18:BECKETT

18:Beckett

BLACKWOOD GALLERY
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO AT MISSISSAUGA

WORK BY
Martin Arnold, Dorothy Cross, Stan Douglas,
Gary Hill, Bruce Nauman, Gregor Schneider,
Ann-Sofi Sidén, Zin Taylor & Allison Hrabluik

ESSAYS BY
Terry Eagleton & Séamus Kealy

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FOREWORD

INVENTING OBSCURITIES: SAMUEL BECKETT & CONTEMPORARY ART

The question has been posed regarding Samuel Beckett and contemporary art, about their proper and improper relations, about how they get along, about how they keep company or part ways. Under the coordination of Séamus Kealy and the Blackwood Gallery and in celebration of Samuel Beckett's centennial year, a number of visual artists working in new media and inspired by the texts and plays of the twentieth century Irish bard are haunting the spaces of the University of Toronto at Mississauga and filling them up with questions.

Searching for some dark illumination concerning the aesthetic posture that directs Samuel Beckett's oeuvre, I turn to *The Unnamable* for some questionable and questioning advice that both demands and resists analysis at the limits of self-knowledge:

And all these questions I ask myself. It is not in a spirit of curiosity. I cannot be silent. About myself I need know nothing. Here all is clear. No, all is not clear. But the discourse must go on. So one invents obscurities. Rhetoric.

What does it mean to invent obscurities? I take this as a Beckettian approach to art and its making. To make contemporary art means for Beckett to invent obscurities. It is as simple and as complicated as that. This mode of invention has nothing to do with the satisfaction of curiosity that is somehow tied to the production of knowledge and to the discourse of enlightenment. In contrast, the discourse (like the show) that must go on is not at all clear. Whatever the technical means deployed (video, performance art, installation), what is produced is bound to be obscure. At odds with the bright lights of the enlightenment, the Beckettian discourse is the subject of an intermittent or an irregular light. The Unnamable rhetorically asks us to consider what is so strange and so wrong about these lights: "Is it their irregularity, their instability, their shining strong one minute and weak the next?" But there is a further question: Is this Beckettian mode of invention to be viewed as obscurantism, a rendering unto obscurity solely for obscurity's sake? This is one of the questions that you must engage with when you approach the contemporary work of art under the influence of Samuel Beckett.

You also should not forget that rhetoric (standing alone by itself) substitutes for obscurities in the above citation. From the sophistries of the pre-Socratic philosophers to the tragicomic characters of Samuel Beckett, the rhetorical arts (verbal and/or visual) are to be read as arts of obscurity that conceal/reveal the truth under the cover of performance and theatricality.

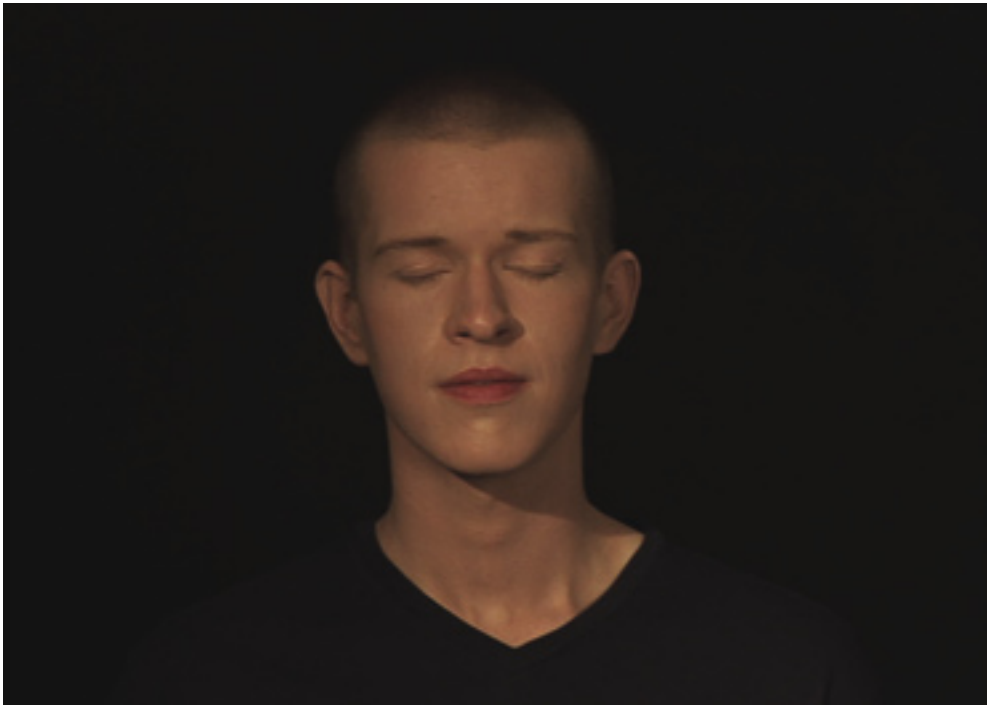
Beckett once said that his favourite word was the one with the capacity to cast a reasonable or unreasonable doubt over each and every situation. This word has an uncanny and paradoxical power to push being over the edge of certainty and into the state of limbo where things become undecided. In this way (and in between), the unnamable Beckett text is transported into the undecidable. The word in French is *peut-être*. The word in English is maybe. Perhaps.

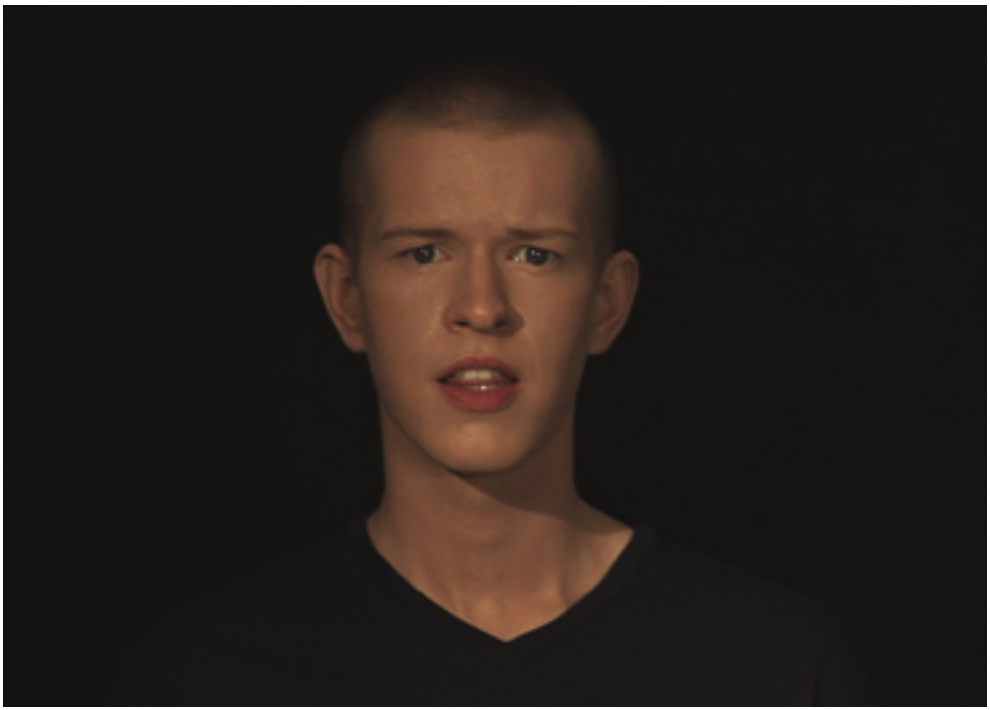
Louis Kaplan
Director, Institute of Communication and Culture
University of Toronto at Mississauga

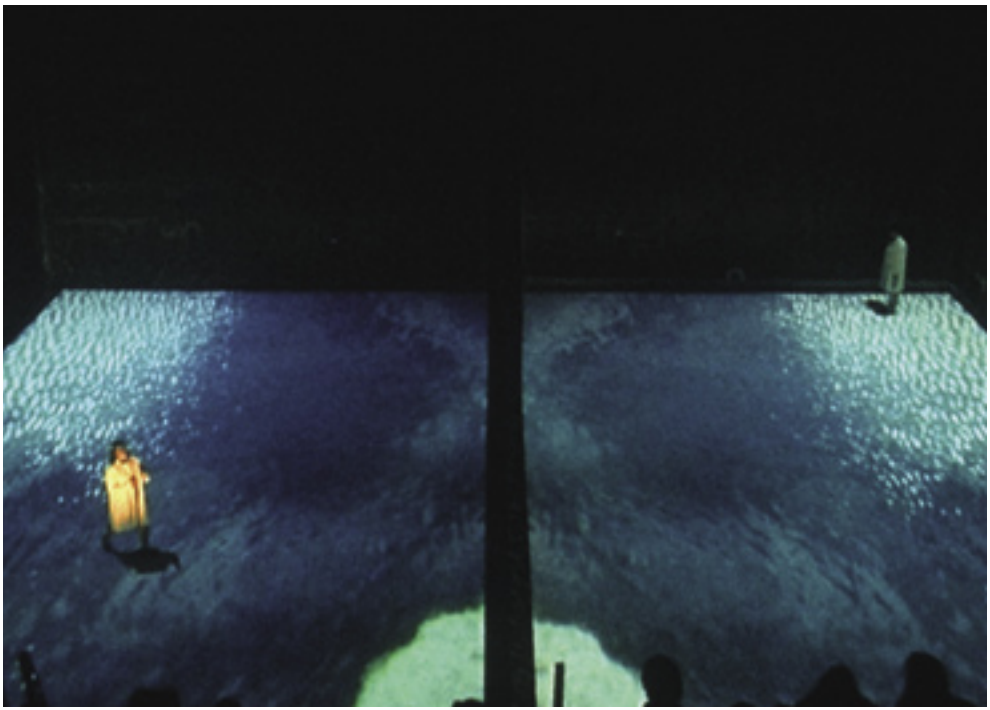
PLATES

opposite Martin Arnold
Silent Winds (stills), 2005 (cat. 1)

following pages Dorothy Cross
Chiasm (stills & documentation), 1999 (cat. 2)







opposite Stan Douglas
Win, Place or Show (stills), 1998 (cat. 3)

following pages Gary Hill
Wall Piece (stills), 2000 (cat. 4)

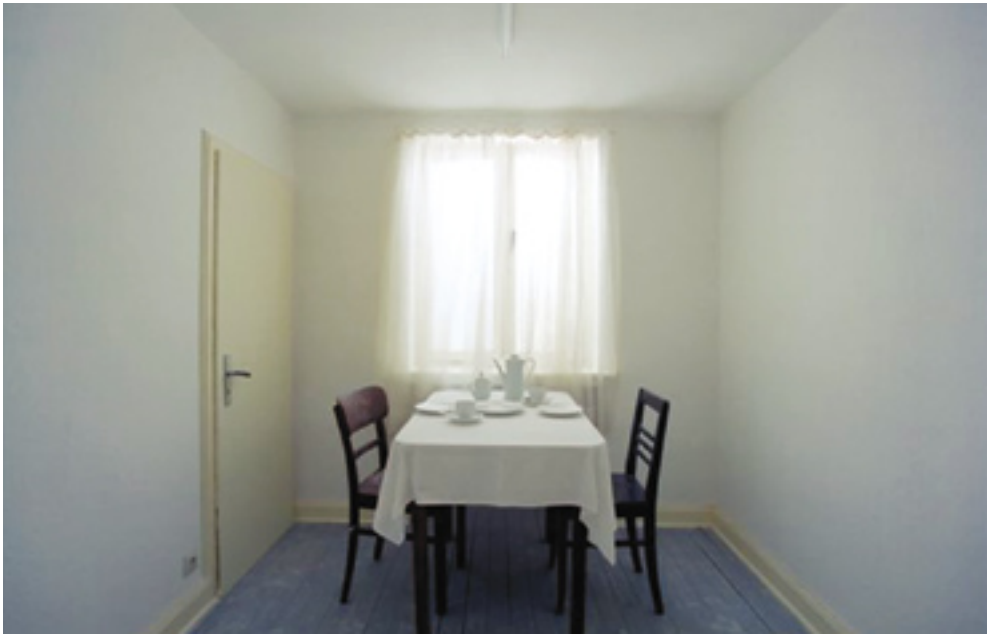







Bruce Nauman
Clown Torture (stills), 1987 (cat. 5)

above/opposite Ann-Sofi Sidén
179 kg (stills & documentation), 1990 (cat. 6)



above/opposite Gregor Schneider
Totes Haus ur (documentation), 1985–ongoing (cat. 7)

following page Zin Taylor & Allison Hrabluik
Are Your Dreams 10 Sizes Too Tall?, 2006 (cat. 8)


Are Your Dreams
10
Sizes Too Tall?

CATALOGUE OF WORKS

1 Martin Arnold
Silent Winds, 2005

HDTV-film on DVD, 4 parts

Courtesy of the artist & Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna

2 Dorothy Cross
Chiasm, 1999

Single-channel video of performance

Courtesy of the artist & Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

3 Stan Douglas
Win, Place or Show, 1998

Two-channel video projection, four channel soundtrack; 204,023 variations with an average duration of six minutes each

Courtesy of the artist & David Zwirner, New York

4 Gary Hill
Wall Piece, 2000

Single-channel video installation; video projector and mount, one digital video disc and player, strobe light and strobe controller with steel floor mount; speakers

Courtesy of the artist & Donald Young Gallery, Chicago

5 Bruce Nauman
Clown Torture, 1987

Four-channel video installation; two projectors, four monitors, four speakers, four digital video discs and players; speakers

Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago, Watson F. Blair Prize, Wilson L. Mead and Twentieth-Century Purchase funds; through prior gift of Joseph Winterbotham; gift of Lannan Foundation. Photograph courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago

6 Ann-Sofi Sidén
179 kg, 1990

Single-channel video of performance

Courtesy of the artist & Galerie Christine König, Vienna

7 Gregor Schneider
Totes Haus ur, 1985–ongoing

Site-specific installation in Rheydt, Germany

Courtesy of the artist

8 Zin Taylor & Allison Hrabluik
Are Your Dreams 10 Sizes Too Tall?, 2006

Digital print mounted on Plexiglas, 72" x 108" (height/width)

Courtesy of the artists

TEXTS

Political Beckett?

TERRY EAGLETON

In September 1941, one of the twentieth century's most apparently non-political artists secretly took up arms against fascism. Samuel Beckett, who with exquisite timing for a notorious pessimist was born on Good Friday (and Friday the 13th) 1906, had been living in Paris since 1937, self-exiled from his native country in the manner of many an eminent Irish writer. The Irish, unlike their erstwhile colonial proprietors, have always been a cosmopolitan nation, from the nomadic monks of the Middle Ages to the corporate executives of the Celtic Tiger. If the oppressiveness of colonial rule turned some of them into nationalists, it turned others into citizens of the world. Joyce, Synge, Beckett, and Thomas MacGreevy, men already caught between two or three cultures and languages, were to flourish in the rootless, polyglot, ambience of high-modernist Europe, rather as half a century later their compatriots were to embrace the European Union. It helped, in signing up to a linguistically self-conscious modernism, to stem from a nation in which language, as a political minefield, could never be taken for granted.

Beckett had volunteered to drive an ambulance for the French forces in 1940, but when the Germans invaded the country he and his wife Suzanne fled south, a mere forty-eight hours before the Nazis marched into Paris. Stopping briefly in a refugee camp in Toulouse, they arrived exhausted and almost penniless at a friend's house in Arcachon on the Atlantic coast. Some months later, lured in part by reassuring tales of the Germans' conduct in the capital, the couple returned to their Parisian apartment, surviving the bitter winter of 1940–1 on little more than a handful of vegetables. James Knowlson, Beckett's official biographer, sees this as the origin of Vladimir and Estragon's animated discussions of carrots, radishes, and turnips in *Waiting for Godot*.[1] Beckett's characters, true to his own wartime experience, are vulgar materialists, too busy keeping biologically afloat to indulge in anything as grandiose as subjectivity. They are more body than soul—mechanical assemblages of body parts, as in Swift, Sterne, or Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, in which human bodies betray a distressing tendency to merge into bicycles. The mystery of the human body, like the mystery of black marks on a page for the Tipperary-born Laurence Sterne, is how this inert piece of matter comes to be more than itself—how it keeps

crawling or bleating, when it ought by rights to be as silent as a stone. If the focus of Beckett's play *Not I* is the human mouth, it is because there meaning and materiality mysteriously converge.

Once back in Paris, Beckett joined the Resistance, his growing revulsion at the Nazi regime brought to a head by the deportation of a Jewish friend to a concentration camp. With characteristic generosity, he donated his meagre rations to the victim's wife. The eighty-strong Resistance cell of which he became a member was co-founded by the redoubtable Jeannine Picabia, daughter of the celebrated Dadaist painter, and was part of the British Special Operations Executive. From the viewpoint of pro-Nazi Republicans in the officially neutral Irish state, the Dublin émigré was now in cahoots with the political enemy. His role within the group drew on his literary skills: he was set to work translating, collating, editing, and typing out scraps of information brought in by agents about German troop movements, information which was then microfilmed and smuggled out of France. Like the boy in *Waiting for Godot*, some of the agents' messages proved somewhat unreliable. Despite its sedentary nature, the work was highly dangerous, and after the war he was to be awarded both the *Croix de Guerre* and the *Médaille de la Reconnaissance* in honour of his services. His silence and secretiveness, qualities apparent in his art, proved to be signal advantages for a *maquisard*.

Even so, the cell's cover was soon blown. A comrade cracked under torture, and more than fifty of the group were arrested, many of them later deported to concentration camps. The Becketts, advised to leave the capital immediately, perilously delayed their departure by forays to alert other members of the cell, in the course of which Suzanne was arrested by the Gestapo but managed to bluff her way out of trouble. The couple escaped being picked up by a whisker, vacating their apartment only minutes before the secret police arrived at their door. Scrambling from one small hotel to another under false names, they took shelter for a time with the writer Nathalie Sarraute, and later, duly armed with forged documents, hid away in the village of Roussillon in Provence, where most of the locals mistook them for refugee Jews.

It was here that Beckett rejoined a Resistance cell in 1944, hiding explosives around his house, undergoing some basic training in handling a rifle, and occasionally lying in ambush for the Germans at night. If Vladimir and Estragon sleep in ditches, so did their creator. Indeed, he was more of a

vagrant than they are, since the play does not actually tell us that they are tramps. On their return to Paris after the war, the couple found themselves once again emaciated and half-famished, along with the rest of the city's population. When Beckett took up his pen, it was sometimes with fingers blue with cold. Sometime during these years, he is said to have suffered a severe psychological breakdown. Ten years before, he had taken a course of psychotherapy with Wilfred Bion.

ANGST AND EXILE

Beckett, then, was one of the few modernist artists to become a militant of the left rather than the right. And James Knowlson is surely right to maintain that "many of the features of his later prose and plays arise directly from his experience of radical uncertainty, disorientation, exile, hunger, and need."[2] What we see in his work is not some timeless *condition humaine*, but war-torn twentieth-century Europe. It is, as Adorno recognized, an art after Auschwitz, one which keeps faith in its austere minimalism and unremitting bleakness with silence, terror, and non-being. His writing is as thin as is compatible with being barely perceptible. There is not even enough meaning to be able to give a name to what is awry with us. One pointless narrative cranks itself laboriously off the ground only to be aborted for another, equally futile tale. These stripped, stark texts, which seem to apologize for doing anything as importunate as actually existing, have a Protestant animus against frippery and excess, as their words flicker up for a fragile moment from a void into which they then fade back. Sparseness and pedantic precision are the nearest one can now come to truth. His friend James Joyce, Beckett once remarked, was always adding to his material, whereas "I realized that my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than adding."[3] He shares with his compatriot Swift a savage delight in diminishment.

Beckett's art maintains a compact with failure in the teeth of Nazi triumphalism, undoing its lethal absolutism with the weapons of ambiguity and indeterminacy. His favourite word, he commented, was "perhaps." Against fascism's megalomaniac totalities, he pits the fragmentary and unfinished. In his Socratic way, Beckett preferred ignorance to knowledge, presumably because it resulted in fewer corpses. If his works are morosely, hilariously

conscious of the fact that they might just as well never have existed—that their presence is as farcically gratuitous as the cosmos itself—it is just this sense of contingency, one quite as much comic as tragic, that can be turned against the murderous mythologies of necessity.

Like many an Irish writer, from the great medieval philosopher and negative theologian John Scotus Eriugena, to Edmund Burke with his aesthetics of sublimity, Flann O'Brien, and the contemporary Irish philosopher Conor Cunningham,[4] Beckett, a keen reader of Heraclitus, had a consuming interest in the notion of nothingness—a harmless enough phenomenon in the view of Sterne, "considering," as he observed, "what worse things there are in the world." "We Irishmen," wrote Bishop Berkeley, "are apt to consider something and nothing as near neighbours." The attenuated world of Beckett, populated as it is by characters of an alarming Lacanian leanness, exists somewhere in this crepuscular region, as a form of anti-Literature allergic to all rhetorical flatulence and ideological plenitude. When *Godot* was first produced in London in 1955, cries of "This is how we lost the colonies!" could be heard from the scandalized audience.

IRISH DEFLATIONS

Yet Beckett's depleted, degree-zero writing, one to which the tongue of Descartes and Racine seemed more hospitable than the language of Shakespeare, is also a riposte to the florid rhetoric of a far more benign form of nationalism than the Hitlerite variety: that of Irish Republicanism. Like Joyce, his keen sense of Irishness survived years of never setting foot in the place, and he had a weakness for what struck him as a particularly Irish kind of desperation and vulnerability. He was always glad to have a drink with a compatriot passing through Paris, and his black humour and satirical wit (an early work was entitled *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*) are cultural as well as personal traits. If the starved, stagnant landscapes of his work are post-Auschwitz, they are also a subliminal memory of famished Ireland, with its threadbare, monotonous colonial culture and its disaffected masses waiting listlessly on a Messianic deliverance which never quite comes. Perhaps there is a particular irony in this respect in the name "Vladimir."

Even so, as a Southern Irish Protestant descended from eighteenth-century Huguenot émigrés, Beckett belonged to a besieged minority of cultural

aliens, some of whose big houses were burnt to the ground during the war of independence, and many of whom took refuge in the Home Counties after 1922. Encircled by what the ascetic young Trinity College student from middle-class Foxrock scorned as a bloated Gaelic bigotry, Southern Irish Protestants found themselves trapped later within the Catholic parochialism of the Free State. Beckett's father's dying words to him were, "Fight, fight, fight!," perhaps with a political resonance, though he rather undercut this clarion call by adding, with remarkable understatement, "What a morning!" It is a bathos worthy of his son. Isolated and displaced, Beckett abandoned Ireland for a spell in London in 1933, a year after the theocratic, authoritarian De Valera took power. He was to pass only another two years of his life in Ireland. As with any internal émigré, it seemed as logical to be homeless abroad as at home. The traditional alienation of the Irish artist could be translated into the rather more glamourous *Angst* of the European avant-garde. Art or language might prove substitutes for national identity, a phenomenon which could be derided as *passé* in polyglot bohemian cafes at the very moment when the most noxious nationalism of the modern epoch was looming over the horizon.

Yet there is, ironically, a distinctively Irish quality to Beckett's deflation of what might nowadays be called Oirishness. For one thing, nothing is more Irish than debunkery. For another thing, Beckett's rejection of his nation, like Joyce's, was of a peculiarly intimate, keep-it-in-the-family kind. Insulting themselves is a time-honoured Irish custom, one in which only insiders (and certainly not the British) are permitted to take part. It is as native to Ireland as getting out of the place. Many Irish dissidents have been inverted nationalists, just as the Irish Catholic Church fosters a booming business in atheism. As a marginal nonconformist marooned in an assertive new cultural orthodoxy, Beckett, rather like Wilde, found ways of translating the displacement of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy into a deeper kind of fidelity to dispossession. There is a powerful lineage of such Irish Protestant "convert" figures to radical causes, from Wolfe Tone and Thomas Davis to Parnell and Yeats.

What helps to deflate swollen rhetoric in Beckett is also what demystifies cozily humanistic sentiment. It is the inhuman device of the *combinatoire*, in which the same few drab odds and ends are rigorously permutated with all the clinical impersonality of what would later be called structuralism. There is a monkish pedantry about Beckett's art, a crazed meticulousness which

smacks among other things of a hard-headed Protestant rationalism. There is a similar dimension to his Protestant middle-class Dublin colleague Yeats, whose dreamy Celtic reveries sit cheek by jowl with the neurotically systematized world of magic. Beckett's Molloy must arrange his sucking stones in a series of pockets sewn specially into his garments, moving each stone as soon as it is sucked to a different pocket, so that no stone will be sucked out of sequence. One thinks of Sterne's mad philosopher Walter Shandy, or Swift's lunatic projectors. Rationalism, pressed to a limit, capsizes into its opposite. There is a venerable Irish tradition of such satire, in a philosophically idealist culture which never produced a major rationalism or empiricism.

Complete Beckettian texts are conjured up by an ingenious reshuffling of the same few scraps and leavings, in a parsimony of gesture which is both theatrically subversive and dramatically engaging. The reader or theatre audience is packed off poorer but more honest. What strikes us is the extraordinary exactness with which this supposed obscurantist weaves the wind, the clear-sighted logic with which he sculpts the void and seeks, in his own phrase, to "eff the ineffable." An obsessive scrupulousness plucks ever more slender nuances from what seems mere shapelessness. Beckett's materials may be raw and random, but his treatment of them, like so much Anglo-Irish art, is highly stylized, with a balletic elegance and economy. It is as though the whole formal apparatus of truth, reason, and logic has remained intact, even though its contents have long since leaked away; and if this is an antidote to Gaelic extravagance, it also owes something to a very Irish-Catholic scholasticism.

Everything in this post-Auschwitz world is ambiguous and indeterminate, which makes it hard to understand why sheer physical pain should be so brutely persistent. As far as indeterminacy goes, it is not just that nothing much happens, but that it is hard to be sure whether anything is happening or not, or what would count as an event. Is waiting doing something, or the suspension of it? It is, to be sure, a kind of deferment; but then this is true for Beckett of human existence itself, which like Derridean difference keeps itself going only by the perpetual shelving of some ultimate meaning. All we can know, in the words of Clov in *Endgame*, is that "Something is taking its course," with all the irresistible force of a teleology but with none of its sense of purpose.

REFUSING FINALITY

Perhaps the final meaning would be death; and that is devoutly to be wished in a world in which the only opiate for suffering is habit, now degraded from revered Burkean custom to mechanical reflex. Yet there is in fact no death in Beckett's work, merely a steady disintegration as the body continues to peel and stiffen. Death would be a far too grand, definitive occurrence for these eviscerated figures to cope with. Even suicide requires more sense of identity than they are capable of mustering. Beckett's characters thus have all the unkillability of comic protagonists, with nothing of their craftily gained achievements or blitheness of spirit. They are not even up to tragic status, which would at least be some kind of recompense. They would only fluff their lines and bungle their big moment, distracted by a hairpin or a bowler hat. Lucky's big metaphysical speech falls to pieces as it leaves his mouth. We are in the presence of low farce or black carnivalesque rather than high drama.

No doubt Godot's eventual arrival would constitute a big moment; but who is to say, in this world of extreme conceptual scarcity in which there is only so much meaning to go around, that it would be recognizable when it happened? Maybe Godot is in fact Pozzo; Vladimir and Estragon may have misheard the name. Or maybe this whole agonizing freezing of time, in which the past is erased so that you must reinvent yourself from scratch at every moment, is Godot's coming, rather in the way that for Walter Benjamin the very catastrophism of history points in its negative way to the imminence of the Messiah. Perhaps there never was any one big thing crying out for redemption, and this is the characters' mistake. For one lineage of Messianic thought, the Messiah will transfigure the world by making minor adjustments.

Yet the problem is that Beckett's universe looks like the kind of place where the idea of redemption indeed makes sense, while being at the same time grievously bereft of it. There is a meaning-shaped hole at the centre of this lamentable condition, since modernism, unlike its more callow postmodern progeny, is old enough to remember a time when there appeared to be truth and reality in plenty, and is still tormented by its disappearance. There is no danger of an excess of nostalgia here, however, since memory, and therefore identity, has collapsed along with everything else. All one can salvage by way of consolation is the fact that, if reality is indeed indeterminate, then

despair is not possible. An indeterminable universe must logically leave room for hope. If there are no absolutes, there can be no absolute assurance that Godot will not come or that the Nazis will triumph. If the world is provisional, then this must be true of our knowledge of it as well—in which case there is no saying whether this landscape of freaks, cripples, and hairless spheres of flesh, viewed from another perspective altogether, may not be teetering on the brink of transfiguration.

Clinging to the possibility of redemption has at least this benefit, that it allows us to measure how dismally far short of it we fall. Beckett has sometimes been accused of nihilism; but if there were no sense of value in his universe, there would be no cause for so much shrieking and howling. Without some sense of value, we would not even be able to identify our suffering as objectionable, and so would fail to recognize our plight as anything but normal. It is just that such value cannot be spoken outright for fear of its being ideologized, inflated to some sentimental humanism and so becoming part of the problem rather than the solution. Instead, value must manifest itself negatively, in the unswerving lucidity with which this writing confronts the unspeakable. Since the detachment it requires for this confrontation is also the detachment of comedy and farce, value lies also, as so often in Irish writing, in that momentary, inexplicable transcendence of a drearily oppressive world which we know as wit. Madness, pedantry, the body, self-irony, arbitrariness, endless repetition, mechanistic reduction: these are just the kind of grim motifs which can also be very funny, and are thus fit meat for this comic maestro of the post-human. If he is indeed, in the end, a comedian, it is not least because he refuses tragedy as a form of ideology. Like Freud and Adorno, Beckett knew that the sober, bleak-eyed realists serve the cause of human emancipation more faithfully than the bright-eyed utopians.

NOTES

1 James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1996), 361.

2 Ibid., 416.

3 Ibid., 417.

4 See Conor Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 2002).

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Ten Texts for *18:Beckett*

SÉAMUS KEALY

Right in the middle of Prague, Wenceslaus Square, there's this guy throwing up. And this other guy comes along, takes a look at him, shakes his head, and says, "I know just what you mean."
Milan Kundera

Might not the beatific vision become a source of boredom, in the long run.
Samuel Beckett

18:Beckett is an interdisciplinary project of eighteen sites, one for each numbered year since Irish writer Samuel Beckett's death. The year of the organization of *18:Beckett*, 2006, is the centennial year of Beckett's birth. While there have been celebratory events worldwide, some of them heroizing the figure of Beckett, this project uses as its structure the countable eighteen years in which the world has continued on without him. These counted years, each one both a signpost of Beckett's legacy and a circling around his absence, not only mark the endurance of his writings but also allude to the problematics of engaging with his work after his death. The broken gestalt of Beckett's work is more than ever about these times, which are ruled by mass-media fantasy. Despite this confluence of his work and our times, Beckett's name, the third most cited author in the history of literature and its studies, has blended into a blanket of sparkly nothingness.

Celebrating Beckett's achievements, the centennial year has involved an immense re-engagement with his work, including symposia, book launches, endless articles, theatre productions, and art exhibitions, all under the banner of Beckett and his influence. Organized as both a centennial event and a reaction to the centennial year, *18:Beckett* is an experiment that begins with a number that structures its design, organization, and sites, and then branches literally into discourse. This project, by remaining an experiment first and foremost, aims to be, as much as one can say, true to Beckett's work, without pastiching his image or his "tableaux" of work. There is little

attempt to imitate his voice, both the familiar voice of authority and the voice of meekness—that ghostly, mechanical voice, inimitable in its binding of clarity and obscurity, stoicism and submission, and relentless onwardness within the ditch.

There is a sentiment and an obligation that fastens this project together by means of a theme that is just as soon challenged in the attempt to realize it. The proper name of Samuel Beckett is employed here to pull various sites into a whole in an attempt to create an assemblage, wrought of multiplicity, that is both designated by this name but which is then re-inscribed by the content of the project. As such, this project attempts to avoid the trappings of authorship, romanticization, facile designations, dusty historicisms, and empirical categorizations, all of which can be associated with Beckett's name as engaged within the conventions of hagiography. To attempt this within the auspices of an institution, such as the university within which the Blackwood Gallery is housed, may appear incongruous. However, it is hoped that this only apparent contradiction may aid in gelling the turbulence and doubt of this project under a few key terms.

ORIGINS

In several symposia this year, Beckett scholar Stanley E. Gontarski presented a lecture on the subject of "reinventing Beckett." Gontarski gives examples of artists and theatre companies who have produced work out of Beckett's oeuvre with a sense of freedom and creativity despite the rigour and control of Beckett's work that is often associated with the "doctrinal invariance" of the Beckett Estate and the concern Beckett rightfully had about the mis-usage of his work.

Gontarski asks if this year's centennial events are a headstone for Beckett and his relevance today. He remarks upon reinventions of Beckett's work which are often experimental, sometimes taking artistic and interpretative license, and often going beyond the expectations or aesthetic acceptability of Beckett scholars. Surely, a number of these revisions or borrowings from Beckett may enter the realm of pastiche and thus may rightfully constitute a "wrong" to the work of Samuel Beckett. This sort of appropriation is a certainty, given the infinite need for narratives that are done and redone and often, in the process, over-aestheticized in this time of sequels and re-re-makes.

However, Gontarski also sees the "avant-garde potential" of restaging Beckett plays and themes today. He cites the 2002 installation *Steenbeckett* by Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan at London's Museum of Mankind. Egoyan filled the museum with a sculptural installation, involving unending spools of film running excessively along rollers through an antique Steenbeck editing machine. The installation had its origins in Samuel Beckett's 1958 play *Krapp's Last Tape*, of which Egoyan had earlier made a powerful film version. Gontarski also singles out the versions of Beckett's plays produced by the Brazilian duo Adriano and Fernando Guimaraes, who combine theatre, literature, music, performance, and the visual arts to make interactive, hybrid spectacles in which the body is central to the events and images. In both cases, Gontarski continues, Beckett's work is treated as a readymade in a new poetic space.

18:Beckett arises to some extent out of this occasional use of Beckett's work as a readymade. However, since its conception one year ago, this project has concentrated, more specifically, on how artists have applied "formal strategies" that Beckett worked with—not literal re-workings of his work per se, but revitatilizations, sometimes belatedly, of a number of themes along with the algebraic clarity and austerity of form which we can associate with Beckett's work. In this sense, this project embraces *Nachtraglichkeit*—Freud's term for a belated revisit of trauma or experience—which the art historian Hal Foster, in *The Return of the Real* (1996), applies to some examples of contemporary art that re-visit modernist strategies from the 1960s in order to revitalize, in a sense, the avant-garde work of art's struggle with contemporary society.

This idea was where *18:Beckett* began. Since then, the project has taken a number of unexpected turns. One obligation that produced this project is the task behind discursive curatorial practise generally: to engage with contemporary culture in a vigorous, provocative, and unflinching way. At times, this engagement involves parsing out how society and individuals rely upon one another, or questioning how it is that culture comes to mis-recognize itself. This often involves considering hidden structures of global and socio-economic realities that govern everyday life in western society. Beneath this lie even grander and less tangible questions, an abyss with which psychoanalysis, philosophy, and most serious art attempt to grapple.

The iconoclasm of Samuel Beckett's work breaks through the binaries of

teleology, ideology, and religious debate. In that sense, an art project out of Beckett's influence might attempt to challenge these structures. The artworks in *18:Beckett*, like Beckett's work, come out of a profound doubt that is circumscribed—especially in new media works—by a marked formal rigour. The co-existence of doubt and sureness of form put reassuring structures of belief, society, and consensus off-kilter. By means of this instability, these works recall some of the strategies of the modernist avant-garde: they irk the delusional categories that hold our current perceptions and experiences of the world together.

Although it is misleading to name them, there are themes arising out of Beckett that were meant to appear in this exhibition from the beginning. These themes include: the use of repetition to unmask behaviour and constructions of reality; absurd dialogue and scenarios; tropes of determination and onwardness in the face of despair; observations on human perception and modern philosophical ideas; depicting the darkness of an inner world; confronting the need for desires to be given free expression; employing rational contradictions; opposing conventional reality; rejecting the principle of knowing more as a way of creatively understanding the world and controlling it; focussing on poverty, failure, exile and loss; humanity as "non-knower" and "no-can-er; applying the Greek philosopher Democritus' idea that "nothing is more real than nothing"; and generating an ongoing, often poetic, and elegant criticism of the world at large.

VOICES OF GHOSTS

Three insights into the work of Samuel Beckett by Gilles Deleuze have been key to this project.[1] First, for Deleuze "la voix de Beckett est un image" (the voice of Beckett is an image).[2] In a similar tone, Lois Oppenheim argues that the "unifying force of all Beckett's work is a preoccupation with the visual as paradigm and that painting sanctioned the preoccupation."[3] The geometry and intense visual formalism within Beckett's novels, plays, and television plays has, in turn, always interested artists and musicians. It can be defined as an intertwining of content within form, a definition of content by form, without succumbing to solipsistic obsessions. In other words, it is the maintenance of this structure—this twining—as something universal and applicable to everyday life. Artwork coming out of the *voice* Beckett applied

often continues with this visual understanding of Beckett's writings.

Second, in some works in this project, one encounters symptomatological methods Deleuze identifies in the work of art, such as Beckett's work which contains more knowledge of schizophrenia than psychiatrists and psychoanalysts. The projects presented in *18:Beckett* are meant to collide as a laboratory of cultural analysis, as a machinery of different, sometimes contradictory parts that form a tenuous whole. This sense of bumping up against truth and belief is echoed by Irish scholar Terrence Brown when he refers to the "ghost in the machine" of Beckett's later works, especially the "radical doubt" of his television plays, which suffering from a "memory lapse, prioritize a mechanical sense of immediacy"[4] and conjure up a gaze of self perceiving self. This self perceiving self as immediately fruitless, automatic in process and form, and an ultimately anti-heroic gesture (however engrossing and relevant it is for the audience) is evident in *Krapp's Last Tape*, where Krapp's consciousness is a set of tapes that he circumnavigates, an image of disorder, consciousness, and "dead voices." Here, questions of consciousness are invoked in high contrast to the diarrhoea of contemporary new media society.

By means of a "Beckettian strategy," one may make a relevant critique today of the familiar certainties (and horrors) of the capitalist world, of the inability to imagine alternatives to this system that defines individuals and their environments in detail. One also encounters a healthy unease and scepticism of the world as it is depicted, where a recognition, respect for, and acceptance of otherness and the anti-spectacle come to illustrate what is "beneath" representation. Here one might glimpse a sort of base materialism, such as Georges Bataille advocated, and the ruins of the ignored possibilities for avant-gardism today. By circumscribing the avant-gardism of yesterday—with its belated entries and re-arisings today—a formal severity as analysis and re-writing of boundaries of identity and culture is encouraged. Organized entries into "meaninglessness" may produce collisions with the profound, thus asserting re-writings of belief, beauty grasped in the unlikely, and an embrace of anti-traditions of wit mingled with a despair, which have followed the course of human civilization.

TABLEAUX

In 1962, Beckett brought a metronome into the theatre where *Happy Days* (1960) was being rehearsed. "This is the rhythm I want," he said to actress Brenda Bruce, turning it on and setting her dialogue to it.[5] This rhythm, a formal rigour throughout Beckett's work that supersedes expression, as in the case with Bruce's acting, gives one a sense of the structured whole of Beckett's oeuvre. Raymond Federman describes a series of "tableaux" throughout Beckett's writings, insisting on the geometry, structure, and intense formalism in Beckett's work (rather than on the latter's meaning).[6] Within this shape of the writing, as Federman defines it, one finds a series of landscapes that "turn to ruins, or rather one should say, construct themselves on their own ruins, to become first, in the early works, surrealistic tableaux, then cubist scenes, abstract expressionism, and ultimately, in the later texts, minimalist and conceptual as they reconstruct themselves into perfect geometrical figures in the form of circles, squares, cubes, cylinders."[7] Lois Oppenheim views Beckett's own references to the history of visual arts, such as his conjuring of images from paintings which he makes his own, as having an *ekphrastic* function. *Ekphrasis* can be defined as "a visual moment stopped in time,"[8] mimetic and motionless. It is like the sculpture of the terrible, female Slavic figure in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* (1870) in the way that it holds *furore* and activity in a silent calm, static yet vigorous, a vibrant stillness.

The space Beckett depicts in his work is simultaneously constructive and resistant to meaning. Federman argues that pursuing meaning in Beckett's texts leads to an "impasse, to non-sense, to platitudes, ready-made ideas."[9] "No symbols where none intended," ends Beckett's novel *Watt* (1953), an early line from a long career of harnessing anti-meaning within different structures. It is not interpretation of Beckett's texts that should be pursued, but a dance into and around their form. This is not to disengage from the project of reviewing or sorting through the lucid ideas, references to history, allusions to philosophy, psychoanalysis, and the histories of art and literature throughout Beckett's work. Rather, it is to insist that the more natural abode of the *unnamable* lies in the visual; that this very defiance of meaning in Beckett lends itself to a more intense, wordless confrontation of the greater world, to politics, to rationality, to accepted notions, and to a consensus in perception. With Beckett's example, one may make measures at driving towards an "underneath" of thinking. This underneath has a history, with

some of it, as Terry Eagleton notes, in Irish philosophy. The substance of it is as old as Democritus. In this age of information overload, a reconsideration of the *unnamable*—the "truth-shaped hole" within the geometry of reduction—may be generative:

And yet I have high hopes, I give you my word, high hopes. That one day I may tell a story, hear a story, yet another, with men, kinds of men as in the days when I play all regardless or nearly, worked and played.[10]

STRATAGEMS OF INSUFFICIENCY

The cue for *18:Beckett* is the *matter* of his work: that which defied and broke down structures, opening up new possibilities for art, a powerful alternative, a "secular almighty," as Eagleton describes it, opposed to status-quo thinking and the hubris to rely upon delusions and ideologies. The third borrowing from Deleuze consists of a series of themes that point to such an alternative. These themes or stratagems identified by Deleuze within Beckett's work are, where possible, taken up in this project in order to take measure of their multiplicities. Deleuze's Beckettian consist of the following:

The exhausted
Destruction of world
Dissolution of subject
Disintegration of body
"Minorization" of politics
Stuttering of language
Space/Any-place[11]

During Beckett's lifetime, audiences responded to these themes as they spoke to the senselessness of waiting for a greater good, to the crippled nature of modern life, to their understanding of the world. They responded to the almost unconscious motifs of Beckett's experiences during the Second World War, his running from the Gestapo, and his close encounters with mass conformity and cultural sado-masochism (in Ireland, Germany, and Nazi-occupied France). Today's audiences may experience a glimmer of recognition, in one way or another, especially in the wait for a better life, the dreams of a better future (after the disenchantments of modernist utopias). That the experience of waiting is also familiar may be measure by how much

it is avoided by contemporary standards. Today a typical experience of time often involves impatience and a desire for instantaneous arrival. This may indicate a contemporary lack—or an ongoing incineration of the groaning meaninglessness that should belie structures of visual reality—that arises via flashes, not hazes, lighting and fueling continual ongoing needs for gratification and delusion.

Within Beckett's work, as thematized by Deleuze, one can trace collapses, undignified discontinuities, banal uses of language, poetry without purpose, repetitions of activities, and an "unsentimental depiction of despair and death."[12] Because human consciousness, as we see especially in *Endgame* (1957), has been shelled beyond recognition, a "reification of the world has been completed, and this allows only for permanent catastrophes."[13] Beckett's novel *Molloy* (1951) depicts humankind's tendency to rely upon delusion, enacting the dissolution of comforting structures evident in the post-war and late capitalist West. This depiction of delusion also applies to the expectations created by Hollywood, religious traditions, and the urges for distraction that lead one to believe, to claim or to simply wish that all things will turn out for the best. *Molloy* is a novel of quest, a parody of the detective novel or romantic mission, in which the expedition is not successful. The journey, on the other hand, navigates through delusion and misrecognition. It demarcates repressive myths of humankind as possessor of goods, according to which identity based on "I own, therefore I am"—with all the golden apples of income, property, technologies, and even political and social rights—is increasingly determinative of human consciousness. As John Calder writes:

Beckett makes this clear and shows that it is not only possible to live without it, but it is necessary. If we expect nothing we may receive much more by being able to live in the world free of its encumbering possessions and becoming aware of its natural resources, aware above all that the greatest riches lie in the ability to use and stretch the mind. We must have the ability to discard, like Hamm facing his end, or like the "she" of Ill Seen, Ill Said.[14]

Beckett's work, increasingly as the years passed, had a remarkable ability to delineate, disparage, and even emasculate metaphysical conceptions. Noting Beckett's affinity to contemporary theory, Iain Wright is careful to note that the "deconstruction of logocentric illusions" in Beckett's work, leads to no "erotic *jouissance*" or "Nietzschean *Froehlich Wissenschaft*."[15] This lack

of *jouissance* is definable in Jean-François Lyotard's terms as a modern predicament in which "the politics which 'we' have inherited from revolutionary modes of thought and actions have turned out to be redundant (whether we find this a cause of joy or a matter to be deplored)."[16] Beckett's works spiral around this space of loss and lack. Though there is a view of Beckett as a nihilist, the expression of endurance within his writing, as well as what Eagleton calls pure expression alongside an inability to express in his work, defy this categorization. A Beckettian scepticism of Cartesian certainty, of the subject's aptitude to bridge the gap between itself and the world via representation, tackles much of the territory that nihilism enjoys, but is not itself of that order.

There is in Beckett's work a need to describe and demystify methodological certainties, such as in the famous sucking stone passage in *Molloy*, in which Molloy circulates sixteen pebbles among four pockets so that each stone is sucked in a strict order, precisely and obsessively, but for no obvious purpose. This passage, like many other motifs in Beckett's work, indicates a need for a relationship with the extraneous in pursuit of subjectivity, despite the seeming fruitlessness and inanity of this pursuit. Here we find, in one sense, a Heideggerian critique of the systems and objectifications produced by human consciousness in order to negate the fact of death. And yet beyond that, and more so into Beckett's later writings, we find a poetry and almost sacral quality that carries the Heideggerian pessimism into another order. Sometimes this erupts into pure hilarity, as when, in *Malone Dies* (1951), a parrot is taught "*Nihil est in intellectu, quod non feurit in sensu*" (Nothing is in the intellect that will not first have been in the senses, from Democritus), but can only repeat the first part of this phrase: "Nothing is in the intellect."[17]

MECHANICAL SPIRIT

For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face-to-face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I also am known.
1 Corinthians 13:12

In Jonathan Swift's *The Tale of a Tub: Battle of the Books: A Discourse concerning the Mechanical Operations of the Spirit* (1704), the narrator seeks mechanical operations of the spiritual, as well as spiritual qualities in physical objects, and alternate readings of everything. This book is an enormous parody with a number of smaller parodies spiraling within it; everything is unceasingly questioned with ridicule and wit. Swift's key term, *mechanical spirit*, also arises in Beckett's characters with their emotion-free expressions, such as Winnie in *Happy Days* or the mouth in *Not I* (1972). In Beckett's teleplays, this *mechanical spirit* becomes visible and more reflexive. Repetition, a hallmark in Beckett's work, enters into a structured arena, such as in the teleplay *Quad* (1981). Speaking of *Waiting for Godot* (and surely this applies to his other work), Beckett says, "It is a game, everything is a game." Structures are done "artificially," he continues, "otherwise everything becomes an imitation, an imitation of reality. It should become clear and transparent, not dry. It is a game in order to survive."[18]

With *Quad*, the precise movements of the figures are comic at first, but the pattern becomes more manic with the repetition, like, as James Knowlson describes, "traffic in the Place de la Concorde, rodents in a maze, human beings scurrying about their business, or prisoners exercising desperately in a courtyard, […] something eminently Dantesque."[19] Similarly, the mouth in *Not I,* Beckett recounts, was someone he knew, "not 'she' specifically, one single woman, but there were so many of those old crones, stumbling down the lanes, in the ditches, beside the harrows. Ireland is full of them. And I heard 'her' saying what I wrote in *Not I*. I actually heard it."[20] This voice shouts, "What? [...] Who? [...] No! [...] She!" Then the voice, again one might think of Deleuze describing this "white voice" as image, in *The Unnamable* (1953). It is also a hysterical and impossible voice, between the living and the dead, which speaks: "I shall not say I again, ever again, it's too farcical, I shall put in its place, whenever I hear it, the third person, if I think of it."[21] Later works, especially the teleplays, depict these voices more and more like "shades" (Beckett's term),[22] televisual figures, dreamed projec-

tion, fleeting memories, futuristic ghosts, and apparitions all as one:

Nothing and yet a woman. Old and yet old. On unseen knees. Stooped as loving memory some old gravestones stoop. In that old graveyard. Names gone and when to when. Stoop mute over the graves of none.[23]

Calder suggests a kinship in this *mechanical spirit* of Beckett's characters with decapitated heads, guillotines, the macabre, and even questions about cerebral life continuing after clinical death (in 1950s France, experiments were performed on the heads of murderers punished by guillotine who often exhibited signs of consciousness just after decapitation).[24] However, these *shades* in Beckett's work, as well as their words and actions, are more about the sense of bodies smothered in helplessness. In a century riddled with disruptions of peoples, diasporas, the rule of totalitarian regimes, displacements by technological advancements, and profoundly unjust, terrible wars, Beckett's characters pulse with an existence that yearns to be discerned.

AGONY OF PERCEIVEDNESS

The task of mapping the *unnamable* in Beckett's work often involves an avoidance of materiality. Federman suggests that in Beckett's writings "the object prevents us from seeing it clearly and the eye itself is an obstacle to clear perception of the object."[25] In 1965, Beckett produced his only film: *Film*. Alan Schneider, the director, describes the film as a "movie about the perceiving eye, about the perceived and the perceiver—two aspects of the same man. The perceived desires like mad to perceive and the perceived tries desperately to hide. Then, in the end, one wins." The protagonist is split into an object (O) and an observing eye (E), "the former in flight, and the latter in pursuit." According to Schneider, certain shots were envisaged so as to contrast two "absolutely different visual problems."[26]

For Beckett, the pursuer and the protagonist are two different modes of the same self. In her book *The Passive Eye: Gaze and Subjectivity in Berkeley (Via Beckett)*, Branka Arsic ruminates on this split of self in an analysis of Irish philosopher Bishop Berkeley's influence on Beckett. Arsic accounts for Berkeley's radical thoughts on God's visual language, where the overview of reality that emanates from the Godhead is incompossible to human perception. It is a grand non-narrative that structures reality:

opposite Dorothy Cross
Chiasm (documentation), 1999 (cat. 2)
Photograph courtesy of the artist

Berkeley's philosophy would read as follows: in his interiority, God produces and perceives a visual language as an exteriority that is his own interiority, which exists only as long as his perception lasts. Esse est percipi (to be is to be perceived) *would therefore mean that God produces the world as a perception to which nothing in exteriority "corresponds" because exteriority is precisely that perception. In other words, it would mean that God produces the world as his own hallucination. The world would exist only within the region of God's imaginary, in which "subjective" images act as objects and actual images cannot reach their own actualization.*[27]

Berkeley, in reacting to atheism, comes to depict God's gaze as a dead, non-knowing, atheistic gaze, prescient in terms of the advent of photography and film (Beckett's *Film* aligns this dead gaze with the camera lens). Berkeley's philosophy totally de-figures God and recasts his entity into a whole new realm.[28] The gaze of God, a pre-Foucauldian panopticon, continuously perceives all consciousness. We can never escape this perception or know that "his gaze is blind." This "fills our hearts with an awful circumspection of *holy fear*," an "agony of perceivedness," as Beckett would say.[29]

The only way for the exhausted body to elude suffering from this predicament is in its *deactualization* and the removal of everything from its perception that might bring it into action.[30] Thus, in Beckett's *Film*, Buster Keaton puts out the dog and cat from his apartment, covers the mirror, tears a picture from the wall, and even covers a fish bowl, all in the attempt—however transitory—to escape the gaze. Similarly, Beckett's characters lie in the muck or refuse to leave their (mother's) bed. And amidst and within this *deactualization* is a voice that continues to speak.

18:BECKETT

In the exhibition, Dorothy Cross presents her video projection *Chiasm* (1999). The video documents a performance that she organized in a handball alley in Ireland. The space was used as a spectacular stage, with video images projected ninety feet from above blaring onto the concrete ground. The projections themselves are from video shots of "The Worm's Hole," a naturally formed, rectangular pool on the terraced cliffs of Inis Mor, on the Aran Islands in Ireland. A wall separates the two handball courts, which divide


MIND
THE
STEPS

the projected images, but also divide the two performers who are singing a fragmented, operatic narrative that shifts from Romeo to Ariadne, to Dido to Desdemona, to Othello to Manon, and so on. The result is a mix of ten different operatic fragments streamed together into one melodious event. Characters shift into one another by means of a sung dialogue.

Structuring this crossing of characters, this morphing from one identity and emotional state to another (something we can identify throughout Beckett's work), there is a rigour to this project, along with its scaling down of operatic and mythological references amidst a glowing spectacle mounted within the grey-brown chambers of these handball alleys. As a term, *chiasm* sums up the sense of binded narratives and fluctuating identities in this work, denoting structures of intersection or inversion. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *chiasm*—Greek for "crossing"—represents a complex mode of relationality, an intertwining of the visible and invisible in experience, and thus an intertwining of subject and world. In the moment of synthesis, elements still retain their difference. As nature and culture, myth and history, and viewer and viewed are brought into intimate encounter, "binary distinctions are thrown off balance," according to Robin Lydenberg, and distinctions transform into new perceptions, where everything then "radiates outward in a kind of Derridean dissemination."[31]

For Dorothy Cross's work, the term *chiasm* indicates a sense of being and perception, where representation constitutes the presentation of a certain absence. In Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind" (1964), the author describes how individuals are like landscapes interpenetrating other individuals, who themselves are other landscapes.[32] This murky and elastic vision that Merleau-Ponty speaks of has much resonance with Beckett's writings, in which one encounters a world that is indefinable, but continually mapped via structures that are constructed and then deconstructed. One can think of the character of Molloy, who is always becoming, and never quite arriving at something, however vivid his relationship with his surroundings.

For Merleau-Ponty, human perception itself is akin to a lived reality, where, Oppenheim reminds us, it often seeks to purge the "ontology of the polarities of mind/body, self/world, thought/language."[33] Thus, "our body is comparable to a work of art. It is a nexus of lived meanings."[34] Expression is indistinguishable from what is expressed; the human being is *of* the world, not simply in it. Here we encounter a Cézannesque-like "vibration of appear-

ances […] the cradle of things," a domain of encounter, which Oppenheim names as the origin of the work of art.[35]

This is the realm that Cross had in mind when conceiving *Chiasm*. However, the formal structure of *Chiasm* also brings it in league with Beckett. There are parallels, one might argue, with Beckett's teleplay *Quad* (1981). *Chiasm* contains a number of mythological references and is set in a semi-abandoned, modernist terrain. Its structure emphasizes the physical and psychological separation of the two characters who speak to one another through a grey wall.

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Since 1985, Gregor Schneider has been working on the ongoing project *Haus U R*. The German artist has been building and reconstructing this house (from his formative years growing up in Germany), from which a live webstream is cast for *18:Beckett*. This is one of the true interventions in the show, an experiment within an experiment. Since the summer of 2006, Schneider has made enquiries about a man named John Faré, who most likely did not actually exist. There are online stories about how this artist performed in Toronto in the late 1960s, mostly by enacting self-mutilations on stage. His final act involved surgically altering his body in order to enable mechanical appendages to be fixed onto him. Regardless of the factual or fictional existence of Faré, Schneider's project stages a performance in real time within the house around this reinvention of Faré.

Schneider's restless search to build his house again and again, to finish it (which he never will), has an obsessive, rigourous, senseless, and both precise and abject consistency with Beckett's writing and attention to structures. There is an undoing at work here within the structuring, within the building. However, for *18:Beckett* we have a meeting place of cyberspace and audience—presence and absence, real time, interaction, and the screen—with this formal thoroughness and endless quest. There is something reminiscent of Beckett's late shade-characters—whether in *Worstward Ho* (1984), *What Where* (1983), or *Eh Joe* (1965)—in the conceptualization that Schneider has drafted specifically for this project. It is an encounter, if contrived, with mechanical spirit.

opposite Gregor Schneider
Totes Haus ur (documentation), 1985–ongoing (cat. 7)
Courtesy of the artist

The structures of Schneider's house project are both fully and concretely present, made of wood, stone, plaster, and generated by motors. In addition to re-examining trauma and entering into childhood nostalgia, Schneider's agitated acts are unfinished. They speak of the desire to be "subjunctive, full of alternatives and potentiality, and intentionally unsettled."[36] This unsettling space is present throughout Beckett's writings and teleplays—the little rooms, the madhouses, the rainy ditches, the grey surfaces, the human remains as dust on the floor amongst beer spills and vomit, caged, frothing voices—in which these sites are forsaken, bereft of sense; they are like physical holes of meaning. And yet something resembling meaning comes back to the hole from which it has been evacuated.

There is a moment in *Molloy* when Moran is attempting to drag himself home, where he hopes to see once again his bees dancing near their hive. He describes at length the mystifying buzzing dance of the bees, controlled by "determinants of which I had not the slightest idea." It may be one of the happier moments in Beckett's writing when Moran exclaims, "And I said, with rapture, here is something I can study all my life, and never understand."[37]

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In 1990, the Swedish artist Ann-Sofi Sidén organized a performance, an unauthorized version of Beckett's play *Come and Go* (1965), which she titled *179 kg. Come and Go* involves three women sitting side by side on a bench, with minimal conversation that reaches its height in the moment when, after one woman leaves, the other two engage in gossip. In Sidén's work, as in her ongoing performance, *Queen of Mud* (since 1988), the body is a model for illustrating social or political situations. The women in this video are represented in a heightened form of display, under surveillance at all times in their transparent cages. These women are simultaneously "female crippled animals left behind in a basement during a war, human lab rats in some gelatin or body fluids, which creates a visual slow motion."[38] They are also a reaction to Beckett's own directions that the women should be wearing summer dresses while sitting on a park bench. For Sidén, deliberately steps out of the clothed, controlled figures into an anti-dance piece. Beckett's women are now depicted nude: more real, more animal, especially in their off-stage moments, where now the transgressing referenced by Beckett (or by his characters really) is seen.

In the original play, when one of the women leaves the other two, she vanishes, like a shade, into darkness. In Sidén's version, the camera follows these naked bodies, one by one, into plastic cages to witness, albeit absurdly, some obscure carnal acts that arouse the two other women to accuse their friend of having violated a taboo. Exposed are the imposed conditions and ridiculous nature of taboo and societal consensus. By seeing their "sins," it becomes evident that they are not only capable of them, but they that they must commit them because of their very condition within these constraints. Sidén also enhances the baseness of these characters and highlights the social constraints and intolerance by using transparent, plastic boxes.

179 kg is *guerilla Beckett*. Sidén takes her cue from Beckett's work and heads off in another direction, leaning on its foundation in order to exploit the form for her own interests in the baseness of the body, and the darker sides of consciousness as repressed in ever-present social relations. While Beckett used the image of cages throughout his work[39]—even repeatedly within writings such as *Murphy* (1938), stressing isolation, repetition, and the ideas that life is a trap—Sidén inserts a cage into the cage of Beckett's structure. The result is an undoing of this work and a transformation of it into matters of entrapment (of the body) and subjectivity (especially that of the sexualized body).[40] However, characters from Beckett, often drawn from his early Dublin life, as well as the streets, bogs, ditches, dumps, and madhouses that he encountered, might still find themselves within *179 kg.* Here reside cast-offs, loonies, inmates, and poets of the gutter: the broken flesh ousted from the system. They constitute the real visage of the urban wasteland.

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Bruce Nauman's interest in the work of Samuel Beckett has been well-documented, especially in works like *Slow Angled Walk* (1968), sometimes also titled *Beckett Walk*. This work directly references characters from Beckett's *Watt* and *Molloy* who walk in absurd, broken gaits, illustrating various ways of traversing different psychological and physical terrain. *18:Beckett* includes Nauman's 1987 video installation *Clown Torture*. It might be useful to consider how Beckett often referenced clowns in his characters and their movements, employing them as an archetype throughout his work. Beckett was interested in and highly influenced by performers such as Charlie Chap-

lin, Buster Keaton, Karl Valentin, and the Swiss clown Grock. In fact, Grock makes an appearance in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women,* which Beckett wrote as a struggling young writer in 1932. Later, in the 1960s, Buster Keaton was cast by Beckett for *Film*.

Despite the darkness often associated with Beckett, his work has also often, and rightfully, been celebrated for its incredible, often scathing humour. Deleuze has shown how the image of clowns, a form of "clowning" as writer Mary Bryden calls it, is employed by Beckett as a central figure of deterritorialization. Tracing motifs of clowns and clowning in Beckett's work, Bryden argues that clowns are often depicted in popular culture as superhumans impervious to what others cannot tolerate, and thus possessing a recuperative instinct.[41] With Beckett's work, she continues, the clown-archetype characters, as most of Beckett's characters, battle to find meaning. Although they are vulnerable as very objects of interrogation, they are forced to endure.

With Nauman's *Clown Torture*, one enters the visual nightmare of "clowning" in the form of a darkened, soundproofed chamber holding an eruption of shrieks. Projected on the left wall is the image of a clown on a toilet. In the centre, towards the back of the wall, are four monitors, stacked in twos on top of one another. Each monitor plays the image of a different clown, often repeated in different monitors, such as the clown telling the madly circular story of Pete and Repeat, another clown shrieking, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no," and another clown holding a bucket to the ceiling with a broom. Projected on the right wall is this same image, which changes to another image of a clown with a goldfish. The room is blaring-loud, with each clown competing with the others to be heard.

This inferno is akin to the anxious babble world of Beckett's *Not I* as exemplified by Billie Whitelaw's mouth with the absurd, close-up materiality of the lips together with the third person screaming narrative that shouts around and stutters past any semblance or reference to *I*. Like Beckett's use of hobos or clownish characters—Chaplinesque losers who are lost in the world—Nauman takes this image further, incorporating the colourful, childhood motif and carrying it into adulthood, when obsession-compulsion displaces comedy. Shifty, slippery subjecthood, never resting, comes through this iconic image. It was always already there—the image of the clown in medieval times came out of representations of death—which the audience

is supposed to laugh at. One may chuckle when experiencing *Clown Torture*. But time passes slowly there with the dark mockery of Western consciousness and its forgetfulness, and the means by which this forgetfulness is congealed within a babbling labyrinth of popular representations. In this small room, one is also thrust, in the violence, spectacle, and intensity of this work, into a chamber of interrogation—interrogation of selfhood, surveillance of the self from within and from without—and ultimately an incarceration, something akin to both the repetitious demands of consumer society and the blaring media spectacle that acts as its engine of consciousness.

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Samuel Beckett worked on his text *The Lost Ones* in 1965 and 1966 and then, after a break of four years, completed it in 1970 by writing its last few pages. *The Lost Ones* describes a space that simultaneously suggests a lost civilization that somehow remains in the form of ancient ruins, and a futuristic dystopia. Within a cylindrical chamber are two hundred and five people: one hundred and twenty "climbers," sixty bodies on the floor searching for their lost ones, twenty sedentary searchers (who have abandoned the quest), and five vanquished people. The principal drive, apparently, is to find an exit from this predicament. As Chris Ackerley and Stanley E. Gontarski tell us, this work has an echo of Plato's symposium—in which Zeus punishes all three sexes (male, female, and hermaphrodite) by bisection, so that each yearns for that from which it was severed, its lost one.[42] As an allegory for contemporary life, with its endless pursuits in the maddening pace of progress, this work also conjures up the foundation of contemporary civilization: that which never left—like Freud's image of the combined centuries of the Acropolis, simultaneously imagined in one site, as a metaphor for the complexity of the human mind—and that which lies beneath the pursuit of happiness (again something base, arcane, unknowable but continually practised).

Beckett scholar Ruby Cohn refers to the narrator's "naïveté, insensitivity, and dryness of tone" as functioning in tension with the theatricality of the piece, as well as of the speaker's inability to cope with the complexities of "a Dante-nourished imagination" and "a cruelly gripping account of a social system that is at once self-enclosed and parallel to those we know."[43] In addition to noting the discernable nod to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, James Knowlson

characterizes the *The Lost Ones* as a "miniature leviathan" that draws upon much of Beckett's experience in film and television in the 1960s.[44] The structure of the cylinder in this work parallels the "eye of the mind" as well as the lens of the camera. Made at a time when Beckett suffered from deteriorating vision, "the whole text could be defined as myopic."[45]

The Lost Ones is the point of reference for a billboard project by artists Allison Hrabluik and Zin Taylor.This past summer, Hrabluik and Taylor were asked to contribute a work specifically for this billboard. Since almost none of the work in the show makes any direct reference to Beckett's work (except for Sidén's), the idea was to make an exception to this principle, with a commission of a sketch by an artist as imagined from *The Lost Ones*. The sketch could have been the "flattened Babel-tower like space"[46] in *The Lost Ones*, or something derived from this imaginary architectural space, or a sketch of the nefarious bodies one encounters when reading this text. The sketch, exposed to the elements, would decay and disappear over the course of the exhibition. Hrabluik and Taylor decided to produce a collaborative image via email correspondence, working and reworking it until completion.

The artists chose the general description that Beckett gives of a finite area occupied with by a set population, and built their work by association. The drawing on the billboard is the image of an ant cooker-machine that adjusts and alters temperature to generate movement. The text, *Are Your Dreams 10 Sizes Too Tall?,* comes out of lyrics (misremembered by Taylor) by the garage rock band *Spaceman 3* from the early 1980s. Hrabluik and Taylor drew a parallel to the repetition and pared down music of *Spaceman 3*.

For the artists, "addressing a mass of people through the form of an advertisement has links to the themes and suspicions we have about why this story was written and what Beckett was responding to."[47] These would include the period before and after the student revolts, especially in France, the society of the spectacle as demarcated by the Situationists, a kind of "bleak assessment of the failure of the avant-garde," and sectarian violence between the English and Irish into the late 1960s. Last, "asking the question *Are Your Dreams 10 Sizes To Tall?* is appropriate in the wake of population theory and action of the late 1960s and early 1970s."[48]

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opposite Stan Douglas
Win, Place or Show (installation view), 1998 (cat. 3)
Photograph by Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery
Courtesy of the artist & David Zwirner, New York

Since the 1980s, Stan Douglas has employed modernity's ghosts in his art production. In the looped film projection *Der Sandmann* (1994), Douglas interweaved a Freudian narrative through a film set based on a geographical reference associated with Freud's case subject. In the 1998 installation *Win, Place or Show*, installed in *18:Beckett*, Douglas developed the loop into an endless variation on a simple exchange between two characters, using computer technology that recombines the narrative. The title of the work refers to horserace betting options: a subject that features in the content of the characters' dialogue and alludes to the "combinatorial analysis of race finishes."[49] The title, *Win Place or Show*, also rhymes rhythmically with *Waiting for Godot*. But the work continues with other references and permutations.

Win, Place or Show begins with a reference to North American "urban renewal" that began in the 1950s, and focused upon the governmental task of eliminating "urban blight," usually through the destruction of aged houses and apartment buildings in the city centre, and replacing them with public housing. The well-known result was "modernist architectural idioms that were so removed from earlier utopian ambitions that these structures eventually would symbolize social problems they had in fact created."[50] *Win, Place or Show* is set in a Strathcona neighbourhood of Vancouver in a building that does not actually exist. The real Strathcona and its surroundings are so embroiled in urban decay today, that one would never recognize these areas from touristic photographs of this ever-photogenic city.

The set and action of *Win, Place or Show* derive in part from the style of a short-lived CBC-TV dramatic series named *The Clients* (1968), cancelled in its first season, which had brisk, realist episodes following probation officers counselling or investigating men just released from prison. In *Win, Place or Show*, two dockworkers share a one-bedroom apartment in a non-existent single-house dwelling. They discuss the "news, occult mysteries, conspiracy theories, and a game of chance,"[51] eventually colliding into a quarrel and physical fight that ends in exhaustion. A few moments pass and their conversation begins again, as does their fight.

This looping narrative was shot in a studio from twelve points of view simultaneously, with variations of dialogue and performance included. The installation involves a computer recombining the montage so that that each time the scene repeats, it is repeated differently—"identities shift back and forth, different jokes fail to get a laugh—when six minutes of almost twenty

thousand hours of variations are presented."[52] As Douglas states, "No two people can see the same sequence of events that lead to this fight that will never be resolved, however, this conflict which never happened in fact takes place in a realm of fantasy that still determines the occlusion of space to this day."[53]

The couple define each other like Beckett characters Mercier and Camier, Vladimir and Estragon, and Hamm and Clov. They are inseparable in the futility of their conversation. "If I wasn't so tired, I'd slug you again." And Donny replies again, "I know it." And so it goes, eternally, a conversation evincing a Nietzchean eternal return. The characters define each other and themselves in an unsettlingly way. This unending, circular quest for identity, this partnership in unknowing and habit, is inserted by Douglas into the calculated realm of capitalistic expansion and alienation.

Besides the *Godot* reference, one can also observe, in the formal and technical structure of *Win, Place or Show* (that repeats itself in various permutations of its same self), a nod to Beckett's use of repetition as a means of undoing the sameness of habitude, distraction, and ultimately ontological reflections that govern perceptual reality. We can think again of the sucking stones sequence in *Molloy* as well as Swift's ideas on mechanical spirit. As Eagleton puts it, "rationalism, pressed to a limit, capsizes into its opposite."[54]

According to Douglas, "The doubt, that pronounal doubt, doubt of pronouns, doubt of the certainty of an I, is the a priori of my work."[55] As with Beckett, pronounal doubt is a mechanism. And despite the endless desperation in *Win, Place or Show* being reminiscent of, as Daniel Birnbaum remarks, lines of Beckett's *Unnamable*, "like a caged beast born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born in a cage and dead in a cage, born and then dead, born in a cage and then dead in a cage,"[56] the form controls the content, and despair is not the final word. The mechanical is at work here: characters in Beckett, more substance than spirit, are mechanical assemblages of habitude, and here in moving images, controlled by a computer, by the artist. This work is not solely ruminating on tragic reality, dehumanizing modernity, and agonizing, mechanical nonidentity, but contains determination and defiance, a form of liberation within the machinery of spirit, even when this spirit is in fact the very machinery.

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In Gary Hill's video installation *Wall Piece* (2000), a man flings himself against a wall repeatedly, each time blurting out a single word. The sound is muffled by the jolt of the body slamming against the wall. A strobe light flashes over this projected video image, going in and out of synchronization. These words, more like exclamations, are edited together to form a linear text. This visual sequence of the body crashing in various positions against the wall, combined with the words, functions as an interrogation of the supposed state of being. The body hitting the wall acts a means of coping, a reminder of one's physicality, as that which is contradicted by the snares of language.

There is a logic to these absurd repetitious jumps, in which the ongoing, broken speech embodies a neurotic, involuntary pattern, and an undesirable sensation that supplements it. Here the audience encounters a Beckettian impulse to express suppressed inquiries on the nature of life, interrupted in jolts by the intertwining of action and speech, and a blinding, repeated flash. This work is the essence of "muralité," a "walledness," which Garin Dowd finds in Beckett's *Watt* (1953).[57] It is a bogged, ditch-bound body-ness, and an encountering of the world like that of a cosmonaut. The "walledness" is what the body and the word are simultaneously and continually up against in an ongoing attempt to break through this wall.

The ongoingness and the repetition in *Wall Piece* both deny and make allusion to illumination. It may be that the *work* involved by the body may come to break down the duo barrier of language and bodily entrapment by virtue of the patterned activity. The bursts and the pulse of this work, a blinding and re-appearance, as George Quasha notes, underline Heraclitus' statement—*we're estranged from what's most familiar*—and finds its deepest resonance in the body itself. Although one sees a flickering image, a video image, a Beckett-like shade, the intangibility of the image bears more upon the ephemeral physicality of one's body and the hitting of the wall like tapping on one's skull. The differences here—the visual, physical, and verbal contradictions—produce, one might say, a sudden gap that enables a simultaneous re-looking, re-experiencing, and re-wording, all in one. Like Beckett, the theme and structure are hard, direct, and dark. And while it seems pointless and endless, the endurance depicted in this projection, the "I can't go on, I will go on," has something empathetic and derivative within it. Quasha argues, "such cruelty awakens the sense of reality and, despite appearances, is life-affirming."[58] Hitting one's head against the wall, like ruminating

in the muck, may provide an embodied knowledge one is otherwise unlikely to encounter. Moreover, it is the struggle itself that serves as a means of coping and moving forward.

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In the forest of symbols, which aren't any, the little birds of interpretation, which isn't any, are never silent.[59]
Samuel Beckett

Although this statement by Beckett, in a letter to Axel Kaun in the 1930s, was made in reference to art criticism and interpretation, it contains an image irresistibly associable with Martin Arnold's *Silent Winds* (2005). The character in this three-channel (and projection) installation cannot keep quiet. He is split into three and chirps like a bird. The three monitors encase the tripled head of a young, gaunt man. Moment by moment, noises, hums, gasps, and sighs are emitted by each head, creating a cacophony of the sounds that bookmark language: the punctuation marks in communication that one usually learns to turn off when listening.

Of all the works included in *18:Beckett*, *Silent Winds* most directly conveys the Deleuzian theme of the stuttering of language. The voice is broken down into fragments of speech, so that language is undone, while we view the clear image of he who expresses it. On the one hand, one witnesses a visible rendering of the inabilities and insufficiencies of language and speech, while on the other, one is audience to the "in-between" of language. Just as the first person is avoided emphatically in *Not I*, the word is avoided in this work. While gasps and rhythms are implied in *Worsward Ho* and other late works by Beckett, it is in *Silent Winds* that we encounter the breadth of language.

The notion that "there is nothing more to say" does not imply that nothing should be said. Silence has often been a stance taken by writers and artists against, especially after the horrors of war. This turning away from language, a Wittgensteinian refusal of "nothing can be said," is meant to impart that which cannot be spoken or expressed. One can argue that this sentiment applies to the contemporary world, one smothered by the unspeakable as

much as it did to the post-war period when Theodor Adorno proclaimed that it was not humane to produce lyrical poetry after Auschwitz. Then again, Adorno championed Beckett's *Endgame* as true avant-garde art in the post-war period because of its negativity, its commitment via its commensurability with subjectivity to "ensure some sort of validity after the unspeakable," and its ability to express the inexpressible without representing it. Akin to Beckett's succinct, bleak, and humorous survey of humankind, consciousness and history (as in *Endgame*), Arnold's *Silent Winds* is symptomatological in its structure and reception. By avoiding mutism and presenting a precise fragmentation of voice (of song, in fact), this work presents conditions of contemporary life—tenuous subjectivity, erasure of narrative, over-reception of authoritative voices (telemedia), fragmentation, and alienation within Western culture, and repression of the collision-course this world is on—as absorbed by an individual. It constitutes a case study in split form, surgically presented for the audience's observation and reflection.

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The bourgeoisie will recuperate [the avant-garde] altogether, ultimately putting on splendid evenings of Beckett and Audiberti.[60]
Roland Barthes

I speak of an art turning from it [the world] in disgust, weary of its puny exploits, weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along a dreary road […] there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express.[61]
Samuel Beckett

Adorno's proposal that *Endgame* finds the solution of making art after Auschwitz also included a description of universal critiques within this play: foolishness emerging as the actual content of philosophy, the forecasting of post-capitalist consciousness after the grand catastrophe, and the dangerous character of history itself. *Endgame*, Adorno argues, evokes catastrophe without representing its aftermath, and plugs this negative presentation within a

formal rigour so as to deny traditional, bourgeois aesthetic gratification (which, of course, Adorno derides). And there is also a will in the work: "Consciousness begins to look its own demise in the eye, as if it wanted to survive the demise, as these two want to survive the destruction of their world."[62]

Since its inception, *18:Beckett* has attempted to grapple with associations, spin-offs, new terms, and permutations of both the critique and will that Adorno associates, although perhaps puritanically and not always to Beckett's liking, with *Endgame*. The question of how this criteria (which has shifted) be applied while also looking back, while acknowledging Beckett's work (while minimizing the usual hagiography), and while cognizant of contemporary failures, tragedies, and political nightmares, has itself often been the matter of this project.

Eagleton asserts that "Beckett's art maintains a compact with failure in the teeth of Nazi triumphalism, undoing its lethal absolutism with the weapons of ambiguity and indeterminacy." "Against fascism's megalomaniac totalities," Eagleton continues, "Beckett pits the fragmentary and unfinished."[63] Beckett's work has often been described, in a Hegelian sense, as an end to literature, an end to art. *18:Beckett*, as an amalgamation of mechanical spirit within a machinery of aesthetics, maintains, where it can, that belated tropes from Beckett are not an end but rather a beginning. This project situates the work of Beckett as a root, a foundation, and a place of revisitation. The aim is to begin something that is both knowing of history and rejecting of tradition. And where the spectacles of mass media and the pace of contemporary life perpetuate new modes of delusion and belief for the world to become immersed within, re-entwining with "Beckettian strategy" becomes a task of other obligations.

This project also insists on the more natural abode of the *unnamable* in the visual. Defiance of meaning in Beckett and in the visual art in this project lends itself to more intense, wordless confrontations of the world, to that of politics; a challenge to rationality and to accepted notions. The intention is to circumscribe an underneath of *consensus perception* that is always already *there*, no matter how far gone things appear to be. This is especially relevant today in the babbling madness of spectacle-consumer culture, where a tightly-sealed, delusory consciousness is blanketed in the mindless melodies of pop music, empty orchestras, retrograde ideologies, and mis-remembered religions often cast to justify decadent lifestyles and dangerously immutable positions. The *18:Beckett* project resists by means of its negative represen-

tions of imposed (and agreed upon) realities. These so-called realities enable the world to carry on with its confusions on a course of so-called logic, orchestrated, at its base, by perverted ideals and misconstrued ideas of order.

Beckett's aesthetic of impoverishment, one that is not ignorant of the more grandiose questions in historical accounts, philosophy, or psychoanalysis, acts as a withdrawal from modernism's promises of grandeur and happiness. It continues to be provocative and more of this world than of another. With Beckettian space and "tableaux," one may find an opening beyond these questions of ideology and rationality, not as something beatific, heavenly, or redemptive, but a space of radical doubt, of muck and grime, one of fractured precision, crippled bodies, obsessed minds, trauma, sputtering words, doubted structures, the shades of the real and the unreal, and most of all onwardness: the lost, forsaken, and unredeemed, within an unwinding, questioning order.

ALLUVIUM

Hamm: We're not beginning to... to... mean something?
Clov: Mean something! You and I, mean something!
[Brief laugh] Ah, that's a good one![64]
Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*

The multiplicities and assemblages referenced in this text, when brought into a tangible space, can degenerate into a monstrosity. Failings become clear within structures. The project's configuration contains some of its ephemera, but escaping from it, or fleeing from its grips, are the problematics between artwork and audience, the expectations that arise both from those familiar and those unfamiliar with Beckett's work, and the mechanical buzz of new media. Most of all, at every stage, there is the obligation to the ever-present ghost of Beckett. It is clear in *18:Beckett* that the silence of Beckett's work, the whiteness of the voice, the murkiness of the landscape, cannot be attained. Instead, perhaps, bastardization arises within the form of an illusory, high-tech, fantasy-blanket that suppresses the shock of the Real as much as navigating through its course. Still, a circuit, an aisle, a small path, a stream has been traversed. There are remains.

NOTES

1 See Gilles Deleuze, "The Exhausted," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1987), 152-168.

2 Bruno Clement, "Mais quelle est cette voix?" paper presented ast *Borderless Beckett: An International Samuel Beckett Symposium*, Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan, 2 October 2006.

3 Lois Oppenheim, *The Painted Word: Samuel Beckett's Dialogue with Art* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 3.

4 Terrence Brown, "Yeats, Beckett, and the Ghosts in the Machines," paper presented at *Borderless Beckett: An International Samuel Beckett Symposium*, Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan, 2 October 2006.

5 James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 447.

6 Raymond Federman, "The Imaginary Museum of Samuel Beckett," *Symploke* 10, nos. 1-2 (2002): 153-172.

7 Ibid., 161.

8 Oppenheim, 137.

9 Federman, 162. He continues, "Beckett warns us not to fall into the trap of symbolism and hermeneutics: S*i seulement ils pouvaient arreter de me fair dire plus que j'ai dit.*"

10 Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 139.

11 From Daniel W. Smith, "A Life of Pure Immanence: Deleuze's 'Critique et Clinique' Project," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1987), ixx.

12 Jack Zipes, "Beckett in Germany/Germany in Beckett," *New German Critique* 26 (Spring/Summer, 1982): 152.

13 Ibid., 158.

14 John Calder, ed., *A Samuel Beckett Reader* (London: Pan Books, 1983), 30.

15 Iain Wright, "What Matter Who's Speaking: Beckett, the Authorial Subject, and Contemporary Critical Theory," in *Comparative Criticism 5*, ed. E.S. Shaffer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 71.

16 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 7.

17 The parrot jokes often explore these gaps of consciousness. There is the joke about the late electrician who bangs on the household door, after the owners have left, with the parrot repeating "who is it" again and again to his reply of "it's the electrician," until the electrician falls dead from exhaustion. When the owners come home, the woman asks, "I wonder who it was?" and the parrot answers, "it's the electrician."

18 Quoted in Walter Asmus, "Beckett Directs *Godot*," *Theatre Quarterly* 5, no. 19 (1975): 23-4.

19 Knowlson, 592.

20 Ibid., 522.

21 Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 1991), 358.

22 Knowlson, 594.

23 Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), 45.

24 Calder, 38.

25 Federman, 172.

26 Knowlson, 463.

27 Branka Arsic, *The Passive Eye: Gaze and Subjectivity in Berkeley (Via Beckett)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 85.

28 It also lends itself powerfully for a contemporary use of the term "god" without the heavy ideological baggage of religion and frees humanity to define the greater outerness of reality—the *real* itself—as "god."

29 Arsic, 95.

30 Ibid., 118.

31 Robin Lydenberg, "The Impossibility of Desire," in *Gone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 54-55.

32 See Lydenberg, 55-56.

33 Oppenheim, 100.

34 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, quoted in Oppenheim, 106.

35 Ibid., 109, 120.

36 Richard Schechner, quoted in Philip Auslander, "Gregor Schneider's *Totes Haus ur*," *Journal of Performance and Art* 25, no. 3 (2003): 88.

37 Beckett, *Molloy*, 182.

38 From an email conversation between Ann-Sofi Sidén and the author, July 2006.

39 Morris Sinclair quoted in Knowlson, 253: "Living in Ireland was confinement for Sam. He came up against the Irish censorship. He could not swim in the Irish literary scene or in Free State politics the way W.B. Yeats did […] But the big city, the larger horizon, offered the freedom of comparative anonymity (Belacqua seeking the pub where he was unknown) and stimulation instead of Dublin oppression, jealousy, intrigue and gossip."

40 Beckett scholar Chris Ackerley has stated that Beckett would not approve of this version of *Come and Go* by Ann-Sofi Sidén.

41 Mary Bryden, "Clowning with Beckett," paper presented at *Borderless Beckett: An International Samuel Beckett Symposium*, Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan, 29 September 2006.

42 Chris Ackerley and Stanley E. Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to His Works, Life, and Thought* (New York: Grove, 2004), 342.

43 Quoted in Gary Adelman, "Beckett's *The Lost Ones*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 26, no. 2 (2003): 164.

44 Knowlson, 475-6.

45 Ibid., 476.

46 Ackerley and Gontarski, 342.

47 From an email conversation between Zin Taylor and the author, 4 September 2006.

48 Ibid.

49 From the project description material for *Win, Place or Show* produced by the studio of Stan Douglas, 1998.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Terry Eagleton, "Political Beckett?," *New Left Review* 40 (July/Aug 2006): 72.

55 Stan Douglas quoted in Daniel Birnbaum, "Daily Double," *ArtForum* (January 2000).

56 As quoted and referenced by Daniel Birnbaum.

57 Garin Dowd, "Watt's Way," paper presented as part of *Borderless Beckett: An International Samuel Beckett Symposium*, Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan, 30 September 2006.

58 George Quasha, *Gary Hill: Language Willing* (New York: The Institute for Publishing Arts and Boise Museum, 2002), 18.

59 The lighting engineer Duncan Scott quotes Beckett in similar, less formal words: "[Beckett] fervently disagreed with Wittgenstein: 'When you can say nothing, then you must stay silent. That's the whole point,' he said, 'we must speak about it'." See *Beckett Remembering—Remembering Beckett: A Centenary Celebration*, eds. James and Elizabeth Knowlson (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2006), 215.

60 Quoted from Stanley E. Gontarski, "The Future of Performance," lecture presented at the University of Toronto, 6 March 2006.

61 Samuel Becket, *Proust: And Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (New York: Grove Press, 1931), 103.

62 Theodor Adorno, "Versuch, das Endspiel zu verstehen" (Trying to Understand *Endgame*), *Noten zur Literatur* II (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1961), 150.

63 Eagleton, 70.

64 Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, in *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 3, *The Grove Centenary Editions*, ed. Paul Auster (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 110.

ARTIST & WRITER BIOGRAPHIES

Martin Arnold
b.1959, Vienna, Austria

Martin Arnold is one of Austria's most distinguished filmmakers in the area of structural and experimental short film. He studied Psychology and Art History at Vienna University. Since 1988, he has been working as a freelance filmmaker. His works use unusual editing and montage to unearth concealed narratives in well-known Hollywood films. His films have screened at the Palais des Beaux Arts, Brüssels (2006), the Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna (2005), and Fact Center, Liverpool (2003). In addition, Arnold has organized several avant-garde film festivals in Vienna and is a founding member of the Austrian Film distributor Sixpack Film.

Dorothy Cross
b. 1956, Cork, Ireland

Cross employs a variety of media, such as sculpture, video, photography, installation, and performance. Her oeuvre is focused on themes of sexual and cultural identity, personal history, and memory. She has been included in the following group exhibitions: *Bad Girls*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1993) and *Fetishism: Visualising Power and Desire*, first shown at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery in 1995. Cross has also taken part in the Venice (1993), Istanbul (1998), and Liverpool (1999) biennials.

Dorothy Cross is represented by the Frith Street Gallery in London and the Kerlin Gallery in Dublin.

Stan Douglas
b. 1960, Vancouver, Canada

The work of Vancouver-based artist Stan Douglas focuses on cinematic, photographic, and televisual languages. Solo exhibitions include those at the Serpentine Gallery (2002), the Vancouver Art Gallery (1999), the Art Institute of Chicago (2000), and the Dia Center for the Arts in New York (1999). Douglas' work has also been exhibited at the Venice Biennale (2004, 2001, 1990) and Documenta X (1997), IX (1992), and XI (2002). In 1988, Douglas curated *Samuel Beckett: Teleplays*, which assembled eight of Beckett's works for film and television. Originally presented at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the exhibition went on to tour throughout Canada, America, and Europe.

Stan Douglas is represented by the David Zwirner Gallery in New York and Galería Helga de Alvear in Madrid.

Terry Eagleton
b. 1943, Salford, England

Called the "high priest of theory" by *The Gaurdian*, Terry Eagleton is currently Professor of Cultural Theory and John Rylands Fellow at the University of Manchester. His most widely-read book, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983, revised 1996), traces a historiography of literary criticism from Romanticism to Postmodernity. Eagleton's other writtings and research have focused on the English-language literature and culture of Ireland, which are the subjects of a series of books, including *The Truth About the Irish* (2001).

Gary Hill
b. 1951, Santa Monica, United States

Since the early 1970s, Gary Hill has been using video works to investigate the relationship between textual and visual representations. Solo exhibitions of Hill's work include *Visual Utterance: The Works of Gary Hill* (1998) at the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, and those at the Donald Young Gallery in Chicago (2000, 1998, 1996, 1993). Hill's work has also been exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2000) and White Cube in London (1996). In 1998, Hill was awarded the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant.

Gary Hill is represented by the Donald Young Gallery in Chicago.

Allison Hrabluik
b. 1977, Calgary, Canada

Allison Hrabluik is a Toronto-based multimedia and video artist. Her working process involves photographing various locations and taking the images back to her studio to create miniature sets. Her work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions as well as film festivals in Canada and Europe, including Catriona Jeffries Gallery (Vancouver), Market Gallery (Glasgow), EK Arts Centre (East Kilbride), Eastern Edge Gallery (St. John's) and Latitude 53 (Edmonton).

Allison Hrabluik is currently completing her postgraduate studies at the HISK in Antwerp.

Séamus Kealy
b. 1972, Vanguard, Canada

Séamus Kealy is curator of the Blackwood Gallery. He completed his studies in visual arts at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver where he studied under Jeff Wall, Mark Lewis, and Ken Lum. He later completed his masters of Art History at the University of British Columbia. With a background as an artist and curator, Kealy has participated and/or organized over forty exhibitions nationally and internationally. Curatorial projects have included *Failure* (2002), *No Tragedy* (2002), *No Place as Home* (2004), *Unterspiel* (2005), and *Everyday Every Other Day* (2006).

Séamus Kealy regularly contributes articles to several publications, including *Canadian Art Magazine* and *Flash Art International Magazine*.

Bruce Nauman
b. 1941, Fort Wayne, United States

Working in a broad range of media, including video, photography, sculpture, and performance, and exploring a number of visual and conceptual ideas, Bruce Nauman's practice has had a profound impact on contemporary art production of the last three decades. Nauman's many solo and group exhibitions include Documenta IV (1968) V (1972), and VII (1982). In 1994, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis organized a large-scale retrospective of his work that toured across the United States and Europe.

Gregor Schneider
b. 1969, Rheydt, Germany

Gregor Schneider's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Bern and Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (1996), Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, and the Århus Kunstmuseum (1998). He is best known for *Haus ur*, an ongoing project he began in 1985. The project involves the ever-changing construction and reproduction of the interior of his house in Rheydt. This and other work has been part of several important group exhibitions, including *No Man's Land,* Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld (1997) and *Performing Buildings,* Tate Gallery, London (1998). Schneider represented Germany at the 2001 Venice Biennale and was awarded the Golden Lion award for Best National Pavilion.

Ann-Sofi Sidén
b. 1962, Stockholm, Sweden

Using methods borrowed from journalism, feature film, and scientific research, Ann-Sofi Sidén uses film and video installations to examine the human psyche and mythologies of the "self." Her work was included in the exhibition *In Between the Best of Worlds* (2004) at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and at the South London Gallery (2000). Sidén was awarded residencies at P.S.1's International Studio Program, New York (1994) and Artpace, San Antonio (2002). Her work has also been shown at the 1999 Venice Biennale, the 1998 São Paulo Biennial, and Manifesta 2 in Luxemburg (1998).

Zin Taylor
b. 1978, Calgary, Canada

Zin Taylor uses conceptual interventions and music-related work in various media. He was recently included in *Re-Play*, a travelling exhibition organized by the Blackwood Gallery and the Edmonton Art Gallery. Between 2004 and 2005, Taylor produced a video accompaniment to a CD by the Japanese electronica composer Aki Tsuyuko, which was included in the international exhibition *Dedicated to you, but you weren't listening* at Toronto's Power Plant.

PROJECT SITES

Exhibition
November 9 – December 21, 2006

Eight international artists present their work in and around the Blackwood Gallery. The exhibition highlights formal and conceptual strategies that artists are exploring in relation to Samuel Beckett and features work by Martin Arnold (Austria), Dorothy Cross (Ireland), Stan Douglas (Canada), Gary Hill (USA), Bruce Nauman (USA), Gregor Schneider (Germany), Ann-Sofi Sidén (Sweden), Zin Taylor & Allison Hrabluik (Canada).

The Image Bar
November 9 – December 21, 2006

Six week series of film and video screenings including documentary films, teleplays on and by Samuel Beckett, and a contemporary video art program including work by Stephane Gilot (Canada), Kelly Mark (Canada), Nikos Navridis (Greece), Daniel Olson (Canada), Hans Op de Beeck (Belgium), Michal Rovner (Israel), Anri Sala (Albania), Magdalena Szczepaniak (Poland).

Artist talk with Gary Hill
November 8, 2006

Participating artist Gary Hill discusses his work with curator Séamus Kealy.

Symposium & Performance
November 22, 2006

Lecturers examine recent art and theatre projects and the conceptual frameworks that have compelled engagement with the work of Samuel Beckett as a means of reactivating avant-garde production.

Event includes a live, new media performance of *Cascando* by Gerhard Hauck and collaborators.

Film Screenings & Lecture
November 22, 2006
Goethe Institut, Toronto

A screening of a selection of films and dialogue by Walter Asmus, director, and Linda Ben-Zvi, Professor of Theatre Studies, Tel-Aviv University.

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