



THE BECKETT CIRCLE LE CERCLE DE BECKETT

Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

Borderless Beckett: Tokyo 2006

The late Takahashi Yasunari, the founder of Beckett studies in Japan, called attention to Beckett's affinities with the classical Noh theatre. As Noh crosses borders between reality and dream, life and death, Beckett's art, too, transcends dualistic thinking and transcgresses such borders as conventional genre distinctions, linguistic differences between English and French, geographical and political boundaries, and received frameworks of philosophy and aesthetics. Beckett's writing, which, on the one hand, reduces art to its bare

essentials, is, on the other hand, paradoxically excessive, eluding any reductive view of literature, media, or culture. *Borderless Beckett: An International Samuel Beckett Symposium in Tokyo, 2006*, created a free critical and creative space wherein diverse critical approaches and methodologies reached toward and celebrated Beckett's transgressive, borderless art.

Held at the International Conference Centre, Waseda University, from 29 September to 1 October 2006, this symposium was placed under the auspices of the 21st Century COE Institute for Theatre Research at Waseda University and the Samuel Beckett Research Circle of Japan, with support from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (International Meeting Series).

The highlight of the event was a special lecture by J. M. Coetzee, the Nobel Laureate, who made his first visit to Japan for the symposium. No sooner had Coetzee begun his talk than the more than five hundred people in the auditorium fell into absolute silence under the enchantment of the beauty of his words and his quiet, earnest manner of speech. Coetzee's lecture, entitled "Eight Ways of Looking at Samuel Beckett," introduced a variety of colourful approaches to Beckett, ranging from a comparative analysis of Beckett's work and Melville's *Moby Dick* to a biographical observation concerning Beckett's application for a lectureship at a South African university. Coetzee's argument was not linear but multiple. His freewheeling exploration intriguingly elaborated the disjunctions between the different approaches that he took, and each image of Beckett that Coetzee presented was astonishingly vivid. This lecture will appear in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 19 in 2008, along with the keynote speeches and selected papers presented at the symposium.

The keynote speeches and plenary panels were also remarkable. Mary Bryden's opening lecture, "Clowning with Beckett," was followed by S. E. Gontarski's "The Future of Per-



The *Borderless Beckett* conference concluded with a performance by Noh players that was inspired by Beckett's television plays.

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formance," Evelyne Grossman's "A la limite...", Steven Connor's "On Such and Such a Day... In Such a World': Beckett's Radical Finitude," and Terence Brown's "Yeats, Beckett and the Ghosts in the Machines." Although limited space prevents us from elaborating on the brilliant content of all the keynote speeches, we would like to offer a brief note on the lecture by S. E. Gontarski (Visiting Professor at Waseda University at that time), who paid tribute to the indomitable and imaginative efforts of theatrical directors and artists in overcoming restrictions on performance and adding new dimensions to performances of Beckett's works. In so doing, Gontarski epitomized the innovative spirit shared by all of the symposium speakers in their unwillingness to conform blindly to existing paradigms of Beckett studies.

In one of the two plenary panels, "Beckett and the Art of his Century," Enoch Brater, Linda Ben-Zvi, and Angela Moorjani gave talks entitled, respectively, "Dada to Didi," "Beckett, McLuhan, and Television: The Medium, the Message, and 'the Mess,'" and "Child's Play and the Learned Art of Unseeing." This panel superbly explored inter-relationships between Beckett and individual musicians, painters, sculptors, and other artists. The other plenary panel, "Dialogue entre Bruno Clément et de jeunes chercheurs," offered an excellent opportunity for two younger scholars -- Agnieszka Tworek from Yale University and Manako Ono from Tokyo's Gakushuin University -- to discuss Beckett frankly with Clément, who began the session with a beautiful lecture entitled "Mais quelle est cette voix?" Both the keynote speakers and the panelists are veterans of Beckett studies, yet their talks revealed a common interest in breaking fresh ground.

The symposium was further enriched by seventeen diverse sessions organized around the following topics: "Body," "Image/Vision," "Nature," "Politics," "Presence/Absence," "Translation," "Philosophy," "Philosophie," "Later Plays/

The production featured four performers walking around a limited space in the Noh style, thus illustrating the potential link between Beckett, Yeats, and Noh drama.

TV," "Aporie," "Comparative," "Japanese Theatre," "Deleuze," "Dramaturgie," "Alterity," "Voix/Silence," and "Early Works/ Modern Art." Each of the sessions offered pioneering papers and lively discussions that, along with the keynote speeches and panels, renewed our awareness of the admirable quality and wide range of approaches that characterize Beckett studies.

As part of its effort to encourage the younger generation of Beckett scholars, the symposium's organizing committee offered travel grants to several postgraduate students who had submitted outstanding abstracts. We acknowledge with gratitude the many young promising Beckettians who brought a touch of excitement to the Symposium; their arguments were both innovative and informed by the fifty-year history of the field. They show ever indication of passing the critical legacy of Beckett scholarship on to the future, even as their contributions signal that Beckett studies has entered a new phase.

The closing ceremony of the symposium featured "Tribute to Beckett," a performance by Noh players inspired by Beckett's television works. The production featured four performers walking around a limited space in the Noh style, thus illustrating the potential link between Beckett, Yeats, and Noh drama. The sublime beauty and noble presence of the Noh performers served as a fitting conclusion to the three exciting, stimulating, and fruitful days of the Symposium.

In 2006, Samuel Beckett's centenary was celebrated with symposia, conferences, and events all over the world, but, in Japan, the year marked something more than Beckett's centenary: it was, as well, the fiftieth anniversary of the very first encounter of the Japanese public with his work. Shin'ya Ando, a Japanese student from Waseda University, was among the lucky few who witnessed the world premiere of *En attendant Godot* at the Théâtre de Babylone in Paris in 1953. Thoroughly enchanted by this "unprecedented" play, he translated *Godot* into Japanese upon his return to the Graduate School of Waseda University. The Hakusui-sha Publishing Company published his translation as early as 1956, and Beckett was thus introduced to Japan.



J. M. Coetzee's lecture, "Eight Ways of Looking at Samuel Beckett," was the highlight of Waseda University's celebration of the Beckett centenary.

Four years later, in 1960, Ando himself directed *Godot's* Japanese premiere for the theatre company Bungakuza. That production launched the avant-garde movement known as the "Underground Theatre," which developed into the "Shougekijou-Undou" ("Little-Theatre Movement"), the new wave of Japanese theatre. *Godot* has been performed repeatedly in Japan since the 1960s, leaving a deep impression upon audiences and performers alike.

We are very proud that *Borderless Beckett*, the first international Beckett symposium ever held in East Asia, was an unqualified success and that Waseda University admirably served as a meeting ground for more than sixty researchers from all over the world. It was a great honour and pleasure for us to have supported the global network of Beckett scholars by hosting this symposium. We would like to extend our deepest appreciation to all symposium participants and supporters for their cooperation and contributions.

—Minako Okamuro and Takeshi Kawashima

"... my monster is in safe keeping": Samuel Beckett at Boston College

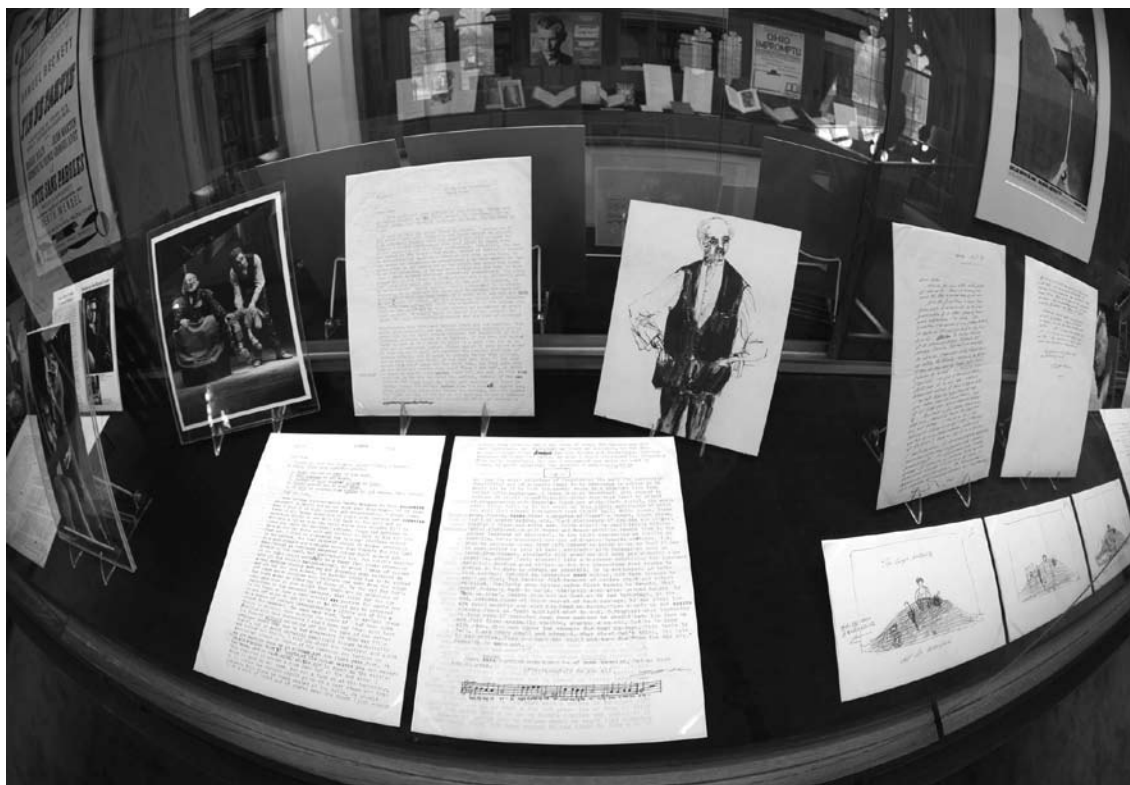
The John J. Burns Library of Rare Books and Special Collections at Boston College houses the largest, most comprehensive collection of Irish research materials in the western hemisphere.

From September 15, 2006 to January 31, 2007, the Burns Library celebrated the Beckett centenary, together with its acquisition of an important new Beckett collection, with an exhibit of a small but representative sample of its extensive Beckett holdings. The exhibit's title derives from Beckett's letter of December 14, 1955 to director Alan Schneider: "Having worked with you so pleasantly and, I hope, profitably, in Paris and London, I feel my monster [*Godot*] is in safe keeping."

The collections featured in the exhibit, all of which are available to scholars, include: (1) The Alan Schneider-Samuel

Beckett Collection, 1955-84, with correspondence including over 270 letters and notes from Beckett to Schneider; (2) The Barney Rosset-Samuel Beckett Collection, 1949-89, which includes materials dealing with the relationship between Beckett and his North American literary agent, Barney Rosset of Grove Press, and contains manuscripts of Beckett's works, correspondence, and press files; (3) The Calvin Israel-Samuel Beckett Collection, 1929-89, which includes manuscripts, theater programs, and publications, together with a number of signed published works by Beckett; (4) The Robert Pinget-Samuel Beckett letters, 1953-88 (in French); and (5) the library's new acquisition, the Judith Schmidt Douw Collection of Correspondence with Samuel Beckett, 1957-84, which contains more than 130 letters from Beckett to Judith Schmidt (later Judith Schmidt Douw), Rosset's secretary. According to Senior Reference Librarian Robert Bruns, who curated the exhibit with assistance from BC graduate student Scott Peterson, the more than 130 letters exchanged with Schmidt Douw show Beckett as "a friendlier, more sympathetic person than some critics make him out to be."

Mr. Bruns kindly took time off from his busy afternoon to guide me around the exhibit, which consisted of four cases displayed in three of the library's elegantly appointed rooms. Pointing to two typescript manuscripts of *Company*, with its famous opening ("A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine"), Bruns commented: "You can see Beckett going back to his psychotherapy" with Dr. Wilfred Bion in London." I asked the curator about the Calvin Israel Collection, since I had not come across Mr. Israel's name before. A professor at SUNY Geneseo, Israel had apparently impressed Beckett by correcting an



The Beckett exhibition at Boston College drew upon the extensive Beckett holdings of its John J. Burns Library of Rare Books and Special Collections.

encyclopedia entry on the author and then visited Beckett in Paris in 1975. "Beckett went to a trunk of manuscripts and publications, opened it, and handed Israel copies which he signed," marveled Bruns—such stuff as professors' dreams are made on, indeed.

As I examined the cases, my eye was caught by many treasures: a first edition of "Whoroscope," accompanied by Beckett's own type-

script; an original poster from the Théâtre de Babylone premiere of *En Attendant Godot*; Beckett's handwritten notation of Krapp's song,

"Now the day is over," for Schneider's benefit; a typed synopsis of *Not I* ("Tries to delude herself voice not hers"; "Brain grabbing at straws"); and, most charmingly (if that is the word), three ink sketches by Beckett of Winnie and Willie in and around the mound in *Happy Days*, accompanied by tentative notes ("Hole offstage if Willie visible"; mound "too high probably") and sent to Schneider on July 13, 1961. But for me, the undoubted highlight was the holograph notebook of Beckett's story "Suite" (later "La Fin"), open to a page where sometime in January-February 1946—the French parts are undated—Beckett drew a line across the page and switched from English to French. This decisive line seems to mark the linguistic shift that produced what the author would later call "the siege in the room," including his three major novels and first two plays.

Fascinating as the photographs, postcards, and theater memorabilia are, it is the manuscript drafts and letters that provide deeper glimpses into Beckett's work—the latter including, occasionally, the author's personal judgments. "I don't know what to think of *Play* myself," Beckett wrote Douw on February 25, 1964. "It seemed to function on my dim mental stage when I did it, enough at best to justify my letting it go. And I felt it had something the others had not. Nothing to do with writing (no attempt at writing there) or with more or less compassion or humour [sic]. But simply in the way of its arrant contrivance and attitude." About *Proust*, Beckett wrote to Rosset on June 25, 1953: "It is a very youthful work, but perhaps not entirely beside the point. Its premises are less feeble than its conclusions." Nor does the author eschew explication on principle. On a sequence in *Film*, Beckett informs Schneider that "the photos and their destruction parallel triple perception (human, animal, divine) from which he [O, the protagonist played by Buster Keaton] seeks to escape and his efforts to obliterate it" (June 24, 1964). And on *Krapp's Last Tape*, Beckett writes to Schneider, "Krapp has nothing to talk to but his dying self and nothing to talk to him but his dead one" (January 4, 1960). The correspondence reveals others' candid impressions of Beckett, too. "Sam is actually a rather naïve individualist," Schneider confides to Thornton Wilder in his 20 January 1956 letter describing his first meeting with Beckett, "avant-garde and non-conformist that he is."

About Proust, Beckett wrote to Rosset on June 25, 1953: "It is a very youthful work, but perhaps not entirely beside the point. Its premises are less feeble than its conclusions."

This illuminating exhibit brought to light several sides of the protean author: tireless reviser, scrupulous collaborator, loyal friend, generous mentor, and affectionate correspondent. Most excitingly, it allowed viewers to forge new connections between Beckett's life and work. Coming across a reference (in an April 13, 1962 letter to Judith Schmidt Douw) to the "zoo," or exercise yard, at the

Santé prison, which was visible from Beckett's Paris apartment window, I mused whether the sight of prisoners exploring whatever permutations of movement were made

possible by their enclosed rectangle might have inspired the gnome-ic figures of *Quad* almost two decades later.

—Andrew Sofer

Washington College Celebrates Centenary

Maryland's Washington College – which had commemorated the James Joyce centenary in 1982-83 with a series of lectures and a performance by Siobhán McKenna of her "All Joyce" program – celebrated the Beckett centenary throughout the Fall 2006 semester in an equally fitting way. Principal events included three lectures – by Marjorie Perloff, Raymond Federman, and Jonathan Kalb – and a stage reading by Barry McGovern.

During her visit to the college, Marjorie Perloff spoke about the influence of Beckett's experiences during World War II on his work. Citing *Waiting for Godot* and the stories that Beckett wrote in the immediate postwar period, she emphasized that Beckett's writing is "based on real experience -- things that happened to him," specifically during the War, when he was forced to flee to the south of France. Perloff also stressed that Beckett's work focuses on "natural functions" such as aging, defecation, and general deterioration, and discussed how this emphasis shows not some kind of existential undertone but rather, as she put it, "realistic things turned inside out." It isn't straightforward realism," she argued, although his work does contain certain realistic details from his life.

Offering a variation on this idea, Raymond Federman, who arrived fresh from Paris, where he had celebrated the publication of *Le Livre de Sam*, a memoir about his friendship with Beckett, as well as the French translation of his novel *To Whom it May Concern*, declared that Beckett's work is a completely "false representation of reality." Beckett taught him to "escape the imposture of realism and naturalism," which "trap[s] you into believing that

what you are reading or seeing is true...without falling into absurdity, [Beckett] takes you out of the illusion realism creates. He breaks down illusions and confronts you with the medium itself." Federman cited *Waiting for Godot* -- specifically, the "awful, hilarious" scene when Pozzo drives Lucky on with his whip while commanding him to go "on, Pig!" -- as what initially fascinated him about Beckett. "What guts! What courage to show me that and make me laugh! Only great artists can do that." In his novel *To Whom It May Concern*, Federman, having learned from his "tormentor," tells "a traumatic, horrible story" while making the reader laugh. He also leaves out certain details about the place and time period in which his story takes place -- a device reminiscent of Beckett's work, which contains very few "grounding" elements. According to Federman, Beckett employs certain kinds of constraints in his work, and in doing so, shows us that those constraints are not an obstacle to his artistic freedom in the least.

Jonathan Kalb -- in a lecture entitled "Beckett After Beckett," which dealt with present-day performances of Beckett's plays -- argued that the "speeded-up tastes of today's public" and a society where "you can just reach for an automobile, soap, or TV shows for quick satisfaction," make many theatergoers impatient and unwilling to endure the "trouble" necessary to achieve the deeper satisfaction and pleasure that Beckett's plays offer. The problem with many modern-day performances of Beckett's plays, according to Kalb, is that they are shallow, pseudo-"sexy" and have missed Beckett's point com-



Raymond Federman, shown here with Johanna Schaeffer, concluded his presentation by reading from his recently published book, *Le livre de Sam*.

pletely. However, some productions -- including certain plays filmed as part of the *Beckett on Film* series -- have, in his view, remained true to Beckett's vision. These successful productions were "driven by passion, a missionary zeal to connect Beckett with the larger public" without attempting to simplify and sex up his work to catch the attention of mouse-clicking couch potatoes."

The Washington College community (no couch potatoes here) was also treated to an unforgettable performance of a sampling from the Beckett canon by Barry McGovern. McGovern, who became "intrigued" by Beckett at the age of twelve after seeing a performance of *Waiting for Godot* on television, has performed Beckett's work multiple times and Beckett himself granted him permission in the late 1980s to perform a one-man show. His mesmerizing reading included excerpts from *More Pricks Than Kicks*, *Murphy*, *Watt*, *Molloy*, and *Waiting for Godot*. McGovern ended his performance with an absolutely spell-binding recital -- without the aid of a text at hand -- of passages from *The Unnamable*. After this powerful finale, the audience -- struck dumb with amazement, at first -- burst into prolonged and vociferous applause.

—Johanna Schaeffer



Barry McGovern chats with members of the audience during a reception at the Rose O'Neill Literary House following his performance at Washington College.

Paris—Beckett 2006

The Paris-Beckett 2006 festival included productions of all nineteen of Beckett's plays in French as well as stagings of other works and performances in languages other than French in theaters in Paris and the Paris region. Three Beckett scholars -- Alexandra Poulain, Karine Germoni, and Harry Vanderolist -- contributed the following reviews to The Beckett Circle.

Dramaticules at Studio-Théâtre de la Comédie Française.

The beginning of the Paris-Beckett festival featured a much-expected event, *Dramaticules* at the Studio-Théâtre, under Jean Dautremay's direction, which signalled the belated entry of a selection of Beckett's shorts into the repertoire of the Théâtre Français. The name of the Studio-Théâtre -- the Comédie Française's newest venue, which opened in 1996 -- was chosen as homage to Stanislavski's First Studio at the Moscow Art Theatre. Like its predecessor, it is a deliberately small, intimate theatrical space where actors and audience may commune emotionally -- apparently an ideal choice for Beckett's experiments in theatrical minimalism. No such communion, however, was achieved in Dautremay's production, which

came across as little more than a succession of lifeless tableaux.

One reason, no doubt, was the sheer number of plays performed as "one theatrical gesture," as Dautremay puts it in the program note: five substantial, perplexing, exacting one-act plays -- too many, arguably, for any audience to absorb at a single time. Dautremay's attempt to fuse all five plays into a continuum might highlight thematic and formal continuity (throughout the performance, all four actors are dressed in the same shapeless long grey gowns and wear similar wigs of long white hair, four identical, recognizably "Beckettian" figures), but it tended to cancel the plays' specificities as unique, self-contained theatrical rituals. Thus the staging of the hieratic *Cette Fois, Solo*, and *Impromptu d'Ohio* on a stage already cluttered with the numerous props used later in the more worldly *Fragment de Théâtre II* did little either to clarify individual pieces, or to energize the whole.

The bill started with one of Beckett's most exacting, and most radical, plays, *Cette Fois*. Dautremay's strict adherence to Beckett's constraining stage directions failed to give the superb Michel Robin the breathing space he required to animate his character, and the piece ultimately failed to captivate -- as did Jean-Baptiste Malaparte's equally orthodox *Solo*. Michel Robin returned to play Listener to Pierre Vial's Reader in *Impromptu d'Ohio*, a rather muddled and disappointing affair in which Dautremay's timid departures from the rigid law of Beckettian stage di-

rections rather tended to obscure the general effect of the play, without imposing his own vision of it. The two actors played in profile, both plainly visible and clearly differentiable in spite of their identical costumes, which obviously undermined the uncanny effect of duplication towards which the play strives. Instead of knocking on the table when he wanted a phrase repeated, Listener rattled castanets, which came across as an absurd gimmick rather than an imperious expression of authority. Finally, the two characters hardly met each other's gaze at the end of the play, thus failing to suggest the sense of horrified mutual recognition with which the play is meant to culminate. As a result, the three plays -- in which Beckett's theatrical images grapple with fractured identities and fragmented memories and strive to negotiate a subtle balance between pathos and grim comedy -- could only produce a feeling of, frankly, boredom.

The cast seemed more at ease in the comic register of *Fragment de Théâtre II*. Jean-Baptiste Malaparte and Alain Lenglet visibly enjoyed playing the two unfeeling clowns in



La Troupe de la Comédie-Française présente
au Studio-Théâtre
avec le Festival Paris Beckett-Cinq *dramaticules*
De Samuel Beckett
avec: Michel Robin et Pierre Vial
Mise en scène de Jean Dautremay.
photo de Cosimo Mirco Magliocca

Beckett's bureaucratic nightmare, and an audibly relieved audience could finally begin to relate, although tentatively, to the drama onstage. The program ended with *Quoi Où*, which brought the four actors together in a minutely choreographed ballet of verbal exchanges, in which the mechanical quality of speech and gesture forcefully conveyed the horror of rationalized sadism. This very short play did not, however, redeem the whole evening.

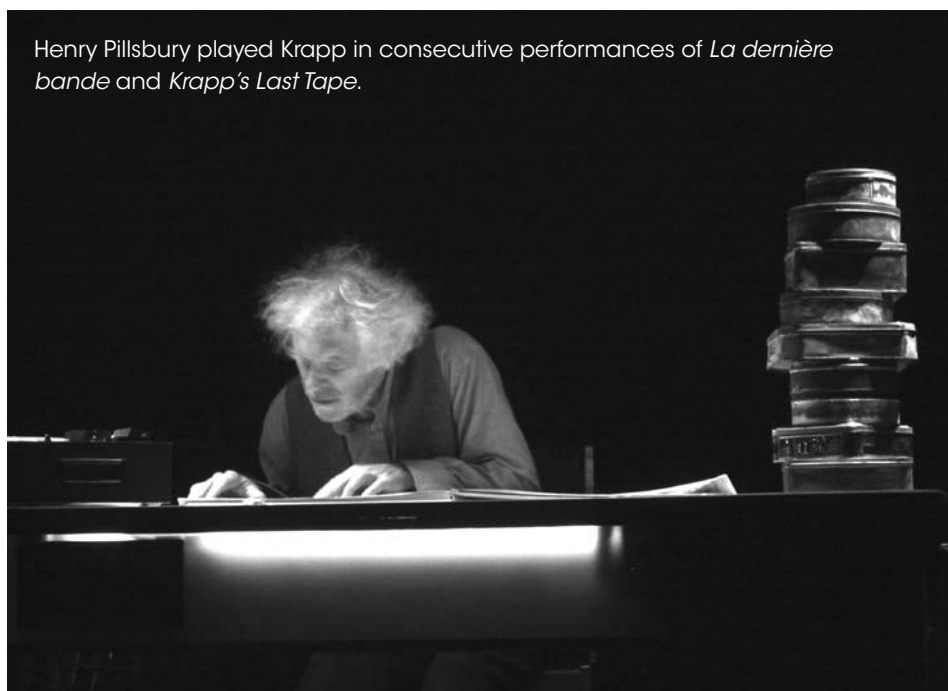
La dernière bande/Krapp's Last Tape and Fin de partie

In 1994, Joël Jouhanneau had directed an emaciated David Warrilow in *La dernière bande* at Le Théâtre de l'Athénée, in what was to be one of his last appearances on stage. Thus, it must have been particularly challenging for Xavier Marchand to direct Henry Pillsbury's rendition of Krapp at the same venue, little more than a decade later. Like Warrilow, Pillsbury is perfectly bilingual, and under Marchand's direction gave two successive versions of the play in a row, first in French, then in English. Marchand justified his choice in the program note by suggesting that such an arrangement offered a bilingual audience the possibility of comparing the two versions, and of measuring the stylistic and lexical gap between them (the French version, for instances, contains many colloquialisms that are absent from the English). "Beckett's oeuvre only fully exists when it is encountered in both languages," he claimed. The problem with this approach is that it tended to privilege scholarly interest over theatrical truth. The juxtaposition of the two versions may (or may not) have been enlightening about aspects of Beckett's ambidextrous approach to language, but in dramatic terms it ran the serious risk of simply being tedious.

Of course, Marchand had anticipated this possibility: not only did he imagine two substantially different *mises en scène* for the two versions, but he actually endeavoured to integrate the two versions into a coherent, dynamic whole. Pillsbury first played the French version, closely following Beckett's stage directions – a touchingly acribious Krapp who performed a Clov-like pantomime at the start, aware as he was of the treacherous potential of banana peels when left dormant on the floor. For all his impeccable diction in French, however, Pillsbury's Krapp lacked the element of frailty (the famous crack in Patrick Magee's voice, or Warrilow's ghostly intensity) that might make the character's desperation come fully alive onstage.

For the English version, played after an interval of a few minutes, Marchand had Krapp deliver his text

while watching a video of himself in very close shots, in which he performed the same gestures as in the first version – but to an English soundtrack. Michel Jacquelin's video was strikingly beautiful, and the effect of multiple embedding is always superficially fascinating, but the artificial imposition of a post-modernist aesthetic on the play tended to obscure its meaning and to stray from the point – especially, and crucially, because Krapp did not control the video as he did the tape-recorder. Ultimately, the juxtaposition of the two versions came across as a commemorative homage to Beckett's linguistic versatility, rather than as a successful directorial gesture.



Henry Pillsbury played Krapp in consecutive performances of *La dernière bande* and *Krapp's Last Tape*.

photo credit: Michel Jacquelin

Fragments au Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord

One highlight of the festival was Peter Brook's *Fragments*, featuring four of Beckett's shorts at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord. As always, Brook used no set, but merely relied on Philippe Vialatte's intricate lighting to animate the reddish walls of the theatre and the bare stage. The program started with the grimly comic *Fragment de Théâtre I*, in which Beckett turned the fable of the blind man and the cripple on its head to point out the impossibility of human solidarity. Brook had brilliantly cast Jos Houben and Marcello Magnani -- both of whom are actors in the remarkable British company, Théâtre de Complicité -- as the two forlorn clowns who fantasize briefly on a future of mutual help and shared baked beans before – inevitably – falling out. The mildly sarcastic exchanges at the outset subtly grew into genuine acrimony before culminating in

the violent, unbearably aporetic dénouement.

This outburst of violence was followed by the introspective, enigmatic *Berceuse*. Sitting on (or standing by) a simple chair, Geneviève Mnich listened to her own voice with an expression of puzzled surprise, as if taken aback by time's propensity to repeat itself indefinitely. Her "Encore" became an invitation to interpret the spiralling of the text as comic repetition ("here we go again!"). Her performance radically reinvented the play by revealing its comic potential – though it tended to tone down the sense of existential angst that productions of this play usually suggest.

The evening's apex came when Houben and Magnani returned for *Acte sans paroles II*. The short, stocky Magnani went grumpily through the motions of his imposed score of everyday gestures; he was then followed by the tall, lean, and highly enthusiastic Houben. Both actors vied with each other in unbridled comic inventiveness and poignancy, thus achieving a moment of magnificent, quintessentially Beckettian theatre that was then subtly counterpointed by Mnich's quiet rendering of *Ni l'un ni l'autre*.

— Alexandra Poulain

« Comédie », « Pas », « Catastrophe » au Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord

Dans l'émission rediffusée par France Culture, « Beckett et le théâtre. Hommage à Roger Blin », dimanche 26.11.06, R. Blin déclare : « Les critiques et exégètes de Beckett cherchent un message dans ses pièces mais ils oublient l'essentiel : le théâtre de Beckett est essentiellement comique [...] Mais il y a dans tout cela une grande cruauté ». C'est ce qu'ont pu vérifier les spectateurs de *Comédie, Pas, Catastrophe*, mises en scène au Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord par Michael Lonsdale, acteur et metteur en scène fidèle à Beckett. Bien des spectateurs ont pu se sentir projetés plusieurs décennies en arrière. Michael Lonsdale, Eléonore Hirt et Delphine Seyrig ont en effet créé les rôles de H, F1 et F2 dans *Comédie* en 1964 dans la mise en scène de J.-M. Serreau.

Trois jarres de terre cuite sobre, en parfait accord avec l'atmosphère délicieusement délétère du Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, sortent progressivement du noir, comme bouchonnées chacune par une tête, « le cou étroitement pris dans le goulot » : de gauche à droite, celle de F2 (Laurence Bourdil), de H (Michael Lonsdale) et de F1 (Eléonore Hirt), couronnés de perruques aussi loufoques que discriminantes. Pour H, cheveux courts d'un blond lumineux ; d'un blond électrique est la perruque de F2, crinière hirsute qui fait d'elle la maîtresse, plus jeune que F1, la femme, à la coiffure brune davantage classique. Les visages (surtout ceux des femmes) ne sont donc pas « oblitérés » ni « à peine plus différenciés que les jarres », selon la volonté auctoriale. Ils sont humains, simplement. Commence le concerto « à la Beckett » de ce vaudeville, « métaphysique » comme le dit Michael Lonsdale, à la

limite du compréhensible pour les spectateurs qui ne connaissent pas le texte et ne l'ont jamais entendu – ce qui occasionne (toujours) la frustration.

Ceux qui, en revanche, connaissent la didascalie liminaire de l'auteur - « *débit rapide* » - et ont encore dans l'oreille le débit endiablé des premières mises en scène sont surpris par une cadence qui, pour être soutenue, n'a rien de précipité : F2 articule rapidement mais marque de légères pauses ; F1 parle sans se bousculer. Les deux actrices sont remarquables de maîtrise. Quant à H, pris en tenailles entre les deux femmes, il débite son texte de façon mi-amusée, mi-désabusée, d'une voix monotone mais pas monocorde – à l'image de son visage, immobile sans être impassible : la voix si particulière de Michael Lonsdale est une palette de couleurs à elle seule, sans que l'acteur ait besoin de « jouer ». Le public lâche des petits rires nerveux – la pièce est féroce. Le hoquet de H, le rire hystérique de F2, les insultes si peu élégantes que s'envoient les deux femmes par le biais de « leur » homme si lâche ne font pas oublier la cruauté de ce projecteur à la lumière si aride de blancheur qui torture les trois personnages, en leur extorquant la parole dans une sorte d'Enfer ou de Purgatoire, où ils n'ont pas fini d'expier on ne sait quelle faute (celle d'avoir - mal ? - aimé ?). Sans fin, semble-t-il, même si, sans doute pour des raisons de « timing », il n'y a pas de « Da Capo » dans cette mise en scène. Le noir se fait soudain.

Suit un intermède de piano jusqu'à ce que progressivement émerge « l'aire de jeu » arpentée inlassablement par May, dans un espace là encore incertain. Les Portes du Paradis de Dante demeurent également fermées pour elle, qui n'a jamais fini de « ressasser tout ça ». La mise en scène s'inspire de celles de Beckett en 1976 lors de la création de *Footfalls* (Royal Court Theatre) avec Billie Whitelaw et en 1978 au Théâtre d'Orsay avec Delphine Seyrig. L'actrice, Laurence Bourdil, comme May, est entre deux âges, âge qui est toujours la source de questions amusantes chez Beckett, comme le montre cet extrait entre May et V., la voix off, réelle ou imaginée, de cette « Mère » (Françoise Thuries), tellement désirée dans l'absence de sa présence :

M.- Quel âge ai-je... déjà ?

V.- Et moi alors ? (*Un temps. Pas plus fort.*) Et moi alors ?

M.- Quatre-vingt dix.

V.- Tellement ?

M.- Quatre-vingt neuf, quatre-vingt dix.

Petits éclats de rire dans le public. Plus que sa diction, un peu trop déclamatoire parfois, le jeu de Laurence Bourdil rappelle celui de Billie Whitelaw ou de Delphine Seyrig, prostrée, les avant-bras croisés sur la poitrine, comme si elle portait « sa petite croix ». Par contraste, son visage paraît peut-être trop serein. Son costume rappelle également celui que Jocelyn Herbert avait dessiné pour l'actrice anglaise, de même que le son de taffetas qu'il produit en frôlant le sol. Entre le gris-noir et le gris lumineux, les dégradés de la robe sont en harmonie avec les cheveux poivre-sel et en désordre de l'actrice dont le corps est plongé dans un clair-obscur qui auréole la scène d'un halo poétique et mystérieux.

Pendant la pièce, les variations d'intensité de l'éclairage et ses changements de direction modulent l'espace. Quand

V parle, un spot lumineux (très différent de celui dans *Comédie* à l'avant-scène) éclaire l'arrière-scène comme s'il s'agissait de matérialiser la source vocale de la voix off, par une source lumineuse ; quand May se fait narratrice, seule l'aire de jeu (marelle ? couloir ?) est éclairée. Dans l'ensemble, la pièce baigne dans une atmosphère étrange, entre le rêve et la réalité. Le spectateur est bercé, voire hypnotisé par le rituel du va-et-vient de May, réglé comme du papier à musique - « Sept huit neuf et hop » - par la chute des pas qui retombent pourtant sans pesanteur : « Non, mère, le mouvement à lui seul ne suffit pas, il me faut la chute des pas, si faible soit-elle ». Comme si May n'était déjà plus là - et pour donner ce sentiment d'absence à soi, le « paradoxe de la comédien[ne] » exige d'elle encore plus de présence. Laurence Bourdil, parfois, hante le texte plus qu'elle ne l'habite. Le noir se fait ; l'éclairage tamisé éclaire à peine l'aire de jeu : May n'est pas là. N'est plus là. A-t-elle jamais été là ?

Le même morceau de piano que précédemment sert d'intermède, après cette « pause » que constitue Pas entre *Comédie* et *Catastrophe*. Cette pièce, dédiée à Vaclav Havel, créée au festival d'Avignon en 1982 avant d'être reprise à Paris en 1983 dans une mise en scène de Pierre Chabert n'a pas pris une ride, sans doute

grâce à la métaphore théâtrale utilisée par Beckett pour représenter les rapports d'oppression. M., le metteur en scène assis dans un fauteuil, figure l'homme

Suit un intermède de piano jusqu'à ce que progressivement émerge « l'aire de jeu » arpentée inlassablement par May, dans un espace là encore incertain.

de pouvoir, qu'on voie en lui un metteur en scène ou le bureaucrate d'un Etat totalitaire de l'est d'avant la chute du mur de Berlin. A., son assistante (Eléonore Hirt), recueille les indications qu'il donne, fait des suggestions qu'il s'empresse de rejeter. Sur un cube se tient un homme silencieux, P., le Protagoniste (Pascal Omhovere), pieds nus, la tête baissée. Seule la référence de M., le metteur en scène (Michael Lonsdale, comme en 1983), à son « comité » semble datée, tout comme son grand « manteau de fourrure » et sa « toque assortie », qui en font la figure d'une autorité despotique.

De la soirée, c'est sans doute la pièce qui touche le plus le public à travers la figure tremblante de P., aussi pathétique que Lucky. Ses lèvres sont agitées, comme son corps, par un tremblement incessant. S'agit-il d'un acteur qui joue le rôle d'un prisonnier ou d'un prisonnier auquel on fait jouer son propre rôle dans un de ces spectacles édifiants que les directeurs de camps préparaient à l'attention des visiteurs cyniques ou naïfs ? Qu'on tire la pièce vers l'interprétation politique, cautionnée par le contexte de création - la condamnation de la sujétion politique - ou l'interprétation métathéâtrale, le théâtre de Beckett demeure politique au sens étymologique du terme et profondément engagé en ne refusant jamais de montrer toutes les horreurs dont sont capables les hommes envers leurs « semblables ».

C'est aussi celle des trois pièces qui amuse le plus le public qui rit tout de suite. M. est aussi cynique que

comique - surtout lorsqu'il réclame « du feu », qu'il déclare avec une satisfaction désabusée, si peu crédible, « C'est mieux. On arrive » ou encore qu'il fait référence à la « Patagonie ». Au moment où il dit « Je vais voir ça de la salle », le public se tend, émoustillé par l'idée que l'acteur va venir se fondre parmi les spectateurs. Néanmoins, la mise en scène ne cède pas à cette facilité-là et aucun renversement ne s'opère entre la salle et la scène. M. disparaît dans les coulisses. A., que l'éclipse de M. détend, en profite pour s'asseoir sur le fauteuil puis se met à l'astiquer nerveusement avant de jeter son chiffon d'un mouvement précipité.

A la fin de la pièce cependant, les spectateurs fictifs qui applaudissent se confondent avec le véritable public - d'autant que les projecteurs qui éclairent P. pour la « catastrophe » sont braqués à partir de la salle par Luc (Damien Bricotteaux), l'éclairagiste réduit à une voix off. A la fin, le mouvement de tête de P. est toujours aussi fort, aussi mystérieux - « beau » en effet. Résistance passive mais résistance quand même. Mouvement de défi lancé à la salle. La tête plonge lentement dans le noir comme elle en était progressivement sortie au seuil de la pièce.

Terminons nous aussi par là où nous avons commencé, en citant Blin : « On rit de sa propre misère ; c'est la seule élégance que l'on puisse se permettre ». Ajoutons : « sur ce Purgatoire qu'est la Terre », selon la formule de Beckett, la seule façon de résister.

Le Dépeupleur au Théâtre de l'Athénée

Du 9 novembre au 9 décembre 2006 Michel Didym, acteur et metteur en scène, assisté par Alain Françon, portait sur la scène de l'Athénée *Le Dépeupleur* (1970) dans une version totalement différente de sa première mise en scène du texte, en février 1996, dans ce même théâtre. Lors de cette création, Michel Didym usait d'une voix monotone, avec peu de reliefs ; sa gestuelle elle aussi était sobre à l'excès : « Je devais, tout au plus faire deux ou trois mouvements ». En 2006, Didym a tiré *Le Dépeupleur* vers un théâtre clownesque brisant le « quatrième mur ». Vêtu d'un chapeau melon, portant de grosses chaussures et un veston, il a quelque chose de chaplinesque. Son but est d'amuser le public auquel il s'adresse ostensiblement par des gestes du bras, à plusieurs reprises. L'acteur néanmoins ne se trouve pas sur des tréteaux mais sur une scène étroite, sculptée comme un demi-cylindre par une lumière jaunâtre qui donne à voir l'espace du « séjour » et l'éclairage qui le baigne. Quand l'acteur évoque les niches, l'éclairage devient bleuté pour délimiter une ceinture dans la partie supérieure du mur de fond : du sol, il est impossible de voir les niches. Et de la salle, il devient impossible de voir les niches dessinées, gommées par l'éclairage.

Alors que le texte laisse indéterminée la nature et le lieu d'où parle la voix de l'instance narrative, ici, il s'agit bien d'« un homme » (le lecteur du *Dépeupleur* se souvient de la formule « si c'est un homme ») qui se trouve dans le cylindre avec les « petits corps » – comme s'il était l'un d'entre eux. D'ailleurs, l'acteur intègre par le geste le décor à son discours ; lorsqu'il est question de l'ascension aux échelles, il montre les dessins aussi naïfs que des dessins d'enfants au crayon gris qui représentent les petits corps sur le sol ou sur les échelles. La naïveté des dessins sied bien à la naïveté du ton : « Il faut cependant du courage pour s'en [des échelles] servir. Car il leur manque à toutes la moitié des échelons et cela de façon peu harmonieuse. S'il n'en manquait qu'un sur deux, le mal ne serait pas grand. Mais l'absence de trois à la file oblige à des acrobaties » (9). Le public rit. Les spectateurs sont également amusés lorsqu'est mentionnée la difficulté à s'accoupler dans la treizième section. Les allusions sexuelles font souvent rire, il est vrai. Mais

la manière beckettienne de les mettre en forme les rend particulièrement savoureuses. Michel Didym sait les donner à entendre en trouvant le ton juste,

sans en rajouter inutilement. Pour les évoquer, il s'allonge, avant de relever la tête puis de s'asseoir. Serait-ce pour signaler qu'il n'est pas un des « petits corps » qui n'ont pas même la place de s'allonger – sauf dans les niches où le corps peut « tant bien que mal s'y étendre » (11) –, tout juste de s'asseoir, dans le cylindre ? Le doute demeure dans ce texte qui ménage ses propres culs-de-sac, se fait en même temps qu'il se défait.

Le *Dépeupleur* n'est pas un texte facile – Beckett a mis cinq ans à l'écrire, rejeté par ses « intractable complexités ». Sans doute l'interprétation de Michel Didym fonctionne, en ce sens qu'elle fait entrer le spectateur dans l'univers du cylindre et qu'elle met le texte à la portée de tous. Mais ce faisant, elle aplanit parfois le texte là où plusieurs strates de sens possibles se chevauchent, là où le mystère se niche. L'émotion manque quelquefois, notamment lorsqu'est évoquée la femme qui est « le Nord ». La mise en scène du *Dépeupleur* en fait encore la preuve : la liberté que laisse entrevoir l'absence d'indications dans l'adaptation à la scène des textes en prose est un leurre hypothétique, car il s'agit d'un exercice aussi périlleux que celui de l'équilibriste. Saluons la performance de Michel Didym qui, quoique vacillant de temps à autre sur le fil très mince où il s'aventure, parvient à traverser *Le Dépeupleur* en gardant l'équilibre.

—Karine Germoni

A Memorable *Fin de Partie* in the Paris Suburbs

France's network of *scènes nationales*, or national public theatres, was created in 1991 to make contemporary dra-

ma accessible throughout France. As of 2005 there were 69 such theatres. At the Scène Nationale de Sénart in the southern suburbs of Paris, Bernard Levy's beautiful and memorable production of *Fin de Partie* played to a full house on November 25, 2006. Five late-November dates there offered a second chance for those who had missed the very well-received earlier performances of the same production at the Athenée Théâtre Louis-Jouvet.

From the first moments it was clear that this production would take a thoughtful, inventive approach. The play's title was announced with the image of the play text's cover, projected on a scrim. This faded away, to be replaced by the projected text of Beckett's set description and opening stage directions. All of this unfolded amid a stylish dove-grey light. As the scrim disappeared the set itself emerged into view. The space was defined by suspended dark ribbons or cables which described a cube within an area of glowing light, as if Ham and Clov's

room had been drawn freehand

in three dimensions with a

Saluons la performance de Michel Didym qui, quoique vacillant de temps à autre sur le fil très mince où il s'aventure, parvient à traverser *Le Dépeupleur* en gardant l'équilibre.

black marker. The sense of a location that was as much mental as physical, possibly suspended in air, was both beautiful and apt. The windows and

the door through which Clov

exits were also "drawn" in this way. The absence of any true physical barrier around the "room" allowed for an effective joke, as Clov once walked "through the wall" while impatiently fulfilling Hamm's request for his "lunettes." The decor by Giulio Lichtner and lighting by Christian Pinaud added a truly seductive element to the production. (Several audience members could be heard whispering "génial" during the play's opening seconds).

The performances given in this beautifully-conceived space were themselves equally "génial." Gilles Arbona as Clov was anguished and nail-thin. His craggy, high-cheekboned face produced spectacular shadows and hollows under the lights. His movements, rheumatoid and deliberate, conveyed many subtle shades of anger and resignation. Arbona moves with genuine subtlety and wit, and this added immeasurably to his performance. Thierry Bosc, as Hamm, was evidently dying to get out of his chair and move a bit more himself. He performed with something like the maximum mobility possible while remaining seated. This gave him a restless energy that sometimes diminished Hamm's irritable stateliness and that was sometimes distracting during his speeches. Perhaps it was this physical energy which ensured that, despite his grey beard, he came across as relatively youthful. Overall his Hamm was, quite aptly, an agreeable old bastard, a despot and blowhard who softened toward the end, almost becoming a touch sentimental as he told his stories later in the play. The performance showed strongly that Hamm truly is "a player," in many senses: a contender for power, for advantage, for fresh drama and conflict. In the purely theatrical sense he was also a vivid, fiercely watchable player. Audience comments in the lobby afterward focused, above all, on his performance – a testament

Giles Arbona played Clov and Thierry Bosc, Hamm in Bernard Lévy's production of *Fin de partie*.



photo credit: Pascale Gely, Agence Bernard

to Bosc's sheer magnetism on the stage.

Georges Ser's Nagg spoke, even sans teeth, with a silky radio-announcer voice that was very effective, and Marie-Françoise Audollent played Nell with, given the character's situation, a touching equanimity. As an ensemble, all four actors worked together without any obvious unevenness that might distract from the production's overall sense of mastery--of the text, of timing, and of movement within the theatre space. Yet it would be wrong to suggest that the performance was in any way ponderously magisterial. The actors' collective touch was light enough that it was rare for five minutes to pass without laughter from the audience. The laughs in this production (and it is worth noting that the company Bernard Lévy founded in 1994, and which co-produced this performance, is named "Lire Aux Eclats," which puns on "rire aux éclats,") were of every possible type: of recognition, of surprise, of relief, and of satisfaction, after an especially apt or witty gesture. Occasionally the audience seemed to find itself laughing at nothing; perhaps that "nothing" which is funnier than unhappiness.

The Scène Nationale de Sénart serves one of several newly-created "agglomérations" or "new towns" in Ile-de-France. It is one of those austere, functional art centers erected to deliver urban culture to denizens of the "banlieue." There is plenty of exposed service ductwork, a bit of glass brick defining an informal lobby cafe, and a minimalist but perfectly effective theatre space. The night I attended, nearly half of the theatre was filled with school groups, attentively chaperoned by their teachers. Credit must be given to the cultural policy that makes such

high-quality theatre available well over an hour's commute from the better-known theatrical venues of central Paris. The Festival Paris-Beckett had a pedagogical dimension (extensive dossiers were made available for this production), which was very well served by this production. In sum, this was a consummate evening of theatre and a tribute to the text.

—Harry Vanderolist

Godot on the Beach at Collioure

A beach or a shoreline setting offers authors a potently symbolic threshold space. Keats's sonnet "When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be" places its speaker "on the shore / Of the wide world" where "love and fame to nothingness do sink." Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" looks across the English Channel and recalls Sophocles' evocation of "the turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery." From Keats and Arnold it may be a bit of a leap to entertainments like Nevil Shute's shrewdly-titled cold-war novel *On the Beach*, in whose film version Ava Gardner and Gregory Peck witness humanity's final ebb. But is it even more of a leap to

place Vladimir and Estragon on the sand for a beachfront production of *En Attendant Godot*?

This was the choice of the Paris-based company Théâtre de la Gargouille. The company mounts an annual “plein-air” production in the small seaside town of Collioure, just north of the Spanish border (and of the site of Walter Benjamin’s tragic suicide sixty-six years earlier). Previous productions in the company’s “Théâtre à Ciel Ouvert” project have included Bernard Marie

Koltes’ *Combat de Nègres et de*

Chiens, Slamovir Mrozeck’s

En Pleine Mer, and Israël

Horovitz’s *Le Premier*.

The Beckett centenary in

2006 prompted the deci-

sion to mount *Godot* on

the Boramar beach, beneath

the thirteenth-century fortifi-

cations of the Chateau Royal.

The site has several points in its favour: the town itself has visual art connections, with the fauvistes like Matisse and Dérain above all, which might perhaps have intrigued Samuel Beckett. The harbour is small and C-shaped, almost a naturally theatrical space framed by the chateau (still a French commando base), the tall housefronts of the town, and the rising terraces and mountains of the Pyrénées-Orientales behind.

However, the beach setting raises substantial technical challenges, which this production was unable to overcome. The first of these – to which any open-air production is subject – is, of course, the weather. In this case the scheduled performance had to be put back a day due to heavy rains on the night of September 17. Fortunately, Collioure has, in spite of tourism, remained a small enough town that many prospective audience members were able to inform themselves of the postponement simply by walking down to the stage-set on the beach and chatting with the performers themselves. At least this was possible until the rains became too intense. So it was a day late (with all of the inevitable jokes on “attendant” that this inspired) that the play was finally staged.

Despite the next evening’s fair weather, the open-air production had to contend with the following: competition from the sights and sounds of the sea itself as well as the later vestiges of sunset; children playing just outside the performance area on the public beach; a busy café immediately behind the seats deployed by the company (in fact many spectators chose to seat themselves at café tables and enjoy a drink during the performance, which was a highly agreeable option until mid-second act, when the staff abruptly decided to close up). The lack of any wings from which to enter and exit was adequately addressed by two large black fabric panels flanking the performance area. Lighting was provided from two masts, left and right, and this worked well from the spectators’ viewpoint. The performers however suffered visibly from the heat of these lights, which, necessarily placed closer than usual, caused their makeup to run off their faces fairly early in the performance. A public address system helped with the difficult auditory situation, but failed entirely to

overcome the pleasant, but distracting ambient seaside sounds. It was interesting, but not theatrically satisfying, to strain to hear the familiar text against Arnold’s “grating roar / Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling / At their return, up the high strand.”

The performances themselves were creditable. Jean-Luc Goutefangea’s Pozzo was the most memorable, as he loomed, thin and spectral, over the other players, re-

calling nothing so much as

Jeremy Irons with long

grey locks. As Lucky,

Ludovic Chassueille

was for the most

part fixed in place,

visibly burdened

by much more than

the literal baggage he

bore. Vincent Chatraix as

Estragon and Jacob Vouters

as Vladimir hewed to faithful, traditional interpretations of their roles. The timing of their exchanges was sometimes flat, as in the beautiful passage “toutes les voix mortes” passage. Laurent Mendy was the boy.

The production, staged by Xavier Bazin, was paced fairly slowly for the most part, so that the performance drew on into the night. This made for a not unpleasant experience—in fact the small, sympathetic audience seemed to be enjoying a comradely, picnic feeling under the crepuscular light. However, the production entirely lacked the necessary tension, concentration and finely-tuned play with duration, all of which are proper to Beckett’s theater.

In a brief correspondence, I asked M. Bazin about the company’s choice of the beachfront setting. I raised the issue of Irène Lindon’s well-known objections to exotic settings for Beckett’s plays, cited in *Le Monde* not long after the Collioure production (though not in connection with it). In a short article entitled “Samuel Beckett : metteurs en scène sous surveillance,” Mme. Lindon was quoted, reminding reporters that “*En Attendant Godot* is set on a road in the country, not in the Gare de l’Est” (*Le Monde*, October 28, 2006). In response to this viewpoint, M. Bazin strongly affirmed the artistic freedom of the interpreter and condemned attempts to subject an author’s work to posthumous limitations. Yet in fact, except for its open-air setting, his production respected Beckett’s directions throughout. Nevertheless, the choice of setting led to all kinds of foreseeable and insoluble problems. As an abstract idea, the notion of “Godot on the shore” may have its attractions. In practice, though, the decision left its audience with an unsatisfying and fatally diluted theatre experience.

—Harry Vandervlist



The program notes for Premier Amour at the Théâtre de Saint-Maur, directed by Alexandra Royan and performed by Antoine Herbez, included the following "Petit mot du comédien."

Dans le voyage dans un personnage, il y a aussi un voyage dans soi. Forcément. Avec cet homme de Premier Amour, j'ai d'abord cherché les résonances personnelles, les correspondances. Et ainsi tellement d'images de ma vie me sont apparues... L'errance de cet homme parlant de mon errance... Puis, petit à petit, les mots de Beckett, ont commencé leur travail souterrain, celui de m'emporter dans son univers, l'univers de l'auteur, l'errance de Beckett... Alors où est le personnage de fiction et où est Beckett?

Dans toute création d'un personnage il y a, je pense, pour l'acteur, la recherche continue de l'équilibre entre ce qu'on met de soi et ce qu'on met du personnage fictif.

Mais ici, dans la relation à deux, s'invite Beckett lui-même... Alors une partie de moi, une partie du personnage et une partie de Beckett?

J'ai tenté de laisser se faire intuitivement cette "création triangulaire," en essayant de m'ouvrir, avec le plus de disponibilité possible, à mon vécu, à celui de Beckett, et à celui de cet homme qui dit: "il m'est déjà difficile de dire ce que je crois savoir..."

ESSAYS

Demented Particularity, or, the Art of Annotation

As *Murphy* observes (97), the aetiology of any neurosis is obscure, but I attribute my obsession with annotation to a childhood interest in stamp-collecting. Philately, they say, gets you everywhere; it took me to the world of history, geography, enterprise, and folly, as recorded in the catalogues, which, like the Army Lists of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, were my constant study. Also valuable was a later specialization in New Zealand issues, which made me aware of the niceties of shade, watermark, perforation, and retouching – tiny details that distinguish a relative rarity from its commonplace like. Although I was unconscious of it, my training in demented particularity had begun.

I was intrigued, then, to find that Beckett as a boy collected stamps. His brother Frank was keener, later specialising in Trinidad and Tobago, and in British Overprints of the Irish 1922 Provisional Government and Free State (Knowlson, 624). Unlike Malcolm Lowry, who at the end of *Lunar Caustic* confuses several stamps, Beckett's references are precise, notably the three mentioned in *Molloy* (121): the Timor five reis orange (1895); Togo one mark carmine, "with the pretty boat" (1900); and Nyassa ten reis green and black, showing "a giraffe grazing off the top of a palm tree" (1901). With mixed feelings of envy and admiration, then, I read in Phil Baker's "The Stamp of the Father" how the Timor five reis reflects the oedipal drama

of *Molloy*, for King Carlos of Portugal uncannily resembles not only Moran but William Beckett, the bristling moustache an emblem of Freudian and Old Testament patriarchy, the rule of law; with the pun on timor ("fear") a bonus. All I could add was that the manuscript of *Molloy* at this point leaves a blank (as a good album should) for the later selection of a suitable stamp.

This is annotation at its best, but only rarely (like the occasional sweet shot in golf) does it compensate for much hacking in the rough. *Fallor, ergo sum* ("It doesn't add up"): the annotator's neck is on the block - get it right, and it's obvious; get it wrong, and the crrrritics will pounce - as dear Oscar said for all time, to be transparent is to be found out. It is impossible not to blunder, to be a blockhead. An earnest note (#228.6) on the "Engels Sisters" in my annotated *Murphy* (1998) remained in revision (2004), re the "complex symbiosis" (*politesse* for authorial stuff-up) of Marx and Engels, since Karl rather than Friedrich had three daughters. Only much later, to my immense chagrin, did I get the joke, on the "Marx Brothers." Oh, dear. Another just made the 2004 edition, when I realized belatedly why Wylie's wife, the Cox, swallows 110 aspirins: in the "Lestrygonians" chapter of *Ulysses*, Bloom deflects his inadvertent thought, of Boylan having VD: "POST NO BILLS. POST 110 PILLS."

Annotation is a purgatorial art, crawling through the mud of noman's land, with the textual rock below and the critical light above, trying to make the one intelligible to the other. Tied to the text but aspiring to the impossible, complete illumination, it requires regular doses of what Arnold Geulincx calls the cardinal virtue, *humilitas*; in *Molloy's* words (85), when lost in the dark wood (no prizes for that), "Perfection is not of this world." This I learnt early. My first major annotation, of Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, identified an epigraph from Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, criticized Lowry's sloppy citation, and corrected his phrasing. Fortunately, the UBC Special Collections holds the remnants of Lowry's library, including his copy of William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, in which Bunyan's words appear exactly as in the novel. The passage is neatly pencilled off in Lowry's hand; compelling evidence that his immediate source was James. Only rarely may Annotation thus approach the Citadel of Creation - usually the pilgrim remains in Vanity Fair, or struggles in the Slough of Despond.

Other oddities shaped an aesthetic. In Chapter four of *UTV*, Yvonne discusses with the Consul's brother, Hugh, how to get Geoffrey out of the inferno of Mexico. It is her dream, she says, to have a farm somewhere, with "pigs and cows and chickens." Accustomed as I was to Lowry's compulsive borrowing, and armed with Mallarmé's "il n'y a qu'allusion," I failed to detect any echo here - until I read O'Neill's "Bound East for Cardiff," where a dying sailor dreams of a little farm with (yes) "pigs and cows and chickens." There is a rough calculus of allusion, to the effect that one congruence, ho-hum; two, maybe; three, intended: this had about ten commensurate points. That it was intentional,

there could be no doubt; that anyone could perceive it, what was the chance? If this was allusion, then anything was. I was about to renounce annotation as folly, when it dawned on me (rather like John Shade in *Pale Fire*), that *this* was the point, that for certain writers (Lowry and Beckett among them) intertextuality goes far beyond what we normally understand by textual intentionality. So I remain impressed by how Murphy's "surgical quality" (62) curiously combines *The Merchant of Venice* with the "operative surgical quality" of Bloom's cocoa-making hand, even though the obscure Joycean allusion must have been for Beckett's delectation alone.

A minor vexation: the French *Molloy* calls the young Jacques Moran's teddy-bear "Jeannot." In English, this "woolly bear" is "Baby Jack," extending patriarchal authority unto the next generation. "Baby Jack" was Beckett's childhood teddy (Knowlson, 36). In a draft of *Endgame*, "Avant Fin de partie," X's baptismal spoon has the name "Jeannot" on it;

a silver spoon, inscribed "Sam," was given by Beckett to Avigdor Arikha, on the birth of his daughter; and on the anniversary of Beckett's death Arikha painted "Sam's Spoon"

(1990). Not understanding the "Jeannot" link irritates me (this is the "rational prurit," the urge to *know*). But annotators are easily irritated, especially when they find, as I did in a study of Beckett's narratology, a teddy-bear called "Woolly Jack"; for if the particulars are wrong, then how can we trust the critical conclusions drawn from them?

Part of the impulse to annotate, undoubtedly, is the academic challenge of defining a *modus operandi* for intriguing cruxes. I interrogate this in a forthcoming issue of *JOBS*, one dedicated to Beckett and phenomenology; but, briefly, I accept Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation*, both the principle of intention and his contention that validity is essential to critical activity. I affirm his premise that each interpretative problem requires its distinct context of knowledge, which (a) shapes the *horizon* of relevant meaning, and thereby (b) determines the limits of intention. This is to locate an aesthetic of annotation within a hermeneutic circle, but there is no other viable option. Uncertainty remains, with but rarely the satisfaction of perfect understanding; yet Hirsch's sense of validity offers a practical mode of procedure.

To illustrate: in "Yellow" (164), Belacqua, wondering whether to weep or laugh, exclaims: "Another minute of this and I consecrate the remnant of my life to Heraclitus of Ephesus, I shall be that Delian diver who, after the third or fourth submersion, returns no more to the surface." The interpretative problem is "that Delian diver"; and the practical task is to determine the knowledge that shapes the horizon of relevant meaning. This takes several stages, of which I offer the summary notes:

(a) location of Delos, in the Cyclades; centre of a cult of Apollo; steep slopes, deep waters; sponge divers descend to great depths.

(b) context: laughing Democritus or weeping Heraclitus - Bel affirms D, despite provocation; failure to "resurface" after the anaesthetic.

(c) SB's philosophy notes, MS TCD 10967/24: "Comes from the city of sanctuary. Heraclitus the dark, the obscure, the weeping philosopher. 'A Delian diver needed to sound his works' (Socrates). Deposited his scroll in the Temple of Artemis and went up to the mountains & died there."

(d) this from Alexander's *Short History of Philosophy*, 28-30; other details from Windelband's *History of Philosophy*, Burnet's *Greek Philosophy*. Problem: no mention in these of Socrates and/or Delian diver; more research needed.

(e) Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* II.22, 152-53: "They relate that Euripides gave him [Socrates] the treatise of Heraclitus and asked his opinion upon it, and that his reply was, 'The part I understand is excellent, and so too is, I dare say, the part I do not understand; but it needs a Delian diver to get to the bottom of it.'" Likely source, but did SB read Diogenes? [TCD lecture on pre-Socratics? other accounts?]

(f) Joyce, *Portrait* (186): "It is like looking down from the cliffs of Moher into the depths. Many go down into the depths and never come up. Only the trained diver can go down into those depths and explore them and come to the surface again." [gloss]

These details are then shaped into a coherent paragraph by a principle of decorum that respects an implicit horizon of meaning determined by their relation to the point at issue, and with regard to the context, so that the weight of criticism is appropriate to what the text might reasonably bear. The hermeneutical paradox of part and whole (each informing the other) is not avoided, for the particulars determine the phenomenological whole even as that whole validates certain details but excludes others. The *knowledge* reflects the finding of requisite facts and determining their validity; the artistry, shaping these to an aesthetic (or callipygian) end. Thus:

Delian diver: a sponge-diver from Delos, in the Greek Cyclades, an island with steep volcanic slopes and deep waters; the centre of a cult of Apollo. Having affirmed the laughing Democritus over the weeping Heraclitus, Belacqua is provoked into reconsideration. Beckett's philosophy notes (MS TCD 10967/24) record: "Comes from the city of sanctuary. Heraclitus the dark, the obscure, the weeping philosopher. 'A Delian diver needed to sound his works' (Socrates). Deposited his scroll in the Temple of Artemis and went up to the mountains & died there." These details are mostly from Alexander's *A Short History of Philosophy* (28-30), but neither Alexander, Windelband, nor Burnet mentions the Delian diver. A likely indirect source is Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, II.22, 152-53: "They relate that Euripides gave him [Socrates] the treatise of Heraclitus and asked his opinion upon it, and that his reply was, 'The part I understand is excellent, and so too is, I dare say, the part I do not understand; but it needs a Delian diver to get to the bottom of it.'" Compare Joyce's *Portrait* (186), on dialectical profundities: "It is like looking down from the cliffs of Moher into the depths.

Many go down into the depths and never come up. Only the trained diver can go down into those depths and explore them and come to the surface again." Belacqua, regrettably, when he goes under the anaesthetic, will not "resurface."

There are other reasons for seeking explicitation. First, the need to express, despite Molloy's cynicism (41): "You must choose between the things not worth mentioning and those even less so. For if you set out to mention everything you would never be done." Next, the occasional serendipity, which gives such pleasure that pleasure is not the word: I recall wandering down Gray's Inn Road with a 1935 *vade mecum*, to find that the Tea Rooms where Murphy tries his behaviourist experiment was then "Skinner's Luncheon and Tea Rooms." But my best moment was when I found the celebrated "shape of ideas" quotation, not in Augustine as Beckett had implied to Harold Hobson, but in Robert Greene's *Repentance*. Then, the irrational joy experienced by Moran when he thinks of his bees and says with rapture, "Here is something I can study all my life, and never understand" (*Molloy*, 169). The bees can be traced to Diderot's "coagulum of continuous bees" in *Le Rêve de d'Alembert* (*Grove Companion*, 9, 44), and Windelband notes (524) that Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* portrays man "stripped bare of all egotistical impulses." The "horizon of relevant knowledge" now differs from Beckett's day, since Karl von Frisch in 1965 cracked the mysterious code of the bees (their "waggle-dance"). But Moran is still a solitary bee, separated from his like (compare the famous ant in Pound's *Pisan Cantos*, emerging from the destroyed anthill of World War II, "ego scriptor"), and making a "bee-line" home only to find the hive in ruins. The image persists into *Malone Dies* (197), for among the items of Malone's inventory is a little packet, soft and light, of something that he throws into the corner, but which (I suggest) may be a frail, dessicated coagulum of apian exoskeletons, Moran's "dry light ball" (*Molloy*, 174). The lasting *plaisir du texte* is finally not the understanding of such demented particulars, but the enriched experience (tinged with the *humilitas* of submission to the text) that arises as they are half-forgotten (but not entirely) in the rapture of re-reading.

—Chris Ackerley

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* * *

"Others' Words": Traces of Translation in the *Trilogy*

Translation of the works of others, even more than the more celebrated self-translation, has tended to be elided from Beckett scholarship. To some extent, this concurs with the convention that translation is considered a marginal, derivate, subsidiary practice. "Good" translators are fluent, self-abnegating translators, who pull off a successful vanishing act. However, the conventionally "invisible" practices of translation are traceable throughout Beckett's trilogy, dominated as it is by linguistically located speakers who are both polyglot and studiously ventriloquistic, between languages and cultures, frequently referring to the other language or languages. Like Joyce, who translated Hauptmann as a teenager, collaborated on Italian translations of Yeats and Synge, and translated *Riders to the Sea* into German, as well as overseeing and managing multiple translations of his own work into various languages, Beckett made his way into writing by making translations of others.

Much as he cast about for inspiration for what he called "butin verbal" (letter to Thomas McGreevy, 9 November 1931) among the works of other writers, as evidenced by the *Dream* and other notebooks, to produce his early, exhibitionistic essays in prose, and the frantic, polyglot allusiveness of the early lyrics in English, he also lent out his voice to other writers as a jobbing literary translator. The sheer amount of this generally overlooked translation by Beckett – these borderline works that Beckett both did and did *not* write – comes as a surprise, as the majority has never been authorised for republication outside the little magazines in which it first appeared, or is difficult to identify because published anonymously. Yet, these critically bypassed or unacknowledged writings, the *disjecta* of the Beckett canon, make their presence felt in the trilogy.

Beckett's chief translations of the early 1930s are comparatively well-known, though little studied. In 1930, he translated a trio of Italian poems for *This Quarter* and *The European Caravan* and (with Alfred Péron) a section of Joyce's "Anna Livia Plurabelle" into French for the review *Bifur*, a rendition rejected by Joyce in favour of a group translation eventually published in 1931 in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*; he translated Surrealist manifestoes, automatic writings and verse by Char, Crevel, Breton, and Eluard into English for the 1932 Surrealist special edition of *This Quarter*; in 1932, he translated Rimbaud's *Le bateau ivre* into English; he made nineteen translations from the French – including poetry, manifesto, polemic, folklore, jazz criticism, anthropology, and history -- for Nancy Cunard's 1934 *Negro: An Anthology*; he translated (anonymously) in 1938, a catalogue preface by Jean Cocteau (Federman and Fletcher, 91-7).

More surprising, given the understandable assumption that the "siege in the room" was a period of intensely solitary self-communing creativity, is the realisation that the post-war novels and plays of late 1940s and early 50s were ghosted by a series of far more obscure and heterogeneous translations, constituting a set of unknown doppelgänger texts, running alongside Beckett's "original" productions of the period. During the writing of the trilogy and *Godot*, the poverty-driven Beckett contributed at least one translation to virtually every issue of Georges Duthuit's revamped post-war *transition*, including work by Duthuit himself, Emmanuel Bove, Henri Michaux, Alfred Jarry, André du Bouchet, Suzanne Dumesnil, poems by Eluard, Char, Jacques Prévert, Henri Pichette, Gabriela Mistral, and Guillaume Apollinaire. He co-translated Duthuit's book *The Fauvist Painters*, and translated other essays by him for the American journal *Art News*. UNESCO commissioned the *Anthology of Mexican Poetry* for which Beckett, while writing *L'Innommable*, translated over a hundred poems by thirty-five Mexican poets. In addition, his revisions to and rewriting of other people's translations for a range of publications are many (Federman and Fletcher, 97-99, 101; Knowlson, 369, 774-5).

As composition and translation of *Work in Progress* were almost indistinguishable amid the interlinguistic accumulation, rearrangement, and embroidery which characterised the later stages of writing, so too does the

writing of Beckett's trilogy become enmeshed both with its own translation and the prodigious amount of jobbing translation work which underwrites it. Beckett's translations – whether viewed as ventriloquism, ghosting for other writers, or his placing of himself in "others' words," to elaborate on a trope that dominates *L'Innommable/The Unnamable*, in particular – manifest themselves in visible "traces" of translation left in the trilogy texts. Work on the typescript of the manifestly translatorial *L'Innommable*, in particular, was still under way, alongside the translation of the Mexican anthology, when Beckett was asked to translate sections of *Molloy* into English for Georges Duthuit's *transition* in 1950.

This coincidence of translation, self-translation, and "original" composition goes some way towards accounting for the jadedness and bewildered plurality of *L'Innommable's* sense of existence inside others' words, its profoundly alienated sense of the shifting and deictic nature of the "I" – no more than a moveable label that is slapped onto an unending series of "vice-existers" or ventriloquist's dummies through which despairing and inauthentic voices are channelled – and its aggravation at parrotting dictated banalities.

The proximity, even the mutual infection, of translation and composition exacerbates Beckett's already sceptical attitude to the postulation of a fixed, unitary consciousness that precedes and expresses itself through language, and offers a mode of attack on the smooth surface of the fictional subject, metamorphosing it instead into a sequence of discontinuous vocal instances, all evanescent.

Moreover, the trilogy takes an active and sceptical concern in conducting continual investigations of appropriation, citation, and authority. Far from claiming textual respectability – in translation terms, originality – any single page of *L'Innommable/The Unnamable* is saturated with unnervingly explicit assertions of futility, unoriginality, and inadequacy. Selfhood is a mere web of echoes of those whose words "continued to testify for me, though woven into mine, preventing me from saying who I was, what I was" (*Trilogy*, 282). The voice, flouting the protocol of good translation practice, proclaims itself alien, bestowed, and non-originary: "Having nothing to say, no words but the words of others, I have to speak" (*Trilogy*, 288). His work's refusal of a single, cohesive speaker cannot be considered in isolation from the double role of both translator and self-translator, but is a constant component or circumstance of the writing.

In this way, Beckett pulls the normally invisible, marginal figure of the translator into the centre of his writing, much as he put the conventionally unimportant activity of waiting centre-stage in *Godot*, or proclaimed, via his porteparole Belacqua in *Dream*, his desire to give his reader an experience "between the phrases [...] communicated by the intervals." (*Dream*, 137). Beckett is not habitually an

obedient or self-effacing translator of others; his version of *Le bateau ivre*, for instance, perceptibly darkens Rimbaud's vocabulary, while his renderings of the surrealists make repeated and disconcerting use of archaisms entirely at odds with the originals, thus hamstringing their already contorted syntax still further. Equally, in much of his own prose in both its languages, his deployment of foreignisms draws attention to the narrator as translator – between languages, swerving between naturalising and foreignising translation styles. Early critics of the trilogy often admired Beckett's skill in finding equivalent textual effects in his other language, but his self-translations in fact resemble his translations in their frequent refusal of equivalence; texts that, already in their original form, are mined with narrative and linguistic deviations, gaps, and incongruities develop, in translation, further unsettling linguistic markers or references to another linguistic universe, reneging still further on the realist contract.

Reading the French and English trilogy from the perspective of translation leaves

the reader puzzled as to what is putatively *native* for these narratives, in either of their versions. Rather than an intractably French trio of novels simply transposed via translation into the English language, or

Far from claiming textual respectability – in translation terms, originality – any single page of *L'Innommable/The Unnamable* is saturated with unnervingly explicit assertions of futility, unoriginality, and inadequacy.

an unproblematically French text completely relocated to the Anglophone world and repopulated with native speakers and thinkers of English, the trilogy seeks quixotically to be both of these things at once. In general, it bears the traces of a mental and linguistic "consistent inconsistency" that produces an alien yet hauntingly partially-comprehensible world.

The trilogy, in both its "original" and translated forms, bears traces of an entire spectrum of incompatible translation strategies familiar to Beckett from his translation work, ranging from minor transplantation, geographic relocation, one-to-one cultural substitution, to full-blown "transculturation"; the result is a collision and mingling of linguistic universes, rather than a principled setting aside of one for another. In his translation of *Molloy*, for instance, apparently refusing to decide whether he is writing a French-language text about an English- (or Hiberno-English) language reality, or vice-versa, Beckett blithely allows plausibility gaps to stand one moment and rigorously naturalises realistic detail the next. The coastal resort "Isigny sur Mer" in the French *Molloy* is uncontroversially naturalised into an English-language reality in translation as "Blackpool" (*Molloy*, 182; *Trilogy*, 123), as *Molloy*, conventionally, appears to be re-situated via translation from a presumed France to England, while the speaker of *L'Innommable's* sarcastic expectation of being awarded the Prix Goncourt for a particularly florid passage is anglicised in *The Unnamable* as the Pulitzer Prize (*L'Innommable*, 154; *Trilogy*, 349).

However, such conventional "naturalising" decisions are far from consistently applied, even within the original

French texts, which themselves frequently read like inconsistent translations. Far from the conventional translator's worry about restitution in translation, Beckett privileges asymmetry and apparently intentional error. What, for instance, is the reader to make of the fact that the original French-language Molloy farts on "le Supplément littéraire du Times" (*Molloy*, 39); of the curious combination of cod-Irish surnames and place names on what we may presume to be French people and settings; of the fact that Moran, apparently a bourgeois Frenchman indicting his "report" in French, claims that the term 'commune' is not used in his country (*Molloy*, 182); or that *L'Innommable's* Worm, not long after a mention of Pigalle, casually compares himself to the caged owl of Battersea Park (*L'Innommable*, 177)? There is no attempt to match the French language to an equivalent French worldview here, suggesting a deeply implausible putative English-language reality behind the original French text. The reader of the French trilogy has the sensation of already reading a translation which is in two minds about the translation strategy it is using, yawning between naturalising and non-naturalising, making the existence of other languages and a polyglot narrative presence disablingly obvious.

Lacunae in the original narratives of the trilogy are sometimes sites of even greater pleasurable readerly distress in the translation; aporias twice over, they alert the reader to the existence of not one but two translation worlds between which the implied translator continually moves for specific effects. The refusal of parity conservation is itself an important effect, as the translation wavers between a francophone world reported on by an implied English or Hiberno-English consciousness and an Anglophone mirror-universe. The most arrestingly peculiar of these lacunae is the episode involving Lousse's multilingual parrot in *Molloy*. The presumably French parrot in the French *Molloy* swears eloquently in the expected French – "Putain de conasse de merde de chaisson" – but this is immediately followed by Molloy's interjection that "Il avait dû appartenir à une personne française avant d'appartenir à Lousse" (*Molloy*, 49), while the linguistic water is muddied further as we are told that Lousse tries to teach her parrot to say "Pretty Polly."

The English *Molloy*, for its part, confounds the matter still further. Far from retaining the original French for the parrot's swearing for an equivalent foreignness, the English parrot deviates into American English – "Fuck the son of a bitch" – as well as French profanities, and the translation adds another putative owner, an American sailor who, along with a preceding French sailor, must have owned the parrot at some point before Lousse's more decorous proprietorship (*Trilogy*, 36). (Neither sailor exists in the original French; a census of the original population of the novel would not overlap with one taken of the translation.) Another dizzying level of foreignness, rather than elucidation, is thus added by the translation. Is the narrator in one language or two, or in some third zone between languages? Linguistic asymmetry becomes aporetic regress. For the reader, the entire ramifying theme of subjective reality here is undermined. The reader of the original texts of the trilogy in French thus has an experi-

ence specific to the experience of reading a translation, and questioning the nature of not one but two realities whose internal coherence must be taken on trust; this questioning is only exacerbated further by the subsequent translation.

Deliberately inconsistent translation strategies, such as Beckett absorbed from his translation work, thus contribute largely to the trilogy's radical oddness as a literary artefact. Although shying away from any form of mimetic representation of post-war France or Ireland, translation also, inevitably, draws attention, albeit obliquely, to the question of linguistic identity, national identity, and authorial identity precisely via the trilogy's perversely simultaneous inhabitation of positions that appear to be exclusive according to the classificatory systems of nation, language, and canon. Playing with the concepts of self-identity and system, only to overturn these in favour of narrative splittings and discrepancies which function as criticisms of rational, classical, even national, unities, the traces of translation open the texts to stranger and more open forms of narrative.

—Sinéad Mooney

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Relecture du bilinguisme beckettien via Bourdieu

Le passage d'une langue à l'autre est incontestablement en deçà des véritables préoccupations de Samuel Beckett. L'auto-traduction n'est que l'expression parmi d'autres d'un démarquage systématique au cours duquel Samuel Beckett sabote toute marque d'identité ; il bifurque, annule, ajoute, corrige, traduit et ses récritures procèdent par aller-retour. Le bilinguisme comme figure par excellence de ce va et vient permet de contourner les choix qui s'imposent à tout auteur à chaque étape de l'écriture, en offrant puis récusant les termes d'une quelconque alternative. Le projet littéraire de Samuel Beckett mire ainsi une

solution esthétique à la question de choix.

La structure du double dont est *marquée* son œuvre matérialise cette question et y oppose le doute systématique cartésien. Toutes les *figures* duelles participent de cette isotopie dont le bilinguisme est la figure maîtresse. L'ambiguïté dans l'œuvre se présente ainsi comme le refus de se *plier* aux impératifs catégoriques de la composition littéraire traditionnelle qui exigent choix ultimes et péremptoirs et y préfère le sursis des impératifs hypothétiques dont Molloy vante la gentillesse (Molloy, 117).

La question du choix est cruciale dans l'écriture de l'écrivain parce qu'elle s'inscrit précisément dans son impossibilité. Le projet d'une écriture sans style au-delà de la simple boutade signifie celui d'une autonomie inaccessible. Le style par définition donne à l'écrivain son accès à la parole au prix d'une dépendance inéluctable qui s'inscrit dans la figure de son langage. Dans *Le degré zéro de l'écriture*, Roland Barthes (11) explique que la langue engage « des automatismes [qui] s'élaborent à l'endroit même où se trouvait une liberté » et définit le style comme « un habitat familial ». La question de l'écriture neutre, blanche ou sans style que l'on explore en littérature dans les années cinquante revient immanquablement à une écriture *marquée* par son auteur.

Dans notre étude du bilinguisme beckettien (Louar, 2004), nous démontrons que « l'écriture sans style » revendiquée par Beckett se traduit dans les premiers récits par une remise en question de la relation arbitraire constitutive du signe linguistique saussurien. Puis, en rapprochant la notion de style à l'habitus de Bourdieu, nous démontrons que l'œuvre de Beckett se place en exergue d'une histoire littéraire qui l'illumine et l'acquitte. Nous tenterons d'explicitier succinctement ce dernier point dans les pages suivantes.

Dans son essai sur la peinture des Frères Van Velde, Beckett présente les trajectoires qui s'offrent à lui, artiste dit « moderne » par opposition aux *antiquarians*:

Il reste trois chemins que la peinture peut prendre [...] Le chemin du retour à la vieille naïveté [...]. Puis le chemin qui n'en est plus un [...] Et enfin le chemin en vant d'une [...] peinture d'acceptation, entrevoyant dans l'absence de rapport et dans l'absence d'objet le nouveau rapport et le nouvel objet, chemin qui *bifurque* déjà, dans les travaux de Bram et de Geer Van Velde. (Je souligne), 137.

Beckett s'oppose à une famille d'écrivains qui, selon lui, n'est pas consciente de la rupture qui s'opère dans la matière littéraire même et continue d'écrire selon une idée de la littérature manifestement périmée. La *bifurcation* abordée par Beckett coupe court à un modèle littéraire dont l'auteur endetté doit s'acquitter et qui s'incarne dans la figure de l'aïeul dont la présence émaille l'œuvre entière. « Mon vieux débiteur » comme le nomme le narrateur de *L'innommable* place la dette dans sa dimension généalogique et évoque celle au père symbolique qui en

psychanalyse donne le nom, ordonne la filiation, véhicule l'arbitraire de la loi et du langage. Pour l'engeance beckettienne, il s'agit bien de se défaire d'un langage et d'une histoire que tous les narrateurs beckettien s'exhortent à taire.

Pour mieux comprendre le 'roman familial' de l'écrivain, formule prise dans son sens le plus prosaïque, nous hypostasierons dans la figure Joycienne le lieu de tous les attachements. Si l'on fait foi au témoignage des amis proches et aux biographies consacrées aux écrivains, James Joyce est sans conteste la figure du double négatif par rapport à laquelle Beckett s'envisage d'abord sur la scène littéraire.

Sans réduire la complexité esthétique aux circonstances autobiographiques, il est utile de reconsidérer l'espace intellectuel et physique dans lequel le jeune

Beckett reconfigure son champ d'action et formule sa brutale désaffiliation.

Malgré son désir d'inédit, on sait que les premiers écrits restent *endettés* à bien des égards au célèbre « Dante de Dublin ». *Dante...Bruno.Vico...Joyce*, un essai que Beckett écrit à l'instigation de James Joyce, resitue le projet littéraire de ce dernier dans une lignée intellectuelle qui esquive les questions politiques et littéraires divisant les auteurs irlandais de l'époque. La poétique que Beckett formalise dans cet essai opte pour une exterritorialité qu'il impose par une généalogie littéraire qui subvertit les structures rigoureuses de l'espace littéraire irlandais. La formule introductive prévient le lecteur contre toute identification ; sur la question du style, il écrit :

You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read - or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something it is that something itself. The beauty of *Work in Progress* is not presented in space alone since its adequate apprehension depends as much on his visibility than on its audibility (27-28).

L'essai incisif du jeune étudiant en lettres assimile le projet littéraire de Joyce et l'on voit rapidement que la singularité attribué à *Work in Progress* s'applique parfaitement à l'œuvre sonore et histrionique que Beckett écrira. Dette et dépendance *marquent* de fait les premiers écrits du jeune auteur qui simultanément intègre et désintègre les effets stylistiques de cette ascendance. C'est sous le joug de cette domination que Beckett conclut à l'impossibilité d'une prise de position originale et singulière et arrive à la provocante affirmation selon laquelle il n'existe aucun domaine pour le *faiseur d'art* (*there is no domain for the maker*):

B. [...] The only thing disturbed by the revolutionaries Matisse and Tal Coat is a certain order *on the plane of the feasible*. (Je souligne)

D. -What other plane can there be for the maker.

B. -Logically none. Yet I speak of an art turning

from itself in disgust [...].

(*Three Dialogues*, 138)

S'écarter avec dégoût de la vaine voie/voix qui est la sienne est la solution radicale que Beckett admet pour *son devenir art*. Le silence opposé par B. à la fin du dialogue indique l'inanité de toute expression artistique ; il s'agit de couper tous ponts et cordons ombilicaux établissant une quelque conque filiation. Nous savons, puisque œuvre il y a, que toute réduction au silence fut vaine. Les efforts pour annihiler la référence, que ce soit aux épisodes biographiques déterminants d'une lecture psychanalytique ou à la spécificité culturelle et l'élément politique auxquels s'intéresse la critique anglo-saxonne actuellement, s'enlisent.

No domain for the maker

C'est à ce point d'enlissement que la théorie du sociologue Pierre Bourdieu nous permet de reconsidérer l'aporie avec laquelle Beckett compose, et dont le sens en grec est précisément 'absence de passage'. Dans sa théorie hautement systématisée, Bourdieu rappelle simplement que l'individu, même poète, n'est pas « sans attache, ni racine ». Il est situé dans l'espace physique et social et y occupe une place spécifique.

Dans *Le sens pratique*, (1980) Bourdieu développe une sociologie de la pratique et conçoit le monde social comme un espace multidimensionnel composé de « champs de pratique » relativement autonomes à l'intérieur desquels des « classes » désignant un ensemble « d'agents » agissent selon un *habitus*.

Produit de l'histoire, l'*habitus* produit des pratiques individuelles et collectives, donc de l'histoire, conformément aux schèmes engendrés par l'histoire ; il assure la présence active des expériences passées qui, déposées en chaque organisme sous la forme de schèmes de perception, de pensées et d'action, tendent plus sûrement que toutes les règles formelles et les normes explicites à garantir la conformité des pratiques et leur constance à travers le temps. (91)

L'*habitus* est « une stratégie sans intention stratégique » qui guide l'action individuelle en l'ajustant spontanément aux conditions subjectives de son effectuation. L'agent, dans sa relation au monde sociale, est comme la monade leibnizienne, à la fois l'individu singulier et reflet d'une totalité à laquelle il appartient. L'*habitus* n'est autre « que la loi immanente, lex insita inscrite dans les corps par des histoires identiques » (99).

La (pré)disposition des « agents » partageant le même *habitus* ou « état de corps », comme dit parfois Bourdieu, est le mouvement par lequel les figures d'une époque s'insèrent et trouvent leur place dans l'espace littéraire. Celles qui « font date », c'est-à-dire, « qui font exister une nouvelle position » (*Les règles de l'art*, 260) configurent en tant que *producteurs culturels* l'espace littéraire qui, réciproquement, les engendre.

Pierre Bourdieu replace ainsi le sujet en tant que corps et individu biologique en un *espace de dispositions* et de *prise de positions* qui donne tout son sens à la revendication de Beckett selon laquelle il n'existe aucun espace pour le créateur [*no domain for the maker*] et aucune possibilité de

prendre une quelconque position face à cette carence.

Si l'on analyse, selon cette lecture, le champ de pratique littéraire sur lequel Beckett prétend agir, nous constatons que le champ d'action est exigu, particulièrement pour le jeune artiste affublé dès le départ d'une formidable présence tutélaire qui lui obstrue la vue et occupe son espace. La dualité antithétique de cette amitié qui à la fois propulse Beckett dans les milieux littéraires avant-gardistes tout en lui imposant un modèle incontournable le mène à la viduité artistique dont il se trouve affecté. Selon Bourdieu, en effet, chaque système de dispositions individuelles représente une variante structurale des autres ; « le style personnel, écrit-il, c'est-à-dire cette marque particulière que portent tous les produits d'un même *habitus* [...] n'est jamais qu'un écart par rapport au style propre à une époque, ou à une classe ». (101)

Si le champ d'action de Beckett se confond à celui de Joyce, ou en d'autres termes, si les prises de positions joyciennes se superposent à celles de Beckett, pour simplifier ici la situation, il n'est pas surprenant que celui-ci se détourne d'une lignée dans laquelle il n'a littéralement rien à faire. C'est bien en ces termes qu'il se décrit à Harvey Lawrence (1970: 273). Inutile de rappeler ici que le désœuvrement de, et dans l'œuvre est un des motifs structuraux.

La théorie sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu est complexe et nous ne prétendons pas ici en défendre les tenants. Cependant, les outils conceptuels qu'elle fournit permettent de dévoiler la fissure dans laquelle l'œuvre inédite de Beckett se fait. En effet, dans cette théorie de la pratique littéraire, Bourdieu inclut l'anomalie sous la figure d'un anachronisme qui bouleverse l'ordre social et le fonctionnement de l'*habitus* dans son champ de pratique. Il parle alors d'un *habitus* dont les dispositions sont inadéquates à son moment, dû à un décalage entre les pratiques engendrées par l'*habitus* et les conditions dans lesquelles elles ont lieu. Ce dérèglement provoque une situation singulière « en raison d'un effet d'hystérésis » que Bourdieu définit comme « une inadaptation des schèmes de pratique mis en œuvre dans l'action aux conditions objectives présentes de cette action » (*Le sens pratique*, 105). En d'autres termes, le champ de pratique qui se constitue dans la relation avec l'*habitus* fonctionne à contretemps. Bien que notre lecture se concentre sur la structure génératrice de l'œuvre, il n'en demeure pas moins que les effets de ce 'décalage prometteur' se manifeste dans le texte, et parfois même de façon explicite :

Tout est prêt. Sauf moi. Je nais dans la mort, si j'ose dire. Telle est mon impression. Drôle de gestation. [...] Ma tête mourra en dernier. [...] Mon histoire arrêtée, je vivrai encore. Décalage qui promet. C'est fini sur moi. Je ne dirai plus je. (*Malone meurt*, 208)

Si l'*habitus* est « la connaissance par corps », (*Méditations pascaliennes*, 185) ou, en d'autres termes, si le style « naît du corps et du passé d'un écrivain » (Barthes, 1953), l'anachronisme symptomatique qui enraye le dispositif de la production littéraire beckettienne se reflète dans le corps et l'histoire de son auteur (vice-versa). Dans son action réciproque, la rupture entraîne la rupture et ne peut

produire qu'une œuvre clivée. Plus simplement, écrit Bourdieu « l'habitus a ses ratés, ses moments critiques de déconcertement et de décalage : la relation d'adaptation immédiate est suspendue [...] » (Ibid, 223). Comment ne pas voir dans cette suspension le mouvement par excellence de l'œuvre bilingue ?

Dans les déclamations parfois extravagantes de l'écrivain, le projet de se défaire de son histoire individuelle et collective se répète. En prétendant écrire sans style ou en projetant l'impossibilité d'écrire, l'écrivain annonce simplement, à l'instar de toutes ses créatures, sa propre carence. Beckett est amené ainsi à créer son propre *nomos* : acte fondateur initial d'une œuvre apportant avec elle le principe sans antécédent de sa propre perception. Beckett inédit.

—Nadia Louar

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Daniela Caselli, *Beckett's Dantes: Intertextuality in the Fiction and the Criticism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). pp. viii + 232. £50.00.

As Daniela Caselli acknowledges throughout her new book, there is a long tradition of critical writing which has sought to excavate the Dantean foundation to Beckett's writing. Caselli builds on this tradition, but the richness of her understanding of Dante's work, and of the cultural context in which it came into being, combined with the scrupulousness of her understanding of the Beckett *oeuvre* and its *residua* / *marginalia*, allows her to transform and reinvigorate the field. Dante is present in Beckett, as a result of Caselli's research, in a way that has not before been evident.

But it is not simply the comprehensiveness of the research that makes this book a valuable contribution to Beckett studies. The importance of this monograph as a research tool sits alongside its value as a theoretical reflection on how we read Beckett, and as a nuanced analysis of how the relationship between Dante and Beckett impacts upon our understanding both of Beckett and of Dante. Indeed, this second aspect of the work is in a productive tension with the first. Whilst the research that Caselli has carried out tends towards a comprehensive and thorough revelation of the presence of Dante in Beckett, the theoretical model that she employs leads her to a certain scepticism about the possibility of establishing a definitive account of the relationship between the two writers. Existing accounts of Dante in Beckett, Caselli suggests, have tended to cast Dante as a stable source which serves as a foundation upon which Beckett erects his *oeuvre*, thus implying that it would be possible to conduct a kind of critical archaeology in which the Dantean "substrate" is revealed. "Most comparative studies devoted to Beckett and Dante," Caselli writes,

assume a rigid definition of the meaning of "Dante" or of the *Comedy*, and then proceed to analyse the difference between this and Beckett. For instance, Dante is seen as the "culmination of the Christian tradition of the Middle Ages" and the *Comedy* is declared "the greatest itinerary of the soul in Western literature." Thus, the conclusion is that the *Comedy* can be known, understood, and, usually, subverted by Beckett. (23)

Caselli seeks to avoid this tendency to fix Dante as an authority upon which Beckett draws, and against which he pursues his own anti-theological, anti-teleological agenda. She works instead to produce a reading which sees both Dante and Beckett as fluid discursive events, events which are not determined or completed but that are still occurring, and that help to produce each other.

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So the comprehensiveness of her research does not aim to arrive at a definitive, stable account of Dante in Beckett, but rather to allow for an imaginative and informed understanding of the ways in which Dante and Beckett continue to inhabit, articulate and transform each other. Caselli explains that

I would like to argue that each Beckett text produces a different “Dante,” which has various functions in the text, thus creating different “Becketts.” I will also explore how Dante is fashioned as an authority, in its turn shaping Beckett’s authority. In other words, I would like to take into account the instability not only of Beckett’s works but also of Dante’s, trying to avoid attributing a predetermined meaning to them. (23)

In setting out to articulate this mutually

transformative relationship between Beckett and Dante as “works in progress,” Caselli’s book takes us from Beckett’s early prose and

criticism, up to *The Lost Ones/ Le dépeupleur and Company/ Compagnie*, paying attention throughout to the multilingual dimension of Beckett’s output. The early chapters dramatise the movement from the Dante of Beckett’s early essay, “Dante...Bruno.Vico.Joyce,” to the differently inflected Dantes that can be read in his essay on Proust, and in his early prose works *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, and *More Pricks Than Kicks*. The middle chapters focus on the apparent absence of Dante in Beckett’s early to middle period, particularly in *Murphy* and *Watt*. This section of the book reads Beckettian marginalia and addenda, which suggest the continuing presence of Dante as a structuring presence in Beckett’s thinking, against the “main body” of the writing in which “Dante is kept out of sight” (81). The final chapters read the return of Dantean structures in the middle to later works, in the trilogy, in *How It Is*, and in *The Lost Ones*, where, Caselli argues, the mechanism of quotation, the inheritance of a tradition, becomes a major focus.

Throughout this reading of the oeuvre Caselli attends, with precision and imagination, to what she identifies as a contradiction in the theory and practice of intertextuality. To build a framework of references to an authoritative source across an oeuvre lends a substance to each text; not only does every Beckett text carry something from every other Beckett text with it, but these connecting elements are themselves grounded in Dante’s *Comedy* – a work of literature that arguably frames a powerful version of

Caselli seeks to avoid this tendency to fix Dante as an authority upon which Beckett draws, and against which he pursues his own anti-theological, anti-teleological agenda.

modern civilisation itself. But at the same time, the effect of inter- and intratextual reference is, on the contrary, to empty each text out, to suggest that each text and each textual moment has its true source and destination elsewhere, that no individual text is sufficient to itself. Dante’s presence in Beckett, Caselli argues, is structured like a promise. Dante’s authority is “inscribed” in the text, as a promise inscribes itself in the present, yet his presence is deferred as a promise is deferred, located always just beyond reach, beyond the possibility of consummation (84). This is nowhere more evident than in those early middle works where the marginalia – the “Addenda” to *Watt*, the “Whoroscope” notebook in which the genesis of *Murphy* is recorded – attest to the presence of a Dante who remains invisible in the novels themselves. It is as if, here, the price of a Dantean presence is his absence, that he functions as an authority by virtue of withholding himself, hiding himself from view.

The task of a reader who is attentive to this problem, who is able to locate those places where Dante’s absence becomes visible, is twofold. Caselli suggests, eloquently and persuasively,

ly, how much richer our reading of Beckett can be, if we are able to read the Dantean voice that whispers in his work throughout. The first task for his readership, then, is to find a means of responding to this possession, this inhabitation of Beckett by Dante. But the second task, equally pressing, equally imperative, is that we read in such a way that Dante’s absence is preserved *as an absence*. To treat reading as detection, as a challenge to spot the missing Dante where others have failed, and thus to fill in the gaps, to correct Dante’s absence as is if it were a defect, is to overlook the extent to which the force of Dante’s presence is generated by his absence. To read Dante in Beckett, it is necessary to read him as an absence, as, in Milton’s and in Beckett’s words, a darkness which is nevertheless visible (*Paradise Lost*, I, 63; *Company*, 15)

It is in developing such a reading of Beckett’s Dantes, and of Dante’s Becketts, that Caselli provides us with the apparatus to tune ourselves according to the “faint voice” that opens *Ghost Trio*. In producing a language that can articulate Dante’s presence as a structuring absence in Beckett, Caselli invents a model that helps us to understand the difficult relationship between the visible and the invisible in Beckett more generally. This model allows us to respond to the Virgillian echoes in Beckett’s faint voices, whilst also hearing the faintness itself. If Caselli makes Virgillian faintness perceptible as a substrate in Beckett’s work, then she does so by attending to its imperceptibility, rather than repressing it. It is this attentiveness to the

imperceptibility of Dante in Beckett, even as she renders him perceptible, that makes Caselli's work unique, and that makes it such an important and original contribution to Beckett studies.

– Peter Boxall

Matthijs Engelberts and Everett Frost, with Jane Maxwell, eds. *Notes diverse holo: Catalogues of Beckett's reading notes and other manuscripts at Trinity College Dublin, with supporting essays*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2006. 391 pp. \$108, Euro 80.

While Beckett's works, particularly those written in the 1930s, may betray what in the 1934 poem "Gnome" he denigrates as the "loutishness of learning," precisely what form that learning took remained for many years a matter of more or less reliable scholarly intuition. This unhappy situation changed dramatically, however, when, in his groundbreaking *Damned to Fame*, James Knowlson was able to draw on some of Beckett's reading notes from the 1920s and 1930s, "discovered in a trunk in the cellar after his death." A year later, Beckett's heirs, Edward and Caroline Beckett, donated these notes, enclosed in brown wrapping paper and labeled "Notes Diverse Holo" in Beckett's hand, to Trinity College Dublin. As Everett Frost observes in the preface to *Notes diverse holo*, this collection of 21 manuscripts, consisting "almost entirely of Beckett's transcriptions, outlines, and summaries of the books he read either during his sophister years as a Trinity undergraduate (1925–1927) or between 1930 and 1936" (19), constitutes "an extraordinary resource for Beckett studies" (25). Individual authors covered in the notes include Machiavelli, Ariosto, Dante, Carducci, D'Annunzio, Augustine, Porphyry, Rabelais, Mistral and the Félibrige poets, Fritz Mauthner, and Arnold Geulincx. Topics include the history of Western philosophy, European and Irish history, English literature, German literature, the University Wits, and psychology. Among the many highlights of this remarkable collection, the most extensive are the 267 pages of notes that Beckett took on Western philosophy from the Pre-Socratics to Nietzsche, now catalogued as TCD MS 10967.

With the publication of *Notes diverse holo*, Beckett scholars finally have access to a fully annotated catalogue of the above material (compiled by Frost and Jane Maxwell), together with a catalogue of the other Beckett manuscripts held at TCD (compiled by Maxwell), and nine critical essays in which the significance of a wide range of archival materials, including the "Notes Diverse Holo," is explored from a variety of critical positions. Complementing the existing catalogues for the other major Beckett archives at Reading and Austin, Texas, these

two new catalogues are detailed and highly informative. A few judiciously chosen extracts from the reading notes themselves, plus photographic reproductions of illustrations to be found in the notes, round off this essential resource.

For the most part, the essays included in this volume achieve the stated aim of demonstrating the importance of archival material in any critical engagement with Beckett's published oeuvre. John Pilling's contribution on Beckett and English literature, which supplies annotations for the 157 entries on English literature at the end of the *"Whoroscope" Notebook*, is certainly among the most important in the volume. As he had previously done for the entries in the *"Dream" Notebook*, Pilling here continues to provide readers with invaluable information on Beckett's "phrasehunting" during the 1930s, in this case principally from a range of Renaissance writers (including Marlowe, Marston, Greene, Jonson, and Nashe), and from one later author, Samuel Johnson, to whom, as Pilling observes, Beckett "would always return" (232).

Proving that a commitment to archival material need not limit the diversity of critical approaches, Daniela Caselli's essay on Beckett's Dante notes proposes a radically new conception of the relationship between such material and the published works. Beckett's notes, she argues, are to be read "not simply as *avant-textes* [...] but as texts in their own right" (238), in accordance with his "poetics of marginality" (249). No less innovative, although perhaps less contentious, is Mark Nixon's seminal essay on Beckett and German literature, in which he not only charts Beckett's growing acquaintance with German literature during the 1930s but also argues that Beckett's reading of Goethe was a key factor in his movement towards a new kind of "self-writing" (270) that promised to come to fruition in the projected (but never written) *Journal of a Melancholic*, and ultimately bore fruit in the postwar works. A worthy companion-piece to Nixon's fine essay, Dirk Van Hulle's attentive reading of Beckett's 1936 notes on Goethe's *Faust* identifies another crucial element in the development of Beckett's poetics, namely the conflict between a Mephistophelean spirit of negation (*Verneinung*) and a Faustian spirit of onwardness (*Vorwärtsstreben*), with, as Van Hulle argues, the interruption of the notes itself being a key moment in Beckett's own critique of Enlightenment thinking.

Frederik N. Smith takes a very different approach to the relation between Beckett's reading and his published works. Relying not upon archival material but upon a comment made by Beckett concerning his childhood reading, Smith seeks to demonstrate that *Watt* parodies the detective fiction genre, and in particular Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. Offering the kind of comparative analysis common to many existing studies of Beckett, Smith argues, for instance, that the dialogue in the late

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Holmes story "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman" bears a striking resemblance to an extract from Beckett's *Catastrophe*. Such comparisons are made not in order to demonstrate "any specific influence," however, but rather to identify a "similarity" (310).

Chris Ackerley's essay on the painting in Mr Erskine's room in *Watt* returns us to the importance of the archives, charting the evolution of this passage in the *Watt* notebooks, and demonstrating one of Beckett's more subtle challenges to "anthropomorphic insolence." Ackerley's contribution offers readers a taster of the outstanding scholarship to be found in his recently published *Annotated "Watt"*. Whereas Ackerley treats the genetic evolution of a published work, Anna McMullan convincingly reads the 1963 "J. M. Mime" dramatic fragment (TCD MS 4664) as "a crucible in which several textual and *mise en scène* motifs are experimented with," only to "emerge in strangely mutated or metamorphosed form" in later published works (334).

Drawing on the vast resource of Beckett's as yet largely unpublished correspondence, Lois Overbeck and Martha Fehsenfeld identify some of the key ways in which he engaged with publishers throughout his career. Although their essay is unfortunately marred by a number of typographical errors, the extracts from Beckett's correspondence shed considerable light on his attitude towards the textual integrity of his works, and support the claim that, while he repeatedly defended "his right to have his texts published integrally" (355), it is nonetheless necessary for critics to have a "historical sense," since Beckett's texts, particularly the plays, are not fixed but rather evolving entities.

The volume is rounded off by a stimulatingly polemical essay by Matthew Feldman in which he assesses the general methodological implications raised by the existence of the Beckett archives, and in particular the "Notes Diverse Holo." Identifying a radical division between two basic approaches to Beckett—one grounded in empirical textual evidence and offering "falsifiable" readings, the other seeking correspondences and proposing readings that remain unfalsifiable—Feldman argues passionately for the former, on the grounds that it alone can make a genuine contribution to our knowledge of Beckett. This position-taking returns us to Matthijs Engelberts's claim in the general introduction to the volume that "*SBT/A* continues to be open to as many approaches as possible, provided they are productive and provided the results are presented coherently" (11). While any general critical

Complementing the existing catalogues for the other major Beckett archives at Reading and Austin, Texas, these two new catalogues are detailed and highly informative.

consensus over precisely which approaches to Beckett are "productive" may remain difficult to achieve, one may nonetheless safely assume that, for the foreseeable future, commentators on Beckett's published oeuvre will find themselves drawn almost irresistibly to the riches of the "Notes Diverse Holo" and the other archival materials catalogued in this fine publication.

—Shane Weller

Matthew Feldman, *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'*. London: Continuum Books, 2006. 179pp. £55.

Matthew Feldman's groundbreaking study, *Beckett's Books*, is the first scholarly monograph to take full cognisance of the wealth of new archival material available to Beckett scholars since 2002. Indeed, following the publication of James Knowlson's biography in 1996, a "new empiricism" may be said to have gripped Beckett studies. The sheer range of new material, as Feldman acknowledges, will take some time to be absorbed and accounted for.

Feldman employs, with remarkable results, the principle of falsifiability to Beckett's interwar and postwar development. We need to elucidate what Beckett read and when to establish precisely which influences are at work, not just in 1930s texts like *Murphy*, but over the course of Beckett's artistic development (it is notable how even much later texts betray influences of Beckett's "notesnatching"). In the absence of an empirical procedure, there is a danger, Feldman argues, of there being *too many Becketts*, a protean multiplicity by which Beckett the polymath becomes the subject of subjective scholarship with no grounding in the actual texts Beckett omnivorously consumed. Hence Feldman's urging that we should "theorize from a position of empirical accuracy."

Feldman calls for reassessment of many verities of Beckett scholarship. For example, the Philosophy Notes held at TCD (MS 10967) suggest, and supporting evidence endorses, the view that Beckett's engagement with Descartes was less profound than has hitherto been assumed. It is, rather, the pre-Socratics who held Beckett's more focused attention. But rather than substitute pre-Socratic for Cartesian influence, Feldman demonstrates how the Philosophy Notes show "Beckett's *general* indebtedness to philosophical themes and debates" while also delineating particular interests. His "general indebtedness" is what enables Beckett to place "Western thinking itself, at its

most basic and formative, under scrutiny." This scrutiny begins at the beginning, Feldman argues, with the first principles of philosophy in early Greek thought and not, as has more often been asserted in Beckett studies, with the Cartesian *cogito*.

The Notebooks' primary interest is for the light they shed on Beckett's intellectual development. But it is interesting also to trace the development of Beckett's interwar notetaking habit. The Dream Notebook seems to have been compiled mainly of verbal oddities and there is something improvised and provisional about it, a Joycean engagement with language and recondite terminology. The Notebooks covered by Feldman are more systematic, rigorous even, as Beckett attempts to grapple with major currents in Western thought. They are, nonetheless, "extremely difficult to classify" and they provide "numerous initiatives for Beckett's writing," that is, sources, hints and suggestions rather than a template. These sources and hints are then "incorporated into the methodological structure" of Beckett's writing, an artistic rather than scholarly structure. As Feldman convincingly shows, the Notebooks enable us to trace Beckett's unlearning of systematized knowledge as he reaches towards his artistic goals.

The Beckettian paradox lies in what Feldman calls Beckett's "non-Euclidean logic." What Beckett's mature "methodological structure" facilitates is the disavowal of learning, of knowledge and of authority. But as Feldman shows, Beckett's art entails a paradoxically self-conscious ignorance, one which refutes systems only through prior acquaintance with them, an acquaintance which Feldman eruditely traces. And so, "Beckett's meticulously cultivated protestations of ignorance" are seen as "deeply learned."

What *Beckett's Books* shows is that Beckett's mature misology (hatred of theories) could not have crystallized without his prior immersion in these theories. Beckett's postwar prose seems to enact this disavowal and Feldman valuably traces the path that leads to that enactment. The success of Feldman's analysis largely depends on his refusal to identify any interpretative key or schema to Beckett's work. In this, the empirical method helps him as does the very diversity of the "Interwar Notes," Feldman uses the notes to identify a kind of aesthetic epistemology which does not allow for Beckett's "adherence to any given system" but rather suggests an "alogical outlook," one which finds a formula in the denial of formulas.

Feldman is able to revisit some old debates in Beckett studies and shed new light on them. His re-evaluation of the Beckett/Bion link demonstrates just how much

guesswork is needed if one is to retrace accurately that relationship. And it is guesswork which Feldman is disinclined to embark on. Rather, the Psychology Notes confirm Beckett's well-documented debt to psychoanalysis while discouraging attempts to pin Freudian or Lacanian or Bionian readings on Beckett. Feldman confirms Phil Baker's intertextual readings of Beckett and psychoanalysis while preferring a more cautious formula of "mental reality" to evoke the complex web of psychological, philosophical and linguistic concerns in Beckett.

If Beckett's work is often a process of "undoing," of eliminating specific references, then these Notebooks testify to just how much he took out of his mature art, in which allusions are calculatedly infrequent. Indeed, Feldman suggests, the Notebooks themselves trace this movement towards the ineffable, the non-localisable, with Mauthner's linguistic theories preoccupying Beckett as late as 1938 rather than in the early 1930s, as suggested by previous scholars. The dilemmas of linguistic representation, so prevalent in *Watt*, increasingly concern Beckett; but what we find here is Beckett confirming his own intuitions. His 1937 German letter pre-dates, according to Feldman, his reading of Mauthner, and yet Beckett's

core concerns are already stated. So the Notebooks are not just a mine of information which Beckett used; they also delineate an active intellectual journey

in which Beckett sought confirmation, in various fields, of his developing "non-Euclidean" outlook most clearly articulated, Feldman suggests, in the *Three Dialogues*.

A significant outcome of Feldman's study will be the re-reading of extant Beckett criticism in the light of this new archival material, a process already well underway, but one which will doubtlessly evolve further. As we know, there are many possible Becketts: existential, post-structuralist, psychological, religious, postmodern, and political, to name just a few. Beckett is a global author whose work seems to evoke cross-cultural and theoretically diverse responses. Feldman's attempt to narrow scholarly focus and, through some astute literary archaeology, to re-inject empirical precision into Beckett studies comes at an opportune moment and may well send us scuttling back to the archives in our efforts to delve further.

—Benjamin Keatinge

The Notebooks covered by Feldman are more systematic, rigorous even, as Beckett attempts to grapple with major currents in Western thought.

New and Forthcoming

- Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Works of Samuel Beckett* (Hebrew). Trans. Shimon Levy. Tel Aviv: Assaph Books, 2007.
- Ben-Zvi, Linda and Angela Moorjani, eds. *Beckett at 100: Revolving It All*. New York: Oxford UP, 2007. ISBN (paperback) 9780195325485, price \$29.95.
- Connor, Steven. *Repetition, Theory, Text*. London: Davies, 2007 (revised edition). ISBN-10: 1888570881, ISBN-13: 978-1888570885. \$24.
- Gibson, Andrew. *Beckett and Badiou: The Pathos of Intermittency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. ISBN-10: 0199207755, ISBN-13: 978-0199207756. \$95.
- Herren, Grayley. *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. ISBN-10: 140397795X, ISBN-13: 978-1403977953. \$65.
- McDonald, Ronan. *The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. ISBN-10: 0521838568, ISBN-13: 978-0521838566. \$65.
- McMullan, Anna. *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett*. London: Routledge, 2007. ISBN-10: 0415385989, ISBN-13: 978-0415385985. \$120.
- Murray, Christopher. *Samuel Beckett: 100 Years*. Dundrum: New Island Books, 2006. ISBN-10: 1905494084, ISBN-13: 978-1905494088. £10.00, \$13.95.
- Uhlmann, Anthony. *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. ISBN-10: 0521865204, ISBN-13: 978-0521865203. £48.00

Announcements

Beckett Sessions at the 2007 MLA

Panel 1: Testimony and Memory in Beckett
Presiding: Linda Ben-Zvi, Tel Aviv University

1. "Bearing Witness in *How It Is*," Russell Smith, Australian National University
2. "Samuel Beckett, the Jews, and the Cruelty of War," Jackie Blackman, Trinity College, Dublin
3. "Situating Testimony in Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*," David Houston Jones, University of Exeter, UK
4. "Wartime Memories and Testimonies of the Dead in Beckett and Betsuyaku," Mariko Hori Tanaka, Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo

Panel 2: Beckett: New Approaches to Endgame
Presiding: Linda Ben-Zvi, Tel Aviv University

1. "*Endgame* and Performativity," Richard Begam, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2. "The Japanese *Endgame* and the New 'Lost Generation,'" Minako Okamuro, Waseda University, Tokyo
3. "Rethinking *Endgame*'s Genesis in a Digital Format," Dirk Van Hulle, University of Antwerp,
4. "Masculine Dead Masculine: Western Masculinity's *Endgame*," Jennifer Jeffers, Cleveland State University

The exact times, dates, and places of these sessions will be published in the Fall issue of the newsletter.

Beckett Bibliography

The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett: A Selective, Classified International Bibliography of Publications About His Plays and Their Conceptual Foundations is intended to supply researchers of Beckett's dramatic writings with a single source that should satisfy nearly all of their needs in the realm of secondary bibliography. Here you can find over fifty pages of items -- whole books, parts of books, whole articles, and significant parts of articles--on *Waiting for Godot* alone, plus carefully selected subsections for "Radio Plays, Television Plays, and 'Dramaticules,'" "Beckett and Other Dramatists," "Beckett's Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Criticism," etc. etc. The scope of publications is international, although only for Roman-alphabet languages.

Every publication listed has been judged as “substantial,” meaning that users should not be dissatisfied when they track down the ones that look promising to them. Only landmark reviews are listed, and no mere summaries or other “lightweight” material. The bibliography is one of a continuing series that Charles Carpenter began five years ago with ones on Shaw and O’Neill, and continued with Wilde, Yeats, Synge, O’Casey, Pinter, and Stoppard. Each one is on sale with the price depending upon the size. As the largest by far (about 340 pages), the one for Beckett costs \$30 (\$10 more than the ones for Shaw, O’Neill, and Pinter). This includes a guarantee of free periodic updates as long as Carpenter can manage them. People who want copies may send a check for \$30 to Charles A. Carpenter, 908 Lehigh Ave., Vestal NY 13850, being sure to specify WORD or WordPerfect. Upon receiving the check, he will email the file at once.

Beckett Lecture in Israel

The Irish Embassy in Israel, at the initiation of the ambassador, the Honorable Michael Forbes, is supporting the establishment of an annual Samuel Beckett Lecture, to be held at Tel Aviv University, in co-sponsorship with the Beckett Society of Israel and the Theatre Studies department of Tel Aviv University. The inaugural lecture will be given by Ms. Jackie Blackman, Trinity College, Dublin, 8 May 2007. Her subject is “Beckett and the Holocaust.”

SBWG Meeting in South Africa

There are still a few places available in the Beckett Working Group, which will meet at the IFTR conference, 10-14 July 2007, at the University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa. Send inquiries to Linda Ben-Zvi, lindabz@post.tau.ac.il, and check the IFTR website for details.

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.

President’s Message

This is the first issue of *The Beckett Circle* after the centenary activities, a good time to look back and look forward. I am honored to be taking over the Presidency of the Beckett Society from my longtime colleague and friend Enoch Brater. My thanks to him for his leadership over the past two years and for his help in making this transition go so smoothly. The Society is in excellent shape thanks to Enoch’s stewardship.

This issue marks another ending and beginning. Tom Cousineau is stepping down as editor. He has served in this position for the past six years. That may well be a record for the *Beckett Circle*. With each issue the Newsletter has grown, both in size and professionalism. Contributors provide the material, certainly, but it has been Tom who prodded them to do so, who made suggestions about what would be of interest, and who made sure deadlines were met and the Newsletter mailed on time. I know I speak for all the members when I thank Tom for all his hard work.

The new editor of *The Beckett Circle*, who will be taking over with the next issue, is Graley Herren. A professor of English at Xavier University in Ohio, Graley has long been part of the Beckett academic community. His latest book, just out, is *Samuel Beckett’s Plays on Film and Television* (Palgrave). I thank him for taking on the position and send him our best wishes for his tenure.

I am about to prepare a seven-year report, which the Modern Language Association requires of its allied organizations. I will provide some facts from the report in the next issue. I just want to remind you that the Samuel Beckett Society will be 30 years old this December. It was begun at MLA in Chicago in 1977; it held its first elections in 1978, and the first newsletter, edited by Stan Gontarski, came out that year. We’ve come a long way since then. I hope that we can continue to grow, not just in numbers but in the scope of our activities. If you have suggestions for the society, and for the newsletter, please send them to Graley or me.

One last acknowledgment. Anna McMullan is ending her position on the Executive Board of the Society. I want to thank her for her service. I also want to remind you to vote for the new members. We will be electing three people for the Executive Board, who will join Angela Moorjani and me. Please send in the ballot that is enclosed in the issue. Also please remember to respond to your dues notice, and get your University library to order *The Beckett Circle*.

—Linda Ben-Zvi

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).
- Peter Boxall is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Sussex. His research interests focus on Modern and contemporary writing; aesthetics and cultural politics, particularly in the work of Samuel Beckett; contemporary literature, especially the work of Don DeLillo; the utopian function in twentieth-century writing. He is author of *Don DeLillo: The Possibility of Fiction* (Routledge, 2006), *1001 Novels you must Read before you Die* (Quintet, 2006), *Waiting for Godot and Endgame: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Palgrave, 2003) and *Beckett/ Aesthetics/ Politics* (Rodopi, 2000). He is currently working on a book called *Since Beckett: Contemporary Writing in the Wake of Modernism*, which will be published by Continuum in 2008.
- Karine Germoni, Professeur agrégée de Littérature française, teaches 20th century French literature at l'Université de Provence. She is finishing her doctoral dissertation, entitled "Ecart, Jeux et Enjeux de la ponctuation dans l'oeuvre de Samuel Beckett," under the direction of Marie-Claude Hubert. Co-director of the conference on "Les formes de la réécriture au théâtre," she has also published articles on the plays of Aristophanes, Racine, Giraudoux, Gide, Merle, and Crousse. Her several articles on Beckett's punctuation and on the genetic study of his work have appeared in *The Journal of Beckett Studies* and *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*. In June of 2006, she organized the "Beckett et les quatre éléments" conference.
- Takeshi Kawashima, a PhD student at Goldsmiths, University of London, was a director of *Borderless Beckett: An International Samuel Beckett Symposium in Tokyo, 2006*. His papers on Samuel Beckett have appeared in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* and other periodicals.
- Benjamin Keatinge gained his PhD from Trinity College Dublin in 2005 with a thesis on Beckett and mental illness. During the Beckett centenary, he delivered a number of conference papers on the psychiatric and psychological aspects of Beckett work. He is currently editing a collection of essays on Brian Coffey (forthcoming from Irish Academic Press, 2007). He currently teaches in the School of English at Trinity College Dublin.
- Nadia Louar is an assistant professor in French and Francophone Studies at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. She has completed a monograph on Beckett and bilingualism and is currently working on a book-length project on *Worstward Ho* and *Company/Compagnie*.
- Sinéad Mooney, a lecturer in the Department of English in the National University of Ireland, Galway, and the author of *Samuel Beckett* (Northcote House Writers and Their Work series, 2006), has contributed essays to the *Journal of Beckett Studies* and *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*. She is currently working on a study of Beckett, translation, and self-translation.
- Minako Okamuro, Professor of Media Studies at Waseda University, Tokyo, is one of the founders of the Beckett Research Circle of Japan and was General Director of *Borderless Beckett: An International Samuel Beckett Symposium in Tokyo, 2006*. She is a co-editor of *Ireland on Stage: Beckett and After* (Carysfort Press, 2007).
- Alexandra Poulain, a senior lecturer at the University of Paris IV – Sorbonne, writes on modern and contemporary Irish drama; she has just completed a monograph on Tom Murphy which will be published by Caen University Press.
- Johanna Schaeffer is a senior at Washington College majoring in English and minoring in Creative Writing. She plans to apply for admission to Trinity College Dublin after working for a year at an antiquarian bookstore in Chestertown, Maryland, and revising her novel.
- Andrew Sofer teaches at Boston College. Among his favorite theatre experiences are directing *Waiting for Godot* and performing in *Krapp's Last Tape*.
- Harry Vandervlist teaches at the University of Calgary.
- Shane Weller is Lecturer in Comparative Literary Studies and director of the MA in European and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Kent. His research interests focus on theories of aesthetic value and the relation between literature and ethics in Modern and Postmodern literature. Recent publications include *A Taste for the Negative: Beckett and Nihilism* (Oxford: Legenda, 2005) and *Beckett, Literature, and the Ethics of Alterity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

THE SAMUEL BECKETT SOCIETY

lan, 2006). He is currently working on a book called "Literature, Philosophy, Nihilism: The Uncanniest of Guests" forthcoming with Palgrave Macmillan.



The Beckett Circle Le Cercle de Beckett

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Book Review Editor: Derval Tubridy
Production Editor: Ray Noll

All members of the Samuel Beckett Society are encouraged to submit items of interest for publication in *The Beckett Circle*. **If possible, submissions should be e-mailed in rich text format.** Please send all theater reviews, letters to the editor, inquiries about advertising rates, and information on special events to:

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Please note that all materials for the Fall 2007 issue must be received by Sept. 1, for the Spring 2008 issue by March 1.

The Samuel Beckett Society is an international organization of scholars, students, directors, actors and others who share an interest in the work of Samuel Beckett. Honorary Trustees are Edward Beckett, John Calder, J.M. Coetzee, Ruby Cohn, Raymond Federman, John Fletcher, James Knowlson, and Barney Rosset.

The Society provides opportunities for members to meet and exchange information. Membership includes a subscription to *The Beckett Circle*, the biannual newsletter of the Society. The annual meeting of the Society's Executive Board is held during the MLA Annual Convention. Individual membership is \$35.00 per year and \$60.00 for two years, library membership \$35.00 per year, and student membership \$20.00 per year. Donations over and above the membership fee are welcome and are tax deductible.

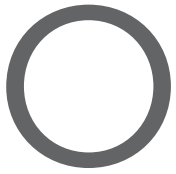
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Members or prospective members are requested to remit their fees in US Dollars in the form of cash, checks, or International Money Orders made out to "The Samuel Beckett Society." Fees received in any other form will have to be returned.

Thank You

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