



# THE BECKETT CIRCLE LE CERCLE DE BECKETT

Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

## A Note on the Visual Images of *Happy Days*

*Author's note:* The material here is presented in the form of a personal investigation rather than as a formal scholarly article in order to concentrate as much on the emergence of the evidence and its plausibility as on any claim itself, leaving it to the reader to decide how convincing that evidence is.

I was recently invited to contribute a 'text revisited' chapter to a *Festschrift* for a friend and proposed an essay entitled 'Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* revisited'. This essay, due to appear in January 2012, published by Peter Lang, considers the role of music, song and poetry in the play (e.g. Yellen and Alger's 1929 song, Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* and the unlikely medley of W. B. Yeats and Jerome Kern), its links with the visual arts and with philosophy and psychoanalysis, especially in the light of Beckett's various 1930s notes. I also drew on certain of Beckett's life experiences at that time, uncovered while researching my biography and suggested other literary sources of inspiration found in letters, some of which have only recently become accessible.

Looking at *Happy Days* again (after, in my case, a gap of almost thirty years), led me to focus attention on the startling visual images of Winnie, buried first up to her waist, then up her neck in the mound, and of her companion Willie, first seen in his boater with a club ribbon, then in a top hat and morning suit. Was there anything new to be discovered about the potential sources of inspiration for these images?

Let me first recapitulate what we already know about the play visually—or at least what we think we know. First, Dante: the *Divina Commedia* was, of course, one of Beckett's favourite books in the whole of European literature and, in his magnificent illustrations to the *Inferno*, Gustave Doré memorably depicted Dante's Damned with their heads or lower limbs protruding from the frozen lake or the 'livid stone'. There are indications within the play that such a highly graphic, visual evocation of Hell may well have played a part in Beckett's initial inspiration. But evidence has also come to light of Beckett's interest in and close knowledge of modern movements in painting like German

Expressionism and Surrealism, although he was much keener on the first than he was on the second. I therefore explored some affinities with modern painting in the light of Beckett's German diaries. In addition, I noted that the closing frames of Buñuel and Dalí's 1929 film *Un chien andalou*, with its image of two women buried up to their waists on the beach, had often been cited by scholars (including myself) as a potential source for Winnie's progressive burial in the earth.

From my biography of Beckett, I included as a further possible source the photograph by Angus McBean taken to advertise the 1938 review *The Fleet's Lit Up* of the actress Frances Day, buried in sand in a basket and, like Winnie,

Max Ernst, *Projet pour un monument à W. C. Fields* (1957). The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Charlotte, NC. © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



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Frances Day. Angus McBean Photograph (MS Thr 581). © Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

holding a lock of hair in her hand (with another unseen person holding up a mirror in his or her hand). The resemblances are striking. What has not been pointed out, however, is that Angus McBean used the same 'half-buried in the earth' motif in two other photographs: one of the British actress Flora Robson (also taken in 1938), with her bust again apparently bursting out of the earth, and one of *gamine* film-star Audrey Hepburn, photographed yet again, but in 1951, emerging from the sand, flanked by two classical pillars. So far, one might say, a moderately interesting 'addition to company' but nothing to get too excited about.

But recently an additional possible source of visual inspiration has emerged that I mentioned in the 'Happy Days revisited' essay only in two brief sentences and without any of the supporting evidence. In Charlotte, North Carolina (where two of our three children live with their families), the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, designed by Mario Botta, the architect of the MoMA in San Francisco, was built especially in 2009 to house the fine 20<sup>th</sup> century art collection of the Zurich industrialist Hans C. Bechtler (1904-1998) and his wife Bessie. It was gifted to the city of Charlotte by their son Andreas Bechtler and was opened to the public on 2 January 2010.

Shortly after the museum opened, I visited it twice. Walking round the gallery for the first time, I was astonished to see a remarkable, vividly coloured, kaleidoscopic oil painting by Max Ernst entitled *Projet pour un monument*

à *W. C. Fields*, which appeared to bear striking resemblances to Samuel Beckett's play *Happy Days*. In the centre of the painting is a female figure, painted as a rotund, buxom torso in red, wearing an ornate hat and holding aloft an unfurled, multi-coloured parasol. The woman, as the accompanying audio guide explained, is based on the celebrated film actress Mae West. The right foreground is almost dominated by the large head of a male figure, wearing a top hat and reaching out his hand. The male head, the audio guide went on, is that of the comic actor W. C. Fields and the painting had apparently been inspired by the (unique) collaboration of Fields and Mae West on a 1940 Universal Studios' film called *My Little Chickadee*. In English, the painting is known, in fact, as 'Homage to W. C. Fields and his Little Chickadee', although, for reasons that will become clear, it has been reproduced in relatively few books on Ernst.

Intrigued by the unusual light-filled setting of *Happy Days* and its internal preoccupation with the element of fire, it was the brightness of the colours of the painting, especially its fiery reds that also struck me forcibly. One aspect of the painting, dissimilar, it might appear, to Beckett's play, was the presence of a small face looking on quizzically from the far left and echoing in its colours the large hatted head on the right. Was this a surrogate for the painter himself or for the observing spectator? Even here one is reminded though of the presence within Beckett's text of the Shower and Cooker visitors, who, as Beckett himself commented very precisely, represented the spectator (SB, letter to Jacoba van Velde, 28 Feb. 1962), as well as the constant repetition of the motif of an observing eye: 'Someone is looking at me still...Eyes on my eyes.' Yet, in recognising various parallels between Ernst's painting and Beckett's play, I was concerned that I might be seeing what I wanted to see, the victim perhaps of what could be termed professional deformation.

Was there any connection between the play and the painting? And which came first, painting or play? The second of these questions was quickly answered, since the date of 1957 is inscribed with the artist's signature on the canvas itself, printed on its gallery description and on a reproduction that I promptly purchased from the gallery shop. And we know, of course, that Beckett's play was written in 1960-61. But when did Hans Bechtler purchase the picture for his private collection? And might Beckett have seen it in Paris before or even after it was purchased? In a general way, there were a sufficient number of personal links between Beckett and Ernst for Beckett not only to have been aware of Ernst as a powerful Surrealist presence (he refers to him, for instance, along with Hans Arp in 1937 in the fourth of his German diaries) but also to have taken an interest in his work. The German painter had after all briefly been married to Peggy Guggenheim, with whom Beckett had had a passionate sexual affair in late 1937 and early 1938, and, following a meeting between them in 1967 arranged by Werner Spies, a good friend of Max Ernst and a specialist on his work, Ernst went on to illustrate a trilingual edition of Beckett's *From an abandoned work*. (See my note in *The Beckett Circle*, Spring 2008, vol. 31, no. 1)

An e-mail query next to the Bechtler Museum elicited the helpful information that Hans Bechtler had in fact purchased the painting in 1958. This was a little discouraging at first since it made it more difficult for Beckett to have seen the picture, since it had been held in a private collection from 1958 until 2010. But then, later the same day, a key piece of the jigsaw came in the form of a postscript from Hallie Ringle, a young researcher at the Bechtler Museum who was looking into my queries, saying that the picture in question was reproduced in Patrick Waldberg's 450-page biography of Max Ernst.

Now it is at a moment like this that a scholar's antennae begin to twitch uncontrollably! For since I happened to know that Patrick Waldberg was a personal friend of Beckett, dining and playing billiards with him on many occasions, this was exciting news indeed. I also happen to possess copies of some of Beckett's letters to Waldberg, which are preserved in the Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet in Paris. A few days spent searching through these and other correspondences established that Beckett was indeed seeing Waldberg at the time he was writing his Max Ernst biography, meeting him either alone or with his second wife Liane for dinner early in 1958 and seeing him once in the company of Marcel Duchamp, probably on 26 June 1958 (SB, letter to Patrick Waldberg, 13 June 1958). About that time Beckett also read several of Waldberg's other books, and it is clear that the art critic sent him complimentary copies of them, one being his *Promenoir à Paris* which Beckett read in only one session at the beginning of October 1960 (SB, letter to Waldberg, 5 Oct. 1960), just as he was starting to write *Happy Days*. Another was Waldberg's 1961 book *Mains et merveilles. Peintres et sculpteurs de notre temps* which Beckett read in February 1962, before sending it on as a gift to Kay Boyle (SB, letter to Kay Boyle, 22 Jan. 1962).

The link (if indeed there is such a link) would appear then to be with Waldberg's biography of Max Ernst, which was published by Jean-Jacques Pauvert in December 1958. There, indeed, the 'W. C. Fields' painting is printed, but in black and white not colour, in the sixth and final section of the book, entitled 'Suite sans Fin', perhaps as a tribute to Beckett's post-war story 'La Fin', first called and printed in *Les Temps modernes* as 'Suite'! In view of my previous comments on the intense, fiery nature of the colours of the original painting, the black and white character of the reproduction was initially disappointing. Yet the outlines of the two figures are much more sharply delineated in black and white than they are in the more kaleidoscopic painting. Interestingly too, in the same section there is another painting of the top-hatted head of W. C. Fields alone (*pace Willie*) also painted in 1957, which was owned by Patrick Waldberg. We cannot be certain that Beckett had his own copy of Waldberg's handsome first biography of Max Ernst. There was no such copy in his library when he died. But then neither were there other books by Waldberg that we know for certain from the correspondence that Beckett both owned and read. He gave away hundreds of books, especially towards the end of his life.

However, I also learned from Werner Spies' *Max Ernst A Retrospective* that to celebrate the publication of Waldberg's biography of Ernst an exhibition of the painter's



Patrick Waldberg and Max Ernst.

work had been arranged at La Hune bookshop on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. I have not yet been able to establish whether the W. C. Fields painting was indeed exhibited there. But, even if Beckett had not been able to see it at an exhibition, it would have been surprising if Waldberg had not discussed the most recent of Ernst's pictures with Beckett or shown him some of the illustrations from his biography of the painter during their multiple meetings in 1958. And we can almost guarantee that Beckett would have called at La Hune and have studied the book there.

So, even if he did not possess his own copy—which, in view of Waldberg's habit of giving him copies, I still find highly likely—the odds are surely very high that he would have been acquainted with this particular painting, either through an exhibition or in the biography itself. Although the evidence remains circumstantial, it seems to me to be sufficiently convincing to establish at least a possible visual influence on Beckett as he came to imagine the appearance of the two figures in *Happy Days*.<sup>17</sup>

--Jim Knowlson

17 I am most grateful to Werner Spies, Anne Arikha and Shannon White and Hallie Ringle of the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art for answering my queries and to John Pilling, Matthew Feldman and David Addyman for reading early versions of this note.

## Out of the Archive in York

After the frenzy of the Beckett centenary, it was inevitable that things would quieten down in the world of Beckett studies, at least temporarily. In 2011, however, the mega-conference came back with a bang, by way of 'Samuel Beckett: Out of the Archive', held at the University of York, England. Opening the proceedings, David Addyman suggested that the organisers of the event, Peter Fifield, Bryan Radley and Lawrence Rainey, had set a new standard for academic conferences, and this was certainly the case: readings and recitals, performances and panels, exhibitions and concerts, this conference had it all and it would be impossible to do justice to the variety of offerings in such a short review. They even had ginger biscuits!

The theme of the conference was the recent archival turn in Beckett studies, and the call for papers asked delegates to consider the extent to which Beckett had been 'saved by' or needed to be 'saved from' the archive. It was, in some ways, a curious document, with its talk of the archive as having either 'refreshed' or 'embalmed' Beckett's work, but a number of delegates, including Jean-Michel Rabaté in his keynote, 'Beckett's Three Critiques', took up the theme to interrogate what exactly we were getting out of the Beckettian archive, and whether this new approach was crowding out other approaches. Rabaté spoke from personal experience about potential misreadings of the archive, and traced a careful account of Beckett's engagement with Kant's third critique, by way of a critique of Martha Nussbaum's recent work. Linda Ben-Zvi, too, took up the challenge of Nussbaum's work in her keynote, 'Beckett and Disgust: The Body as 'Laughing Matter'', to point out how Nussbaum rather misses Beckett's humour, while Lois Overbeck gave an eloquent, cautionary talk on archives and audiences, on the myriad ways our desire can distort and diminish the ambiguities of the archival trace.

The conference proper consisted in 38 panels, inevitably in parallel session, covering everything from 'The Margins of the Archive' to a 'Performing Patterns Workshop'. The program reads like a veritable Who's-Who of Beckett studies, but the established voices were nicely balanced by those of younger scholars and graduate students, as well as some new faces who inevitably brought with them new perspectives and energy. One of my favourite papers was by Berlin-based musicologist, Franz Michael Maier, who gave a fascinating account of Beckett's use of Beethoven's silences in his work and explicated his use of the term 'symphonic' from his early lecture notes on Racine through to the German Letter. In the same session, Michael D'Arcy, with customary care, sought to move the Beckett/Adorno debate beyond the *Endgame* essay, arguing that Adorno saw the potential in Beckett's work a new theory of the novel based on an embrace of weakness and stupidity, as a way of addressing the impasse of art after the Holocaust.

Elsewhere Matthew Feldman and Steve Matthews brought an archival perspective to Beckett's use of philosophy, while Sinéad Mooney, celebrating the publication of her recent monograph, focused on the question of trans-

lation in the 'grey canon'. Nadia Louar sought to move us from the issue of translation to that of bilingualism, while Claire Lozier looked at *Watt* as an instance of archive fever: an account of the pleasure of the archival impulse. My own paper asked why there is so much W.B. Yeats in the *Watt* manuscripts and so little in the novel itself, while Garin Dowd interrogated the various 'archaeologies of knowledge in Beckett studies'. The range of papers here, and these are all from the first parallel session, gives an indication of the nature of the event. This is an exciting time to be working on Beckett, and the conference was buzzing.

Highlights of the conference include Shane Weller's extraordinary account of the genetic history of *The Unnamable*, a showcase for all that is good about the archival turn. Weller was also designated, humorously, the 'person most to be feared' at the conference: a testament to his unstinting intellectual engagement throughout. James McNaughton reflected on the limits of the archive and the dangers of aesthetics when faced with limit events, while David Wheatley reflected on self-archiving, the issue of how Beckett and his archive, and our archiving of it sit together (or fail to). Mark Nixon's account of Beckett in the literary marketplace was slotted for the same time as Stephen Dilks's account of the same topic, and there was a general consensus that Dilks has chosen an objectionable way to talk about a rather interesting topic. Emilie Morin sought to complicate the Ireland/Europe binary in a paper on antiquarianism that recovered the German context for such debates, while Peter Fifield and Laura Salisbury gave excellent papers on the topic of Beckett and waste. Jeremy Parrot's account of *Bing* as referring to Bing Crosby was greeted with something approaching disbelief, while John Banville surprised nobody by ploughing through a bottle of red wine and then declaring himself to have a 'female mind'. There were also a number of interesting papers looking at Beckett's relationship to Irish topography by Cóilín Parsons, Nels Pearson and Feargal Whelan, and a number of excellent panels on Beckett and modernism.

Meanwhile, the philosophical tradition in Beckett studies was also well represented, with papers on Badiou, Deleuze, Windelband, Schopenhauer, Sartre and others. A number of scholars, including Peter Boxall, braved the topic of Beckett and Coetzee, while the digital humanities were well represented in a session anchored by Mark Byron and, another highlight, the launching of the Digital Manuscript Project: [www.beckettarchive.org](http://www.beckettarchive.org). Overall, the sense was that Beckett studies was refreshed, rather than embalmed by the conference at York, and that the implicit binary of 'archive versus philosophy' that had framed the call for papers was less rigid and limiting than it had been thought to be. Beckett studies is in rude health, largely due to the robust nature of the continuing process of argument that frames events of this nature. No one goes to a Beckett conference expecting to be pandered to, and everyone who drifted away from York on Sunday seemed exhilarated and exhausted in equal measure. A final word of thanks to the organisers, in particular Peter Fifield, who raised the Titanic on a daily basis to keep this extraordinary celebration rocking along.

--Seán Kennedy



## Performances at York

The ‘Out of the Archive’ conference was organized by Peter Fifeld, Bryan Radley, and Lawrence Rainey. It was attended by nearly 200 delegates. There were three keynote lectures and thirty nine panels organized into eight sessions, which meant that it was of course a very difficult task to choose which to attend, and also meant that delegates were forced to miss papers that they really wanted to hear. But this is the situation with a conference of this size, and cannot be avoided. There were some excellent papers, but also a whole variety of additional events, which were open to the public (admission free) as part of the York Festival of Ideas.

On Wednesday and Thursday evenings there were opportunities to see a performance of *First Love* by the Gare St Lazare Players, directed by Judy Hegarty Lovett and performed by Conor Lovett, and on Friday and Saturday they presented *The End*. The performances took place in the Dixon Studio Theatre, Wentworth College, which, as it is a small auditorium, was a very appropriate space. The performance space was bare, apart from a couple of benches, and Lovett stood in front of the audience in a circle of light. The two benches were upended in *First Love*, but in place of using them as props, Lovett suggested an imaginary bench with his hand, with an insistence that encouraged the audience members to ‘see’ it—and this was true of all the absent props: the actor gave them a presence through the skilful movements of his hands. The benches did play a part in *The End*, helping to create a very dramatic scene when Lovett leapt up on them and declaimed loudly as the orator, whilst also taking on the role of heckler. He again encouraged the audience members to ‘see’ what wasn’t ‘really there: in this case the narrator/character he so recently embodied and soon ‘became’ again. He also enacted the toad, catching flies with his tongue—a nice touch. Lovett encourages the audience members to listen and watch attentively, and thus enter into the strange worlds of the two novellas, through voice and gesture alone, and this was helped by the intimacy created both by the space and his delivery. Lovett spoke directly to the audience, making eye contact, and even responding to audience member’s laughter or sounds of dismay. He used pauses and silences to great effect, making it seem as if he was reminiscing, and having to search back through his memory, which at times let him down. I found that *The End* worked for me far better than *First Love*, as with the latter I did find the necessary bleakness lacking at times—the darkness, to set beside the more comic moments. As a result there was a little too much laughter from the audience—and also from Lovett—whereas *The End* managed to reach really interesting depths, and to convey a sense of the darkness, the strangeness and the mystery of the piece.

On Thursday evening John Banville gave a reading from his latest novel, *Ancient Light*. He was introduced by Hugh

Haughton, and the reading was followed by an interview, with Haughton and Radley asking the questions. Banville spoke about how all of his books came ‘from very deep inside’. He acknowledged the influence of Beckett on his work, and spoke of the ‘rhapsodic trance’ of his first encounter with Beckett’s prose, when reading *Molloy*, and described it as a ‘superb comedy’ and how this created a sense of the ‘human element’ in the work. Banville finds that, as he gets older, the comic in his own work takes precedence over the tragic. Interestingly, he gave high praise to the work of Henry James, describing him as the ‘first real modernist’, and considered that writers such as James Joyce and Beckett had, unfortunately, led modernist writing into a very different direction. He considers himself an ‘internal exile’ in Ireland, a writer who, unlike Beckett, chose not to leave. But of course the Beckett that Ireland left was a different world. Banville claims: ‘I can’t do without Ireland’, but at the same time doesn’t ‘feel part of Ireland’, but ‘international’.

Friday lunch took place at the Ron Cooke Hub, an impressive new building beside the lake at Heslington East. It gave all the delegates the opportunity to view the exhibition *Beckett in Photographs* by John Minihan. After lunch Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle launched the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, a collaboration between the Centre for Manuscript Genetics (University of Antwerp), the Beckett International Foundation (University of Reading) and the Harry Ransom Center (University of Texas at Austin), with the support of the Estate of Samuel Beckett. The first print volume has been published: *The Making of Samuel Beckett’s Stirring Still/Soubresauts and Comment dire/What is the Word*. It is an amazing project, and its purpose is to ‘reunite all the manuscripts of [...] Beckett’s works in a digital way, and [...] provide the digital facsimiles with research tools, a search engine, an electronic apparatus variorum, and an analysis of textual genesis’. [To find out more visit the website [www.aspeditions.be](http://www.aspeditions.be) or email [gert.denutte@aspeditions.be](mailto:gert.denutte@aspeditions.be).]

The next event was a reading by J. M. Coetzee, on Friday evening, in the Central Hall. It was very well attended. Derek Attridge, who has written on Coetzee and has known him for a good few years, gave a very lively and engaging introduction—the best introduction of the conference. Coetzee read very well, for nearly an hour, and really captured his audience. He has an intensity which draws the listener in. He read from a work in progress, and it was enthralling. It was an honour to hear such a great writer read from his work, and also good to see him attending other events in the conference, including the



J. M. Coetzee at York Conference.  
© Ian Martindale.

conference dinner on Saturday night.

There was another public event at 1.00 pm on Saturday: the *Beckett in Music* concert in Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, which, like all the above events, was open to the public as part of the York Festival of Ideas. Catherine Laws, who programmed the event, is a Lecturer in Music at the University of York, and is also a performer who specializes in contemporary music. The hall is a large, impressive space with wonderful acoustics, and the audience encountered a large, dark performance area, with four musicians totally still, two grand pianos, percussion instruments and a flute. What followed was a varied programme of music inspired by Beckett texts, with each performance lighted in turn, the rest of the space left in darkness. John Tilbury began the concert, performing his own composition, 'Three Late Poems of Samuel Beckett', followed by Laws performing Martin Iddon's 'head down among the stems and bells' (a European premiere). This was a surprising piece, featuring a prepared piano. It was full of unexpected noises, with the piano being intermittently treated with blows from a large mallet. Next was an intriguing piece written and performed by Damien Harron, 'what is the word' (its premiere). Harron played a whole variety of percussion instruments and Jos Zwaanenburg played flute and electronics. Listening to these performances was a mesmerizing experience, and strangely fascinating. The final performance was Beckett's radio piece, *Cascando*. Tilbury took all the parts: he had recorded the voices of Opener and Voice, and played Music on the piano: it was a skilful and evocative interpretation of all three roles. In the programme Laws points out Beckett's 'finely tuned sensitivity to sound' and this kind of sensitivity was apparent in all the performances. Beckett's work, Laws suggests, encourages the reader, spectator or listener 'to concentrate on what it is to listen,' and this is surely what this concert achieved for the audience: a strong awareness of 'our own acts of listening'.

On the final day there was an interview with John Calder, who was asked about his stance as a political publisher, and he recalled the early risks he took in the publishing business. He spoke in glowing terms of Beckett as a sort of 'secular saint', but was less complimentary towards academia, which he rather felt had 'thrown the baby out with the bathwater'. Specifically, he felt that three of the most important themes/influences in Beckett—Shakespeare, Milton and God—were being ignored, and he urged Beckett scholars to return to them. Marek Kędzierski presented 'Conversations with Barbara Bray, remembered and recorded'. These recollections were strangely unsettling, with her voice reciting letters from Sam, together with some personal recollections and excerpts from her memoirs. There was something haunting and not entirely edifying about the experience, but there were some marvellous polaroid photos of Beckett, many of him looking rather pained to be on camera.

It was a very successful and well organized conference, and the way it was structured worked towards a relaxed rather than a high-pressured atmosphere, with breaks for coffee and lunch that gave the delegates the chance to meet fellow Beckett scholars and discuss the various panels, exhibitions and events, and the diverse and often fascinating issues raised.

--Julie Campbell

## Beckett Summer School at Trinity College Dublin

'[*Krapp switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again*]*—great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most [Krapp curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again]—unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire'* (CDW 220).

As participants of the inaugural Samuel Beckett Summer School strolled along the pier at Dún Laoghaire, the supposed site of Beckett's revelation could not have looked any less like the description offered in *Krapp's Last Tape*. The sun insisted on shining clear and bright across the harbour, a stubborn wind refused to blow. Throughout the week, Trinity College Dublin had played host to both a heatwave and a troupe of Beckettians drawn from across the globe. Established academics, postgraduate students in the arts, literature and philosophy, poets, performers and enthusiasts had gathered in a Dublin which, we were told, in the absence of rain, wind and cold, barely resembled Dublin. Appropriate, perhaps, for a city which has reinvented itself as a literary tourist trail, complete with Samuel Beckett Bridge. For many of the Summer School's participants, visiting the city for the first time, it might have felt that an unbridgeable distance separates the storm and night of the worlds conjured by the likes of Beckett and Dublin's celebration of its authors.

In any case, at Dún Laoghaire we were told that there wouldn't be time to walk to the famous anemometer, where a plaque commemorates Beckett and Krapp's revelations. And yet, even while murmuring that it was not really here but in his mother's house that Beckett's transformation took place, it was the organisers and the speakers of the Summer School who insisted that we must strain the schedule and complete our pilgrimage. It was this immense enthusiasm for Beckett, resonating throughout an exhausting week, which set the tone for the Summer School and built bridges between a range of nationalities, disciplines and levels of expertise. While Beckett studies might, like Dublin itself, occasionally be reproached for obscuring that which it celebrates, this love of Beckett and for the work of Beckett ensured that academic questions and theoretical debates worked to enhance an appreciation of the texts which had brought participants of the Summer School together.

Running from 10-16 July 2011, the week included lectures, performances and four group seminars. Advertised as the theme of the Summer School, the Samuel Beckett and Gilles Deleuze seminar attracted a range of participants, many of whom were new to Deleuze's work. Led by Garin Dowd of the University of West London, the seminar included a challenging selection of readings from Deleuze's oeuvre and focused on both the uses of Beckett by Deleuze and the possibility of discovering Beckettian engagements with Deleuze's thought. Given the complexity and

frequently obscure style of Deleuze's writing, it's not surprising that members of the seminar left their first sessions voicing concerns that they might have chosen the wrong topic. However, failing better as the week progressed, the group began to create pathways into Deleuze's thought and discover unexpected approaches to Beckett's writing. Discussions of Deleuze's text *The Exhausted*, which deals with Beckett's works for television, were stimulated by screenings of the original productions during the seminars and by viewing new productions of *Nacht und Traume* and ... *but the clouds...* as part of the general Summer School programme.

These productions form part of a practice-as-research project entitled *Abstract Machines: Performing the Televisual Beckett*, directed by Matthew Causey and performed by Nicholas Johnson, both from the Drama Department of Trinity College. This screening was one of four evening performances, including Conor Lovett and the Gare St. Lazare Players' dramatization of *The End*, followed by the opportunity to discuss the productions with those involved. While the reception of these pieces was mixed, the inclusion of evening performances ensured, as Michael Colgan stressed in a speech which helped launch the Summer School, that theoretical concerns did not threaten to obscure our vision of Beckett as 'a man of the theatre'.

On the final night of the Summer School, participants were invited to view the results of the Performing Beckett Workshop. Led by Sarahjane Scaife, the seminar had focused on the body as the site of performance and culminated in presentations of *Catastrophe*, *Come and Go* and a dramatization of an excerpt from *Fizzles*. Throughout the week, Scaife's students spoke warmly of her encouragement and intelligence as the workshop's leader. This was clearly displayed throughout a showcase which, including both experienced performers and those from more varied backgrounds, exhibited a fine elegance of movement and sensitivity to Beckett's texts.

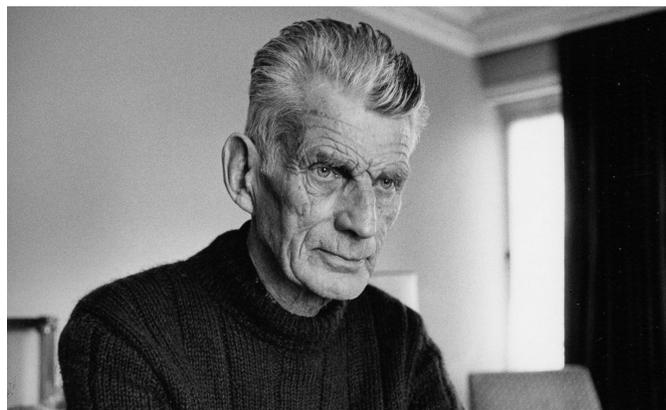
As the week progressed, participants from other seminar groups had taken the opportunity to discuss the production's development with those involved in the workshop. Barry McGovern, whose readings of Beckett with Gerry Dukes at the Alliance Française was a highlight of the week, was remarkably open and approachable, happy to answer questions regarding his own productions of Beckett's work. For many participants, the Summer School presented a unique opportunity for informal discussions with performers and academics whose work with Beckett had already contributed a great deal to their own engagement with the author. Members of Gerry Dukes' Beckett Reading Group, which focused on Beckett's *Three Novels* (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnameable*), echoed this sentiment. Again, participants came with varied levels of expertise and left having found their attitudes towards the texts altered by the discussion.

Led by Mark Nixon of the University of Reading and Dirk Van Hulle of the University of Antwerp, the Beckett Manuscripts seminar explored the methodology of genetic research and its critical consequences. Both are to be congratulated for their work on launching the Samuel Beckett: Digital Manuscript Archive ([www.beckettarchive.org](http://www.beckettarchive.org))

which they exhibited at the Summer School. While the task of completing the online archive is expected to take many more years, it is clear from the material currently available that the site's design, interface and ease of use has the potential to revolutionise archival research.

The Summer School's lecture series reflected various stands in Beckett studies, including Van Hulle's own genetic criticism, presentations of performance-based research carried out by Anna McMullan and Sarahjane Scaife, and treatments of Beckett intended to pose broader philosophical and social questions as exemplified by Nicholas Johnson's discussion of the Beckettian subject. Without offering an exhaustive account of the week's programme, two lectures stood out in indicating new directions for research. S. E. Gontarski presented a compelling argument for a Bergsonian influence on Beckett through his relationship with A. A. Luce, who tutored Beckett during his studies at Trinity. Those with an interest in Deleuze and Beckett would have been particularly interested in the possibility of reading *Whoroscope* as reflecting a Bergsonian conception of time and in the notion that Beckettian failure may be related to Bergson's conceptualization of an *élan vital* which cannot be represented or expressed without distortion. Meanwhile, Sam Slote's 'Beckett en Français' problematized the very notion of translation in Beckett and suggested that those texts written in both English and French might be treated as separate versions or translations of a non-existent original. Both Slote and Steve Wilmar, co-directors of the Summer School, deserve praise for bringing a distinguished group of speakers together.

--Daniel Koczy



THANK YOU

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# Godot in Belgrade

## Scene 1: *Godot* is coming

The subject of our interest is a theater house, BDP [Beogradsko Dramsko Pozoriste (Belgrade Dramatic Theater)], reputed at the time as the city's most avant-garde. Since 1951 it had been the centre of novel theater trends in the country. By staging the contemporary American playwrights Arthur Miller (*Death of a Salesman*) and Tennessee Williams (*Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), it broke the framework of imposed traditions. The very appearance of modern authors in the repertoire contributed to a foreboding of a reversal.

All of this, however, was taking place in a communist state. No matter how the authorities struggled to show a free-thinking, open-minded or even liberal face to the world, Tito's regime was oppressive nevertheless. Since 1948 many political dissidents from the communist circle ended up on the isle of Goli Otok, Tito's gulag/concentration camp from whence many never returned. From 1944-45 many citizens were reputedly killed, arrested or ousted from the country, and hardship hit the middle class, industrialists, tradesmen, intellectuals, artists and university professors. Through nationalization and confiscation of property from the wealthy, the previous industrial elite had been plundered.

At BDP a production of Jean Anouilh's *Thieves' Carnival* was banned in 1952 by command from top authorities. Everyone was shocked. There followed no explanation. In this atmosphere of shattered self-confidence the idea of directing a play by a then unknown author, Samuel Beckett, may seem like a mad whim! How did this occur? The answer lies in an incredible turn of chance. It is well-known that Beckett wrote *Waiting for Godot* in 1948/49, that it was published first in the Les Editions de Minuit in October 1952 and that the world premiere took place at the Paris Théâtre de Babylon on January 5, 1953 with Roger Blin as director. It was the beginning of world fame for the previously obscure Irishman, who chose France as his new homeland and French as the primary language for his literature after World War II.

In that same year of 1953 the young Borislav Mihajlovic Mihiz, later to become an outstanding Serbian author, was studying in Paris. He frequented the theaters of "City of Light," and by pure coincidence lived on the very square where the Babylon Theater was performing Beckett's new play. Not knowing what to do one night, Mihiz headed towards the theater across the square. From his testimony it is clear what impression *Godot* left on him: "I attended something I did not know as existing before, nor did I believe it could exist: two tramps were sitting on the stage and uttering the lines that were both attractive and repulsive to me. Up to that moment I had thought that drama was performed by actors who had names, who had their sociology, their origin, their personalities, psychology, emotions; there was none of it there. Everything there was in reverse [...] and something that had never happened neither before nor after that, three times in a row I went

to wait for Godot. After two or three performances and following the first passing confusion, I became an ardent adherent of Beckett and his anti-drama."<sup>1</sup>

In all likelihood, the text of *Godot* reached Belgrade shortly thereafter. It was offered to BDP by Vasilije Popovic, who wanted to direct it. *Godot* was translated into Serbian in 1953 by Andreja Milicevic.<sup>2</sup> Rehearsals of *Godot* started on the stage of BDP in January 1954, only a year after the Paris premiere. Although the play was not officially added to the repertoire of the theatre, rehearsals were being held daily there. Apart from the director Popovic, later to become an author known under the pen name Pavle Ugrinov, all actors were the professionals of the house: Ljuba Tadic as Vladimir, Mihailo Paskaljevic as Estragon, Rade Markovic as Pozzo, Mica Tomic as Lucky, and Rastislav Jovic as the Boy.

Why was *Godot* omitted from the official repertoire of the theater? The fear of possible censorship triggered in people a form of self-censorship. Beckett's play surely did not offer a worldview favorable to the new communist organization. His nihilism, hopelessness, and lack of a way out represented everything that the new establishment wanted to abolish, at least by order and directive.

Stage setting was done by Stojan Celic, one of the best known Serbian painters of the twentieth century. He looked for an utterly simple solution, hinted at by the author himself. In a preserved sketch the stage was denuded, grey, while life would be represented by that "poor little tree". It was standing in the middle of the stage. The scenery represented a wasteland. Costumes were old, refurbished from the holdings of the theater. They were remodeled by Danka Pavlovic.

One of the rehearsals was seen by Miroslav Krleza.<sup>3</sup> After the rehearsal a conversation ensued in the office of the manager Dinulovic. The manager, Stojan Celic, Vasilije Popovic and the actors took part in the conversation. According to Celic, "Krleza said that he had read *Godot* the night before on his way from Zagreb to Belgrade. As far as I remember, he said that he reached some conclusions about the work itself and that it referred to alienation, almost a reduction of man to a rag. On the other hand, it dealt with a psychological aspect, senility, an utterly ruined man (...) He wanted to say what man can come down to and what he is reduced to in capitalism. He spoke of the senility as the malaise of times and society. Analyzing the play, he

1 Feliks Pašić, *Kako smo čekali Godoa dok su cvetale tikve (How we waited for Godot when pumkins flourished)*, Bepar Press, Belgrade, 1992, p. 40 (note).

2 This translation of Milicevic was published as a separate volume Čekajući Godoa (*Waiting for Godot*) by the Srpska književna zadruga (SKZ) in 1964, since Beckett forbade the play to be published in the miscellany *Avangardna drama (Avant-garde drama)*, edited for the SKZ by Slobodan Selenic in the same year. The demand was principled: Beckett would not allow his dramas to be published in any miscellany along with dramas of other authors.

3 Miroslav Krleza is the most famous Croatian author of the twentieth century, the darling of Tito's regime and arbiter in numerous literary, artistic and cultural debates. His word was often final in those not always innocent disputes. He gained a particular reputation as a playwright, which makes this professional attitude towards Beckett as a peer the more interesting.

negated it. He also stated that it was nothing new in theater, that it all had happened already.”<sup>4</sup>

Such a negative attitude coming from so reputable an author—standing in favor of the authorities and generally known as a personal friend of Tito—must have greatly annoyed all the artists involved in the production. Presumably the manager foresaw the certain fate for the enterprise: new bans, public disapproval, perhaps even his own dismissal. Solomon found a solution nevertheless: the premiere would not be publicly staged; instead a closed-door performance of *Godot* was mounted exclusively for members of the BDP ensemble.

According to the testimony of the witnesses, this performance took place in the spring of 1954, in March or April, and no one, including even the members of the performers’ families, was allowed to attend it! Still, some people simply smuggled into the hall through open windows and side doors, hiding from the administration and even from the maids. They hid in a squatting position behind the seats, like little kids! A maid ran into some spectators hiding on the balcony and drove them out with her broom! Many respectable citizens, professors and students of the Film and Theater Academy, were left standing outside in front of the theater with no means of entering. What were the reactions of this small but privileged audience after the show? Borislav Mihajlovic Mihiz reports: “I can say with certainty and without fear of being partial, patriotic or localistic, that the Belgrade performance was superior to the Paris one in many respects. Although it would be difficult to state for Blin’s performance that it embodied the Cartesian spirit, French actors performed in a considerably drier manner, possibly even on purpose, while ours brought into the performance more warmth, a greater measure of irony and comedy. Or, perhaps, simply put—they were better actors.”<sup>5</sup>

## Scene 2: Atelier of Mica Popovic

Forbidden *Godot* was performed yet again a few months later in the atelier of the renowned painter Mica Popovic, on Staro Sajmiste (Old Fairground). Situated on the other bank of the Sava River, this part of town was built in 1937 with a view to organizing the first fair in Belgrade. During World War II it served as a German concentration camp for Serbs, Jews and Romas, a place of woe and death. After the war the buildings were used by state decree to house lots of known painters, sculptors and authors. The exact time of this performance is difficult to determine with certainty. It certainly occurred in 1954, apparently at the end of May or June. Feliks Pašić observes: “The bits of a mosaic can now be assembled. The text of Beckett’s play was, therefore, brought to Belgrade in 1953, the same year it was first shown under

4 Pašić, *op. cit.* p. 17. It is noteworthy that the man who thus criticized Beckett’s vision of man’s alienation in capitalism, lived enjoying all blessings of the same in (for most people) unimaginable abundance in a villa situated in the residential part of Zagreb, travelled all over the world, possessed loads of money from numerous issues of collected works and dramas staged by all theaters of Yugoslavia, and was the number-one regime author, comparable to ancient court poets.

5 Pašić, *op. cit.* p. 46 (note)

Blin’s direction in Paris. Most likely it was translated in that year. Rehearsals in BDP, exactly as director Vasilije Popovic says, might have started in January or February of 1954, while the closed-door rehearsal was held, in all likelihood, at the end of March or in the first days of April. Roughly two months later the performance took place on Staro Sajmiste.”<sup>6</sup> In a still more clear-cut detail by director Popovic, drawn from his diary, “the fateful rehearsal was held on April 5, 1954, from 10 to 14 h, while the premiere was scheduled for April 10. *Godot* was shown in the atelier of Mica Popovic on May 31, 1954 from 18 to 20 h.”<sup>7</sup>



Ljuba Tadic as Vladimir and Bata Paskaljevic as Estragon

*Godot* in the atelier of Mica Popovic was prepared and performed in circumstances that were unusual to say the least. Ljuba Tadic remembers that everything happened like in a “trance,” “just like everything else in *Godot* seems to be in a trance.” Why did everything transpire in that particular location? Vasilije Popovic, the director of the performance, lived in one of those pavilions. As the atelier of Mica Popovic was by far the largest of all (14.7 x 7 meters), the idea to perform there occurred naturally.

Scenery for the occasion was swiftly assembled by Mica Popovic and Mario Maskareli. Maskareli drew a line in chalk on the floor to mark the border between the stage and the audience. “The line divided those who were forbidden and those who were free,” says Mica Popovic.<sup>8</sup> What was the scenery like? Above the place meant for the stage a big lamp was positioned. Two smaller lamps were put at the sides. The director played the role of the light technician, using two switches to turn the lights on and off. There was a broom around, or rather a big broom handle. Maskareli interwove wires atop the handle to represent the tree. Costumes were recycled from the performance in BDP.

There were some forty people inside sitting on the floor and chairs. Somewhere in the midst of the performance there was an outbreak of a tempest. Mihiz remembers: “A violent tempest struck into the huge atelier windows. As if the heavens wanted to protest against our impudence or against Beckett’s spiritual or theatrical blasphemy, or possibly the other way around: to express consent, to sign in its accord with our audacity to the lightning. All of a sudden the poor scenery got an additional, huge, weirdly natural decor. It looked as if the heavens themselves took part in

6 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 47 (note).

8 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

this performance.”<sup>9</sup> Before the end the electricity went out and candles had to be used. “Lightning lit up not the sky only but the atelier as well and produced in it an absolutely incredible atmosphere. All the time it thundered loudly and it always thundered at some breaks, so that one had a feeling that the walls were almost open, that we were out in a desert place, in the most dreadful circumstances.”<sup>10</sup> *Godot* was a spectacular feat of Staro Sajmiste. It seemed natural and appropriate in that atmosphere that Beckett “illegally” loomed over Staro Sajmiste, then the locus of art but in the recent past the site of mass misery in a concentration camp.



Rastislav Jovic (The boy) and Ljuba Tadic (Vladimir) in Atelier 212

### Scene 3: Atelier 212

Two more years had to pass before *Godot* finally received its public debut in Belgrade. “The same *Godot* standing at the beginning of the end of a theater will mark the birth of a new theater. It is well-known and historically established that the right date in the history of Atelier 212 is the performance *Waiting for Godot*. It was on December 17, 1956. The first *Godot* in a socialist country.”<sup>11</sup> The whole of Belgrade now had access to *Godot* and in the “proper” hall of a “proper” theater, seating a capacity audience of 212 in wooden chairs. The show was played in utter silence. It ended with long and vehement applause. This official *Godot* was directed by the same director, Vasilije Popovic, the scenery was the work of the same scenographer, Stojan Celic, and it was played by the same actors who were supposed to play in the original cast. Only the time and place differed.

The reception of both the audience and the critics was positive. All critics of renown praised the performance. *Godot* played in Atelier 212 all the way through the end of the season of 1972/73! It was restaged with the same ensemble of actors on November 21, 1981 and played up to 1985. Atelier 212 thus assumed the role of the most avant-garde theatre in Yugoslavia in the decades to follow.

If we put aside the premiere in the Schiller Theater in German on December 8, 1953, as well as the attempt of the prisoner K.-F. Lembke from the German prison Lutrighausen to put Beckett’s play on the prison stage in the fall of 1954,<sup>12</sup> it is generally recognized that *Godot* was first shown, after Paris, in London on August 3, 1955 in Arts Theater Club under the direction of Donald Albery, while

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett*, Fayard, Paris, 1979, p. 403; James Knowlson, *Beckett*, Solin, Actes Sud, Arles, 1999, p. 523-525.

the American first night was on January 3, 1956 in Miami in Coconut Grove Playhouse<sup>13</sup> under the direction of Alan Schneider. The first performance of *Godot* in Eastern Europe is often credited to the Warsaw production that premiered on January 19, 1957.<sup>14</sup> Theater history has taken little notice of the Belgrade performances, and yet the closed-door rehearsal in April and the illegal performance in the atelier in May of 1954, were in fact among the first in the world after Paris. These seminal productions deserve wider acknowledgment and appreciation. Although everything went on behind closed doors, viewed by a total of only a hundred people or so, *Godot*’s influence among Belgrade intellectuals and artists was inestimably greater. In retrospect it is clear, as Jovan Cirilov observes, that “*Godot* was a testing ground for our cultural bearings and cultural politics.”<sup>15</sup>

--Predrag Todorović

<sup>13</sup> Is the choice of this theater a coincidence? We know of the famous movie of the Marx Brothers *Coconuts* from 1929, actually their first film, where action takes place in the part of Miami known as Coconut Grove. The Marx Brothers and Beckett’s *Godot*, clowns and tramps, film and theater.

<sup>14</sup> Jan Kott, *Pozorišne esencije i drugi eseji*, Prosveta, Beograd, 1986, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Jovan Cirilov, *NIN*, Belgrade, April 27, 1986.

## REMEMBERING RUBY

Just as the present issue was going to press, we learned of the death of Ruby Cohn on 18 October 2011. Her devotion to Samuel Beckett’s work spanned over a half century, and she was a friend, colleague, mentor, and supporter to many readers of this newsletter.

The Beckett Circle would like to celebrate the life and work of Ruby Cohn by printing various remembrances in the spring issue. Members of the Beckett community are invited to send brief submissions to the editor, Graley Herren (herren@xavier.edu), by 1 April 2012 for possible inclusion in this special issue. Space constraints may not permit publication of all submissions, but we will strive for as broad a selection as possible.

## Aspettando Castri: *Finale di partita* (Endgame)

A bourgeois Hamm and Clov are almost inconceivable, although Hamm refers to a time when he was something of an overlord, Clov inspecting Hamm's paupers "sometimes on horse." The play is almost always set in another time, amid post-war devastation and deprivation, as the text details. But here they are, Hamm and Clov, played by Vittorio Franceschi and Milutin Dapcevic respectively, in red velvet smoking jackets with satin collars and cuffs, Hamm with a tartan lap rug rolling around polished checkered floors, black and white chess board tiles, in a sleek, Naugahyde or pleather wheelchair, his stancher an elegant, crisp, white jacket accessory, this couple looking like gay fashionistas. The picture facing the wall, an oversized oil painting in this production (a detail Beckett saw fit to cut in his own productions as "trop recherché"), sits atop an elegant, black fireplace mantle in the great room of a once elegant Big House and is then moved to the floor along the upstage wall. Devoid of furnishings, the set, the house, rather, remains grand. The walls themselves are grey but with substantial white trim and black molding. The room looks freshly painted. Inconceivable, we might say (to borrow the catch phrase from *Princess Bride*), but that is how legendary Italian director Massimo Castri and his designer Maurizio Balò conceived this story of deprivation and slow decline to a *Finale di partita*, but their imagery seems more Chekov than Beckett. The play, in the standard Carlo Fruttero translation published by Giulio Einaudi Editore S. P. A., opened at the Teatro delle Passioni in Modena on 30 March 2010 and has been touring Italy's wonderful Teatri di Stabili since, quite successfully, we might add. I caught up with it at Teatro Elfo Puccini in Milan in May of 2011.

Much of this production is then ill-conceived and even misdirected, the legendary Castri taking on his first Beckett production and seeing it through his own lens. Nagg and Nell (played by Antonio Giuseppe Peligra and Diana Hobel) are astonishingly young and energetic, bouncy, even, for instance. The reptilian Nagg ferociously testing the air with his flickering tongue is almost obscene. Deprivation is everywhere in the text, but visually the laundry staff functions well enough. Nagg and Nell's garments are freshly washed, ironed, and starched, even, as are those of Hamm and Clov; the single exception is the light Ketchup stains that remain on Hamm's handkerchief. In something of a Naturalistic touch, Hamm's gaff is here a fireplace poker, fine for adjusting burning logs in the fireplace, but Hamm couldn't use it to propel himself in the best of days. But the hard drinking, chain smoking Castri is an important director who gets the most from his actors, and his *Finale di partita* won Italy's "Premio Ubu" as production of the year in 2010. And, one must say, that the acting was superb, alternately tender and sadistic, at least from the principals. Nagg and Nell threatened to bounce out of their oversized bins at each emergence, like Jack and Jill in a box.

I was asked to contribute an essay for the program as originally planned and to offer a lecture on the play at the

University in Modena, mostly to students in the English literature program, both of which I did. I watched some rehearsals in March of 2010, and even then, with neither set or costumes fully realized, it seemed clear that Castri's conception of the play would be more personal than faithful, more Castri than Beckett. My essay, "The favorite of my plays: Beckett's *Endgame*," opened with an overview of the play, and this two paragraph prelude was translated and published in the original short version of the program. But it must have suggested a certain incongruity since my overview bore little resemblance to what the audience would actually see in Castri's production. In fact, it probably introduced a certain confusion. The longer essay was never translated, presumably because the full program with a number of essays was never produced—a casualty of the new austerity that has hit Italian theatres in the 2010 Berlusconi budget. But in the touring production even my short description of the play went the way of Mother Pegg.

Castri's *Finale di partita* reinforces the fact that Italian theatre remains very independent and very much a director's theater, even when dealing with Beckett—from Giorgio Strehler's all-white *Giorni Felici* (*Happy Days*) of 1981, Strehler's only encounter with Beckett, with its massive white sheet for a mound and an upstage mirror set for the audience to see Willie in his hole and Winnie (played by Giulia Lazzarini) from two simultaneous perspectives. More recently, Andrea Adriatico's 2009 staging, again of *Giorni Felici*, was almost scandalous with Winnie (played sensuously by Eva Robin) set for a time amid heaps of apples and with the couple engaging in something like carnal embrace. Such stagings are admittedly no more "loose" than Robert Wilson's much stylized and much lauded rendition of the same play, which recently played the Strehler Milano, still sacred ground for contemporary Italian theater. Such productions, finally, tend to revitalize rather than diminish the work, Castri's included. Although his *Endgame* is not so daring, not so deviant, not so clever, not so ambitious, in fact, his take on Beckett's odd couples, nonetheless, jars us into re-recognition and reappraisal.

--S. E. Gontarski



Vittorio Franceschi and Milutin Dapcevic  
in Castri's *Finale di partita*.

# Reading Research Day Seminar

In May 1971, James Knowlson organized a public exhibition of Samuel Beckett manuscripts at the University of Reading. Opened by Harold Pinter, the exhibition included a series of lectures and seminars on Beckett's work, alongside several play productions and a one-man show. The event began a lasting association between the writer and the institution, and marks the origin of what we now know as the Beckett International Foundation. Today, Reading holds the richest collection of Beckett materials in the world, attracting over 200 visitors each year, from academics to the luminaries of theatre, film and television. This year's Beckett Research Day Seminar on 7 May 2011 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1971 exhibition, affirming the contemporary vibrancy of Reading as an international meeting place for the discussion of Beckett's work. The annual seminar, founded by Anna McMullan in 1988, attracts research scholars and enthusiasts from all over the world, and this year was no exception. Organized by the Foundation director Mark Nixon, four papers were presented, each followed by a lively discussion.

Peter Fifield, whose research addresses notions of the anti-literary in post-war writing, explored affinities between Beckett's work and that of French theorist Georges Bataille. Bataille's work utilizes Western cultural taboos surrounding sex, death and horror to forge an anti-traditional, anti-literary landscape of eroticism and decay. While the popular view of Beckett evokes the image of a respectable Nobel laureate, Fifield suggests that his work is more Bataillan than it might first appear. In *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, Bataille can help make sense of Didi and Gogol's remarks on suicide and sexual gratification. And how else might we account for the strange appeal of the dark, squalid atmosphere of *First Love*? Sex and death seem to conspire and intermingle in Beckett's texts, recalling not only Bataille's philosophical views, but also the 'dirty books' of Beckett's publishers at Olympia (Paris) and Grove (New York). Incidentally, despite the respect afforded to his work, the publishing houses that produced it drew hostile attacks from a sexually-conservative literary consensus. Fifield contended that, while Beckett's writing satisfied the criteria of a respectable literary work, there remains a kind of Bataillan transgressive character at its heart.

Beckett actively blended traditional literary forms with the transgressive and the unsavoury to pioneer a new kind of artistic work. The 'queasy satisfaction' of reading *First Love* accentuates this dynamic, whose protagonist is a model of Bataille's erotic subject—an atrophied figure at the mercy of his sexual urges. Throughout the post-war novellas we can see the Bataillan connections between violence and sexuality, pain and seduction, transgression and comfort. Fifield observed how Beckett played continually on the distaste of the reader, and argued that erotic motifs in the work destabilize dominant social norms and values—not to mention the guarded formalities of conventional literary style. As I listened, I was reminded of the

origin of the word 'perverted' in what is 'off course': we might consider Beckett and Bataille's work as that which twists the path of literature off-course, along a transgressive and unfamiliar route, or, as Fifield puts it, beyond the constraint of polite unification.

John Pilling, renowned Beckett scholar and Professor Emeritus at the University of Reading, was next to speak. Pilling explored the young Beckett's fascination with Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's novel *Volupté*. His discussion took note of Beckett's wide reading habits, which encompassed everything from Goethe and Proust to paperback romances and police procedurals. Beckett's admiration of the Western canon was touched on, along with the writer's tendency to find faults with many of Europe's leading literary figureheads. Yet Sainte-Beuve's novel, first published in French in 1834, is a strange exception. It drew no such criticism. Like Balzac and Flaubert before him, Beckett was happy to praise *Volupté* unreservedly, describing it in a letter to Thomas MacGreevy as 'very beautifully written'. High praise indeed.

While Beckett would never mould himself in the likeness of Sainte-Beuve, Pilling revealed numerous thematic similarities in their writing. There is, for instance, the philosophical significance of Sainte-Beuve's title, *Volupté*: a term conveying an encounter of the body that is likely to influence a state of mind. Pilling noted the term's relation to the suffering for an impossible, idealized object of love. For this reason, the protagonist, Amaury, is perhaps a precursor of Belacqua, betraying neurotic symptoms tempered by self-knowledge. Pilling also discussed the theme of madness in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, relating it back to similar motifs in Sainte-Beuve's novel. But the most remarkable correlation is, perhaps, the lack of action that defines the work of both writers. *Volupté* is a novel that dispenses with vivid description, opting instead for characters that do very little: an action of inaction. Pilling outlined numerous philosophical affinities between Sainte-Beuve and Beckett: the quest for intellectual peace, the Quietism of Thomas à Kempis, references to Christ, and the work of Dante Alighieri. In all, it appears that Beckett's brief encounter with *Volupté* (late 1932, early 1933) represents a meeting of minds that was never rescinded. The usual 'initial enthusiasm followed by severe critique' does not seem to apply to this difficult French nineteenth century novel, and perhaps some trace of its influence always remained.

Derval Tubridy gave a multimedia presentation that explored the dynamic between Beckett's published texts and musical/visual artists who interpret his work. She began with some of the well-known illustrations of Beckett's later texts, which were collaborations of sorts between writer and artist: examples included Dallas Henke, Jasper Johns and Stanley William Hayter. But the main focus of Tubridy's discussion was Bun-Ching Lam's *Quatre Poems/Four Songs*, an artistic work that adapts four of Beckett's poems. In correspondence with Tubridy, Lam stated that she 'chose the poems as a set as I thought they were just the right length, and work beautifully together'. Combining Beckett's words with images and music, Lam forges a visual and aural counterpoint to the poetry, and investigates the dissonance between interpretation and new

artistic creation. Tubridy played each of the artist's songs in turn, commenting on the way they seem to manipulate or suspend time; the role that silence plays in the songs was also discussed in relation Lam's description of her music as 'useless', insisting: 'I don't create statements'. The paper attested to Beckett's contemporary influence on a wide range of artistic disciplines. The examples, both musical and illustrative, go beyond simple accompaniment to achieve a kind of artistic and philosophical autonomy. Through their work, Beckett and the artists become contemporaries: their distinct contributions are conceived separately, distanced by time and culture, but are brought together to occupy the same space.

Seán Kennedy presented the final paper, a discussion of Edmund Spenser, famine memory and the discontents of humanism in *Endgame*. Using the work of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin as theoretical starting points, Kennedy suggested that Beckett's *Endgame* not only articulates a particular post-war historical moment, but reaches back to a deeper crisis, buried in the Western cultural consciousness. More specifically, while acknowledging that *Endgame* and drafts for *Watt* articulate a post-war crisis, Kennedy points to uncanny moments in the texts that evoke traumatic events in Ireland's cultural memory.

Kennedy suggests we might read *Endgame* and *Watt* as Irish Big House narratives, both of which consciously or unconsciously evoke the Irish potato famine. Irish cultural memory, in this sense, operates like a ghost that haunts Beckett's post-war writing, signalling the return of events that have been repressed. While Benjamin noted the affinity between civilisation and barbarism, Edmund Spenser

was its walking example in Ireland's Early Modern period. Spenser represented a supposedly 'civilized' occupying socio-political force that 'barbarically' supported and extended the impact of the famine on the Irish people. What is special about Beckett's work, in Kennedy's account, is that it evokes the spectres of famine memory and historical exploitation in ways that other, more directly political Irish writers (W. B. Yeats) often denied (or resisted). While Beckett never explicitly addressed or discussed such historical issues in his work, Kennedy drew compelling examples from manuscripts and published texts where the 'whisper of the famine' might be heard. Whether such textual references can be empirically stabilized to specific historical moments or not, Kennedy made a convincing case, and I for one will not see *Endgame* in quite the same way again. Beckett's writing, in this sense, is not simply confined to an immediate socio-historical context, but is also valuable as a broader critique of the Western humanist project.

The Beckett International Foundation at Reading continues as a vital wellspring of lively debate and rigorous academic critique. As the launch of the Beckett Digitization project offers greater online accessibility to archival materials, the appeal of Reading continues to lie in its personal touch—whether as a place to see original documents and manuscripts, or as a friendly and collaborative space to exchange new ideas. The next BIF Research Day Seminar will be held in April/May 2012, and an international conference on Beckett's work is already pencilled in for September 2013.

--Rhys Tranter

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## SAMUEL BECKETT SUMMER SCHOOL 2012

15–20 July 2012

Trinity College Dublin

Following from the success of last year's inaugural Samuel Beckett Summer School, the School of English and the School of Drama, Film and Music, Trinity College Dublin, are proud to announce the 2012 Samuel Beckett Summer School. Each year we will invite the world's foremost Beckett scholars to present new lectures and seminars on all aspects of Beckett's works.

Confirmed speakers for 2012: Enoch Brater, Terence Brown, Andrew Gibson, Jonathan Heron, Seán Kennedy, Declan Kiberd, Ulrika Maude, Emilie Morin, John Pilling

There will be four seminars:

- **Beckett and Irish Culture, 1929–1949:** Seán Kennedy
- **Beckett's Manuscripts:** Mark Nixon & Dirk Van Hulle
- **Performance Workshop:** Jonathan Heron
- **Reading Group:** John Pilling

There will be multiple performances during the week, including a performance of *Rockaby* by Rosemary Pountney.

The website for the Summer School: [www.beckettsummerschool.com](http://www.beckettsummerschool.com)

The Summer School will be preceded by the conference "Beckett and the State of Ireland: Irish Beckett – Global Beckett" at UCD on 13–14 July. We encourage participants to attend both events.

Beckett and the State of Ireland conference: <http://beckettucd.wordpress.com>

REGISTRATION FOR THE SUMMER SCHOOL WILL BEGIN IN JANUARY 2012.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### Beckett and the State of Ireland Conference Irish Beckett - Global Beckett

July 13-14, 2012

"Famous throughout civilised world and Irish  
Free State" - *Murphy*

"Somewhere on the Ballyogan Road in lieu of  
nowhere in particular" - *Company*

Samuel Beckett's relationship to his native country continues to be one of the most exciting areas within Beckett studies, evident in the growing number of publications dealing with this concern and in the enthusiastic responses to this year's

UCD Beckett and the State of Ireland Conference and the inaugural Samuel Beckett Summer School held at Trinity College. Following the success of the 2011 conference, the organisers of Beckett and the State of Ireland are pleased to announce that the event will take place in 2012 on Friday July 13 and Saturday July 14.

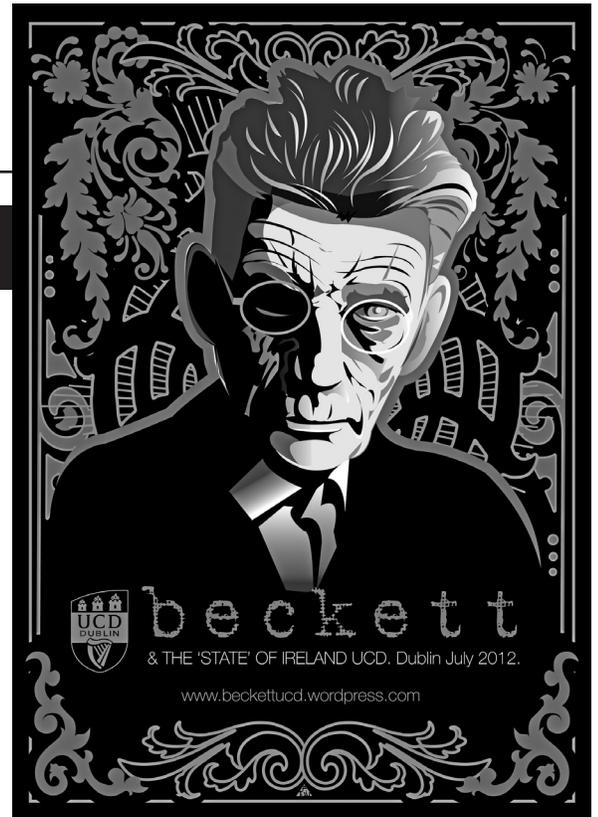
This year's conference demonstrated the richness and variety of work being undertaken in relation to the Irish Beckett, especially concerning Beckett's Irish Protestant background, the role of Irish myth in Beckett's work and the negotiation in the early texts of the political and social life of the Irish Free State. In the hope of developing these and other discussions, the organisers invite papers from graduate researchers and professional scholars concerning all facets of Beckett's relationship to Ireland. A central objective of the conference is to facilitate an interface between understandings of Beckett in Irish studies and those which circulate in the Beckett community. In particular, we welcome papers which address how Beckett's Irishness influences the international nature of his work.

Topics may include but are not restricted to:

Beckett and Nation  
Beckett and Bilingualism / Translation  
Beckett and Franco-Irish Studies  
Beckett and Contemporary Ireland

Beckett's Influence  
Beckett and Diaspora  
Beckett and the Revival  
Teaching the Irish Beckett

Abstracts not exceeding 300 words for 20 minute papers should be emailed to: **Beckettconference2012@gmail.com** The deadline for proposals is Friday February 24, 2012.



# Samuel Beckett Working Group in Osaka

The 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Samuel Beckett Working Group (SBWG) took place at the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) Conference in Osaka, Japan (7-11 August 2011). It was a lively group, with nine papers presented in the group, three papers in a main conference panel, and quite a few auditors who increased the group size to 25. The papers, which are distributed to the SBWG members two months before the meeting, stimulated extremely useful discussions in relation to a range of interesting ideas and approaches to Beckett's work. The co-conveners of the SBWG were Mariko Hori Tanaka (Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan) and Julie Campbell (University of Southampton, UK). It was an international group, with members from France, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, the UK and the US.

We began with Campbell's paper, 'Listening to the Inner Voice in *Watt*: Innovation in Narrative Form', which examined the listening activity which is such a prominent focus of the novel, and becomes an essential feature in many of Beckett's later dramatic works. This was followed by Matthias Korn's (University of Potsdam, Germany) paper, '*Quadrat I + II = Ulysses + Finnegans Wake*: Beckett illustrating Joyce'. He discussed Joyce's influence on Beckett, and his movement away from Joyce and the reliance on the word into the 'speechlessness' and 'passionate image-making' so evident in *Quad*. Cathal Quinn (Artistic Director of Mouth on Fire Theatre Company, Ireland) was next, and it was particularly useful to have a theatre practitioner involved in the group. His paper outlined his proposal to stage the radio play *Rough for Radio II* and the various difficulties involved in moving a Beckett piece from one medium to another.

Michiko Tsushima's (University of Tsukuba, Japan) paper, "'I open and close': Disclosing the Fundamental Acts of Creation in *Words and Music* and *Cascando*' followed. This paper explored the proposition that Beckett's work for radio enabled him to introduce important innovations into his work, especially in relation to the use of music. This was a carefully considered and stimulating exploration. Then Véronique Védrenne (Osaka University, Japan) presented her paper entitled 'Influences of Cinematographic Writings on Beckett's Late Drama: Recreating Theatrical Representation'. It was a fascinating examination of the way in which Beckett's reading of film practitioners and theorists (such as Eisenstein) can be considered as having an influence on his late dramatic work.

This was followed by the discussion of Munetaka Kume's (Waseda University, Japan) paper, 'An Empty body in *Footfalls*: Presence in Beckett's drama from the Viewpoint of Contemporary Art Criticism'. Kume explored the ambivalence of presence in *Footfalls*, and the ways in which May's identity shifts, and how her 'body alternates between presence and representation'. He put forward a very interesting set of ideas, provoking a useful debate. We then discussed Yuka Kakiguchi's (University of Shizuoka, Japan) paper, 'The Failed Hospitality in Beckett's Plays'. We considered her ideas in relation to Beckett's own position

as an exile, and to what extent his experiences could be seen to be reflected in his work. After that we considered Priyanka Chatterjee's (University of Calcutta, India) paper, 'Oriental Beckett'. There was great interest shown in relation to Beckett's reception in India, and Chatterjee spoke of her plans to undertake some thorough research into the translations and productions that have taken place. Our final presentation was by Yoshiko Takebe (Japan), and her paper, 'Formal Experimentation: Performance Spaces of *Happy Days* and *Rockaby*', was a carefully considered and interesting examination of productions of the two plays, with a particularly insightful comparison of a Noh Theatre production (Tessenkai, Tokyo, 2006) of *Rockaby* with Peter Brook's (*Young Vic*, 2007). It was a highly appropriate way to conclude the SBWG, with its focus on the effects of very different performance spaces in relation to both the actors and the audiences, and western and Japanese theatre traditions and innovations.



Presenters and auditors in the Samuel Beckett Working Group (Osaka, 10 August 2011)

After the two full days of the SBWG discussions, there was a Beckett panel in the main conference, with papers presented by three members of the Group. Nicholas Johnson (Trinity College Dublin), who won an award for his paper on Beckett at last year's IFTR conference in Munich, gave a paper entitled '*Nohow On: Samuel Beckett and the Tradition/Innovation Dialectic*'. Johnson argued convincingly that 'a unified definition of "the text" as a fixed object fails to capture the immanent mobility of textual development and reception'. Takeshi Kawashima (Hiroshima University, Japan) explored 'Postcolonial Tradition or Innovation of Irishness?: Samuel Beckett's Translation of Robert Pinget's *La Manivelle*'. His paper suggested that Beckett's translation of Pinget's work can be interpreted as involving a criticism of England's colonial past in relation to Ireland. Conor Carville's (University of Reading, UK) paper, 'Absorption, Distraction and Theatricality in the Teleplays' brings the art critic Michael Fried's ideas of absorption and theatricality into a discussion of the television plays, *Ghost Trio* and ...*but the clouds*... It was an illuminating discussion, and Carville used slides with good effect to illustrate his thesis.

A workshop was organized for the following evening, led by Jonathan Heron (Artistic Director of Fail Better Productions and IATL Teaching Fellow at the University of Warwick, UK), Johnson (Lecturer in Drama at TCD), who specializes in practice-based research and is a professional actor and theatre director, and Rieko Suzuki (Rikkyo University, Japan), who is a professional theatre performer and has produced and performed Beckett's short plays. She

worked with Shogo Ota at his Tenkei Gekijo, one of the world-famous Japanese avant-garde theatre groups in the 1970s and 80s.

This was a three-hour workshop, and in the first hour Heron led a session that used rehearsal methods to explore Beckett's theatrical texts, specifically Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* and Mouth in *Not I*. The focus was on the use of voice and stream-of-consciousness, and we were able to investigate in practice the performance patterns and generative tensions involved in staging Beckett's work. In the second hour Johnson's session was designed to enhance our awareness of physical and gestural aspects of Beckett's texts, and to show how physically embodied explorations—particularly of 'non-dramatic' texts such as prose or poetry—can benefit researchers as well as artists, and introduced us to some basic strategies for such research, encouraging us to consider wider issues concerning narrative, language, silence, and the creation of meaning. Finally Suzuki's session focused on May's walking in *Footfalls*, using the Noh techniques and foot movements [*hakobi*]. She explained how the foot movements restrict the body and what will be lost and gained by such restrictions. She also showed us video clips of one of her own performances of the role. The images were strong and powerful, and effectively conveyed the affinity that exists between Japanese dramatic techniques and Beckett's work, helping to explain the high regard in which he is held among Japanese scholars and theatre practitioners. It was a useful evening, creating a valuable learning experience, allowing the participants to engage in Beckett's work practically and gain new insights into dramatic techniques and a range of approaches to the challenges Beckett presents in relation to performance.

This was the first year in which the decision was made to include our own specific panel in the main conference, and organize a workshop to explore Beckett's work from a practical perspective. Both proved very useful additions, providing the group with a stronger presence in the conference proceedings, and were certainly highly appreciated by all those who participated.

--Julie Campbell

## Beckett and Philosophy in New Brunswick

On 7 April 2011, Jean-Michel Rabaté and Arka Chatopadhyay chaired a session on 'Samuel Beckett and the Encounter of Philosophy and Literature' at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual NEMLA Convention in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The panel sought to throw new light upon the much talked about Beckett-philosophy interface and Beckett's changing philosophical reception, from Esslin's absurdist labeling to Badiou's acknowledgement of Beckett as an affirmationist philosopher, or better still the emergence of Critchley's Beckett toying with philosophy through laughter. A number of philosophical concerns motivated the session: the long and heterogeneous list of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers writing on Beckett; Beckett's own diverse philosophical reading; the philosophers appropriating Beckett for their system building as well as the curious resistance to this in his works; Beckett's works as a battleground for the conflict between the linguistic turn to philosophy and its critique, between nihilism and resistance to nihilism, between the end of philosophy and a return to philosophy; and finally the emergence of a philosophical school within Beckett Studies.

The time allotted for the seminar was two hours and we had eight speakers, each making a brief 10 minute presentation, leaving about half an hour for a question-answer session at the end. According to the conventions of the conference we had already read each other's papers, sharing them among ourselves well before the session. We had a large number of delegates auditing the session, including the panelists of the other Beckett session which was a part of the conference.

Our first speaker was Richard Marshall, a PhD candidate at Institute of Education, London University. His paper was titled 'The Illusory Nothing of Endon's Affence'. He analyzed the game of chess in *Murphy* as a

### CALL FOR PAPERS

The 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Beckett Working Group will convene at the next IFTR conference in Santiago, Chile, 22-28 July 2012. It will be an open topic related to Beckett's Theatre work. Please send title and short abstract by 1 December to Prof. Linda Ben-Zvi: lindabz@post.tau.ac.il.

Hori Tanaka and Julie Campbell are planning to organize additional Working Groups in December 2012 in Tokyo and in September 2012 in Southampton. The theme will be 'Samuel Beckett: Past, Present and Future'. The plan would be to hold it over one weekend and include a performance of a Beckett play and a workshop (details to be confirmed). If you are interested in participating in either of these meetings please do get in touch:

Julie Campbell: j.campbell@soton.ac.uk (Southampton, UK);

Mariko Hori Tanaka: junsetsuan@orange.plala.or.jp (Tokyo, Japan)

depiction of 'nothingness' connecting it with Roy Sorenson's work on the 'impossible object'. He dwelt on the contradictions regarding the knowability and expressibility of nothingness, resolving them with recourse to Sorenson's logical grids of 'negative reality' and 'counter-privacy'. Our second speaker Sean Ward, a PhD candidate at Duke University, presented on *Watt*. His paper was titled 'Beckett's *Watt*, Potentiality, and Allegorical Exhaustion'. He read Beckett's novel and the protagonist's subversive linguistic torsions vis-à-vis Agamben's conception of 'bare life', showing how Beckett informed Agamben's notion with a trace of alternative potentiality by toppling the sovereign law of language. Up next was Professor Jean-Michel Rabaté from University of Pennsylvania. The title of his presentation was 'Bataille and Beckett: From the Impossible to Unknowing'. He concentrated on the asymptotic interface of Bataille and Beckett in their markedly different rejections of Sartrean humanism and the subsequent pursuit of a radical anti-humanism. The presentation opened up a new space for Beckett's critique of the humanist project in relation to the Derrida-Agamben dialogue on the human animal. Thereafter, it was Christopher Langlois' turn to present his paper, "'Cease to Exist in Order to Be: *Worstward Ho* between Badiou and Deleuze'. Christopher, a PhD candidate at the University of Western Ontario, offered a reading of *Worstward Ho* which tried to counterbalance Badiou's conceptual emphasis in his article on Beckett's prose piece with Deleuze's general insistence on the texture of a literary text and his particular stress on Beckett's poetics of stuttering. He argued that as opposed to Badiou's unabashedly philosophical reading, interpreting *Worstward Ho* along the lines of Deleuzian creative ontology would do more justice to the literary quality of the work.

Our next speaker Peter Steeves, a professor of Philosophy at DePaul University, presented his paper 'The Space of a Door: Mourning, Memory, Madness, Beckett'. For the presentation he focused on Beckett's poem 'my way is in the sand flowing' and approached it with the most fundamental philosophical problems like the relation between identity and the temporal flux with references to Heraclitus and Theseus' Paradox. Our next presenter was Matthieu Protin, a PhD candidate at Université Paris 3 and his paper was titled 'Elective Affinities? Beckett's Theatre between Denial and Philosophy in Action'. He argued that Beckett's chosen philosophers (e.g., Geulincx, Schopenhauer and Mauthner) were all theatrical in their own right. Focusing on Beckett's theatrical use of philosophical images in the plays and the erasure of particular references generating a conceptual fabric, he offered a caveat for the philosophical reading of Beckett's works. Matthieu also explained Beckett's self-proclaimed theatrical ignorance as a strategic naïveté whereby he tried to dissociate himself from the overarching contemporary figure of the ideologically committed writer. James Martell, a PhD candidate at University of Notre Dame, was our penultimate speaker and his paper was titled 'Derrida Beckettian specter'. Martell's presentation approached

Derrida's writings as a philosophical double of Beckett's focusing on shared images and metaphors like the hedgehog in Beckett's *Company* and the same in Derrida's 'Che cos'è la poesia?' His presentation drew attention to Beckett and Derrida's shared concern with the alterity of death as the unspeakable secret of language and the problematic definition of the poetic in their works. Arka Chattopadhyay, an M.Phil candidate at Jadavpur University, was the last presenter. My paper was titled "'Profounds of Mind": Thinking the Thought in Thought and Beckett's Locus of Stirrings'. It dealt with Beckett's foregrounding of the locus in his later prose texts and Alain Badiou's definition of philosophy as a locus of thought qua thought. I argued that an interpenetration of Beckett's literary locus with Badiou's *locus philosophicus* would enable us to see how Beckett exhausted the function of philosophy by performing the philosopher's task on his own.

During the interaction at the end there were many interesting exchanges among the presenters. The panelists of the other Beckett session on translation came up with an important question of how to reconcile Beckett's abstract philosophical interpretation with the historically rooted political and cultural readings within the Irish context. While Christopher observed that they should remain dialectical strands within Beckett Studies, I tried to emphasize the openness of the Beckettian text which allowed the coexistence of contradictory perspectives. Was the Berkleyan coda of *Film* a philosophical intertext, a cinematic axiom or homage to the Irish philosopher? An answer could come only in the form of a Beckettian equivocal silence. Professor Rabaté pointed out the subtle difference between the terms 'abstraction' and 'subtraction' in case of a prospective over-determination of the philosophical in Beckett's works. There was an intriguing discussion regarding Beckett's use of deviant logic and the impossibility of reducing his texts to a propositional logical structure. Richard Marshall came up with a caveat for reading almost anything and everything in Beckett by reminding us of the writer's very precise intentions and his disappointment with productions that took liberty with his instructions. Marshall's provocation led us to the controversial question of where to punctuate the openness of the Beckettian text. Appropriately, this issue of drawing a limit coincided with the necessity to draw the session to a close: we had run out of time. The seminar provided fresh insights into Beckett's love/hate encounter with philosophy. As expected, very few conclusive answers were reached, but some important questions were iterated and reiterated in the process. The session was favourably received by the audience.

--Arka Chattopadhyay

## CALL FOR PAPERS / APPEL À CONTRIBUTIONS

Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui (SBT/A), vol. 26 (2014)  
"Revisiting the Trilogy / Revisiter la trilogie"  
Coedited by David Tucker, Mark Nixon, Dirk Van Hulle

We are soliciting 5000-word articles in either English or French for SBT/A 26 (2014), "Revisiting the Trilogy." Submissions should conform to the SBT/A Guidelines for Contributors, available in both languages on The Samuel Beckett Endpage along with model articles. See <http://www.ua.ac.be/beckett> - "Beckett Journals."

Deadlines: proposals of approximately 250 words by 31 January 2012; completed articles by 31 January 2013. The results of the refereeing process will be communicated by 31 May 2013.

The years since James Knowlson's 1996 biography have seen Beckett studies become a considerably broadened field. With recourse to archival materials in the form of correspondence, manuscripts, reading notes, notebooks and diaries, and the adoption of new and innovative critical paradigms taking inspiration from diverse disciplines and rapidly evolving theory, scholars have explored Beckett's creative processes and their contexts and outcomes in divergent and fascinating ways.

During this period, the status held by Beckett's 'trilogy' of novels *Molloy*, *Malone meurt/Malone Dies*, and *L'Innommable/The Unnamable* as a pinnacle of

Beckett's achievements in prose has rarely been put into question. It might therefore be expected that scholarship of the recent period would have a proportionately high focus on these novels. Yet, although there have been some striking new readings, the three novels do not feature as extensively in the critical discourse of the past fifteen years as their often-cited positions of prominence within Beckett's oeuvre might lead one to expect. With the wealth of resources and critical approaches that are now available, a concerted reengagement with these novels seems not only possible, but also increasingly desirable.

Contributors are free to approach Beckett's novels as stand-alone works or to situate them in the 'trilogy' or to tackle the issue of their place in Beckett's oeuvre or the canon. Might the scholarly approaches that have brought much light to some of Beckett's other works add to the new ways of reading these novels? Do these novels pose specific problems for otherwise recently successful approaches? The trilogy, a series of novels so concerned with the very nature and possibility of questions, also raises some important questions for Beckett studies at this time. "Revisiting the Trilogy" will go some way to addressing them.

Please submit queries, proposals, and completed articles via email to David Tucker: [d.a.tucker@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:d.a.tucker@sussex.ac.uk)

## COMPARATIVE DRAMA CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPERS



Conference: *Text & Presentation*: 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Comparative Drama Conference  
Location: Baltimore's Inner Harbor  
Conference Dates: March 29-31, 2012  
Proposal Deadline: December 3, 2011

Papers reporting on new research and development in any aspect of drama are invited for the 36<sup>th</sup> Comparative Drama Conference, sponsored by Stevenson University at Pier 5 Hotel in Baltimore's Inner Harbor, March 29-31, 2011. Papers may be comparative across nationalities, periods and disciplines; and may deal with any issue in dramatic literature, criticism, theory, and performance, or any method of historiography, translation, or production.

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Paula Vogel** will be the feature speaker in this year's keynote panel.

Papers should be 15 minutes in length and should be accessible to a multi-disciplinary audience. Scholars and artists in all languages and literatures are invited to email a 250 word abstract (with paper title, author's name, institutional affiliation, and postal address at top left - please also include any technical requirements for your presentation such as powerpoint or slide projectors, DVD/VHS, etc. - please note, AV that is not requested with the abstract cannot be guaranteed) to the Conference Director, Dr. Laura Snyder, at [cdc@stevenson.edu](mailto:cdc@stevenson.edu) by December 11, 2011.

Select papers will be published in *Text & Presentation*, an annual book series published by McFarland and edited by Graley Herren.

**The Samuel Beckett Series**  
**« La Revue des Lettres modernes »**  
**Lettres modernes Minard**

Samuel Beckett occupies a special place in our modern literature, largely as a result of his work's linguistic specificity. Indeed the diversity of genres he practiced (poems, novels, plays, film, short fiction, works for radio and television) is less important than its division between the French and English languages. This bilingual orientation affects both the status of his writing and the way researchers study his work. In spite of the considerable importance of Beckett's bilingualism, most research still privileges the part of his work composed in English. By the same token, the vast majority of critical publications originate in the English-speaking world. We thus find ourselves faced with a paradox: Beckett's work is celebrated on an international level, but its importance is somewhat relativized in the country where he took up residence.

The *Samuel Beckett Series* in the collection "La Revue des Lettres modernes" offers the opportunity for a group of researchers, dedicated to reading Beckett's bilingual work, to be heard. It provides a regular forum for dynamic scholarly exchanges studying Beckett from a linguistic point of view. The series features international contributors and is oriented toward an international readership. In an attempt to address the imbalance in Beckett criticism, the series is especially receptive to quality studies in the French language. It remains open to a multiplicity of approaches. Each volume is divided into a thematic part, followed by a section offering diverse contributions provoking reflection outside that theme.

Critical works addressing the entire Beckett canon are welcome, including both texts in French and in English (with a preference for the study of texts written or adapted by the author himself, rather than translations). Contributors and readers will most often be bilingual, this being essential for a full appreciation of this author. Nonetheless, in order to enhance communication between researchers, each of the contributions will be accompanied by a bilingual abstract. As it seems useful to enable French-speaking researchers to be aware of current research in the Anglophone world, reviews of numerous works published abroad will be undertaken systematically.

The inaugural volume, titled "L'Ascèse du sujet" ("Subjective Ascetics"), is available, and the contents are listed below. The second volume, titled "Parole, regard et corps" ("Speech, Gaze and Body"), is forthcoming. These two volumes aim both to renew the perception of Beckett's writing, to enlighten and highlight aspects at issue, and create a dynamic for future volumes. Prospective contributors should send submissions to the series editor, Llewellyn Brown at [lbrown@free.fr](mailto:lbrown@free.fr).

**SAMUEL BECKETT 1 – "L'ASCÈSE DU SUJET"**

Présentation de la Série "Samuel Beckett", par Llewellyn Brown

avant-propos, par Llewellyn Brown

I. L'ASCÉTISME ET LE CORPS

1. Le Corps en suspens dans la "Trilogie" de Samuel Beckett, par Natália LARANJINHA
2. Traité sur le mouvement ascétique chez Beckett et Kazantzakis : garder la pose, par Katerina KANELLI
3. Mutiler le corps pour abolir le désir : « Nonché la speme il desiderio », par Chiara MONTINI

II. LE DÉSIR PUR D'EN FINIR

4. *Cap au pire* et le désir d'en avoir fini, par Anthony UHLMANN
5. Beckett, en adaptant *Godot* : la peine ou pas, par Dirk VAN HULLE

III. UN SUJET INEFFECTABLE

6. Le Monologue de Samuel Beckett sur la mort : « Ne fut jamais d'autres questions », par Franz KALTENBECK
7. Excavations poétiques dans l'écriture de Samuel Beckett, par Nadia LOUAR
8. Désir textuel et inscription du sujet chez Samuel Beckett (avec Deleuze et Lacan), par Isabelle OST
9. Samuel Beckett : du désir au roc de l'existence, par Llewellyn BROWN

RÉSUMÉS (français-anglais)

V. COMPTES RENDUS DES PARUTIONS DE L'ANNÉE 2008

BRANIGAN, Kevin : *Radio Beckett: Musicality in the Radio Plays of Samuel Beckett*. (par M. BOUSQUET) – GROSSMAN, Évelyne : *L'Angoisse de penser* (par J. SIBONI) – MÉVEL, Yann : *L'Imaginaire mélancolique de Samuel Beckett, de « Murphy » à « Comment c'est »* (par I. OST) – OST, Isabelle : *Samuel Beckett et Gilles Deleuze: cartographie de deux parcours d'écriture* (par J. SIBONI) – POTHAST, Ulrich : *The Metaphysical Vision: Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Art and Life and Samuel Beckett's Own Way to Make Use of It* (par J. CAMPBELL) – VAN HULLE, Dirk : *Manuscript Genetics, Joyce's Know-How, Beckett's Nohow* (par M. BOUSQUET).

# BOOK REVIEWS

Daniela Caselli, ed. *Beckett and Nothing: Trying to Understand Beckett*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. 265pp. £60. \$79.95.

*Beckett and Nothing: Trying to Understand Beckett* is a volume of essays devoted to the theme of negation most prominently associated in Beckett scholarship with Adorno's famous essay on *Endgame*. Featuring essays by long-established scholars such as John Pilling and Enoch Brater, it also serves as an inventory of some of the most significant forays into a key Beckettian theme by scholars whose work has emerged or consolidated itself over the last decade. The book makes two claims for itself on which I would like to focus in this review. I will deal with the first of these now and turn to the second in conclusion. According to its editor Daniela Caselli, writing in her admirable introduction, *Beckett and Nothing* is "a way of taking stock of the present moment in Beckett studies." This present moment, it transpires, is one requiring a heightening of caution with regard to the manner in which new textual resources should be staged in Beckett criticism. Some of the essays here collected turn to new or newly accessible archival resources [such as the first volume of the collected letters; some simply use familiar resources (the 1937 letter to Kaun for example)]; some continue to use the biography by James Knowlson in order to cite letters; others use archival resources as the foundation of their arguments; some refer only to published texts. The caution evinced by Caselli, however, seems to describe a largely unspoken anxiety in the community of Beckett scholars when they consider the potential impact of such projects as the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project on the fabric of future Beckett research. That anxiety is however very germane to the question of the critical and hermeneutic gestures which the authors here assembled adopt when confronted by Beckett's void, meaninglessness, lessness and other potent detritus from the ebb and flow of his writing in what *Worstward Ho* calls "the vast of void atween."

The reprise of the challenge to the faculty of understanding—including critical understanding—which Adorno explored in the essay on *Endgame* reminds us one of the pillars of a potential nihilism which is so often made to announce the approach to the grounds of Beckett: that of a failure of meaning (meaninglessness). As for the second pillar, commentators have chosen between negations of either value or epistemology. Previous key contributions to the debate showed how what Steven Connor, writing in 1992, calls "economies of nothing" often serve to convert an intransigently negating or neutralising corpus into critical plenitude. In his later study of Beckett and nihilism Shane Weller reminded us that the charge of nihilism against Beckett has been notable for its surprising rarity, despite its

promising candidacy for qualifying as the "very consummation of nihilism."

The voices which in the critical heritage have sought to align Beckett with the negative in a very broad sense may be to some eyes now somewhat quaint. Adorno, Cioran, Bataille, Blanchot and Coe may have almost no common ground, but they none the less provided the vocabulary for a consideration of Beckett and the nothing, or the next-to-nothing, a nuance memorably described by Cioran as Beckett's "mélange de privation et d'infini, vacuité synonyme d'apothéose" (47). From Adorno's formalist negation, to Cioran's despair, to Bataille's absolute expenditure, to Blanchot's *désœuvrement*, the labour of Beckett's void has been acrobatic and flexible in its applications of the *pas* (the Blancottian-deconstructionist step which is also a *non-step*).

The book's first chapter by John Pilling appropriately addresses the fact that "not" is more a gesture than a word, in that it *as a word* is oriented towards the nothing. It is a "naturally re-active word...a word full of potential, playing an active role in an 'art of negation'" (21). This chapter is followed by the Lacanian reading of Mladen Dolar which largely treats Beckett's work of the negative as the labour which will produce the Real. The interstices of this essay, as indeed are many others, are haunted (albeit often distantly) by a set of discourses from the history of philosophy. This is entirely appropriate considering that Beckett was himself so drawn to debates concerning the status of the nothing as these were carried out in the philosophical tradition. The volume seeks to carve out a specific space for the nothing as such. That the space is not predetermined is gestured toward by the editor's introduction as well as, performatively, on its dust jacket by means of the graphic elision of the word "nothing." Indeed much thought has been put into these gestures of a materialisation of what one might call in pseudo-Beckettian terms as the "effing ineffable" that is the Beckettian nothing, from Enoch Brater's reflection on the empty envelope sent to him by Beckett, to the inclusion of Bill Prosser's reflections on the doodles in Beckett's "Human Wishes" manuscript. Just as the claim is that the nothing has specificity implicitly lies behind this volume, so also is that conjecture hollowed out by the very ineffability of the proposed target. Boxall figures this problematic, in a gesture which many authors in this volume repeat, as coaxing something into *viscosity*. It is a paradox entirely of a piece with the aporias of Beckett's oeuvre. The question is one of proximity and distance; of the act of scrutinising being prey to a distancing aperture such that to come close is to be flung far from the object. This indeed is a situation encapsulated in Beckett's own "neither", a text which three contributors concur addresses the absconding kernel of the Beckettian nothing.

Other studies have approached this plenitudinous void—the plenitude being the hermeneut's fulfillment.

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Shane Weller, author of the most notable study congruent with the theme of *Beckett and Nothing*, is here represented by a new essay, entitled, with appropriate economy, 'Un-words'. The novelty which Weller brings to his reading of the famous letter to Sighle Kennedy (which featured his approval for the Democritean "naught is more real" and the "Ubi nihil valet" of Geulincx) serves as a corrective to those too hasty to take these two nothings as equivalent. They represent, already in Beckett's approach to the question of the nothing, an antinomy. Whereas the nothing of Democritus is an ontological nothing, that of Geulincx is ethical. Weller's avowedly philological study of the naughts and *nihils* of Beckett's work emerges as one of the most original of the essays presented here. Among its many insights the possibility, through renewed attention to the Kaun letter, and the idea of the qualified (next-to-)nothing, of seeing *Watt* in a fresh, albeit retrospective light, in the context of *Worstward Ho*, the former text being the initiation and the latter a culmination of Beckett's literature of the unword.

Many of the contributors engage with the other most influential and impactful account, that of Simon Critchley. In each of these tributaries there lie some traces of the endurance of a set of discursive—in the consideration of the nothing (as such)—owing their origins to the encounter of Beckett's text and interpretive stratagems flavoured with existentialism. Caselli is alert to this aspect and in this regard cites Sartre and Heidegger. Stephen Thomson's chapter which features the admirable deployment of *Footfalls* as the pretext for an enriching discussion of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida represents another addition to the growing body of critical work returning to the phenomenological tradition.

Why is there something rather than nothing? This is a question which resounds not only in Beckett's oeuvre but in the reflexively-disposed exegesis conducted in its name, it circulates among legators and legatees (to reprise Boxall's chapter). They all come up with something. Even Derrida, in his suggestive evasion, turns out to have conjured a richly viscous encounter with the text he held at bay (even if in his Foreword Terry Eagleton cannot resist the familiar caricature: "The vacant subject is not always more progressive than the replete one"). The remarkable afterlife of Derrida's statement on not-Beckett is testified to by the sheer number of occasions it is invoked in Beckett scholarship. The legatees want the master of the *sous-rature* to have said something about Beckett; his nothing is a small something and out of it they can conjure a world.

This serves to remind us of the place of negation in dialectical thought: supercession (Hegel) or non-supercession (Nietzsche). "[P]reserve and maintain what is superseded"

wrote Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It seems that each contributor can be located somewhere along this axis. Negate the negation or perpetuate it and offer it hermeneutic shelter. Enoch Brater's empty envelope thus performs the role for this volume of the purloined letter in Poe. It is worn on the book's sleeve, but not all will see it. It is a matter of who is looking and where.

It is on just such a note that Catherine Laws concludes her study on Beckett's silence, a silence which she is quick to point out, must be differentiated from that which one associates with John Cage. The silence with which Englebarts is concerned in his essay is a critical one concerning the status of Beckett's (or indeed not-Beckett's) *Film. Film*, as far as film specialists are concerned, comes to Nothing. Jonathan Bignell makes a worthwhile addition to his research on Beckett's work for television by evoking the inherently ghostly aspect of television broadcasting, especially when considered in the context of the technology of its time. Russell Smith's nothing is derived from the Heideggerian notion of anxiety and offers the notion of feeling Beckett's nothing rather than knowing it, an essentially Kantian hesitation which the chapter is all about. Smith styles it an ethics of interpretation apt to the times—the times evoked in terms which echo those of the editor.

The hesitation at a threshold, or the loitering between inside and outside, is evoked also in Derval Tubridy's study. If Tubridy's is well-wrought then the contribution of Laura Salisbury is to be singled out for the remarkable effect it has of rendering palpable Beckett's generative void. Salisbury's writing evokes very well the pressure of the abscess and the trepanning evisceration of the pus of these toxic pockets (through sockets). Beckett's bore-holes in the skull offer new cranial orifices of perception; boring a hole releases the ooze, or the generative void.

Aside from purporting to be a window on to the current state of Beckett studies, the other claim made for the book comes not in the interior but on the book's dust-jacket. Beckett readers of long standing will have come across tributes to the author which themselves evoke in their time something of the present moment of critical reception (as indeed the recently published Faber editions will do of theirs). This, however, is the first time the present reviewer has encountered a volume of Beckett essays identified as "case-studies to be used in the classroom." Fortunately the inclusion of this phrase perhaps tells us more about the current constraints facing academic publishing than, it turns out upon scrutiny of the contents, it does about the twelve chapters here assembled.

--Garin Dowd

# BOOK REVIEWS

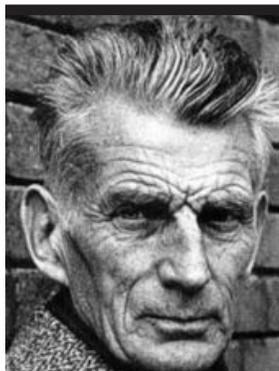
Laura Cerrato, with illustrations by Enrique Alcatena, *Samuel Beckett para principiantes*. Buenos Aires: Era Naciente, 2010. 176pp. AR\$39.90. US\$9.

In his 1937 letter to Axel Kaun, Samuel Beckett defines language as “a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it.” Faithful to this quest, in *Samuel Beckett para principiantes* [for *Beginners*], Laura Cerrato proposes a biography of Beckett presented as a journey towards a “literature of the unword,” a “poetics of failure.”

Laura Cerrato has been the leading authority on Beckett in Argentina for many years; she has published extensively, organized and led the Beckett Seminar at the University of Buenos Aires, and directed the specialized journal *Beckettiana*. Enrique Alcatena is an Argentine il-

lustrator whose work has been published both nationally and internationally, in the UK with D. C. Thompson and Fleetway, and with Marvel and Eclipse, in the USA.

Argentina in general and Buenos Aires in particular have enjoyed a long relationship with Beckett’s work; suffice it to say that the first edition of *Waiting for Godot* in Spanish was published in Buenos Aires in 1954, translated by the Argentine Pablo Palant and revised by Beckett himself. Moreover, the first staging of *Godot* in the Spanish-speaking world took place in Buenos Aires in 1956. It is unsurprising, then, that the series “Para Principiantes” has chosen Samuel Beckett as the subject-matter for their new volume. “Para Principiantes” is meant as an introduction to the life, works, and thought of capital figures in the history of Humanities; the Beckett volume, however, will be appreciated by both beginners and experts. Cerrato convincingly balances an informal register and an in-depth study as she



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deals with complex philosophical and literary matters. In *Samuel Beckett para principiantes*, text and image are accompanied by an index of works and names, a list of relevant internet websites, and a bibliography, which is limited to books edited in Spanish. From the beginning, Cerrato engages the reader with Beckett's paradoxes, ambiguities, and uncertainties. However, she introduces intricate concepts both clearly and concisely and, as she explicitly mentions all major sources, readers are able to continue their research, should they wish to do so.

The most interesting feature in *Samuel Beckett para principiantes*, however, is that it combines text with illustrations in comic format, featuring one panel per page and speech bubbles, along the lines of the popular "For Beginners" series in English. The page layout effectively reinforces the interaction between text, illustrations, and the text contained within the illustrations. While the text deals with Beckett's life, works, and thought in the third person, the text within the illustrations offer a first person narrative in which the characters themselves summarize the concepts analyzed on the page. Simultaneously, Alcatena's illustrations help visualize the characters, their surroundings, and their moods. Text and image, therefore, interact with and illuminate each other, adding layers of meaning and potentiating readings. *Beckett para principiantes* constitutes a high-quality introductory study of the life, thought and works of Samuel Beckett which will certainly contribute to the formation of Spanish-speakers readers and audiences of Beckett's texts and plays.

--M. Cristina Figueredo

Rina Kim, *Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 224pp. £50. \$80.

Like Phil Baker's path-breaking 1997 study *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis*, Rina Kim's monograph on *Beckett's Lost Others* demonstrates how a sophisticated psychoanalytic reading of Beckett, one which avails itself of new archival and manuscript materials, can be highly illuminating. Like Baker, Kim avoids the trap of playing the Freudian (or in this case Kleinian) detective by applying a pre-conceived theoretical position onto the texts. Rather, Kim seems alert to the ways in which Beckett enlists and encrypts aspects of Freudian and Kleinian thinking on mourning and melancholia into his work in a way which is integral to and integrated into the texts themselves. In this sense, we may suggest that both Kim and Baker, despite disagreements on certain details, pursue a fundamentally similar reading method which Baker describes as "less a psychoanalytic 'reading' of Beckett's work than an attempt to read the psychoanalytic and quasi-psychoanalytic material which is already present in certain texts."

Since Baker's study and since the TCD Psychology Notes have been available to scholars, we have been alert to the major formative influence psychoanalytic thought had on Beckett. James Knowlson's biography and *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (Volume 1) confirm Beckett's own psychoanalytic therapy as a psychological turning-point for the young writer. The difficulty, as always in Beckett scholarship, is to avoid an over-determined "neatness of identifications." Kim has admirably grounded her study in the "empirical links" which exist between psychoanalytic theory and Beckett's writing (in the form of the notes Beckett took during his own therapy 1934-35), just as Baker was able to demonstrate a greater than hitherto appreciated debt to Freud. The novelty of Kim's research is her exposition of the "tenacious trace" of female figures in Beckett's writing career and the link between psychoanalytic theories of loss, reparation and abjection (variously quarried from Kristeva, Freud and most notably Melanie Klein) and these recurrent and increasingly spectral female figures in Beckett's later drama and prose.

We are all by now familiar with evolution of the female figure in Beckett's writing from the early aloof caricatures in *Dream* and *More Pricks Than Kicks* to the no less derisive presentation of Miss Counihan in *Murphy* and the extreme caricature of the mother in *Molloy*. Kim usefully connects the often violent abjection of such figures with the psychoanalytic conception of the lost or damaged object. If Beckett rejected the 'motherland' in desperation in 1937, this rejection was not without psychological consequences. As Kim persuasively argues: "those female figures who are rejected and expelled by the male protagonists as well as ridiculed by the narrators in Beckett's early fiction do not seem simply to 'expire' [...] Instead they leave an indelible imprint on the author's mind." Therefore, the "ghost loved ones" with whom Beckett contended in his later work include, of course, his own mother May Beckett and his cousin and first love Peggy Sinclair. Equally, the ghostly presence of the south County Dublin landscape, so beautifully captured in Eoin O'Brien's *The Beckett Country*, is hauntingly reintegrated into the late prose works as if Beckett unconsciously (or, as Kim's analysis suggests, consciously) wanted to "be again" in his own country of origin.

In this analysis, the hinge text turns out to be *All That Fall*, written in English in 1956, and set in Foxrock. The slightly hysterical antics of Maddy Rooney are read by Kim as the beginning of a long process of reparation whereby the female subject and the "motherland" are brought back into Beckett's work but invested with the tropes of guilt, mourning and the need, in Kleinian terms, to reintegrate the "good object" in order to complete the work of mourning which exile, arguably, brings in its wake. On this view, Freudian melancholia represents an incomplete and arrested process of mourning since it represents a pathological incapacity to mourn and then readjust. Thus, for Kim, in certain key texts, such as *Molloy* and the *Novellas*, both women and Ireland must be rejected and psychologically banished in order for

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the male protagonists to maintain their “onwardness.” The latter part of Kim’s monograph traces the psychological cost of such a process and suggests that a long-range process of readjustment must involve a Kleinian act of reparation.

While Kim is at pains to show Beckett’s documented debt to psychoanalysis and while Kleinian thinking is correctly shown as influential (we learn from Deirdre Bair that Beckett asked his cousin Dr Peter Beckett about the differences between Freudian and Kleinian analysis in 1960 in Paris suggesting that Beckett maintained an interest in developments in the psychoanalytical field), there is a suspicion at times that Beckett may not be proceeding as deliberately as Kim’s close and impressive analysis suggests. After all, Baker reminds us that there is a tension between Beckett and psychoanalysis which he describes as a “hostile dialogue” whereby Beckett both integrates but also ridicules psychoanalytical material (Molloy’s relationship with his mother and the so-called ‘Obidil’ in *Molloy* being the most blatant examples). Surely in the later texts—especially *Company*, *Ill Seen Ill Said* and *Worstward Ho*—Beckett proceeds, to a greater extent than previously, in an unconscious or uninhibited way.

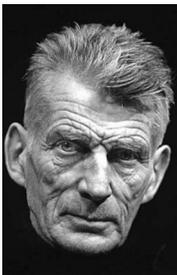
There is a gulf between Beckett the notetaker of the 1930s and the late Beckett where, Kim rightly discerns, the act of mourning lost objects is most conspicuous and where arguably “empirical links” are less important. In this sense, psychoanalysis may have entered the Beckettian bloodstream in a less deliberate, but also more ambiguous, way than Kim allows. There is an important sense in which the Beckettian resistance to connecting with the loved or lost object is bound up with this hostility to psychoanalysis because of that discourse’s tendency to emphasise interdependence rather than independence. Whether such ‘attacks on linking’ can be fully explained in terms of Freudian melancholia and the masculine need to ‘expel’ the unwanted feminine object is an open question. In some ways, the Beckettian subject rejects all connections, all emotions and, in the process, subverts all discourses.

Nonetheless, Kim’s book is a fine contribution to the psychoanalytic literature on Beckett. Connecting as it does with both feminist and Irish perspectives on Beckett, this welcome and timely study will be of interest to a broad community of Beckett scholars.

--Ben Keatinge

## New and Forthcoming

- Astro, Alan. *Understanding Samuel Beckett*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2011. ISBN-10: 1611170044, ISBN-13: 978-1611170047.
- Banier, François-Marie and Viviane Forrester. *Beckett*. Göttingen: Steidl, 2011. ISBN-10: 3865219837, ISBN-13: 978-3865219831.
- Brater, Enoch. *Ten Ways of Thinking About Samuel Beckett: The Falsetto of Reason*. London: Methuen Drama, 2012. ISBN-10: 1408137224, ISBN-13: 978-1408137222.
- Carpenter, Charles A. *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett: A Selective Bibliography*. London: Continuum, 2011. ISBN-10: 144118421X, ISBN-13: 978-1441184214.
- Craig, George. *Writing Beckett's Letters*. Paris: Sylph, 2011. ISBN-10: 0956509274, ISBN-13: 978-0956509277.
- ---, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn, and Lois More Overbeck, eds. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume 2: 1941-1956*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. ISBN-10: 0521867948, ISBN-13: 978-0521867948.
- Poole, Adrian. *Joyce, Eliot, Auden, Beckett: Great Shakespeareans*. London: Continuum, 2012. ISBN-10: 144118743X, ISBN-13: 978-1441187437.
- Stewart, Paul. *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ISBN-10: 0230108814, ISBN-13: 978-0230108813.



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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When one leaves the *vaporetto* to arrive at the Giardini and wander through the main exhibits of the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale currently on show, it is impossible to miss the Spanish pavilion. The first one to the left, it displays a fascinating array of texts, films, videos and objects that even include artworks. Its overarching and slightly mystifying theme is "the Inadequate." If you are lucky, you'll get the full treatment: a young man, looking like a panhandler or a disheveled homeless, will hand you a sheet of paper as you enter. The paper is covered with a series of incomprehensible words while the young man mutters plaintively. When visitors try to give him small change to get rid of him, he refuses it. Then, suddenly, he stops his muttering and seems to have a fit. Screaming and kicking, he starts jumping around, elegantly and wildly dancing through the maze of the displays. By that time, you have understood that he is an actor who adequately embodies the "Inadequate." This is why he can also translate very competently lectures in English on the question of "artists without a work" (also a regular performance). The stimulating collection on the theme of "inadequacy" was put together and curated by the Spanish artist Dora García who has mostly worked with a group of people in Trieste. It is visible until the end of November 2011, and testifies to the power of high and late modernism, defined respectively by James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, on the minds of curators and contemporary art-buffs. While Joyce is the most obvious focus in this show (one sees a copy of *Ulysses* sawed through diagonally, side by side with a old and tattered copy of *Finnegans Wake* that has been spared any visible outrage; there is also a documentary film in a corner room in which we see and hear specialists like Fritz Senn and John McCourt discuss Joyce's stay in Trieste, and the links between his works and madness), the general spirit calls up Beckett.

Why Beckett? Because of the mixture of irreverent performance, chaotic archives of modernism and the striking decision to focus on failure. This is the rationale of a generic "inadequacy" that may have been felt by several artists when they are sponsored by state organizations. But here, more pointedly, by the "Inadequate," Dora García means first of all the feeling of inadequacy that the audience will experience in the awe-inspiring and forbidding environment of the Biennale. This is why she has decided to highlight the "violent fragility of everything we consider adequate," seeing in the concept "a form of dissidence, of escaping from the centre." For her, "The Inadequate responds to the need not to meet expectations, of not being what is expected of one." Thus, "inadequacy" extends beyond the realm of art, it engages with social taboo and exclusion (the work of Erving Goffman is often quoted here) and psychosis. With Dora García playing the roles of initiator, host, curator and author, we still feel the old vibrations that extend from Joyce's monumental creations to Beckett's skeptical questioning.

If we skip one pavilion, which contains a very good show on contemporary television and images painted from them directly on the TV screen, I mean the Belgian pavilion, one enters a third space in which Beckett is fully present, and quoted rather liberally. This is the Dutch pavilion, devoted to another general concept that also calls up modernist masterpieces, the concept of "Opera aperta," "open" or "loose" work (a term that calls up Umberto Eco's groundbreaking book in which he introduced not only *Finnegans Wake* but a new avant-garde to the Italian public in the early sixties). The Dutch curator Guus Beumer has combined a multi-media environment made up of an empty stage for puppets, Pirandello's creatures that can be discovered via a mirror and at the back of a screen in mid-air. There are also prepared mechanical pianos, paintings, tapestries, all of this blending work by artists like Joke Robaard, Johannes Schwartz and Barbara Visser, designer Maureen Mooren, architects Herman Verkerk and Paul Kuipers, writer Sanneke van Hassel and composer Yannis Kyriakides. They have all worked on the collaborative project of "Loose Work" by alluding to the utopia of an operatic work, the gigantic Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, with a general dramatic composition, a libretto, voices, a stage set, lighting and costumes. However, everything remains potential and has to be arranged by the viewer. And if the viewer wants to know a little more, he or she can turn to one wall on which huge reviews of the show have already been printed. One alludes to the show itself as a "first-rate failure" and is signed by Hans den Hartog Jager, a wonderful novelist, the author of *Becoming God*. His review quotes Beckett's famous "Try again. Fail again. Fail Better." There could not be a better ironic commentary on the show that we have become a part of. After that, we are ready to take more and visit the rest.

I have to stop here the narrative of my visit to the Venice Biennale, or soon I will start showing you my summer photographs. I just wanted to mention these works and the attendant critical discourse to suggest that Beckett's influence is everywhere, that it has deeply penetrated the current discourse of artists. Beckett lives in the Giardini, at the Arsenale, and in all the churches, warehouses and palazzi that dot Venice. Beckett is also quite alive in Paris, where one can see the beautiful first issue of *Samuel Beckett* for La Revue des Lettres Modernes that Llewellyn Brown has edited. Under the general heading of "L'ascèse du sujet," one finds excellent and original essays by authors who are already known to most of us, Natalia Laranjinha, Katerina Kanell, Chiara Montini, Anthony Uhlmann, Dirk van Hulle, Franz Kaltenbeck, Nadia Louar, Isabelle Ost and Llewellyn Brown himself. They treat themes like those of the ascetic body, the desire to "be done," and the ineradicable subject. The beautiful collection also contains a series of reviews on issues like the Radio Plays, Deleuze, Schopenhauer, melancholy, philosophy, and genetic criticism.

All this gives us a foretaste of the banquet that will soon be offered to us when the second volume of Beckett's Letters is finally made available. Daniel Gunn will launch the book in London and Paris at the end of September, and will also present it to those who can come to the Beckett society meeting at the next MLA in Seattle. The panel is called "Looking Back at Beckett" and is scheduled from 1:45 to 3:00 p.m. on 7 January 2012. I hope to see you all there!

And all my good wishes to all of you,  
Jean-Michel Rabaté

# NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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**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 Sheep" is forthcoming in *The Beckett Bestiary* (Cambridge UP), and she has two articles soon to be published in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*.

**Arka Chattopadhyay** is a Master of Philosophy in English scholar at Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He has completed his dissertation on Samuel Beckett and Alain Badiou. He teaches at Vidyasagar College and Presidency University as guest faculty. He has presented papers on Beckett, modern theatre, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and Bengali fiction in India and abroad, and published articles in anthologies and journals. He edits *Ashtray*, a Bengali small press magazine, and writes prose and stories in Bengali and poems in English.

**Garin Dowd** is a Reader in Film and Media at the University of West London. He is the author of *Abstract Machines: Samuel Beckett and Philosophy after Deleuze and Guattari*, co-author of *Leos Carax*, and co-editor of *Genre Matters: Essays in Theory and Criticism*. He has also published articles and papers on Samuel Beckett and Philosophy.

**M. Cristina Figueredo** has published articles on literature in both Spanish and English. She received her first degree in Literature from the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where she was a member of the Beckett Seminar. She then earned her MA in Medieval Literatures from the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York and her PhD in Medieval Literature at the Universities of York and Leeds.

**S. E. Gontarski** is the Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor of English at Florida State University. His most recent books are: *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to His Works, Life, and Thought* (with C. J. Ackerley) (London: Faber and Faber, 2006); *Krapp's Last Tape and other Short Plays*, ed. and with a "Preface" and notes on the texts by S.E. Gontarski (London: Faber and Faber, 2009); and *A Companion to Samuel Beckett*, ed. and with an introduction by S. E. Gontarski (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

**Benjamin Keatinge** is Head of English at the South East European University, Tetovo, Macedonia where he teaches English literature. He holds a doctorate on Samuel Beckett from Trinity College Dublin and he has published several articles on Beckett. He recently published (as co-editor) a volume of critical essays on

Irish poet Brian Coffey titled *Other Edens: The Life and Work of Brian Coffey* (Irish Academic Press, 2010). He has also contributed essays on poets Richard Murphy and Pearse Hutchinson.

**Seán Kennedy** is Associate Professor of English and Coordinator of Irish Studies at Saint Mary's University, Halifax. He is editor of *Beckett and Ireland* (Cambridge UP, 2010).

**James Knowlson** is Emeritus Professor of French at the University of Reading, where he founded the Beckett Archive (now the Beckett International Foundation). He was the co-founder (with John Calder) of the *Journal of Beckett Studies* in 1976 and its first editor. He was also the general editor of the four volumes of *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett* with Faber and Faber and editor of the *Waiting for Godot* and *Krapp's Last Tape* volumes. He was a friend of Samuel Beckett for almost twenty years and his authorized biographer, publishing *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* with Bloomsbury in 1996. He has written and edited many other books and essays on Beckett and modern drama, including, most recently, *Images of Beckett* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) with the British theatre photographer, John Haynes and *Beckett Remembering/ Remembering Beckett* (Bloomsbury, 2006) with his wife, Elizabeth Knowlson.

**Daniel Koczy** is a PhD candidate at Northumbria University, working on "Deleuze and The Theatre of Samuel Beckett." He is concerned with notions of encounter, failure and creation in research practice and with generating concepts towards a theatre of immanence. His recent paper, entitled 'A Crystal-Theatre: Automation and the Image in Beckett and Deleuze', is due to be published in the *Journal of Deleuze Studies* next year.

**Rhys Tranter** is a postgraduate student at Cardiff University, currently researching representations of trauma in Samuel Beckett's post-war theatre and prose. He designs, maintains, and contributes to the website "A Piece of Monologue" ([www.apieceofmonologue.com](http://www.apieceofmonologue.com)).

**Predrag Todorovic** is a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Literature in Belgrade. He is the editor of *Beket* (Sluzbeni glasnik, Beograd, 2010). He has also published articles on Beckett, Dadaism, Zenithism, avant garde, and bilingualism. He is currently working on a book about Dadaism.

## Beckett Digital Manuscript Project



We are delighted to announce the launch of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, a collaboration between the Centre for Manuscript Genetics (University of Antwerp), the Beckett International Foundation (University of Reading) and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (University of Texas at Austin). The project is supported by the Estate of Samuel Beckett, and is published by the University Press of Antwerp.

The purpose of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project is to reunite the manuscripts of Samuel Beckett's works in a digital way, and to facilitate genetic research: the project brings together digital facsimiles of documents that are now preserved in different holding libraries, and adds transcriptions

of Beckett's manuscripts, tools for bilingual and genetic version comparison, and a search engine. The project also enhances the preservation of Beckett's manuscripts.

THE BDMP CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS:

- (a) a digital archive of Samuel Beckett's manuscripts ([www.beckettarchive.org](http://www.beckettarchive.org)), organized in research modules. Each of these modules comprises digital facsimiles and transcriptions of all the extant manuscripts pertaining to an individual text, or in the case of shorter texts, a group of texts.
- (b) a series of print volumes analyzing the genesis of the texts contained in the corresponding electronic environment.

The editorial schedule of the BDMP envisages the publication of one module per year, and will run to 2037. The first electronic module, which comprises *Stirrings Still* /

*Soubresauts* and 'comment dire / what is the word', edited by Dirk Van Hulle, and the corresponding volume *The Making of Stirrings Still / Soubresauts and 'comment dire' / 'what is the word'* (Brussels: ASP/University Press Antwerp, 2011, ISBN: 9789054879121) are now available. See [www.beckettarchive.org](http://www.beckettarchive.org) for details.

The BDMP is a collaborative research project, undertaken by and for the scholarly Beckett community; we invite colleagues to participate and to comment on the project. The project relies on subscriptions (individual and institutional) by the community to ensure its continuation and successful completion.

Should you have any comments or queries, please don't hesitate to contact the project directors.

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Mark Nixon (University of Reading – [m.nixon@reading.ac.uk](mailto:m.nixon@reading.ac.uk))

## THE SAMUEL BECKETT SOCIETY

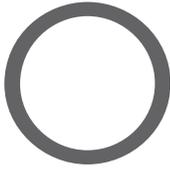
The Samuel Beckett Society is an international organization of scholars, students, directors, actors and others who share an interest in the work of Samuel Beckett. Honorary Trustees are Edward Beckett, John Calder, J.M. Coetzee, Ruby Cohn, John Fletcher, James Knowlson, and Barney Rosset.

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.

Checks made out to the Samuel Beckett Society are accepted in the following forms: U.S. dollars drawn on U.S. banks, or a money orders in U.S. dollars; Canadian dollars drawn on Canadian banks; Pounds sterling, drawn on British banks; Euros drawn on banks from the European Monetary Union; Checks in Japanese yen, Australian dollars or any other widely traded currency, so long as they are drawn on a bank using that currency.

Membership and subscription dues can also be paid in various currencies by credit or debit card online through the SBS PayPal account. Go to the Samuel Beckett Endpage ([www.ua.ac.be/beckett/](http://www.ua.ac.be/beckett/)) for more information.

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THE BECKETT CIRCLE  
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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.