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

Endgame at the Irish Repertory Theatre

Endgame, directed by Charlotte Moore at the Irish Repertory Theatre, is an entirely faithful rendering of Beckett's play; at the same time, it reminds me of V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko's long-running productions of Chekhov's plays at the Moscow Art Theatre. Along with similarities in the production style, one notices the producer's undoubted love of the playwright and her indispensable respect for the original directions for staging the play. It is, as well, a gorgeous and a highly professional ensemble performance, with Tony Roberts (Hamm), Adam Heller (Clov), Alvin Epstein (Nagg), and Kathryn Grody (Nell). One might expect a production of a Beckett play at the Irish Repertory Theatre in New York City to be very "Irish"; this one, however, is not particularly Irish, or even "New York," but, rather, universal, as any really good performance should be.

There was something very special about the "classic" Moscow Art Theatre productions that were presented some twenty years ago, when the last members of the Stanislavski circle were still alive. Any one of the so-called "Moscow Art Theater old men" became the center of the performance even if he played only a very small part in the play, such as Firs in *The Cherry Orchard*. In the Irish Rep production of *Endgame* such a center is surely Alvin Epstein in the role of Nagg. Each of his appearances on stage – limited to his head being raised over the lid of the dustbin in this case – attracted the complete attention of the audience. His very presence made his character as central a player in this chess game as Hamm and Clov.

Like the MAT old men – who were all "born for Chekhov" (even if they performed in plays by other playwrights) -- Alvin Epstein looks as though he were born for Beckett. Even audience members who didn't know that he was the first American Lucky, or that he played Clov in the American premiere of *Endgame*, had to recognize his kinship with the play. Although his character speaks relatively few words, Mr. Epstein used his amazingly expressive face to make Nagg absolutely unforgettable as well as really likeable. Actually, all the characters in Charlotte Moore's production (and in Linda Fisher's costumes) are very attractive, and the only one of them who looked unappealing was a rather naturalistic – even mangy – toy dog, "a kind of Pomeranian." It seemed here to be more a very old second-hand toy than a hand-made one.

Photo credit: Carol Rosegg

Tony Roberts plays Hamm in Charlotte Moore's production of *Endgame*.

The three generations of the "family" in this performance are clearly distinguished from each other, even with respect to the color of their costumes. The old couple is clean and well-kept, as nice as can be, like one's own grand-parents. Tony Roberts' Hamm is very handsome and monumental, perhaps even too monumental, more like King Lear than usual. Mr. Roberts' physical charisma isn't in the least diminished by his faded uniform of a retired general (with awards on his dressing-gown)

In This Issue:

Spring 2005
Volume 28
No. 1

or even by the mangy toy dog which he plays with. His costume is a mixture of different times and battles, and his shoes are unexpectedly red. His speeches sound very prophetic: in this production, Hamm definitely has the moral right to consider Clov as his (or somebody's) prodigal son and to teach and take care of him. As for Clov, he is fussy and busy as well as being, interestingly, the only greyish character in this performance. His costume, which resembles a convict's uniform, echoes the prison-like space that he shares with the fleas and rats.

All three generations—mildly tragic as they are—provoke the audience's pity even if they do not produce a catharsis. The comic overtones of their predicament differ greatly with each character: Clov's movements are quite farcical, indeed; Nagg and Nell offer a rather Dickensian kind of humor (Kathryn Grody's Nell is especially good in her elegiac intonations); only Tony Roberts' Hamm is tragicomic in the proper sense of the word. His enthroned character looks very much like the last vestige of a humanity that has entered the final phase of its endgame.

— Elena Dotsenko

Composer David J. and director David Dowling strike an impromptu pose during a discussion of *Voices in the Dark*.

Voices in The Dark: Three Plays by Samuel Beckett

If anyone has made a case for grouping *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Cascando*, and *Ohio Impromptu* as chamber pieces, it is Devanaughn Theatre, a young company that operates out of the Piano Factory, a tiny black box theater in Boston's South End. Spectators sit on risers almost literally on top of the actors; a stray cough has as much resonance as any onstage sound. The meticulous care given to the aural and visual dynamics by director David J. Dowling resulted in a fittingly ghostly trio.

A veteran Boston director now based in L.A., Dowling had recently directed *Endgame* for Boston's Theatre Cooperative. For *Voices in the Dark*, he used James Knowlson's revised text of *Krapp's Last Tape*, which incorporates many refinements made by Beckett in production. Gone were Krapp's "clownish" appearance and song. The opening mime was streamlined (no keys, fewer looks at watch), and Krapp's fetishistic cradling of the machine became more pronounced. Nipping back and forth to his curtained alcove for tape recorder and tapes (another refinement), George Saulnier III was a disconcertingly spry Krapp, even as his Irish brogue gave Krapp a hint of blarney. Initially I found Saulnier's performance a trifle Hammy (ghosting his previous role for Dowling, perhaps?), but the actor discovered emotional shading as Krapp's life unwound. This was the most claustrophobically intimate production that I have ever seen; Anita Fuchs's setting consisted of two flats, folded in a V behind Krapp's desk and painted with abstract lines and rectangles, together with a third flat suspended at an angle overhead. Greg Jutkiewicz's chiaroscuro lighting and Krapp's prerecorded, amplified voice seemed to emanate from his overhead lamp and tape recorder respectively. The click-click of spinning reels added an eerie dimension, as did a ghostly red light on the machine once the dark closed in on Krapp.

The radio play *Cascando* took place in darkness. The text, spoken live by Opener (Brian Quint) and Voice (Jason Myatt), was amplified from the control booth and accompanied by a score for slinky, ass's jawbone, and cello specially composed by avant-garde art-rocker David J. (formerly of the British bands Bauhaus and Love and Rockets). The repetitive score was uncannily effective: its spiraling, chromatic cello lines played by Joyce Rooks suggested a failed attempt to escape the confines of minimalist repetition, while the percussive slinky and jaw bone provided an endlessly protracted death-rattle. The *Boston Phoenix* (Feb. 11-17 issue) reported: "In a talkback following the February 4 performance, the composer sounded positively Beckettian when he admitted he was thinking of 'an M. C. Escher staircase that never ends' and that his urge was both 'wanting to create—and wanting to be done with it.'" Shot through with flashes of paranoia, Opener's fussiness contrasted nicely with an ingratiating and breathless Voice, each actor blending seamlessly with the prerecorded instruments. A CD of David J.'s music, which is currently in the works, will allow this haunting score to grace further productions.

Only in *Ohio Impromptu* did the theater's miniaturized scale work to slight disadvantage, as the proximity of actors to audience made this austere play incongruously cozy. Listener (Brian Quint) and Reader (Jason Myatt) sat nearly touching at a small wooden table barely large enough for the requisite black hat and "worn volume." Even from the back row, I could make out the text in Reader's volume, and the garish wigs and make-up made Reader and Listener appear even more tamarin-like than usual. Myatt delivered his lines clearly, although his voice lacked resonance; I would have liked to compare him with Brian Quint as Reader (the two actors switch roles

nightly). Dowling's magnified stage image led me to ponder such minutiae as why one actor's fingers were bent and the other's straight. The final tableau – in which, for a first and only time, the two men raise their eyes in mutual acknowledgment -- registered powerfully.

Dowling's program notes explain that "each of tonight's plays manage[s] to express a frustration with the creative process, of which Beckett often spoke. The inability to express together with the compulsion to do so. Krapp, the failed writer who seems to have washed his hands of his 'opus . . . magnum' but still wonders if a 'last effort' is worthwhile, bears some resemblance to *Cascando*'s Opener, who assures us that the creative impulse is not his own, then gets swept up in the act of creation. While the 'sad tale' related in *Ohio Impromptu* is not one of creative frustration, the authorial voice is loud and clear in the final moments: 'Nothing is left to tell' could be a direct response to the scholars who requested he contribute this piece to their celebration of his work." The rest, in other words, is silence.

— Andrew Sofer

Pas Moi at Paris-Villette

Last December, the Théâtre Paris-Villette presented a boldly unorthodox production of *Pas Moi* directed by Nathalie Kourouma, daughter of the Ivory Coast novelist Ahmadou Kourouma. Instead of the usual eleven minutes, this production lasted for a full forty-five minutes, during which Muriel Piquart, as Mouth, fought her losing battle with silence perched in full view of the audience on a high podium, from which she delivered her rhapsodic soliloquy unhurriedly, in a hypnotically muted voice. While much of the play's visual power usually depends upon the obscene image of the disembodied mouth, Eric Soyer's remarkably mobile lighting created an equally disturbing effect by truncating Mouth's face, which was never fully lit, and sculpting eerie shapes – a larynx, perhaps? – in the darkness that enshrined her. Mamadou Ottis Ba, dressed as a desert-dwelling Tuareg, plays an intent Auditor, moving his lips silently as he listens to Mouth, his silence poignantly bound to her logorrhoea, his irretrievable loss to hers. For all the liberties it takes with Beckett's original stage directions, Nathalie Kourouma's subtle production successfully captured the essence of Beckett's play. The following interview with her took place at the Théâtre de la Villette on December 14, 2004, following the play's final performance.

"The text is not delivered slowly in order to be understood, but in order to make room for the silence."

Alexandra Poulain: In your production of *Pas Moi*, Mouth is fully visible: how did you happen to make that choice?

Nathalie Kourouma: At first I thought of showing the mouth, and sometimes the inside of it, on a large screen, as a backdrop to the play, but Irène Lindon was opposed to that idea, and now I can see why. I feel that Beckett was trying to reach some sort of theatrical limit, and adding another medium would have distorted the play. But I never considered lighting only the mouth. I felt that this would have created a close-up, as in the cinema. In film, if you want to indicate a mouth, you show one – although even there, the filmmakers of the Nouvelle Vague have shown that to represent one thing you can actually show something else. Besides, it is my personal feeling that Beckett is very Spinozian, and that it wouldn't be going against the grain of the play to conceive of Mouth as a body who imagines that she is only a mouth. If you show only the mouth, then you suggest that there is a body which cannot be shown, and I didn't want that. She is the one who says that she is only a mouth.

AP: Another striking difference is the pacing of the play. Usually the monologue is spoken rapidly, which creates a very oppressive effect. In your production, however, one can actually hear the words very distinctly.

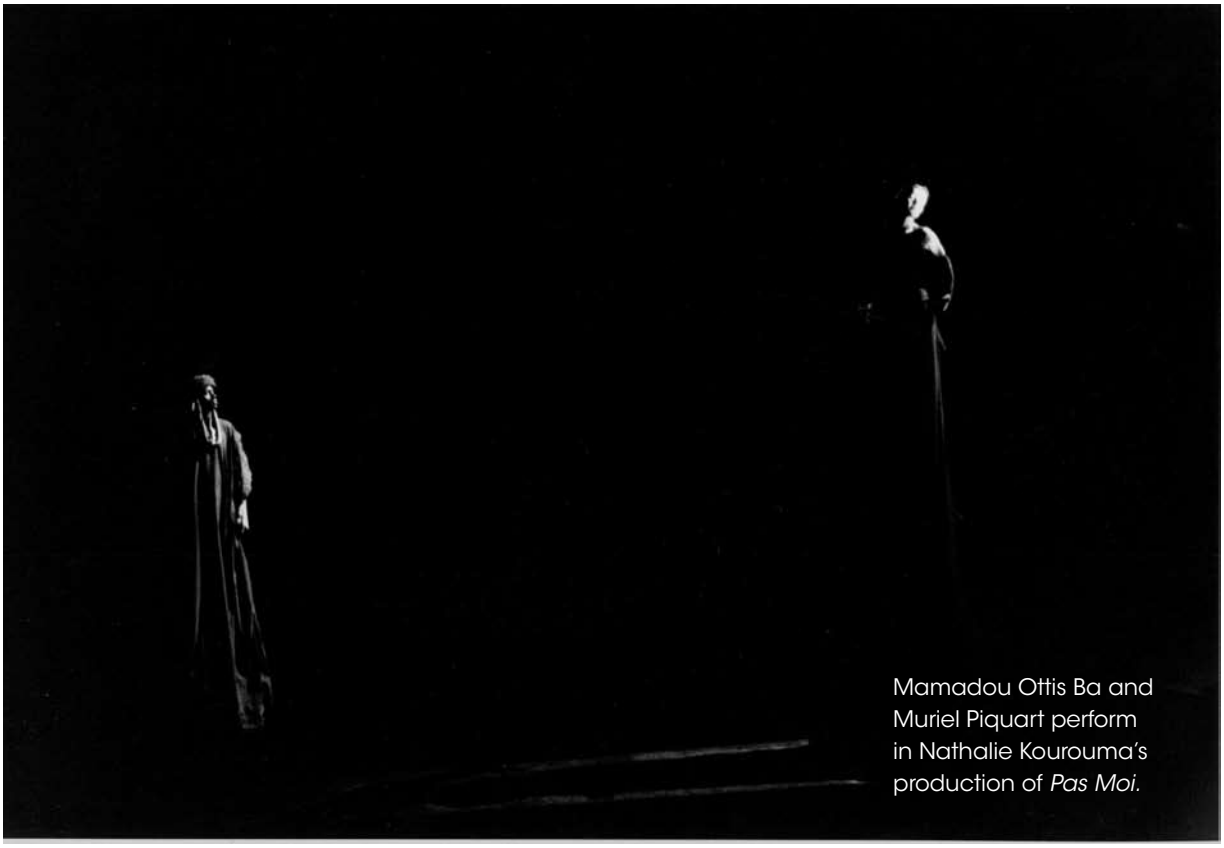
NK: Beckett says something quite beautiful in *Three Dialogues* about an art that recognizes that "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." In his letter to Alex Kaun, he describes the "sound surface" of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony as "nothing but a path of sounds suspended in giddy heights, linking unfathomable abysses of silence." This play suggests that silence does not occur only after the words are spoken, but that it also lies between the words. I wanted the lights to be changing continually, so that there would never be a fixed image. In this way, silence is experienced as lying not only between the words but between the visual images as well. The text is not delivered slowly in order to be understood, but in order to make room for the silence. Muriel Piquart, a magnificent actress, enjoys the slow pacing and knows how to let emotion grow in the silence – although the silence never becomes merely psychological.

AP: How did you envisage the role of Auditor?

NK. I first thought of Simone Weil, who said that absolute unhappiness occurs when you can't say "I." I also thought of Robert Antelme, who said that those who survived the Nazi camps were those who were able to think that the SS were still human beings. I feel that Auditor is waiting, waiting for her to say "I" so that he might become a human being; if she can say "I," then he can retrieve his own humanity by becoming her interlocutor

I also had in mind Emmanuel Lévinas, who says that speech creates an abyss, a desert between people, which is why I wanted Auditor to be a desert dweller. He is also the stranger, the Other, and I wanted to preclude any possibility of identification with him. I read somewhere

that the figure of Auditor was partly inspired by a djellaba-clad woman whom Beckett had observed in Morocco. Today, in France, a djellaba no longer signals otherness; there are probably some five to ten percent of the population who wear one. A desert dweller, however, is still capable of signifying otherness. In Africa, you can see many people who are merely waiting and who themselves become this act of waiting for nothing. I also feel that Africa itself is waiting to be able to say "I"; Ireland in the 1970s was perhaps in a similar situation. I also had in mind Deleuze's discussion of "minor literature" in his *Kafka*. He refers to Joyce and Beckett as having created minor literatures in two different ways: Joyce by reterritorializing language and Beckett by drying it up.



Mamadou Ottis Ba and Muriel Piquart perform in Nathalie Kourouma's production of *Pas Moi*.

AP: In your production, Auditor moves his lips, as though he were miming Mouth's lines while she speaks them; their eyes, however, never meet.
NK: He moves his lips without speaking aloud because I think he already knows everything she is going to say; he is waiting for her to say "I," but he knows that when she does, it will be over for him because he exists only in this waiting. Some spectators felt that he was giving her air to breathe, which is a beautiful idea. Yet there can be no meeting; there is only this speech that creates a desert between them. Beckett says that Auditor's gesture, which he performs four times, "lessens with each recurrence," which I take as a sign that there is no hope. He knows beforehand that she will never make it: she will never say "I." Concerning his gesture, I also thought about Blanchot's supplicant, whose imploring gesture tells the person to whom it is addressed that the supplicant's fate depends entirely on the outcome of his supplication.

AP: Mouth stands on a high podium and wears a long dress that reaches down to the floor, which reminded me of Bob Wilson's Queen of the Night in his production of the *Magic Flute*, and also of *Happy Days*.

NK: Yes, we did have those references in mind. At one point, we thought of having a root coming out of the floor and twining round her dress, but that was difficult to achieve technically, so we replaced it with a beam of light that comes up along her dress. This production owes a lot to Eric Soyer, who designed both the set and the lighting.

AP: At times, Mouth's soliloquy is punctuated by the sound of a music-box.
NK: One of the first things she says is that she was an abandoned child, "parents unknown," so it is as if she had a beginning but no origin, and she can't say "I" because she has no personal history. Beckett himself was born in April, like Mouth, and he used to say that birth is a trap, that being born was the worst thing that ever happened to him. The music-box is not an object from her own childhood in the literal, psychological sense, but it has to do with origins, with going back to the origins of speech and before; it provides the very rhythm of her speech.

AP: What do you make of "the buzzing" to which she repeatedly refers in her monologue?
NK: To me this buzzing is "doxa, " received thought or opinion. She is trying to say "I" but is prevented each time by the thought that she is an abandoned child (which might not even be true). So when she fails to speak in her own name, she simply says "the buzzing," and the text comes out mechanically, repeating itself and saying nothing about who she really is.

— Translated by Alexandra Poulain

E. M. Cioran on Beckett

Readers of *The Beckett Circle* are likely to be familiar with the tribute to Beckett that appears in *Exercises d'admiration* by the Romanian-born French philosopher and aphorist E. M. Cioran. According to Anthony Cronin, the two men met for the first time in the Closerie des Lilas in 1961. James Knowlson reports that, although initially quite friendly with Cioran, Beckett came to feel eventually that their outlooks on life had less in common than he had originally thought. For his part, Cioran felt a deep and lasting affinity with Beckett. Scattered throughout the one thousand pages of his *Cahiers 1957-1972* are many intriguing remarks about both the man and his work, of which the following are among the more memorable:

E.M. Cioran sits in the Luxembourg Gardens, October 1990.

9 September 1968. The other day I noticed Beckett along one of the footpaths in the Luxembourg Gardens, reading a newspaper in a way that reminded me of one of his characters. He was seated in a chair, lost in thought, as he usually is. He looked rather unwell. I didn't dare approach him. What would I say? I like him so much but it's better that we not speak. He is so *discreet*! Conversation is a form of play-acting that requires a certain lack of restraint. It's a game which Beckett wasn't made for. Everything about him bespeaks a silent monologue.

21 April 1969. Beckett wrote to me about my book, *Démiurge*, "In your ruins I find shelter."

23 October 1969. Samuel Beckett. The Nobel Prize. What a humiliation for such a proud man. The sadness of being understood!

Beckett or the anti-Zarathustra.

The post-humanity vision (as we say "post-Christianity")

Beckett or the apotheosis of the subhuman.

12 December 1969. Last night I went to see Yeats's *The Shadowy Waters*. The theater was empty. Today's youth cannot appreciate a play that is so fundamentally, so totally poetic. And I understand why. There has to be at least a certain degree of cynicism to counteract poetic excess; otherwise, one runs the risk of falling into the insipid, the childish, the sublime, or the anemic. Every time that Beckett risks falling into lyricism or metaphysics, he has his characters erupt in hiccups or other fits; this abrupt shift, which allows the character to get a grip on himself, could not be more fortunate or more contemporary. Yeats is a great poet, but his theater is only very good Maeterlinck.

20 February 1970. Spent an evening with the Becketts. Sam was well and even high-spirited. He told me that he started writing plays by chance, because he needed to relax after writing his novels. He didn't think that what he thought of as a distraction or an experiment would acquire such importance. He added, to be sure, that playwriting involves numerous challenges, because you must *restrain yourself*, which had appealed to him after the great liberty, the arbitrary and limitless freedom of the novel. The theater imposes conventions, while the novel no longer requires obedience to any.

18 May 1970. At a rehearsal of *La dernière bande*, when I said to Mme. B that Sam was truly despairing and that I was surprised that he was able to continue, to "live," etc., she replied, "There's another side to him."

This answer applies, on a lesser scale to be sure, to myself as well.

13 June 1970. Evening with Suzanne B. If I understood correctly, Sam was displeased with the article that I had written on him. It wasn't, in fact, a very good one. But this didn't stop me from feeling chagrined, as though I had been rejected. I returned home tired and in despair.

I spoke on the phone with Paul Valet about my article on Beckett. We agreed that Nietzsche's superman was ridiculous (because theatrical), while Beckett's characters never are.

Beckett's characters do not live in the tragic but in the incurable.

It's not tragedy, but misery.

21 August 1970. Last night, Suzanne B. told me that Sam wasted a ridiculous amount of time with second-rate people, whom he helped with their problems. When I asked where this peculiar solicitude could have come from, she told me that it was from his mother, who loved to comfort the sick and to care for hopeless wretches, but who turned away from them when they had recovered or were out of trouble.

20 November 1970. Splendid, divine morning in the Luxembourg Gardens. Watching people as they came and went, I said to myself that we the living (the living!) walk this earth only for a brief time. Instead of looking at the faces of passers-by, I looked at their feet, and they all became for me only their footsteps, which went in every direction, making a disorderly dance not worth lingering on. While thinking of this, I looked up and saw Beckett, this exquisite man whose mere presence has something so salutary about it. The operation on his cataract, performed on just one eye for now, was a great success. He's beginning to see in the distance, which he hadn't been able to do until now. "I'll end up by becoming an extrovert," he told me. "It will be up to your future commentators to explain why," I replied.

— Translated by Thomas Cousineau

ESSAYS

The Paper Trap: Beckett's Manuscripts and Their Publication

It was too tempting and really daunting. My friend Chuck Rossman forced the issue when I was in Austin for a conference by suggesting that I look at the *Watt* mss. Having worn out one set of eyes on the Joyce manuscripts, I was not about to subject myself to Beckett's hand. Still, the doodles were too marvelously varied and even accomplished, too personal and revealing. I decided to compromise, to write up descriptions of some of the best. But I made a fatal mistake when I ordered reproductions not only of images but also of surrounding text. Then, in the privacy of my study, and with great difficulty, I tried to read some text and was surprised to see how very different it was from what I had expected.

My study of the doodles netted a hastily produced essay published first in English, and later, a French version revised after further contact with the mss in Texas. It was that experience that led to the approach followed in my third essay. My growing awareness of the curious ur-*Watt* process and the interrelatedness of text and doodle substituted curiosity and excitement for fear. Beckett's friend and executor, Jérôme Lindon, gave me permission to Xerox the collection, warning me that I should tell no one I had it. Reluctantly, inevitably, a study of one section led me to what is now a book-length study of the whole development as revealed (or concealed?) in the notebooks and typescripts.

There are plenty of reasons besides the elaborate and accomplished doodles to get excited about the *Watt* mss. On the one hand, they clarify the transition between the pre- and the postwar modes, introducing among other things the music hall pair, the dualogue, and the firming up of the "God" figure. On the other, the book's early stages testify to Beckett's reuse of personae, tricks, and details from *Murphy*. Beyond that, the mss show how he managed gradually through trial and error to establish the Watt personae, the setting, and the plot development, such as it is. Most striking perhaps is the way the original situation was eventually subverted or rather inverted: how the ineffectual pantaloon-like Mr Quin morphed into the Godlike absence of Mr Knott; how the gay and garrulous "We" became the stoic Watt; how broad farce turned into mad pathos. The manuscripts give us a detailed record of each step along the way and enable us to rationalize the overall development.

That may perhaps explain my own fascination, that and the fact that I have also had the time to pursue my quest for insights into the creative process against the background of Beckett's situation in wartime Paris and Roussillon. It may begin to explain my fond hope eventually to publish the *Watt* archive along with my book on the ms evolution. It does not explain a higher ambition to publish, not only those six notebooks and three typed stages, but the entire corpus of Beckett manuscripts, which is now available only to scholars who have the time and funds to travel to the archives.

This more ambitious plan dates back to my encounter with Edward Beckett at the Sydney symposium. Having previously had trouble getting permission from the estate for modest publication projects, I expected resistance. But it soon became clear that Edward Beckett was more scholarship-friendly than I had thought. Having gotten his backing for my work on *Watt*, I decided to ask for permission for the publication of the whole archive. After a discussion of the pros and cons, he agreed to consider the project, cautioning me to keep it quiet for a while.

The next day he was more forthcoming, and I hastened to take advantage of the confluence of experts in Sydney to set up a committee. That put in motion a process currently, hopefully only temporarily, on hold. Let me explain where I was coming from and why I believe that the larger project is both practicable and worthy. For over half a century I have been working on Joyce's mss for *Finnegans Wake*, trying to understand the pattern of creative moves on both the micro and the macro levels of the last century's greatest writer. To that end I published my *First-Draft Version* in 1963, a labor of love. At the time, I couldn't see how that immense trove of manuscripts could ever be published for closer study by other scholars.

As it happened, fifteen years after its publication, my book helped justify a quixotic project underwritten by the *Ulysses*-obsessed Gavin Borden. In the late 60s I was asked by Walton Litz to help edit a facsimile edition of what eventually became the sixty-three volume *James Joyce Archive*, the first of its kind for modern literature. Over the years, the *JJA* has, in turn, spawned a growing international movement, gaining followers and respectability far beyond the Joyce community as an adjunct to a field since baptized "genetic criticism" by the French researcher, Louis Hay.

Beckett scholars have for some time been exploiting the various caches, producing useful transcriptions and inspiring a growing interest in manuscript studies, if not necessarily in full-blown genetic criticism. Scholars are making the pilgrimages, but few if any have had the time needed to fully exploit the resources. The next necessary step is to make the archive available to the community, giving scholars more exposure and giving more scholars access to these powerful tools.

When it comes to difficult manuscripts where tiny details can be of considerable significance, facsimiles are just that, and the library hoards remain the ultimate scholarly

source. My own experience teaches me that I can fill in details only when confronting the documents themselves. But think of the advantages of having ready access to the record in the shape of carefully edited and expertly reproduced visual clues to authorial procedures.

The experience of Garland Publishing in the 70s and, more recently, that of the Belgian firm Brepols (publisher of a reproduction-assisted annotated transcription of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* notebooks) suggests that publication of a Beckett archive is feasible as well as desirable. A step toward that goal in the absence of a publisher willing to take on the larger project would be an edition of the *Watt* materials that could complement my study of the novel's evolution. How better to showcase the wealth of materials awaiting fuller study?

— *David Hayman*

"We Do It to Have Fun Together": Beckett Directing in Germany

Early in 1966 Beckett was asked to accept a fee for his forthcoming production of *Eh Joe* for Süddeutscher Rundfunk, Stuttgart. Reinhart Müller-Freienfels, who was then responsible for television plays, reports that Beckett just smiled and said dismissively, "We do it to have fun together!" (405). This attitude seems to apply to all the directorial work that Beckett did in Germany, whether for the Süddeutscher Rundfunk or for the Schiller-Theater in Berlin. This is even more remarkable since -- always scrupulously careful about text, stage directions, and images -- he never seems to have been a very easy-going consultant for the staging of his plays. The joy that Beckett felt in his work for German theater and broadcasting seems to have arisen from the artistic freedom that those institutions offered to him. This created an atmosphere of "entspannte Spannung," or relaxed tension, as the assistant Walter Asmus remarked during the 1975 production of *Waiting for Godot* ("Godot 1975" 128). Furthermore, his work on the German translation for these productions – in which he comes up with unusual, often witty solutions – seemed to reinforce the joy that Beckett felt in these stagings of his plays. As I have shown elsewhere, Beckett himself had an excellent command of German and took a strong interest in the German versions of his works. This is also clear from his long-standing professional relationship with Elmar Tophoven, his German translator.

The cultural landscape of Germany after the murder or forced emigration of intellectuals that occurred under the National Socialist regime could be described as a wasteland. The young republic was eager to return to the world of international art and culture, and it did so by encouraging avant-garde artists. This is what led Boleslaw Barlog, director of the Schlosspark-Theater at Berlin and Reinhart Müller-Freienfels at Süddeutscher Rundfunk to invite Beckett, in the mid 1960s, to direct his own plays in Germany. Both men were open to the experiments that Beckett had in mind, and the whole team was concerned about implementing his ideas as precisely as possible. When Beckett came to London in 1976 to advise Donald McWhinnie on the BBC production of *Ghost Trio*, just after he had directed *That Time* and *Footfalls* in Berlin, he felt quite annoyed by the incessant tea-breaks and the noisy chat of technicians, as James Knowlson tells us in his biography. Beckett whispered to him, "It was not like that at all in Germany. There, you felt that everyone was personally involved" (632). The German actors resisted their tendency to attach metaphysical meanings to their roles and to see the plays as what Beckett called called "reine Spielvorlage" during rehearsals for *Endgame* in 1967.

Beckett took the actors' own suggestions for the text or certain movements seriously and thereby gave them a feeling of having a say in their roles. Ernst Schröder, who played Hamm in Beckett's first production at Berlin, recalled that, when he asked Beckett if Hamm did not have a guilty conscience, "He looked at me with a mischievous face, a bit astonished, but obviously happy and said softly, 'Do you think so?' I do not know any author or director who would have reacted this way" ("Samuel Beckett als Regisseur" 82f.). Beckett's appreciation of the actors' willing cooperation even led him to step in for the actress playing Winnie during a rehearsal of *Happy Days*, four years later. Alfred Hübner reports that, when asked whether he would not rather leave this to his assistant, he replied that, in fact, it gave him great pleasure. When Eva-Katharina Schulz expressed her confusion about when to put away her toothbrush, Beckett admitted with a smile that he had forgotten to indicate this detail in the directions. Quite astonishing for a perfectionist like himself! Obviously, he was eager to dispel the aura that surrounded him. One day, in the midst of intense rehearsals with the actor who was playing Willie, he asked for a break at noon; the next phase would be so difficult that he could not see himself explaining it to the actor without having a beer.

The relaxed atmosphere also led to linguistic experiments with the scripts. Krapp's comment on the whore Fanny -- "Couldn't do much, but I suppose better than a kick in the crutch" -- was, for example, initially rendered literally as "besser als ein Fußtritt zwischen die Beine." In Berlin, however, Beckett replaced this image with "besser als zwischen Daumen und Zeigefinger." This is an allu-

sion to Krapp's sexual satisfaction by masturbation, with the tape recorder as a masturbatory aid. While the initial effect is comic, this rendering points all the more to Krapp's loneliness. Beckett later incorporated the same image in the French translation and even in the English original: "better than between finger and thumb." A more outright joke is to be found in the script of *Waiting for Godot*. When Vladimir and Estragon keep swearing at each other in the second act, Estragon finishes off with: "Oberforstinspektor!" (In the English version, it is "Crritic!"; the French original does not have this exchange of insults at all). "Oberforstinspektor" means "Head forest inspector"; it is an ironic allusion to authority and particularly to the German love of overly precise descriptions of social rank.

> "One day, in the midst of intense rehearsals with the actor who was playing Willie, he asked for a break at noon; the next phase would be so difficult that he could not see himself explaining it to the actor without having a beer."

Beckett cared very much about echoing effects in general. The German Vladimir, for instance, offers a third possibility for the colour of Godot's beard: "Blond oder ... *er zögert* ... schwarz ... oder rot?" This serves as an echo of the brothel joke, in which the Englishman has the same three colour options in choosing a prostitute, thus creating a parallel that humorously deprives Godot of his mystique. Another example of the importance of sound effects is to be found in *Play*. Woman 2 says of Woman 1, "Her photographs were kind to her." The Berlin script has the adjective "schmeichlerisch" (which means "flattering"). "Schmeichlerisch," however, is much less common in German than "schmeichelhaft." Walter Asmus observed that when Sybille Gilles, who played Woman 2, pointed this out to Beckett during rehearsals in 1978, he replied cunningly, "I am not at all bothered by the uncommon" ("Beckett inszeniert sein *Spiel*" 6). The reason why he opted for "schmeichlerisch" instead of "schmeichelhaft" is obvious: the initial and terminal "sch" has an onomatopoetic quality that stresses the pejorative connotations of the word itself

Beckett also wanted to keep the humor of his original text and to create additional humor in German. After the first discussion of the script of *Eh Joe*, the assistant at SDR anxiously remarked that the audience might laugh at some lines. According to Müller-Freienfels, Beckett was astonished and said, emphatically, "Well, I hope so!" (407). As in *Krapp's Last Tape*, Beckett makes use of sexual connotations wherever possible. After camera move 3, the voice warns, "Watch yourself you don't run short," which becomes in German "Paß auf, daß du nicht zu kurz kommst, Joe." The literal meaning is exactly the same; "Kommen," like "to come," however, also means to have an orgasm.

When Beckett came to Berlin, a critic wanted to know what theatre meant for him. His well-known answer, documented by Michael Haerdter, was "For me theater is first of all a relaxation from work on fiction. We are dealing with a definite space and with people in this space. That's relaxing." The critic asked, "Directing too?", whereupon Beckett laughed. "No, not very, it's exhausting" (96). So directing was not all fun; recollections of rehearsals by his assistants clearly indicate the hard, indeed exhausting work of everybody involved. Despite the suggestion of "no happiness" implied by this panel's title, however, both joy and happiness are indeed to be found in the directorial work that Beckett did in Germany.

At the beginning of his famous 1937 German letter to Axel Kaun, Beckett discusses the verse of the German poet Joachim Ringelnatz (1883-1934), which he thinks not worth translating. Nearly fifty years later, in 1985, after the recording of *What Where* in Stuttgart, Müller-Freienfels gave a farewell dinner for Beckett. Cameraman Jim Lewis, who had worked with Beckett from the beginning, asked him if he had given any thought to celebrating 1986, which would be the twentieth anniversary of their collaboration. As Walter D. Asmus recalls ("All Gimmicks Gone?" 30), Beckett paused for a moment, then mischievously cited Ringelnatz in German to put an end to the pleas. In my view this indirect poetic reply, conveying the personal warmth and camaraderie that existed between Beckett and Lewis, is a last reflection on the enjoyment that Beckett experienced whenever he came to Germany to direct his plays:

In Hamburg lebten zwei Ameisen,
Die wollten nach Australien reisen.
Bei Altona auf der Chaussee
Da taten ihnen die Beine weh,
Und da verzichteten sie weise
Dann auf den letzten Teil der Reise.

Two ants who lived in Hamburg planned
To walk downunder overland.
But on their way down Hafen Street
They both got blisters on their feet,
And thought it wise not to extend
The journey to the bitter end. [my translation]

— Marion Fries-Dieckmann

This essay was presented at the "'Know Happiness': Beckett and Joy" panel sponsored by the Samuel Beckett Society at the 2004 MLA Convention.

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Photo credit: Edward Savaria, Jr.

Mary Bryden chaired a panel that featured composer Paul Rhys and playwright Edward Albee at the 2004 MLA Annual Convention in Philadelphia, PA.

The MLA Show: Philadelphia, 2004

Act I (Wednesday, 29 December): "On Samuel Beckett and Musical Composition." Presiding: Mary Bryden; Presenter: Paul Rhys; Respondent: Edward Albee.

Scene i

Mary Bryden opened the session by noting that this was the first time that the Samuel Beckett Society had ever invited a composer to its biannual creative-artist session. She then introduced the English composer Paul Rhys, who has written solo, orchestral, and choral compositions, including "Dialogue for Clarinet and Birdsong," and, central to this occasion, has set *Not I* to music for solo piano.

Rhys began by relating the medieval distinction between the Trivium (grammar-rhetoric-logic) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic-geometry-music-astronomy) to the question as to whether music naturally has a greater affinity with language or with number. Citing "the human impulse to song in loss, love, or celebration," he told us that the single melodic line inclines to the narrative, in contrast to polyphonic or contrapuntal music, which moves closer to the architectural and thus to the Quadrivium.

Noting that Beckett himself was an "able but private pianist" who drew inspiration from a wide range of music, Rhys turned to Morton Feldman, who collaborated with Beckett on *Words and Music*. Feldman also composed *Neither*, a one-act opera for the Rome Opera in which he used the poem as the brief libretto, despite Beckett's making it known that he liked neither opera nor the idea of his work being set to music. Feldman removed all the hallmarks of the melodic, thus creating "hushed dynamics"; Rhys read aloud the fourth stanza of *Neither* and then played a recording of the Feldman piece (four minutes, seven words) which begins with a soprano singing the text—impossibly high—followed by the eerie, repetitive music. Rhys suggested that Beckett's spoken word is music in its own right, thus Beckett's resistance to having his texts set to music, i.e., imposing a layer of music upon what is already music.

Rhys also explained that his fascination with Beckett began when, as a teenager, he saw Billie Whitelaw on television performing *Not I*; he read it years later and then, years after that, composed a piano piece in which he tried to recapture the initial wonder that he had felt. He discussed Beckett's revisions of *Not I*, which he had studied at the Reading archive, and then shared with us his semantic and thematic analyses, in which he searched for groups of verbal fragments that then became a musical refrain.

Rhys's own *Not I*, which follows Beckett's rhythms and structure, is intended as an independent piece, striving for "recapitulation without any hint of resolution." He tried to capture in the music the "continuity and interruption of continuity" that his semantic analysis had revealed to him. He played an excerpt of Ian Pace's performance recorded at Reading in 1995, noting that he used six-part harmony for the flashbacks and "richly dissonant twelve-part harmony" for the rest. Each syllable equalled one demi-semi quaver. The piece originally took fourteen minutes, but eventually Pace performed it in eleven, which was close to the elapsed time of Whitelaw's spoken performance.

Scene ii

Edward Albee began his response with some autobiographical details: his early attempts at poetry were "skillful but derivative," his drawing derivative as well, and he was "incompetent" at playing the piano. He then turned to a critique of Rhys's work, which he found to be not entirely persuasive: "I found the use of the text unsuccessful—an unnecessary elaboration of what does not need elaboration." He questioned Rhys's having omitted the "inaudible" beginning and ending of *Not I*, wondering why he had not found a need to "realize" these portions of the play. In response to Albee's questioning, Rhys speculated about the possibility of a multi-media performance of the music in *exact* coordination with a video of the play.

Angela Moorjani chaired the "'Know Happiness': Beckett and Joy" panel, with Stéphane Pillet, Marion Fries-Dieckmann, and John Paul Riquelme as panelists and Edward Albee as respondent.

Albee also told his often-repeated story of directing *Krapp's Last Tape* when he changed Beckett's stage directions for Krapp's fourth exit offstage, only to learn later that Beckett had made the same change the last time that he directed the play. When a member of the audience asked Albee why he did this, he answered "intuition."

Act II (Thursday, December 30): " 'Know Happiness': Samuel Beckett and Joy." Presiding: Angela Moorjani; Panelists: John Paul Riquelme, Marion Fries-Dieckmann, and Stéphane Pillet; Respondent: Edward Albee.

Scene i

John Paul Riquelme's talk, called in the program, "Joy or Night: Beckett's Untimely Rocky Voice," was renamed "The Joy of Crutches or Know No More," in part because Riquelme was in a bootcast and using a cane, props not yet in evidence when he proposed the topic. He made four points. First, that joy and knowing have a relevant literary historical lineage back to Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* that Heaney recognizes in his essay on Larkin and Yeats (alluded to in the original title), which includes explicit mention of Beckett. An "anti-romantic swerve" occurs in Yeats's "mortality odes." Second, that in Beckett and pervasively in the post-Wordsworthian lineage, an apparent negative is also positive in the slippery relations and implications of "no" and "know"; in Beckett, "no" is embedded in "enough" and becomes "on." Third, the more complex claim that the emergence of the positive involves something both endless and funny (the rhyming of "joy" with Molloy would have been unavailable to Wordsworth). A handout included passages (centrally from *Molloy*) and a "post-Duchamp" illustration (published in the tribute to Hugh Kenner that appeared in the Fall 2004 issue of the newsletter) of Leonardo's Vitruvian Man with the Greek letter pi superimposed as if it were crutches. Drawing on the passages, Riquelme made his fourth claim concerning "the rhetoric of the peace of pi," in which unexpected inversions are realized.

Scene ii

Marion Fries-Dieckmann spoke about Beckett's relation to the Schiller-Theater. The title of her paper -- " 'We do it to have fun together': Beckett Directing in Germany" —alludes to Beckett's reply when asked to accept a fee for directing *Eh Joe*. Fries-Dieckmann first discussed the source of this "fun" in what Walter Asmus called, *entspannte Spannung* ("relaxed tension") and the joy that Beckett felt in directing his plays in German. She provided various examples of the "fun" as it materialized through translation, including the scene where when Vladimir and Estragon call each other names, Estragon concludes with "*Oberforstinspektor!"* in place of the English "Crritic!" The German word means "head forest inspector" and "is a satire on authority and the German love of overly precise titles."

She concluded with the delightful 1986 anecdote of an exchange between Beckett and Muller-Freinfels, Beckett's television producer. Fifty years earlier, Beckett had dismissed the poetry of Joachim Ringelnatz as not worth translating. When asked by Jim Lewis, the cameraman who had worked with him for twenty years, if he had any ideas for the next project, Beckett replied "mischievously" with a Ringelnatz poem about two ants whose blistered feet force them to abandon their journey to "downunder."

Scene iii

Stéphane Pillet presented the most discussion- generating of the three papers with "Happiness and Humor in Beckett," in which he first acknowledged what must have been on the minds of those reading the title: that looking for happiness in Beckett "is like looking for a needle in a haystack." Citing Bergson's theory of the *élan vital* (the energy that drives biological and social evolution and that brings movement and vitality to our existence), he argued that, since so many of Beckett's characters are made happy by "ignorance, apathy, and paralysis," the *élan vital* is actually an obstacle to their happiness.

In discussing the function of humor and laughter in Beckett, Pillet differentiated intradiagetic from extradiagetic humor. Intradiagetic humor is the humor shared by Beckett's characters; it is the anxiety-releasing laughter of the resigned that Freud called the laughter of defense and unhappiness. Extradiagetic humor, on the other hand, is directed at the reader. It is the laughter of rejection, in which we are not laughing with the characters as much as we are laughing at them. Using Bergson's philosophy, he also discussed the social function of laughter, which acts as a corrective by rejecting what society defines as abnormal behavior.

Scene iv

Edward Albee began his response by noting that his first experience of seeing his own work performed was when *The Zoo Story* was presented at the Schiller-Theater on a double bill with *Krapp's Last Tape*. From there, he moved on to reflections on the pervasive humor of the great playwrights of the twentieth century, including Chekhov, Pirandello, Brecht, and Beckett.

He then contrasted the "inevitable dehumanizing" of being alive and the amount of laughter that one finds in performances of Beckett's plays. Turning to the sucking stones episode in *Molloy*, he noted that in her recent book on Joyce, Edna O'Brien tells us that Joyce wandered around Zurich near the end of his life with stones in his pockets; Albee suggested that the stones that Virginia Woolf's placed in her pockets before drowning herself in a river are also connected to Molloy's stones.

He took issue with Pillet's assertion that we sometimes laugh *at* Beckett's characters, citing the dangers of feeling superior to them. Various people in the audience agreed with Pillet, however. Riquelme suggested that we laugh both with and at the characters, much as we laugh with and at ourselves. Albee replied that characters for whom we might feel contempt are "in greater contact with futility than we are," adding that he knew Beckett "well enough to know that he enjoyed being alive."

Advising us to go to the theatre in a "state of innocence," removing all expectations while paradoxically bringing all our experience of the arts, Albee said that Beckett "requires the full abandonment of our prejudices." He concluded by characterizing as "nonsense" the idea that Beckett is an avant-garde playwright. "If the plays were set in a living room instead of a blasted heath, no one would have any trouble with them," he contended, adding that there is not a word in them that is incomprehensible. He cited the line, "out there in the dark vast," commenting that a lesser playwright would have said "vast dark."

Exeunt

— Toby Zinman

Beckett at Boulogne-sur-Mer

Boulogne, a major fishing port on the northern coast of France, was the setting last December for a one-day conference sponsored by the European Union to enhance cooperation between the Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale and the University of Kent at Canterbury. The theme of the meeting, which was hosted by the Language Department of ULCO's Boulogne campus, was "Transferts et transformations: littérature, theatre, cinema." Presentations by ULCO colleagues on *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and on *Dracula* were preceded by my keynote paper entitled "Where the Camera is Itself a Player: the Case of Anthony Minghella's Film Version of *Play* by Samuel Beckett."

I began by noting that, like Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*, *Play* owes its origins to a triangular relationship between the playwright and two women, in Beckett's case his wife Suzanne and his lover Barbara Bray, whose 1963 *Observer* review of the play is criticism of a high order, rendered all the more poignant in hindsight for being (as we now know) uncomfortably close to home. I then proceeded to analyse the play in terms of its characters and structure, and of its décor, with particular reference to the spotlight, which is of such crucial importance that, in the 1976 Royal Court production, the name of the lighting operator was listed in the programme along with those of the actors. The task for the film-maker is to find a cinematic equivalent for this mobile spot. Anthony Minghella, an Oscar-winning director, rose to the challenge in his RTÉ production, casting as W1 Kristin Scott Thomas, the lead in *The English Patient* (1996), and as M and W2 Alan Rickman and Juliet Stevenson, the actors in *Truly Madly Deeply* (1991).

The camera serves as the inquisitor in probing close-ups, wobbling occasionally as if taking aim, switching suddenly from profile to full face and back again in its desire to get the measure of the protagonists. The blackout in stage productions is cleverly replaced in the cinematic adaptation by a strip of lead-in frames of the kind used when threading film on a projector. This strip flashes numbers and other signs in quick succession on the screen; its scratchy images are accompanied on the sound-track by amplifier distortion and various whirring noises. Like Minghella's other transpositions, this device works well in transferring *Play* convincingly from the theatre to the cinema and television screen. Certainly the crucial aspect of Beckett's play – the torment, comic at first and less funny in the repeat, that is inflicted on erstwhile lovers in a modern reworking of Dante's *Inferno* – comes across powerfully in Minghella's version. This makes it one of the more successful of the RTÉ productions. About some of the others – such as *Waiting for Godot* and the *Acts Without Words* – it is possible to have reservations. In the hands of a master of film like Anthony Minghella, adaptation stands a better chance.

The three papers were followed by questions and a brief debate; following the conclusion of the seminar, a *vin d'honneur* enabled the participants to meet the speakers and continue the discussions in a less formal manner. Everyone agreed that the meeting had been a success, arousing interest in and shedding light on the general theme of "Transfers and Transformations."

— John Fletcher

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://www.ua.ac.be/beckett

Or by contacting Dirk Van Hulle (dirk.vanhulle@ua.ac.be). The Endpage contains the official homepage of the Samuel Beckett Society.

Current & Upcoming Events

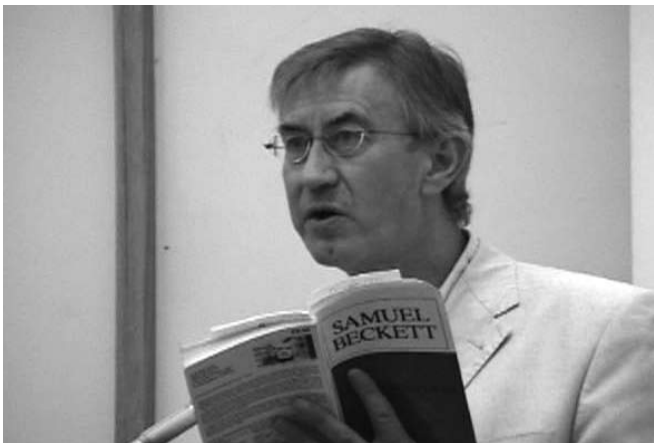
The Samuel Beckett Endpage Moves to Antwerp

After nine years, two facelifts, and much friendly and informative socializing on the net, the Samuel Beckett Endpage is moving from Santa Barbara to Antwerp. When Ben Strong and Porter Abbott created the site in 1996 with $1000 from UCSB's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, they had no idea how the site would grow or how long it would last. It has been a good trip for them, but working alone and with no further support for most of the decade, they have found it hard to realize the full potential of this site. So it is a great comfort for them to send the Endpage half way around the globe to its new home at the University of Antwerp and the capable management of Professor Dirk Van Hulle. A professor of English and a modernist scholar of rising distinction (he is the author of *Textual Awareness***:** *a Genetic Study of Late Manuscripts by Joyce, Proust, and Mann*), Professor Van Hulle combines the energy of youth with the special enthusiasm that Beckett inspires. He can be contacted at dirk.vanhulle@ua.ac.be. The new address for the *Endpage* is http://www.ua.ac.be/beckett.

McGovern Visits Israel

For three days, November 24-27, Irish Actor Barry McGovern transformed Tel Aviv University into Beckett Land, lecturing, performing, and teaching Beckett's works for the university community and the general public. He began his residency with a formal lecture entitled "They Want to be Entertained! Performing Beckett," in which he discussed the expectations of audiences of Beckett's works and the ways in which Beckett draws people into his theatre. On the following day, he visited a seminar on Beckett's Media Plays and discussed his experiences acting in *Embers*; that evening, he did a reading of selected Beckett works, drawing from the fiction, poetry, and drama. On his last day, he conducted a master class for acting students from the university. Each event drew large, enthusiastic crowds that were taken with McGovern's erudition, charm, and inspired readings.

In conjunction with the visit, a Samuel Beckett Society of Israel was formed, and more than forty people attended its first meeting. To launch the Society, the Irish Ambassador to Israel, the Honorable Patrick Hennessy, presented the Society with a generous check for its future activities. The group is now planning an event for the centennial year. One suggestion is a series of workshops to be held over a weekend at the Dead Sea, which is not pale blue but does attract honeymooners.



The Beckett Suite

After reading Beckett's *From an Abandoned Work* in 1982, Diarmuid Delargy conceived the idea of making a series of etchings based on it. He wrote to Beckett about his desire to undertake the project and received his permission. The completed work – a series of twenty-four etchings entitled *The Beckett Suite* and intended to be both a celebration of Beckett's text and a homage to the man himself – was recently exhibited for the first time in its entirety at the Graphic Studio Gallery in Dublin. Certain key images of this work, including birds and the white horse, had been part of Delargy's visual repertoire for some time; to these he added the figure of Beckett himself to convey the sense of a monologue. In his introduction to the catalogue for this exhibition, Patrick McCabe praised Delargy as a kindred spirit, in his own artistic medium, to Jack McGowran and Billie Whitelaw.

The first of Diarmuid Delargy's etchings (right) evokes the opening line of *From an Abandoned Work.*

Centenary Celebrations

Reading

The Beckett International Foundation, with the support of the University of Reading, will be hosting a series of events to celebrate the centenary of Beckett's birth. The exhibition "Beckett: The Irish European" will run in the Reading Town Hall from 25 March until 25 June 2006. It will include various items from the Beckett archive (manuscripts, letters, notebooks, drafts) complemented by photos, pictures, and audio-visual components. An international conference, organized by the Beckett International Foundation and the School of English and American Studies of the University of Reading, will be held from 31 March to 2 April 2006. Keynote speakers will be announced and a call for papers issued in early May 2005. A digital manuscript edition with facsimiles and transcriptions of four Beckett texts will be presented on the final day of the conference. This project represents a joint undertaking between the University of Reading and the University of Antwerp.

In the evening of the final conference day, on Sunday 2 April 2006, a Beckett Gala Evening is to be held in the Concert Hall of Reading Town Hall in aid of MacMillan Cancer Relief. It is open to the public and there will be a minimum donation. The anthology evening of Beckett readings and performances will be directed by the Oscar-winning director, Anthony Minghella. The actors who will take part are not yet confirmed, but they are expected to include figures as distinguished as Kevin Spacey, Alan Rickman, Juliet Stevenson, Dame Judi Dench, Sir Michael Gambon, Lee Evans, and Jeremy Irons.

Tokyo

Japan's first international Beckett Symposium will be held at the International Convention Centre at Waseda University for three days, from 29 September to 1 October, 2006. The Symposium will be co-hosted by Waseda University's 21st Century COE Institute for Theatre Research and the Samuel Beckett Research Circle of Japan. The symposium theme will be "Borderless Beckett." The late Takahashi Yasunari, who initiated Beckett studies in Japan, described affinities between Beckett's drama and classical Noh theatre. Noh crosses borders between reality and dream, between life and death. Beckett's art too undermines dualistic thinking and transgresses various borders: traditional distinctions in genre, linguistic differences between English and French, geographical and political differences, and conventional frameworks of philosophy and aesthetics. Beckett's writing, which seems, on the one hand, to be art reduced to bare essentials, is in fact paradoxically excessive, eluding conventional views of literature, media, and culture. The symposium will aim to create a free critical and creative space, where diverse critical approaches and methodologies may reach toward and celebrate Beckett's transgressive, borderless art.

In addition to the Symposium and publication of the proceedings by the Samuel Beckett Research Circle of Japan, the following supplementary events have been planned so far: presentation and poster exhibition of Beckett work at the Setagaya Public Theater; performance of Kojin Kondo's play based on Beckett's later trilogy under the title of "NOWOH ON" by Molecular Theater directed by Shigeyuki Toshima; Akira Asai's exhibition "Portrait of Samuel Beckett."

Florida

The Winthrop-King institute for Contemporary French and Francophone Studies, in association with the Department of English and the Journal of Beckett Studies will host an international conference 9-11 February 2006 at Florida State University. The conference directors are William J. Cloonan, S.E. Gontarski, and Alec G. Hargreaves. Keynote speakers will be Mary Bryden, Bruno Clément, James Knowlson, and Jean-Michel Rabaté. The key questions that speakers are invited to address include the following: What are the most significant aspects of Beckett's work attracting recent and current research? What new insights are these affording? In what ways do current critical approaches and methodologies vary across time and space? In what respects are productions of Beckett's plays and audience responses to them open to innovative approaches? How significant are linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries in opening or closing new avenues of inquiry? In what ways do Beckett's writings engage with the discourses of Modernism and Postmodernism and issues we might broadly call Postcolonial?

BOOK REVIEWS

Gary Adelman. *Naming Beckett's Unnamable.* Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004. 192pp. $39.50.

In an endnote assessing extant interpretations of *How It Is*, Gary Adelman remarks that it is "hard to find an 'axe' in these discussions" (173 n. 20). The elusive implement is that mentioned in a line from Franz Kafka's letter of 27 January 1904 to Oskar Pollak: "a book must be the axe for the frozen sea in us," which serves as Adelman's epigraph and is later quoted again at greater length (117). Kafka's imperative is seldom fulfilled by imaginative literature, let alone works of criticism; nevertheless, the inability and apparent unwillingness of Beckett's critics to capture something of the power of Beckett's texts provide Adelman with an axe of his own – if only one -- to grind.

The texts in question are Beckett's major prose works from 1946 to 1970 (from the *Nouvelles* to *The Lost Ones*) and *Endgame*. It is never quite clear why Chapters 2—4 on the Trilogy should be headed "A Strange Justice" (41—84); the heading chosen for the second half of the book, "Torture and Art" (87—168), is more convincing. The "revivifying discovery" that allowed Beckett to move beyond the solipsistic tendencies of *The Unnamable* is that "the self wishes to be engaged with another self in the interest of pain" (107). Adelman observes this in *Endgame* and the fourth of the *Texts for Nothing* (1951), repositioning a turning-point that Beckettians have latterly assigned to *How It Is* (1960). Perceptively, Adelman comments on his own participation in this urge to torture. "I confess to repeatedly striving to get the Unnamable in my clutches" (17). he writes, thus simultaneously occupying the position both of torturer and of victim,

Adelman's principal concern is to salvage something of the *story* of Beckett's texts, which he considers to have been wilfully obscured by influential Beckettians. As a consequence, there is a great deal of précis here. Adelman also quotes liberally, but there is rarely room for close commentary; one gets the impression that most of the quotations are there simply because it is impossible to paraphrase them more concisely. Occasionally Adelman quotes at some length, but selectively, a technique that he first applies to *Enough* (12). The selective nature of his quotations somewhat undermines Adelman's argument that *Enough* is fundamentally a traditional narrative, the story of a woman's life, to which Beckett's critics have done less than justice. The stories rendered by Adelman will surprise some readers. Few Beckettians will admit to recognising *The Unnamable* as "the story of a hero fighting for some remnant of self" (14); clearly Adelman does not share the prevailing aversion to "heroism," a virtue that he later invokes again without qualm (64). Fewer still will accept Adelman's rendering of *How It Is* as the story of the narrator's "wife's suicide and of his subsequent dereliction" (117).

Adelman's interpretations are often pseudo-psychoanalytical. A "joke" from the opening passage of *Molloy* is thought to reveal a deeper truth: "[p]erhaps he had a son, a son who is also his brother" (45). Elsewhere, Adelman attends to the "cave-womb suggestion" of *The End* (29) and decides that the knife given to the narrator by his companion is "*surely* the knife in the fairy tale his father told him" (29, my italics). Such leaps of faith are occupational hazards when "one […] must stand for the occasional" (43); however, the double-whammy of selective quotation and over-extrapolation jeopardises Adelman's attempt to tell the undistorted story of Beckett's texts. The threat is made greater when, for example, a passage in *The Unnamable* is interpreted as an "inversion" according to the logic of "denial" (76). The very absence of "cattle cars, crematoria, factories" *et cetera* in *The Lost Ones* thus bolsters Adelman's argument that "that world is called into being by the cylinder" (137). Adelman is also repeatedly concerned to break what he considers to be the near-conspiratorial silence on the influence of Hitler's concentration camps on Beckett's imaginative world: "We live in a world of matter and pain; it is all *Inferno*, or, rather, more specific to Beckett, the world of the concentration camp (107—08). That the latter world strikes me as being *less specific* to Beckett than does Dante's perhaps only confirms what Adelman would consider the current plight of Beckett studies.

These chapters are capped with a lengthy piece on "Beckett and Kafka" (140—68), a key presence throughout the book. At the outset, Adelman had boldly identified Ruby Cohn, James Knowlson, and John Pilling as prime proponents of the kind of criticism he considers damaging (11). It is therefore odd that Adelman does not more directly address their contributions to this specific issue. Knowlson and Pilling had written that it "would be wrong to see [*How It Is*] as a kind of gloss on Kafka's *In The Penal Colony*, which it superficially resembles"; the relegation of this verdict to an endnote (173 n. 20) and the tentative nature of Adelman's own suggestion that *How It Is* "may have been inspired by Kafka's 'In the Penal Colony'" (130) therefore falls short of the defiant pose that he had initially struck. (Here Adelman prefers to proffer a parallel reading of Kafka's text with *The Lost Ones*).

Similarly, while Cohn's *A Beckett Canon* comes in for frequent criticism throughout the book, the foundational nature of her 1961 essay, "*Watt* in the Light of *The Castle*," is not sufficiently acknowledged in this chapter; Adelman merely describes it as "the most detailed comparison of the two novels" (143). Despite citing Cohn's essay on *Watt*, Adelman fails to notice the discrepancy between it and his own conclusion that "*in 1946* he [Beckett] turned to Kafka's example to break out of his own spiritual deadlock and write the trilogy" (161, my italics); in any case, "turned to" covers a multitude of possibilities. To determine when

Beckett first read Kafka is perhaps not the point. The matter is not settled by noting that Beckett's comments to Israel Shenker of *The New York Times* (cited at the head of Cohn's essay but somewhat smothered here) were made in 1956; nor is it settled by *Damned to Fame*, though Kafka clearly remained important for Beckett to the last (see Knowlson 681, 684, 701). I wonder how Adelman reacted when he discovered that the first entry under "K" in the recent *Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* is not "Kafka," but "Kakiamouni" (294). The cumulative effect of the numerous critics who have written on Beckett and Kafka surely renders this an oversight; however, Adelman alone would not make a sufficiently strong case for Kafka's inclusion.

In general, Adelman's tone is informal and engaging; only once did a sentence trip me up:"The question, what drives him and toward what, when he creates, that is, orders experience by speaking, cuts to the heart of his situation" (69). Like Beckett, Adelman occasionally deploys what one might call the Anglo-Saxon vernacular; but his own use of such language is problematic, the concentrations rising like mercury ascending the food chain (see 108 and 122). Adelman is fond both of brusque phrases and their opposite:

> In the Molloy narrative, the reader may hear his own voice murmuring, "In my deepest heart I believe in the rectitude of his private war with the world. His sense of engagement is a constant reminder of how much I have surrendered. I am not a man of principle, I am not a man of faith, I am not a man of action. I am a moral cripple." (55)

It is possible that both such phrases and their inspiration ("Pat Conroy's *The Prince of Tides*") are familiar to an American audience, but I found this reference – and the one to W. S. Merwin (32—33) – obscure. True, Beckett's own style lurches between severe concision and expansive lyricism, but it is not always in the critic's best interests actually to emulate the object of his enquiry.

The parallels between Adelman's interpretation of *The Unnamable* and his own self-positioning within Beckett criticism are clear. That this is nothing new is clear from the titles of Adelman's previous books: *Retelling Dostoevsky* (2001); *Reclaiming D. H. Lawrence* (2002). Regarding the Unnamable, Adelman concludes, "[w]e are persuaded that his resistance is wise" (68); it remains to be seen whether Adelman's readers will be similarly persuaded.

-- Thomas Mansell

Alain Badiou. *On Beckett*. Edited and translated by Nina Power and Alberto Toscano; Postface by Andrew Gibson. Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2003. xxxvi+164 pp. £12.50.

An enduring taxonomical gesture in Beckett scholarship entails a labor of demarcation in the guise of a chronological arrangement that depends on a "break," "turn," or "vision" (or other mode of authorial or textual epiphany or conversion, secular or otherwise) by means of which the critic might better locate herself or himself in relation to the corpus. In an essay from *Conditions* (1992), entitled "Qu'est-ce que l'amour?," Alain Badiou argues that what he calls Love is central to the break away from the solipsism which, in Badiou's view, characterizes all of Beckett's pre-1960 work, while the post-1960 works disclose what he calls the "latent poem." Thus for Badiou, *Krapp's Last Tape* shows the solipsism of the early Krapp give way via the encounter which produces the Two, which is equivalent to the "passage to the limitless multiple without the limitations of Being" (14).

However, in one of the four texts collected in *On Beckett*, "The Writing of the Generic" (also from *Conditions*), Badiou practices a sleight of hand that cannot go unremarked: the passage which he quotes from the play is announced as one of the three examples to illustrate his theory that the "latent poem" emerges in the *prose* (17). The fact is, however, that *Krapp's Last Tape* is *not* a prose work and that a passage describing the memory of the boat is at worst not prose and at best not only prose. That it is possible for the passage to disclose a "latent poem" is perhaps uncontentious (especially if one agrees with Marjorie Perloff), but, in the case of Badiou's example, there is no prose as such on the scene in the first place to facilitate the disclosure. It must be objected, *pace* Badiou's claim, that the *prose* of the passage is itself merely *latent* (in a work of drama). Beckett may be no respecter of genre categories, but one should not ignore the fact that he is *never* unaware of the genre in which he is writing or towards which he is – albeit ironically – gesturing.

There is, moreover, a problem with the discussion of "sexuate polarity" in "Tireless Desire," the translation of the slim volume *Beckett: l'increvable désir* (1995), of which the same play is deemed to be exemplary. The alleged distance from signifiers of, *inter alia*, physically embodied, constructed, or biologically determined gender identities enjoyed by the "masculine," which Badiou aligns with "the imperative" and with "immobility" (66), and the "feminine," which he aligns with "errancy" and "narrative," is ill served by the examples chosen for their illustration. Winnie and Willie in *Happy Days*, granted; but *How It Is*? While one may be prepared to accept that Winnie is "feminine" in Badiou's sense – she desires to be free of her current predicament and to continue the narrative in her monologue – it is quite another matter to assert that this "feminine" pole is to be found *in the same way* in *How It Is*. As Badiou correctly points out, Beckett is meticulous in his avoidance of unambiguously gendered identities in this novel (the "images" of the first part notwithstanding),

as when the narrator locates on Pim "finally what seems to me a testicle or two" (60). If, as Badiou claims, the sexes for Beckett do not exist except insofar as the amorous encounter manifests them (65), is Badiou not presupposing that the encounter *is* amorous (and normatively heterosexual) in *How It Is* in order to verify a prior position which he holds on the centrality of "love" to Beckett's work?

Badiou's writings on art and literature find their most systematically delineated presentation in the 1998 book, translated as *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (Continuum, 2005), from which one of the Beckett essays, "Being, Existence, Thought: Prose and Concept," is taken. Re-read in the light of this volume, it becomes clear just to what extent Badiou's Beckett is, as the editors of *On Beckett* point out, the product of a "systematic" reading. For Badiou, "it is of the essence of philosophy to be systematic" (*Manifesto for Philosophy* 65). The *inesthétique*, Badiou writes, "describes the strictly intraphilosophical effects produced by the independent existence of some works of art." Moreover, this account of the specificity of the relationship of philosophy to art serves to foreground another notable Badiouian preoccupation that permeates his thinking on Beckett. Badiou has criticized the "suture" of philosophy to one of its particular conditions – the poem – as this is manifest in the tradition that he calls the "philosophic cult of poets" (*Manifesto* 66), which he argues "delegates the living flesh of thought to its artistic condition" (67). In this regard, Andrew Gibson's survey (in the postface to *On Beckett*) can be thought of as a working-through on Badiou's behalf of the implicit relationship of his Beckett (in a supposedly de-sutured philosophy) to the very critical tradition which, in Badiou's estimation, practices a suture to the poem.

One of the many refrains in Badiou's essays and chapters on Beckett is *constellation*—an index of his predilection for Mallarmé and, in particular, the final image of his *Un Coup de dés*. In contemplating the heavens, however, the problem, as Beckett's Malone identifies it, is that if the celestial bodies he takes to be visible through the window of his abode should turn out to be merely simulacra painted on an ersatz portal, the place in his world of celestial movements will remain a mere projection without any hope of the working out of neo-Platonic emanation. *On Beckett* gives us a "two" thrown together in *Enough* such that "the multiple of Constellations is held in the opening of the Two" (31), and the "astral pin" that embroiders the dark tapestry of *Worstward Ho* is endowed with salvific potential (though to be saved in Badiou's formulation is no less fraught with irony than it is in Beckett's).

The ease with which Badiou stitches a constellation into the fabric of *Worstward Ho* is perhaps evidence, in the end, that for all his avowal of the de-suture of philosophy from its conditions, in writing philosophy out of poetry (and out of the impasse of the suture), Badiou finds himself more a poet than a philosopher (appropriate perhaps for a philosopher who is also a novelist, dramatist, and librettist) and perhaps offers a thread of hope to the suturists among us. (Indeed, the question of whether the philosophy of Alain Badiou, as represented by his disparate writings on Beckett, finds itself more sutured to literature, by virtue of being *collected* rather than left in their four respective contexts, remains moot). *Worstward Ho* is an instance of the work of one of the conditions of philosophy that somehow slips from "suture" to the very place of philosophy itself, which Badiou characterizes in *Handbook* by an adherence to "*dianoia*" (17).

In preparing this volume the editors have been thorough well beyond reasonable expectation, even going so far as to consult the archives at Reading, as it were, on Badiou's behalf. Some quibbling is, however, unavoidable. In their introduction some well-known portraits of Beckett, notably by Christopher Ricks and Martin Esslin, somewhat predictably come forward to proclaim their anthropocentric bias, but these are far less dominant than the emphasis given them by the editors would suggest. Perhaps more problematically, it is open to dispute that *How It Is* has been neglected, or that it regarded as anomalous by Beckett crit-

New & Forthcoming

- Gontarski, S.E. *Beckett–Rosset Correspondence*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006. ISBN: 057122184X. £25.00

- Graver, Lawrence. *Beckett:*Waiting for Godot. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN 0521549388. £9.99.

- Hutchings, William. *Samuel Beckett's* Waiting for Godot*: A Reference Guide*. Norwalk: Greenwood Press, 2005. ISBN: 0313308799. $99.95, £56.99.

- Kenner, Hugh. *Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians*. Dublin: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005. ISBN: 1564783804. £7.99.

- Mooney, Sinead. *Samuel Beckett*. Plymouth: Northcote House, 2004. ISBN 0746310382. £37.50.

- Pilling, John. *Beckett Before Godot.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN 0521604516. £21.99

- Strathern, Paul. *Beckett in 90 Minutes.* Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005. ISBN 1566635861. $8.95

ics. Minor, and in some instances "doctrinal" (as the editors put it) objections aside, the publication of four of Badiou's essays on Beckett marks a welcome and important event in Beckett scholarship. Gibson expresses the view that after its publication "a rather different set of applications or distributions to those proposed by Badiou himself" (121) may be made possible. The first major instalment in this emergent field is due from Gibson himself, and the present volume serves as a preparation for this ground as well as terrains as yet unknown. Did someone say "on"?

— *Garin Dowd*

Linda Ben-Zvi, ed. *Drawing on Beckett: Portraits, Performances, and Cultural Contexts*. Tel Aviv: Assaph Books, 2003. xvi + 343. $65.

In her introduction to this volume, Linda Ben-Zvi confesses trepidation over picking titles for essay collections, which "either say too much or too little about the contents" (vii). *Drawing on Beckett* may seem at first to map on to the volume's contents in a surprisingly literal way. The first section presents twenty-four studies of Beckett by his friend, the Paris-based Israeli artist Avigdor Arikha, and provides a fine short analysis of the relationship between writer and artist. But the reader who expects a volume on the relationship between Beckett and the visual arts will be disappointed. The two sections that follow present instead twenty new essays on various aspects of Beckett's plays for theatre, radio, and television, most of which were first presented at the 2002 session of the Samuel Beckett Working Group. Many of these essays respond to that session's general theme of "Cultural Memory and Theatre," and it is this context that provides a different logic for the title. Here, to "draw on" Beckett, in the sense of making "a demand or draft *upon* (a person, his memory, his imagination, etc.) *for* resources or supplies of any kind," (*OED*) is to use Beckett as a source from which new criticism will spring. In a period when personal memories of Beckett and the performances he directed are necessarily giving way to the broader category of cultural memories, the title of this new volume renders productively explicit a key question for contemporary Beckett Studies: precisely what kind of resource does "Beckett" now provide for criticism to draw upon?

The second section of the book, entitled "Influence, Memory, Theory," explores the cultural contexts of Beckett's plays, concentrating particularly on questions of influence, intertextuality, and the relationship between Beckett's work and questions of cultural memory. Contributions by Mariko Hoi Tanaka and Shimon Levy explore intercultural issues of influence, legacy, and affinity that relate Beckett's work to contemporary Japanese Theatre and Israeli playwright Hanoch Levin respectively, whilst Matthijs Engelberts illuminates connections between *Eleutheria* and the reappearance in cultural memory of Roger Vitrac's play *Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir* during the time of its writing (1946/7). Beckett's own exploration of the work of memory is given a cultural context by Antonia Rodriguez Gago. She suggests that Beckett stages and embodies the workings of memory according to culturally resonant representations that conceive of it as appearing within a dark space of the mind. This productive reading could perhaps have been extended to include a more detailed engagement with precisely what it means for memories to be regarded as "cultural." Which specific culture and what traditions are being invoked here? In which spaces does cultural memory find itself being constructed? How precisely does cultural memory intersect with or inflect questions of history and intertextuality?

Julie Campbell's exploration of the construction and subsequent deconstruction of the power of grand narratives and tradition in *Endgame* addresses some of these questions in a way that illuminates Beckett's exploitation and subversion of the traditions and expectations that are folded into cultural memory. Building on this useful analysis, it would be interesting to hear how Beckett's radical memory- work intersects with the way that late twentieth-century Anglo-European cultures have themselves been figured as memory cultures. In a period when memorializing has assumed such a central position within the cultural and political imaginary, Beckett's obsessive reformulation of the work of memory and forgetting could be usefully related to the discourses of trauma and witnessing.

Angela Moorjani's fascinating repositioning of *Godot* and *Eleutheria* in relation to the cultural dominance of Kojeve's reading of Hegel in post-war European thought demonstrates the potential of reading Beckett's work within particular cultural contexts. She explores how this Hegelian-Kojevian paradigm, in which the master-slave dialectic takes centre stage, has dominated many of the canonical readings of *Godot*, just as it dominated French intellectual life, at least until the disappointments of May 1968. Her reading of Beckett's ironic engagement with this paradigm suggests, however, that "[i]n the place then of a modernist dialectics of progress and a postmodern 'end of history' and levelling, Beckett's 'dualistic' spaces, temporalities, and protagonists suggest psychic and social divisions that undo hierarchical stratification by flowing into each other and reversing from one to the other" (83). Moorjani's essay explicitly takes aim at "the conservative circles on the right" (83), for whom the Kojevian version of Hegelian history still provides substantial resources. Her work, however, will also need to be taken into account by those of rather different political persuasions. The more complex power dynamics and subject positions in the dialectic that postcolonial critics such as Homi Bhabha have sought to identify are also part of this Kojevian legacy, and

a postcolonial Beckett criticism should certainly explore the historical context of this ironic engagement with the master-slave dialectic before mapping its deconstructions on to the work in any simple fashion.

The third section, "Media and Performance," draws on the venerable tradition of performance history in Beckett studies. Ruby Cohn's essay on *Happy Days* and Enoch Brater's account of "Billie Whitelaw's TV Beckett" offer to future scholars much valuable information on past productions. The essays on new productions by Everett C. Frost and Anna McMullan, Colin Duckworth, and Eric Prince all work through the inevitable tension between innovation and fidelity that occurs when staging work by an author whose absent presence continues to wield such authority over the production and reception of his work. Frost and McMullan's analysis is particularly useful, not only because it is one of the first critical pieces to consider the Blue Angel *Beckett on Film* project, but because it does not reject the possibility of trans-generic adaptation, which, using Beckett's proclamations on the subject, it would be all too easy to do. Instead, the problems they lucidly point to in some of these adaptations are read as being the result of an insufficient attentiveness to Beckett's own media aesthetics, and an unhelpful rejection of the plays' position within a modernist theatrical avant garde. Frost and McMullan thus successfully read the *Beckett on Film* project in terms that expose the problems of "mainstreaming work whose aesthetic resists commodification, spectacle, and habitual modes of viewing" (220).

Jonathan Bignell's essay, "Beckett at the BBC," undertakes an analysis of the relationship between Beckett and the "mainstream" in rather different terms. As part of a larger project considering the television plays through new archival research on their production history and reception by British audiences, Bignell explores the tensions between television's status as a mass medium and Beckett's position as an exemplary figure within a cultural elite of European modernism. Using the discourse of Television Studies that emphasizes "institutional frameworks, professional relationships, technological modes of production, and […] reception by actual viewers" (165), Bignell's essay usefully deconstructs any simple opposition between modernism and mass culture. At the same time, however, the essay remains attentive to specific structural tensions between the educative imperatives of Public Service broadcasting and the growing demands of commercial entertainment. By contributing to a "culture of authorship" (171) at the BBC, Beckett's work helped to establish, legitimize, and maintain "a cultural and class elite in broadcasting institutions" (180) that offered challenging products resistant to the logic of the Culture Industry. Nevertheless, by describing Beckett's use of a medium "at the margins of cultural authority" (181) and the creation of works that allude to the aesthetic of television studio production, Bignell suggests ways in which that production of hegemonic authority is complicated. This essay thus offers valuable resources for those interested in exploring Beckett through materialist models that resist the representation of self-present intentionality and authorial control, whilst suggesting ways in which the representation of Beckett as a figure of authority might be given a historically nuanced inflection. Sean Kennedy's innovative reading of *All That Fall* in relation to Protestant fears of engulfment by the Irish Free State is a useful companion to Bignell's essay, in that it similarly demonstrates how various kinds of historicisms can provide under-explored resources for analyses of Beckett's work.

Daniela Caselli explores the related questions of materiality and authority in her examination of *Was Wo*, in which she confronts the tendency in Beckett criticism to fetishize materiality and to maintain its distinction from language. Her essay demonstrates the ways in which the critic's authority is underpinned by the ability to grasp this essential matter that is assumed to lie beneath the surface of the text, whether it is located in the hand of the intentional writing subject, the "life material" of biography, or the corporeality of the body on stage. Using Judith Butler's investigation of the constructed category of materiality, Caselli reads *Was Wo* as a text that refuses an easy opposition between matter and language, world and word, and that questions, instead, the processes by which materiality, and the authority claimed by it, is constructed and read (rather than uncovered) in the text. The essay goes on to demonstrate the complex relationship between image and speaking voice that resists the production of any easy sense of presence that might underwrite this critical imperative, even though the trace or promise of materiality, the "what" and the "where," insists on driving forward the torturous play of mastery and domination that *constructs* rather than reveals Bam as "authority" in the text.

As Ben-Zvi points out, even though a number of the essays in this collection seek to complicate the relationship between authorial voice and power, they are "forced, for want of another set of terms, to use Samuel Beckett in the title of their studies and discussions" (vii). This is perhaps the reason why Ben-Zvi worries that *Drawing on Beckett* says, and indeed implies, both too little and too much. For what brings the essays together is simply "Beckett"—figure of authorial power, representative of a modernist avant garde, intentional writing subject, now absent centre around which cultural memories necessarily seem to constellate—and even though many of the writers here may try to draw *away* from this Beckett, they still need to draw *on* Beckett to underwrite their own critical projects.

Although there is little sense that this volume is mapping out a clear direction in contemporary Beckett Studies, there are, nonetheless, ways of viewing this diversity as its strength. It is perhaps productive to acknowledge that there is no clear critical *doxa* that underwrites what it means

to work on Beckett at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This volume demonstrates, instead, the vitality of the field and the exciting critical questions that are opening up as scholars continue to draw on Beckett; in so doing, it provides a resource that will itself be drawn upon by critics and students in the future.

— Laura Salisbury

James H. Reid, *Proust, Beckett, and Narration.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003. 195pp. £40.

James Reid's book is an ambitious undertaking in which intertextuality is convincingly combined with a sophisticated textual analysis in order to uncover the ways in which the tropes of allegory and irony, as defined by Paul de Man in "The Rhetoric of Temporality," function in Proust's *Recherche* and Beckett's trilogy to foreground the split nature of the subject of first-person narration. Reid's thesis is that "in both Proust and Beckett the allegorical development of the subject as split in time gives way to an ironical constitution of the subject as split in space, but that this ironically split subject eventually gives way to the allegorically split subject" (2). The key word in Reid's analysis is *interplay* -- between allegory and irony, repetition and difference, remembering and forgetting -- a notion that he deploys to great effect in order to reproblematize what he sees as the overtly coherent existing accounts of the Proust-Beckett relationship and to foreground the dynamism that it generates.

The first four chapters, devoted to Proust, are preceded by a straightforward examination of the beginning and end of what is no doubt the best-known volume, *Combray*. In them Reid focuses on such central concerns as the distinction between the "remembering narrator" and the "writing narrator," the mis/representation of self, and the construction of deceptive consciousness. Having uncovered the mechanisms of remembering/forgetting operative in the famous opening of *Combray,* he turns to the ending to establish a founding duplicity, showing the writing narrator to be ironical since, despite the illusion of recovery fostered by the remembering narrator, the former acknowledges that his memories were knowingly deceptive misrepresentations. That deceit established, Reid notes the similarities with the artificial consciousness foregrounded by Beckett's narrators, an irony that ultimately fails because his narrators, while falling back on a supposedly non-localisable or non-referential first person pronoun and while more "knowing" than the Proustian narrator, are also haunted by knowledge of the pitfalls and limits of narrative self-representation.

The title *Remembrance of Things Past*, as Reid reminds us, has often blurred for anglophone readers the fact that Proust's work actually privileges forgetting. In his first chapter, entitled "Remembering Forgetting," he plots the ontological, moral, and psychological strands in Proust's narrative, integral elements of the first person narrator's search to query his own (in)adequacy. Following critics like Poulet and Deleuze, he foregrounds the process of recreation of past impressions, "artistic forgetting," a process that is then used as the basis for chapter two, "Impressions, the Instant of Artistic Consciousness and Social History." Here, via a detailed analysis of the Elstir paintings, he reveals how the artist seeks to dissolve the existence of objects, transforming them into impressions which are, in turn, deconstructed into "invisible metaphors of the creative subject" (37). The allegory of forgetting is thus redefined as the allegory of the deconstruction of signs of consciousness, and both irony and allegory are seen to mark only their own failure, two "deceptive aspects of the Instant of Proust's first-person narration between which the "I" […] always alternates" (44).

Beckett scholars will find themselves on more familiar ground in chapter three, "Lying, Irony and Power: Proust's Deceptive Allegories." Here, the focus is on the discourse of lying or deceitful reinvention of past and present selves where, through the games played by Proust's Mlle. Vinteuil, readers are coaxed into an understanding which makes them "ironic accomplices" in the exercise of autobiographical deceit. This enables Reid to show how Beckett's *Proust* and, in particular, its approach to involuntary memory, "foregrounds a remembering narrator" while appreciating an "ironical narrator who deceitfully invents past and present selves" (47).

Starting from the well-known position that the dramatization of the discursive modes that make allegory and irony as well as forgetting and lying possible are central to Beckett's trilogy, the four chapters devoted to these novels argue convincingly that each volume also parodies and deconstructs not only Proust's remembering narrator but the ironical first-person narrator and his hapless search for indifference. Ironically mocking all claims to being able to express individual differences, Molloy's forgetful ironical voice and deceptive allegorical voice are said to mark only uncertainty regarding remembering, forgetting and, more disturbingly, "embellishing." The parody of Proust's search becomes the search to kill off illusion regarding not merely self-representation but the self as well, a parody of Proustian parody in which Molloy can achieve only a knowingly deceptive suspension of disbelief in order to repeat the Proustian remembering narrator's illusion of recovery of past consciousness. More radically, however, Beckett's character "not only forgets where, when, and who he is, he [also] forgets to be" (93). Being itself is thus not only something that the subject has to remember to do, but the subject itself is revealed as a purely linguistic construct. Reid appeals increasingly to Speech Act theory in chapters six, "Moran's way," and seven, "*Malone Dies*

and the Impossibility of Not Saying I," to explore the solipsism affecting Moran's use of narrative to cover his present ignorance regarding the past and then Malone's recourse to third-person stories as a means to erase all reference to the self and drive home both the discontinuity between past and present selves and the ironical stance adopted towards the language used to relate them.

By this stage in Reid's analysis, the focus on the interplay between allegory and irony, the two irreconcilable modes of constructing the first-person narrator's discourse, is not only well established but, as he argues, has been shown to be a key factor in the pleasure of these texts. His final chapter, "*The Unnamable*: The Death of the Ironical Self and the Return of History," rounds off the argument that, far from marking "a literary historical transition from a seemingly allegorical narrator to Beckett's ironical narrators," the trilogy also shows itself to be "a literary historical repetition of the same formal interplay of language between allegory and irony" (138). This, the most recondite chapter of the book, begins with the rejection of the notion that language needs a human voice, then confronts the aporia generated in a novel unable to show whether it is ironic or suspended between irony and allegory. The result is a series of attempts/failures to subordinate allegory's production/deconstruction of voices to language's ironical assertion/negation of the voices it mechanically produces.

One of the many achievements of this study is the skill with which Reid shows that this transition from engagement with the voice(s) of the self to language's production/negation of voices is a central feature of all Beckett's texts and that *The Unnamable*'s first words—"Where now? Who now? When now?"—are asked retrospectively and with no hope of an answer because "the text now both affirms and negates the power of its speech acts to perform the act of questioning" (140). Although Reid does not mention it, the parasitic nature of speech acts in the literary text is a guarantee that its prelocutionary effect is illusory since the text can no longer be other than "caught within the present of its simultaneous, ironical production and negation of speech acts and meaning, which indirectly negates this ironical denial of meaning" (141).

Proust and Beckett scholars will certainly not agree with all that James Reid has to say; Beckett scholars, in particular, may be unwilling to accept his reluctance to engage with the fact that Beckett himself was dismissive of allegory. However, no-one, I am sure, will deny the skill with which Reid shows how the two authors collude in privileging the "transition from irony to allegory as that which marks the birth of the act of writing—whether it be linguistic, social, or psychological —out of language, which repeatedly tries and fails to speak itself" (155).

— *Peter Dunwoodie*

Presidential Message

As we approach the centenary of Beckett's birth next year, the role of the Samuel Beckett Society takes on added importance as the venue for the collection and dissemination of information relating to conferences, seminars, and the many other international events marking the occasion. The Society has already played its central role in this regard; and looking through the collection of newsletters sitting on my desk, it is more than a little daunting to consider the Society's role during the past three-and-a-half decades in promoting any number of academic and theatrical enterprises. We owe an enormous debt to Stan Gontarski and the late Calvin Israel in setting forth such a forward-looking course for the Society way back in the 1970s.

What has made the Society work so well is the generosity and commitment of colleagues who have consistently taken on a leadership role as champion Becketteers. Mary Bryden has just completed her two-year term as President; she leaves the executive branch in very good shape. It is an honor to succeed her in this office. Her strong organizational sense and her enviable interpersonal skills have made her not only a strong advocate for Beckett studies but also a smart diplomat in representing us not only in North America, but in Europe and beyond as well. From her base in Cardiff she has kept the "global" fire burning. So, too, are we indebted to Toby Zinman, who steps down from her position as an active and responsive member of the Executive Board.

How might we go forward from here in the busy two years that lie ahead? In addition to supporting our colleagues who have worked hard to plan the events surrounding Beckett's 100th year, I would like to suggest that we make use of the occasion to place additional emphasis on the contributions young scholars and theater practitioners are making to the field. Their success will be our success as they develop new ways of performing Beckett and new ways of thinking about Beckett in performance, both on and off the stage. Beckett studies must, inevitably, move *on*. Think of Alvin Epstein, who began his involvement with Beckett as the first American Lucky, then starred as Clov in the U.S. premiere of *Endgame* (with many other memorable encounters along the way), and finally ended up in a trashcan in Charlotte Moore's accomplished 2005 production of the same play for the Irish Repertory Company in New York. Nagg rarely, if ever, looked more appealing. You can safely assign the other roles to younger actors. And so it might be for the Beckett Society as the centenary year quickly approaches: a year in which, while we take stock of this organization's history, we always look ahead to what our studies might become in the future.

— *Enoch Brater*

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- David Hayman is an active Joycean who has been a somewhat less active but no less avid Beckettian over the years. He is an emeritus professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin and the author of many articles and books on Joyce, Mallarmé, Flaubert, modernist and post-modernist fiction. Currently, he is spending most of his time with Beckett's Watt mss.
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All members of the Samuel Beckett Society are encouraged to submit items of interest for publication in *The Beckett Circle*. **If possible, submissions should be e-mailed in rich text format.** Please send all theater reviews, letters to the editor, inquiries about advertising rates, and information on special events to:

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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 Enoch Brater (2006), President; Executive Board: Thomas Cousineau (Newsletter Editor), Anna McMullan (2006), Linda Ben-Zvi (2008), and Angela Moorjani (2008). 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 a 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 is $20.00 (US Dollars) per year and $35.00 for two years, library membership $25.00 per year, and student membership $15.00 per year. Donations over and above the membership fee are welcome and are tax deductible.

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