



THE BECKETT CIRCLE LE CERCLE DE BECKETT

Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

Gala Evening in Reading

While the academic conference, *Beckett at Reading 2006*, was proceeding in the tranquil surroundings of Reading University's oldest hall of residence, final arrangements were being put in place for a culminating Samuel Beckett Gala Evening which would take place just a mile or two away, in Reading Town Hall. The event, hosted by the Beckett International Foundation and envisioned by its founder, Jim Knowlson, in consultation with a committee, had been under construction for many months. Julian Garforth, from the central hub of his desk in Reading University Library, also played a significant role in the preparatory activity.

Much of the success and impact of the evening would depend upon the availability of the invited participants. In the event, a spectacular line-up was achieved. Addressing a packed hall, the film director, producer, and writer Anthony Minghella introduced both the programme and the actors who would perform the selected Beckett excerpts: Lee Evans, Felicity Kendal, Jude Law, Barry McGovern, Rosamund Pike, Alan Rickman, and Billie Whitelaw. Sitting alongside one another in the centre of the stage, each stepped forward twice to deliver, solo or in collaboration, a range of texts from Beckett's prose, drama, and poetry.

The ingredients of the evening were dramatised short readings rather than sustained per-

formances. In these circumstances, it can be difficult for an actor to command and retain a measure of intensity in audience concentration. Here, however, the contrasting resonances provided by the variety both of text and of performer ensured that the readings constituted a series of compelling encounters between actor, text, and audience. Further shaping was provided by Minghella's well-measured and insightful introductions to each segment of the evening. Amongst these, the combination of Evans and Law in the *Godot* extract, the first sparky and effusive, the second more laconic, seemed to promise well for a full-length *Gogo / Didi* pairing in a future production. Rosamund Pike – not hitherto associated with the Beckett *oeuvre* – responded remarkably to the challenge of delivering part of *Not I* in the presence of that most memorable of all executors of the word-stream, Billie Whitelaw. For me, a notable and recurrent feature of the performances was the attention given to the musicality of the texts, more noticeable in some pieces than in others.

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James Knowlson welcomes actor Jude Law and director Anthony Minghella to the Samuel Beckett Gala Evening hosted by the Beckett International Foundation at the Reading Town Hall.

A high spot of the evening was Whitelaw's *Eh Joe*. She was as if hooked there in mid-air, her voice low and insinuating, her hand raised as if conducting herself in Beckett's absence. It was a spellbinding performance. Jude Law's 'What is the word' was somewhat uniform and cerebral (though dynamic through-lines are elusive in such a halting and self-cancellatory text). The consecutive and coincident surges of *Play* were delivered by the trio of Felicity Kendal, Alan Rickman, and Rosamund Pike with wonderful tautness and precision. As always, Barry McGovern exploited the vocal medium to bring out the humour and the violence, the bitterness and the tenderness of the Beckettian text. His rich bass snarl and darting, intelligent eyes – seen and heard here to advantage in *The Unnamable* – seem to wring more and more layers of meaning out of the texts through which he prowls.

Each actor seemed to reach deep within him/herself to produce committed performances which were greeted by loud and sustained applause on the part of the town-and-gown audience. The BBC had sent a reporter to cover the event, and this resulted in an item in their nationwide news programme *Today* the following morning, featuring interviews with some of the participants and a recorded extract from Lee Evans's reading from *Watt*. Jim Knowlson had ensured that this event, like its predecessor in 1998, would not only showcase Beckett's writing, but would also raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Relief. After the performance, a charity auction took place in the course of a drinks reception. Literary items from several donors, including Seamus Heaney, Edward Albee, and Brian Friel, were sold to the highest bidder. After the expenses of the evening had been deducted, Jim Knowlson was able to hand over to the Regional Chairperson of Macmillan Cancer Relief the impressive sum of £22,000.

Events such as this are difficult to organise and coordinate. The fact that so many high-profile performers were prepared to make themselves available demonstrates the ongoing influence of Samuel Beckett in the twenty-first century. Reading's Gala event celebrated that influence in a unique evening which stimulated not only existing Beckett scholars and enthusiasts, but also those who were newcomers to his work.

-- Mary Bryden

Beckett at Reading 2006

Among the large number of conferences devoted to Samuel Beckett this year, "Beckett at Reading" proved to be an important event which provided scholars with genuine intellectual stimulation and with new information on the work of Beckett. The conference took place between March 30 and April 2, 2006 at University of Reading's Wantage Hall, under the auspices of The School of English and American Studies and the Beckett International Foundation. Dr. Mark Nixon, who organised the conference, kept the event focused on new textual interpretations; this resulted in an event both coherent in its aims and able to give new insights into the works. Appropriately, a number of papers were focused on manuscript material, thus foregrounding the central role which the Beckett International Foundation plays for any scholar in the field. Most importantly, the conference was – at least for me – an example of how manuscript studies can be a fruitful area of research because of the interpretive problems they raise rather than solve. How to read manuscripts and what to look for in reading them were central critical problems, tackled in often original and innovative ways by a number of contributors.

The conference also offered participants a rich evening programme, including a reception to mark the John Haynes's photographic exhibition at the Museum of English Rural Life, a staging of *First Love* – directed by Walter Asmus and hosted at the Bob Kayley Studio Theatre, on the Bulmershe Court Campus – and the concluding Gala Evening, directed by Anthony Minghella and hosted by Reading Town Hall Museum, where the exhibition "Samuel Beckett: the Irish European" was also held. All of this was thought-provoking and enjoyable and bears well for the future of the archive (now under the directorship of Dr. Ronan McDonald), even though its planned relocation to the Museum of English Rural Life on Redlands Road remains controversial due to its distance from the main library. Controversial remains also the decision on the part of the University's management not to renew Dr. Julian Garforth's contract as a fellow, since researchers will lose a much-valued source of archival expertise.



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.

The conference focussed principally on intertextuality and language. Doireann Lalor, Minako Onamuro, Maria José Carrera, Therese Seidel, Chris Ackerley, David Hatch, Franz Michael Maier, Paul Stewart, and Mary Bryden all looked at Beckett's work intertextually. Lalor discussed the role of Dante in *Play*, focusing on the infernally insistent orchestration of pain. Intertextuality, she argued, can help us to reconsider the dialectics between music (as "mesure pour rien" – i.e. bar of silence – song, figure, form) and words. Onamuro detected links between W.B. Yeats's *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* and *Words and Music* and ...*but the clouds...* and argued for a connection between the two authors via alchemical symbols. Maria José Carrera read for the first time the references to the *Quixote* in MS3000, demonstrating that Beckett, after a few attempts at engaging with the original Spanish, relies heavily on de Brotonne's French translation of Cervantes's work and focuses on a relatively minor series of points. This discovery confirms that MS 3000 employs similar strategies in the case of its main intertextual references, from Dante to Cervantes. Sean Lawlor provided an illuminating reading of Beckett's poems "Alba" and "Dortmunder," not only discovering a number of previously unknown intertextual references, from Dante to the Bible, from Ronsard to St. Augustine, but also establishing some revealing intratextual references to other Beckett's work and providing one of the best readings of these early poems since Lawrence Harvey's.

John Pilling contextualised *From An Abandoned Work* by discussing different published and unpublished versions of the text, from the 1956 *Trinity News* version to the 1957 *Evergreen Review* one, from the Faber version collected in *No's Knife* (1958) to the transcription Beckett made for Jake Schwartz in 1958. He then focused on the analysis of the notebook containing a MS version of the text. The manuscript, held at Ohio State University Library in Columbus, is longer than the printed text; around 4000 words were excised from it for the published version. Pilling persuasively argued that the text is a little more "abandoned" than we might otherwise have thought; he analysed the manner of excision (mostly the text was "abandoned" in large chunks); and then convincingly disputed those readings which see *From An Abandoned Work* as the spontaneous outcome of "inspiration." The textual differences between the *Trinity News* and the Faber editions would already suggest this, Pilling maintains, but the evidence from the Ohio Manuscript confirms it for us beyond any doubt.

Therese Seidel contextualised *Nacht und Träume* in relation to materials held at Trinity College Dublin, Reading, and Stuttgart (WDR), while Chris Ackerley bravely ventured into the minutiae of *Human Wishes* and *Watt*, tracking down Johnsonian features in both texts. David Hatch also engaged with *Che Sciağura*, a text that is rarely analysed in detail, which he used to demonstrate what he identifies as a subversive use of a dialogue, which – he contends – persists in the later works. Franz Michael Meier carefully discussed how Beckett's preoccupation with the self – both in its Cartesian split and in its opposition to the world – is developed from Proust, often

through traceable intertextual repetitions. Paul Stewart's humorously titled "A Rump Sexuality: The Recurrence of Defecating Horses in Beckett's Oeuvre" opened up an interesting – and serious – discussion about sexuality in Beckett's work and the often disturbing and ironic ways in which generative and penetrative preoccupations interact in the image of the defecating horse.

Mary Bryden followed a very original line in looking at William Saroyan's response to the American première of *Godot*, thus not only recuperating a little known fragment of cultural history, but also raising important issues about "failure" (from "failing better" to lack of commercial success) in both authors. She also kindly "doubled" as Angela Moorjani, who sadly could not attend, reading her paper titled "Superimposition: Seeing Double in *Murphy* and *Film*."

Among the cluster of scholars working on language, Friedhelm Rathjen developed a micro analysis of the words "away," "always," and "way" in a number of late and unpublished texts. Using as a starting point *neither* and its phrase a "way of neither," he maintained that even apparently "simple" lexemes such as those mentioned above, can reveal a condensed cluster of often surprising meanings in which the "turning away" and the "way" coexist in a state of tension. Rathjen underpinned his argument by asserting that it is Beckett's conscious attention to detail which enables us to think of any repetition (such as those of "way") as intentional; however, his textual analysis was so persuasive that there would have been no need to resort to the intentional fallacy to convince us of the relevance of such "little" words in Beckett.

Anthony Collingdale, who discussed the logic and the grammar of Port Royal, gave an illuminating account of the intellectual history in France and Britain of the *ordo naturalis*. On the one hand, this enabled him to problematize the idea that French allows for greater clarity of expression (an idea to which Beckett scholars are fond of returning again and again) and, on the other, it led him to analyse the ways in which *How It Is* uses Cartesian linguistics to question rather than endorse the possibility of a natural order (Carla Locatelli had also analysed this problem in the past, albeit from a different angle).

Marion Fries-Dieckmann presented evidence from the production notebooks held at Reading and the autograph material at Stuttgart (SDR) and Berlin (Schiller-Theater) which argued forcefully and persuasively that Beckett's fascination with the German language had little to do with his early interest in the coincidence of form and content (as indicated in "Dante . . . Bruno . . . Vico . . . Joyce"). Instead – Fries-Dieckmann argued through rigorous textual analysis – the German language offered Beckett the possibility of counteracting the conventional idea of identity or complementarity of text and image on stage. Gregory Byala and Maximilian de Gaynesford analysed various aspects of Beckett's language, focusing on beginnings (Byala) and endings (de Gaynesford). While Byala contended that Beckett's novels "did not derive their force from the necessity of the end, but from the contingency and error of their own beginnings," de Gaynesford constructed a series of parallels between Beckett's and

Wittgenstein's approaches to "knowing how to go on," which both thinkers regarded as an unsolvable "torment."

Elizabeth Barry's work on cliché (soon to appear in the form of a monograph for Palgrave) has taken a new turn in her study of the importance of "stupidity" in Beckett. Barry persuasively argued that Beckett pits singular stupidity (in the tradition of Flaubert's self-absorbed idiots) against collective stupidity (in the tradition of Musil's attacks against bourgeois obtuseness); the clashes between these two forms of stupidity indicate the importance of the verbal *sottise* in Beckett as a strategy to question the certainty of truth-claims in both philosophical and commonplace utterance.

Enoch Brater focused on the theatre, analysing the role of landscape on stage, from props to offstage, from imaginary landscapes to the landscapes of memory. In her paper on "the dark field of memory," Antonia Rodríguez-Gago argued that, while the creative process of *Footfalls* indicates textual expansion aimed at increasing the musicality of the text, *Rockaby* was gradually distilled and fragmented, and can be read as a performance poem. Ronan McDonald, in a discussion of the drafts of *Play* that drew upon the work of René Girard, pointing out that one of these drafts featured two men and a woman, His paper raised the rarely asked question of the role of the homosocial bond in Beckett's work. Karine Germoni pursued the issue of genre in Beckett's *oeuvre* by presenting a detailed reading of drafts (held at Washington University Library of St. Louis but available in photocopied form at Reading) of *Le dépeupleur*. She forcefully demonstrated the theatricality of the text and, more specifically, the theatrical dimension of the narrator as both a puppet and a figure of authority in the text.

Lately we have heard a lot about "the history of the book" and the relevance of the materiality of the text to twentieth-century and contemporary scholarship, not only to medieval and early modern researchers. Recent development in genetic criticism (see especially the work of Lebrave and Gressillon) have developed approaches to unpublished material not merely aimed at establishing a definitive text in accordance with the assumed intentions of the author but focused instead on interpreting the meaning, form, and structure of the unpublished texts themselves. These, and the new developments in digital philology and manuscript preservation, are the premises from which "The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project" takes shape; by Autumn 2006, materials relevant to the *mirlitonades*, *Stirrings Stills*, *Not I*, *What is the Word*, and the *Dream Notebook* (including manuscripts, transcriptions and facsimiles) will be available as a digital edition. This will enable scholars to retrieve various drafts at the same time, to compare them, and even to click on a magnifying lens capable of instantaneously producing a transcript of the manuscript material. When Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle clicked on their "magical" lens in front of the international crowd of Beckett scholars, they were met by spontaneous applause. Scholars who have attempted to decipher Beckett's handwriting can gauge the relief of having this resource at their fingertips. This project is

welcome, and, as the two researchers pointed out, rather overdue if compared, for instance, with developments in this area within Joyce studies; I certainly hope that it will be extended to digitalize the entire holdings. This does, of course, involve certain risks.

A possible objection has to do with the way in which projects of this kind monumentalise authority; another problem is the potentially self-defeating nature of the exercise: does not such a project run the risk of erasing the role of the archive? Once all the Beckett archive is digitalised and (possibly) made available online, there will be no point in going to visit the archive and face the materiality of the text. Nixon and Van Hulle are well aware of such risks and their thoughtfulness and rigorous scholarship have assuaged the anxiety which any innovative development of this kind generates. The digitalization of the archive will raise new challenges, which can, however, be dealt with: not only because the digital editions can be seen as supplementing, rather than replacing, the paper archive, but also because such a project alerts us to the instability of the paper archive itself whilst opening up the possibility of original thinking about manuscripts thanks to digital philology. The possibility, among others, of comparing various drafts on the screen is an invaluable research tool, for which all Beckett scholars, I am sure, will be grateful. It goes without saying that such a project will have to gain its credentials by inspiring in scholars the necessary trust; anything produced so far (and available for consultation at the conference) has certainly done so.

— Daniela Caselli

Beckett Centenary Symposium, Dublin

The Beckett Centenary Symposium held 5-9 April 2006 at Trinity College, Dublin, was a homecoming of sorts for Beckett scholars from around the globe, an encounter with a place thoroughly entwined with their object of study. The events were predominantly held in the Samuel Beckett Theatre, only a stone's throw from Beckett's old rooms in New Square. Presented as part of the larger Beckett Centenary Festival with the support of the Irish government, the Symposium filled five days with panels, lectures, and performances, and also hosted a meeting of the Beckett Working Group organized by Linda Ben-Zvi within the International Federation for Theatre Research.

To walk around Trinity College, Dublin is to be confronted constantly by the biographical footprints of illustrious graduates, often taking the form of statues and busts, paintings and plaques. In April of this year, when Beckett's arresting visage had overtaken billboards across the city, it was his back and upturned collar which towered over the campus. The projection of this famous John Minihan photograph loomed over the Symposium proceedings on the first day, a reminder of the productive tension between the author and the analyst. Roughly fifty hours of discussion followed, ranging across many disciplines, research areas, languages, nations, and points

of view, toward an understanding of Beckett's legacy.

The opening panel, on "Beckett and Performance," featured Fintan O'Toole, the columnist and drama critic for the *Irish Times*, as chair. In his opening remarks, O'Toole posited the relationship between text and performance in Beckett as a "problem," drawing on his vast experience as a spectator and critic of Beckett's plays. He drew a series of generative questions from a central Beckettian ambivalence between rigour and instability: what is or is not a performance? How far into death does an author's authority extend? Can the plays, ultimately, change?

Jonathan Kalb related many of his recent conversations with American playwrights, including Mamet, Vogel, Durang, and Greenberg in order to gauge Beckett's legacy in performance (and perception) in the United States. Kalb observed that, given his status, Beckett is produced rather rarely in American regional theatres. The defining metaphor in his talk came from Tony Kushner, who positioned the choice between Beckett and American writing – such as his own – as "matzo versus lasagna," a metaphor implying that Beckett's "art of impoverishment" perhaps does not necessarily appeal to American audiences.

Kalb was followed by Joyce McMillan, the drama critic for the *Scotsman*, who focused largely on her own enjoyment and appreciation of seeing the work performed in Scotland. The two aspects she highlighted were what she called the "profound universality" of the work, as well as the "intensity of re-imagination" of what the theatrical space can be. Her conclusion that the work was "bleak but funny" contrasted strongly with the verdict of the final speaker on the panel, the Irish playwright and poet Frank McGuinness, who quickly replied: "not that funny." Noting the habitual fondness of Irish actors for the comedy and vaudeville in Beckett, McGuinness insisted that ambiguity is "a more complex score to settle." He wielded a powerful metaphor of his own, saying that, in literature, he prefers the wolves over the sheep; Beckett's "dictatorial and relentless" authorial persona had the effect of turning many into sheep. Being read by some as a tacit accusation and by others as a long-awaited truth, this comment sparked an intense half-hour discussion between panel and audience.

Terry Eagleton, the prolific cultural theorist from the University of Manchester, presented the opening night lecture on "Beckett and Nothing." Later referred to as "panoptic and magisterial" by Nigel Biggar, Eagleton's discourse traced the philosophical heritage of Beckett's *via negativa*, creating a kind of canon of – or at least a prolegomenon to – aporia in human thought and writing. Eagleton's citations alone showed an impressive breadth of Western thought, as he quoted at will from Adorno, Aquinas, Augustine, Berkeley, Burke, Conrad, Duns Scotus, Hardy, Joyce, Lenin, Schopenhauer, Sterne, Swift, and, of course, Eagleton.

In the second day's panel, on "Beckett and Ireland," Anna McMullan chaired a discussion which challenged some of the terminology of "universality" used the previous day. The panel, which included Anthony Cronin and Declan Kiberd, manifested an ongoing effort to reclaim "the Beckett country" and to articulate the complex re-



Edward Beckett, Judy Hegarty Lovett (Artistic Director of Gare St. Lazare Players Ireland), and Caroline Beckett Murphy met during the "Access All Beckett" season at The Beckett Centenary Festival in April. In addition to their suite of six prose recitals and Walter Asmus's production of *A Piece of Monologue*, the company also recorded new productions of all of Beckett's radio plays. These were broadcast by RTE during the week of April 13th and can be listened to via internet at <http://www.samuel-beckett.net/#x7>.

lationship of his work to national identity. Cronin, one of Beckett's biographers, drew attention to the nuances of locality found among the Irish in general, asserting that Beckett's work has more to say about Foxrock than about the island as a whole. Using close readings of the novels, Cronin firmly traced the tramps and Beckettian "men with no background" to Ireland. Kiberd followed with a discussion of Beckett in "exile," clarifying his ostensible rejection of Ireland and the English language into a rejection of "Irishness" and of identity defined through otherness. Kiberd found a fruitful comparison in Borges, an "Argentine in a French mask," and positioned Beckett in a traditionally Irish tension between the intellectual and the tramp.

The evening lecture featured John Rockwell, the music critic for the *New York Times*, speaking on "Beckett, Feldman, and the New York School: Music after Beckett." Rockwell explored the interaction of music and text through the work of Morton Feldman, composer and friend of Beckett, with broader reference to repetition in Philip Glass and the text scores of LeMonte Young. He identified four ways in which music and text can interact: 1) text foremost, music woven in or incidental; 2) music foremost and lyrics internal (the semi-conventional form); 3) rigid adherence between words and music; or 4) no text at all, but music which "captures the spirit" of the words. His talk, punctuated with sound cues (and with external noise, like a passing airplane, sometimes mistaken for sound cues), was driven home by an evening performance from the Crash Ensemble, including work by John Cage and Peter Adriaansz.

Friday's panel, like Beckett's Moran, raised "certain questions of a theological nature," focusing on religion and philosophy in Beckett and extending the discussion ably begun by Terry Eagleton. Nigel Biggar, a Trinity College professor of theology and ethics, led the panel off with a slightly mischievous comparison of the Symposium to the debates among believers at the foundation of a religion. He concisely expressed the "Beckettian form of atheism" as a *wanting* to believe in God, in order to call Him to account. This inverted theodicy was further explored by Mary Bryden, who cited the "dynamism by negation" found in Beckett's selves. Rather than a denial of God, Bryden sees Beckett's critique as against the insufficiency of God, or the inconceivability of God; one cannot deny that which is beyond denial. Minako Okamuro, of Waseda University in Tokyo, extended the discussion from the Christian milieu into the occult. In her own scholastic alchemy, she connected Beckett's *Quad*, Dante, Bruno, the sigla from *Finnegans Wake*, and W. B. Yeats, which Terence Brown, a biographer of Yeats, considered a "daring comparison." Brown finished the panel by drawing an arc between the *via negativa* laid out by Eagleton, Biggar, and Bryden and the atheistic mysticism suggested in Beckett's response to music, order, number, and narrative.

The lecture which followed, "Watt Ho," was rich in puns and cross-references, pitting the formidable verbal intelligence of Paul Muldoon against the labyrinthine machinations of the novel *Watt*. Muldoon spun an eloquent web of tautologies, and it is certain that his talk "proved true, whatever that is, or false, whatever that means." Linguistic flexibility was required for the evening events as well, which were in French. Raphaëlle Gitlis performed an "in progress" version of *Pas Moi* directed by Barbara Hutt, followed by the famous Pierre Chabert performance of *La dernière bande*.

Chabert returned in a different form the next day, when he sat on the second "Beckett and Performance" panel, a discussion with practitioners chaired by Everett Frost of New York University. Frost drew on recent experience with a theatrical performance of the radio play *All that Fall* to show the fundamental impossibility of perfect authorial control. Further, he asserted that this tendency toward change and new contextual life is "more an impeachment of scholarship of the theatre than of the nature of the plays." Walter Asmus, the German director who assisted Beckett in Berlin, upheld this practical and flexible basis for the exploration, but also emphasized the importance of "honesty" and "attention" to the work. Chabert spoke animatedly in French, with simultaneous translation by Anna McMullan, but was somewhat more conservative, referring to the eventual release of texts into the public domain as "un problème" and stating that it was impossible to separate the precise copyright specifications from the meaning of the plays. The panel on the whole was dominated by experiential knowledge and direct anecdotes, a refreshing re-embodiment of what can often slip into wholly theoretical territory.

The evening lecture by Marina Warner treated a wide range of Beckett's work and genres, exploring the materi-

ality of language as well as its performative aspects. She opened with an analysis of Beckett's decision to write in French and then invoked Mallarmé to inaugurate a notion of "semantic synaesthesia." Warner offered a compelling thread of linguistic development from Babel, nursery rhymes, and nonsense poetry to the symbolists, *Finnegans Wake*, and *Imagination Dead Imagine*.

On Sunday morning, the final panel met before a packed crowd to discuss Beckett's legacy. Reflecting the scale of the event, the illustrious panel included Enoch Brater, Steven Connor, Bruno Clément, Stan Gontarski, Linda Ben-Zvi, and H. Porter Abbott. The chair and moderator of the discussion was James Knowlson, a scholar whose own impact on Beckett's legacy, both as his close friend and as his authorized biographer, is considerable.

Enoch Brater launched the proceedings with a case for Beckettian exceptionalism, describing him as both "of his time and apart from it." According to Brater, in his avoidance of commodification and the many ways in which his writing is all-encompassing, Beckett is both a writer and a way of thinking. Steven Connor spoke of this broad and open legacy's being at risk, however, from "censorious inhibition and over-reverential monumentality." The need for friends and collaborators in Beckett's life belies the supreme solitude often conferred upon the artist; Connor agitated movingly for engagement and transformation of Beckett's work, so that this solitude is not Beckett's lot in the afterlife. Bruno Clément, director of the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris, upheld this viewpoint as well, stating that the work must be free for directors and actors to adapt, translate, reinterpret, and perform.

Stan Gontarski, who discussed several areas in which such transformations might be taking place, foresees in the work of artists like Atom Egoyan and the Brazilian Adriano and Fernando Guimarães a future for Beckett outside the theatre. Linda Ben-Zvi, reporting on the results of the Beckett Working Group over the previous week, found a similar path toward openness outside the theatre, in the discourse of the thirty-six scholars from fifteen countries, sharing sources and developing new inquiries.

H. Porter Abbott, in his closing remarks, laid out an anatomy of Beckett's legacy, and located three types of legacy currently in play. The first he called the "absolute," predicated on fidelity, and represented by the Estate and the early workers in the critical field, namely Knowlson, Pilling, Cohn, and Gontarski. Second, Abbott named a "recombinant" legacy, which takes precisely the opposite approach; it is more interested in shredding and redistributing the text, referencing, stealing, and reinterpreting. Finally, Abbott named – and seemed to privilege – the "generative." This is the productive contribution of Beckett to human knowledge, whether in philosophy, ethics, literature, or science; it is his imprint on the past, present, and future; it is his afterlife. From the crowds of scholars, students, thespians, and Dubliners, young and old, who flocked to the Symposium, it seems safe to say that this generative Beckett is alive and well in the year of his centenary.

— Nicholas Johnson

The Samuel Beckett Working Group in Dublin, 2006

“Beckett at 100: Looking Back/Looking Forward,” the 2006 meeting of the Samuel Beckett Working Group, took place 4-8 April during the Beckett Centenary Symposium at Trinity College Dublin. In honor of the centenary, the working group sought to involve as many voices as possible; thirty-nine participants were invited to present papers on a staggering array of topics from all phases of Beckett’s career. In keeping with the protocol for previous meetings, papers were circulated beforehand, and our sessions consisted of a summary by the presenter and a group discussion. Because of the number of participants, I am unfortunately able to offer only the briefest sketch of each paper.

Given our location, Beckett’s Irishness was an unavoidable topic. Ciaran Ross offered a critique of the “Irish Beckett” that focused on the problematic way in which Irish readings return Beckett to the Ireland that he so specifically sought to negate. Ross advocated a more dialectical approach, one that acknowledges Beckett’s attempt to make the “wholly other” an actuality. Anna McMullan similarly emphasized Beckett’s commitment to difference, finding particular relevance in a quotation from “Capital of the Ruins” in which he says of the French and the Irish: “their way of being we, was not our way and [...] our way of being they, was not their way.” She then went on to draw attention to the layered histories in *Eleutheria* and *Godot* that might suggest new paradigms for contemporary Irish identity.

Another pair of papers addressed Beckett’s debt to two of his most famous Irish friends, James Joyce and Thomas MacGreevy. Minako Okamuro saw the shadow of Joyce in *Ohio Impromptu*. She argued that it employs a “pseudo-Joycean narrative style” in which the perspective shifts between an objective narrator and the subjective characters described in the text, an effect described by Hugh Kenner as the “Uncle Charles Principle.” Susan Schreibman outlined Samuel Beckett’s forty-year friendship with Thomas MacGreevy. Schreibman argued that MacGreevy, who is the key source for Beckett’s intellectual development from his move to Paris to the beginning of the war, was just as important a model for the young Beckett as was Joyce.

Our meeting site might also explain our most often discussed text: Beckett’s early novel, *Murphy*. Lidan Lin compared an early, unpublished typescript of the fifth chapter of *Murphy* with the published version. She concluded that Beckett’s alterations made the relationship between himself and his protagonist less direct—the manuscript focuses on a hard-working writer named Quigley—while also making the novel’s narrative less conventional. Tom Cousineau, in a reading of *Murphy* that drew on Rene Girard’s concept of mimetic desire, argued that Murphy’s attempt to imitate Mr. Endon’s psychosis is a “demented” version of Beckett’s own creative imitation

of such literary models as Dante and James Joyce who, like Beckett in *Murphy*, had also subjected the story of Icarus to a highly original rewriting. In my own paper, I suggested that Beckett’s dramatic turn and his deterritorialized aesthetic grew out of his frustration with the limitations of conventional political and literary notions of Irishness that are directly addressed in *Murphy*.

Many more participants discussed Beckett’s relationship to the French language and French literature. Anthony Cordingley outlined the then prevailing theories of the French language and French language instruction and used these ideas to read *Comment c’est*, which he remarked often seems a rehearsal of the rituals of language acquisition. Daniel Katz emphasized the degree to which Beckett differentiated himself from trans-channel modernism, noting that his early urban poetry refuses to participate in the modernist celebration of the city. Katz also questioned the familiar notion that Beckett’s turn to French was a way to escape the overwhelming influence of Joyce; he remarked that Beckett’s French betrays a more significant debt to Celine than his English does to Joyce. Nadia Louar argued that bilingualism, which is central to Beckett’s literary project, represents a “faulty process of repetition and remembrance that structures the very breach within which the bilingual work is conceived.” She suggested that its implicitly bilingual nature enables Beckett’s work to achieve his goal of equating form with content while also refusing any definitive location. Jürgen Seiss argued that Beckett’s apparent withdrawal from the socio-phenomenological world into a world of pure form was an attempt to stake out a position in a cultural field dominated by Sartre, Ionesco, and Adamov. Seiss further observed that Beckett’s repeated attempts to place the author in a privileged position in relation to the reader was one of the ways in which an immigrant writer could deflect challenges to his legitimacy. Jackie Blackman also addressed Beckett’s attempt to distance himself from Sartre, but she attributed this to his sense of allegiance to Jewish friends and relatives. For Blackman, *Eleutheria* in particular is a bold critique of the blind spots of Sartrean Existentialist/Marxist dogma with regard to anti-Semitism, the nature of the Holocaust, and Stalin.

The work of Giorgio Agamben also inspired some new perspectives. David Houston Jones discussed the topic of “Archiving Beckett” in view of Agamben’s rethinking of the Foucauldian archive. For Jones, *Krapp’s Last Tape* offers perhaps the clearest example of the self-cataloging that is a persistent subject in Beckett’s late prose texts, from *Comment c’est* to *Le Dépeupleur*. Jones argued that these texts anticipate Agamben’s theorization of testimony. Russell Smith noted that despite the fact that ethics would seem to require agency, Beckett’s *oeuvre* undermines agency and speech even as it manages to imagine an ethics. Smith suggested that Beckett’s ethics of desubjectification prefigures the “I” that disappears in the act of bearing witness in *Remnants of Auschwitz*.

The other philosophers and theorists who came up in our sessions were quite diverse. Naoya Mori suggested that Beckett’s notion of force—premised upon an object that is at once still and in motion—is derived from Leib-

niz's monad; she then contrasted Leibniz's dynamism with Cartesian dualism. Irit Degani-Raz described the legacy of the spear of Telephus as a cultural metaphor of wounding and healing and, via Adorno and Horkheimer, related it to the tapes in *Krapp's Last Tape*, which bring the past into the present, but also make it clear that the past cannot be recovered. Turning to Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatisches Theater*, Dmitri Soenen asked the question of whether Beckett's shorter plays should be described as "postdramatic." Soenen concluded that they should not, primarily because of Beckett's dedication to the Western tradition. In a paper indebted to Alain Badiou's work, Matthew Causey described the "subtractive logic of a tragedy minus the tragic" in Beckett, the endpoint of which is not a slipping toward disappearance or death, but a movement in the direction of appearance or "immanence." S. E. Gontarski compared Beckett's "afterimagism" to the imagism of Bergson. From Gontarski's perspective, Bergson is the crucial link between Modernist writing and the work of contemporary cognitive scientists and philosophers. After his talk, we debated whether, as Gontarski argued, Beckett's theatre offers an image of the body rather than the body itself.

Three papers emphasized psychological approaches or themes. Ben Keatinge stressed the "psychotic distortions" that often complicate communication, expression, and memory in Beckett's works. By way of example, he made a distinction between *Embers* and *Krapp's Last Tape*, in which memory serves as persecutor, and *That Time*, in which memory serves as a panacea; he further noted that this distinction turns upon the presence of psychiatric problems. Mariko Hori Tanaka, who discussed the representation of suppressed fear in the plays of Beckett, Harold Pinter, and Minoru Betsuyaku, argued that all three playwrights encourage the audience to face their fear by depicting the stasis that results when individuals suppress it. Rodney Sharkey approached Beckett through a theoretical consideration of the relationship between birth and booze, the public house and publication. Sharkey related Beckett's pre-natal memories and his difficult birth as a writer to several moments in *More Pricks Than Kicks* and *Murphy* in order to demonstrate the surprising degree to which the failed births and attempts to escape the womb in Beckett's writing employ the language of alcohol and the public house.

Three papers addressed Beckett's relationship to other media. Matthijs Englebarts noted that Beckett's *Film* has attracted much more interest in literary studies than in film studies, even though it makes for a rather bizarre literary text. Englebarts pointed out that *Film* focuses on the dominant issues of early film theory—color, sound, and the use of the close-up—issues that Beckett first encountered during the 1930s in his reading of essays by Arnheim, Pudovkin, and Eisenstein. Jean Antoine-Dunne discussed the influence of Sergei Eisenstein on Beckett and Francis Bacon, arguing that Beckett, like Bacon, was deeply influenced by the film image. In comparing Beckett's manuscripts to Eisenstein's film images and illustrations, Antoine-Dunne found that both artists employed a very similar creative process. Catherine Laws

discussed a "triangle of association and influence" involving Morton Feldman, Beckett, and Jasper Johns. None of these individuals collaborated directly, but Feldman's late works drew inspiration from Beckett (including *Neither*, for which Feldman requested, and received, a text written by Beckett); Feldman was influenced by the crosshatch paintings of Jasper Johns; and Johns's contributions to Beckett's *Fizzles* were among his first crosshatch works.

Performance issues inspired a number of papers. J. M. M. Houppermans discussed the "motive of the fall" in both an ontological and a theatrical sense. Houppermans was particularly intrigued by the actual as well as the suggested falls in *Krapp's Last Tape*, especially the presence of the banana peel and the bending of Krapp's head. Antoina Rodriguez Gago, who remarked that spatiality is perhaps even more important than subjectivity in Beckett's plays, made a distinction between on-stage spaces—which "contain, control, torment, and produce characters"—and off-stage spaces—the geographic and cultural spaces towards which the characters repeatedly gesture. In many cases, these references to off-stage space reveal the characters to be transcultural, which for Gago explains the difficulty of locating the on-stage space in Beckett's plays. Callie Oppedisano argued that Beckett only came to recognize the complexity of femininity once he began to write for the stage, and thus that the problematic representation of women in *Eleutheria* is a sign of its intermediate position between his early fiction and his drama. She then described the various choices that a production of *Eleutheria* would have to make in regard to gender. Everett Frost discussed his recent staged reading of *All That Fall*. Although he had long felt that it could never be successfully presented on stage because it takes place in Maddy's head, Frost was surprised by how well it worked as a staged reading. Several group members remarked that the future of Beckett's radio plays would largely depend upon staged readings because our relationship with the radio has changed.

Three participants discussed the performance of Beckett's dramatic works in particular locations. Shimon Levy noted that Beckett productions in Israel have tended toward two extremes: either they have tried to demonstrate that Beckett is universal or they have sought to reveal latent Israeli elements in his work. He remarked that despite the popularity of *Godot*, it is Beckett's other, less frequently staged plays that have had the largest impact on Israeli theatre. Elena Dotsenko, who gave an overview of Beckett's reception in Russia, revealed that Beckett's plays were not particularly popular during the twentieth century—perhaps due to the dominance of realism in Russia and the lack, until the 1990s, of accurate Russian translations—but that interest in Beckett has recently increased. Sarahjane Scaife described her experiences directing Beckett's plays in the Republic of Georgia, Mongolia, and India. Scaife is particularly curious about the limits of Beckett's supposed universality: while she found that a group in Georgia quickly related *Godot* to Stalin, no such identification emerged in Mongolia. Finally, three participants addressed Beckett's legacy. Julie Campbell considered Beckett's influence on Paul Auster,

noting that Beckett's presence is unmistakable in Auster's early fiction. *Moon Palace*, for example, includes several references to *Endgame* and *Murphy*, and his play "Laurel and Hardy go to Heaven" is a rewriting of *Godot*. However, Auster had learned to suppress Beckett's influence by the time he reworked the "Laurel and Hardy" material for *The Music of Chance*. Jonathan Kalb described a recent project in which he interviewed seventeen American playwrights in order to gauge Beckett's influence on contemporary American drama. Surprisingly, he found that the most insightful comments tended to come from playwrights whose work would seem to have little relationship to that of Beckett, for instance, Paula Vogel, who remarked, "Beckett enabled women to become playwrights." Finally, Hersh Zeifman discussed Beckett's transformation from an actual biographical subject into a public figure by offering an account of three plays in which he appears as a character: Michael Hastings's *Calico*, Sean Dixon's *Sam's Last Dance*, and Justin Fleming's *Burnt Piano*. Zeifman concluded that in his afterlife Beckett becomes whatever we would like him to be.

— Jonathan Naito

Beckett in Tel Aviv

As part of the world-wide celebrations on the hundredth anniversary of Beckett's birth, Tel Aviv University held on 27-30 May 2006 an international symposium entitled "Samuel Beckett: Looking Back/Looking Forward" under the skillful direction of Linda Ben-Zvi. The focus was on Beckett's contributions to theatre and fiction, his innovations, and his legacy for future generations. A prominent role was given to performances, especially by members of the university's Department of Theatre Studies. It opened with a special Hebrew/English staged reading of Deb Margolin's play *Critical Mass*, directed by Merri Milwe, and performed by Margolin (speaking in English), and acting students, who performed in Hebrew. Major figures from the field of Israeli drama and theatre participated in a panel chaired by Shimon Levy on Beckett's impact and legacy. Panelists included such leading Jewish and Arab theatre practitioners as directors Rina Yerushalmi, Salim Daw, and Yossi Yizraeli, actors Hanna Marron and Shimon Lev-Ari, and playwright Yehoshua Sobol. All gave stimulating presentations based on their personal experience.

The keynote lectures given by Nicolas Green (Trinity College, Dublin), Antonia Rodriguez Gago (Universidad Autonoma, Madrid), and Florence Godeau (Université de Lyon) focused, respectively, on placing Beckett in the context of Irish drama from Yeats and Synge to Friel and Murphy; the theatrical image of the body in Spanish text adaptations and theatre productions; and the rewriting of thematic and mythical elements (Beckett's encounter with Kafka). Other lectures emphasized Beckett's work with specific generic elements stemming from different media and his particular ways of transferring such elements from one medium to another: the way he deals with film and television, or with the interview, but also with



Gitit Ben-Avi performed in Shimon Levy's production of *Act Without Words I* in the Tel Aviv University Theatre, June 2006.

the audio-tape. A philosophical reading of *Krapp's Last Tape* Krapp's related memory to wounding and healing. Specific political situations were referred to in an analysis of *Godot* and in commentaries recalling various theatrical productions in the Arab world. Beckett thus appeared at the same time as a unique author and as a playwright whose figures and situations allow a multiplicity of transfers and interpretations.

Perhaps the most enriching contributions to this commemoration came from the students who performed Beckett under the direction Ruth Ziv-Ayal, Edna Shavit, Shimon Levy, Rina Yerushalmi, and visiting artists in residence Deb Margolin and Merri Milwe, from the United States. Their performances included *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Shavit (the seventh time she has staged the play in Israel), and seven of Beckett's later, short plays, all directed by Shimon Levy, including *Come and Go*, *Rough for Theatre II*, *Not I*, *Act Without Words I*, *What Where*, *Footfalls*, and *Ohio Impromptu*. The conference also featured a performance entitled "The Supper of G and D," a movement-theatre work written by Ziv-Ayal and inspired by male/female-relations as found in Beckett's work. Nili Sacher and Aviv Pines, who played the roles of G and D, an allusion to the initials of Gogo and Didi, captivated the audience during forty-five powerful minutes. The physicality of their performance possessed an intensity rarely seen on the professional stage.

The Tel Aviv symposium gave proof of Samuel Beckett's presence in the field of theatre as well as of literary criticism, a presence that seems to stem from his profound insight into human behavior but also into institutional conditions related to his work on and with the media on the one hand, and from the adaptability of certain figures and situations shaped by him, on the other hand. To give an example recurrent in the symposium: the couples Didi-Gogo and Pozzo-Lucky seem to have been adopted by very different theatres and publics in the region as authentically Israeli, with all the divergences implied.

— Jürgen Siess

Beckett et les Quatre Éléments » en Pays Cézarien

C'est à Cézanne que l'on songe lorsqu'on évoque la ville d'Aix-en-Provence. Pour le centenaire de sa mort en 1906, le grand peintre a été dignement célébré. Or, tandis que mourait Cézanne, naissait cet immense auteur qu'est Samuel Beckett. Pour marquer l'année 2006 à l'effigie de Beckett, dans la continuité des célébrations qui ont eu lieu à Tallahassee, Reading, Dublin et ailleurs, l'Université de Provence s'est associée à l'association « La Maison Samuel Beckett » de Roussillon dans le cadre du colloque international et bilingue « Beckett et les quatre éléments » du 14 au 17 juin 2006. Ce colloque, organisé par Karine Germoni (Département de Littérature française), avec le soutien de l'Université de Provence, la Mairie d'Aix-en-Provence, le Conseil Général des Bouches-du-Rhône et le Conseil Régional PACA, a réuni une trentaine d'intervenants.

Beckett n'a pas écrit sur la Sainte-Victoire mais c'est avec un œil de peintre qu'il a observé, non loin d'elle, les fameuses ocres de Roussillon, là où il a vécu durant deux ans et demi pendant la guerre, là « où tout est rouge » comme le rappelle Vladimir à Estragon, là où ils ont fait « les vendanges » « chez un nommé Bonnelly ». La mention de la terre comme celle du ciel n'a rien d'exceptionnel d'une œuvre où les quatre éléments primordiaux (terre, air, eau, feu) et leurs attributs respectifs reviennent d'un bout à l'autre, dans chacun des genres et des médias que Beckett a explorés, que ces éléments soient convoqués séparément, simultanément ou complémentirement, sur le mode de l'absence et de l'effacement, de la présence ou de l'efflorescence, de l'euphorie ou de la dysphorie, souvent de l'ambivalence.

S'interroger sur le rôle que jouent les quatre éléments dans l'œuvre de Beckett, qui toujours s'est acheminée vers l'essentiel, est apparu comme une manière appropriée de rendre hommage à cet auteur pour le centenaire de sa naissance. L'étude de ces éléments essentiels exemplifie la formule bien connue de Beckett, « less is more, » comme son postulat symétrique « more is less » : ce petit nombre d'éléments autorise en effet un grand nombre de perspectives. L'air, la terre, le feu et l'eau peuvent être envisagés sous un angle géographique, physique et métaphysique mais aussi poétique, esthétique, métaphorique, symbolique ou encore psychanalytique.

C'est de cette dernière perspective qu'est parti Sjeff Houppermans (Université de Leiden) pour nous rappeler que dans *Mal vu mal dit* les pierres beckettienne font le pont entre les instances parentales, sous le signe de ce fort-da que Freud décrit en tant que kinesthésie élémentaire. C'est dans ce même texte que Llewellyn Brown (Université de Paris X) a montré que le règne minéral qui prédomine traduit l'influence d'un idéal paternel mortifiant dont le personnage ne peut se défaire. C'est encore dans *Mal vu mal dit* et dans *Worstward Ho* que Stéphane Inkel (Université Queen's) a démontré comment à trav-



Edward Beckett chats with Aimé Bonnelly at the reception hosted by the mayor of Roussillon for participants in the «Beckett et les Quatre Éléments» conference organized by Karine Germoni.

ers les figures de pierre est à l'œuvre la métaphorisation entre le corps de la mère et l'image de la pierre. A son tour, Ciaran Ross (Université de Strasbourg) a examiné le monde des pierres beckettienne aussi bien dans la Trilogie romanesque que dans des pièces telles que *Waiting for Godot* ou *That Time*. L'examen textuel des éléments pose bien entendu la question du corpus choisi.

Quelles sont les constantes, les divergences d'un texte à l'autre, dans la diachronie et dans la synchronie de l'œuvre ? Beckett réserve-t-il le même traitement aux éléments d'un genre à l'autre ou bien ce traitement est-il trans / supragénérique ? La programmation qui, pour des raisons pratiques et méthodologiques, a croisé dans un va-et-vient très beckettien approches génériques et approches thématiques, a permis de faire émerger quelques réponses. Tout comme le va-et-vient entre les deux langues, Français et Anglais, reflet de ce bilinguisme fondamental dans l'œuvre beckettienne – le croisement des deux langues dans la programmation des communications nous l'a rappelé bien à propos.

L'appréhension des éléments est-elle identique d'une langue à l'autre, d'une culture à l'autre ? Les références à la nature spécifiquement irlandaise sont-elles transposables ? Ou encore sont-elles davantage présentes dans l'imaginaire des premières œuvres composées en anglais ? Mark Nixon (Université de Reading) a évoqué la fascination de Beckett pour les rivières, la Liffey notamment, dans les textes des années 1930 ; comme chez Joyce, l'écoulement des eaux se mue dans l'œuvre beckettienne en procédé textuel et structurel. A leur tour, ce sont les éléments qui donnent forme à l'écriture de Beckett en même temps qu'ils lui permettent d'« accommoder[r] le gâchis »¹...

Lourdes Carriedo (Université Complutense de Madrid) et Yannick Hoffert (Université de Nancy) ont montré que l'eau tant dans l'œuvre romanesque que dans l'œuvre théâtrale de Beckett est, en termes bachelardiens, un principe fondateur d'images. Anne-Cécile Guilbart (Université

1 « Beckett at the Madeleine », entretien avec Tom Driver, 1961.

de Paris VIII) a abordé la question des « canalisations beckettiennes », non pas celles de la Liffey par exemple, mais des pleurs et des humeurs de l'œil auxquels Beckett imprime un écoulement « sous contrainte ». L'imaginaire beckettien serait-il donc fondamentalement aqueux ou aquatique ? Ne serait-il pas plutôt igné comme l'a proposé Jean-Pierre Ferrini (Université de Paris VII) dans son étude de *La Dernière Bande* ou cendré comme l'a envisagé Yves Le Moing (Université de Provence) dans sa lecture de *Cendres* ?

Ou encore terrestre, comme l'a envisagé Katerina Kanelli en étudiant *Catastrophe* (Université de Paris VIII) ? C'est également ce qu'a proposé Aphrodite Sivetidou en examinant le théâtre de Beckett (Université Aristote de Thessalonique). Les personnages beckettien adhèrent à la terre, sur laquelle ils se couchent pour penser, rêver, se reposer aspirant à faire corps avec elle. Car la terre englutit comme nous l'a rappelé Myriam Jeantroux (Université de Besançon) : « d'une part ça se creuse, d'autre part ça se comble » ; c'est de cette terre à la fois mère et tombeau, mise en scène dans *Oh les beaux jours*, dont nous a parlé Régine Bruneau-Suhas. Cette terre beckettienne en tant que *materia prima* souvent se mêle à l'eau. Mireille Bousquet (Université de Paris VIII) nous a montré que la boue, substance informe et indistincte, dans *Comment c'est* est le lieu du dire, un espace poétique décollé de l'évidence référentielle. Nous avons également vu, avec Michel Bertrand (Université de Provence), que dans *Molloy*, « l'être de boue ne saurait être un être debout ».

A l'endroit des éléments, l'œuvre de Beckett serait-elle donc encore à définir comme cette œuvre de « l'entre-deux » dont les critiques ont tant parlé ? Entre deux langues, entre deux terres, entre la terre et l'eau, à l'horizontale par conséquent ou bien plutôt à la verticale, comme l'arbre de Godot, entre la terre et le ciel comme l'ont proposé Thomas Hunkeler (Université de Fribourg) et Nadia Louar (Hobart and William Smith Colleges) ? Le même élément permet de parcourir l'espace dans des directions opposées comme nous l'a rappelé Isabelle Ost (Université catholique de Louvain) : la terre vaut aussi bien comme limite indéfinie de l'espace à parcourir que comme matière, matière féconde qui oscille entre la plus grande lourdeur (la boue est terre chargée d'eau) et la plus grande légèreté quand elle se fait poussière (« mud »/ « dust »). Enfin, Annie Charpillot (Université de Lausanne) a envisagé les quatre éléments qui participent simultanément de la mise en forme de l'humain dans la Trilogie. Quant à Marie-Claude Hubert (Université de Provence), elle a examiné les éléments à la scène pour souligner le rapport ambivalent de Beckett aux éléments : « Funestes lorsqu'ils sont présents », nous dit-elle, « ils engendrent la souffrance lorsqu'ils sont absents ».

Dans le carré formé par les quatre éléments, l'œuvre de Beckett tenterait-elle dans ses parcours droits et obliques comme les quatre figures de *Quad* d'épuiser toutes les combinaisons possibles ? Au carrefour des quatre éléments serait-elle à la recherche d'un sens, d'un centre, aussi attractif que répulsif, d'un cinquième élément, à portée de main sans jamais être atteint ? Ce cinquième élément serait-il le centre comme pour Gracian, le sacré comme chez Patrick James Michel (auteur d'un livre ré-

cent intitulé *Five* dans lequel est affirmée l'existence d'un « cinquième élément, » le sacré) ou encore, comme pour Dante, l'amour, « qui dans sa ronde élanse le soleil et d'autres étoiles. » ?

Enfin, dans quelle mesure, le discours beckettien sur les éléments ou les images élémentaires que ce discours produit entrent-ils en résonance avec d'autres discours élémentaires, antérieurs ou contemporains : avec ceux des mythographes, comme l'ont examiné Angela Moorjani (Université du Maryland) et Thomas Cousineau (Washington College); avec la Bible comme l'a analysé Eric Eigenmann (Université de Genève) ; avec les textes des philosophes présocratiques, comme l'ont étudié Sophia Felopoulou (Université Aristote de Thessalonique), Anne Darmstätter (Université de Zurich) et Dirk Van Hulle (Université d'Anvers); ou les textes d'autres auteurs, de Sartre, comme l'a mis en exergue Dimitri Tokarev (Maison Pouchkine de Saint-Petersbourg) ; ou encore ceux de Lamartine et d'autres Romantiques, comme l'a examiné Karine Germoni (Université de Provence) dans *Le Dépeupleur* ?

Autant de perspectives que le colloque « Beckett et les quatre éléments » a permis de faire émerger en même temps que d'autres interrogations. Car il est apparu, une fois encore, que l'exégèse des textes de Beckett demeure sans fonds, ce qui fait des chercheurs beckettien, en quelque sorte, des travailleurs de la mer... vingt mille lieux sous les mer. Et même si Beckett n'est pas, comme Jules Verne, l'auteur des romans de l'eau ou des romans de l'air, et que par conséquent les intervenants du colloque n'ont été conviés ni à un voyage De la terre à la lune ou à Cinq semaines en ballon, les manifestations organisées dans le prolongement des journées leur ont permis de voyager dans le temps et dans l'espace.

En partenariat avec l'Institut de l'Image d'Aix-en-Provence, a été programmée la soirée « Beckett au cinéma » le mercredi 14 juin au cours de laquelle ont été projetés *Film* de Beckett et *Dis Joe* (avec Jean-Louis Barrault et la voix de Madeleine Renaud), après une présentation par Bernard Rémy (Cinémathèque de la Danse - Paris), « Le rapport de Beckett à l'image ». Le jeudi 15 juin, dans le cadre des « Ecritures Croisées » de La Cité du Livre, a eu lieu une rencontre avec Edward Beckett, Pierre Chabert et Raymond Federman, animée par Gérard Meudal, journaliste au *Monde des Livres*. Cette soirée, particulièrement émouvante, a permis d'évoquer des tas de souvenirs et d'anecdotes plaisantes sur la vie et l'œuvre de Samuel Beckett. Edward Beckett a exprimé combien cet oncle « parisien », grand sportif et musicien, avait été présent dans sa vie. Quant à Pierre Chabert, il a souligné à quel point Beckett était un metteur en scène méticuleux et exigeant à l'extrême ; enfin, Raymond Federman a rappelé bien à propos que Samuel Beckett était un humoriste de premier ordre et qu'il avait dû bien rire le jour où il a inventé le mot « Godot »... Un rieur au grand cœur qui trichait au billard pour les laisser gagner, lui et Ludovic Janvier... Nos locuteurs, portaient tous les quatre une chemise blanche (*Coincidence non intended !*), tableau qui, sous la lumière des projecteurs et sur fonds noir de la scène de l'Amphithéâtre de la Verrière, avait quelque chose de très

poétique et de très *dramaticquement* beckettien...

Enfin, le samedi 17 juin - journée arrosée par une pluie qui entrainait bien à propos en résonance avec la thématique du colloque - les intervenants ont été accueillis à Roussillon par Henri Marcou, le maire du village (fondateur et ancien président de l'association « La Maison Samuel Beckett ») et les autres membres de l'association, autour d'un apéritif dînatoire ; dans l'après-midi, a eu lieu une visite de la carrière des Ocres en hommage à « la terre rouge » mentionnée dans *En attendant Godot*, puis la visite des caves Bonnelly. Bonnelly (Aimé, le fils du Bonnelly mentionné dans la pièce), Bonnelly fils, fille et Bonnelly petit-fils, petit-fille étaient présents pour accueillir avec générosité les visiteurs. Les futures générations de Beckettians peuvent être rassurés : elles pourront être encore accueillies dans la propriété où Beckett a travaillé pendant son séjour roussillonnais. La relève est assurée...

En fin d'après-midi c'est dans la Carrière des ocres et pigments appliqués que s'est déroulée une lecture de textes beckettians autour des quatre éléments, par Alain Simon, acteur et directeur du Théâtre des Ateliers d'Aix-en-Provence. Une sortie appréciée de tous pour clore en terre rouge, sous la pluie mais dans la bonne humeur et avec une légèreté aérienne, trois journées de réflexion qui ont été à la fois fiévreuses et très chaleureuses.

— Karine Germoni

Beckett in Brazil

The Samuel Beckett centenary was celebrated in Rio de Janeiro for three weeks this summer. "Festival Beckett 100 Anos," as the event was called, had an intense schedule of lectures, discussions, films of Beckett's theater plays, readings of his radio plays by important Brazilian actors and companies, workshops, and the release of the book *Eu que não estou aí onde estou: O Teatro de Samuel Beckett* by Isabel Cavalcanti, who, along with Marta Metzler, curated the festival. Cavalcanti and Metzler, both of whom are actresses as well as researchers, share a great interest in Beckett. The main objective of the festival was to reveal aspects of his work that are not well known in Rio. Both organizers agreed that the festival succeeded in changing the current view of Beckett as just a "Theater of the Absurd" playwright. Response from the audience indicated that the event had a great impact because of the amount of new information and because of the different points of view that were presented.

Professors Enoch Brater of the University of Michigan and Marjorie Perloff of Stanford University kindly accepted the curators' invitation to participate in the festival. Professor Brater gave a lecture on Beckett's Theater and also participated in a discussion of this topic with other professionals. Professor Perloff's lecture was on Beckett's poetry. Brazilian artists and intellectuals who participated in the festival included Gerald Thomas (a director who lives in New York and who had become Beckett's friend in Paris), José Celso Martinez Correa (director of the recent staging of *Waiting for Godot* in Rio), Professor Flora Süssekind, the Art Critic Ronaldo Brito,

and the director Rubens Rusche. The curators plan to publish the lectures and discussions; a DVD of the Festival is also being prepared. The sponsors of "Festival Beckett 100 Anos" were Centro Cultural Telemar and Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, and the productions were by Lúdico Produções Artísticas.

— Vera Novello



Czekajac na Godota

Antoni Libera's new production of *Waiting for Godot* (in Polish) was recently performed in Warsaw's famed Teatr Narodowy (National Theater), June 30-July 2. The generous stage space of the Narodowy was effectively arranged by Andrzej Witkowski, with the (cruciform) tree set deep upstage, audience right, and the rock-like mound downstage, audience left, creating an imaginary diagonal of visual tension. Under Libera's skillful direction, the characters, each with his unique dynamics, crosshatch their theatrical space with the indelible marks of their humanity.

While at first, the rapid-fire vaudevillian exchanges between Didi and Gogo were somewhat rattling for their lack of pauses, once they reached the initial "We're waiting for Godot" refrain, the pace took on a more familiar pattern of verbal cadences. Along these lines, while Wojciech Malajkat's Didi was at first aloof, to the point of appearing incidental to the play, Zbigniew Zamachowski's Gogo exuded a comically tender humanity, succeeding in gradually bringing his partner into the inner folds of their mutually shared plight. This process reached its peak during Lucky's monologue (expertly performed by Jaroslaw Gajewski), with Gogo and Didi's hilarious attempts to hide from Lucky's verbal onslaught. Finally, Jerzy Radzimiłowicz's basso profundo Pozzo resonated with such existential vigor as to smooth over any identifiable shortcomings in this otherwise stunning production.

— Charles Krance

Beckett and a Way of Thinking

In one of those great passages from *Molloy*, the kind that reminds you why you read Beckett in the first place, the storytelling, such as it is, is abruptly stopped in its tracks when a Keatsian reminiscence of things recently past uncannily intrudes:

Do you know what he told me the other day. . . . He said to me, said Gaber, Gaber, he said--. Louder! I cried. He said to me, said Gaber, Gaber, he said, life is a thing of beauty, Gaber, and a joy forever. . . . A joy forever, he said, a thing of beauty, Moran, and a joy for ever. . . . I said, Do you think he meant human life?

The intercalated dialogue, all talk (like the rest of the novel), is of course part of the storytelling, too. But it is just as telling in other ways as well, ways that go to the heart of the matter concerning Beckett's legacy in terms of big-ticket items like *being* and *representation*, and remind us even more forcefully why there have been so many major cultural events this year marking the centenary of his birth.

That Beckett is a writer's writer is by this date hardly what anyone would call big news, nor did he need the Nobel Prize Committee in Stockholm to validate his status as such in 1969. The tributes in this regard are as legendary as they are sometimes surprising: among fellow playwrights, Harold Pinter, Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, David Mamet, Tom Stoppard, Pavel Kohout and even Lillian Hellman have said in one way or another how profoundly influenced they were by everything he wrote. That holds true for Arthur Miller too, the un-Beckett, who admitted late in life that "that man was up to something." And yet, strange as it may seem, there are no "sons of Sam." In this "case nought" the influence is more difficult to track and trace, but just as assuredly all-encompassing.

What Beckett's legacy may be finally about is what I like to call "a way of thinking." And that way of thinking should be already apparent in the short passage I have quoted above. No's knife is everywhere in yes's wound, placed there in something like safe-keeping. Keep me in mind, the passage seems to say, keep me in mind for when you need me most, on the next rainy day perhaps, or even more so in the "world without end." Moran's is not a throwaway line; it's offered to us, instead, as though it were some sort of final prayer at last: the one that asks for nothing. And like all great masters, Beckett is both an artist representative of his time and one who stands apart from it (I know we're not supposed to talk about "great masters" anymore, but what are you supposed to do with Beckett? Subject him to "commodification" and say "that's it"?).

Let's take a close look at what those few lines from Beckett's fiction do. Postmodern before they may have been quite ready to be *post-*, they tell us, among other

things, how a writer deals with a profoundly romantic sense of loss when his audience can no longer take its romanticism raw. Irony reigns, and it cuts deep, but it does so, at best, only tenuously: something of all that misery remains. "Endymion" is recycled in the only way this sort of lyricism can now be recaptured—recuperated really—in spite of and surely *because* of the fact that Keats now has a dirty finger in his eye. How ironic. How romantic. How Beckettian, really—and it's not every writer who gets his name turned into such a weighty adjective. That's not moving, that's *moving*.

Conscious of his literary past, but never for one moment cowed by it, as no real writer ever is, Beckett seems to have known from the start that having something to say could never be separated from his own way of saying it, "not knowing what." *Saying* was only *inventing* anyway, "rhetorical question less the rhetoric." After Joyce, after Yeats, after Proust and even, yes, after his beloved Dante, "*Simile qui con simile e sepolto*"—like with like is buried here. What Beckett's legacy gives us, finally, he perhaps said best himself, solo, in *Ohio Impromptu*: "Thoughts, no, not thoughts. Profounds of mind."

Beckett at 100: a *writer*—and a way of thinking. Earth, receive one more honored guest.

— Enoch Brater

Enoch Brater presented these remarks as part of the "Beckett's Legacy" panel chaired by James Knowlson at Trinity College, Dublin's celebration of the Beckett centenary.

NOMINATIONS FOR SBS EXECUTIVE BOARD

Three positions on the Samuel Beckett Society Executive Board will become vacant at the end of this calendar year. Nominations for these positions are now in order; note that self-nomination is entirely appropriate. The election for these officers will be held in early 2007; the highest vote getter will succeed Linda Ben-Zvi as President for a two-year term beginning in 2009, with the next two vote-getters serving terms of four and two years each. Please send your nominations of no more than three colleagues to Enoch Brater, President of the Samuel Beckett Society, no later than December 15, 2006, at enochb@umich.edu

Nominations may also be mailed to him c/o The Department of English, 3187 Angell Hall, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003, USA.

A Summer Interval in the Year of Beckett

Summer during this dizzying Year of Beckett was something of a welcome interlude, an interval between what seemed to be an overlapping series of non-stop conferences and festivals of the late winter and spring, and the resumption of that frenetic pace in the autumn. But someone, mercifully, hit the pause button for what was an overheated summer in Europe and the United States, and activities at least wound down. But they did not stop. The irrepressible Michael Colgan reprised his stage version of *Eh, Joe*, his Gate Theater contribution to the April Dublin festivities, in London's west-end, at the Duke of York's Theatre, for 30 performances, from 27 June to 15 July 2006, before the Barbican's autumn Beckett Fest in October and November. Having seen it in Dublin, I jumped at the opportunity to see it again in London if only for Michael Gambon's tour de force performance, although Penelope Wilton's assailing Voice held its own against this "mental thuggee."

Gambon is now getting to be an old hand at this Beckett business since he replaced Alan Sanford who played Hamm in the Dublin Beckett festivals in 1991, reprised the role at Lincoln Center in 1996 and at the Barbican in 1999. But the cast and director changed for the Beckett on Film *Endgame*, which screened in Dublin in 2001 and which was directed by Conor McPherson (not Antoni Libera), with Gambon playing Hamm opposite David Thewlis's Clov. At the Albery Theatre in April and May of 2004, it was Lee Evans's quirky Clov opposite Gambon's Hamm. By the Albery *Endgame*, Gambon seems to have grown into a Beckett actor, comfortable with the limitations imposed by Beckett's theatre. The *Eh, Joe* saw him at his best, a subtly sorrowful, rheumy-eyed mime battling a voice both part of him and alien. Director Atom Egoyan is being drawn into the Beckett circle as well, bringing along a bag of technological savvy that projected Gambon's face on a nearly invisible scrim in profile so that live and projected images overlapped in a single frame, in the same reality, each a ghost of the other. Production values were superb, and Egoyan's direction was seamless and slick.

But the summer saw another kind of Beckett, a sort of backroom Beckett with all the slickness of film and the west End shorn away in the musty back room of the Calder Book Shop at 51 The Cut in London, almost across the street from the re-emerging Young Vic. Denied permission for his "Godot Company" to stage any of the major plays in this Year of Beckett, Calder went under the radar with the small stuff, staging sets of shorter plays and readings in the back room of what was The Calder Book Shop, now converted into a *théâtre de poche* and called the Bookshop Theatre. Calder kept his Thursday night literary soirees going but dedicated Tuesdays and Wednesdays evenings to performances of Beckett. I caught the June offering on an unbearably hot Wednesday night with Peter Marinker in *Piece of Monologue* and a reading of *Enough*. One Tuesday night in an equally unrelentingly hot July, I caught *Ohio Impromptu* and *The Old Tune*, the latter Beckett's adapta-

tion of Robert Pinget's *La Manivelle* and the most curious inclusion in the collected plays of Beckett.

The theatre itself and the performances in the Bookshop Theatre have all the look of amateur theatre, with makeshift costumes and a handful of lighting instruments all run from a tiny lighting board controlled (if that is the word) by the bookshop's clerk, but limitations are part of the charm. Calder's bookshop is intimate theatre with small, sometimes tiny audiences, more private club than theatre, more salon than private club. With diminished production values, there's just enough askew with each performance to keep one less than wholeheartedly enthusiastic, but one tends to overlook the shortcomings in favor of the atmosphere created. The waist-length wigs in *Ohio Impromptu* were what Beckett has called excessive, and the usually reliable Peter Marinker as Reader actually *read* the text from the book on the table. The result was something of a re-writing of the stage directions, the insertion of extra page turns, all seemingly at the wrong time, and somehow the loss of the most dramatic one, with pause and protracted turn as the prelude to "dawn of day." And the under-trained lighting board operator got a bit nervous or confused on the night I was there, and the stage went to blackout before the final epiphany so that the two figures never "grew to be as one."

On the other hand, Marinker showed himself to be a worthy heir to David Warrilow in his performance of *A Piece of Monologue*, outclassing Stephen Brennan in the Beckett on Film version. Little wonder that Naxos Audio Books chose to include Marinker's *Piece of Monologue* in its 2-CD tribute to Beckett (ISBN: 962634332X). (The CD also includes Jim Norton performing *Krapp's Last Tape*, Juliet Stevenson in *Footfalls*, John Moffat in *That Time*, as well as Marinker's *Piece of Monologue*.) Scheduled as a summer filler, the Godot Company's twice weekly evenings have been extended; its run of backroom Beckett now scheduled for the month of October with a triple bill of Beckett's shorts for women, *Footfalls*, *Rockaby*, and *Enough*, and so the little Godot Company went head to head with the Barbican Beckett bash.

More underbelly Beckett was on offer in August of 2006 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, a madhouse that bills itself as the largest arts festival in the world. From August 3-27, The Arches Theatre Company (253 Argyle Street, Glasgow) offered its *Krapp's Last Tape* with Andrew Dallmeyer and *Rockaby* with Kay Gallie, both under the direction of Andy Arnold, in the damp catacombs of the The Caves at Niddry St. South, off Cowgate in the Smirnoff Baby Belly. It was Beckett in the belly of the beast, and the venue offered welcome relief from the musty backroom of the Bookshop Theatre. This was part of The Arches Theatre Company's (and director Andy Arnold's) on-going investigation of Beckett's work, having mounted *Waiting for Godot* in Glasgow in 2003 and the daunting triple bill of *Play*, *Footfalls*, and *Not I* in 2004.

Like the Calder Bookshop performances, these plays were staged in alien sites so that theatrical improvisation was necessary to create Krapp's cubicle, but the performance by Andrew Dallmeyer, whom I met applying his makeup before the show in the public toilet, was stunning, flawless even. And Kay Gallie's "Woman in chair" in *Rockaby*, was equally impressive in her sequined dress slipping in and

out of the light, although much of the mystery of the play was lost as one can see her conspicuously rocking the chair herself. There is always a fine line between stark realism and otherworldliness in that play, and the mysterious, sourceless motion of the rocking is needed to keep Naturalism at bay. But such technical nuances are the elements most difficult to include in improvised locations like almost all venues at the Edinburgh Fringe.

The independent London theatre group, Educated Guess, and producer Penny Guest, brought its production of both *Acts without Words* to Edinburgh as well. In what appeared to be a former classroom in the converted church called Zoo Southside, the intrepid group and designer Lucy

Wonfor brought in its own cumbersome set to turn open classroom space into something like a theatre: two large, intersecting black, plywood arches, artificial flies, from which the material objects in *Act without Words*, I could descend; the set dominated the room. With only 15 minutes before show-time to set up the flies, run through the tech, and prepare the actors, the performance was also necessarily makeshift. There are no dress rehearsals at the Fringe, so every show, especially previews, which I saw, has an improvised quality, and the more technical the requirements of one's production the more that can go wrong. In Edinburgh, suddenly, you're on. With Educated Guess's portable proscenium, the pulleys were not always working as they had in rehearsals or performances in London. What saved the day was the quality of acting, in this case the exceptional James Boyle, who somersaults on stage in mime I, and who plays the slovenly one in II; he was exceptional in both, and Evan Locke as the fastidious member of the pseudocouple in II played the foil to perfection. Sharon Enav's direction showed that she understood what was at the heart of these plays.

Edinburgh is a ruthless theatrical market, where little Beckett plays have to hold their own against the *Puppetry of the Penis*, billed as "The show that starts where *The Full Monty* ended," or such confessionals as *My Brother and I Are Porn Stars*, or even *Brokeback Britain*, so it takes courage and dedication, a commitment to Beckett, to compete in this market against some 2,500 other theatrical performances crowded into the month of August. And it takes a bit of insanity to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe as well, as groups take to the crowded streets in costume to drum up business. There is no built in reverence for Beckett on the streets of Edinburgh, no smug intellectual superiority. In the streets of the capital of the Scots, it's a matter of getting bums on seats, and so it's Beckett against sword fights and high wire acts, against jugglers



The reviewer greets the cast and crew of the "Acts without Words" on the streets of Edinburgh.

and transvestites. These smaller groups, like Educated Guess and Glasgow's The Arches, and even The Godot Company, this underbelly of the lavish Beckett festivals supported by embassies and airlines and banks, this backroom Beckett, these actors tramping the streets of Edinburgh in search of an audience, need our support and encouragement as well. They are, after all, the future of Beckett performance.

— S. E. Gontarski

Endgame at the End of the World

At the 2006 Conference in Reading, I was introduced as the Beckett scholar living closest to Antarctica, at the world's end and was later asked about references to New Zealand or Australia in Beckett's writing. I could think of none to New Zealand, but C in "Rough for Theatre II" has been engaged in an unfinished game (an end-game?) of chess with a correspondent in Tasmania, and has hopes of living to see the extinction of the species – an oblique reference to the genocide of the aboriginals of that delightful isle (where L'hibou Hornung did her undergraduate work). And Malone, his antipodean geography only slightly astray, imagines that if he started to shit the lumps would fall out somewhere in Australia, to assume, no doubt, the form of theater critics (this gratuitous slur will be explained).

If Beckett, like Smith ("Never knew anyone of that name") in "Rough for Theatre II," was once to be seen "hanging around World's End" (in Chelsea, where he wrote *Murphy*), thespians from the Antipodes have long been

hanging around Beckett. My small town alone, over the past decade, has witnessed productions of *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Footfalls*, *Act without Words* (I and II), "Rockabye" (English and French), *Play*, "Come and Go," "Breath," and "Catastrophe." Most of these arose from the University of Otago's lunchtime theatre program, featuring small pieces directed by theater majors. The results have been mixed, but some have been truly excellent. And this, I imagine, has been the case on many small stages throughout Australasia.

There have also been some controversial productions. Here, in Dunedin, a few years ago, the Beckett Estate moved quickly to close, after the opening night, a feminist "interpretation" of *Waiting for Godot*. As the resident Beckett scholar, I was asked by the media for my opinion on this, to which I replied that I was totally in sympathy with the Estate, and that a wooden clothes-rack, no matter how many diapers it sprouted in Act II, was no substitute for the tree. This, clearly, was not the right answer, so my fifteen seconds of fame were denied, and the interviewer found someone else to say, yes, it was a disgrace, the Estate had no right to stifle creativity, and who did Edward Beckett think he was anyway? I am reminded of Flannery O'Connor's response when asked if university writing programs stifled creative geniuses: "Not enough of them," she replied.

The issue refuses to go away. In Dublin (2006) a panel of Irish playwrights and directors who should have known better inveighed against the Estate and insisted on their

right to produce Beckett as they saw fit. In Sydney (2003) the Estate tried (but failed) to close a much-touted production of *Waiting for Godot* (by Company B Belvoir) because of its "innovative" musical score; the result was a mediocre (but not entirely dreadful) standard version of the play, marred by a hideous stain upon the silence and, inevitably, a Pavlovian chorus of abuse from the Australian media (hence my earlier image) against the dead hand of the Estate. Meanwhile, almost unnoticed in the media feeding-frenzy, an absolutely stunning performance of *Endgame* (by the Sydney Theatre Company) was taking its course – one of the real highlights of the festival.

The more refreshing, then, to find in Wellington a production of *Endgame* that was at least the equal of the Sydney one – perhaps a little less austere, perhaps a little more empathy between the pairs of characters – and sharing with it a total dedication to the stage image: stark, uncompromising, and utterly compelling. The major project of L'hibou Hornung, a final-year Master of Theatre Arts student, it was a joint production of Toi whakaari/the New Zealand Drama School, and Victoria University. The stage set (by Daniel Williams, with Rachel Lenart as Stage Manager) was spare and shabby; patrons were shown to their (uncomfortable) seats by a tall, shrouded, silent figure who looked as if s/he had just walked off *Quad*; the sense of enclosure was intimidating. And, when the production was over, the audience groped its way out through a dimly-lit passage into a small yard littered with garbage-cans and detritus – a reminder, if one were needed, of the liminality of world and stage. If the illusion was finally broken by an invitation to all the audience (about half accepted) to join the cast for wine and cheese, that gesture typified what was in every way a generous production.

There are (I believe) some plays (*The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Waiting for Godot*) that require a subtlety of tone and timing that puts them beyond the reach of most amateurs; while others (*Juno and the Paycock*, *Endgame*) respond more readily. But the goal is (ought to be) the same: an experience of the drama, rather than an "interpretation" thereof. Under Ms Hornung's guidance, this production offered strong visual images that might be in turn (in the words of the program) "expressed as a musical scene or an animated painting." She got it right: Brian Hotter (Hamm) and Felix Preval (Clov), both graduates of the Victoria acting program, brought a remarkable ruthlessness to their parts, yet an anguish that was tempered by a curious compassion. Likewise, Barry Lakeman (Nagg) and Aileen Davidson (Nell) found exactly the right balance of grotesque humor and pathos. The dynamic worked: the play was funny, harrowing, pathetic, ruthless, and compelling. The director's sense of the action as set "in an ambiguous space that represents the world where life and death collide" found expression, as *King Lear's* Gloucester might say, feelingly.

One thing I liked about the production was (as Vladimir might say) its attention to the little things of life, precise particularities finding expression in a wider emphasis that was authentic: the coming to and going from the auditorium, as noted above; posters and programs depicting



Brian Hotter (Hamm) and Barry Lakeman (Nagg) performed in L'hibou Hornung's production of *Endgame* in Wellington, New Zealand.

the life-cycle of a flea or images, living and skeletal, of a rat (my thanks to Nancy Linton, publicist, for providing me with a set); the refusal to take a curtain-call lest it spoil the final tableau. Beckett once commented that what he had learned from Joyce was a sense of artistic integrity; in little things as well as big, L'hibou Hornung's commitment to the integrity of Beckett's images and her desire to see them (rather than her ego) to best advantage led to an amateur performance that was better in almost every way than most professional productions I have seen in the Big World. Good things can happen at this end of the universe, and I look forward to seeing more of them under her direction.

— Chris Ackerley

Happy Days at the Gloucester Stage Company

The American writer Israel Horowitz paid tribute to Samuel Beckett, who had been his friend and mentor since their first meeting in the 1960s, by producing *Happy Days* at the Gloucester Stage Company, a small, professional summer-stock company which he founded in 1980 on the North Shore of Massachusetts and which he has served as artistic director. This production, which ran for ten days in mid-July, was directed by Scott Edmiston, a professional director and member of the Boston artistic community for the past twenty years. Nancy Carroll -- a critically acclaimed and award-winning regional actor who is widely regarded as one of the best in the Boston area -- made her Beckett debut as Winnie. Will McGarahan, an equity actor originally from Seattle, joined her as Willie.

Taking a textually faithful approach to the play, Edmiston used Beckett's published production notes as his guide. Like Carroll and McGarahan he thinks of Beckett as both composer and painter; all three saw themselves primarily as a conduit for his intent. In an interview, Edmiston described working on Beckett as a "transformational experience" in which "you have to surrender yourself to his vision completely." Despite this deference to the text, the production design was often unconventional. Although none of the changes Edmiston made constituted any type of radical departure, his set, light, and sound designers made choices that were decidedly abstract, figurative, and emotive. Interesting as individual moments, the design as a whole functioned as a sort of narration that was too eager to provide Beckett's elliptical work with emotional clarity and explanation.

To begin with, Winnie's mound was not a pile of barren dirt and earth, but instead a volcano-like mound of painted foam that continued uphill behind her across the cyclorama, extending to the ceiling, with holes carved out through which the "sky" was visible. Edmiston described this as a "blurring of the boundary between the earth and sky," a decision which emphasized the placelessness of

Winnie's void, but sacrificed the necessary sense of the earth engulfing her—particularly during the second act when the size of the mound itself did not change, merely Carroll's seated position inside it.

The light and sound design varied according to the tone and tenor of Winnie's subjects. The portions of the cyc visible through the set changed in color from green to yellow to orange to red, evoking the emotions of Winnie's words, but losing in the process any sense of Winnie being trapped beneath a "scorching" sun. The sound cues, while played at barely audible levels, still included several moments of underscoring (most noticeably during Winnie's nostalgic thoughts about her hair in Act One, and during the final moments of confrontation between Winnie and Willie in Act Two) and were completely out of place in Beckett's silent world. Less intrusive were the orchestrations composed by sound designer Dewey Dellay that preceded each act. As Edmiston explained to me, these were a mixture of wind, human voice, and faint strains of the "Merry Widow Waltz" mixed together—an inspiration taken from Winnie's line: "Sometimes I hear sounds. Like little cries. Like little thunderings torn apart." The end result was a production that was a pastiche of both traditional and unconventional choices.

With respect to the performances, veteran actor Carroll seemed uncharacteristically overwhelmed by her role. She spoke during a post-play discussion with the audience about how terrified she had been of the physical and mental demands involved in playing Winnie. Carroll explained that the stage manager had coached her in rehearsal towards a meticulous incorporation of Beckett's detailed instructions: "Smile on," "Smile off," "Head up," and so forth. Traces of this rehearsal technique were still visible during the first act, in which Carroll's performance felt rather stiff and forced. She gradually relaxed over the course of the production, and was later better able to capture Winnie's particular blend of resilience and pathos. Highlighting her performance were several instances in which Carroll was able to showcase her ample comic talent, particularly at the beginning of Act Two, when Winnie is confirming the presence of various bodily parts. Being constrained to her neck had an oddly freeing effect on Carroll; her wonderful facial contortions evoked one of the night's only moments of real laughter from the audience. Although Carroll's performance was ultimately very good, it raised the question of just how successful American actors, such as herself, who are schooled in realism can be when faced with the mental and physical gymnastics required of a Beckett actor.

The evening's only major disappointment was in the blocking of the final moments when Willie reaches towards Winnie and the mound. The wonderful ambiguity of what exactly Willie is reaching for was lost. With Willie's back directly to my third-row center seat, I could not even see him lift his arm. Aside from that moment, it was a solid production that nevertheless left me wanting more. I could not help but wonder how much greater an effect the text would have had if the designers had treated it with the same fidelity as had the actors.

— Natka Bianchini

Stuart Seide in Lille

Where better than at Lille's Théâtre du Nord, directed by the bilingual and bicultural American actor-director Stuart Seide, to stage a bilingual performance of two Beckett plays to mark the centenary year? Stuart Seide is no stranger to Beckett, having performed the role of Krapp on two previous occasions. And it was to be as an actor, rather than a director, that he would choose to celebrate Beckett's centenary, abandoning for a short time directorial preoccupations that have included Pinter (*Moonlight*, 2005) and Shakespeare (*Anthony and Cleopatra*, 2004 and *Hamlet*, 2006). A seasoned Beckett actor, then, was to be directed by Alain Milianti, who, apart from a workshop on *Waiting for Godot* in Soweto in 1985, had not previously directed Beckett. The performances were in French, with two weekend performances in English, and one marathon evening with both plays (*Krapp's Last Tape/La Dernière Bande* and *A Piece of Monologue/Solo*) performed in both languages.

Krapp's Last Tape opened, with three-quarters of the vast stage of the Théâtre du Nord blocked off by an opaque partition, behind which Krapp would disappear when thirsty. The extreme left-hand side of the stage was lit to represent Krapp's den. Krapp was present from the outset, but hidden under a large plastic sheet, which he ripped off in apparent rage before his opening actions. (In interviews about the plays, Alain Milianti explained that the recurrent use of plastic had symbolised, for him, our throwaway society).

Stuart Seide held the audience with an impressive interpretation, barely stopping between the two plays. A link was created between both when a second, previously invisible, plastic sheet fell dramatically from in front of the wide partition, to leave the actor, now in a simple white night-shirt, free to roam up and down a narrow, lit strip at the front of the stage. This device led one to imagine that the two plays concerned one character, at two different times of his life.

Piece of Monologue was less static than Beckett's stage directions dictate. The movements seemed to represent the character's constantly renewed attempts to perform the actions which he was, at the same time, describing at breakneck speed. The Speaker would stop at one or the other end of his allotted space at the mention of a window or a wall, and would stop at a darker coloured square on the stage floor at each mention of the scene around the grave. If this *Piece of Monologue* was more innovative, in terms of breaking with Beckett's vision of the play, than *Krapp's Last Tape*, both plays were highly effective; interpretation of both was coloured by their presentation as a pair.

The following interview took place shortly after the final performance at the Théâtre du Nord on Saturday 18 March 2006.

Helen Astbury: Did Alain Milianti contact you or you him to do Krapp's Last Tape and A Piece of Monologue?

Stuart Seide: We contacted one another. I had already done Krapp's Last Tape in another mise en scène almost twenty years ago, and the last time I did it was ten years ago. I wanted to re-do Krapp's Last Tape as an actor and to put it with A Piece of Monologue. I was looking for a director to do that with, and Alain Milianti was a friend of mine, and we were chatting about things, and I mentioned that project to him. Several days later, he called me to say that if I were looking for a director, he would be interested since he had never done Beckett. That's how it started. At the beginning, we didn't know how to put the two plays together. It was very intuitive on my part, about the two plays: they were written twenty years apart, and they were never made to be done together. At first, I thought of A Piece of Monologue as a curtain-raiser for Krapp's Last Tape. While working on it, however, we realised that it should be done the other way.

HA: Because of a sort of chronological continuity?

SS: Not only that. During the readings, we would read one first and then the other first, and after a while it just seemed right that at the end of Krapp's Last Tape, there's still one more tape, one more poem, to state the ultimate death, which is Solo. So that there's something, almost as if Krapp dies and disappears at the end of Krapp's Last Tape, only to finally do his masterpiece, the magnum opus that he never wrote, maybe it's A Piece of Monologue.

HA: Going back to what you said about having done Krapp twenty years ago, and then ten years later, is this a continuation of your history with Krapp?

SS: Actually, I also did it almost forty years ago. I was 22-23 years old, in university, and a friend of mine opened an art gallery in upstate New York where they also wanted theatre, so I said, "OK, I'll do Krapp's Last Tape for you," and we converted a part of the gallery to a little theatre with thirty seats. I must have been 23-24 years old when I did Krapp's Last Tape for the first time; I did it again in 1984-85 with Mario Gonzales, an actor who'd worked a

lot with Ariane Mnouchkine as well as an expert in masks. We became good friends, and, when he said that he'd like to direct me in something, I gave him Krapp's Last Tape. The version that I did with Mario was very much inspired by his work with masks in creating characters, although I wasn't masked. Quite a bit of that work is still the basis of what I do now. I was about forty years old at the time -- the same age as Krapp on the tape. Now I'm not quite sixty-nine, but I am a lot closer

to the old Krapp. I've more of my life behind me than in front of me.

HA: Does that change the way you approach the play?

SS: Of course. It changes one's relationship with time, with the notion even of having accomplished or not accomplished what one dreamt of when one was young



– foolish as well as unfoolish dreams – what one has given up to achieve what one has achieved. Was I right to give up what I did give up, all the things I didn't do, to do the things I wanted to do. Obviously that has a different resonance, a different meaning when one's going on to 60 than when one is 35 or 40. When one's twenty, that's another thing. I don't know exactly how that change expresses itself in the show.

HA: One of the things which must have been interesting about this particular production is doing it in both French and English.

SS: Yes, it's a very different experience, especially for me, born and raised in English and then at twenty-six years old, no twenty-four years old, leaving the States; I've been here ever since. I go back now and then, but my life is here. I've now become a French director. I live theatre in French, not in English. That's one thing that always fascinated me in Beckett, and several other writers. He really became himself when he gave up his mother tongue, in a certain way. And for me, it's the same, I became myself, who I am today, having cut myself off from my mother culture; going into another culture, it's a way of finding one's self. It's very strange. It's also a way of finding one's original culture as well. The fact that the two plays I chose for this production were originally written in English is a complete coincidence because, at the beginning, I didn't know that *A Piece of Monologue* was written first in English. I should have known, because I knew it was done for David Warrilow, but, then again, Warrilow has done Beckett in French.

I found that going from the French to the English versions of *Krapp's Last Tape* was relatively easy since it's really a word-for-word translation. *A Piece of Monologue*, however, is very tough to learn in either language. It took me three months to learn it in one language. And then learning it in the other language made me unlearn it in the first language, because it's less of a translation. He wrote the first in English and there are a whole series of events in English that aren't in the French. Sometimes it's parallel, and then there are a whole bunch of things in English that aren't in the French, or several things in the French that aren't in the English, so there's a common trunk that branches out, separates, and then joins and separates, and that's confusing. Every now and then during the French rehearsals, I would mistakenly do a French translation of the English text. Now I think I've been able to separate them, or to have them dwell together, coexist in my brain.

HA: Beckett was an obvious influence on Pinter, a playwright whom you've often worked with. After directing Pinter last year and now acting Beckett this year, how do you see that Beckett-Pinter filiation?

SS: A lot of people in France associate Pinter with Ionesco. For me, he belongs to the Beckett family. For both of them, relationships with objects are as important as the words to be spoken. Pinter's early plays -- *The Caretaker*, *The Homecoming*, *The Birthday Party* -- are in an absurdist mode. And then Pinter went into a more Proustian phase about memory, somewhat as Beckett did. Another interesting resemblance is that, now that Pinter has come back

to the theatre, his plays seem to be shorter and sparser. Some people, with the passing of time, just blabber on, get more and more "radote" as we say in French. Beckett and Pinter went more and more towards the essentials. They're very different, but they live in the same theatrical country.

— Helen Astbury

Beckett à Zurich

A Zurich, la nuit du Samedi 29 avril était une nuit d'hommage à Beckett, organisée dans l'étonnant lieu du Schauspielhaus, par Marek Kedzierski, Thomas Hunkeler, et Bruno Hitz.

Lectures, représentations, et projections se sont ainsi enchaînées et chevauchées tout au long de la soirée, portant les spectateurs d'une salle à une autre avec ce qu'il fallait d'intervalle pour reprendre souffle. Ainsi Conor Lovett initiait la soirée, réjouissant tout le monde avec sa lecture rodée et incarnée – le vieux manteau vert y est - d'extraits de *Molloy*, faisant resurgir du texte de Beckett le comique dont le public a souvent oublié qu'il s'y trouve.

Après *Molloy*, on rejoignait la salle à côté, où Miriam Goldsmidt venait de jouer des extraits de *Oh les beaux jours* dans la mise en scène de Peter Brook, et Cristin König de lire *Texte pour rien* en allemand, pour voir Claire Aveline interpréter *Pas Moi* en français, suivie sans solution de continuité de l'interprétation du même texte, en polonais cette fois, par Dagmara Foniok. Echos de la langue, le texte en polonais répondait au texte français, même si les bouches étaient différentes, les dictionnements dissemblables, le rythme des langues imposant une « couleur » propre à chacune, les refus de la Bouche d'assumer l'identité dits autrement, pourtant percutants, épuisants comme ils doivent l'être pour les actrices tenues à cette immobilité parfaite du corps pour que la lumière tienne sur la seule bouche, épuisants comme on veut les entendre.

Dans la première salle, pendant ce temps, Martin Wuttke disait *Premier Amour* en allemand, puis tandis que Norbert Schwientek lisait *D'un ouvrage abandonné*, en allemand également, Serge Merlin venait dire *Le Dépeupleur* dans la salle où s'était joué *Pas Moi*. Choix à faire, nous avons opté pour Merlin. Une lecture, une déclamation plutôt, du texte par Serge Merlin, avec les inflexions de voix d'un Antonin Artaud en finissant encore avec le jugement de Dieu, et on se dit que c'est bien aussi de cela qu'il s'agit avec Beckett, et avec ces personnages enfermés dans leur cylindre avec leurs niches et leurs échelles jusqu'à l'épuisement des vaincus. La voix de Merlin, sa diction forte, faible, lente, rapide, ses gestes, ses tremblements, ses bras marqués par l'âge, qui le désarticulent presque, à la manière des corps qui s'agitent dans le cylindre ou s'effondrent, portent le texte jusqu'au bout, don au texte du corps de l'acteur.

Pour attendre que Rick CLuchey se mette en place pour *La Dernière Bande*, on se glissait dans la salle où depuis le début de la soirée étaient projetées les versions filmées des pièces de Beckett. Bonheur de la programmation,

c'était l'heure de la projection de la lecture de *l'Innommable* par Pinter, avant donc de retrouver Rick Cluchey dans le rôle tant de fois interprété, et toujours aussi convaincant, d'un Krapp dont il a maintenant l'âge, et le texte résonne soudain curieusement, lorsque l'acteur et le personnage se moquent ensemble du jeune blanc bec qu'ils ont pu être.

Pour la fin de la soirée, faisant écho à la lecture de Lovett qui l'initiait, Oleg Liptsin et Marc McPherson jouaient d'abord quelques moments de *Fin de Partie*, en anglais --simplement Nagg et Hamm et leur relation père fils – un Nagg véritablement en majesté dans sa pouvelle. Ils enchaînaient avec une lecture à double voix d'extraits de Watt, en anglais et russe alternés. Pour un non russophone, il était fascinant de retrouver le texte initial par les seuls jeux de voix, intonations et échos de mots. Là encore, c'était l'humour des textes qui refaisait surface, pour nous permettre de reprendre pied. Nous avions atteint le dimanche matin. On voudrait que cela n'ait jamais fini.

— Geneviève Chevallier

Pierre Chabert at the Bernhardhaus

The International Thomas Bernhard Society hosted one of the very few events marking the Beckett centenary in Austria. Bernhard himself was also commemorated in 2006 because this would have been the year of his 75th birthday. Both Beckett and Bernhard, who held each other in high esteem, died in 1989. Even during their lifetimes, the striking similarities in their work had led many critics to draw comparisons between them.

Bernhard lived most of his life as a successful author in a large farmhouse in Ohlsdorf, Upper Austria, which he had transformed from a ruin into an elegant dwelling reminiscent of the rural lifestyle once favored by Austrian aristocrats. Bernhard kept the stables and farm machinery because he entertained the possibility of making his livelihood as a farmer in case his literary career should fail. More than a decade after his death, his brother and heir, Dr. Peter Fabjan, who had been Bernhard's physician during the last years of his life, decided to adapt part of the building for stage readings and theatrical performances of his late brother's works as well as of writing that can be related to Bernhard's. In recent years renowned actors have read texts not only by Bernhard, but also by Chekhov, Tolstoi, Kertész and others, to a steadily growing audience as part of the annual Gmunden Summer Festival.



The Bernhardhaus in Ohlsdorf, Upper Austria, was the setting for the celebration of the Beckett centenary hosted by The International Thomas Bernhard Society.

This year Dr. Fabjan and his wife Anny Fabjan invited Pierre Chabert to perform *La dernière bande* at the Bernhardhaus. They had befriended Chabert several years ago, whilst he was playing in a stage performance of Bernhard's novel *The Loser* at the Festival d'Avignon. So, on 5 August 2006, Chabert performed the play in which Beckett had directed him in the intimate atmosphere of the "theatre stable" at the Bernhardhaus to a fascinated audience that appreciated the opportunity to see this highly authentic Beckett production in Austria. German supertitles helped those who did not understand French, although the power of his acting was a remarkable experience in itself.

After his enthusiastically applauded performance, Chabert participated in a roundtable discussion of the play as well as of the relationship between the Austrian and the Irish authors. He was joined by Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, professor of German literature at the University of Vienna and editor of the comprehensive Thomas Bernhard Edition currently in preparation (eleven of twenty-two volumes have appeared so far) and Raimund Fellingner from the Suhrkamp publishing house in Frankfurt/Main, Germany, where both Beckett and Bernhard had published most of the German editions of their work. Fellingner has been responsible for several books by Bernhard, but also for substantial publications by Peter Handke, among many others.

Chabert noted a considerable number of differences between Bernhard and Beckett while also suggesting that both authors share remarkable features that make a comparison between them highly rewarding. He mentioned, in particular, the importance of the eminent German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer for both of them, as well as their predilection for the art of the monologue and their love of music. He argued that musical structures give both Beckett's and Bernhard's texts their distinctive rhythms.

Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler reminded the audience of

some labels the press attached to Bernhard when he was still a comparatively young author: He was called “Alpenbeckett und Menschenfeind” (“Beckett of the Alps and Misanthropist”), an allusion to the title of a famous play, *Der Alpenkoenig* [King of the Alps] und der Menschenfeind, by his Austrian compatriot and Biedermeier playwright, Ferdinand Raimund. Schmidt-Dengler, who is not only a scholar but also a well-known literary critic, mentioned two further similarities between Beckett and Bernhard: their fascination with objects (e.g., clothing in some of Bernhard’s prose texts) and with eating (which the audience had just observed in Chabert’s performance as Krapp).

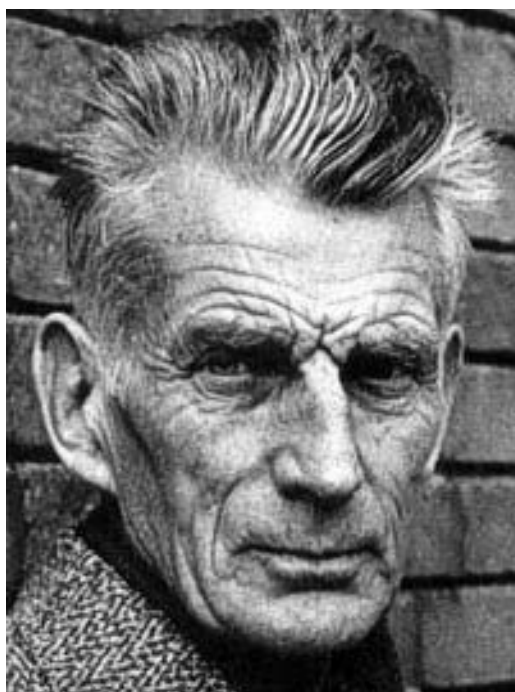
Raimund Fellingner argued that, despite the striking contrast between Beckett’s verbal austerity and Bernhard’s exuberance, both authors use repetition and musicality as hallmark stylistic devices. He also mentioned the Austrian writer, Ingeborg Bachmann, who was one of the first to recognize his international stature and who, in an essay comparing the two authors, admitted her preference for Bernhard.

Chabert acknowledged that he likes the mixture of comedy and tragedy in Bernhard’s writing, his predilection for black humour and laughter in the face of death. Schmidt-Dengler also emphasized the importance of death

in both Beckett and Bernhard. According to Chabert, a significant difference between Bernhard and Beckett consists in their relationship to the historical context to which they lived and wrote. Bernhard writes of an imaginary Austria which nevertheless remains recognizable in his texts; he indulges in the poetry of names, including those of little villages in Upper Austria or Salzburg and of personal names, which do not convey any associations to non-German speakers. However, even the French-speaking actor enjoyed, as he said, pronouncing these “exotic” names when he performed *The Loser* and made use of their musical qualities. Bernhard’s works are also filled with references to the realities of Austrian social and political life, whereas Beckett’s texts exist at a much higher level of abstraction. The manuscripts of *Endgame*, for instance, prove that Beckett continuously erased all the allusions to concrete names and realities that had been there at the beginning of the creative process.

At the end of this illuminating discussion, Chabert was asked what he considered to be the most fascinating aspect of Bernhard’s works. He mentioned, in response, the famous “Bernhard sound” -- that intricate composition of several voices within one single monologue that is always recognizable as the voice of a highly individual author.

— Manfred Mittermayer



I.S.I.S. “Pitagora”
Torre Annunziata

Il Laboratorio Teatrale
“Anita Sorrentino”

in

Omaggio a Samuel Beckett

Cosa dove, Passi, Non io, Va e vieni, Testi per nulla, Dondolo

Regia Antonio Borriello

Teatro Politeama
Corso Umberto I - Torre Annunziata
Giovedì 11 maggio 2006, ore 20.00

Antonio Borriello directed a personal tribute to Samuel Beckett last spring in the Naples suburb of Torre Annunziata with the assistance Laura Boccia, Delia Greco, Antonella Mastellone, and Annamaria Raiola. This celebration of the centenary, which included performances, stage readings, and roundtable discussions, began with *Cosa dove* (with Catello Coppola, Pasquale Esposito, Gennaro Pagano, and Pietro Paolo Solimeno), followed by *Passi* (with Maria Paola Conato), *Non io* (with Cristina Sermino), *Va e vieni* (with Arianna Chervino, Maria Paola Conato, and Claudia Di Caterina), *Testi per nulla* (with Alessandra Borrelli and Marella Solimeno), *Dondolo* (with Elisabetta Castenzana Correa), and concluded with Nicola Frega’s reading of selected poems.

Current & Upcoming Events

Panels at MLA 2006

Friday, 29 December, 1:45–3:00 p.m., Independence Ballroom Salon II, Philadelphia Marriott. “Beckett: Poetry, Verse, and Lyricism.” *Presiding:* Enoch Brater, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor. *Speakers:* R. M. Berry, Florida State Univ., Tyrus H. Miller, Univ. of California, Santa Cruz, Jean-Michel Rabaté, Univ. of Pennsylvania, and Pierre Simon Taminiaux, Georgetown Univ.

3:30–4:45 p.m., 307, Philadelphia Marriott. “Beckett at One Hundred and Irish Writing.” *Presiding:* Victor Ernest

Luftig, Univ. of Virginia. *Speakers:* Michael Wood, Princeton Univ., Sean D. C. Kennedy, Saint Mary’s Univ., NS., Nicholas Allen, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Saturday, 30 December, 12:00 noon - 1:15 p.m., Room 304, Philadelphia Marriott. “The One Hundredth Year in Review.” *Presiding:* Enoch Brater, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor. *Speakers:* Linda Ben-Zvi, Tel Aviv Univ.; Thomas J. Cousineau, Washington Coll.; Angela Moorjani, Univ. of Maryland Baltimore County.

Call for Papers

Proposals are invited for an edited volume I am preparing entitled “A Beckett Bestiary.” It will examine issues of animality in Beckett’s work, and will contain chapters on individual animals or species. (Some species, such as birds, will warrant subdivision). Some contributions have already been commissioned, but many gaps remain. If you are interested in contributing, please submit a half-page abstract to me, on the framework for the specific animal/species you are proposing to cover, by 31 December 2006, together with summary biodata and contact details. Email preferred. Address: Professor Mary Bryden, School of European Studies, Cardiff University, 65-68 Park Place, Cardiff CF10 3AS, United Kingdom.

Email: <BrydenKM@Cardiff.ac.uk>.

Beckett at UMBC

The Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery at UMBC in Baltimore will host an exhibition “Celebrating Samuel Beckett at 100” from 29 January to 24 March 2007. Co-organized by Gallery curator Cynthia Wayne and Angela Moorjani, the show will present Beckett’s words and images as filtered through the imaginative work of a number of visual and stage artists. An opening program on 7 February will feature UMBC’s resident Beckettians—Xerxes Mehta, Angela Moorjani, and Wendy Salkind—in readings, performances, and discussions related to the work on display.

Beckett in Hamburg

The posthumous discovery of his “German Diaries 1936/37” brought to light Beckett’s fairly substantial connection with Hamburg, a city whose cultural and political activities he observed from early October through early December 1936. He recorded all of his visits to the Hamburger Kunsthalle, and he commented on the increasingly restrictive national-socialist culture politics in artistic circles, as experienced by the “Hamburg Secession” group, which was already forbidden in 1936. It was thanks to private contacts that he gained access to the closed-off sections of the Kunsthalle and the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe. He was further confronted with national-socialist ideology in everyday life, on his walking tours through the city, in the boarding house, listening to the radio, reading the newspaper, and while drinking his evening beer. The “Beckett in Town” project, which will take place from 10 October 2006 through 14 January 2007, will call attention both to Beckett’s perception of Hamburg and to the city’s reception of his work. It includes two exhibitions, one conference with a corresponding publication, and further accompanying complementary events. The project is also interlinked with numerous other Beckett-events in Hamburg. Our website: www.beckett-in-hamburg.de.

Beckett in the East Village

The New-York-based company ghostcrab recently presented *Beckett Below: Four Short Plays by Samuel Beckett* at Under Saint Marks in the East Village. Ariane Anthony, who was praised by *The New York Times* as “a young choreographer of rare imagination and sureness,” directed *Act Without Words II*; Peter Campbell re-mounted his production of *Play*, which was recently seen at The Chocolate Factory; Eve Hartmann directed *Footfalls*; and Tim Lee directed *That Time*. *Beckett Below*’s cast features OBIE winner Ellen Maddow, of *The Talking Band*; Molly Powell; and Milt Angelopoulos, President of Secret Theater.

What's the Word?

On the most recently issued installment of "What's the Word?" -- produced by the Modern Language Association to celebrate the Beckett centenary -- Enoch Brater explores *Waiting for Godot*, Raymond Federman talks about his friendship with Beckett and reads a poem he wrote shortly after Beckett's death, Tom Cousineau discusses Beckett's fiction, and Barry McGovern reads from *Waiting for Godot* and *Molloy*. First broadcast in April 1997, "What's the

Word?" is a radio program developed by the MLA to show how the study of language and literature enriches people's lives. Programs have covered a wide range of topics and have attracted the attention of directors of public and community radio stations. Currently the program is aired in forty states and overseas. It is also available through the In Touch Network.

Lines for the Centenary of the Birth of Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)

I

Only now do we see how each crossroads
was bound to throw up not just a cross
but a couple of gadabouts with goads,
a couple of gadabouts at a loss

as to why they were at the beck and call
of some old crock soaring above the culch
of a kitchen midden at evenfall,
some old crock roaring across the gulch

as a hanged man roars out to a hanged man.
Now bucket nods to bucket of the span
of an ash yoke, or something of that ilk...

Now one hanged man kicks at the end of his rope
in another little attack of hope.
Now a frog in one bucket thickens the milk.

II

Now a frog in one bucket thickens the milk
as a heart might quicken behind its stave
at the thought of a thief who bilked
us of our life savings himself being saved.

Only now do we see... How spasm and lull
are mirrored somewhat by lull and spasm
when the nitwit roars out to the numbskull
thinking he might yet narrow the chasm

between his own cask and other's keg,
thinking he might take the other down a peg
if not leave him completely in the lurch,

leave him to ponder if it's less an ash
yoke tipped by his bucket of balderdash –
less an ash yoke than a crossbar of birch.

III

Less an ash than a crossbar of birch
and a birchwood bucket where a frog breasts
the very milk we feared it would besmirch.
Only now do we see we're at the behest

not of some old crock kicking the beam
but ourselves. We balk at the idea, balk
at the idea of a frog no sooner opening a seam
in milk than it's... Surely not *caulked*?

Only now do we see how it's ourselves who skim
determinedly through the dim
of evenfall with no more regard for our load

as we glance up through the sky-hoop
than the ninny who roars back to the nincompoop.
Only now do we see how... Each crossroads...

-- Paul Muldoon

BOOK REVIEWS

Friedhelm Rathjen, Samuel Beckett. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006 (Rowohlts Monographien). 156pp., b/w illus. €8.50.

Friedhelm Rathjen, *weder noch*. Aufsätze zu Samuel Beckett. Schönbuch: Edition ReJoyce, 2005. 166pp. €17.00.

Der unbekannte Beckett: Samuel Beckett und die deutsche Kultur, ed. Therese Fischer-Seidel and Marion Fries-Dieckmann. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2005. 358pp., b/w illus. €11.50.

Given the rash of centenary publications, there's no shortage of Beckett biographies in German. However, Friedhelm Rathjen's little book stands out because it is compact and accessible, and also because it serves as a very good critical introduction to Beckett's work. From the outset, Rathjen refuses to make any causal link between the writer's "life" and his "work," just as he refuses to elevate this refusal into a postmodernist dogma of sorts. The book is divided into four main chapters, each of which emphasises a key stage. Beginning with Beckett's "flight into the world" – his youth and early years in Ireland – Rathjen tracks Beckett "changing places" in the 1930s and 1940s and "switching languages" (1946-1961) to the "worlds within the head," the work written from the early 1960s onwards. The chapter titles neatly capture the two impulses Rathjen sees at work in Beckett – a desire to flee from the external world and the equally strong desire to confront it. With this in mind, Rathjen is excellent at identifying what makes Beckett's work so unique, without subscribing to the popular view of Beckett as an absurdist or minimalist writer. For Rathjen, it's about how the above desires find their way into the internal texture of Beckett's writing, which he sees as being about finding adequate forms for silence; it is a kind of writing that keeps life and personality at bay (126). At the same time, Rathjen is equally good at showing how such writing is closely informed by events and experiences in Beckett's life and in the wider social and cultural climate in Ireland and elsewhere.

More of mixed bag are Rathjen's essays on Beckett from the last twenty years or so, published under the title *weder noch*, an allusion to Beckett's short text "Neither." The volume consists of seven reviews of German translations of Beckett and books about him, and seven essays, some of which are based on papers presented at international conferences. The topics in this collection range from individual texts and motifs in Beckett's work to looking at Beckett through other writers such as Chamfort, Melville, Synge, and, above all, Joyce to pieces intended for a German audience, notably an essay on the work of post-war German experimental writer Arno Schmidt in relation to Joyce and Beckett. As in the biography, Rathjen's style is

deliciously jargon-free, and his ability to communicate knowledge and insights is immense. If the fourteen pieces have a common denominator, it is perhaps the notion that Realism in Beckett and in self-consciously modern writing is not a given, but is dependent on figuration, perspective, and consciousness: dependent, in other words, on non-realist means and forms.

For me, the best piece is the essay on Beckett's bicycles. Although bicycles may be part of the "realist" repertoire, in Rathjen's reading they become much more than that. Not only do they provide rare moments of relief and release, though often in the nostalgic mode, the two cycles endlessly turning back on themselves come perhaps to signify a Beckettian ideal. In relation to the surrounding landscape, the cyclist makes progress, but in relation to the machine he powers, he is at a standstill – a metaphor that works equally well in relation to writing. It may be no coincidence that the mathematical sign for "infinity," ∞ , resembles a bi-cycle, a link suggested by Beckett himself in an unpublished 1981 text entitled "The Way." Perhaps this collection is best understood as a Tour de Beckett, an entertaining as well as rewarding bike-ride around the rich imaginative landscape that is Beckett's work, and the bicycle essay gets to wear the yellow jersey.

Of the three books under review here, *Der unbekannte Beckett* makes the most significant contribution to Beckett scholarship. This is the first volume to look comprehensively, and at an almost consistently high level, at Beckett's relationship with German art, literature, and language. The fifteen contributions in this volume are based on papers given at an international conference at the University of Düsseldorf in 2004, and of the contributors, several have led the way in investigating Beckett's affinity with and work in Germany. The volume offers a great number of genuine new discoveries, critical insights, and fresh cross-cultural contexts. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Beckett's six-month travel through Germany 1936/7 and the diaries he kept during the period take centre-stage, and the volume opens with a detailed chronology of Beckett's trip compiled by Mark Nixon. (The diaries are as yet unpublished, although a good deal of information is made available here. A short extract on Beckett's sojourn in Hamburg was published in German in 2003).

The first group of essays explores the ways in which Beckett was stimulated by German visual art, starting with James Knowlson's competent and engaging account of Beckett's exposure to Expressionist art in the collection of the Sinclairs in Kassel, which he visited from 1928 onwards. Marie Luise Syring offers more detail on Beckett and Expressionist painting, suggesting also that some of the work he saw during his sojourn in Nazi Germany, such as Franz Marc's, or indeed painters he met there, such as Ballmer and Grimm, helped shape Beckett's post-war view that visual art often articulates a categorical

dissonance between “subject” and “object,” becomes an art “as though there were no eyes left in the world,” as Beckett noted in Hamburg in November 1936. According to John Pilling, although the German trip did not help Beckett overcome his own personal and creative crises, it was fundamental in shaping a new artistic outlook and ultimately changed his approach to writing. Mark Nixon suggests that the second-rate contemporary German writers Beckett read during his German trip, served as a kind of negative foil against which Beckett was able to formulate ideas that would shape his own writing. Nixon is perhaps a little too optimistic in suggesting that some of the writers Beckett was in contact with were critical of the Nazi regime, and one would have liked to hear more about what Beckett thought of the really interesting German modernists, such as Heym, Trakl, and Franz Kafka, whose work Beckett could have sampled in the pages of Eugene Jolas’s *transition* magazine as early as 1928.

More detailed essays on Beckett and older German writers are offered by Ulrich Pothast (Schopenhauer), Everett C. Frost (Goethe) and Martin Brunkhorst, who traces the relevance of Beckett’s allusions to Fontane’s *Effi Briest*. Examining Beckett’s Exercise Books, Marion Fries-Dieckmann proves that Beckett’s German, although he never received any formal instruction, was extremely good and that he was capable of articulating complex aesthetic ideas in the language, as his famous “German Letter” to Axel Kaun of July 1937 proves. In fact, Beckett’s grasp of the language was so good that he collaborated on translations into German (as Wiebke Sievers shows), and the German language became a factor even in self-translations, as Monika Gomille demonstrates.

The remaining essays look to other media: Julian Garforth (like Rathjen in his bicycle essay) examines the influence the Bavarian *Kabarettist* and performer Karl Valentin, whom Beckett met in Munich, had on his early plays; Mary Bryden detects in Beckett’s remarks on German music during 1936/7 a similar penchant for extreme interiority and pure spirit, as Knowlson and Syring identify in his meditations on Expressionist art; and Therese Fischer-Seidel reads Beckett’s production for German TV, “Nacht und Träume,” as a late version of this extreme “interiorist” mode, albeit peppered with biographical and iconographical references. Coming back to Expressionism, Gaby Hartel suggests that silent German films, in particular *Nosferatu* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, may have influenced some of Beckett’s ideas about of stage setting, lighting, and visual composition.

As many of the essays show, Expressionism was the most important German art-form for Beckett. However, the notion of German Expressionism used by the contributors varies widely: most use it as a loose historical and/or artistic term (Knowlson, Nixon), unaware of vast aesthetic and political differences and indeed divided

legacies within Germany and beyond; only Syring (104) makes some of the necessary distinctions. One or two of the contributors suggest that some German writers, e.g. Adorno and Wolfgang Hildesheimer (whose work is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world), read Beckett as a writer whose work explores the post-Holocaust situation. This is a debate which would seem to be more significant than the immediate post-1945 debate about literature and commitment that Peter Brockmeier traces in this volume. However, these minor criticisms do not detract from the main achievement of this volume: it demonstrates conclusively the long-standing and vital role that modern German art, thought, and culture played for Beckett. Given this rich significance of Beckett’s many German dimensions, the editors are absolutely right to

New & Forthcoming

- Casanova, Pascale. *Samuel Beckett: Anatomy of a Literary Revolution*. Translated by Gregory Elliot. London: Verso, 2007. ISBN: 18-446-7112-7. \$27.95.
- Engelberts, Matthijs and Everett Frost, with Jane Maxwell. *Notes Diverse Holo: Catalogues of Beckett’s reading notes and other manuscripts at Trinity College Dublin, with supporting essays*. Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2006. ISBN 90-420-2002-4. \$104; €80.
- Federman, Raymond. *Le livre de Sam, ou, des pierres à sucer plein les poches*. Paris: Al Dante, 2006. ISBN 2-84761-133-9. €17.
- Stewart, Paul. *Zone of Evaporation: Samuel Beckett’s Disjunctions*. Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2006. ISBN 90-420-2077-6. \$42; €55.
- Gontarski, S.E. and Anthony Uhlmann, eds. *Beckett After Beckett*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006. ISBN: 08-130-2909-0. \$59.95; £45.50.
- Tajiri, Yoshiki. *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body: The Organs and Senses in Modernism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. ISBN: 02-300-0817-8. \$65.
- Uhlmann, Anthony. *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. ISBN: 05-218-6520-4. \$85; £45.72.
- Uhlmann, Anthony and Han Van Ruler, eds. *Arnold Geulincx’ Ethics, with Samuel Beckett’s Notes*. Translated by Martin Wilson. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006. ISBN: 90-041-5467-1. \$129; £69.39.

ask whether the time has come to see Beckett as a genuinely trilingual writer (11), with all the consequences for aesthetics and criticism that this entails.

Discussion of Beckett and Germany is not new, but rarely has it produced such a stimulating range of essays that sheds much light on a hitherto largely “unkown Beckett.” This is, beyond any doubt, an important volume, and it will be immensely useful for anyone wishing to better understand the cultural significance of Beckett’s work. Although the essays are generally very readable, one or

two have been translated into a functional and inelegant German, which does a disservice to their authors and translators. Unfortunately, there’s no overall index, which makes the volume somewhat user-unfriendly. Nevertheless, the volume deserves to be widely read, and it would be a shame if Suhrkamp’s decision to publish these papers in German limited its potential readership. Suhrkamp himself, after all, has for the past half-century and long before his Anglophone and French counterparts, been keen to present Beckett as a multilingual writer.

— Andreas Kramer

Notes on Contributors

- Chris Ackerley is professor and former head of English at the University of Otago, New Zealand. He works in Modernism, with particular emphasis upon Malcolm Lowry and Samuel Beckett. His speciality is annotation. Recent books include a revised edition of *Demented Particulars: The Annotated Murphy* (1996 & 2004); *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated Watt* (2005); and, with S. E. Gontarski, the companions to Beckett published by Grove and Faber (2004 & 2006).
- Helen Astbury teaches English at the Université de Lille 3.
- Natka Bianchini, a PhD candidate in drama at Tufts University, is writing a doctoral thesis on the American premieres of Beckett’s plays between 1956-1984. Her article on the 1984 ART *Endgame* will appear in a forthcoming volume of essays on the play published by Rodopi Press.
- Mary Bryden is Professor of European Literature (French) at Cardiff University. She has published widely on Beckett, and is a former President of the Samuel Beckett Society.
- Daniela Caselli, Lecturer in Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture at the University of Manchester, is the author of *Beckett’s Dantes: Intertextuality in the Fiction and Criticism* (2005) and *Djuna Barnes’s Bewildering Corpus: Improper Modernism* (forthcoming).
- Geneviève Chevallier teaches in the English Department of the Université de Nice.
- Karine Germoni is Professor Agrégée in the Department of French Literature at the University of Provence in Aix-en-Provence. She teaches dramatic theory and 20th-Century French Literature while preparing a PhD on “Punctuation in Samuel Beckett’s works.” She has also published articles on Aristophanes, Racine, Rousseau, Gide, Giraudoux, and Cousse.
- E. Gontarski is Sarah Herndon Professor of English at Florida State University, where he is General Editor of the *Journal of Beckett Studies*, *Journal of Beckett Studies Books*, and *Journal of Beckett Studies E-books*. He is currently editing the *Blackwell Companion to Samuel Beckett*. For fall 2006 he is Visiting Professor of Theoretical Studies of Theatre at the 21st Century COE [Center of Excellence] Institute of Theatre Research and the The Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University.
- Nicholas Johnson is a PhD candidate, actor, and writer based at Trinity College, Dublin; his dissertation is on the performance of Samuel Beckett’s prose.
- Andreas Kramer is Senior Lecturer in German at Goldsmiths, University of London. His research interests focus on twentieth-century German and Austrian writing and the avant-garde, especially Dada and Expressionism. He is the author of *Gertrude Stein und die deutsche Avantgarde* (Isele, 1993), an edition of *Eugene Jolas, Man from Babel*, with Rainer Rumold and Holger Briel (Yale UP, 1998), and *Adorno, Critical Theory and Cultural Studies* (Peter Lang, 2001).
- Charles Krance has been living in southeastern France since the spring of 1999.
- Manfred Mittermayer is currently a researcher at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the History and Theory of Biography in Vienna. He is the author of several books and articles on Thomas Bernhard and other twentieth-century Austrian writers and one of the editors of the *Thomas-Bernhard-Werkausgabe* (Suhrkamp).
- Paul Muldoon is Howard G.B. Clark ’21 Professor at Princeton University and Chair of the University Center for the Creative and Performing Arts. Between 1999 and 2004, he was Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford. His most recent collection of poetry is *Horse Latitudes* (2006).
- Jonathan T. Naito is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at UCLA.
- Vera Novello is an actress and Professor of Theater History in Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.
- Jürgen Siess, an emeritus professor of comparative literature at Caen University, has published numerous articles on 18th and 19th century theater.

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Thomas Cousineau
Department of English
Washington College
300 Washington Avenue
Chestertown, MD 21620
Tel: (410) 778-7770
Fax: (410) 778-7891
e-mail: tcousineau2@washcoll.edu

Inquiries concerning book reviews should be sent to:
Derval Tubridy
Department of English and Comparative Literature
Goldsmith College
London, SE 14 6NW
England
e-mail: d.tubridy@gold.ac.uk

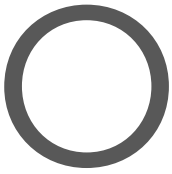
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Professor Enoch Brater
Department of English Language and Literature
3187 Angell Hall
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003
USA
Tel: (734) 764-2275
Email: enochb@umich.edu

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