



THE BECKETT CIRCLE LE CERCLE DE BECKETT

Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

Endgame at the Duchess Theatre, London

Last fall the Duchess Theatre in London mounted a new production of *Endgame*, directed by Simon McBurney. The first thing that really struck me was the fine set designed by Tim Hadley. It was the requisite grey, a smoky grey, with wreaths of smoke slowly moving around throughout the play. Dust was everywhere, on the window sills, on the characters' clothes, and any movement or impact tended to raise a little cloud of dust. The windows were at step-ladder height, while the bins were to the right and the door to the left (in opposition to the stage directions), but of course Hamm's chair was placed in the centre. There was no picture turned against the wall (a feature that has intrigued many of my students over the years), but this was not an important omission. The set continued upwards, so high that the ceiling couldn't be seen. This helped to communicate the idea of the inside of a head, with the windows as eyes and the vaulted set as cranium, enforc-

ing the idea of a vast emptiness, populated by just the four characters. Rather than dustsheets, Hamm, Nagg and Nell were covered in plastic. Simon McBurney as Clov folded each of these sheets diagonally, slowly, with patience and care, until they were small enough to fit in his pocket. This was an effective piece of business, echoed by Mark Rylance as Hamm when he folded his handkerchief in the same careful way and tucked it into his pocket.

McBurney's stance, slightly bowed, was very effective, as was his stiff-legged walk. He set about the 'wake-up' mime by opening each curtain abruptly with a drawstring. Thus each eye was opened, one at a time, suddenly, with very little light resulting, followed by the uncovering of Nagg, Nell, and then Hamm. We could hear Clov's breathing and wheezing, signalling the effort involved and the difficulty that movement had for him. His brief laughs,

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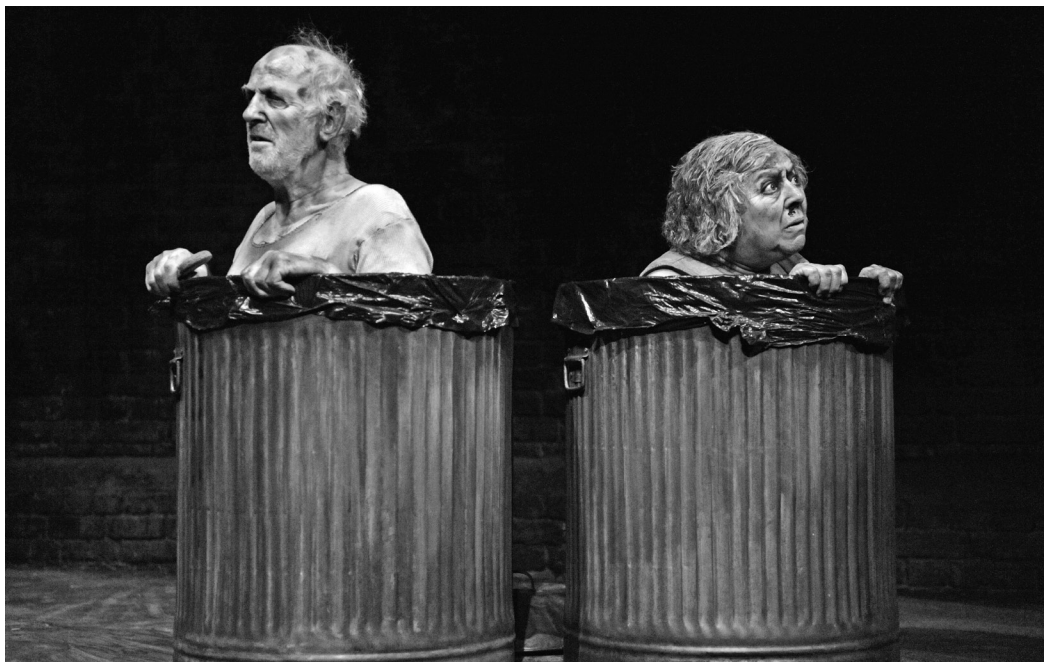
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Duchess Theatre, London *ENDGAME*

on every occasion, were greeted with laughter by the audience. I was a little concerned at the start of the performance: what if this audience had seen the recent *Waiting for Godot*, starring Ian McKellan and Patrick Stewart, and were anticipating a production which aimed predominantly to entertain by highlighting and making rather too much of the comic elements? This approach to *Godot* proved detrimental, diminishing or even completely swamping the tragic elements of this tragicomedy. *Endgame* is far bleaker, and could not have survived similar mistreatment. Interestingly, every laugh, first from Clov and later from Hamm, was followed by laughter in the audience. Clov's first words were spoken in an appropriate monologue, and when he exited through the kitchen door it swung and squeaked, a nice touch, which was repeated each time he exited and entered.

Hamm had a white face, and when he removed his (John Lennon) glasses to clean them on his handkerchief, his eyes could not be seen. Somehow Rylance managed to keep his legs tucked underneath him throughout the performance, and false but real looking legs hung down, never moving. He gave an appearance of discomfort, not as regards his squashed legs, but as if he had back pain and also some soreness in his neck. He sniffed the air to discover if Clov was there. After Clov re-entered, he stared vacantly when not speaking, and spoke with little intonation. On the other hand, Rylance's Hamm used far more intonation, moved around in his chair quite erratically (and, I thought, excessively), and also laughed excessively at every opportunity. The contrast was very strong: a still, bored and resentful Clov; an imperious, often loud, lively Hamm, often squirming in his chair, often waving his hands about. It worked up to a point. I did admire McBurney's subtlety, his stillness (apparent even in his movements) and the sense he gave of very begrudgingly doing everything that was demanded of him. Rylance, for me, was somehow

too small, and I don't mean in stature. He didn't dominate the stage, didn't 'rule' it and pervade it in the way Hamm surely should. Clov, for me, was the strongest presence whenever he was on the stage; I liked his staring eyes, and the way that he gave the impression that his legs really did hurt. You could see and even hear his pain.

Tom Hickey as Nagg and Miriam Margolyes as Nell were both filthy, as were Hamm and Clov, but these two were dirtier: a result of their dustbin-bound lives. What I did really appreciate about their performance was the way they gripped onto the rims of their bins, as if

for grim life, and when they moved they gave the impression that they were moving with difficulty and painfully, on their stumps. Other Naggs and Nells I have seen have tended to remain still, and I thought that this specific innovation was certainly effective, increasing the sense of their dreadful imprisonment. Nagg ducked in fear of Hamm whenever he shouted at him, although Rylance's Hamm, for me, did not warrant such fearful responses. Nell's elegiac 'Ah yesterday!' was accompanied, on both occasions by a stroke of her hair and a winsome look, as if recalling when she was 'bonny'—another nice touch. Again, as with Clov and Hamm, every time Nagg laughed the audience laughed. When Nagg told the trouser joke, Nell gazed off into the distance, obviously not listening. He gets to the punch line and nobody in the audience laughed! And yet when he laughed—at his own joke—the audience did laugh! It's intriguing. Maybe they read the laughter of the characters as their own cue to laugh. I noticed that the laughter receded as the performance continued. In fact it seemed to me that the audience, after a certain length of time, had been captured by the play and were listening and watching intently. The diminished laughter, along with the lack of coughs, rustles or the squeaking of chairs (the chairs in the auditorium were very squeaky, I'm afraid), was a good sign for me that the play was working its magic. My original fears about the temptation to lighten the play were, I am glad to say, not borne out.

The business with Hamm's chair—'Put me right in the centre!'—was quite dramatic, almost exciting, which strongly contrasted with the far less dramatic quality of most of the play. I did like the way that the sense of a long-standing relationship between Hamm and Clov was apparent, as if this had been going on, much the same, day in and day out, for a very long time. McBurney, as would be expected considering his *Complicite* credentials, was very good at the comic business with the ladder, the tele-

scope and the flea powder. When Clov was 'having an idea' about how Hamm could know if he has left or died, he did a little dance, rather than simply pacing up and down, which could be seen as echoing Lucky's dance before he thinks in *Godot*. When Clov entered his kitchen, we heard the clanging and clashing of pots, pans and kitchen tools, as he searched for the telescope, the flea powder or the clock. We also heard the window open towards the end of the play, and a sound like a gusting wind until it is closed.

The most impressive part of the play for me was Clov's soliloquy towards the end of the play, which begins: 'How easy it is,' and ends: 'When I fall I'll weep for happiness.' This, for me, was Beckett. I heard Beckett's poetry—its rhythm, its tone, its timbre. McBurney came to the front of the stage, stood there, quite still, arms in a gesture of resignation and helplessness, staring in front of him. I was gripped, and the audience, too, seemed fixated. It was excellently done. I did find that Rylance was too frenetic, too vigorous and full of life. He expertly moved from mood to mood: the ham actor, the imperious master, the self-pitying whiner, the bad-tempered and fractious invalid. Nevertheless, there was an aspect of Hamm that he didn't master, and it is a crucial aspect: Hamm, at the end, all alone, with no one to talk to, shout at, manipulate, intimidate—eventually discarding gaff, toy dog, whistle—with no father, no Clov, all alone. This can be such a powerful ending to the play. It annoyed me that he tried to strangle himself with the handkerchief. It annoyed me that he didn't deliver the lines in the way that could create all the power of the solitude, the recognition of an end suspended in the moment of ending. 'You cried for night; it falls: now cry in darkness'—there is such sadness and recognition of the loneliness of ending in these words. I felt that Rylance missed the poetry and resignation and forlornness of this movement into silence, in the darkness of his blindness, into a situation in which he will 'speak no more.'

Apart from my reservations about Rylance's Hamm, all in all this was a good production. It was infused with the bleak quality *Endgame* requires, with the moments of comedy that not only lighten the gloom, but also help to get us through—the characters and the audience. In a way such moments do, paradoxically, intensify the bleak mood of the play. McBurney's direction demonstrated care and respect towards the play that I valued highly. It is not the best *Endgame* I have seen. For different reasons I would rate Katie Mitchell's and Michael Warchus's London productions of the play higher. But the Duchess *Endgame* was certainly well worth seeing. It is for me Beckett's greatest play, and a performance which didn't do it credit would annoy me intensely. This was a worthwhile and thoughtfully directed production, and McBurney deserves praise both as director and for his admirable portrayal of Clov.

Director: Simon McBurney

Cast: Mark Rylance, Simon McBurney, Tom Hickey and Miriam Margolyes.

2 October – 5 December

--Julie Campbell

Beckett's Angel

strange is the angel
stripped of the angelic

he says little
mainly single syllables

the harmony of the world
he strives to prop up with
sentence fragments

for him the tenses tangle –
angelic and human

inside him a void
bigger than heaven

to the degree he forgets
the bright past

he begins to recall
the human

soon he'll forget
how to be an angel

--Krzysztof Kuczkowski
Translated from Polish by David Malcolm



Some Answers for Raymond Federman

For Raymond Federman fiction is useless.

Fiction is a delusion we use to screen ourselves from reality and reality is largely, though not entirely, delusional. This is why Federman is a story teller and not a novelist. And assuredly not a writer of fiction.

And if he tells the same stories over and again it is because the story is never the same in any telling because, if it were, *that* would be fiction. And Federman writes nonfiction. Historical nonfiction.

Or else what he writes is a bed of lies. (A hole inside a gap.)

And anyway it is never the same story and Federman tells it over and again because what he has to tell, like history, cannot be told once and for all.

Like the same dream you keep having only it's not the same and this time you can't wake up.

Federman wakes us up.

Federman is a spelunker of either historical memory or collective forgetting, depending on the reader. He is not interested in the well-lit paths through the cave nor even the once-marked offroads. What's a cave to him or he to a cave that we should weep so? Memory has become a way of forgetting, the recovered forgetting of the professional memoirist. Federman prefers the musings of Stan and Oliver, or Vladimir and Estragon. He speaks of his life like a defrocked poet at a coroner's inquest.

O, inconstant heart!

Digression is as much a foil as progression. Federman's digressions are as direct as "an arrow from the Almighty's bow." They pierce but don't wound. The wound is the condition, the voice in the closet that comes out, like Tinker Bell, only if you say you believe it. And you believe it only at your peril. (Pauline will fend for herself.)

The elementary error of the literature of self-help and affirmation, the preferred fiction of the mediocracy, is that trauma is overcome, that you get better, that there is healing. That there can be understanding. Federman neither dwells

on the abyss, nor theatricalizes it, nor explains it, nor looks away.

The Dark is the ground of his being and his becoming.

Go nameless so that the name you are called by becomes you.

Federman is an improper noun full of signs and stories signifying (precisely) nothing. *Federman* names that which is (k)not here.

He is our American Jabès, only the rabbis have been subsumed into the bouillabaisse and the ladder loaned to the roofer.

And from that roof we shout to the crowd assembling below: Break it up! Go back to where you came from, if you can find it! *There is nothing to see here.*

The truth you seek is not on this earth nor in Heaven either.

Then Federman begins again.

One more time.

The words, at least the words, are indelible, even if we are not.

Or so the story goes

--Charles Bernstein
June 21, 2007
New York

[The editor wishes to thank Charles Bernstein for this contribution, originally written for *Federman at 80: From Surfiction to Critifiction*, ed. Jeffrey DiLeo (State University of New York Press).]

In Memoriam Ramond Federman

(15 May 1938 – 6 October 2009)

Although Raymond Federman was born in Paris on May 15, 1938, the date that he considered as his real birthday was July 16, 1942; it was on this day that his parents and his two sisters were arrested by the French police and later deported to Auschwitz, where they died. Ray escaped thanks to his mother, who hid him in a closet—an act that, in his own words, gave him “an excess of life.”

Following his arrival in the United States in 1947, Ray served as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army during the Korean War and then attended college on the G.I. Bill. For his doctorate in French literature from UCLA, he wrote a landmark study, *Journey to Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Early Fiction*; a few years later, he and John Fletcher co-edited *Samuel Beckett: His Works and Critics*. His long friendship with Beckett was the subject of his recently published *Le Livre de Sam*. During his many years as a distinguished professor of literature at SUNY Buffalo, he became widely known as a leading writer of experimental fiction (which he called “surfiction”) in both English and French, and as one of the leading contemporary proponents of avant-garde writing. His more than twenty books of fiction, poetry, and criticism were translated into twelve languages. *Shhh: A Story of Childhood* was published last spring by Starcherone Books.

In his essay, “The Necessity and the Impossibility of Being a Jewish Writer,” Ray speculated that if it hadn’t been for the Holocaust he would have spent his life as a little Jewish tailor slaving in a tailor shop in Paris, or as a teacher in some intellectually retarded school in the French provinces. As the Romanian critic Camelia Elias has said, it was by chance that he survived the Holocaust and by chance that he became a writer of loss. His first responsibility towards those who have become memories—whom he calls “the potentials”—was to turn to writing and to say something about potential. He recently gave a playful twist to this idea of potential when, in response to a French journalist who asked him to name his favorite of his novels, he replied (in English): “The one I haven’t written yet.” Those of us who knew Ray will cherish our memories of the “excess of life” that he unfailingly shared with us. As someone who spent a few days with him during the final phase of his illness, I will never forget the courage and good humor with which he endured this ultimate challenge to his high spirits.

--Tom Cousineau

Beckett après Beckett ?

Dans le cadre d’un colloque Robert Pinget organisé par les universités Paris 7, Paris 8 et l’Institut des Textes Et Manuscrits modernes (ITEM), a eu lieu vendredi 16 octobre 2009 au Centre culturel irlandais une lecture par Pierre Chabert de larges extraits de la correspondance inédite entre Samuel Beckett et Robert Pinget. Chacune des lettres était accompagnée d’extraits, également inédits, du manuscrit de Robert Pinget « Notre [ou “Mon”] ami Sam », ce dernier servant de fil conducteur. Enfin, dans une seconde partie, la nièce de Pinget, Solange, et Pierre Chabert ont lu l’acte II de *Lettre morte*, une pièce de théâtre écrite par Pinget en 1959.

Pierre Chabert sait comme personne restituer la « voix » de Beckett. Là encore, avec cette lecture (le mot spectacle serait plus juste), c’est la voix de Beckett à travers l’amitié de Pinget qu’on a entendue dans une profonde et incomparable proximité, redonnant à Pinget toute sa place, mais posant aussi une autre question, celle de la lecture elle-même de Beckett. Écoutons l’extrait d’une lettre datant du 24 juin 1966. Il suffira, je crois, à deviner la *voie* et les potentialités, suivant la proposition de Pierre Chabert, que réserverait la publication d’une telle correspondance. Robert vient de recevoir le prix Femina pour *Quelqu’un* et apparemment il n’est pas très heureux. Sam, son aîné de treize ans, trouve les mots pour le consoler. Il est à Ussy-sur-Marne, *cloîtré* dans sa petite maison d’Ussy-sur-Marne.

« [...] Tu as tort de débiter ton travail. On n’est pas des *gendelettres*. Si on se donne tout ce mal fou ce n’est pas pour le résultat mais parce que c’est le seul moyen de tenir le coup sur cette foutue planète. Avec ce besoin-là beaucoup de misère mais pas de problème. Tu l’as peut-être un peu perdu, mais il reviendra et tu t’en refoutras de toutes ces questions de valeur. Je crois que ces histoires de prix et autres à-côtés ne t’ont rien valu et qu’elles peuvent très bien être pour quelque chose dans l’état où tu te sens. Laisse tomber tout ça, cesse de te relire et mets-toi au travail. Nous ne saurons jamais ce que nous valons ni les uns ni les autres et c’est la dernière question à se poser [...] »

Qu’entendons-nous ? Un écrivain au travail. La vie d’un homme. Ce Beckett qui « coupera son téléphone » (rapporte Pinget) après l’attribution du prix Nobel en 1969 distribuant aux amis dans le besoin les bénéfices. Ce Beckett *damned to fame* (damné pour la gloire) selon le titre anglais de la biographie de James Knowlson. Ce Beckett dont *l’œuvre dans l’œuvre* n’a pas fini de surprendre.

Nous savons que l’édition des œuvres de Beckett est loin d’être achevée si par « œuvres » nous comprenons l’ensemble de l’œuvre, c’est-à-dire les romans et les pièces de théâtre, mais aussi les poèmes et les essais ou la correspondance, les carnets de travail et de voyage ou de mise en scène. De plus, comme Beckett écrivait en anglais et en français, son œuvre est à la fois anglaise et française, voire allemande pour certains textes, redoublant la difficulté de la tâche. En écoutant Pierre Chabert lire ces lettres, la

question viendrait naturellement à l'esprit. Est-ce que nous devons continuer à lire Beckett comme nous l'avons lu jusqu'à présent ou devons-nous commencer à prendre davantage en compte l'œuvre « complète » ? Je ne parle pas de la recherche universitaire qui a accès aux archives. Je parle de l'édition de l'œuvre, par exemple de la correspondance Beckett / Pinget ou de la traduction du premier volume des quatre tomes de la correspondance générale que les Presses de l'Université de Cambridge ont publié au début de l'année 2009 sous la direction de Martha Dow Fehsenfeld et de Lois More Overbeck (*The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 1, 1929-1940, 880 p.). Je parle de l'édition des six carnets du voyage en Allemagne durant l'hiver 1936-1937, des poèmes ou des essais de jeunesse, du roman *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, de *Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce* (traduit pour l'exposition Beckett au Centre Pompidou en 2006), ou d'autres textes (*disjecta, miscellaneous writings...*), tous contribuant, inévitablement, à modifier notre lecture.

J'aime lire Beckett dans les livres que les éditions de Minuit ont publiés, dans les trente-trois livres publiés, de *Molloy* en 1951 à *Os d'Écho* en 2002 (le dernier inédit en date). Mais l'exigence de cette œuvre ne nécessite-t-elle pas désormais une approche plus globale (appareil critique, édition bilingue, inédit, correspondance, etc.), comme c'est de plus en plus le cas pour l'édition en langue anglaise (bien que trop coûteuse). Les étudiants qui préparent l'agrégation de lettres modernes cette année doivent en savoir quelque chose, puisque les deux éditions bilingues de *Waiting for Godot* et de *Endgame* (éd. Faber and Faber, 1993 et 1992), comprenant les cahiers de mise en scène de Beckett, sont au programme. Pourquoi ce retard en France ? Je ne suis pas le premier à poser la question. De nombreux lecteurs le pensent. Certes, Beckett l'a voulu ainsi. Pas de lierre étouffant l'œuvre. Néanmoins, vingt ans après sa mort, est-ce manqué de respect que de vouloir déchiffrer, *intus, et in cute*, les mécanismes d'une des œuvres les plus importantes du XXe siècle ? N'est-ce pas, à moyen, court ou long terme, inévitable ?

--Jean-Pierre Ferrini

« Funérailles de — il allait dire d'êtres chers. » C'est dans *SOLO* de Samuel Beckett, un texte qui dit la peine de quelqu'un qui assiste à la disparition progressive des amis en allés... En allés... J'ai pensé aussitôt à cette expression en apprenant la mort de Pierre Chabert jeudi 28 janvier 2010, lui dont la voix a su, avec tant de justesse, nous faire entendre la voix de Beckett : Hamm dans *FIN DE PARTIE*, Krapp dans *LA DERNIÈRE BANDE*, sa *Dernière bande*, *PREMIER AMOUR*, etc. Qui l'a entendu ne peut l'oublier. --JF



In Memoriam Pierre Chabert

(4 March 1938 – 28 January 2010)

Pierre Chabert died of a cerebral hemorrhage on the morning of January 28th at his home outside of Paris. He was preparing to spend the day prospecting Parisian theaters with the actress Catherine Frot, who had asked him to direct her in a revival of his production of *Oh les beaux jours*. His funeral was held the following week at L'Eglise St. Roch, "the church of the artists," and he was cremated several days later at Le Cimetière Père Lachaise. The ceremony at St. Roch was led by the actor Michaël Lonsdale, who recalled Pierre's many achievements as "un acteur inoubliable et metteur en scène hors-pair," mentioning, in particular, the two plays in which Beckett directed him: Robert Pinget's *L'Hypothèse* at the Théâtre de France in 1966 and *La dernière bande* at Le Petit Orsay in 1975. He also recalled the many memorable productions of Beckett's plays in which Pierre was involved as either actor or director and the special "compagnonnage" that he enjoyed with Beckett.

Among the multitude of family, friends, and theatre professionals who attended the ceremony, several were invited to share their memories of Pierre or to contribute a reading. The actress Laurence Bourdil read Paul Claudel's "L'Ane," a choice that reminded many in the audience of her performance with Pierre in his *Claudel Insolite*, a play that he based on little-known prose texts of Claudel. Barbara Hutt read a letter from Thomas Bernhard's brother Peter Fabjan and his wife Anny in which they recalled their "sympathiques rencontres" with Pierre, both in France in Austria, while he was working on his Bernhard projects, which included, along with a stage version of Bernhard's novel *Le Naufragé*, a magnificent book of photos, letters, critical essays, and reminiscences related to Bernhard that Pierre had co-edited with his companion Barbara Hutt. They also recalled with particular fondness the extraordinary production of *La dernière bande* that he presented at Bernhard's farmhouse in Nathal.

Barbara Hutt then read Verlaine's "Voici les fruits des fleurs," followed by Edward Beckett, who played a composition by Gabriel Fauré, and John Calder who, after a few words of remembrance, read Beckett's "my way is in the sand flowing." (Calder's lovely personal tribute to Pierre appeared in the 11 February 2010 issue of *The Guardian*). Guy Cambreleng, who had played Willie in Pierre's production of *Oh les beaux jours*, read a passage from *L'Innomable*, and the writer Annie Cohen read an amusing story that drew upon Pierre's near-sightedness. His former wife Sandra Solov and their daughter Anne-Besse Chabert read Emily Dickinson's "I died for beauty" in English and French.

Perhaps the most moving tribute was the one offered by Pierre's elder sister, Edmée Cournarie. Her memories of the larger-than-life man that she called "mon petit frère" began with his baptism in the Cathedral of Gap when he was just two-days old, continued with her recollections of him as a young man, especially his generosity and his boundless love of life, and concluded with her remarking the admirable determination that he displayed in being the first of the Chaberts to leave "le chaleureux cocon familial," as well as the great pride that those who stayed behind took in his many accomplishments. She had seen Pierre at his home only two days before he died. Concerned for his health as he launched into an ecstatic recital of the many projects with which his head was teeming, she tried to play the role of "la vieille soeur rabat-joie," only for Pierre to respond—with the voice and the gusto that those of us who knew him can well imagine—"Mais le théâtre, c'est ma vie!!"

Pierre had invited my wife and me to dinner at his home shortly after our arrival in Paris in early January. It was to be the last get-together in a friendship that began in the late 1980s when I was invited to attend Pierre's meeting with the students at the Lycée Montaigne who had had been to his "Voix de Samuel Beckett" production at Le Théâtre du Rond-Point the previous evening. It continued for more than twenty years with always memorable meetings in Paris, Avignon, and New York, and at Washington College, where, in 1989, he performed *La dernière bande* to a packed house of enthusiastic students, very few of whom spoke French but all of whom warmly wished for his return. I'll always remember Pierre's glee when I pointed out to him that Dec. 8th, the date of his performance as Krapp, was the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on the Catholic calendar. He immediately reached for the phone in my office to call Beckett in Paris to share with him this delightful incongruity, only to learn from the receptionist at the nursing home that he had been taken to the hospital and that Edward Beckett had come from London to be with him in what were to be his final days.

Now that Pierre himself is no longer with us, there will be no revival of *Oh les beaux jours*; Catherine Frot had agreed to this project only on condition that he be her director. Barbara Hutt will, however, move forward with the production on which she and Pierre were working at the time of his death: a staging of Thomas Bernhard's *Meine*

Preise, for which Pierre had recently acquired the French rights from Gallimard. Barbara had already directed Pierre in Bernhard's *Le Naufragé* and plans to bring his passion for Bernhard to the stage once again, albeit, sadly, with another actor. Pierre's memory will also be kept alive by the many scholars who will study the rich trove of Beckett-related documents that he has left behind.

--Tom Cousineau

Beckett at MLA 2009

The MLA conference in Philadelphia was a little more somber than usual this past year, due to the dire economic situation at college campuses nationwide. Job hopefuls clutched their vitas nervously in the interview hotel lobbies, and panel discussions about the fate of the profession were crowded with grim-faced attendees. What a relief it was to attend three excellent Beckett sessions, and judging by the audiences at all three, I wasn't the only one who was grateful for the diversion. Happily for all, the events were spread out over three days, keeping spirits afloat with reminders of why we do what we love.

A special session on "Beckett and Degeneration" met on Monday morning. Patrick W. Bixby (Arizona State Univ.) opened with his paper, "Beckett, Nordau, and the Critique of Humanism," and provided an excellent context for interpreting Beckett in relation to Nordau. Bixby noted that Beckett's novels tend to be symptomatic of disease, and he connected this framework of "disease" to Nordau's *Degeneration* (*Entartung*). There Nordau attributes symptoms of degeneration (egomania, perversion) to physical decline. For Nordau, one needs to be physically fit in order to produce good art. In *Watt*, *Murphy*, and *Malone*, Beckett takes a political, rather than ethical, stance regarding this claim. In Bixby's final analysis, both Nordau and Beckett engage in a struggle over the value of aesthetic culture, the latter embracing what the former rejects.

Seán D.C. Kennedy (St. Mary's Univ., Nova Scotia) continued this provocative discussion with "'Waltz me round, Willy': The Ends of Ascendancy in Beckett's *Watt* Notebooks." He examined Beckett's motivation for writing a "big house" novel while hiding during World War II. Kennedy proposed that *Watt* is Beckett's response to Nazi discourse of racial purity and regeneration, in that it refers to similar political concerns that existed during the end of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. The Protestant descendancy was characterized by crises of identity, privilege, displacement, significance, and even reproduction. These crises appear in *Watt*, and in the notebooks Kennedy finds interesting connections to W.B. Yeats. For example, Quin's wife is named Leda née Swan, and Beckett parodies Yeats with the inbred, dysgenic Indian Runner Duck, "obtainable by long inbreeding years of unnatural selection." Issues around failure to reproduce in *Watt* mirror the decline of the Protestant population in Ireland that began around 1900; Beckett recalls Nordau when he portrays a "hopelessly degenerate ascendancy that is incapable of regeneration."

The final paper of the session, "Exceptional Degenerates and Irish Aryans: History, Catastrophe, and Aesthetics in Beckett's *Malone Dies*," was presented by James McNaughton (Univ. of Alabama). According to McNaughton, Beckett "employs parables of degeneracy" to warn against the abuse inherent in Nordau's positivism. While Nordau endorses art that represents how life should be, Beckett sees a dangerous relationship between aesthetics and politics. For instance, in *More Pricks Than Kicks* and *Malone Dies*, Beckett reveals the way in which art, when implicated with political and historical narrative, sanctions racial cleansing. A lively question and answer period followed in which McNaughton's reading of degeneracy in Beckett was contrasted with that of Kennedy. The discussion reaffirmed the usefulness of applying Nordau's theories to Beckett's texts at the same time that it the diverse possibilities for such application.

The Samuel Beckett Society sponsored sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday. Richard Begam (Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison), the Society's president, presided over the first panel, "Theater after Beckett." Martin Harries (NYU) led things off with "Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* after *Not I*." *4.48 Psychosis* concerns a nameless female protagonist who relates her mental anguish through intense monologue, with periodic interjections from a psychiatrist and a lover. Harries showed video footage of Claude Régy's production of *4.48 Psychosis* starring Isabelle Huppert. The striking resemblance to the manic mouth of *Not I* was unmistakable. Harries also identified similarities between Kane's script and the ending suicide scene of Werner Herzog's *Stroszek*. One of the lines repeated in both films is "the chicken's still dancing / the chicken won't stop," and Harries ended his talk memorably with a clip of Herzog's dancing chicken, wondering if Huppert's willed refusal to move is her refusal to be the chicken.

In the next paper on "Beckett in Crisis," Nicholas Allen (NUI-Galway) considered Beckett within the context of the financial crisis gripping contemporary Ireland. Beckett is often depicted as transcending or ignoring geographic space and historical temporality. However, Allen grounded Beckett in Irish soil. Emphasizing "the language and imagination of exchange," Allen examined where Beckett's work fits into the present values system that has led Ireland into the current condition of crisis.

Katherine Weiss (East Tennessee State Univ.) presented the final paper of the program, "Lost Ones and Haunting

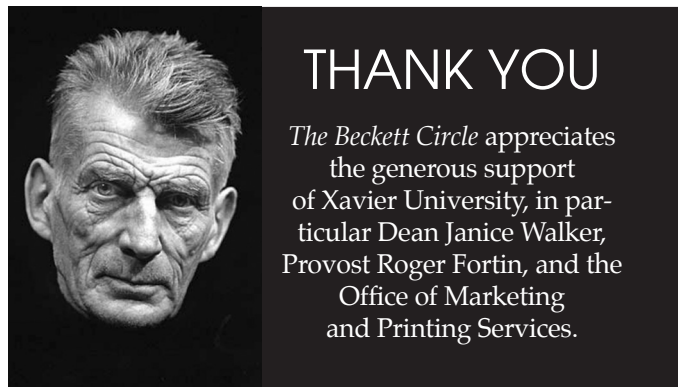
Ghosts: Beckett and Shepard." Weiss identified a number of Beckettian images and influences in Shepard's *The Late Henry*. For instance, boots figure in both *Moss* and *Godot* as representations of struggle and identity. The sons in *Moss* repeat their father's behavior, much as May echoes her mother in *Rockaby*. Shepard's characters are stuck in a loop in which they cannot come to terms with their past, much like a number of familiar Beckett characters. Shepard has publicly admitted to idolizing Beckett, and Weiss shows just how thoroughly that influence is incorporated into Shepard's work for the stage.

The last Beckett program of the conference, "The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett," convened on Wednesday. Despite this dubious time slot, a sizable crowd was in attendance, largely due to the distinction of the presenters. Graley Herren (Xavier Univ.) presided over this session, which featured another interesting talk by Seán Kennedy, followed by a joint presentation by Martha Fehsenfeld and Lois Overbeck (both of Emory Univ.). Kennedy countered the myth of a placeless/timeless Beckett with the rooted complicity of "Beckett's Irish Habitus." Beckett was conflicted over the expectations and burdens of class as an Irish Protestant. Kennedy anchored his discussion in the bowler hats that frequently appear in Beckett's work and letters. The bowler hat was an emblem of Cumann na nGaedheal, and was commonly identified with British economic and cultural values. Its reappearance indicates Beckett's awareness of and discomfort with what Bourdieu calls *habitus*, the complicity conferred upon Beckett by virtue of his dubious birthright as an affluent Irish Protestant.

After a spirited discussion about the significance of the bowlers, Fehsenfeld and Overbeck participated in an engaging conversation on "Editing *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*." Overbeck emphasized that the letters provide a middle-ground between Beckett's life and work. They cannot be read as an absolute seed of the work; each one must be read in the context of its purpose and for whom it was meant. Fehsenfeld elaborated upon the collaborative process used in the selection and compilation of the letters. Beckett stipulated that only letters with direct bearing upon his work be included in the correspondence. Care was also taken to protect the privacy of people who are still living, and not to "dwell on third party gossip" irrelevant to Beckett's work. When complete, the project will encompass four volumes of selected letters. Although electronic publication of the letters is not presently an option, Fehsenfeld and Overbeck do hope to post a chronology and index on the web.

So, there is much to look forward to in Beckett studies. Next year's conference in Los Angeles is being billed as "The New MLA Convention." The new guidelines limit allied and affiliate organizations to one guaranteed session; however, the SBS has the option to propose an additional session. Given the popularity of this year's sessions, and the continued interest in Beckett studies, we can only hope to witness as lively a program in 2011.

--Alice Finkelstein



REGISTRATION FORM

2010



I would like to attend the Seminar on **Saturday 8 May**, and enclose payment of:

☐ £20 (waged) ☐ £15 (unwaged)

Name (please print) _____

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Make cheques payable to:

'The University of Reading: Beckett International Foundation'

Please send to:

Dr Mark Nixon, Beckett International Foundation, Department of English,
University of Reading, Whiteknights, PO Box 218, Reading RG6 6AA

BECKETT

SEMINAR

The 20th Anniversary Session (1990-2010)

8 MAY 2010

The Beckett International Foundation
at the University of Reading

ABOUT THE SEMINAR

2010

BECKETT

The Beckett International Foundation is pleased to announce that the next Beckett Research Seminar will take place on Saturday, 8 May 2010.

The event will be held in the Conference Room of Special Collections at the University of Reading.

As in previous years, our speakers represent a mixture of both local and international research students as well as established scholars, reflecting the current research into Beckett's writing. It is our hope that the quality of the papers will, as in the past, attract a wide and varied audience.

The charge for the day is £20 per participant (£15 unwaged), which includes lunch and refreshments throughout the day. Directions are attached. Please note that parking facilities are available at the venue. If you would like to attend the Seminar, please return the form overleaf, with payment.

For further information, please contact:

Dr Mark Nixon
E: m.nixon@reading.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 118 378 7010

By Post: The Beckett International Foundation
Department of English, University of Reading, Whiteknights
PO Box 218, Reading RG6 6AA

Date: Saturday, 8 May 2010

Time: 10.00 to 17.00

Venue: Conference Room, Special Collections, The University of Reading

10.00 - 10.30 Coffee

10.30 - 11.00 **Thomas Cousineau**, Washington College
'Symmetry Unbound: Samuel Beckett's Modernist Rage for Order'

11.00 - 11.30 Discussion

11.30 - 12.00 **Gaby Hartel**, Berlin
'listen to the light now - Samuel Beckett's artistic transformation of early radio theories'

12.00 - 12.30 Discussion

12.30 - 14.00 Lunch

14.00 - 14.30 **Tatyana Hramova**, University of Reading
'Forma moriendi causa nascendi est: The Dichotomy Mortality/Immortality in the Names of Samuel Beckett's Characters'

14.30 - 15.00 Discussion

15.00 - 15.30 **Jean-Michel Rabaté**, University of Pennsylvania
'Think, Pig! Beckett's animal philosophy'

15.30 - 16.00 Discussion

16.00 - 16.45 Wine Reception - 20 Years BIF Research Seminar

Bibliographizing a Sizeable Chunk of the Beckett Industry

I have to take the responsibility for a massive secondary bibliography which I assume the readership of this journal will be compelled to deal with sooner or later. It is entitled *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett: A Selective, Classified, International Bibliography of Publications About His Plays and Their Conceptual Foundations*, which will be published some time in 2011. Including the index, it may run as many as 500 pages and cost over \$350. It has taken over four years of concentrated effort (within the bounds of retirement conditions, of course) to put together, the last half year largely for verification. I take great pride in its quality as well as its quantity—and in the firm that accepted it, Continuum Publishers of London, which already boasts an impressive list of books on Beckett.

The bibliography will not quite define “the Beckett industry.” It gives short shrift to his fictional works and essays, but it also goes well beyond his “dramas of all sorts,” as Lucky might have said. “Conceptual foundations” in the bibliography range from religion, philosophy, and politics to language, the arts, and postmodernism—the virtual *Zeitgeist* of culture and thought in the twentieth and earlier centuries that found Beckett an acute receptor and reflector. It also encompasses his French and English linguistic revolving doors, plus what has been called his “Irish connection.” In the digital file, the highly selective section for his philosophy, aesthetics, and criticism fills fifteen pages—about 180 entries.

Judging from my title, the focus of this brief essay is supposed to be on “bibliographizing”—that is, compiling such a monster. I didn’t know it at the time, but when I offered to do annual checklists of modern drama studies for the journal *Modern Drama* in 1972 I was at the starting gate. The first installment, in 1974, listed what I had found that was published in 1972 and 1973—fifty pages worth, but only one for Beckett. Our own library (Binghamton University, then called the State University of New York at Binghamton) was less profitable for a great variety of books and journals than for standard bibliographical tools, which gave me an excellent kickoff for trips to nearby Cornell. Three years later I began making two-week annual visits to Harvard’s super-sumptuous Widener Library to examine a huge array of materials (including the majority of the complete runs from 1972 on of over 1,400 journals and annuals that I combed), with occasional stops at Yale, Michigan, and Texas. In the summer of 1978 I worked in various international libraries by virtue of a research grant, but eventually I realized that Harvard alone would have sufficed for perhaps 80% of what I had gleaned, and inter-library loans could supply most of the rest. By 1980, when I decided to produce a volume from the checklists with additions from 1966 through 1971, the entries numbered

about twenty-five thousand for the fifteen-year period, about 600 of them devoted to Beckett. Fast forward to 1992, when I produced a second volume covering only the ten-year period 1981-1990 and another twenty-five thousand entries. In five fewer years, Beckett’s count was 625—a growth rate of over 50%.

These were all “discrete entries,” as opposed to “added entries,” thousands of which are in the present bibliography. A whole book on Beckett’s drama, for instance, might have ten to twenty added entries under individual plays and other subdivisions such as “Beckett and Yeats” or “Translation and Bilingualism.” The total number of discrete entries in the published product will come to nearly 3,800.

In this Age of the Internet, a delusion has become rampant that comprehensive secondary bibliographies can be amassed almost entirely through the skillful use of online search engines. That is, the researcher hardly needs to leave his computer to arrive at the kind of compilation that the present volume represents. While granting the usefulness and convenience of these relatively new searching devices, I would still (conservatively) wager that if I had depended entirely on online databases, the bibliography would be less than a quarter as large and much less useful. “Outdated” methods *combined* with currently fashionable ones produced this result.

First, the great bulk of the entries dating from the start into the 1990s came straight from printed bibliographies: my own, Cathleen C. Andonian’s *Samuel Beckett: A Reference Guide*, and Rolf Breuer and Werner Huber’s *A Checklist of Beckett Criticism in German*. These were supplemented by valuable non-online serial bibliographies such as the annual ones in the *Irish University Review*, the *French XX Bibliography*, and the *Bibliographie der französischen Literaturwissenschaft*, which consistently list references that cannot be found online. The only computer-generated entries came from the few major academic libraries that put their catalogs online in the late 1980s (the Telnet circuit).

Second, after departing from such a consuming preoccupation with bibliography in 1994 for a decade, I took the self-imposed dare of confronting the huge body of criticism on the drama of Samuel Beckett. This necessitated a return to the old methods of uncovering elusive material dated after 1990 by labors in large research libraries. I estimate that by now perhaps twenty per cent, but certainly not more, of the publications worth inclusion in the new project originally *derived* from online sources, and certainly no more than a third of the discrete entries would be there if I had relied exclusively on them.

Bibliographizing, like editing a collection of essays or letters, involves an interplay between mild forms of agony

and ecstasy. Both are *bo-ring* at least half of the time. No, make that two-thirds. But—at least if your psyche possesses a freakish contagion I call “the compilation itch”—a distinct pleasure arises from simply watching the project grow. (My first academic experience with this was watching my notes on Bernard Shaw pile up while I was working on my dissertation.) From 1974 to 1993 it was the accumulation of 3 x 5 cards in one box after another which the indulgent English office supplied so often that I became labeled as “the six-million card man.” I recall overhearing one of my older colleagues tell an applicant for a job that I was “primarily a bibliographer”—this after my fourth article on a post-Shaw dramatist, Harold Pinter, had just been published. But in terms of time and printed pages, he was certainly accurate.

The last concerted phase of my work on the Beckett bibliography was verification. It had a double purpose: correcting errors of transcription, misclassification, and misguided inclusion (which may have led to the deletion of as many as 100 entries), and adding explanatory notes when it seemed desirable. My goal was the completely unfeasible one of taking a second look at *all* the discrete entries, those I had accumulated during my self-reliance period, and a first “live” examination of entries I had gotten from bibliographies and internet. An unbelievably *bo-ring* prospect.

To my enormous surprise, the process turned out to be so profitable that I began to look forward to it. I will pass over the frequent embarrassments of finding errors I had made myself, my favorite being pages 44-33 in an article on *Waiting for Godot*. (If it had at least been 44-44 I could claim unavoidable influence of the play.) But I must declare, authoritatively, that entries from other bibliographies—and especially from the internet—*must* be checked. Amending these tickled my slight sadistic tendencies, just as correcting my own boners tickled my masochistic ones. Anyway, I drained the patience of the library’s interlibrary loan office to the tune of over 200 requests within six months, and gave up hunting after successfully verifying 97% of the discrete entries. I wish I could proclaim absolute perfection, but being “primarily a bibliographer” I have no such delusion.

As a finale, readers might appreciate an illuminating sidelight: the critical statistics of the most written-about plays by Beckett as compared to those of other English-language playwrights, judging from the bibliographical work I have done over the years. (This includes “downloadable” bibliographies of Wilde, Shaw, Yeats, Synge, O’Casey, O’Neill, Miller, Pinter, and Stoppard, as well as Beckett.) It will surprise few Beckettians that *Waiting for Godot* stands head and shoulders ahead of all other plays by this quantitative measure, and *Endgame* is second. The actual (estimated) statistics are 1,025 references on *Godot* and 525 on *Endgame*, with Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* third at 440. The remainder of a “big ten” of plays by the dramatists I have worked on—none of the others with more than 250 entries—would also show *Krapp’s Last Tape* in fifth place and *Happy Days* in seventh. That, I would say, is dominance, although of a very particular kind.

--Charles A. Carpenter

Happy Days in Philadelphia

Philadelphia seems to have caught the Beckett virus. While the troupe known as “EgoPo” is giving its new season of Samuel Beckett—the company has taken Beckett’s work as a focus—the Lantern Theater put on *Happy Days* this past fall and hosted a Samuel Beckett festival from October 9th to October 12th, during which *Play*, *Act Without Words II*, *Roughs for Radio I and II*, and *Krapp’s Last Tape* were produced. Unhappily, I had to miss EgoPo’s recent *Company*, which was one of the hits of Philadelphia’s Fringe Theater last month. Several of my friends went and loved it. The main idea was to take no more than thirty audience members and make them experience the narrator’s struggle with personal memories. Blindfolded, taken one by one into the room, covered in blankets and lying down in the dark, the spectators were able to reenact the dialectical recapture by the Voice of its persecuting or redeeming figments.

Having just come out of the impressive performance of *Happy Days*, I am still under the spell of Mary Elizabeth Scallen’s perfect rendering of an Irish voice, with all its subtle singsong and sudden hysterical peaks or cries of muffled despair. The set is one of the most beautiful I have seen. It calls up an Arizona diorama, and this complex maze allows Willie to emerge fully in view, crawling on the arms with paralytic legs, the unexpected picture of a failed gold digger from a lost Western coming face to face with a Dubliner reduced to a dusty mask still spouting out words whose verbose jollity is undercut by angst. David O’Connor, the director, believes that his Beckett plays can reach out to people, and they do, which is why each performance is followed by a discussion with the cast. The Sunday’s discussion I attended was wonderful, with a good number of people of all ages staying on, from a couple in their eighties and nineties claiming that they now saw the point of trying to go on with dignity in spite of the body’s handicaps, to a very young and shy Asian student who wanted to know how one could overcome stage fright when one was stuck in a hole in front of the public.

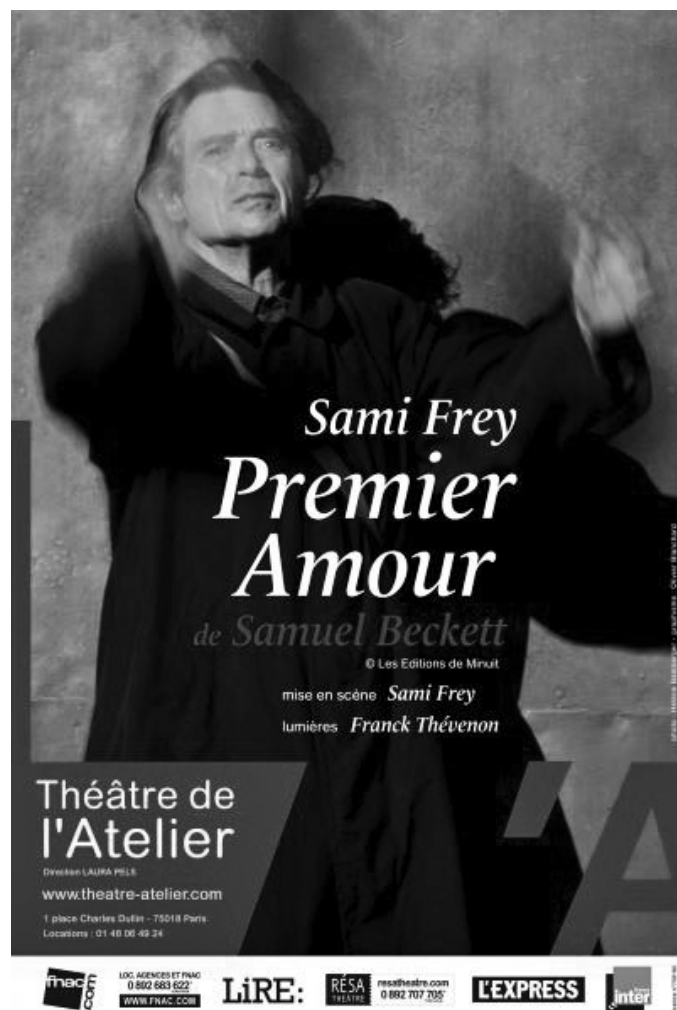
As Scallen, who teaches performing arts at Penn, explained, the fact that she was stuck in a mound was not a limitation; on the contrary, it made her imagine that the audience was an extension of her body, and hence would either see it as made up of helpers and accomplices (when she stresses “happiness”) or as a group of indifferent bystanders who are embarrassed by their own immobility when she laments her fate. This could suggest us to re-read the play in the light of ethics, since we may all agree that Beckett goes beyond his usual fascination with the repetitive world of the obsessional neurotic to question in this play our own emotional limitations. By forcing us to look, for a long time it seems, to a body visibly tortured by a cruel demiurge, we can meditate reflexively on the degree of our empathy. “Why don’t you help me?” would be the key question—even if we may not be able to answer easily, we may conclude that by asking this, Beckett is helping to help ourselves.

--Jean-Michel Rabaté

Sami Frey plays *Premier Amour* at the Théâtre de l'Atelier

One particular highlight in Sami Frey's breathtaking acting career was his 1989 performance of Pérec's *Je me souviens*, which he recited while pedalling frantically on a motionless bicycle in an eerie landscape of moving mountains. His *Premier Amour* at the Théâtre de l'Atelier (Nov 2009-January 2010), in which he returned to the perilous exercise of a solo rendition of a narrative text, was less athletic but no less magnetic. Frey had recently become familiarised with Beckett when he had given a reading of *Cap au Pire* (Edith Fournier's translation of *Worstward Ho*) at the Théâtre de l'Athénée in 2007. When Théâtre de l'Atelier's director Laura Pels suggested a reading of *Premier Amour*, however, Frey declined and offered to stage a full-fledged performance of the text instead, working as his own director with the help of light designer Franck Thévenou.

He then spent some eight months appropriating the text, repeating it over and over again until it felt perfectly fluid, and rehearsing on public benches in Paris so as to experiment the constraints of public exposure and reduce the theatricality of his acting. In the small, intimate Théâtre de l'Atelier he performed before the beautifully painted coppery iron curtain, so that the acting space was minimal and he was in close contact with the audience. Frey says that while he was working on his character he drew part of his inspiration from Gilles Deleuze as he appears in the filmed interview *L'Abécédaire*—a slightly dishevelled, ageing man baring his soul and striving for the exact word and phrase in the quiet of his drawing-room. Frey's narrator achieved the same sense of absolute, almost unnerving sincerity as he reminisced about his long-gone "first love." One difficulty was to account for the age difference between Frey and *Premier Amour*'s youngish narrator, who has presumably just experienced the events he narrates. However, Frey points out that while Beckett wrote *Premier Amour* at age thirty-nine, he did not publish it then but returned to it and revised it when he was past sixty, encouraged by Jérôme Lindon. Frey's narrator is modelled on this older Beckett, and even draws from Knowlson's account of Beckett's final days in a medicalized institution. The set consists barely of two benches and a light on the wall which flashes intermittently while a dull mechanical sound buzzes, for no apparent reason, sometimes (but not always) prompting the narrator to get up from his bench and sidle laboriously to the other one. Frey's intention was to suggest the slightly dehumanised, incomprehensible atmosphere of a waiting-room in a hospital or public administration, one of those places in which people are left waiting for hours on end, until a machine flashes the number on their ticket. This attempt to create a fictional frame for the narrator's reminiscences was not entirely convincing, partly because to any one familiar with Beckett's universe, flashing lights



and buzzing sounds unavoidably evoke the mechanised injunctions of a tyrannical, sadistic transcendence which torment the protagonists of many of the plays and jolt them into immediate automatic responses (the light and alarm-clock in *Happy Days*, the spotlight in *Play*, the "buzzing" in *Not I*, etc.). In the context of *Premier Amour* where they have no such function, these added stage effects seemed rather incongruous; yet they were inconspicuous enough to leave Frey's magnificent performance unscathed.

Dressed in a long brownish coat, clutching his crumpled hat on his lap, Frey addressed the audience conversationally, looking just slightly puzzled at the unaccountable strangeness of human (especially female) behaviour, and at the sheer intensity of the suffering induced by the unwelcome feeling which bears "the dread name of love." Frey never yielded to the temptation of playing the simpleton, but merely recited Beckett's chiselled prose with acute intelligence and utter, unnerving, hilarious sincerity. While superficially he may have seemed grossly unsuited for the part (too sophisticated, too handsome, too attractive—indeed frankly irresistible), Frey emerges as the ideal Beckett actor, combining an unfailing comic instinct with an ever-alert consciousness of the tragic potential of existence.

--Alexandra Poulain

Beckett—Living Materials

25-26 September 2009

On 25-26 September 2009, Mary Bryden hosted an international conference on *Beckett and Animality* at the University of Reading's Museum of English Rural Life, home of the university's special collections, including the Beckett collections. The two-day conference featured a strong roster of papers by leading academics from around the world. The subject was given wide and stimulating treatment, from Chris Ackerley's dogs, (mistakenly) 'despised for their obviousness' as his paper illustrated, to Yoshiyuki Inoue's figurative creatures, which have been seen to inhabit the brain.

The event began with papers by Max de Gaynesford, from Reading's Department of Philosophy, and Yoshiki Tajiri, from the University of Tokyo. The former addressed the story of the fencing bear in Heinrich von Kleist's essay 'On the Marionette Theatre', and the relation of the gaze to non-human self-consciousness. The latter considered J. M. Coetzee's lecture 'Eight Ways of Looking at Samuel Beckett', which the Nobel laureate delivered at the Tokyo Beckett conference in 2006, a document that speaks of the plight of animals, particularly at the hands of human beings. This was followed by Shane Weller's paper on animalisation in Kafka and Beckett, a topic that brought discussion beyond the awkward impasse of vague affinity that has sometimes characterised the pairing in the past. Animalisation in Beckett operates, Weller argued, in a manner different to the literalised metaphors of animality that characterise Kafka's work, instead largely preserving the distinctions between human and animal.

As mentioned, Chris Ackerley gave a paper on Beckett's dogs, which travelled via the Beckett family's Kerry Blue Terriers, to the vast canine economy of *Watt*, to the figurative reference to Clov's flea feigning death by 'laying doggo'. An example of his encyclopaedic knowledge of the oeuvre, the paper demonstrated the rich variation that characterises the 'demented particulars' beloved by both Beckett and Ackerley. Julie Campbell also chose a specific, but more surprising animal: the sheep. As they appear in *Murphy* and *Molloy*, she proposed, they mirror the conditions and mental landscapes of Beckett's human protagonists. For her keynote paper, Katherine Burkman, from Ohio State University, took a mythic trajectory from Winnie's question in *Happy Days*, 'What exactly is a hog?', that considered archetypes including Persephone and Demeter.

Departing from Beckett's animals to that least-animalistic of sports, cricket, delegates were treated to 'Beckett on Crrickett' on the night of the 25th. This consisted of James Knowlson's lively introductory talk, and the short play 'A Knock at the Door', written by John Quinn and performed by The Bookshop Theatre Company. Delivering his overview of Beckett's variable cricketing prowess

whilst wearing the whites of his topic, Knowlson's humour, which warmed the audience for the equally entertaining play, confirmed the balance of fun, erudition, co-operation and respect that makes the field such a delightful one in which to work. The play itself presented Beckett warming up for a cricket match while attending to Joyce and his Work in Progress. As the young Beckett has a dry-run through his array of strokes before the flinching Joyce, conversation, digression and accident are worked into the Wake-to-be, with Beckett paying heavy fines for using the bad language that is, for Joyce, to be reserved for work of literature.

The second day of the conference opened with Naoya Mori's reading of a number of Beckett's prose works in relation to Leibniz's idea of the monad. The final panel featured papers from Ulrika Maude, on the re-animalisation of the category of the human in Beckett's work, and David Wheatley, who considered animality in Beckett with the Anglo-Irish and Gaelic traditions of transmogrification in mind. The concluding keynote of the conference was given by Steven Connor, for whom the topic of animals provided a chance to return to old ground, having sent an article on the topic to Beckett himself earlier in his career. This paper redressed the oversight noted by Beckett in his response, who noted that only a stray fly had escaped the young critic's attention. Here he endeavoured to 'make the fly mean something'.

Following the close of the conference proper there were a number of archive-based activities, all of which undoubtedly whetted the intellectual appetites of the delegates. Martin Mégevand related some of the riches of the previously unseen correspondence between Beckett and the French author Robert Pinget, which he is currently collating. The ongoing Beckett Digital Manuscript project, led by Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle, was presented to those scholars keen to exploit the breadth and depth of its vision when it becomes available. More tangible is the addition to the existing Beckett archive in the form of James Knowlson's collection of 'Beckettiana', selections from which were available for browsing.

Finally, there was a round table discussion in which Sean Lawlor, James Knowlson, John Pilling and Mark Nixon outlined some current research strands of Beckett studies in Reading, and encouraged suggestions for participation in work that makes use of the archive's new materials. Together, the lively discussions of the conference as a whole and the subsequent displays reminded one the ongoing importance of Reading as a site for debate and research, and all will look forward to the next Beckett-related event there.

--Peter Fifield

Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies, 2010



A seminar sponsored by the University of Oxford and the University of Northampton

Convening in the Collier Room, Regents Park College, Pusey Street, Oxford

Following the publication of James Knowlson's biography and the release of invaluable notebooks and diaries for scholarly scrutiny, Beckett Studies is undergoing a revolution. Beckett's major phase of intense study was in the 1920s and 30s, long before he became known as a French Existentialist after *Waiting for Godot*, and even longer before he was discovered by post-structuralist critics. This seminar will attempt to reassess Beckett's cultural position in two directions: by examining some of the recently uncovered influences that shaped his unique writing, and by refracting his image and his work through some of the authors, thinkers, composers and visual artists he influenced in turn.

Trinity Term 2010: All welcome. Seminars commence at 4:30 p.m.

30 April	Dr Bill Prosser (Regents Park, University of Oxford) 'Samuel Beckett: Nothings in Particular'	4 June	Dr Suzanne Dow (University of Nottingham) 'Lacan with Beckett'
7 May	Dr Catherine Laws (Dartington College of Arts) 'Beckett's Schuberts: Vocality and Imagination'	11 June	Professor Stan Gontarski (Florida State University, USA) 'Beckett and Bergson'
14 May	Dr Peter Fifield (University of York) "'Spirochete!'" Syphilitic Fathers in Beckett and Georges Bataille'	18 June*	Professor Enoch Brater (University of Michigan, USA) 'Beckett's Devious Interventions, or Fun with Cube Roots'
21 May	Dr John Bolin (Linacre College, University of Oxford) <i>Watt's Voices</i> '		
28 May	Dr Katherine Weiss (East Tennessee State University, USA) 'Beckett's Theatre: Revolving and Rewinding Histories'		

*A day long symposium from 9am–4pm precedes this concluding session

Contact details for seminar series: Dr John Bolin (bolin.john@googlemail.com), Dr Matthew Feldman (matthew.feldman@northampton.ac.uk), Dr Bill Prosser (william.prosser@regents.ox.ac.uk), and Dr Erik Tonning (erik.tonning@regents.ox.ac.uk)

One-day symposium, 18 June 2010

Convening in The Collier Room, Regent's Park College, Oxford

Programme: (All welcome. Lunch must be booked in advance.)

9:15	Reception and coffee. Welcome.		
10:00	Panel 1: (Chair: Dr Matthew Feldman). A short break follows the second paper. Professor Jennifer Jeffers (Cleveland State University) 'The Psychology Notebooks in Beckett's <i>Murphy</i> : Ireland and the 'Masculine Protest'' Alys Moody (University of Oxford) 'Ascetic Aesthetics: Beckett and Schopenhauer' Pavneet Kaur (University of Westminster) 'Beckett, Schopenhauer, and Buddhism: Between Willing and Suffering' Irit Degani-Raz (Tel-Aviv University) 'Cartesian Fingerprints in Beckett's <i>Imagination Dead Imagine</i> '		Brynhildur Boyce (Goldsmiths College, London) 'Beckett and the Radio' Tatyana Hramova (University of Reading) '"'The Letter Kills"'': Beckett's Debt to Fritz Lang's Films' Dr Karine Germoni (Université de Provence) 'Proust's Legacy in Beckett's Punctuation and Syntax'
13:00	Lunch	16:00	Coffee and informal discussion
14:00	Panel 2: (Chair: Dr Erik Tonning)	16:30	Keynote paper Professor Enoch Brater (University of Michigan) 'Beckett's Devious Interventions, or Fun with Cube Roots'

Organisers: Dr Matthew Feldman (matthew.feldman@northampton.ac.uk), Dr Erik Tonning (erik.tonning@regents.ox.ac.uk),

Dr Bill Prosser (william.prosser@regents.ox.ac.uk) and Dr John Bolin (john.bolin@ell.ox.ac.uk)

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Mary Bryden and Margaret Topping, eds. *Beckett's Proust / Deleuze's Proust*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 264pp. £55; \$90.

The see-saw title of this collection of essays raises the hope of finally adding to the currently rather light balance of criticism on Gilles Deleuze's work on Proust. The fact that Beckett's 1931 essay on Proust is somewhat more frequently considered by critics than Deleuze's *Proust et les signes* (1964) is just as well, as the balance of this book itself lies firmly on the side of Deleuze's work. The volume ostensibly sets out to situate Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* as the "pivot [...] on which Beckett and Deleuze balance their positions, constantly shifting in relation to Proust and to each other" (1). The result, however, is rather different, although none the less interesting. Most of the fourteen pieces do either of two things very well: present a range of insightful and refreshingly heterogeneous exegeses of Deleuze's Proust book, or offer fruitful readings of Beckett and Proust through Deleuze's thought.

Deleuze's *Proust et le signes*—published in three editions, each with significant new material—performs Deleuze's characteristic manoeuvre of employing his subject in the service of his own philosophy. As a result, the work offers Deleuze's most thorough examination of literature, yet the very density of the work has resulted in it being eclipsed in literary studies by Deleuze's more accessible collaborations with Félix Guattari. By engaging boldly with Deleuze's use of Proust as a catalyst in the development of his own approach to literature, language and signs *Beckett's Proust / Deleuze's Proust* makes its most significant contribution.

The first part of the collection, "Reading Encounters," offers various perspectives on *Proust et le signes*, including Christopher M. Drohan's dense but illuminating exposition of the "apprenticeship of signs" that Deleuze traces in Proust, and Joe Hughes' essay which usefully situates this apprenticeship alongside Deleuze's interrogation of cinematic signs in *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. Taking a critical stance, Erika Fülöp succinctly argues that Proust's idea of Essence—"the 'mystery' glimpsed in the moment of the peeling away of the rind of things [that] is not a sign, but precisely that to which all signs are ultimately supposed to refer" (44)—is incompatible with Deleuze's construction of this Essence as "ultimate and absolute Difference" (39). Interestingly, and correctly, Fülöp situates Deleuze's reading of Proust through his exposition of Leibnizian monadology in *Le pli*. However, Fülöp's argument ultimately sets up a false opposition by failing to identify the affinity between the romantic absolute that she ascribes to Proust, and Deleuze's ideas of the univocity of monadic multiplicities in his readings of both Leibniz and Proust.

Philippe Mengue's piece "Proust/Deleuze: Mnemosyne, Goddess or Factory?" raises the most cogent questions about Deleuze's work on Proust. Mengue identifies a break in Deleuze's thought between the first early version of *Proust* and the later editions, a change he aligns with Deleuze's experiences of May '68. The shift lies between an earlier figuring of a search for truth, sense or meaning to a later emphasis on the *production* of these. Although the extent to which the early Deleuze actually privileged the implied existence of truth is debatable, Mengue identifies a central problem in Deleuze's thought as a whole in his discussion of the later editions of *Proust*, namely the contradiction between the absolute immanence of literary meaning and the pragmatic need to be able to say something, as a writer, a thinker, or literary critic, about literature's relationship to that which lies outside literature.

The second part of *Beckett's Proust / Deleuze's Proust*, "Visual, Cinematic and Sonic Encounters," also provides perceptive links between Proust, Beckett and Deleuze, while retaining a primary focus on Deleuze. Here the net is widened to include analyses of his work on cinema, his collaborations with Guattari and, unexpectedly but fruitfully, *Masochism* in Ian Pace's "Coldness and Cruelty as Performance in Deleuze's *Proust*." Clark Lunberry's evocative "'Staring Sightlessly': Proust's Presence in Beckett's Absence," illustrated by photographs Steven Foster, is the only essay in this collection that manages to offer a truly practical reading of Beckett, Proust and Deleuze *together*, as well as successfully performing the feat of combining creativity and scholarly rigour in one fascinating piece. Lunberry properly stages an exposition of how the banal act of removing shoes in both *Waiting for Godot* and *À la recherche du temps perdu* brings about a sudden glimpse of the experience that for Deleuze and Beckett alike, Proust reveals as particular to art: the "irremediable obliteration" within presence for Beckett, and the being of "time itself" for Deleuze (125-126).

The focus of the third part of the volume, "Bodily Encounters," shifts its focus towards Beckett. Notable is Jennifer M. Jeffers' essay on deviant masculinity, comparing *À la recherche du temps perdu* with Beckett's *Molloy*. Deleuze's readings of both Proust and Beckett as writers who inspire revisions of philosophical thought provide the framework for her reading of the characters of Charlus and Molloy as opposite ends of the spectrum of Deleuze's madmen that force us to think. Margaret Topping's essay on puppetry in Proust is extremely interesting, not only in its readings of Proust through Deleuze's idea of signs, but also because Topping manages, perhaps not entirely deliberately, to show how Deleuze's famous stance against the sign as metaphor relies heavily on metaphoric exposition. The last essay, "Murphy's Madeleine" by Adam A. Watt, finally spends some significant time on Beckett's *Proust* but slightly at Deleuze's expense. Deleuze, however,

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quickly reappears in the epilogue as one of the hypothetical correspondents in the late Jérôme Cornette's amusing "Imaginary Encounter": "... Proust ... Beckett... Deleuze...: a Quad Regained." *Beckett's Proust / Deleuze's Proust* is both a timely and valuable addition to Deleuze studies, and to readings of Beckett's work through Deleuze.

--Eva Aldea

New and Forthcoming

- Guardamagna, Daniela and Rossana Sebellin, eds. *The Tragic Comedy of Samuel Beckett: Beckett in Rome 17-19 April 2008*. Rome: University Press On Line, 2009. ISBN 9788842090700.
- Hubert, Marie-Claude. *Lectures de Samuel Beckett: En attendant Godot, Oh! Les beaux jours*. PU Rennes, 2009. ISBN-10: 2753509395 ISBN-13: 978-2753509399.
- Johns, Gregory. *In the Dim Void: Samuel Beckett's Late Trilogy: Company, Ill Seen Ill Said and Worstward Ho*. Maidstone, Kent: Crescent Moon, 2010. ISBN-10: 186171260X; ISBN-13: 978-1861712608.
- Kennedy, Seán, ed. *Beckett and Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN-10: 0521111803; ISBN-13: 978-0521111805.
- McMullan, Anna. *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett*. London: Routledge, 2010. ISBN-10: 0415385989, ISBN-13: 978-0415385985.
- Sardin, Pascale. *Samuel Beckett et la passion maternelle ou l'hystérie à l'oeuvre*. PU Bordeaux, 2009. ISBN-10: 2867815886, ISBN-13: 978-2867815881
- Taban, Carla. *Modalités po(i)étiques de configuration textuelle: le cas de Molloy de Samuel Beckett*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009. ISBN-13: 9789042025875.
- Temkine, Pierre and Valentin Temkine, François Rastier, Denis Thouard, Tim Trzaskalik. *Warten auf Godot: das Absurde und die Geschichte*. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2008. ISBN-10: 3882217146 ISBN-13: 978-3882217148
- Tsakalakis, Thomas. *Beckett's Humotopia*. Athens: Patakis, 2010. ISBN 9789601636214
- Van Mierlo, Wim, ed. *Textual Scholarship and the Material Book*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009. ISBN-10: 9042028173; ISBN-13: 978-9042028173.
- Wessler, Éric. *La Littérature face à elle-même: L'Écriture spéculaire de Samuel Beckett*. Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi, 2009. ISBN 978-90-420-2722-0.

Linda Ben-Zvi and Angela Moorjani, eds. *Beckett at 100: Revolving It All*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. 334pp. £18.99; \$29.95.

Restoring the full line from *Footfalls*—"Will you never have done...revolving it all?"—makes for an ironic and very "Beckettian" reading of the dream of full presence in *Beckett at 100: Revolving It All*. Although it cannot account for "it all," this collection contains many insightful essays from leading Beckett scholars. The text appears to be celebrating Samuel Beckett's 2006 centennial, yet the frontispiece and first two pieces of the text are a tribute to eminent Beckett scholar, Ruby Cohn. Cohn is listed as a "charter member" of the Samuel Beckett Working Group (the 2006 Trinity College Dublin Working Group symposium is the basis for *Beckett at 100*); Cohn's work is cited by Ben-Zvi as having "laid the foundations of Beckett studies: her lucid writing, elegant and always to the point, nourished it; and her great generosity of spirit provided the model for the collegiality that has developed among Beckett scholars" (4-5). Indeed, to honor the groundwork she established in Beckett Studies, the first two pieces in the text, "Still for Ruby," photographs from *Room Film 1973*, by Peter Gidal, and "Beckett the Tourist: Bamberg and Würzburg" by James Knowlson are both dedicated to Cohn.

Overall, *Beckett at 100* is an eclectic and wide-ranging collection of essays from a diverse range of academics. For the body of the text, I expected something along the lines of *Drawing on Beckett: Portraits, Performances, and Cultural Contexts* (2003) also edited by Ben-Zvi. Although seemingly thematically more diverse, the essays in *Drawing on Beckett* blended more harmoniously and indicated new attitudes toward and contexts for Beckett scholarship. In spite of *Beckett at 100*'s tripartite format ("Thinking Through Beckett," "Shifting Perspectives," and "Echoing Beckett"), the collection belies a bipartite arrangement. One half of the text acknowledges or pays homage to Cohn, while the other half of the text comes from those outside of Anglo-American Beckett circles or from a later generation.

The former half is most poignantly represented by Herbert Blau's piece "Apnea and True Illusion: Breath(less) in Beckett." Blau's relationship with Cohn began shortly after she edited the 1959 Samuel Beckett issue of *Perspective* that united the "few scholars in the United States who knew anything about Beckett then" (36). Blau connects his own experience of a momentary stroke to not only the characters that people Beckett's stage and page, but to Beckett's own ongoing psychological and physical problems, "tormented sleep, palpitations, spasms, suffocations, and memories of forgetting...sebaceous cysts on the anus, eczema, or herpes on the face," and later in the essay, "And I knew him [Beckett] well enough to know that no more no less was, in his 'poor mind,' with all the brilliance of it, the equilibration

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of human misery with something like infinite pain, which he could parody, mixing the personal with the abstract, as in *Rough for Theatre II*." Blau and Cohn, who both knew Beckett, have now become a rare breed, and thus their work is all the more valuable.

In this way, much of the collection is an eloquent eulogy for the graying of Beckett criticism which is perhaps fitting as the text is celebrating the 100th year of Beckett's birth ("We too were bonny—once"). Several of the essayists acknowledge not only Cohn as a friend but other Beckett scholars; for instance, Enoch Brater's personal recollections include critics such as Martin Esslin, Edith Kern, Rubin Rabinovitz, Porter Abbott, and Hersh Zeifman. As I read *Beckett at 100* my appreciation for the inclusion of the actual *experiences* of the first generation or two of Beckett scholars reached a newfound admiration.

No less valuable, however, are the essays that do not reference Cohn and one assumes were selected from the TCD Working Group. Most of the first section, "Thinking Through Beckett," juxtaposes Beckett with philosophers such as Bergson, Leibniz, or Giorgio Agamben. Taking a different route, H. Porter Abbott's "I Am Not a Philosopher" visits the familiar territory of Beckett's aesthetic of failure stating that Beckett's position is "no joke" because it is absolute. Less absolute is Part II, "Shifting Perspectives," which is nearly rhizomatic in the diversity of material. Anna McMullan's article, "Beckett's Theater: Embodying Alterity," focuses on a close reading of *Eleutheria* in order show that Beckett utilizes Victor Krap to embrace his own exilic space of the outsider. Counterpoised to McMullan, Jürgen Siess discusses Beckett's "authorial posture as the distinctive manner in which authors position themselves in the literary field of their times" (178). Siess challenges the view of the modest and retreating author of the early French texts. Beckett's image was carefully constructed, Siess argues, "through three interrelated figures of the writer: Beckett's position as the empirical author in the French literary field of the 1940s and 1950s; his posture on entering the French context...and the function of implied author and self-narrator within the discursive framework of his early French fiction" (177). This era of Beckett "becoming-Beckett" needs further research and elucidation. No doubt, the forthcoming second volume of *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* will illuminate this time period which transformed Beckett from a "failed" writer in the literal sense to a "failed" writer in the constructed aesthetic sense.

The final section, "Echoing Beckett," puts various writers and artists along side of Beckett. The more novel of the combinations are Marshall McLuhan, Caryl Churchill, and Minoru Besuyaku. A truly interdisciplinary study is Catherine Laws' "Beckett—Feldman—Johns" in which she revisits her work on Beckett and Feldman in the context of Steven Johnson's work on Johns' influence on Feldman. "Echoing Beckett" furthers this collection's rhizomatic eclecticism. In actuality, *Beckett at 100* does not "revolve

it all," but it does cover a good bit of territory and, like many other Beckett collections, it is likely to have essays of interest for any generation of Beckettian.

--Jennifer M. Jeffers

Ulrika Maude and Matthew Feldman (eds.). *Beckett and Phenomenology*. London: Continuum, 2009. 208pp. \$120.

Given Beckett's interest in "the new thing that has happened, or the old thing that has happened again, namely the breakdown of the object"—or perhaps of the subject—phenomenology would seem to be a branch of philosophy that had much appeal for him. Phenomenology also has much to offer Beckett scholars. In its broadest outlines, it teaches that there can be no subjectivity without the object (consciousness is "intentional," it "points towards" something), but no objectivity that is not grounded in subjectivity (the scientific perspective begins in the subject's wrestlings with an intractable world). The famous bracketing (*epoché*) is thus an attempt to reach, not pure subjectivity, but a clear view of the manner in which, among other things, objectivity and subjectivity are bound up.

The beauty of phenomenology resides in the number of approaches it offers Beckett scholars, and the contributors to this volume propose, variously, phenomenologies of the body, of nothingness, of enunciation, of sleep, of perception, and many more. Maude and Feldman's work is divided into two sections—"Beckett and Phenomenology" and "Beckett's Phenomenologies." The former contains essays on points of intersection between Beckett's work and the major themes of the four most well-known phenomenologists—Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. The second section examines the way in which some of the more obscure themes of phenomenology echo in Beckett's work. Cutting across these divisions are three others: those essays which seek to ascertain what Beckett knew of phenomenology and then to look for traces of this knowledge in his oeuvre; those which are less concerned to establish an empirical grounding to their readings, but look for shared themes between Beckett and phenomenology which emerge from the more general cultural and ontological discourses of twentieth-century thought; and finally those which attempt to provide a phenomenological account of the reading or writing process. In the first category, Feldman's highly significant essay reveals that Beckett knew and took notes on the basic tenets of Husserl's thought, as well as being *au fait* with Sartre's work of the 1930s, which was suffused with Husserlian phenomenology. Feldman then shows how Beckett's reading in phenomenology in the late-1930s manifests itself in the first work Beckett writes afterwards, namely *Watt*. Shane Weller makes the equally important point that Beckett's

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comments on Heidegger in the famous interview with Tom F. Driver in 1961 betray a grasp of the central tenet of the German's thought—despite Beckett's denial of any familiarity with it. The discoveries outlined in these two essays must be considered momentous, and can only lead to further explorations in this area.

However, a number of the contributors to this volume have long made the claim that the themes of phenomenology have clear resonances in Beckett's work, without looking for the empirical grounding that Feldman and Weller provide. If Husserl was as important in the formation of Beckett's thought as Feldman convincingly argues, he was equally so in the development of Sartre's, Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's, and there are thus bound to be sometimes similar, sometimes very different treatments of the same questions as those raised in Beckett's work, just as the three philosophers themselves share numerous themes. Most of the other essays in the volume are in this vein. Thus, Ulrika Maude gives a superb comparison of Beckett's treatment of perception in the light of Merleau-Ponty's work, which was almost certainly unknown to Beckett, while Steven Connor makes a daring case for re-admitting Sartre into the ranks of philosophers who can help us understand more of what is at stake in the Beckettian body. Other highlights are Daniel Katz's essay on Beckett and the Holocaust *via* Lévinas' concept of shame and recent work by Agamben, and Paul Sheehan's piece on the phenomenology of sleep and Beckett's late drama.

Phenomenology, then, can open up many critical perspectives. What it cannot do convincingly is nullify the past twenty years of Beckett criticism. It is certainly true, as Chris Ackerley suggests, that poststructuralism threw out the baby of phenomenology with the bathwater, but his regression to a Hirschean hermeneutics based on authorial intentionality fails to convince: this particular baby is not worth rescuing. However, this raises a question which ill-aimed jibes at all things "post-" (or modern?) fail to answer: if phenomenology does not simply take Beckett criticism back to square one, as if poststructuralism never happened, then what is its relationship to this strand of criticism which has dominated this field for so long? What is the status of poststructuralist criticism now? Is the new phenomenological account of Beckett a recantation or refutation of the poststructuralist account? Or does it complement it? The editors hint in their Introduction that the latter is in fact the case, but while most of the contributors are (rightly) keen to distance themselves from Beckett studies' earlier dalliance with phenomenology (in its existentialist form), none of them ever really devotes any space to this question. Yet there is surely an unresolved contradiction when Connor refers to the unnamable as a "voice" (as he did in his poststructuralist days) in an essay which stresses embodiment.

Nevertheless, poststructuralism and phenomenology are not incompatible: Merleau-Ponty, before his early

death, had begun to sense that structuralism had much to offer phenomenology, and Derrida, in his writings on place at least, is very close to phenomenology. Indeed, it would have been nice to have seen an essay on Beckett's relationship to the phenomenology of place in this volume. Although Weller argues that for Heidegger "the basic problems of phenomenology" were time and temporality, perception, truth and being – which is undoubtedly true of *Being and Time* – in 1969 Heidegger suggested that his work could be divided into three periods, concerned with, in chronological order, Meaning, Truth and Place. In line with this, a number of "third-generation" phenomenologists, working in anthropology and philosophy, consider the movement's account of place to be one of its major contributions to knowledge. Likewise, place also seems to have been a major concern for Beckett, as he suggests in what appears to be a summary of *his* career so far (written only a little earlier than Heidegger's), the opening of *All Strange Away*: "Place, that again, never another question."

All in all, though, this is a fine collection of essays, one of the most important of recent years, and, given the numerous avenues opened by phenomenology, this polysyllable will doubtless be around in Beckett studies for some considerable time to come.

-- David Addyman

Dirk Van Hulle. *Manuscript Genetics: Joyce's Know-How, Beckett's Nohow*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008. 225pp. £49.50; \$29.95.

The recent explosion in genetic Beckett studies constitutes one of the most exciting developments in the field over the last ten years. Building on the pioneering work of a small number of scholars, most notably S.E. Gontarski and John Pilling, a new generation of researchers is making unprecedented use of the Beckettian archive to reveal ever more about Beckett's particular methods of composition, as well as his assiduous note-taking and effusive letter-writing. These studies, together with the correspondence project, have altered Beckett studies beyond measure, and it will take many years to absorb and refine the full implications of their findings. The archive has proven indispensable to textual exegesis, clarifying individual references for example, but it has also altered our overall picture of how Samuel Beckett worked. Dirk Van Hulle's book, *Manuscript Genetics*, contributes at both levels, but it is fair to say that the real focus is on the bigger issue of Beckett's poetics: the process by which Beckett composed his work and the methods he applied to his materials through subsequent drafts: 'genetic criticism', he suggests, 'is not so much interested in literary detective work and source hunting; the object of research is the writing process' (20).

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As S.E. Gontarski noted in his still indispensable *Samuel Beckett and the Intent of Undoing* (1985), one of the real fascinations of genetic scholarship is that it brings us as close as we can get to Beckett making aesthetic decisions, decisions which intimate something of the nature of the Beckettian aesthetic, and Van Hulle is clearly fascinated by this process. His rigorous and painstaking reconstruction of the genetic history of individual works is impressive, while the depth of his erudition and his ability to draw from a critical literature across a range of languages cannot fail to impress. Van Hulle is, perhaps, the leading light in genetic Beckett studies, not just because of his industry and ability, but also because of the ethical standard that he has set in his treatment of the Beckett archive. If dissemination and care are the two, often conflicting, duties of the archive, then Van Hulle's scholarship is exemplary in its achievement of both. In this he keeps very good company with Mark Nixon, Matthew Feldman and Chris Ackerley.

Manuscript Genetics consists of a manuscript study of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and a number of Beckett texts, including *Not I* and *Stirrings Still*, with a view to saying something about the manner in which Joyce and Beckett worked, retracing the many aesthetic roads not taken as potential signposts towards the road that was. The level of erudition displayed in Van Hulle's description of the composition of the *Wake* is, at times, astonishing, and one would have to agree with the series editor, Sebastian Knowles, that this book contains as good a synopsis of the *Wake* as has been achieved to date. Van Hulle describes a Joycean aesthetic of decomposition and recombination, whereby Joyce's notes are taken out of context, either expanded or reduced, and allowed to fuse with other disparate textual elements until they achieve a form approximating a final draft of the work at hand (approximating because the work remains in progress and, in an important sense, unfinished/unfinishable). 'Rumour', in particular the parlour game sometimes called Chinese Whispers, recurs as a trope to identify the manner in which Joyce allowed his original sources to be decomposed and recombined into new textual elements that owe their origins, but little of their final shape, to the original source. He notes Joyce's 'sustained effort to separate the entries in the notebooks from their contextual history' (92), and, with customary care, traces an example of this where Joyce incorporates early criticism of the *Wake* into the chapter on Shem.

The governing insight for the chapters on Beckett is Molloy's observation that it is 'in the tranquillity of decomposition that I remember the long confused emotion which was my life' (6). For Van Hulle, Beckett's method consisted in a sort of 'failing recollection' or decomposition that became the stimulus for the act of composition itself, and he traces numerous instances in which Beckett exploits the creative potential of failure—failure to recollect, to translate, to find *le mot juste*—in his work. This is Beckett's 'nohow': 'I know this doomed to fail and yet

persist' (138). For Van Hulle, in this way, the 'dynamics of the writing process thus reflect a dynamic process in the mind' (133), and the importance of failure is that 'it charts the ways in which the "self" is constantly being rewritten' (137). The failing memory and the failing self provide the basis for an ongoing process of what Van Hulle terms 'decomposition'. Hence, Beckett's aesthetic is 'exemplified most succinctly in the homophony of the phrase 'Nohow on,' simultaneously indicating an impasse and implying the inexplicable urge and 'know-how' to go on nonetheless' (146). The impasses have a formative impact on the final works, and this, for Van Hulle, is one of the governing principles of Beckett's process.

Van Hulle's acumen is acute, especially as he recounts what he calls Beckett's 'Dante revelation', but I did feel, at times, that the Beckett chapters could have done with a few more signposts to the reader. Certainly, I learned something from every page, but there were times when I felt that I was working rather hard for my insights, in a manner that could have been easily amended by an occasional telescoping out from the manuscripts and a rehearsal of the overall argument and its implications. It seemed at times that some of the elements of the book had not yet quite fused in a manner that left the overall direction to be clearly discerned. This is a minor quibble, however, one that in no way takes away from the value of the book, and it is immensely valuable that we have scholars of Van Hulle's calibre working in Joyce and Beckett studies to reveal to us something of what it felt like for both writers when in the heat of (de)composition.

--Seán Kennedy

P. J. Murphy, *Beckett's Dedalus: Dialogical Engagements with Joyce in Beckett's Fiction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. xiv+268pp. \$65.00; £42.00.

I

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a cowmunity of Beckett critics who were so blissfully ignorant they did not recognize the abundance of allusions to baby tuckoo and other nicens little Joyce references in Beckett's works. While something was thusly taking its course, another critic came along and told them that the existing assumptions of Beckett criticism would have to be reconfigured from now on.

II

In his "Prolegomenon to Any Future Beckett Criticism" P. J. Murphy emphasizes Samuel Beckett's critical engagement with Joycean aesthetics and suggests that it plays "a heretofore unrecognized" (4) role in the development of his aesthetic theorizing, a more traditional aspect of which

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has been equally “largely neglected and generally unrecognized” (4). Especially *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is so obviously present in Beckett’s works that Murphy, referring to Poe, calls it a “purloined novel,” almost too conspicuous to be noticed. Murphy’s strategy, therefore, is to black out the room and create a black velvet background to draw attention to this object, the focal point of Beckett’s *Dedalus: Dialogical Engagements with Joyce in Beckett’s Fiction*. The dark background is the tradition of Beckett criticism, which has “essentially dismissed” (13) the influence of the Joyce connection. Murphy admits that there have been a few exceptions, such as Dettmar, Katz, Gluck, Rathjen, and Jewinski, but he does not mention critics such as Thomas Cousineau, who pointed out a few interesting correspondences in chiasmic patterning between *Portrait* and *Murphy* (SBT / A 18, 2007). Nonetheless, “virtually all critics” (14) seem to think Joyce was no longer relevant to Beckett after *Watt*, whereas the matter is too complex to be “so simplistically” (13) dismissed. Once this background is set up, Murphy spotlights Beckett’s encounter with Stephen Dedalus’s aesthetic theory in *Portrait* and zooms in from every angle.

III

The great merit of P. J. Murphy’s study is that it draws attention to *Portrait*’s importance to Beckett, not just the young Beckett, although it is understandable that the clearest vestiges of its influence can be traced in the earliest works. Murphy reads the story “Assumption” as a rewriting of Stephen Dedalus’ visit to the prostitute in the second of *Portrait*’s five chapters. The narrator’s sudden moment of revelation is regarded as a critique of the Joycean epiphanic moment – a negative epiphany and a false assumption (36). Murphy also makes a link with the author’s “assumed identity as a Dedalus redux” (43). His interpretation is subtle in that it fully acknowledges the complexity of Beckett’s parody, which he sees—in Linda Hutcheon’s terms—as both a critique of, and a homage to, the original. Beckett’s critique of the modernist epiphanic moments (in which a quest for what is real is fulfilled through a direct intuition or experience, such as Proust’s *mémoire involontaire*) has been pointed out before, but it is important that the homage aspect of the parody is highlighted with a focus on *Portrait*. Murphy reads dozens of words or phrases (such as the last line of “Dante and the Lobster” or Lousse’s basket in *Molloy*) as textual echoes of *Portrait*. The other great novels by Joyce are mentioned much less frequently. Murphy also draws attention to textual resonances between for instance “Ecce Puer” (written on the birth of Joyce’s grandson, opening with the words “Behold the child”) and *Dream of Fair to*

Middling Women (“Behold Belacqua an overfed child”). But in general, the focus is on *Portrait*.

IV

Sometimes, however, this focus risks turning into tunnel vision. Whereas John Pilling shows that Beckett was open to a multiplicity of authors while writing *Dream*, Murphy stresses that the book that determined *Dream*’s complex structure is Joyce’s *Portrait* (62). Pilling may argue that Beckett tried to “excrete” Joyce from his system, but: “No, Joyce is very much alive and well throughout *Dream*” (72). Chris Ackerley may have found numerous allusions in his annotations to *Murphy*, but the structural features revealed in Beckett’s *Dedalus* do not lend themselves to “conventional scholarly annotation” (111), and “the role of Celia as a portrait of the artist as a young woman” is “one that critics have not yet fully appreciated” (120). Frederik N. Smith may have pointed out a few general affinities with Swift in *Watt*, but they do not “constitute a convincing case of ‘influence’ in the sense that Beckett’s *Dedalus* is pursuing” (130). Beckett may have informed Lawrence Harvey that the starting point for “The Vulture” was the “Geier” in Goethe’s “Harzreise im Winter,” but Joyce’s description of the mythical artificer Dædalus in *Portrait* is “much more influential in Beckett’s ‘The Vulture’ than the reputed ‘starting point’ found in Goethe” (158). In the shorter prose, P. J. Murphy discovers an echo of “black vowels” (*Portrait*) in the “black vowel a” mentioned in relation to the word “Fancy” in “All Strange Away.” Since Beckett actively read Rimbaud, the black vowel could be a direct reference to “Voyelles.” But according to P. J. Murphy it was Joyce’s borrowing from Rimbaud, “which Beckett in turn adapted from Joyce” (211).

V

The relationship between Joyce and Beckett is one of the most complex cases of literary influence, and Beckett’s *Dedalus* contributes in a valuable way to a better understanding of this literary phenomenon by stressing Beckett’s sustained effort to come to terms with Joyce’s *Portrait*; by suggesting that Beckett’s project is not so much antithetical to Joycean aesthetics as complementary to it (154); by emphasizing Joyce’s supporting role in *Molloy*; by noticing possible echoes of *Portrait* or “The Dead” even in such late works as *Ill Seen Ill Said*; and by reading Beckett’s whatness from *Watt* to “what is the word” in the light of (Joyce’s ironic distance from) Stephen Dedalus’s interpretation of *quidditas*. But it is a pity that P. J. Murphy has chosen to make his point by using his colleagues’ studies as a contrastive background. If he expects the Beckett community to “rethink and reconfigure the very assumptions whereby Beckett’s work has been read” (155), his confrontational approach may not be the most effective strategy and one would rather wish for a “Prolegomenon to Any Future Beckett Criticism” that called for more team spirit and cooperative research.

--Dirk Van Hulle

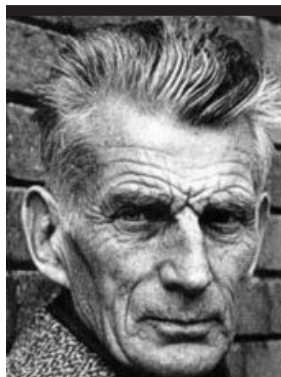
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Executive Board is extremely pleased to announce that the distinguished literary scholar, Pascale Casanova, will be presenting a paper on Samuel Beckett at the forthcoming Modern Language Association conference to be held in Los Angeles. Professor Casanova is the author of the highly acclaimed *La République mondiale des Lettres* (Éditions du Seuil, 1999), translated as *The World Republic of Letters* (Harvard University Press, 2004), as well as the influential *Beckett l'abstracteur. Anatomie d'une révolution littéraire* (Éditions du Seuil, 1997), translated as *Samuel Beckett: Anatomy of a Literary Revolution* (Verso Press, 2006). She is Visiting Research Professor at Duke University in the Romance Studies Department and Associate Researcher at the Centre for Research in Arts and Language in Paris. Her lecture will be entitled "Beckett and Philosophy."

As some members will know, the MLA has moved to a new schedule and will henceforth be holding its annual meeting in early January. The Los Angeles conference will take place from 6-9 January 2011. Another change in MLA is Allied Organizations such as the Samuel Beckett Society are now guaranteed only one session at the conference and must apply if they wish to host a second session. We will be filing such an application for a session, to be chaired by Jean-Michel Rabaté and entitled "Beckett in the Republic of Letters: Responses to Pascale Casanova's readings of Beckett."

As always, I invite all members to contact Graley Herren or myself if you have any suggestions for *The Beckett Circle* or the Society. I am very much looking forward to meeting you at the MLA conference in Los Angeles.

All good wishes,
Richard Begam



Samuel Beckett Society

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Membership includes a subscription to *The Beckett Circle*, published twice yearly. Members of the SBS are also eligible for a subscription to the *Journal of Beckett Studies* at a reduced rate; please go to www.eupjournals.com/jobs/page/subscribe for more information.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Eva Aldea received her doctorate from Royal Holloway, University of London in 2009, supervised by Prof Andrew Gibson. She is a tutor at Goldsmiths, University of London, and her book on *Gilles Deleuze and Magical Realism: The Indiscernibility of Difference* is forthcoming with Continuum Press in 2010.

Charles Bernstein is the author of *All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems* (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2010). He worked with Raymond Federman as part of the Poetics Program at SUNY-Buffalo; he now teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. More info at epc.buffalo.edu.

Julie Campbell is Lecturer in Literature and Drama at the University of Southampton, UK. She has published widely, in books and scholarly journals, on Beckett's fiction and drama. Her essay on Beckett and Paul Auster was recently published in *Beckett at 100: Revolving It All* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), and her chapter "'A Voice Comes to One in the Dark': Imagine: Radio, the Listener and the Dark Comedy of *All That Fall*" was published in *Beckett and Death* (Continuum, 2009).

Charles Carpenter is Emeritus Professor of English at Binghamton University, having taught modern drama and other courses there since 1967. He is the author of two books about Bernard Shaw, the two-volume *Modern Drama Scholarship and Criticism: An International Bibliography*, and *Dramatists and the Bomb: American and British Playwrights Confront the Nuclear Age, 1945-1964* (which contains an essay on *Endgame*). His next project is an edition of the collected letters of Shaw and Gilbert Murray.

Tom Cousineau is Professor of English at Washington College in Maryland. He is currently on sabbatical in Paris, where he is writing a book for the Dalkey Archive Press on Fernando Pessoa's "unwritten novel," *The Book of Disquiet*.

Jean-Pierre Ferrini est l'auteur notamment de "Dante et Beckett" (Hermann, 2003). Il a également publié des études sur l'oeuvre de Samuel Beckett dont "Le voyage d'hiver de Samuel" Beckett (Gallimard, L'Infini, n° 94, printemps 2006).

Peter Fifiield is currently completing a monograph on Samuel Beckett and Emmanuel Levinas, and teaches at the University of York.

Alice Finkelstein has worked as a librarian in a variety of settings. She currently teaches English at Cincinnati State Technical & Community College.

Jennifer Jeffers is Professor of English and Associate Dean of the Graduate College at Cleveland State University. Her books include *Uncharted Space: The End of Narrative* (Peter Lang 2001), *Britain Colonized: Hollywood's Appropriation of British Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), *The Irish Novel at the End of the Twentieth Century: Gender Bodies and Power* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), and *Beckett's Masculinity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Seán Kennedy is Assistant Professor of English at St Mary's University, Halifax. He is editor (with Katherine Weiss) of *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), and of *Beckett and Ireland* (Cambridge UP, 2010).

Alexandra Poulain is a Professor of Irish literature and drama at Charles de Gaulle University in Lille. Her latest publication is the book "Endgame ou le théâtre mis en pièces" (Paris, CNED-PUF, 2009), co-authored with Elisabeth Angel-Perez.

Jean-Michel Rabaté, Vartan Gregorian Professor in the Humanities at the University of Pennsylvania, is one of the founders and senior curators of Slough Foundation. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and will be president of the American Beckett society as of 2011. He has authored or edited more than thirty books on modernism, psychoanalysis, contemporary art, philosophy and writers like Beckett, Pound and Joyce. Recent books include *Lacan Literario* (2007), *1913: The cradle of modernism* (2007), *The Ethic of the Lie* (2008), and *Etant donnés: 1) l'art, 2) le crime* (2010).

Dirk Van Hulle, associate professor of English literature at the University of Antwerp (Centre for Manuscript Genetics), is the author of *Textual Awareness* (2004) and *Manuscript Genetics, Joyce's Know-How, Beckett's Nohow* (2008); president of the European Society for Textual Scholarship and a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Beckett Studies*, *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* and *Genetic Joyce Studies*. He is co-director of the *Beckett Digital Manuscript Project*, and currently working with Mark Nixon on *Beckett's Library* (Cambridge UP, forthcoming).



The University of Gdańsk Samuel Beckett Seminar
BACK TO THE BECKETT TEXT



Dates: 10-16 May 2010 • Venue: Dworek Sierakowskich, Sopot


"Back to the Beckett Text" is the title of an international seminar, organized by the English Institute of the University of Gdańsk, Poland, Off de BICZ Theatre and a literary bimonthly "Topos." Confirmed keynote speakers include: Professor Enoch Brater (University of Michigan, USA), Professor Stan Gontarski (Florida State University, USA), Professor Shimon Levy (Tel Aviv University, Israel), Dr Mark Nixon (Reading University, UK), Professor Antonia Rodriguez Gago (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain), and Antoni Libera (Warsaw, Poland). The programme includes speakers from India, Brazil, Japan, Armenia, Iran, Jordan, Cyprus, Canada, the UK, Holland, Italy, and Poland. Most sessions will be in English, although some will also be in Polish.

The title "Back to the Beckett Text" demonstrates the seminar's concern with the semantic potential of Beckett's written texts. Particular performances of plays will be considered, but the principal focus will be on Beckett's words, on the meanings encoded in them, on the conventions they draw on, and on their relations to other texts. Indeed, the seminar will also discuss Beckett's work in non-dramatic forms, especially his fiction.

A key component of the seminar will be a series of workshop sessions, both theatrical and literary stretching over seven days. There will be workshops on Beckett and dance, Beckett and Shakespeare, translating Beckett, and Beckett on film, and on many other topics. There will be practical workshops for actors and directors. There will be performances and readings of Beckett plays, poems, and short stories.

The seminar's venue is Sopot, a charming seaside resort on the Baltic coast between Gdańsk and Gdynia. Sessions will be held in the Dworek Sierakowskich (a nineteenth-century Polish aristocratic home in the centre of Sopot), and in the nearby Off de Bicz Theatre overlooking the Bay of Gdańsk.

For further information, please contact us at: beckett@ug.edu.pl



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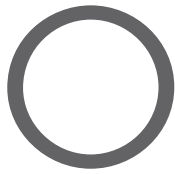
All members of the Samuel Beckett Society are encouraged to submit items of interest for publication in *The Beckett Circle*. **If possible, submissions should be emailed in Word or Rich Text Format.** Please send all essays, theater reviews, letters to the editor, inquiries about advertising rates,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

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