72). Meanwhile, *en attendant*, there are pleasures, even joys, to be had. For Ferrini, prime amongst these in the Beckettian context are comedy and music, the latter arguably providing"la seule manière encore pour Beckett de dialoguer avec un au-delà"(163).

Ferrini's study ends with a helpful array of annexes, including an analysis of existing scholarship on Beckett/Dante affiliations, an inventory of Dantean references/resonances in Beckett's writing, and a thematic index. *Dante et Beckett* is the fruit of a lengthy engagement with its subject. It is a reflective and persuasive *vademecum*, sustaining the Beckett/Dante linkage through the complexities that lead the author to conclude that "les chemins de Dante et de Beckett se séparent" (161). It is by turns bracing and discreet. It is thoroughly to be recommended.

— *Mary Bryden*

John Robert Keller, *Beckett and the Primacy of Love.* Manchester: Manchester University Press 2002. 224pp. £15.99

John Keller's book joins a long line of works that explore the connections between Beckett's work and psychoanalysis. However, what is distinctive is that it is the first extended work to take the approach of the contemporary object-relations school founded upon the work of Melanie Klein. For those more used to Lacanian psychoanalytic literary analysis, some aspects of this reading will seem quite unusual: Keller's emphasises on the unification of subjectivity or selfhood as an aim; a consequent disinterest in "deconstructive" linguistic and narrative strategies; a belief in the value of personal growth, change and creativity; an avocation that the exploration of feelings is more important than intellectualisation. For those unfamiliar with this approach, Keller does an extremely good job of explaining the foundations of his method in chapter 1, although by method here I mean therapeutic practice as much as theory. This is as thorough, perceptive, and informed in its analysis of Beckett's work as any literary critic might want and a rewarding book whether you are interested in psychoanalysis or not.

What is also striking is that this is the work of a practising analyst, rather than a literary critic (the book is also an important contribution to the discussions of creativity within psychoanalysis). Keller makes little use of biographical material (thereby distancing himself from earlier psychoanalytic accounts of Beckett), instead, arguing that Beckett's texts foreground a "narrative-self" (3-4). While not identical with Beckett's real self, it is nonetheless a neo-therapeutic construction that allows the working through of certain recurrent problems of the early mother-child dyadic relationship and the way it consequently informs later life. Much as Anzieu did, he sees Beckett's oeuvre as a "complex psychoanalytic dialogue" (7), a type of self-analysis through writing in the absence of formal analysis. Hence, there are numerous, often illuminating, examples drawn from clinical case work that parallel and contextualise the interpretations of Beckett's texts. (The epilogue even includes an instructive self-analysis of one of Keller's own dreams about Beckett [167-8].) The book has the unmistakable look and feel of a therapeutic encounter where Keller as therapist is trying to facilitate growth and transformation. For example, in his intriguing reading of *Murphy,* Keller compares Murphy ("not part of a secure, loving world, a feeling engendered by disconnection from a good, internal presence" [78]), with one of Klein's patients. He takes

Murphy to be striving to reconnect to the world through recognising what he really is ("a living sentient being who creates meaning in the world through a loving attitude that allows an ongoing rebirth into a safer more secure world" [80-1]) through his work in the mental hospital. Murphy's final tragedy is that he fails to recognise (he "resists" in therapeutic terms), the benefit of this process of therapeutic change that is underway: "This is his terrible misrecognition, and it reflects the tenacity of his ties to a cold, unloving mother/ world" (81).

The book claims that the value of Beckett's work (for both Beckett the person and his readers) lies in a universal core experience of being which we all share: "an enduring psychological struggle to engage the primal mother, in order to maintain a complete, enduring sense of selfhood" (1). This is what Keller means by the "primacy of love" in this (perhaps) surprisingly positive and affirmatory reading, which sees Beckett's works as moving towards the possibility of successful psychic integration and a creative reordering of what often appears as a disintegrative, internal psychic universe. In his chapter on *Godot,* he uses an interesting example of a patient, "the most overtly negative person I ever met" (144-5), who plays out in therapy his problematic relationship with a mother (his internal world). She had conditioned him to believe the world was an awful place in order to ensure his dependency on her (in fact she sounds very much like André Green's model of the "Dead Mother"). Keller comments that the patient believed that "the world is dominated by this very type of relationship—a world filled with Pozzos and Luckys, Vladimirs, and Estragons, and mothers that never quite arrive in any real or whole sense" (145). Vladimir and Estragon are thus a rather disabling, co-dependent couple (to use the jargon of pop psychology), though Keller talks of a "merged" couple. Yet, paradoxically the play interrogates such problems so keenly that it suggests movement and change. In this vein, *Godot* becomes "a play of the greatest hope, for within this realization comes the possibility of change, to live in a new, more integrated and, perhaps, better world" (167). "Godot," Keller tells us, "has *already* arrived, present in the characters' natures and relationships themselves"(167). This, then, is a therapeutic reading of *Godot* (although it is defended in textual terms) because it follows the inevitable thrust of therapy towards amelioration of suffering and the promotion of psychic change – the better world that Keller speaks of is your own internal Utopia.

Such an orientation is very much in opposition to those modern critics who value Beckett's engagement with linguistic and philosophical nihilism, or see the texts as representing a decisively *aporetic* "deconstruction" of the self. What would it mean if the world were meaningless primarily, not because of your failed production of a good internalised mother object, but because it simply and actually is? It is, perhaps, a weakness of the book that it does not engage with such accounts of Beckett. One interesting aspect of Keller's argument is that Beckett's work is, in fact, much less strange than we often intellectualise it to be, which in turn explains its intuitive, emotional popularity with audiences and readers. While the situation that Beckett's texts speak to is that of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position (17-21), this is less pathological than developmental, as it is something that we all share as part of our progressive negotiations to self-hood. Beckett's ability to represent our constant struggle to maintain contact with a good internal object becomes a primary value in his work and in fact makes him something like an analyst after the fact (24).

The tracing of the sophistication and richness of such negotiations in Beckett's work is a major achievement of the book, which could very easily have become a reductive illustration of a thesis. In the last chapter, for example, Keller considers the theme of wanting to be witnessed and the familiar Beckettian trope of subjects and their unreliable auditors/ perceivers. He suggests that behind this lies the alternative between the negative 'no-mother' who can never be mourned and the positive "dead good mother" who can become an internal loving object who offers affirmation to the subject (198-216). My only criticism (apart from the peculiar, frustrating absence of a thematic index to the book) is that much like object-relations psychoanalysis itself, the view of the world enshrined here is one in which the therapeutic subject of analysis is always vulnerable, childlike, solipsistic, and autonomous. The Other, too, is never more than an object to be incorporated into that self's internal universe. Keller's suggestion is that love is reducible to learning to become loved inside one's self, which seems to me a somewhat straitened version of the primal scene as an encounter between self and Other.

— Steven Barfield

Shimon Levy, *Samuel Beckett's Self-Referential Drama: The Sensitive Chaos.* Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Publishing, 2002. viii+187pp. £16.95

Shimon Levy's latest book is based on a reworking of his previous *Samuel Beckett's Self-Referential Drama: The Three I's*, published by Macmillan in 1990. The author himself informs us of this, and the chapter headings indicate that some of the material from the 1990 volume has made its way into the new one: the philosophical preoccupations remain the same, as chapter one of both texts ("Philosophical Notions") makes clear, and the analysis of theatrical techniques also stays, since chapter two ("The Message of the Medium – Theatrical Techniques") is substantially

identical to its 1990 counterpart ("Dramatic Practices and Theatrical Techniques"). However, what in the 1990 volume was only a rather short concluding section in chapter two, "The Poetics of Offstage," becomes a full chapter in the new book (chapter three), preceding an unchanged chapter four on the Radioplays. Chapter five, on *Film* and TV plays, and six, on *Godot*, are new (although they have appeared in print as articles), while chapter seven is a substantially revised version of what was chapter five. The Epilogue and the Introduction are new additions.

Samuel Beckett's Self-Referential Drama, a study of the offstage, of theatrical *Doppelgängers*, and of returning shadows is itself haunted by its previous incarnation, as suggested not only by the very titles of the two volumes, but also by the occasional repetitiveness and stylistic laboriousness. Having said that, the arguments are both revised and expanded upon, and this justifies the book's existence on the market. An analysis of Levy's notion of the offstage as developed in both studies can illustrate how this is the case.

In 1990 Levy argues in favour of the rediscovery of the offstage, a theatrical concept that had not received sufficient critical attention, and interestingly suggests that those playwrights for whom theatre becomes "a *mode* of existence rather than a fictitious substitute for reality" (48) have always been interested in the offstage: Beckett is certainly among them, and Levy builds a convincing case between the offstage and Beckett's interest in presenting the unpresentable. The paradoxical use of the offstage to both draw attention to and sabotage the "self-referentiality of space, movement, light, and props" (49) is well explored. From the relation between offstage and the material shape of stages to the offstage as a Robbe-Grillet-esque "anti-space," Levy's analyses are persuasive.
What I find unconvincing about Levy's argument, however, is the way in which he resorts to the figure of Beckett the playwright as a way out of the problems raised by the notion of offstage in relation to that of authority. For instance, looking at a stage play that is arguably devoted to the very notion of authority, Levy suggests that in *What Where* the "offstage is a metaphor for the space from which the playwright operates," so that the audience "is invited 'inside' the author himself. The invisible author is associated with the audience, as both exist offstage; the audience thus becomes a part of this inaccessibleness or inexhaustibility of reality" (57).

For somebody who also argues that in Beckett "offstage offers a means of communicating the sense of imperfect communication," the previous argument seems a little too optimistic (audience meets author in the dark), and, more importantly, comes dangerously close to seeing the offstage as the expression of the ineffable. In both studies (the passage is present in the 2002 volume too) very nuanced textual analyses are followed by conclusions that posit the author and his intentions in an almost transcendental "beyond," an operation that ends up reading the late drama as the expression of the author's ineffable presence, contributing to Beckett's ongoing sanctification. The 2002 volume makes clear that this is not quite Levy's intention, which is to shed "some unmystical light on the evasive self of Beckettian characters and suggest that they definitely strive to what may be called the spiritual" (63), but I am not convinced that Levy's spiritual is not at least a little bit mystical. The volume in fact expands on the 1990 point about the author in relation to the role of the actor by saying: "it is in the performative act of self-creation in Beckett's texts, when it is indeed self-referentiality performed, that the true self-reference of an actor really expresses individually the self of the author and thus extends an invitation to the audience to posit their selves too" (63). It is difficult not to read this as recuperating the offstage as the space where the author and his unfathomable intentions are mystically united to actors and audience. Moreover, the 2002 volume expands on the spiritual aspect of this process, as indicated by subheadings such as "On and Offstage – Spiritual Performative" and "Secular Rituals and Surrogate Religiosity." I see this as a limit to, rather than as an evolution of an otherwise productive idea of theatrical self-referentiality.

Theatre studies' aversion to theory has been diagnosed as an ongoing problem by Peter Buse (Peter Buse, *Drama+Theory*, Manchester UP, 2001), and it is refreshing that Levy's text attempts to resist the familiar concern that sees theory as the enemy of affect, and thus as a problem for the theatre; and yet, Levy's book does not fully manage to shed this concern. For instance, "implied author" is used to refer to Beckett as an individual preoccupied with self-expression. Levy's excellent readings of Beckett's plays (his definition of *Not I* as "one of the most striking cases in theatre history to use speech about birth as the birth of speech" is beautifully succinct, 4) do not need to rely on such a notion of the author; they could, instead, fully focus on what they keep hinting at, that is that the figure of the author (the "deviser") gives shape to the unsolved textual and theatrical problem of authority.
Throughout the text there is a tension between a rather traditional idea of authorial intentions and an attempt to question it; it is the latter, I would argue, that is critically the most fruitful. The former, instead, produces a number of puzzling assertions, such as Levy's "acceptance" that "the stage directions are the author's text in a direct way" (131). The following statement can also be read in the light of my symptomatic reading of the tension between wish to theorise and reluctance to give up the idea of the author for whom theatre expresses "a desire for knowledge and love for people" (19):

> He [Beckett] writes his own self-reflection into the play; the play becomes self-referring in relation to its writer, to itself, and to its audience; finally, the audience is invited to become self-reflexive. *Only if this cycle is complete is the playwright's intention fully realised*, and the spectators become actual co-creators of the play […]. *Taking for granted* that theatre is an independent art and *not a realization of the dramatist's textual intentions* given to an actor to "play", "interpret", "present", "represent", etc., the actor's performance is, in terms of the art, the endpoint itself. (134-5; emphasis mine)

I don't hold the addition of a more spiritual dimension in the 2002 volume as a development of the notion of offstage, but rather as a limitation of its potential (even though the section on "The Unseen and … "Unsaid" is excellent). However, I regard as a very productive development the fact that this texts expands on the analyses generated by the close attention paid to the offstage. The discussion of the roles of children is illuminating, and especially convincing in the case of the boy in *Waiting for Godot* (an issue taken up by Stephen Thomson in the Sydney 2003 Beckett symposium). The chapter reading *Godot* as "the personification *of* offstage" (117) able to draw "to himself major identity-related issues in modern day Israel" (118) is cogently argued; the comparative readings of performances and debates generated by them throughout the years are revealing, and the discussion on translation helpful and informative (Godot was at one point translated as Mar-El, "Mr God," 120).

The last chapter, which discusses the writings of six actresses who have worked throughout the years with Levy himself, closely analyses their reactions to *Not I*. The texts are interesting, sometimes quirky, and even funny (especially Angelina Gazques's description of the fly entering her mouth while performing). From the comments of Hege and Geller in particular, Levy is able to generate a fruitful discussion of how Beckett's theatre questions and resists the idea of "expression" as revelation of personality and of its consequences in performance. Levy's intellectually-stimulating book is definitely worth reading in order to rethink many important issues in Beckett, such as the roles of author and audience, the dangers of the ineffable, and the interaction of theory and drama.

— Daniela Caselli

Presidential Message

In this Fall issue I would like to take the opportunity of welcoming *The Beckett Circle's* new book review editor, Dr. Derval Tubridy. Derval is a lecturer in the Department of English and Comparative Literature and in the Department of Visual Culture at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Author of *Thomas Kinsella: The Peppercanister Poems* (2001), she has also published on Beckett's prose and drama, with a particular interest in the visual arts and philosophy of language. In welcoming Derval, we must also, sadly, say goodbye to the previous review editor, Lance Butler, who has performed the task with characteristic style and good humour. The Society is indebted to him for his hard work.

Amid changes of personnel, one element remains a constant feature: namely, the annual Beckett Society sessions at the MLA Convention, to be held this year in Philadelphia. This year's sessions promise to be fascinating as well as very different from one another. I am delighted to report that Edward Albee responded to my invitation to be Respondent to the panels, and we look forward to welcoming him and hearing his reflections on the papers given. The line-up is as follows:

Composer Paul Rhys on Samuel Beckett and Musical Composition

Wednesday, 29 December, 1:45 to 3 pm, 203-B, Convention Center

Presiding: Mary Bryden; Respondent: Edward Albee.

Paul Rhys: "On Samuel Beckett and Musical Composition."

"Know Happiness": Beckett and Joy

Thursday, 30 December, 12 noon to 1:15 pm, 401-403, Philadelphia Marriott

Presiding: Angela Moorjani; Respondent: Edward Albee

1. "Joy or Night: Beckett's Untimely Rocky Voice." John Paul Riquelme;
2. "'We Do It to Have Fun Together': Beckett Directing in Germany." Marion Fries-Dieckmann;
3. "Happiness and Humor in Beckett." Stéphane Pillet.

I look forward to seeing Beckett Society members there, potential, new, longstanding, or lapsed!

Finally, as my term of office as President comes to an end, I must thank our board for their friendship and support. It has been a privilege to work alongside them. Toby Zinman is also about to step down, and grateful thanks are extended to her for her four-year stint on the Board. Being president necessitates frequent contact with the editor of the *Circle*, and it has been a tremendous bonus to know this to be in the capable hands of Thomas Cousineau, who performs his task with such commitment and eye for detail. Next year, Enoch Brater will be stepping into my shoes. He will, I am sure, be an excellent president, and I wish him all the very best as he takes on this rôle.

— Mary Bryden

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Please note that all materials for the Spring 2005 issue must be received by March 1, for the Fall 2005 issue by September 1.

Thank You

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THE SAMUEL BECKETT SOCIETY

The Samuel Beckett Society is an international organization of scholars, students, directors, actors and others who share an interest in the work of Samuel Beckett. Its officers (and their terms) are Mary Bryden (2004), President; Executive Board: Enoch Brater (2006), Thomas Cousineau (Newsletter Editor), Anna McMullan (2006), Toby Zinman (2004). The Honorary Trustees are Edward Beckett, John Calder, Ruby Cohn, Raymond Federman, John Fletcher, James Knowlson, and Barney Rosset.

The Society provides opportunities for members to meet and exchange information. Membership includes subscription to *The Beckett Circle*, the biannual newsletter of the Society. The annual meeting of the Society's Executive Board is held during the MLA Annual Convention. Individual membership £15.00 (sterling) or $20.00 (US Dollars) per year, £25.00 or $35.00 for two years. Library membership £20.00 or $25.00 per year. Student membership £10.00 or $15.00 per year. Donations over and above the membership fee are welcome and are tax deductible.

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