THE BECKETT CIRCLE
LE CERCLE DE BECKETT
Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society

A Flaunting Humanist

Editor's Note: Ruby Cohn died on 18 October 2011, just as the fall issue of this newsletter was going to press. Several readers answered the call for brief remembrances of Ruby's life and legacy, and they are arranged alphabetically in the following pages. I especially wish to thank Linda Ben-Zvi for her advice and assistance in organizing this tribute.

The first time I met Ruby I was up in the air, literally. It was in June 1978 at the revolving restaurant on the top of the BT Telecom Tower in London, a place she had carefully chosen to host us, the newly-arrived American NEH participants for her summer seminar at the National Theatre. "A festive meal in a special place and some good wine will break the ice," she told me later. Thoughtful, thorough, generous: these are qualities Ruby had in abundance. Who else would host strangers; who else would make a special trip from London to Canterbury to search for the perfect restaurant for another "festive meal," this time for participants of a Beckett Working Group, and then swear me to secrecy about the identity of our "anonymous host."

The Beckett Working Group was actually begun because of Ruby. She and I ate in many fine and not so fine restaurants over the years, but one place where she adamantly refused to dine—or visit—was Israel, where I moved in the 1990s. She not only had fierce loyalty to friends but equally fierce hatred of injustice, which she felt Israel policies embodied. However, in June 1996—when the Oslo Accords seemed to be pointing to some possible prospects for peace (more alliterative than actual as it soon turned out)— I decided that a Beckett meeting might weaken her resolve. It did. She came, along with many Becketteers; and the happy memory of that first Working Group is captured in the beautiful photograph of Ruby that Angela and I used in *Beckett at 100*, dedicated to her, and that the *NY Times* and other publications printed in their obituary tributes.

In the *Times* piece Bill Irwin describes catching the "Beckett virus" from Ruby, who taught him the meaning of "close reading." Many would echo his words. She said of herself, "perhaps I made Beckett's acquaintance *because* I was punctilious about reading texts." Her first correspondence to him had listed errors she discovered in his novels. For Ruby it was always texts to which she returned and performances of texts, which she reconstructed from notes recorded with her ever-present flashlight/pen surreptitiously parting the dark in theatres around the world. At a time when critical theory was threatening to make close analyses of texts and performances passé, and the word "theatre" had become a metaphor for any human activity, Ruby kept this focus, although she acknowledged to me that many bright grad students were lured in other directions and this pained her.

As much as what she wrote, it was how she wrote that is part of her legacy. She hated convoluted style and sentences requiring a road map to get from the subject to the verb. Ruby always wrote simply but profoundly, few words but carefully chosen, very much in the

Ruby Cohn in Israel, 1996. Courtesy of Linda Ben-Zvi.

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spirit and tone of Beckett. She also had little patience for loquaciousness. For the plenary panel at the Sydney *Godo*t conference, she allotted participants seven minutes each to tell when and how they first encountered the play and its initial impact. Who would need more time, she assumed, and stopped speakers abruptly when they went over the limit. We all did.

Her last years were difficult, as she slowly lapsed into silence. The rooms in her assisted-living apartment looked like the set of *Ghost Trio*; and her voice, decimated by Parkinson's disease, lost its effect, echoing V's in that play. Yet while still mobile, she walked with her usual brisk step and perfect posture. She also still managed an occasional Ruby quip or sharp observation: "I'm so mad at Israel," were her last words to me.

"Ms. Cohn leaves no immediate survivors," the *Times* obituary reported. No survivors but countless descendents, who continue to cite her. Archival Beckett studies are the latest examples of the punctilious research Ruby practiced and admired. Her last published book, the monumental *A Beckett Canon*, was, she wrote, "personal, after long immersion"; but "other readers will construct a different Beckett canon." We continue to do so with a model of the kind of scholarship required and the type of scholar needed. She also wrote in that book, "I flaunt the label that has sometimes been scornfully affixed to me—humanist." A flaunting humanist; for me that best describes Ruby. Never flaunting fame, accomplishments, or honors—disdaining those who did—she proudly waved the humanist banner throughout her extraordinary life; and those of us who were her friends were enriched and changed by knowing her.

--Linda Ben-Zvi

I first met Ruby Cohn at the Shepherds Bush tube station in London in the mid-1970s. We had arranged to meet there when she invited me to go along with her to the BBC Television Studios where the now-famous version of Billie Whitelaw's *Not I* was being prepared as the third entry in the program called "Shades," one of several events organized to mark Samuel Beckett's 70th year. Unknown to me before that meeting was the fact that Ruby had just recommended one of my early essays on the play for publication in *Modern Drama*. She sent me a note to say that if by chance I happened to be in London we might be able to think of some way to get together. We did, in the first of what would become a three-decade friendship based in part on our mutual passion for theater in London and elsewhere.

Ruby had a rare and enviable talent for friendship. She did not give this lightly, but rather with her whole heart and always generously. Once you became part of her world she remained steadfast and loyal. Her attachments were based on honesty, so much so that you occasionally had to weather the not-what-you-wanted-to-hear zinger. She held the same high standards for herself, in everything she said to others and in everything she wrote for publication. In both of these she went her own way, eschewing trendenista fashions-of-the-moment and sticking to a profound belief that theater was one of the places where we could best understand ourselves and the world we live in. She never told you wanted you wanted to hear, but rather said what needed to be said.

And how much of herself she gave to a younger circle of critics, encouraging and supporting their different ways of finding their own voices as they encountered some of the same material she had so persuasively made her own. That's an amazing legacy, above and beyond the seminal studies on Beckett for which she is justly celebrated. Long before it was fashionable to do so, she was one of the first responders who helped us understand what made Beckett "Beckett." She was also one of the precious few who gave so much of herself to make sure that a new generation of "incurious seeker[s]" might be able to become the critics she always knew they could be.

--Enoch Brater

Ruby Cohn – Ruby – what a wonderful person she was. I first met her at the Beckett conference held in Blackheath, London in 1995. It was a memorable, interesting and stimulating event. It was my very first Beckett conference, but I was made really welcome. Ruby was very supportive, as she would always prove to be, and said some very nice things about my paper, which, in my position as a novice were very much appreciated. She always took the time to be supportive and encouraging, and I owe her a great deal. We became friends, and I feel so privileged to have had her as a friend. I remember all our theatre trips and the meals in fancy restaurants I so enjoyed during the summers that she spent in London.

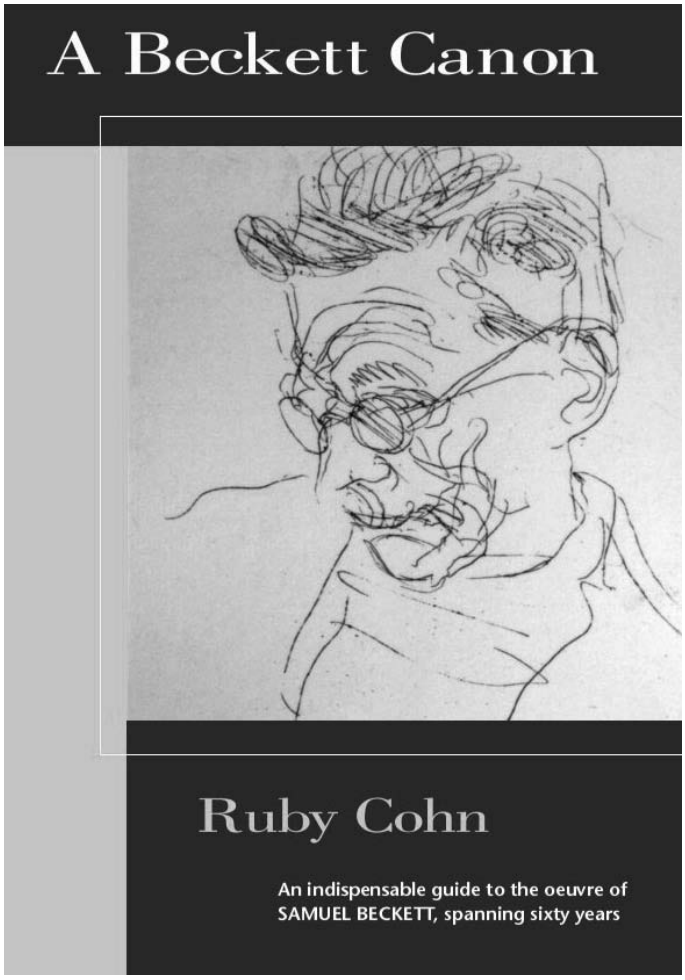
Ruby was a wonderful Beckett scholar. She has produced a wealth of important work on Beckett, which is always a pleasure to read. She was so sharp, so accurate and precise, so informative, and her work has always been enlightening, and will continue to be required reading for Beckett scholars at every level. My students often tell me how much help her critical work has been when studying Beckett's work, and this is a significant part of her importance: she always wrote with clarity, communicating her ideas in a way that never excluded readers, prompting a strong engagement and involvement. And you could always have supreme trust in all the facts and details, and it was of particular interest to hear Beckett's own comments. Ruby became a friend of Beckett's in Paris in the 1950s, a friendship that lasted for the rest of his life.

Ruby got to know my daughter when she and I came and stayed at her apartment on Liberty Street. We had a great time, and I will never forget that breath-taking view from the window of the city of San Francisco and the Bay, alongside the theatre visits, the excellent meals, and getting to know such a remarkable city alongside Ruby who knew it so well. We also took a trip to Yosemite Park, an unforgettable adventure. I miss her very much: as a friend and as a Beckett scholar. I miss her sharp incisiveness: she was always direct, always sincere, always someone you could rely on to tell you frankly what she thought – and I mustn't miss out her sense of humour: splendidly wry and ironic; a wonderful person to spend time with – what a wonderful person she was.

--Julie Campbell

When Ruby was writing her autobiographical piece for Jim Knowlson's *Beckett Remembering Remembering Beckett* in 2004 she wrote to me: 'My first sentence will be: "I met Samuel Beckett for the first time twice – once in late 1952 and once a decade later."' Then I'll go on with how I encountered the name of Beckett, and then with the meeting itself, which I'm sure you know' (11/12/2004). I first met Ruby Cohn when I fell in love with Beckett as a first-year undergraduate student in 1989, the year of his death. It was then that I became a Beckett reader, and thus, as Ruby put it in *Back to Beckett*, a student. Then I met Ruby Cohn when I finished my dissertation, on Beckett and Leopardi, five years later.

We met in Trento, where Carla Locatelli, my then thesis supervisor and now dear friend, had invited her to be visiting professor. I shall always remember how Ruby and I talked of Beckett's work while walking together to the train station, where she was heading to catch some theatre in Verona to escape the stifling Catholicism of the beautiful little town. When I go back in my memory to that half-hour long walk, in my twenties, I cannot but think of it as a turning point in my life. When I moved to England, Ruby regularly took me to the theatre (and to pre-theatre dinners where we shared our love for red wine, with fish too), taught me to walk out of it, and put me up at a time when I had no money. I gained a theatrical education: going to the Old Vic, the Almeida, the Donmar Warehouse in the 1990s was for me, not a theatre buff by any stretch of the imagination, a revelation. We went to Stratford-upon-Avon to see Katie Mitchell's *Beckett Shorts*, which we both loved. Uncharacteristically, we went to the cinema once, to see Mike Leigh's *Secrets and Lies*, which we both disliked – 'sentimental' was Ruby's one-word verdict.



She came to Reading to visit when we lived there. We breakfasted near the station, in a café that served us orange juice that Ruby said was 'as freshly squeezed as I am'. Emanuele and I visited her twice in San Francisco, where she took us to the newly rebuilt de Young museum, and to the theatre in Berkeley. We came up with the only present I remember her ever liking, a bottle of her favourite perfume, *Champs-Elyseés*, bought at the historic Jacqueline Perfumery, which she loved. I went twice more to see her in the last few years, once with my mother, with whom she got on famously, in French.

Ruby is for me the model of what it means to live according to an uncompromising critical practice. She shunned critical trends while always remaining true to the task of the critic: to close read and to explain, without giving up the passion for the work. In *A Beckett Canon* she states clearly that her aim is to share a 'renewed sense of the immediacy of Beckett's individual works' and to 'elucidate some of their difficulties'. In that same book, Ruby 'flaunt[s] the label that has sometimes been scornfully affixed to [her] – humanist' (1) and yet comfortably asserts that 'in fiction, however, feelings are only as deep as the words that convey them' (6) and that 'to linearize the life narrated by Mouth is to betray it, for the tempo, the repetitions, and the interruptions of the verbal onslaught are designed for piecemeal understanding' (317). Ruby showed us the way to overcome, in Beckett studies and beyond, the divide between 'humanists' and 'theorists'.

Ruby made it possible for me not only to think of academia as a real option, but also to find myself as a scholar. She wrote the reference that got me into graduate school, gave me crucial advice on my book on Beckett and Dante (down to suggesting its title), and, fundamentally, believed in my abilities while pointing out my shortcomings. I still cherish the very critical annotations she made in the margin of the draft introduction to my book on Djuna Barnes, whose *Nightwood* she greatly admired and whose brief correspondence with Beckett she had passed on to me. While I was wittering on about some irrelevant aspect of my own reading, Ruby wrote, next to my 'let's look at this more closely', 'let us not'. It jolted my project into a completely different direction, and helped me, like many of us who were lucky enough to be her friends, to find a more economical language in which to exist.

Ruby did not do small talk. I miss the comfortable density of our time together, feeling held by her exacting kindness, at times nervous about her inspiringly high standards. I loved her disdain of theory jargon that always went hand in hand with the ability to look at the most intractable problems with crystal-clear lucidity; her rigour and wit, in writing and conversation; her being a politically engaged woman who spoke of her choices without any self-congratulatory complacency; her being, unapologetically, a scholar; her warmth and generosity.

We found each other through Beckett, for whom, as she wrote, we shared a passion, so differently.

--Daniela Caselli

At Sterling in 19—went finally to a Beckett conference and Ruby Cohn was to give a talk, figured that would be good to hear, as in 1964 had seen her Beckett casebook at Brandeis and gotten it, and over the years read one or another of her books and liked them…. though assumed she'd dislike my book for its positions, but so what. She spoke so succinctly, easily, beautifully about the various books on Beckett she'd read recently and suddenly shockingly said also a few nice things about mine. Taken aback and obviously pleased as pudding, an hour or two later in the cafeteria introduced myself to her quickly, kneeling next to her seat at the table she was sharing with 4 or 5 of her fellowtravellers/friends….."just thought I'd say hi after all those nice things you said!"….she seemed as delighted to meet as I was, so I offered her some espresso from my ubiquitous flask (the portable machine in the room of necessity). We became fast friends. Over the years, lovely letters in her inimitable small neat handwriting…sometimes descriptive/objective, sometimes enthusiastic and so deeply warm, sometimes a cutting phrase which made you feel perhaps discarding a piece might've not been a bad idea. We met once a year in London for around a dozen years, took turns, here at home for tea or at her flat on Fleet Street. On occasion for lunch round the corner in town in that lovely old pub near her, big tables, no claustrophobia. After never more than two hours after which it was time to call it a day, she'd let on, getting tired, or we'd just run out of our all bases covered stories and dialogues. Those two hours were filled with laughter and gossip and intellectual complexities and just real pleasure. Of course there were also meetings at other places during conferences, schlepping up the hill at Monte Carlo, meeting for dinner in Amsterdam, never more than three people present. Intense and light at the same time. One day (knowing of the obsessive collecting of SB material, having seen it) she decided to give me Beckett's *Werkbuch* of the Berlin production of *Comédie*, with plenty of his handwritten changes in German and English; he'd given it to her when she'd been in Berlin with him during rehearsals. It was the most out of the blue unexpected and fabulous gift. Only after many years realized some of the truly prescient and precise insights her chapters on Beckett maintained. Walking her to the 23 bus around the corner which went straight to her house, hooking her arm into mine (and Therese's), was something I can still feel physically. She's still here.

--Peter Gidal

In spite of her serene manner and beautiful, mellifluous voice, Ruby could appear intimidating. Most people were fearful of appearing ignorant in her presence or of saying something stupid. She was very demanding in her standards and could be withering in her judgments.

I must have been both lucky and wary for, as my memory suggests and her many letters and e-mails confirm, she was nothing if not kind, supportive, loving and compassionate in all our dealings, both professional and personal. She became a dear friend as our paths crossed in various cities in Europe or the USA, at conferences, on various panels, in the occasional private shared meeting with Beckett when he was in London for rehearsals. Our correspondence (now held in the University of Reading Special Collections) runs from 1972 to 2003 and e-mails were to continue for several years after that. We met many times for delightful lunches or dinners in London and sometimes went to plays together. To my mind, she was the one critic who was looking over my shoulder as I wrote the Beckett biography in the early 1990s. Would this paragraph satisfy the Ruby Cohn litmus test? Was it accurate, perceptive and interesting enough? If it dealt with a delicate issue, would she approve of the way in which it was expressed? It had, however, always been like that. She was a severe critic but a magnificent inspiration.

It goes without saying that Ruby was a passionate lover of and expert on American and European theatre. Internationally indeed she was the *doyenne* of theatre scholars. The sheer quality of her crystal clear writing and the number and range of her books, essays and articles put us all to shame. But her dedication was an example to us all. Like so many scholars, I learned so much from her close, meticulous reading of Beckett's texts, from her descriptions of rehearsals of his plays and his directing and from her ability to pinpoint what was really worth saying in Beckett criticism.

But there were many other elements to our friendship. Her kindness when one was ill was legendary: concerned letters; constant e-mails expressing her love and support in bad times; flowers sent from the USA when my wife had cancer. Her helpfulness and hospitality while I was researching the Beckett biography were exceptional: putting me up in San Francisco; driving me to meet and interview that remarkable free spirit Kay Boyle, a long-standing friend of both Beckett and Ruby. More important was her wider concern for the community of Beckett scholars and the advancement of knowledge. I recall her asking me one day when she was working in the Beckett archives in Reading, if I would take her off for a drink immediately after work. She had, she said, something she wanted to talk to me about. This turned out to be that she wanted to donate all the Dr Johnson material that Beckett had given to her to the Beckett International Foundation that she had long supported as a Patron and Adviser. Already by then these notebooks would have been worth a small fortune. I think it was a few years later that she talked to me about donating her letters also to the Foundation. She kept her word in every respect. She thought carefully about every decision that she had to make. But once that decision was made, you could rely on her to carry it out with total honesty and scrupulousness. Ruby would never let you down.

--Jim Knowlson

Like many other postgraduate students working on Beckett, I was very much in awe of Ruby Cohn, both as a scholar, since her work on Beckett's drama was one of the central reference points of my thesis, and as the *doyenne* of Beckett Studies, whom I had heard was direct and uncompromisingly honest in her responses and judgement. These qualities I certainly encountered when we met, but I wasn't prepared for her extraordinary generosity and support, which I have cherished over the years. While she was not always en-

thusiastic about my theoretical toolbox, she could also be complimentary, and I knew that that was precious treasure coming from Ruby, and always took what she said to heart. Her integrity was matched by no other, except Samuel Beckett himself. Ruby cared deeply not just for Beckett and his work, but for the community of scholars that she called the Becketteers, and I know personally and from others how profound was her concern and generosity towards individuals, and also towards that community for whom her own research was a resource to be shared. A few years ago, I went back to her magnificent first monograph on Beckett, *The Comic Gamut*, published in 1962, and marvelled at the careful scholarship, the elegance, intelligence and wit of the writing, and the confidence of her voice. Her body of work laid the foundation for our understanding of Beckett's work, informed by her close friendship with Beckett himself, but also her expansive literary and artistic range of references and her profound knowledge of modern literature and contemporary drama as text and in performance. Across the years, *Back to Beckett*, *Just Play* and other books and edited collections have been the companions of my research, returned to again and again. *The Beckett Canon* provides a unique overview of Beckett's work, including unpublished texts, that will be a major reference work for decades to come. My most precious memories however, will be the glimpses of Ruby as a member of the WAVES during World War II, Ruby on her first meeting with Beckett, or seeing Genet and Giacometti in a café in the old Les Halles in Paris at 3am, which she sometimes disclosed after a glass of wine. These, combined with her formidable scholarship and intelligence, made her the extraordinary woman she was and will remain in our memories.

--Anna McMullan

Ruby surprised (and wowed) the audience at the Beckett in Berlin 2000 conference on illuminating for them the role objects of twentieth-century vintage play in Beckett's theater. The lipstick tube is what I recall most vividly. Hers was a memorable performance, light in tone, but wonder-inspiring in its erudition. Yet, she could not be persuaded to submit her piece for publication, finding it lacking in scholarship. My arguments about the academic nature of the study of material culture failed to make a dent in her resistance, so that Ruby's is the one missing piece among the essays by the illustrious "Beckett and the Twentieth Century" panelists in the *SBT/A* Berlin 2000 volume.

My stabs at persuading Ruby of what she would not be persuaded of date back to our first meeting at the 1974 Beckett symposium at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Ruby was welcoming to the fledgling Beckettians there, expressing her pleasure that young academics were entering the field. It was no doubt a pleasure often renewed in subsequent years. At the time, I hoped to sway her with my argument about *Molloy*'s three (not two) narrators in one. But no. Was I trying to imitate our writer in failing always better to convince Ruby of my musings as we would meet at conferences and the Beckett Working Group? Not to exaggerate, we didn't always disagree!

The Young Scholar. Courtesy of Jim Knowlson.

In 1990, when Xerxes Mehta and I arranged a tribute to Beckett on our Baltimore campus, Ruby accepted my invitation to be on the panel discussing the three plays performed that evening with the audience. She, Peter Gidal, and I each talked about one of the plays and fielded questions, with Ruby, much to my consternation, tough on questions or comments she found intolerable. But no, the packed house didn't mind, remaining spellbound late into the evening.

A few years later, when Ruby and I both happened to be in Paris in April 1996, we decided to celebrate Beckett's ninetieth birthday together. She took a bus across town from her hotel to my *pied-à-terre* with a view of the Isle of Swans. The "Théâtre" bus stop, I told her, is where to get off. We were good company the two of us that evening over filet of sole and wine to match with conversation and plans to translate together the message Beckett sent for the *Godot* broadcast on the radio a year before the play's first performance in the theater. We continued our collaboration in London that summer, Ruby inviting me this time to her favorite little restaurant. From this experience, my admiration for her way with words could only grow.

It was with much sadness that I learned from Ruby that she would be unable to participate in the 2006 centenary celebrations. Nor was she able to take pleasure in the *Beckett at 100: Revolving It All* collection of centenary essays Linda Ben-Zvi and I dedicated to her. It was a labor of love and appreciation. I would like to think that she was still aware of that.

--Angela Moorjani

Ruby Cohn had an unforgettable direct personal approach to people. I met her in Paris, April 1986, at the international conference, "Beckett dans ce siècle," at the Pompidou Centre, celebrating Beckett's 80th birthday. I gave a paper there entitled "Staging Beckett in Spanish." When the session ended, Ruby approached me and introduced herself. "I am Ruby Cohn," she said, and asked me if she could have what I had said about the Spanish premiere of *Waiting for Godot* (*Esperando a Godot*) for a new casebook on the play she was editing. I was delighted, of course, and agreed to send her

that fragment of my paper. We had never met before, but became friends ever since. We met often in different places, especially in London.

I could say many things about Ruby's generosity, personal warmth and professional integrity. However, knowing how much she hated "hagiography," and how much she loved theatre, we dedicated this year's Modern Drama Seminar [see poster above] at the English Department of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid to her memory.

--Antonia Rodríguez-Gago

We're sitting at table sharing a meal–thirty-five years' worth of meals, some of which were particularly memorable. There was a wild, late-night meal in Paris, for example, when maybe twenty of us stormed a bistro after Joe Chaikin's performance in *Texts for Nothing*; I don't remember what Ruby and I ate, but I remember clearly that it was the first time I met Chaikin. There was a hilarious lunch with Linda Ben-Zvi and Toñi Rodríguez-Gago in the restaurant of London's Globe Theatre. There was an unusually sweet lunch at Joe Allen's in London (one of our haunts) with Elin Diamond and her then very young daughter Hannah, to whom Ruby was remarkably tender and solicitous—a side of Ruby (her interaction with children) that was unexpected and charming. There was a long (mostly liquid) meal–just the two of us this time—in the bar of the Caledonian Hotel during the Edinburgh Festival where we got quietly smashed over endless glasses of single malt Scotch (this too was unexpected, though maybe not so charming).

And then there was Ruby preparing meals at her own table—sometimes in her San Francisco apartment, but mostly in her London flat. The flat was tiny—basically one room, with a Munchkin-sized kitchen and bathroom—but that didn't stop Ruby from entertaining. I need to gloss the word "preparing," by the way. In all the years I knew her, Ruby never actually cooked anything. But she knew her way around Marks and Spencer's food hall and a microwave, there was always plenty of wine and a good dessert, and everyone left the table happy. I remember one particular dinner party in which Ruby served a delicious soup as the first course. When the guests complimented her on it and asked what was in it, Ruby went to the kitchen and read the contents from the Campbell's can she had used. (The soup was still delicious.)

Whether eating out or in, however, there was always the same end-of-meal ritual. Ruby was one of the least vain women I've ever known: she kept her hair short and easy to manage; she always wore pants (I don't recall ever seeing her in a dress or skirt); and she used no makeup. Except on her lips: at the end of every meal, out came the compact as Ruby carefully reapplied her lipstick. "Ensign crimson," I thought, invariably reminded of Winnie in her mound. It is the single gesture I most associate with her—a gesture so seemingly incongruous and yet, at the same time, so purely Ruby.

My bond with Ruby is finally far more personal than professional, one of the most important relationships in my life. She wrote her first letter to me, critiquing my dissertation, in 1971, before she knew me; she wrote her last letter to me, an e-mail sent to my inbox but with no message, in 2009, when she perhaps no longer knew me. But I always knew her, and loved her. "Ms. Cohn leaves no immediate survivors," Ruby's *New York Times* obituary stated. While that is true in the narrowest biological sense, Ruby nurtured and inspired an entire generation of scholars and theatre practitioners who learned from her and a huge circle of close friends who adored her. She is survived by all of us.

--Hersh Zeifman

Review Essay

George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, ed. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett Vol. II, 1941-1956*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011 $55.00; £30.00.

There are perhaps few books that will grip Beckett scholars and lovers more than this one. It contains the letters from Beckett's most turbulently creative period, during which he produced his two most famous plays and the great prose writings that were to establish and secure his reputation in the academy. It comes as close as presumably is likely to answering what for many Beckettians is surely an unavoidable question: what was the inward life that provoked such extraordinary works? So, too, anyone concerned with the relationship between Beckett's works of the forties and fifties, his recent experience and recent and contemporary European and especially French history no longer need address it in a vacuum or at one remove. This is certainly not to say that we are now at a point where all becomes clear. The materials which the volume provides us are hardly sparse but, predictably enough, they are seldom expansive either. A great deal will depend on the weight readers choose to give to details, and the angles at which they place them. For those who don't read French, the problem is compounded. Translator George Craig has done a fine, responsible job. It is hard to think that, as a whole, his work could be improved on. But Beckett is impossible to translate, as no-one knew better than Beckett himself. Not surprisingly, then, there are points in Craig's translations that are necessarily open to argument. Furthermore, the Beckett of this period writes his letters in specific styles. Gone, now, from the start, are the stylistic posturings to which, in the first volume, the young Anglo-Irish intellectual was inclined. The world has encroached on him too harshly for them not to have fallen away. On the other hand, as Dan Gunn tells us, in an excellent introduction which breaks new ground and will serve as a stimulus to new interpretations, as the later letters in this volume already demonstrate, "from the watershed of *Godot's* success, the letter that will be increasingly common [throughout the rest of Beckett's life] is one which is informative and direct rather than exploratory and complex." The letters that make up the greater part of Volume II, by contrast, are sometimes elliptical, elusive, indirect, delicately nuanced, given to half-saying. This further complicates exegesis. Yet it is important not just to express the usual respect for Beckett's exquisite reticence. There is also a great deal in these letters that is not obscure at all, notably, perhaps, their pain. Indeed, there are times when they seem to oscillate between a familiar Beckettian Anglo-Irish sangfroid which is reticent, and a not-so-familiar, almost Dostoevskean intensity which is not very reticent at all. In short, it will take us some time to think this volume through and assess its full implications. In the meantime, we can only be extremely grateful to all those who made it possible for us to do so.

We begin in silence. The last letter in Volume I is dated 10 June 1940, just two days before Beckett and Suzanne left Paris and four days before the *Wehrmacht* occupied it. The first letter in Volume II is to Denis McDonald of the Irish Legation in Paris and is dated 17 January 1945, less than five months after the liberation of Paris and three months after Beckett's return. There is no correspondence from the Vichy years, with which the silence is virtually co-extensive. One should not of course read too much into that. Beckett and Suzanne were on the run or in hiding. Missives to Frank Beckett — sent "regularly," according to his brother — do not survive (assuming they ever reached him), and *w*hoever purchased the letters to the Haydens, which are at least relevant to this volume, has consistently refused access to them (*caveat emptor*, may lightning strike). The five-year silence is nonetheless eloquent, and should be placed alongside accounts of the texture of life under Vichy like Dominique Veillon's: the vile, draconian legislation against minorities; the betrayal and fear of betrayal, the denunciations, arbitrary violence, *rafales*; the dawn raids, deportations, summary executions and assassinations; the climate of chronic, mutual distrust; the impoverishment, brutalization, depletion, exhaustion, and sometimes extreme distress; mean conditions, mean conduct. Vichy France existed in a state of more or less clandestine civil war. Life was stained with an ignobility begun in swift defeat and abject surrender, from which better people retreated into obscurity and forms of local solidarity, notably the Resistance and *maquis*. Beckett experienced much of this first-hand, and would have learnt the rest — and indeed a great deal about what lay beyond France — from newspapers, radio, and talk.

Shockwaves from the war years run shuddering through these letters from beginning to end. In that sense, the war is for Beckett what Emil Nolte called Vichy, a *Vergangenheit, die nicht vergangen will*, a past that won't lie down and die. Gunn suggests that the Beckett of the period has an instinct for mourning. The forms in which it appears can be terse and tight-lipped: the grim compression of the epitaph for Péron, the curt taking note of Robert Desnos's death, the brief expression of apprehension at Paul Léon's possible fate ("dare not conclude...that he is living"). The wholesale devastation of what was once St-Lô — "No lodging of course of any kind" — should be self-evident, it seems, and requires no emphasis. So far, we might say, so British in understatement, as Beckett could certainly be. Indeed, he confesses that, where English is concerned, he is "only comfortable now with a sort of pastiche of eighteenth-century style." Yet "the great inner dereliction," that he will suggest later is essential to playing Pozzo, was clearly his own at the time, and manifests itself in other ways. If there are "moments of calm," there are equally "moments of near panic." There are many if

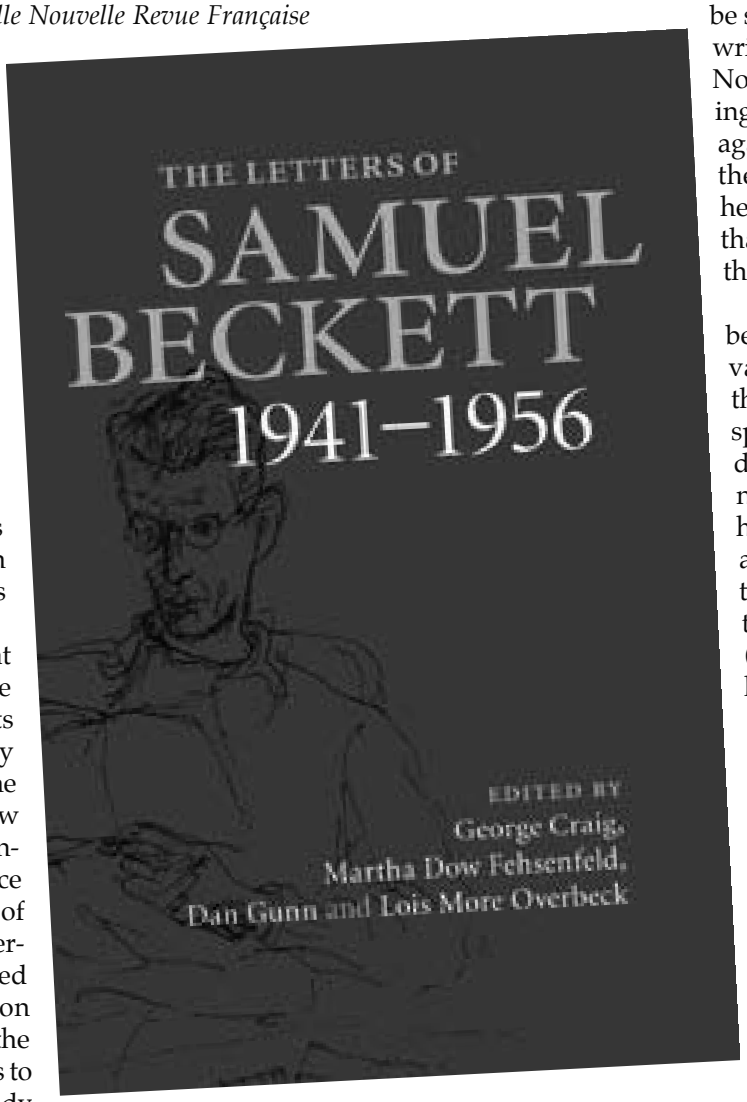
sporadic outbursts of unruly grief. His heart "falls backward down precipices every night." He gives vent to the "roars of a madman," or, "blinded by whiskey," starts to shout "and make frantic gestures." Once his nerves are stretched, "the bawls are out of me, in the house and in the street." He "howls" repeatedly, as if sharing the agony of those afflicted by divine judgment in the Old Testament. The connection is by no means fanciful: "howls" is precisely the word in the King James Bible, for the prose beauties of which these letters occasionally show a quite remarkable feeling. In Ussy, as late as 1951, Beckett asks "for nothing more than to be able to bury myself in this beetroot-growing hole, scratch at the earth and howl at the clouds." If we do not register what is at stake in such confessions, or suppose that they are best blasted with a dose of "trauma theory," we merely show how far away we already are from this Beckett, how much we have already lost him.

The seriousness of Beckett's sense of incalculable waste and loss makes him dismissive if not excoriating about those who slight the catastrophe or have kept safely apart from it, like the "guzzling tourists" in the Dublin that has remained outside the war zones. He expresses distaste for the mindset again, more obliquely but to the point of moral horror, in his memory of Antonello da Messina's St. Sebastian, which he had seen in the Zwinger in Dresden in 1937. Here courtiers "tak[e] the Sunday air on their balconies" and admire the martyrdom. The same almost demented seriousness determines his disenchanted view of postwar France. "All the wrong things, all the wrong way," he writes, to Thomas McGreevy. "It is hard to feel the France that one clung to, that I still cling to." With whatever reservations, Beckett surely nursed at least a certain affection for the socialist France of the Popular Front in the late thirties, a France of and for ordinary French men and women. They, too, had very often suffered under Vichy, and his work refuses to lift itself above them. Their hardships continue in a postwar Paris where life "is pretty well impossible, except for millionaires." Meanwhile, like the millionaires, new elites are asserting themselves. Furthermore, they are feeding off the old and supposedly discredited ones. Not only are some people still furtively attached to "the poor old misled man and hero of Verdun" (Pétain). Eminences of the Vichy years are quietly reinstalling themselves in the upper echelons of French society, and De Gaulle and the new dispensation are more or less conniving in it. Hence Beckett's bitter irony at the expense of ex-collaborationists and former capitulators, as prompted by Arland Ussher's essay on "The Meaning of Collaboration": "Flourishing, especially the military representatives, they are happily engaged in reorganizing the salvation of the country. They are prepared to forget and forgive — the so rude interruption." In the context of the Purge and the early years of the Fourth Republic, the lines Beckett extracts from Racine's *Andromaque* — too soberly imposing to be quoted in translation — take on a quite extraordinary power: "'Je ne sais de tout temps quelle injuste Puissance Laisse le crime en paix et poursuit l'innocence. De quelque part sur moi que je tourne les yeux, Je ne vois que malheurs qui condamnent les Dieux.'" "Voire," adds Beckett. Too right.

As the caustic reference to those "reorganizing the salvation of the country" might suggest, the Beckett of the period is above all ferociously hostile to what, with London productions of *Godot* in mind, he will later call the "redemptive perversion," the swift recuperation from negative to positive. He is scathing about those who think in terms of "crises, to be overcome, bad times to be lived through." This attitude will remain to the end of his life, as is clear from his late response to the dismantling of the Berlin Wall ("Ça va trop vite!"). If he finds the postwar climate rebarbative, it is because the redemptive perversion appears to be so widespread, rather than for any more familiar political reasons. Irredeemability will be key to his work for at least the next decade. This links him to French contemporaries like Sarraute and Pinget, and indeed he can sound close to Sarraute's vision of an "age of suspicion." "Voices grave sweet and reasonable" are likely also to be "stinkingly poisonous," and complicity is universal. "I am as nasty a piece of work as the next man," he writes. So, too, when he claims that the Antonello painting derives its effects from having finished with "the pernicious illusion" in which "people everywhere have always been at one," he sounds close to Sarraute. Here the human becomes corrosive, invades the scene, eats into it. Having noted that, Beckett promptly moves on to what seems to be another more or less direct attack on the new French order and the redemptive perversion together: "And to think that they intend to go through the whole thing again, eyes irremediably lowered so as not to cause offence by revealing the full bewilderment of ignorance regained." What human investment can survive not only such a refusal to learn, but the indifference even to the possibility of there being any lesson? Thus, though he has friends working in it and actually applies for a job with them, Beckett is cynical about UNESCO and its project (international peace, justice and co-operation), associating it with "an atmosphere of futility and incredulity" that is "overwhelming." UNESCO was much associated with the emergence of a new humanism very alien to Beckett. But then, intriguingly, he did not believe that war was over. Even as early as October 1945, just six weeks after Hiroshima, he is concerned that he might be "bottled in a warring Europe for another 5 or 10 years." In late 1947, the massive French strikes prompt him to expect class confrontations that winter, and a slide into "French Yankeeism and then war." His bleak forebodings subsequently mutate into a fear of nuclear Armageddon. "Hope this reaches you," he writes, in a letter to Mary Hutchinson, "before the hydrogen or uranium or whatever it is gets rid of us." But by this time Armageddon has become a continuum, is with Beckett always: "To wait until the atomic age before feeling really worried," he writes disparagingly of André Breton, "that is indeed surrealist."

These letters, however, also tell us about a Beckett by now habituated to the Parisian artistic and intellectual scene, and increasingly connected to it. If he notes early on that "[t]he same crowd, writing & painting, tops the bill that has topped it since the liberation," he himself is heading in their direction. This Beckett tells Morris Sinclair that he should think of Sartre as a possible thesis topic, and suggests that he "could introduce him to Sartre and his

world." He owns novels by Sartre and has read de Beauvoir's. He tells Arland Ussher that he could speak to Sartre about his book. He recommends Camus's *L'Étranger* ("important"). He knows Tzara, is familiar with Klossowski and likes Robbe-Grillet. He expresses feelings of kinship with Blanchot and Nadeau, and a wariness of "the all-purpose-disaster, à la Bataille." He reads *Franc-tireur*, *Les Temps modernes* and *Nouvelle revue francaise.* He reads *Combat,* regularly. It was clearly important for him at least as late as 1955. (By contrast, significantly, the letters make no mention of *L'Humanité*). He rows with Jean Paulhan over the suppression in the *Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française* [sic] of a passage from an excerpt from *L'Innommable* — "I'll have the bastard's hide, even if it means losing my own" — but nonetheless clearly has a rather sophisticated view of the position adopted by Paulhan after 1945, that of a former Resistance fighter who nonetheless espoused the cause of blacklisted collaborationist writers, not least as those who served as convenient scapegoats whilst more shadowy figures got off scot-free. All in all, this is a Beckett now intimate with a Parisian world of "things politico-literary."



Yet he also holds himself at a certain distance from it, aware that he is an outsider, that its concerns will never be exactly his own. Together with, on the one hand, his dislike for the new France and, on the other, his anti-humanism and his insistence on an abiding consciousness of suffering, this leaves him operating in an extremely restricted space. Yet from this situation erupts the great fiery core of the volume, the sequence of letters to Georges Duthuit. Beckett already has all the emotional mulch he needs to nourish a new turn in his art. "I see a little at last what my writing is about," he tells MacGreevy in March 1948. But he also needs, not just to "see" it, but to grasp it as an idea. In the letters to Duthuit, the logic of Beckett's postwar pain also becomes the logic of an aesthetics of poverty. Of course, this aesthetics is not unfamiliar to us, notably from the pieces in *Disjecta.* But the letters substantially enhance and clarify our understanding of it, insisting for example that the poverty of "not being able" should not be confused with the poverty of "not having." They also help us understand what fuelled such an aesthetics. In a world for which, Beckett has become convinced, the appropriate allegory is a "Pickwick of a Christ" at the mercy of "the hard men and the executioners," the "illusion of the human and the fully realized" is at an end. Modern capability, with its addiction to "whatever kind of maximum," has proved catastrophic. The catastrophe demands that one repudiate the "passion for the achievable" or the imperative of extending limits. One should work to get outside "the world of competition, winning and losing," and choose the "undisguisedly useless" and the "act without hope." If this produces an irreconcilable art, it will be because its principal aim — not, we should note, necessarily its source — is deep discouragement. "Nothing will ever be sufficiently against for me," writes Beckett, "not even pain." Nonetheless, it is only by trying, vainly, to be "sufficiently against," not least, in scorning the imperatives of "joy, sun, health and other ignominies," that one can hope to counter the redemptive perversion.

An impoverished art will be an art of the "eternally larval," a lessness which lives in the knowledge that "[l]ife is a spelling mistake in the text of death," but, for all that, does not preclude "the glory of having been a little, beneath an unforgettable sky'." Certainly, here, Beckett appears to share Agamben's terrain (or hinterland). He himself had an inspiration much closer to hand, however, in the works of Bram van Velde. Bram and he are "a long way apart from each other." But they also coincide "in the unthought and the harrowing." If Bram is "genuinely, seriously unhinged," he is also "my great familiar," whilst Thomas McGreevy, who has lived at a distance from the war and is by now sunk in religion and "officialdom," seems increasingly remote. Beckett and Bram are "close together in one and the same stuckness," which is the problem of how to make art out of major and drastic renunciation, an "absence of relations of whatever kind." Both are struggling to refigure the human thing, beginning in a conviction of its fundamental and ineradicable weakness. This will lead Beckett to "obscenities of form" which "I am not at all disposed to mitigate." But he insists that he is not "a nietman," a nay-sayer. He is too faithful to the memory of Joyce, a great moral example, he tells us, for that to be the case. The search — or, better, the disbelieving wait — is rather for an unexpected, dark radiance, as Bram's paintings of the late forties are "miracles of frenzied impotence" which

stream with "beauties and splendours like a shipwreck of phosphorescences."

Aesthetically, then, the adventure is that of the failed form that lacks any "achieved statement of the inability to be." Such an aesthetic is only practicable and sustainable if it refuses to make any superior claim, is incessantly open to self-dismissal and even self-ridicule, repeatedly engineers its own contradictions. As other's crush one's case, says Beckett, so one must of course join in the crushing. It is doubtless partly for that reason that he feels that "I could not belong and I could not be a credit to any academy." Not only must the programme be modest ("the trouble about my little world," he tells Alec Reid, "is that there is no outside to it"). Not only must it also be inherently flawed. It must repel one. Thus Beckett is suitably "overcome" with "disgust for everything that I do." One dons one's armour for "a loathsome combat" for which one feels only disdain. So direly straitened an aesthetic, however, hardly needed greater elaboration, and the white heat of the letters to Duthuit duly cools and wanes. What follows is bound to seem flat in comparison. Tragi-comically, the world whose very foundational assumptions the howling postwar Beckett has called into question increasingly takes hold of him, and the immitigable irony in which he has rooted his vision leaves him with no defence against that world's incursions. Even by 1956, he is saying that he is "overwhelmed with silly requests and letters most of which I feel I have to answer."

He nonetheless remains an absorbing correspondent to the end, not least, in what he tells us about *Waiting for Godot*. He asserts, for example, no doubt surprisingly to some, that "in Godot I tried to retain the French atmosphere as much as possible." He can provide no theory of drama: "I have no ideas about theatre. I know nothing about it. I do not go to it. That is allowable." Since "abstraction" is "something I am almost incapable of," the condition of *Godot* is an absolute materiality. "As for wanting to find in all this a wider and loftier meaning to take away after the show, along with the programme and the choc-ice, I am unable to see the point of it." He would rather performances were ill-attended ("Full house every night, it's a disease"). The London production particularly appals him: "I think the whole West End attitude to the play all wrong." If Beckett was operating in an extremely restricted space, it was unlikely to be enlarged by any English or Irish (or, one might add, American) identification. These letters offer a mild corrective to one aspect of James Knowlson's biography, insofar as from time to time, it conceives of Beckett as English-identified and even Anglophile. Here, certainly, we discover only a Beckett who stares at England with a cold Irish eye, for whom the English are always other. He repeatedly calls them "the shopkeepers" and anathematizes their star system (notably in the cases of Alec Guinness and Ralph Richardson). He is happy to avoid "the wen" (London). He comments ironically on "British generosity" and drily on "the classical anglo-saxon exasperation." The English are hypocritical and narrow-minded. Their "official Public Morals organisation" is anti-art. English is a "horrible language." His "cursed prose" won't "go into English." When he produces a potted biography for Gian Renzo Morteo, he pointedly states that he was "born in Dublin of Irish parents." Not that this is a token of any resurgent feeling for his native land. "There are no compensations for me in this country," he writes from Ireland, "on the contrary." All the same, he can quite blithely countenance the idea of a Gaelic *Godot* in Dublin. And his revulsion from Irish "romanticism" is no longer as reliable as it formerly was, notably in the case of Yeats, whom he is now less inclined to treat with a youthfully scornful hauteur. In *At the Hawk's Well*, for example, there is "much great poetry."

The letters continue to gleam with unanticipated, particular lights, like the observation that "the cinema was killed in the cradle," the repeated references to the works from *Murphy* to *The Unnamable* as if they were concerned with a single figure ("him"), and the (admittedly cryptic) interest in something Beckett calls "the form of judgment" (What can he have meant by that?). Nor is all passion quite spent. When he gets a letter from the man he addresses as "Mon cher Prisonnier," Karl-Franz Lembke, for example, he flares back to intense life and glowing prose. Lembke has directed some of his fellow inmates In Lüttringhausen prison, in a production of *Godot*, or what Beckett enthusiastically refers to as "a revival in a Rhineland penitentiary by a group of thieves, embezzlers, assassins and sexual aberrants." Lembke and his comrades have brought Beckett comfort "in the place where I will always find myself, turning round and round, falling over, getting up again." After hearing from Lembke, he is "no longer the same, and will never again be able to be the same." He urges Fischer Verlag to grant Lembke "all the facilities he needs." Lembke clearly offered to renew Beckett's contact with what he continued to take for reality, but from which a world that increasingly required him to mediate that reality for its own ends was more and more to screen him.

Finally: if there is a lacuna in the book, it is surely how little it conveys of Suzanne. Tramping doggedly from one publisher or editor to another on Beckett's behalf, she nonetheless remains opaque to us. One actually gets a better sense of Pamela Mitchell, though as a character she is at best ungripping. It would be good if, at some point, Suzanne had her own biography to rival Brenda Maddox's admirable life of Nora Joyce. This seems important, for several reasons. The other project towards which this volume of letters beckons is a full, serious, scholarly account which locates Beckett as precisely as possible in relation to the extraordinary complexity of the Parisian literary and intellectual world during the Fourth Republic, certainly its early years, and is not just content with telling us about "Sam and his friends." In the meantime, however, we have the letters themselves, and they give us much to work with.

--Andrew Gibson

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Beckett at MLA

The audience at the Samuel Beckett Society's allocated session at the annual MLA Convention often features an energising mix of established Beckettians, younger scholars, and inquisitive 'drop-ins', and this year's meeting was no exception. Presided over by Jean-Michel Rabaté, the three-paper session in Seattle this past January was entitled 'Looking Back at Beckett'. For the first and third speakers, this meant piecing together textual or epistolary evidence in order to unpick Beckett's difficult jugglings with texts or friendship, while for the second speaker it meant retrospective analyses of Beckett's reception amongst the incarcerated.

Dan Gunn's fascinating paper, 'Samuel Beckett and Georges Duthuit: An Epistolary Trace of a Volcanic Friendship', illustrated the appropriateness of the term 'volcanique' which Claude Duthuit had applied to the intense but bumpy relationship between his father and Beckett. Insofar as the correspondence between Beckett and Duthuit allowed for ample measures of venting and simmering, the adjective is an appropriate one. Further, why did this particular volcano flare so brightly for less than six years, and then go abruptly into quiescence? In presenting his material, Gunn opted for an episodic structure: 'twelve traces' which offered insights into an enigmatic friendship. The correspondence from 1948 between the pair, conducted in French, reveals a growing intimacy and even exhilaration on the part of Beckett. It is useful, after all, to remember the early disparity between the two men. Duthuit, editor of the relaunched *Transition*, was a source of much-needed translation work for Beckett; while both had emerged from the gruelling Occupation period, the older Duthuit was already a military veteran of World War One. Handsome, well-connected, and prodigiously knowledgeable about art, Duthuit became an esteemed recipient of Beckett's confidences.

Among the correspondence, Gunn picked out letters in which Beckett commends indigence and ignorance as the mainsprings of art, and exposes his vulnerability at the time of his mother's last illness. Quoting from one letter not included in the second volume of the Letters, Gunn alluded to bitter remarks about what Beckett sees as the indignities visited upon his mother's body: juice-feeding, enemas, and eventually prayers about returning to dust. (Also in that same letter, incidentally, is what to my mind is one of the most startling demonstrations of Beckett's complicated connectedness with his mother at this time, when he describes a feeling of resentment that he is not departing along with her). What distinguishes the Beckett/Duthuit correspondence for Gunn is its overtly expressed fondness. Could this uncharacteristic effusiveness, he suggested, even be some kind of overwrought antidote to a premonition of cooling in the friendship? (The shift from 'vous' to 'tu' in the correspondence occurs in March 1949, at Beckett's instigation. Yet some of his most affectionate impulses towards Duthuit are uttered in the *vouvoiement* phase. I sometimes wonder whether Beckett felt more at liberty to express his attachment when it could be placed within this formal envelope).

In actively seeking to translate Duthuit's own writing on aesthetics, Beckett might be seen to be supportive of his friend's aversion to the Italian Renaissance masters. Yet Gunn made astute use of later correspondence to show Beckett revising this stance. Then, once Beckett became swallowed up in the *Godot* phenomenon, a gulf gradually developed between the two correspondents. What Gunn managed adroitly to suggest was – and I am simplifying here, for brevity - that when the dynamics of the relationship shifted, and Beckett moved from satellite to star, the friendship could not tolerate the strain.

If Gunn's paper demonstrated careful negotiations between a range of archival resources, Mark Nixon's paper also required some skilful pathfinding. In 'Faux départs: The Textual Genesis of Beckett's *All Strange Away* and *Imagination Dead Imagine*', Nixon dissected the enmeshed roots of the two texts. Referring to the first drafts respectively of the 'Faux départs' (the three micro-texts in French and the slightly longer one in English, which begins with the words 'Imagination dead imagine' and seems to set the mould for *All Strange Away*), *All Strange Away*, and *Imagination morte imaginez*, in Trinity College's MS11223 notebook, Nixon explored the structural and thematic dilemmas which are apparent there, as well as Beckett's indecision over the choice of language. Any textual geneticist tracing the evolution of a Beckettian text is accustomed to the meticulous commitment to refinement, replacement, and retuning which his drafts exemplify. Yet this sequence of texts is unusually complex, as Nixon rightly emphasised, interspersing his visual examples of the successive reversals and progressions in the notebook with extracts from correspondence with Barbara Bray, Alan Schneider, Mary Hutchinson, etc. In many of these letters, Beckett conveys both dogged persistence and yet frustration with the resistant text(s), described to Dick Seaver as 'horrible new prose' and to Hugh Kenner as 'the wreck'.

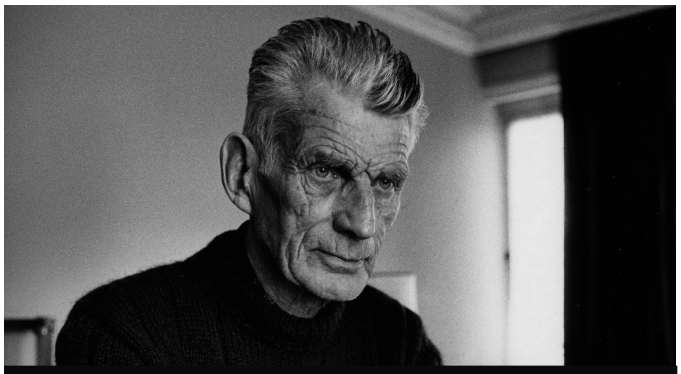
Many fragments from that wreck are spun away and crossed through within the notebook, as the drafts proceed through the rehearsals of the 'Faux départs', the tortuous drafting of *All Strange Away* (which features at least four rewritten beginnings) and the January 1965 resurge, in French, of what would become *Imagination morte imaginez*. Nixon's itinerary through this kaleidoscopic text-bed was proficiently laid out, noting along the way the recurrence of the words 'imagination' and 'fancy', and the probable stimulus given to them by Beckett's reading of Coleridge's *Biographica Literaria* a couple of years earlier, as well as the four-line quotation from Act V of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, beginning 'And as imagination bodies forth […]', which finds its way into the notebook and which, Nixon suggested, might be read 'as a remarkable summary' of the two texts under construction.

A constant theme of these texts is bodily confinement within space, and this provides a bridge of a sort to Lance Duerfahrd's paper, 'Godot Behind Bars'. The success of *Waiting for Godot* among convicts (notably at San Quentin in California and at Raiford in Florida) is well documented. Here, Duerfahrd sought not so much to analyse the basis on which *Godot* achieves this, as to examine what fresh light

the prisoners' responses throw on the play. While *Godot*, he pointed out, does not foreground sequestration in a manner akin to Genet's play *Haute Surveillance*, it signals to it (and in this respect Duerfahrd cited Beckett's silent communications from his study window to inmates of the Santé prison opposite). Analysing the interjections uttered during the performance by the Raiford prisoners, as documented by Sidney Homan, Duerfahrd drew attention to the collapsing of stage into auditorium, pushing the fourth wall back to fuse with the rear prison wall entrapping the audience. Raiford's inmates encourage Estragon and Lucky to resist the forces pinning them down; by means of their hurled questions, argued Duerfahrd, 'the prisoners let the contents of *Godot* seep into the prison space, and make the text porous'. More conventional theatregoers, he concluded, either speak only at the times appointed by the curtain, or internalise their questions, thus permitting the 'canonisation' of *Godot*'s silences. The prison inmates, on the other hand, refuse to have 'mere decorum' mistaken for 'the grandiose silence of an unresponsive Godot'. This paper is clearly part of a larger study: it could rewardingly also take in more recent manifestations, such as Jan Jönson's 1985 *Godot* at the Kumla prison in Sweden (see Michka Saäl's film *Prisonniers de Beckett*).

There is no particular need to forge connections between these three papers, all memorable in their own way. All of them relied to some extent on archival or documentary resources. The confined body lay most obviously at the heart of both Nixon's and Duerfahrd's papers. However, it also appeared compellingly at the end of Gunn's paper, with an evocation of the ailing Duthuit, felled by a stroke which left him immobilised in his bedroom for the last ten years of his life. A year before he died, he broke his long, hostile silence, remarkably, to tell Beckett in a letter that having his work read to him was the source of 'des richesses toujours neuves'.

--Mary Bryden



THANK YOU

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Letter to the Editor

21 June 2011
Istanbul

Re: GODOT = GOD + (IDI) OT

I am a Turkish retired banking executive living in Istanbul. I am a bibliophile who also wrote novels, two of which were translated into English.

Your response with regard to following matter, would be highly appreciated.

In *Beckett Remembering Remembering Beckett*, the anthology published in 2006; there is a concise interview with Peter Woodthorpe. The late actor played Estragon in the British premiere of *Waiting for Godot* and it is claimed that Samuel Beckett admired his acting very much.

After a party at Beckett's cousin John's house, while sharing a cab Woodthorpe said, "What is *Waiting for Godot* all about? Everybody is coming round saying different things." They laughed a lot and Beckett responded, "But it is all symbiosis, Peter." This was a rare and a valuable clue.

I immediately consulted the Shorter Oxford Dictionary after reading the interview twice for reconfirmation. Yes, symbiosis meant, "an interaction between two dissimilar organisms living in close physical association; especially one in which each benefits the other."

I automatically visualized the two main and zigzaging characters of the play, Estragon and Vladimir (actually Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart at Theatre Royal). And I thought, I found who GODOT was/were! It was the symbiosis of GOD and (Idi) OT. Hence, GODOT would never come; because he/they was/were already on stage. Estragon and Vladimir *were* GODOT. They were not waiting for any one. While they were joking "absurdly" between each other, they were also setting a trap to the audience.

Secondly, by noticing the nick names of Estragon (Gogo) and Vladimir (Didi); one would be led to cute clues in form of references to (Go)d and I(di)ot.

Although Beckett very rarely discussed his plays, he once said to Sir Ralph Richardson, "If by Godot I had meant God I would have said God and not Godot."

I checked internet sources to see if GODOT was previously deciphered in my way; there was no such datum. I consulted relevant local academicians and authors; they hadn't heard this before but thought it is rather sensible.

I also incorporated "my way" to my recent novel, to be called *The Sultan Of Byzantium* when translated into English.

Has any one else previously asserted GODOT is the symbiosis of GOD and (Idi)OT? Considering rare clues Beckett donated and nick names used (Gogo and Didi) in the play, is it not sensible?

Your response would be highly appreciated.

Kindest regards,

Selçuk Altun

Happy Days at Washington's Avant-Bard

Having established itself anew during the past two years in the Artisphere in Arlington, Virginia (former home of the Newseum), the former Washington Shakespeare Company has rechristened itself WSC Avant-Bard. Its commitment to the production of daring and innovative productions of classic and modern works—such as the much-discussed all-nude production of *Macbeth* directed by José Carrasquillo in 2007—remains undiminished, and its stylish, technologically up-to-date new locale is a vast improvement over the converted warehouse that was its former home. In September 2011 its intimate black-box theatre provided an especially effective setting for Carrasquillo's "50th Anniversary production" of Beckett's *Happy Days*, in which a finely nuanced rendition of the text was combined with some startling innovations in set design, costuming, and production—not least among them a nuclear blast and subsequent blackout early in the second act—that startled aficionados of the play and may well have perplexed newcomers to it.

With only five rows of seats on an L-shaped set of risers facing an arc-shaped set, the small and intimate space put every member of the audience in unusually close proximity to Winnie, so that every nuance and gesture stipulated in Beckett's unprecedentedly micromanaging stage directions—which, notoriously, stipulate even the movement of her eyes—could be appreciated as rarely before in Delia Taylor's subtle and finely modulated performance. When she examined Willie's pornographic postcard, for example, even viewers situated in the top row of seats (as I was) could have no doubt what the amorous couple in the seemingly-authentic sepia-tinted Edwardian-style photo was in fact doing. When it was returned to him, Willie—deftly played by director Carrasquillo himself—made unambiguously clear (even with only his head visible above the mound) his onanistic enjoyment of it, bringing to the pastime an enthusiasm and vigor that seemed unlikely in a character said to be "not the crawler [he used to be], poor darling [. . .] No, not the crawler [she] gave [her] heart to" and who struggles but fails to climb the mound's less-than-Kilimanjaroesque slope when the play ends. On the other hand (so to speak), it may offer a novel explanation of why—despite Winnie's encouraging exhortation to do so—he can't manage to "put a bit of jizz into it" any more.

Behind her, a (quite wrongly) cloud-filled sky was mounted on a series of billboards that did not extend even nearly to the stage floor. Protruding arm-extension-style lights atop them cast technology-created shadows across the framed and papered-on sky, producing a Magritte-like effect: "*Ceci n'est pas un ciel*" indeed, cleverly linking one absurdist to the other. Beckett's own specification of "a very pompier trompe-l'oeil backcloth to *represent* [an] unbroken plain and sky to meet in the far distance" [italics mine] implies a certain artificiality. Nevertheless, the cloud-filled sky certainly mitigated the unallayed "hellish" yet "holy" light that Winnie so stoically endures. While softening her plight and placing it within an unmistakably man-made landscape, it also evoked the "day of dappled sea-borne clouds" in which the young aesthete Stephen Dedalus found his initial creative impetus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*—hardly an apposite association here.

Another startling feature of the production was the transformation of the mound by costume designer Marie Schneggenburger and set designer Tony Cisek. Beckett's austere "expanse of scorched grass rising centre to low mound" with "gentle slopes down to front and either side

Carrasquillo and Taylor in *Happy Days*. © Dru Sefton. Courtesy of WSC Avant Bard.

of stage" in a "maximum of simplicity and symmetry" has here been transformed into a faded-golden cascading ball gown of heavily brocaded fabric over six feet high, with crumbles of dirt clods, pebbles, and dust lightly scattered over it but doing nothing to obscure the pattern of the fabric. Tinged by lighting director Cory Ryan Frank's earth-tone browns at the base, the coloration subtly shifted to faded blue hues up towards the embroidered low-cut bodice. The mound looked like a Brobdingnagian ball gown of an antebellum design—as if Winnie were a Miss Havisham-like figure who had never changed out of the gown she wore to her first ball. With a necklace of pearls and a thin arc-like hat that matched the material of the dress, she looked like a perennial bridesmaid never to be a bride.

The frilly white collapsible parasol that complemented Winnie's attire never literally caught fire as Beckett's script specified that it should do—the notoriously difficult stage effect having here been supplanted by a sound cue of crackling fire that was accompanied by suddenly bright orange lighting; a hasty disposal of the parasol behind the mound ensued. The supposed-to-be "piercingly"- ringing bell was replaced by a clangingly hand-rung old-time school-bell, quite wrongly suggesting that an unseen human ringer must be somewhere nearby; a much louder and more abrasive electric alarm-bell seemingly operated from a seemingly remote and indifferent unseen otherwhere would have been much more apposite. The revolver produced from her bag was in fact a dueling pistol, its long barrel pointing down the mound but remaining well out of Willie's reach as he grunted and less-than-half-climbed towards her and/or it. Winnie's mirror and comb were antique and silver-backed, more elegant than might have been assumed. Quite gratuitously among such Edwardian-era fineries, a cellphone sounded from inside her bag, incongruous (and laugh-provoking) in its contemporaneity.

When the audience returned from intermission, Winnie was entirely unchanged from the first act: that is, she remained buried only to her waist, *not* now buried to her neck as the text specifies and thus not indicating that an undeterminable amount of time has passed during the interval. Less than five minutes into the second act, however, the extremely loud sound of a seeming nuclear explosion led to an immediate total blackout in the theatre. Shortly thereafter, when the lights returned to their normal level, there she was: buried up to her neck, as if in an instant, as if due to an act of war or at least of extreme violence, no longer after an indeterminable amount of time but in an instant, no longer a metaphor for the inevitable ravages of time and mortality. Obviously the most radical alteration of the script in this production, it is also surely its most controversial and disconcerting: as if Winnie simply had not noticed—or as if she thought nothing had happened—Taylor's well-attuned rendering of the near-monologue resumed without any acknowledgment of whatever had just happened. Later, when Winnie speaks of hearing "cries," the audience heard them too—again distantly, as if from survivors of the blast.

One can only guess, then, what theatergoers who bought their tickets to *Happy Days* relatively unaware of the nature of Beckett's play must have made of Carrasquillo's assurance in his Director's Notes in the program that this is "Beckett's happiest play." Like Candide, they may well have wondered in astonishment: if *this* is the happiest of all of Beckett's possible worlds, what must the others be like? Even more baffled, no doubt, were those who—according to the company's Executive Director Warren Arbogast—went in "thinking we were doing a show about the 1970's TV sitcom but didn't want to say *that's* what they were thinking." No doubt they too must go on . . .

A more apposite clue to the production's prevailing tone may be found in the inclusion of six lines of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" in the small type beneath the program's cast list:

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot
But being too happy in thine happiness,--
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

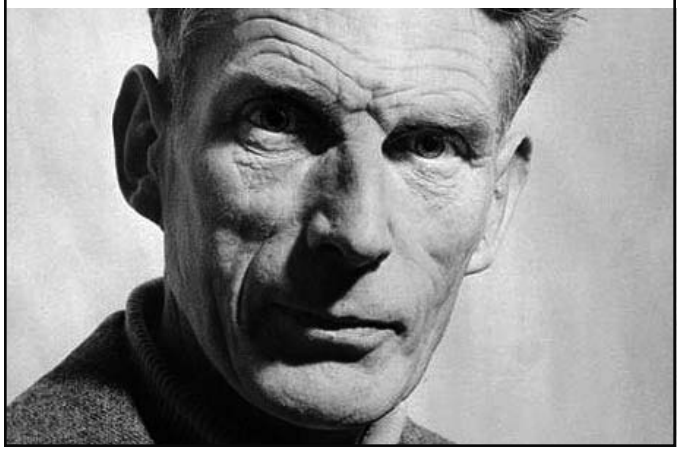
Throughout Carrasquillo's production, Beckett's prose *does* sing thanks to Delia Taylor's masterfully subtle rendition—even in her unusually billboarded landscape, atop an un-earthy mound of attire, despite a blast whose effects she remains oblivious. Somehow nohow on indeed.

--*William Hutchings*

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

The Beckett Circle will soon be moving online. The web address for this new entity will be communicated to members of the Samuel Beckett Society soon in a separate announcement. The present issue is the last one that will be printed and mailed to the entire membership.

Please read the President's Message for more information about these important changes concerning membership and newsletter services.



Beckett and German Culture

In the run-up to the publication of the German Diaries, probably in 2015, Beckett's communication with German philosophy, literature, film, and TV continues to hold Beckett scholars in thrall. Subsequent to several German Beckett conferences in recent years, for instance at Kassel, Düsseldorf and Hamburg, another event brought Beckett's multifarious connections to Germany in focus. The conference on "Samuel Beckett and German Culture / Samuel Beckett und die deutsche Kultur "was held at the TU Darmstadt from 23-25 September 2011, jointly organized by Jan Wilm (Darmstadt) and Mark Nixon (Reading), and it provided evidence that he persistently inspires a younger generation of Austro-German literati – well beyond his well-known influence on the likes of Bernhard and Handke.

The first day of the conference was preoccupied with issues of translation. Marion Fries (Universität Düsseldorf) picked out some "Fragments of German Literature in the German Translations of Beckett's Work" and Kathrin Schoedel (Universität Erlangen) focused on German translations, by Christian Enzensberger and Wolfgang Held, of Beckett's early work. Once again, it became clear that Beckett's intertextual debate with German culture was marked by accents on *Wehmut* (lack and melancholy, mixed with pleasurable memory) rather than by playful allusions. Idiosyncratically, he picked out references to fragments from Grillparzer (*Malone Dies*), Heine (*Company*) and Goethe (*Eh Joe*). A major thread at the conference was Beckett's Romanticism.

Beckett continues to be highly influential on contemporary literature in German. Norbert W. Schlinkert found in the work of slam poet and novelist Michael Lentz (*Liebeserklärung* (2003), *Pazifik Exil* (2007) a number of obvious Beckettian tropes and postures – exile, imprisonment, solipsism – often also referencing Kierkegaard's *Die Wiederholung*. In a magnificent, animated reading from Beckett's *Texts for Nothing* and from his own *Pazifik Exil*, Lentz himself, who won the prestigious Ingeborg Bachmann prize in 2001, provided spectacular substance for Schlinkert's claims, continuing his intimate dialogue with Beckett. Gaby Hartel showed curious similarities between Arnheim's theories of film sound and Beckett's work for radio – particularly the idea that in any medium the artistic potential comes out of its limitations. Discussing *Embers* and *Company*, she distilled this point to the argument that German radio theory was a key influence on the Beckettian take on synaesthetics.

On the second day, Thomas Hunkeler (Université de Fribourg) discussed the occasional but persistent presence of Walther, Heinrich von Mohrungen and the troubadour poetry in Beckett's *Echo's Bones* via Robertson ("da tagte es") as well as in *Molloy* and *Stirrings Still* over more than fifty years. To Hunkeler, this was one way in Beckett's *ars poetica* of balancing the Joycean exuberance with a defamiliarized but simple *arte povera*, "perfectly intelligible". Shane Weller's (University of Kent) talk led Beckett scholars "Towards a Literature of the Unword: Beckett, Kafka, Sebald", arguing that it was not coincidental that Beckett's project of linguistic decomposition came out of his engagement with German and Austrian literature and philosophy (Mauthner). In the key works *L'Innomable* and *Worstward Ho*, Weller also resurrected Kafka as a kindred spirit, disturbing and too close for comfort for Beckett, and assessed Sebald as a political twist of 'unwording' and negativity. Mauthner's influence on Beckett also figured prominently in Dirk Van Hulle's (Universiteit Antwerpen) contribution – "'Kritik des reinen Quatsches': Beckett and German Philosophy". Hulle explored Beckett's library and read the Whoroscope notebooks and Beckett's pencil marks in his volumes of Kant, Cassirer, Schopenhauer, (the editor) Frauenstedt and Olga Plümacher's *Der Pessimismus*. Friedhelm Rathjen showed how intimately Siegfried Unseld admired Beckett, who was his perennial 'No. 1'-author, and to what extent Beckett profited from Unseld's almost tank-like protection. Rathjen amusingly recounted various anecdotes and biographical details, but noted the limits of Unseld's understanding of Beckett. The evening was rounded off by Tim Parks. The renowned Italian-based novelist, who was shortlisted for the Booker (*Europa*, 1997) and whose recent, highly successful work of non-fiction, *Teach Us to Sit Still*, resonated at least with the bodily ills that informed Beckett's work, offered an insightful and, in part, amusing personal perspective on Beckettian writing and suffering.

On the final day, Beckett's work for, as well as his appearance in, visual media figured prominently in the contributions. Ulrika Maude (Reading University) explored "Beckett, Automatism and German Expressionist Film". She showed not only the well-known influence of German expressionist and surrealist film on Beckett, whose viewing diet while in Germany can now be surmised, but also detected an expression of unease in the face of the mechanical and automatic that invokes the Kleistian marionette theatre. Eckart Voigts-Virchow (Universität Siegen) focused on the way in which Beckett was presented on German TV. While Voigts-Virchow described Beckett's own TV works as "untelevision", programs such as *Die großen Dramatiker – Samuel Beckett* or *Lippen schweigen* (2006) seek to reintegrate Beckett via a strictly biographical approach and TV-rhetoric into the contemporary televisual landscape. The conference was rounded off by its inimitable mentor and frequent reference point, Mark Nixon, who gave insights into his recent research preoccupation, the key importance of Beckett's pre-war experience of Germany.

All in all, in particular the early Beckett and the Beckett of the short later works continue to profit from the embedding of his texts in German culture. It is striking that Beckett research seems to have moved almost entirely away from textual concerns and now almost exclusively focuses on the Beckett contexts. His inspirations and biographical, historical and intellectual milieux as well as his reception were at the heart of this conference. In both of these fields, German culture figures prominently. This conference has widened the view from the initial focus on the archival gems and the perspectives gained from the forthcoming publication of the German diaries to include other ways of assessing Beckett's dialogue with Germany and Germany's dialogue with Beckett.

-- Eckart Voigts-Virchow

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Samuel Beckett Society is pleased to announce the launch of a new website to keep members up-to-date with current activities across the globe and to facilitate communication between members. In addition, because of increased printing costs, the board would like to re-launch *The Beckett Circle* in an electronic format. There will, however, be a transitional period whereby the *Circle* will continue to be available in print format, upon request. *The Beckett Circle* will keep its name but the electronic format will allow for an increased number of operations.

This transition will occur in the Fall/Winter 2012 issue, and will coincide with the introduction of a new editorial board. Peter Fifield at St John's College, Oxford, will replace Graley Herren at the helm as the new editor of the *Beckett Circle*. Derval Tubridy will continue in her role as review editor. The new website will be designed, managed and maintained by Rhys Tranter at Cardiff University.

In its new format, the *Circle* will not only be more easily and readily accessible; it will also be available to a much broader audience. It will be linked with any number of international groups working on Beckett, which will facilitate the dissemination of information. We envisage that there will be public access to part of the website, thereby raising the profile of The Samuel Beckett Society, and that part of the site will be reserved for members, with privileged access to additional information. In this way, *The Beckett Circle* will keep growing. Will it reach asymptotically infinite dimensions? Can we become more Beckettronic? To paraphrase Pascal and Borges, and like Celia's bust, *The Beckett Circle* should become an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

It also my great pleasure to announce the two SBS panels that will be offered at the next MLA in Boston (3-6 January 2013).

Beckett's Method and Discourse

1. Gregg Lambert (Syracuse University): "Beckett and Method"
2. Robert J. Harvey (SUNY Stony Brook): "Lessons in Lessening"
3. Richard Marshall (*3:AM Magazine*, London): "Naturalizing Beckett: Beckett and Nietzsche"

Beckett's Manuscripts, organized by Dirk Van Hulle (University of Antwerp)

1. Kristen L. Marangoni (University of Tulsa):
   "The labor of composition: A Visual Genesis of Beckett's *Watt*"
2. Federico Bellini (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan):
   "Beckett and St. Augustine: from *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* to *Murphy* "
3. Mark Nixon (University of Reading) and Dirk Van Hulle: "The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (www.beckettarchive.org)"

This MLA meeting will be a perfect opportunity to introduce and congratulate Mark Nixon who will be the next president of the Samuel Beckett Society as of 1 January 2013.

Finally, I would like to conclude this unusually long and detailed letter with my special thanks to Graley Herren for his longstanding services to the Society in editing *The Beckett Circle*. He will be missed, but we know that he will remain active and will keep a dynamic presence at our meetings and in our institutions.

--Jean-Michel Rabaté

Samuel Beckett Working Groups

SAMUEL BECKETT: FACING UP TO THE FUTURE

University of Southampton
7-9 September 2012

You are invited to join the Samuel Beckett Working Group for a weekend discussing papers presented by a group of international Beckett scholars, including a workshop led by a drama group which focuses on Beckett's work, and performances of three Beckett plays. There are limited places available for auditors. You will receive all the papers written by the presenters at the beginning of July, to give you time to read them carefully and consider the ideas presented and join in the discussions.

If you would be interested in joining us, please email Julie Campbell (convenor): j.campbell@soton.ac.uk. Specify if you require B&B accommodation at the University (Ensuite room: £35.25; Standard room: £26.50) and how many nights you plan to stay (for example: Thursday to Monday or Friday to Sunday) so that the accommodation can be booked. The SBWG attendance fee (excluding the B&B accommodation) will be no higher than £75.00, and this includes lunch and refreshments. The plan is that we will go to a local restaurant for the evening meals.

The programme is planned to run from 10.30 am on Friday 7th to 5.30 pm on Sunday 9th. If you would like any further information do get in touch.

AOYAMA GAKUIN UNIVERSITY, TOKYO

22-23 December 2012

This call for papers is for the Working Group meeting taking place at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo on 23 December 2012. This Working Group is held in conjunction with the Samuel Beckett Research Circle in Japan, commemorating its twentieth anniversary.

The Working Group topic will be "Samuel Beckett in the Twenty-first Century." This topic covers areas such as

- New experiments in the theatre
- Approaches to different media
- Adaptations from one medium to another
- New challenge to the existing traditions
- Historicizing Beckett
- Beckett and Music, Visual Art, and Film
- New Critical Approaches to Beckett

Papers to be presented at the Working Group are distributed and read by all the participants ahead of the meeting. At the Working Group session presenters give short resumes of their work, followed by a lengthy discussion period of at least 30 minutes per paper. This is an extremely effective method, which allows ideas to be discussed, debated and evaluated, with participants suggesting directions for presenters' works-in-progress. There is limited space for presenters, so do get in touch as soon as possible to guarantee a place; there will also be a limited space for auditors, who would also be sent the papers to read, and be encouraged to engage in the discussions during the sessions.

A Symposium in French (with English resume) is planned on Saturday afternoon by the Samuel Beckett Research Circle in Japan. Other events related to Beckett's work will be announced later when the details are set.

If you are interested in joining the Working Group in Tokyo, please do get in touch. Send a title and a short abstract by 30 June 2012 to Mariko Hori Tanaka (convenor): junsetsuan@orange.plala.or.jp Papers (length 5,000 words) are to be distributed by the beginning of November 2012.

BOOK REVIEWS

Anna McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama*. London: Routledge, 2010. $125, £80 hardcover; $39.95, £24.99 paperback

For McMullan the human body is under constant re-definition, exposing its rich complexity in performance environments and undoing the Cartesian tradition. It is understood "not as a stable historical entity," but rather as an embodied psychoanalytical and phenomenological subject. McMullan's argument builds on Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and most notably Merleau-Ponty to develop an understanding of embodiment, intercorporeality and "ontological doubleness," which enables *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* to provide a vital bridge between existing theatrical studies of Beckett and contemporary work in Performance Studies.

In the first chapter—a conceptual introduction to the monograph—McMullan explains that *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* will proceed through "a broadly chronological development of Beckett's dramatic work," while also organizing chapters around the dramatic media in which Beckett conducted his experiments: mime, radio, film, television, and theatre. While acknowledging that this work was often "intermedial," the reader is made aware that examples will re-emerge in an entirely appropriate cyclical pattern. The subsequent three chapters concern the theatrical plays—from early attempts to established masterpieces—while chapters four to eight focus on "mimes and fragments," "radiophonic embodiments," "the flesh of the screen," and "the televisual matrix." The final three chapters interweave the apparent tension between text and practice by engaging with "the traces of embodiment" in Beckett's late theatre (Chapter Nine), "mutated bodies" in stage performances of Beckett's late prose (Chapter Ten) and "re-embodying" Beckett now (Conclusion).

The three chapters that use Beckett's practice as a playwright of the 1940s-50s as an organizing principle demonstrate his *wright*-ing of embodiment that is variously "dehiscent," "intercorporeal," and "disjunctive." McMullan explores "dehiscence" as "a process of maturation followed by rupture and dispersal" which creates a conceptual framework for the fragmentation or disruption of (gendered) embodiment in "Le Kid" and "Human Wishes" as well as *Eleutheria*, where "the protagonist and the dramatic world come asunder." The "corporeal interdependency" depicted in *Godot* and *Endgame* underpins the third chapter, which also offers a re-reading of characters who "inhabit diverse temporalities and spatialities." Enabling a clearer focus on "a single or principal protagonist," McMullan's fourth chapter concerns "disjunctive modes of embodiment, juxtaposing past and present, sight and hearing, the body as sign/spectacle, and as fractured through the proliferation of substitute bodies" in *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Happy Days*.

Across these chapters, McMullan locates the theatrical Beckettian subject in relation to modernist paradigms of embodiment, and incorporates Beckett's work as a theatre practitioner into our contemporary understanding of these plays. In doing this, she responds to Stan Gontarski's 1999 observation that pre-millennial theatre history was ignoring the evidence that "Beckett was re-creating his dramatic corpus, reinventing himself as a dramatist, rewriting history in effect during his mid-1960s period," as well as earlier processual, and perhaps feminist, models for Beckett Performance Studies, such as Ruby Cohn (1980), Rosemary Pountney (1988), Linda Ben-Zvi (1990). McMullan also extends her own research from this period, not only developing ideas from her *Theatre on Trial* (1993) and "Beckett as Director: the Art of Mastering Failure" (1994), but also her journal articles for *Samuel Beckett Today/aujourd'hui 16* (2006) and *Performance Research 12* (2007). This powerfully informed viewpoint, allows her to deal directly with Beckett's artistic practice in relation to theories of embodiment across chapters four to eight.

McMullan argues that "the mimes and the unpublished dramatic fragments constituted laboratories in which Beckett tried out the possibilities of staging the body or a series of bodies" in a fascinating chapter on the "wordless drama" of the 1950s and early 1960s, such as *Act Without Words I&II* and *J.M. Mime*. This act of generating and then abandoning these texts enabled Beckett to consider new possibilities for the performing body and inform his later work for the stage. On radio, "the possibilities of sonic embodiment" were explored through "experiments" such as *All That Fall*, *Cascando* or *Embers* where "voice, sound, music, and the radio system intersect" (80). McMullan pursues this idea of the "body-circuit" into Beckett's work for film and television, where human embodiment evolves in relation to technologies of representation, often denaturalizing or disarticulating the body from view. *Eh Joe* is re-read via Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty and Lacan but also draws upon the work of contemporary Beckett scholars such as Bignall, Oppenheim and Herren. The "relationship between the body semblance and the animating matrix" in the television plays is shown to prelude the late theatre, which will continue to "dislocate", "distort" and "disorientate perceptions of embodiment," especially in plays with an intermedial status, such as *Not I* and *What Where*.

Developing these ideas over the final three chapters, McMullan writes that "the body in Beckett's late theatre is presented as both sign and site, engine or matrix of production (of stories, semblances, voice, footfalls or hiccups) and fabric to be composed and recomposed with limited materials." Therefore, the body is "itself a matrix of embodiments [...] a site of production, Murphy's 'matrix of surds.'" In the section "Performing Bodies in Beckett's Late Theatre" such theoretical abstractions are counter-balanced by accounts of "the extraordinary physical and vocal discipline needed

for such an approach," such as Zarilli's "bodymind," Neumann's "double vision," Whitelaw's "spiraling inward," and Chabert's "bodily posture." McMullan blends philosophical phenomenology with performance theory throughout, often identifying emergent discourses and experimental practices at this intersection. Broadening her approach to an analysis of "Stage Performances of Beckett's Late Prose Texts," specifically *The Lost Ones* (1975) and *Imagination Dead Imagine* (1984) performed by Mabou Mines, and *Worstward Ho* (2005) performed by Gare St Lazare Players, McMullan reconsiders issues of "genre androgyny," "mutation from prose to stage," and "re-siting Beckett." She concludes "these productions confirm that staging Beckett's prose has the potential to complement and extend the performative laboratory of Beckett's theatre of the body." This relates back to her reading of the mimes and fragments as "corporeal laboratories," and forward to "interdisciplinary and intercultural translations and embodiments" of the future.

Such arguments enable *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* to enter into a discourse beyond Beckett Studies, where "the human is crucially *constituted* through performance" (Kershaw 2001), where performance itself "will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth" (McKenzie 2001), and where "the theatre of the late twentieth, and early twenty-first century was the human laboratory" (Read 2008). McMullan's text forms part of the Routledge Advances in Theatre and Performance Studies, sitting alongside works on the biopolitical (Giannachi 2006) and the neuroscientific (Di Benedetto 2010). *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* is well positioned to articulate the new environments for our embodiments, be they biomedical, transcultural or "ghost-haunted."

--Jonathan Heron

New and Forthcoming

- Ackerley, Chris. *Samuel Beckett and Science*. London: Continuum, 2012. ISBN-10: 1441175474, ISBN-13: 978-1441175472.
- Lozier, Claire. *De l'abject et du sublime: Georges Bataille, Jean Genet, Samuel Beckett*. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, 2012. ISBN-10: 3034307241, ISBN-13: 978-3034307246.
- Salisbury, Laura. *Samuel Beckett: Laughing Matters, Comic Timing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. ISBN-10: 0748647481, ISBN-13: 978-0748647484.
- Tucker, David. *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx: Tracing 'A Literary Fantasia'*. London: Continuum, 2012. ISBN-10: 1441139354, ISBN-13: 978-1441139351.
- Weiss, Katherine. *The Plays of Samuel Beckett*. London: Methuen, 2012. ISBN-10: 140814557X, ISBN-13: 978-1408145579.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Linda Ben-Zvi's latest Beckett publication is "Beckett and Disgust: The Body as 'Laughing Matter,'" in the recent issue of *Modernism and Modernity* devoted to Beckett.

Enoch Brater is the Kenneth T. Rowe Collegiate Professor of Dramatic Literature at the University of Michigan. The author of several seminal studies on Beckett, his most recent publication is *Ten Ways of Thinking About Samuel Beckett: The Falsetto of Reason*.

Mary Bryden is Professor of French at the University of Reading, and Co-Director of the Beckett International Foundation. Her forthcoming collection *Beckett and Animals* will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2012/13.

Julie Campbell is Lecturer in Literature and Drama at the University of Southampton. She has published quite a few articles on Beckett's prose fiction and drama.

Daniela Caselli teaches English at the University of Manchester. She is the author of *Beckett's Dantes* (2005) and *Improper Modernism: Djuna Barnes's Bewildering Corpus* (2009).

Andrew Gibson is Research Professor of Modern Literature and Theory at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is the author of numerous books, including *Beckett and Badiou: The Pathos of Intermittency* (Oxford, 2006)and *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Life* (Reaktion, 2010). His new book on James Joyce is forthcoming next year from Oxford.

Peter Gidal is an experimental filmmaker and aesthetician whose retrospectives have appeared at Belgian Cinemateque, Centre Pompidou, Tate Gallery, Anthology, NY, and many others. His books include *Materialist Film* (1989), *Understanding Beckett: Monologue and Gesture* (1986), and *Warhol: Films and Paintings* (1971).

Jonathan Heron is the Artistic Director of Fail Better Productions and IATL Teaching Fellow at the University of Warwick. He is co-author of *Open-space Learning: A Study in Trans-disciplinary Pedagogy* (WISH, Bloomsbury Academic, 2011) and *Chemistry, Performance and Pedagogy – an interactive approach to periodic trends* (CERP, Royal Society of Chemistry, 2010). His recent work as a theatre director includes *Rough for Theatre II & Ohio Impromptu* (Oxford Playhouse).

William Hutchings is a Professor of English at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the author of *Waiting for Godot: A Reference Guide* (Praeger: 2005). His production history of *Happy Days*, titled " 'In the Old Style, Yet Anew': *Happy Days* in the 'AfterBeckett' " is included in *A Companion to Samuel Beckett*, edited by S. E. Gontarski and published by Wiley-Blackwell in 2010.

Jim Knowlson has written, co-authored or edited many books on Beckett's work and life. He founded the *Journal of Beckett Studies* and set up the Beckett Archive in Reading.

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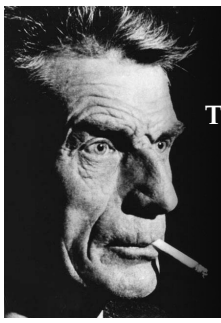
Eckart Voigts-Virchow is Professor of English Literature at the University of Siegen, Germany. His Beckett articles were published in *The International Reception of Samuel Beckett*, *Other Becketts*, *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, and *Samuel Beckett: A Casebook*.

Hersh Zeifman, Professor Emeritus at York University, Toronto and a past President of the Samuel Beckett Society, has published widely on Beckett and on modern and contemporary drama.



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All members of the Samuel Beckett Society are encouraged to submit items of interest for publication in *The Beckett Circle*. **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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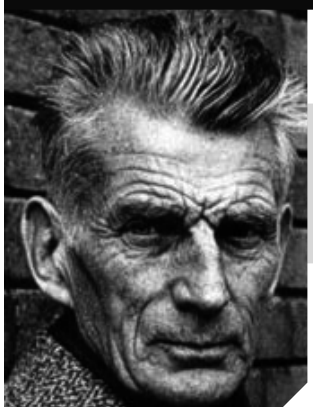
Please note that all materials for the Fall issue must be received by September 1, for the Spring issue by March 1.



SAMUEL BECKETT SOCIETY

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Members can soon keep up with the latest reviews and announcements in the world of Beckett studies through *The Beckett Circle* website, to be updated regularly. Members of the SBS are also eligible for a subscription to the *Journal of Beckett Studies* at a reduced rate; please go to **www.eupjournals.com/jobs/page/subscribe** for more information

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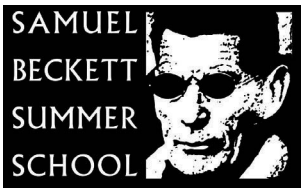


Samuel Beckett Summer School 2012
15–20 July 2012
Trinity College Dublin

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.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

Sunday
Rodney Sharkey: `"Local" Anaesthetic for a "Public" Birth: Beckett, Parturition and the Porter Period'

Monday
Declan Kiberd: 'Samuel Beckett: Mystic?'
Seán Kennedy: 'Beckett, Yeats and the Big House, 1933'

Tuesday
Andrew Gibson: 'Samuel Beckett, How It Is and the Irish Misanthropic Tradition'
Emilie Morin: 'Beckett and Radiophonic Sound'

Wednesday
Enoch Brater: 'Beckett's Dramatic Forms, Considered and Reconsidered'

Thursday
John Pilling: 'Six Notebooks In Search of a Novel: Beckett writing Murphy'
Ulrika Maude: ``Convulsive Aesthetics: Beckett, Chaplin and Charcot'

Friday
Terence Brown: 'Beckett: Memories and Sounds'
Jonathan Heron: 'Theatre Laboratories, Performance Genetics and "Beckett's DNA"'

The Sunday lecture starts at 6 pm (although this may change in the final schedule). The weekday lectures are from 9.30-11 and 11.30-1, except for Wednesday when there is just one lecture, which runs from 11.30-1.

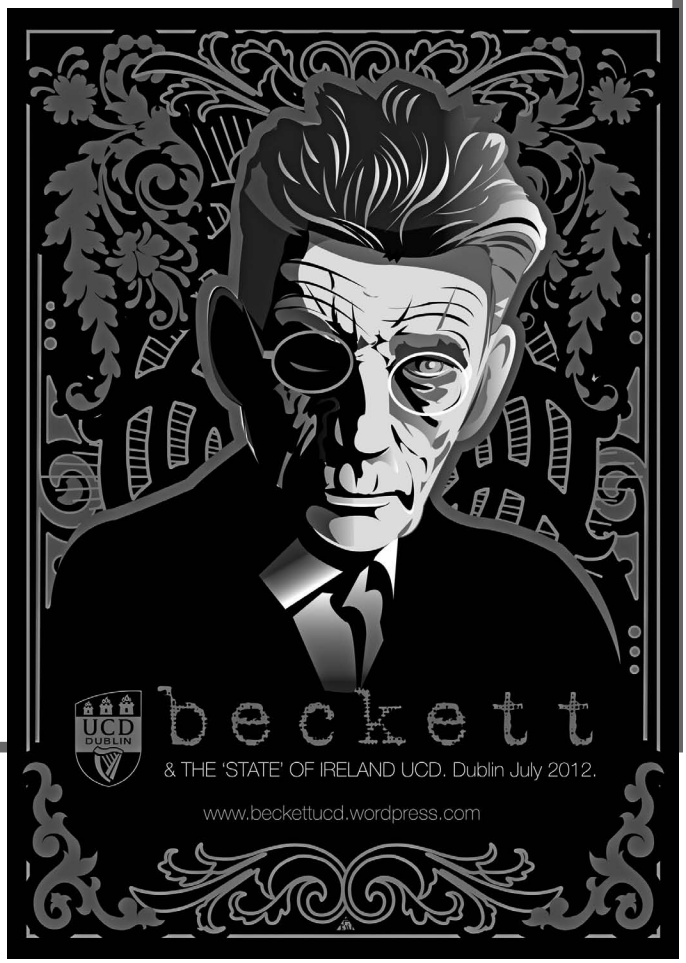
SEMINARS FOR 2012:

Beckett and Irish Culture, 1929–1949 (Seán Kennedy)
Beckett's Manuscripts (Mark Nixon & Dirk Van Hulle)
Performance Workshop (Rosemary Pountney & Jonathan Heron) Reading Group (John Pilling)

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

The fees for the Samuel Beckett Summer School have now been set: 670 euro programme only; 1170 euro programme plus accommodation at Trinity College Dublin. For more information see www.beckettsummerschool.com or contact sbss@usit.ie.

The Summer School will be preceded by the conference "Beckett and the State of Ireland: Irish Beckett – Global Beckett" at University College Dublin on 13–14 July. We encourage participants to attend both events. For more information see http://beckettucd.wordpress.com.



THE BECKETT CIRCLE
LE CERCLE DE BECKETT
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THE SAMUEL BECKETT SOCIETY

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

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

For membership inquiries, write to:
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