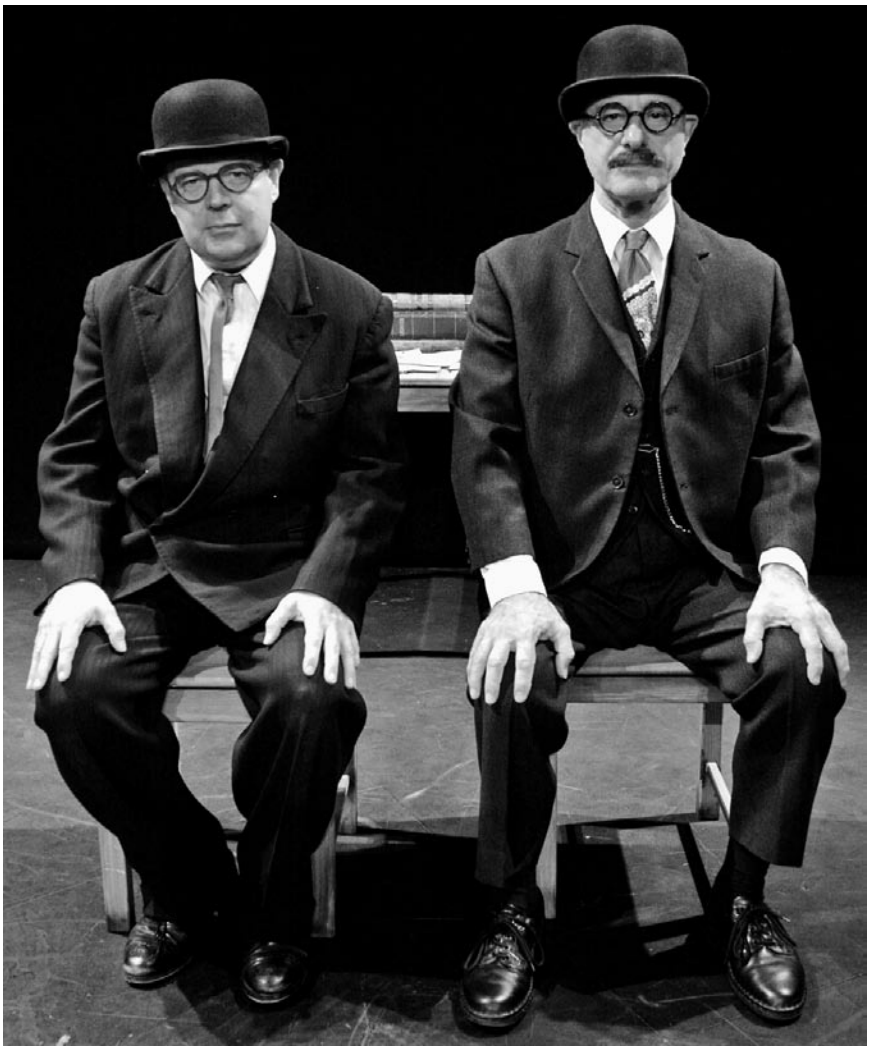
THE BECKETT CIRCLE
LE CERCLE DE BECKETT

Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

Beckett's "Roughs" Rock

Beckett's "Roughs for Theatre," I and II, written in French the late 1950s, have been problematic since their publication in the 1970s; that is, whether or not they are abandoned sketches or "finished" plays has been something of an issue both for Beckett (who resisted initial publication) and his critics. But to plan an evening's theatre around them, and in London's West end, in the midst of tourist season, borders on the audacious if not the foolhardy. Such was the task that a brash but passionate group of producers set for themselves to fill a one-week gap in The Arts Theatre's summer schedule. The idea of unfinished plays for an unfinished theatrical season, and in the house where *Waiting for Godot* had its British premiere, makes a certain kind of symmetrical and historical sense. Whether or not it makes economic sense, or even aesthetic sense, is quite another matter. But Mike Bennett, better known as a critic of rock music, a playwright, especially of musicals like "All Cloned Up," and a record producer with 10 gold discs to his credit, joined Associate Producers Kate Plantin and Ben Mika, first to convince rocker Steve Harley, frontman for Cockney Rebel, to take on Beckett just before he was scheduled to open for the Rolling Stones's tour in Warsaw and St. Petersburg, and then to schedule a West End premiere of the "Roughs." Gari Jones, who cut his teeth as Assistant Director to Harold Pinter (on "Celebration" and "The Room"), would direct Harley as "A" in both plays and Bennett as "B," again in both plays, for consistency's sake, no doubt. But the letters are of course only place markers for names that failed to appear (although the characters address each other by name in "Rough II'), hence the prevailing sense that the "Roughs" remain sketches that lack finish.

Despite the superficiality of alphabetical consistency, the two roles could not be more contrasting. Harley's blind musician of I (although he demonstrates no musical talent on



Mike Bennett and Steve Harley in "Roughs for Theatre," I and II.

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his fiddle) and his dominating chartered accountant of II, where his range of facial ticks, bodily eccentricities, and verbal play is as appealing as those of anyone who has ever played this role, are polar opposites. Bennett moves from the overbearing, potentially violent, sexually suspect cripple in I to the less than organized, unctuous milquetoast of II. Even for so short an evening's theatre, barely an hour's playing time, such radical contrast of characterization requires an interval—to shift gears, to change costumes, and, admittedly, to sell ice cream.

Of the two, II, the most Pinteresque of Beckett's plays, has a variety and subtlety of emotion that eludes I, as, of course, it is the more developed of the two "Roughs." In I, the most Yeatsian of Beckett's plays, the duo seems stuck in an unmodulated shout almost from the first, the potential tenderness and frisson too often lost, as Harley seems overly fond of modeling his gestures on Edvard Munch's "The Scream" and Bennett plays all with the *fortissimo* of a rock concert, but he hits his 11 so early that he leaves little room for the next level of amplification. The violent *tableau vivant* that serves as denouement for this play, something of a *coitus interruptus*, needs to be juxtaposed against some *pianissimo*. The logic of blind groping, "A" of "B" and "A" for his fiddle, remains unconvincing, in motivation and blocking, while the shift from magical appeal of distant music that draws "B" to the spot at the opening to the sadistic threat of "B"'s stealing "A"'s fiddle is almost lost, in part because there is no magical music to speak of. "Rough for Theatre, I" is a fragile playlet that needs more attention than it's gotten. Jones seems to allow his stars to indulge their excesses, however, as they wear their emotions on their tattered sleeves. That said, we might also note that the play is produced, indeed showcased, so infrequently, that almost any high quality production, as this one surely is, is a treat.

If the evening needed redemption it appeared after the interval with a remarkable "Rough for Theatre, II," whose production values and timing were consistently superb. Jones seems to have learned something from Pinter, or at least appears more comfortable in the Pinteresque world of II. In their re-assessment of a "problem," an abstraction, the two bureaucrats are insentient to the human, a frozen, poised "C," played stonily by Charles Kennedy. We learn almost nothing personal of these three, much less, say, than we do of the two in I, save that "A," called Bertrand in the play, once belonged to the Band of Hope, a youth temperance movement, and that "C" has a morbid sensitivity to the opinion of others and that he is in this flat, not his own, to mind a pair of lovebirds, one of whom has since expired. If its death has put "C" on the edge, "A" and "B," the latter called Mervin in the play, can find nothing in "C"'s life to recall him. Overall, one might complain that the scene was too harshly lit by lighting designer Linda Edwards, "C" in particular appearing less apparitional, less a trick of moonlight, perhaps, than he might have been, at least to the taste of this reviewer. But overall the production and the performances of the two actors were stunning.

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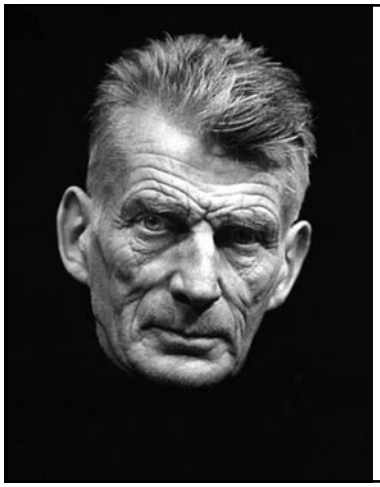
Such a theatrical evening of Beckett slights is, inevitably, a gamble, the producers relying perhaps too heavily on Harley's fan base and on Beckett's literary reputation in a post centenary year, so I'm sure that it was no surprise that the project did not seem to pay off at the box office. More's the pity. I saw two performances, opening and closing nights, the latter by far the better of the two, but the stalls were barely half full, the circle closed entirely for both. Tourists evidently preferred *Spamalot* and *Little Shop of Horrors* to esoteric Beckett. And yet huzzas to this band of brave producers and valiant actors willing to take a chance on such unlikely material. Clearly the performances and the performers would mature and perhaps mellow a bit as they gained confidence. One can only hope that they get the chance, that this experiment fuels rather than dampens their literary ambitions, and that the production has a life beyond this short run (10-15 July, 2007).

—S. E. Gontarski



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.

« Samuel Beckett », un artiste-écrivain au Centre Beaubourg

Si à la question « Comment exposer l'œuvre d'un écrivain ? », la réponse peut sembler aporétique, elle paraît d'une évidence limpide dans le cas de Samuel Beckett. L'œuvre de celui qui, pour le grand public demeure encore Prix Nobel de littérature en 1969 et l'auteur d'*En attendant Godot*, est une œuvre à entendre et à voir ; c'est l'œuvre d'un grand artiste-écrivain. Dans ses mots-musique, ses mots-images, bien des artistes de la modernité se sont reconnus, vus et entendus. C'est ce Samuel Beckett-là que les visiteurs de l'exposition « Samuel Beckett » organisée au Centre Pompidou, à Paris, du 14 mars au 25 juin 2007 ont pu découvrir.

Pour commémorer le centenaire de celui qui a révolutionné la littérature, réinventé les liens entre littérature, arts visuels et sonores, les commissaires, Marianne Alphant et Nathalie Léger, avaient réuni des œuvres d'artistes contemporains, inspirés par Beckett ; elles avaient également passé commande à plusieurs vidéastes et plasticiens, pour proposer une traversée insolite de l'œuvre de Beckett. Traversée ou plutôt cheminement car l'espace de l'exposition aussi géométrique que labyrinthique demandait au promeneur, non pas de déambuler mais de tracer lui-même son parcours d'une œuvre à l'autre, sollicitant tantôt son œil, tantôt son oreille, ou encore l'un et l'autre simultanément.

C'est par un couloir intitulé « Voix » que l'on pénétrait dans l'« antre » beckettien : d'une ligne sobre et minimale de carrés blancs lumineux fixés au mur, émanait la voix si particulière de Michael Lonsdale devenue support des *Mirlitonnades*. Au bout de ce couloir débouchant sur la salle nommée « Restes », le visiteur se trouvait nez-à-nez avec la bouche terrifiante et hypnotisante de Margo Lee Sherman débitant à toute trombe le texte de *Not I*. Cette voix empêchée mais pourtant obstinée est récurrente tant dans le théâtre que dans la prose de Beckett, tout comme l'image du corps, morcelé, rampant, défait et errant.

Ces grands motifs ont profondément inspiré une génération d'artistes contemporains dont les œuvres étaient exposées dans cette salle : les vidéos de Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy et Mona Hatoum ; les dessins de Geneviève Asse, William Chattaway, Avigdor Arikha et Jasper Johns. Le contenu de cette salle était également là pour rappeler au visiteur que l'œuvre est le résidu d'un long travail d'écriture dont les manuscrits gardent la trace tenace. De nombreux manuscrits et tapuscrits en provenance des archives de l'Université de Reading près de Londres et du Harry Ransom Center à Austin étaient en effet exposés: ceux de *Murphy*, *Mercier et Camier*, *Watt*, et d'autres encore. Pour les Beckettiens qui ont eu l'occasion de travailler sur les avant-textes de l'auteur, il est toujours aussi émouvant de voir cette écriture aussi décharnée qu'étirée où se dessine l'extrême sensibilité de l'auteur. Pour ceux qui la découvrent, l'écriture est difficilement lisible… De fait, peu de visiteurs s'y attardent vraiment. De façon générale - et c'est là l'une des rares critiques que l'on peut faire à cette exposition - le parcours manque d'explications pour les visiteurs peu avertis. Certes, çà et là se trouvent des panneaux explicatifs, sans doute trop peu nombreux.

L'hermétisme et la nudité siéent bien à l'œuvre beckettienne mais dans le cadre d'une exposition qui vise à faire découvrir l'œuvre, ils semblent un peu déplacés. On peut saluer l'effort réalisé pour restituer l'atmosphère de l'univers de l'auteur. Si l'éclairage était lumineux dans la salle « Restes » - presqu'aussi cru que dans *Bing*- dans la salle suivante, il variait entre le gris et l'obscurité. C'est l'œuvre de Claude Parmiggiani qui servait de transition entre le deuxième et le troisième espaces : deux pages immenses de *Comment c'est*, ouvertes et dressées comme le symbole de ce roman, œuvre à jamais ouverte, pour reprendre l'expression de U. Eco. Les lettres, gravées dans l'épaisseur, laissaient passer la lumière, créant derrière l'œuvre elle-même, par le jeu de l'éclairage des deux espaces contigus, une multitude de petites étoiles se détachant sur l'obscurité pour dessiner ce firmament étoilé que dessine l'effort de l'esprit créateur évoqué dans *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*.

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Le troisième espace, « Scènes », était consacré au théâtre, s'articulant autour d'archives audiovisuelles de différentes représentations françaises, anglaises ou allemandes d'*En attendant Godot*, de *Fin de partie*, de *La Dernière Bande* et d'*Oh les beaux jours* et de dramaticules, *Footfalls* notamment dans la mise en scène de l'auteur avec Billie Whitelaw. Les spécialistes de Beckett savent qu'il n'est guère évident de pouvoir visionner de tels bijoux ; c'était là une rare opportunité de le faire. En contrepoint, étaient exposées des photos de pièce et de répétitions, les plus connues, notamment, celles du metteur en scène Beckett face-à-face avec sa muse Billie; à côté des accessoires de Madeleine Renaud alias Winnie dans *Oh les beaux jours*, le visiteur avait le loisir de regarder de près les dessins de Blin (« Lucky », « Pozzo ») ou encore la maquette de Ralph Koltai réalisée pour *Endgame* en 1964. Dans un coin de « Scènes », un espace très étroit abritait un travail très original de Jérôme Combier, *Noir-Gris*, « Installation sonore et visuelle autour d'*Impromptu d'Ohio* de Samuel Beckett, 16'», en collaboration avec le vidéaste Pierre Nouvel : dans cette sorte de théâtre d'ombre fantomatique librement in-

spiré de la pièce du dramaturge irlandais, les deux artistes sont parvenus à créer une atmosphère beckettienne, en conjuguant le rythme de la musique avec le rythme de l'écriture de Beckett. Il s'agissait là d'une des commandes heureuses du Centre Pompidou pour cette exposition.

Dans la salle « Œil », attenante à l'espace « Scènes », le visiteur pouvait voir ou revoir l'unique film de Beckett, *Film*, tourné avec Buster Keaton à New York au cours de l'été 1964. On le sait : s'appuyant sur la fameuse formule de Berkeley, « Esse est percipi », l'œuvre met en scène un personnage dissocié, à la fois percevant et objet perçu ; à la fin, seule demeure « l'insupprimable perception de soi ». *Film* était associé à la présentation d'une création de Stan Douglas conçue à l'occasion de l'exposition, au titre générique elle aussi. « Tournée en banlieue parisienne, *Video* (2006-2007) rapproche l'univers cinématographique de Beckett et celui du *Procès* d'Orson Welles » (Guide de l'exposition). Ajoutons : et de Kafka…

Dans la salle suivante, « Cube », était projetée sur le sol *Quad* : des visiteurs peu réservés ont pu s'amuser à suivre le parcours frénétique des silhouettes aux têtes encapuchonnées… En regard de cette pièce télévisuelle où le parcours en lignes droites et diagonales nous renvoie à l'*ars combinatoria* si cher à Molloy, Murphy et exploré de façon inouïe dans *Worstward Ho*, on pouvait admirer les recherches menées, dès la fin des années 1960, par des artistes comme Sol LeWitt (*Geometric Figures and Colors*, une série de planches de 1979) et s'attarder sur les vidéos ou œuvres filmiques de Bruce Nauman (*Slow Angle Walk (Beckett's Walk)*, vidéo de 1968 ; *Walking in an exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square*, 1967-1968, film cinématographique), deux artistes marqués par Beckett, plus précisément : par l'économie de sa phrase, son travail d'abstraction sur l'espace, les corps et les images.

Etaient également exposées des œuvres de Robert Motherwell et de Sean Scully. Les très belles peintures de ce dernier (*Falling Wrong*, 1985) contrastaient par leurs couleurs vives avec les œuvres aux tons sombres de Bram Van Velde exposées dans un espace intime, à l'image de l'amitié ayant uni l'homme à l'homme, mais aussi de la complicité artistique qui a lié le peintre à l'écrivain-artiste. Si Samuel a écrit la peinture de Bram dans *Le Monde et le pantalon* - qui peut à juste titre être lu comme un manifeste littéraire-, Bram a peint l'écriture de Beckett : en témoignait cette lithographie de Bram sur le troisième des *Textes pour rien*. L'admiration de Beckett pour son ami peintre se lit dans quelques lettres, notamment dans cet extrait de celle datée du 14/01/1949 : « Vous résistez en artiste, à tout ce qui vous empêche d'œuvrer, fût-ce l'évidence même. C'est admirable. Moi je cherche le moyen de capituler sans me taire - tout à fait ».

C'est l'homme qui se confie ici, en même temps que l'écrivain. Car même si, comme l'a montré Proust dans son *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, l'œuvre est le produit d'un moi différent du sujet civil, toute l'œuvre de l'auteur de *La Recherche*, toute l'œuvre de Beckett tendent également à prouver le contraire.

Aussi, parallèlement à la salle « Scènes », un espace intitulé « Truc » était là pour nous le rappeler. Cet espace était celui de la biographie - « ce truc qu'on appelle ma vie », disait Beckett. Cette vie était illustrée à travers des photos de famille, de proches, des lettres, des documents administratifs, une paire de lunettes, autant de fragments de vie mêlés aux premières éditions de textes tels que *Molloy* ou *Malone meurt*. En face, des photos en pied (Lüfti Özkök, I.C. Rapoport, Dmtri Kasterine, Jerry Bauer, Bernard Morlino) pour rappeler au visiteur que Beckett a été au sens littéral un beau ténébreux, au regard d'un bleu si pâle, « à peine plus foncé que le blanc d'œuf », et pourtant si lumineux, à l'image du tableau de Sean Scully, *Beckett* (2006).

C'est pourtant dans la pénombre que se terminait l'exposition dans la salle titrée « Noir », la plus dépouillée, en référence à l'atmosphère des dernières œuvres télévisuelles - *Ghost Trio*, *…but the clouds…*, *Nacht und Traüme* et *What Where* - avec lesquelles Beckett a inventé un art de l'image qui a profondément marqué une génération de vidéastes tels que Geneviève Asse et Robert Ryman dont les œuvres présentées proposaient une lecture personnelle de l'écriture beckettienne. La voix, si présente dans les dernières proses telles que *Compagnie*, n'était pas oubliée dans cette salle. On entendait, dans leur intégralité, les courtes proses lues par Michael Lonsdale. L'exposition s'achevait sur l'œuvre de Claudio Parmiggiani, *Silenzio*.

Mais laisser se clore l'exposition sur le silence, autrement dit la parole zéro, eût été un contresens : ce n'est pas le zéro qui caractérise le mieux les derniers textes de Beckett mais littéralement, « la capacité d'être moins », comme le dit *Lessness*. C'est sur cette « moindritude » que se terminait véritablement l'exposition en nous permettant d'entendre quelques minutes de l'unique trace sonore de la voix de Beckett lisant *Lessness*.

Une voix douce, mélodieuse parvient avec un accent irlandais à quelqu'un dans le noir. Imaginer.

—Karine Germoni

Irish Film Archive Filmography of Samuel Beckett

The Irish Film Archive has recently published what it advertises as "the definitive filmography of Samuel Beckett." This filmography extends beyond the previous standard reference, Kees Hessing's Beckett on Tape (1992), to include more recent films and videos of Beckett's work, most notably the Beckett on Film project. The new filmography is available for free from the IFI Film Shop at 6 Eustace Street, Dublin, or it may be downloaded online at www.irishfilm.ie from the "Irish Film Archive" tab.

The IFI has also announced its "intention to collect, for our national archive, Beckett's cinematic legacy based upon this publication."

A "Controversial" but Monumental *Happy Days* at Epidaurus

A modern dramatist's stage debut at the ancient theatre was always going to spark off considerable debate. This proved true even though it was the National Theatre of Great Britain's acclaimed *Happy Days* production directed by Deborah Warner scheduled to close the 2007 Epidaurus Festival on August 24-25. Lively debate was generated, together with intrigue and anticipation—for Beckett is the most revered and most performed modern dramatist in Greece. But to have had 3,500 spectators give the production a standing ovation and vociferous applause at the premiere must count for something. Epidaurus vindicated Beckett, despite the predictions that the project was fated to fail. Unfortunately, many of us were deprived of sharing the experience when the second scheduled performance was cancelled because of the devastating fires that swept across the Peloponnese. Nevertheless, the general praise in the Greek press acted as some small consolation for the national tragedy. It would be nice to think the source of contention was concern to protect the work from being diminished by the obstacles peculiar to the vast 4th century B.C. amphitheatre. Sadly, it was more political than that.

A substantial part of the artistic world insisted the festival keep its "ancient-centric" profile, issuing warnings such as "Epidaurus avenges." Others endorsed the move to include modern plays in its repertoire on certain conditions: that they were inspired by Greek mythology, or that they evolved from classical tragedy with epic proportions befitting the historic site. Supporters, unavoidably, spoke of *Happy Days* in superlatives—as the "quintessence of tragedy"; "ancient drama in its original sense"; "the culmination of old and new at its height"; "the other side of tragedy"; "tragedy in its contemporary form." The majority was ambivalent. The response of a Greek Beckett actress who has performed at Epidaurus, Rene Pitaki, epitomised the underlying reason for the reservations: "It is not the 'what' but the 'how' that is significant. How will a world be created, that music, the resonance of today, which will breathe with them [the ancients]?" The more open-minded intimated that the Beckett choice may prove enlightening for new performance perspectives since Epidaurus is "a poetic legacy which should liberate art" and because of this "belongs to tradition because it belongs to the future." This statement by the esteemed director, Stamatis Fasoulis, concluded with an attempt to allay fears on the grounds that "the theatre itself is so powerful it alone will doom to oblivion whatever is not worthy of it."

It seems that there is near unanimous agreement on the current relevance of Beckett's play. Therefore, the only explanation for objections from certain quarters, where the general consensus has been in favor of reviving the festival's fifty-year tradition of producing exclusively ancient drama, is a symptomatic "burden of the past." These symptoms assumed the form of an "anxiety of influence" which a modern dramatist of Beckett's cultural standing might have over a festival designed to showcase the nation's ancient cultural heritage. Headlines such as, "Archaeologists 'explode' over the beckettification of Epidaurus," were indicative of this hyper-sensitivity. The Central Archaeological Committee ruled that a wooden covering should shield the ancient ruins at the back part of the stage due to the fire hazard posed by Winnie's umbrella scene and because of the flammable foam used for the wasteland stage-set. Fortunately this did not obscure the view of the ancient architecture framing the orchestra at the side entrances, nor divert the mind's eye obstinately provoked by the archaeological game with "fire." Thankfully, the wooden covering went largely unnoticed when the rows of lights fixed to it cast their beams on the audience (the orchestra lit from the front rows of seats).

Fiona Shaw in *Happy Days* at Epidaurus.

Never failing to mention the insights gained from her previous collaborations with Fiona Shaw on *Electra* and *Medea*, Deborah Warner tried to mediate the cultural politics of Beckett's Epidaurus reception in press conferences and interviews. In seeking to validate the continuity line of argument, she drew attention to the affinities of *Happy Days* with the classics, seeing these as lying in the representation of human experience at certain extremes: "It [*Happy Days*] has an epic quality. It has the magnitude and the same plane of action as Greek tragedy. The Greek theatre reveals the interior space of the human mind—a revelation that does not happen through everyday behaviour but through the unusual conditions in which the characters discover themselves: Medea, Electra, Oedipus and others. In this way Winnie of the 20th century is connected to […] Clytaemnestra, Iocaste, Antigone and others. […] Winnie, like for instance Clytaemnestra, enacts the depth of human existence at its most intense. Both heroines contend with absolute life and absolute death. This is the essence of these plays."

Warner's background in directing ancient Greek plays lent credibility to her argument, but these were certainly not new observations. Beckett has been received in Greece since the mid 1960s as the great modern tragedian. Yet even within this interpretive approach, in defining what is fascinating about the modern playwright's work, the line of discontinuity which informed the directorial perspective became apparent. The focus was to be on the humour—"about which so much is said but rarely experienced"—and on the 157 pauses that "to a certain extent

have to do with thousands of fragments of silence" which must be made to "speak." A silence that "cries out," "is colourful, like playing a musical piece," and "transposes us to a plane beyond language." Her conviction, however, that Epidaurus is the perfect space to foreground it, and the staging difficulties in actualizing Beckett's other radical aesthetic innovations on such a different scale, were to be the productions biggest challenges.

The views of critics and theatre people interviewed converged on one point: that it was, simply, an unforgettable performance. The brilliance of the production lay in Warner's finely crafted projection of Beckett's potent stage language, and in Fiona Shaw's astonishing Winnie, distinguishing herself in a role already well-known for great acting achievements from ten previous Greek productions. Shaw underscored the play's human values for the receptive Epidaurian audience while buried in the heart of the ancient theatre's orchestra atop a sprawling mound of cracked concrete slabs, rock, and scorched earth rubble, with minimal gestures, facial, and verbal expression. Tim Potter's "fine," "despondent" Willie and the "vitality" of Shaw's "virtuoso" Winnie were both comic and moving. The greatest triumph of the production inevitably belonged to Shaw. She perfectly delivered the "strangely uplifting" humour of Act I, negating the myth of Beckett's "infamous dark pessimism" that has all too frequently accompanied his Greek reception. She alternated from moods of wistful lustfulness, gracious femininity and bleak heroism, "exorcising despair with dignified forbearance, humour and ceaseless activity" in Act I, to continue "gaspingly" in Act II the "heart-rending," "persistent struggle for survival" quickened into new life with the thought of the end, or an impending disaster.

The estranged couple enacts the need to go on despite disquieting thoughts about the continuity of human existence. Winnie's struggle to build on the "void" with the "nothingness" of the "trivial" marks a rupture with tradition -the human condition diminished to the minimum of existential anguish and uncertainty. But with "words as her allies," expressed through a finely tuned physicality despite her immobility, Winnie makes a profound statement which is both comic and genuinely tragic. The influential theatre critic, Spyros Pagiatakis, described Shaw's achievement as opening the way for a new approach to Beckett, claiming that what was so impressive was her rendering of Beckett's profound compassion through non-verbal communication with the audience. "She was good because you could feel for her even if you didn't know the language she spoke."

Beckett's refusal to depict a transcendental meaning in the human condition was supported by Mel Mercier and Christopher Shutt's disturbing, "slightly chilling," "metaphysical" sounds. Tom Pye's imposing set fully exploited Beckett's polysemic disruption, together with the vastness of the open-air theatre and the mythic aspect denoted by the site. Winnie's head seemed pin-sized fixed at the centre of layers of centuries-old debris. Her framing by the ancient ruins, against the natural landscape and a black sky extending into infinity, sensationally reinforced the symbolism of a timeless, hostile universe. Beckett's aesthetic was further reinforced by the severe gales, bringing up waves of dust on the orchestra the eve before the disaster of the next day's forest fires. All of these visual significations worked in tandem with the play's existing associations: the wasteland of centuries of destruction, a post-nuclear bombed city, an ecological catastrophe caused by climate change, and Beckett's subversive take on western civilization. This inspirational use of imagery and music that was wholly appropriate for the Beckett-Epidaurus production produced an enactment of the human condition, together with Shaw's luminous theatricality, an emotional depth and physical magnitude that acquired an epic dimension. To use the words of an enthused reviewer, "one tiny head was worth fifty actors"; "*Happy Days* proved that if a contemporary work has the Magnitude it can 'fill' Epidaurus." Luca Costigliolo used visual layering in her modern costume design, adding an allegorical dimension which subtly served the integrity of the work. Likewise, Jean Kalman's employed "pitiless" lighting to cast "accusative" beams on the audience in Act I.

The only blemishes in the performance were caused by the acoustic and technical restrictions imposed by the space. Efforts were made to accommodate a more esoteric acting style, such as marking off-ground the side and upper tiers at the very top. Even so, for those sitting in the second tier the nuances of the smaller scale were reportedly lost. For example, some spectators failed to notice that Winnie's teeth had been blackened in Act II. The loaded pauses "where an inner voice should be perceptible and enacted" apparently came across as "blank silences." One critic commented that those sitting above the fourteenth row could not "appreciate the half tones, the eye expression and facial quivering—note by note of Shaw's tremendous concert." Yet overall Beckett neither "disappeared" nor was "off note." Another commentator claimed that the "transformation of hopelessness into a catalytic and, principally, captivating expression" in Act I did not reach him when he later sat further up. But he felt this was inconsequential since Shaw delivered Beckett's language with a conviction that verged on a subversive naturalism, with the distance adding to its immediacy: "In the open plane, Winnie's body seemed not to be trapped in construction rubble, but in something solid and monumental, in something that alluded to the ruined city of classical logos. As her head appeared from the higher tiers small and insignificant, so too her voice reached our ears even more despairing and condemned."

There were a few stronger objections. The most

notable was by Greece's foremost veteran theatre critic, Kostas Georgousopoulos, whose review was mainly devoted to contesting the continuity thesis. He admitted to his obsession with tracing the history of the concept of tragedy, from the first tragic dramatist, Aeschylus, to the last, Beckett. "Beckett is the endgame literally, that is, the end of the tragic, where language dies and the human condition enters the dominion of silence." But he went on to underline the persistent impression constantly being reinforced that "Beckett converses with Aeschylus and in particular with *Prometheus Bound*." He then looked at the Aristotelian features of classical tragedy as a prescriptive formula, frequently reconstituted in a more absolute form in European theatre history, to show that Beckett's play does *not* belong to the tragic genre. He argues that the only linking element is that of "opsis," but even this convergence of eloquent visual image is presented as an ironic departure: "Prometheus immobilized on his rock invokes the natural entities to assist him," whereas Winnie is "trapped in the remnants of the civilization that Prometheus offered humans, the ashes of the fire he stole, she invokes her toothbrush, her lipstick, her glasses, her parasol, a revolver, a bag of truly cheap properties and of course a lexical precision– the life-buoy of the classics."

Georgousopoulos was also critical of Shaw's performance: "The admirable Shaw was unable to impose the anguish of the end of the game, the end of the tragic and the return to chaos and silence in the funnel of Epidaurus. She orated to be heard, she virtually shouted the words and turned Beckett's irony into Burlesque." In an effort to discourage repeating such experiments, he warned, "The space of the amphitheatre has its laws and offenders are punished." These emphatic comments should also be viewed as an objection to altering Beckett's "atmospheric" theatricality, to the non-conformism of his specified constraints relative to pitch, tone and voice projection. Georgousopoulos emphasized that in a closed space Beckett's "masterpiece" and Shaw's rendering would have been a "real contribution" to the play's performance history. Indeed it is worth discussing a little the purpose of performing Beckett at oversized venues which may detract from, or alter, the original stage aesthetic.

Larger spaces are usually associated with the "popular"'—something also true of Epidaurus—and not entirely undesirable if it means broader audiences will experience a Beckett play. Placing it on a stage either heavily laden with socio-historical or other associations, or denuded of context but physically imposing, may allow spectators to identify their world with the Beckettian universe and thus has some justification. Interestingly, two decades earlier, the late Minos Volonakis' definitive Greek *Waiting for Godot*, mounted in an Athenian quarry turned open-air amphitheatre, attests to this fact. It is still remembered as a brilliant conception for the immediacy created by setting the play in a real wasteland setting, as well as for the general audiences it attracted from nearby suburbs who would not have normally frequented the art-house theatres of the city-centre. That this Epidaurian *Happy Days* has seized the imagination of and animated the Greek theatre world is without question. The actor-director of the most recent *Godot* production, Dimitris Piatas, will certainly be haunted by the theatrical memory and did not mince words: "Epidaurus has proved it's still a live theatre that unites even the next millennium. Beckett has proved to us that Epidaurus is now a live theatre and not a museum."

A seasoned critic, Spyros Pagiatakis, seems to have been similarly exhilarated by Shaw's ability to "take complete command of the vast space," and by what it brought to the play: "the text written for a closed theatre […] functioned so convincingly in the open space of Epidaurus—it was as if Beckett had returned home." Warner and Shaw's decision against using microphones or a more extroverted or intense acting style seems vindicated by such accolades. Shaw's impression that the eye of the spectator would look down on the orchestra like a camera following her everywhere also proved accurate. One critic's verdict, which reads as a kind of eulogy, provides a sombre reminder to those uncomfortable with the idea of the open-air large scale Beckett production, or with a modern appearing at the "sacred topos": "Beckett has sanctified Epidaurus more than many other unsuitable, non-elegant or boring productions of Greek content."

The effect of *Happy Days* at Epidaurus was extraordinary, precisely because the mythic ancient theatre brought something to the performance created by Beckett's work that is outside the usual conventions of his dramatic oeuvre. But the play in turn brought about a transformation in the tragic genre. This "para-tragic" status, in the double sense of the suffix, validates the renewed significance the work acquired through dialogue with the classical tragedians, and not only on the level of "pity" inducing visual stage poetry. What emerges, then, is a successful new provocation in the reception history of the work itself; we are invited into its inexhaustible fascinations, as well as the new dimensions made possible by a historically loaded venue.

That this has happened is cause for celebration. A Beckett play should not merely be judged by what is lost on the minute scale. Rather we should measure what we gain through each re-experience of the entire work. This is, after all, what drew people to the theatre since the beginning, and what draws us, after all, to the "old" classics.

—Patricia Kokori

Production Credits:
Direction: Deborah Warner
Set Design: Tom Pye
Lighting Design: Jean Kalman
Sound Score: Mel Mercier
Sound Design: Christopher Shutt
Costume Design: Luca Costigliolo

Cast:
Winnie: Fiona Shaw
Willie: Tim Potter

Beckett and the Art of Kyôgen at the Japan Foundation of Paris

On April 6, 2007, the Japan Foundation presented a night dedicated to Beckett and the art of Kyôgen as part of the Paris Beckett Festival. The evening started with performances of *Breath* and *Not I*, staged by Barbara Hutt and starring Raphaëlle Giltis as Mouth and Ippei Shigeyama as Auditor. These were followed by performances of *Acts Without Words I and II*, staged by Jonah Salz and starring Akira and Dôji Shigeyama and Yasushi Maruishi. The evening was rounded off by a discussion of "Beckett and Japan" with Barabara Hutt and Pierre Chabert (the two artistic directors of the Paris Beckett Festival 2006-2007), Jean-François Dusigne (one of the artistic co-directors of ARTA) and Akira Shigeyama.

The art of Kyôgen is one of Japan's traditional performing arts, which developed together with the art of Noh during the Muromachi period (1333-1573). A Kyôgen playlet is a farce in the literal sense of the word. They were originally performed as interludes between two Noh plays, and they provided the spectators with a welcome slackening of the dramatic tension. Since the Muromachi period a very limited number of actors have been allowed to perform Kyôgen playlets. The Shieyama family, who performed at the Japan Foundation in Paris last April, are among the few Kyôgen actors. They are based in Kyoto and represent the Okura School, one of the two remaining schools of Kyôgen. They perform both classic and contemporary Kyôgen in Japan and around the world, so as to reach as wide an audience as possible.

The evening of April 6 opened with a stunning representation of *Breath*, with very minimalist and stylised scenography. Contrary to what the stage directions suggest, no rubbish was present on stage. In Beckett's didascalies, the heap of refuse stretches horizontally across the stage. In this production, however, horizontality was replaced by sheer verticality as the bare stage was plunged into near-complete darkness—except for a vertical strip, far back, bathed in a soft pinkish light, against which a rosy umbrella rose gently to the sound of inhaled breath. The umbrella, which appeared as light as a feather, hesitated slightly when at the top of the lighted strip and swayed before overturning and slowly falling to the sound of exhaled breath. The performance ended with the sound of a baby's cry. The overall visual and acoustic effect was absolutely stunning. The umbrella came alive, as it were, floating and dancing to the sound of breathing in and out. Barbara Hutt's staging of *Breath*, with Geneviève Soubirou's lighting effects, may not have respected the letter of Beckett's didascalies, but it was very effective and faithful to their spirit, thus allowing Beckett's play to come fully alive. The Kyôgen genre fitted the play perfectly, as *Breath* has assumed an aura of farce, so out of key with the spirit of *Oh Calcutta*, the erotic revue in which it was first performed.

Actually, what was most enjoyable in the four-play bill presented at the Japan Foundation in Paris, was that neither Barbara Hutt nor Jonah Salz turned any of the dramaticules into "theatre musée" pieces. On the contrary, both directors made the Beckettian spirit their own and did not confine themselves to a faithful but not so creative use of Beckett's very demanding didascalies.

The art of Kyôgen has more to do with speech, and very often mad speech, than the art of Noh, which mostly structures itself around songs and stylised dances. In that respect it suited a play like *Not I* perfectly. The "mad speech" of the play was complemented remarkably well by the visual contrast between the whiteness of the karaori-like robe that Auditor wore and the darkness surrounding Mouth.

Act Without Words I was performed in a very restrained fashion, giving a subtle touch to the comedy of the piece. The actor glided across the stage, yet appeared to be staggering. The seemingly precarious balance of most Beckettian characters was thus majestically rendered. As for *Act Without Words II*, this production celebrated a mixture of western and far-eastern traditions. A and B wore western suits and bowler hats, while the actor holding the goad was dressed in a traditional Japanese costume. The goad itself was brought on stage on an axle-like wooden bar and two wooden wheels. A performed to the sound of a traditional Japanese flute, while B's movements were accompanied by a western piano tune, reminiscent of those accompanying Charlie Chaplin, whose influence on the acting style of B was obvious.

"Actually, what was most enjoyable in the four-play bill presented at the Japan Foundation in Paris, was that neither Barbara Hutt nor Jonah Salz turned any of the dramaticules into "theatre musée" pieces."

In the discussion the four speakers stressed that the series of codified, stylised and very precise gestures of a typical Kyôgen actor fitted Beckett's theatre extremely well. Kyôgen is an art that gives prominence to interiority. Yet the various performances also let the physiological aspect of the body seep through – as when the saliva visibly dripped from the actress playing Mouth. Pierre Chabert reasserted the importance of the body in Beckett and drew parallels with Kyôgen. For instance, the steps a Kyôgen actor takes are carefully measured. Whereas western theatre and dance mostly focus on the faces of the actors or dancers or on the upper part of their bodies, Beckett always paid great attention to the lower part of the body, to feet in particular. Pierre Chabert shared a personal memory of Beckett during rehearsals for *Krapp's Last Tape*: Beckett repeatedly told him how essential it was for him to hear Krapp's steps. When Krapp walks over the spools, he is walking over his life.

After such an evening at the Japan Foundation in Paris, Beckett undeniably strikes us as a dramatist partaking both of western and eastern theatrical traditions.

—Hélène Lecossois

ESSAY

"No Frills for the love of God": Reading a Staged Reading of Beckett's All That Fall

To begin with the justifications:

Beckett's well-known admonition in the frontispiece of my well-thumbed Zilliacus famously swags o'er any attempt to undertake a performance of his first radio play, *All That Fall*, in any other medium than the radio one for which it was written:

> *All That Fall* is a specifically radio play, or rather radio text, for voices, not bodies. I have already refused to have it "staged" and I cannot think of it in such terms. A perfectly straight reading before an audience seems to me just barely legitimate, though even on this score I have my doubts. But I am absolutely opposed to any form of adaptation with a view to its conversion into "theatre". It is no more theatre than *End-Game* is radio and to "act" it is to kill it. Even the reduced visual dimension it will receive from the simplest and most static of readings — and I am quite sure Berghof has no intention of leaving it at that — will be destructive of whatever quality it may have and which depends on the whole thing's *coming out of the dark*. . . . [F]rankly the thought of *All That Fall* on a stage, however discreetly, is intolerable to me. If another *radio* performance could be given in the States, it goes without saying that I'd be very pleased.
>
> [Samuel Beckett to his American publisher, Barney Rosset, August 27, 1957].

Yet when Emma Jordan and Edel Magill, the Executive Producers of Prime Cut Productions in Belfast, Northern Ireland, offered the opportunity to direct a reading of the play, the much sought after chance to revisit this beloved treasure after an interval of twenty years proved decisive, and, contrary to my own previous arguments in this respect, I surprised myself by agreeing to do so, even though, in forecast, I couldn't promise not to screw it up. If that happened, I rationalized to myself, we could take such compensatory satisfaction as might be salvaged from the firmer knowledge that my (and Beckett's!) initial reservations had been right after all. In hindcast, the concept outlined below "worked" well enough for me to embalm it now in an essay, and provided the framework in which a stunning cast, led by Stella McCusker as Maddy, was able to give to an audience unfamiliar with it an authentic, performative, experience of a reading of *All That Fall*.[1]

On closer examination, it becomes clearer that Beckett's evident exasperation in the letter to Barney Rosset cited above is driven as much by the circumstances that prompted it as by a general reticence to have his play plucked out of its original context. The letter is in response to an attempt by Herbert Berghof to stage a reading of *All That Fall*, and, since Beckett had found his 1956 Broadway premiere of *Waiting for Godot* problematic, he was understandably wary of the new initiative from that quarter (Knowlson 421-22). But a few weeks later, Beckett relented, writing again to Rosset on 9 September, "I cannot hold out against a simple reading of *All That Fall* so let it be. But no frills for the love of God."[2]

Thus it is not surprising that, despite Beckett's admonition cited above, he sometimes relented. Indeed, in his chapter on "The Plays out of Their Element" (169-182), Zilliacus chronicles several readings staged and a film made during Beckett's lifetime, and acceded to, and not always grudgingly, by the author himself, writing, for example to Barney Rosset on 30 March 1958, "Mary Manning, old friend, is welcome to do [a public reading of] *All That Fall* (170). As shall become clear from the remarks below, the more promising of these anticipate the strategy that developed in Praxis in Belfast and is described in this essay.

Additionally it is arguably the case that Beckett finally withdrew permission for anything other than a radio production of *All That Fall*, not because a staged reading was unacceptable to him but in exasperation over "a quality common to most projects for staging *All That Fall*: [while] none of them aims at unstinted realism; many find the task of transposition an opportunity for formal experiment" (Zilliacus 171). Beckett was simply fed up with struggling against directors wanting to commit "adaphatroce" on his play for their own agenda in ways not congenial to its spirit or consonant with its essence and that it would compromise its texture, tone, or spirit.

This play, like any play[3] — however satisfying it may be to read — is written, fundamentally, as instructions for a performance that is to be realized, not by the author (as might be the case in an author-directed film, such as *Apocalypse Now* or *Mr. Hulot's Holiday*) but by others (actors, technicians, producers and director working in ensemble). It is not done once and once only but depends for its very vitality and currency on being re-done from time to time and not by endlessly recycling the classic productions (though that, too, should occur from time to time, and in the case of these radiophonic gems does not occur often enough). As Druid Theatre artistic director, Garry Hynes, notes in a recent interview devoted to her productions of Synge, "No audience is going to thank you by saying: 'That was really rather interesting to see that historical curiosity.' They want to be engaged and provoked within the context of their lives at the present moment. *That* is the job."[4] In this respect, the wretchedly deteriorated state of radio for serious drama in the present — and for the foreseeable future — makes it certain that opportunities for

new productions on the radio will be rare indeed. Without some acceptable form of staging, audiences will have no opportunity to experience the play, nor performers, directors, and technicians to (re)create it. And if it isn't given a chance to live, the play will die along with the many other worthy, and no longer known, plays deteriorating in the archives of the BBC.

Simply staging the play as a straightforward proscenium drama, however, in which we follow Maddy's adventures along the road as she sallies forth to fetch her blind husband, Dan, and their return, is out of the question. This is clearly demonstrated by the not unsuccessful film made for French television from *Tous ceux qui tombent*, which illustrates what is lost by adapting this radio play into any genre — stage, screen, or television — which requires bodies in addition to voices. Aside from the tiresome Procrustean convention of television to cut drama to fit predefined program slots[5], the television production makes clear that the issue is larger than one of fidelity to text, including stage instructions. Even with cuts restored, the French television film would yet lose something essential.[6] The inference is that the loss is occasioned by, to employ Ruby Cohn's phrase, the jump in genre itself: something is lost in the act of subjecting the requirements of a thing written to meet the specific, unique, and singular characteristics of one medium to the differing requirements of another.

In other words, all adaptation (including the concept outlined below) invokes an elaborate calculus of accounting for the gains and losses in the midwifery of genres.

As I've written elsewhere, this, in my view, is true in the specific case of *All That Fall* because the whole thing is meant to come out of the dark as disembodied voices and sounds since the *locus spectaculae* — the scene — is not the road and railroad station at all, but inside the head of Maddy Rooney, and any externalization of her mitigates against that interiority. Such interiority is the special or unique quality of the disembodied sound of radio (or, pace Eisenstein, the asynchronous sound track of film) to convey. The audience experiences Maddy in the act of experiencing the world — her consciousness, and therefore her existence — coming into being in the act of perception. The sounds do not enter the play in the way that a normative person in the scene might experience them. The sounds (or, for that matter, the other characters) are the way they are because that is the way that Maddy Rooney experiences them. And it is precisely this opportunity to be set in(to) the conjured consciousness of Maddy that is lost insofar as we experience her from the outside, as the French film-for-television inadvertently but compellingly demonstrates.

For these reasons it is, and in my view remains, impossible to stage *All That Fall*.

Yet neither did a simple straightforward reading of the play seem adequate to me — actors seated before an audience in a semicircle and/or approaching a music stand or lectern for their lines. For one (rather major) thing, there are the sound effects — or, as we came to call them during rehearsals so as to avoid the specificity of an accumulation of specific sounds, and to suggest instead the broader acoustic ambiance or soundscape strategy — the *bruitage*. Introducing a narrator to read them out would have been an acceptable alternative, but dramatically less forceful than letting them sound. The disorienting character of the cacophony of animals that opens the play would be lost, to give just one, particularly compelling, illustration. Arguably we could, as Donald McWhinnie had done in the original BBC radio production[7], have had actors imitate the animal sounds (dog bark, sheep baa, etc.). But what about the wind and the rain, the railroad train(s), or that worn out recording of "Death and the Maiden" that brackets the action of the play? And what about the footsteps?

We'll come back to the footsteps.

Once one had committed oneself to some combination of generating the sound effects in sync (footsteps, bicycle) with the action and dropping in recorded sound effects (automobile, railroad trains) some principle of consistency had to be established: either one did *all* of the sound effects or one did not do them (some of them) at all.

This strategy — a dramatic reading augmented with the actual production of sound effects — seemed an acceptable "no frills" middle ground between a fully dramatized performance as a stage play and a straight dramatic reading of the text. This is what I have come to refer to as a "staged reading." According to this concept, we were neither *reading* the play (giving the play a reading on stage) before an audience nor giving it a theatrical performance. Instead we staged (performed) a reading of the play, the act of reading the play. The distinction is important, and not, I hope, merely a matter of elaborate word-play. We staged not the play, *All That Fall*, but a reading of it. Strictly speaking, actors performed not the roles in the play but played the role of actors reading that portion of the play that is contained in the words that they say (i.e. the dialogue). Maddy, for example, is made up not only of the words she says but is also woven out of the web of sounds that she hears (whether or not they're heard by others) and makes and hears herself making. In practice this distinction was quite sensibly lost on everybody, including me: the actors used the rehearsals to develop a dramatically compelling performance of their characters in Beckett's play (and were, of course, directed towards that end). But it provided a straightforward and intelligible way to get past the temptation to indulge in various elaborate directorial shenanigans to sneak the play onto a stage in some minimal way that might elude Beckett's reluctance to have it done: Placing the actors behind screens or on a totally darkened stage, having them appear disembodied and dimly lit on a darkened stage, etc., etc.[8] Beckett's response to the efforts of his preferred American

"This strategy—a dramatic reading augmented with the actual production of sound effects—seemed an acceptable "no frills" middle ground between a fully dramatized performance as a stage play and a straight dramatic reading of the text."

director, Alan Schneider, to find some such formula for minimal staging is instructive:

> *All That Fall* is really for radio only. It has been tried in some out of the way theatres, in the dark & with faces only lit on [word illegible], but not much point in that. Oliviers want to 'dramatize' it and were very insistent, but I held out. I think better leave it where it belongs.[9]

The concept I used in Belfast provided the rationale by which, for example, Maddy Rooney's footsteps were very much a part of the performance but did not actually emanate from the feet of the actress playing the role — a conventional matter on radio, but a formidable conundrum on stage. The alternative would have required Stella McCusker to perform the role while sloshing about in a box of kitty litter, using her own feet to generate the sounds of Maddy Rooney advancing along the gravel road towards the Boghill railroad station. (Pause for imagining).

Additionally, in this scenario, the script became not an impediment to a performance — a show in the process of getting "off book" (though remarkably some of the actors had actually done that — memorized their role — by the time we came to stage the reading) — but a "prop" — not only something to lean on, but a *property* in and of — belonging to — the play, signifying the actor as playing the role of reader.

This convention was indicated to the audience by the presence on stage of two music stands, which served as props in both senses of the word (a support for the script that would disencumber the hands) and a property whose semiotics said, "staged reading." This seems also to have been the strategy adopted by the Berghof reading discussed above (and identified as a "concert reading," which might well be a better term than my "staged reading").[10] The sense of seeing the performance of a reading was further emphasized by placing Maddy's music stand roughly center stage and that of the other characters (except Dan[11]) to stage left and slightly upstage from Maddy's, keeping the interaction of characters at a remove that argued against the realistic or plausible. The palpably visible presence of these two simple props — scripts and music stands — clearly and unambiguously immersed, or re-immersed into the performance concept the natural tendency of the efforts of the actors (and director) to create the roles specified in the play. The props reframed the play we performed into not *All That Fall*, but the staging of a reading of the play Beckett had written.

Even within the concept of a staged or concert reading, there were hazards to be avoided at all costs. I have already mentioned one: the actors so involved in the creation of their own sound effects that the role of reader becomes so visually fascinating, even comical, that it takes away from Beckett's script (Maddy and her feet, for example). The one exception was Dan's cane, which Ian Mclhenny, playing Dan, managed on his own, so as to use its sounds as an extension of his own verbal expression.

Another thing to be avoided was the temptation to stage the play as if the audience were witnessing a recording session of the radio play, or acting as the studio audience for the play going out live over the air. With less demanding vehicles than Beckett's radio play, I have, from time to time, done both of these. In each instance the theatrical center of gravity becomes the sense of being given a privileged or "behind the scenes" view of the process of the production of a radio play. And it is this production process with all of its visually amusing activity that becomes the play — upstaging the scripted play, and allowing the sound effects technician to steal center stage from the actors. The audience takes delight in witnessing how footsteps are actually generated out of a box of sand, gravel, and shredded Mylar, how bracelet bangles and a belt 'become' a horse's bridle, and a whoopee cushion a hinny's fart, etc. Great fun this, but it leads away from Beckett's play, not towards it.

The same difficulty occurs if the sound effects (or some of them) had been generated onstage. The audience's attention would have gone there, and not to "our" performance of the play itself. For me the footsteps created a particular and exceptional problem. They had to be so tightly integrated into Maddy's actual speech rhythms and pauses and breathing that I was convinced that these sound effects would have to be generated live, with the performer and technician cueing each other through body English and eye contact, as they had done in my radio production. Staging also presented one further complication that causes no difficulty on radio: So as to avoid the schizophonia of the feet and the voice clearly coming from different places (uncannily unsettling when viewed), the feet would have to be sent through a microphone for playback through speakers installed directly behind the performers, thus plausibly emanating from their space. Though I disliked the idea of even the footsteps being on stage (and had resigned myself the expedient of hiding their generation behind a screen), I gave up the idea only at the last possible minute and with gratitude for the sound designer, Kevin McCullough who combined the skills of a composer and digital audio engineer. Kevin sequenced over fifty sound effects cues digitally, including the sequences of feet.[12] There were speakers placed behind the actors, in the house above the audience, and just offstage at the extremities, right and left, which were used variously singly, in pairs, and in different combinations to establish assorted directionalities, and acoustic movements and surrounds (the up mail, for example, crosses from stage left to right, followed directly by the train carrying Dan, "moving" in the opposite direction).[13]

We had three punishingly long days of rehearsals since most of the actors were performing somewhere in the evenings — indeed, three of them (Stella McCusker, Ian McElhinney, and Frankie McCafferty) in (and one of them, Mark Lambert, directing) the production of *Endgame* onto whose stage we were camped for our concert reading. For script we used the one created for my Beckett Festival production, which Beckett reviewed in 1985, and contains a number of minor corrections and modifications from the printed versions. Since I had not previously met any of the cast, I gave the first day over to a read-through and discussion of the play, and a session with Maddy. The second day

was devoted primarily to working with each of the actors in their scenes with Maddy, with a whole morning given to Maddy and Dan together.

In introducing the *bruitage* on the morning of the third day, we blew the rehearsal. Sound levels were wrong, cues came too fast, and it threw and discouraged us all. Timing proved exceedingly difficult. In a radio production, one can back-time the sound effects to find their entrance points, or insert (or modify) them after the voice track is recorded and edited. If it goes wrong, one backs up and redoes the mix. No such luck in a staged reading. What you hear is what you get. Slocum's automobile, for example, once re-started, must continue through the action; and there are perhaps a dozen cues within that tight frame, all of which are tied to the dialogue and have to be fired off precisely. If they went wrong, they'd wreck the reading. I was on the verge of throwing out all but the most essential sounds; but a second tech session got each effect fitted into the reading in the right way, and the actors proved adept in working off them. [You have to have top people, and I was additionally blessed with actors, all of whom had done radio drama — which would have been impossible in America]. By late afternoon, we were all tired but no longer discouraged, and able to manage a complete and technically accurate final tech/dress — the weave of sound and voice held for a bright and fresh performance the next day for an audience, only a very few of whom had ever read or heard *All That Fall* before.

At 88 minutes and fifty seconds, I think I hold the world record for the longest radio production of *All That Fall*. I'm still getting used to the fact that the (uncut) stage version was on and off in about an hour and ten minutes. The actors were right to resist my radio-derived pacing: slowing it down would have deadened the play for a live audience. There is still much to learn about this remarkable play.

Actors were asked simply to dress in black, and to avoid shoes that would clunk on the stage. The idea was to at once suggest the casual nature of a reading, while using the color to diminish the presence. As the houselights went down, all the performers in the first half of the play, except Maddy, entered and took seats at the back of the stage. The play began in total darkness, a spot coming up to find Maddy at her music stand after the animals sounds and feet and beginning of "Death and the Maiden," for the first words of the play:

Poor woman. All alone in that ruinous old house.

Performers stepped up to the second music stand (to the left of, and slightly behind, Maddy) for their scenes, and left the stage after it unless they reappeared on the railroad platform, thereby contributing to the image of Maddy's increasing isolation. On the railroad platform, the other performers surrounded Maddy, and at the train's arrival, milled about the stage adlibbing, and one by one melted away into the wings, leaving Maddy alone on the stage until Dan's entrance, prefaced by Jerry. For the second half of the play, Maddy and Dan face each other across flanking music stands. The lights, never very bright, dim at definite cue points throughout their scene, while the wind and rain grow louder and fiercer, until at the conclusion of the play, after the departure of Jerry, the lights diminish to black and the actors reading Maddy and Dan are dissolved in the tempest of wind and rain — and the play returns to the dark out of whence it came.

—Everett C. Frost

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[1] Production credits include:

Cast:

Maddy Rooney	Stella McCusker
Dan Rooney	Ian McElhinney
Christy	Lalor Roddy
Mr. Tyler	Frankie McCafferty
Mr. Slocum	Mark Lambert
Mr. Barrell	Gordon Fulton
Tommy	Gerard Jordan
Miss Fitt	Kathy Kiera Clarke
Jerry/Lynch twin	Martin McCann
Female Voice/ Lynch twin	Christine McQuillan

Technical

Sound Design	Kevin McCullough
Technical Director	Mark Dornan
Stage Manager	Mags Mulvey
Lighting Design	John Comiskey
Production and Casting	Prime Cut Productions
	Edel Magill (Executive Producer, Operations)
	Emma Jordan (Executive Producer, Creative)

[2] Letter in possession of Barney Rosset. Quoted in Zilliacus 169.

[3] In this instance, a better analogy would be a musical score, which Beckett's precise orchestration of words and sound resembles in many respects, as several critics, including its first director, Donald McWhinnie, have noticed.

[4] "The Crystal Heart of Druid: Garry Hynes Interviewed by Peter Crawley", *Irish Times* "Weekend Review" 11 March 2006.

[5] The production cuts the hour and a half long radio play to fit into an hour of television (mostly by savaging the dialogue between Maddy and Dan on their return home), unbalancing the subtle tragi-comic texture of this remarkable play.

[6] Concerning it, Beckett wrote to Alan Schneider on 6 February 1963, "*All That Fall* was done on French TV. Badly I thought—but well received" (Harmon 135).

[7] For his rationale in doing so, and my discussion of it, see McWhinnie 133ff, Esslin 128-29, and Frost 192ff.

[8] One of the most interesting of these — to which Beckett consented and followed with interest — was an attempt at a multi-media production by Director, Charles C. Hampton, Jr., in Calgary, Canada, in 1967, which, according to Zilliacus (176-179) yielded mixed results in part because the simplicity of the play simply caved in under the complexity of the technical requirements.

[9] Letter 1 September 1974 in Harmon 319.

[10] "*All That Fall* by Samuel Beckett Has a Concert Reading", *New York Times*, October 8, 1957, 41: "Two lecterns were set at the front of the stage and were used by the players involved in the play's progress. When not involved the performers sat to the rear."

[11] For the second half of the play, Maddy and Dan's music stands flanked each other in center stage to give opportunity for the

greater degree of intimacy between them.

[12] This strategy seems to have been anticipated in part by a 1958 student production of a staged reading in German in Heidelberg which sequenced all the sound effects on a tape recorder and played them back into the production (Zilliacus 171).

[13] It is to be noted to future producers that it took several long and late-night studio sessions to variously find, generate, download, digitalize, and process these effects. In mounting a production in this way, one is advised to make provision budgetary and technical for this necessity. I am forever grateful for how clearly Prime Cut Productions understood this requirement from the beginning (apparently even before having contacted me), and how fully and resiliently Kevin entered into it.

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BOOK REVIEWS

William Hutchings, *Samuel Beckett's* Waiting for Godot: *A Reference Guide*. Connecticut: Praeger, 2005. 168pp. $99.95; £57.95.

The problem for anyone setting out to write a basic reference work on *Godot* (as the bibliographical and performance chapters William Hutchings provides amply demonstrate) is that there is simply so much to deal with: over fifty years of critical and theoretical writing on the play, a very large number of significant or controversial productions, and an impregnable place in contemporary culture. It would be possible to write a reference work either on the critical literature *Godot* has attracted, or on the play's production history. To try to do both these things while at the same time attempting an in-depth critical reading of the play itself in a relatively small book, as Hutchings does here, is an act of conspicuous academic bravery and I wish that the resultant study had been more successful.

For much of this book, Hutchings has chosen a sensible strategy, given the problems I describe above. He has been selective. Some approaches to the study of *Godot* have been foregrounded, and others have been pushed into the background, or almost elided (more on this below). However, it is frequently hard to see the logic behind the selection process. For example, Hutchings has chosen to focus on theological, existential and absurdist readings of the play: other approaches are shoehorned into a catch-all section entitled 'other intellectual contexts' in which Descartes, Schopenhauer, Freud, Proust, Hegel, Heidegger and Geulincx fight each other for the reader's attention. It is not that the readings Hutchings chooses are inappropriate; it is, rather, that they have already been covered in some depth early on in the history of the reception of the text. For example, the chapter on dramatic art examines minimalism, clowning (on film and on stage), and the Theater of the Absurd. The influence of twentieth century Irish drama on Beckett's work is covered in a page and a quarter, dealing with Synge's *The Well of the Saints* to the exclusion of almost everything else, and the derivation and use of the term tragicomedy is covered in under a page. Given what we know of Beckett's theatre-going and play-reading habits, such a selection simply seems outmoded. The points Hutchings makes are the points made by the first generation of Beckett scholars and, as detailed in the bibliographical section, such analyses are still readily available in a number of forms.

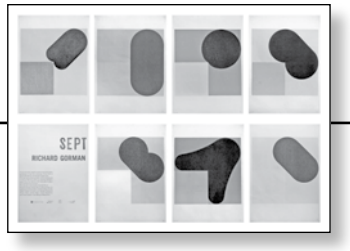
In contrast, however, sometimes Hutchings is if anything too inclusive. I would agree that Vivian Mercier's famous description of *Godot* as a play in which nothing happens twice is rather reductive, but I am not sure that a blow-by blow account of the plot is worth the twelve pages Hutchings devotes to it. More damagingly, the long section on the play's production history is compendious, but undigested. The chapter becomes a list; this production follows that production, in Germany this happened, while in the US that happened. Similarly, the bibliographical chapter leaps back and forward in time, with no clear ordering principle behind the selection or ordering of critical texts (a major problem, given the labyrinthine evolution of Beckett criticism over the past fifty years). Without a clear argument or structure to follow, the pages simply blur. Finally, the chapter on the play's meaning reads like a poorly structured gloss on the plot description mentioned above, drawing out points from a play which repeats itself as obsessively as *Godot* will necessarily lead to a repetitive argument. In addition, the overall thesis of the chapter is not made clear by points such as '*…absences can be of two very distinct kinds; the absence of the existent and the absence of the non-existent'* (24). This has a fine rhetorical flourish to it, but I am not sure what it means. If something does not exist, its continued absence can pretty much be taken for granted.

Most surprising, however, is the absence of any considered discussion of the impact that *Godot* has had on the theatre. This is where the book is seriously deficient. Beckett's approach to the creation of performance pieces has had a massive (and very well discussed) impact on playwriting, on design, and on the evolution of live and video

art. *Godot* is significant, because it stretched the boundaries of performance, in a way that seemed unimaginable (certainly for the vast majority of theatregoers) when the play was first produced. The production history of such a radical text should form part of a study like this but, as I've already noted, performances are listed rather than analysed. Hutchings ends his long, exhaustive account of the play's performance history with a useful list of the questions that *Godot* the play text poses; it would have made far more sense to have tabled these questions at the chapter's beginning, and to have used the information contained within the chapter to arrive at least a partial answer to each. As it is, the haphazard arrangement of material here seriously underplays *Godot* as a historically significant piece of theatre.

Hutchings has been assiduous in gathering information for the study and it is good to have the information on the productions, the play's textual history, and the bibliographical information gathered here (although a separate bibliography would be valuable). However, I must admit that if I were to refer students to a good, reliable and interesting reference guide for *Godot*, I would send them to David Bradby's 2001 *Beckett:* Waiting for Godot (CUP), rather than to this book. Bradby, at least, deals with the evolution of *Godot* as a piece of theatre, and in doing so he covers most of the points raised in this study in a far more easily assimilable way.

– David Pattie



The Beckett Project Paris

The Beckett Project Paris successfully launched its first project in May 2007. The mission statement of the project is four-fold: 1) to facilitate the collecting of documentary sources(written and multimedia)on a website created for this purpose; 2) to create a program of grants; 3) to organize a variety of events such as theater productions, lectures, audio and video projections, conferences, debates and exhibitions; 4) to commission original art works in a variety of media which are influenced by Samuel Beckett.

The abstract artist Richard Gorman collaborated with the printmaker Michael Woolworth to produce a box-set series of seven prints titled *Sept*. A limited, numbered run of 40 signed editions is available from the Beckett Project Paris, c/o Centre Cultural Irlandais, 5 rue des Irlandais, 75005 Paris, France.

Becketts Melodien. Die Musik und die Idee des Zusammenhangs bei Schopenhauer, Proust und Beckett. By Franz Michael Maier. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006, 337 pp.

As all Beckettians well know, English is a language abstracted to death. In the present case, it can only produce such half-hearted fizzles as "interconnectedness," "coherence," or perhaps "relatedness" for the rich concept of "Zusammenhang" (*lit*. "hanging-together-ness") that governs Franz Michael Maier's argument in this immensely learned and detailed book on the rootedness of Beckett's understanding of music – and his uses of it as a writer – in Schopenhauerian theorising and Proustian prose.

Most importantly, "Zusammenhang" for Maier refers to the fact that a tone is characterised by its embeddedness in an intelligible tonal system which enables musical intentionality. Within a piece of music, the entire fabric of the audible, as well as the pauses which may rupture this fabric, make up a single coherent structure.

This idea of a piece of music as a single 'thought' is in turn fundamental to Schopenhauer's conception of melodic progression as an image of the fruitless strivings of mankind in this phenomenal world of illusory desires – an image which abstracts from individual motives to "copy" the Thing-in-Itself, the Will, directly. The "Zusammenhang" of melody for Schopenhauer enables a momentary liberation from the bondage of the individual will-to-live through its imitation (via harmony and discord) of the ebb and flow of desire as if from without, *sub specie aeternitatis*; this experience borders on the mystical, for it involves a transcendence of the subject-object relation, and thus of the categories of space and time, altogether.

Maier is not the first to note Beckett's use of Schopenhauer on music in *Proust* to interpret involuntary memory (which makes suddenly present a fragment of the past that has been preserved from the taint of utilitarian motives) as a "mystical experience" which "communicates an extra-temporal essence." However, Maier's in-depth treatment of individual encounters with music in *À la recherche du temps perdu* reveals a subtle intertwining of the possible "Zusammenhang" between the moments of a life and the gradual revelation of the significance and construction of certain recurring musical shapes. While Maier faults Beckett for severing the empirical from the transcendental too schematically in the *Proust* essay itself, he nonetheless plausibly argues that it was Proust who first taught Beckett to surround the actual uses of music in his work with a multiplicity of frequently ambiguous associations and images. Neither Proust nor Beckett, then, is simply a Schopenhauerian theorist; the use (and misuse) of music in their work takes place *within* time.

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In Beckett's summary, music "asserts to [Proust's] unbelief the permanence of personality and the reality of art." Maier finds an implicit recognition here of music as an autonomous world which asserts its own wholeness and order in partial defiance even of Beckett's corrosive scepticism. There is, for example, Hamm's doubt whether single moments can ever "add up to a life"; however, in Maier's reading, Beckett's decision to cut Clov's song from the English and German versions of *Fin de partie* was motivated precisely by a felt threat to the unremitting negativity of this vision. Similarly, Krapp intones the hymn "Now the Day is Over" in *Krapp's Last Tape* to assure himself of some "connection with the earth" (Maier 261), albeit a connection that may be slipping away in the final silence. And in *Happy Days*, Léhar's "Merry Widow Waltz," a duet sung by a single member of a couple, functions as one more fragmentary bit of refuse from Winnie's disintegrating mind and as a reminder of the abyss between her and her husband; yet its dialogue of voices also projects a connectedness and a closeness that remain irreducible by this context.

Even Beckett's reflections on music in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* in terms of "discontinuity," "incoherence" and "silence" assume the formal coherence of, say, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Maier's detailed analysis shows how its many pauses seem to suspend time; and for Beckett, famously, they hint at a something (or Nothing) beyond time. Maier shrewdly points out that in a 1934 letter to Morris Sinclair (quoted in Knowlson's biography), Beckett castigated Wilhelm Furtwängler for producing a "Nazi" interpretation of this work, displaying "an absence of mystery and a disintegration of formal structures": *this* kind of "disintegration" precisely deflects attention from the mystery of the "incoherence" at the heart of reality itself, a mystery which requires musical "Zusammenhang" to be articulated.

Maier's argument, then, evolves symphonically across the book, and his musicological expertise and impressive scholarship are evident on every page. In particular, his technical discussions of Chinese music in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, of Beethoven in *Ghost Trio*, and of Schubert in *Nacht und Träume* are unlikely to be bettered.

Nonetheless, the strengths of this severely academic *Habilitationsschrift* also point to its weaknesses. At times (as with the speculation that the vowel "u" in Krapp's "spool" relates to the "u" in Aristotle's concept of "phusis") the learning seems overdone. More importantly, amidst his patient expositions Maier does not seem to notice how idiosyncratic Beckett's readings of both Schopenhauer and Proust really are. For Beckett, the "breakdown" of the subject-object relationship is complete: all attempts at contact with any object of desire, perception or knowledge fail. Yet the temptation to hope remains. Schopenhauer's (and Proust's) varieties of mystical experience are finally viewed as defunct attempts to imagine a "way out" (cf. the Charles Juliet interviews) of the prison of being. Also, the Proustian "communication des âmes," which Maier discusses in relation to the narrator and his beloved grandmother, is for Beckett simply a cruel illusion: it ends in an intolerable "contradiction between presence and irremediable obliteration" (*Proust*).

What, in this perspective, of musical "Zusammenhang"? For Schopenhauer, it is precisely the completeness of melodic progression that makes music a copy of the Will itself. Beckett, by contrast, finds in some favorite pieces a principle of internal disintegration which may negatively project, but still fails to achieve, the longed-for Silence. Beethoven's Seventh is a characteristically assertive work, heroically driving towards wholeness and reconciliation; but what Beckett hears is the breakdown of that assertiveness, its hollowness. It is still true, as Maier argues, that formal coherence is fundamental, and he is surely right that music for Beckett does suggest "Zusammenhang" in all the senses he explores. But the tension between "presence" and "obliteration" in Beckett's engagement with music may be more fraught and complex than he admits.

—Erik Tonning

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am happy to announce the results of the recent election to the Beckett Society board. Richard Begam, who received the largest number of votes, will become president of the Society at the beginning of 2009. He is joined on the board by Dan Katz and Anthony Uhlmann, who will serve for the next four years. I congratulate them, and thank those ran and those who took the time to vote.

Please note the two Beckett sessions at the upcoming MLA meeting in Chicago on the 28th and 30th of December. Six of the eight participants are international scholars. I hope many of you will consider coming to Chicago to hear them and participate in the two sessions.

Finally, on behalf of the Society, I welcome Graley as the new editor of the *Beckett Circle*. If you have suggestions for articles or new directions for the publication, or are willing to cover upcoming Beckett performances and events, please contact him.

Best wishes,
Linda

BOOK REVIEWS

Arnold Geulincx Ethics: With Samuel Beckett's Notes, eds. Han van Ruler, Anthony Uhlmann and Martin Wilson, trans. Martin Wilson (Brill, Leiden: 2006) ISBN-10: 90 04 15467 1, 413pp., 99 ($129)

After some 325 years, both principle works of Arnold Geulincx (1624-1669) are now available in English: his mostly posthumous *Ethics*; as well as Martin Wilson's earlier translation of the *Metaphysics* (Christoffel Press, 1999). Alongside renowned Beckett scholar Anthony Uhlmann, and Han van Ruler, series editor of Brill's longstanding *Texts and Sources in Intellectual History*, Wilson has again taken on the (nearly) impossible. But then again, this is Beckett Country. For translating Geulincx's "contorted syntax" and "obscure" Latin (xi) – that "magnificent Belgo-Latin" Samuel Beckett wrote of in *Murphy* – was never going to be easy going. The elliptical style, repetition, negative mode of expression, and complex philosophical formulations would seem to defy translation into comprehensible style. Yet here it is: just over 150 pages covering Treatises I through VI; and just under 150 pages of corresponding Annotations (that could have profitably been turned into footnotes) virtually all from the first Treatise, *On Virtue and its Prime Attributes*. In addition to these, a brief preface by Wilson cited above, a lengthy introduction rather overly taken with Spinoza by van Ruler, and an impressive eight-page contextualisation of Beckett's encounter with Geulincx, all precede 45 pages of Beckett's notes from the *Ethics* (originally taken in Winter/Spring 1936 from J.P.N. Land's definitive compendium, entitled *Opera Philosophica*). These transcriptions, with rare interpolations in English, comprise roughly three quarters of Beckett's entire corpus of material on Geulincx, the remainder excerpted from the *Metaphysics* and *Questions Concerning Disputations*, both also taken from Land's 1891-3 volumes. For readers of *The Beckett Circle*, a closer look at these relevant excerpts is in order.

First, however, it is worth clarifying Uhlmann's assertion that "Beckett had [previously] read *about* Geulincx and knew the outlines of his system" (302-3). For Beckett's introduction to the seventeenth century mystic-cum-rationalist's thinking was actually made years earlier, via Wilhelm Windelband's revised *A History of Philosophy*, the medium for many of the former's initial philosophical encounters. In his extensive summaries from Windleband, forming the largest portion of his notes on the history of philosophy – itself the largest portion of the "Interwar Notes" – Beckett had already summarised Geulincx's ethical and metaphysical system:

> The ultimate "cause" for causal connection between stimuli and sensations, purpose and action, is God. This is *Occasionalism*.
>
> This furthest developed in *Ethics* of *Geulincx* [….] Geulincx reduces self-activity to immanent mental activity of man. The "autology" or *inspectio sui* is not only epistemological starting point, it is also ethical conclusion of his system. Man has nothing to do in outer world. *Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis*. Highest virtue humility - *despectio sui*.[1]

Given this summary, and of course given Beckett's own predilections, it may be unsurprising to find his comments to Arland Ussher about Geulincx's influence on 25 March 1936:

> I am obliged to read in Trinity College Library, as Arnoldus Geulincx is not available elsewhere. I recommend him to you most heartily, especially his Ethica, and above all the second section of the second chapter of the first tractate, where he disquires on *his* fourth cardinal virtue, Humility, *contempus negativus sui ipsius* [*to comprise its own contemptible negation*].[2]

Bearing this out here, Geulincx's section on Humility (29-37; Annotations 217-44) represents about a quarter of Beckett's corresponding notes from the *Ethics* (326-37). And his transcriptions clearly show a focus on this, "the most exalted of the Cardinal Virtues," which "calls for negative disregard of oneself, meaning that one should not labour concerning oneself, not have a care of oneself, and place no consideration of oneself ahead of a Love of Reason" (29-30).

Esoteric as Geulincx is—going so far as to call himself a "Mystagogue" (64)—these last words ultimately anchor both his metaphysical and ethical thinking: "Love of Reason." This is only properly formed through a rigorous "autology," or self-inspection. Consequently, if a "right intention" is to be unflinchingly trained upon the dictates of Reason – and here Augustinianism is a major, unacknowledged source for Geulincx, second only to a de-emphasised Descartes (cf. xxi) – the four Cardinal Virtues (Humility, Diligence, Obedience and Justice) may then be separated from their "vulgar" imitations, and indeed imitators. Precisely how this is done forms the complex bulk of Geulincx's *Ethics* which, as a whole, is nothing if not a behavioural rulebook built upon a simple maxim: *Beyond God and Reason, all things must be despised* (17). This recipe for a judgemental asceticism is further fuelled by that doctrine most associated with Geulincx; namely Occasionalism: the external world, including all bodily motion, is moved only by the divine *occasion* of God's perpetually-miraculous correspondence of our interior will with His inscrutable actions. "I merely experience the World," Geulincx emphasises again and again. "I am a spectator of the scene, not an actor." Yet if Reason can reveal this axiom of Geulincx's system, this is in no way understood as empowering, either practically or theologically: "I cannot get beyond *I do not know*, there is nothing I can add to this

I do not know. I do not know how I came to this condition [….] I have rightly acknowledged that no volition of mine imposed it on me [….] God brought me to it without my even knowing about it, let alone willing it" (35-6).

Reason therefore returns the devotee of Occasionalism to a medieval kind of *tremendum et fascinosum* before God. And even if Beckett could accept Geulincx's rules for comportment – especially a nascent humility increasingly evident over the second half of the 1930s – submission to God remains another matter entirely. By excluding this interventionist Prime Mover, Beckett's incorporation of Guelincx becomes a wholly stoical philosophy indeed, one given over to "I don't know" fully 140 times in *The Trilogy*. And it is this despairing, uncertain Geulincx that makes his infamous appearance in *Molloy*: I who had loved the image of old Geulincx, dead young, who left me free, on the black boat of Ulysses, to crawl towards the East, along the deck. That is a great measure of freedom, for him who has not the pioneering spirit. And from the poop, poring upon the wave, a sadly rejoicing slave, I follow with my eyes the proud and futile wake. Which, as it bears me from no fatherland away, bears me onward to no shipwreck. (*Molloy* 48)

Much more could be said about this connection here, but as Uhlmann effectively concludes – perhaps with a bit of a nod and a wink, one suspects – "I wish future scholars well as they crawl over the intricate surface of [Beckett's] notes in making sense of them and their connection to Beckett's works" (309).

Get this book. While it may not ultimately help twenty-first century seekers, as *Watt's* Arsene exclaims in his "short statement," to "eff the ineffable" (a word transcribed a total of 17 times in Beckett's notes on Geulincx) of human existence, this translation of the *Ethics*, at least, makes "effable" one of Beckett's most valued and frequently-invoked intellectual debts for the first time. And if for nothing other than an ingenious fusion of quietistic Christianity and the New Science of Cartesianism, this presentation of Geulincx's masterpiece can finally be marvelled, or castigated, by an Anglophone audience bereft of its challenging paradoxes for too many centuries.

—Matthew Feldman

ENDNOTES

[1] Cited in TCD MS 10967/189r, 189v. I must declare an interest here: these and other transcriptions from Beckett's 1930s notebooks, including complete transcriptions from Geulincx, Mauthner and others, are available in the five appendices to my *"Sourcing Aporetics": An Empirical Approach to the Philosophical Development of Samuel Beckett's Writings* (Unpublished PhD., Oxford Brookes University: 2004). I am grateful to Edward Beckett, the Beckett Estate, and the Beckett International Foundation at the University of Reading for permission to quote from this material.

[2] Letter to A.J. Leventhal of 9/1/36; cited in my *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's "Interwar Notes"* (132). I am particularly grateful to Mark Nixon for his valuable assistance with this passage. The other recent works on Beckett and Geulincx in English include Rupert Wood's "Murphy, Beckett; Geulincx, God", *JOBS* 2 (1993), and Anthony Uhlmann's insightful *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image* (Cambridge, CUP: 2006).

New & Forthcoming

- Ben-Zvi, Linda and Angela Moorjani (Eds.). *Beckett at 100: Revolving it All.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN-10: 0195325486 ISBN-13: 978-0195325485. $99.
- Dowd, Garin. *Abstract Machines: Samuel Beckett and Philosophy After Deleuze and Guattari*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. ISBN-10: 904202206X, ISBN-13: 978-904202206X. $86, £45.71.
- Friedman, Alan Warren. *Party Pieces: Oral Storytelling and Social Performance in Joyce and Beckett*. Ithaca: Syracuse University Press, 2007. ISBN-10: 0815631480, ISBN-13: 978-0815631484. £15.50.
- Herren, Graley. *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television*. New York and Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007 ISBN-10: 140397795X, ISBN-13: 978140397795X. $65, £40
- Lawley, Paul. *Waiting for Godot (Character Studies).* London: Continuum, 2008. ISBN-10: 0826493815, ISBN-13: 978-0826493811. $11.53, £10.99.
- Pilný, Ondřej, and Louis Armand (Eds.). *Samuel Beckett: Textual Genesis and Reception*. Special Issue of *Litteraria Pragensia* 17.33 (2007). ISSN: 0862-8424. €5.
- Schubert, Gesa. *Die Kunst des Scheiterns: Die Entwicklung der kunsttheoretischen Ideen Samuel Becketts*. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007. ISBN-10: 3825804497, ISBN-13: 978-3825804497. €29.90.
- Van Hulle, Dirk, and Mark Nixon (Eds.). *All Sturm and No Drang: Beckett and Romanticism – Beckett at Reading 2006* (Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui): *Beckett and Romanticism – Beckett at Reading 2006* (Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui). Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007. ISBN-10: 9042023015, ISBN-13: 978-9042023017. $119, £40.06.
- Wynands, Sandra. *Iconic Spaces: The Dark Theology of Samuel Beckett's Drama.* Indiana: U of Notre Dame Press, 2008. ISBN-10: 0268044104, ISBN-13: 978-0268044107. $17.82, £13.33.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Having catalogued the Trinity College Dublin collection of Beckett's reading notes, "Notes Diverse Holo[graph]", for a special issue of SBTA (16), **Everett Frost** is at work on a study of Beckett's philosophical investigations.

Karine Germoni, Professeur agrégée de Littérature française, teaches 20th century French literature at l'Université de Provence. She is completing her doctoral dissertation « Ecarts, Jeux et Enjeux de la ponctuation dans l'œuvre de Samuel Beckett ».

S. E. Gontarski is Sarah Herndon Professor of English at Florida State University where he is General Editor of the *Journal of Beckett Studies* and Journal of Beckett Studies Books, and he serves as Director of Graduate Studies. His most recent books are *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2006) (written with C. J. Ackerley) and *Beckett after Beckett* (2006) (edited with Anthony Uhlmann). In fall 2006 he was Visiting Professor of Theoretical Studies of Theatre at the 21st Century COE [Center of Excellence] Institute of Theatre Research and the The Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University, Tokyo.

Patricia Kokori, lecturer in Communication, Media and Cultural Studies at Panteion University, Athens, was General Secretary of the *Beckett: from the 20th to the 21st Century* Symposium, Athens, 2006. She is currently working on a book-length study which examines Beckett's performance history and critical reception in Greece.

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

CURRENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

Samuel Beckett Society Panels for 2007 MLA

PANEL 1—Testimony and Memory in Beckett
Friday, 28 December
3:30-4:45 pm
Grand Suite 5, Hyatt Regency Chicago

Presiding: Linda Ben-Zvi, Tel Aviv University
1. "Bearing Witness in *How It Is*,"
   Russell Smith, Australian National University
2. "Samuel Beckett, 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
Sunday, 30 December
1:45-3:00 pm
Columbian, Hyatt Regency Chicago

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

Special Session at 2007 MLA

"Samuel Beckett and Bilingualism"

Friday, 28 December
3:30–4:45 p.m., Addams, Hyatt Regency Chicago

Presiding: Nadia Louar, Hobart and William Smith Colls.
1. "Samuel Beckett's Maternal Passion; or, Hysteria at Work in Company/Compagnie," Pascale Sardin, Bordeau III Univ.
2. "Bilingualism and the Question of Stylelessness in Samuel Beckett's Oeuvre," Nadia Louar
3. "Following the Lieder: Music and the Art of Translation in Beckett," James Rogers, Univ. of California, Berkeley

Call for Papers

32ND ANNUAL COMPARATIVE DRAMA CONFERENCE

March 27-29, 2008 in Los Angeles, California
Submission Deadline: December 11, 2007

Papers reporting on new research and development in any aspect of drama are invited for the **32nd Comparative Drama Conference** that will take place in Los Angeles, **March 27 – 29, 2008**. Papers may be comparative across nationalities, periods and disciplines; and may deal with any issue in dramatic literature, criticism, theory, and performance, or any method of historiography, translation, or production. Papers should be 15 minutes in length and should be accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience. Scholars and artists in all languages and literatures are invited to **email a 250 word abstract** (with paper title, author's name, institutional affiliation, and postal address at top left) to conference director Kevin Wetmore at **compdram@lmu.edu** by **December 11, 2007**.

Abstracts will be printed in the conference program, and presenters may submit papers for publication in the peer-reviewed book series *Text & Presentation*, published by McFarland.

For a fuller description of the conference, please consult the website **http://myweb.lmu.edu/compdrama/**

Inquiries about Beckett sessions at the conference should be directed to board member Graley Herren at **herren@xavier.edu**

Thank You

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THE SAMUEL BECKETT SOCIETY

The Samuel Beckett Society is an international organization of scholars, students, directors, actors and others who share an interest in the work of Samuel Beckett. 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 is $35.00 per year. Student membership is $20.00 per year. Donations over and above the membership fee are welcome and tax deductible.

For membership inquiries, write to:

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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.