THE BECKETT CIRCLE
LE CERCLE DE BECKETT

Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

Waiting for Godot in New Orleans:

An Artist's Statement

> Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! (*Pause. Vehemently.*) Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment o f time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say?
> —*Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett

In November 2006, I visited New Orleans for the first time. Tulane University's art gallery was showing one of my animated projections and the art department invited me to lecture at the school. I readily accepted. It was a chance to see the city for myself. It was also a chance to visit with friends and colleagues, like Bill Quigely. Bill was my lawyer in 2005 and defended me and other members of the Chicago based anti-war group Voices in the Wilderness in federal court. The US government charged that we broke the law by bringing aid and medicine to Iraq before and during the 2nd gulf war. An unjust law must be broken to serve a higher law called justice, Bill argued before the judge. I found it moving and convincing; unfortunately the judge did not. We lost the case.

Bill and his wife Debbie (an oncology nurse) spent five days in Memorial hospital without electricity or clean water or phones, trying to save people from the flooding during Katrina. After the hurricane, Bill and Debbie found refuge in Houston. They returned to New Orleans almost four months later and Bill began to write a series of articles exposing the absurdity of FEMA, the pathetic government response to rebuilding efforts, and the political fight over the rights of returning New Orleanians. Bill's writings were my first encounters with New Orleans after Katrina.

What surprised me about seeing the city for the first time was that, from seeing what was right in front of me, I still couldn't put together a complete picture of New Orleans. I expected comparative contrasts but not wholesale contradictions. Some neighborhoods, like the one around Tulane, seemed virtually untouched by Katrina. But in the Lower Ninth Ward and parts of Gentilly, the barren landscape brooded in silence. The streets were empty. There was still debris in lots where houses once stood. I didn't hear a single bird.

J. Kyle Manzay as Estragon and Wendell Pierce as Vladimir.

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I have seen landscapes scarred by disasters of all sorts. In Baghdad, I saw kids playing soccer barefoot on a wide boulevard and around the concrete rubble that came from US troops shelling the buildings near the Tigris River. I thought I saw the same kids playing in the ghost town known as downtown Detroit on a side street during an enormous labor demonstration in 1999—with shoes but no shirts. Life wants to live, even if it's on broken concrete.

New Orleans was different. The streets were still, as if time had been swept away along with the houses. Friends said the city now looks like the backdrop for a bleak science fiction movie. Waiting for a ride to pick me up after visiting with some Common Ground volunteers who were gutting houses in the Lower Ninth, I realized it didn't look like a movie set, but the stage for a play I have seen many times. It was unmistakable. The empty road. The bare tree leaning precariously to one side with just enough leaves to make it respectable. The silence. What's more, there was a terrible symmetry between the reality of New Orleans post-Katrina and the essence of this play, which expresses in stark eloquence the cruel and funny things people do while they wait: for help, for food, for hope. It was uncanny. Standing there at the intersection of North Prieur and Reynes, I suddenly found myself in the middle of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

The longing for the new is a reminder of what is worth renewing. Seeing *Godot* embedded in the very fabric of the landscape of New Orleans was my way of reimaging the empty roads, the debris, and, above all, the bleak silence as more than the expression of mere collapse. Seeing gave way to scheming. How could it be done? Was it worth doing? I have never worked on a professional play before, much less produced one, outside, in the middle of a street intersection, in a city I have only come to know through one visit and the work of Bill and other writers and activists. Making a play is also an inherently collaborative process and I'm allergic to working with people. If someone were

to stage *Waiting for Godot* in the middle of the street in the Lower Ninth and mobilize the given landscape to tell the 20th century's most emblematic story on waiting, that someone would probably not be me.

I started asking around. I went back to New Orleans and talked to people about what they thought of the idea. Bill said, "Great, a public performance, I love it." I respect Bill very much but you can't trust lawyers, even anti-war ones. So I talked to more people. Ronald Lewis, who lives in the Lower Ninth and runs a small museum in his backyard dedicated to the history and tradition of the Mardi Gras Indians, called The House of Dance and Feathers, had never seen *Godot* and so couldn't say whether or not it was a good idea. But he told me many art projects have come and gone without leaving anything behind. "You gotta leave something behind for the community," he told me. We talked some more. I noticed on the ground the shadow of a tree similar to the leaning tree I saw at the intersection of North Prieur and Reynes. I recently finished a series of animated projections that deal with shadows, so I've become sensitive to their mute presence. It occurred to me while listening to Ronald that *Godot* needed a shadow. I asked him what he thought about a fund that would be set up which would shadow the production budget of the play at whatever the cost, and these funds would stay in the neighborhood where *Godot* would conceivably be staged, in order to contribute to the rebuilding efforts. "A shadow fund," I said. Ronald thought about it a bit and replied, "It's a start."

Artist Jana Napoli liked how staging it outside connects with the city's storied tradition of street performance, from Mardi Gras to the Second lines that leisurely snake through streets and neighborhoods. Pamela Franco, an art historian from Tulane, thought the play should be in two locations, not just one. The sense and nonsense of waiting engulfs other neighborhoods as well, where people still live in trailers almost two years after the storm, hoping for some type of relief to come from city, state, and federal authorities. To bring *Godot* to New Orleans, Pamela thought, meant that one had to expand the place where the

tragicomedy of waiting occurs, beyond the borders of one neighborhood. "What about Gentilly?" Pamela asked.

Greta Gladney, an organizer who runs a local farmers market in the Lower Ninth, and whose husband Jim teaches at Fredric Douglass High School in the city, thought that, if a project were to happen, the schools ought to be involved. Ron Bechet, an artist and professor at Xavier University, thought the same thing. "If you want to do this, you got to spend the dime, and you got to spend the time," someone said to me. The idea of staging *Godot* in New Orleans, of using the natural collaborative process of producing a play with the necessary give and take of working on the streets in order to reimagine how art—as the form freedom takes without the use of force—can become the opening to enter and engage the myriad dimensions of life lived in the midst of ruin, without succumbing to the easy graces of reducing it to either knowledge or illustration of that life, began to take shape in a way that became unpredictable, which is to say, new. It is fashionable today (still?) to claim that there is nothing new beyond our horizon of art, that everything worth doing has been done. But this seems to me an altogether specious claim, for it ignores the vast undiscovered country of things that ought to be *un*done. In these great times, the terror of action and inaction shapes the burden of history. Perhaps the task of art today is to remake this burden anew by suspending the seemingly inexorable order of things (which gives the burden its weight) for the potential of a clearing to take place, so that we can see and feel what is in fact worthless, and what is in truth worth renewing.

Waiting for Godot has been staged on Broadway (in 1956), at a prison (San Quentin), and in the middle of a war (during the Siege of Sarajevo, directed by Susan Sontag). It is a simple story, told in two acts, about two tramps (we have other names for them today) waiting for someone named Godot, who never comes. In New Orleans in 2007, Godot is legion and it is not difficult to recognize the city through the play. Here, the burden of the new is to realize the play through the city.

--Paul Chan
June 2007
New York City

Production Details:
Conceived by Paul Chan and co-produced by Creative Time and The Classical Theatre of Harlem

Performed November 2 & 3, 2007 at N. Roman St. and Forstall St., Lower Ninth Ward
Performed November 9& 10, 2007 at Robert E. Lee Blvd. and Pratt Dr., Gentilly

Director: Christopher McElroen
Vladimir: Wendell Pierce
Estragon: J. Kyle Manzay
Pozzo: T. Ryder Smith
Lucky: Mark McLaughlin
Boy: Tony Felix (Nov. 2 & 10), Michael Pepp (Nov. 3 & 9)

Brook's *Fragments* at the Young Vic

> Beckett was a perfectionist, but can one be a perfectionist without an intuition of perfection? Today, with the passage of time, we see how false were the labels first stuck on Beckett – despairing, negative, pessimistic. Indeed, he peers into the filthy abyss of human existence. His humour saves him and us from falling in, he rejects theories, dogmas, that offer pious consolations, yet his life was a constant, aching search for meaning.
>
> Peter Brook
> Programme note to *Fragments*
> October 2007

Fragments is an intense theatrical experience. Played straight through without an interval, the programme lasts just over an hour. The restyled "Maria" room of the Young Vic, with its breeze-block back wall and steeply raked bench seating is a suitably uncluttered space for these shorts to do their dope. The plays had quickly sold out. The combination of Peter Brook directing, a cast with a background in *Complicité* and five Beckett shorts had proved irresistible. But for all that, I confess to some slight feeling of trepidation as I set off for the Young Vic where, as I already knew, they were going to do *Rockaby* without a rocking chair, *Come and Go* with a cast of two men and one woman, and *Rough for Theatre I*, surely the worst piece that Beckett ever abandoned?

As the audience came in, the stage was already furnished with a couple of solid-looking stools, a pewter dish by one, a gaff by the other. The house lights dimmed and the stage lights came up in a sort of ballet: a high horizontal strip of light and two vertical strips, like a soccer goal, demarcated the back wall; four strips on the floor delineated the acting space. They fade and the spots come up to the scrape of the fiddle. B is already on stage. In *Rough for Theatre I*, it is more difficult to create the *nec tecum nec sine te* pseudo-couple tensions, which are so much better handled in *Endgame*, partly because the piece begins with a seemingly chance encounter. Jos Houben's performance swept this problem aside by giving every utterance an undertone of Pinteresque menace, his gaff ever a potential weapon. I am not sure how he did it, but Marcello Magni left no doubt that he really was blind and absorbed in an inner world from which even the prospect of corned beef and potatoes could not dislodge him. Coiled as tight as a spring, he was all physical tension, especially in the sequence where he feels up the be-rugged amputee for missing parts. A slight liberty was taken with Beckett's stage direction "*groping towards* B*'s torso*," it was B's genitals that A put his hand to, and to great humorous effect. This comic high point gave a welcome twist to the play. Till then, the threat had all come from Houben's B, but this violation, perpetrated on B by A, was a premonition of the reversal in power-relations to come so that forces seemed more evenly matched for the denouement. *Rough* went into slow motion for B's last

speech and into freeze-frame for the final tableau, as A raised the gaff over B's head. Houben and Magni gave the most compelling and convincing performance of this *Rough* that I have seen.

The back wall was bathed in red light to mark the transition to *Rockaby;* the lights dimmed and Kathryn Hunter entered carrying a straight-backed, armless chair which she positioned centre stage and sat in. Bareheaded, dressed, like a prematurely widowed Greek peasant, in a simple knee length black dress, there was no hint of Miss Faversham here. The lights came up. The play began with the actress speaking the opening word "More," but then moving directly into V's "till in the end." So, no tape-recording and, thus, the abolition of the distinction between subject and object which Beckett had dramatised. In *Rockaby* as written, we see W become both her mother and her own other. Something else happens when V is sacked and W has all the lines. The rhythms were about right, although there was no rocking metronome to measure the beat. Hunter delivered her seated monologue with an air of suppressed wildness, her glinting eyes occasionally stravaging the auditorium. In the final section of the play, the relationship between W's subjectivity and her own other object was re-imagined.

> so in the end
> close of a long day
> went down
> in the end went down
> let down the blind and down
> right down
> into the old rocker
> mother rocker
> where mother rocked

Hunter got up, still speaking, and began to rock the empty chair. As it took up the tempo of her spoken lines, the absence of the mother was realised brilliantly on the stage. With the repeat, Hunter got back into the chair and rocked herself off, the chair tipping back and forth on its backs legs in exactly the way your mother warned you against. This was a most effective *coup de theatre*, achieving in the end something that seemed close to Beckett's intentions, but by other means.

Act Without Words II is a piece that is written to the strengths of a company like *Complicité*. It was sheer, unadulterated pleasure from beginning to end. Magni demonstrated that he can handle the befuddled A as well as the energetic B, which he had played in Enda Hughes's wonderful silent movie version for the Gate's *Beckett on Film* project. Each of his gestures was pathetic and engaging. It was a real struggle for him to move the sacks across the stage. Much was made of the physical contrast between the two actors in this piece. Magni is short and solid; Houben tall and gangly. Houben's exercises were a treat. Somehow his arms and legs were just too long to come together in press-ups and pull-backs. There was a nice contrast, too, in some business with the hats. Magni, tried half-heartedly to kick his up to his head, and failed; Houben pulled off this trick effortlessly. *Act Without Words II* was an absolute delight; of all the plays on this bill, it was the one that came closest to what Beckett actually wrote, the substitution of a vertical for a horizontal goad notwithstanding.

How do you dramatise *Neither*? With a surprising literal illustration in the case of this production. Kathryn Hunter delivered the piece on a darkened stage through a microphone. The vertical strips of light on the rear wall, which had marked the transition from one play to the next, did duty as the "two lit refuges whose doors once neared gently close." There was something soothing about the mesmeric, altered voice and these brightening and dimming "gleams," and a sudden jolt of incomprehension when the voice finally hits the brick wall of "that unheeded neither / unspeakable home." This *mise-en-scène* would seem fully to justify the labels that Brook says he was rejecting: "despairing, negative, pessimistic."

After that, there was nothing for it but to send us home laughing. As the cast took their places for *Come and Go*, the titters began. One of Beckett's notes to the play reads, "apart from colour differentiation three figures as alike as possible." These three were as comically unalike as it is possible to be. The diminutive Kathryn Hunter looked like a middle-aged busy-body from a British sit-com of the early sixties. The enormous Houben and the bearded Magni, *en travestie* rather than simply in drag, were hilarious in their apparent discomfort. The whispered confidences were lengthy, the gossips drawing breath midstream and then continuing with vigour. It was *Come and Go* performed by *Monty Python.* It grew funnier and funnier as the actors changed places. I laughed out loud. For the curtain call, the cast parodied the stage movements of *Come and Go,* again to great comic effect.

Brook's starting point, as set out in his programme note is that Beckett was a perfectionist. Since these works fall short of perfection, the desire to improve on them is, perhaps, more understandable than usual, and can be excused since Brook and his company put on, and pulled off, an enjoyable evening in the theatre. I have no qualms about the treatment of *Act Without Words II* and *Rough for Theatre I,* but, much as I enjoyed Brook's productions, I should like to have seen Beckett's *Rockaby* and Beckett's *Come and Go.* Despite these reservations, Brook and his cast discovered an "intuition of perfection" in *Fragments* and while they took us to the edge of "the filthy abyss of human existence" they ensured, on this occasion at least, we should not fall in.

--Seán Lawlor

Houben, Hunter, and Magni in *Come and Go.*

Inauguration du buste de Beckett

Le 24 octobre dernier eut lieu, dans la salle des mariages de la mairie du 14ème arrondissement de Paris, une soirée littéraire et artistique en hommage à celui qui vécut dans ce quartier de la capitale française pendant une trentaine d'années. Cet hommage n'aurait pu avoir lieu sans la volonté, la ténacité, l'inventivité voire la ruse, qualités qui s'avèrent parfois essentielles pour passer les fourches caudines de l'administration française, de Bogdan Manojlovic et de Teresa Kochanowka-Manojlovic, son épouse. C'est une longue histoire d'amitié, d'amour et d'admiration de l'œuvre de Samuel Beckett et de l'homme qu'il était que l'on célébrait ce soir-là. C'est, en effet, la profonde amitié qui lia Bogdan et Teresa Manojlovic à Samuel Beckett qui les poussa à faire don de l'une des sculptures de Teresa à la Mairie du 14ème arrondissement.

La soirée s'ouvrit par l'inauguration du buste de Samuel Beckett par le maire, M. Pierre Castagnou. Teresa Kochanowka-Manojlovic prit ensuite la parole pour préciser qu'elle avait travaillé à partir de photographies, mais surtout à partir du souvenir personnel qu'elle avait des traits de Samuel Beckett. La sculpture est pour elle la traduction la plus directe de ce souvenir.

Teresa Kochanowka-Manojlovic travaille ici le bronze, l'un des matériaux les plus difficiles à faire vibrer. Elle offre aux Parisiens et à tous les amoureux de Beckett une œuvre figurative qui immortalise les traits de l'artiste, déjà immortalisés par nombre de photographes de talent, sans toutefois les figer. Bien au contraire. La froideur du bronze n'occulte pas complètement la chaleur et la sensualité de l'argile, le matériau dans lequel la sculpture a d'abord été réalisée. L'œuvre allie rugosité et velouté, brillance et matité et nous laisse apercevoir le geste créateur du sculpteur. Des traces de la main qui cherche la forme sont, en effet, clairement perceptibles. Ces traces font délicieusement osciller l'œuvre entre achèvement et inachèvement, animant ainsi véritablement la matière.

La soirée se poursuivit par une lecture très émouvante d'extraits de *Mal Vu Mal Dit* par Marie-Christine Barrault, de *Premier Amour* par Pierre Chabert et de *Dis Joe* par Barbara Hutt. Pierre Chabert précisa qu'il avait volontairement souhaité faire découvrir au public de « La Fureur des Mots », le festival dans lequel s'inscrivait cette soirée en hommage à Samuel Beckett, des œuvres variées, écrites pour différents média, à différentes époques de la carrière de l'écrivain-dramaturge. La soirée se termina par une projection d'un documentaire conçu et réalisé par Helen Gary Bishop en 1986 : *Beckett : les dernières pièces*. Il nous fut alors donné de voir ou de revoir les interprétations magistrales de Catherine Sellers dans *Berceuse*, de Guy Cambreleng, Dominique Ehlinger, David Warrilow et Philippe Krejbich dans *Quoi où*, Jean-Louis Barrault, et de Catherine Sellers et David Warrilow dans *Catastrophe*.

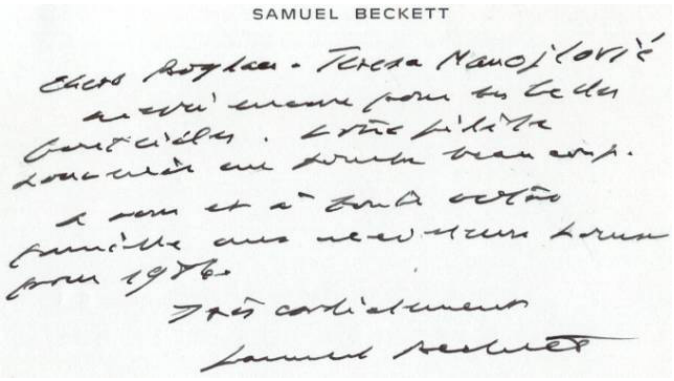
Note biographique: Teresa Kochonowska-Manojlovic est sculpteur et peintre. Elle est née en Pologne, a fait ses études à Lodz, puis à Paris, à l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Elle vit en région parisienne depuis une quarantaine d'années et consacre sa vie à son art et à sa famille. Un aperçu de ses œuvres est disponible sur son site internet : www.artka.com

Teresa et Bogdan Manojlovic peuvent être contactés à l'adresse suivante : manojlo.717@wanadoo.fr

Entretien avec l'artiste: Dans un entretien qu'elle eut la gentillesse de m'accorder, Teresa Kochanowka-Manojlovic m'exposa les différentes phases de création du buste :

En 1986, elle offrit à Samuel Beckett, à l'occasion de son 80ème anniversaire, une aquarelle qu'elle avait réalisée à son intention à Ussy-sur-Marne. C'est à cette époque qu'elle commença les premières études et esquisses du buste.

Copie de la lettre de remerciements de Samuel Beckett à Teresa et Bogdan Manojlovic [*Reproduced with the kind permission of the Beckett Estate—Ed.]* :


SAMUEL BECKETT

Teresa Kochanowka-Manojlovic travailla d'abord l'argile, directement avec ses mains, puis procéda à un moulage en plâtre. C'est ce moulage qui fut présenté pour la première fois au public pendant l'été 2005, à Cerisy - une façon, en sorte, d'amorcer les célébrations du centenaire de la naissance de Samuel Beckett. En 2006, Teresa Kochanowka-Manojlovic confia son travail à un maître fondeur. Le buste en bronze patiné pèse 12 kilos et fait 38 cm de haut, 23 cm de large et 27cm de profondeur.

NB : Teresa et Bogdan ont proposé d'installer une plaque commémorative, ainsi qu'une effigie de Beckett en bas-relief - réalisée par Teresa - au 38 boulevard Saint-Jacques, Paris 14ème où Beckett a passé les trente dernières années de sa vie. Cette proposition a été acceptée avec enthousiasme par Edward Beckett, Pierre Castagnou, maire du 14ème et le service des affaires culturelles. Cette installation se fera dès que les copropriétaires de l'immeuble auront donné leur accord.

Détails pratiques :
Le buste de Samuel Beckett a été scellé à l'entrée de la salle des Mariages de la Mairie du 14ème arrondissement de Paris, 2 place Ferdinand Brunot, métro Mouton-Duvernet ou Denfert-Rochereau. Horaires d'ouverture : du lundi au vendredi de 8h30 à 17h00 ; jeudi, de 8h30 à 19h30.

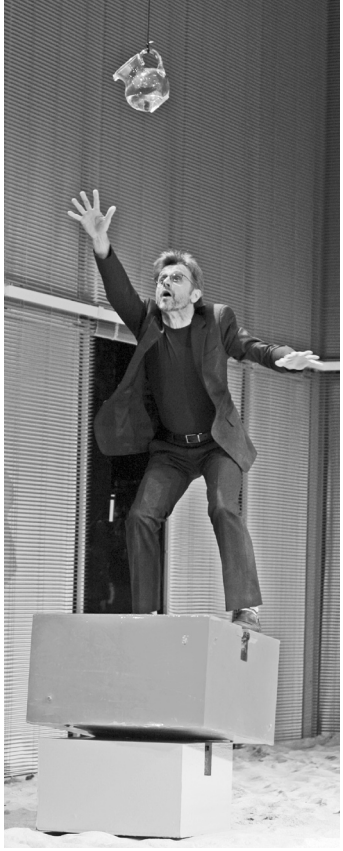
--Hélène Lecossois

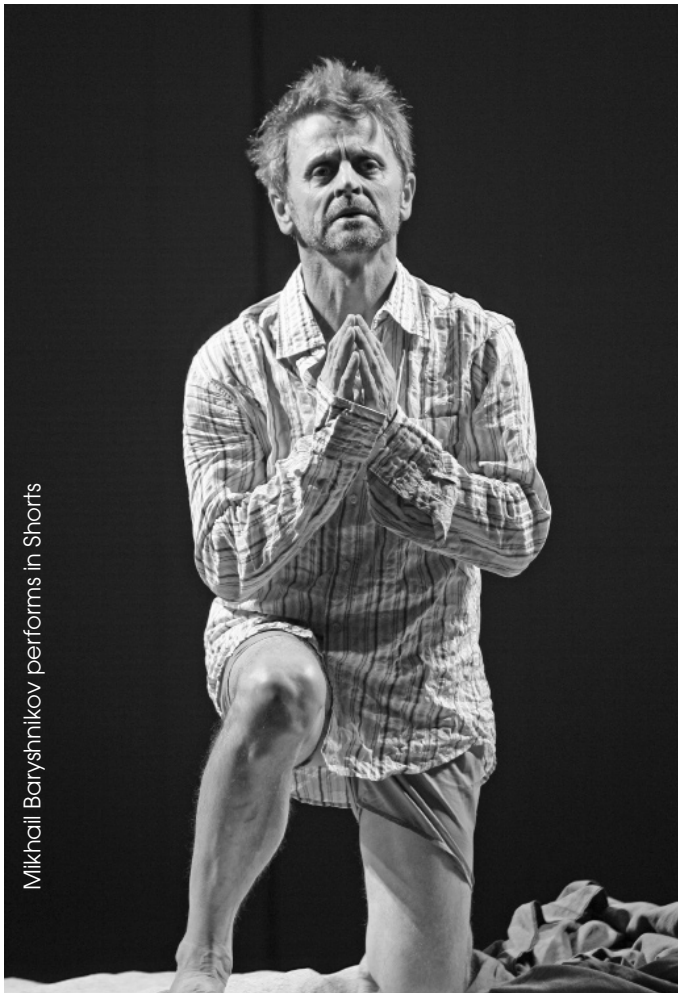
New York Theatre Workshop's "Beckett Shorts"

Mikhail Baryshnikov—a name that evokes images of a gravity-defying body capable of extraordinarily diverse physically- and emotionally-exacting movements. JoAnne Akalaitis—one that summons memories of highly innovative (if hotly disputed) directorial decisions and sets. And Philip Glass—the mere mention of which elicits rhythms in the mind that are nothing if not mesmerizing and provocative. Three names whose association with that of Beckett in the New York Theatre Workshop's recent production of four of the playwright's one-act "shorts" was responsible for the eager anticipation of a historic theatrical event. Not only was it not the aesthetically-electrifying production one expected, however, it was generally disappointing—and this principally for one overwhelming reason.

The bill of one-acts included *Act Without Words I*, *Act Without Words II*, *Rough for Theatre I*, and *Eh Joe*. Bill Camp, Karen Kandel, and David Neumann completed, with Baryshnikov, the cast, while the renowned sculptor and architect Alexander Brodsky supplied his first theatrical set, Kaye Voyce the costumes, Jennifer Tipton, the lighting, Darron L. West the sound, and Mirit Tal the video.

The collaboration of Akalaitis and Glass with Baryshnikov and Brodsky, to say nothing of the talents of Tipton et al, was in fact something to await impatiently, for it was not without a degree of success. Indeed, the sets were quite remarkable, the lighting (like all Tipton's work) was excellent, nuanced and evocative especially when emanating, as in *Act Without Words I*, from behind panels at the back of the stage. Glass' music was wonderfully Glass and not in any way intrusive on the texts, limited as it was to a mostly intermediary position between the plays, but also well-integrated into *Act Without Words II*. Yet what was missing in all this richness was Beckett. This is to say that we knew, of course, the script to be his, but neither the visual nor the semantic Beckettian "vision," however we may define it, was there. What was lacking was the *tenor* (and even the humor) that are the sine qua non of Beckett's work. In a word, it was a reasonably good evening of theater; it just wasn't Beckett's.





Mikhail Baryshnikov performs in Shorts

Consider, for instance, the sand-covered stage for the desert of *Act Without Words I*. It was a masterful part of the set, but not at all appropriate for the three following works. *Act Without Words II* calls for "a low and narrow platform at the back of the stage." This was present. But the remainder of the stage was covered with the sand, as it was for *Rough for Theatre I*, which calls for a "street corner," and for *Eh Joe* which takes place in Joe's room. The purpose this served, like other elements referred to below, was to unify the four one-acts, an idea which worked well in itself. But at what expense?

Similarly, the colorful tree with its palms (more than the "meagre tuft" Beckett called for in the first of these four plays) and the brightly colored cubes that descend from above made for a stunning set, but one far more reminiscent of a Caribbean beach than the desert Beckett cites at the start of this text. "The palms close like a parasol," Beckett specified—could this analogy have led the creative team so far afield?

Moreover, the camera close-ups for *Eh Joe*, projections on a scrim stage front, were powerful—artfully conceived and realized. And the screen-like enclosure that extended across the back and around the sides of the stage, an enclosure that had a horizontal display of lights around the mid-line of the whole, was truly lovely, exquisite in fact—but Beckett's work does not call for "lovely" or "exquisite."

In *Rough for Theatre I* there was screaming and laughing from Baryshnikov that strained the play and did not provide the kind of release of inner "violence" Beckett called for in the script. While David Neumann was a fine counterpart to Baryshinokv's Billy, and the video projections again significantly enhanced the production, as did the lighting which,

though it rendered the décor rather living-room modern, one wondered still where Beckett's own cosmology was to be found. What's more, *Act Without Words I* famously begins with a man "flung backwards on stage" from the wings, a movement repeated two more times in quick succession. Here the dancer's control of his body was distinctly disadvantageous as the fling was not at all flung; rather it was proficiently and technically well executed. *Eh Joe* was also marred, and seriously so, this time by the personification of "Voice." Not only did her presence on the stage distract the spectator from Joe, but the pleas of "Voice" for Joe to hear what she had to say lacked entirely the haunting quality they are meant to have.

The talent, then, was there. It is just that, in this misguided production, Beckett wasn't. Ben Brantley summed it up best when he wrote in *The New York Times* (Dec. 19, 2007), "The production as a whole suggests that Ms. Akalaitis has concentrated less on the performers than on what surrounds them."

--Lois Oppenheim

ESSAY

Beckett's Passion for Art — A Biographical Note

The biographer is forced to make choices. These choices are determined partly by topic or perspective and are often made in the interest of the narrative or the depiction of a state of mind. He or she also prunes and condenses, even deliberately excludes, partly in order to avoid indigestibility for the general reader, whose interest and attention simply cannot be taken for granted. Selecting and omitting are in any case the only practical ways in which the life of a subject can be shaped into the space (in the case of Beckett, so far at least) of a single volume. This runs contrary to all the instincts of the scholar. Facts in academic writing need, of course, to be marshalled into a coherent argument and it is clearly impossible to include everything. But the scholar loves evidence and seeks to follow a trail, sometimes through the densest of thickets, to reach a successful conclusion or a satisfying interpretation.

So if you agree to write a biography, as I did over ten years ago with previous experience only as a teacher, a scholar and a part-time writer and are forced to make selections out of the complex details of a subject's life, you may come to regret what you have omitted and feel that things have been left out or glossed over that could well have contributed to the wider picture that you were seeking to paint. This is why there will never be a definitive biography. For, faced with the same body of evidence, biographers will all make different choices. They will as a result have different regrets.

"And here is where the regret of omission arises. For even a single letter from Cascais to his friend, Jocelyn Herbert (…) reveals how many artistic concerns were buzzing around in his brain at that particular time."

One of my own biggest regrets is well illustrated by the review of a period of a few weeks in Beckett's life during the winter of 1966-67. At that period, he and Suzanne frequently went abroad, especially out of season, when others were not on vacation. One of their holidays which I omitted to write about (deliberately at the time) was a twelve-day stay in Portugal from 24 December 1966 to 4 January 1967, when they spent Christmas Eve at the Hotel Avenida Palace in Lisbon, then went on to stay in an apartment at the Estalagem Albatroz in Cascais. I had just pictured them in October swimming and sunning themselves in Greece and Rhodes and there was no obvious reason for adding that particular trip to Portugal, except perhaps to underline how exhausted Beckett felt after a surfeit of theatre in Paris, after several deaths and serious illnesses in his family, after translating the Texts for Nothing and after reviewing the post-war stories for Grove Press and for John Calder's volume of *No's Knife*. But the issue of exhaustion had been almost overcooked anyway, so, for this reason, their visit to Cascais was never described.

During that holiday, however, we find Beckett concerned with a number of artistic ventures that were closely associated with his own writing or with some forthcoming art events in Paris that clearly intrigued him greatly. And here is where the regret of omission arises. For even a single letter from Cascais to his friend, Jocelyn Herbert (who had recently lost her partner, the founder of the English Stage Company George Devine, and in whom he therefore confided) reveals how many artistic concerns were buzzing around in his brain at that particular time.

First, he had just completed a short piece in French beginning "Siège remis devant le dehors impregnable" ("Siege laid again to the impregnable without") to accompany an exhibition of Avigdor Arikha's new drawings which was to open at the Galerie Claude Bernard in Paris on 26 January 1967. This text for Arikha was used inside the card of invitation to the vernissage of the exhibition. The various stages of its composition are reproduced in Anne Atik's *How It Was. A Memoir of Samuel Beckett* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001). Beckett had clearly taken the text away with him on holiday, for he made a change to the first line in a letter to Arikha from Lisbon written on Christmas Day 1966.

Even though Beckett referred to this in the letter to Jocelyn Herbert as "a crazy little piece," the tribute to his artist friend was both genuine and heartfelt. He clearly wanted Arikha's Paris exhibition to be a huge success: "You must get over for it sometime. It should be a good show."

he wrote enthusiastically to Jocelyn.[1] On his return to Paris from Lisbon, he seems, according to his diary, to have wandered along to the accrochage or "hanging" at the Gallery on 24 January and is described as standing "'like a soldier on duty' at the opening of the exhibition" two days later.[2] The text also opened the catalogue of the Centre National d'Art Contemporain's wonderful exhibition in December 1970, which showed eighty of Arikha's drawings from life. Beckett later translated it into English and it has appeared many times since in books and gallery catalogues.

This text was a very important one for the artist. It depicted Arikha's return to representation in his art in the complex terms of a reach for the unself and a search for the invisible through a brave encounter with the visible: "Eye and hand fevering after the unself"; "Back and forth the gaze beating against unseeable and unmakable."[3] As Barbara Rose put it in the same catalogue, in Arikha's art "we are somehow made aware that reality is apprehended not with ease, but with enormous difficulty. As if to testify to this difficulty of seeing, forms are often ruptured, lines are broken or incomplete." But, like Beckett's earlier writings on the Van Veldes, the text also seems to offer an insight into what Beckett felt he was attempting to do in his own writing. "Unseeable," "unmakable" are very much Beckettian terms ,and the sentences "Truce for a space and the marks of what it is to be and be in face of. Those deep marks to show" also resume some of the difficulty of the Beckettian project.

"'Max Ernst,' he wrote to Jocelyn Herbert, "has done 4 coloured engravings for *From an Abandoned Work*. He has given me another but just as I was leaving Paris and I hadn't time to collect it. That to look forward to on return if to little else."

Second, Beckett showed more than a passing interest in some colour etchings that had been sent to him by Max Ernst to serve as illustrations to a multilingual edition of *From an Abandoned Work*. "Max Ernst," he wrote to Jocelyn Herbert, "has done 4 coloured engravings for *From an Abandoned Work*. He has given me another but just as I was leaving Paris and I hadn't time to collect it. That to look forward to on return if to little else."[4] In the event three aquatint etchings by Ernst, printed at Georges Visat's Studios in Paris to accompany a text in three languages, were used in the book itself, which was published by Manus Presse in Stuttgart in 1967. The same press had earlier published an edition of *Act Without Words*, illustrated by H. M. Erhardt.

Beckett had been escorted around to Max Ernst's apartment at 19, rue de Lille on 29 September 1966 by a mutual friend, the eminent German art historian, writer and critic, Werner Spies.[5] It appears that Beckett was meeting the artist for the first time. Ernst, who had greatly admired *En attendant Godot*, was the best known artist internationally at that time to take a lively interest in Beckett's writing and, according to Spies, Beckett was soon able to relax in the company of a man with whose work he too was already familiar. In 1937, for instance, the art historian, Will Grohmann, had spoken to Beckett in Dresden about the influence of Hans Arp and Max Ernst on modern art[6] and the names of Ernst and Salvador Dali had also cropped up in a discussion in Munich between Beckett and the German surrealist painter, Edgar Ende.[7] As Beckett was aware, Peggy Guggenheim had acquired a number of his works for her new Guggenheim Jeune Gallery in London in 1938. Thirty years later, Beckett sent a postcard (27 April 1968) of Ernst's sculpture in silver, the *Jeune homme aux bras croisés*, to one of his correspondents, Alan Clodd.

There was the additional curious personal link of Beckett and Ernst both having had a relationship with the same woman, Peggy Guggenheim. In fact, Max Ernst went on to marry Peggy briefly during the Second World War, while Beckett had had a much briefer fling with her at the beginning of 1938, followed by a longer friendship. By the time Beckett met him, however, Ernst had been married for twenty years to the American painter, Dorothea Tanning, who was, according to Spies, present at their meeting.

The three etchings by Ernst for *From an Abandoned Work* employ a basic stretched mesh patterning over a schematic oval head and triangular shoulders and they are printed in variant colours. Details of the edition are discussed by Renée Hubert in an essay, "From an Abandoned Work: the Encounter of Samuel Beckett and Max Ernst,"[8] although she mistakenly refers to four etchings and dates the Manus Presse book wrongly as 1969 not 1967. But her discussion of Ernst's etchings and the possible affinities between them and Beckett's own text is of considerable interest. Beckett later gave one of the original coloured etchings, inscribed to him by Max Ernst at that time, to his nephew, Edward Beckett.

Third, Beckett told Jocelyn Herbert in the same letter about "some strange complicated object" that the distinguished English sculptor and former assistant to Henry Moore, Bernard Meadows (1915-2005) had made to accompany a cut-up version of Beckett's novel, *Molloy*.[9] This object was, he reported, due to be shown in Paris in early January: "Haven't seen it and can't imagine it." Beckett's personal diary reveals that he did indeed visit an exhibition at the Galerie Givaudan on the Boulevard Saint-Germain on 18 January 1967 and Avigdor Arikha wrote to me recently as follows: "I remember going with Sam to the Galerie Givaudan (vanished since) and seeing the strange 'Molloy' object, a kind of a book, but I can't remember what it actually was."[10]

The object itself, commissioned by the gallery owner, Claude Givaudan, was described by Meadows (in an interesting interview with Tamsyn Woollcombe recorded at the artist's home on 20 November 1992 for the British Library of Recorded Sound) as a box which he designed himself, in which there were 34 (or 33 according to a catalogue) two tone colour etchings arranged on the covers of 34 (or 33) divided sections of *Molloy*: "They hung on a sort of Meccano-like contraption which Givaudan had thought up," said Meadows. "It was all a bit silly and I think Beckett thought it was a bit silly too."

But, in the words of René Gimpel of the famous Gimpel fils gallery who represented Meadows: "Claude Givaudan was a pioneer dealer in Paris, a visionary. I would place him in a similar context to [John] Kasmin in London, that is, someone who had a flair for encouraging artists to make work not usually associated with their normal practice. The boxed object was a multiple, an early form of this kind of 3-D edition. It incorporated etchings, a plastic scaffolding to display them on top of the box and, I think, some text. The box itself was made of fibre-glass resin, but again this is based on memory rather than evidence."[11]

A letter from Bernard Meadows to the librarian and Beckett bibliographer Robin Davis (28 February 1973) described the "livre-objet" more fully from the artist's own point of view. "The box was a plain black wooden box covered on the four sides with acrylic resin in which was embedded grass and the lid was of polyester resin, a white bas relief of a similar form to several of the etchings, while the bottom of scarlet polyester resin was a reverse cast of the lid so that when the lid was taken off and placed on a table the main body of the box could be stood on it. The box was divided into [5] compartments some of which contained the booklets and the rest were for a form of stand of aluminium parts which could be erected, was about three feet high and was for the display of the booklets. This part of it was Givaudan's idea and I didn't like it, it was altogether too tricksy."

Beckett's own opinion of the art work is revealed clearly in a letter to John Kobler: "I have no copy. The whole thing is in a box. *Molloy* reduced to a jumble of loose pages and the collapsible object which when assembled has the form of a stairy support on which segments of the unfortunate text can be hung or draped according to the fancy of the hypocrite lecteur. Don't ask me what the idea is. To make a ceremonial of reading perhaps. The object in itself is all right."[12]

Bernard Meadows had read a lot of Beckett's prose in the fifties and sixties and chose *Molloy* as his subject not specifically in order to illustrate it but to allow him to produce a visual world which paralleled "what Beckett's attitude might have been." The etchings and aquatints reproduced drawings that he had already made. Meadows explained in the same 1973 letter to Robin Davis that he had considered choosing Kafka's *Penal Colony*, Camus' *Plague* or the Hell Fire scene from Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. "An edition of a hundred was made, the etchings were printed in Paris, adequately enough, and the boxes were made also in Paris but very badly. A further edition of the etchings alone was printed in Paris by Lacourière but this time printed superbly. I had ten copies of this edition as did Givaudan. I have the prototype box which I made as a pattern and this is well made."

Although Beckett does not appear to have taken this last "livre-objet" very seriously, he still took the trouble to visit the gallery to see it and later dined with the "playboy" gallery owner at his apartment (on 1 March 1967). An entry in Beckett's diary also confirms that he went round to meet Bernard Meadows in the Hôtel de Londres while the artist was over in Paris and talked to him about his work, a meeting (on 20 Jan. 1967) that Marjorie Meadows, the widow, also remembered as having taken place.[13]

All of these various preoccupations serve to underline how passionately Beckett was involved with the paintings, etchings and drawings of his friends — Arikha and Henri Hayden, as well as Bram and Geer van Velde and William Hayter of "Atelier 17" fame — and how intensely curious he was about the artistic innovations of those whom he knew less well. These were personal interests that played an important part in his intellectual and artistic development and, although they figure prominently in the section of my biography about the 1930s and help to suggest how Beckett's later visual stage imagery came to assume some of its particular forms, they probably needed to be restated on a number of different occasions.

From these varied art concerns, it should then be clear why this particular biographer regrets such omissions and would have appreciated having the benefit of a second volume to allow him to explore and develop further, among other things, Beckett's great passion for painting and sculpture.[14]

--Jim Knowlson

Notes (Endnotes)

1 Letter to Jocelyn Herbert, 26 December 1966, Reading University Library.

2 Duncan Thomson, *Arikha* (London: Phaidon Press, 1994), 62.

3 *Arikha 39 Ink Drawings* catalogue, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1972.

4 Letter to Jocelyn Herbert, 26 December 1966.

5 Werner Spies is a specialist on the work of Picasso and Ernst and the author of more than 50 books. He was the director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou in Paris from 1997 to 2000 and, since 2002, he has taught at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf. A friend of Beckett, it was he who arranged for Beckett to write the plays for SDR radio and television in Stuttgart. I am most grateful to Werner Spies for his help and for information on Beckett's meeting with Ernst in e-mails to me of 11 Nov. and 3 Dec. 2007.

6 German Diaries, Vol. 4, 2 February 1937.

7 German Diaries, Vol. 6, 19 March 1937.

8 Alan Friedman, Charles Rossman and Dina Sherzer, eds., *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett*, (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University, 1987).

9 Letter to Jocelyn Herbert, 26 December 1966. Although there is no mention of the Molloy 'livre-objet' in it, there is a book on Bernard Meadows by Sir Alan Bowness, *Bernard Meadows Sculptures and Drawings* (London: Lund Humphries London, 1995).

10 Avigdor Arikha, E-mail to Jim Knowlson, 28 October 2007.

11 René Gimpel, E-mail to Jim Knowlson, 22 Nov. 2007.

12 Letter to John Kobler, 4 February 1968, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas.

13 Telephone conversation with Jim Knowlson, 12 November 2007.

14 Jim Knowlson wishes to express his gratitude to the following individuals who helped him with information for this note: Avigdor Arikha, Penelope Curtis of the Henry Moore Foundation, Keith Chapman, Robin Davis, Peter Gidal, René Gimpel of Gimpel-fils gallery, Seán Lawlor, Marjorie Meadows, Breon Mitchell, Mark Nixon, Lois Overbeck, Werner Spies and Tamsyn Woollcombe. He is also grateful to Edward Beckett for permission to quote from Beckett's letters to Herbert and Kobler.

Beckett at MLA 2007

By my count there were twelve papers with a primary focus on Beckett delivered at the annual Modern Language Association convention, held in Chicago from December 27-30, 2007. I was privileged to hear nine of these presentations. For devotees of his work, the year 2006 was devoted largely to remembering Beckett. If MLA 2007 is any indication, however, the primary focus of Beckett studies is now shifting away from remembering Beckett and toward Beckett remembering—studying what he remembered, how he remembered, and where the narratives he forged from memory fit into various comparative contexts.

The first paper I heard was part of a special session on Irish Protestant literature, organized and moderated by Seán Kennedy. This midday Friday session was anchored by Kennedy's own paper on *Texts for Nothing*. His paper began as a rebuttal to Jonathan Boulter's ahistorical reading of Beckett. Kennedy did an especially astute job of tracing references to Bill Beckett in *Texts for Nothing*, presenting an image of Beckett's Ireland as "father/land"—an interesting departure from the far more familiar trope of Mother Ireland.

Due to an unfortunate scheduling decision by the MLA, two Beckett sessions competed against one another on Friday afternoon. I was sorry to miss Nadia Louar's special session on "Beckett and Bilingualism." However, I was very glad to attend the first of two sessions sponsored by the Samuel Beckett Society. Richard Begam moderated the panel on "Beckett and Testimony," featuring papers by Russell Smith, Jackie Blackman, David Houston Jones, and Mariko Hori Tanaka. Smith's paper examined two different paradigms of witnessing in *How It Is*: the theological paradigm, influenced by Dante and emphasizing problems of authority; and the secular paradigm, akin to Giorgio Agamben's models for Holocaust testimony and emphasizing problems of witnessing. The former paradigm posits an identity between creator and created, but Smith argued that the latter paradigm is more compelling for its insistence upon alterity over identity. Jackie Blackman was unable to attend the conference, turned away by customs officials in Ireland over a passport technicality. I suspect I speak for most of the membership of the Beckett Society in voicing my distress with this deplorable trend, whereby international scholars are increasingly prevented from entering the United States to pursue valid scholarly activities. In any event, Chicago attendees were still treated to Blackman's paper, read ably in absentia by her colleague Nicholas Johnson. Blackman is to be applauded for her efforts, detailed in the paper, to restore Paul Léon's proper name to the Shoah Memorial in Paris (where it had been misidentified as "Leen"). Like Smith, David Houston Jones also makes integral use of Agamben's theories on testimony, applying them to *Texts for Nothing*. Without going so far as to assert that *Texts for Nothing* is about the death camps, Jones does note the essential compatibility between Beckett's work and Holocaust testimonies. Both discourses are populated with suffering bodies, underwritten by shame, and animated by the absent dead who persistently reassert their presence within and through the living. Mariko Hori Tanaka also traces Beckett's compatibility with wartime memories and testimonies of the dead, in this case the Japanese dead as conjured by Minoru Betsuyaku. Once again invoking Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Tanaka hears echoes of wartime suffering in Beckett and compares them to the dead voices in Betsuyaku, particularly those of atomic bomb victims. Some members of the audience raised concerns during the post-panel discussion about comparing atrocities and about the presumption that Beckett would attempt to speak, even indirectly, for victims of the Holocaust or the atomic bombs. Nonetheless, this provocative panel made it abundantly clear that the study of Beckett's compatibility with discourses of testimony is one of the major interests galvanizing Beckett Studies today.

"(…T)his provocative panel made it abundantly clear that the study of Beckett's compatibility with discourses of testimony is one of the major interests galvanizing Beckett Studies today."

I chaired the second session sponsored by the Beckett Society on "New Approaches to *Endgame*." Despite its potentially discouraging placement at the very end of the convention, the Sunday afternoon session was fairly well attended, and the audience was certainly rewarded for its dedication. The first paper was presented by Richard Begam, President-Elect of the Society and one of the most dependably incisive speakers on the Beckett circuit. His analysis of *Endgame* eschewed traditional allegorical approaches to the play in favor of a more scrupulously literal approach. Drawing upon performative conceptions of language advanced by J. L. Austin and Ludwig Wittgenstein, Begam interpreted the play as "a game that performatively demonstrates the ends or limits of games." Minako Okamuro tested new possibilities for the play in light of Makato Sato's 2006 Tokyo production. She interpreted Sato's unconventional casting decision—featuring a Hamm who was notably younger than Clov—in relation to Japan's "New 'Lost Generation.'" Okamuro found in Sato's Hamm the theatrical embodiment of "hikikomori," a trend toward social withdrawal, cynicism, and malaise among a considerable portion of Japanese youth. The next new approach to *Endgame* was offered by Dirk Van Hulle. In recent years he and Mark Nixon have become well known among Beckettians for their groundbreaking work in "genetic Beckett." Their project consists of transcribing and uploading manuscript materials and converting them into navigable cyber-forms. In his latest presentation, Van Hulle demonstrated some ways that this new method might be productively applied to *Endgame*, tracing the interrelationships of various texts and challenging assumptions about how the final text (of this or any Beckett work) evolved. Finally, Jennifer M. Jeffers closed

the session by reconsidering *Endgame* as a commentary upon masculinity. She framed the gender politics of the play within a specifically Anglo-Irish context, linking Beckett's loss of class status and national identity as an Irish Protestant after Independence with the play's savage emasculation of the patriarch Hamm. Jeffers' paper rounded out a remarkably diverse range of new approaches to *Endgame*, reaffirming its position as one of Beckett's most compelling and evocative plays.

As the MLA begins to implement new policies designed to streamline and reinvigorate the annual convention, I anticipate big changes for the Beckett Society's future sessions. At the very least, we might look forward to panels with three speakers apiece instead of four, reducing the number of speakers but allowing for more post-panel discussion—a welcome move in my opinion. The Society might even find our total number of sponsored sessions reduced from two to one—a harder sacrifice to make, but perhaps a necessary one for the sake of pruning this overgrown convention. Nevertheless, given the high quality of papers delivered at MLA 2007, audiences may be thankful that such implementations, if they are to come, will wait for another year.

--Graley Herren

Beckett Working Group in South Africa, 2007

The 2007 meeting of the Samuel Beckett Working Group took place from July 10-14, 2007, at the Centre for Theatre and Performance Studies on the campus of the University of Stellenbosch. As in many of our past meetings, our working group convened during the annual conference of the International Federation for Theatre Research/Fédération internationale pour la recherche théâtrale (IFTR/FIRT). After the large international conferences of the centenary year, including the massive thirty-nine-participant meeting of the working group in Dublin in 2006, our small group provided a welcome opportunity to discuss Beckett in a more intimate setting. Under the careful direction of Linda Ben-Zvi, we enjoyed a number of involved discussions on our topic: "International Beckett."

Corinne Scheiner's paper, "Beckett's Audiences: Bi-Discursivity, Self-Translation, and Cultural Specificity," offered a new perspective on the differences between the French original and English "self-translation" of *Mercier et Camier* (*Mercier and Camier*). While previous critics have described Beckett as obscuring the cultural references in his self-translation, Scheiner instead sees the differences between the two texts as demonstrating Beckett's careful attention to the needs and experiences of his French and English-speaking Irish reader, respectively. Though the narrative is set in Ireland in both the original and in the translation, she noted that the references to Irish landmarks, money, distance, and food that seem much more direct in the French original are not erased, but altered in the English translation in order to account for the knowledge that an English-speaking Irish reader would bring to the book. This is particularly clear when one examines the manuscript variants of the novel. She also pointed out that this attention to the specific needs of different audiences is also visible in Beckett's translations of his dramatic works, which provided a useful link to our other papers.

My own paper, "The Black *Godot*," addressed several phases in the long history of the involvement of black actors in productions of Beckett's most famous play. In the first such production, in New York in 1957, the actors came to the play from a variety of African American performance traditions. Though the play had only a short run, the production confronted several issues that would come up in later attempts to stage a black *Godot*, in particular the issue of minstrelsy. In the second phase, companies in the United States and in South Africa consciously attempted to locate the play in the political context of the Civil Rights era and the Apartheid era, respectively. Then, during the early 1980s, the international success of the South African production starring John Kani and Winston Ntshona inspired a new phase in which black actors and playwrights on both sides of the Atlantic became increasingly bold in altering or even rewriting Beckett's play. Ultimately, I emphasized the black *Godot* as an ongoing transnational project that holds out the possibility of radically reconfiguring our sense of the play.

In "The Journey Between Two (or More) Cultures: Social and Political Issues Underlying Performance," Antonia Rodríguez-Gago described three Beckett productions in Spain—the Spanish premiere of *Waiting for Godot* (*Esperando a Godot*) in 1955, a production of *Endgame* in 1984 (*Final de partida*), and a 1996 staging of *Happy Days* (*Los días felices*)—in order to demonstrate the ways in which the socio-political context of a production influences its realization. In particular, Rodríguez-Gago emphasized the idea that "foreign plays…are always cultural hybrids," and thus inevitably undergo a process of "transculturalization" in which the context of the production makes its presence felt via "cultural and temporal marks." For the 1955 *Waiting for Godot*, she focused on the reports produced by the two censors charged with reviewing the play. We were especially interested to hear the comments of the religious censor, who, despite recommending cuts to lines that he felt cast some doubt on the validity of the Gospels, found it a "strange and original vision" of "the mystery and anguish of human existence." With Miguel Narros's *Endgame*, she noted that in the production's emphasis on the "compulsory dependence" of Clov and Hamm and the decision to employ a "relentlessly slow pace," it offered itself as a commentary the climate of Franco's last years. Finally, Rodríguez-Gago described the fascinating "El Canto de la Cabra" production of *Happy Days* in which the company made use of Spanish references, from St. Teresa and the Spanish poet Gustavo Adolfo Becquer to the Socialist International hymn and Pasionaria's "¡no pasarán!"

Shimon Levy spoke on his work as both a translator and a director—a confluence of experiences that was of particular relevance given Rodríguez-Gago's presentation

and Scheiner's earlier remarks. While agreeing with many of the observations of Rodríguez-Gago and Scheiner, he also drew our attention to the role of cultural context in offstage space. Levy then invited another director, Yossi Yizraeli, to share his thoughts on what makes Beckett's drama such a challenge. Yizaraeli offered his view that many of Beckett's works seem to have been conceived by a writer whose ideal performances took place in his mind rather than on an actual stage, which lead to a long and energetic exchange about past productions and—we hope—productions to come.

In a fitting end, our final event was a performance-lecture by Laura Jones and Wendy Ishii under the title "Next Time…Fail Better…: Challenges to the Actor in Performing Beckett." Jones, a director trained in the Alan Schneider tradition, and Ishii, actor and artistic director of the Bas Bleu Theatre Company, have been frequent collaborators, and they shared a number of their experiences in realizing Beckett's work on the stage. In a fast-paced ninety-minute presentation, Jones highlighted the hurdles involved in preparing an actor to perform *Happy Days*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*. Jones and Ishii demonstrated some of the exercises that they use to practice the rhythms of Beckett's dialogue, and Ishii performed sections from each of the three plays, giving us a sense of the trajectory from rehearsal to performance.

--Jonathan Naito

Irish Modernism at Trinity

On October 19, 2007, I returned to Trinity College, Dublin for a conference on "Irish Modernism." It was there over fifteen years before as an undergraduate that I first saw Senator David Norris lecturing on the works of James Joyce, and it was strange to be back in the same tiered lecture halls. I found myself recalling how Norris would waft down the stairs in full regalia (the only lecturer who still wore the gown), enthrall his audience for an hour (he gave a very convincing rendition of the orgasm in Nausicaa, for example), and then ascend the stairs again to a standing ovation. All who saw him had their own favourite moment, and many times during this conference I had cause to remember mine. Teaching Joyce's "Gas from a Burner," Norris had directed us to Samuel Johnson's definition of a conceit: "two heterogeneous elements yoked by violence together." He was explicating the phrase "Shite and onions," and two more heterogeneous elements, he claimed, could hardly be thought of.

I had occasion to remember this because something similar has often been suggested of the term "Irish Modernism". Joe Cleary conceded in his keynote that neither term could be easily defined, and so yoking them together might be expected to bring its own headaches. The conference organizers, Edwina Keown and Carol Taafe, recounted how their decision to run the conference grew out of frustration with claims that there simply was no such thing as "Irish Modernism," and while the point of the conference was to suggest that there was, some anxiety was still in evidence. It made, at times, for an uncomfortable feeling: Is the quest for an "Irish Modernism" merely "Shite and onions" all over again?

The overall consensus was "No." Most commentators felt there was a viable and available object of scrutiny, albeit an elusive one that was always open to (and under) construction. Joe Cleary, in his plenary "Modernism after Modernism," suggested that it was as a tradition of linguistic opulence that "Irish Modernism" made most sense, memorably describing the arrival of the mature Beckett on the scene as the moment when that whole glittering Christmas tree was unplugged once and for all. After *All that Fall* (1956), he suggested, most Irish writers felt they were struggling with a dead language, the language of Modernism itself, and so they reverted to a conservative naturalist aesthetic that has been the aesthetic dominant in Ireland ever since. This fed into an interesting discussion of the chronologies of Irish Modernism: when and where did it begin, and when and where did it end? Has it even ended? Jean-Michel Rabaté suggested in his plenary, "Irish Modernism vs. International Modernism in 1913," that "we are not yet out of the modernist period," and he traced the origins of contemporary globalization to the earlier period of capitalist development coterminous with the first flowering of modernist experimentation.

Anne Fogarty noted how Modernism in Ireland was still being constructed in gendered terms, and there were a number of panels examining ways in which women continue to be put under erasure in Modernist studies, whether in Ireland or elsewhere. The uncomfortable truth, Joe Cleary suggested, might be that Modernism was a rather masculinist business in the first place, although the ways in which Lady Gregory has been sidelined in discussions of the Literary Revival, for example, point to a deeper disavowal. Just how much of *Cathleen ní Houli-*

Extensive Beckett Bibliography Service

Charles A. Carpenter offers a valuable resource for Beckett scholars in the form of *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett: A Selective, Classified, International Bibliography of Publications About His Plays and Their Conceptual Foundations.* For $30 Carpenter provides not only his extensive and usefully organized bibliography, but he also sends his subscribers regular updates of the most recent Beckett publications. Email requests should be sent to Charles A. Carpenter at ccarpen@binghamton.edu specifying Microsoft Word or WordPerfect preferences. Send the required fee to him at 908 Lehigh Avenue, Vestal NY 13850.

han did she write, and why did Yeats in his later poetry confine her to catering at Coole: "A scene well set and excellent company"? Whatever the gender blindspots of Modernism as a broader movement, it seems Irish Modernism has reproduced them, and it was hazarded that Modernism among women writers may not have gotten going in Ireland until the 1950s, and perhaps even later.

Samuel Beckett was the subject of only three papers at the conference, which might seem slight, but his name popped up again and again as a writer of special interest to theorists of the movement because he seemed to push beyond the more commonly held sense of both terms: if there is a place for Beckett in Ireland it is not a straightforward place, and if there is a place for him in discussions of Modernism, he has also been described as the writer who exhausted its terms. My own paper, "Ireland/Europe … Beckett/Beckett," was an attempt to deconstruct certain binaries, especially tradition/modernity, that seem to structure discussions of Ireland in Beckett Studies, as a way of moving beyond the notions of an "Irish Beckett" who becomes "Beckett the European." This partition, I suggested, was symptomatic of a misreading of Ireland as somehow inimical to Modernist experimentation, and I tried to re-evaluate Ireland's relationship to modernism and, by the same token, Samuel Beckett's relationship to both. Peter Fifield, from the University of York, presented on "Beckett's Visual Aesthetics," comparing Beckett to Francis Bacon and arguing that both shared a "distortive mimesis" of the human body that was meant to emphasise, in the last instance, the physicality of the human subject. By contrast, Maeve Tynan, from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, took the disappearing female body on the Beckettian stage as an index of the problematic status of Beckett's women in her paper, "Language and the Diminishing Self for Beckett's Women." For Tynan, the dominant aspect of these women's lives was a loss of control or a sense of being controlled by an outside other, and she examined the ways in which Beckett constructed women as a presence defined by absence.

There were many other papers of interest to Beckett scholars, however, including many on the work of Thomas MacGreevy. Rhiannon Moss suggested in her paper, "Thomas MacGreevy, Catholicism and Modernism in 1930s Ireland," that MacGreevy was trying to build up a Catholic Modernism for Ireland informed by the precedent of T.S. Eliot, and it was remarked in the discussion that when Beckett reminded MacGreevy that T. Eliot was "Toilet backwards" he was demurring from the terms of that initiative. There was also much work in evidence on Denis Devlin, Brian Coffey and Flann O'Brien in which Beckett was a constant preoccupation, often based on an assumption of solidarity amongst these figures that may need to be more clearly articulated. The conference overall was a resounding success, and the blogspot that Edwina and Carol set up is to be continued at http://irishmodernism.blogspot.com

-- Seán Kennedy

Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies, 2008

Co-sponsored by the University of Oxford and the University of Northampton, and co-directed by Erik Tonning and Matthew Feldman, this seminar series is designed to study Beckett's debts to previous sources and his legacy of influence upon subsequent artists and thinkers.

When: Friday afternoons at 4:30pm, from 25 April – 13 June

Where: Collier Room, Regents Park College, Pusey Street, Oxford

Cost: Free to the public

Lineup:

25 April: "Delight in swine's draff: Samuel Beckett and the Art of Annotation" by **Chris Ackerley**

2 May: "Beckett's *Happy Days* and *Film*: A Kleinian Approach via Karin Stephen" by **Rina Kim**

9 May "'Stuck in a Stagger': Beckett and Cixous" by **Mary Bryden**

16 May: "'It seemed to me that all language was an excess of language': Minimalism, Reductionism and the Legacy of Nothingness" by **Kathryn White**

23 May: "Sexual and Aesthetic Reproduction in Beckett's *Trilogy*" by **Paul Stewart**

30 May: "Digitally Unmastered Beckett" by **Graley Herren**

6 June: "Pim's *Paideia*: Ethics in the Kosmos, Beckett's *How It Is*" by **Anthony Cordingley**

13 June: "Speaking of the 'So-Said Mind': Beckett after Psychoanalysis / Psychoanalysis after Beckett" by **Shane Weller**

Please note that the final seminar is preceded by a postgraduate symposium from 9am-3pm.

For further details contact Matthew Feldman (matthew.feldman@northampton.ac.uk) or Erik Tonning (erik.tonning@regents.ox.ac.uk).

BOOK REVIEWS

Yoshiki Tajiri. *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body: The Organs and Senses in Modernism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 240pp. $65.

Prosthesis has come a long way in recent years. Though still associated with dental bridges, or with artificial replacements for amputated or missing limbs, comparable to the wooden specimens used by the ancient Egyptians, prostheses are now able to implement much more complex transactions with the human body and mind. Not only may they visually mimic the missing part (as "cosmoses"); they may also soon be able routinely to pick up commands from the motor cortex, and thus be controlled by the mind.

At the same time, prosthesis has also undergone development within an array of critical discourses. Insofar as prosthesis attaches itself to me while being other than me, there is a natural affinity with contemporary theorisations of alterity, not to mention preoccupations with hybridity, or with the Deleuzian rhizome, operating through connectivity rather than hierarchy. Moreover, as technologies intersect increasingly with daily transactions (commercial, social, medical, etc.), self-identity accrues plasticity. In taking cognizance of many of these tendencies, Yoshiki Tajiri uses the term "prosthetic body" to denote the body incorporating the alien. In doing so, he deploys a fascinating range of lenses in order to contextualise his discussion within recent debates about modernism.

This notion of the prosthetic body is shown to be double-pronged in its implications. On the one hand, the early Beckettian male protagonist may take refuge in the body's mechanical possibilities, especially in the sexual domain, where fluids are made subject to hydraulics (the engineering and regulation of flow). Similarly, the "wombtomb" offers an alternative space, a shield which is watertight (or womantight). On the other hand – and here Tajiri makes good use of Hal Foster, after Freud – the prosthetic body in Beckett may resemble a deficient machine, always prone to short-circuiting or disintegration. In this respect, Lucky's outburst – here tellingly compared to the broken phonograph in the Marx Brothers' film *Duck Soup* – is seen to mark the point where masculine endeavours to control outflows breaks down and loses its gender specificity.

Of course, insofar as prosthesis is both makeweight and supplement, operating in intimacy with the body, the question of bodily boundaries presents itself. Sticks, crutches and bicycles function as Beckettian prostheses, while, in contrary fashion, real parts of the body (limbs, organs) take on a strange interchangeability, or dissociation from the narrator who sports them. In this context of blurry superficies, of negotiable body-image, the Beckettian body is here rewardingly anatomised in various lights, including those of Didier Anzieu (the "skin ego") and Gilles Deleuze. Indeed, it is the latter's characterisation of the Beckettian "langue III" – the language of visual and auditory image – which provides a bridge to Tajiri's discussion of synaesthesia. Where senses overlap their usual areas of competence, or are shuffled about by bodily fragmentation, they may be deemed prosthetic. Modernism's fascination with the aesthetic opportunities offered by the synaesthetic model (Kandinsky, Rimbaud) is well documented here, as is its wider relevance: if sensory channels might be interrupted and rechannelled, so might other conventional stratifications and genres. Moreover, to the extent that new technologies participate in these displacements, they are prosthetic. For Tajiri, Beckett already has a stake in this as early as *Proust*, where attention is drawn to the mediations of telephone and photography. That "synaesthetic sensibility" remains and develops throughout Beckett's writing, notably in its negotiations with painting and music.

> "This is an exemplary and often brilliant study, notable for its demonstration of the sheer productivity of prosthesis as analytical tool. "

The final two chapters of the book do indeed trace the visual and acoustic explorations undertaken by Beckett's later texts. In Beckett's use of the camera eye, the technological, the physiological, and the psychological are deeply enmeshed, such that, in *Film*, technology not only proffers vision, but also feeds into self-consciousness as implicit in bodily gyrations and effacings. Later, in the television plays, Beckett continues to use the camera eye as interrogator of the inner eye. The inner ear, on the other hand, is differentiated inasmuch as the physiological organ, the fleshly ear, is not highlighted as intensely as the eye. Hence Tajiri concentrates upon the prosthetic voice (that emitted through machine mediation), and its relation with the inner voice. The complexity of this relationship is demonstrated by, for example, the voice in *The Unnamable* (and other texts) which appears to discern a voice which it is hard put to recognise as its own – as if, in other words, picked up from snatches on the air, disembodied vocalisations, a version of Derridean "telephony." What links eye and ear is the intensity of the manner in which, prosthetic *par excellence*, they problematise boundaries and distances between inside and outside.

Cliché though it is to claim that space does not permit of justice being done to a focus text, I shall utter it here with complete confidence. This is an exemplary and often brilliant study, notable for its demonstration of the sheer productivity of prosthesis as analytical tool. Reading it generates other prosthetic candidates. What of pen as prosthesis? And is there a sense in which the prosthetic

model could be applied to Beckettian sequences of drafts and revisions? I would have welcomed more detailed discussion of plays such as *Rockaby* and *Footfalls*, which recommend themselves so strongly in terms of the prosthetic voice. Yet it seems churlish to ask for this in a book which is so rich in scholarship and insight. Its particular strength is in the imaginative anchoring of its analyses within chosen features of an unfolding modernist landscape, offering illuminating and interactive readings of Marinetti, McLuhan, Nordau, and others. It is lucidly and persuasively written. It is a study to which I, for one, will be returning frequently.

– Mary Bryden

Sinéad Mooney. *Samuel Beckett*. Writers and Their Work. Tavistock: Northcote House, 2006. 128pp. $22.

Sinéad Mooney begins her new book on Beckett for the respected *Writers and Their Work* series by reminding us of Vladimir's ironic assertion in *Waiting for Godot* that "Habit is a great deadener." So it can be; although one is never sure in Beckett's work whether deadening relates to death as a promise, a consummation devoutly to be wished, or whether deadening is just another way of binding back to the limited material world all those modes of transcendence – death, interpretation, even representation – which seem to pull away from what Steven Connor has recently called Beckett's "radical finitude," his persisting insistence that things should remain nailed to "'such a world … on such and such a day.'"[1] As Mooney rightly points out, this leads to an aesthetic bound to uncertain but manic repetitions, repetitions which only emphasise the now paradoxical familiarity of Beckett's ashen and apocalyptic theatre spaces and his fag ends of fictional form, even though there is enough glowing in the embers to offer satisfactions of both familiar and unfamiliar sorts. But criticism has habits of its own, and Mooney places her initial attention upon that certain "'tidying' of a deliberately untidy oeuvre, a suppression of Beckett's career-long 'perhaps'" (2), which books on Beckett habitually seem to produce. Perhaps by its nature, criticism will inevitably involve something of a refusal of Beckett's textual refusals. It also takes its own part in some repetitions that are more recognisably Beckettian, however, as criticism assumes an interpretative mode already incorporated and critiqued within the work's merciless working through of the compulsive epistemological and ontological bad faiths involved in the forging of meaning.

In this regard, Mooney could also have reminded us of Beckett's snarl in *Proust* that "habit is the ballast that chains the dog to its vomit,"[2] and the way in which nearly all recent (and not so recent) critical accounts of Beckett seem, over and over, already to articulate the double-bind of being caught within the very movements that it is the work's Sisyphean task to critique. The critic's admission that his or her project on Beckett appears already in the wake of a textual prolepsis, that Beckett's texts are part of an avant-garde behind which criticism always seems to be playing catch up, worries away at the suspicion that critical production itself may just be another regurgitation of those self-sustaining interpretive aporias and productive futilities over which Beckett was such a paradoxical master.

Mooney's task, to write a general introduction aimed at the undergraduates or those postgraduates unfamiliar with Beckett's work as a whole, seems to intensify the problems experienced by all critics of that work. How to do justice to a formidably complex body of work so tirelessly suspicious of acts of interpretation? How to write, in synthetic terms, about such a body of work without simply regurgitating both the good and bad habits of previous criticism, or endlessly repeating the moves of Beckett's texts themselves? Mooney's response in this book is the answer one tends to give to students stumped, more or less like Jacques Derrida, as to how to "respond" to Beckett: return to the texts, pay attention to their movements and cadences – the idioms alongside the ideas – and, finally, begin to read what it means already to be part of a play of futile mastery and paradoxical incorporation as one takes one's position within Beckett criticism.

Anyone familiar with Mooney's work will know of her extraordinary sensitivity to what it means to read a text, and her ability to place the work within a historical and aesthetic context which never threatens to make one simply an example of the other, or to flatten out under a lazy synoptic gaze the distinctions between textual figure and contextual ground. Mooney's clear belief in the importance of reading Beckett with attention informs this book completely, in both its form and content. As one has come to expect from her work, the style remains concerned to find the right word, the perfect rhythm, although it produces a text that is never gratuitous or showy. Indeed, the precision of her prose is nothing more nor less than a respectful taking account of the complexity and singularity of works. Mooney's readings ensure that texts are never beaten into a consistency that might render digestion easy but would denude them of their texture and flavour.

Those very familiar with Beckett's work are unlikely to gain new information from this book, although one is pleased to find the most important aesthetic statements and contextual elements presented clearly, accurately, and in ways that neither distort nor are distorted by the fictional and dramatic works alongside which they are placed. It is perhaps inevitable that the commonly taught texts feature

1 Steven Connor, "On Such and Such a Day … In Such a World: Beckett's Radical Finitude," http://www.bbk.ac.uk/english/skc/finitude/finitude.pdf (12).

2 Samuel Beckett, *Proust, and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*. (London: John Calder, 1999), 19.

most prominently, with not much space offered either to the poetry or Beckett's own critical works. A chapter on the less frequently taught television plays and the works for radio, however, serves an important function, showing the student that there are other useful objects for their critical attention alongside the most canonical. Mooney takes the decision not to stage in any obvious way the major movements and debates in Beckett criticism, but even-handedly uses the most influential critical texts and models to sit alongside her intelligent, subtle and tirelessly clear accounts of Beckett's work. A very helpful, briefly annotated, bibliography of the major critical works gently steers the student towards the resources they will need.

Offering consistently informative, penetrating and sensitive interpretations, Mooney's modest-sized book nevertheless provides a powerful reach. As when one watches a gifted teacher at work on a subject one knows well, there is satisfaction in seeing the field reflected back, and admiration that it has been wrought into such valuable coherence. Indeed, familiarity is far from deadening here, and this book is a long way from being a simple regurgitation of what has gone before. If you are looking for an introduction to Beckett to recommend to your undergraduates and master's students, this is the one that will, with clarity, accuracy and scholarly penetration, begin to show them how it is.

--Laura Salisbury

Paul Stewart. *Zone of Evaporation: Samuel Beckett's Disjunctions*. Faux Titre. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006. 211pp. $55.

Stewart's study explores modes of disjunction in Beckett's prose from *Proust* to *How It Is*. Beginning with the paradox that Beckett's works both demand and frustrate a drive to be understood according to a pleromatic imperative, the introduction explicitly disclaims any intention to provide an all-encompassing theory of disjunctive practice, but aims instead to chart Beckett's use of varieties of disjunction, and to trace the implications of such usages in his fiction and selected critical writings. Such an intention, with precise definitions of the key term mutating as individual works seem to demand, risks both too close a focus on the "demented particulars" of the individual works, and an unhelpfully capacious or vague understanding of "disjunction." However, this concise, accessible study largely avoids both pitfalls.

Adhering to a rough chronology, each chapter examines disjunction within particular works, up to a cut-off point after *How It Is*. Stewart choose to omit the late trilogy of *Company, Ill Seen Ill Said* and *Worstward Ho*, which he reads as permeated by images of "communion, verging on reconciliation," and hence at odds with the main focus of this study. If the late fiction is too predicated upon the conjunctive and upon apparently autobiographical images to be considered by Stewart, then drama is also largely omitted for the reason that the presentation of bodies onstage, at least in the earlier plays, testifies to some form of communication between individuals, and between the stage action and the audience.

"Disjunction" is initially defined as "a breaking apart of what *Dream* terms the chain-chant of cause and effect, that plausible concatenation of events into an apparently meaningful structure." Most obviously Stewart analyses issues of narrative structure, and disruptions to narrative progression or cohesion in the trilogy. But he focuses as well upon syntactical and grammatical disjunction at the level of the individual sentence. He also identifies a larger "grammar" of narrative - Beckett's "syntax of weakness" - his pervasive suspicion of metaphor, and compensatory partiality for oxymoron and other disjunctive language games or jokes. Stewart hypothesises a differential "zone of evaporation," originally constructed in *Proust* and summed up in a phrase Beckett borrowed from his modernist precursor in *Swann's Way*. Marcel's "zone of evaporation" refers to his sense of a self-consciousness which intervenes between viewing self and external object, preventing a direct "touching" of the substance of what is external to the self – a consciousness of self which eventually itself "evaporates" due to involuntary memory. The phrase, picked up in *Dream* with a flaunting come-hither to the reader to "guess where" the allusion originates, operates entirely differently in its Beckettian context. There the "zone" remains an irreducible division between individual consciousness and external world, reader and author, narrator and characters, and as a metaphoric expression denied in favour of "the hyphen of passion between Shilly and Shally."

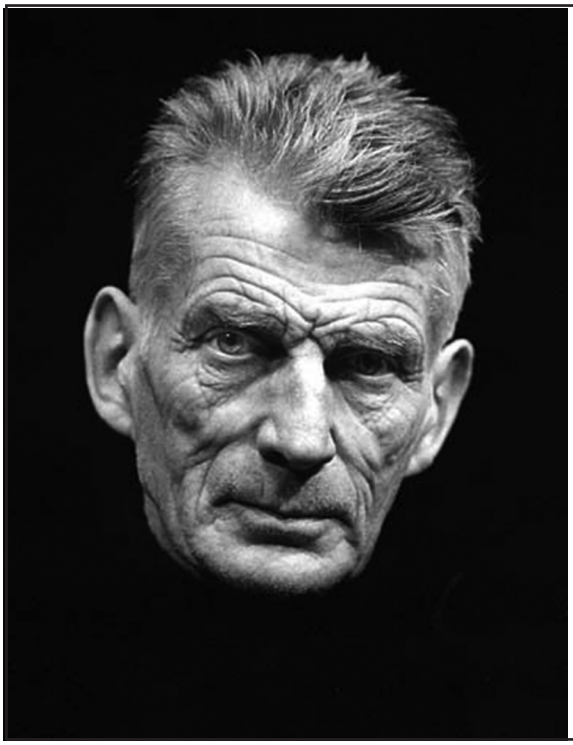
Stewart's first chapter reads Beckett's *Proust* as a Bloomian creative misreading of *A la recherche du temps perdu* and in its relation to *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. The terms of that misreading are worked out as a self-differentiation from Proust in terms of an exploitation of difference implicitly pitted against Proustian involuntary memory, which works to overcome or cancel difference. Chapter Two, "Comic *Watt*," sidelines essentially philosophical readings of the novel in favour of a focus on disjunctive jokes such as the "Irish bull" and the oxymoron, subsequently approaching ontological issues via the comedy of disjunction. A chapter on *Molloy* and narrative pursues the subject-object disjunction into an examination of narratology and *Molloy*. Stewart reads the novel in terms of the "grammars" of narrative initially proposed by critics such as Todorov and Barthes, and subsequent revisions of these. Grammatical scepticism - the lack of conjunction of the sentence in terms of subject and object - offers an analogy to a larger narrative scepticism, in which narrative subject and object are also radically uncertain. Similarly, Beckett's denial of metaphor - in essence, speaking of something as if it were something else - is traced to a larger field, wherein a denial of the essential resemblances

and relation upon which metaphor is based denies the narrative the common binding thread of sameness necessary for it to function. A fourth chapter moves beyond *The Unnamable* and takes scepticism concerning the possibility of being and presence of "being oneself" into the *Texts for Nothing*. "Me" and "here" become involved in a series of deferrals and disjunctions. Yet a paradoxical dependence on such devalued currency persists. Stewart connects this with the be-gapped process of assertion, revision and negation which underpins *How It Is*.

It may initially seem somewhat eccentric that only a late chapter explicitly links Beckett, Derrida and the question of Beckett's position as *de facto* poststructuralist theorist in his attack on the governing structures of Western thought. That chapter begins by acknowledging the difficulty of denying that Beckett "has much in common with poststructural, deconstructive and Derridean thought and practice." However, Stewart is interested in problematising the "and" which has joined Beckett and Derrida for so many critics. He queries, for instance, the historicity of the chronology by which "Beckett and Derrida" is possible, examines how various critics have dealt with the problem of the linkage between writer and philosopher which is strongly felt but difficult to theorise, in part because of the pitfalls posed by a Bloomian model of chronological influence on post-foundationalist thought. For Stewart, what is interesting are the metaphors of linkage underlying theories of linkage in the work of critics such as Simon Critchley, Richard Begam and Anthony Uhlmann. Stewart shifts the emphasis away from influence towards a "dynamic of inevitability" which sees writers disseminate the same discourse, like the pacers in *Quad*, circling an untrodden central space, tracing one another's paths, all writing on the "nothing new" with which *Murphy* opens. Ultimately, difference reasserts itself. Stewart locates *The Unnamable* in the disjunctive "zone of evaporation," the tympanum towards which Derrida can only gesture.

Zone of Evaporation is in many ways itself resistant to critical appraisal or generalising remarks because of its detailed attention to disjunction at the micro-level across a range of Beckett works. I did long for more end-of-chapter or end-of-section conclusions. But the principle on which the decision not to provide such generalising moments rests is revealed in the relegation to the two concluding chapters of the large question of Derrida, and discussion of what has generally been judged Beckett's central aesthetic "manifesto" in the *Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*. In essence, this study privileges individual moments of disjunction above totalising critical rhetoric and attempts to "explain all Beckett." I did also at times regret the absence of drama, particularly when a long footnote relating *Not I* to *The Unnamable*, and a discussion of the power to "claw" of *Endgame*, were both strong pieces of analysis. If I did occasionally also find myself wondering who precisely the implied reader for this study is intended to be, it is nonetheless a model of accessible clarity. In relegating poststructuralist issues of difference and deferral to the late chapters, Stewart forces himself to invent a lucid critical vocabulary of disjunction with which to approach Beckett.

– Sinéad Mooney



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.

Previous issues of *The Beckett Circle*, dating from Spring 2003, are now available in their entirety on the website. Click on "The Beckett Circle" tab for PDF files of each issue.

IN MEMORIAM

Marius Buning

Marius Buning passed away on January 11th, at the age of 77, after having been hospitalized for lung disease leading to severe respiratory problems. Just a few days before last Christmas, he was still corresponding actively on *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* matters, not only with the Dutch members of the editorial board but with authors, with members of the Beckett Society, and with the advisory board of the bi-lingual journal he founded in 1992. It is, perhaps, not wholly improper to say that Marius was a society man.

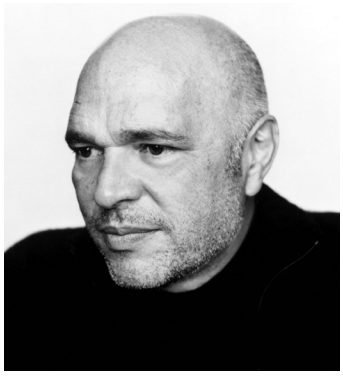
For the numerous people who have met him, for instance during the 1992 The Hague conference which he initiated after having been contacted by the festival organizers, it will be very clear that that does *not* mean he was intent on "society" events; I don't remember him wearing a suit, for instance. This may be – or may have been – a common attitude in the humanities, but for Marius it was a way to keep up with what happened in society at large. Although he was obviously not a student any more in the sixties and seventies, he was fascinated by the ideas and practices of that age.

However, he thrived even more in small societies than in the society. At the start of his career, that small society was mainly the classroom. He liked teaching, and he liked his students – so much so perhaps that there was hardly any time left for research and publishing. At his crowded funeral, one of his students, now a middle-aged woman, thanked him for his inspiring classes: that is quite a privilege for a teacher who retired – unwillingly – more than 10 years ago.

Gradually, other smaller societies attracted Marius. The first one was the Powys society: Marius wrote his Ph.D. thesis on allegory in T.F. Powys. But soon there were others: Meister Eckhart, the German mystic, seduced the man who had been born in a strict protestant community, but who had abandoned religion as a student. From allegory to mysticism; and then on to a meaning so hidden that no one will ever even know in which emptiness to search for it. The Samuel Beckett society proved to be his best 'company', since he collaborated closely and for many years with the board and with many members as the editor in chief of *SBT/A*. Which is not to say he did not cherish other companies: of Jewish American writers, for instance (he guided Chaim Potok during his visit to the Netherlands), or Joyce and his more or less concentric circles. Many will thus miss Marius, who very much appreciated company.

--Matthijs Engelberts

Anthony Minghella



The Beckett community notes with sadness the death of Anthony Minghella, the award-winning director, author, and lifelong Beckett devotee. He first gained international celebrity for his Oscar-winning film, *The English Patient*. However, the readers of this newsletter will remember him more for his deep and enduring commitment to Beckett's work. Minghella directed *Play*, widely acknowledged as the best adaptation for the *Beckett on Film* collection. He was also a patron of the Beckett International Foundation and directed the Beckett Centenary Gala at Reading in 2006, with proceeds going to the Macmillan Cancer Relief charitable fund. Minghella died on March 18, 2008, of complications from surgery to remove a growth from his tonsils. He was 54 years old. (http://www.macmillan.org.uk).

New & Forthcoming

- Boulter, Jonathan. *Samuel Beckett: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2008. ISBN 978-0826492678
- Cerrato, Laura. *Beckett: El primer siglo*. Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2007. ISBN 978-950-563-621-1
- Chan, Paul. *Waiting in New Orleans: A Reader*. New York: Creative Time, 2008. ISBN 978-1928570059
- Depussé, Marie. *Beckett, corps à corps*.Paris: Hermann, 2007. ISBN 978-270-566-704-7
- Fehsenfeld, Martha Dow and Lois More Overbeck. *Letters of Samuel Beckett: Volume 1, 1929-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0521867931
- McMullan, Anna. *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett*. Routledge Advances and Theater & Performance Studies. New York: Routledge, 2008. ISBN 978-0415385985
- Taylor-Battie, Mark and Juliette Taylor-Battie, *Samuel Beckett's* Waiting for Godot (Modern Theatre Guides), London: Continuum, 2008. ISBN 978-0826495945
- Uhlmann, Anthony. *Beckett and Poststructuralism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0521052436

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Mary Bryden is Professor of French Studies at the University of Reading, and author of numerous books and articles on Beckett.

Paul Chan is an artist based in New York. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and Bard College, and his work has been exhibited in Amsterdam, London, Los Angeles, and Boston. He conceived of the *Waiting for Godot* project in New Orleans and served as its Artistic Director. His latest exhibition opens at the New Museum in New York in April.

Matthijs Engelberts (University of Amsterdam) has served on the editorial board of *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* since its inception. Among his publications are (co-) edited volumes of the annual bilingual review; articles on (mainly contemporary) literature and theatre, for instance on Tardieu, Duras, Molière, surrealist theatre, theatresports. He is the author of *Défis du récit scénique* (Geneva: Droz) on the relation between narrative and theatre, mainly in Beckett.

Graley Herren is an Associate Professor of English at Xavier University in Cincinnati. He is the author of *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). He serves on the executive boards for the Beckett Society and the Comparative Drama Conference, and he edits *The Beckett Circle*.

Seán Kennedy is Assistant Professor of English at St Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is the editor of *Beckett and Ireland*, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press, and is working with Katherine Weiss on a volume entitled, *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive*.

Jim Knowlson is Emeritus Professor of French at The University of Reading in England. His books on Beckett include (with John Pilling) *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett*, the biography, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett,* and, most recently (with John Haynes) *Images of Beckett* and (with Elizabeth Knowlson) *Beckett Remembering/Remembering Beckett*.

Sinéad Mooney is Lecturer in English at National University of Ireland, Galway. In addition to her book on *Samuel Beckett* (Northcote 2006), she has co-edited a collection on Edna O'Brien (Carysfort 2006) and published articles on Beckett, Molly Keane, Kate O'Brien and Edna O'Brien. She is currently working on *A Tongue Not Mine: Samuel Beckett and (Self) Translation.*

Jonathan T. Naito is currently completing his dissertation in the Department of English at UCLA. His article, "Writing Silence: Samuel Beckett's Early Mimes," will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujord'hui*. Beginning in the fall of 2008, he will be a Visiting Assistant Professor of English and Humanities at Reed College.

Lois Oppenheim is Professor of French and Chair, Dept. of Modern Languages and Literatures at Montclair State University. She has authored or edited ten books, including *A Curious Intimacy: Art and Neuro-Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2005) and *The Painted Word: Samuel Beckett's Dialogue With Art* (The University of Michigan Press, 2000). Dr. Oppenheim is a past president of the Samuel Beckett Society and on the Board of Directors of The Philoctetes Center for the Multidisciplinary Study of Imagination in New York.

Laura Salisbury is RCUK Research Fellow in Science, Technology and Culture in the School of English and Humanities, Birkbeck, University of London. Co-editor of *Other Becketts* (Florida 2002), she has published on Beckett, Michel Serres and the Irish Joke. Current projects include a monograph on Beckett, Comedy and Ethics and a book, *Late Modernism to Postmodernism* (Edinburgh). She is co-editing a collection on *Nervous Conditions: Modernity and the Neurological Self* (Oxford).

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All members of the Samuel Beckett Society are encouraged to submit items of interest for publication in *The Beckett Circle*. **If possible, submissions should be emailed in Word or Rich Text Format**. Please send all essays, theater reviews, letters to the editor, inquiries about advertising rates, and information on special events to:

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

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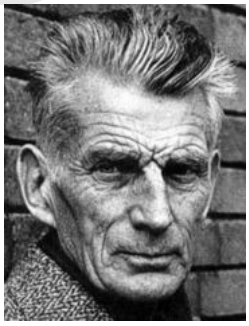
Members or prospective members are requested to remit their fees in US Dollars in the form of cash, checks, or International Money Orders made out to "The Samuel Beckett Society." Fees received in any other form will have to be returned.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Beckett Society Members,

Please fill out the membership form and return it with the appropriate remittance to the address listed on the form. Make sure to include your current email address. We would like to use email for future membership correspondence.

We thank you for your continued support of the Beckett Society.

All best wishes,
Linda Ben-Zvi
President,
Samuel Beckett Society

Samuel Beckett Society Membership and Dues Form

One year: $35 • Two years: $60 • Students: $20 (one year only)

All dues are payable by check to the Samuel Beckett Society in U.S. currency. Membership includes a subscription to the *Beckett Circle*, published twice yearly.

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Dues enclosed: _____ *Contribution:* _____

MAIL TO: Linda Ben-Zvi, President
Samuel Beckett Society
Department of Theatre Studies
Tel Aviv University
Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv 61390 Israel

Winecoff Exhibit in New Mexico

Charles Hans Winecoff will be exhibiting several paintings inspired by the works of Samuel Beckett. The exhibition opens October 24, 2008, at InArt Sante Fe Gallery of Fine Art (219 Delgado Street, Sante Fe, New Mexico). For more information contact the gallery directly at 505-983-6537. Previews for some of Winecoff's paintings can be found at http://beckettpaintings.blogspot.com/