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ON GOING ON
The Ethic of Impossibility in the Performance of Samuel Beckett's Prose

PhD in Drama Studies

Trinity College Dublin

2009

Nicholas E. Johnson

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Nicholas E. Johnson

SUMMARY

On Going On: The Ethic of Impossibility in the Performance of Samuel Beckett's Prose

by Nicholas E. Johnson

This dissertation presents a history of performances of the prose of Samuel Beckett and illuminates a theory of prose performance through readings of his work. Unifying a phenomenological reading of prose performance with the negative and multiple subject put forward in Beckett's oeuvre, this dissertation will inaugurate an "ethic of impossibility" which permeates the creation and viewing of performed prose. The first chapter introduces theoretical foundations from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Theodor Adorno, and Alain Badiou, developing a phenomenological reading of prose performance and examining the "negative aesthetics" and ethics which result. The second chapter integrates Beckett's own philosophical antecedents and descendents with this framework, focusing particularly on his unique approach to subjectivity. Chapters Three, Four, and Five each treat a specific lineage within the history of prose performance, examining "pure audio" performance, single-text adaptation, and multi-text adaptations respectively. The sixth chapter combines a study of genre in Beckett with the legal situation surrounding prose adaptation, while the conclusion to the thesis examines the practical implications for adaptor, audience, and academic.

Using the methods of phenomenology and the language of poststructuralism as complementary tools, this dissertation examines what occurs for Beckett's prose when it is performed, as well as the implications for the theatre when Beckett's non-dramatic material is placed on stage. It is presumed from the outset that something is both lost and gained when text makes the transition from a genre of prose into performance. To identify these transactions is one goal of this work; another is to define, as precisely as possible, the subjects and objects of these changes which occur in adaptation. Ultimately, a new and flexible theory of prose performance should emerge, providing both a taxonomy of techniques and a practical tool for the staging of Beckett's prose works.

This dissertation represents the first full-length study of this type of Beckett performance, which has more often been examined peripherally within studies of either drama or prose. An inherently interdisciplinary work in the already wide-ranging field of Beckett studies, this thesis both draws on and contributes to discourses of literature, drama, philosophy, and performance studies. The historical portion of the thesis, including an appendix which begins the task of listing all prose adaptations to date, has been gathered from personal interviews of artists involved, published accounts in secondary literature, journalistic documents of contemporaneous reception, lived experience as an audience member, and the "performance archive" held in the Beckett collection at the University of Reading. The theoretical arguments, drawn from thinkers connected to Beckett as well as from the profound philosophical thought found in his own writing, form the basis of a new theory of adaptation. It is thus hoped that while the historical portion clearly forms the basis for future explorations of this type of work, the process of this analysis can also contribute to the long-running debates about the nature of performance.

DEDICATION

For my family
whose wisdom, love, and sacrifice
have made it such a joy to go on.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project has been a profoundly collective enterprise, with extensive roots in the cities where I have lived and the people I have met since first encountering a Beckett play twenty years ago. It is necessary to acknowledge here some of the specific contributions without which the work would have been impossible to complete. In particular, I wish to name the people whose advice, support, mentorship, and friendship have been truly indispensible.

Most obvious is the contribution of my supervisor, Matthew Causey, whose teaching in the classroom, collaboration in the theatre, and friendly companionship throughout my graduate study have enriched my thought and work beyond measure. I was fortunate to have the supervision of two other exceptional scholars, Dennis Kennedy and Anna McMullan, in the early years of this research. My examiners Professor Andrew Gibson and Eric Weitz provided excellent feedback through their close reading and conversation, and the present volume is the product of their guidance. I am grateful to the other colleagues and teachers at Trinity College Dublin who have made the community what it is, especially Brian Singleton, Melissa Sihra, Chrissie Poulter, Steve Wilmer, and Paul Keenan. I am also grateful for personal support and feedback given to me over the years by students in the community, especially George Seremba, Beth Mannion, Alisande Orme, Pippa Van Welie, Mary Caulfield, and Riku Roihankorpi.

The research in Dublin, Paris, New Haven, and Reading would have been impossible without the funding support of several individuals and organisations. Much of this vast debt is owed to Sara Vaux and the Northwestern University Office of Fellowships, who guided me through the first Undergraduate Research Grant process that began my ethnographic field work and then aided me in my application for the George J. Mitchell Scholarship. Trina Vargo and those with the U.S.-Ireland Alliance have provided long-term support well beyond my first year of funding. My research has since benefited from the Provost's Fund for the Visual and Performing Arts; the Samuel Beckett Studentship from the Provost and the Irish government's Department of Arts, Sport, and Tourism; the John McCormick Fellowship; and the Trinity Trust. The many individuals associated with these institutions and all those who sat on their award committees played an essential role. For the remainder of my tuition and a great many other benefits, I must thank Declan Treanor and my colleagues at the Disability Office at Trinity College.

Further institutional support was provided by the following libraries and their patient, helpful staff members: The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Archive, Yale University; the National Library of Ireland, Dublin; Trinity College Dublin; and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. The Beckett Archive at Reading University has played a singularly important role over several years, and I am especially grateful to Julian Garforth, John Pilling, James Knowlson, and Mark Nixon for their advice and hospitality.

Much of the research for this work has been carried out in theatres. The support of Francis Thackaberry and the staff of the Samuel Beckett Theatre at Trinity College has been invaluable in this process. Without the assistance of the Beckett Estate, Edward Beckett, and Joe Phillips at Curtis Brown, my work could not have been performed. Additionally, the actors and artists who collaborated on these projects devoted large amounts of time and energy toward a "laboratory" for my own research, and did so on a volunteer basis.

Though I cannot name them all, I wish to thank especially Katrin Wächter, Hannah Grady, Mark Gordon, Gabriella Calchi Novati, Aoife Lucey, Katherine Graham, and Ciaran Clarke. For the opportunity to perform in *Endgame* in 2006, I am grateful to Ruth Palileo and Jackie Blackman; for the reading of *Play*, I thank Bush Moukarzel; for the chance of performing "What Is the Word?" I thank Niamh NicGabhann and the staff of the Long Room.

A large number of scholars and artists have given generously of their time to speak about Beckett with me, discuss their own work, and advise me on my research. Again, their number is prohibitive, but I must single out particularly Jussi Backman, Lee Breuer, Everett Frost, Judy Hegarty-Lovett, Robert Jaffe, Emma Jordan and Prime Cut Productions, Conor Lovett, Barry McGovern, Sarah-Jane Scaife, and Fritz Senn. I am grateful to Richard and Karen Lambe, who first informed me about the work of Robert Jaffe, and to Vera Lester and Dodd Loomis, who put me in touch with Breuer and Mabou Mines in 2007. The scholars who attended the Centenary Symposium at Trinity College in 2006, as well as those at Northampton University later that year, also aided my work, provoking re-evaluations and revelations now deeply embedded in this thesis.

I have been fortunate to have a large number of true teachers, and their work is deeply etched within my own. Those who share a piece of this authorship are listed here: Kelly Wise, Ed Germain, Cindy Gold, Bud Beyer, Paul Edwards, Frank Galati, Eric LeMay, Brook Ziporyn, and Kevin Bell, who introduced me to Walter Pater and Laphroaig. During my work on Beckett, I have also lost four great mentors, whose memory is palpable for me in these pages, and whom I hope to honour with this work: Géza von Mólnar, Dwight Conquergood, Craig Thorn IV, and Cissie Harshbarger.

Since the subject of this work is the act of going on, it is only right to thank those who have been integral to my own survival in a sense much greater than the academic. My five roommates have become five brothers: Teddy Dunn, Dan Schwerin, Dale Fanning, David Hughes, and Niall Ó Tuathail. Over the years of this project, I have been cared for both materially and spiritually by many others: Adar Cohen, Niamh Dillon, Tom Huntoon, Matt Irwin, DeVon Jackson, Fiona Keating, Phil Kingston, Adam Lichtl, Ryan Maldonado, Sarah Palmer, Ethan Sawyer, Emma Siddall, and Emma Stapely. I thank Alix Fenhagen and Hannah Schwartz for the breakfast in Brooklyn. A special thanks goes to Jennifer Killelea, whose collaboration on Painted Filly Theatre has been a source of great joy, and whose unwavering friendship has been a source of great peace. The Jeffers family of Carlow has provided not only an urgently important trip to Kilkenny and a writer's retreat in Courtmacsherry, but also an endlessly warm welcome into their home and onto this island.

To Emily, I can only say that I could not have done this without you. To my family — Mom, Dad, Vanessa, Grandad — I can only say that I have done this all for you. All those recorded here, and the many others I have forgotten, are the people who turned the impossible into the possible.

N.J.
Dublin, 2009

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PREAMBLE

I hope this preamble will soon come to an end and the statement begin that will dispose of me. Unfortunately I am afraid, as always, of going on. For to go on means going on from here, means finding me, losing me, vanishing and beginning again, a stranger first, then little by little the same as always, in another place, where I shall say I have always been, of which I shall know nothing, being incapable of seeing, moving, thinking, speaking, but of which little by little, in spite of these handicaps, I shall begin to know something, just enough for it to turn out to be the same place as always, the same which seems made for me and does not want me, which I seem to want and do not want, take your choice, which spews me out or swallows me up, I'll never know, which is perhaps merely the inside of my distant skull where once I wandered, now am fixed, lost for tininess, or straining against the walls, with my head, my hands, my feet, my back, and ever murmuring my old stories, my old story, as if it were the first time. So there is nothing to be afraid of.

— *The Unnamable*, 1953

INTRODUCTION
Content and Context

What I am looking for is nowhere, as far as I can see.

—More Pricks Than Kicks

This dissertation presents a history of performances of the prose of Samuel Beckett and illuminates a theory of prose performance through readings of his work. Unifying a phenomenological reading of prose performance with the negative and multiple subject put forward in Beckett's oeuvre, this dissertation will inaugurate an "ethic of impossibility" which permeates the creation and viewing of performed prose. It also represents the first full-length study of this type of Beckett performance. An inherently interdisciplinary work within the already wide-ranging field of Beckett studies, this thesis both draws on and contributes to discourses within literature, drama, philosophy, and performance studies. The first chapter introduces theoretical foundations, developing a phenomenological reading of prose performance and examining the "negative aesthetics" which result. The second chapter integrates Beckett's own philosophical antecedents and descendants with this framework, focusing particularly on his unique approach to subjectivity. Chapters Three, Four, and Five each treat a specific lineage within the history of prose performance, examining "pure audio" performance, single-text adaptation, and multi-text adaptations respectively. The sixth chapter combines a study of genre in Beckett with the legal situation surrounding prose adaptation, while the conclusion to the thesis examines the practical implications for adaptor, audience, and academic.

Using the methods of phenomenology and the language of poststructuralism as complementary tools, this dissertation examines what occurs for Beckett's prose when it is performed, as well as the implications for the theatre when Beckett's non-dramatic material is placed on stage. It is presumed from the outset that something is both lost and gained when text

makes the transition from a genre of prose into performance. To identify these transactions is one goal of this work; another is to define, as precisely as possible, the subjects and objects of these changes which occur in adaptation. Ultimately, a new and flexible theory of prose performance should emerge, providing both a taxonomy of techniques and a practical tool for the staging of Beckett's prose works.

There is an attraction among numerous theatre practitioners to performing Beckett's prose, and a strong tradition of reciting his non-dramatic work began during his lifetime. Patrick Magee read from Beckett's trilogy of novels, *Molloy, Malone Dies,* and *The Unnamable,* over the BBC within ten years of the novels' writing. Jack MacGowran's one-person show, *Beginning to End,* evolved from 1962 to 1973 and used selected prose from multiple works to craft a single character. Frederick Neumann, Barry McGovern, and Joseph Chaikin each staged major dramatic prose treatments while Beckett was alive. Since Beckett's death in 1989, many more stagings have taken place in professional and non-professional contexts, sometimes with the approval of Beckett's estate and frequently without it. Today there are theatre companies, such as the Paris-based Gare St. Lazare Players, whose stated mission is the "dramatization" of the novels and short prose of Samuel Beckett. During contemporary festival s such as the Cork 2005 European City of Culture events, the 2006 Beckett Centenary Festival in Dublin, or the 2006 Dublin Writers Festival, recitations and performances of Beckett's prose abound.

In spite of heightened presence in the public eye, extended through the near-mythic status of the Beckett Estate among theatre practitioners and scholars, prose performance often falls between the cracks in studies of Beckett's drama or of Beckett's prose. While a number of critics — in particular Enoch Brater, Ruby Cohn, Jonathan Kalb, and Anna McMullan — do tackle some of the issues posed in prose performance or offer analyses of such performances, they tend to do so in single chapters, rather than in whole books.[1] Analyses that come from literary study, as opposed to drama,

frequently avoid performance and embodiment wholly, opting for the microscopic textual analysis for which the texts seem so ripe, but which their author so thoroughly reviled. This dissertation attempts to fill a gap in the discourse of Beckett studies by concentrating on prose performance and extrapolating a new framework in an area that has been under-theorized.

This work quickly revealed, however, that any theoretical engagement with prose performance must be grounded in a clear understanding of the phenomenon of performance in general. While debates have raged in the field of performance studies over the ontology of performance, notably between Peggy Phelan (*Unmarked,* 1996) and Philip Auslander (*Liveness,* 1999), there are only two books which claim explicitly to deal with the phenomenology of performance: Bert O. States's *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* (1985) and Stanton B. Garner's *Bodied Spaces* (1994). An understanding of performance in general, far from a settled matter among theatre scholars, must then move toward a phenomenology of performed prose specifically. Chapter One begins this exploration, and is called a "phenomenological" investigation not only because its subject is a phenomenon of perception, but also because this method of analysis permits — or, indeed, is predicated upon — the radical subjectivity on which writing about performance depends. (This is a thesis in which it will be necessary, unlike so many of Beckett's characters, to say "I.") It is the phenomenological process which permits the testimony of the senses, in this case the observations of a theatre practitioner and observer, to be admitted into the analytical discourse.

Theory and Method: Phenomenology

Phenomenology which comes after poststructuralism is often put forward as a polemic methodology. Stanton B. Garner, Jr., in his study of phenomenology and performance, claims it as a strategy of resistance and reclamation, challenging "the apparent ease with which contemporary theory

has dispatched the phenomenal (or lived) body in favor of the representational (or signifying) body" (13). It is true that Michel Foucault claimed to dispense with phenomenology, in spite of the demonstrable effect of Martin Heidegger and phenomenal existentialism on his philosophy and on that of Jacques Derrida. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault writes explicitly: "I do reject [...] the phenomenological approach, which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity—which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness" (xiv). Surely his criticism is a valid one, when narrowly applied to the foundational texts of Edmund Husserl, or even to the proto-phenomenological streams in Hegel and Kant. Later phenomenologists, however, particularly Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre, reshaped the approach considerably, breaking away from many of the dualisms and neo-Cartesian matrices which Husserl assumed. It is this "later" phenomenology which has had a fruitful history in performance studies, as it seemed to liberate the testimony of practice and deep experiential knowledge from the formal constraint of third-person academic discourse. Phenomenology itself does not display the ideological stability that such a blanket critique would suggest. David Woodruff Smith identifies no fewer than seven categories of phenomenology, only one of which — the "transcendental-constitutive" — is Husserlian; Smith's survey also names the naturalistic-constitutive, existential, generative-historicist, genetic, hermeneutical, and realistic schools. This diversity of method, coupled with the spread of the philosophical tradition to virtually every academic discipline from sociology to neuroscience, should imply that no defense of the strategy is necessary, nor is it under serious threat from Derrida and deconstruction.

Instead of a defense, I offer here a kind of methodological *apologia*. There is no need to accept the strict dichotomy of approach that some critics, including Garner, posit. Rather, the phenomenological stream of analysis can be adopted as complementary to the poststructuralist tools so powerful and so

in vogue in recent Beckett studies. These postmodern, semiotic, and linguistic strategies are clearly implicated in the illumination of Beckettian subjectivity, aporia, repetition, erasure, and deferral.[2] Perhaps the most useful metaphor is that of "binoculars," offered by States in his seminal work *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*, when he refers to phenomenology and semiotics as complementary ways of seeing the same thing (8). Binoculars are exceptionally useful when reading Beckett, whose linguistic strategies seem to oscillate between deep bodily awareness — "something dripping in my head" — and an almost mathematical distance from that which is observed. As attuned as he is to the sign and signified in his prose, Beckett in performance becomes experiential, evental, and phenomenal (in the formal sense).

The phenomenological analysis concentrates initially on what differentiates prose performance from the performance of dramatic material, and moves on to the implications of the negative aesthetics and ethics put forward in the writings of Theodor Adorno and Alain Badiou. In drawing philosophical links between Merleau-Ponty, Adorno, Beckett and Badiou, I emphasize the impact of lived experience in wartime and post-Second World War Europe. In this historical context, Merleau-Ponty's theorization of the self as a "gap" or "absence" links clearly to Adorno's attempts to think a post-Auschwitz aesthetics. The same radical aporia underlying language, action, and the self was repeatedly exposed in Beckett's art during and after this period. I argue that this reflects not "absurdism," as some claimed during his life, but a profound realism. In the imperative to continue and the thematics of "going on," Beckett defines his "ethic of impossibility" in relation to a void which he relentlessly witnesses. In the theatre — an "empty space" predicated on many of the same types of absences and liminalities — Beckett's prose can be adapted to explore these depths with rigour, humour, and commitment.

The structure of what will be called an "ethic of impossibility" in Beckett prose performance thus emanates from two complementary areas of exploration: phenomenology (ill seen) and subjectivity (ill said). The study of

subjectivity in Beckett draws on readings in the poststructuralist discourse — without ignoring its pre-Socratic heritage — to show the extent to which the self is constructed through language, then how the resulting "I" is systematically troubled, tortured, subtracted, erased, multiplied, and objectified in Beckett's prose. This project is undertaken in Chapter Two, with special attention to how performance magnifies the manipulation of subjectivity already evident in the texts.

Theory and Method: Subjectivities

To frame any discussion of subjectivity and its function in Beckett, it is necessary to address briefly his own position as regards philosophy. Beckett was steeped in classical philosophy in the course of his privileged education, and as a result his notebooks are filled with eclectic references, most notably to René Descartes, Samuel Johnson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Henri Bergson. The breadth of Beckett's interests, together with the contradictions that a sixty-year writing career obviously generates, set off a kind of scholastic war over what to name him and how to classify his ostensible philosophy. Early criticism was focused on what quickly became Beckett buzzwords: "existentialism," "absurdism," and "quietism." Significant energy has been devoted to deciding whether Beckett is a modernist or a postmodernist; biographer Anthony Cronin got around this by calling his book *The Last Modernist*. The terms metafiction and meta-drama have both been applied to Beckett's writing. Anthony Uhlmann, in his 1999 book *Beckett and Poststructuralism*, makes a case for a strong resonance with Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze, contemporaries and neighbors of Beckett whom he may or may not have read. What emerges from this cacophony of categories, besides a fundamental inadequacy, is that in his prolific sixty-year writing career, one can find evidence for widely disparate philosophical leanings. This sets up a dialectic, not a definition.

For this reason I abandon at the outset any idea of Beckett's "position" in a philosophical stream, or even of a "philosophy of Beckett," and speak instead in terms of the vector, a measurement which contains data on both the force and the direction of movement. "Philosophical vectors" of Beckett allow intellectual process to trump dogma, in keeping with a view of life as a continuously lived and embodied experience. Declarative statements of philosophy are notoriously short-lived, and except in matters of artistic taste, Beckett largely eschewed them. Above all, Beckett did not settle comfortably into a point of view; his mind, as the notebooks reveal, was highly dialogic, hungry, and constantly in motion. If we accept for convenience the category-mongers, and reduce philosophy into two streams — one Platonic-Rationalist-Essentialist-Objective-Analytic, and the other Aristotelian-Irrationalist-Existentialist-Subjective-Continental — Beckett still cannot be placed squarely in one camp or the other.

It is not incidental that poststructuralism maps extremely well onto Beckett, and the "resonance," as Uhlmann calls it, between his writing and many philosophers who were working in Paris at the same time, namely the "class of 1968," spawned a whole generation of postmodern critics of Beckett.[3] Lyotard's most extreme reduction of postmodernism was "an incredulity toward metanarratives" (*PC* xxiv), and by this most broad definition, a correlation to Beckett's unease with monolithic systems is apparent. In a similar phrase, John Pilling characterizes Beckett as "sceptical of anything harmonious or unified" (*DN* xix). The premise that the self is constituted by language and achieves recognition through interpellation is a cornerstone both of Beckettian and of postmodern vectors of thought. The second step, that language and meaning are mobile, malleable, and multiple, is one taken by both vectors of thought as well. The logical conclusion, and the place where the Beckett vector seems to be perfectly aligned with poststructuralism, is that an irreducible aporia, inherent in the word, undercuts subjectivity. The self is a fiction, or set of fictions, told to the self by the self or by the Other.

Ostensibly philosophical, this point is in fact a description of a performance. In this notion of the formation of self, we have a dramatic scenario: the speaker and the listener. The listener is variously self and Other, just as the speaker is. But these are the fundamental variables of Beckett's writing, long examined in the context of his drama, and are overtly present in *Not I*, in which "Mouth" refuses to relinquish the third person as the mysterious "Auditor" listens to the stories of a life in darkness. The late prose work *Company*, which has appealed to many theatrical practitioners as material for adaptation, is an alternative rendering of the same struggle against the first person, in which a voice uses second and third person alternately to an auditor lying on his back in the dark. A reader of the trilogy of novels, *Molloy, Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, will perceive this dialogue between selves and others in an unmistakable spiral through fictions and metafictions leading ultimately inward, to an "I" literally exploding with alternatives. In the last novel of the *Trilogy*, the names converge at the Unnamable, who says:

> All these Murphys, Molloys, and Malones do not fool me. They have made me waste my time, suffer for nothing, speak of them when, in order to stop speaking, I should have spoken of me and of me alone. But I just said I have spoken of me, am speaking of me. I don't care a curse what I just said. It is now I shall speak of me, for the first time. (303)

In his biography *The Last Modernist*, Anthony Cronin uses prose performance to address the variable subjectivities in Beckett: "They are and are meant to be different from one another, but the success of many one-man stage performers in amalgamating them into a single character shows that there is a 'Beckett man'" (379). Cronin's construct is unfortunately named, as it pins down a name for the unnamable and smacks of the autobiographical reading of character, but he is correct to assert that "differing incarnations have only about as much relevance as have the differing film incarnations of Chaplin's tramp" (379). The implication, repeated and re-worked in Beckett's musical variations, is that no simple self exists. "I" is never what it seems.

The variable subjectivity captured in the "Beckett man" is not simply a man who *is not* named — such a man would have left a novel entitled *The Unnamed*. Instead, a second-level negation is occurring, moving above and beyond the fact that the man is not named: the man also cannot be named. The restricting negation applies not only to the man with no name, but to the implied observer of this man, who is unable, unwilling, or not permitted to name what is seen. It is this escalation of the negative which prepares the ground for an ethic of impossibility, in which it is possible to move beyond the impasse of the naming to the fact of the name itself, its presence in spite of all: *The Unnamable*. In the end, this novel was named. But the negation embraces the performer and the audience alike when such a work is staged, just as it embraces both the author and reader when the work is read. Negation, absence, and void are the preconditions of subject- and object-construction in Beckett's theatre; as a phenomenon in which negativity is the precondition, the Sartrian category of the *négatité* is suggested by this persistent aporia.

The second chapter explores the simultaneous deconstruction of subject and object which occurs in Beckett's prose, and which is amplified in prose performance. While it makes use of the philosophical vocabulary for this process, it permits Beckett's artistic project a kind of priority over the critical responses to it; indeed, as Blau argues, Beckett's writing alone offers a "gloss on deconstruction" (qtd. in *BwB* 21). Accordingly, three streams of influence are explored in Chapter Two: first, Classical and Enlightenment thinkers who had an impact on Beckett philosophically; second, "postmodern" thinkers explicitly influenced by Beckett; finally, thinkers who are linked to Beckett for me, but whose explicit link is not as strong as those in the first two categories. The chapter concludes with textual readings that show Beckett's various operations on the subject. The role of philosophy in the author's intellectual development and its infusion into the process of writing has left sufficient traces that Beckett's literature can infuse philosophy with the clarity of enactment, and vice versa.

Historical and Contemporary Readings of Prose Performance

The next three chapters address three distinct types of prose performances, applying the vocabularies of the phenomenological and semiotic analyses undertaken in the first two chapters in order to flesh out the theoretical framework with concrete examples. Like any history, these readings are selective and subjective, and laid out to function as a narrative. While thus not wholly arbitrary, they are not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of the full range of Beckett prose performance, a project for which the data collection alone would be impossible. Each chapter represents a different phase of adaptation, in a trajectory from the most simple forms of prose performance to the most elaborately worked and "theatricalised."

Chapter Three questions and clarifies the role of the frame in performance, in order to deal with the act of reading and hearing prose aloud in a non-theatrical (more precisely, not-framed-as-theatrical) or user-controlled environment, such as in the home or on the radio. To approach this issue through the established framework, the radio as a performance venue is examined phenomenologically, with integrated readings from Beckett criticism which address his radio plays. The chapter follows Enoch Brater, Jonathan Kalb and others in its assertion that a fundamental orality marks all of Beckett's work, whether dramatic or non-dramatic. Taking a historical cue from the *seanchaí*, or storytellers, who were the bards and bearers of oral history in early Ireland, I show how their practice of inventing on their back in the dark is frequently echoed in the prose works of Beckett and often reflected in performance. The centrality of the speech act in such a context also has philosophical implications, which are explored by tracing the history of *logos* through Plato, Heidegger, and Derrida. The concluding investigation of the audiobook reveals the tension between presence and absence in the frame of auditory adaptation, and suggests that the radio is a kind of modern *seanchaí*, bearer of the *logos*.

Chapter Four analyzes a selection of single-text performances within the framework developed from the phenomenological observations of the first chapter, assessing production choices relating to time, space, and the body. Two further decisions — how to handle the narrator, and the problem of style — are the difficulties identified as particular to adaptations. They form a central problematic in prose performance, which is the possible conflict between "authorial fidelity" and "audience fidelity." The specific theoretical discourse underpinning this chapter is drawn from the work of Robert Breen, a prolific adaptor and author of *Chamber Theatre*, a short handbook on staging fiction, as well as from theorists of the novel and the narrator as far back as Henry James and E.M. Forster. The empirical portion of the history follows. It is broken into four separate groups, in order to reveal patterns and correspondences among the various adaptors and performers. First, Frederick Neumann, Lee Breuer, Ruth Maleczech, David Warrilow and others involved with Mabou Mines' Beckett adaptations from 1979 to 1986 are examined for their use of image. I argue that Mabou Mines' work represents a progression of fidelity, from Breuer's admonition to "perform the writer" in *The Lost Ones* to Neumann's extraordinarily free-ranging *Mercier & Camier*, arriving finally at a kind of balance with *Worstward Ho* in 1986. The second grouping examines performances of *Company* by three different scholar-artists: Stan Gontarski (1985, with Pierre Chabert and Beckett himself), Katharine Worth (1987), and Sarahjane Scaife (1992). Third is the history of Joseph Chaikin and his adaptation of *Texts for Nothing* in 1981, revived with Bill Irwin in the leading role in 1992. Basing the analysis in the prose work itself as well as performance history and documents of reception, I show how Chaikin's work foreshadows the quest for "I" that defines the one-person multi-text performances. Finally, the fourth section addresses the contemporary situation of prose adaptation, defined largely by the work of Paris-based Gare St. Lazare and founded on a false distinction — made by the Beckett Estate as well as the companies who have its permission — between recitation and adaptation.[4]

Chapter Five presents readings of multi-text performances, particularly the practice of anthologising Beckett's prose into one-person shows. While some of the phenomenological rubric that governed single-text performance can be maintained to read these performances, a new operation also occurs. Beyond the mere instability of "I" as a signifier for the self, or the instability of the self that is signified, the editing and recombination of distinct texts effaces any remnant of character. The role of the adaptor/actor (almost always the same person) is substantially greater in these cases, and amounts not to an "adapted narrator" (as in the single-text performances) but rather to an "adapted author." This gesture, with its concomitant "authorization" of the performer to explore and adapt the culture of the "Beckett country," extends from the phenomenological discourse into that of anthropology. Drawing on writings by Michael Jackson and Dwight Conquergood, a theoretical introduction to the chapter assesses how contemporary performance studies might accommodate this reassertion of the self as a site of knowledge in performance, even as the self is destabilised within culture or eviscerated inside Beckett's texts. The first evidence drawn from practice is the "borderline" case of Barry McGovern, whose performance *I'll Go On* is textually a single-text adaptation of the *Trilogy*, but is also in many ways a new work virtually disconnected from this (hardly unitary) source. The clearest and most influential example of adapted authorship is the case of Jack MacGowran, still a name virtually synonymous with the "Beckett one-man show." As well as providing biographical details surrounding and informing his performance, this section will deconstruct a critical tradition which sets MacGowran up as a "Beckett actor" parallel to Cronin's notional "Beckett man." A third empirical section examines later descendants of MacGowran's performative tradition up to the present day, namely Ryan Cutrona, Jack Emery, and Robert Jaffe. The chapter concludes by moving beyond the one-person performance model to events of commemorating Beckett, an area where prose performance has fused powerfully with his legacy (as well as his publication market).

The historical analysis of these performances is supplemented by an appendix to the thesis, which begins the (impossible and incomplete) task of listing all prose adaptations to date. In all cases where both are available, both primary and secondary sources have been used to collect data on performances. This includes personal interviews of artists involved, published accounts in secondary literature, journalistic documents of contemporaneous reception, recorded media or testimony, and whenever possible my lived experience as an audience member. The performance archives at the University of Reading provided the basis of many of these investigations.

The Ethic of Impossibility, Genre, and the Law

The sixth and final chapter draws together the historical observations with the theoretical investigations to define an "ethic of impossibility" in prose performance. The conditions of such an ethic, introduced in the first chapter and enforced in each subsequent analysis, are now examined in terms of consequences for the academic, the audience, and the practitioner. These consequences tend to be concrete and practical — unforgivingly so — in that the area which is impacted by the ethic involves economic and legal realities, largely foreign to the purely theoretical realm. An investigation of the area of copyright law as it impacts on the rights of practitioners to adapt, as well as a contemporary assessment of the policies and definitions of the Beckett Estate, is required to make a comprehensive argument on prose performance. This, in turn, will involve a discussion of genre in Beckett.

It is not as clear a task as it may seem to define what constitutes Beckett's prose. A Beckett anthology exists which is called *The Complete Short Prose*; other books by him have the word "novel" on the cover. These nearly everyone would admit into the category of prose, if only because they are named as such. However, some of the featured works within the collection, most visibly the piece "From an Abandoned Work," are known to have had

their nascence as monologue, or drama. Others, like the one-page, eleven-line "neither," are indistinguishable from his poetry in form and syntax. *Company* was first given the dramatically, or at least sonically, suggestive title *Heard in the Dark*. Beckett never had time to clarify how to classify his very last work, the short text called "What is the Word." Though delineated line by line as a poem would be, it could just as easily be lines of a monologue, and has been spoken aloud in performance to great effect. There is no reason to say it is not prose, as many critics call it, but clearly this flexibility undermines the category, not the piece.

Beckett offers characteristically contradictory indications of his own feelings about genres. In a 1957 letter to Barney Rosset, his publisher at Grove Press, he writes, "If we can't keep our genres more or less distinct, or extricate them from the confusion that has them where they are, we might as well go home and lie down" (qtd. in Cohn 207). Nevertheless, during his lifetime, a huge range of genre crossovers received his personal permission. If anything, the sense of genre has become more convoluted since his death, with the Estate giving permission to the massive "Beckett on Film" project, permitting stagings of television and radio plays, and authorizing some prose performances but not others. It would be fair to claim, as the final chapter will show, that the Estate may have inherited a somewhat paranoid and highly protean psychology from the literary mind it continues to represent.

By necessity, I will continue in the thesis to refer to Beckett's prose with the official bibliography of short prose as published in the 1995 collection as a guide. I will also accept the novels as examples of prose. I do not wish this obeisance to the convention to belie the basic unnamability and undecidability of the category. H. Porter Abbott, in *Beckett Writing Beckett*, de-emphasizes the significance of generic distinction altogether, and speaks instead of the difference between the works as one of technique. This can be a useful and liberating device, which frees the critic from having to define Beckett's prose in the abstract.

It is understood that the matter of authorial intent comes into play where genre is concerned, as well as the labyrinthine and arcane process of copyright law. Neither area offers robust ground for critical argument.[5] Nonetheless, the final chapter of the thesis attempts to negotiate carefully with the unavoidable fact — indeed, a bold answer to one central question of my project — that Beckett simply wanted some works to be staged, and some to be read. An author's opinion in such matters cannot be brushed aside lightly, and in particular the opinion of this author, who shows such sensitivity to form and who seems to cut to the root of every technique he applies to language. It is necessary to acknowledge, as I do in the first chapter, that great violence is done to prose which is staged. While the arguments in this dissertation may also serve to emphasize the violence done to prose which is *not* staged, or to state positively the precise effect of prose which is brought to performance, the only way around the impasse of Beckett's choice is to disavow any polemic intent of my own. Rather, the project throughout is one of measurement based on experimental results. What are the effects of staged prose for audience, practitioner, and text? What techniques are applied by adaptors of the prose, and what are their implications theoretically? What is the impact of the law upon interpretation?

Beginning to End

Only in the conclusion to the dissertation will some escape from this rigorous neutrality be attempted. The conclusion is in an exploration of current trajectories in praxis, and it addresses more explicitly the plight of the practitioner who wishes to adapt the prose. A dose of Beckettian ambivalence to theory and criticism is the chief motivator of this attention to the artists. As the young critic, fresh out of Trinity College, admonished the readers of Joyce: "The danger is in the neatness of identifications [...] Literary criticism is not book-keeping" (*Disjecta* 19). Barry McGovern also selected this line as a kind of

epigram for his first performance of *I'll Go On*, using it to end his brief programme note in 1985. In spite of Beckett's many close friendships with the scholars who wrote about him, and their glowing mutual testimonials which abound in published memoir, biography, and criticism, he kept a healthy — at times notorious — amount of distance between himself and those who sought "meaning" from the work. This resistance to critical interpretation in Beckett is pitched by Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* as a resistance to commodification, and a strict adherence to the negative aesthetics which the work so mercilessly typifies. Adorno also observes, however, that an aesthetic procedure of higher order than mere resistance to the bourgeois is occurring:

> Beckett's refusal to interpret his works, combined with the most extreme consciousness of techniques and of the implications of the theatrical and linguistic material, is not merely a subjective aversion: as reflection increases in scope and power, content itself becomes ever more opaque [...] The darkness of the absurd is the old darkness of the new. This darkness must be interpreted, not replaced by the clarity of meaning. (27)

This analysis rejects the clarity and rationality on which the academic discourse is purportedly founded and, taken to its logical conclusion, ultimately undermines any conceivable thesis on Beckett. While the achievement of Adorno in the *Aesthetic Theory* may adhere to this rigorous negation of meaning, the present study will be unable to respond fully in the darkness. The ethic of impossibility applies to the critic also: while it may be right to say nothing, "nothing" will still have to be said. The response of the artist is better equipped to overcome the unavoidable pitfall of aesthetic criticism, which is its immanent externality to its own object. In spite of manifest overlaps between art and criticism, I must concur with Badiou that philosophy only finds names for thoughts that art actually *thinks*. Identifying this problematic in the introduction to *Aesthetic Theory*, Robert Hullot-Kentor quotes the painter Barnett Newman, and neatly summarizes the plight shared by Beckett with any scholar/artist of his work: "aesthetics is for me like what ornithology must be like for the birds" (xii).

NOTES

Introduction

1. Brater's *The Drama in the Text* argues for the insignificance of the distinction between the drama and the prose and the primacy of the spoken word, referencing some stage adaptations of the prose in the process. Cohn's *Just Play* spends Chapter 11 analyzing three works of staged fiction. Kalb's *Beckett in Performance* offers Chapter 7, entitled "The Gamble of Staging Prose Fiction." McMullan's forthcoming work continues her interest in embodiment, with the stagings of the prose as key examples.

2. In response to the unmanageable slipperiness of the terminology, I will refer to "postmodern," "poststructural," and "semiotic" critiques somewhat interchangeably when addressing their comparison to "phenomenology." I will attempt greater precision when the works are individually referenced, though all these categories show a high level of exchange of method, and a low level of distinction from one another. The many critics I include in this school, such as Begam, Connor, Gidal, Hill, Locatelli, Moorjani, Tresize, Uhlmann, and Watson, tend to interpellate themselves with many variations of "post-," including (along with the above terms) "postdramatic," "posthumanist," and "post-Heideggerian." All these works share a somewhat ironic attention to the conditions of language, discourse, and difference.

3. The conceivable (and known) meetings and friendships in Paris between Beckett and the great critics/philosophers, while entertaining to imagine, are not sufficient grounds to argue for any critical affinity. If they were, I would place greater emphasis on Beckett's early stint at the École Normale, which overlapped with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's attendance between 1928 and 1930 (Garner 25). In Chapter Two, these philosophers will be grouped as persons influenced by Beckett, and not as persons who influenced Beckett.

4. I refer to Gare St. Lazare Players as Paris-based in keeping with their own current marketing, but this is a necessary inaccuracy. The core members of the company — husband-and-wife team Conor Lovett (actor) and Judy Hegarty-Lovett (director) — are both Irish. They are funded by the Arts Council of Ireland and have performed more in Ireland than anywhere else. Nonetheless, they tour extensively in Europe and elsewhere, and the company's provenance is originally American.

5. I defend this assertion thus: the argument of intent, bound by definition to indeterminate ground, is insufficiently rigorous due to the openness of its field. Copyright law, on the other hand, is defined by comparatively extreme rigor, and is not subject to change through any criticism but that of a lawyer, legislator, or judge. The extent to which this thesis will engage the law, quite outside my depth as a critic, is on the philosophical level of its consequences; its presence and dicta are taken as given.

CHAPTER ONE
"Things That Scarcely Were":
A Phenomenological Investigation of Prose Performance

Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

—*King Lear*, I.i.90

This chapter is an exploration of three different and complementary negations. The first is a phenomenology which arises from an analysis of the form of prose performance, reads the experience of such performances from the perspectives of creator and viewer, and draws on the work of Samuel Beckett and Maurice Merleau-Ponty in particular. Its goal is not the transcendent perception of the thing-in-itself, but rather a speleology of the aporia at the root of prose performance. The second is a negative aesthetics, arising from the phenomenological conditions of prose performance and responding to the reading of Beckett in Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. Finally, an "ethic of impossibility" is introduced, which is a negation in several stages; rather than simply a negation of the possible, which it accepts *a priori*, it posits a negation of the impossible in response. Such an ethic is summed up in Beckett's oft-quoted dictum from the first of his three dialogues on art with George Duthuit, "the expression that 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" (*Disjecta* 139). This ethic is the theoretical cornerstone of my reading of the history of Beckett's prose performance undertaken later in the thesis.

My phenomenological approach to prose performance is not so much a systematic methodology as it is, to use Stanton B. Garner's phrase, a "particularizing mode of attention" (5). This mode adopts three practices which are characteristic across the discourse. The first is an analysis of form; I will draw out some useful, observable characteristics of performance, drama, and prose. Secondly, I will apply an interpretation within this context, following what Heidegger refers to as the hermeneutic. Thirdly, I will

intermittently attempt what the early phenomenologists boldly named the "pure description of lived experience," that is, my first-person account of past experience of the phenomenon at hand. Nowhere do I intend to rest the argument upon that which Michel Foucault and others reject in phenomenology, that is, the theory of the knowing subject. It is the benefit of applying these observations to the work of Samuel Beckett that my investigations are predicated upon the unknowable, the inaccessible, and the unnamable. These negative categories resonate across the experience of the audience, the performers, and to an extent implicate the author himself, whose presence continues to lurk in the background every time a body stands on stage and says "I" (or refuses to do so). It is through the experience of the impossible — whether in knowing, speaking, or acting — that Beckett's phenomenology transcends the transcendental in Husserl or Heidegger, and avoids some of the common traps of this methodology.

Beckett's worlds establish what might be thought of as a negative phenomenology: the spatiality and corporeality of absence. This absence is already richly staged in Beckett's drama, which moves over time on an asymptotic trajectory toward silence and nothingness. The prose offers this same experience textually, in that it manifests Beckett's project of confronting the void, both in the undermined subjectivities it presents and in the narrative forms it challenges. To stage such works, already invested with doubt and void, is to enrich the negative, not least by confronting the absence of stage direction, and going on. Thus a prose performance, in a stronger sense than a dramatic one, is literally *ex nihilo*.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in his discussion of the origin of negation, uses the example of distance as an experience with an "inner structure inhabited by negation" (55). He offers absence, change, otherness, repulsion, regret, and distraction as similar realities which hold a certain nothingness at the heart of their being.[1] He coins the term *négatités* to refer to these "syntheses of negative and positive in which negation is the condition of positivity" (55). The

theatre is clearly another venue where such *négatités* constitute the fundamental contract between spectator and performer; as the separation between the two is constitutive of performance, there is no eliminating a gap in space, in body, and in time. These same gaps which are found in the heart of the theatrical experience also define the undermined subjectivities of Beckett's prose characters, perhaps most explicitly in the voice of the Unnamable, who begins his long discourse with three questions which might well be asked by anyone, of anyone, inside the theatre: "Where now? Who now? When now?" (*Trilogy* 291).

Phenomenology of the Theatre

Theatre is a realm that causes problems for traditional phenomenology, which has classically been drawn to more tangible art for analysis. Since sensory perception is the basis of phenomenology — and the basis of Merleau-Ponty's rejection of the Cartesian *cogito,* on grounds of the primacy of the body-subject — a natural affinity exists between art that resembles the stone (verifiable as an object of perception because it can be kicked) and the phenomenological discourse. In a different sense, however, the stage poses a problem of ontology which phenomenology is uniquely positioned to handle, in that performance is an array of phenomena deeply tied to the body and to consciousness. The existence of these phenomena is not in question here; that is the ontological debate which has recently occupied Phil Auslander, whose thesis in *Liveness* disputes the argument (particularly as stated in Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked)* that a transcendent "presence" defines the theatrical event. The problem of ontology, particularly of "live" events, is composed of questions which phenomenology traditionally "brackets."[2] Instead of attempting to resolve this impasse, this thesis will revel in it, and endeavour to construct a vocabulary to replace the phenomenological terms which seem no longer to be valid inside the space of performance.

Phenomenology is an unwieldy tool, to say the least, because it has been repeatedly recast in theory and variously deployed as practice for at least the past two centuries. As a result, its methods are hardly unitary; indeed, it must be thought of more as "method" than as "philosophy." Merleau-Ponty, writing in the preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*, notes (with emphasis) that "phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking, that it existed as a movement before arriving at a complete awareness of itself as a philosophy" (viii). It is this attention to practice and perception — to the *Lebenswelt*, or world-as-lived, Husserl's term for the central phenomenological theme — which elevates *description* over *explanation* and thus becomes so attractive for the theatrical critic. Stanton B. Garner initiates his phenomenological exploration of theatre in *Bodied Spaces* with a similar call for subjective analysis over scientific measurement. He describes the aims of phenomenology as follows:

> to redirect attention from the world as it is conceived by the abstracting, 'scientific' gaze (the objective world) to the world as it appears or discloses itself to the perceiving subject (the phenomenal world); to pursue the thing as it is given to consciousness in direct experience; to return perception to the fullness of its encounter with its environment. (2)

This final concern references a fundamental circularity at the core of Merleau-Ponty's system between subject, object, and world. If these are separate notions at all, then they are separate strands in a knot, at once singular and plural. Rather than espousing a strict separation between subject and object, as in the heritage laid out primarily by Descartes but visible already in Plato, Merleau-Ponty emphasises the interdependence of this system at the moment of *encounter*. Merleau-Ponty locates the ambiguity of perception and world-consciousness in a zone prior to this division of subject and object. He thus is equipped to reject the strict empiricist viewpoint that the world arises only through perception, arguing instead for interdependence. Garner's repeated reference to the "embodied mind" and to his titular "bodied space" on stage

brings this method of description into theatrical terms. While Garner's work applies traditional phenomenology (i.e. Husserl) effectively to modern dramatic works (i.e. Beckett, Brecht, Mamet, Pinter), it will be seen that he does not adequately maintain the ambiguity so central to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological thought. Instead, his efforts to describe the theatrical event reinscribe many of the separations from which *Phenomenology of Perception* attempts to liberate the *Lebenswelt.*

Garner proceeds from a basic suggestion that an "experiential duality" (3) between audience and performer, between the scenic space and the environmental space, pervades the process of performance. In a conventional Western theatrical setting of more or less classical (at least canonical) texts, which are the parameters that Garner sets for his study, this indicates that an audience member is aware of two worlds at once. Environmental space is the offstage area — including places such as backstage, the house, the foyer, the parking lot — a world which the perceiver experiences in time, surrounding the frame of the performance event. Scenic space is the world of performance, brought into being by the believing subject: the imagination of an audience or the investment of a performer. To assert that these are two different worlds at all is to overlook much of the twentieth century avant-garde theatre, though these examples are ostensibly the ones he takes. It accepts the paradigm of the "fourth wall," and even points the way toward a "willing suspension of disbelief." These conventions have been thoroughly dismantled in both practice and theory, although they have not left the mainstream of popular theatre; perhaps more seriously, the argument of experiential duality overlooks the twenty-first century as well. The redefinition of presence and corporeality which is suggested by current technology and the revision of liveness brought on by the televisual and digital age trouble the notion of a "special world" inside the frame of a proscenium in which perception, or even time, is transcendently or radically altered.[3] Garner's model of experiential duality is only useful insofar as it describes the necessary separation between

audience and performer, or the separation necessary to speak. Every reading of a phenomenon in the theatre must take account of both sides of the frame.

While I agree with Garner that the theatre occupies a special area of perception, I would argue that its uniqueness is in the singularity of perception which occurs there, rather than the duality. The twin concerns of the phenomenologist — the world-as-perceived and the world-as-inhabited — seem to unify into a single attention in the theatre, since to be perceived is to inhabit such a world. This is true on both sides of the frame, both for a performer and for an observer, as the perception of the other and the inhabiting of a world is descriptive, even constitutive, of both roles. Such a unity of perception and being echoes Beckett's vision of phenomenology and ontology, perhaps best "argued" in *Film* (1963), and stated in the first line of his description of the work, taken from Bishop George Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*: "*Esse est percipi*" (*Plays* 163). Beckett's use of this dictum of strict empiricism — to be is to be perceived — followed by such anxiety at "perceivedness," twists the motto into service to the negative, into a new impossibility of either being or perception. A different way of phrasing this elision between world-as-perceived and world-as-inhabited is that the traditional duality put forth by Husserl between noesis and noema ceases to exist in the theatre. "Noesis" is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a process or an act of perceiving or thinking," as opposed to "noema," which is "an object of perception or thought."[4] Without the process of perception, the objects in theatre would not be experienced as objects; without the objects of perception, the perception could not occur. The interdependence of audience and performer is the precondition for theatre to occur. Hence, to have consciousness in the theatre is to experience the unification of the object of perception with the process of perceiving.

The theatrical event is not self-evident.[5] For the perceiving subject to be aware that performance is occurring, a frame of reference is necessary. This frame can be a particular venue, an arrangement of bodies, or a ritual;

whatever its type, the frame demands the recognition of a subject if its meaning is to be interpreted. The history of the avant-garde in theatre is the history of this frame — often, most simply, the proscenium arch — being probed, questioned, undermined, or destroyed. This history is dialectic; sometimes the frame is reinstated, rebuilt, or reinterpreted as part of the same impulse to "make new." The frame is primary in the phenomenology of performance, because it constructs the way that performance is seen. The frame forms a key part of the theatrical event's "thing-in-itself." My argument relies on the existence of a frame to define the boundaries of the theatre, so that what occurs there — namely, the placing of Beckett's prose within that frame — can be addressed. More than any other phenomenal factor, the presence of a frame takes precedence in my definition of performance.

The idea of the "frame" has been treated extensively in performance studies and across many other disciplines. A widely known work of sociology which focuses on this notion is Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Goffman uses both theatre and radio as examples which illustrate the role of the frame in determining perception of reality. Goffman credits Gregory Bateson with coining the term "frame," which Bateson used to define situations "built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events" (10). Goffman links his own discourse to a distinctly sociological brand of phenomenology, hearkening back to 1869, when a chapter in *Mind* entitled "The Perception of Reality" was published by William James. James was in agreement with Brentano — teacher of Edmund Husserl — that a distinction exists between the "content of a current perception" and the "reality status enclosed or bracketed within sense perception" (3). This is a classic approach to experience, from which the curious doubleness (or even trebleness) of the theatre derives: even the theatre is not entirely a stage. This understanding is crucial to reading the dramatic environment, as it draws the variable of knowledge — who has it, or who pretends not to have it — into sharp focus.

Goffman defines a performance (in his own restricted sense) as "that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense, and looked to for engaging behavior, by persons in an 'audience' role" (124). This is distinct, in Goffman's view, from the face-to-face frame, in which the mutual show of visual respect is an obligation; this difference extends, in Goffman's reading, to a means of reading the "purity" of performance based on the exclusivity of attention which the performance claims. From this point the argument's utility in reading contemporary performance markedly declines; the reading of theatre as "voluntarily supported benign fabrication" (136) essentially limits the potential impact of the form, and seems to focus more on the terms of melodrama ("hero" and "villain" are taken as a given on 135) than on any theatre past Ibsen. By ignoring much of the twentieth century avant-garde — some of the most potent examples of which, in fairness to Goffman, came after his book's publication — the application of his terms seem to be merely a defense of the suspension of disbelief. With the exception of a footnote invoking Ionesco (137), the post-Brechtian and post-Beckettian innovations in drama seem to have made no impact on Goffman's analysis. Many twenty-first century performance forms involve precisely the opposite framing device (i.e. the full knowledge and complicity of the audience in the real event unfolding on stage). Thus, the present argument will adopt Goffman's term and his most general definitions, while the applications of his tools will be new.

The experience of the frame defines the space of performance, and the other element of its phenomenology is the experience of time. The problem of temporality in performance is a thesis-length discourse in itself, but a phenomenological reading cannot ignore this factor.[6] Some arguments persist that performance is defined by "liveness," the notion which Auslander has substantially troubled in his book of that name. Based on Auslander's thesis, it is difficult to assert any primacy of the live event when the category of the live

itself is dependent upon the possibility of reproduction, recording, and other conceptions of the televisual. The embedding of these categories into contemporary performance — indeed, into everyday life — has fundamentally altered the model of performance, to say nothing of subjectivity.[7] Most readings of this shift implied by the televisual terminology of "real-time" proceed from the assumption, based in the Western metaphor of "the river of time" and the resulting sense of linear flow, that something fundamental has changed for the perceiving subject. Merleau-Ponty, however, disputes this notion of temporality at the root (Heraclitus), and shows the curious performance which it implies: "Change presupposes a certain position which I take up and from which I see things in procession before me: there are no events without someone to whom they happen" (411). This undercuts the notion of a stream of time, in which we have "surreptitiously [put] into the river a witness of its course" (411). Without such a witness, time is the plaything of the mind, rather than a real or constant process; it arises exclusively from a relation to the world and to objects. Mimetic enactment and embodiment, of the type seen in performance on stage or in film, will always provide an object as a window to another time. The audience and its time are the beneficiary of the same freedom which Merleau-Ponty finds in the severing of causality between the subject and the body.

The freedom which Merleau-Ponty posits, however, does not apply as strongly in the theatre, and certainly does not apply to temporality in the sense of the timing of an event experienced. For the transition from prose to drama is defined precisely by a shift in this temporality and its control. The reader of a novel is in complete control of the temporal dimension, in that the artwork will continue to exist in the absence of a reader. The reader can always return and experience the time of reading, the time within the novel, and a mental time of lived experience and historical reference. In the theatre, however, this first category — the time of the artistic event — is under another's control. In order to experience theatre, one must arrive at a certain

place (the frame) at a certain time. Some performances may be conceived which violate this claim, including interactive technology for the audience or conceptual "installations" which classify as performance art, but in the general situation, a staged text wrests the control of the temporal dimension from the audience and places it in the hands of an artist. After the event, temporality becomes another question again; memory persists, with all its conditional freedom, as does the modern possibility of recording/reproduction, with all its sacrifices. Regardless of the shift in temporality suggested by these post-performance possibilities, it seems clear that for the moment of experience, reading a book is wholly distinct from attending a play. The following section will expand on the problematics of novel and drama to distinguish types of activity within this theatrical frame.

Phenomenology of Drama, Prose, and Performed Prose

In order to point the way toward the phenomenology of prose performance, the categories of drama and of prose must be examined in terms of form. This analysis reveals a remarkable fluidity between the two categories, so often held up as distinct. The distinction between them is featured in the popular culture as a matter of course: different sections in the bookstore, different categories and lists in newspaper book reviews, and of course a "School of English" and a "School of Drama." It is in this last area, however — the academic purview — that the confusion seems most rife, since students of literature also read dramatic texts. The phenomenological difference may be located in how the same readings would differ in the two ostensibly different disciplines. Perhaps the difference would be best illustrated by asking a student of drama and a student of English the question: "Where is *King Lear*?" A textually focused literary critic might reference a bookshelf, a copy of the play, or the Folio source itself. A dramaturge, director, or cultural critic might point to a performance. The problematic of *locating* a play is the

same problematic identified in Adorno's quest for an origin of art: no original actually exists, only fragments and potentialities. No "authoritative" *Lear* can be identified; though its text can be read as such, the fact remains that any play is a blueprint for an event. Reading will only provide one part of the artwork, and likely a very different part than the performance will yield.

While this argument may seem to ascribe higher value to the theatrical and performative approach, this is a response to its diminished stature within Beckett studies. It was a noticeable trend in the 2006 Beckett Symposium at Trinity College that corporeality and embodiment are often overlooked in scholastic studies of Beckett's plays, which, sparse and dismembered as they may be, strongly resist any reduction to mere text. (Matthew Causey noted at one point in the proceedings that we were witnessing "the revenge of the English majors.") The strategy of performance studies to account for the textual trend is simply to expand the definition of text, and to claim that it encompasses the body in space which we find in the theatre. This is a largely semantic concession which seems to offer only psychological comfort to the critic, as opposed to real inclusion in the discourse; it is responding to the horror of not being talked about by renaming yourself after whatever is. The phenomenological exploration undertaken here has no need to elide text and performance by bringing prose into the performative discourse. Rather, the goal is a concrete strategy to illuminate the many ways that prose performance, in practice, is actually indistinguishable from the performance of a play. This will point toward a use for those ways in which prose performance is unique. The final outcome is a discovery of what might be gained and lost by performance, in terms of Beckett's writing.

It is not the purpose of this phenomenological description of performance to "reinvent the wheel" so much as to study a particularly interesting and rare type of wheel. As it does in Beckett studies itself, prose performance seems to fall between the cracks of much performance analysis. Contemporary surveys of performance practice do not tend to theorize prose

performance as distinct from performance more broadly. Marvin Carlson's *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, for example, is an attempt to index this enormous field, but prose performance is hardly encompassed within his primary definition of performance. Carlson separates at the outset work based upon characters previously created — associated with dramatic or theatrical writing, but clearly also the Beckett material at hand — from the typically solo art of performance based around more personal material (5). Interestingly, Carlson ends the book with a coda he calls an "apologia for theatre," in which he notes that "one can still also usefully distinguish 'theatrical' performance from its many recently discovered close relations and find not only a particular orientation but also a particular utility" (215). While his terminology here leans more toward the transcendent, speaking of the "particular quality and power of 'theatrical' performance" and the way the audience "becomes involved" in this type of activity, his reading is finally a social one, stressing the group nature of the framing, which he links to ethics, by way of Alan Read's vision of political and social theatre. Carlson's diagram of contemporary practice is more interested in the "ethic" of performance as applied to cultural studies and identity politics, because this is a concern more dominant in recent performance studies discourse (as will be explored in Chapter Five's discussion of solo ethnographic performance). Because it is author-created work, the possibility of ethics — and indeed metaphysics — arising out of contemporary adaptations of Beckett's prose is not really addressed. Nonetheless, Carlson usefully demonstrates that all performance involves an *encounter* and an *arrangement* based in intentionality (not unlike Merleau-Ponty's understanding of consciousness itself).

This notion of performance as an "occasion" or an "ado" invokes the writings of Herbert Blau on the universals of performance, which forms a part of his reaction to the postmodern in *The Eye of Prey*. Blau is much more connected to Beckett in his theoretical and practical underpinnings, and his writings on theatre articulate how profoundly performance involves absence.

Noting how "performance itself seems to be universal" (179) as the scope of theory widens across seemingly infinite disciplines, Blau sounds a return to the literary: "All this gestation of performance in nontheatrical disciplines has been summoned up and perhaps summarized in the performative virtuosity of our literature, particularly literary theory" (180). This turn is a reaction to the almost casual uptake of the terms of performance into assorted matrixed and nonmatrixed activities, to the difference-annihilating ubiquity of the word. Drawing frequently on examples of ghosts and ghosting, Blau's point is ultimately a phenomenological one: "Performance occurs in a middle region between the world of transparency and the world of opacity" (181). The influence of Beckett on Blau is as unmistakable as the absence of that influence on Goffman and Carlson; the fundamental solitude, rather than the essential community, of performance is emphasized:

> when the ghostly thing appears, the latent substance of performance [...] is divisive, solitary, alien, and apart. Whatever the appearance or actuality of communitas, performance is a testament to what separates. In the empty space, an empty solitude. (183)

Importantly, this view is not necessarily anethical. While essentially alone, Blau's is "the performer who, in a primordial substitution or displacement, is born on the site of the Other" (183). This commiseration with the Other is ultimately a kind of ethic, explored extensively in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas, and is not limited by the foundational gap between audience and performer, subject and object. Indeed, it is enriched by the primary impossibility, as this thesis will continually argue.

The area of agreement among all the theorists of performance is stated most concretely by Blau: "What is universal in performance is the consciousness of performance" (171). Carlson narrows this down in his introduction, in which he quotes Richard Bauman in the *International Encylopædia of Communication*, who writes that "All performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, according to which the actual execution of an

action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action" (5). Even the problematic model of "purity" of performance proposed by Goffman has the notion of consciousness at its core, as he lists "work performances" as among the least pure — the case, for instance, at a construction site where viewers "openly watch those who openly show no regard for the dramatic elements of their labor" (126). The symbiotic relationship of frame and consciousness, neither fully comprehensible without the other, is the key to moving beyond a notion of "interaction" between audience and performer to get at the voids which both separate and constitute their positions.

Prose performance, like the general form of theatre discussed above, involves an ever-present dual perspective: that of the practitioner and that of the audience. For now, I will limit this discussion of performance to the conscious and framed variety; consciousness of performance, as has been shown, is determined by the presence of a frame, i.e. a particular space and time for the event. I will also presume the role of the audience to be constitutive. A performer, under this definition, cannot be his or her own audience; such a performance would be called a rehearsal. The performer is distinguished from the audience not only by the immanent gap of *négatité*, but also by virtue of knowledge which the general audience does not have, in the form of a plan for the event, whether a script as such, another kind of text, or simply a framework for improvisation. For any group of performers or directors, in the most common situation, it seems that it will always be known whether the material being performed is classified as prose or drama.

For this to be true, however, a clear lexical distinction must exist between prose and drama. The *Oxford English Dictionary* fails to offer this distinction with the clarity on which its reputation is based. Instead, its primary definition for drama is in terms of prose: "*Drama*, 1a: a composition in prose or verse, adapted to be acted upon a stage, in which a story is related by means of dialogue and action, and is represented with accompanying gesture,

costume, and scenery, as in real life; a play." Leaving the rather absurd "as in real life" aside for the moment, the key verb that unlocks "drama" is the word "adapted." Under such a delineation, the celebrated actors in the "definitive" Gate Theatre's *Waiting for Godot* are performing adapted prose. (Perhaps the Beckett Estate would be surprised.) The difference, of course, is whether the author of the text or a later artist adapts the prose. It is this fact of which the performer or director, again in the general situation only, would be aware.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a situation is conceivable in which the origin of a text being performed is unknown to the performer. To be handed a text and to be asked to speak it is not an unusual experience for an actor. Nor is it out of the question that an actor might have no familiarity with Beckett's troubled generic distinctions, or with the source of a given monologue. Particularly in a one-person play — *A Piece of Monologue* leaps to mind — a page of the script could as easily be read as a page of a short story. With *A Piece of Monologue* as a frame of reference, *From an Abandoned Work* could easily be taken for drama by any actor not widely read in Beckett's prose. In many ways, it is the more likely candidate of the two, as its narrative voice is first person, while the *Monologue*, like the play *Not I*, is spoken resolutely in the third person, traditionally the province of prose.

The tempting, simple tests for distinguishing prose from drama, other than narrative voice, include stage directions, character names, and basic layout. These categories have long ceased to be good indicators of the form taken by a text; countless examples from postwar, postmodern, and contemporary drama, from Müller's *Hamletmaschine* to Adam Rapp's *Nocturne*, have broken with the formal conventions. Novels have also made use of stage directions and dialogic form, most notably in *Ulysses*, but also in metafiction by Barth, Barthleme, and Calvino, as well as more contemporary and experimental fiction by David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers, and Jonathan Safran Foer. The list of novels which are essentially one-person monologues in the first person is even longer.

The membrane between prose and drama seems to be resolutely porous for the less-informed practitioner. Does this then mean that the experienced and widely read performer of Beckett's work will be any more able to make clear generic distinctions? Here we can consider the experience of multi-text adaptation, especially the "ethnographic" one-person performances that combine multiple texts by Beckett (addressed in Chapter Five) . Such texts, like those adapted by Robert Jaffe or Jack MacGowran, draw on separate sources without respect to genre, often combining drama with poetry and prose. These writings are connected by the "adapted author" in an intuitive process, based only on affinities of tone or subject, as opposed to technique. Jaffe, for instance, relates the experience of underlining prose segments while reading, and then retyping and resequencing these into solid blocks of text. Selections thus become a new script with new authority, effacing their origin. Naturally, the performer still recognizes certain lines from well-known passages. But the phrases become at the same time aleatory and jazz-like, floating up into the consciousness without reference; the new connections supplant the old ones, and in a performance treated entirely as drama, the distinctions break down in their new context. Prose recontextualized as drama is indistinguishable as prose; for the actor, it could just as well be drama.

It is much clearer, and requires less argument, that for a large portion of the audience, prose performance is absolutely indistinguishable from dramatic performance. Information on the background of a given performance remains the dominant variable. The opening lines of *Company*, a prose piece which has been successfully adapted by a number of practitioners (including Beckett, who collaborated with Pierre Chabert and Stan Gontarski in 1984-85), seem to describe the dramatic situation: "A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine" (1). An audience presented with a voice in the dark saying these words — particularly an audience whose main reference for Beckett is *Godot* and possibly *Endgame* — would have no reason not to think that it had

been planned this way by the author himself. While authorial intent is traditionally proscribed in the critical discourse, it often forms the bulk of public critical discussion outside the academy: "would Beckett want it staged this way?" or "what did Beckett mean?" Many less-informed observers, and even the more ham-handed critics, simply accept that what is seen does represent the will of the "original" creator, and refer to "Beckett's play" as such, taking as gospel staging choices which may have been introduced later.[8]

In spite of the ascription of authorial choice within certain audiences, intent becomes invisible — or at least illegible — in performance. This can be thought of as a process of "triple distillation," which is the hermeneutic movement from author to adaptor to actor. An actor's body in the space is the medium through which a director's interpretation is passed on to the observer, but the director's voice emanates from an encounter with a text from an author. In the conventional situation of "text to rehearsal to stage," the author's vision, already mediated by language, is mediated twice again before it arrives at its destination in audience reception. Only in the performance which is written, directed, and performed by the same person can a more pure manifestation of intent be ascribed. Even then, for the purposes of phenomenology, this singularity of object might not be visible through mere observation. It is a position that can be inhabited, but not strictly perceived.

Stanton B. Garner, in spite of the awkwardness of his basic model of "experiential duality" (3), ultimately confirms that the theatre is a unique site of synthesis of the phenomenal subject and the phenomenal object. His elegant phrase for this is that "the embodied *I* of the theatrical spectatorship is grounded, one might say, in an embodied *eye*" (4). The object in his reading is the scenic space, and the subject is the environmental space, not wholly separate as he first asserts, but instead being "intersubjectified" by actors' bodies. In fact, this might be better understood as subjective and objective dimensions on both sides of the fourth wall: the actors and audience are both

embodying themselves, and both perceiving one another. Perhaps the experiential duality is useful simply as a way to discuss these dimensions, rather than as an assertion of absolute separation; even the duality itself is double, as it goes in two directions at once. Garner argues that "Bodied spatiality is at the heart of dramatic presentation, for it is through the actor's corporeal presence under the spectator's gaze that the dramatic text actualizes itself in the field of performance" (1). This is a sound thesis, and is not difficult for Garner to support with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, but as shown, the limitation of "dramatic text" seems unnecessary, particularly for a book written in the 1990s. The same phenomenal parameters would be true for anything presented as drama, or presented in the same performative frame of bodied spatiality. He admits that his preoccupation with traditional dramatic form is "surprising," but defends its utility for a phenomenological analysis by referring to its "specificity and determinacy" (5).

Specificity and determinacy lead Garner to Beckett for examples, but this betrays an excessive concentration on form over content. It is true that Beckett's dramas are both heavily specified and highly determined. But this presents a stark contrast to the situations of indeterminacy and unknowability which most depict. Even death would offer too much certainty; it is the goal of many Beckett characters, and thus something that they are almost universally denied. The blurred and multiple subject which Beckett worked out so self-consciously and exhaustively in his prose is not nearly so helpful for a clear phenomenological analysis as the plays might be; nonetheless, the non-dramatic texts show powerful affinities to the theatrical form which Garner describes. The subjectivities in the novels deploy the "paradox of grounding and dispossession" (32), sheathed in diseased and undercut bodies, voiced by murmurs and viewed in darkness. The phrase Malone applies to his own sensuous childhood memories, to the sights and sounds of his own history, is apt: "They were things that scarcely were, on the confines of silence and dark, and soon ceased" (*Trilogy* 208). Not only the staging conventions of prose

adaptation, but also the prose itself, could be summed up with this dim ontology. Beckett's unnatural world is contrasted with Husserl's transcendental and experiential world:

> I am aware of a world, spread out in space endlessly, and in time becoming and become, without end. I am aware of it, that means, first of all, I discover it immediately, intuitively, I experience it. Through sight, touch, hearing, etc., in the different ways of sensory perception, corporeal things somehow spatially distributed are *for me simply there*, in verbal or figurative sense "present," whether or not I pay them special attention by busying myself with them, considering, thinking, feeling, willing. (Husserl 91)

If negatives are inserted in each of these sentences, it begins to read like a rumination of Malone: I am not aware of a world, I do not discover it, I do not experience it. Husserl's phenomenological subjectivity fails to account for the radical darkness which Beckett witnessed in philosophy, literature, history, or personal experience. Husserl's is a pre-Holocaust phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty, writing in the weighty year of 1945, evaluates self-definition, freedom, and consciousness with the same tools as Husserl and Heidegger, but yields quite different results; his models are the subjects who are schizophrenic (125), amnesiac (193), anorexic (164), old and deformed (434), or on mescaline (228). Merleau-Ponty does not expand the field of discourse to these "damaged" or "crippled" subjectivities through a sense of inclusiveness, nor through political correctness (*avant la lettre*). His phenomenology has simply awoken, like Beckett's art, to the reality of the negative, and *Phenomenology of Perception* is his attempt to take stock of the consequences. That his analysis serves as a bulwark against the apotheosis of that negative — by elevating the sensory experience of the external and by separating subject from body, world from society — implies an incidental nexus with a modern non-escapist aesthetics (Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*) and an ethic of impossibility (Beckett's oeuvre).[9]

Art depends upon faculties of perception for its reception. What, then, are the consequences for art if perception is defined by absence? What art results from the gap which is between, and which constitutes, both perceiver and perceived? Merleau-Ponty states the problem in the indeterminate linguistic realm, as one of description:

> There can be no question of describing perception itself as one of the facts thrown up in the world, since we can never fill up, in the picture of the world, that gap which we ourselves are, and by which it comes into existence for someone, since perception is the 'flaw' in this 'great diamond.'(207)[10]

A "picture of the world" constituted by void could apply not only to perception in the general case, but also to the apprehension of art. This exposure of the "gap" resonates with the "flickering" nature of art argued by Walter Pater in his proto-modern work of aesthetics, *The Renaissance* (1865). Negative phenomenology posits a "picture of the world" in constant decay and movement, afflicted by doubt, and on the edge of void. It is through this negative pathway that Merleau-Ponty might find a corollary in Pater's most famous dictum that "all art constantly aspires toward the condition of music" (45). Necessarily, Pater's thesis depends upon a particular definition of music; for it to correlate to modernism, the temporal element of its reception must be emphasized. For music, the death of the art (decay of sound perception) is immanent in its life. As with the earlier declarations on the strict temporality of performance, contemporary notions of recording, playback, and memory all trouble this theory, without fully negating its validity. Pater's analysis is predominantly applied to painting, sculpture, and architecture, plastic arts no less subject than music to the bounded temporality of perception and the rule of entropy. It is not difficult to see how theatre or performance can be read as music in this model. The emphasis which Pater places on ascesis in all artistic

production addresses the other side of the frame, finding it equally empty as the reception.[11] The undermining of perception which such an aesthetics entails, together with the evacuation of transcendent or godlike permanence within the artwork, fills the art-as-perceived and the art-as-inhabited with world-shaped holes. A gap in noesis is met by a gap in noema: this is one possible definition of modernist aesthetics.

Adorno's role in the reconfiguration of aesthetics is rooted in his revision of subjectivity begun during World War II, while he was living in exile in the United States. Unsurprisingly given the historical context (and his own background as a keen reader of Marx and an expert on Kierkegaard), he and Max Horkheimer launched a radical critique of modernity in light of the Enlightenment "triumph" in their co-written work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). Sampling with unusual abandon from sociology, philosophy, literature, and other cultural manifestations, Horkheimer and Adorno revealed the historical threads which wove their profoundly unsettling historical moment. The coexistence of Auschwitz with Hollywood films is so irrational, they argue, that the path of "reason" and "science," so triumphantly upheld in Kant, must be riddled with voids of reason. They call these voids "myth," writing that "myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (xviii). Asserting that freedom in society and enlightenment in culture form a dialectic, they show convincingly that freedom's limitation is also coextensive with the decay of enlightenment. This project was at the root of the Frankfurt School and its Institute for Social Research (headed first by Horkheimer, and then by Adorno until the end of his life). The terminology of the "culture industry," the fundamental critique of infinitely expansive capitalism, and the positioning of Auschwitz as a central turning point for philosophy all arise from this early phase of Adorno's thought.

If one philosophical outcome of the Second World War was the renewed primacy of the subject, sparking the "new wave" of phenomenology (Sartre and Merleau-Ponty) and the "new name" of existentialism (which had

been around, in one form or another, at least since Kierkegaard and Nietzsche), the evisceration of this subject in the face of late capital was well underway by 1968, when Theodor Adorno was writing *Aesthetic Theory*. Responding as much to the Holocaust itself as to the political convulsions of the 1960s, Adorno's "seminal insight" is succinctly summarized by his translator, Robert Hullot-Kentor: "subjectivity could only be transcended by way of subjectivity, and not by its limitation [...] identity is the power of nonidentity" (xiii). Though Adorno frequently refers to Beckett's plays and novels in the course of his dense paratactical argument, it is not widely known that he intended to dedicate the work to Beckett.[12] The affinity between the two artists — for that is surely what Adorno reveals himself to be in this seething, desperate work of theory — is oriented around a central and fundamentally unnamable insight into the aporia, the constitutive void, of language and perception. Adorno's early statement, indirectly applied to Beckett, is highly self-reflective: "to survive reality at its most extreme and grim, artworks that do not want to sell themselves as consolation must equate themselves with that reality" (30). Adorno's "must," used so often in the book, points toward an ethic lurking just behind the aesthetic. The process of fulfilling such a demand, which Beckett successfully does in Adorno's reading, requires the methods of negative phenomenology developed in Beckett's universe.

Adorno's conclusions in *Aesthetic Theory* also take for granted many of the metaphysical insights written in his other *magnum opus*, *Negative Dialectics* (1966). He says his mission in this work is "to use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity" and admits that "this is what the author felt to be his task ever since he came to trust his own mental impulses" (xx). As the work concentrates on a critique of Heidegger, German idealism, and various models of how negative dialectics might work with issues in moral philosophy, Adorno claims to eschew topics of aesthetics. Nonetheless, he cannot resist reference to Beckett's art in dealing with the

ethical imperatives of a world after Auschwitz:

> Beckett has given us the only fitting reaction to the situation of the concentration camps — a situation he never calls by name, as if it were subject to an image ban. What is, he says, is like a concentration camp. At one time he speaks of a lifelong death penalty. The only dawning hope is that there will be nothing any more. This, too, he rejects. From the fissure of inconsistency that comes about in this fashion, the image world of nothingness as something emerges to stabilize his poetry. (380-81)

The result of these conditions, for Adorno as for Beckett, is not simply nihilism. Rather, in the tradition of the Gnostics and Ivan Karamazov, since the world is viewed as radically evil, its rejection is an ethical imperative. In its resounding conclusion, *Negative Dialectics* holds that "such nihilism implies the contrary of identification with nothingness [...] thought honors itself by defending what is damned as nihilism" (381).

Adorno's twin attentions to the power of the subject (*Negative Dialectics)* and to its relation with "truth content" (*Wahrheitsgehalt*, held by many critics to be the central theme of *Aesthetic Theory*; see Jarvis 90, Wellmer, and Zuidervaart) prefigures the thought of Alain Badiou. As Badiou notes in his prose analysis, Beckett's method is precisely the opposite of Husserl's; he subtracts (instead of adds) the subject in order to see what happens then to being (*On Beckett* 108). The objects and bodies on stage that result from such a process — the things that scarcely were — are no less real, no less equated with the radically darkened reality; they are only perceived with less certainty. It is surely Beckett's long shadow falling over Adorno when he writes, in the Paralipomena to the *Aesthetic Theory*, that "art reaches toward reality, only to recoil at the actual touch of it" (286). While Adorno speaks distinctly of Beckett's plays and prose, never addressing the possibility of transfer from the novel to the "second world" of theatre, his negative aesthetics reveal an open pathway for the negative phenomenology of contemporary performance:

> At ground zero, however, where Beckett's plays unfold like forces in infinitesimal physics, a second world of images springs forth, both sad

> and rich, the concentrate of historical experiences that otherwise, in their immediacy, fail to articulate the essential: the evisceration of subject and reality. This shabby, damaged world of images is the negative imprint of the administered world. To this extent Beckett is realistic. (*AT* 31)

It is interesting to note that the naming of Beckett as an "absurdist" by Martin Esslin in *The Theatre of the Absurd* was also in 1968, the same year that Adorno calls him a "realist."[13] Esslin's moniker has achieved much greater popularity in the interim, but it is Adorno's "real" which adheres more tenaciously to the phenomenology of the work, and questions more brutally the logic of the modern: "Artworks participate in enlightenment because they do not lie: they do not feign the literalness of what speaks out of them [...] They are real as answers to the puzzle externally posed to them" (*AT* 5). The implications of this statement, when applied to the work of Beckett, are fairly damning to the world that Adorno perceived near the time of his death: the world of *Endgame*, of *Texts for Nothing*, of *How It Is*.[14] Like Beckett's phenomenology, Adorno's aesthetic theory is ultimately infiltrated with ethics, emerging from the sheer moral weight of the world's ugliness, namely the aesthetic consequences of Auschwitz, itself the philosophical consequence of the Enlightenment.

Toward an Ethic of Impossibility

What ethic, and what impossibility? Hearkening back to the Greek origins of the word *ethos* — most often translated as "nature" or "disposition," but meaning "customs" when in the plural — the usage in this thesis describes a manner of approach to theatrical variables in play in prose performance. This is separate from a condition of morality; indeed, to assert that the history of prose performance coheres into a complete or adequate code of "morals" or even "customs" would be to reinscribe a position like that taken by the Estate, one which creates a myth of origin and sufficiency. The ethic is "of" impossibility in two senses. First, it is both a response to the *a priori* aporetics

of the linguistic and performative acts. Second, the strategies of negation and disruption employed by Beckett — an apotheosis of the impossible — are the methods by which this foundational void is confronted. Impossibility is thus both the condition and its remedy, and the ethic fleshed out over the next chapters is a *via negativa* composed more of Gnostic tenacity than of Classical or Enlightenment morality.

How does a phenomenological analysis become an ethical one? The somewhat churlish answer to this is "the comma." The comma of much note, in Beckett's prose, is the comma between the phrases "I can't go on" and "I'll go on" on the final page of *The Unnamable*. The link between these logically exclusive propositions is a mere pause, during which some change occurs. The irresistibility of this concise ethic is evident in the wide dispersal of the phrase and its general recognition among many who have not read *The Unnamable*; Grove Press and editor Richard Seaver took the phrase as the title of "A Samuel Beckett Reader" anthologized in 1992, and Barry McGovern's one-man show drawn from the prose was entitled *I'll Go On*. The heritage of "on" is an extensive one in Beckett's oeuvre, and is not limited to the Trilogy alone. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir's "I can't go on! (Pause.) What have I said?" (224) seems like a precursor to the construct in *The Unnamable*, and Pozzo's repeated "On!" to Lucky in both acts sounds a cruel imperative. At the other end of Beckett's career, *Worstward Ho* opens with the fiercely distilled: "On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on." (*Nohow On* 87). Even in the most obscure work of Beckett — for instance, the anthology of Mexican poetry he translated in 1958 — traces of the ethic persist: the refrain for the poem "To Be" by Manuel Gutierrez Nájera is the repeated phrase, "On!" (135-136). In slightly different terms, the ethic of impossibility is in evidence in some of Beckett's critical writings. The dictum from *Three Dialogues* from the December 1949 issue of *transition* has been widely quoted: "The expression that there is nothing to express [...] together with the obligation to express" (*Disjecta* 139). The statement from *Molloy* that "not to want to say, not to know

what you want to say, not to be able to say what you think you want to say, and never to stop saying, or hardly ever, that is the thing to keep in mind, even in the heat of composition" (112) follows a similar structure and implies the same imperative. Adorno poses the problematic thus: "the need for progress is inextricable from its impossibility"(*AT* 30).

Beckett's ethic of impossibility is grounded in a view of language which foregrounds the inadequacy and futility of expression. This is the "primary impossibility" against which an ethic must define itself. The condition in which this impossibility leaves the world is the subject of his negative phenomenology explored in this chapter; the fragmented and objectified condition in which it leaves the subject is the subject of the next. A "secondary impossibility" infuses Beckett's writing, however, when the work is read; indeed, this is the dark task of the critic or of any producer of a "secondary source." Adorno, again, provides a vital key in his Paralipomena:

> The idea of many artworks that want to realize the experience of vagueness actually demands that the boundaries of their constitutive elements be effaced. But in such artworks the vague must be made distinct. Authentic works that defy the exigency of clarity all the same posit it implicitly in order to negate it; essential to those works is not an absence of clarity but rather negated clarity. Otherwise they would be simply amateurish. (*AT* 295)

The "distinctly vague" is the paradox of reading Beckett, the tension between his philosophical vectors, and the play with criticism internally in the works. Beckett's use of Descartes (or Arnold Geulincx, his mediator) in *Murphy*, the "summary of two preceding chapters" in *Mercier and Camier*, and the "addenda" to *Watt* — most famously the bitterly ironic "no symbols where none intended" (254) — are all representative of Beckett's awareness that clarity would have to be posited in order to negate it properly. The impossibility of reading Beckett or of writing about the work is the impossibility of doing so justly or accurately, given the parameters of the word and the unnamability of the author. This notion of "justice" introduces

an ethical component to the critical or artistic task after Beckett: "You must go on," the oft-overlooked preliminary to "I can't go on, I'll go on."

The twin impossibilities, the authorial and the analytic, return to a notion of the negative phenomenological condition, to the distance and absence of *négatité*. Sartre describes this condition: "to be insofar as you reveal yourself" (9). Abbott, in his study of autography[15] in *Beckett Writing Beckett: The Author in the Autograph*, shows how Beckett played this "revelation of self":

> As he constructed his language in successive works, he had to be ever alert against its potentially deadening or imprisoning effects, an object that required, in its turn, keeping that language from coming to an end. The function of writing was to avoid having written. (40)

Beckett's curious logic of subtraction left him in an insoluble loop of continuation. In order to prove the failure of language, language must be produced which fails, and by failing to prove the failure of language, language's failure is proved. The ever-worsening, never-ending effort to end is how a writer so critical of language found himself one of the most prolific authors of the century for a career of sixty years.

A final step is necessary in the ethic of impossibility in order to point the way toward its usefulness in understanding and evaluating prose performance. This is the performative impossibility — the impossibility of authorial or artistic control, of precise reproduction on the stage, of successful "fidelity" to the author (if this is the goal) or of utter destruction of the text (if this arises through negligence) — in other words, the sum of the inexact conditions of the negative phenomenology of Beckett and the theatre itself. It is in a "performative impossibility" that aporia comes full circle from ethos to embodiment. No longer simply a precondition of language recognized in Beckett's texts, nor merely the fundamental blindness of the would-be reader/interpreter, impossibility becomes a structural element in the theatre. The subjectivities which are dissolved into a world-as-perceived-and-inhabited, no longer able to rest in the categories of the empirical or the dichotomy of

noesis and noema, are left to waste and pine, waiting for a certainty which will probably never come. That the performer of Beckett's texts would willingly make such a contract is an ethical declaration. To enter, in a space so devoid of escape, is to pursue a truth relentlessly. It follows the same path which Badiou illuminates in his *Ethics*, clearly influenced by Beckett's constant imperative:

> This ethics combines, then, under the imperative to "Keep going!", resources of discernment (do not fall for simulacra), of courage (do not give up), and of moderation [*réserve*] (do not get carried away to the extremes of Totality). (91)

Badiou also refers to "Totality" as "the forcing of the unnameable" (87).[16] Badiou holds the absence of a name for the unnamable to be the power of the True, and defines the voicing of this name as one type of Evil. This ethics elevates the void which the phenomenology of prose performance sets up in content and form, and preserves the presence of its absence.

The world on stage, either in Beckett or after Beckett, is not simply there, as Husserl has it, but scarcely there. Merleau-Ponty's revision of the world-body relationship comes close to a Beckettian uncertainty principle: "Experience discloses beneath objective space, in which the body eventually finds its place, a primitive spatiality of which experience is merely the outer covering and which merges with the body's very being" (148). Merleau-Ponty also answers an old question of Gogo's ("We're not tied?"): "To be a body, is to be *tied* to a certain world. Our body is not primarily *in* space: it is of it." (148) This relation of corporeality and spatiality is present when any text, regardless of genre, is brought to the stage from the page. The act of reading silently — which the Beckett Estate, at least, claims was the intended mode of apprehending the novels or short fiction — leaves no gap but the linguistic aporia between subject and object, and the original gap of an unnamable author. The added emptiness which the phenomenology of prose performance reveals has the potential to enrich both the impossibility of Beckett — I can't go on — and the ethic of impossibility in Beckett — I'll go on.

NOTES: CHAPTER ONE
A Phenomenological Investigation of Prose Performance

1. Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* is the source I read for his phenomenology, but it is interesting to note (as many have before me) that his novel *Nausea* articulates the same system of perception much more concisely. It is to this novel that I would attribute the doctrine of the *négatité* I have found so useful, though its literary project represents the applied philosophy more than the statement of philosophy itself.
2. The "bracketing" of ontology is a move made by Husserl, but not by either Heidegger or Sartre (both of whom had "Being" in the title of their *magnum opi*). I follow Husserl's lead in this case in order to sidestep a debate over the fundamental ontology of performance and the primacy of presence, which I believe has little impact on my argument for prose performance.
3. The impact of the technology of reproduction on performance has a theoretical heritage reaching back at least to Benjamin's seminal *On the Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, but my reading draws substantially on Auslander's *Liveness* and Matthew Causey's *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture.*
4. The fundamental tenet of Husserl's phenomenology is that "all consciousness is consciousness of something." This formulation gave birth to the distinction between noesis and noema, defined by David W. Smith in the *Stanford Encyclopædia of Philosophy* as "acts of thought" and "intentional objects of thought" respectively. According to the *SEP*, "the correlation between noesis and noema becomes the first step in the constitution of analyses of consciousness" (Smith n. pag). Merleau-Ponty formally begins to break down their strict separation in *Phenomenology of Perception.*
5. "It is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident anymore, not its inner life, not its relation to the world, not even its right to exist" (*Aesthetic Theory* 1).
6. Derrida called temporality, along with intersubjectivity, the "torments" of phenomenology (Garner 22). This "torment" is redoubled in the theatre due to the presence of multiple platforms and frames, and becomes increasingly insoluble as the theatrical form becomes increasingly complex and nonmatrixed.
7. For an extensive argument that a model of truth-construction through simulacra has given way to a model of embeddedness, see *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture* by Causey (Routledge 2006).
8. Intent is particularly thorny where Beckett's drama is concerned, because the stories of his (now his Estate's) harsh demands for "perfect" fidelity to the stage directions have achieved the status of myth. Thus, when small shifts from stage directions are carried out in performance or design, or when major interpretation is layered on to a lesser-known work, the meaning might be altered from Beckett's original, but no one present can possibly be the wiser. The author of this difficulty is unquestionably Beckett himself, who showed genuine misunderstanding of the form of theatre — or perhaps simply his creative impulse toward impossibility — when he acted as though such fidelity were possible. This discourse will be expanded in Chapter Six.
9. The thread drawn here between Merleau-Ponty, Adorno and Beckett is one inspired by their historical bond as postwar writers, and by their particular usefulness for my own argument. It is also a choice made out of a necessity to limit my scope, since aesthetics (even of the postwar variety) is as impossible

to contain as phenomenology. It is not uncommon to see phenomenology deployed analytically in contemporary aesthetics. However, the argument put forward in this chapter is intended to be responsive to these linked discourses within Beckett Studies, and not to address an entire philosophical field.
10. According to the translator's footnote on this page, Merleau-Ponty is referring to a line from the poetry of Paul Valéry: "*mes repentirs, mes doutes, mes contraintes / sont le défaut de ton grand diamant.*"
11. Paterian ascesis is an adequate description of the writing method of Joyce (though some Dubliners might insist that he should have used more). Abbott suggests an inheritance of this impulse by Beckett (*BwB* 40) and shrewdly applies it to Beckett's strict control of his own oeuvre and self-consciousness (48-50). My broader reading of Pater is heavily indebted to Dr. Kevin Bell, whose original and compelling argument is outlined in his *Ashes Taken for Fire: Aesthetic Modernism and the Critique of Identity* (Minnesota 2007).
12. This fact is disclosed by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann in an editors' afterword to the 1997 edition of *Aesthetic Theory* (366).
13. Though Esslin is British, the reception of his "absurdist" reading in America, where it continues to be a dominant critique taught in major universities, reveals more about the difference between American and European thought in the 20th century than either critic would probably imagine.
14. *Aesthetic Theory* was published posthumously, and was not completely finished at the time of Adorno's death in 1969.
15. "Autography" is Abbott's word to refer to the "writing the self" Beckett undergoes; Abbott introduces the construct in order to overcome the limiting notion of "autobiography" in the prose. This concept is an essential component of my own reading of Beckettian subjectivity.
16. The spelling of Badiou's translators, which I follow when quoting from his works in English, includes the first "e" in "unnameable." A number of other critics include this letter in the word. Beckett's spelling, however, does not. The *OED* acknowledges both, and I follow Beckett in my own usage.

CHAPTER TWO
"What Matter Who's Speaking?": The Unnamable Subjects of Samuel Beckett's Prose

What am I to say? I said.
Be yourself, they said, say yourself.
Myself? I said. What are you insinuating?

—*Ohio Impromptu* Manuscripts

In order to illuminate Beckett's treatment of subjectivity and self-construction in his prose, and thus the conditions which inform the performance of such works, it is necessary first to investigate the philosophical vectors in play. Rather than a complete history of "the subject" in philosophy — an impossible project even in an abbreviated form — this chapter will attempt to describe a "subject vocabulary" in Beckett. Such a vocabulary falls into three categories: 1) ideas about subjectivity which informed Beckett; 2) ideas about subjectivity which were informed by Beckett; and 3) ideas about subjectivity which have no explicit relationship to Beckett, but which are deemed useful in understanding his subjects. In the first category, philosophers including Schopenhauer, Descartes, and Geulincx, each of whom Beckett is known to have studied, will be investigated in terms of specific impact on the prose. In the second grouping, writers like Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and Lyotard will be included, more for their use of Beckett's subjects than for Beckett's use of their models. While they were all alive at the same time, and for the most part in Paris, and sometimes at the same cafés, there is no strong biographical evidence to suggest that Beckett was steeped in their philosophies. There is much to suggest that they were steeped in his. In the third grouping, some models of subjectivity will be utilized which Beckett may never have read and could not have influenced (Taoism), or could not have read and influenced to an less explicit degree (Alain Badiou).[1] Such sources will be used sparingly, but they will provide useful tools for comprehending the particular types of "undecidable and unnamable" subjects of the prose. Of particular interest to the construction of an ethic of impossibility are the

philosophical points (highly visible in Badiou) where subjectivity denotes ethics.

With a "vocabulary" established, the fourth part of the chapter will concentrate on an "arithmetic of the subject" depicting the operations performed by Beckett through his prose. This analysis takes on a language of simple mathematics to describe Beckett's manipulations, i.e. adding, subtracting, dividing, and multiplying the subject. Rather than drawing a linear timeline of these subject operations, the analysis of the prose will treat each as a technique which Beckett deployed variously throughout his career. Most of his works contain combinations of such functions, and it is difficult to draw explicit periods, though it is fair to say that "addition of the subject," the Joycean tactic of verbosity, cross-reference, and anamnesis which characterizes Beckett's early attempts at prose, was largely dispensed with when he reached maturity, in mid- and late career. Through close reading of Beckett's narrative voices and characters in the prose, a working catalogue of such "mathematics" will be implemented.

In its conclusion, this chapter will make use of the terms of, and operations upon, the subject as investigated in the first two sections, in order to uncover an adscititious subject-related process represented by performance. It will be argued that Beckett's project with the subject, already resonating across many different strata within his oeuvre, can be augmented in performance, due to some of the conditions of phenomenology in prose performance exposed in the first chapter. Such potential for "augmentation" of prose by performance, however, is neither a guarantee that an enrichment will occur, nor does it mask a polemic intent (i.e. "Beckett's prose *should* be performed, for the sake of his subjects"). Accordingly, the performance of Beckett's prose subjects will also be explored in terms of its negative impact, or how performance might limit or inhibit the subjects presented in the written work. More a prolegomenon than a fulfilled argument, this analysis of subject in performance will rely on later examples to support its broad claims. In other

words, the general assessment of the Beckett prose subject in performance in this chapter will point the way toward the specific examples of prose performance which form the bulk of the third, fourth, and fifth chapters.

A Vocabulary of the Subject: Influences on Beckett

The study of the subject can be understood to be an ontology of the self, as "being" is invoked in the primary question: what is the self?[2] Many of the phenomenologists already referenced in the first chapter fall into a stream of philosophy and ontology broadly defined as "subjective," because of their emphasis on lived experience as a basis for analysis. Subject-construction in phenomenology comes primarily from the process of perceiving, or noesis; object-construction is the noema which results. Debate centres on what relationship noesis and noema might have; a shift in this balance is the essential transition from early, transcendental phenomenology (Husserl) to a more troubled and negative vision of perception, founded on its incompletion (Merleau-Ponty). In the case of phenomenology, however, the subject is absolutely and obviously central; a self of some kind is implied in every process related to perception.

It would be an error, however, to assert that a subjectivity is therefore not implied in more "objective" philosophies. Indeed, Bishop George Berkeley is known both for his strict empiricism and for his maxim *esse est percipi*, which states precisely the relationship of a self constituted by its being perceived. Berkeley's empiricism of objects was so absolute (and his reaction against the materialism put forward by Locke so virulent) that he arrives at the apotheosis of the subject: *all* that exists are the ideas, because that is all that the self can confirm. Berkeley's thesis in his key work, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), is essentially that matter does not exist; rather, objects exist in an ideal realm of the mind, derived from the will and consciousness of God. Vitally for Beckett, Berkeley's principle works in the

converse as well: *Esse est aut percipi aut percipere,* or to be is both to be perceived and to perceive. One's own being is confirmed by the perception of others. Beckett's staging of this notion in *Film* is frequently cited as the kind of "adapted philosophy" which one finds in Beckett's work; it is clear, however, that the same philosophy pervades a phenomenology of performance. Berkeley's axiom could be read, in that context, as expressing the specific need for an audience.

In Beckett's prose,[3] one of the first citations is René Descartes, who is among the most influential Enlightenment thinkers in the rationalist, objective, and Platonic stream (insofar as such a stream can be severed from its other tributaries). It is through Descartes — together with his disciple Arnoldus Geulincx, whose philosophy is explicitly derivative — and Beckett's alternately mocking and devout application of his philosophy that the early philosophical roots of Beckett in post-Renaissance humanism are exposed. Descartes posited the complete separation of mind and body — *pensum* and *punctum* — as his response to the ancient Greek metaphysical problem of the duality of the universe (matter, or extended substance, versus soul, or thinking substance). Descartes left, as an insoluble lacuna, how these two types of matter come together in Man. Many philosophers, namely Spinoza, followed Descartes with philosophical (or religious) solutions. But Beckett applied this theory to his literary production, and created *Murphy*.

The "self," as such, is divided in the title character precisely the way that Descartes proposes, manifesting a dissociation which Beckett felt profoundly, but which also clearly amused him. The sixth chapter of the novel is an interlude describing the so-called mind of Murphy, who, it is revealed, is subject to this rigorous Cartesian mind-body duality. Beckett writes that Murphy felt himself "split in two," part of "a closed system, subject to no principle of change but its own, self-sufficient and impermeable to the vicissitudes of the body" (109). In his 1973 book on Beckett's fiction, H. Porter Abbott uses a revealing phrase about the novel, exposing a duality in Beckett

himself: "[Beckett] appears to be of two minds: often yielding to the very form he tries to attack" (38). *Murphy* represents a mockery of reason and rationalism, merely by giving absolute credence to Descartes; that Beckett applies this philosophy with a view to revealing its contradictions does not reduce the fact of its presence. An attack on the novelistic form — an early salvo in a war Beckett waged more successfully later in life — is advanced in this work as well, with numerous inversions of conventional metaphor and idiom, drawing as much attention as possible to the threadbare patches in the fabric of words. As words were to take on central significance to Beckett's vocabulary of subject construction later, it is worth noting that the connection existed early on.

Arnoldus Geulincx, the metaphysician from Antwerp working throughout the 1660s in the footsteps of Descartes, is responsible for what Murphy calls the "beautiful Belgo-Latin" (178) of another axiom that is clearly a keystone to Beckett's work: *Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis* — where you are worth nothing, there you should want nothing.[4] An edition of Geulincx's *Ethica,* from which this declaration comes, was housed in the Long Room at Trinity College and read in the original by Beckett during 1936, while he was writing *Murphy*. One of the few suggestions that Beckett was ever to offer scholars of his work was that this axiom might be a good place to start.[5]

As was almost universal in Western philosophy of the time, the *Ethica* posits an essentially religious ethics, asserting that virtue is a love of reason which leads to God. The "cardinal" virtues, according to Geulincx, are *Diligentia, Obedientia, Justitia,* and *Humilitas;* each of these are specifically defined in terms of reason, which is the narrow span separating such ethics from an explicitly Christian doctrine or a monastic rule. On its surface, it may not seem that this would hold great interest for an agnostic Beckett, whose "brand," at least, has been irrevocably tied to the irrational. It is the *Humilitas,* however, in which Beckett finds his most significant correspondence, and in which Geulincx places his ethical core. In its typical definition, humility is the

sense of one's lack of worth before God; this invokes the Greek philosophical imperative of self-knowledge, *Ipse te nosce.* Geulincx divides this into two distinct ethical activities:

> *inspectio sui*, looking into the self; and *despectio sui*, contempt of the self. The two are discussed in terms of the ethical axiom: *Ubi nihil vales*, by looking into oneself, one realizes one's essential lack of worth, *ibi nihil velis*; by so doing one is led to despise and hence not desire the material world (which having inspected, one sets at naught). (*Companion* 595)

As the *Companion* goes on to assert, many of the derelicts and tramps who occupy the "Beckett Country" have this metaphysical value system at the heart of their self-understanding. While granted the most prominence in *Murphy*, Geulincx crops up several times in the *Trilogy* and in the *Nouvelles*; his ethics clearly inform the entire oeuvre.

What *Murphy* attempted in content, *Watt* achieves in form. The novel *Watt* is composed, in the words of biographer James Knowlson, of "exhaustive efforts to conduct rational inquiry according to logical rules" (303). Pages are spent exploring all possible combinations of how Mr. Knott could arrange his furniture, how the dog could be brought together with leftover food, and how the members of College Grants Committee (clearly based on the administration of Trinity College) could try forever to look each other in the face and always fail. It is this ever-present failure, the inevitable contradiction that emerges when logic is purely applied, which forms the body of the novel. *Watt* ends with an addendum which makes a farcical attempt to close the gaps left in the story, and concludes with the now-axiomatic line "No symbols where none intended" (254).

Thus, on the surface, the philosophical statement in the book would seem to extend from its form solely, which has become "pure mind" in the Cartesian sense. Such a reading would miss the rich statement about the subject and the body presented in the title character, who exhibits a more subtle and internalized extension of Murphy's duality. It is the novel's

discourse, not plot or character, which most clearly displays what Andrew Gibson calls "a fresh kind of perception" in which the human is "dissolved into fragments" (*ND* 151). This time, it is the narrator, not Watt, who occupies the *pensum*, forever engaging in pointless proliferation of ideas and language. In a description of Mr. Knott — his name another impoverished pun on the absent subject — the narrator derides his own passage of description as "anthropomorphic insolence" (202). Moving through the novel's curious world — itself reflecting simulacra of Beckett's farmhouse hideout in Roussillon during the war, where he wrote the work, mixed with the fragmentary Dublin suburban landscape — is Watt, who is pure *punctum*, "lived, sentient experience" (Gontarski xxiii), perhaps even "bare life." Gontarski observes that with Watt and the tramps who follow him in later novels, Beckett gives us a "medieval" subject, tormented by a medieval logic in the body and in the world, except with no deity in which to believe, no force from which to beg salvation.[6] In this connection of pain and the subject, and in this rich pessimism, Beckett shows the strength of his early influence from Arthur Schopenhauer.

Schopenhauer seems initially to follow in the footsteps of Berkeley when he begins *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819) with the assertion "The world is my idea." While this answers Berkeley in a tone already familiar from Kant's model of the phenomenal world, it raises a new problem: the possessive first person, and the "I" lurking behind "my idea."[7] Much like the phenomenologists after him, Schopenhauer's philosophy implies a subject. Rather than vivisecting this subject like Descartes, or simply naming him "God" like Spinoza, Schopenhauer believes that:

> The existence of this 'I' is an absolute necessity, in the same way as the existence of an 'apparent' world makes necessary the existence of a 'real' world: and in fact this 'I' *is* the real world, the substratum of the world of phenomena [...] We know ourselves objectively, in the same way as we know all other phenomena, as an object extended in space and time: we know ourselves as body. But we also know ourselves subjectively, we have an inner consciousness of our own existence, and we possess feelings and desires. (20-21)

It is this inner consciousness, an "inner world," that Schopenhauer names "will," which is the Kantian "thing-in-itself," in contrast to the body, which is only "appearance."It prefigures the ethical turn in Badiou, as well as Beckett, when Schopenhauer holds that all will — the noumenal form of the body — is will to live. Thus, "going on" is incumbent upon anything that is a body. To cease to will *is* to cease to live.

A further, irreducible part of Schopenhauer's subjectivity is suffering. He defined happiness negatively, as the temporary cessation of suffering (41), and also (for even more rigorously pessimistic reasons) holds that "no form of existence is suitable [for the human race] other than the one it already possesses" (43). Echoes of Vladimir's "born astride a grave" speech from *Waiting for Godot* can be heard in Schopenhauer's essay "On the Vanity of Existence": "To our amazement we suddenly exist, after having for countless millennia not existed; in a short while we will again not exist, also for countless millennia" (51). A connection quickly emerges, then, between the radical impossibility encountered by Beckett's characters or exhibited by Beckett's forms and the tenacity of subjectivity, even at its most fragile and fragmentary. In a character like Watt, this is also one example of an ethic of impossibility.

The famous "burst of creativity" which followed *Watt*, Beckett's return to postwar Paris, his transition to French as his main writing language, and the death of his mother yielded the four *Nouvelles* ("First Love," "The Expelled," "The Calmative," and "The End"), *Eleuthéria, Waiting for Godot,* and the *Trilogy* (*Molloy, Malone Dies,* and *The Unnamable*). Identified by nearly every critic in the field as a demarcation point of some kind, this initiates a period in which Beckett struck out from his influences, abandoned the Cartesian variations, and began to outline the embodiment of a starkly original philosophy of the subject with his characters.

A Vocabulary of the Subject: Beckett's Influence

It is useless to posit the complete independence of Beckett's insight into the subject during his (extremely long) mature phase, as it would be difficult to locate another writer with such a rich concentrate of sources and influences at his back. It is also observable that many of Beckett's insights into subjectivity were shared by other writers, some in other contexts, in the post-World War Two (and then the post-1968) environment. However, the philosophers who rose to prominence in his life, particularly in Paris — namely Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Camus, Foucault, Lacan, Adorno, Derrida, Deleuze, and Lyotard — nearly all engaged with Beckett as a source, and sometimes also as an acquaintance. It is a lucid illustration of the difference between the artist and the critic that we know which of them read Beckett, and that we do not know which of them Beckett might have read.

Independently discovered or otherwise, Beckett's postwar subjects exhibit two distinct but related qualities: 1) self-construction through language, or discourse, and 2) constitutive void, or aporia. The relationship between language and void is extensively explored in all philosophies interpellated as "postmodern," and does not need a complete recapitulation here; suffice for the moment to say that John the Evangelist's *logos*, crafted for a bygone era of *una sancta*, was turned finally by the Holocaust (among other machines) into Derrida's *aporos*.[8] Aporia, used here as a "constitutive nothingness," has a long heritage in mankind's thought, and is by no means the property of the postmodern discourse; indeed, its background in Eastern thought is considerably older (Lao-Tzu, 6th-4th centuries BCE) than its Western branch of negative theology (Duns Scotus, Augustine, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche). An understanding of Beckett's subjects, and of the milieu in which he wrote them, must be predicated upon a brief investigation of discourse and aporia. Some of the philosophers who drew upon Beckett to discuss these topics inaugurated vast models of subjectivity, and their positions will be impossible to compress

adequately; thus, the following sketches will attempt to narrow the inquiry to specifically Beckettian cross-reference, solely to show the provenance of the vocabulary used throughout this dissertation.

It is only fitting that an initial attempt to address language and the subject should invoke Michel Foucault, whose stated project in the seminal *Madness and Civilization* is the highly Beckettian "archaeology of silence" (ix). As has been discussed, Foucault rejected the "phenomenological approach" in his "Archaeology of the Human Sciences," entitled *The Order of Things* [*Les Mots et les Choses*], which he felt put too much primacy on the knowing subject. In his rigorous attempt to identify and then classify aspects of an episteme, his philosophy shows a preoccupation with the external, though he is hardly a structuralist, nor (as he admits) does he escape the "problem" of the subject. Instead of linking an idea — for instance, the idea of madness to 18th century practice in exclusionary discourse and society — to a person ("X had an idea"), Foucault tends to tie changes in an episteme to time. Foucault believes, it might be said, in the ontology of ideas, by way of language. In *The Order of Things*, he writes that "Language partakes in the world-wide dissemination of similitudes and signatures [...] It must, therefore, be studied itself as a thing in nature" (35). Foucault is also conscious that this inclusiveness of words into the traditional province of phenomena absolutely negates the disappearance of the subject. While he tracks many manipulations of the image, the simulacrum, and the *logos* through his archaeologies, his sleight-of-hand never fully hides a person thinking, nor does the writer himself (as pointed out by Derrida) ever fully disappear. In this, a classic Beckettian paradox begins to appear.

Derrida responds to Foucault's essay on madness in a lecture/paper of his own, entitled "Cogito and the History of Madness." Not fully a rejection, Derrida's critical essay draws out the specific problematic of language and subject of which Foucault was surely aware within his project. Derrida writes:

> *Either* do not mention a certain silence (a *certain* silence which, again, can only be determined within a *language* and an *order* that will preserve this silence from contamination by any given muteness), *or* follow the madman down the road of his exile [...] when one attempts to convey the silence itself, one has already passed over to the side of the enemy, the side of order, even if one fights against order from within it, putting its origin into question. There is no Trojan Horse unconquerable by Reason (in general). (42)

This is a recapitulation of Beckettian impossibility, the need to speak together with the impossibility of speaking, or the longing for silence which must be spoken aloud. Much in the way that Merleau-Ponty, writing phenomenology in the radically darkened post-war France, used fractured subjects to understand perception, Foucault finds enormous fecundity in investigation of reason through madness. In his own preface to *The Order of Things*, he demonstrates the centrality of language through the struggle of an aphasiac to categorize skeins of yarn:

> But no sooner have they been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve again, for the field of identity that sustains them, however limited it may be, is still too wide not to be unstable; and so the sick mind continues to infinity, creating groups then dispersing them again, heaping up diverse similarities, destroying those that seem clearest, splitting up things that are identical, superimposing different criteria, frenziedly beginning all over again, becoming more and more disturbed, and teetering finally on the brink of anxiety. (xviii)

It is not a far leap to see Lucky's "intellectual" diatribe, Watt's attempts to grasp time or sequence, Molloy's discourse on the sucking stones, the Unnamable's logorrhea, or (as Abbott's conception of autography permits) Beckett himself in this difficult linguistic and aporetic condition. In an oeuvre which never ceased to be self-aware, from Belacqua to the Reader/Listener of *Ohio Impromptu*, it is an essential part of the puzzle of Beckettian subjectivity to understand how the author related to his characters.

H. Porter Abbott, in his book *Beckett Writing Beckett*, offers a useful conceptual tool to show how the author might be related to his characters without falling into a trap of biographical fallacy.[9] Avoiding both the easy pitfall of calling the work "autobiographical" and Gontarski's somewhat more

limited description of "the intent of Undoing" to describe the "creative achievement" of separating life from work, Abbott coins the term "autography," or writing the self. Describing Beckett's difficulty once he realized that his project was to "write the self," Abbott says that "as he constructed his language in successive works, he had to be ever alert against its potentially deadening or imprisoning effects, an object that required, in its turn, keeping that language from coming to an end [...] The function of writing was to avoid having written" (40). This process is visible, more than anywhere else, in Beckett's notebooks and drafting process. The sensitivity which Beckett exhibited to how much he was constructed, indeed *living*, through the writing is nearly an empirical test of the semiotic vision of subjectivity. There are innumerable examples — one may as well cite Beckett's complete works — but *Texts for Nothing*, the "grisly after-birth"[10] of *The Unnamable*, contains the remarkable passage after which this chapter is named:

> Leave, I was going to say leave all that. What matter who's speaking, someone said what matter who's speaking. There's going to be a departure, I'll be there, I won't miss it, it won't be me, I'll be here, I'll say I'm far from here, it won't be me, I won't say anything, there's going to be a story, someone's going to try to tell a story. (85)

The power of Beckett's literary and narrative negation is such that the evisceration of language immediately becomes the evisceration of subject, and is named as such by Adorno in the *Aesthetic Theory*: "what matter who's speaking" immediately becomes "it won't be me," repeated twice. Lurking just beyond the subject — thanks to Berkeley and several others — is the object, or objects, called into being by their name, erased from being by their going unnamed, or utterly negated, made finally impossible, by Beckett's doubled "unnamable." Beckett's *Trilogy* reflects, then, the central insight ascribed to Adorno by his translator, Robert Hullot-Kentor, that "subjectivity could only be transcended by way of subjectivity, and not by its limitation [...] identity is the power of nonidentity" (xiii).

This discernment is not dissimilar to Lyotard's understanding of the Inhuman, which is as helpful as Foucault's investigation of madness in casting some light upon the all-too-human tramps that people Beckett's literature. Jean-François Lyotard identifies two distinct types of "the Inhuman" in his eponymous collection of reflections on time, and agitates for their rigorous separation in argument. The first (not the original, but the easiest to see) is the inhuman in the system: that which undertakes to deny and control the human. The impulses of development, of instruction, and of organization are shown in limited ways — insofar as they suppress the human — to be extensions of a repressive and authoritarian apparatus, which could be named anything on the list of postmodernism's usual suspects: the State, the Church, the Prison, the School, Sigmund Freud. The second category of the inhuman invests this heavy argument with a stunning subtlety, for it is an "internal" inhuman, the "miserable and admirable indetermination" found in childhood and never fully destroyed, which Lyotard claims constitutes the human. Therefore, placed into the (inhuman) sequence of mathematical logic, Lyotard 1) equates the human to the inhuman, and 2) shows how the inhuman in the system is the denial of the human; the conclusion is thus that 3) it is inhuman (in the system) to deny the inhuman (in the subject). These tenets strongly inform Beckett's ethics, as well as his human (because inhuman) subjects. Lyotard concludes:

> It is a consequence of these banal observations that one can take pride in the title of humanity for exactly opposite reasons. Shorn of speech, incapable of standing upright, hesitating over the objects of its interest, not able to calculate its advantages, not sensitive to common reason, the child is eminently the human because its distress heralds and promises things possible. Its initial delay in humanity, which makes it the hostage of the adult community, is also what manifests to this community the lack of humanity it is suffering from, and which calls on it to become more human. (3-4)

It could be argued, as it was by the Academie Suedoise in their citation of Beckett for the Nobel Prize, that Beckett's subjects encourage us to become

more human. It could not be argued, however, that the subjects themselves do so. Rather, as the prose went on distilling, the bodies also disappeared. Already in *The Unnamable*, the narrator is a kind of "cylinder" speaking beyond a metaphysical (metaphorical?) grave. Syntax and subject, in Beckett's prose, shared a decline in the late prose, peopled by narrative personae who cease to deserve the same title of "subjectivity" which his earlier works suggested. Rather, the model of self-construction (text-construction) shifts into one which might be called "haecceity." Haecceity is the remainder of the Beckett subject, a final identification between subject and object, all that is left beyond the aesthetically terminal point of *Texts for Nothing*.[11]

"Haecceity" is a term of scholastic philosophy coined by the 13th century theologian Duns Scotus. It derives from *hic*, Latin for "this," and is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the quality implied in the use of 'this,' as 'this man;' 'thisness;' 'hereness and nowness;' that quality or mode of being in virtue of which a thing is or becomes a definite individual; individuality." This definition was considerably expanded in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, who place haecceity in opposition to subjectivity or substantiality. They write, "A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle [...] It is not made of points, only of lines [...] It is a rhizome" (263). This is the mode of individuation which they find present in nomad thought, that is, the "secret link constituted by the critique of negativity, the cultivation of joy, the hatred of interiority, the exteriority of forces and relations, the denunciation of power." Examples they give of thinkers in this stream include Lucretius, Hume, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Beckett.

The supplanting of subjectivity with a model of haecceity is begun by Molloy in the *Trilogy*, whose "principle of advertising" suggests not that he exists, nor that he can think, but that "If I go on long enough calling that my life I'll end up by believing it" (53). The Unnamable, a becoming-object who has not yet abandoned will, carries it a step further: "No, one can spend one's

life thus, unable to live, unable to bring to life, and die in vain, having done nothing, been nothing" (358). It is the late prose of Beckett which fully turns the self into a machine, a body without organs, an empty object, left with nothing but the dull coinage of words. Deleuze and Guattari, writing about the act of becoming, describe the type of embodiment which is representative of the post-*Trilogy* period of Beckett's artistic production:

> A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the functions it fulfills. On the plane of consistency, *a body is defined only by a longitude and a latitude*: [...] the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (latitude). Nothing but affects and local movements, differential speeds. (260)

This "plane of consistency" reduces to longitude and latitude, enforces a grid, and thus causes the subject to take on certain qualities of the object. The voice of the late prose is that of the disintegrating object, a "not-I."[12] These writings are inhabited by the imprisoned, the homeless, the confused, and the injured, whose words are on an asymptote to silence. Beckett's use of pronouns becomes utterly twisted, centered on the "I" but constantly undermining the meaning of the first person. The "I" seems to long equally to be something other than "I," preferably just an "it." In *Company*, it tries for "you," but the obsession with falling silent and the refusal to do so constantly returns us to some voice of *some subject*. The problematic is summarized, with the appropriately desiccated syntax, in *Worstward Ho*: "Whose words? Ask in vain. Or not in vain if say no knowing. No saying. No words for him whose words. Him? One. No words for one whose words. One? It. No words for it whose words. Better worse so" (19).

The lugubrious process which created Beckett's "I" in the first place, through the process called "addition" later in this chapter, is inverted in the final, ultimately subtractive prose. While other operations — division and multiplication — of the subject can be identified in the prose, there is an almost

systematic destruction, erasure, and objectification visible in half-light in the late enigmas. Frank Kermode, writing in the *Guardian* in 1989 about the "last mantras" of Beckett, summarizes the aporetic task, but also links to the linguistic project of self-construction, present since the beginning. He writes that Beckett's final works are:

> inescapably paradoxical: representing the last possible act of imagination, they also suggest that even this quasi-Berkeleyan man, existing as perceived but almost not perceiving, cannot be represented without the payment of a tribute, however reluctant, to a specifically human power, not extinguished as long as one can speak of such things.[13]

A Vocabulary of the Subject: Beyond Beckett's Boundaries

Two final reference points are needed in a philosophical description of Beckett's subjects. They do not establish Beckett's broad range of given or received influence; indeed, both seem to lie beyond these limits. Rather, they introduce descriptions which usefully illuminate his subjects as treated in the present analysis. The first is Taoist thought, which substantially predated Beckett, but whose direct influence remains unclear; the second is the notion of subjectivity found in Alain Badiou, which was fleshed out in *Being and Event* too near Beckett's death to have been explicitly addressed. Both can be connected to an explicitly Beckettian idea to which this study will return: the "atomist paradox" of Democritus of Abdera, "Nothing is more real than nothing"

With the release in 2006 of Ackerley and Gontarski's encyclopædic *Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett*, Taoism's previously tenuous linkage with Samuel Beckett was codified in an entry on Lao-Tzu (308), the (possibly mythical) founder of the doctrine and the (ascribed) author of the *Tao Te Ching*. First, the entry cites Giles's *Civilization of China*, to define Taoism as the doctrine "of doing nothing, by which means [...] everything could be done" (58-59). Ackerley and Gontarski point out that the reference in *That Time* to an "old

Chinaman long before Christ born with long white hair" (*Plays* 230) relates to Lao-Tzu, who, according to legend, was carried by his mother for 62 years; they assert that the white hair often shown in the late plays, particularly *Ohio Impromptu*, may be further reference. Thus, Beckett clearly knew of Lao-Tzu, as well as a few specifics surrounding his story; as to whether he read the *Tao Te Ching*, it seems extremely likely in the context of an unpublished prose poem, entitled *The Way* — one English translation of the word *Tao* — collected as part of the Ussy manuscripts dated "14.5.81" and held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in Austin, Texas. As Carlton Lake comments in *No Symbols Where None Intended*, "here, in one short piece—'The Way'—is the distillation of all the journeys made by all of Beckett's eternal wanderers."[14]

More than an erudite reference in passing, Taoism has a great deal to offer in the understanding of Beckettian subjectivity and discourse, though the significance of the doctrine to Beckett's thinking is impossible to gauge.[15] The foundational text of Taoism is the *Tao Te Ching*, but historians disagree on the date of the text (either the fourth or sixth century BCE) and on the existence of the author, about whom too many myths are written (such as the 62-year gestation period) to disentangle. The attribution of the work to Lao-Tzu is, at best, traditional. The book was materially assembled by unnamed editors from disordered sets of bamboo slips, themselves full of holes. It is unique among religious texts — though that label too would be disputed — in that it contains no proper names. These various voids which lie at the root of the *Tao Te Ching* are no accident; indeed, they form the subject of the work, and found what might be called an aporetic canon. While no historical episteme can be drawn which credibly connects the two bodies of work, the distinctive use of absence and the negative in Beckett's writing and discourse could be read as one Western manifestation of this Eastern tradition.

The quote used in the *Companion* reduces Taoism to a sophistry of inaction: "doing nothing, by which means [...] everything could be done" (308). This is a statement of impossibility without the ethic, and does little

justice to the rigorous "nothing" proposed in the *Tao Te Ching*. From its opening lines onward, the *Tao Te Ching* proposes a doctrine of inconstancy: "The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way / The name that can be named is not the constant name."[16] This inconstancy is present in structure and form, and certainly the history of the text's myriad translations adds another layer of unknowability to the content. Like the doubled negative present in the Beckettian idea of the "unnamable," depriving both subject and object, word and form of stable knowledge, the Taoist absence is so complete that "nothing" is used to reveal an ontology, an epistemology, a phenomenology, and finally an ethics.

Though it seems to spark a phenomenological crisis — how can a book escape the linguistic level? — the *Tao Te Ching* achieves its rigorous critique of name, word, and language by creating informational gaps, doubts, and ambiguities. Contrary to the Confucian tradition of morality heavily based in societal demarcations and teachings using stories about named individuals, Taoism elevates these aporias as manifestations of *yin*: the flowing, the transient, the absent, the dark, the feminine. Taoist ontology rests on the void surrounding an object, not on the object itself. One example is the wheel, mentioned in the eleventh chapter: "Thirty spokes/share one hub. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose at hand" (Lau 15). The Feng/English translation renders this second line "It is this center hole that makes it useful" (13). A parallel is thus drawn between emptiness and potential. The presence of a name, seen in these terms as a calling into being, is revealed as an act of violence, referred to variously as "cutting" or "severing" an object (or a subject) from the constitutive void. Naming becomes a way of killing things. This awareness of the ideological force of language predates more familiar adherents, like Althusser or even Derrida, by at least twenty-four centuries.

What is most interesting about the Taoist connection to Beckett is the similarity of the two solutions to the paradox of writing, reached across such an astounding span of time. If aporia is a categorical precondition of the

writing act, then to express this by means of writing is a kind of performance of Nothing, even though the book is, and does contain, something. It is a unity of "affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered, or sooner or later" (*Trilogy* 291), a spoken unspeakable, an exalted failure, which can be glimpsed in early Chinese thought as clearly (and as impenetrably) as in Beckett's project.

In an entirely different but equally radical way, the void is at the root of the philosophy of Alain Badiou. While his Beckett criticism merits (and receives) further response elsewhere in this dissertation, at issue here is the pure philosophy — that is, ontology, particularly on the production of subjectivity — laid out in his magnum opus, *Being and Event* [published as *L'être et l'événement*, 1988], which unfolds without specific reference to Beckett.

Being and Event is a philosophical singularity with so many scores to settle that its full treatment here would resemble the Taoist project of "hiding the world in the world."[17] Most broadly stated, the work applies mathematics to ontology, tracing a heritage of being through the work of Cantor, Gödel, and Paul Cohen. The philosophical assertions are demonstrated with set theory, that part of mathematics "in which it is historically pronounced that every 'object' is reducible to pure multiplicity, itself built on the unpresentation of the void" (14). Badiou names the thesis "mathematics is ontology" as the basis of the book, but not its goal, which is characterized more as "meta-ontological." (15) Having demonstrated that mathematics is the study of being-qua-being, Badiou confronts Heidegger, guardian of what he calls the "poetic" ontology (10), and attempts also to address the problem of "what-is-not-being-qua-being." This domain, the philosophy with which Badiou wishes to supplement his "historicity of the discourse on being qua being" (13), involves the nomination of what Badiou boldly calls "essentially new concepts, those of truth and subject" (15).

Truth, new? Indeed, Badiou's activation of the term can only be called a re-activation, but his treatment of the subject — in light of Descartes and

Heidegger — can only be called revolutionary. Badiou writes:

> This book founds a doctrine which is effectively post-Cartesian, or even post-Lacanian, a doctrine of what, for thought, both un-binds the Heideggerean connection between being and truth and institutes the subject, not as support or origin, but as *fragment* of the process of a truth. (15)

The subject, in Badiou's system, is "any local configuration of a generic procedure from which a truth is supported" (391). Genericity is one of two terms (along with "forcing") which Badiou adopts from Paul Cohen; of it, he writes that "it can be said that it is bound to the profound problem of the indiscernible, the unnameable, and the absolutely indeterminate," because the thought of the generic "supposes the complete traversal of the categories of being (multiple, void, nature, infinity,...) and of the event" (16). The four "generic procedures" nominated by Badiou are art, science, politics, and love. As it is only in these procedures that truth can arise, the subject can only be artistic, scientific, political, or amorous (17).

In Meditation 35, where Badiou discusses his Theory of the Subject, he rests heavily on his own vocabulary established in the earlier proofs within the book; nonetheless, certain direct responses to the Western metaphysical conception of the subject are discernible. Badiou asserts the insubstantiality of the subject, against Descartes, on account of the indeterminacy intrinsic in the generic procedure. However, he also rejects the idea of the subject as "void point," based on his earlier argument that "the proper name of being, the void, is inhuman, and a-subjective" (391). The phenomenologists are dispatched with a preliminary remark that "a subject is not, in any manner, the organisation of a sense of experience" (391). Like Foucault before him, Badiou rejects the notion of subject as a "transcendental function." Ultimately, it is the power of nomination — the same force called to account in the *Tao Te Ching* — which Badiou invokes, and then links to the null set, the foundational void:

> What the proper name designates here is that the subject, as local situated configuration, is neither the intervention nor the operator of fidelity, but the advent of their Two, that is, the incorporation of the event into the situation in the mode of a generic procedure [...] what was summoned by the interventional nomination was the void, which is itself the proper name of being. Subjectivization is the proper name *in the situation* of this general proper name. It is an occurrence of the void. (393)

Because it is that "through which a truth is possible," subjectivization is not devalued through its relation to the void; rather, the void is seen as the unit of absolute possibility in terms of set theory (Nothing more real). Importantly, though, the subject's role in creating truth is far from an assurance of knowledge. Badiou emphasizes that the subject is local, whereas the truth is global (396). Thus, the subject can only know ("encounter") terms or multiples presented within the local situation, which do not include the truth. The problematic, then, is of a finite subject faced with infinite truth; just as discussed in Taoism and revealed starkly in Beckett, the result is one of eviscerated language:

> The subject cannot *make a language* out of anything except combinations of the supernumerary name of the event and the language of the situation. It is in no way guaranteed that this language will suffice for the discernment of a truth, which, in any case, is indiscernible for the resources of the language of the situation alone. It is absolutely necessary to abandon any definition of the subject which supposes that it knows the truth, or that it is adjusted to the truth. (396)

Beckett's characters, not to say Beckett himself, seem constantly to express the subject's indiscernibility and persistent unnamability. Badiou's writing on the subject manages to describe with rigour — pointing toward how the subject might be thinkable — without replacing or reducing the void at its core, and without effacing or eliding the problem of language.

The Arithmetic of the Subject: + x ÷ –

It is fitting to follow Badiou with Beckett's own mathematical procedures, which I refer to as the "arithmetic of the subject," developed as Beckett operated on notions of the self. Beckett had a competent grasp of elementary mathematics, but did not progress extensively in calculus. Nonetheless, the *Companion* fills ten pages with a legion of mathematical references in Beckett's writing, both explicit and implied. In his book *Beckett and Badiou*, as well as articles and chapters elsewhere, Andrew Gibson makes a compelling argument for Beckett's deployment of tactics found in set theory, and from various references (particularly to Gödel, in the 1937 German Letter) Beckett's awareness of its key concepts is evident. The simpler arithmetic terms on which this section will concentrate — addition, multiplication, division, and subtraction — are frequently, albeit unevenly, invoked by the critics of Beckett as means to describe the actions of narrative upon the subjects. While the more complex mathematical activities (i.e. Badiou's set theory) will be largely passed over here, these basic procedures provide a foundation for understanding the manipulations of Beckettian subjects.[18] As Gibson argues, "Beckett tends repeatedly to 'mathematize' the body [...] his work is much closer to mathematics than it is to most literature" (*BB*, 32).

The "additive subject" is the most clearly bounded within one period of Beckett's work, as it broadly characterizes his earliest phase of prose. While superficially showing some influence from Joyce, Beckett's first novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932) and the collection of short stories *More Pricks Than Kicks* (published 1934) probably owe their greatest debt to the intensity and breadth of his education, both from Trinity College and as a committed autodidact. This is convincingly demonstrated in the notebook he used while writing *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, called "The Dream Notebook," and held at the University of Reading. A collection of notable facts and phrases from a diverse range of sources, Beckett literally ticked off items as they were

used, essentially cobbling together a novel from shards of other writers. The Reading-based Beckett International Foundation published an annotated version of the notebook, introduced by John Pilling, who writes in his introduction that without the notebook, no one would have spotted any but the most overt derivations. Pilling titles his essay after a line about Belacqua — Beckett's Dante-derived avatar in the early works, and the central character in both books — of whom it is written, at one point during his ruminations, "that was a good one and Belacqua noted it down" (27). In those years Beckett did a great deal of noting, and the results were a literature which seemed to prize allusiveness over a certain accessibility.

Dream of Fair to Middling Women contains several full-page untranslated passages in French, and uses scattered Latin, Greek, German, and Italian words and references with abandon. Such linguistic flexibility recalls Joyce, on whose *Work in Progress* [to become *Finnegans Wake*] Beckett was also writing at the time, but shows an even more extreme disregard for readability by anyone but himself. Belacqua couches this in terms of the subject: "The reality of the individual is an incoherent reality and must be expressed incoherently" (*Disjecta* 48).[19] What Beckett describes as the "furious restlessness" of form in *Work in Progress* (*Disjecta* 29) is present in his own technique, and imparts an instability to character construction which reflects a philosophy of the subject. The subjects reflect the novel itself: an aggregated collage of elements interwoven and obscured, each new idea or name sheathing a never-constant selfhood.

The subjectivity that emerges in the early work, then, whether in the dominant character (Belacqua) or in the narrators (unreliable and protean as a rule) is "additive" in the sense that the language — that is, the agent of subject-construction — is effusive, fecund, and dense. Words and alternatives proliferate, and references agglomerate, but they do so in the unruly manner of a cancer, seeming at times to spin out of control, to take over, and ultimately to work against the narrative function itself. An aesthetic dictum

expressed in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, ostensibly written about painting, states:

> I have discerned a disfaction, a désuni, an Ungebund, a flottement, a tremblement, a tremor, a tremolo, a disaggregating, a disintegrating, an efflorescence, a breaking down and multiplication of tissue, the corrosive ground-swell of Art. (138-39)

This passage indicates a trajectory of Beckett's future work (and future processes of subtraction and multiplication), more than an effective summary of his work at the time. Nonetheless, it was clear from his earliest efforts that Beckett, as Pilling observes, was "sceptical of anything harmonious or unified" (*DN* xix). This manifestation of his aesthetic inclinations also led to sceptical editors and publishers, and success at first proved as elusive as the unitary self. Beckett himself seemed to disavow the "additive" impulse in later work, and was reluctant in his later career even to publish the early works widely. Their referentiality, erudition, and instability did not disappear by any means; there was merely a shift to other tactics.

The multiple is closely related to the additive, both mathematically and philosophically, but can be usefully distinguished in Beckett's prose, and is seen in the next phase of work. The fragmentary subjects and the narrators who seem to shuttle unevenly between "erudite meticulousness" and "slack indifference" (*Discourse* 141) continue from *More Pricks Than Kicks* through to *Murphy*, in which the title character manifests disparate selves, the *pensum* and *punctum* of Descartes. While the Cartesian mind-body duality is played on so often in the work that it comes to resemble a theme, the so-called "mind of Murphy" enumerated in Chapter Six of the work really has three parts, a subtle critique of the Rationalist ideology so frequently injected into the work. Murphy's tripartite self is actually an extension of Belacqua's picture of mind (*Dream* 120-125), and again relies on the classical education of Beckett in which the Greek tripartite soul, Spinoza's three levels of knowledge, Liebniz's distinctions of consciousness and apperception, and Schopenhauer's three

manifestations of Will all act as multipliers on the unitary self. Finally, it has been widely noted that Beckett's psychoanalysis under Wilfred Bion during the writing of *Murphy* exposed Beckett to Jungian and Freudian streams of thinking, which clearly points to the model of id, ego, and superego as another trinity of selfhood.[20] Beckett's narrative technique in *Murphy* also supports this multiple subjectivity more structurally. As the *Companion* notes, Murphy is "a gigantic joke made up of infinite tiny ones" (387).

Multiplicity overtakes all narrative convention in *Watt*, the next novel, written mostly in Roussillon at the end of World War Two while Beckett was in hiding. The work is filled with serial mathematics and absurd logical conundra, in which the narrator (or Watt himself, from time to time) attempts to enumerate all possible outcomes of an arrangement, a location, or an event. Both the *Companion* and J. Alane Howard, in his article "The Root of Beckett's Aesthetic: Mathematical Allusions in *Watt*," have identified legions of mathematical and logical jokes in the work. Interestingly, however, many of the serial games in the work have mistakes or small holes, potentially accidental but probably not (no symbols where none intended). Howard's conclusion — as the comedy found in these "abysmal games" would seem to indicate — is that mathematics shares the same inadequacies of language in describing the world (346). The pure application of perfect logic leads to an untenable situation, even to a kind of dissolution of the subject, or to an ultimate nonbeing of the object of discourse. While clearly a rich send-up of pure rationality, these attempts to define the world through mathematics manifest a genuine narrative violence, assaulting the same process they employ. This should come as no surprise, as it is exactly how Beckett came to treat language itself as his work evolved.

Andrew Gibson, however, narrows down Howard's view of the aporias coded into *Watt* in the language of multiplicity and mathematics. In *Beckett and Badiou*, Gibson astutely specifies that the use of "infinite series" to comic effect is not aimed at "mathematics as such," but rather that it "is an

expression of the irony of supposedly finite forms, sufficient descriptions, and exhaustive enumerations in an actually infinite universe" (33). Gibson effectively tracks this motif of Beckett's elevation of the "actual infinite" through the *Trilogy*, which is riddled with indeterminacy and "indifferent, infinite multiplicity" (*BB* 33), as well as (of course) jokes. After he counts his farts and (incorrectly) extrapolates his rate of flatulence, Molloy says, "Extraordinary how mathematics help you to know yourself" (*Trilogy* 30). Molloy, of course, has very little determined self-knowledge; he has a great many questions, most of them arising from his "life without end" (36) and the ineluctable borders of his world. One way to describe Beckett's achievement in the three novels is that he places the reader into the very situation in which his subjects find themselves: the names begin to collide, and the limits (between subjects, characters, and worlds) which once offered the comfort of unity and order begin to waver and break.

As this chapter has shown, it was through a process of rich and conscious influence from a wide intellectual and theoretical background that Beckett achieved his own singular subjectivity as a writer; he was himself far from unified in his approach. His "growth" as a writer can be seen reflected in (and defined by) the activities described here as additive and multiple, just as the words and characters seemed to expand formally and encompass an ever-wider frame of reference. As Abbott shows, the significance of this referentiality in the early work is that Beckett was not writing *about* himself, but was actually writing himself. The intellectual development he underwent in these years is indistinguishable from his creative production. Nonetheless, it was not lost on him that the additive and multiple methods both had the unpleasant side effect of sometimes concealing the subject, in all its indeterminacy, in an armour of verbiage. Beckett's project, manifesting a classically negative dialectic in which the radical multiplicity of self remained a central component, began to turn more toward techniques of impoverishment and of subtraction. Part of this movement was his shift into French.

The first key works in French were the novel *Mercier et Camier* and the play *En Attendant Godot*. The novel clearly prefigures the play, as it documents the movement of the two eponymous tramps through a landscape of vaguely Irish dimension. Narrative interventions, such as the frequent "summary of two preceding chapters," acknowledge the audience beyond the page in a turn that seems to resemble the dramatic. Now-standard conditions of instability in narrator, plot, and subjectivities continue to proliferate. However, the central characters of both works crystallize a technique of division which, if not new, has never been clearer: the Beckettian pseudocouple.[21] The duality of self had always been a feature of Beckett's subjects; even the narrator in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* refers to himself in the plural, as "we (concensus [sic], here and hereafter, of me)"(5). The pseudocouple stages this multiple self in its divided form, as two essentially symbiotic characters who reflect (and usually invert) one another's traits. The most typical and familiar example would be Didi and Gogo in *Godot*, whose relationship forms the dramatic core of the play. Didi is the abstract thinker, the *pensum*, the element of air; Gogo is physical and concrete, more *punctum*, and defined by the element of earth (his nearness to it, his downward gaze, his obsession with his boots).[22] Their differences lead to arguments and conflicts which "pass the time." They are incomplete as individuals; when together, they achieve a kind of balance — not to say completion — which allows them to go on. They are bound together as surely as if they were tied. Pozzo and Lucky, the other pseudocouple in Waiting for Godot, are quite literally tied. The master/slave relationship in the first act, a clear instance of both symbiosis and inversion, is reversed in the second, when Lucky is Pozzo's only set of eyes. As Badiou notes repeatedly in his own axioms of being and event, infinity begins with Two (*BB* 38).

Possibly because of the nature of drama and its basis in conflict, division seemed a tactic most frequently and successfully deployed by Beckett in his theatre than in prose. More play with the pseudocouple can be seen in

Endgame, which has both Nagg/Nell and Hamm/Clov, each of whom stage philosophical and physical inversions of the other (to alternately tragic and comedic effect). "What is there to keep me here?" asks Clov. "The dialogue," says Hamm (58). Beyond the pseudocouples, the subjects who people the dramatic work post-*Trilogy* are themselves divided into pieces. *Krapp's Last Tape* experiments with the division of self across time, as the older Krapp confronts and rejects younger fragments of who he now is. *Happy Days*, on its surface another pseudocouple play, features the fragmented body of Winnie. The isolation of the mouth in *Not I* — not to mention the theme of negated selfhood in the title and the monologue — is a concrete expression of division. Finally, in *That Time*, the floating head hears memories much as Krapp did, but the division of the "speaking mind" into three speakers in three locations expresses the division of self through stagecraft.

In mathematical terms, division is most closely related to multiplication; once something has been multiplied, divisibility is implied. In literary terms, however, division comes closer to subtraction: it is used to lessen the quantity of something that is there. It is in a nexus of these two usages that the Beckettian operation can be discerned. Once the fundamental, even overwhelming, multiplicity has been established, something must be done to ensure that the proliferation of words, images, or subjects does not spiral out of control. "Division" is the answer, in that it neither posits a unity of the subject nor adds to the subjectivity established by the words. While the *Trilogy* begins with multiplication of the subject, as shown above, it is division that is implied within the logorrhea of the Unnamable. (It is an ironic proof of Beckett's literary ethic that the narrator of *The Unnamable* is referred to in criticism, as in this dissertation, by the name of "the Unnamable.") The "I" which frequently surfaces in this final desperate stream of syntax is an "I" literally exploding with alternatives, fragmenting into portions of the already-multiple prior characters, sometimes not even from the same *Trilogy* of novels. The Unnamable says:

> All these Murphys, Molloys, and Malones do not fool me. They have made me waste my time, suffer for nothing, speak of them when, in order to stop speaking, I should have spoken of me and of me alone. But I just said I have spoken of me, am speaking of me. I don't care a curse what I just said. It is now I shall speak of me, for the first time. (303)

Thus, the *Trilogy* contains on a smaller scale the entire dialectical sequence of Beckett's development of subjectivity, bridging between the massively referential selves of the early works and the increasingly shifting, silent, and controlled subjects who inhabit — perhaps haunt — his late prose. The trajectory seems to set up characters "conventionally" and then one by one erases them, as later characters claim interchangeability with, or even authorship of, the others. The last man standing is a void — as Badiou says, the proper name of Being — named the doubly-negating Unnamable, which is little more than a mind, or a "cylinder" (305), confronted with the most paradigmatic Beckettian paradox: the impossibility of expression, together with the obligation to express.

Division of the subject seemed to destroy, once and for all, the unitary voice in Beckett's prose. Neither the narrators nor the subjects presented in the stories are left with conventional novelistic unity, or even a concrete determination of space or time. The subtraction of the subject can be seen most clearly in the "late enigmas," in which each effort of the subject to achieve certainty, clarity, or identity is undercut by void. This void is primarily expressed through a breakdown of syntax and a pervasive uncertainty which leaves no assertion unchallenged and no element whole. Rather than utterly absent selves, Beckett presents subjects in *Lessness*, *How It Is*, *Company*, *The Lost Ones*, and *Worstward Ho* who have been deprived (or set free) from traditional determinants of subject. Temporality, as in *Lessness* and *How It Is*, becomes endless and indistinguishable. The division of self from other is washed away in the first and second person confusion of *Company*. The fixity of space and the rigid order of the universe is rewritten in *The Lost Ones*, a

puzzle of infinite architecture comparable to Borges's Library of Babel. Finally, in *Worstward Ho*, the paradigmatic line for Badiou undermines the entire basis of knowledge, and opens up the path for actual infinity:

> Dim light [pénombre] source unknown. Known minimum. Know nothing no. Too much to hope. At most mere minimum. Meremost minimum. (*Worstward Ho* 9, cited in *BB* 36)

This line is typical of a text which subtracts all possibility until the subject is only this "penumbra" of being, named by Gibson as a figure which presents "Being on the edge of or indistinguishable from the void" (*BB* 36). Even the haecceity described by Deleuze and Guattari — the becoming-object of the subject, the "longitude and latitude" that is the remainder of the self — is inaccessible, pushed beyond the limit. The only real remainder is, fascinatingly, the fragment that Schopenhauer called "will": Nohow On, an ethic of continuation.

Toward the Performing Subject

This chapter has shown the depth of influence in Beckett's conception of the subject, from the centrality of perception (Berkeley) to the duality of the subject (Descartes). It has shown the ethical turn in the *Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis* axiom of Geulincx and the Schopenhauerian doctrine of suffering and will, both of which underpin the Beckettian ethic of impossibility, in which the self arises through language and never fully escapes a constitutive void.

The influence of Beckett's own model of subjectivity has been explored through readings of Foucault's ontology of language and Derrida's linkage of impossibility with the imperative of speech. The *via negativa* of Adorno, who linked his own project of transcending the subject by way of subjectivity to Beckett's, and the less explicitly referential project of Lyotard with *The Inhuman* have both been shown to link in to how Beckett's philosophy of the subject

might be interpreted. Finally, the model of haecceity posed by Deleuze and Guattari has been adopted as a means to describe the becoming-objects of the later prose work, as the subjectivity is subtracted from the subjects.

The following chapters will endeavour to show what occurs when these complex conditions of subjectivity, and Beckett's arithmetic operations upon them, are brought together with the negative phenomenology represented in performance. The lengthy history of prose performance demonstrates an attraction by theatre artists to the subjectivities in Beckett's prose, but two major questions arise when these works come to the stage. First, what are the theoretical implications of these layered and highly manipulated subjects appearing within the conditions of performance? Second, what are the practical techniques employed to achieve this transition? To what ends and to what extent are these methods effective?

A few assertions, then, will serve as a prolegomenon to the arguments of the next three chapters. First, it is clear that the instantaneous element of the theatre seriously alters the relationship of the works to time. Whereas a reader controls the temporal element of a novel, the audience member must arrive at an appointed place, to experience an event which will expire as it is called into existence. All that transpires is preterite, flickering on the edge of oblivion, but more than anything the identities of the performers are in flux. The question which emerges from the prose — "what is the self?" — is the same question that forms the core of the mimetic act.

An actor is a person living life, but within that life, an actor calls other persons into being. One body holds multiple selves; more than a philosophical statement of the subject, this is an actor's job description. Finally, if self-resemblance is at the basis of identity, which is the central assertion of the haecceity model, then the body on stage is irreducibly multiple, both self and Other, each part resembling every other. Alain Badiou avoids this problematic loop of subjectivity — the transcendental primacy that terminates in exhaustion — and simply makes the subject a by-product of the event, local

rather than generic, and labouring under the same unknowability constantly expressed by Beckett's narrators. He writes:

> A subject is a local evaluator of self-mentioning statements: he or she *knows*—with regard to the situation-to-come, thus from the standpoint of the indiscernible—that these statements are either certainly wrong, or possibly veridical but suspended from the will-have-taken-place of *one* positive enquiry. (*Being & Event* 404)

The integration of this model of subjectivity with the situation of theatre, particularly when viewed through, for example, Goffman's frame theory, reveals the unique position of the actor. The actor is a local evaluator of self-mentioning statements, aware at once of "suspension" and of falsity. It is in the skillful application of this technique that an audience feels a performance is, in fact, true. The performative situation, then, redoubles the layers of the subject and stages a void. How it might do this, and how it can avoid an "additive" pitfall which re-assigns a unitary body to the dispersal so intricately handled in the prose as prose, will be investigated in the next three chapters.

NOTES: CHAPTER TWO
The Unnamable Subjects of Samuel Beckett's Prose

1. This grouping may seem idiosyncratic, due to the fact that Badiou (unlike the French philosophers listed here as "influenced by Beckett") has published a full-length book entitled *On Beckett*, as well as Badiou's application to Beckett studies through the work of Andrew Gibson and others. However, I am regarding Badiou's thinking on the subject (Meditation 35) in *Being and Event*, on which this chapter will concentrate, as independently produced by his work in set theory. Thus Beckett's influence was, if anything, peripheral (though Beckett's application of it, or applicability to it, is not). Regarding the assertion that Beckett had no exposure to Badiou, the first French version of *L'être et L'événement* was released in 1988; given Beckett's health and known reading list during the last year of his life, I take it as a given that he never read Badiou's magnum opus.
2. While Husserl claimed to "bracket" ontology, such a philosophy does not escape the "ontology of the self" which I am calling subjectivity.
3. Descartes figures more directly and more prominently in Beckett's early poetry than anywhere in the prose, as important as he is to the conception of *Murphy*. "Whoroscope," his first separately published work, written in a few hours in 1930 for a competition held by Nancy Cunard, is "narrated by Descartes" (Knowlson 116) and is basically a network of extremely arcane academic material about Descartes' life and strange penchants, with footnotes.
4. Some confusion about the correct meaning of the Latin has arisen since Anthony Cronin mistranslated this phrase in his Beckett biography, rendering it "where you can do nothing, there wish nothing"(229). In Knowlson and the *Companion*, however, it is correct.
5. The suggestion was in Beckett's letter to the scholar Sighle Kennedy published in *Disjecta* (113), and is included in the "Geulincx" entry of the *Companion* (224), but it is unmissable to anyone who has read substantial amounts of Beckett criticism. The axiom has its own entry in the *Companion* as well, but it forms the starting point of Ruby Cohn's work *Just Play* (Introduction), as well as being significantly treated in Pilling's *Samuel Beckett* (116-117), Kenner's *Samuel Beckett* (83-91), and Gibson's *Reading Narrative Discourse* (148).
6. Gontarski makes the argument for the "medieval subject" in his essay which introduces the *Complete Short Prose*, and thus initiates this model not only for Watt specifically, but for each of the tramp characters (Cf. Cronin's "Beckett man") who follow.
7. I draw here on the concise and useful essay in the Penguin edition of Schopenhauer's *Essays and Aphorisms* by R. J. Hollingdale, who lays out the complex relationship of Berkeley, Kant, and Schopenhauer.
8. The problem of *logos* is more extensively treated in Chapter 3.
9. I refer here to the critically unacceptable (yet remarkably common) practice of equating an "I" in a piece of fiction — frequently in a story which mimics precise details of the life of the author, or from a narrator whose life (or name) is the same as the author's — with the "I" of the author. This struggle has a long and complicated history among Beckett scholars, among whom Abbott and Gontarski are leading purveyors of an elegant escape.
10. Beckett's own phrase (Cronin 402).
11. It is worth noting that after the "aesthetically terminal" (according to A. Alvarez, quoted on the back cover of the book) *Trilogy* and "afterbirth,"

Beckett's writing career continued for 30 years. This is a further ethical component, perhaps, to his autographical subject-construction.
12. Daniel Katz invests a great deal of time and vocabulary in this argument in his book *Saying I No More: Subjectivity and Consciousness in the Prose of Samuel Beckett*. Heavily influenced by poststructuralism, he offers an analysis of pronouns and first-person utterance in the prose, adopting a Derridian *cogito*: To say "I" is both to name and to enact. Conscious, however, of the deconstructionist pitfall in which the notion of identity drift becomes its own stable anchor to a root theory, Katz endeavors to show Beckett's own scruples in his refusal to allow traditional notions of subjectivity and consciousness to overtake his radically dispersed and undercut narrative "I." The counterpoint of expression and refusal to express, what Katz calls a framework of "impossible texts and possible approaches," is clearly a bulwark in my own "ethic of impossibility" as relates to adapting Beckett's prose.
13. Quoted in Knowlson (613).
14. While *The Way* is entry #433 in *No Symbols Where None Intended*, the catalogue of the HRHRC collection annotated by Lake, this commentary appears in entry #434. Quoted in *Companion*, 638.
15. While a few writings exist which have treated Beckett and Buddhism, particularly its Zen manifestation (most directly Paul Foster's *Beckett and Zen*, 1989; Paul Davies and J.L. Kundert-Gibbs have also produced articles and books), there is clearly a need for further study in the area of Taoism. The correspondence indicated here between Beckett's project and the *Tao Te Ching* arises solely out of my own reading and thought, and is thus much more personal as a tool to comprehend Beckett than an indicator of real influence. My argument is therefore focused more on the matter of *reception* and *description* of Beckett's subjects and discourse than on *production* of the texts.
16. This is the translation of D.C. Lau, from the Penguin edition (1963). This opening line has only the following characters in Ancient Chinese: [*Tao*] [Can] [*Tao*] [Not] [Constant] [*Tao*]. The second line is identical, but with the character *ming* [Name] substituted for *Tao*. Translations are absurdly numerous, and disparities between texts are vast. This is partially due to the form of Ancient Chinese and its lack of correspondence to English grammar, but also speaks to the inherent ambiguity of the original. A good argument can be formulated that *Tao Te Ching* is even "untranslatable" in its own Chinese; in other words, the signs which comprise the text do not connect on an objective basis with any describable meaning.
17. In Book VI of the Chuang-Tzu, a parable is told in which small objects are hidden in larger spaces, and they are nonetheless successively found and taken. The story ends: "You think you do right to hide little things in big things, and yet they get away from you. But if you were to hide the world in the world, so that nothing could get away, this would be the final reality of the constancy of things" (76-77). Stated less allegorically, I advise the interested reader to pursue *Being and Event* in its entirety, as any summary of this type will be inadequate, given the dense web of referential terms used by Badiou. Standing alone, the individual quotations from Badiou can seem wilfully abstruse; taken as a whole, his work exhibits a remarkable integrity and interconnection.
18. As these mathematical demarcations may seem to creep toward the "bookkeeping" end of literary criticism which Beckett so reviled (*Disjecta* 19), I feel the need to assure the reader at this point that no claims of intent are implied. Simple arithmetic serves here simply as a vocabulary for description;

it is not meant to enforce a strict reading, nor an easy distinction between Beckettian subjects or phases.

19. This quotation is from *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, ultimately published amid controversy in 1992, but I have cited the excerpted version from *Disjecta* because it was in fact the earlier publication of this portion of text. The inclusion of this excerpt in *Disjecta*, selected by Ruby Cohn for placement between "La Concentrisme," Beckett's academic hoax from 1930, and the "German Letter of 1937" to the poet Axel Kaun, also highlights the significance of the passage.

20. This catalogue of references draws on the entry "Murphy's Mind" in the *Companion*, 388-89.

21. While "pseudocouple" has the whiff of jargon and is a term that has featured heavily in Beckett criticism, its origin is in the work itself; the Unnamable (297) uses the word to describe the pairings of prior characters (Mercier & Camier, from the earlier novel, among them).

22. While these ideas have been explored continually in Beckett criticism for many decades, the air/earth split is actually Beckett's own description, mentioned both in his correspondence with Alan Schneider and in the production notebooks for *Godot*.

CHAPTER THREE

"A Voice Comes to One in the Dark": Reading, Radio, and the *Seanchaí*

I think the primary function of radio is that people want company.

—Elise Nordling, South by Southwest, 2006

With the framework of a phenomenological vocabulary and Beckettian subjectivity in place, the following three chapters will now embark on readings of prose performances. Each chapter will relate a selective history of a particular type of performance, beginning with pure audio performance (i.e. radio readings and audiobooks) and then moving on to single-text and multi-text adaptation in Chapters Four and Five. From this point of the thesis, theory largely turns to practice. The philosophical conditions outlined already — namely, the profound void at the root of the theatrical event and at the "ideal core" of the "I" within Beckett's prose — will manifest in time, space, and the body. Additional aporias will be located at key points along the way, in explorations of *logos*, the phenomenology of radio, the narrator in fiction, and ethnographic performance. Working as the empirical spine of this dissertation, the next three chapters will animate the "ethic of impossibility."

It may seem idiosyncratic to begin this history within the technological realm of the radio, rather than on stage. Indeed, the famous stage productions by Jack MacGowran, David Warrilow, and Joseph Chaikin are often the first point of reference when considering the adaptation of Samuel Beckett's prose to performance. However, theatrical performance marks an endpoint of the trajectory from page to stage; at a prior historical (and phenomenological) phase, the prose was adapted for the radio. Almost immediately after their publication, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable* were read aloud on the BBC by Patrick Magee, and more recently, "Beckett actors" like Barry McGovern have recorded unabridged versions of the novels for the audiobook market. The "exclusive" auditory rendering of Beckett's text,

whether a play for radio or prose recited, recorded and broadcast, is a practice accepted both by Beckett during his lifetime and by his estate now.

This practice merits further scrutiny, however, for its theoretical and performative implications. At issue is not only the generic distinction; one presumes that the radio audience, as in the theatre, cannot tell the difference between dramatic text and performed prose without prior knowledge. Of greater interest is the function of this particular type of performance, in relation to the texts themselves. What is gained and lost by the restriction of the visual, or more precisely, by the removal of the artist's control over the visual? How is Beckett's prose, or an ethic of impossibility emergent within it, served by its rendition as voice? This chapter will explore the role of sound in the prose, linking both the author and his subjects to the Irish tradition of the *seanchaí*, or storyteller. It will investigate the philosophical development of *logos* and the primacy accorded to speech over writing in Western metaphysics, using readings from Derrida, Heidegger, and Plato. These analyses will develop into a phenomenology of audio performance, revealing the first stage of Beckett's prose in performance.

Vitally, this chapter will not attempt to argue that there is no difference, phenomenologically, between the role or capability of modern audio technology and the speaking, present actor. Erving Goffman, writing in *Frame Analysis*, again provides a useful model in this differentiation: "there are, then, systematic differences between the theatrical and the radio frame [...] each is only one lamination away from an imaginably real model, but the transformations involve somewhat different conventions" (149). Goffman's different conventions, however, seem only to treat the techniques applied within the medium, and the general attitude of the audience; his main interest is ultimately the ability of an audience to suspend its disbelief. On the radio and on stage, this manifests as the ability to be engrossed in "a transcription that departs radically and systematically from an imaginable original" (145). Intent to sort the performative experience into observable spheres, or "strips,"

Goffman measures the "purity" of an art form "according to the exclusiveness of the claim of the watchers on the activity they watch" (125). On this standard, Goffman finally fails to separate drama from radio, as both seem to make an equal demand on the attention of the audience.

A more productive tool than purity might be the dimension of control. It is on this count, as has been argued in Chapter One, that a performance most clearly differs from a novel or painting; in the theatre, the artist is in control of the time and place of reception, and the transient event constitutes the work. An audiobook, or a recorded radio production, resembles a novel in this respect: the experience is user-controlled, and the document is unchanging. The radio might seem at first to split the difference, because broadcasts occur in a particular time, and the place of reception, while globally unlimited, is locally limited to the space near a receiver. However, recording technology and archives render the radio essentially similar to the audiobook. If one could obtain the content that was broadcast, even if the broadcast was missed, this document could be (in the strict sense) unaltered. The same is not true within the theatre, in which it seems that all recording, whether through memory or through film, involves a certain decay of the event.

Beyond these factors is the phenomenological reality of space and the visual frame which accompanies an audio performance. When an actor is present, this visual is controlled within a certain scope. The audience may look freely around the space, thus differentiating the experience of individuals in the room, but their perception will nonetheless be limited to the set of all objects present in the room. Radio expands this set of possible views to all objects in the world. An audience member who sits in the Gate Theatre during Barry McGovern's performance of *I'll Go On*, drawn from the *Trilogy*, will see a version of Malone lying on his back as he speaks. The same audience member might purchase McGovern's reading of *Malone Dies* on CD and hear the same text while stuck in traffic on Dublin's M50. These are two radically different dimensions of artistic control. Clearly, an audiobook, like the radio broadcasts,

is a form of performed prose. What emerges from these audio adaptations, just as from the staging of Beckett's prose, is a dynamic conflict of textuality and performativity, revealing new pathways to both.

Sound and Silence

It is widely acknowledged that sound is a fundamental variable in Beckett's writing; his use of verbal rhythm and vocal music has been apotheosized by its comparison to Joyce. It is clear that both artists had "curiosities about the rhythms, subtleties, and shapes of words" (*Companion* 286). However, rather than a Joycean loquaciousness — the prolific voice described as "additive" in the previous chapter — Beckett developed a "subtractive" attention to sound, honing and reducing with "savage economy" (*Disjecta* 28).[1] His work progressed on an asymptote toward silence, the limit never quite achieved. Beckett's obsession with the absence of sound, a motif developed extensively throughout his work in prose and drama, has inspired numerous studies of his use of silence. In April 2007, the annual Samuel Beckett Lecture at Trinity College Dublin was a paper by Enoch Brater, entitled "Beckett's Beckett: So Many Words for Silence."[2] Brater has long been an advocate of the prose as speech, not text; of the sentences as diction, not syntax. In his book on the late fiction, *The Drama in the Text*, he asserted that a Beckett line "is written for recitation not recounting" (5). Brater points toward the early critical writings of Beckett on Joyce and Proust, not to mention his dalliance with the symbolist poets, to show how his aesthetic attraction, from the beginning, was to sound before sense. He says:

> If a story emerges—and sometimes it will despite Beckett's stubborn insistence that there is nothing to communicate and no vehicle for communication—it will be more celebrated for its *telling* than for anything that might get itself *told* along the way. (5)

As this credence in the synthetic power of language would suggest, Brater

finds critical traction with Jacques Derrida and, to an extent, Saussure. He recasts a classic poststructuralist approach to the potency of the speech signifier with the axiom "to be is to be heard" (6), transposing a phenomenology from the eyes to the ears and emphasizing the inter-subjective character of being.

Writers who have worked to map the Irishness of Beckett have found the same conclusion by another path, as a recurring point of reference in such writing is the *seanchaí*. These were the ancient Celtic bards, poets and bearers of oral history, of whom Beckett illustrates his awareness both explicitly and implicitly in his prose. Stan Gontarski, writing in the introduction to the *Complete Short Prose 1929-1989*, draws attention by name to this specifically Irish heritage of storytelling. Beckett himself, in his essay on "Recent Irish Poetry" from 1934, shows a sensitivity to the history of the *seanchaí*, even as he dismisses the attempts of the Revivalists to channel their intense and ancient encounters with the word. Observing that the recent Irish poets, to their detriment, have "no theme," Beckett proclaims that "the poem of poems would embrace the sense of confinement, the getaway, the vicissitudes of the road, the wan bliss on the rim" (*Disjecta* 71). In the seminal *Inventing Ireland*, Declan Kiberd expands on Beckett's condemnation of his fellow writers, even while insisting on Beckett's fundamental Irishness:

> For Beckett, the Gaelic tradition seemed posited on a void, every poem an utterance in the face of imminent annihilation, every list an inventory of shreds from a culture verging on extinction [. . .] in the revivalism of the previous generation, all he could discern was an attempt to translate late-Victorian piety into the Irish language. This was not so much a rejection of Gaelic tradition as of various smug misrepresentations of it. (537)

Beckett's response to the failure of most of his contemporaries to come to terms with the full scope of void is there to be seen in his own writing over the next half-century. The pathway to a subjectivity which could be thought of as essentially "Beckettian" — that is, the fundamental role of language in creating the subject, and the radical aporia at the heart of that language — was the

productive outcome of a negative revelation. Beckett's understanding of the situation of the writer gave him singular access to this "autographic" medium; if Beckett's characters are often *seanchaí*, then Beckett is, for all his world's unknowability, "writing what he knows." Following an aesthetic imperative at which these early essays only hint, the story of the storyteller became, in some ways, the only story that he ever told.

The *Seanchaí*

This chapter is unable to contain a complete and definitive treatment of the *seanchaí* in Beckett's worlds; the instances would be numerous enough to merit a full-length study. But as a point of departure for understanding the role of orality in the prose, and the degree to which the content and form persistently lend themselves to a mode of sound and performance linked to the ancient bards, it is useful to offer some examples. Drawing on the huge amount of specific research in Beckett studies which has mapped the names, places, range of reference, inflections, and phraseology in his writing, Kiberd is well supported when he argues that "the voices which Beckett heard and committed to paper for the rest of his life as an artist were unambiguously Irish"(535). (Of course, it is necessary to note that this is most accurate when referring to Beckett's composition in, or translation into, English.) Another broad trend, however, which invokes the *seanchaí* much more substantially than mere Irishness, is the centrality of the writing act across the plays and prose, from composition on one's back in the dark (in the case of Malone) to storytelling into a void (as Hamm, Henry, Winnie, Mouth, and many others).

Nearly every author who tries to make the case for the bardic tone in Beckett, from Kiberd to Brater to Gontarski, applies the same quotation from the opening line of *Company*, a late prose piece: "A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine" (1). This line, though complicated in its syntactical subjectivity by Beckett's use of the second person in the rest of the piece, seems to contain

the situation of both the author and the audience. This fact has not been lost on the adaptors of Beckett's prose; *Company* is one of the most frequently staged pieces, having seen both professional and amateur adaptation in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the U.S., most notably with Mabou Mines. It was even adapted with Beckett's agreement and participation in 1984 in Paris with Pierre Chabert, and then staged in an English version by Stan Gontarski in Los Angeles in 1985 (see Chapter Four). The work is also a prime example of Beckettian shifts across language and genre, as it was written first in English but published first in French, and then re-translated back into English; the *Companion* calls the work a "prose-poem" (106), but its function as drama (i.e., that it encompasses the co-dependent frames of the audience and of the author) is indisputable. Much as they gesture toward the theatrical space, these two frames also undergird a phenomenology of the audio performance.

"Orality persists," writes Declan Kiberd, linking Beckett to a specifically Irish tradition in which the spoken work has primacy over the written (536). This posits a theory of Beckett's prose which suggests it is not just aided by being spoken aloud, but is actually dependent upon the voice for its reception. Kiberd is aware of the possible extremity of this assertion, which could be seen to idealize or polemicize a "proper" mode of reading, and he offers a nuanced view of how the "vocal" might continue to be thought in the "written" mode:

> While speech is assisted in its articulation by tone and emphasis, writing must be more immediately precise, but such precision can then insinuate itself back into the oral mode, in terms reminiscent of Yeats's 'written speech' or of Wilde's rehearsed spontaneities. (536)

Kiberd allows for the obvious distinction between writing and speaking, but he illuminates a continuum of the written word which, although more precise than speech, remains within a category understood by a reading audience as the "spoken language." A parallel might even be seen within critical writing, some of which exists to be read aloud, for instance at a public lecture, and some of which is explicitly geared toward silent reading.[3]

Here there is a connection to the writing activities of the *seanchaí*, whose bardic poetry and spoken stories, ostensibly fresh and unscripted, were in fact painstakingly composed (sometimes only the night before). Oscar Wilde's witticisms, sometimes pre-written expressly to be tossed off spontaneously in the company of an audience, are Kiberd's latter-day comparisons to the long-form oral tradition. A further comparison might be the passages of dialogue or first-person narration written within prose works or novels, which seem like sometimes laborious attempts to express "realistic" speech, identifiable as a real voice to a reader. The reviewer's phrase "leaps off the page," encountered with absurd frequency in positive reviews of adapted Beckett prose, is the clichéd expression of this phenomenon. Finally, as explored in the first chapter, the general task of the dramatist is the creation of written work which exists solely to make the transfer into speech. Such works exist in the interstices between the written word and the spoken word, belonging neither to the purely spontaneous and oral mode, nor to the solitary and silent world of the reader.

It is from this tradition, and within this liminal space of writing, speaking, and hearing, that Beckett's subjects and narrators begin to take form. Writing on Beckett's drama in *Just Play*, Ruby Cohn observes the many *seanchaí* who populate the Beckett stage, invoking prose performance by comparison:

> Beckett's play authors tell themselves stories, which an actual audience overhears; in this respect, dramatized fiction resemble soliloquies. In a deeper respect, however, fiction is a strategy to circumvent soliloquy on the part of Hamm, Henry, Winnie, Mouth, the old man, the pacing daughter, and the radio writers. (77)

The act of speech — whether as an author writing, as an actor alone, or both at once — is central across the prose and drama. This enunciation is tied once again to Being and to the subject, revealing the gaps in both. Soliloquy and fiction are identified by Cohn as "theater costumes for an indefinite,

undefinable self" (76). Brater reads this as demonstrating the inseparability of Beckett's fiction and drama, as both were, in essence, written for the voice (7).

The content of Beckett's stories reflects a nexus with the *seanchaí* as much as his narrative mode. The aesthetics of his approach to landscape and the attitude applied to his descriptions are far removed from many of his Revivalist contemporaries, and hearken back to a bardic tradition:

> The Irish landscape of south County Dublin in particular was celebrated [...] in the concrete, chaste, descriptive style of the Celtic nature poets, without the burden of abstract metaphorical meaning, without any patriotic eroticizing of this or that landscape as a synechdoche for the whole of Ireland. (Kiberd 535)

Kiberd notes the centrality of Beckett's "exile" to this descriptive approach, and suggests that, as with the Celtic nature poetry, famous descriptive passages in the *Trilogy* and other prose works offer an "exile's celebration." That Beckett was writing from outside Ireland illustrates, for Kiberd, "a bleak law: the imaginative possession of the Irish landscape seemed possible only to those who were removed from it" (535). The centrality of distance in Beckett's formal aesthetic — that is, not only the removal from the object, but the inadequacy of the tools to bridge that distance, to describe worlds with words — represents an elevation of aporia as a primary and irreducible category. For Badiou and, to an extent, Gibson, this might be seen also as an aesthetic elevation of the concept of actual infinity in Being, a making-possible of the impossible by way of the void. Both of these ideas are mirrored somewhat, as argued in Chapter One, in the situation of the theatre, namely in the distances which constitute the act, the silence from which speech emerges, the blankness of the empty space, and the darkness selectively removed but never absent in the performative act.

Dark in Beckett, and the image of the author composing on his back within it, is derived directly from the heritage of the *seanchaí*, referred to interchangeably by Kiberd here as the *filí*, or poets:

> The process of composition was carried out by the Gaelic *filí* as they lay on pallets in small, darkened rooms. This dark seclusion protected them from light and noise and recalled the ancient links between art and sorcery. To secure themselves further, some of the poets lay with stones on their bellies or in the hands. (535)

While Kiberd links the stones with Molloy's game of counting pebbles, there are many nearer examples which preserve the role of restraint, particularly in *Murphy* when the title character is bound to the rocking chair, in *Malone Dies* where the writing act is Malone's response to the restriction of his movement, or in the somewhat more obscure *Rough for Radio II*, in which Fox, an author, is hooded, gagged, bound, earplugged, and tormented into composition. The radio plays operate, even more clearly than the theatrical dramas, within a "heart of darkness;" because there is no visual element in the control of the author. This does not mean that the radio is "blind," but rather that the experience of it is at the very least ear-dependent. It brings to life a deep memory of our human culture of sound; the German *Hörspiel* even moves the sensory experience of sound beyond language. For all the emphasis that the mass permeation of television and film have placed on the visual experience — manifested, as Auslander points out, in contemporary theatre direction as well — it is the soundscape which often determines meaning. It is perhaps no accident that theatre retains words like "audition" and "audience," which both have roots referring to hearing, not sight.

Phenomenology of Radio

A study of the phenomenological parameters of radio technology, coupled with an analysis of Beckett's theoretical approach to some of the work he wrote for radio, will point the way toward how his prose has functioned in broadcast or recorded form. The topic of Beckett's work for broadcasting has been previously explored in Beckett Studies, and the analysis of the media itself is similarly a massive and independent field. The present study will build

on a heritage of work done in both areas, but will focus narrowly on the lacuna of broadcast prose. Reflecting the broader field of prose performance, broadcast prose has tended to be sidelined in discussions about radio drama generically and treated only peripherally in the analysis of Beckett's work for radio. By contrast, *All That Fall* (1957), Beckett's first play explicitly for radio, has been extensively studied in both frameworks. It marked a watershed moment in Beckett's literary and formal trajectory, as well as demanding technological innovations of Donald McWhinnie (the first producer) which altered the history of sound design in radio drama. McWhinnie went on to write one of the essential texts of radio theory, *The Art of Radio* (1959), drawing heavily on his experience of broadcasting Beckett's work at the BBC. Writing in *Mediations* (1980), Martin Esslin credits *All That Fall* with the creation of the radiophonics department at the BBC, since the play's aesthetic demanded certain sonic landscapes beyond the capacity of the studio at that time (129). To supplement McWhinnie's detailed case history in *The Art of Radio,* nearly a quarter of Clas Zilliacus's *Beckett and Broadcasting* (1976) is spent analyzing *All That Fall.* The sole chapter of this work which explicitly addresses the problem of genre on the radio is entitled "The Plays out of Their Element," and looks at the radio-to-theatre transition rather than the prose-to-radio.

Radio theory supplements two key arguments previously made in this thesis: first, that a performative medium defined by absence has a unique potency; and second, that the auditory experience of language has historical priority over the written word. Initial theories that radio is a "blind" medium have largely been overturned, thanks in large part to the writings of media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Writing just after McWhinnie, McLuhan released two major works in media studies within two years, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964). While the latter is instructive in how much the televisual had already taken precedence over drama as a form of mass culture, it is the former work which most extends the possibility of "acoustic space" and takes account of the radio *audience* as distinctive. In a

provocative phenomenological turn, McLuhan classifies radio as a visual medium (in contrast to television, which he considers tactile). Just as this chapter has referenced the *seanchaí* in drawing out the Irish heritage of Beckett's attention to sound, McLuhan also finds that radio "retribalized" the act of storytelling which was dominant before the printing press. Tim Crook, writing in his contemporary survey *Radio Drama* (2006), articulates McLuhan's view of radio's sensory liminality:

> The auditory codes of radio exist physically as speech, music, sounds and silence which are framed by time, so the experience is ephemeral. The other important factor is the listening situation. But radio cannot be defined as a purely 'blind medium.' It is not only psychologically visual but also experienced by most people in physical visual space as well as acoustic space. (64)

The structural conditions of radio also have social implications. Whereas the printing press, according to McLuhan's reading, served to atomize the population into individual and private consumers, radio is a more communal cultural form. Nonetheless, the restrictions placed on content by those who own, manage, or regulate the broadcast process mean that it is not an equal replacement to the community discourse in which verbal exchange goes both ways.

Radio is not "blind" in two different senses: first, the strategic void of a given image opens an avenue for the imagination to create its own "ideal" picture. Martin Esslin's essay on the medium of radio drama collected in *Mediations* is entitled "The Mind as a Stage," which is a lucid (and Beckettian) vision of how this process might work. Secondly, unless the listeners are themselves blind, a visual input from the "world outside" will coincide with the auditory input of the radio. These interactions between the frames of performance and audience cannot be controlled in the same way that they might be in a theatre. Additionally, since the auditory "space" of radio is so continuous — witness, for example, the terror felt by a radio producer at the prospect of broadcasting dead air — one of the most dramatic tools of the

radio writer is silence. Esslin compares radio drama to the silent cinema, as there is an apparently inverse relationship between these two media: one is image without sound, while the other is sound without image. The analogy breaks down, however, under both phenomenological and historical analysis. As Esslin observes, silent cinema was reliant on subtitles to communicate anything more detailed than a landscape or situation. Radio, constructed primarily from the written word already, can "invoke the visual element by suggestion alone" (171-72). Historically speaking, radio drama has survived as an independent medium, and thrives especially under national systems (such as the BBC's) which are publicly funded. In spite of smaller market shares or profit margins when compared to television or cinema, and in spite of minimal distribution when compared to the internet, radio and radio drama continue to exist as independent art forms. Radio also continues to receive a great deal of critical attention, with numerous recent books and journals dedicated to the subject, even as the internet has supplanted it as the least expensive mass media.[4]

As with the other performative media explored in Chapter One, the radio encompasses two distinct frames, and thus is informed by two essentially competing phenomenologies: that of the performers and producers (i.e. radio-side) and that of the audience (i.e. receiver-side). Again, the great determinant of prior knowledge — in other words, the information about the content being broadcast — tends to favour the production side, and so it can be assumed that the distinction between broadcast radio drama and broadcast prose or poetry can only be determined, free of context, by the creators of the content. However, the history of radio and the treatment of its particular notions of time, space, and embodiment are quite distinct from the same development in the theatre. To an even greater extent than the theatre, the development of a radio "world" has been mediated by technology.[5]

Erving Goffman spends some time in his seminal work of sociology and phenomenology, *Frame Analysis*, on the analysis of radio, which defines a

particular "strip" of experience. Goffman's isolations of "intention choreography" operate both in the performative realm and in the realm of daily life, and to successfully interpret these framing activities, he holds that "strips of activity [must] be counted as a single problem for analysis" (564). His guiding assertion for understanding radio is based on the will of the performer, editor, author, or producer to communicate:

> for example, on the stage and on radio we have come to expect that a performer will externalize the inner state of the character he is projecting so that continuity of story line can be assured, so that, indeed, the audience will know at every moment what is going on. (564)

As in his more extended analysis of stage performance, Goffman does not show a strong awareness of 20th century innovations in dramatic form or in the outer limits of how radio might be used; his insistence on communicability and unity seems to relate best to melodrama, one form from which he frequently draws examples. As argued previously, he shows little awareness of those performative techniques which would most trouble his model, namely Brechtian *Verfremdung* and avant-garde complicities between performer and audience. His most frequent citations of framing mechanisms in drama are drawn from Shakespeare, utilize a fuzzy hero-villain dichotomy, and presume an ironclad suspension of disbelief. In spite of these flaws, Goffman's isolation of "strips" succeeds in crafting a clear vocabulary to describe complex activities, and are handled more elegantly in the strictly limited area of radio than in the vast potentiality of the theatre.

Goffman draws heavily on an unpublished thesis by John Carey, entitled "Framing Mechanisms in Radio Drama," to illuminate the effect of technology and the history of radio on this frame of experience. The thesis put forward by Carey is that "a basic feature of radio as the source of a strip of dramatic interaction is that transmitted sounds cannot be selectively disattended" (Goffman 145). An absurd statement on its surface — obviously, the listener is capable of "selective disattention," or indeed of switching off a

program halfway through — what is meant here is the more qualified statement that the tuned-in listener only has access to what is broadcast as a source of information. This is contrasted by Goffman with the situation at a cocktail party, in which a single conversation can be understood "surrounded by a babble of extraneous sound" (145). The human brain, in such a model, is understood to operate much like a mixing board, picking out the necessary sound from a vast background occurring at different levels. While the producer of a radio drama has a literal mixing board at his or her disposal, and can thus set the necessary levels for maximum clarity of the intended focus, the audience is only receiving a "single channel" through the radio, which acts as one input to the brain. The audience has only a volume knob at its disposal.[6] It cannot remix the production of this drama, as it is able to remix the world in real life.

The "multiple channel effect," Goffman's term for the real-world ability of an observer to distinguish necessary input from extraneous sound, is drastically limited by radio because of the absence of other sensory cues. That is, the "multiple channels" are the other sensory pathways in play — sources that are smelled, felt, or heard — which are identified primarily, outside of the radio frame, by the visual. The restriction of that sense (or, more precisely, the restriction of the control of that sense) which occurs in radio results in new solutions to provide functional equivalents of real-world experience in the strictly auditory realm. As Carey argues in his thesis, "What the participant does in real life, the director has to do in radio and (to almost the same degree) on the stage" (qtd. in Goffman 145). This results in the sound design convention, present historically in radio, stage, and now film, of using a background sound only at the beginning of a scene, then fading it to silence as the content of the scene grows in importance.

Other conventions, mainly those involving the manipulation of a microphone, provide a functional equivalent for information that otherwise could not be transmitted. This is, in effect, the substitution of sound for the

visual (Goffman 146). The impression of distance is given by the actor moving nearer or further from the microphone, or simply by the engineer decreasing volume or increasing reverberation. Modern audio editing tools, such as the industry standard ProTools, actually include a user interface for reverb effects in which the size and shape of an imaginary "room" is adjusted, controlling an algorithm for how an audio clip might sound in such a room. Most interesting in Goffman and Carey's analysis is how technology drives content in radio, thus setting the limitations of the medium (and developing them) based on when, historically, an author or producer is working in the medium. For example, a whole style of singing was influenced by early radio; because soprano high notes could blow out transmitter tubes with their vibrations, "crooning" came into vogue. Certain sound effects, such as gunshots, could not be used because the spike in volume — already relatively high for radio drama — could not be safely sustained in transmitters or receivers. (Goffman 145). As always interests Goffman, a certain game of make-believe was played both within the scene between performers and among the audience listening. This is visible in the often painfully obvious passage of exposition at the beginning of a radio play, in which "comments that have been tailored to lock a sound into its context are then dissembled as 'mere' talk" (147). Beckett's radio dramas both make light of these traditions (Cf. *All That Fall*, with its absurd catalogue of barnyard sounds) and make excellent use of them, as in *Rough For Radio II*, which opens:

> A[nimator]: Ready, miss?
> S[tenographer]: And waiting, sir.
> A: Fresh pad, spare pencils?
> S: The lot, sir.
> A: Good shape?
> S: Tiptop, sir.
> A: And you, Dick, on your toes? [*Swish of bull's pizzle. Admiringly.*] Wow! Let's hear it land. [*Swish and formidable thud.*] Good. Off with his hood. [*Pause.*] Ravishing face, ravishing! Is it not, miss?
> S: Too true, sir. We know it by heart and yet the pang is ever new.
> A: The gag. [Pause.] The blind. [Pause.] The plugs. [Pause.] Good. (*Plays* 115)

The relationship between the two primary speaking characters is set up by the fourth line; the existence and role of the mute character is addressed by the seventh, and the features of the tormented Fox's existence — hood, gag, blind, and plugs — are established by the ninth. In the inaugural broadcast of the play on the BBC, on 13 April 1976, each of the "Pause" directions were emphasized by sounds which, in isolation, would not have been clear as hood, gag, blind, or plugs.[7] While this is not "mere" talk, it displays Beckett's agile application of convention at the outset of a play which cuts near to the core of the writing act and, by the *seanchaí*'s extension, the vocal (broadcasting) act.

Beckett's six plays for radio are progressive studies of the interplay of sound and semantics. It can be derived from the analysis of *Film* and *Ghost Trio* provided by Matthew Causey in *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture* (118-120) that Beckett seemed to cut to the core of every genre that he touched; as evidenced in the work for radio, Beckett applied his literary scalpel to the purely auditory environment with a deftness equal to, if not greater than, his prose and drama. This arc across the radio texts is traced by Clas Zilliacus in his study on Beckett and broadcasting: "*All That Fall* tells a story; *Embers* portrays a storyteller; *Words and Music...* still has remnants of character and milieu; these are discarded in *Cascando* which, instead of focussing on a story, focusses on the storytelling condition" (143). In *Rough for Radio II*, which Zilliacus does not include in this scope but which was written prior to *Words and Music...*, a situation strongly parallel to that of the *seanchaí* — albeit one with a flavour more Kafka than Gaelic — forms the fundamental action. Fox, the fictionalizer who is tortured into spouting prose, spends all the time when he is not composing strapped down and sensorily deprived. "Animator" and "Stenographer" provoke and record the daily dictation, aided by a mute character — a Beckettian in-joke on the phenomenology of radio, no doubt — who thrashes Fox at intervals with a bull's pizzle. Prefiguring *Catastrophe* and *What Where*, the radio play offers a lens into human cruelty; vitally, however, it reveals this torture through language, whereas the more widely known

"political" plays centre on a more direct biopolitics.[8] It is here that Beckett's commentary on the writing act, or perhaps on language itself, is most palpable. Ruby Cohn observes that "the officialese of Animator and Stenographer is quite different from Fox's incantatory prose, which so resembles Beckett's own that it may not be parody" (86).

The physical situation of Fox resembles that in *Malone Dies*, in which Malone, so permanently near death in defiance of the title's present tense, can only hear the writing hand as he lies on his back in the dark. The state of these storytellers is structurally reinforced in both works, in ways befitting their respective genres; in *Rough for Radio II*, as shown above, the mention of the hood, gag, blind, and plugs are immediate, to set the scene for the audience sitting quite literally in the dark. In *Malone Dies*, one of the many textual discontinuities is followed by the admission that Malone nearly lost his pencil and has been trying to retrieve it for forty-eight hours (222), a sight gag with line breaks that can only play in prose. The only clear cross-generic relationship between these two *seanchaí* is their invisibility to the audience in the original reception; the radio listener does not see Fox, nor does the reader see Malone, in any other than the mind's eye.

What separates the two men in form, however, is unified in the content of their stories. The metaphor at which Fox arrives in his asyntactical ramblings is, quite clearly, that of male pregnancy; he refers to "my brother inside me, my old twin" (119), a turn in the story which so disgusts the Animator that he violates what appears to be a cardinal rule of his world, and alters the transcript. Malone's need to create others from within himself, particularly the intertwined stories of Sapo, Macmann, and Lemuel, is echoed throughout the *Trilogy* and finally defeated in the all-consuming authorship of the Unnamable. More than mere images wheeling across a "cylinder," there is the pervasive sense that the Unnamable engenders all. Even Malone moves from a bardic incantation on familiar themes into a reference strikingly similar to that of Fox:

> But what matter whether I was born or not, have lived or not, am dead or merely dying, I shall go on doing as I have always done, not knowing what it is I do, nor who I am, nor where I am, nor if I am. Yes, a little creature, I shall try and make a little creature, to hold in my arms, a little creature in my image, no matter what I say. And seeing what a poor thing I have made, or how like myself, I shall eat it. Then be alone a long time, unhappy, not knowing what my prayer should be nor to whom. (226)

Martin Esslin leans excessively toward the biographical, symbolic, and psychoanalytic in his interpretation of *Rough for Radio II*, making the claim that each character represents one aspect of Beckett's mind. Cohn tempers this in her analysis, allowing this to extend to "any mind endeavoring to apply an organizing critical intelligence to words coaxed up from the depths" (87). In Cohn's turn of phrase, the link to the *seanchaí* seems clearest. A more detailed analysis of the techniques in play would reveal even more bardic tendencies, such as repetitions or echoes with slight alterations, an attraction to lists, and especially, as Kiberd observes, a looseness of the overall structure together with a manic precision in localised parts (536).

Rough for Radio II is a text written for performance with the voice; it is therefore natural that it should lend itself to that purpose, and that one might say it is incomplete when read from a book silently. Like a play for stage, the text alone is a shadow, a blueprint, or even an after-image of the event. An understanding of Beckett's prose which takes account of the notion of the *seanchaí* and its significant influence, both consciously and culturally, would point to the same conclusion. Thus we return to Brater's original argument from the *Drama in the Text*: these are texts conceived, and best received, in voice. Brater's later arguments on silence lead to an identical result, but through a more phenomenological chain of reasoning: silence implies an absent sound. If silence is an obsession within a genre such as prose, it is clear that the author conceives of the written word as having sound. This conception of the word has a deep history, and returns us to Jacques Derrida, Heidegger, Plato, and the problem of *logos*.

Logos and *Aporos*

The nature of *logos* is one of the most contested areas of philosophy and linguistics, but an abbreviated discussion of this debate is necessary to specify its usage in the present work. Much of the difficulty has arisen, rather redundantly, through language. It could be said that the history of *logos*, and thus of Derrida's "logocentrism" explored in *De la Grammatologie*, is one of poor, or at least ambiguous, translation. To the Greeks, and importantly to both Plato and Aristotle, this word most nearly refers to "discourse," and could legitimately be translated as "speech." The Finnish philosopher Jussi Backman, in his useful history of what he calls "Phenomeno-logocentrism," makes the case that "*logos* in its most general acceptation meant the structure of all meaningful articulation in general – language, discursiveness, discourse."[9] Translation is extremely telling in the case of Martin Heidegger, who uses the German *Rede* to stand in for *logos* in *Being and Time*. Directly, this word indeed means "speech," but the ideas of "articulation" and "discourse" are contained in it as well. The same root of *Rede* has brought English one of its most ambiguous verbs, "to read," which can refer both to a silent act and to a performative one. German, with characteristic precision, distinguishes between *vorlesen* (to read aloud) and *lesen* (to read). An unfortunate casualty of the English ambiguity was German novelist Bernard Schlink, whose 1995 novel *Der Vorleser* was published in translation as *The Reader*, thus losing the title's most essential denotation.

It is a joyful irony of this linguistic imprecision that the mandatory disclaimer printed in every programme of Beckett prose performance by Gare St. Lazare Players can be seen to say two contradictory things: "The text was written intended to be read and is recited here by kind permission of Calder Publications Ltd. and the Samuel Beckett Estate."[10] Such a disclaimer would be more successful in German; the contestation of the word "read" is a reflection of the tension inherent in the idea of *logos*. This liminality is highlighted in

Kiberd's concise analysis of Beckett's prose:

> Such a literature inserts itself into the interstices between speech and writing: if as speech it seems somewhat writerly, then as writing it retains many of the qualities of a speaking voice which issues — unlike the manual effort of writing — from unconscious depths. (536)

It is thus understandable that in his review of the first performance of the *Trilogy* by Gare St. Lazare, *Irish Times* critic Fintan O'Toole calls the actor Conor Lovett the "*seanachaí* unplugged."[11] O'Toole claims that by working with and through "the idea of narrative, Lovett forges a vital connection with the Irish tradition of storytelling," that his narrator becomes "the storyteller without the baroque rhetoric and the time-honoured traditions, without even feeling that there is anyone left to listen" (*Irish Times* 18 May 2002). While O'Toole rather generously ascribes these qualities to Lovett, the performer, it is obviously Beckett's legacy in the writing which invites performers to mirror his own rhetoric of the *seanchaí*. The ancient bards are so present in both the form and content of his later prose that it would actually be difficult to miss as a performer. The adulation of critics and, perhaps more significantly, the approval (with disclaimer) of the Beckett Estate suggest that some kernel of Beckett's "intention" comes alive when the written text is treated as this particular type of speech.[12] This assertion falls within the province of journalists and lawyers; from a scholarly position such a statement is basically inadmissible. There are methods to explain the nexus of text and speech which do not resort to intentionality, which is perhaps, along with God, a "witness that cannot be sworn" (*Watt* 9).

The first stage of an argument for the vocality of prose, derived from Derrida and adopted explicitly in Brater's Beckett criticism, is the primacy of the *logos* in Western metaphysics. Logocentrism, then, refers not to a centrality of the mere "word" in Western thought, but rather to "the built-in tendency of Occidental metaphysics to subordinate writing to speech" (Backman n. pag). Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic model clearly shows this tendency, as his

Course in General Linguistics makes the claim that "language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first" (23). Saussure goes on to say that "the linguistic object is not defined by the combination of the written word and the spoken word: the spoken form alone constitutes the object" (23-24). Derrida's *Of Grammatology* emerges from this tradition, but rather than privileging speech over writing, as Brater claims, he seems merely to observe that this has always been the case. Derrida's first section, on linguistics and grammatology, simply lays out the fundamental presuppositions which guide his analysis, among which this tendency toward logocentrism is named. Derrida bases his investigations not upon a wholesale critique of this "metaphysics of phonetic writing," but rather upon the observation of the phenomenon. If there is a more aggressive gesture in the book, it is a critique of Saussure's structural linguistics in which the signified (the present, the ideal, the permanent meaning) is granted absolute primacy over the signifier (the absent, the irrational, the transient sign), at the expense of overlooking the power, or the danger, in the signifier. Much of the book is given to the deconstruction of the idea of a book, precisely because this is the work that has been neglected by the primacy granted to presence and speech. The subordination of the book to the bard, of the trace to the event, is the fundamental distinction asserted within logocentrism, and is supported in Classical notions of Being as *ousia* — substance or "beingness" outside of time — and is reiterated logocentrically in the Heideggerean notion of "constant presence," which Derrida is deconstructing in this work.[13] Derrida writes: "Phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as presence [...] Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity [l'être de l'étant] as presence" (*Of Grammatology* 12).

That Derrida uses the terms "logocentric" and "phonocentric" interchangeably suggests his thesis; very little deconstruction is needed to unveil the ideology within the etymology. This logocentric or phonocentric

view conceives of signifier and signified in an analogic relation to discourse and meaning. That is to say, writing is a trace, whereas speech is an origin. Bickman points out that writing is "mediate," in contrast to the "immediate" act of speech. The Ancient Greek understanding of discursivity subdivided three activities: *dianoia*, the language of thought or "the soul's internal conversation with itself;" *logos*, the discourse whose function is to externalize the *dianoia*; and *symbola* or *graphomena*, the written signs which represent the *logos*. The immediate *logos* is actually pointed out to be one and the same with *dianoia* in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues, when the Eleatic Stranger confirms that "We have simply named the soul's internal conversation [*dialogos*] with itself 'discursive thinking' [*dianoia*] [...] whereas the flow from the soul, coming vocally through the mouth, is called 'discourse' [*logos*]."[14]

Derrida's influence on metaphysics with the tools and arguments inaugurated in *Of Grammatology* can hardly be summarized, but his techniques of erasure and *différance* — both of which are manifest only orthographically, and thus apparent only when read on the page — do a great deal to reveal, or even to perform, a radical aporia within *logos* and the logocentric tradition.[15] It is the same *aporos* which Beckett relentlessly and paradoxically pursued in fundamentally different written media; the relative silence of Derrida on Beckett was one of much respect and influence, not to say redundancy, as many postmodern critics of Beckett have pointed out. Beckett's final written question, the distillation which is also the title of the 1989 English translation from which it comes, is essentially Derrida's starting point: what is the word?

The risk in applying a philosophy of *logos* to Beckett's work is that it results in the strictures of logic — the predicative structure of argument inaugurated in Aristotle's *logos apophantikos* — overlapping with the syntax of poetry and prayer, a conflation which the Greeks themselves warned against. In that religion, drama, poetry, and history were spoken media first, and that writing followed much later, they resembled discourse and philosophy. But here the correspondence ceased. The classification of the declarative and

predicative as the sole source for truth, while inherently monopolistic in Aristotle's schema and the wellspring of all formal grammar, is nonetheless never argued to be the sole form of *logos* which has meaning [*semantikos*]. It is the fundamental character of literature, and certainly of Samuel Beckett's literature, that a statement may have meaning, but be neither true nor false.

To sum up the philosophical situation for the present study, *Of Grammatology* is responding to certain questions of a technological nature, namely the evolution of the written word, which is a much later development — particularly in its current mass market form — than the prior dominant category of discourse and orality known as *logos*. In this sense, technological innovations like the radio or the audiobook do not operate as improvements or replacements for the book, as they are sometimes shortsightedly imagined. They are, instead, throwbacks to an exclusively oral tradition. They eliminate the signifier and cut straight to the signified; they elevate the trace to the status of Being. The radio is thus a modern-day *seanchaí*, the bearer of the *logos*.

The Quest for Company

The radio has a special status for Beckett specifically, because it can be conceptualized as absence, or as "presence of voice" (*logos*) within "absence of space" (*aporos*). When asked to describe radio, Albert Einstein famously said:

> You see, wire telegraph is a kind of very, very long cat. You pull his tail in New York and his head is meowing in Los Angeles. Do you understand this? And radio operates exactly the same way: you send signals here, they receive them there. The only difference is that there is no cat.[16]

While there is excellent comedy in the incongruity of any predication which sets up wire telegraph as equivalent to a cat, there is also a brilliant clarity of the *utter* absence which defines the distance between broadcaster and receiver. The innovation represented by this technology, as even a contemporary commentator like Elise Nordling (quoted in the epigraph to this chapter) can

see, is the portability of "company." A person can still sit alone in the room, as so many of Beckett's characters sit, and hear voices, "the fable of one fabling of one with you in the dark" (*Company* 44) as so many of Beckett's characters hear. The radio is a puppet which does not need its ventriloquist to stand nearby, or even to perform live. It transplants measurable presence with unknowable distance.

Thus, the phenomenology of this form of prose performance is thematically unified with Beckett, and the same movement — from a negative phenomenology to a negative aesthetics toward an ethic of impossibility — can be discerned. The collision of subject and object in a space defined by absence has already been used as a description of theatre; radio emphasizes such an absence still further, as there is no space, no visible confrontation, and not necessarily any presence save that of a single listener. A Deleuzian haecceity is also visible, as the "human" presence of the voice is an anti-anthropomorphic device — machine without organs — with its latitude and longitude in some living room, some kitchen, or some car. Whether the listening occurs alone or is, as in the early days of radio, an event with its own communal ritual, the communal *function* is served by making the single listener somehow more than one. There is a particular power in the fact that this can occur in one's own rooms, as well; the invitation is also a form of invasion, with another's words and voices entering an intimate space. Clearly the potential impact of the medium, viewed from this angle, is substantially greater than the theatre, which only rarely suspends belief sufficiently to transcend the public nature of the enterprise.

Enough critical studies have been conducted which examine the effectiveness of Beckett's radio drama, and this is not at issue here. What has received less critical attention, but which was no less significant in the development of Beckett's own art and the artistry of his interpreters, is the radio production of his prose works. Certainly these events can be said to cross genre, against some supposed interdiction, but very little resistance —

either from Beckett or from the critics then or now — has arisen from the practice. BBC Radio 3, particularly during the years 1963-1977 that Martin Esslin was head of Radio Drama, broadcast an enormous variety of Beckett prose and poetry.[17] Indeed, to this day, the BBC World Service offers daily readings of novels and stories. Although these activities entail both editing and adapting the work of novelists, this practice is not often questioned, as it has a certain place in the tradition of the BBC, a "venerable institution" if ever there was one, and in radio in general. As shown in both the philosophical history of *logos* and the cultural history of the bard — whether the Irish *seanchaí* or the Japanese *biwa hoshi* or Homer himself — the vocal presentation of the written is not merely permissible, it is primary. In the early years of radio all over the world, listening to novels and prose excerpts was absolutely as commonplace as watching television is today. Perhaps as a result of all these factors, it seems that prose adaptation for radio has somehow escaped categorization as performance, and is treated as "just reading"; it is simply never subject to the same controversy as staging prose in physical space. While it is phenomenologically distinct, it occupies a region as prosaic as the author's publishing tour, where some of the printed matter is usually expected to be read in a relatively stable live environment, perhaps with a lectern, a lamp, and a glass of water. Few authors would refuse to participate in these activities on the grounds that the work was "meant to be read silently," as they might object to a fully mounted stage production.

It is notable that many of Beckett's most permissive stances with regard to prose adaptation were in the area of radio performance/reading, which is commensurate with the Beckett Estate's present-day acceptance of the audiobook as a legitimate form of reception for prose. Beckett himself adapted his prose piece *Lessness* for BBC Radio 3, produced by Martin Esslin and broadcast on 25 February 1971, with the astonishing cast of "Beckett actors" including Nicol Williamson, Harold Pinter, Patrick Magee, Donal Donnelly, Denys Hawthorne, and Leonard Fenton. Beckett's text assigned each line of

this highly mathematical text to a different actor (until the final line), emphasizing the conception of the subject, as discussed in Chapter Two, as irreducibly multiple.[18] A critical success, the piece was rebroadcast in May of 1971, and a substantial response among journalists in the United Kingdom essentially upheld both a notion of generic slipperiness with Beckett and the greater success of his work when read aloud. Writing in *The Scotsman*, radio critic Ian G. Ball wrote in his review, entitled "Lessness Less Than a Play":

> If it has to be categorised, it could be described as a prose poem for voices. The voices are essential to understanding this complex, intricate work. On the printed page, the words mean little, and visuals would distract. This is essentially a radio piece, in which the tape-editor plays a creative role. (*Scotsman* 3 May 1971)

Ball was well supported in his final assertion, as the six voices of the actors were recorded separately, and then assembled for precise timing & pitch by Martin Esslin in the editing room. Again, because the spaces and subjects of the prose are so thoroughly shrouded in darkness and indeterminacy, the radio hardly seems to violate the terms of the world.

The opposition to cross-generic work, then, can be seen as a matter of essentially visual significance, applicable more to "staging" non-stage works than mere "performance" of non-performance works. This is borne out in Beckett's stringent views on stage adaptation of radio drama, even though the literary "genre" (drama) was the same in both realms. Many of Beckett's most aggressive statements about adaptation in general were in regard to this not-quite-converse movement from radio to stage. In the 27 August 1957 letter to Barney Rosset, Beckett wrote that "frankly the thought of *All That Fall* on stage, however discreetly, is intolerable to me."[19] The same letter contains the famous interdiction that "if we can't keep our genres more or less distinct, we may as well go home and lie down," a quote frequently marshalled in the argument against prose adaptation, although the letter does not have anything specific to say about adapting prose. The controversy over *All That Fall* has not succeeded in limiting the stagings of it, many of which have

entered into strange contortions of theatrical practice to "preserve" the radio elements.

Ten years after rejecting a New York performance in the strongest possible terms, Beckett permitted a student production of *All That Fall* by Reading Players at the Whiteknights Theatre on the Reading University campus. Produced in June 1967 by Malcolm Kelsall, the play faced very different circumstances, and audiences, than it would have had off-Broadway. Beckett already had a personal relationship with James Knowlson, who worked at Reading, and whose steady hand was evident both in the political and dramaturgical processes. There was no set other than a black backdrop, and the sole props were a comic horse, bicycle, and car (presumably a theatrical facsimile). The only extant review of the production describes "minimal movement" and "irritating though necessary sound effects" (*Evening Post* 20 Jun 1967).[20] Attempts to stage the production more professionally foundered as late as 1995, when London's Royal Court Theatre secured permission from the Beckett Estate for a version — billed as "world premiere" and directed by the "revolutionary" Stephen Daldry — under the comically unenforceable provision that the audience be blindfolded. Needless to say, this is not the phenomenological equivalent of radio; understandably, the production fell through (*The Times* 27 February 1995).[21]

Ultimately, *All That Fall* was performed on stage with permission, in what must have been, for the Estate, optimal conditions. Directed by Everett C. Frost, who has expertise in both Beckett studies and radio studies, as well as having directed Billie Whitelaw and David Warrilow in the radio production in 1986, the production was mounted for a short run at the Waterfront Centre, Belfast, Northern Ireland, on 11 February 2006. The actors were from Prime Cut Productions, a professional Belfast company staging *Endgame* simultaneously. Thus, the work was performed on the set of *Endgame*, largely in shadow; the actors sat against the back wall, with podiums and microphones in the forestage. While work was done predominantly with the

voices and with scripts held — the rehearsal period, according to Frost, was barely three days — the presence of bodies was an inescapable fact, while the qualities of radio managed at the same time to be suggested (if not wholly intact). Speaking in the post-show discussion, Frost wisely bypassed the inevitable questions about "improvement" or "disimprovement" of the text, as well as the general problem of cross-genre work in Beckett. He revealed that his struggle with the text had essentially been in his awareness of the two mediums, and their competing requirements. In beginning work, he initially followed some paths of previous adaptations either suggested or illegally performed. He thought at one point that it should be wholly in the dark. He considered a staging of the work "as if being recorded for radio," with visible sound effects being created by the actors on stage, but ultimately placed a gigantic speaker on stage, like the voice of another actor, or the mechanized body. Like Esslin's adaptation of *Lessness*, the sound designer was an additional character; on stage, however, this imagined "body" was in the space.[22]

If Frost's production represents a best-case scenario — at least from the perspective of the Estate — for the preservation of a Beckettian world in a genre which is not original, the apparent outer limits are represented by the New York avant-garde production house La Mama E.T.C., which adapted the radio play *Cascando* (1963), combined it in a programme with *Eh Joe* (written for television, 1965), and performed both in April 1995 under the direction of Erica Bilder.[23] The review published in *TheaterWeek* by Rosette Lamont sets a high bar for extremity, as it begins with the assertion that La Mama's was an even more daring production than JoAnne Akalaitis's 1976 Mabou Mines production of *Cascando* at the Public Theatre, naming both the director and the company who are synonymous with broken Beckettian boundaries. The descriptions and photographs of Bilder's production, however, support Lamont's claims about the adaptation, which is more "post-modern installation piece" than play. The sole gesture toward the radio-based origins

of the production was that each audience member wore a headset; otherwise, Beckett's content and form seem to have had little visual impact. The large space of La Mama was filled with two large screens, between which the audience entered, and on which were presented both images and shadows of performers. On the left was a man at a music stand, and behind him a desk; on the right, a male figure sat at a harmonium. In front of the audience, but with back turned to them, was a cameraman in black, pointing a camera toward the Opener, one speaker of the divided personae in *Cascando*, and another example of the negated subjectivities who populate much of the late drama. The role of Voice was piped through the headphones, as was Music. The Opener, however, was granted the opposite of invisibility, revealed on camera in tight zooms and projected gigantically on the screens. He/she was outfitted with a golden *kesa*, a type of Buddhist robe; a black eye patch; a tall, liturgical headdress; a Tibetan prayer wheel; and, in the left hand, a silent accordion. On the lines "I open," Bilder unaccountably sexualized the text, having the Opener open his or her androgynous legs to reveal white lace panties. In a voice seemingly incapable or unaware of irony, Lamont writes:

> Bilder reads Beckett much as Ariane Mnouchkine interprets Aeschylus, Euripides, and Shakespeare through the prism of *kutiyattam*, the art of the Cakyar and Nambyar communities [...] Like the ancient, blind, *biwa hoshis* of rural Japan, [the Opener] must transmit endless tales (38-39).

The review seems to have inherited a quality of the performance itself, free-associating cultural and aesthetic flotsam, using *Cascando* as a jumping-off point into highly specific, personal, technological, and largely unexplained cross-references.[24] If one were to accept a mythological rubric of Beckettian performance ethics based on the concept of "purity," whether of genre or of content, the Erica Bilder/La Mama production of Cascando is an exhibit for the prosecution.

These examples have been included to demonstrate the range of impossibility when radio work is adapted "backwards" into a visual medium.

Above all, it is apparently an a priori impossibility to remain "faithful" — this problematic notion aside — to the genre when radio work is made visible. As this chapter has frequently been careful to qualify, however, radio does not actually restrict the visual; it merely restricts the artistic control of the visual. There is, then, an inversion of the argument made by Beckett, the Estate, and the so-called "faithful" artists and critics of his work: no matter how extreme the additions and emendations of the text in adaptation, the theatrical realm is one in which an artist *may* choose the qualities of the space. The radio, by contrast, is a realm in which it is impossible for the artist even to know who is listening, where they are listening, and what they are seeing while they listen. In this sense, the radio forms an ultra-Beckettian space of radical indeterminacy and absence. The result of this impossibility on the performance side of the frame results in a quite astonishing type of prose adaptation, potentially more extreme than what is even possible in theatrical adaptations. This potential is most visible in the recorded medium of the audiobook.

The audiobook is a medium of increasing significance, though its content is the oldest type of storytelling in the world. In the United States, the only market for which figures seem to be publicly available, audiobook sales increased 5% from 2005 to 2006, drawing in 871 million U.S. dollars (627 million Euro) in revenue. This figure includes downloadable books, CDs, and cassettes, many of which are listened to in portable devices; users of the audiobooks tend to describe their chief motivation as one of efficient use of time, because it becomes possible to read while driving long distances or commuting to work. Another major drive in the audiobook market, as in publishing in general, is an increase in book-club attendance among adults, observable in the last decade and manifest in the publication of books about book-clubs, such as Diana Loevy's *The Book Club Companion* (2006). Several recordings of Beckett's Trilogy are available as audiobooks, one narrated by Sean Barrett and one by Barry McGovern; an audiobook has also been made

of *Murphy*, as well as *Solo/A Piece of Monologue*. All the other Beckett CDs currently in commercial circulation are either versions of the radio plays or are recordings of the major plays. In the selection of actors to read the novels, there is an attempt to fuse the live with the recorded, much like Auslander predicted in *Liveness*; actors who made their name with the live performance are taken on to give the recording their legitimacy, as with Barry McGovern, whose credentials are well-established as an interpreter of Beckett. On the other hand, the recorded document is also made to stand in for the event, or in the most extreme cases, the author; for Sean Barrett's part, Naxos (the record company which produced his Trilogy in 2003) claims that he is "fast becoming the contemporary voice of Samuel Beckett on audiobook."[25]

The audiobook is clearly a type of performance, but its cousin the book club is also a venue of performative reading. Readers may spend time on their own with the material, but the discussion and gathering results in a community in which each individual reader has an audience composed of all the others. It is thus interesting that the audiobook is stigmatized in these environments. According to a recent article by Andrew Newman, entitled "Your Cheatin' Listenin' Ways," "the latest schism in the living room lit-fests is not over whom they read, but if they read" (*NYT* 2 August 2007). The leading anecdote which Newman cites is that of a librarian who admitted to a book group of fellow teachers that she had listened to that week's book, instead of reading it silently. The art teacher spoke up, saying "I'm a painter, and it would be like me painting by numbers." Others, with little phenomenological attention to the distinction of the visual element, compared it to watching the movie. A cognitive neuroscientist consulted by Newman respectfully disagreed with these assessments; Dr. Daniel T. Willingham asserted that "if the goal is to appreciate the aesthetic of the writing and understand the story, then there won't be much difference [...] the basic architecture of how we understand language is much more similar between reading and listening than it is different."[26]

What is most interesting, or even amusing, about a stigma attached to listening to a book is how short the cultural and philosophical memory is among readers who claim to be doing it "the old-fashioned way." The CD or MP3 is simply another *seanchaí*, another blind Homer, with the added feature that it transports the voice across infinite space, with impossible intimacy. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this type of performance is that opinions from both ends of the spectrum — that it is "safer" than theatre or that it is "weaker" than reading — do not take into account the fundamental features of the auditory medium. It is instead a zone of absence and of phenomenological paradox, out of the range of control, spinning an impossibility forward to its audience and backward to its creators. Technologically rendered into invisibility, then phenomenologically inscribed again onto the visible, audio performances remain riddled with the negative, voices at first come to one in the dark. The darkness does not remain, though, as the voices of the hulking, plugged-in *seanchaí* in the corner are mapped onto the administered worlds, played on stereos, paused and fast-forwarded, slipped in and out of time.

NOTES: CHAPTER THREE
Reading, Radio, and the *Seanchaí*

1. This phrase was actually applied by Beckett to Joyce, in his essay "Dante . . . Bruno . Vico . . Joyce." The quotation in full is:

> This writing that you find so obscure is a quintessential extraction of language and painting and gesture, with all the inevitable clarity of the old inarticulation. Here is the savage economy of hieroglyphics. Here words are not the polite contortions of 20th century printer's ink. They are alive. They elbow their way onto the page, and glow and blaze and fade and disappear. (*Disjecta* 28)

In my application of the phrase to Beckett, I follow a strong critical tradition (Cf. *Companion* 287) which suggests that Beckett's analysis here has more to do with Beckett's aesthetic ambitions than Joyce's aesthetic achievement.
2. This paper is to be included in a forthcoming book, according to Brater. In the context of this chapter, however, I prefer to cite the oral event rathen than the written work.
3. At academic conferences, a speaker is sometimes complimented on "delivery" of a paper, and it is assumed in these cases that the presentation skills of the author are the basis of success. While not denying the significance of these skills — one notices when they are absent — I suspect that the writing style which lends itself to oral presentation also plays a major role. A dense thesis or book chapter will often fall flat or create confusion regardless of how nice a speaker is to listen to, simply because it was not conceived with speech in mind.
4. Key recent texts in radio theory include David Hendy's *Radio in the Global Age* (2000), Stephen Barnard's *Studying Radio* (2000), Andrew Crisell's *Understanding Radio* (1994), and Martin Shingler and Cindy Wieringa's *On Air: Methods and Meanings of Radio* (1998). The dedicated journal *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media* just launched in 2004, while the journals *Media, Culture and Society* and *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* frequently publish new work about the form. Finally, interest in Beckett's work for radio has not ceased; he is treated as a major figure in the recent Routledge survey *Radio Drama* (2006), while Elissa Guralnik's *Sight Unseen: Beckett, Pinter, Stoppard, and other Contemporary Dramatists on Radio* came out in 1996.
5. This is not to say that theatre has not experienced technological revolution; it is difficult to imagine a history of theatre without the Greek experiments with sound, Wagner's innovations at Bayreuth, the theatre machinery of the Berliner Ensemble, or (most significantly, perhaps, for Beckett) the development of stage lighting capable of blackouts. Radio, however, has an entirely different trajectory, of much shorter duration and of much faster acceleration; radio is wholly reliant on the technological capabilities and limitations of the medium, whereas much innovation is possible in the theatre within the predetermined scope, because of the spatial and visual dimensions.
6. It is a necessary presumption that the newer hi-fi system with extensive EQ settings, on which it would in fact be possible to "selectively disattend" a fully mixed audio input, is not the normal mode of reception. Certainly at the time of Goffman's writing, these were not widely available.
7. Indeed, in this broadcast the plug sound is a surreal cork-pop, hardly an accurate depiction of an earplug, depriving the moment somewhat of its seriousness. But this issue is another to take up with Martin Esslin, who

directed. One wonders whether a broadcast leaving the pauses intact would be more successful in setting the oppressive atmosphere.
8. I recognize this grouping of *Catastrophe* and *What Where* primarily as a critical tradition (Cf. *Companion* 449, Knowlson 603-604) rather than as arising from my independent analysis. I am not aware of others who have grouped these works with *Rough for Radio II*, though *How It Is* is sometimes mentioned as another critique of the torturer-victim relationship. If one were to take biopolitics to its full logical extensions in Beckett, I think the field of work that could be nominated as "political" would be vastly increased. This expansion of the category, however, is not a project within the scope of the current work.
9. Backmann's essay is available exclusively online, so no page numbers are available. Though he considers it still in draft form, he granted permission to use it in personal correspondence, 28 April 2007. The essay is hosted at the University of Helsinki at <http://www.helsinki.fi/filosofia/tutkijaseminaari/backman.doc>.
10. This note is to be found on every programme issued with a Gare St. Lazare performance; those I have consulted are listed in the Works Cited under "Unpublished Materials." Perhaps due to my own emphasis on this research, when I first saw one of their productions and read this disclaimer, I took it as a surprising admission by the Beckett Estate of Brater's thesis, originally reading "read" as the German *vorlesen*. It was not until I discussed it with the director that I discovered my error.
11. Review of *Trilogy*, *The Irish Times*, 8 May 2002. O'Toole's spelling is an alternative version of the same word in Irish.
12. It is the fundamental paradox of the Beckett Estate that "intention" is the framework adopted both for approving performed prose and for rejecting it. This problematic will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Six.
13. *Beständige Anwesenheit* is Heidegger's phrase for this; Backman words this as "supratemporal and absolute accessibility" (n. pag).
14. Plato, *Sophist*, 263e2-9. I use Backman's translation of the original, for which he cites *Platonis opera, Tomus I*, ed. E.A. Duke, W. F. Hicken, W.S.M. Nicoll, D.B. Robinson, J.C.G. Strachan, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.
15. It is interesting to note that Heidegger also links his terminology to orthography. Backman points out in a footnote that Heidegger moved to *Seyn*, an archaic spelling of *Sein*, the German word for Being, following *Being and Time*:

> In his second *magnum opus, Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (composed in 1936-38 but unpublished until 1989), Heidegger begins to consistently apply the obsolete German orthography *Seyn*, thus emphasizing that what he is questioning is something other than what traditional metaphysical ontology has been looking for. His question concerns a more "archaic" notion of Being - yet something that is not completely detached from the metaphysical conception of beingness, but rather to be viewed as its "condition of possibility." (Backman n. pag, footnote 4)

That both Derrida and Heidegger utilized idiosyncratic spellings demonstrates the extent to which 20th century philosophy moved beyond its foundational logocentrism, reworking the *logos* and manifesting discourse into a purely written form.
16. This quotation is widely cited and is universally attributed to Albert Einstein, but an original source has proved difficult to trace. Many online compilations list it, including GoogleQuotes; it can be found reputably at the URL <www.quotationspage.com/quote/26870.html>.

17. The appendices to this thesis are selected lists of prose performance, in which radio prose performances have been included. Appendix A is organised by date, while Appendix B is organised by piece.
18. The transcript of the *Lessness* radio broadcast adaptation, signed by Samuel Beckett and assigning roles to each of the actors, is held at the Beckett Archive at Reading University (MS1539/1). The reviews and corresponding files can be found under STAGE FILE/ADA-1971, MS1792 and MS4007.
19. This letter is held in the Barney Rosset collection at Boston College, but I have drawn on the wide citations of it rather than the original. Clas Zilliacus makes this quotation the epigraph of his *Beckett and Broadcasting* (1976). It is S.E. Gontarski, foremost among others, who has pointed to the statement in this same letter about radio-to-stage adaptation as a more general barrier to prose performance, I think erroneously.
20. The review is attributed only to M.W., Evening Post, Reading, Berkshire, 20 June 1967. It is held with the programme of the evening at the Beckett Archive, STAGE FILE/ADA-1967, MS1792 and MS3204.
21. The complete records of this ill-fated yet hilarious production can be found in the Beckett Archive, STAGE FILE/ADA-1995, MS4223.
22. I draw on my own notes for this production, as I was present at the time.
23. The publicity describes *Eh Joe* as "live on video," which seems to describe a method in which the performance was filmed live, but the audience watched a projection; Phil Auslander would no doubt have delighted in this formulation.
24. The review of "Cascando and Eh Joe" appears in *TheaterWeek*, April 1995, 38-42. This article and others which I draw on in this section are held at the Beckett Archive, Reading, STAGE FILE/ADA-1995, MS4238.
25. This claim is part of the biography of Sean Barrett at the Naxos website, and is available at <http://www.naxosaudiobooks.com/PAGES/seanbarrett.htm>.
26. All information included here, including this quotation, draws on the article by Andrew Adam Newman, "Your Cheatin', Listenin' Ways," which headlined the Sunday Styles section of the *New York Times*, 2 August 2007.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Someone's Going to Try to Tell a Story": Theatrical Strategies in the Single-Text Performance

To hell with all this fucking scenery.

—Malone Dies

Every theatrical event is characterized by a certain approach to time, space, and the body. The choices made by practitioners, whether in directing process or in performance, determine the degrees of these three variables. Far from a sliding scale which can be easily adjusted, each "measurement" of a performance event occurs in three dimensions, permeated by the twin impossibilities of repetition and cessation. Within its frame, the same gestures and movements may repeat, or a scene may be paused; however, taking into account the wider frame in which theatre is enacted — that is, for the audience — each experience in the theatre is inherently unique, and the movement of time is inexorably "on."

While the broadcasts of prose over the radio and the audiobook recordings may be classified as performance, the radio does not constitute a "theatrical" venue. The radio thus creates its own phenomenological problems in the realms of time, space, and embodiment. Temporally, it can be repeated or stopped utterly (using recording technology) within its own frame, to a degree of precision impossible with live performance.[1] All control over space is lost to the performers, so reception of the performance is possible in an infinite variety of locations. Finally, the technology causes, or rather allows, the body to disappear, replacing it with the logocentric remnant of the voice. As argued in Chapter Three, these factors respond to some fundamental characteristics of Beckett's worlds and narrators in the prose, granting the radio a certain efficacy for the delivery of this writing. In addition, Beckett's radio drama explicitly takes advantage of the phenomenology of the medium, dissolving space and persona into an array of sounds and silence. Like much of his prose, it also thematizes the writing act as the dominant driver of the plot.

In his stage drama, where Beckett showed a scintillating awareness of the image, he also embedded "all the dead voices" with theatrical technology, manifesting both the negative embodiment and the conflicted subjectivity which are present theoretically in the texts. The examples are, by now, commonplace in Beckett studies. *Krapp's Last Tape* employs a tape recorder as a device to create a dialogue between multiple selves, though the present self remains firmly — indeed, realistically — embodied. Later, in *Not I* and *That Time,* Beckett dismembers the self entirely, using a floating mouth and floating head, respectively, to present a consciousness unanchored from a unitary source. The subject of Mouth's discussion in *Not I* is also the title of the play, making the link between language and self-constitution keenly felt (in the failure of both). In *That Time,* Beckett blends the devices of radio with the theatrical scene, using a recorded voice from three differently mounted speakers to present the fragmentary and unanchored self, attached presumably to the consciousness of the floating head. In Beckett's stage drama, such images are ready-made by the author and elaborately described in stage directions. They form the essence of the work, because they essentially explain the qualities of a desired time, space, and embodiment.

Prose adapted and mounted on stage does not benefit from the same level of attention to the theatrical image on the part of the author. While some texts are quite specific in their descriptions of some or all of these theatrical variables, they remain "untranslated" to technical directions or simply impossible to recreate in theatrical space. Many of Beckett's texts pose further difficulties, as they rest so centrally on the aporetics of language and perception; when the Unnamable asks "Where now? Who now? When now?" at the outset of its diatribe, each of the three theatrical variables is called into question. The practitioner is thus left with a problem that seems, on its surface, unresolvable. For a person to speak such texts in a room is already to violate the rigorously cultivated absence of a given body, a certain voice, a particular time, a present place.[2] Radio, at least, preserves some void. How can the

practitioner who makes a theatrical performance out of Beckett's prose avoid the re-inscription of texts or selves that Beckett has effaced?

Some practitioners would reject this question out of hand, arguing that its construction places too much emphasis on Beckett's intentions. In other words, it is impossible not to do violence to the text, and violence to text is no great sin; indeed, it constitutes the main activity of 20th and 21st century theatrical and theoretical practice. Celebrating the radical freedom of the *bricoleur*, a postmodern approach to Beckett's prose would see it simply as another cultural tributary in a vast current of artistic sources. Adaptations by Mabou Mines and La Mama E.T.C. throughout the 1970s and 1980s show this spirit of the avant-garde, in which Beckett's words were essentially vehicles for directorial or compositional innovation. Cross-generic work is normative in this realm; examples of Beckett's texts being set to music (*Lessness* in 1973, *Company* in 2007), or used as fragments in a solo dance piece (*Worstward Ho* in 1993) exhibit a similar approach. If a binary were distilled from these examples, it would show a greater weight on the practitioner's vision — whether composer, choreographer, director, or interpreter — than on the author's intentions and aesthetics, stated or unknown. One theoretical rubric which would support such an approach is the "death of the author" advanced by Roland Barthes, now canonical in spite of itself.

Another path, however, seems to present itself in light of the negative phenomenology of the theatre as described in the first chapter of this work. Theatre, in a different but no less radical way than radio, is also founded on absences. The chorus of critical voices citing the negative in performance — whether invoking unrepresentability and death (Tadeusz Kantor), ghosting and absence (Herbert Blau), or the "blind spot" (Peggy Phelan) — is by now well established in the discourse of performance studies. While "presence" is still invoked in the theatrical (and especially phenomenological) context, namely to speak of the embodiment of the actor, it remains a type of presence which cannot be pinned down with any certainty, any more than the temporal

frame can be controlled. Not only is the gap between the performer and audience primary in the theatrical event, but a gap between selves is inherent in the performative act. As Beckett's subjects speak with many selves and invent others for "company," so too does the actor become more than one when on stage. Such an approach, to contrast with the earlier binary offered, could be described as one which takes account of the aesthetic and theoretical concerns of the author, and attempts fidelity. At its best, it mimics the process of Beckett's own drama, in which the structural or formal characteristics are echoed in a theatrical plan, supported through text and character.

Crucially, authorial fidelity does not guarantee theatrical success. A major factor which differentiates novel from drama is the immediacy of confrontation with the audience; critical response, while inherently an imperfect reading of reception, at least shows the stringency of the "popular" demands of an audience. A certain portion of every audience expects to be entertained, a fact which leads to some discomfort (or is simply ignored) in a purely theoretical reading of a theatrical event. The innovative directors from the "first camp" mentioned above — Mabou Mines, La Mama, and much of the New York City avant-garde — might argue that their adjustments to the texts are made out of fidelity to the audience; they are great directors precisely because they aware of what the texts need to be made into interesting theatre. While such attention to reception does not exclude fidelity to the author, the balance is clearly weighted toward the final product.

This chapter will examine theatrical adaptations of Beckett's prose by looking solely at instances of single-text adaptation. This separates the phenomenon of staged prose from the radio events explored in Chapter Three, which have fundamentally distinct phenomenological characteristics, and from the anthology or multi-text performances argued in Chapter Five. The goal will be to locate techniques of adaptation — that is, particular uses of time, space, or character — which illuminate the ethic of impossibility within Beckett's text and the act of prose performance. To this end, performances will

be categorized and addressed based on the spectrum of fidelity presented above. Each performance will be read to determine whether author or audience emerges as a dominant priority. Within these two broad categories, a more nuanced view can be provided by investigating what happens to the remainder, or the "unweighted" category. Some performances create an audience-oriented event at the expense of authorial intent or integrity, while some maintain both this priority and the textual origin. Some of the performances intended to elevate the author's words or aesthetics fail to consider the theatricality of the event, while others attempt to duplicate Beckett's own dramatic approach, finding an image or performative metaphor which stands with, and supports, the text. In all four divisions, what can be seen are "possible approaches to impossibility." This observation of the choices made by practitioners when confronted by the conundrum of prose performance is fundamental to the determination of an ethics.

Chamber Theatre and the Problem of Narration

When performed text makes the shift from radio to stage, the transition is one from "telling" to "showing." But what is shown, and how is this decided? As previously argued, a new dimension of control is granted to the performer or interpreter in the spatial/visual realm. A staging of any text, regardless of its provenance, thus results in the act of interpretation. The invisibility of *King Lear* was the metaphor deployed previously to show that drama has no original to be copied in performance; at best, the descriptions offered in the stage directions must be adapted to the venue, budget, performers, and situation at hand. With no original, all performance is inherently adaptation; suggested already in Adorno's addendum "On the Origin of the Work of Art," this idea has found expression in performance studies (most notably Phelan's *Unmarked*) as well as literary theories of drama. In her 2006 work *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon writes explicitly that

"every live staging of a printed play could theoretically be considered an adaptation in its performance" (6). There is no determinant, even in the highly deterministic realm of Beckett's drama, for an "ideal" production. The act of performance eludes fixity, even if (as Auslander claims) the stage increasingly mimics the recorded media. Philosophically, the drama thus constitutes an aporetic and subjective realm, more of Lyotard's inhuman ontology than of Plato's mimesis of perfection. Phenomenologically, theatre can be seen to embody more of Merleau-Ponty's unstable perception than of Cartesian cogitation. Rather than a clear set of points on the coordinate plane, drama occupies the darkness, the haze. From this perspective, all performance activity is unified by a certain imprecision, indeterminacy, and impossibility.

Nonetheless, the distinction of technique — that is, whether a text originates as drama or prose — has real and identifiable consequences in performance. The entire discipline of performance studies rests on this divide between dramatically originating text and "other" text. Northwestern University, one of the founding institutions of the discipline, continues to divide departments of Theatre and Performance Studies; actors study Theatre, while "adaptors" or "interpreters" take the other route.[3] One of the founders of this department — then called "interpretation" — was Robert S. Breen, who published a book which was definitive (in its time) of a technique he called "chamber theatre." This slim volume is a handbook for performing prose, and continues to inform the curriculum at Northwestern and other universities. At the book's outset, Breen classifies the primary distinctions between novel and drama, while at the same time pointing out the impossibility of maintaining the distinction in light of actual literary or dramatic practice:

> Traditionally, the dramatic mode has been almost synonymous with *showing* a story, while the epic or narrative mode has meant *telling* a story [...] Since the novelist, like the dramatist, does indeed both show and tell, it is not unreasonable to suggest that if a drama can be appreciated in printed form where the action must be imagined, then the novel, no less than the play, can be appreciated when staged in the theatre. (2)

Breen never denies the existence of a formal distinction between prose and drama, but merely calls attention to novelistic techniques already present in classics of the theatre, much as the first chapter of this thesis laid out the dramatic techniques present in the novel. Greek messengers bearing word from offstage, Elizabethan heroes declaring their innermost feelings in soliloquy, and Restoration confidants hearing the artful confessions of masters and mistresses represent fundamentally narrative devices disguised by dramatic conceits.

Basing his analysis on the claim that "the appeal of drama is principally to the outer eye, [and] the appeal of fiction is to the inner eye" (3), Breen demonstrates how both novel and drama present distinct varieties of simultaneity. In performance, the action and reaction of two characters can be seen in the same moment; Breen's example is a swordfight, which can only be told sequentially in written prose, but which comes alive on stage in an exchange of thrusts and parries without language. However, simultaneity of motivation — the description of inner states together with outer expression — is more traditionally the province of fiction. The narrator who frames the dialogue of a character with observations about the inward attitude and thoughts of that character has a tool which no actor could wield with equivalent precision.

Breen's definition of chamber theatre is also the thesis of his book. He writes that "there is a technique for presenting narrative fiction on the stage in such a way as to take full advantage of the theatrical devices of the stage without sacrificing the narrative elements of the literature" (4). The key to this technique is the embodiment of the narrator, who maintains an "intimate" relationship with the audience while framing and contextualizing the relationships of the central characters of the story. Breen explicitly disavows the problem of "transforming fiction into drama" by deleting descriptions or rewriting paragraphs of text as dialogue; rather, he proposes that the narrative point of view so central to fiction should be maintained, even

emphasized, by embodiment on the stage. The attitude, appearance, and locution of this embodied narrator lends an interpretive dimension to the performance, demonstrating or critiquing qualities of the narrator which the text may leave hidden. The *presence* of a narrator resolves the conflict between the patent and the latent in pieces which are "purely drama" or "purely fiction." While most of his book eschews the polemic, Breen does make the proposition that

> the ideal literary experience is one in which the simultaneity of the drama, representing the illusion of actuality (that is, social and psychological realism), may be profitably combined with the novel's narrative privilege of examining human motivation at the moment of action. (5)

In discussing the role of the narrator in fiction, Breen intersects with a massive field of critical and theoretical research in literature, and while it is not possible to treat the entirety of that field within the "chamber" of his book (or, indeed, this thesis), it is equally impossible to overlook. Breen's work draws freely, if indirectly, on the classics in a discourse that would eventually be named "narratology." For instance, the distinction between showing and telling is a tenet of formalist literary criticism reaching back at least to 1888, when Henry James introduced it to his major critical work *The Art of Fiction*. James is often credited with laying the groundwork for an aesthetics of the novel, and a vast tradition in literary criticism cites him as a kind of founding father.[4] His system was codified by the work of Percy Lubbock in *The Craft of Fiction* (1921), whose mantra "Show, don't tell" lives on in fiction-writing seminars, even if it has been pushed aside in theory of the novel. A structuralist tradition based on the primacy of "point of view" and "showing" was inaugurated by James and Lubbock, and in spite of some early dissenters — E.M. Forster, for one, whose *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) relishes a less precise and more subjective approach to criticism — dominated the field until the 1960s.

The next generation of critics produced three texts of novel theory that would each be seminal in their own right, namely Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of*

Fiction (1961), Roland Barthes' *S/Z* (1970), and Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1972). Though their methodologies are individual and many other features differentiate them, all three books disavow the central thesis of Lubbock. In Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), a significant adjustment is made to the Jamesian spectrum of narrative activity, in that Booth fundamentally rejects the distinction between showing and telling. Drawing on examples from the contemporary novels which would have been unavailable to James, Booth provides a kind of taxonomy of the narrator, pointing out the prevalence of *both* showing and telling. Booth's book is the published origin of terms now commonplace in English and literary studies classrooms, such as "implied author" or "unreliable narrator." Lubbock's "objectivism" and "materialism" was thus supplanted by a notion of the novel as a linguistic practice; Booth names this "rhetoric," while Genette refers to "discourse" and Barthes simply to "writing." More attention will be given to Booth's theories in this chapter, because of their more specific application to Breen's chamber theatre and Goffman's frame analysis of novel and drama.

It is worth noting that in some more contemporary readings, particularly Dorothy J. Hale's *Social Formalism: The Novel in Theory from Henry James to the Present* (1998) and David Carroll's *The Subject in Question* (1987), James has fared somewhat better than Lubbock, who is now generally seen as too sycophantically and rigidly applying the thought of James. Hale even argues that the "second wave" of novel theory represented by Booth, Genette, and Barthes did not actually oppose, but rather restated, key elements of James's own theory. Drawing on Carroll, she writes:

> Booth's, Genette's, and Barthes' respective attacks on Lubbock's aesthetics of vision (that the novel should show rather than tell) reaffirm James's deeper philosophical assumptions about the novel's capacity to represent identity: first, the Jamesian definition of identity as point of view; and second, the Jamesian belief that the novel allows points of view to be authentically expressed, legibly represented, and thus rendered optimally interpretable for a discerning reader. (66)

Hale goes on to point out that all three "second wave" critics refer to the Jamesian novelistic subject as "voice," reaffirming the logocentric nature of prose argued in Chapter Three. Voice is inseparable from — and for Barthes, constitutive of — the subject represented in the novel. Conceiving the narrator as a voice renders the distinction between showing and telling moot, since it is natural that a voice should do both (Hale 67).

Hale's own work explores the Anglo-American heritage of narrative theory, and the Franco-American second wave, in relation to the "social formalism" of her title, based primarily in the reading of narrative by Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin regards the novel more as a form of social discourse, and his narrative theory is thus an extension of his social theory; that is, it flows from a type of Marxist materialism which accords importance to the class-based, cultural, economic, and ideological features of the novel, novelist, and readers. Hale finds a "surprising correspondence" (17) between Bakhtin's social formalism and James's noetic materialism, in that both elevate the act of representation of the Other to an ethical status.

Rather than proceed further into the discourse of narratology, a discipline increasingly concerned exclusively — and ironically — with the nomenclature of its own system, the focus here will be on "applied narratology" and the practical function of narrative theory in performance. The first applied system can be found in the sociological writings of Erving Goffman, whose *Frame Analysis* compares the framing mechanisms of novel as opposed to drama. Published in 1974, the book's debt to the previous decade of novel theory, particularly Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction*, is quite extensive. Opening with the proposition that novels and plays "share important properties" (149) along with other types of dramatic scriptings (presumably radio and television), Goffman argues for a radical integrity, or a fundamental completeness, of such artworks. He writes:

> Whereas in real life each participant brings to an activity a unique store of relevant personal knowledge, attends to a slightly different range of

> detail, and presumably remains unaware of much that could be available to his perception, this is not so in the realm of dramatic scriptings. As already suggested, that which appears is pre-selected as what the audience must select out. In effect, then, all members of the audience are given the same amount of information. (149)

Even slight phenomenological attention to the situation of theatre would negate this statement. If the audience *lived* within the proscenium "frame," inside the room where characters are being played, and was entirely bounded by the limits of the play, it might be true. However, theatre is also an activity which occurs "in real life." Different observers bring distinct senses, thoughts, experiences, and companions into the theatrical event. The individuality of the mind and body throws Goffman's theory into disarray the moment it comes in contact with practice. The audience member is free, and the gaze is always roving; directors may do their best to draw everyone's focus to one side of the stage, but they often fail in the attempt. External interventions are common, whether in the form of a phone call, a crinkling wrapper, or a whispered comment from a companion. Anyone could, in theory, rise from his or her seat and depart for a scene or for half the play. Any such intervention would destroy the "sameness" of the information on offer in a play.

It may seem excessive to criticize Goffman for avoiding the conflicting strips of experience occurring in the theatre, when his project is explicitly the isolation of strips; after all, he only states that everyone is *given* the same amount of information, not necessarily that they each receive it. What is the use, however, of a gift that cannot be received? Coded into the argument is the triumph of theory over practice, of idea over reality. Pervasive in Goffman's writing is the "assumption of sufficiency" (150) in artistic reception which, as argued previously, overlooks at least a century of modernist and postmodernist writing based on the opposite. He asserts:

> In plays and fiction, the audience assumes that what the writer chooses to inform them about up to any one point is all that they need in order to place themselves properly in regard to the unfolding events. It is assumed that nothing that ought to be known has been skipped; a full portrayal of the scene has been provided. (149)

This is a claim as absolute as the closing axiom from *Watt*'s Addenda — "No symbols where none intended" — without the bitter irony to make it palatable. In Beckett's *Trilogy, Texts for Nothing, How It Is,* and countless other works of his late prose, the inverse situation defines the practice of narration. It could be assumed that nothing that ought to be *unknown* has been skipped, that *no* full portrayal has been provided. Even the language which leads down this narrative *via negativa* is called into question; the death of knowledge and the death of name can only be answered by Clov's categorical imperative, "it's not certain."

When Goffman begins to consider the differences between the novelistic and theatrical frames, the confusion is only compounded. He considers first the transition from drama into novel, suggesting that "everything heard or seen by the audience could be simply rendered into printed words in an impersonal, authorial voice" (151). Parenthetically, he notes the complication: what is seen by the audience of an actor's expression cannot be put down into objective language, and thus would involve a statement of interpretation. The extreme limitations on both the novelist and playwright suggested by this rubric can only be justified by avoiding Beckett as an example. Generally, the comparison allows Goffman to point out that "the fiction frame presents the writer with fundamental privileges not available to the playwright" (152). Here Goffman is referring to the narrator.

Beckett is not the only writer who confounds the Goffman frame model; plays from Aeschylus to Shakespeare to Brecht are, of course, riddled with narrators. Characteristics of narrators found in novels — omniscience, point of view, bias, instability and unreliability — all have precedent in dramatic narrators. The equivalency between novel and drama as objects for comparison tends to overlook the basic historical fact that in the West, drama predates the novel by approximately two millennia (if the 15th century romances are held to be the forebears of the modern literary category). E.M. Forster, in a rebuttal of sorts to Lubbock and James, wrote as late as 1927:

> Zealous for the novel's eminence, they are a little too apt to look out for problems that shall be particular to it, and differentiate it from the drama; they feel it ought to have its own technical troubles before it can be accepted as an independent art. (79)

The most telling aspect of this comment is that as late as the 20th century, the novel was still seen to compete for independence and differentiation from drama. This manifests a corollary to logocentrism, emerging from the privileging of drama over the novel, as though the novel were merely a written form of drama and must assert its own reason for existence.

Breen's *Chamber Theatre* is much more open to the innovations in narrative form, and it is specifically oriented toward the movement of prose into drama, a possibility at which Goffman never quite arrives. Breen is not interested in the presentation of characters in a setting, nor particularly in the translation of action and dialogue onto the stage; he points out rightly that these are formal characteristics which fiction and drama have in common (6). In some senses, *Chamber Theatre* is thus forced at the outset to dispense with the "traditional novel" as an object for consideration, and instead to pursue the "modern novel," which has (in Breen's reading) diminished concern with plot, character, and setting. Instead, he writes, "Writers like Kafka, Joyce, Beckett, Sartre, and Nabokov create novels in which much of the action takes place on the *inner* stage of the characters' minds" (6). Rather than the social focus implied by Bakhtin and others, the core concerns are psychological.

Perhaps due to this attention to 20th century literature (with justifiable detours to Dostoevsky, Conrad, and Stevenson), the starting point of Breen's work, both in terms of philosophy and narration, is the division of self. His second chapter is entitled "Self," and its theme is the Double, in all its senses. Drawing on references ranging widely from Socrates to Carl Jung to Virginia Woolf, Breen shows how an internal dissociation — whether in terms of a dialogic self, an anima/animus, or a locution which separates "I" and "me" into different personae — is virtually universal in human culture and psychology. Writing about Peter Moen's concentration camp diary, he

discusses how particularly in isolating and stressful situations humans "discover that thought processes once regarded as interior monologues are in fact dialogues [...] within a short while, the need for dialogue develops, and [...] the self is bifurcated" (8). The linkage to *Company*, and indeed to all of Beckett's use of the monologic form to reveal the disunity of the subject, is extremely clear. Solitude and dialogue are thus joined in a causal relationship which seems, at first, to be paradoxical. It is Badiou, however, who demonstrates (more formally than either Breen or Beckett) that infinity is at the heart of One.

Breen successfully identifies the narrator as the focal point, either as a major problem or a groundbreaking solution, when prose is performed. However, his practical solution to the split self is always relatively simple and sometimes surprisingly conservative. In nearly every adaptation he suggests or cites, he simply advocates the use of multiple actors to define multiple frames of time, space, or point of view. Thus, in a work like Nabokov's *Lolita*, Breen's adaptation suggests at least two performers for Humbert Humbert, one who narrates and one who is active within the story, or one for the first person and one for the third person. In adaptation of a work like *Lolita* in which the narration is in the first person and the "I" is also a main character, Breen actually sees three frames: "the audience is in one time and place, the characters in another time and place, while the narrator-character alternates his existence between both settings" (22). Recasting a notion articulated by Booth, Breen holds that the most important information for the adapter of prose is the narrator's "epic situation," or vantage point in time and space.[5]

Breen goes on to theorize and provide example performance choices for the first person narrator as a minor character, the third-person omniscient narrator, and the third-person objective narrator. These delineations ultimately return the discourse to Booth and his less flexible theories of point of view, demanding a critic's consistency within prose which was often, as the century wore on, built to reflect inconsistency. While his terminology remains

useful in looking at the performances, Breen's individual narrator models do not serve well in description of Beckett's prose, except to show how many formal laws of fiction they broke. The ethic of narration for Beckett was not "a means of controlling the operation of the central intelligence responsible for the telling of a story," nor was there any observation of the "categorical limitations demanding a modicum of consistency" (Breen 33). "The function of writing" was rather, as H. Porter Abbott has it, "to avoid having written" (*BWB* 40). As Adorno's reading of Beckett in *Aesthetic Theory* would imply, Beckett's radical inconsistency was the most consistent possibility available to him.

Breen's approach to the narrator is nonetheless, in a sense, highly dialectic; from the form of his approach, if not the actual content, interesting possibilities of reading and staging Beckett's narrators arise. Presented with a singularity and consistency which close reading (or philosophy) reveals to be false, Breen's response is to stage the multiplicity. The problem in Beckett is the reverse, because the presentation of the original text is fearfully and finally multiple. In the *Trilogy*, narrators come and go. Their names change. Stories are interrupted and left unfinished. Even a narrator as obsessed with logic and puzzles as that of *Watt* leaves a raft of broken promises and errors in his wake. Rather than a failure of technique, this is evidence of it. Breen defines chamber theatre as "the dynamic relationship between the lyric (that is, the element wherein the audience is addressed in the telling of the story) and the dramatic elements of narrative literature" (33); this could be a description of Beckett's whole project, which revolves around the same tension between narrator and character, story and reality. "Someone's going to try to tell a story," affirms the narrator of *Texts for Nothing*, moments after this list of negations and impossible refusals: "I'll be there, I won't miss it, it won't be me, I'll be here, I'll say I'm far from here, it won't be me, I won't say anything, there's going to be a story" (85). The next line contains the famous logician's paradox, a summary of the third text from which it comes, if not the work entire: "Yes, no more

denials, all is false" (85). This could be an epigram for drama itself.

Comforting though formalism would be, it cannot help such a narrator to be analysed, much less performed. Is this a first-person monologue? What would Booth or Breen describe as the point of view, or the epic situation, in *Texts for Nothing*? The only possibility seems to be to name the voice of the piece "paradox," or "pure multiple," or "negative," or "void." If the practice of chamber theatre is indeed a dialectic one, encouraging antithetical performances to interpret or reveal the original text, then the best option for staging the narrator is probably singularity, not multiplicity. In practice, this has also been the most common approach; one-man shows of Beckett prose are far more prevalent than full-cast renderings which attempt to account for all the narrative frames, times, places, and personae. Landmark productions of *Texts for Nothing* feature Joseph Chaikin alone, and later Bill Irwin alone; Conor Lovett, another actor who rendered the *Texts*, also unapologetically performs a solo adaptation of the entire *Trilogy*. A preference is clear, in both the selection of prose pieces for performance and the editing of the pieces, for first-person locution; Barry McGovern has stated this preference explicitly, saying that first-person monologues are "those suited to staging."[6] The suppositions and the problematics which characterize this stance, both in conception and execution of prose performance, will occupy the rest of this chapter.

As Booth and Breen repeat in their theoretical studies, generalizations about fiction and prose narrators tend to break down when applied to actual works.[7] The same is true — and, if it were possible, would be more true — of prose in performance, where the already infinite possibilities of the written word enter the dimensions of space, time, and embodiment. While technically measurable and enclosed, and thus distinct from the liminal place of Beckett's text and the inherent performative characteristics of a novel, these dimensions nonetheless create immense potential for interpretation. These performances are readings of the prose which can, of themselves, be read.

NUMBER 1
David Warrilow, *The Lost Ones* (dir. Lee Breuer).
Mabou Mines, Theater for the New City, New York City, 1975.
Photo: Richard Landry / Source: Kalb, *Beckett in Performance*

The Problem of Style: "Perform the Writer"

If time, space, and body are the descriptive categories in analysis of performance, the "epic situation" of the narrator is clearly the central question in analysis of adaptation. However, a more nebulous but no less essential element to reading prose performance is that of style. Breen makes note of this, writing that "style is the principal means by which literature dramatizes the narrator's point of view as it relates to the setting, the characters, and the action" (41), and he devotes a full chapter of *Chamber Theatre* to the question of how style works. One of the more conservative tenets of his model of adapted prose, the notion that the performance event is "serving" the literary work, is inherited from a formalist approach to drama which holds the playwright paramount, with directors and actors in a secondary position of service. While he admits the inadequacy of a single definition of style to serve all literature, the most modern allowance that he offers is excessively general:

> Syle has often been regarded as ornamentation, or it has been thought of as the *manner* in which the *matter* of a text is conveyed, and the manner must always be at the service of the matter. A more contemporary view of style in literature continues to see it as manner but relegates the matter to simply a *context* in which we experience the true value of the literature — this being its style or form. (35)

Not quite as absolute as Beckett's assertion regarding Joyce — "form *is* content, content *is* form" (*Disjecta* 27) — Breen's claim here, like Goffman's before, still fails to encompass the possibilities afforded by stylistic inconsistency, or by the non-alignment of form and content for particular effects.

It is therefore interesting that one of the most widely recognized "postmodern" directors, Lee Breuer, has formulated a far simpler approach to the problem of style. In 2007 at the Kilkenny Arts Festival, the American director presented a videorecording of his acclaimed 1974 version of *The Lost Ones*, performed by David Warrilow. A keystone in the avant-garde American

theatrical landscape, this production both solidified the reputation of Mabou Mines, Breuer's company, and marked a new border of performance, or performance art, as some called it. This showing of the video, which had itself been lost until 2007, was followed by a public interview of Breuer, during which he was asked what he felt was different between performing Beckett's prose and performing the plays. Immediately responding "No difference," he expanded on the point by saying that whatever material he is working with, he simply "performs the writer."[8]

Breuer does not claim that the writer is actually represented in the content of the work, but rather is taking a nuanced position on style. Most literary critics and English teachers, including Robert Breen, are extremely cautious about any conflation of narrator and author. The separation between them is a cardinal truth of prose fiction, regardless of first-person locution, autobiographical correspondences or even identical names. For Breuer, the sum total of an author's creation forms a sense of style — suggested approaches to time, space, body, and text — which is admissible as an influence on a performance. The text's "internal consistency," insofar as it exists, is not the stylistic border. This is a highly practical approach, defying the chronological and genetic attention of many critics. For Breuer, the task is simply to read, and then to manifest in empty space, the more abstract and sensuous characteristics of a person's art.

Fortunately, this approach is both clearer and more fruitful when working with Beckett than with many other writers. Beckett's lifetime project shows strong philosophical trends and movements, some of which were mapped in the second chapter of this work, as well as the correspondence of attentions and obsessions which span many decades. While studies within particular genres can be illuminating about those genres, Breuer would seem to suggest that to the practitioner, all available information comes into play. Breuer's own adaptation of *The Lost Ones* provides a case study in this type of authorial fidelity. Such fidelity is not defined by narrow, legalistic adherence to

Beckett's own wishes; indeed, the performance did not exhibit this. Having approved a "straight reading" by David Warrilow, Beckett was initially displeased to hear what had been done by Mabou Mines, famously saying "Sounds like a crooked straight reading to me."[9] Nonetheless, Breuer had created an interpretive vision of Beckett's universe, drawing on drama, poetry, novel, and biography, and attempted to place the production in that imaginative and impossible location. It was to this Beckett, created from his own creations, that Breuer was trying to be true.

Using the bulk of Beckett's prose text with no alterations to sequence, Breuer and Warrilow created a performance event characterized by immersion of the audience in a dramatic experience. *The Lost Ones* places the audience within the cylinder that the narrator describes as the home of the Lost Ones; most are seated and barefoot on the hard rubber material of the theatrical set. This initial abandonment of a proscenium-type framing signals a move toward the category of performance art, with a much stronger implication of the audience achieved by their participation in the scene. Warrilow, playing the narrator, is thus a highly controlling figure, and because he is the sole speaker of the text, his role is much more active than the strangely colourless and objective voice in the prose piece. In other words, when reading silently through *The Lost Ones*, the dominant impression is of space, a strange universe with precise rules; as Breen suggests often occurs in prose, the third-person omniscient narrator almost disappears. In performance, this space becomes a simple fact of life, no longer a metaphor but an actual purgatorial container for the audience. Accordingly, the dominant attention shifts to the narrator, whose identity "is not subject to whimsical shifts" (Kalb 132) as in other prose pieces, and who, when embodied, takes on an academic character bordering on cruelty.

The Mabou Mines production of *The Lost Ones* is known for its use of miniature figures and for nudity, both of the narrator (late in the performance) and of one of the figures being described (a woman).[10] The

miniature figures serve as the illustration of control, with the narrator manipulating tiny people and tiny ladders within the cylinder. He places the ladders in the foam and against the walls, plays with the figures in the palm of his hand and on his knee, and generally stages the omnipotence of a god along with the omniscience of the narrator. Warrilow's manner of speaking is slow and deliberate, showing in the matter both greater knowledge than the creatures he depicts, as well as a detached, almost leisurely gaze from above. Describing the narrator of *The Lost Ones* as one of Beckett's most masterful creations, Jonathan Kalb writes that his is "like a voice transplanted from satire into unsatirical discourse [...] as if utterly indifferent to the emotional implications of what it is saying, [it] causes the emotion behind its words to build up like water behind a flood wall" (134). Warrilow describes the process with Breuer as "developing this narrator and his relationship to the story events," rather than worrying about depicting the events (Kalb 136). A classic example of Breen's theories of chamber theatre in action, the staging of the narrator is the real success of the production, working in tandem with Thom Cathcart's compelling design to balance the audience-focused communicative act with the author-focused interpretive act.

The Mabou Mines performance of *The Lost Ones* shows how this "balance of fidelity" and dimensionality can add greater efficacy and speed to the perception of a text. The narrator of the story is not an element that is somehow "lacking" in the original, and thus "needs" to be staged to be understood. However, a silent reading of the third-person omniscient persona does not immediately reveal a personality; a few re-readings might be needed (as Kalb suggests) to move past the self-effacement and flesh out the type of distance, the paradox, the gravity and the strangeness of the speaker. When Warrilow performs it in a pedantic, intense, and imperfect Irish accent, even the first three lines — "Abode where lost bodies roam each searching for its lost one. Vast enough for search to be in vain. Narrow enough for flight to be in vain" (202) — carry a clear sensibility with their sense.[11] Beyond the

NUMBER 2
David Warrilow (detail), *The Lost Ones* (dir. Lee Breuer).
Mabou Mines, Theater for the New City, New York City, 1975.
Photo: Richard Landry / Source: Kalb, *Beckett in Performance*

narrator, each element of the performance is grounded in the text, even though some interpretation or abstraction is required by the formal shift. After only four sentences, the story mentions "The light. Its dimness. Its yellowness." Such a light is used, rising in concert with its description. The figurines, the silent woman, and the audience itself all provide a staging of the exacting descriptions of the searchers and the still. Even an innovation like the music of Philip Glass, which seems initially to violate the parameters of the story as read, can be traced to diegesis in the incessant murmur of bodies, whispers, searchers, climbers, and the "faint stridulence as of insects" (*Prose* 214), the one constant.

Perhaps due to the success and wide recognition of the performative solutions found by Breuer and Mabou Mines, *The Lost Ones* has only rarely been performed by others. The French text, *Le Dépeupleur*, was presented in 2002 and 2003 by the actor Serge Merlin, although it was billed as a "*lecture*," and seems from the descriptions to have been, quite literally, a staged reading.[12] Using only face and gesture, Merlin was presented reading over a book and speaking. Thus stripped of all theatricality that had characterized the Mabou Mines version, the result cannot be seen to have achieved the same level of immersion in the event. The audience has the same distant and passive position as they would when reading alone; if the speaker on stage is presenting an image of this reading, then a conflation of reader and narrator is occurring, rather than a dynamic conflict. The repositioning of the reader within the cylinder itself, perhaps the most radical move by Mabou Mines, brings the purgatorial situation of the Lost Ones into the direct experience of the observers; the theatrical framing of the 2002 version seems instead to place the reader with the narrator, coldly observing the Lost Ones. It is in such determinations that a performative ethics can be read. The fidelity was clearly placed with the author, in the case of the recent version, and the dramatic style may indeed be "Beckettian," reminiscent of Krapp or *A Piece of Monologue*: minimal set, a solitary man, and a singular pursuit of knowledge.

The staging for a 1990 production of *Stirrings Still* in Flemish — interestingly also from a local celebrity actor, Julian Schoenaerts — was remarkably similar.

> In a room lit by twilight, where coat and hat hang like shadows on a clothes-stand, the unused stool stands under the high window. Schoenaerts sits behind a small table with oil-lamp and reads the text. He mutters, ponders and weighs. The hidden microphone gives his words an extra soft resonance, and with only the occasional minimal movement of hand and gaze, he navigates through the text.[13]

Again, the performer inhabits a universe that is recognizably Beckettian, and avoids adding too much interpretation to the work, but how is the content of the text served in such a staging? How is the position of the narrator clarified or revealed? The performance of reading is always, in a sense, a compromise between the twin theoretical demands of adaptation: how to extract and present the events that an audience can follow, and how to maintain the ambiguity which is central to the author's project. Making the same general distinction in his chapter on adapted prose in *Beckett in Performance,* Kalb suggests astutely that "very few adapters fit neatly into either camp [...] most of them enter rehearsals with something of both attitudes, an ambivalent blend of faith and faithlessness" (120). Kalb's reading of the performers is attentive to the psychology and personal feelings of the artists in question, evidenced by his inclusion of interviews in the book. He writes that their ambivalence is "born perhaps of uncertainty about whether it is feelings of love or competition in regard to Beckett's work that drive them" (120).

The comparison of performances like the Mabou Mines version of *The Lost Ones* with the lesser-known "staged reading" of the same text, or of the Flemish *Stirrings Still,* reveals the difficulty inherent in terms like "Beckettian" or in the idea of style. Both types of performance are Beckettian, but this term naturally means different things to different creators. Lee Breuer radically employed all tools at his disposal: space, time, body, and narrator. The basis is textual, but the style is innovative, conceiving of the audience not only as

readers of the prose but also as its victims. When Breuer suggests that he "performs the writer" when he approaches a Beckett text, the result is a re-interpretation of the act of reading. The contrasting, almost inverse, approach of the European staged readings — used here merely as examples, but hardly exceptional in their style — utilised a space, a time, and a body, but neglected strong choices of narrator or of audience positionality. This is more akin to "performing the reader," leaving no absence for the audience to fill. By emphasizing the book, the unchanging "record" triumphs over the radically indeterminate "event." The goal of this comparison between performances is not to evaluate success or failure, but rather to show a distinction of fidelity between author and audience, and the impact on style. It reveals that style is more about the audience than the actor, and is required to define the frame and the form. Style is the connective tissue between space, time, body, and narrator, relating them not only to one another, but also to the audience as a whole.

This creation of unity between performative elements — or Beckettian unity, which is disparity — will be explored further in Chapter Five, because the multi-text performance must inherently draw through-lines across the oeuvre to create an organizing character. The only possibility in such combined and edited works is to perform the writer, because the styles suggested by individual texts will inevitably conflict. In the single-text performance, the stylistic element is the audience itself, producing meaning from image and reaching into unnamable and undefinable depths. The theatre is never hermetic; an audience's imagination or memory will always reach outside the darkened room to grasp for reference and meaning in the work at hand. Thus, a consciousness of Beckett will influence the experience of an individual performance, or the choices of the performers. Some of these "intertexts" are virtually clichés; prose performers often use the bowler hats or tramp-like costumes from *Waiting for Godot*, even if they are not indicated in the text. Other performances take advantage of this intertextuality, and refer

to others conspicuously in order to deepen their own meaning. The 1994 La Mama E.T.C. production of *Foirades/Fizzles* is an example, as it was framed by Beckett's television play *Nacht und Träume* and projections of the 1976 Jasper Johns edition of the book itself. But the single-text performance poses a unique problem in this regard, because "single-text" is an impossibility: the theatre will never quite allow the text to be alone. This returns to the primary distinction between reading and viewing a piece of prose on stage. The theatre alters the textual experience from a bounded activity based in an object (the book) to a boundless potentiality based in an event.

The Use of Image: Frederick Neumann and Mabou Mines

By no means did Mabou Mines, with their aggressively directed but audience-focused approach, always succeed in balancing their attention to the event with their obvious loyalty to Beckett as a writer. Following the success of *The Lost Ones*, Frederick Neumann, one of the original Mabou Mines members, adapted and directed three prose pieces in seven years. These included *Mercier and Camier* (1979), *Company* (1982) and *Worstward Ho* (1986). As an actor, Neumann also featured in numerous other Beckett plays and readings, including the radio-to-stage adaptation by JoAnne Akalaitis of *Cascando* in 1976 (not the La Mama production of the previous chapter). Neumann was denied by Beckett when he requested the rights to do *More Pricks Than Kicks* on stage, more on grounds of Beckett's dislike of his own work than of Neumann's, and the others received Beckett's special permission. Beckett also gave the rights for Neumann to adapt *From an Abandoned Work*.[14] Neumann finds something in the prose which he is compelled to put on stage:

> You see, I understand his texts as not just written words but something almost three dimensional, and meant to be experienced in space if only with the ear. There are always voices and something representing the stage, also darkness and something like day, an announcement of the beginning of things, as in Genesis — the void, the emptiness and some

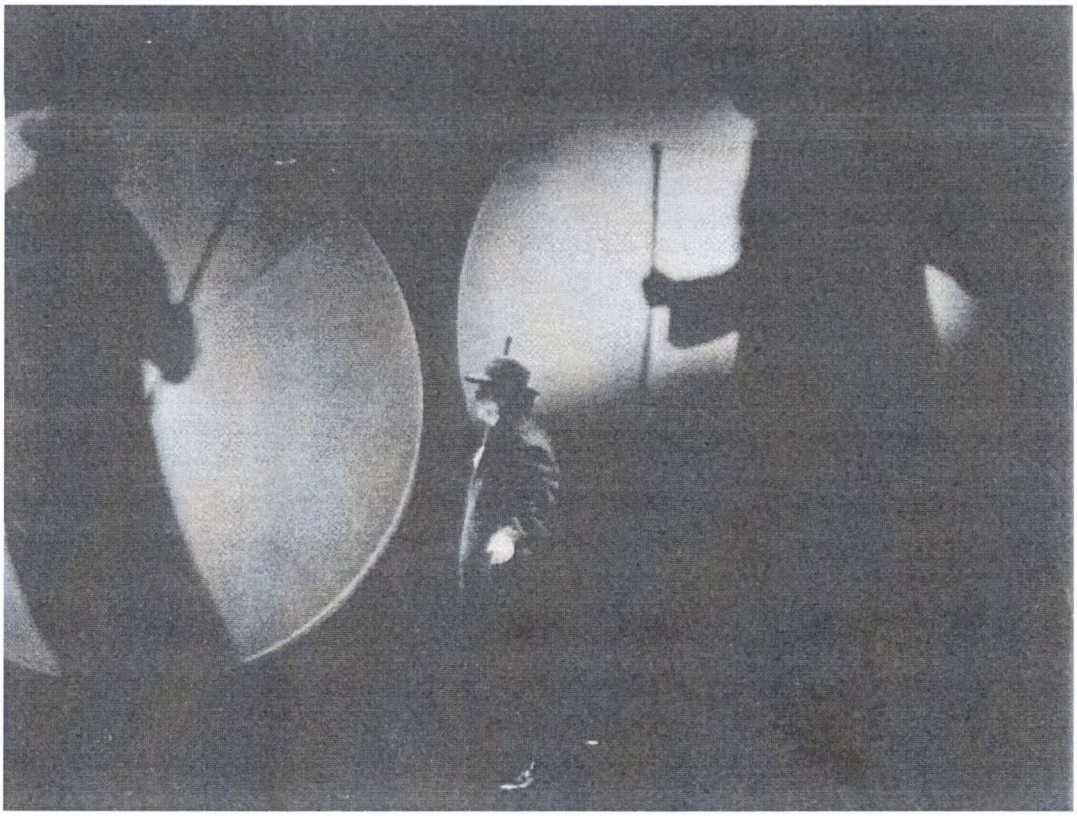
> kind of spark of something there that takes place, to be seen and heard, and perhaps even ignored. (qtd. in Kalb 207)

Because Mabou Mines originally was conceived as a transatlantic company and frequently worked in Paris, the occasional face-to-face meetings with Beckett developed into true friendships for Neumann and David Warrilow. Writing to Warrilow in 1984 to give permission for a studio film version of the Mabou Mines *The Lost Ones*, Beckett wrote that "No such request from you will ever be refused by me."[15] Neumann had similar leeway on the grounds of personal connection and artistic respect, and this led to some exquisite failures of prose adaptation.

Neumann's first work with Beckett's prose was *Mercier and Camier*, which was staged at the Public Theater in New York City in October of 1979.[16] The novel presents its own challenges for adaptation, in that it was something of an apprenticeship work for Beckett, and the first novel he wrote in French. Written in 1946, the work was unpublished until 1970, partially due to a delay in Beckett's translation work on it (but also due to some lack of desire on Beckett's part to see it emerge). The book has a basically naturalistic feeling, but the intervention of the "Summary of two preceding chapters" which repeatedly invades the story's flow is precisely the kind of narrative intervention, revealing and undermining the prose materially, which theatre has a hard time addressing. Mel Gussow, writing the friendliest review of the production for the *New York Times*, asserts:

> Because much of the book is in dialogue, it may appear deceptively simple to adapt to the stage. Actually it is probably as difficult a task as it would be to turn *Godot* into a novel. *Mercier & Camier* is filled with jump cuts, authorial diversions -- after a rhapsody about geography, Beckett comments self-critically, 'End of descriptive passage' -- subsidiary characters and a landscape that swings from bog to bordello. ("Review of *Mercier & Camier*" C3)

Certainly the work was Neumann's apprenticeship to prose performance as well; it was not particularly well received by most critics, but definitely



NUMBERS 3 & 4
Frederick Neumann, *Company* (dir. Frederick Neumann & Honora Fergusson).
Mabou Mines, Public Theater, New York City, 1983.
Photos: Susan Schwartzenberg / Source: Kalb, *Beckett in Performance*

provides fertile ground for exploration. Janice Paran, writing an essay on the production in *Theater*, says that it is "one of those good failures that are worth seeing, worth investigating" (63).

Neumann's (and the company's) theatre tends to be imagistic, even spectacular; the result is, in the words of one reviewer, that "very little of what is seen on stage comes from Beckett's simple and stinging novella [...] Neumann's transposition of this touching acerbity tries to make it theatrical by boiling it down to its essential images, but Beckett had already left out everything nonessential" (Feingold). The work certainly seems like an example of "total theatre," which is mentioned explicitly by Barbara Cossette in her preview article about the production. Paran calls it "environmental theatre," noting the "elaborate setting and multiple acting areas" (65). As with *The Lost Ones*, the audience is enveloped physically in the set, with the theatre transformed with billowing scrim and a sculptural construction, entitled "road-ruins-horizon," lining the walls. A canal with actual water is on stage, where it occasionally rains; through the window, constructed in a wall of fabric, a *trompe l'oeil* image of a real Dublin street can be seen. Cossette quotes Neumann, describing his approach: "This is our little cocoon, our gossamer world of fiction. It is the feeling one has when one steps into a good book: the book actually engrosses you" ("Off Broadway").

The production had a large cast for Beckett's prose performances — most of which are adapted as solo work — including Neumann himself as Mercier, Bill Raymond as Camier, and David Warrilow as the "Storyteller." An excellent theatrical image of the pseudocouple was devised for Mercier and Camier, who first appear on stage together wearing a single oversized raincoat. The positioning of the narrator was theatrically interesting, if a bit difficult to orient within the text; Warrilow appeared as a recorded image on a television, and never came physically into the performance. This is theoretically, at least, a compelling staging of narrative omniscience: absent yet visible and audible, in absolute control of time, fixed to the recording tape

as much as words are fixed to the page. Gussow felt that Warrilow's physical presence was needed nonetheless, both because of the technical flaw of his occasional inaudibility and because "with his ashen face and oracular voice, he is a figure with a magnetic attraction for Beckett" ("Review" C3).

There are disagreements among critics over the quality of the adaptation, and indeed over the textual nature of the event itself. Mel Gussow, who was by this point in time a firm Beckett partisan, wrote that the essence of Neumann's project was textual fidelity:

> Wisely, in his adaptation Mr. Neumann stresses Beckett's words. The play is faithful to the passages that it uses from the novel, but it is, necessarily, highly selective. The adapter has simplified his source, reducing it largely to a dialogue, pruning barflies and passers-by [...] As with any adaptation, one could question omissions, but it should be emphasized that Mr. Neumann has made a serious, partially successful attempt to theatricalize Mercier & Camier with fidelity. ("Review" C3)

The more extended critical essay produced by Janice Paran reaches a conclusion which is an almost perfect opposite:

> The production employed the dialog, incidents, locales, and other characters of the novel selectively, including some key passages while omitting others, but did so without retaining the novel's specific progression or its naturalistic detail. Neumann's staging of Mercier and Camier in effect appropriated Beckett's words and transformed them into décor, changing narrative elements into theatrical ones, meaning into sound and image. (63)

An interesting point about genre is made implicitly by Paran when she writes that the adaptation had virtually nothing to do with the novel, but was instead "a kind of poem about the idea of Mercier and Camier" (63). A clearer description of the style-driven approach can hardly be conceived. Paran's own experience is the basis for her claim about the severed link to the text, as she approached her first viewing without ever having read the novel, and left that viewing with no understanding of it. She saw it again after reading the novel, which provided merely a "scenario" for the performance without improving understanding of it; the new information simply revealed the difference between "gaps" that were textual and gaps arising through performance

choices. Paran thus draws a distinction between "theatrical" and "dramatic" use of language in the production, identifying the dramatic as a convincing and organic relationship between speech and movement. The theatrical vocabulary for which Mabou Mines is renowned was emphasized instead, and for Paran and many others, the constitutive text/action relationship was destroyed in a blaze of image and spectacle. The event thus became "an apology for the dialog [sic] instead of an extension of it" (66). Paran's distinction restates the rubric, previously introduced, which questions the balance of authorial and audience fidelity in prose adaptation.

A concrete example of this phenomenon is the opening image of the production. The audience, enclosed in gauze and scrim on all sides, begins to see projections and shadows on the fabric. A waiter on rollerskates appears first as a shadow, then bursts seamlessly out of the projection and into the space. Paran rightly calls this a "theatrical image of the first order" (65), and it seems ripe for theoretical analysis in terms of nearly anything: the virtual, the simulacra, the act of the novel, Plato's cave. Quickly, however, a television is turned on to reveal David Warrilow; the pseudocouple appears in their shared raincoat; the train is boarded and the text is chanted; conceptual and presentational dialogue overwhelms the images. "The complexity of the words," writes Paran, "got in the way; they seemed to pile up, clogged, in the air, and the production's visual levity was constantly impeded by plodding exchanges between the actors" (66). The balance tips toward experience and away from information, toward theatricality and away from narrative. Paran reveals the origins of her title for the article, "Beckett by Baedeker," in her summary:

> *Mercier and Camier*, in effect, incorporated two languages simultaneously: one actual, the words themselves, and one visual. They ran through the production without meeting; they had nothing to do with each other. Instead of using Beckett's words to create the world of *Mercier and Camier*, Neumann merely included them as a kind of travelogue, rendering Beckett's compact and evocative language curiously flat. (66)

Many of the production decisions show precisely the risk of what has been called "re-inscription," revealing the fragility of the void at the heart of the work. Interventions like the music of Philip Glass are no longer textually based, as in *The Lost Ones*, but instead are layered in to flesh out the pure theatricality. The decision to turn the "monologue of an old crank on the train into a rhythmic chant" invites a comparison to *The Music Man*, and the resetting of the Dublin pub in the final chapter into Heaven's Gate comes into even harsher criticism from Michael Feingold: "to stage this underlying symbolic meaning and exclude the anecdote it underlies is to deny Beckett's pith, and reduce his narrative to incoherence." The end result is an appearance of "lax direction" which "needs a strenuous restructuring under a stricter and more scrupulous eye than Neumann's: Lee Breuer or Joanne Akalaitis ought to take the piece in hand" ("Review").[17]

Whatever the effect of the reviews, it seems that Neumann's next outing enacted the lessons of *Mercier and Camier*, perhaps to a fault. He adapted, directed, and performed *Company* in 1982, revived it several times in New York, and toured the production to Paris in 1985 and 1995 (with David Warrilow playing the main role in French).[18] *Company* is structured in three general and chronological parts, involving stories that move from childhood to manhood to old age. As discussed in Chapter Three, *Company* is fundamentally a piece about voice; "apart from the voice and the faint sound of his breath [there is] no sound" (*Company* 2). In spite of a multitude of personae that seem to emerge, there is the persistent impression in the work that there is only one alone, on his back in the dark, "devised deviser devising it all for company" (32). The voice is constrained, not unlike the Mouth of *Not I* and the various prose narrators from *The Unnamable* and *Texts for Nothing*, from an untroubled first person identity. Spoken of in the third person initially, the "one on his back in the dark" is also addressed by a voice as "you;" at times, "you" seems to reach out to the reader also, or to the audience in performance. "I" is used only fleetingly in the piece. The

explanation offered by the narrator of the multiple points of view seems clear, but is hardly consistent: "Use of the second person marks the voice. That of the third the cankerous other. Could he speak to and of whom the voice speaks there would be a first. But he cannot. He shall not. You cannot. You shall not" (2). Jonathan Kalb articulates the meaning of "company" as "anything that interrupts nothingness, even an itch, a hand movement or a memory" (120). The negative phenomenological conception of radio or theatre, either of which could also be seen as an articulated interruption of nothingness, aligns with this theme of the work. Neumann relates the following exchange with Beckett, from the discussions between them prior to the adaptation:

> —I don't know, Fred, what you could do with it. It all takes place in the dark.
> —Like the theater, in the dark.
> —Touché.

Neumann's *Company* operates on the simple spatial metaphor that two different positions on the stage — rocking chairs which face one another across a table and lamp — manifest two different voices, or points of view. The voice changes, almost giving the impression of different characters being played, as Neumann changes position. The internal anecdotes which structure the story are acted out, often inconsistently with their actual content, perhaps to manifest the unevenness of the narrative voice. Visual disjunction is a theme of Neumann's adaptation; only in the final image does the first line come true, as the character lies down on his back in the dark. Performing the entire text over the course of an hour and three quarters,[19] Neumann seems to have successfully created a unifying character who is credible; in Kalb's words, he enacted "a clear impression of a reflective old man who finds as much joy in the complexities of his own mind as in his experiences of the external world" (123). While this may be a success for the actor in such a daunting role, it is nonetheless a failure to convey the text's central significance, which is "that

the identity is somehow precarious" (Kalb 123). Where *Mercier and Camier* foundered by doing too much theatre, *Company* seems to have done too little; yet both managed to destroy the fragile void at the heart of Beckett's narrative technique. What is the necessary alchemy, generally thought to have occurred in Breuer and Warrilow's *The Lost Ones*, which preserves both the trace and the event?

The last attempt by Neumann to adapt the prose was, fittingly, *Worstward Ho*. This production was also with Mabou Mines, and was staged at CSC Theater in September of 1986.[20] The prose text, written in English in 1983, is a study in the syntactical pursuit of failure; it encapsulates the ever-worsening condition of being and speech, yet its constant refrain is "On." Published as the final work in the late trilogy *Nohow On*, the piece poses a tremendous challenge to adaptation and performance. Memorization is not an incidental feature of the event, but a genuine accomplishment which echoes a choice made in the face of apparent impossibility. In short, in both form and content, a performance of *Worstward Ho* encapsulates an ethic of impossibility. Neumann's adaptation is a direct response to his previous work, an enactment of the famous admonition in the text to "Fail again. Fail better."

Critical response to *Worstward Ho* was a marked improvement over both of Neumann's previous productions. The adaptation had a strong yet simple visual metaphor for the textual activity, which clearly benefited the dense and difficult text. Neumann staged the piece standing in an open grave next to a human skeleton. Performing in extreme slowness for the full effect of the text's intensity and concentration, Neumann also made use of a subtle lighting scheme, designed by Jennifer Tipton, which several reviewers mentioned as adding an almost dialogic element to the rigorous introspection of the speaker. While it seems the most balanced of Neumann's pieces between the demands of audience and author, the same questions arise. Writing in the *New York Post*, Marilyn Stasio holds that "this artfully-wrought piece still doesn't resolve that nagging question of whether a piece of

introspective prose, written to be read, can ever be completely satisfying in an alien art form." The problematic phrase "written to be read" and the curious implications of drama as an "alien" artform aside, Stasio offers a lucid formulation of the prose performance challenge: "There is still a too-solid feeling to his production that seems inevitable when images meant to be imagined by a reader are given a body on stage."

The direction of Neumann's dominant fidelity, then, can be read as a progression. *Mercier and Camier* emphasized the theatrical image and the creation of an experience for the audience over the actual text. The result was an incomplete but interesting piece that failed, in a sense, on both counts. The corrective was *Company*, which signalled a return to textual and authorial fidelity, but was ultimately "typical of the large subset of adaptations that have fallen victim to their creator's respectfulness, their attempts to meet Beckett halfway by keeping theatrical ingenuity to a minimum" (Kalb 121). *Worstward Ho* came closest to the balance, which it achieved by mimicking Beckett's own process of creating drama: the creation of a visual analogue, or spatially manifested dialogue, which is both visually compelling and directly related to the text. Gussow argues that the best cross-genre works of Mabou Mines — a list which includes, for him, *Cascando, The Lost Ones*, and *Worstward Ho* — show that besides authorial fidelity, "the most important element in Beckett adaptation [...] is the discovery of a metaphor or an image, through which one can visualize the original piece" (*Conversations* 164). Yet even *The Lost Ones* manifests an insurmountable "betrayal" of the original text, an effacement of the void which founds it. Warrilow himself commented: "If I had any real misgivings about *The Lost Ones* it was this: there is no way to speak the text without punctuating it, which means that one has to be unfaithful to the writing, since the only punctuation is a period. That is lost" (Kalb 232-233). By this same token, however, every performance of Beckett's drama is an adaptation, a betrayal of the unpunctuated text, "another blot on silence."

Company and the Scholar as Artist

One of the most frequently performed pieces of Beckett prose is the 1980 novella *Company*, and with the exception of general advice about adaptation given in letters (i.e. to Shivaun O'Casey and Joseph Chaikin), it is the only adaptation of a single text with which Beckett was explicitly involved, and for which he received public credit. In collaboration with director Pierre Chabert, Beckett's French version of *Compagnie* premiered in Paris in the Petite Salle of the Théâtre du Rond-Point on 15 November 1984, only one year after the 1982-83 Mabou Mines version in New York and three years after Daniel Zerki presented it in the 1981 Festival d'Automne in Paris.[21] American director and theatre scholar S.E. Gontarski collaborated with Chabert and Beckett in mounting the production in Los Angeles for its English-language premiere. The production, acted by Alan Mandell and directed by Gontarski, played at the Los Angeles Actors' Theatre (LAAT, within the Los Angles Theatre Centre) from 16 February to 27 April 1985, and was held over several times.

The live theatre industry in Los Angeles is considerably different from the New York scene, and the model of authorial integrity apparently upheld by Gontarski sometimes seems at odds with the Hollywood-style marketing of the production by the LAAT. Insistently calling the production "the Nobel Laureate's latest play," the slightly saccharine press release nonetheless lists numerous quotes from Gontarski which explicitly note the origins of the text. The first of these is a condescendingly simple description of the process of adaptation that the prose has undergone:

> The creation of an explicit stage image is the adaptation. The prose text differs from the dramatization in that it presents two images to the reader -- one is the character sitting alone in the dark, the other is the voices that character hears. A third image is required for the theatre, so Beckett devised a tangible stage icon, the Figure. (*Company* Press)

Not only does the text present substantially more than two images to the reader, but also the distinction of "the Figure" as anything different from the

"character sitting alone in the dark" is insufficiently explained. Gontarski is extremely lucid in his other recorded comments about the background of the text, and spirited in his defense of adaptation in the first place; the press release also quotes the detailed argument he has made elsewhere that "nowhere is that essential androgyny of the Beckettian text more evident than in *Company*." But to understand what actually was done to this text in adaptation, it is necessary to go to secondary sources.

The Los Angeles production was in a black box theatre, containing only about 30 chairs "sprinkled about with apparent informality" and padded in black fabric, giving the initial impression of a funeral parlour and hushing the audience almost upon entry (Viertel C1). Much like the experience of reading, this adaptation centres on creating the experience of another's solitude. In the preview in the *Los Angeles Times*, actor Alan Mandell was quoted at length:

> It's a very simple piece. There are no props. There is only a figure -- who might very well be a writer -- sitting in a chair. Telling himself stories. Listening to stories (on a voice track). Memories that may or may not be real. Fables of one fabling. And whether they're actually spoken by me or another being, accurate or inaccurate -- that's something left to be determined. It's all in the music of the piece -- you're dealing with his plays just as you would with chamber music. ("Preview of *Company*")

Mandell mentions the sound montage, which was a device Beckett was experimenting with a great deal in his late plays (*That Time, Rockaby*), as well as in suggestions for prose adaptations (Chaikin's *Texts*). As discussed previously, the voice-over is the theatrical device which encodes the critique of the unitary self; the monologue, as in the case of Krapp, becomes a dialogue between disparate selves. This was also critiqued in *Company*, however, more in terms of the execution than of conception; Jack Viertel, reviewing the production in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, felt that Jon Gottlieb's sound design was "not smooth enough to make us lose the sense of technological intervention in this otherwise hermetically sealed world" (C1). Generally, however, the distilled stage image and the delivery of Mandell, a Beckett

veteran from the San Quentin Drama Workshop, were upheld by the critical reception. The reviews seemed to acknowledge the challenges of the text, and the difficulties inherent in staging prose fiction, but generally agreed that Mandell "manages to elucidate the prose with as much clarity as could possibly be hoped for [...] there's something alluring about that sharply focused concentration with the self, no matter how bleak the news" (Viertel).

As a response to Mabou Mines, whether direct or indirect, the Gontarski *Company* can only be seen as a performance with even more weight placed on the authorial side, as the author actually shared the credit for adapting the work. In his direction, however, it seems that Gontarski was somewhat more effective than Neumann in balancing the theatrical requirements for the audience. Adapted to be only 60 minutes, Neumann's target length as well, the performance ran at 70 minutes, whereas Neumann's weighed in at 105. Neither performance seemed based on strict mimesis, as can be seen by the choice in both to place "the Figure" elsewhere than on his back in the dark. Neumann's *Company* could be thought of as a staging of the reader, or the listener, which has been shown to be somewhat less effective theatrically, as it fills the void that should be left for the actual audience. Gontarski's choice to suggest, if not to stage, the writer, is more functional.

Nonetheless, something remained to be done with the English adaptation for Katharine Worth, another scholar/director based in London. Following a conversation with Pierre Chabert the essence of which seems to have been encouragement, Worth approached Beckett for permission to produce a new English stage adaptation.[22] Following two performances at the Studio Theatre, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, the performance opened 9 August 1987 in Edinburgh. With critical acclaim both for Julian Curry and Tim Pigott-Smith, the actor and director (respectively), the production seems to have taken neither the "readerly" nor the "writerly" approach, but rather to have inherited from Beckett's drama some of his penchant for distillation. Nearly every review discusses the extremes of light and dark in

the production, including periods of total blackness. This takes yet another stance on the approach to the audience, already implicated by the "you" of the narrative voice, by placing them physically in the position described as the listener's. The review in *Time Out* of the Edinburgh production states that these extremes "effectively balance subtleties of mood with the twilight areas where reality and imagination blurr [sic] and soften the images of the mind." Used effectively, darkness — like silence — can indeed activate the imagination of the audience. It was precisely the absence of these absences which Viertel criticized in Gontarski's version, noting how the mind can only accept the density of the text if sufficient pauses allow it to sink in. As the voice in the story also lapses into silence at times, leaving the hearer/deviser of the voice alone, Worth and Piggott-Smith's use of void is a visual, embodied, and narrative choice which structurally manifests the text.

More than any other prose piece, a heritage of *Company* adaptations begins to emerge from the differences in performance choices, as it is interesting in the first place that the piece received so many treatments in such a short time after its publication. A staged reading of the work premiered at the National Theatre in London in 1980, arranged by John Russell Brown shortly after the novella's publication; the 1981 staging in Paris by Zerki was the first effort to theatricalize the work further, though insufficient records have been found to determine the performance choices, beyond the fact that it was also a one-man show. The 1982-83 Mabou Mines version significantly used two actors, with Honora Fergusson appearing in the role of "She," a figure who recurs in the memories and anecdotes. As shown above, Neumann's *Company* succeeded as a rendition of Beckett's text but failed as a Mabou Mines production. With the imprimatur of the author, the 1984 Chabert and 1985 Gontarski versions seem "authoritative" in a way denied the others; yet the most significant theatrical choice, the addition of recorded voice-over, seems also to have proved most problematic. Worth's 1987-88 production, inspired by Chabert and yet inherently revisionist, emphasized

what none of the others had yet achieved: a fusion of narrative choice and stylistic choice, achieved by positioning the audience in the same uncertain state occupied by the voice. Even this did not end the streak of interest in the work. Teacher and freelance director Sarah-Jane Scaife produced her own adaptation in Dublin, again using two performers, Paul Johnson (a noted dancer) and Flo McSweeney, in November 1992. Scaife had directed seven Beckett plays at the Peacock, so she derived a stylistic sensibility highly informed by the drama. Additionally, her training background had included some time at LaMama, to which she attributes some inspiration to present the "combination of text and minimalist use of lighting and imagery on stage."[23] Virtually a dance piece, this was probably the most abstract adaptation in the sequence, at least until the 2007 Dublin Fringe Festival, when the work was simply set to music.[24]

One pattern among these productions is the fact that Gontarski, Worth, and Scaife are also scholars. Gontarski in particular has attempted to use his adaptation as a prism for study (and vice versa), publishing an essay involving his practical work called "*Company* for Company: Androgyny and Theatricality in Samuel Beckett's Prose" (published in the collection *Beckett's Later Fiction and Drama*). It is in this text that he introduces his influential rubric of "generic androgyny," examining *Company* genetically through the manuscripts to establish that it is one of several texts that displays a malleability and indiscernibility of genre. He also examines dramas which "could easily have become [works] of prose fiction" (Acheson and Arthur 193), noting the late stage of composition at which Beckett seems to decide which name to give his technique. While interestingly at odds with Beckett's own descriptions of his feelings toward genre, Gontarski enacted his theory with his work on *Company*. This is precisely the type of "staged criticism" which interests Breen and those in the performance studies discourse. The interest in the work by diverse scholars seems to point not only to something particular in the work, but also to the usefulness of "empirical testing" for the scholar.

NUMBER 5
Joseph Chaikin, *Texts* (dir. Steven Kent, adapted by Joseph Chaikin & Kent).
New York Shakespeare Festival, Public Theatre, New York, 1981.
Photo: *New York Times* / Source: *New York Times*

The Quest for "I": Chaikin, Irwin, and *Texts for Nothing*

The case of Joseph Chaikin and his adaptation of *Texts for Nothing* and *How It Is* is not the case of an artist-scholar, but of an actor-director, who felt no less compelled by Beckett's writing to present an on-stage experiment with prose. Again, the opportunity arose out of a fusion of dramatic work and personal connection with Beckett. Chaikin, the founder of the Open Theatre and a renowned performer, was in Paris to play in *Endgame* with the Manhattan Theatre Club at the American Centre in February 1980. Frederick Neumann was understudying Hamm, and as he had a prior relationship with Beckett, the three of them met and discussed various adaptations. It was at this initial meeting that Chaikin approached Beckett for permission and opened their correspondence, at the same time that Neumann was seeking permission and advice for the ultimately abandoned *From an Abandoned Work* (Knowlson 586). In his letter of 29 January 1981, Beckett gave Chaikin "*carte blanche* to use the *Texts* as you please + end of *How It Is*," but was clearly aware of the difficulties faced by the adapter, asking later, "How stage that bodilessness? That groping *vox inanis* [soulless voice]?"[25]

"Soulless voice" is an excellent description of the narrator of *Texts for Nothing*, and bodilessness is precisely the problem it poses for adaptation. *Texts for Nothing* was composed in French mainly in December 1951, as a kind of coda to, or "afterbirth" of, the *Trilogy*, and in particular of *The Unnamable*. Beckett began work on the English translation almost immediately, but this was not published until 1967, when Grove Press released the collection *No's Knife* and, at the same time, *Stories and Texts for Nothing*. The *Texts* are thirteen in number, and in spite of some very concrete (particularly Irish) references within them, they invite some of the most abstract criticism in Beckett Studies with their highly complex rhetorical structure. Shifting between "I" and "me" — that is, from subject to object, from nominative to accusative — the narrative is much more distilled than the *Trilogy*, but the narrative voice is no

less troubled. The summary of the work presented in the *Companion* ends with the claim that the *Texts for Nothing* represent "a poetical apotheosis of the impossible paradox of being and non-being" (568). Kenner reduces this further to summarize the work's events as "fantasies of nonbeing" (119). More concrete analysis of the tone and structure of the work can be found in an essay by Marilyn Gaddis Rose, who writes: "Separable in having separate texts, these prose poems are linked by a common pattern of assertion, denial, modified reassertion. The voice systematically constructs, annihilates, and reconstructs its concomitants space, time, and matter" (228). However, the vocal texture is nonetheless that of a first-person monologue; this makes adaptation considerably more likely, as the longing to create a one-man show tends to begin from the quest for "I."

In order to stand on stage and deliver his lines, Chaikin had to invent a self, not merely a narrator. As discussed in the first chapter on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, the "I" is already a type of absence, a gap in the picture of the world which no technology or image can fill. At a concrete level, though, the word "I" is the name for the self; its routine utterance produces an impression of unity, and in the actor alone on stage, its utterance provides security. This privilege of existence over essence, of the self as an ungraspable flow, was a central tenet held by the postwar existential thinkers (themselves drawing extensively on Merleau-Ponty) and even then was by no means new. Rather, it is rooted as much in pre-Socratic thought (Heraclitus), with which Beckett was extremely familiar, and more recently in Kant. Gontarski and Ackerley, introducing the *Companion* and thus attempting to survey Beckett's life work, state that the "I" is "inescapably retrospective, a corrupt distortion of memory, nostalgia for a present moment, as Kant suggested, always inaccessible to empirical consciousness" (x). There are countless examples of Beckett's awareness of this aporia throughout *Texts for Nothing*, captured in the conditional conjugations and negations that mount until insurmountable. One of them opens *Text* 4:

> Where would I go, if I could go, who would I be, if I could be, what would I say, if I had a voice, who says this, saying it's me? Answer simply, someone answer simply. It's the same old stranger as ever, for whom alone accusative I exist, in the pit of my inexistence, of his, of ours, there's a simple answer. (*Prose* 114)

One of the most eloquent analyses of *Texts for Nothing* can be found in the classic of Beckett criticism *Frescoes of the Skull*, which suggests an "aesthetics of failure" pervading the work. It is this aesthetics which Chaikin seems to have internalized in his work on the adaptation called *Texts*, which he first performed in 1981 in both New York and London.[26] Produced by Joseph Papp in the Public Theatre as part of the New York Shakespeare Festival, the adaptation was credited both to Chaikin and Steven Kent, the director. Chaikin's approach to the embodiment of the character was clearly not to internalize (or externalize) the struggle of the language, but rather to expose this terror by its opposition. Numerous reviews discuss the "innocence" and "clowning" of Chaikin's figure, invoking comparisons in *The Times* to Nicol Williamson (who triumphed in London with Vladimir in the 1964 *Godot*) and to the "indomitable spirit" of a boxer who continues to rebound after being hit ("Review of *Texts*"). The *New York Post*, which generally gave intensely negative reviews of Beckett's work, seems to have understood an ethical fragment, or an "aesthetics of failure," from Chaikin's *Texts*, which they called "a triumphant affirmation of human survival in the lonely place called earth" (Barnes). Unfortunately, and perhaps indicatively of the unintended effects of "clowning," the *Post* review devolves into farcically disgusting stage-Irish jokes, saying that "Beckett's hero is here a tousled-haired, potato-faced leprechaun [...] redolent of the best Irish whiskey that Dublin can offer, and that Irish music of the spheres. This music no Irish musician has ever captured but is still familiar from the Celtic outpourings of this worthy and wordy Bards [sic]." For a certain portion of the New York audience, the expression "drunk with words" may have expressed something of Beckett's fundamental Irishness; for the author and his informed partisans, however, this reception

NUMBER 6 (above)
Bill Irwin, *Texts for Nothing*
(rehearsal)
(dir. Joseph Chaikin, adapted by
Joseph Chaikin & Steven Kent).
Public Theatre, New York, 1992.
Photo: *Village Voice*
Source: *Village Voice*

NUMBERS 7 & 8 (right, from top)
Bill Irwin, *Texts for Nothing*
(publicity)
(dir. Joseph Chaikin, adapted by
Joseph Chaikin & Steven Kent).
San Francisco, 2001.
Photos: Chris Hardy
Source: *San Francisco Chronicle*

could only be described as appalling.

Beckett's legacy was considerably more secure, and the New York culture probably more sensitive to the ethnicization of his writing, only eleven years later when the adaptation was remounted with the noted actor, mime, and clown Bill Irwin. Chaikin, who directed the new production, had also changed a great deal; in 1984, he suffered a stroke during heart surgery which left him with partial aphasia. Incredibly, he continued his work in the theatre, a practical example of the ethical relentlessness which he had expressed so eloquently in *Texts* of 1981. Remounted at the Public Theatre (now the Joseph Papp Public Theatre) and renamed *Texts for Nothing*, the adaptation was the original Kent-Chaikin piece, incorporating the *How It Is* fragment at the end.[27] An unqualified success for the director and performer, the more negative comments about the work tend to focus on the nature of the work as adapted, or to blame the density of Beckett's original. Because Chaikin's own involvement extended across both performances, it is interesting to note the trajectory of the choices and what they might reveal about the text itself, as well as Chaikin's own process of "failing better."

The production was a crisp 65 minutes, which was only made possible by the wholesale exclusion of several of the texts and the compression of others. Having Beckett's blanket permission, Chaikin did not run into difficulty with agents of the Estate, though it is notable that the more recent adaptation of *Texts for Nothing* (by Gare St. Lazare Players) had to pick several complete texts to perform in full. The all-wooden set, an expensive and artful design by Christine Jones, was a major feature of the 1992 production. It featured crevices in which Irwin sometimes lost his hat, and a slippery slope which Irwin has to descend without a foothold; such choices abstract and express the nightmarish actuality of an unanchored persona. The final section of the performance, from *How It Is*, relies on stagecraft for its metaphor: Irwin literally disappears down a hidden trap in the floor, with only his head visible. Michael Feingold, writing in the *Village Voice*, links this to "Lucky's head

peering improbably out of Winnie's mound, as it were — begging for an answer, which doesn't come, or for the extinguishing darkness, which, long pleaded for, mercifully does" ("Review of *Texts for Nothing*").

Predictably, Mel Gussow's review in the *New York Times* proceeds from a strong background in the text and an encompassing awareness of Beckett's work. He writes that the "primal themes are all in place: [Beckett's] cogitation of the brief abyss between birth and death, his reflections on man's inability to ascertain his place in the cosmos [...] Mr. Irwin's character seeks to name what is unnamable, using a blanket of precise words to prove that words are useless." Gussow also delves into the problematics of performed prose, saying that the work delivers an "acting lesson" in how the transformation can occur. Noting the interiority of the monologue which appears on the page when read silently, he suggests that the curious blend of internalization and externalization — the movement of Irwin from wonderment to perplexity to despair — "makes the fantasies corporeal without losing any of their fanciful context"("Beckett's Short Lesson"). Other than Irwin's "total command of Beckett's 'pell-mell Babel of silence and words'" and other eloquent compliments, however, few specifics are offered by Gussow to show how this successful, believable, yet faithfully uncertain "I" comes to be.

The answer to this question seems to have something to do, again, with the placement and treatment of the audience within the story. Michael Feingold makes this a focus of his own review, noting the primacy of communication to both the director and performer, who "try everything to place the performance physically in the here and now." The method by which this is achieved is the total denial of the "fourth wall" and an acknowledgment of the frame of the theatre. When referring to others than himself, Irwin looks out to the audience directly. When the voice wonders who controls the periods of darkness and light, Irwin peers at the booth in the distance. When the onstage situation becomes too much to bear, Irwin actually leaps off the stage, climbing up one of the Neoclassical pillars of the Public Theatre. As with

The Lost Ones and Worth's 1987 version of *Company*, this attention to the audience's positionality within the work — creating distance from the mimesis of the work's inherent terror, and instead staging the unknowability — opens a space for the audience to fill with its imagination. The presence of the actor, about which Chaikin wrote a book, has an inverted and dialectical relationship to the reality it portrays; this is simply another way of giving the famous advice, so often heard from directors, that "less is more." Sounding much like the scholars describing the work at its most absolute, Feingold writes that "the more assertive the performance gets about its reality, the more Beckett's otherworldly words take hold: Existence here is a paean to nonexistence" ("Review of *Texts for Nothing*"). The original question of embodiment, asked of Chaikin by Beckett in his letter of 29 January 1981, is essentially answered in Feingold's review:

> What's especially piquant is that the physicality of the event, this glib man doing these emphatic things in this intimate space, only serves to reaffirm the evanescence of the texts, the way they disappear into their own self-contradictions, speaking until they speak themselves out. The more Irwin gives the words body, the more they seem thoughts, things of the spirit only, sparks of intelligence flashing and vanishing in the void.

Here again is the profound Beckettian dialectic between presence and absence in the theatre, a place whose essence is its lack of essence. The speech act itself functions only to expose the surrounding and underlying emptiness. Though he writes it of Beckett's drama rather than performed prose, Herbert Blau links this appearance of the "ghostly thing" to the revelation of "the latent substance of performance which is divisive, solitary, alien, and apart" (183). Language does not offer an escape from this matrix; on the contrary, as Derrida observes, language is the cage itself. Thus, "whatever the appearance or actuality of communitas, performance is a testament to what separates [...] In the empty space, an empty solitude" (Blau 183). *Texts for Nothing* explores this idea's content, while performance finds its form.

NUMBERS 9, 10, 11, and 12 (clockwise from top left)
Gare St. Lazare Players Ireland, *Access All Beckett* (series)
No. 9: Olwen Fouéré, *Lessness* (dir. Judy Hegarty-Lovett)
No. 10: Conor Lovett, *Trilogy* (dir. Judy Hegarty-Lovett)
No. 11: Lee Delong, *Worstward Ho* (dir. Judy Hegarty-Lovett)
No. 12: Ally Ni Chiarain, *Enough* (dir. Judy Hegarty-Lovett)
Publicity Photos, 1998-2008.
Photos: Gare St. Lazare Players / Source: Gare St. Lazare Players

Gare St. Lazare Players: Forcing *The Unnamable*?

It is a curious feature of the history articulated in this chapter that it ends both with the present day and with the most conservative choices that can possibly be seen in prose performance, short of a handful of staged readings. The Paris and Ireland-based company Gare St. Lazare Players is the more prominent of only two companies that have dedicated themselves almost wholly to performance of Beckett, particularly of his prose.[28] They have received what appears to be blanket authorization by the Estate to create "recitations," events which phenomenologically are indistinguishable from performances or even adaptations. Thus far they have adapted and performed *Molloy* (1996), *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable* (performed as *The Beckett Trilogy*, 2001), *Lessness* (2002), *Enough* (2004), *Texts for Nothing* (2005), *Worstward Ho* (2005), and *First Love* (2008). The package of performances, combined and recombined for various festivals and symposia, is known by the collective name *Access All Beckett.* Many of the productions continue to run at present, and during their 2005-06 tour surrounding the centenary, their work played extensively in Ireland. The company was founded as a "literary theatre" in Chicago in 1983 by noted director Bob Meyer and moved to Paris in 1988. In 1991, Judy Hegarty-Lovett and Conor Lovett joined Meyer's company, which staged *Waiting for Godot* in Paris in 1993, featuring Lovett as a performer and inspiring them to engage further with Beckett. In 1995 the pair took over "the Irish operation" of Gare St. Lazare, and they are currently in charge of the company as a whole. Lovett is a Lecoq-trained actor who performs *The Beckett Trilogy* and *Texts for Nothing*, and Judy Hegarty-Lovett directs all the Beckett work.[29]

The background of *Molloy*, the first prose piece adapted by Hegarty-Lovett, was quite literally as a piece of "chamber theatre." For years, it was a party piece for Conor Lovett, who had memorized particular passages and could call them up at will in small gatherings. The text underwent what

Hegarty-Lovett describes as "creative evolution," emerging first at the Battersea Arts Festival in a theatre setting, and then much more prominently in London in 1998, where it showed for three weeks at the Riverside Studios. The one-man show incorporated only the Molloy section of the novel, dispensing wholly with Moran, as most adaptations of *Molloy* seem to do. Also in keeping with routines set by Jack MacGowran years before (Cf. Chapter Five), the bulk of the selected episodes were comic: knocking on mother's head, the bicycle and the constable, the sucking stones. Comedy did not win over any critics. The initial reviews were not remotely positive, with Lyn Gardner of the *Guardian* granting two stars, Rick Jones of the *Evening Standard* offering one star, and Jeremy Kingston of the *Times* (which has no star system) spouting unremitting negativity. It is an interesting feature of these reviews that they all compare Lovett to a stand-up comic. The *Guardian* review notes (not for the last time) that Lovett seems to be making up the text as he goes along, but with a "hint of affectation from all his travel, delivered like a stand-up comic but looking for rather less" (Gardner). The *Evening Standard* states that the work does not even measure up to this comparison, that it is "too understated, too quiet to qualify as standup [...] but he does possess a comedian's instinct for timing and crowd control" (Jones).

Molloy has since enjoyed the widest distribution of performances of any other Gare St. Lazare work, touring to over 100 different venues in international locales, including Germany, Israel, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The performance toured singly until the other pieces of the *Trilogy* had been developed; this extended the event from one hour to three, and clearly put much more strain on the performer, thus limiting somewhat the opportunities to travel. The performance of *Molloy* must have changed through the sheer number of performances, but even in 2004, the vestiges of the "stand-up comic" persona and the quality of querulous invention in Lovett's approach were still visible.[30] The performance begins without the lights changing, and Lovett simply rises from the front row. It

seems from his demeanor that he might be about to make an announcement about mobile phones, but he begins speaking the text of *Molloy*. There is a conversational tone, but it is not without precision; the intensity of his focus serves to draw in the audience, most often to comic effect. His shaved head is covered at first with a wool cap, and he wears a long coat over a threadbare sweater. In short, all signifiers point to Cronin's "Beckett Man," the universal tramp in the universal one-man show, both writer and Molloy, inside and outside of the world he is portraying. The faithfulness to a "Beckettian" style, however, also risks a certain staleness for those already familiar with Beckett's theatrical universe. The judicious injection of silence and comedy is as theatrically predictable as it is necessary, playing as it does on the symbolic vocabulary set up by the ubiquity of *Waiting for Godot*. To the uninitiated, the novel is made accessible, but does not retain core elements of its structure (with no mention of Moran throughout). These choices seem to derive from an ethos of sorts toward Beckett's staged fictions, revealing the tension between authorial and audience fidelity. Combined with Hegarty-Lovett's statements about her work as director, these "ethical" choices are worth exploring further in the context of the company's other work.

The first universal that is on display in all the work of Gare St. Lazare Players is a particular treatment of space. The tendency of the company is to perform in unusual, especially non-theatrical venues, and "found space" is the general visual approach. *Enough* in Dublin in 2004 was in a long, darkened hall of oil paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland, but in Cork in 2005 it played in the upstairs portion of a bar. *Worstward Ho*, one of their most successful integrations of a found space with a production, was in the Cork City Museum in Fitzgerald Park, surrounded by ancient archaeological detritus. When the monologues (like *Molloy*) appear in theatrical spaces, no adjustments are made to the set as it stands, and technical interventions like lighting are extremely minimal. Thus, the private showing of *Molloy* at Andrew's Lane Theatre was on the set of Mark Doherty's *Trad* (oddly appropriate, consisting of three

stones and a bed of gravel), but *Lessness* at the National Theatre in London was performed on the set of *Ivanov*. While it may appear that this aesthetic toward found space is particularly convenient for touring work, as well as being justified within Beckett's own theatrical minimalism, the company takes ownership of these environments as a choice.

In terms of embodiment, it is also notable that the clothing for the performances is of two worlds, generally a combination of "whatever the performer was wearing that day" and some directorial decision-making. However, the audience is never in a position to distinguish which choices on stage are the director's and which are "found," so the effect of this approach to costume is not measurable; it would be no different if the costume were, in fact, selected. Also, it is difficult for a performer who dresses knowing that they will be on stage later that day not to take this fact into account, thus merely transplanting a directorial function onto the actor. Both determinations — the space and the body — are extensions of the insistence by the company, upheld even in private conversation, that the *Access All Beckett* performances are recitations, not adaptations. "Adaptation" is treated literally as a dirty word, a kind of insult to the company's fidelity, or else a threat that might lead to revocation of their right to take the texts on stage. Even "performance" is eschewed when possible, carrying with it the taint of cross-generic behaviour.

This defensive position is absurd in relation to the performative history of the prose and its potential efficacy, regardless of what the legal particulars of the permission arrangement are between the Estate of Samuel Beckett and Gare St. Lazare Players. In the forty years before *Molloy*'s premiere, more than 100 separate adaptations of Beckett's prose pieces were produced, for which no apology need be issued. The semantic debate of what to call the production is also theoretically absurd if one merely observes the events with attention to their phenomenological characteristics, which it shares with both "adaptation" and "performance." While the "found spaces" may be conceptually pure in terms of the vision of "recitation," they have an enormous visual impact on

the production. The difference between *Enough* recited on a chair in a vast marble hall lined with oil paintings and the upstairs of a dingy, modern bar in Cork seems like a major directorial choice; instead, it is held up as the absence of choice, for the sake of the text. The 2005 *Texts for Nothing*, when presented in Cork, was staged with a highly specific lighting scheme within the meeting room of the Cork Masonic Temple, redolent with dark wood, hung with heraldry, and suggestive of secrecy. The impact on the text cannot be ignored, nor should it be. The text is not so fragile that it can stand up only "without directorial intervention." The theatre, on the other hand, needs intervention badly. Indeed, some of the performances' negative responses can also be attributed to this curious brand of self-censorship, borne of excessive fidelity.

The Lost Ones convinced a generation of Beckett scholars that generic transition, when done well, is no great sin. The Gare St. Lazare *Lessness*, which premiered at the 2002 Kilkenny Arts Festival and then went on to play at the Cottesloe within the National Theatre in the autumn, seems to have confirmed the opposite for most theatre critics. Benedict Nightingale, writing in the *Times*, noted that the piece was not at all dramatic, condemning the staging choices with tongue-in-cheek mockery of the stage images ("a housewife escaping an importunate curtain," "a Brownie saluting Akela") and concluding that the piece should have remained "melancholy prose for a wet winter afternoon" ("Review of *Lessness*"). Referring to the desire to stage Beckett's prose pieces as "perverse" and reiterating Beckett's intent for the work, Michael Billington wrote in the *Guardian* that

> despite the skill of Olwen [Fouéré's] Cottesloe performance, I see little point in trying to turn this bleakly pessimistic 1969 prose poem, built around repetitive clusters of words, into a form of theatre [...] whereas in Beckett's dramas there is always a necessary tension between stoical resistance and despair — think only of *Happy Days* — in a prose piece such as this he is at liberty to pursue his reductive vision unchallenged. ("Review of *Lessness*")

The critic certainly reveals a preference which was carried into the theatre, but a fascinating insight into the need for internal resistance is repeated several

times in his review. Billington calls the piece "inherently unstageable" due to its lack of "internal argument," and in the next line notes that although Judy Hegarty-Lovett's direction "is full of shadowy lighting and stained-glass poses, it lacks any dynamic." Billington expresses admiration for the actress for her "strong visual presence and vocal technique," reveals distaste for the extremity of Beckett's late prose, and places no responsibility for what he deems the failures of the theatrical event on the director.

Hegarty-Lovett ran into this problem of her own invisibility a great deal with the Beckett work, but a contradiction emerges from her response to this. The 1998 *Molloy* review in the *Evening Standard* noted that "[Lovett] seems so self-contained you wonder what Hegarty's role was" (Jones). Fintan O'Toole left Hegarty-Lovett completely out of his first review of *The Beckett Trilogy*, prompting her to write to him. Unfortunately, the desire to be credited for the productions' success (with the concomitant responsibility over their failure) is at odds with her basic principle of direction, which is service to the author. She says of the text, "the greatest thing you have to do is restrain yourself." Phrasing it in the imperative at one point, she says her main role as director is to "get down."[31] In theory, then, disappearance of her work is the goal. In practice, however, this is not an asceticism which can be lived. It is impossible for any practitioner, whether director or actor, to be a pure vessel for a writer. Directing and acting are both radically embodied acts, and thus pass through the phenomenological prisms of prior experience, intentionality, and interpretation. That Hegarty-Lovett does not embrace this perspective does not reduce its impact on her work as a director.

It seemed initially that in the 2005 rendition of *Worstward Ho*, a prose piece which carries its internal critique more prominently than almost any other by Beckett, Gare St. Lazare Players might break through its self-imposed barriers. The radically inhuman syntax of the text makes it impossible for a performer to rest in the conversational tone of Lovett, or even to disappear within the incantatory murmur of Ally Ni Chiarain in *Enough*. The performer

is exposed and threatened, daunted by memorization and the sheer vicious, ever-worsening logic of the piece. The venue chosen for the premiere, Cork City Museum, has many promising features. Echoing the performative metaphor selected by Neumann for the 1986 version, the museum is full of bones and stones; at the entrance to the performance space sat a gigantic labyrinth carved into a cemetery stone, dating to 4000 BCE. The aura of dead things in cases is pervasive. Added to the sheer weight of history, a texture which interacts so beautifully with the text, is the primary alienation of being in an empty museum for an unusual purpose, at an hour far past its closing.

The gallery selected for the performance places the audience facing a floor-to-ceiling window, looking out on an idyllic vista of Fitzgerald Park. Behind the audience is a three-piece band playing a rhythmic composition on drums, guitar, and hammer dulcimer. On the first night of the performance, 8 April 2005, the sense of elevation and ritual in the room was confirmed by a long and elaborate tea ceremony, in which each member of the audience was served (by an assistant, not the actress) an individually tailored cup of Barry's tea made from water boiled on a camping stove set up in the gallery. An act in no way connected with Beckett's text, the ceremony was a deeply satisfying acknowledgment of the audience, and seemed attuned to the need to comfort them before the long discomfort of the text. As the assistant sat down after the last person was served, Lee Delong quickly closed a black curtain over the pastoral scene ahead, froze, stared at the audience, and said "On."

Delong's performance is undeniably a *tour de force*, applying an inviting yet uncompromising persona to the voice. Helen Meaney, reviewing the work for the *Guardian*, writes that she "brings extraordinary depth and sympathy to a mind that is involuting and a body that no longer serves that mind. Her inflections, gesture — even her smiles — lead us through the thicket of negative abstractions, humanising it, so that it becomes triumphant and moving" ("Review of *Worstward Ho*"). Indeed, the sparse vocabulary of gesture seems mainly to include movements of beckoning and invitation, is

always directed at the audience, and serves to reveal the urgency of the message. Delong's costume, unlike those in the other prose works by the company, seems selected more for its properties of alienation and dislocation than functionality or invisibility. For no knowable reason, she wears a modern fleece jacket over a traditional Japanese costume, complete with sash and plastic beach sandals. From the delivery of the lines to the details of venue and execution, *Worstward Ho* seems to struggle mightily against its repetitive structure, making theatrical "compromises" which serve, ultimately, to clarify the text and illuminate the experience for the audience.

The unfortunate coda to the theatrical effectiveness of *Worstward Ho,* the most innovative non-recitation by Gare St. Lazare to date, is that the tea ceremony was cut the day after the opening. While its absence does not reduce the accomplishment of Lee Delong, it certainly affects the experience of the audience, in particular their receptiveness to such an aggressively difficult monologue. It seems that in spite of the tremendous skill of every actor involved with the company, the final delivery of the texts to the audience is always a second priority; the obsession with origins and fidelity is so strong that it overshadows this primary function of the performance event.

Naturally, neither Judy Hegarty-Lovett nor Conor Lovett truly believes that their "recitations" are pure and complete renditions of an original text. *Molloy,* for instance, is patently not a rendition of the novel, but a limited presentation of one character; this problem is compounded in the *The Beckett Trilogy,* when the same actor appears alone on stage to present one of Beckett's most divided narrative voices. But in the drive to deny the full scale of even their own theatrical alterations to the text, they flirt with what Badiou would call *disaster* — one of the names for an ethical transgression against the truth-process, borne out of the event — and risk a movement that Badiou, ostensibly without the Beckettian cross-reference, nominates as "forcing the unnamable." This is the attempt to maintain

> *total* power of a truth [...] the ability to name and evaluate *all* the elements of the objective situation from the perspective of the truth-process. Rigid and dogmatic (or 'blinded'), the subject-language would claim the power, based on its own axioms, to name the whole of the real, and thus to change the world. (*Ethics* 83)

It is this ethical concept which makes it more than a semantic issue to admit that the works are something other than "recitation." It suggests that the concept of recitation itself, whether derived from the legal fictions or coined by the company in its own defence, is a lie based on misapplied and excessive fidelity to a non-existent origin (invoking Badiou's idea of simulacra, another type of what he calls "Evil" in relation to a truth). It would be far too much to call these performances evil within Badiou's schema (though his connotations are anything but moralising). But the thought contained within these theatrical events risks taking a confused loyalty to the extremes of totality, typified by the uncomfortable imperative in the project's name, *Access All Beckett*.

At the core of this most recent work from Gare St. Lazare is the still-unresolved tension between reading silently alone, reciting, and performing. The *Irish Times* review of *Worstward Ho*, while generally favourable, opens with several "very good arguments against the staging of Samuel Beckett's prose works" (O'Toole). The argument of temporal control comes first; Fintan O'Toole writes that *Worstward Ho* is "intricately bound up with the act of reading [...] its density and its lack of punctuation marks require the reader continually to circle back, figuring out which words form phrases."[32] As observed in the first chapter — and as goes unobserved in the review — it is the task of the director/interpreter specifically to clarify connections, illuminate syntax, reveal a structure, and map the work in the allotted time. This means that a wholly different work will always come into being, with different potential for access; this is what is meant by the phrase "come alive in performance." Close reading over much time will always yield a different experience, particularly with dense and extraordinary texts like Beckett's late prose. An interesting comparison might be *Finnegans Wake*, on which a life's

work could be based, and yet which is hardly lost — indeed, which is vastly improved over reading silently — when simply read, once through, aloud. *Worstward Ho* in performance by Lee Delong stands out from the other works by Gare St. Lazare because it derives its form from the imperatives of content. The others seem to shape the content of the performances based entirely on the form, and its *a priori* closure to "adaptation." Not only does performance theory fail to bear out the separation of adaptation and recitation, but as Gontarski and others argue, the texts themselves are more androgynous.

From "Voices Speaking" to the "Speaking Voice"

The performances addressed in this chapter have been classified and analysed in order to discover their theoretical implications, rather than to document a "neutral" history. More frequent use was made of critical reception than of rich description, partially because many have been described already in published work, especially Kalb's *Beckett in Performance*, Cohn's *Just Play*, and the indispensable *Samuel Beckett: A Casebook* edited by Jennifer Jeffers. A review of the key findings in the area of single-text performance will conclude the chapter, as well as introduce the foundations for the following analysis of multi-text performance in Chapter Five.

The "measurement" of performance choices is distinct from the "judgement" of these choices. Merely to describe how a performance handled time, space, and the body is the simplest, or at least most generic, method of articulating its phenomenology. These categories apply to all performance. Categories of measurement specific to prose adaptation, following from Breen and the narrative theorists explored at the beginning of this chapter, are the problems of how to stage the narrator, how to place the audience within the narrative, and what "style" forms the connective tissue between content and form. These types of choices can be measured more objectively than the notion of "fidelity," which forms the core of this chapter's analytical

procedures. It is in the selective application of fidelity — that is, whether the audience or author emerges as the priority for the artist, and what happens to the category given less weight — that an ethic of prose performance begins to appear.

Paradoxically, this chapter shows that audience fidelity flourished most while Beckett was alive. The reasons for this are manifold. First, there are Beckett's personal relationships with people like Warrilow and Neumann. Personal loyalty undoubtedly permitted more radical choices than would be considered by present-day lawyers, as Beckett's trust and generosity in friendship is rightly recognized as exceptional. Cultural factors are also certainly in play, as the heyday of Beckett prose adaptations coincided with a new *auteur* theory in film as well as times of upheaval in Europe and New York, launching a number of aggressively avant-garde projects following the 1960s. Even Beckett's Nobel Prize in 1969, followed by a relative drought of new plays and ever shorter novels, sparked a public awareness and interest in his work which could often only be satisfied by going beyond the dramatic core. Nonetheless, many of the directors who conceived radical "epic situations" for their narrators and effective incorporation of the audience — Lee Breuer's *The Lost Ones* being the foremost example — still had the author's *style* at heart. Breuer's admonition to "perform the writer" admits the necessity of a thorough attention to the work's penumbra. Serge Merlin's 2002 reading presents the contrast with this approach, and the effect on ethics when authorial fidelity is placed exclusively above the audience: a staged reading of *The Lost Ones* identifies the audience with the narrator, rather than positioning them on the side of the Lost Ones themselves. The extreme of this vision is the conflicted austerity of the work of Gare St. Lazare, which simply brackets the problems of audience and narrator as though there were guilt in adaptation.

Reaching back to the discourse on narratology, prose performance traces the movement that can be seen in Beckett's oeuvre toward voice as the essence of the novel. Voice breaks down the structuralist separation between

showing and telling, and unifies the narrative of a novelistic subject with the being of that subject. Gerry Dukes argues in a programme note for Barry McGovern's one man show *I'll Go On* (1985) that

> Since the mid-forties Beckett has been producing novels / novellas / texts, not for the speaking voice but of a voice speaking. These 'voices speaking' range from the meditative of, say, TEXTS FOR NOTHING (1954) to the haunted, in HOW IT IS (1964). Beckett has exploited this particular device in the theatre as well, most spectacularly in NOT I (1973) and most poignantly in ROCKABY (1981).[33]

Dukes goes on to cite this "vocal" element of the *Trilogy* as the basis for Barry McGovern's anthology, which is the first performance analysed in Chapter Five. It is not a far leap — indeed, it is a mere strategic reversal — to move from a "voice speaking" in a novel to a "speaking voice" in empty space. Even a "soulless voice," as in Chaikin's *Texts*, can position its narrator and audience in such a way that Beckett's thought comes through powerfully on stage. Indeed, if there is a voice, prose is halfway to the phenomenology of drama.

What happens, though, when this "I" must be created from nothing? This problem is hinted at in the discussion of the embodied narrator, and appears in the contradictory practices of Gare St. Lazare. The narrator, like the function of space and venue explored previously, is much more aggressive in the work by the Lovetts than it pretends to be. With the exception of *Worstward Ho*, their pieces are nearly prototypical in their staging of the "man in the room." The precision for which the performers are known, along with the distilled style and reputation — indeed, the wholesale branding — of authorial fidelity, leads also to an exclusion of void. For example, the primary identity when reading *Molloy* silently is the character of Molloy; behind him, a *secondary* persona "lurks," whose name is Beckett. The process of autography both articulates and effaces the presence of the writer. On stage, Beckett becomes *tertiary*, a figure looming over the whole event; when the embodied character Molloy says "I," much like he does in the novel, this "writer" may briefly appear. But the "I" of the real, on stage, is simply Conor Lovett. The

name, even of the Unnamable, is Conor Lovett. His presence and reality are unshakeable. No effort is made to disrupt this unity, other than the fact that he seems to pretend to be someone else for roughly three hours, broken by intervals in which he is again himself. The actor embodies an infinity within the one, because his utterance of "I" extends indefinitely to ancestors real and imagined. The actor verbally re-creates the act of autography which is the basis of the prose. Thus, the staged embodiment of an "I" within a text can structurally manifest the content of the prose, and deepens its form. It is this active journey toward the self — the unique expression in prose performance of the problem of self — which will be the focus of the next chapter.

NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

Theatrical Strategies in the Single-Text Performance

1. The word "live" might seem troubling by now, given the previous attention paid to Auslander and the inherent complexities of the term. I agree with Auslander that contemporary drama mimics the ontology of the recorded to a great degree. Nonetheless, a narrow usage of "live" which distinguishes the phenomenological characteristics of theatre from radio, which is my intended target here, is semantically necessary.
2. I am paraphrasing a comment made by Emily Jeffers, my viewing companion for the screening by Lee Breuer of the 1974 Mabou Mines *The Lost Ones* at the Kilkenny Festival, 11 August 2007, who offered a lucid summation of the problematic of performed prose: "The fact that it's a man in a room is more than is said in the text."
3. Northwestern University's department of Performance Studies was previously called the "Department of Interpretation," which foregrounds this quality in the approach, but (should) hardly distinguish it from a Department of Theatre or a Degree in Acting. Northwestern's School of Speech, which has housed both departments since 1878 (when "Interpretation" was still "Elocution"), was tellingly changed in 2003 to the "School of Communication."
4. I have not rehearsed the entire list of Jamesian critics, either in the body of the thesis or in the notes, due to its prohibitive length. See Chapter 1, note 5, of Dorothy J. Hale's *Social Formalism: The Novel in Theory from Henry James to the Present* for an extensive list of James's and Lubbock's adherents, and for a far shorter list of dissenters (prior to the post-1960 sea change in novel theory).
5. Breen actually cites Bertil Romberg's 1962 work, *Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel,* as the source for his usage of "epic situation." I note Booth as the key influence here only because he was slightly earlier, and though the terminology may be distinct, the definition is not sufficiently different from the "point of view" notion so central to *Rhetoric of Fiction.*
6. McGovern related this opinion casually during our personal interview (17 May 2007) and should thus not be taken as a firm or published stance. It is notable, however, in that it overlooks Beckett's use of the third person in explicitly dramatic work, such as *A Piece of Monologue,* or the *staging* of third person represented by works like *Not I* and *That Time.*
7. Booth calls for the "particular qualities" of a narrator being always related to "specific effects" (20), just as Breen notes that "the critic must be reluctant to count heavily on consistency [...] Close examination of a single work, as we have seen, will inevitably undermine the critic's temptation to overgeneralize" (33).
8. Lee Breuer, public interview, 11 August 2007, Kilkenny, Ireland.
9. Widely cited and confirmed in person by Breuer on 11 August 2007, this quotation is canonized in the *Companion,* 6, though it is unclear who originally reported the comment.
10. I have not spent time on the minutae of performance description, because *The Lost Ones* is probably Beckett's best documented and most widely discussed prose performance in existing criticism. It receives extensive treatment in Jonathan Kalb's essential *Beckett in Performance* (which includes transcripts of conversations with Mabou Mines members) and is also discussed in the chapter "Jumping Beckett's Genres" of Ruby Cohn's *Just Play.* Basic descriptions of many "cross-genre events" can be found in *Beckett on File,*

comp. Virginia Cooke, pp. 66-83.

11. The matter of the accent is another in which Breuer shows his sensitivity to style in Beckett. He is on record both in published work (*Un Théâtre Narratif* interview, qtd. in Kalb 259) and public forum (Kilkenny, 11 August 2007) with the opinion that Beckett's English work must be played only in an Irish accent (with the exception of *Play*, which can be done in tones of London). He rejects the American tone as foreign to the internal rhythm of the language, and needing "*l'ironie laconique, la délicatesse d'une voix irlandaise.*" While some in New York (including Breuer himself) have lauded Warrilow's Irish accent in *The Lost Ones* specifically, it did not play quite so well in Kilkenny in 2007, being notable for some English-sounding vowels and a Scottish "r."It is Breuer's stylistic intent, however, which is of interest here.

12. This version of *Le Dépeupleur* was first presented at the Théâtre du Pommer in Neuchâtel, France, on 20 September 2002. However, the fullest documentation of the performance is from the Paris run the following year, at the Odéon Théâtre de L'Europe, 2-26 October 2003. The programme, which includes a critical essay related to this performance, is held at Reading under MS5089 in the STAGE FILE / ADA-2003 collection.

13. Fred Six, "Schoenaerts Reads 'Stirrings Still,'" *De Standaard*, 22 March 1990. Trans. Gerald Taub. This production of *Stille Sidders* [*Stirrings Still*] played from March-April 1990 at the Malpertius Theatre in Tielt. It was directed by Herman Verschelden, who acquired both translation and performance rights (with "more than a little difficulty," it is noted). Records are held at Reading, STAGE FILE / ADA-1990, MS3947.

14. It remains unclear from my research whether this version was ever staged. In the interview with Kalb, he indicates plans to stage it, but no performance records have been located. It is interesting that Shivaun O'Casey's adaptation of the same work, famously described in a detailed letter from Beckett himself (See Knowlson & Knowlson, 157), also seems never to have gone forward. *From an Abandoned Work* might have been the most frequently abandoned prose performance.

15. Beckett to Warrilow, 5 August 1984. Held at Reading, and cited in Knowlson 608.

16. Production materials relating to this Mercier and Camier are held at Reading, STAGE FILE / ADA-1979.

17. It is notable and sadly ironic that Akalaitis and Breuer were held up as paragons of authorial fidelity in 1979. This was five years before Akalaitis gained infamy as the director of the ART *Endgame* in Boston which was so strenuously opposed by Beckett and his lawyers. The resulting mythology, as much as the events themselves surrounding the production, substantially changed the perception of Beckett and the status of Mabou Mines company members (many of whom had divided loyalties between the parties) with regard to his work.

18. The Mabou Mines *Company* is extremely well-documented in reviews, Kalb's *Beckett in Performance*, and in Gussow's *Conversations with and about Beckett*. The French edition is more obscure: in September of 1985, *Compagnie* played with Warrilow in the role originated by Neumann at the Théâtre du Rond-Point in Paris. In February 1995, just two years before his death from AIDS, Warrilow reprised the French version at the Petit-Odéon. Records of both are at Reading, STAGE FILE / ADA-1985, MS4030.

19. Neumann claims in his interview with Kalb that the reading was at 59 minutes, a fact he explicitly discussed with Beckett. Kalb, writing in his chapter

on prose fiction within the same book, states that the show's duration was an hour and three quarters (125). As Neumann's timing was from process and Kalb's experience was from product, I use Kalb's own figure.
20. The records of the 1986 *Worstward Ho*, which features only incidentally in the major published accounts of performed prose, are held at Reading in STAGE FILE/ADA-1986.
21. *Compagnie* was presented in 1981 at the Festival d'Automne in Paris, at the Studio d'Ivry, adapted, directed, and performed by Daniel Zerki. The Zerki version was presented again in 1994, 9 September - 16 October at the Théâtre de la Main d'Or, also in Paris (Reading, STAGE FILE/ADA-1994 MS4483). The American Beckett/Chabert/Gontarski version of *Company* is more extensively documented than the Paris version; at Reading, the STAGE FILE/ADA-1985 archive includes press releases, programmes, and notes in relation to the production (MS2684, MS3300, MS2732).
22. My source for this is the note on the background of the production in its programme, which is held at Reading in STAGE FILE/ADA-1987, MS3212. More materials related to the 1988 restaging of the work in London at the Donmar Warehouse are held in MS3290, MS3307, and MS3259.
23. This quotation was published in the press advertisements for the Dublin *Company*, which was staged 28-30 November 1992 at Project Arts Centre. These are held at Reading in MS3952, part of STAGE FILE/ADA-1992.
24. Ember Productions used *Company* as part of a "total theatre experience" called *Frozen Music*, performed site-specifically at St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin, from 13-23 September 2007.
25. The Beckett-Chaikin correspondence is held at Kent State; the first letter is from 29 January 1981, and the second 17 March 1981. I rely here on the letters as reported in Knowlson, 739 (note 40).
26. The Kent-Chaikin production of *Texts* ran during March 1981 at the Public Theatre. Records are held in STAGE FILE/ADA-1981, MS4433. The London version played the Riverside Studios in June of 1981, and are held in the same file under MS2082 and MS3150.
27. The Chaikin-Irwin production of *Texts for Nothing* was also produced by Joseph Papp as part of the New York Shakespeare Festival, as the original had been, from 20 October - 22 November 1992. Notably, JoAnne Akalaitis was the artistic director of the Public Theatre at the time. Records are held at Reading, STAGE FILE/ADA-1992, MS4002.
28. Gare St. Lazare Players has staged four non-Beckett productions since 1995, but given the volume of performance received by the Beckett work, these are negligible in terms of the company's brand; the company is, for better or worse, the face of contemporary Beckett prose performance. The other company is the Godot Company, which also adapts a great deal of prose, but is essentially an in-house operation by John Calder (who continues to control the rights to much of the prose performance). They perform in the Bookshop Theatre and had a residency at the Irish Cultural Centre in Paris, but otherwise have not toured widely.
29. My information on Gare St. Lazare players comes primarily from a private interview with Judy Hegarty-Lovett, 10 November 2004 in Dublin, and from casual conversations with Hegarty-Lovett and Conor Lovett since. The readings of productions are generally my own, as I have seen all that have shown in Ireland since 2004, though the earlier performances are supplemented by information on the Gare St. Lazare website, <http://samuel-beckett.net/aAllBeck.html>, as well as the Reading performance archive

(*Molloy*: STAGE FILE/ADA-1998, MS4612; *Lessness*: STAGE FILE/ADA-2002, MS5009, MS5010, MS5017).

30. I was invited to attend a private showing of *Molloy* for potential donors to support a tour of the production, held at Andrew's Lane Theatre, Dublin, 9 October 2004. My reading of the performance comes from this event, which is different in important ways from a presentation before a paying and public audience.

31. Both of these quotations were in direct response to my interview question about the role of the director, 10 November 2004, Dublin.

32. Perhaps O'Toole believes in reading *Worstward Ho* in the abstract; had he looked at a single page of the text prior to writing this sentence in the review, it seems doubtful that he could have asserted a lack of punctuation marks.

33. This is from a facsimile of the programme for *I'll Go On*, which premiered at Dublin's Gate Theatre on 23 September 1985. Dukes had collaborated with McGovern on the adaptation. The facsimile is held at Reading, in STAGE FILE/COM-1985, MS2730.

CHAPTER FIVE
"It Will Be I": Adapted Authorship in Multi-Text Performance

It is now I shall speak of me, for the first time.

—The Unnamable

This thesis has shown that a Beckettian subject in theatre practice is a subject that manifests the fluidity and multiplicity of selfhood, not the unity or origin of the self. It is in this respect that the single-actor multi-text performances explored in this chapter can be seen — in spite of official approval, academic support, or honest intent — as profoundly violent interventions. To edit and combine selections of text into a single anthology inovlves a process of radical destruction, followed by a bold and idiosyncratic act of creation. First, the individuated selves within Beckett's works are effaced, as one piece of text is grafted onto another, often with careful avoidance of the context or character names that might signal different sources. Second, the first-person utterance that defines this mode of performance establishes a new self, not "by Beckett" but "of Beckett." The unity of this new "I" is then confirmed for the audience by the visual image of the actor's body on stage. For the actor, the possession and sensation of this single body containing all these texts makes it relatively easy to supplant the authorial position entirely, making the performance less a specific adaptation of prose than a generic adaptation of Beckettian thought.

Countering this apparent transgression against the infinity of the Beckett subject, however, the multi-text performance can also be read for the opposite conclusion. As basic phenomenological attention to the situation of the actor reveals, the staged body is not the either/or of a singularity, but rather the both/and of a multiple. Whether expressing the voided Beckettian subjectivities described in Chapter Two or simply engaging in the "embodied mind" of lived experience, the actor on stage is inherently more-than-one. Like a cell within a human body, the actor is a cell within the world, filled with

potential energy directed toward the Other, containing linguistic and genetic codes. These codes contain the potential to show — if not actually *become* — all humanity. Much of the debate over theories of acting relates to whether "showing" or "becoming" should be the focus, which is really a debate about the priority of selves: is the actor primarily a person on stage (i.e., Conor Lovett) who uses particular tools and techniques to show a character (i.e., Molloy), or is the character always foregrounded on stage with the actor hidden somewhere inside?[1] It is not nearly so clear on stage as it is within a reading of prose text that the character, or narrative voice, must be seen in the foreground, with the author at some distance away.[2]

This problematic mirrors the narrative situation in Samuel Beckett's prose, where the author lurks somewhere behind the narrator at a distance he is always careful to keep, much as the actor lurks somewhere behind the character. The actor's process, then, also resembles the "autography" of Beckett's literary project, a complex journey inward that provides both the creation of the self through language and the simultaneous effacement of the life of the self. In that a visible remnant and a constitutive negation of the word remain together in concert, this process functions similarly to Derrida's procedure of erasure. The erasure of self by the actor, like the "intent of undoing" in Beckett's prose, reveals what Andrew Gibson calls "a shared indeterminacy and a shared impoverishment" (*ND* 152) in these works, an unfinished and unfinishable quality of life in motion. Gibson's vocabulary is distinctly theatrical, though he is describing narrators of the prose:

> For Beckett as for Proust, selves are fled before they can be known. Any claim to self-knowledge must therefore be idle, and can only ironically flaunt its own futility. Indeed, the very notion of self can only be entertained ironically, as a plaything or a construction in jest [...] We have in common, not a nature, but participation in a process [...] the human quality of the process and its irony and comedy lie precisely in its resistance to definition in terms of 'nature.' (*ND* 152)

The staged singularity of selfhood in multi-text performance fits the source material, then, when it is displayed ironically, contextualizing each new "I" as a

theatrical costume. One task of this chapter will be to establish through performance analysis which practices seem to achieve this, and which merely reinscribe the notional unity which Beckett, like so many of his modernist contemporaries, repeatedly undermined.

The productive transgression of prose performance, as has been argued throughout this thesis, overlaps the phenomenological negations of subjectivity and performance. In the case of multi-text performance, it follows a simple transitive rule. If the narrator hides an author and the actor hides a narrator, then the author cannot be absent from the stage. Whatever the priority of "actor" and "character," the author is always a "tertiary multiplicity" behind both, sometimes indicated by the actor's use of the first person, and sometimes simply suggested by the undeniable presence of organization in a work. One way to read Breen's practice of chamber theatre is as an effort to expose the presence of this author, since the embodied narrator cannot avoid the insertion of interpretative clues to reveal an *ethos* behind the *logos*. In the single-text adaptations discussed in the previous chapter, however, the author is always defended by the distance written into the original text. Lee Breuer's suggestion to "perform the writer" is a stylistic one, not an invitation to wear a mask of Samuel Beckett when performing his prose. Essentially, the theatrical choices of time, space, and embodiment — and the adaptive choices of narrator and audience — will depend on each particular text. The work of Mabou Mines, Joseph Chaikin, and the various adapters of *Company* manifests a desire to discover, expose, and then communicate what Goffman might call an "internal consistency" in the work, an embodied execution of Beckett's rigorously structured (and sometimes wantonly punctured) narrative arguments.[3] The particular interest for a theatre understood to be constructed with negative phenomenology and manifesting an aesthetics of void runs against these efforts, however, because Beckett's consistency is precisely inconsistency. It is this impulse of literary modernism — Beckett's own drive toward a *Literatur des Unworts* expressed in

his German Letter (*Disjecta* 54) — that is missed by performers, critics, and lawyers who seek to locate in Beckett an absolute textual authority.

The texts and performances under examination in this chapter are those whose organizing principle, persona, and self comes not from the author, but rather from the adapter and interpreter. The analysis of these "constructed selves" will begin with a borderline case between single- and multi-text performance, that of Barry McGovern's solo show *I'll Go On*, based on the *Trilogy*. The production premiered in 1985, toured extensively, and played again in Dublin in 2006 and New York in 2008. The second example will be Jack MacGowran, whose one-man shows (*End of Day* in 1962 and 1970's *Beginning to End*) articulated the first onstage "Beckett Man" and set the standard for multi-text adaptation, much in the way that *The Lost Ones* defined the field of single-text prose performance. The purpose of setting McGovern before MacGowran, who preceded him both in chronology and influence, is simply to provide a bridge between the practice of adapting a single work and the practice of creating a new self — the shadow of which can be seen in McGovern's performance — and thereby a wholly new work of text, an anthology of indeterminate "authorship." The third section will concentrate on some lesser-known performances, each of them also one-man shows, by Robert Jaffe, Jack Emery, and Ryan Cutrona. Jaffe in particular performs in a direct lineage from Jack MacGowran, but all three performers manifest a similar impulse and stage selves with some remarkable correspondences. The intersections between these five one-man shows will be explored to reveal their linkages to Beckett's words and worlds, as well as to initiate the exploration of an ethic of impossibility in the practice of such actors. More than in any other prose performances, the selection and execution of these five texts thematize the task of "going on."

The chapter will conclude with an analysis of multi-text prose performance within the frame of commemoration. As many critics have pointed out, Beckett considered his prose to be his most significant writing

(Kalb 115), and many of the worldwide events dedicated to his celebration (during his life) and his remembrance (after his death) involved staged readings or adaptations of multiple texts, often with multiple actors. These events are distinct from the "adapted authorship" seen in the one-man shows, but nonetheless reveal the centrality of prose adaptation to the notion of authorial fidelity. From the commemorations comes not a new "I" spoken in place of the author without regard to individual origin, but rather a vast and unstable "I" spoken on the author's behalf. Naturally, such events can have a certain degree of commercialization attached, and as group rituals — particularly rituals of mourning — they can provide fertile ground for criticism as well. Present throughout the chapter are some conditions specific to the composite one-person performance, which can be seen to supplement the conventions of time, space, embodiment, and audience, but which replace the role of the narrator as explained in Chapter Four. Foremost among these is the reassertion of the self and the reclamation of the self as a territory for performance heralded by ethnographic methodologies and performance studies in the late twentieth century.

Adapted Authorship and the Anthropology of the Beckett Man

The performer of Beckett's prose who adapts a single novel, in particular one of the "prose monologues" like those found in the *Trilogy*, is in many respects approximating drama. A character is provided by the author, and this character is the artist's main guide of attitude, voice, or theatrical aesthetic.[4] The performer or adapter who combines texts from numerous sources into a performance — in particular one who folds in drama, poetry, and prose, as Jack MacGowran did in both his major one-man shows — is engaging in an entirely different operation. Because the attention of the adaptation extends beyond one voice, or even one world as represented in one story, the entire oeuvre is taken into account. The broadest organizing

principle that ultimately binds such a performance together is its authorship, as (in all examples explored here) all material was written by Samuel Beckett.

While it is the broadest category, authorship is not the only factor which unifies the elements of a multi-text performance. Indeed, on closer inspection, it is not a particularly strong force, as the actors' editing and recombination of texts cannot help but destroy authorial intent. The inclusion of Lucky's monologue in Jack MacGowran's *Beginning to End*, for instance, is incomprehensible if considered in relation to *Waiting for Godot*. It can really only be considered in the context of *Beginning to End*, and of Jack MacGowran himself, once it is pulled from the world in which it functions specifically in relation to characters, a location, and a dramatic arc.[5] The lack of the context originally inserted by the author forms a new work — or a new fragment of the work — which sometimes is so radically different that it hardly deserves its title. Most adaptations of *Molloy* eliminate the Moran plotline completely: how are they still *Molloy*? Multi-text adaptation takes these alterations even further, because while eliminating the original context, they also provide new context. In MacGowran's script, instead of Pozzo's order to "Think," the opening passage of "From an Abandoned Work" provokes Lucky's lines. Instead of Didi and Gogo ending the monologue by pulling the bowler hat off his head, a short poem from the Addenda to *Watt* is recited. The only way to resolve the meaning of the text thus presented in such a radically altered frame is to dispense with the idea that it is still Lucky at all. It remains "by Beckett," but it is nonetheless transformed. The same goes for prose pieces that have been excerpted and (in some cases) altered internally. By recombining, juxtaposing, and relocating the original text, the original meaning of the "I" is lost. Who, then, is the "character"? Who is speaking in a multi-text performance?

It is tempting to leap to the other extreme, and argue that the only organizing principle of these performances is thus the performers themselves. It is a notable feature of all of them that the textual selections — albeit with

occasional assistance from experts or enforced alterations from the Estate — were made by the performers, not by an external writer, director, or dramaturge. Some did utilize directors to lead the theatrical expression of the texts after the texts had been selected, and in MacGowran's case, Beckett himself gave guidance and approval throughout the process. But the imprint of the individual performer is nonetheless extremely strong in every case, and the role of the director relatively slight in comparison with traditional drama. Robert Jaffe's anthology performance *...and then you go on*, for example, premiered in 2000 after only nine days of rehearsal with a director.[6] The status of actors in these performances seems to extend well beyond the authority normally accorded to actors in a show, and begins to overlap with the authorial role as well as the directorial. Reviewers and interviewers of the actors involved frequently comment on how eloquently these performers speak about Beckett outside of the frame of their productions. In the case of MacGowran in particular, who was often treated with the transcendent terms of "becoming" the nebulous "Beckett Man" (Young 132), the vocabulary of description treads into a complete oneness with Beckett and his intentions. This impossibility was sometimes supported by Beckett himself, who is quoted by Young as saying that "Jack was like a brother. I didn't have to talk to him; I didn't have to direct him. He just *knew*" (138). For less privileged adaptors, the actors can suddenly find themselves the "responsible party" targeted by reviewers, while the most unfortunate find themselves pursued by lawyers.

The mixture of approaches that properly describes the rubric of these performances is thus more complex than in traditionally structured dramatic staging, and markedly different from single-text adaptation of Beckett's work. As an alternative to "adapted prose," I have coined the term "adapted authorship" to combine the author's foundational role with the actor's newfound agency. It is the word "I" which most clearly illustrates the multiplicity of levels at work here, and the difference between multi-text and single-text performance. "I" begins the first sentence of *Malone Dies*, which

reads: "I shall soon be quite dead at last in spite of all" (*Trilogy* 179). When reading the narrative within the *Trilogy*, it is presumed (or soon becomes clear) that "I" refers to Malone. Likewise, when Conor Lovett begins a performance entitled *Malone Dies* with this line, the first- person monologue is clearly spoken by the character "Malone" (although the embodiment of the actor adds a second level, as discussed in Chapter Four). In the version of Jack MacGowran's *Beginning to End* published in 1988 by Gotham Book Mart — the best available record of the final cut for his performance — the opening sentence from *Malone Dies* also opens his "new" work. With MacGowran, the level of the actor's embodied "I" was even stronger, and the line thus more resonant. His health was manifestly poor during his final years on tour with *Beginning to End*, an ill-conceived string of one-night stands. The sentence "I shall soon be quite dead at last in spite of all" (5) was darkly prophetic for an actor who would die young while on the tour, and when spoken one night immediately following dental surgery, seemed quite literally about MacGowran (Young 18).

That the word "I" spoken in *Beginning to End* could be a pronoun standing in for Jack MacGowran is interesting, but this is not a gesture of "adapted authorship;" indeed, this would be no different in a single-text prose adaptation of *Malone Dies*. What is distinct in multi-text performance is instead the *effacement* of Malone as the speaker of this text. It is a rare audience member who would recognize the opening line of *Malone Dies* when MacGowran began to speak. For this reason, all barriers between the different first-person pronouns throughout the performance break down. Jordan Young enumerates just how many different people are folded together under the umbrella of the word "I" within *Beginning to End*:

> In assimilating the novels, plays and poems, MacGowran had come to the realization that Beckett's 'people' were all of the same mind and marrow, the same steady, unmistakable voice. Molloy, communicating with his aged mother by knocking on her skull [...] and pondering the insoluble problem of the sucking stones... Malone, speculating on the number of his days... The Unnamable, finding the courage to go on...

> Watt, blathering about his genealogy [...] or rhapsodizing on the change of seasons... Krapp, dredging up the bones of an old love... Lucky, spewing his mad soliloquy... Clov, departing, embers glowing to light the way... one and the same, black-humored clowns parading down the strand. Cloaked in a weathered greatcoat from heel to throat, they wandered to and fro, turn and turn about, from beginning to end. (129-30)

It has been argued by some critics, most notably in Cronin's biography of Beckett, that this "Beckett Man" exists. If he does, it is in the multi-text performances that this character is given life. The difficulty is that innumerable other critics spend their time parsing the text-by-text developments and distinctions across the extremely varied internal terrain of Beckett's 60 years of writing. Is it not somewhat too aggressive to suggest that all of this amounts to one vast sameness? Is it not demonstrably true that Clov, Lucky, Watt, Malone, Molloy, the Unnamable, and all the others are really quite different?

The conundrum resembles some of the theological paradoxes which so fascinated Beckett: how is the Holy Trinity both one and three? The solution lies perhaps in questioning our frame, to investigate how the simultaneous unity and disparity of Beckett's expression might coexist. The Beckett Man has distinct manifestations, but perhaps the intertextual connections and constant preoccupation all come from the same place. The Beckett Man might then express a "root cause" or an underlying self, present across many texts, and while the names and situations change, the core is stable. This would easily justify the authorial juxtaposition of many persons under a single "I", but may threaten to become a kind of essentialism if pushed too far. The truth might lie just on the border of this claim, moving asymptotically toward unity, but finally unknowably liminal or limited. It is also possible that no such reversal is necessary, and the shifting manifestations simply express a shifting core. This would ascribe a kind of realism to the mobility of self, and again justify the radically altered representations used in multi-text performance.

One final possibility exists, which is in some ways the most appealing, as it aligns itself with so much of the philosophy underpinning Beckett's notion

of subjectivity. This is that an infinity of outward expressions is possible, because there is Nothing underneath. The Beckett Man is the absence of a Beckett Man: this notion seems possible given much of the philosophical background explored in Chapter Two. Indeed, as the study of MacGowran will articulate, the multi-text one-man-show is a classic example of Sartre's *negatité*; the negation of Beckett is a precondition for the existence of a Beckett Man. There is obviously a Taoist affinity for *yin* in the koan-like structure of this paradoxical assertion. The pre-Socratic Democritus of Abdera asserted that what is not is as real as what is, giving Murphy his gemlike ontological axiom, "Nothing is more real than nothing" (246).[7] Adorno brings an ethical turn to these negations, and defends Beckett against the charge of nihilism by elevating the negative: because "the created world is radically evil, its negation is the chance of another world that is not yet" (*Negative Dialectics* 381). In the context of Badiou, for whom the null set is the key to Being, a primal absence underlying the infinite possible expressions of a Beckett Man is perfectly in keeping with his mathematical ontology. In short, a performance practice which proceeds from this voided "I" into the event, or at least into a speech act, is an expression closely tied to Beckett's own insight into the sources of the self.

Two phenomenological questions arise from this "adapted authorship," and their relentless practicalities must be dealt with before the empirical material from these performances can be fully presented and understood. As before, they emerge from the twin phenomenological frames of multi-text performance: audience and artist. First, what is the experience of an audience member at a multi-text Beckett adaptation, and how does it differ from those experiences explored previously? Second, what conditions the actor/adaptor's position as performer/embodier of these texts, as distinct from others?

As stated above with regard to Malone's opening line, it is a rare audience member who would track each cutting within a Beckett anthology to its source. For most, the experience somewhat resembles an immersion into a

linguistic world, and a presumption of consistency comes from the authorial consistency (all Beckett) and the performative (adapted-authorial) elision of the "I" by a single performer. Because the embodied expression is apparently unified — i.e., always a one-man show — a certain textual unity is visually and experientially implied. What is interesting is that this type of context-free experience is often held up as ideal, and the "informed" audience member is seen to encounter more barriers to reception. There is repeated reference in the body of criticism surrounding these performances — upheld in my own interviews of the surviving performers, and indeed in my own experience of multi-text performance — to how beneficial it is to have little to no prior awareness of Beckett. This promotes an openness to the multiplicity of selves on display, and silences the voice of distinction which otherwise would do violence to the "unity" being expressed by the performer, however manufactured. Many of the performances implicitly acknowledge this feature of the audience experience in the programme, by naming the source texts but not their sequence.

The question of context and prior knowledge in the audience cuts directly across the edge between academic and creative practice. Young writes that MacGowran performed *Beginning to End* "for the young who instinctively understood it," as opposed to the earnest professors pursuing him backstage and "insistently looking for meaning" (154). A programme note written by Barry McGovern, the performer of *I'll Go On* (1985), presumes that the audience has not read the *Trilogy* from which his text is drawn, while getting in an implicit dig at the same "backstage professors":

> I hope the show will whet people's appetites to go and read the trilogy for themselves. Beckett is, I believe, the greatest unread author in the world. There is a lot of nonsense written and talked about his work which is, above all, very funny and ultimately very simple.
> *The danger is in the neatness of identifications.*[8]

The final quotation, wielded here as a portentous warning, is a somewhat

paradoxical critique of the academic approach, given that Beckett wrote it into his own literary criticism about James Joyce. But the sentiment that multi-text performances *should* be received with a simplicity of which theoreticians are reputedly incapable is pervasive in much of the discourse surrounding the prose adaptations explored already. The primacy of accessibility to the uninitiated was already implied by the notion of "audience fidelity" explored in the last chapter, and was made explicit (indeed, imperative) in the umbrella title of the Gare St. Lazare adaptations, *Access All Beckett*. Robert Jaffe, speaking in the context of his own multi-text anthology, acknowledged that while "Beckett-heads" often enjoyed his work, "people who respond best know nothing about Beckett." The academic procedure, to the extent that it involves a textual taxonomy, is thus rejected in favour of a less rigorous form of "just listening," of "just being" with the text. Knowledge in the audience is devalued in favour of openness to the *experience* of a world.

This difference between academic and non-academic listening has a corollary, then, in the creative process. If the audience is to hear a different type of language, then the performer must also learn to speak that language. If the proclamations from and about these performers are to be believed, the approach to the multi-text adaptation requires a more instinctive than intellectual performer, undaunted by the vast critical apparatus surrounding Beckett. The adaptors must become the same kind of audience members that they expect in performance, concentrating on what unifies Beckett's texts, not on minutiae of technique that distinguishes them. The value of simplicity, directness, and humour is constantly upheld, while the dense philosophy is pushed aside. That first-person locution is preferred by a huge margin over second- or third-person reveals the drive for direct accessibility, together with the paradox (already addressed) of manufactured subjective unity. In spite of all these traditions approximating rules, the structure that binds each multi-text performance is invariably loose, even sometimes aleatory; if *Endgame* is Bach, then these performances are jazz.

The artist's intuitive process manifests in countless ways, from the selection of texts to the individual performance choices. It would be a mistake, however, to devalue the intellectual component of understanding Beckett's text as a part of the process, or the rigour which ultimately goes into refining such adaptations. Carrying the metaphor of music further, this would be like suggesting that great jazz improvisation does not involve a mastery of the instrument: rigorous musicianship is no less essential, although the formal structures of Bach's time are no longer in place. As in so many other twentieth-century artistic practices, one must know the frame in order to break it effectively. It is worth noting that for all his over-determined dramatic universes, Beckett hated Bach partly for his "seamlessness" (*DTF* 184). Acutely attuned to form, yet feeling at times highly repressed by its constraints and showing himself incredibly innovative at undermining it, Beckett walks a classically Modernist high-wire between textual rigour and interpretive freedom. The performers and adapters of multi-text performances follow Beckett in manifesting this tension, but lean substantially in the direction of interpretation. They also exhibit a Beckettian duality between drawing on deep knowledge — the rigour side — and simply "feeling their way." In a sense much stronger than within drama or even within single-text adaptation, the performer carves out a space for the *self*, in all its troubled significations.

None of the performers dealt with in this chapter are the neophytes they claim to serve, and all display a high level of awareness of Beckett's original frame which they are so radically, and sometimes boldly and effectively, breaking. A theoretical rubric for performance that will accommodate the combination of academic and artistic, theoretical and practical approaches on display does not need to be reinvented. It can be found in the model of ethnographic research provided by performance studies from the 1980s onward, supported broadly by the theorist Michael Jackson and particularly by the thought of performer-activist Dwight Conquergood. While it would not be accurate to assert that all five performers examined in

this chapter are "ethnographers," it is the methodology of performative research in the field of anthropology that resonates with these anthologies. If there is a "Beckett Country" peopled by assorted manifestations of a "Beckett Man," then the adapted authors examined in this chapters are the anthropologists of this imagined civilization. Contemporary anthropology has been profoundly affected by the phenomenological turn in twentieth century philosophy, returning to the testimony of the senses and the document of the self to gain a deeper understanding of the human.

In his seminal survey of ethnography *Paths Toward a Clearing* (1989), Michael Jackson bases a great deal of his argument in a radical empiricism reminiscent of Berkeley, rejecting the subject-object and observed-observer dichotomies of later, more traditional empiricism. Instead, Jackson advocates the study of "the *experience* of objects and actions *in which the self is a participant*" (3). This is a phenomenological approach, with the same focus on lived experience that is visible in Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, to whom Jackson is specifically indebted for the term "plenum of existence" (3). *Plenum* — "full" or "fullness" in Latin — is the opposite of vacuum. It is contrasted to absence and void, not in terms of the perceived world (noema) which are riddled with the negative, but rather in the perceiving self and the act of noesis. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre writes that "consciousness is a plenum of existence, and this determination of itself by itself is an essential characteristic [...] the existence of consciousness comes from consciousness itself" (16). Jackson's reading of Sartre has particular consequences for performance, and none more clear than in the act of "performing the self."

If Beckett's writing can be seen autographically as a "writing the self," then the one-man-shows adapted from his work are often "performing the self." The multivalent meaning of the word "self," particularly in the context of literary modernism, indicates a complexity in this idea that goes well beyond the biographical. It does not mean, in other words, that a formula of "self = Samuel Beckett" will be true for all readings of the prose or of these

performances. Nor (as shown) will it be true that "self = actor;" indeed, whether on or offstage, one is not oneself. Instead, the "problem of self" is the real focus, both within Beckett's texts and within the one-man shows. Following a Taoist logic that "the useless has its use," the strategies engaged by self-performance bring attention to the void of self by walking straight into it. This paradoxical pathway is somewhat like applying a *via negativa* to resolve a *via negativa*. As the voice of the Unnamable intones: "I'll forbid myself everything, then go on as if I hadn't" (312).

What Jackson finds within ethnographic practice is the *permission* for the self — filled as it is with disunity, transience, imprecision, perspective, and unnamability — to present its experience. This is an essential step toward the one-person performance of any kind. Jackson's approach gives the self a certain authority, without denying the categories of void and negation which underlie and condition it; in this, as will be shown, it closely resembles the philosophical project of Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*. However, there is an important distinction between the *source* of the ethnographic discussion that predominates in Jackson and the textual sources of the selves which populate the one-man shows based on Beckett's prose. Because of the privilege given to individual experience, ethnographic performance can often be a vehicle for pure identity politics (hence *ethnos*), as much as an effective venue for self-actualization or political expression. Aware of this pitfall, Jackson claims that ethnography "encompasses *both* the 'rage for order' *and* the impulse that drives us to unsettle or confound the fixed order of things" (2). The embedded notion of identity within ethnographic performance could lead to extremity, in the sense that its attempt to capture the moment could actually "capture" it, in the sense of locking it down, depriving it of the freedom of its fluid context. The "plenum of existence" must retain a "plenum of possibilities" in order to avoid elevation to a transcendent or even triumphalist category. Beckett in performance might then present more of an "*ethography*" than an eth*n*ography. Such

performances answer Beckett's "rage for order" with a simultaneous "unsettling" or "confounding" of form, an excellent guideline for the process of adaptation. The solo performer who adapts and recombines these works is faced with a similar paradigm, where the novel can be treated as an immersive world to be explored "ethnographically."

Marvin Carlson, writing about such contemporary practices in his broad survey of performance, describes ethnography as "immediate," "active," and "ambiguous" all at once, saying that it is "concerned not with identity and closure but with interplay and interaction" (209). While this seems initially to dovetail with Gibson's reading of Beckett's narrative discourse, this description is clearly aspirational, because a more fixed notion of identity is embedded in any study of peoples and cultures. Again, a paradox of unified self is in the way of a more truthful malleability in performance. It is also evident that many such "purely" ethnographic performances emerge from a legacy of 20th century political and civil rights movements, and often espouse a discourse of identity politics and a reassertion of difference that defines, in large measure, the postmodern condition. In its manifestation in academia this discourse is familiar, and was clearly heralded by the fragmentation of "the humanities" into Gender Studies, Queer Studies, African-American Studies, Aboriginal Studies, and many others. Ethnographic performance, particularly solo performance, is often used within these contexts to voice extremely individual experiences. Indeed, having shaken off its Victorian anthropological background and the concomitant postcolonial critique, ethnography is now legitimized as a "science," and ethnographic performance is accepted as a method of qualitative research.

Initially it may seem that these concerns are entirely peripheral to Beckett and to prose performance, as they are attached to contemporary politics and rooted in nonfiction (rather than fiction) performance practices. However, there are two avenues taken by ethnography which clearly implicate Beckett, as well as numerous intersections with the philosophical

concerns explored within this thesis. The first is my suggestion that Beckett's aesthetic project constitutes a "world," and thus a culture, populated by diverse but linked individuals, words, practices, and thoughts. Multi-text performance resembles nothing so much as an anthropology of this world, as the adaptor-performer takes on much of the role and ethic of the performance studies ethnographer. The second is a vision of identity founded on instability and liminality, a thought repeatedly asserted by theorists of late twentieth century ethnography (however little the radical implications of this were actually played out, devastating as they are to notions of difference now held by many as cardinal truths). The thinking of Dwight Conquergood is useful in navigating this intersection between performance practices, and particularly in seeing how applicable this nonfiction methodology can be to Beckett's prose.

Conquergood's 1991 survey article "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics" identifies four characteristics of contemporary ethnographic practices. They should sound familiar, as many of them echo philosophical concerns of literary modernism — and Beckett's thought specifically — already addressed in this thesis. First, Conquergood cites the "return of the body." The breakdown of a mind/body hierarchy for a sensory and embodied awareness is paralleled not only in the philosophies of phenomenology discussed in Chapter One, but also can be seen textually in Beckett's obsessive recounting of illness and disease in his characters. Second, Conquergood names the elevation of "boundaries and borderlands" as characteristic of ethnographic practice, making substantial use of Mikhail's Bakhtin's description of the "liminal." Third, he highlights the rise of performance, especially characterized by the shift away from text. Fourth and last, he cites "rhetorical reflexivity," a conception of language which asserts that identity itself is linguistically constructed, with all this implies for social and cultural encodings (Lincoln & Denzin 352). Again, these concerns are presaged not only in Beckett but in the whole Modernist project. Conquergood derives the following conclusion about the self:

> The major epistemological consequence of displacing the idea of solid centers and unified wholes with borderlands and zones of contest is rethinking of identity and culture as constructed and relational, instead of ontologically given and essential [...] Identity is invented and contingent, not autonomous. (359)

Kevin Bell, whose survey of literary modernism *Ashes Taken for Fire* emerged almost twenty years later, finds a remarkably similar formulation for identity which explicitly parts ways with identity politics. Linking liminality, rhetoric, and performance in one fell swoop, Bell describes

> literary modernism's unyielding inquiry into language's incapacity to secure the truth of its own propositions. Fewer still consider the implications of this failure for the logic of cultural identity, devastating as they are for such reductive rubrics as 'race' or 'gender' [...] Modernism necessitates instead the thinking of subjectivity as a liquid constellation of singularities of experimentation and experience. It is a constellation whose unfolding always gives the lie to imperatives and systems of social classification, revealing all strategies of definition and naming to be nothing more than discursive instruments of naked power and narcissism. (3-4)

A further comparison makes the link to Beckett even more explicit, as a specific reference to the instability of "I" as a signifier can be found in remarkably similar terms in these disparate discourses. Conquergood cites Vietnamese-American filmmaker and critic Trinh T. Minh-ha, whose 1989 *Woman, Native, Other* was seminal for both performance studies and postcolonial theory. Trinh writes: 'I' is, therefore, not a unified subject, a fixed identity, or that solid mass covered with layers of superficialities one has gradually to peel off before one can see its true face. 'I' is, itself, *infinite layers*" (94). In other words, selfhood itself is an expression of the constitutive void, a null set at the root of being. Trinh draws this insight out of her work with refugees, hence her relevance to Conquergood's own practice. But the centrality of exile to Beckett's life and writing cannot be underestimated, and he fills his world with tramps whose displacement seems more than merely political. Even a comparison of Trinh's and Beckett's locution reveals

interesting parallels, as both deploy the negative coinage of the verb "to unsay" in vital passages:

> You try and keep on trying to unsay it, for if you don't, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said. (Trinh, 80)

This is a more polemic version of the profoundly negative ontology found in *Worstward Ho,* which begins with what Badiou calls the "Axiom of Saying":

> On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on. Say for be said. Missaid. From now say for be missaid. (7)

The substitution of "said" for "be," and the subsequent replacement of "said" with "missaid," functions almost as a generic procedure describing both the synthetic power of language and its underlying aporia. In the later passages of *Worstward Ho,* "unsay" becomes the name of a procedure of negation that reverses all established features of Beckett's narrative, related to the generic "worsening" that forms the plot of the work. Its first usage heralds the structural centre of the prose piece, with the sentences "First on back to unsay dim can go. Somehow on back. Dim cannot go" (26). After several pages of worsening "dim," this structure recurs with "That said on back to try worse say the plodding twain" (30), where "worse say" stands in for "unsay." After setting the pattern one stage further with "On back to unsay clamped to all the stare"(34), Beckett breaks the sequence with "Ooze on back not to unsay but say again the vasts apart" (35). This leads to a culminating sequence that restates the motive from the very first page: "Said is missaid. Whenever said said said missaid. From now said alone. No more from now now said and now missaid. From now said alone. Said for missaid. For be missaid" (37).[9]

The key insight in *Worstward Ho,* for the purposes of relating Beckett to the conditions governing contemporary ethnographic practice, is precisely that all saying is ill-saying. Rather than the presentation of experience grounded in identity and certainty, all that is said must be understood to be a

failure. By extension, the "plenum of experience" is at its core a vacuum, or perhaps a "plenum of vacuum." Beckett's description of this situation is voiced by Estragon's witty maxim: "There's no lack of void" (*Godot* 61). *Worstward Ho* thinks the possibility — or, as Badiou has it, the "temptation" — of trying to achieve the *absolute* failure of language (since failure is the only possible direction). It suggests an ontological failure of difference within the triumph of "unworsenable" void.

Aware that many ethnographic performances ultimately reinscribe a unitary notion of identity, Conquergood reclaims a discursive territory of liminality and void that I associate with Beckett. Conquergood also introduces a notion of ethics which will become central to the final chapter of this thesis. He writes:

> Moral and ethical questions get stirred to the surface because ethnographers of performance explode the notion of aesthetic difference [...] ethnographers try to surrender themselves to the centripetal pulls of culture, to get close to the face of humanity where life is not always pretty. (Lincoln & Denzin 397)

Rather than embedding difference and identity with a stability of self and language, ethnographic performance can allow for tremendous mobility in these areas, providing a link to the divergent "vectors" of Beckett's split and shifting notions of the self explored in Chapter Two. At its best, ethnographic performance "accommodates our shifting sense of ourselves as subjects and as objects, as acting upon and being acted upon by the world, of living with and without certainty, of belonging and being estranged" (Jackson 2). It is not a far leap from this to the central axiom of Geulincx: *Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis.*

Autobiographical ethnography provides an "adapted I," focusing entirely around the self, a phenomenological exercise in communicating lived experience mimetically. Ethnographic performance that is externally focused — say, for instance, one-person performance which is centred on embodiment of others — maintains the perspective and subjective mode, but externalizes

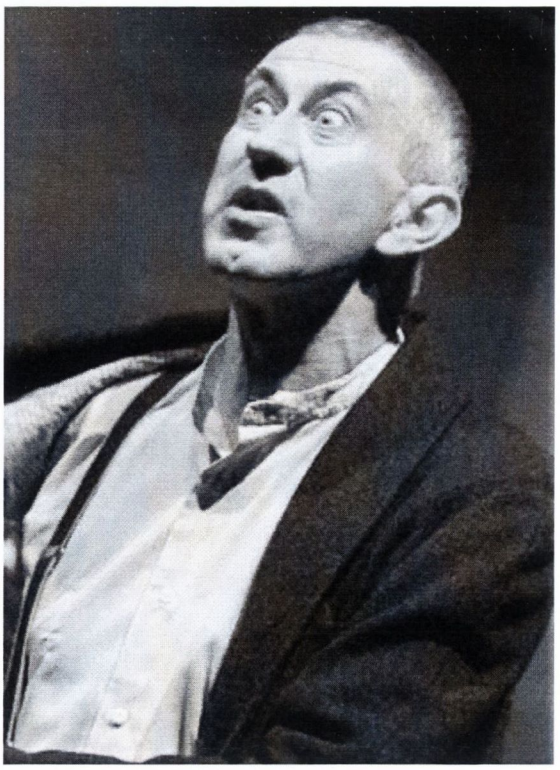
the object. This too is by now a common practice, though it tends to be classified differently than drama, and examined in the field of performance studies more readily than in drama studies or "theatre" departments at many universities.

The types of performance investigated below, then, tend to fall into two categories of anthropological exploration, either of *reading Beckett* or of *being Beckett*. MacGowran and his descendants went into "The Beckett Country" to discover Molloy, Moran, Malone, Mercier, and Watt just as Conquergood went to Thailand, the Gaza Strip, and inner-city Chicago to interview and befriend the Lao peoples, the Hmong, or the Latin Kings. As Conquergood conducted interviews, made friends, and then returned to the theatre or the classroom to perform their world, so did the artists who made these performances explore the books to discover landscapes, objects, sounds, voices, and people. Immersed in this distinctive deterritorialized community, the "researchers" delivered performances which captured both an individual perspective (shown in performance choices and interpretations) and hard data (the text). The next step, then, is the empirical investigation of how the process and product of each multi-text performance globally manifests this adapted authorship, while locally reflecting the undercut subjectivity which marks Beckett's prose and the phenomenological negations which constitute the theatrical act.

On the Border: Barry McGovern and *I'll Go On*

Barry McGovern is an Irish actor probably best known for his portrayal of Vladimir in the Gate Theatre's version of *Waiting for Godot*, a production labelled "definitive" during the Beckett Centenary celebrations in 2006, immortalized in the *Beckett on Film* project, and exported from Dublin to every county in Ireland in 2008.[10] His status as a preeminent performer of Beckett's work has been cemented by numerous international tours covering 30 years

NUMBER 13 (above)
Barry McGovern, *I'll Go On*
(Publicity)
(dir. Colm O Briain, adapted by
Barry McGovern & Gerry Dukes).
Gate Theatre, Dublin, 1994 [1985].
Photo: *Gate Theatre*
Source: *Gate Theatre*



NUMBER 14 (right)
Barry McGovern, *I'll Go On*
(Performance)
(dir. Colm O Briain, adapted by
Barry McGovern & Gerry Dukes).
Parade Theatre, Kensington, 2007.
Photo: Edwina Pickle
Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*

of different roles in Beckett's plays, and perhaps most of all by his association with the Gate Theatre and its producer Michael Colgan (custodian of the Beckett dramatic rights in Ireland). McGovern's voice features in many of the audiobooks of Beckett's novels, as well as other prose recordings and radio work throughout Ireland and the United Kingdom. In the footsteps of Jack MacGowran, however, it is McGovern's one-man show *I'll Go On* which built his particular identity as a "Beckett actor." *I'll Go On* premiered in the Dublin Theatre Festival in 1985, and went on to be performed more than 200 times on four continents, most recently in New York City in 2008.

Barry McGovern is not chronologically the first multi-text adaptor of Beckett's prose, nor is he the most influential. Both these titles go to Jack MacGowran. Nonetheless, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, McGovern's performance serves as a kind of bridge between the practice of single-text adaptation (in which the narrator is staged) and multi-text adaptation (using strategies of authorial adaptation and anthropology). This is due first to the nature of the *Trilogy* itself, which is both one and three at the same time: *I'll Go On* thus has characteristics of both single-text and multi-text adaptation. All of the textual selections in *I'll Go On* are from the *Trilogy*. However, as analysis will show, some staging decisions are clearly referential to other texts. Additionally, McGovern explicitly disavows the notion that his work is an adaptation of the *Trilogy* in a programme note from the original production. He writes:

> I'LL GO ON, selected by Gerry Dukes and myself, is not a dramatization or an adaptation of the trilogy, but consists instead of extracts from the novels woven into a continuous, coherent whole which contains the essence of the novels.

The first part of this claim could be seen to display a certain caution, in keeping with McGovern's later admonition that "the danger is in the neatness of identifications." It could be read simply as warning the audience against a presumption that the *entirety* of the *Trilogy* is contained here. It would thus

avoid the pitfall which marks Gare St. Lazare's version of the same three novels: the assertion of a greater completeness or faithfulness which manifestly cannot be achieved. That McGovern goes on to claim, however, that "the essence of the novels" is contained in a "continuous, coherent whole" logically obliterates the conservative ethos of his first assertion. To hold that *I'll Go On* is not an adaptation of the *Trilogy* is to reject a widely accepted definition of "adaptation." To hold that it becomes a new "continuous, coherent whole" is to claim (together with Gerry Dukes) what I have called adapted authorship.

The tensions set up by these apparent contradictions are simply manifestations of the dialectics that mark the process of prose adaptation generally, as well as the specific problematics of using multiple texts by Beckett as a source. The performance choices in a "border" piece like *I'll Go On* reveal the fault lines where audience and authorial fidelity both intersect and diverge. Texts are cut and recombined to attempt a middle way between entertainment value and artistic integrity. Marketing strategies emphasize comedy and accessibility, even while deep practical and scholarly knowledge of the subject is employed by the artists involved. In the arena of "adapted authorship," the collision of rigour and looseness is even starker, as the performer's interests and attractions compete with Beckett's textual integrity. Trying to determine precisely where this balance lies, or which specific choices can be marked in columns labelled "author," "audience," or "adaptor," is impossible. It is also undesirable to do so, since this could be read as both an argument of intent and a variety of criticism as "bookkeeping" (*Disjecta* 19). Rather, the analysis of *I'll Go On* and Barry McGovern which follows will attempt to locate borders, points of collision, and liminal zones where the performance reveals itself as neither one thing nor the other, a *négatité* which can be defined only by the absences at its core.

The first element of the history of *I'll Go On* which sets it apart from the other multi-text one-man performances is that it was not Barry McGovern's

own idea. Michael Colgan and Barry McGovern had seen Jack MacGowran's one-man show *Beginning to End* together at Trinity College Dublin in the late 1960s. Foreshadowing the prominence that comedy and accessibility would take in the Gate's work on Beckett, Colgan recollects laughing out loud at this performance (Gurewitsch, n. pag). Colgan took over the Gate Theatre in 1983, and he approached Beckett in 1984 with the idea of remounting Jack MacGowran's script. Gloria MacGowran, Jack's widow, held the rights, and with the support of Beckett (who felt understandably obligated to follow her wishes) refused them. Beckett, however, who had a good relationship with Colgan, suggested that the option remained for them to put together a new anthology. In collaboration with director Colm O Briain, Michael Colgan approached McGovern with the idea, which McGovern initially rejected, fearful of "living in that shadow" cast by MacGowran (Keating, n.pag). McGovern eventually relented, and the production premiered in the Dublin Theatre Festival in a late-night slot at the Gate Theatre on 23 September 1985. Since then, it has been revived twice in major productions at the Gate Theatre (1994 and 2006, for the Beckett Centenary) and has toured the world. McGovern is aware that it has now come to define his work, even more so than *Waiting for Godot*, or, for that matter, Yeats and Shakespeare, both of whose plays he has done more often than Beckett's.[11]

The performance has maintained its extensive list of collaborators over the years, so the version performed in Lincoln Center in 2008 was not substantially different (at least in design or text) from the original production. The large staff attached to the one-man production is unique; more than any other performance explored in this chapter, *I'll Go On* relied on numerous artistic voices for its development. It is interesting that the most "borderline" case of multi-text adaptation is thus also the one most influenced by perspectives other than the performer's. In this feature, *I'll Go On* resembles the ensemble-type work of Mabou Mines — a collaboration between several artists of stature — more than the solitary "labour of love" seen in

MacGowran's single-minded pursuit of Beckett's texts or in the "substratum" work of Robert Jaffe. The result of these conditions, more in keeping with traditional dramatic process and hierarchy than with the "anthropology of the Beckett Man," is that an audience-oriented drive takes precedence over the intimate adapted authorship by McGovern alone (or his collaborator on the adaptation, Gerry Dukes). Thus, a tension arises between the commercial nature of the production, the related pressure to be accessible, and the responsibility to an author to whom all involved parties are extremely loyal, and about whom each is fairly knowledgeable. In this collision of aesthetic and monetary drives, this production offers a tutorial in Adorno's "culture industry," showing how intense authorial fidelity, copyright law, and local and international celebrity (not to mention a work like the *Trilogy* that resists all these things) can be combined to enforce a "Beckett brand."

Nowhere is the culture industry more apparent than in the work of the producer, who has shaped the Gate Theatre as the central locus of Beckett's work in Ireland (a status enshrined in the legal framework for local rights). Michael Colgan describes himself as "more missionary than producer" where Beckett is concerned (Gurewitsch, n. pag). Besides its widely famed (and now nationally toured) *Waiting for Godot* production and its co-producer role on the mammoth *Beckett on Film* project in 2001, the Gate produced the entire Beckett dramatic cycle three times in fifteen years (1991, 1996 and 2006). Besides *I'll Go On*, a number of cross-genre pieces have also been attempted. *Eh Joe* was adapted for the stage by Atom Egoyan in 2006, and Colgan himself directed Ralph Fiennes in a staged version of *First Love*, first in Sydney in 2007 and then in New York in 2008. Colgan reveals a fundamental conservatism, however, in his interview with the *New York Times* about this production (20 August 2008): "Put the actor downstage center, looking at audience, feet firmly rooted to ground, no hieroglyphics, just telling you the story so you don't lose a word." In the same interview, Colgan speaks of *I'll Go On* in terms similar to the programme note by McGovern, emphasizing accessibility: "It wasn't meant

for the initiated. We were saying to people from the beginning: 'sit back, relax, and enjoy this.' Not: 'put on your thinking cap, be your most introspective, and worry about it'" (Gurewitsch, n. pag). The effort to be popular — even to "rehabilitate" an artist whose relations with Ireland were severed early and tested repeatedly — manifests most often through the strategy of comedy.

The selections from the *Trilogy* are not all sequential within each novel, but the novels are in sequence; again, this demarcates the liminal zone between a faithful adaptation of the three novels and the creation of a new work in *I'll Go On*. The choices are clearly patterned to provoke laughter early on, and to set an audience at ease within a frame of reference. Before the text even begins, McGovern appears with a drumroll and spotlight, marching, sporting a bowler hat, and eating a banana. This marks the terrain as "Beckettian," referencing both *Godot* and *Krapp's Last Tape*, while setting an unabashedly comic tone. The pre-show music is "The Liberty Bell" march by John Philip Sousa, a piece better known as the theme song from Monty Python's Flying Circus. When McGovern begins to speak, it seems like a new version of a pre-production announcement, but is in fact a section from *Molloy*: "perhaps it's a show — a recitation." When McGovern enters the set (by Robert Ballagh), a slightly raised two-sided perspectival box reminiscent of the *Endgame* room, the persona of a clown is retained along with selections that keep the energy high. The usual suspects from *Molloy* are all accounted for: sucking stones, banging on Mother's head, the encounter with a policeman while on a bicycle (effectively staged as a wooden sawhorse). Tellingly, but hardly surprisingly, the Moran section of *Molloy* is absent.[12]

The tonal shift to *Malone Dies* is a major one, moving from the intertextuality and broad jests of the opening to a more limited staging of the body of Malone. The narrative position is altered from the seemingly omnipresent — or at least highly cross-referential — flexible "I" of Molloy to the more obviously embodied Malone. The orientation of Malone in his room is staged realistically, with McGovern lying on his back on a slab. Suggestive of

a mausoleum more than a hospital bed, the "stage room" is coldly lit and bordered with a bright fluorescent light (design by James McConnell). The broad antics and jests of the opening vaudeville are replaced by a wry, dark humour. This atmospheric shift suits the repeated failures which form the basic plot of the novel, a series of attempted narratives, aborted characters, and obliterated texts. It seems at first that the performance has returned to a more rigid textual attention, a dramatization of the novel's situation on the side of authorial fidelity. However, while the narrative position seems familiar from single-text performance, the border slips again: the audience is treated as present within the space, even dealt with directly, along the lines of Chaikin's (later Irwin's) *Texts for Nothing*. The narrator's awareness of his surroundings is a strategy firmly on the side of audience fidelity; it acknowledges the presence of an observer, returning to the primal anxiety of Berkeley's *esse est percipi*. As the lights in the room shift at one point, McGovern looks up at them with curiosity. His line "it seems to be my room" is spoken while peering out into the audience, much in the same vein as his rendition of Vladimir's self-referential moment at the end of *Waiting for Godot*, "At me too someone is looking" (58). The stage as diorama — indeed, Ballagh's design makes this explicit — aggressively highlights the theatrical framework and the voids of representation in ways that are inconceivable in the novel, yet fundamental to its content.

The final passage, culled from the late pages of *The Unnamable,* dispenses with comedy altogether. McGovern kneels shirtless and speeds through the text at a prodigious pace, the lights of the box blazing behind him. At the level of image and as a display of sheer actor prowess, it is extremely arresting. The internal criticism of the text — the repetition, negation, and centrality of the spoken voice — comes at such a pace and ferocity that it seems a matter of great importance. This is a simple tactic by an actor, yet it articulates an argument within the text that might easily be lost upon the reader. The performance, in the end, seems structured almost as a Trojan

horse: the laughter of the beginning section devolves into a shocking extremity of suffering written on the body and mind of the actor at the end.

Orality returns as the key figure of the *Trilogy*, not only in the content of *The Unnamable* itself, but also in McGovern's own analysis of the work. More than in the Irish *seanchaí*, McGovern locates Beckett's attraction to the spoken language in his formal Protestant education, in Homer and the King James Version of the Bible. Charles Isherwood, reviewing *I'll Go On* at Lincoln Center, referenced McGovern's handling of the text in his headline: "Linguistic Somersaults through Beckettian Pastures." He writes:

> This is no rote, reverent recitation of Beckett's pungent but lyrical prose. Mr. McGovern embodies these variously abject, embittered and infuriated story spinners with an intensity that both tickles and stings [...He] concentrated on the rich seams of humor in Beckett's writing, the mad cackle that echoes even in the grimmest passages. (*NYT* 21 July 2008)

A classic Beckettian dialectic, familiar from the ethical and humanist readings of Beckett typified by Karl Gierow's Nobel Prize citation speech, emerges from this reception.[13] "Intensity" reveals the dramatic tension — or perhaps the dialectical, philosophical tension — between laughter and destruction. The representation of a degraded humanity reveals the underlying value of the human. This is yet another area where fidelity to the textual origins of the performance adds to its dramatic efficacy, foregrounds the logical and ontological oppositions within the novel's discourse and story, and thus initiates the conditions for the ethic of impossibility through the phenomenology of the theatre.

As a distillation or adaptation of the *Trilogy*, a great deal is missing from *I'll Go On*. First and foremost, the void of subjectivity at the core of the novels is effaced by unified presentation in a body and narrative specificity in a space. Of course, the adaptors never claim that it is an adaptation of the *Trilogy*; they state categorically that it is not. But there seems also to be no question that within the loss of the novel certain theatrical gains appear, just as the choices

that are theatrically effective alter key elements of the novels. The demarcations between the sections of *I'll Go On*, falling in line with the different source novels and complete with musical interludes, break up the audience's perception of unity even though the actor does not change. What results is a performance that walks the fault line between single-text and multi-text performance, alternately staging an authorially faithful, diegetic narrative and an aggressively adapted work targeted at the references, intellects, and emotions within the audience. The radical revision and invention of a "self," however, can be found in the earlier work of Jack MacGowran.

Jack MacGowran, The Beckett Actor

The parts of Barry McGovern's performance which fit the model of multi-text performance that I have argued in this chapter — that is, an anthropology of the "Beckett man" and the "adapted authorship" of the interpreter — contribute to the contemporary view of a "mystical" attachment between McGovern and Beckett.[14] If there is a longing to mythologize Barry McGovern as the modern "Beckett actor," this longing has its origin in Jack MacGowran, who was among the first performers to receive this type of accolade. Patrick Magee, MacGowran's contemporary and an occasional collaborator, was seen similarly. Both achieved their initial status by Beckett's appreciation of their craft, and both actors performed Beckett's prose as well as his plays. Magee's prose work was mainly on the radio, as discussed in Chapter Three, but the two men did a public reading of prose excerpts at the Criterion Theatre together in 1970. However, this section will show that the material difference between Magee's and MacGowran's legacies is that MacGowran made a one-man show. The identification of MacGowran and Beckett was cemented by their collaboration on *Beginning to End*, and no clearer example exists in twentieth-century performance of Beckett of the conditions that mark the multi-text anthology. MacGowran's direct legacy was

the ongoing practice of performers like McGovern, Robert Jaffe, and many substratum performers of Beckett collections who cite him as a forerunner or inspiration. His indirect legacy is visible in the contemporary journalistic and academic coverage of this type of work, which continues to seek identification between author and actor. In MacGowran, one can see Cronin's notion of the "Beckett Man" extend into the performative, creating the "Beckett actor."

The notion of a "Beckett actor" is clearly problematic on its surface. What does it mean for an actor to have a particular affinity for an author? How can representation of an author transfer onto another's practice? The biggest risk is that an uncritical one-to-one identification simply becomes normative, even among critics who know better. This appears to have happened already, as the citations of MacGowran's performance as a transcendent identification between self and other, actor and author, are widespread. Jordan Young's full-length biography of MacGowran — a book entitled *The Beckett Actor: Jack MacGowran, Beginning to End* — repeatedly uses this strategy. The weight of such rhetoric undermines its significance as a critique, and burnishes its credentials as a hagiography. In a typical passage, Young writes:

> The actor had changed people's minds about Shaw and illuminated the darkest corners of O'Neill, and he sought to alter the public's perception of Beckett. With the author's supervision, he took selections from the novels and plays and wove them together, to reveal the humanity and the joy that he knew to be at the center of a most misunderstood and private man [...] The result was Beckett distilled to his essence, a lone figure on an empty stage, his only prop a ragged handkerchief, his chair a jagged rock. The show was a triumph in Dublin, a sensation in Paris, a phenomenon in New York. At the Schiller-Theater Workshop in Berlin, it caused a furor, a commotion of the sort generally reserved for pop stars [...] In the end, he was no longer an actor playing a part but a man lost in the bowels of a character. The words were Beckett's, but the pain — and the torment — were his. (18)

Young so frequently strikes this somewhat journalistic tone without much critical underpinning, employing superlatives and leaping into arguments of intent, that it becomes a defining characteristic of the book. As the only

available biography, and considering the high level of access granted by MacGowran's widow Gloria, it is still extremely useful in establishing basic facts and chronologies of the actor's life and work. It does not quite achieve an analytical or scholarly status, however, reading often like a celebrity profile. Young's writing is clearly pitched at a general audience rather than an academic one, which is not necessarily a flaw. Regrettably, Young is not alone.

The Beckett Actor has a curious arrangement of front matter, perhaps intended to frame the book with a bit more academic weight than is contained within it. The work has a foreword, introduction, preface, acknowledgments, and prologue, each of which is about a page in length. The first piece is by Martin Esslin, whose emotions seem to get the better of all critical faculty:

> If ever there was a perfect congruence between a great poet's imagination and an actor, this was it. There is always a special thrill for a playwright to see the human being he has imagined suddenly leap into concrete, three-dimensional existence. In some ways, and for some of his characters, Jack MacGowran was even better than what Beckett had seen with his mind's eye. ("Foreword," Young 5)

Even allowing for the relaxed expectations of critical rhetoric in the literary genre of the foreword, this is surprising. Esslin was one of the leading critics of Deirdre Bair's biography of Beckett, which he lambasted for its frequent resort to arguments of intent, leaps of judgment, and recourse to an impossible position inside Beckett's mind.[15] The situation is ripe for deconstruction, since an advocate of a conservative approach to biography seems to be reversing himself in other published work. What are the forces that might unbind Esslin from his rigorously argued position when it comes to Jack MacGowran?

The important difference between Esslin writing about MacGowran and his opinion on someone else writing about Beckett is the difference between writing about a writer and writing about an actor. Unlike the writer, whose status as a solitary or universal "genius" has been steadily chipped away by Barthes, Derrida, and countless others in the twentieth century, the actor continues to be viewed by many as a vaguely mystical creature. Ethnographic

performance has in large part reinscribed the elevated status of individual performers and given them a kind of auteur status, creating a tension between the form and content of representation. This problem is the subject of recent debates about theories of acting and actor training. In 1997, as David Mamet wrote in his polemic critique of Stanislavski and the American style of Method training, *True and False*, acting is too often thought of as a "technique based on luck," a kind of "superstition" of becoming (6). Embedded in Stanislavski's systems of sense memory, substitution, and character — still the standard Western tropes in theatrical criticism, especially in journalism and pop culture — is an erasure of acting as a job, as a simple set of tasks, or as a means to an end. Similarly missing is a richer notion of the performative from Schechner or Turner, or indeed from any modernist avant-garde practices of acting. Statements of awe at the "transformation" or "transcendence" of an actor elevate a theoretical tradition which mystifies the actor and places the realistic above the real.

There is a structural critique which Esslin's excess here suggests as well. Many theatre scholars have built careers by writing about dramatists, philosophy, or history. Esslin's books show a grasp of all three. But the act of performance — the illumination of a theory of *practice* — is perhaps a lacuna in his oeuvre. The discourse of performance studies certainly accounts for the practitioner to a much greater degree. Within the more limited field of theatre studies, the phenomenological attitude takes the task of the actor as its starting point. Phenomenology, although it is the subject of its own "transcendental" critique, is well used by Stanton B. Garner and Bert O. States, two forerunners cited previously, to return the "embodiment" of a character to its fundamental positionality in an empty space, rather than some imaginary position inside Beckett's mind. There is no doubt that part of the difficulty in reading MacGowran's performance, especially the materials of reception, is the fuzzy discourse used by many critics to describe his embodiment and its effects. In a move profoundly out of keeping with most twentieth century theatre,

especially of the European type, a classical vision of mimesis and catharsis seems to overwhelm rational argument about this unique performance *event*.

It is possible, of course, to push this critique too far, since Beckett himself described an ephemeral connection between himself and MacGowran. As discussed above, Young quotes Beckett on the matter: "Jack was like a brother. I didn't have to talk to him; I didn't have to direct him. He just *knew*" (138). Tony Richardson, who ran the Royal Court in London with George Devine (Hamm in their 1958 *Endgame*, opposite MacGowran as Clov), stated his similar view while citing *Endgame* as an actual example:

> Beckett's characters live in the mind rather than in the real world. It requires an extraordinary gift to embody someone like Clov -- it requires a particular kind of poetry of acting, or poetry of personality. It's difficult to define; it's not something you can relate to naturalistic terms. An actor needs to respond, to see the Beckett vision. To have that strange, poetic kind of thing that makes it work is very rare. Jackie had it. (Young 59)

Surely the idea of a special affinity or understanding between an actor and an author can be accepted, since collaboration in the theatre inherently fuses the personal and the professional. Expressions like "he just knew" or "Jackie had it" are phrases that name, however inadequately, the invisible cord linking two artists. This type of creator-interpreter relationship is already widely accepted between dramatists and directors — consider the Alan Schneider/Samuel Beckett relationship, documented extensively in their published correspondence (*No Author Better Served*, 1998) — and between directors and actors. The author-actor connection is rare only because it is generally mediated by the director, but in most of the one-man shows of Beckett's prose, the director is a peripheral or absent. Again, this key link of "understanding" between Beckett and MacGowran was cemented by the multi-text anthology of prose.

The dynamic relationship between two such collaborators becomes calcified, however, upon the death of both artists, leading to the present state

where the connection between them has entered canonical status. To read the reviews written by Beckett's partisans at the time of MacGowran's final tour in 1972 and 1973 is to drown in superlatives. Even in contemporary coverage of other one-man shows, MacGowran looms large. Writing about the 2008 tour of Barry McGovern's *I'll Go On* to New York, Matthew Gurewitsch writes of MacGowran as the "prime avatar of Samuel Beckett's scrappy, scruffy misanthropes" and places McGovern squarely within this heritage. The *Companion* states that MacGowran achieved "lasting acclaim as SB's interpreter for stage, radio, and TV" and notes the contribution of the one-man show to this status (335). It is Jonathan Kalb, in his essential *Beckett in Performance*, who manages to capture a more objective sense of the actual process that resulted in the performance of *Beginning to End*:

> MacGowran developed what he called 'a composite character of the intellectual tramp' who spoke selected texts from plays, poems, novels and stories, slipping seamlessly from one to another as if delivering a single soliloquy [...] MacGowran created a strong, singular personality and used *it* as his production's through-line, adapting all passages to it without worrying overmuch about attitudes and physical circumstances in the original fictions. (119)

This passage shows the extent to which Cronin's notional "Beckett Man" comes into play with the anthology performance. It also exposes the underlying "adapted authorship" that must take place in order to separate Beckett's language from its context and its form, even from the characters who speak it. The most radical gesture of MacGowran's many anthologies — at once faithful and faithless, rebellious and reverential — can be found in the staging of the Beckettian self.

The dialectic set up in the introduction to this chapter holds true for MacGowran: while context is destroyed and a new self is created in *Beginning to End*, the new self is also fragmented, multiple, and severed from a conventional subject-object relation. This is in keeping with the reading of Beckettian subjectivity presented in Chapter Two; indeed, the "self" of multi-

text performance seems to flow directly from the negative phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. In a much stronger sense than in single-text performance, the anthology performance stages a nomadic subjectivity, colliding pieces of superficially unrelated language to create a new whole. Perhaps justifying the inclusion of Lucky's monologue in each version of *Beginning to End*, the subject in such performances is essentially an aphasiac, a person incapable of sequential linguistic relations, and thereby a person for whom separate categories dissolve. Merleau-Ponty uses the classic example of the aphasiac categorizing skeins of yarn (also appearing years later, without citation, in Foucault) in *Phenomenology of Perception* to articulate the dissociation of language from intentionality, and seems for all the world to be describing the narrators of the multi-text performances:

> There is no speaker, there is a flow of words set in motion independently of any intention to speak [...] speech is not an action and does not show up the internal possibilities of the subject: man can speak as the electric lamp can become incandescent. (203)

For Merleau-Ponty, language falls into the "circuit of third person phenomena," and does not create the unity of thought and subjectivity that the Cartesian *cogito* would seem to suggest. The body is a conduit of language, rather than a producer of linguistic thoughts; surrounded by the force of words, the body merely has to "plug in" to the stream in order for the flow to begin. There is remarkable similarity between this reading of the subject, the condition of Beckett's characters in the novels, and the position of the "adapted author" in the one-man shows.

In terms of this reading of language and intentionality, it is an essential dimension of the early anthologies created by MacGowran that he based them in mime, an art that functions outside of language. MacGowran was an extremely physical performer, having been trained in ballet at the Abbey School and a great admirer of Nijinsky since childhood. He developed his skills in corporeal mime with Étienne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault, two of the

founding creators of the modern form of mime. Though Beckett first encountered MacGowran on the radio, having heard him from Paris doing stage Irish for the BBC in Michael Molloy's *The Paddy Pedlar*, he obviously was aware of MacGowran's physical abilities, having requested him for Clov in the 1958 production of *Endgame* at the Royal Court. Four years later, already so close to MacGowran that he wrote work expressly for him, Beckett immediately approved the selection of texts for the first anthology of his works, *End of Day*. The basic architecture of the piece was built around *Act Without Words I*, but the mime was interrupted with lines from the drama and the prose. These texts included Lucky's monologue, a Clov speech from *Endgame*, a "poetic passage" from *All That Fall*, a selection from *Molloy*, the erotic interlude in the boat from *Krapp's Last Tape*, and the entire text of "From an Abandoned Work" (about a twenty-minute read by itself).[16] Donald McWhinnie (the BBC radio drama manager who had directed MacGowran in the original *All That Fall*) directed the production, and Sean Kenny designed the set, which included the tree from a previous production of *Waiting for Godot*. As the production image (#15) shows, the costume was conceived much like a classical mime, in a Pierrot style with whiteface and black hat. The sound design included the Miles Davis trumpet solo "Blue in Green," released on the *Kind of Blue* LP in 1959, and still would have been received in Dublin as relatively avant-garde.

End of Day opened and played for one night only on 5 October 1962 in Dublin's Gaiety Theatre. It was well-reviewed in the *Irish Times*, where Alec Reid presciently emphasized the humour in the performance: "Mr. MacGowran demolished once and for all the caricature of Beckett as a gloomy, obscure dramatist of dustbins, deformity, and despair" (6 October 1962). The Royal Court made a bid on the production, but ultimately the London transfer went to the New Arts Theatre Club, in a late-night time slot. Controversial among reviewers, and ultimately with Beckett himself, was the departure from mime into speech. Beckett called the format "an aberration," and

NUMBER 15
Jack MacGowran, *End of Day* (backstage).
Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, 1962.
Photo: The Estate of Jack MacGowran / Source: Young, *The Beckett Actor*

observed that "a mime is served best without words" (Young 80). While Beckett had seen a few rehearsals of the production, the script was fundamentally not his own. Even from the production side, the prevailing opinion was that MacGowran had not rehearsed enough — he did not have the texts perfectly memorized on opening night — and the project had been too hasty in conception and execution. That Beckett began his abandoned *J.M. Mime* at this time in 1963 might be seen to indicate a gentle effort to provide MacGowran with similar, but more authorially controlled, material.

The increased success that MacGowran had as an actor for film and television during the early 1960's, following his early associations with Beckett, had been accompanied by some major health scares, as well as diagnoses of alcoholism and manic depression. His wife Gloria held an extremely sacrificial role at this point; one can see a tragic self-negation in her statement that "I hate to see human beings with talent destroying themselves [...] I finally made the choice to give up my life for his" (Young 68). Fascinatingly, the first Beckett one-man show appears to have been her idea, and had nothing to do with Beckett himself, but rather with Jack. She relates to Young that her "idea was to change people's ideas about Jack, to show the different facets of things he could do" (78). She even uses a plural pronoun when talking about the selection of Beckett's textual excerpts: "We chose things that would show the range he had. It was a totally selfish thing on my part. But Jack wanted to show the beauty and the humor in Sam; that was his concern" (78). In a story by now familiar from a large number of writers' lives but somewhat fewer actors' lives, Gloria's contribution to *End of Day* has largely been erased (she does not appear in the programme, or in most critical accounts of the work). Instead, her artistic contribution is exchanged — even in her own comments, as seen above — for her domestic utility.

The project of a Beckett one-man show would be a near-constant focus for the remaining eleven years of MacGowran's life. The multi-text adaptations which grew out of Gloria's idea would have many different

manifestations, three of which were on stage: *End of Day* (1962), *Beginning to End* (1965), and a newly revised *Beginning to End* produced under the direction of Beckett himself from 1970 to 1972 (known by the title *Jack MacGowran in the Works of Samuel Beckett* in the 1970-71 New York run). For television, three versions of *Beginning to End* were produced: the BBC in 1965, RTÉ in 1966, and KCET-TV Los Angeles in 1971 (under the direction of Alan Schneider). Additionally, MacGowran read the text on radio at the BBC in 1966, as well as recording the audio LP *MacGowran Speaking Beckett* with Dublin's Claddagh Records the same year (*Companion* 315). Considering the massive range of texts in each anthology and the several iterations of the multi-text performance itself, it is clear that Beckett's old aversion to shifts of genre did not apply in the least to Jack MacGowran.

The year following his first attempt at a multi-text adaptation based in mime was spent by MacGowran improving his depth in Beckett's non-dramatic work. MacGowran was aware of his failure in capturing Beckett's work adequately on stage, and set about trying to "fail better." In a pattern replicated in each work classified in this chapter as "ethnographic," the practice of adapting Beckett tends to be obsessive, and the standard to which these artists hold themselves demands sustained engagement and formal study. Evident in MacGowran's refusal of every offer to tour the United States with *End of Day* is the triumph of artistic concerns over financial, a relative rarity in theatrical practice. MacGowran sought out Beckett frequently during the Paris festival in 1963, while the actor was directing W.B. Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*, to discuss plans for revision and revival of the one-man show (Young 87). Beckett directly influenced MacGowran's artistic choices during this period. At his suggestion, the new performance eliminated the mime altogether, costumed MacGowran in a vagabond greatcoat, and replaced Miles Davis with Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" (Quartet No. 14 in d minor, D.810, a piece that features in *All That Fall* and one of Beckett's favourite works). Beckett still did not have absolute influence over the work, however,

particularly in the textual selection. He was against the inclusion of Lucky's speech, but MacGowran convinced him to allow it (Young 104-105).

Drawing out a richer thematic that the twilight evoked by "*End of Day*," the new performance was entitled *Beginning to End*. This choice alone reveals a deepening engagement with Beckett's philosophical inclinations — uncertainty over nihilism — and the multivalence of his language. Before it was on stage, the new anthology was performed for BBC TV under the direction of Patrick Garland and broadcast on 23 February 1965. The stage version premiered in Dublin again, playing at the Lantern Theatre from 15 to 18 September 1965.[17] The sequence of this "first draft" is noticeably different from both the previous and the future "final" version, but some elements are in place in all three: the full text of "From an Abandoned Work," Lucky's speech, and some fragments from Clov. It is also interesting that at this stage, MacGowran wanted the audience to be aware of sequence, even to the point of listing an internal jump within the same text (in the programme, *Molloy* is written twice in a row). The programme note on the back of the two-page programme was also written by Jack MacGowran. He begins by contextualizing Beckett's reputation as a playwright, including the work for radio and television. He then explains his motivation and organising principle for the performance in explicit terms:

> Whilst not overlooking his stage and radio plays, I have compiled *Beginning to End* from some of his major novels, "Watt", "Malone Dies", "Molloy" and "The Unnameable", in order to bring to the public a further aspect of the human condition and to portray the feelings and thoughts of a man faced with death, the inevitable. In order to maintain a theme and give shape and form to *Beginning to End*, I have selected passages from Mr. Beckett's works which deal with this aspect alone.

This version went to London and Cambridge during September and October, and launched a new range of interest in MacGowran's Beckett work. In the following year, Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ 2) also made a film of the performance (directed by Chloe Gibson), and Claddagh Records made the audio version called *MacGowran Speaking Beckett*. "Death and the Maiden" was

NUMBERS 16 & 17
Jack MacGowran, *Beginning to End*, rehearsing with Samuel Beckett and Patrick Garland (dir. Patrick Garland). BBC TV, London, 1965.
Photos: The Estate of Jack MacGowran / Source: Young, *The Beckett Actor*

played as introductory music by an all-Beckett family trio, John (harmonium), Edward (flute), and Sam (gong). The gong was used in the recording to demarcate transitions between texts as well (*DTF* 479). Young presents MacGowran's vocal choices, especially in the pure-audio version, as "disembodied" in tone (as well as form). Indeed, it sounds as though the discarded mime costume had left the text without much humour, and the new focus in the selection on "the inevitability of death" (as related in the programme note) had a major impact on the acting style. Young describes the 1965 MacGowran as wearing "a pathetic deadpan expression," writing that "he had smiled then but once, the corners of his mouth curling momentously into an impish grin—to devastating effect" (130). This could also reflect Beckett's influence somewhat, since he had a well-known attraction to "colourless" performances by actors using his text.[18]

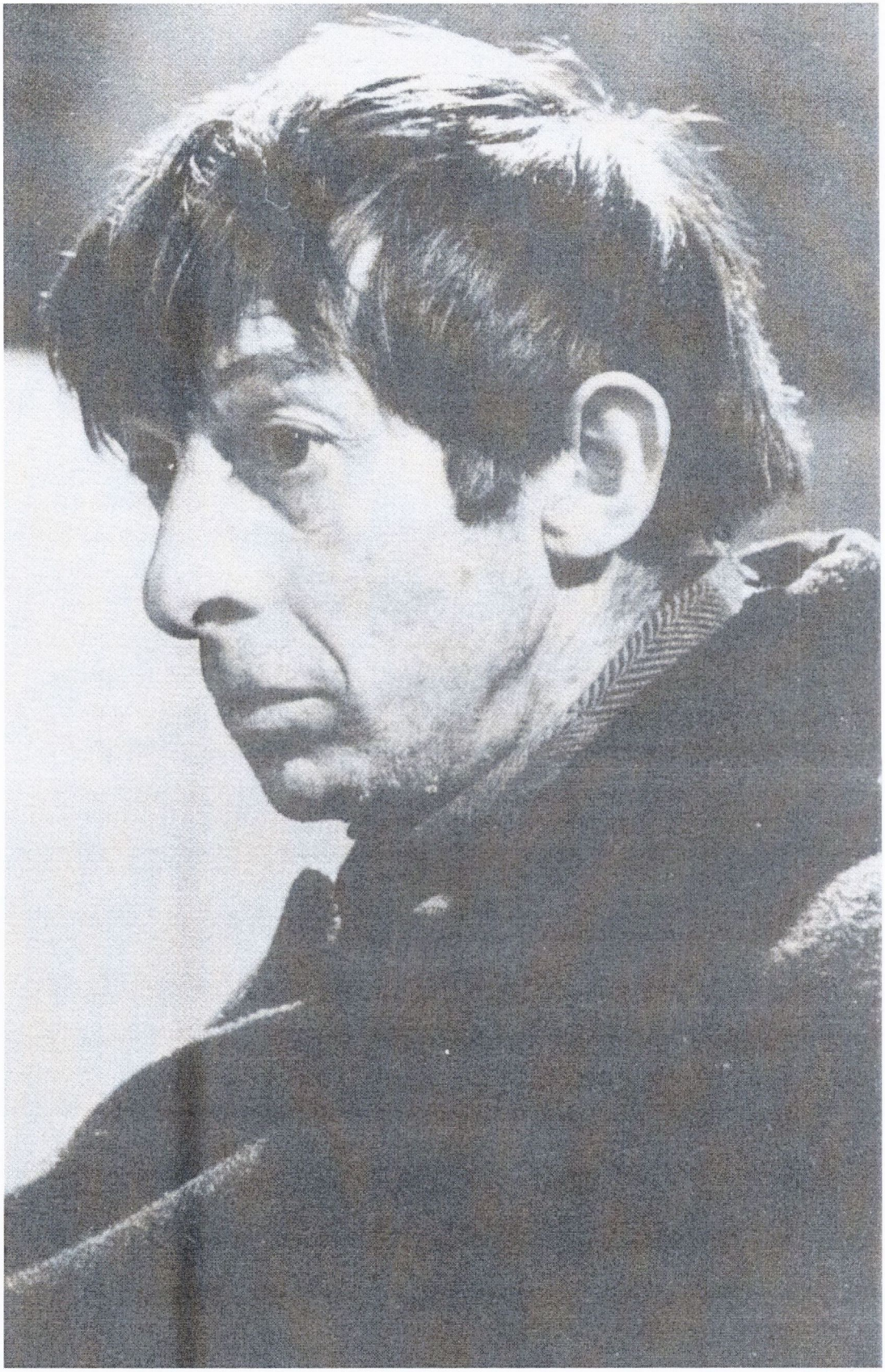
The 1965 version of *Beginning to End* finished in 1968, with a tour of performance excerpts to Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, and a final feature in Ulster for the 1968 Belfast festival. In spite of his unreserved support at every stage, for Beckett the central problematic of the show was still unresolved. Writing that "Sam had never been entirely happy with Jack's concept for the one-man show," Young describes it even at this stage as "a work-in-progress not wholly satisfactory" in the eyes of both men (129). Accordingly, another Paris meeting was arranged, and an intense period of collaboration — effectively Beckett directing MacGowran — was begun that would result in the "final" and "authoritative" *Beginning to End*:

> The challenge was clear as Beckett and MacGowran met in Paris to discuss the show. The problem was not so much one of selection as one of form. *Beginning to End* lacked connective tissue; it wanted for emotional logic and continuity, a common thread to hold the audience between one segment and the next. Jack and Sam decided to start from scratch, reshaping the program with rapt attention to structure and content. No longer would it be a potpourri, a hodgepodge of delectable tidbits snipped impulsively from the author's work, but a[n] homage to Beckett's *oeuvre*. (129-130)

In a slight revision of the 1965 version's focus on death, MacGowran viewed the new production as "the story of a man's innermost thoughts on the statement that he's going to die [...] the man's past, his hopes, his relationships to parents and people, the attitudes and the terror he feels as the end approaches" (130). Nonetheless, the stylistic approach was very different. While he slips back into remarkably subjective language and non-academic suppositions — "they were two men sharing the same soul" (128) — Young suggests that "as his understanding of Sam's work grew, Jack's performance became insanely comical" (132). This is borne out in the contemporaneous documents of reception, which describe both an extreme distillation of gesture and an almost maniacal intensity of emotions. The style fused MacGowran's actor training with his nearly academic study, unifying the corporeal mime of Decroux and Barrault with the Beckettian "unity" of the Dublin vagabond:

> Housed in MacGowran's elastic body and electric voice, his liquid movements and shocking expressions, the little fellow finally came to life in Paris. He laughed. He wept. He snarled. He pouted. He brooded; he raged. He scratched his behind. He stood, he sat, he hobbled. And he danced. But the actor made sparing use of gestures, reducing everything to a bare minimum; his hands he kept in his pockets, or at his sides, for much of the time. His every move dictated by the script, MacGowran used instead the shift of his head and the turn of his neck, the slant of his bearings and the manner of his gait. (Young 132)

This description shows the extent to which the various selves put forward by MacGowran at each stage of the multi-text anthology's development had basically cross-fertilized, leaving a fragmented and contradictory subject, wandering the distilled void of the theatre, an actor essentially as multiple as the texts themselves. The mime of 1962 was clearly present in the final version, as was the brooding philosopher of 1965. The final draft of *Beginning to End* stands as a testament to practice-based research, hinting at the potential of immersion in Beckett's texts in performance as a mechanism to discover the contradictions, negations, and profound philosophical questions embedded in the prose and plays.



NUMBER 18
Jack MacGowran, *Beginning to End* (dir. Chloe Gibson)
Radio Telefís Éireann, Dublin, 1966.
Photo: Radio Telefís Éireann / Source: Young, *The Beckett Actor*

In a manner familiar from Beckett's writing of the period, the theatrical ethos of the new one-man show was subtraction. Schubert and Miles were both gone, as were the *Embers* sound effects from the BBC's radiophonic workshop (with its infamous seagulls). Props like the bowler hat, the knapsack, and the walking stick were eliminated. Calling the performance that resulted a "seamless whole," Young says that Beckett and MacGowran "relentlessly [..] carved it, reduced it to essence, both for adaptation and for memorization" (136). The text selections included some works from before, but many new ones as well: *Malone Dies, Echo's Bones, Cascando,* and *Words and Music* joined *Embers, Molloy, Waiting for Godot, Watt, Krapp's Last Tape, Endgame* and *The Unnamable* from previous versions. The new set designer for the production, Ming Cho Lee, worked with abstract forms to create "a desolate wilderness of strange, cosmic-like swirls, keeping in mind Jack's desire that the stage suggest a womb" (144). The space was evocative mainly for its absence of signification, a Beckettian quality observed by Jonathan Marks, who wrote a scholarly assessment of MacGowran's project in *Theatre* in 1971 (based on the New York production):

> The place is like nothing. Maybe it is the Boards - yes, the Theatre. Nothing - yes, not a tree, but a couple of rocks. Whorls of color - no, not color, just dirty brown, maybe green. An interminably high back wall, side walls to match, swooping down onto the boards. A topless pit. Nothing there. Oh yes - a man, who speaks. (84)

In a final shift in the variable of information provided to the audience, the programme for the evening included the list of works, but not the order of texts nor any definitions of the segments. The audience experience of the actor's embodiment remains troubled, however, by the "local configuration" that is the actor's body, and the "electricity" — to return to Merleau-Ponty's metaphor — that flows through the voice. Is there a recognition in the performance that there are numerous voices in the piece, or do they all fuse into a single character? Marks deploys the highly relevant metaphor of radio

to articulate this central problematic of the multi-text performance:

> Within the unified framework of the program an enormous diversity of sounds can be picked up. Different voices speak from within the actor [...] the man in this pit is like a receiver, picking up stray signals from a long-dead planet. Some signals set his head bobbing about, reaching for words and phrases too genteel or too precise to be contained in that grimy black coat; some slow him down, de-activate him; some nail his feet and drive him down toward the dust. The physical MacGowran is an immutable context, a battered but still-functioning instrument, stripped of all fripperies. Yet with each new signal he changes, he becomes something else, another source of words. (85-86)

All one-person multi-text adaptations are in the same situation of liminality between the singularity of body and the multiplicity of voice. That this body might be a receiver of some kind is an appealing and elegant solution to the theatrical problematic of how a central "longitude and latitude" might collect such diversity of human expression, and the link with Merleau-Ponty's conception of language is obvious.

Theatre Quarterly published an interview with Jack MacGowran following his untimely death in 1973. Richard Toscan, of the Drama School at the University of Southern California, had spoken to him in February of 1972 about the one-man show, and MacGowran shows both astonishing depth of scholarly understanding and great openness in discussing his process. In their general discussion of Beckett, MacGowran touches on many of the tropes already addressed in this analysis: he emphasizes the fundamental "simplicity" of Beckett, the integrity of the first reading of his work, and the non-symbolic character of his writing. He dismisses the psychoanalytic reading of *Endgame* and uses this play to prove that Beckett's writing is fundamentally about relationships between people. He also describes the ethical imperative of going on, as manifested in the countless situations depicted in Beckett which would normally lead to suicide (the narrator of *How It Is*, the Unnamable, and Winnie in *Happy Days*) but which never do. Finally, an ethical movement is explicated in response to a direct question from Toscan. The full exchange is as follows:

NUMBER 19
Jack MacGowran, *Jack MacGowran in the Works of Samuel Beckett.* [*Beginning to End*].
New York Shakespeare Festival, Public Theatre, New York, 1970.
Photo: Joseph Abeles/ Source: Young, *The Beckett Actor*

NUMBERS 20, 21, & 22 (from top left)
Jack MacGowran, *Beginning to End* (dir. Alan Schneider).
(No. 22 with producer Lewis Freedman). KCET TV, Los Angeles, 1971.
Photos: KCET Los Angeles / Source: Young, *The Beckett Actor*

> Q: Does Beckett see himself as an optimistic writer?
> A: I don't think he would describe himself as being either optimistic or pessimistic. What he would really feel like saying is, I think, that survival under any conditions for mankind is most important. When he says 'I could die today if I wished, merely by making a little effort,' in *Molloy*, he means that any man could just commit suicide if he wanted to, but it's just as well to die quietly in the normal course of events. Beckett doesn't believe in self-destruction in case the answer to our problems may happen, if not today, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps the next day. He says he is sure of two things: that he was born and that he will die. Apart from that, he says he's not sure of anything. That's why he said the key word in his books is 'perhaps.' Whenever Beckett is ambiguous, it's because he doesn't know the answer, and when he's definite, he's very definite because he doesn't know the answer.

The dialogue continues to address — again, in remarkably explicit terms — the ethical core of Beckett's aesthetic, firmly within the tradition of Theodor Adorno illuminated in Chapter One of this thesis:

> Q: You're implying that Beckett is really a highly realistic playwright?
> A: Absolutely. He's the greatest realist I know of this generation. He's an extreme realist.

Young is not alone among the critics who assert that MacGowran truly "lived the role" of Beckett's distressed protagonists and anti-heroes. This implies the kind of accolade given to the "Method actor" who commits suicide while playing a suicidal character, and values this mystical and total identification over the truly controlled, sharply distilled and ultimately physical work of embodiment. Many critics simply do not know the difference. The tradition of mime and dance in which MacGowran was trained is in complete opposition to this notional character-actor elision. It is focused, above all, on the act of communication to an audience. What is most visible in the eleven-year trajectory of MacGowran's work on the multi-text performance is how much the struggle to represent Beckett on stage — and its eventual resolution into a profound understanding of this ethical core — was based in his creation of a one-man show, rather than in standard "dramatic" or even single-text stagings.

Ethnographic performance of Beckett creates a feedback loop which shows not only "the great merit of Beckett's writing," as Marks writes (87); nor solely the fundamental orality of the prose, as Brater argues; but also what Herbert Blau calls "the malaise at the selvedge of nonexistence which refuses not to be" (93). Young's work in *The Beckett Actor* depicts this ontological struggle in terms of biography, writing that MacGowran "sensed the affirmation of life at the core of Beckett's work that had eluded others [...] Where critics and scholars stressed the nihilism and the despair, MacGowran was aroused by the writer's wit and compassion" (18). In the extraordinary demands placed on the multi-text practitioner to immerse in Beckett's worlds and words, there is a radical encounter with the void. In the adaptation of authorship that such a performance style demands, a tremendous burden of expression is shouldered. The performance thus entails additional acts of choice which separate it from other textual practices in drama. On its surface, the task of expression is impossible, and the terrain of the theatre is empty. To "go on" in such a situation is the essence of an ethic of impossibility, and the actor's cliché that "the show must go on" — so obviously a driving force of MacGowran's work — mirrors Beckett's radically ethical "you must go on."

Known Unknowns: Robert Jaffe, Ryan Cutrona, and Jack Emery

While Jack MacGowran's multi-text performance practice has had relatively marginal significance in Beckett criticism, it has resonated massively with other performers. MacGowran was not the only actor who showed such affinity for Beckett, and the contemporary scene continues to produce "Beckettian" actors. Mirroring the twentieth century critical reception of his lesser-known works, it is still a defining feature of Beckett's writing that it inspires profound loyalty in certain practitioners (and intense dislike in others). For those actors who admire and endeavour to understand Beckett through study and performance, MacGowran's example is inspirational. His legacy can

NUMBERS 23, 24, 25 & 26
Jack MacGowran, *Beginning to End* (Dublin rehearsals).
Collaboration with Samuel Beckett, Paris/Dublin, 1971.
Photos: Michael O'Reilly / Source: Young, *The Beckett Actor*

be traced to Barry McGovern, as shown previously, but he has also had similarly direct impact on numerous "substratum" and lesser-known performers. This section will address three of these multi-text adaptations, each of which is representative of a particular strand in the artistic response to MacGowran's work and to Beckett's prose in performance. Each performance treated here also indicates particular modes in the twin operations of anthropology and adapted authorship. Rather than approach these works chronologically, this section will follow the through-line of MacGowran's influence. The result is, in fact, a reverse chronology, beginning with Robert Jaffe's *...and then you go on* (2000), moving to Ryan Cutrona's *Nohow On* (1991), and concluding with Jack Emery's *A Remnant* (1967).

The analysis of substratum performance is intended here to supplement the argument carried forward in Chapter Six that in spite of increasing restrictions by the Estate on adaptation of prose, the pathway of multi-text anthology remains relatively open to new practitioners without major backing. This is remarkable given the aggressive alteration of the original context that such performance entails, which returns us to the paradox of the fragmented self, simultaneously faithful to Beckettian subjectivity and yet necessarily faithless to his narrative continuity and formal rigour. The "known unknowns" who make these one-man shows are engaging in a performance tradition bound up in aporia, adapting not only the authorial position and staging the *négatité* that is the Beckett Man, but also responding retrospectively to the tradition set up by MacGowran. No one does this so directly as Providence-based actor Robert Jaffe, whose encounter with *Beginning to End* was a personal one. Jaffe was the resident stage manager at the Lenox Arts Centre in Massachusetts when MacGowran toured his production there in 1970, and conversations between him and the actor about theatre and Beckett, held over the course of a month, made a tremendous mark. Jaffe claims that he can still hear the readings he uses in his own performance in MacGowran's voice.[19]

Familiar characteristics of multi-text performance explored in this chapter are in evidence in Jaffe's work. Like McGovern and Colgan before him, Jaffe predicates his approach to the audience on the concept of access, noting that "people who respond best know nothing about Beckett." Reproducing MacGowran's impulse toward simplicity in practice, he argues that the "obligation is to bring them in." Jaffe identifies humour as a key tool for this "exposure" to Beckett, citing MacGowran in support of this, who quoted Beckett's dictum (in reference to *Beginning to End)* that "the more people laugh, the better." Both MacGowran and Jaffe would agree that such a communicative, audience-focused practice is a comparatively more important element than the academic or analytical approach to Beckett's text, though Jaffe does include post-show discussions in his events. All these ideas function as statements of ethics in regard to multi-text performance, outlining a set of methodologies akin to the ethnographer's, creating boundaries and defining intentions before the engagement with a project. How this planned approach functioned in contact with the Estate, however, is highly instructive regarding the practicalities of dealing with such theories.

When he first became interested in performing the prose, Jaffe had in mind a re-staging of Jack MacGowran's *Beginning to End*. He contacted the Beckett Estate's New York agent to request the rights, and received the response — in his view, "quite rightfully" — that no other performances of this multi-text anthology were permitted. However, the agents left open the possibility of him doing his own anthology; no restriction was placed on the *idea* of such a performance. An interesting detail of the initial exchange between Jaffe and the Estate is that when the performer's first contact was through a copyright lawyer, the response was a flat-out denial. When a personal letter was written "from the heart," the discussion of how a multi-text performance might still proceed began. It is in this difference that adapted authorship, the vastly more significant role of the adaptor/performer in the one-man show, is visible. The possibility of this work — both in terms of the

desire to perform and receiving the permission to perform — originates in the self. There is a similar implication in the restriction of one performer's adaptation, like MacGowran's, from any future performers. It is unimaginable that this would happen with one of Beckett's plays, and indeed unlikely that it could happen with a single-text prose adaptation. The Estate seems to acknowledge the singular bond between the individual and the anthology, so much so that when the performer dies, the performance dies with him.[20]

The Estate placed few restrictions initially, asking only that gender could not be altered and that no interpolations of music be added. Jaffe spent several months reading everything by Beckett that he could obtain, only leaving out those texts — mostly plays — that he says "could not be adapted to solo performance." The process of selection was thus essentially about "underlining," but it was extremely immersive. In a 2002 feature article about the performance, one reporter writes that "Jaffe ate, drank, and slept Beckett, researching and reading feverishly to the point that [his wife] thought her husband had become possessed" (Bishop 96). In 1999, Jaffe reviewed these excerpts that had stood out to him on the reading, and then "intuitively" put things into order. As Chapter Six will argue, the "generic androgyny" of Beckett is made visible through this operation; the improvisational nature of creating a multi-text performance illuminates many connections in content and structure between texts separated across decades. He submitted a draft script to the Estate, and Beckett's nephew Edward responded through the literary agent. The first judgment was that some of the edits were unacceptable. The Estate asked Jaffe to omit any specific character references (though some names had been kept in MacGowran's performance) and to avoid any internal edits within passages. Jaffe made a thorough overhaul following this new doctrine, and found that he liked the new draft better. This was approved by the Estate, and with only two final requirements — first that he submit all related materials for the performance, and second that he contact the Estate before performing at any new venues — he was authorised to perform.

NUMBER 27
Robert Jaffe, *...and then you go on.* (dir. Peter Wallace).
Perishable Theatre, Providence, Rhode Island, 2000.
Photo: Paula Court / Source: Robert Jaffe

Given the intensely personal process of adaptation, there is always a question with one-person performance of whether a director is necessary. While such collaboration on a "solo project" is inevitably challenging, the external vision of a director can assist hugely in communicating the text to an audience. Jaffe's performance exhibits this tension, as the director Peter Wallace began working with him only nine days before the opening. Jaffe believes that this was still extremely useful, helping to articulate the sound and visual shape of the piece, but the traditional roles are clearly reversed when the actor finds the director. The set design by Jeremy Woodward included a large round platform, about 14 feet in diameter, neutral grey in colour. The other set piece was a box about 3 feet square and 30 inches tall, constructed out of firewood stood on end and held together by two steel bands. As the size and weight of this design was prohibitive for solo touring, a simple fiberglass rock was subsequently designed by Ming Cho Lee, the original designer of the 1970 MacGowran anthology. Holly Ratafia's lighting design is similarly austere, with only a few effects punctuating and heightening certain moments (but not the transitions between segments of text). At one point during an *Embers* excerpt, the lighting design uses a tight spotlight in a direct quotation from *Not I*, but there are few other instances of "Beckettian" citation. As it was in the contract that no incidental music would be used, the only sound effects were of a door slamming — Jaffe says that the tension between "going" and "coming" is a thematic concern in the anthology — and the pre-show music, Schubert's "Death and the Maiden."

As the use of Schubert shows, the dominant influence on Jaffe's anthology remains MacGowran's *Beginning to End*. A comparison of the textual selections reveals a high level of correspondence.[21] Both works place Lucky's speech immediately before the interval. Both include two of the same selections from *Embers*, all of the poem "Cascando," the same selection from *Watt*, the same mother/money sequence from *Molloy*, and some of the same selections from *Malone Dies*. The "sucking stones" excerpt from *Molloy*, used in

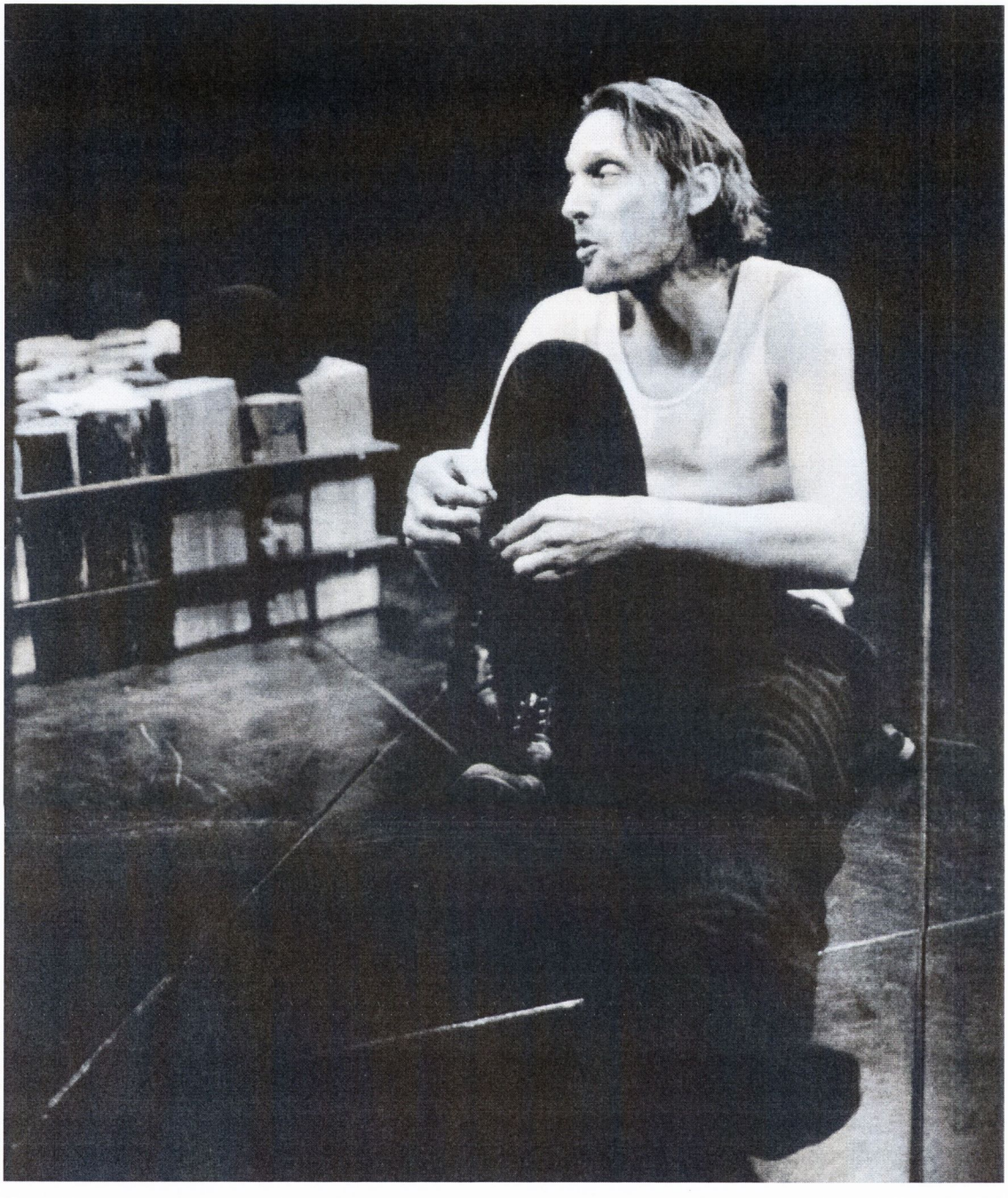
nearly every adaptation including MacGowran's, is absent in Jaffe's text — but the solution ("turn and turn about") is physically performed as stage business. While the sequence in which the works come is generally different, both place the same three texts — *Endgame*'s "the end is in the beginning" passage from Hamm, *Waiting for Godot*'s "born astride a grave" passage from Vladimir, and the conclusion of *The Unnamable* — very near the end of the anthology. While it is clear that the memory of MacGowran represents an overt influence on Jaffe's performance, the similarity of the textual selections seems to suggest that some specific texts by Beckett are indeed performative. Some lines in the novels seem to refer to a one-man show, just as a line like Vladimir's "at me too someone is looking" seems to encompass the frame of the audience.

Jaffe's performance of *...and then you go on* was staged at the Perishable Theatre in Providence, Rhode Island for a ten-day run from 20 to 30 January 2000. It transferred to the Berkshire Theatre Festival and ran for three weeks in 2001. From 29 April to 19 May 2002, it ran in the New York off-Broadway venue Here Arts Center. Like MacGowran, Jaffe has "kept" the performance since, touring with it when he does not have other acting commitments. The performance has undergone many changes, though on a faster evolutionary scale than MacGowran's. The initial Providence performance was one hour and forty-five minutes, but after further cuts, it now runs at 1:10. It has a clear structural shape for Jaffe and an increasingly unified story arc, moving from external concerns in the first half (references to marriage, family, father, mother) to the internal and the problem of self in the second half. The description of the show given in the press materials includes the ethical turn that states explicitly the intent of the performance (much as MacGowran did in his programme in 1965), but also emphasises the problematic unity of multi-text performance: "Jaffe portrays a single, composite character [...] who finds hope and connection in the face of despair."[22] In conversation, Jaffe expands on this notion, saying that the essence of his performance is "life affirming and optimistic," telling a story of how all people, "despite what things we face, find

ways to connect to life and to continue." The narrative content becomes a "struggle to find connection to life, a way to go on." That Jaffe discovered this overriding theme through the creation of a composite performance reveals how much insight into Beckett's ethics is embedded in praxis.

Stylistically, the performance shows many of the tensions which are generically present in performed prose. Jaffe's stated goal was to "honour prose as prose," rather than turn the work into a play, and to treat his role more like a "storyteller." Against this, however, are the requirements of audience fidelity, for which business was quoted (*Molloy's* sucking stones) or invented (stripping off pieces of clothing, cleaning between his toes) as much for the purpose of creating action as anything else. In a seeming contradiction, Jaffe also says that he didn't want to feel like he was doing readings. In fact, this internal dispute simply highlights the unusual tensions in this practice. As predicted would happen with the informed practitioner in Chapter One, the anthology has developed its own internal consistency, obliterating the barriers between passages and effacing separate references, even for the performer. Jaffe says that he sometimes forgets where each citation comes from, and this obviously ceases to matter at all during the rehearsal and performance. At one point during our conversation, he even referred to the work (accidentally and unconsciously) as "the play." Citation becomes insignificant; the new work becomes a "script" by being treated as such.

The critical reception was generally positive, with some traditional confusion over the particular sources. One of the less affirming reviews came from the *New York Times*, in which Bruce Weber — distancing himself noticeably from any Beckett aficionados — wrote that in spite of its "grim hilarity" and "triumph of memorization and articulation," the work "serves mainly to break the shards of Beckett's literary imagination into smaller shards" (7 May 2002). Many of the other reviews observed this fact, but saw it (like Jaffe) as having a fascinating result: though the texts extend from 1936 ("Cascando") to 1980 (*Company*), there are astonishing correspondences. If the



NUMBER 28
Robert Jaffe, *...and then you go on.* (dir. Peter Wallace).
Perishable Theatre, Providence, Rhode Island, 2000.
Photo: Paula Court / Source: Robert Jaffe

audience member can let go of the information that the work is anthologized — the same way that the performer has let go through the long practice of seamlessness — the shards cease to matter, revealing a more profound unity beneath. As this unity creates a further problem in light of Beckettian subjectivity, the phenomenology of the theatre intervenes (to a greater or lesser degree, depending on choices and audiences) to puncture and fragment the staged self.

Ryan Cutrona took a different creative path than Jaffe, but it led to a multi-text performance in much the same vein. Cutrona had worked as a Beckett actor previously, so his situation is more analogous to McGovern's than MacGowran's. He arrived at multi-text prose performance by doing single-text prose performance on stage and radio. As with Magee and MacGowran, radio came first; he broadcast the full text of *All Strange Away* on New York's WBAI.[23] In 1984, Cutrona was the featured actor in *All Strange Away* at LaMama Theatre in New York City. In this performance, the transformation from page to stage was quite drastic, with lengthy passages of movement inserted. Comparing the work to the prose text, Mel Gussow writes that "one is even more aware of the rhythmic flow of energy, the stops and starts of the man's thoughts, how he tries, with increasing helplessness, to control 'the immeasurable turmoil' of his captive existence" (*NYT* 11 January 1984). In December of the same year, Cutrona featured as the solo performer in *Fizzles*, adapted by Gerald Thomas. The piece was produced at Performance Space 122 under the direction of Liz Diamond and the design of Mark Nietzer. A dramatization of only three of the eight *Fizzles*, the piece evidently had far less intervention from the director than did *All Strange Away*. Describing the work as "terse even by Beckett standards," Mel Gussow writes that the performance "represents the author without embellishment or distortion — a direct emanation of his mordant vision" (*NYT* 16 December 1984). The device suggested by Beckett to Chaikin — indeed, already used by Beckett in *Krapp's Last Tape* — makes an appearance in the work, as Cutrona "talks to himself

and reacts to himself on tape" (Gussow). From the documents of reception, it seems clear that this later work erred on the side of authorial fidelity, at the expense of the audience. Mocking the performance's austerity, Laurie Stone wrote in the *Village Voice* that the work is "Beckett on the edge of self-parody" (18 December 1984).[24]

Seven years later, Ryan Cutrona featured in the 70-minute "tribute" anthology *Nohow On*, his own multi-text adaptation directed by Erick Weiss.[25] The piece opened in Los Angeles at the Stages Trilingual Theatre, running from 10 August to 14 September 1991. Using stage business and props to create the metaphor, the piece's organising structure is the journey from birth to death. Its ten source texts include some nearly traditional segments — Molloy and his mother, for instance — as well as the less commonly performed *How It Is* (the ending piece) and *Fizzles* (from his previous performance). As is now familiar, the anthology arrayed itself against the view that Beckett's theatre is "elitist and inaccessible;" the review in the *Los Angeles Times* is actually titled "Beckett Becomes Alive, Accessible in 'Nohow On'" (McCullogh, 16 August 1991). The performance begins with a visual quotation of *Endgame*'s opening, with Cutrona on a stool atop a table in the corner of the room, his body covered in a cloth like Hamm. McCullogh writes that there is "little obscurity" due to the rhythm and sound of Cutrona's voice, a theme that emerges from almost all the documents of reception. The goal of this openness is to reveal the author's "affection and empathy for the human condition" (McCullogh), by now also a dominant and recurrent ethical trope of this type of performance.

Nohow On does not display the radical austerity of late MacGowran, but rather seems to follow a trend from his early work, more *End of Day* than *Beginning to End*. The costume is "the clown," a baggy black suit on Cutrona's lanky frame, with braces and a white shirt. Several reviewers discuss the Irish dialect he uses, though some fall into the same "stage-Irish" pattern of references when describing it ("a kind of literary jig," writes Steven Morris in

the *LA Weekly*). Interestingly for a "composite" character and singularly in terms of the five performances analyzed in this chapter, Cutrona's voice changes during the piece, not just modulating pitch and tone but also accent. As it did in *All Strange Away* and in Jaffe's work, action has intervened between and during the texts, not always with a clear linkage to the text. Cutrona changes a bicycle tire, mops the stage, and clears away the many props; while these gestures may serve to highlight the theatricality of the proceedings, to violate the ostensible unity of the embodied actor, and thus to clarify the audience's relationship to the work, it runs certain risks as well. What is clear is that Cutrona is another actor who encountered Beckett and felt an urgent need to communicate both the breadth of his work and an ethical idea within the work to a wider audience. His strategies neither disrupt nor substantially extend the adapted authorship and ethnographic strategies investigated previously in these performances, but his performance does establish a different relationship to language than seen previously.

The final pathway among these lesser-known performers is that of the truly "substratum" Beckett of the amateur and educational framework, that which often occurs at universities and only rarely encounters a wider audience. The example examined here is that of Jack Emery and his 1967 multi-text adaptation *A Remnant*, but his presence in this analysis can be traced mainly to his escape from the context where he began. His performance started small, first recorded in the *Evening Sentinel* of Staffordshire under the heading "Keele 'Remnant' Brilliant Success."[26] The provenance of the work is related as a compilation of Beckett prose and drama by Frank Doherty, a lecturer in English at the University of Keele. Emery was his student and the only actor in the production. Structure, again, seems to have been simple, related in several reviews as "a day in the life of a Beckett character." The work was divided into nine sections originally, but this may have been shortened to seven. The key selections in the final version included (in sequence) *From an Abandoned Work, Malone Dies, Molloy, Endgame, Watt,* and *The*

Unnamable. The option to take a morning slot in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival came that summer, and when this was highly successful, the production transferred to London's Arts Theatre that October. Further tours within the United Kingdom, mainly to universities, came in the summer of 1968.

The austerity of the show's aesthetic is exposed in reviewers' references to the white spotlight, the hunched figure, and the ghostly stillness. Arthur Scholey, writing an article on the London production for *British Weekly*, pulled out the ethical dimension at the beginning of his review: "once the worst is faced, once all is known, once hope is abandoned and the taste of death is in the mouth — then the real journey can begin" (23 November 1967). Other conditions of multi-text adaptation are evident in some of the other descriptions, though not always in consistent terms; the Edinburgh review describes "seven different characters" (du Pre, 27 August 1967) demarcated by voice and light, rather than the familiar composite. Scholey suggests a more complex view of character, reminiscent of the reading of MacGowran's protagonist as a "receiver." He writes that Emery's performance

> is a superb incarnation of the essential abandoned Beckett-man [...] The figures disappear into the darkness as new ones flit, for a brief moment, out of it, like ghosts ready to take possession of any willing medium [...] And behind all, the continual reminder of the hypnotic beauty of the language. Reading Beckett, one soon discovers the need to lock oneself away and relish the language aloud.

Certainly, the transcendent terminology used to discuss the work's origin was in play during its reception. Writing after the 1968 tour to the Beaford Arts Centre in Devon, F.H.A. Kempe states that *A Remnant* "revealed a remarkable communion between creator and interpreter" (2 August 1968). This assessment raises the interesting question of actor instinct and the problematic signifier of age. Although it was an amateur production by a university actor in his early twenties, and although the character(s) portrayed were universally meant to be old men, *A Remnant* gathered numerous full-throated accolades for the acting. It did not seem to matter, which is a characteristic of

ethnographic performance: identity is made too fluid for the audience to really care about difference. The affinity and skill displayed by Emery did not leave him; a professional actor to this day, he stayed within the Beckettian field, directing a multi-text and multi-actor reading in London in 1976.

There is no clear evidence in the published or unpublished records of this performance that MacGowran was any influence on *A Remnant*. It is possible that Doherty or Emery was aware of *Beginning to End* which had played two years earlier, and possible that they could have heard readings on the BBC. Even more interestingly, there is no evident correspondence between Beckett and either Doherty or Emery. It is possible that there was a standard, businesslike passage of rights between the London publishers (Calder) and the university professor and student, but it is equally possible that no rights were requested or granted. This minor fact could easily have gone missing in the materials available today, since Emery, like Jaffe and Cutrona after him, is a "known unknown." There were probably many more "unknown unknowns," and it is safe to say that there are still many performers today whose work goes completely unrecorded and unremarked, some by accident and some by design. This reality of a "Beckett underground," fostered especially by the relatively safe space of universities, reveals a particular draw within the work that encourages recombination across genre and time, bypasses the rule of the Beckett Estate, and tempts young actors toward engagement with the challenge of the Beckett Man. These are the theoretical conditions that will be explored in the next chapter, which will suggest practical methods to be addressed in the Conclusion.

Commemorations: "All the Dead Voices"

This chapter has argued that the performer of the multi-text prose adaptation creates adapted authorship and an anthropology of the Beckett Man, illuminating the negative category of the Beckettian subject through a

productive layering of unity and fragmentation. These are the main tools deployed by solo performers to communicate disparate Beckett texts to the audience. In terms of a response to the author, however, another shared quality in these performances is that they generally encompass a notion of homage, honour, or service to Beckett. Because this treatment of an author is inherently not critical (however informative it might be about his work), it is difficult to address without using excessively broad generalizations or vague terms of the performer's intent. This chapter will conclude with a brief examination of some of the events expressly geared toward commemoration or memorialization of Beckett and his work. Just as the Nobel Prize citation referenced the significance of Beckett's novels, these honorific and memorial performances frequently use prose, and thus fit into the category of multi-text adaptation. The terms of engagement, however, are somewhat altered. Since few of them are one-person performances, the ethnographic dimension is minimal. Since the focus is all on the (generally absent) author, the degree to which authorship is "adapted" by performers is also slight. It is nonetheless a territory where certain ethical suppositions about Beckett and his prose are in play, and an area where practices of prose performance are not merely acceptable, but fundamental.

First, it must be understood that outside the terrain of Beckett Studies or academic studies as a whole, the value of Beckett is not at all self-evident. Ireland, in particular, exhibits a tension in its own commemorations of Beckett. Beckett's status as an exile and his occasional run-ins with the Church and the State — for most of the Republic's history, not distinct entities — left bad blood on both sides. A tradition of theatre focused so much on nationalism did not find it easy to incorporate a French-speaking ex-Protestant atheist, and a strong class dimension was imbricated with Beckett's Foxrock, Trinity College and Paris residencies. That Beckett's Abbey debut came in 1969, the year he won the Nobel Prize, and even then with some acrimony, is a clear indicator of how imperfectly he fit into the given framework of the Irish writer. To this

day, he remains an exception to what seem like the Irish cultural marketing rules, with very little mention in the Irish Writer's Museum except in connection with Joyce. His birthplace remains an unmarked private home. The first plaque commemorating his time at Trinity was laid in stone on the occasion of his centenary, three years ago. While somewhat anecdotal, one stunning example of Beckett's bizarre reception in Ireland can be found on a postcard in the Beckett Archive at Reading University. A piece of touristic flotsam from a nation that increasingly markets itself on the basis of cultural production, it is ripe for analysis. On its front is a caricature of Beckett stuffed into a dustbin bursting with his texts — itself a co-opting of one of his most profound theatrical images — but the description printed on the back, credited to someone named Mairead Byrne, runs as follows, complete and unabridged:

> Samuel Beckett was educated at Miss Elsner's Kindergarden Academy in Stillorgan and at Trinity College Dublin where he achieved renown as a cricketer. Later emigrated to Paris where he became acquainted with penman James Joyce. A former lecturer in English and French, the Foxrock man broke with his academic life in 1930 with the publication of his competition-winning poem, Whoroscope. Although this, like many of his later works, was banned in Ireland, his plays and novels have been well received abroad.[27]

The copyright of this text is listed as 1980. It is worth bearing in mind that this description was written eleven years after the writer won the Nobel Prize, and nearly thirty years after the "burst of creativity" which gave the world *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and the *Trilogy*. The significant facts, however, are which Irish place-names are associated with Beckett, which sport he played at Trinity, and the name of his kindergarden teacher. The scandalous name of his "competition-winning" first poem is the only work listed, and "well received abroad" is a hilariously backhanded understatement. The cultural equivalent might be if an Irish postcard with a caricature of U2 said only that "they're big in Japan" — but of course that would be impossible.

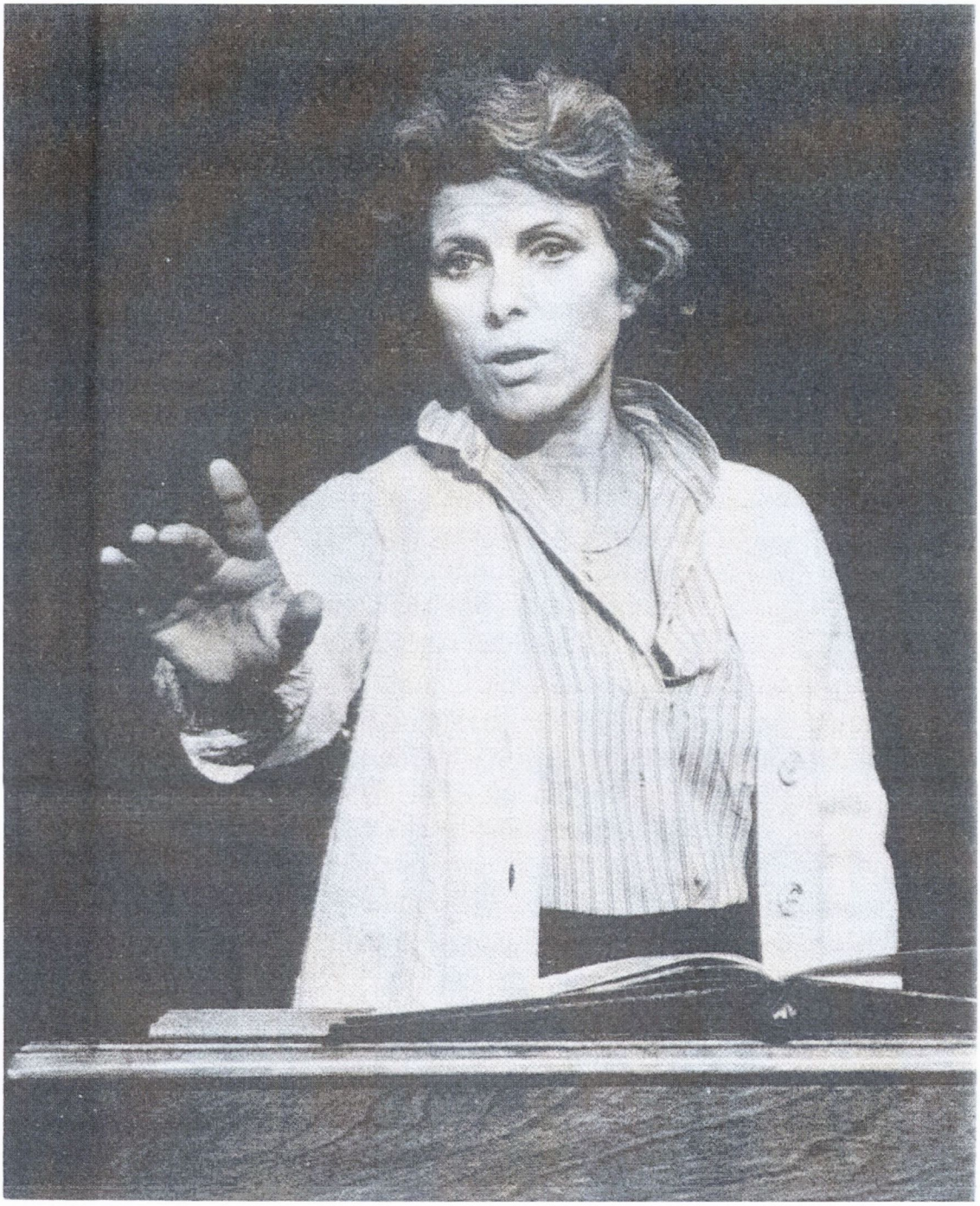
Beckett's image within Ireland was somewhat "rehabilitated" by the 2006 celebration of the centenary, but a great deal of history had to be

rewritten to achieve this. Speaking broadly, entrenched in some older generations is a persistent idea that Beckett is the essence of atheistic nihilism, and is therefore dangerous. Among the young, the problem is the opposite; a common opinion among students (with no particular interest in literature or drama) would be that Beckett is extremely difficult, and is therefore boring. The massive marketing campaign for the centenary put Beckett's face on nearly every lamppost in Dublin for a month, as well as several billboards and bus shelters, but the two images (often presented side by side) were of a dour Beckett glowering at the camera and of him turning away from it. The image was in fact recycled from the 1991 Gate Festival of Beckett, and as Michael Colgan was front and centre for both of these events, its selection represented an attempt at marketing continuity. It also reinforced a widely disseminated view — in its sequencing from left to right — of a reluctant public figure, aged but still attractive, vaguely punk in sensibility. It is a classic example of capital's ability to incorporate any images of opposition and to erase resistance. This massive presence had both cultural and economic effects, with many more people willing to engage in conversation about Beckett during April, book sales in overdrive, and with every media outlet offering reassessments of his life and work. The formula is simple. If Beckett can be successfully reclaimed as Irish rather than French, or even Irish rather than universal, that holds value for Ireland, probably in the millions. To turn Beckett into a "mainstream" writer of the nation is both a strategy to create this value and a self-reinforcing effect. It is revealing, however, that this process has only recently begun to happen in Ireland, while many of the commemorative events that this chapter will address were held in London and the United States, often much earlier.

Two emblematic events of this "compilation" type were held during Beckett's life. Their goal could not be said to be commemoration — indeed, Beckett was alive, and not in need of this — but rather to be either commercial or simply celebratory. As with the 2006 Beckett Centenary in Dublin, it can be difficult to separate the commercial goals from the artistic ones in such events;

perhaps marketing is just commemoration for the living. Most events of this type during Beckett's life were intended to drum up business for his novels, which generally did not sell well; his publisher, John Calder, frequently sponsored the readings. In 1970, for instance, an event called *The Novels and Plays of Samuel Beckett: An Afternoon of Readings and Debate* was held at London's Criterion Theatre, and chaired by Martin Esslin. The readings were by the established "Beckett actors," in this case Jack MacGowran and Patrick Magee, as was typical of such events. The programme's introduction reflects the critical terrain of the time, essentially offering an apologia for "the unrelieved pessimism of his view of contemporary reality." The programme is also relatively naked in its commercial pitch, ending with the line, "All of Mr. Beckett's novels are in the theatre for inspection and purchase [...] Recommended first reading are the two early novels, *Murphy* and *Watt*, both available at a popular price in our new Jupiter paperback series."[28] Following an introduction by Martin Esslin, the readings were from *Watt*, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *From an Abandoned Work*. A discussion by the platform formed a kind of interval, and then the second "act" included *Endgame*, *Poems*, *The Unnamable*, and *How It Is* (at that time, yet to be published). Comedy was emphasized in the same way it tended to be in the one-man shows, but this time with a much more aggressively economic purpose. While there is no need to impugn Calder's motives for adapting the prose, his financial interest in the recognition of Beckett's novels has not declined since Beckett's death, and the foundation of "The Godot Company" in his own bookshop — especially their touring compilation *Beckett's Outbursts* that uses multiple actors to read comedic pieces from the novels — shows a powerful commercial dimension to multi-text performance. Calder's intense interest in adapted prose, which is the explicit mission of The Godot Company, certainly shows how much he believes it can contribute to accessibility.

Back on the spectrum of multi-text adaptation for pure celebration, an event was held at the new National Theatre to honour Beckett's 70th birthday



NUMBER 29
Billie Whitelaw, *Enough* (dir. Alan Schneider).
Samuel Beckett Theatre, New York City, 1984.
Photo: Martha Swope / Source: Kalb, *Beckett in Performance*

on 13 April 1976.[29] In attendance as speakers and performers were Peggy Ashcroft, Martin Esslin, Peter Hall, and Harold Pinter; the director was Jack Emery, less than ten years after his "underground" solo work. Interestingly, the audience was seated on the floor in an empty concrete chamber that was to become the National Theatre's restaurant, but was unfinished. The readings took place across two separate times that day, first at 1:15 PM in a series called "I Can't Go On" and again at 6:15 PM under the title "I'll Go On." The programme records the first half as "extracts from earlier prose, *Molloy*, *Unnamable*, and recent piece *Still* [to become *Stirrings Still*]." The second half was "*Cascando* (poem), *First Love*, *Mercier & Camier*, *Unnamable*, *Poem*, *Malone Dies*, *Watt*, *Texts for Nothing* (12), *Unnamable*." The event was set to repeat on 20 April. It is similar to many of the quasi-theatrical events that marked various decades of Beckett's life, particular conferences or festivals, but it was unique in that it did not include any pieces of drama.

Beckett's death at the end of 1989 led to an outpouring of prose performance in 1990 and 1991, ranging from major international commemorative events to small local ones. On one end of the spectrum, the most widely recognised "Beckett actors" gathered at the National Theatre in London or at Lincoln Center in New York. On the other, Kelly's Irish Times Pub in Washington DC started an annual tribute to the life and work of Beckett by holding readings, playing videos, and performing drama. Called "In the Wake of Samuel Beckett" and supported by the San Quentin Drama Workshop, the event started at noon and lasted more than twelve hours. On 22 December 1991, the second annual performance included a complete reading of *Murphy* between 6:00 PM and 1:30 AM, marking one of the few adaptations of this novel.[30] A surprising variety of locales around the world held events marking Beckett's passing with his prose. On 18 May 1991 at the Princess Grace Irish Library in Monaco, for instance, Barry McGovern read a mixed programme of poetry and prose before Julian Curry performed the Katherine Worth adaptation of *Company*.[31] It is clear from the variety of these

events that prose reading played an integral part in commemorating Beckett.

The first commemorative event on a major scale was in London, where the Olivier Theatre (at the National Theatre) hosted *A Celebration of the Life and Work of Samuel Beckett* on 1 April 1990.[32] Coordinated by Christopher Morahan and designed by Jocelyn Herbert, it showed many of the traits that would come to define the practice of Beckettian memorialising, with an astounding roster of "Beckett Actors," a display of John Minihan photographs, and a charity focus (all proceeds went to Crisis, a British agency assisting the homeless). The selections reveal both the centrality of prose to his legacy, and the legendary status accorded to "Beckett actors" Magee and MacGowran, both of whom were presented on tape for a final tribute. The whole first half of this performance came from novels, while only five excerpts from drama are in the programme at all.

In New York, the Irish Repertory Theatre presented a commemoration programme at the Public Theatre in the first season following Beckett's death (Gussow 23 September 1990). However, with more time to prepare, a much broader programme with more luminous "Beckett Actors" was brought to the Vivan Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Center in September 1990.[33] The evening was called *Beckett's Words: A Celebration of Samuel Beckett*. While there were correspondences with the London commemoration at the National Theatre, it was more focused on the American tradition of Beckett, featuring members of Mabou Mines, members from the San Quentin Drama Workshop, Alvin Epstein, and several pieces on tape directed by Alan Schneider. The other noticeable difference between the London and New York versions in 1990 is that New York used a great deal more film. Writing about the evening in the *New York Times*, critic Mel Gussow noted that this was not one of the more successful aspects of the event. Following Brater and Kiberd, Gussow argues that "at its best, the evening was a testament to the rich theatricality of the author as evidenced in his prose as well as in his plays." His perspective is nonetheless extremely revealing of the problematics inherent in

commemorative multi-text adaptation. He describes the challenge to the actor when all context for the work disappears, quoted here in full:

> To emphasize the words, excerpts from plays and prose were shorn of all environmental and design elements, except for those glimpses of past performances on film. This meant that Hamm in "Endgame" was neither blind nor confined to a wheelchair, that Barry McGovern's Molloy wore no greatcoat and that Billie Whitelaw performed "Rockaby" without the benefit of a rocking chair. With Mr. McGovern and Miss Whitelaw, nothing more was needed. The author's eloquent lines spoke for themselves. There were other moments that were fraught with acting at the expense of language. (23 September 1990)

Gussow's conclusion is ultimately one which not only reinforces the possibility of performed prose, an interest he ascribes to all "adventurous theater artists," but also supports the elevation of distilled, subtractive aesthetics examined in the early chapters of this thesis. He writes that "it is not every playwright who can transcend a loss of context or who can communicate onstage without theatrical accouterments," and suggests that "the most talented [actors] will be able to perform Beckett unadorned." For him, this particular commemorative event reveals the power of the text alone, a fundamental musicality in Beckett's language that can succeed with radically elemental staging.

What vision of the Beckettian self might emerge from commemoration? The operation is clearly distinct from the paradox of simultaneous singularity and multiplicity seen in the one-man shows. Rather than a stable or fixed subjectivity spoken in an act of authorial substitution or personal ethnography, these events reveal a cacophany of selves, a sprawling city made of "I," a body of words spoken on behalf of an author no longer able to speak. Fascinatingly, the multiplicity of voices here is directed toward a singularity — equally false — of an imaginary Beckett. Commemoration is a chorus of voices responding to an absence. It is thus active, practice-based, and embedded in the same ethic of impossibility that has been located in other types of prose performance. While it is possible to critique the ritual aspect of group mourning, or indeed the commercial motivations of a publisher, there

is no question that commemorative multi-text performance illustrates the centrality of prose to Beckett's oeuvre and legacy. It also demonstrates the existence of the "Beckett Actor" by elevating certain people repeatedly to represent the work.

The many textual practices on display in the solo multi-text adaptations and commemorative adaptations constitute a plural *ethos*, recalling the original Greek notion as one referring more to customs than morality. It is difficult for any centralized notion of "value" or even "quality" to emerge from the practical and historical differences between these performers, although one consistently decisive factor in the public perception of this is the variable of Beckett's personal influence and support. What remains a point of contact throughout these numerous approaches, however, are a number of variables that have threaded through all three "empirical" chapters of this thesis. Maintained from the radio performances forward has been a notion of the performer as a storyteller, an embodied mind in a space defined by a series of absences, governed by aesthetic (and fundamentally subjective) opinions about the nature of Beckett and performance. From the single-text "novel" performances, the variables of time, space, the body, and a writerly "style" are functional in much the same way, but with radical revisions to the narrative practices observed.

The extensive treatment of multi-text performances in this chapter revealed that the adaptor/performers of such works are engaged in an "adapted authorship" that removes textual authority from Beckett, at the same time as their performances seem to elevate his contribution in prose and expose his work to a wider audience. Like the ethnographers who dominate the one-person performance tradition of late twentieth century performance studies, these artists articulate a paradox of identity in their work, presenting both a unity of embodiment and a fragmentation of language. In the relationship between the text and the body, an echo of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology can be seen, as the multi-text performer immerses in a field

of Beckettian expression, broadcasting a "third-person circuit" in a first-person voice. The Sartrian category of the *négatité* is implied by the selves staged by McGovern, MacGowran, Jaffe, Cutrona, and Emery, since the "positive" occurrence of the event, the "being" represented by the embodied voice in space, is founded on an original negation of this presentation. In the same way that an actor's inherent multiplicity is bounded in a singularity, the subjects on stage here are beings holding a non-being at their core.

NOTES: CHAPTER FIVE
Adapted Authorship in Multi-Text Performance

1. This concern, which fundamentally goes to the heart of the comparison between representational and presentational styles of acting, is necessarily peripheral to an analaysis or history of the prose performance in terms of theory. However, it is central to the question of "what is to be done" with Beckett's prose in practice, and will be accorded its due space in the Conclusion to this thesis.
2. Robert Breen discusses "distance" specifically as regards the author-narrator relationship, coining the term "double distance" to describe the situation when an author creates a second author who claims ownership, or discovery, of the work. The Glass family novels of J.D. Salinger are an example of double distance in ownership, as the character Buddy Glass claims to have written the books; double distance in discovery can be seen in Kierkegaard's masterwork *Either/Or*, with a narrative introduction by an editor claiming to have discovered the piece. Beckett's situation is more complex than either of these, but the spatial metaphor of "distance" from the text is no less valid.
3. I do not doubt that Gare St. Lazare Players has the best intentions to do the same; the nature of their failure is not that they are inconsistent, but that their elevation of "internal consistency" has become religious.
4. The notion of "character" is somewhat problematic from the perspective of acting theory, in which its usage presupposes a certain traditionalism of representation. Given the instability of self that Beckett relentlessly presents, it is similarly debatable whether "a character is provided by the author" at all. However, both debates needs to be temporarily bracketed so that the *contrast* with ethnographic performance can be expressed; there does not seem to be a better description for the situation of "adapting *Molloy* as a one-man show" than that Conor Lovett (for example) is "playing the character of Molloy."
5. Beckett clearly was aware of this problem, and he did not want Lucky's speech included in the performance (Young 105). MacGowran convinced him otherwise.
6. This and subsequent quotations come from an extended telephone interview with Robert Jaffe on 19 August 2007.
7. An entire critical tradition in Beckett Studies is emerging to study the Pre-Socratic underpinnings of his philosophy. Two leading proponents are C.J. Ackerley and Shane Weller, whose work on Beckett and nihilism *A Taste for the Negative* goes in-depth with Democritus and Heraclitus. For an overview of Democritus and Beckett and further citations of references in his works, see *Companion* 131.
8. This note (and subsequent quotations in the "Barry McGovern" section) is copied from the programme published by the Gate Theatre for the premiere of *I'll Go On*, Dublin, September 1985. It is held as MS2730, within STAGE FILE/COM-1985 at Reading.
9. Alain Badiou's analysis of *Worstward Ho*, included both in his *Handbook of Inaesthetics* and his collection *On Beckett*, convincingly demonstrates how profoundly this work is philosophical in nature — that is, concerned with questions of being and existence — and how its rhythm is that of thought, not poetry. Badiou provides the avenue for my application of this text more as philosophy than literature.
10. The "definitive" label has been recycled in so many reviews that no particular authority can be regarded as being itself "definitive." The Gate

Theatre website simply credits "the international press" with this description — as Molloy might say, it's the principle of advertising.
11. There were a number of press interviews of McGovern around the 2006 and 2008 revivals, most notably Sara Keating's profile (*Irish Times* 13 August 2008). Additionally, I conducted a personal interview of McGovern in Dublin on 17 May 2007. The factual information in this section, as well as attributed quotes, combine these sources with the materials relating to the performance files at Reading (see Note 8 above).
12. The description of the performance of *I'll Go On* in this paragraph and the following are taken from my own audience experience and contemporaneous notes, 18 September 2006, Gate Theatre, Dublin. Interestingly, my efforts to obtain a full script of the production foundered; Barry McGovern refused the request to obtain or examine a copy.
13. At the *Académie suédoise* in 1969, Gierow said of Beckett's work that it captured "a despair that has to reach to the utmost bounds of suffering to discover that compassion has no bounds." The speech is full of these types of rhetorical reversals, suggesting an inverse relationship between Beckett's negativity and the work's humanity. This describes a wider trend of humanist criticism of Beckett.
14. The marketing materials and journalistic tropes related to *I'll Go On* and McGovern more generally reveal the prevalence of this attachment. It is not something that that McGovern aspired to or created himself, as the interview documents attest. The issue is most extensively addressed in Keating's 2008 profile, referred to simply as "the Beckett thing."
15. Esslin's essay against Bair was entitled "Scandalising Samuel Beckett: The Coarse Art of Biography." It was published in the March 1979 edition of *Encounter*, and reprinted in *Mediations*.
16. Not every selection is listed specifically here because the script for *End of Day* does not survive in the available archives. I rely here on the descriptions in Young (78) and other secondary literature to establish which texts were included in the original production.
17. Patrick Funge did the production and lighting, while the design is credited to Liam Miller. The programme from the event survives in the archives at Reading, and it shows a chronological listing of the selections from Beckett's texts (though without specific citations). This list is reproduced here in full, without alterations to spelling or format (aside from spacing):

> PART ONE from Selected Poems, from Malone Dies, from Molloy, from Molloy, From an Abandoned Work
>
> PART TWO from Waiting for Godot, from Embers, from Endgame, from Watt, from Endgame, from The Unnameable, from Waiting for Godot (Vladimir), from Endgame

All quotations from the 1965 *Beginning to End* programme are from the facsimile saved as MS 4881, within STAGE FILE/COM-1965 at Reading.
18. This is a widely discussed feature of Beckett's acting approach, probably dealt with most exclusively in Kalb's chapter on acting in *Beckett in Performance*. It is a supposition on my part that Beckett exerted this aesthetic control over the stage production, but it is known that he supervised the reading of the audio recording of *MacGowran Reading Beckett*.
19. The information on Robert Jaffe's background and any quotations of Jaffe are from an extensive personal interview conducted by telephone on 19 August 2007. Jaffe also provided me with the script, images, a DVD, and press

from the production. With the exception of these reviews and other articles of reception that I located, I am not aware of any other scholarly analyses of his work.
20. It is true that the Estate was only enforcing Beckett's own wishes, following the precedent set by Colgan's request to re-stage MacGowran's performance featuring McGovern in 1985. However, even McGovern's own reaction to this offer — feeling that Jack's imprint had been too strong — shows the strength of this link between an individual performer and the particular adaptation. It is this fact that the Estate seems implicitly to acknowledge with the restriction.
21. The texts used for this comparison are the 1988 Gotham Book Mart edition of *Beginning to End*, with illustrations by Edward Gorey, and the 2000 post-cutting version of *...and then you go on* sent to me by Robert Jaffe.
22. This passage quotes the press release, part of the packet mailed to me by Robert Jaffe.
23. The only source found which confirms this timeline is a note found in the *New York Post*,12 January 1984, but it does not name a date for the broadcast.
24. Materials related to both these works featuring Ryan Cutrona are filed at the Reading Archive in STAGE FILE/ADA-1984, MS4507.
25. Materials relating to *Nohow On* are collected at Reading under STAGE FILE/COM-1991, including MS4507 (probably a mistaken duplicate of Cutrona's previous single-text performances) and MS3846. This section will draw on the enclosed archive and the performance descriptions found in several reviews, all included in the Bibliography. The more abbreviated description of this performance and the focus on reception is due to the lack of any actual script or recording of the performance located in research.
26. The *Evening Sentinel* article is dated 21 June 1967, but the author is obscured in the copy at Reading University, held under STAGE FILE/ADA-1967, MS1792, f. 104.
27. This card does not have a catalogue number, since it is simply an informal attachment to a piece of the archive; it is possible that it was misplaced originally when I found it, and may not be retrievable in the same place. It was attached to STAGE FILE/ADA-1985, MS3300, which is one of the archives concerning the LAAT production of *Company* directed by Stan Gontarski.
28. The programme for the Criterion *Afternoon* is available in the Reading collection under STAGE FILE/COM-1970, MS3141 and MS4392.
29. Two sources address this performance. The first was an article by Nicholas De Jongh in *The Guardian* on 14 April 1976. The second is the Reading archive STAGE FILE/COM-1976, MS3822.
30. The archives concerning this performance are held at Reading under the collection STAGE FILE/COM-1991, MS3804.
31. The programme and related materials concerning the Monaco performance are in Reading archive STAGE FILE/ADA-1991, MS3929.
32. Materials relating to the London commemoration are held under STAGE FILE/COM-1990, MS3589 at the Reading archive. The programme for this event was as follows (actors in parentheses):

Introduction (Stephen Rea)
from Watt (Ronald Pickup)
from Molloy (Barry McGovern)
from Watt (Peggy Ashcroft)
Old Earth (Stephen Rea)
from How It Is (Patrick Magee, on tape)
Lucky from Waiting for Godot (Jean Martin)

Vladimir & Estragon from Waiting for Godot (Barry McGovern & Stephen Rea)
from Krapp's Last Tape & Fizzle 4 (Pierre Chabert)
from Embers (Jack MacGowran, on tape)
from Footfalls (Delphine Seyrig)
from The Unnamable (Harold Pinter)
Rockaby (Billie Whitelaw)
Tailpiece (Stephen Rea)

33. Materials relating to the Lincoln Center commemoration can be found at the Reading archive under STAGE FILE/COM-1990, MS3652. The programme for this event was as follows (actors in parentheses):

Not I (Billie Whitelaw) [on tape, Anthony Page dir., 1977]
Watt (John Calder)
The Expelled (Alvin Epstein)
Theater I (George Bartenieff/Frederick Neumann)
Happy Days (Irene Worth) [on tape, Andrei Serban dir. for TV, n.d.]
Krapp's Last Tape (Jack MacGowran) [on tape, Alan Schneider dir., 1970]
Happy Days (Billie Whitelaw) [on tape, Samuel Beckett dir., 1983]
Embers/Endgame (Chris O'Neill)
Fizzles, Cascando, Echo's Bones (Ruth Maleczech)
Endgame (Rick Cluchey/Bud Thorpe)
an interview (Jack MacGowran/Edward Albee) [on tape, 1971]
Warten auf Godot (Horst Bollman/Stephan Wigger, Schiller Theater)
[on tape, Samuel Beckett dir., 1975]
Waiting for Godot (Burgess Meredith/Zero Mostel) [on tape, Alan Schneider dir., 1961]
Molloy (Barry McGovern)
Krapp's Last Tape (Patrick Magee, BBC) [on tape, Donald McWhinnie dir.,1972]
The Unnameable [sic] (Jack MacGowran, KCET)
[on tape, from *Beginning to End*, Alan Schneider dir. for TV, 1971]
Letters of Samuel Beckett (Patrick Bedford)
Rockabye [sic] (Billie Whitelaw)
Tailpiece (Barry McGovern)

CHAPTER SIX
"Said Nohow On":
The Ethic of Impossibility, Genre, and the Law

It is impossible to establish any constant rule.

—Chuang-Tzu, XVII

The three preceding chapters have presented the empirical background of Beckett's prose in performance. The audio performance, both in broadcast and recorded form, has been historicized in an Irish context and theorized globally as a renewal of *logos*. The single-text prose adaptation, separated into distinct phenomenologies of time, space, and the body, has shown how stylistic and narrative strategies distinguish a spectrum of authorial or audience fidelity. Finally, a reading of multi-text prose performances revealed how the solo performer is essentially an adapted author and anthropologist of the "Beckett Man," creating a new and radically unstable self in the interstices and intersections of Beckett's texts. All three categories, and the many approaches to performance within them, mark the performance of prose as a particular kind of engagement with Beckett's text, Beckett's philosophical vectors, Beckettian subjectivity, and the phenomenology of the theatre itself.

Yet after all this, certain impossibilities remain. There is a remainder when each type of prose performance has been divided. There are categories where void and absence reign unchecked, elements of practice that the "scientific" attention of the academic does not seem capable of resolving. What has been imposed on these performances to create order and sequence is itself a rubric of names, a repetition of Beckett's own transgression against writing by way of writing, or Adorno's transversal of the subject via the subject. Is there an escape from a theory of the impossible? There is a clear danger of creating a missionary atheism; to see impossibility as its own absolute condition would reproduce the transcendence that is under critique. To avoid this pitfall, this final chapter will begin to address the direct, physical realities of action and event which define how an ethic of impossibility might function.

The stated goal of Chapters Three, Four, and Five was the location of techniques in adaptation which illuminate the ethic of impossibility within Beckett's text and the act of prose performance. The irreducible fact that emerges from any such catalogue, however, is that the hopelessly divergent personalities, choices, methods, and suppositions on the part of the artists are beyond the access of the audience, and certainly beyond the scholar. Indeed, the whole procedure is governed by impossibility, not merely limitation. If the goal is completion, purity, or repetition, it is impossible to make such a performance (yet performances are made). It is impossible to grasp such a performance (yet these pages have been written). Fidelity to author or audience is impossible (yet every artist tries). The situation mirrors Molloy's, and in a different sense, Beckett's own: "not to want to say, not to know what you want to say, not to be able to say what you think you want to say, and never to stop saying, or hardly ever, that is the thing to keep in mind, even in the heat of composition" (*Trilogy* 112).[1]

There is a simple integrity in the foundational impossibility of language: as sound begins in silence, words originate in emptiness. Beckett's prose began as blank paper — the writer's equivalent of the actor's empty space — and the "little world" he crafted first appeared on the stage of the mind. Beckett was first a translator of these invisible, ineffable visions. When writing drama, translation is intended for theatre artists, who then translate it again; with prose, the translation goes straight to an audience, but in a different recorded form. The performer who enters Beckett's world may feel no urge to create, but those artists examined in the preceding pages are those who were seized by the desire for translation. This movement from empty page to empty space is the deepest common root of all practices explored in this thesis; the ethic of impossibility attempts to understand how and why the performer adapts.

The analysis that began this thesis shows that there is no phenomenological difference between the adaptation of prose and the "adaptation" of drama to the stage, either for the audience watching or for the

performer. Maintaining this emphasis on "sameness," the second chapter used philosophical and textual readings to established Beckett's particular notion of self and subjectivity, suggesting the ways this might connect to the self staged by prose performance. This chapter will extend the discussion to differences, irreconcilables, impossibilities, and unnamables. First, the chapter will return to the task of theorizing the ethic of impossibility, in order to conclude the central argument of this work with a "summary of findings" based in practice. Next, the implications of this ethic must be explored on a practical level; while the phenomenological argument may serve to eradicate differences between the practice of drama and prose performance, there is no question that there are distinctions in the practical and legal realm. This chapter will address these concrete implications for the practitioner of prose performance, the audience, and the academic, by examining first the thorny conditions of genre in Beckett and then, as any analysis that ignored the specific "physical" barriers to the practices explored would be incomplete, the related legal situation that affects prose performance. In the richness of the impossibility that pervades the activity of adaptation, a theory of practical as well as philosophical interest should emerge.

The Ethic of Impossibility

The "ethic of impossibility" is a new name, and perhaps a new aggregation of concepts, but the idea and its constituent fragments form a powerful strain in Beckett Studies reaching back to foundational criticism. The central dialectic "engine" of this ethic is the conflict between a universal void (impossibility) and the imperative to continue (the *ethos*). The first condition is an aporia at the root of language, thought, subjectivity, and being. Many scholars have observed this feature, but the distinction that separates their assorted positions has been one of value. The *Companion* frames the critical background in the uneasy terms of a humanist/post-humanist debate (263-

266). On one side seen as "humanist," critics initially saw Beckett's writing as a depiction of "humans as rubbish"[2] and interpreted his intent to be devaluation, degradation, or rejection of the human. On a second side described as humanist/existentialist, perhaps apotheosized in the Nobel Prize citation (Cf. Gierow), critics observed that only something that once had value could be devalued, and thus argued that a profound celebration of human transcendence and survival runs through Beckett's dark vision. A third post-humanist reading is treated as the most contemporary in the *Companion* entry, sharing many concerns with other systems of thought beginning with the prefix "post-": discourse, language, technology, ideology, desire, the unconscious, and social formation. This nebula clearly problematizes any basic "humanist" readings, and shares some of the characteristics of subjectivity that the second chapter of this work attributes to Beckett. The *Companion* describes "forces of human heteronymy putatively determining who and what we are," such as language, "as an inhuman archive of alterity with its own impersonal agency" (264). Fascinatingly, the critics in the humanist camp tend to be scholars who study the drama, while the critics associated with the post-humanist readings are generally analysts of the prose. The reason put forward for this invokes the transcendent and aesthetic terms of liveness: "In the drama, the mere fact of the live actor secures the 'presence' that the prose so remorselessly challenges" (264). Prose performance can thus draw the two camps together in exquisitely indeterminate ways, reverberating with "the malaise at the selvedge of nonexistence which refuses not to be" (Blau 93).

A somewhat more functional rubric can be found in the writing of Shane Weller, whose 2005 study *A Taste for the Negative: Beckett and Nihilism* pitches the historical split among critics as one between those who read Beckett as either "nihilist" or "anti-nihilist." In his later work, Weller transforms this into a distinction between "ethical" readings of Beckett and the "anethical." Weller writes a nuanced heritage of Beckett's nihilism based in extensive and rigorous philosophical readings, especially of Beckett's pre-

Socratic interests, and positions himself neither in the camp that condemns Beckett's nihilism nor with those whose ethical reading demands a denial of nihilism's presence. He writes in a single sentence the whole basis for the nihilist reading, a framework that echoes what this thesis has called "impossibility" on the surface of Beckett's work:

> To produce works that mock the meanings and values and aims by which we have lived and, despite any emphasis upon the post-humanism or postmodernity of our age, by which we would continue to live; to see suffering and isolation where others would see pleasure or love or friendship; to see decay where others would see growth; to see exacerbation, regression and failure where others would see amelioration, progress, and possibility; to focus mercilessly upon fragmentation, isolation, incomprehension and exhaustion; and [...] to imagine that to experience the nothing would be to 'Know happiness' — surely this is not merely nihilistic but the very consummation of nihilism? (5)

Weller points out philosophical justifications used for this reading, especially Schopenhauer and the Nietzschean *Wille zum Nichts* or absolute devaluation [*Entwertung*]. In Heidegger, he proposes the non-evaluative sense of forgetting [*Vergessenheit*] and the "radical killing" of Being as other underpinnings (5). He also observes, however, that Adorno's reading of Beckett seems to present a way out of nihilism.[3]

What is interesting about the charge of nihilism, like the first humanist critique of Beckett named in the *Companion*, is that few scholars have actually made it. In literary criticism, its lineage can be traced to the blanket critique of modernism in Georg Lukács's 1957 *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. In his chapter "The Ideology of Modernism," Lukács identifies nothingness in Kafka and Beckett as a substitution for God. The result is a zone in which any possible escape has been abandoned, yet the longing for salvation remains its dominant characteristic (46). Weller finds an ancestor of Lukács's arguments in Nietzsche, and a descendant in Slavoj Zizek.[4] Most interesting to Weller is the fact that so many critics — he names Adorno, Badiou, Blanchot, Cavell, Critchley, Deleuze, and Derrida — have since defended Beckett against the

charge of nihilism, although Lukács is now largely seen as "disastrously myopic" (6). To explain this oddity, Weller cites Esslin's understanding of the nihilist critique of Beckett, saying that it is not a discredited critical perspective, but rather a "popular consciousness" of Beckett's negativity against which these thinkers struggle.

Understandably, since he is a critic, Weller assigns a higher evidentiary value to the number of critics and philosophers who line up on one side or the other than to Esslin's attribution of "universal" perception. But there is ample concrete evidence of this public view of Beckett as nihilist, and there is probably enough of it to assert that it is held by a larger number of people than those who see a deeper anti-nihilist, ethical, or optimistic writer. Readers of the Grove Press edition of the *Trilogy* will discover the following quotation from A. Alvarez, just beneath an elegiac review from the *New York Times*, on the book's back cover: "In the trilogy, Beckett is creating his own death in prose, quarrying right down to that subterranean country of his heart [...] what remains is a terminal vision, a terminal style and, from the point of view of possible development, a work at least as aesthetically terminal as *Finnegans Wake*" (n. pag). It is remarkable that one of the more Lukácsian critiques of Beckett was used by the publishers to sell the book. This is a compelling reversal that reveals a great deal about the Beckett market. In his 1973 book on Beckett, in a passage leading up to the excerpt used on the cover of the *Trilogy*, Alvarez writes that

> The final, irreducible content of all Beckett's work is depression [...] he has the air of a man born with the taste of death in his mouth. However comfortable and loving his middle-class background may have been, his inner world seems always to have been as deprived and grieving and desolate as that of an Auschwitz child [...] His writing becomes a way not of avoiding death, but of achieving it. (47-48)

Alvarez's book, to judge by its own back cover, was intended to disseminate this terminal vision of Beckettian negativity to as wide an audience as possible. The publisher's blurb includes the phrase, complete with italics, that "Beckett is

the artist of deprivation and terminal depression who has expressed his vision of desolation with unique poetic power" (n. pag). The reviews of Alvarez excerpted on the cover laud his criticism's accessibility, the *Irish Press* calling the book "much more readable than almost anything of its kind to date" (n. pag).

Molloy says at the beginning of his ruminations, "If I go on long enough calling that my life, I'll end up by believing it. It's the principle of advertising" (53). Beckett's life, by this same principle, has been tied to nihilism, and as Weller observes, Beckett did it to himself far more effectively than any critics. His staging of deferral in *Waiting for Godot* has percolated so far into the culture that the play's title has entered the idiomatic lexicon. His name, like Kafka's before him, has become an adjective synonymous with situations of no exit and impasse. He became, quite literally in Dublin during the 2006 centenary, a poster boy for negativity, staring stonily from the billboards and the lampposts. Treating Dublin as a focus group, it would be fair to assert that the Beckett "brand" remains closely tied to pessimism and death. Nonetheless, following the mass-information campaign and high audience turnouts for Beckett's work that surrounded the Centenary celebrations, more people apparently began to realise that negativity, impossibility, depression, and impasse only tell part of the story.[5] It is equally clear that whatever its usefulness for purposes of marketing, the assertion that the *Trilogy* was "aesthetically terminal" is not borne out by fact. Other novels went on being written. Beckett himself went on to write for thirty years. Numerous actors and directors adapted the novels for live performance, and many were denied the right to do so. Critics, including Alvarez, continue to this day to squeeze the works for exegesis and publication. If it was a terminus at all, the *Trilogy* was the beginning of a line.

It is also worth noting that the "principle of advertising" is the punch line of a joke, one which uniformly gets a laugh when *Molloy* is performed in the theatre by actors like Barry McGovern or Conor Lovett. Many Beckett

scholars, like the philosophers named above by Weller, have worked against the prevailing image of a "terminal" Beckett, but practitioners of Beckett in particular have agitated for a re-invigoration of his humour, however black it may be. As discussed in Chapter Five, humour is an essential ingredient in the accessibility of the work. While a humorous Beckett is not necessarily an ethical Beckett, laughter clears a space that allows the reassessment of his negativity to begin. The documents of reception presented in the historical chapters of this thesis show far greater awareness of an "ethical" Beckett than they do resistance to his pessimism. As shown previously, Jack MacGowran played an enormously important role in exposing audiences to a collision of comedy with ethics. In an article called "When Friends Collaborate" in *Time Magazine*, one reviewer of *Beginning to End* calls him "Fool without his Lear," and writes that

> Beckett, a Stoic in a post-Romantic age, strives to find the words to face death with. The words are essential, yet they are impossible; perhaps even silence is impossible. With wrenching beauty at its climax and end, MacGowran's performance makes that terrible paradox its own only consolation.[6]

The reviewer goes on to quote the end of *The Unnamable* at length, in keeping with so many of the multi-text adaptors who placed this passage as their ultimate or penultimate selection. The phrase "I can't go on, I'll go on" still offers the most succinct and resonant description of the ethic of impossibility.

There are many other examples of prose performance being read in their reception as anti-nihilist. Many of these documents employ the rubric of possibility and impossibilty that has been a theme in the present study. Writing about the Mabou Mines *Worstward Ho*, a text that remains the *ne plus ultra* of failure, Marilyn Stasio says that "the whole thing was pretty much an impossible task [...] that it has been brought within the scope of possibility is the best tribute to Neumann and company" (16 September 1986). A review of the 1985 *Company* directed by Stan Gontarski stated the same idea in terms of

hope, and placed the ethical operation not in the performer but in the author:

> Beckett's prose in the service of this black analysis is so ravishing that it gives hope where none exists. It is an extraordinary, bracing music that embraces hopelessness while manufacturing palpable beauty. The very equation expresses the dichotomy in all of Beckett's work, for how can one fail to go on in the face of such astonishing creativity, even when what is created is consumed with hopelessness? (Viertel C1)

Again, this is not to argue that critics or audiences who find depictions of death, absence, aporia, or the pure negative within Beckett are incorrect. They are simply articulating the self-evident, mining for what is readily available on the surface. This thesis has argued that impossibility is omnipresent in the first strata of Beckett's worlds, whether in the negation of language, dissolution of self, void of narrative, unnamability, or pervasiveness of uncertainty and deferral. Similarly, the phenomenological analysis of the media for performance of prose — whether audio performance, single-text theatrical adaptation, or multi-text anthropology — has revealed a pervasive absence, drawing on a long line of "negative" aesthetic determinations by philosophers and theorists. It is Badiou who helps to clarify the usefulness of this absence in a mathematical sense rather than an aesthetic one. Through a dialectical process, or even a process of exhaustion, the pure negative calls into being its alternative. A truly absolute negation must also negate negation; the infinite proliferation of dead-ends results in no dead-ends at all. This axiom shows the reason why "I'll go on" follows "I can't go on," as surely as language follows silence. In this way, the pure negative always forces the ethical question: what is to be done? It is in this basic shift to action and praxis that "simple" impossibility takes its first step toward an ethic of impossibility, a statement of what *event* might follow the recognition of the void. Given all this — all this this here — What is the word?[7]

The ethic of impossiblity has applied in this thesis to three inextricably linked arenas: 1) Beckett's worlds, as staged within his works, regardless of genre or technique; 2) Beckett's work in life, and life in work; and 3) the

practice of confronting Beckett, whether as audience, artist, or academic. While the study of prose performance has provided the main support for this framework, it is possible to use the theoretical tools developed here much more broadly across Beckett's life and work.[8] At its first level, the ethic of impossibility simply asserts that the precondition of living, writing, speaking, acting, and watching is a radical impossibility. However, an ethical operation prevents the apotheosis of the impossible, the coming of the end, though the imperative of continuation. Rather than a staging of death itself, or of the author's death, or of the actor's death, Beckett's oeuvre presents us with death's deferral. Beckett's writing of death reflects in many ways his writing of silence, in that the line of continuation over time — life and voice — is always approaching the asymptote, and always conscious of the end, but never quite arriving there.

Examples of asymptotic procedures abound in Beckett's own writing, but they appear in a robust critical tradition as well. Herbert Blau, writing in *The Eye of Prey*, conceives of this indeterminacy as phenomenological: "what we see in all of Beckett's writing is the trembling of perception at degree zero on the edge of its extinction" (73). A similar reading of time has already been addressed in the analyses of Walter Pater, but in the introductory essay to the *Companion*, Gontarski and Ackerley relate it to Beckett's classical source:

> Heraclitus's emphasis on a world of becoming, a liminal world in perpetual transition, reverberates through Beckett's work where to utter 'now' is always late, an afterthought; consciousness itself always belated. To utter 'I,' then, is inescapably retrospective, a corrupt distortion of memory, nostalgia for a present moment, as Kant suggested, always inaccessible to empirical consciousness. (x)

This returns the impossibility of the phenomenological determination — "Where now? Who now? When now?" (*Trilogy* 291) — to the problem of saying "I," a recurrent thematic of the prose performance. The Unnamable who speaks these words at the opening of a book called *The Unnamable* becomes a pervasive *Unnamability* in the space, time, and embodiment of

theatre. The argument made in this thesis is not that the act of reading somehow eliminates the ethic of impossibility or its conditions; rather, it is that the performative strategies used to stage the prose are "resonators" for the negative categories in the work (being negative themselves). In radio, the absence of the visual is a literal rendering of the "voice in the dark" seen in so much of Beckett's work. In single-text performance, the unstable identities in the work are mapped onto the liminality of the event: the narrator is at once self and other, but never certain; the audience is both many and one, but never stable; the spoken text is neither play nor prose, and yet seems like both. In the multi-text adaptation, the author is both absolutely present in the text and utterly absent in the body of the actor. The actor is an ethographer of a non-existent world and fails utterly to capture it, but in this way he physically enacts this writer's project.

It is only natural that the outcome of this procedure would reflect an essential liminality. Bell argues that literary modernism generally can be "distinguished by this incessant thematization of its fundamental disengagement from strict designation," a state it achieves by "its ongoing encounter with the presence of its own nothingness" (9). All the techniques explored in this thesis can illuminate the strategies of this encounter and of this disengagement. Prose adaptation responds to the fact of impossibility with the *presence* of nothingness. Rather than a simple overlapping of conceptual or abstract categories, these conditions are finally about the *action* of staging prose and how it both exposes and corrupts the source, while exploiting and opposing the medium. Prose performance is ultimately a *physical* struggle, a demanding act of adaptation on both sides of the performer/audience frame. Like the literary modernism that Bell finds in Beckett, prose performance "animates the formative pivot between subjective aporia and subjective arrest" (14). The eternal failure of these procedures is not, then, a statement of nihilism. Failure is not a bug in the system, but a feature. Writing in her book on Beckett and Bernhard called *The Imperative of Narration*, Catharina Wulf

thinks through the inverted logic of such an ethic:

> Failure is above all a constructive, albeit endless, struggle indicative of Beckett's and Bernhard's perplexity toward language and the production of art as well as the performative aspects of language. The space in which the act of narrating/writing — or art in general — occurs is located in a gap which is beyond silence. Rather than repeating the impossibility of reaching silence as an end (which has been done by most critics) it is more important to look at the *way* in which silence rests in suspense as well as suspended, i.e., the journey, or the progression of the narration. (10-11)

Without addressing the possibility of performed prose, Wulf nonetheless calls for a reinvigoration of praxis, for some method of examining the *way* that failure operates in the "performative" space, a "gap which is beyond silence." This thesis has argued that such a path is available, though not inevitable, in prose performance. In the preconditional negation underpinning both Beckett's subjects and the theatre itself, an ethics emerges as a consequence of the choice — by Beckett, his characters, or the performer — to proceed in the face of the void. Theatre already has its own "ethic of impossibility" in the expression that "the show must go on;" Beckett's "you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" personalizes this same fundamental resilience and tenacity. The artistic form thus presents a non-escapist and anti-nihilist aesthetic, predicated on a relentless witnessing of a senselessly violent and cruel world, but forbidding certainty either of death or of salvation.

Generic Androgyny

The ethic of impossibility suggests the failure of Beckett to express his world on the first level, an ever-present failure to stage Beckett's failure on the second, and the ever-present failure to fail absolutely on the third, the result of which is "going on." Is there a difference, though, when this ethic unfolds in prose performance as opposed to dramatic performance or reading a book? As argued above, any division leaves a "remainder," and one remainder that impacts on the practice of prose performance is the problem of genre. While

obviously a theoretical concern for the scholar or critic, genre also has a direct and concrete impact on the practitioner. Indeed, genre may pose a further "resonator" in prose performance — a fourth layer of impossibility — in its enactment of impermanence and indeterminacy. This section will trace the unusual trajectory of genre in Beckett, moving from the subversion of form to a more general and fundamental challenge of generic difference. It will examine how permission to adapt work across genres has come about historically, beginning with a look at Beckett's personal relationships with trusted collaborators and their impact on cross-genre practices.

First, nearly every prose text by Samuel Beckett has been adapted for performance, and some have been adapted many times, in many countries. The sheer number of such performances places a first barrier on writing a definitive history.[9] A perhaps more significant barrier is that some performances do not wish to be found, because of the legal atmosphere surrounding Beckett adaptations. The best-known performances are all by towering figures of the theatre (Mabou Mines), or by figures who became famous due in part to their association with Beckett (Jack MacGowran). As has been repeatedly emphasised in biographical works and personally by those who knew him, Beckett placed tremendous value on his relationships; when approached by friends or trusted collaborators, he gave permissions which would never have been given to strangers. Further evidence of the significance of his relationships pervades the record of his writing process, his theatrical process, and indeed his own creative life. The popular perception of Beckett as an utterly reclusive, "ivory tower" writer — even the occasional critical perception of him as a spontaneous, transcendental, fiercely specific genius — is belied by an absence of solitude in some of his creative process, where collaborators played a huge role.

Second, Beckett's relationships reveal a lower priority for generic "faithfulness" than is generally assumed. While his sole published dedication of a piece was to Vaclav Havel in *Catastrophe*, many more pieces of both prose

and drama were written for specific performers. Frequently, these selections were made on the basis of a voice alone, confirming Beckett's sensitivity to sound in his works argued in Chapter Three. One example is the fateful collaboration between MacGowran and Beckett, which can be traced to MacGowran's radio work at the BBC.[10] In his biography of MacGowran, Jordan Young asserts that *Embers* was written with MacGowran "in mind" (58); *Eh Joe* was written explicitly for MacGowran, and the character was originally named Jack (106). Similarly, one inspiration for *Krapp's Last Tape* is frequently attributed to Beckett hearing Patrick Magee's readings of his work over the radio. *From An Abandoned Work* — now classified with Beckett's prose — was at one point known as the "Magee monologue," and *A Piece of Monologue,* which is still anthologised with the plays, was a text written for David Warrilow. *Not I* has been reported occasionally as a piece for Billie Whitelaw, who certainly had an impact on Beckett's later female characters, but this is probably a conflation of the piece's basis with its definitive performance in 1972. *Ohio Impromptu* is an example of several rarities, in that it was requested by S.E. Gontarski (a Beckett scholar and director) and written expressly for performance by Warrilow, thus interestingly unifying theory and practice as well as breaking Beckett's repeated admonition that he did not accept commissions. It was also not always about the voice, as there are several examples of physical or embodied inspiration for Beckett's writing. Deryk Mendel requested *Act Without Words I* and received it, and an aborted project known to Beckett as *J.M. Mime* was begun for Jack MacGowran following his physical introduction to Beckett in 1957 (Young 81).

Beckett's strong background in collaborations of this kind has a practical significance as regards the "generic transition" of prose performance. Namely, it destroys the notion that all prose adaptation is *inherently* a travesty of Beckett. In many of the above examples — namely Magee, MacGowran, and Warrilow — the performer who earned Beckett's trust began with prose interpretation, or prose readings, rather than with drama. As shown in

Chapter Five, MacGowran's main legacy as an actor is his Beckett one-man show, an anthology which takes liberties that most performers would be hard-pressed to find approved by the Estate (the case of Robert Jaffe notwithstanding). Other "Beckett actors" like Frederick Neumann and Joseph Chaikin maintained excellent relationships with Beckett after working with extremely aggressive prose adaptations. This clearly indicates that Beckett's opposition to cross-generic performance, famously expressed in his 1957 letter to Barney Rosset and often brought to bear in arguments over the appropriateness of adaptation, was far from categorical. As discussed at the beginning of this thesis, Beckett wrote, "If we can't keep our genres more or less distinct, or extricate them from the confusion that has them where they are, we might as well go home and lie down."[11] On the other hand, it is equally well-known among scholars that Beckett regarded his work in prose as the "serious" work, in spite of the early critical imbalance toward the plays and the ongoing public ignorance of Beckett as novelist.

The superficially banal conclusion that one is forced to draw from the litany of friends and collaborators who hugely impacted Beckett's writing, combined with the leeway they were afforded on the limitations of great importance to Beckett's creative life and legal legacy, is that psychology matters in prose performance. Their attention to, and interest in, Beckett's "serious" work was a compliment to Beckett. Their loyalty — and their sheer ability — regarding public performance of his writing, whatever its basis, earned a reciprocal loyalty from Beckett. The public perception of Beckett's own litigiousness (when his stage directions were violated or unauthorised adaptations were attempted) and the ongoing mythologies of the Beckett Estate tend to overlook the human element which was so fundamental to his willingness to stretch his own boundaries. A serious artist who could meet Beckett, convince him of his or her intentions, and demonstrate a strong understanding of the writer's major and minor works actually had an excellent chance of receiving a unique permission. Even the "real" red lines, such as a

film version of *Waiting for Godot*, ultimately could not withstand the demands of friendship; several of varying quality have now been made, but no lesser artists than Roman Polanski and Jack MacGowran failed to convince Beckett as late as 1967. In his refusal, Beckett wrote that "it is simply not cinema material. And adaptation would destroy it. Please forgive me... and don't think of me as a purist bastard."[12]

It is difficult to envision a "purist bastard" agreeing to the things that Beckett allowed across genres, but perhaps part of the difficulty in unifying the public image with the recorded facts lies in a static definition of genre. Genre is hardly a zone for purity; it is a zone of impossibility. Much like the author himself, a man who attracted contradictory descriptors, the works of Beckett resist categorization. Significant time has been devoted by critics to mapping Beckett's biographical paradoxes, which show that he is at once Irish and French, Protestant and Jew, mystic and atheist, humanist and nihilist. Such identity politics finally obscure the core of his ethics, which is found in his resistance to definition and a deep suspicion of unitary systems. It is no accident that Beckett's genres are therefore fluid and difficult to pin down; his adherence to formal traditions was idiosyncratic at best. He could at the same time be considered attentive to form, if only because of how regularly he practiced narrative subversion. He showed his awareness of convention by how precisely he flouted it. As argued in Chapter Two, not one of his novels sustains a consistency of narrative voice, and most of them celebrate this inconsistency as their sole consistency. *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* is perhaps his most chaotic attempt, and is often treated critically as an adolescent strike against traditions; *Murphy* and *Watt* both show mathematical attempts in the tradition of pre-Socratic sophistry to defy the internal logic of the story, and often the external laws of the world. Several pieces shifted genre during the course of their composition, with early drafts of short pieces now classified as prose, such as "From an Abandoned Work" and *Company*, revealing their conception as monologues. Stan Gontarski examines many

texts that moved in the other direction, becoming drama at a late stage of composition, concluding that Beckett's writing occupies a liminal space of "generic androgyny" (Acheson and Arthur 193). In the programme notes for the 1985 production of *Company*, Gontarski shows how even in genetic criticism of Beckett's texts, generic difference is not easy to establish:

> The line separating Samuel Beckett's fiction from his drama has never been rigid. *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, has its roots in an abandoned piece of French fiction, *Mercier and Camier*. And that generic distinction has grown even fainter with Beckett's develpment of dramatic monologue in *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), a play which also may have its roots in a piece of abandoned fiction called appropriately, *From an Abandoned Work*. But nowhere is that essential androgyny of the Beckettian text more evident than in *Company*, a work published as a novella in English and French in 1980.[11]

Besides a formal characteristic, the same indeterminacy of genre is present in Beckett's use of language. In his study on Beckett in performance, Jonathan Kalb argues that one way that the demands of immediate reception are handled differently in drama and prose is through repetition. Nonetheless, though he seems to argue that drama uses more repetition in order to make them more easily comprehensible, Kalb notes that "Beckett hasn't always made such clear distinctions between the way language functions in his dramatic and non-dramatic works [...] it is just too simple, in other words, to claim that the dramas are built on a principle of ready accessibility lacking in the prose fiction" (125). The frequent approval of radio recitations of Beckett's prose, along with the specifically Irish heritage of orally based prose, further expose a fundamental emphasis on voice over the printed text. This conception of orality as a primary category throughout Beckett's writing — addressed extensively in Chapter Three, citing particularly the work of Enoch Brater and Declan Kiberd — also undermines a central tenet of the relevant copyright law, which is the strictly textual basis of intellectual property rights. The implications of Beckett's slippery genres, particularly in this boundary between prose and drama, extend beyond the question of organization or

category or even law, and touch on the meaning and function of the works themselves.

If modernism avoids "strict designation," as Bell argues, what is the meaning and importance of genre in general? With Beckett's writing, the description of differences between works might be more productively addressed as "techniques." Beckett's oeuvre is technically diverse, but thematically and aesthetically highly consistent. This consistency is not at all incompatible with a modernist aesthetic, particularly because the most consistent aspect of the work is a rich and multivalent impossibility. Writing in the general introduction to the *Companion,* Gontarski and Ackerley argue that "while the cultural dislocation, alienation, and the dehumanization of the Shoah that blight the twentieth century dominate his art, it retains a remarkable if surprising coherence, his works forming part of a continuous series, if not a pattern" (x). Andrew Gibson observes largely the same quality in Beckett's language, saying that "almost from the start, Beckett was thinking of minds and selves as inconstant, variable and shifting, full of disparate and incongruous functions" (*ND* 153). For Gibson, the local result in Beckett's prose is a "Bloom-like volatility of consciousness" in the narrators, but the global result is a breakdown of generic distinction across texts. Beckett deployed genre more like a tool, frequently geared toward subversion. Genres were the different weapons in his arsenal as he tunneled toward silence.

Genre is useful primarily for sorting prohibitively large collections of text. It serves an important function in some anthologies, in bookstores, and on the pages of the *New York Times Book Review*. It is considerably less descriptive of either Beckett's own process or of contemporary literary practices. In fact, a wholesale rethinking of genre is suggested by today's saturation of media and the virtual. Instead of barriers between text, the internet posits a fluid continuum of text, maintained in a system not of rigid suspension — i.e., a book — but in the "fluid storage" of a database or server,

able to be transmitted, retrieved, or altered with impunity. In a special issue on genre published in 2007, the journal *PMLA* examined new technologies and their impact on traditional separations between methods of writing, finding that "stackability, switchability, and scalability are the key attributes of genres when they are seen as virtual" (Dimock 1379). Though it is again not considered as a possibility within the essay, the practice of performing prose seems to introduce some of the contemporary fluidity associated with the virtual genre. The introductory article arrives at the series of questions that the journal issue goes on to consider, underscoring the increasing impossibility of formal determinations long taken as a given:

> What exactly are genres? Are they a classifying system matching the phenomenal world of objects, a sorting principle that separates oranges from apples? Or are they less than that, a taxonomy that never fully taxonomizes, labels that never quite keep things straight? What archives come with genres, what critical lexicons do they offer, and what maps do they yield? And how does the rise of digitization change these archives, lexicons, and maps? (Dimock 1377)

Since there is no isolation among medias in the virtual, but instead a unified and slippery terrain of pure "embedded" content (Cf. Causey), no medium can work in isolation from any other medium, any more than artistic production itself can work in a vacuum, insulated from social or economic forces. The new vocabulary of genre is one of "interface," "cross-currents," and "diffusion." To cling to a unitary notion of genre at this point in history is utterly retrograde.

Without the ethic of impossibility and its overriding indeterminacy, this thesis may seem to reinscribe the generic difference (between prose and performance) and to inscribe a new genre (prose performance) for the first time. Even the earliest texts that discuss the practice, however, deny the status of an independent artistic genre to adapted prose. Robert Breen writes in *Chamber Theatre* that it is "a technique, not an art," saying that "it lacks the creative autonomy of art; rather it provides a practical and formal means by

which the art of literature may be manifested" (6). Breen sees adapted prose as being "in the service" of literature, with the structure, content, style and voice of the original "always in focus, always present" during a performance. While there is probably more "autonomy" in today's practice than he would have seen, Breen is correct that prose performance is not an "art," nor would it particularly want to be a "genre." Genre is the leading edge of law. It is an ideological exercise in futility, fundamentally impossible but strategically powerful. Jacques Derrida argued in an article entitled "The Law of Genre" that "as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly, or monstrosity" (124). This negative definition polices free artistic action from within, and so contains what he calls a "principle of contamination" (125). Genre is a law that can only be honoured in its breach.

The "Constant Rule"

This section will focus on the role of the Estate, the legal realities of copyright and adaptation, and the implications of these for an ethic of impossibility. This analysis will show that the current legal framework is utterly inadequate to deal with Beckettian textual aesthetics, the protean modernist identity, and the radically negative phenomenology of either adapted prose or drama. To look at the laws themselves, especially in their application to rights acquisition from the Beckett Estate, further illuminates the underlying instability of the cross-genre situation and widens the "breach" already observed in Beckettian textual practices. This investigation is not intended as a full-blown interdisciplinary venture into an arcane or even separate arena of law. The legal status of Beckett's work is intimately bound up with the performance's phenomenology — how the work is embodied or experienced — while the Estate's claims to sole authority directly affects the texts' ontology, or how the work continues to exist.

As the examples and broader legal questions addressed here will show, the requirements and practices to achieve permission are not dissimilar to what they were during Beckett's lifetime. Namely, a non-legalistic analysis of an artist's intent comes into play, even within the legal framework of copyright. Intent is particularly thorny where Beckett's drama is concerned, because the stories of his (and now his Estate's) harsh demands for "perfect" fidelity to the stage directions have achieved the status of myth. Some stereotypes, however, arise because they're true. Knowlson is clearly aware — if somewhat carefully aware — of the risk inherent in the attempt to protect Beckett in the aftermath of the 1984 *Endgame*[14] and the 1988 *Waiting for Godot* in Haarlem,[15] which both came with high-profile bad press for Beckett's literary and legal agents:

> As a result of such disputes, Beckett contracts in several countries were tightened up to state specifically that no additions, omissions, or alterations should be made to the text of the play or the stage directions and that no music, special effects, or other supplements should be added without prior consent. Whether this could result in turning Beckett's theater into a wax-works is another question. If it is applied too rigorously, there is a great danger that it might. (*DTF* 611)

Adorno, as usual, is both more aggressive and more abstract; he writes that "Only works that expose themselves to every risk have the chance of living on, not those that out of fear of the ephemeral cast their lot with the past" (*AT* 34). This would seem to imply that in his aesthetic reading, the Estate is making a huge methodological mistake.

The "strict designations" abhorred by modernism and disturbed by Beckett's genres, subjectivities, and phenomenology also do not apply to the problem of permission, which is inseparable from the embodied practice of adapting prose into performance. The legal conditions surrounding Beckett, both as a cultural commodity and in the form of his living texts, visibly impact the practice of contemporary adaptation. On the surface, it may seem that the legal arena is less interesting theoretically than the theatrical analysis

(conducted already in this thesis) of *what actually occurs* when the prose is staged. However, it can be shown that little separation of copyright law from actual performance choices exists in practice, even though the law theoretically governs only text, not performance:

> Copyright assumes, and actualizes, a particular ontology for the dramatic text. Its aims are the regulation of a traded commodity and to establish protective norms for the copying and distribution of texts. This protects only a work's expression, not its underlying idea. A work of literature *is*, in the eyes of the law, its words. The ontology that copyright defines is entirely textual, based on what is scripted, fixed to the page, and, in theory, able to be copied exactly for distribution and sale. (*Companion* 310-311)

The presence of an authority on interpretation places conditions on permissible expression, possible readings, and available contexts. The chilling effect that Derrida foresaw with genre is clearly in effect here. Each director, performer, and adapter may be forced to "take a stand" with audience and critics during and after the performance, but long before this opportunity that defines the moment of reception, the legal validity of their choices must be vetted.

Beckett was far from consistent in his own standards for giving permissions. The previous section of historical analysis of genre revealed not only how many permissions he personally granted, but also the flexible and personal nature of this supposedly rigorous realm. Knowlson cites an incomplete list of the numerous exceptions to the rules, writing that "Deryk Mendel, David Warrilow, Fred Neumann, Lee Breuer, and later, Pierre Chabert, Barry McGovern and Michael Colgan, Katharine Worth, and S.E. Gontarski were allowed to do things with his work that Beckett would have refused outright if the proposals had emanated from anyone else" (*DTF* 608). Again, psychology matters, and impossibility pervades. Since Beckett is no longer making new friends, the relationship between practitioners and the Estate takes on enormous importance. The Estate is the legally empowered surrogate "friend" of today's "Beckett actors." However, in a Beckettian

paradox *par excellence*, the Estate seems most concerned with replicating Beckett's protean approach to permissions. The examples investigated in this chapter reveal the ongoing challenges posed by their inconsistencies, and the outcome for the practitioner of prose performance.

Hearkening back to Benjamin and Baudrillard, the notion of copyright is irrevocably linked to the age of mechanical reproduction, and so to simulacra. Its vocabulary is relentlessly capitalist, treating art as product, and thereby demanding a fixity which twentieth century aesthetic innovation largely dispensed with. The language of American copyright law is instructive in this respect. Title 17 of the United States Code, which is the 1976 Copyright Act, states that a work must be "fixed in the tangible medium of expression" that renders it replicable, a clause which suggests that performance is inherently exempt; an intangible event cannot be copyrighted. Section 101 of the law states that "A work is created when it is fixed in a copy [...] for the first time." Phil Auslander interprets this gleefully in support of his central thesis in his final chapter of *Liveness*, writing that "as far as copyright law is concerned, a work exists legally only in so far as it has been replicated; if a work has not been reproduced, it has not yet been created [...] there are no 'originals' under copyright law" (131). This definition does not fit neatly into an aesthetic model based on the event; instead, it is geared toward the much more lucrative industrialization of content, and protects the exclusive rights of the creator (or the agent). While there is nominally a balance to be struck between these individual rights and the collective right of dissemination for public benefit, the entrenchment of the economic motive has proved too great. The transition of private work into the public domain has been pushed to seventy years from the death of the author, after successive extensions tracking precisely with the penetration of media, and media jobs, through the 20th century.

The manifest mutual inconvenience of the politics surrounding permissions was foreseen by Theodor Adorno, who openly abhors both the culture industry — of which the Beckett Estate is clearly a part — and the

notional fidelity to a mythical original which it demands. In *Aesthetic Theory*, he writes:

> Art is now scarcely possible unless it does experiment. The disproportion between established culture and the level of productive forces has become blatant: what is internally consistent appears to society at large as a bogus promissory note on the future, and art, socially dispossessed, is in no way sure that it has any binding force of its own. (37)

While one may lament, as Adorno does, the salesman standing between the audience and the art, there is no question that copyright law serves a legitimate interest in cases where money is changing hands, and that many artists would be worse off without this protection. This is no less true for the playwright than it is for the novelist or painter; the dramatic arts do not dilute the urgency of remuneration for one's labour. However, unlike the novel or the painting, the play must undergo both transformation and collaboration for it to be received. This sets up the painful dialectic between artistic control and the exigencies of performance, as it is impossible for a work not to transform as it enters the public discourse. As manuscript, it is private; as play, it becomes public, and from this moment "the terms of its ownership alter and are contested" (*Companion* 310). Competing interests, whether individuals or cultural authorities, patrol the border between public and private, legal and aesthetic ownership. The Beckett Estate makes it extremely clear where it stands on this question. Edward Beckett, the writer's nephew and head of the Estate, uses the metaphor of music to make the case for their protective ethos:

> There are more than fifteen recordings of Beethoven's late string quartets in the catalogue, every interpretation different, one from the next, but they are all based on the same notes, tonalities, dynamic and tempo markings. We feel justified in asking the same measure of respect from Samuel Beckett's plays. (*Guardian* 24 March 1994, 25)

This argument cannot be probed very deeply until it falls apart. The statement is nonetheless deeply revealing of the text-based ontology put forward by the

Estate, a vision of the drama — and the inherent performativity of the prose — which ignores the phenomenology of the event. The question has never been about whether changes from an original document will occur. Not only are such changes the very essence of performative aesthetics, whether in music or in theatre, but there is no such original. Even the published texts which are protected letter by letter under copyright law are not mutually consistent, so no analogue exists to the Beethoven score of this example. The extensive body of research into Beckett's drafting process and self-translation, to say nothing of changes introduced when he was directing his own plays, leave each new interpreter an enormous number of choices. Finally, and most deeply, copyright only applies to something that can be reproduced; this means that the dynamic *markings* might be protected, but the dynamics themselves can never happen twice. The notes on the page may be someone's property, but the tones in the air can only flicker and die unowned.

The entire system proposed here by the Estate's representative flies in the face of even nineteenth-century aesthetic revelations about music, to say nothing of Adorno's radical postwar approach. Walter Pater, whose 1865 work *The Renaissance* was discussed in Chapter One, prefigures modernism in his celebration of a central oppositional metaphor. He relates music to the "flickering" and "flamelike" transience of art. In Botticelli and Beethoven, Pater observes the absence of an original and the constant presence of the void. Kevin Bell provides the bridge from Pater to Adorno:

> Pater unravels the customary oppositions by which art is split conceptually, either into a phenomenal object of pleasure and confirmation of existing values or into a noumenal practice of critique and radical revision. His fascination is with the simultaneously rebellious and reverential character of an artwork that is at once retrospective homage and futuristic defacement of the formal traditions that inform it. (Bell 39)

This passage echoes a similar temporal distinction made in *Aesthetic Theory*:

> The afterlife of artworks, their reception as an aspect of their own history, transpires between a do-not-let-yourself-be-understood and a

> wanting-to-be-understood; this tension is the atmosphere inhabited by art. (Adorno 302)

It is precisely into this type of dialectic of understanding and non-understanding, a simultaneous faithfulness and faithlessness, a *now* and *then* that prose performance falls. The practice takes a novel which is copyrighted for the purpose of reproduction, and turns it into a non-iterable event. It agitates against generic unity and the lie of fixity; it advocates a strategy of enacting impossibility, of re-imagining the conditions of Beckett's content and form; it liberates the *logos* from the institutionalised stability of the printed book. It does not escape logocentric conditions, nor is it in any respect "better" or clearer, but the conditions of its enactment have obviously changed.

Prose performance does not need to be a polemic strategy from the standpoint of aesthetics, but there is no question that it is an activity which is oppositional to the Estate. It is a painful irony and an illustrative environmental problem of the culture industry that the Beckett Estate's main difficulty is the tenacity of Beckett's own revolutionary ideas about aesthetic form and philosophical content. As Claire Beach articulates it in the *Companion*,

> The Beckett Estate has inherited a material legacy, and enjoys legally sanctioned guardianship of it. In conflict with the Estate are those who regard themselves as inheritors of [Beckett]'s commitment to artistic innovation. Members of this group employ strategies to align themselves with [Beckett], but against the Estate, and claim more truly to honour the Beckettian "spirit." These strategies and claims constitute a new conception of ownership, which characterizes itself in opposition to the legal desperation. (313)

If "desperation" seems too harsh a descriptor, it is worth examining the empirical facts of a recent event within the context of Beckett Studies which served to crystallize the explicit challenge to prose performance. The event in question was a performance in Dublin's Samuel Beckett Theatre entitled *Disjecta*, a series of Beckett shorts which was designed to reveal a trajectory of adaptation practice, moving from drama through adapted prose and culminating in stage-adapted film.[16] A proposal was submitted to the Estate

which articulated the laboratory purpose of the free academic event, as well as its linkage to doctoral research within Beckett Studies.

Because the performance was explicit in its use of adaptation of prose text — indeed, this investigation was its experimental purpose — it was thought prudent to inform the Estate of the existence of the event, even though its non-commercial and wholly academic status guaranteed its protection under both Irish and European copyright law, and no permission to perform was actually required. The relevant statutes are unequivocal on this point. In Ireland, the Copyright Act 2000 states that "The performance of a literary, dramatic or musical work before an audience limited to persons who are teachers in or pupils in attendance at an educational establishment or other persons directly connected with the activities of that establishment [...] is not a performance for the purposes of copyright infringement." Separately, the Act protects public reading or recitation in public by one person of any "reasonable extract from a literary or dramatic work" (§90), and in clause 106, the Act states that "It is not an infringement of the copyright in a work to make an adaptation of the work by any act which may otherwise be done without infringing the copyright in a work under this Chapter." These rights are based in protections extended to educational institutions in European law as well, including Directive 2001/29/EC of the European Parliament, currently in force throughout the European Union, which provides for copyright exemptions for communication "for the purpose of research or private study" and "on the premises of [...] libraries, educational establishments, museums, archives," provided no money is charged for the performance.

In spite of these protections and the absence of commercial motive, the Estate communicated extreme displeasure at the stated plan, asserting repeatedly that performances of prose could be authorised under no circumstances, in spite of the legal reality that no authorization was required and in spite of the historical reality that has been extensively recorded in these pages. The absence of any judicial basis was compensated for, however, by the

differential of power. The threat of future — possibly permanent — difficulty with permissions arising out of a disagreement at the educational level would have been too high a price to pay for the principle of legality.[17] A compromise was reached in which specific performance choices were altered, and the new proposal was promptly approved. With such an imbalance of power between the parties, however, any consent is inherently coercive.

The uncomfortable fact remains that in a university setting in a democracy, artistic choices one year in the making were quickly set aside at the pleasure of an empowered other. This is indicative of a broader chilling effect, of countless performances that may not be, and of capable artists who will not compromise themselves by engaging willingly with Beckett's material. Mired in its own rich legacy of Beckettian paradox, the Estate may be engaged in a destructive form of preservation.

A Theatre of the Unword

The conclusion of this chapter will attempt to bypass the emotional aspect of a "permissions debate," a theme which tends to overtake post-show discussions and scholastic forums on Beckett, and return to the ethical question of "what is to be done." Structurally, this chapter has traced the twin impossibilities of categorizing Beckett's genre and of resolving the riddle of permissions, applying both experimental observation and philosophy to the position of the Estate. While a final look at Adorno, Badiou, Bell, Blau, and Weller will reinforce the ethic of impossibility argued thus far, the true "endgame" for this thesis can also be found in Beckett's own writing (especially the early criticism, in which he was less afraid of specific aesthetic declarations). Where he was most explicit — in his monograph on Proust and the famous "German Letter" of 1937 — he seems repeatedly to offer support for artistic practices that tear away the "surface" of language to reveal a void. Prose performance conceived as such is one pattern of activity that seems at

least to accommodate, if not typify, this strategy. The *Literatur des Unworts* [Literature of the Unword] that is Beckett's stated hope in his letter to Axel Kaun (*Disjecta* 54) is transformed in prose performance into a *Theater des Unworts*, an embodied activity in empty space that serves to *enact* the disintegration of the world and the inadequacy of the word.

Adorno has been a primary witness throughout this thesis for the "negative aesthetics" of Beckettian performance, since he provides a robust philosophical model — both directly in the *Aesthetic Theory* and metaphysically in *Negative Dialectics* — for thinking Beckett's escape from nihilism. This is not accomplished through a recourse to absurdity, as it is in Esslin's argument, nor through a polarising or transcendent affirmation occurring outside the text. Instead, the whole nihilist dichotomy is undermined by thinking of Beckett's work as ruled by "an obsession with positive nothingness," as well as "by the obsession with a meaninglessness that has developed historically and is thus in a sense merited, though this meritedness in no way allows any positive meaning to be reclaimed" (153). The negation of meaning, or "meaning on trial" by way of form, is thus not indicative of an easy pessimism or a genuine devaluation of the human. Quite the contrary; since it avoids affirmation of meaning while retaining "rigour," "density," and "unity," Beckett's drama operates for Adorno as a simultaneous negation of the negative, achieved through a negative strategy.

Adorno liberates an ethical Beckett because he ignores neither enactment nor the negative. One could argue that this is because he is a theorist mainly of Beckett's drama, which the *Companion* suggests may provoke humanism through the embodiment of the actor. But it seems more likely that Adorno perceived in Beckett a shared aftershock from Auschwitz, and the enormous aesthetic weight that mirrored the philosophical consequences of postwar Europe. As discussed in the first chapter, this is explicitly argued in Adorno's metaphysical work, *Negative Dialectics*, where Beckett's "fitting reaction" to the concentration camps is positioned as a

"fissure of inconsistency" through which the "image world of nothingness as something emerges to stabilize his poetry" (380). This differentiates Adorno's definition of Beckett's nihilism, which at first "seems stoical," yet "is full of inaudible cries that things should be different" (381). Rather than stasis, then, Adorno proposes that this is Beckett's "legacy of action":

> Such nihilism implies the contrary of identification with nothingness. To Beckett, as to the Gnostics, the created world is radically evil, and its negation is the chance of another world that is not yet. As long as the world is as it is, all pictures of reconciliation, peace, and quiet resemble the picture of death. The slightest difference between nothingness and coming to rest would be the haven of hope [*Zuflucht der Hoffnung*], the no man's land between the border posts of being and nothingness. Rather than overcome that zone, consciousness would have to extricate from it what is not in the power of the alternative. The true nihilists are the ones who oppose nihilism with their more and more faded positivities [*immer ausgelaugteren Positivitäten*], the ones who are thus conspiring with all extant malice, and eventually with the destructive principle itself. Thought honors itself by defending what is damned as nihilism. (381)[18]

Adorno envisions Beckett's "nothingness as something" as the key shift that opens the ethical pathway — the pathway he names as Gnostic — in which negation of negation is the only viable procedure. Adorno's invocation of the camps is thus, in a sense, a historicization of what Beckett stages ahistorically.[19] Beckett's camp is not a specific place, but the whole earth; his death sentence is not an "absolute integration" carried out by Adolf Hitler, but birth itself. Mere continuation, in circumstances so conceived, is a miraculous effort. Negation becomes the chance of another world through Adorno's strategic reversal of terms.

Adorno's notion of *commitment* is the fragment of his thought most clearly reflected in later Beckett criticism by Alain Badiou. Badiou sees Beckett as similarly anti-nihilist, but his distinctive position is that this arises mainly through Beckett's concrete actions, namely the effort and integrity of his labour to express, and through the process of "thought" defined through art. Writing about Badiou's contribution in the context of contemporary "postmodern and poststructuralist" Beckett criticism, Andrew Gibson argues

that Badiou "has the power to orient Beckett studies in a different direction: towards understanding Beckett's work, neither as determined by mood nor as engaged in a practice of theoretical diagnosis, but rather as a project of thought, one whose implications are ultimately ethical" (*OB* 121). Because it is one of the few "generic procedures" in Badiou's system, art has special significance (and responsibility) to truth.[20] There is a clear emphasis in Badiou on Beckett's *formal* activity as a writer and thinker, rather than the emphasis in humanist critiques (or even in some deconstructive, textual, and semiotic critiques) on his art's surface of words. Since art is a zone of thought, for Badiou this opens up the possibility of the event, of the subject, and of the truth procedure. Badiou is interested in the holes torn by Beckett in the fabric of thought; this "tear" mirrors the destruction of instituted knowledge by truth. To find justification for Badiou's interest in these holes — or even a precedent for this expression — one need not look beyond Beckett's own criticism.

In 1937, Beckett was given the opportunity to translate the poet Joachim Ringelnatz from the German, for which purpose he was writing to another German poet, Axel Kaun. In their correspondence of 9 July 1937, Beckett eviscerated Ringelnatz and then went on to describe (in singular German) his own artistic aspirations. In Beckett criticism, the letter is most often deployed as evidence related to Beckett's transition into French from English, or as a demarcation of his difference with James Joyce, which is stated explicitly. However, there is a statement which Badiou's locution clearly echoes, and which explicates a writer's ethic for Beckett himself:

> As we cannot eliminate language all at once, we should at least leave nothing undone that might contribute to its falling into disrepute. To bore one hole after another in it, until what lurks behind it — be it something or nothing — begins to seep through; I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today. (*Disjecta* 172)[21]

Beckett differentiates the "terrible materiality of the word surface" [*fürchterlich*

willkürliche Materialität der Wortfläche] from the "something" or "nothing" underneath, and again reveals how much of his linguistic understanding is derived from music. He asks whether there is any reason why the word surface

> should not be capable of being dissolved, like for example the sound surface, torn by enormous pauses, of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, so that through whole pages we can perceive nothing but a path of sounds suspended in giddy heights, linking unfathomable abysses of silence? An answer is requested. (172)[22]

These are far from the only examples of Beckett exposing his artistic goals. His monograph on Proust, his demanding essay on Joyce's *Work in Progress*, and his writings about painters frequently succeed as disguised manifestos of his own aesthetic aims more than expository essays. In one of his most nakedly "autographic" works, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, an aesthetic axiom (that is again linked with Beethoven's Seventh Symphony) is perhaps at its most distilled: "Form destroying form" (183). It is this aspiration that returns us to the aims of literary modernism and the philosophy of the subject, before arriving back at prose performance.

Kevin Bell does not mention Alain Badiou in *Ashes Taken for Fire*, but he does see a similarly radical demand for thought emanating from Lyotard and Adorno. Artworks must "evoke new modes of imagining such concepts as art itself, alongside accepted notions of history, tradition, and identity — so as to make us aware of the questions, forms, and practices of life that such given notions exclude" (20). Introducing the term familiar from this thesis, Bell writes that for each of these thinkers, "each artwork of this kind *enacts the impossibility of its success*" (20). The ethical operation, though it is not named as such here, is the process of "suspending figurally the final closure of meaning that would constitute such 'success'," in order to expose "the lie of culture's coerced consonances" (21). Bell's argument in this book expresses the politics inherent in modernist aesthetics, an aspect which is considerably more internal

in Beckett, and is generally deployed to undercut contemporary rubrics of identity politics and any essentialist determinism of subjectivity. In this respect, his book shadows Badiou, perhaps without knowing it. In spite of his apparent distance from the Beckett studies discourse, his careful study of the language of modernism reveals numerous correspondences among the selves staged in such works. He could be speaking of Beckett's own *Literatur des Unworts* when he writes in the second line of the book that "more relentlessly than any other, this literature thematizes both the profound absence prior to language and the strategic concealment of that void by language" (1). In another remarkably relevant formulation, Bell writes: "these affective surfaces of modernist figurality perform in sound, rhythm, cadence, and color and ongoing, explicit, and irreducible politics" (4-5). The "performative surface" of language suggests the transition from words as glyphs on the page into a living document. It is this document that is punctured in the prose performance.

For the living document conceived as absence and riddled with holes, we must return one final time to Herbert Blau, whose work in *Eye of Prey* opens the avenue for this vision of a performance whose pivot is an absence. The epigram of Chapter One was the line from *King Lear*, which is re-read by Blau in much the way that was intended by its usage in a chapter on negative phenomenology. Blau writes: "nothing may come of nothing, but it would also be precise to think of that replicated nothing as a substantive *ado*" (161). In his investigation of universals in performance, Blau finds Henry James's model of drama as an *ado*, with its blissfully negative Shakespearian resonance (*Much Ado about Nothing*), useful in considering the negative space carved out for performance. Performance occurs, Blau argues, "in a middle region between the world of transparency and the world of opacity" (182). Critical of anthropology and unforgiving of any representation aligned with mimesis, Blau sees performance as an indicative expression of humanity's "essential aloneness." He suggests a return to the "ghostly thing," a move beyond "the

outer show" that would *renew* awareness of the fundamental separation between the self and all that is not-self (183). Reading Blau in parallel with Merleau-Ponty, the self is reconceived in this model as an absence, a gap in the world. There is no real crossing this boundary, and the most that art can do — an ethic of impossibility for a theatre so conceived, perhaps — is to draw our attention to it. The eyes are the proscenium arch of the skull, and all the world's a stage; there is no real alternative to this "fourth wall."

For all their solitude, the actors go on speaking. For all the challenges, it seems that audiences go on listening. Facing the enormity of these layered impossibilities, the academics go on writing. The action that defines prose performance is this ongoing "going on." Such concrete action has only become possible because of Beckett's encounter with many hundreds of blank pages, hundreds of blank walls, and several austere rooms, empty spaces that were filled with language in spite of his best efforts. This original activity of thought was a moment that looks almost heroic, if heroism were permitted. For Badiou, the act of writing was the key moment; for Blau, it is the encounter in the moment of performance. In both, the speech act maintains its own destructive principle and its own imperative. Following in the scheme inaugurated by Emmanuel Levinas, Simon Critchley writes:

> The Saying "is my exposure — corporeal, sensible — to the Other, my inability to refuse the Other's approach. It is the performative stating, proposing, or excessive position of myself facing the Other. It is a verbal or non-verbal ethical performance, whose essence cannot be caught in constative propositions. It is a performative *doing* that cannot be reduced to a constative description [...] The Saying is the sheer radicality of human speaking, of the event of being in relation with an Other; it is the non-thematizable ethical residue of language that escapes comprehension, interrupts philosophy, and is the very enactment of the ethical movement from the Same to the Other. (7)

Prose performance utilises Saying, Self, and Other, but because it takes place in Beckett's universe, there is no stability in any of the three. Rather, prose performance brings together the pervasive impossibilities of these positions for the purpose of an *ado*. It is this element of action that is missed by Weller's

critique of the ethical reading. Indeed, on the final page of his book, he asks the reader to "consider the possibility that the experience of reading — not necessarily ethical — is the experience of finding oneself precisely *in no position to say*, in that indecision. And that, were it possible, might just be to experience nihilism in its uncanniness" (196). Crucially, Weller here means reading in the sense of *lesen*, not *vorlesen*. Otherwise, he would see that he had already answered the question himself:

> As enactments, Beckett's works become the site of an encounter between two entirely irreconcilable needs: the need for the work as work, and the need for no work at all. A more compact formulation of this double need would be: those works enact the attempt to say nothing [...] a commitment to the impossible becomes the precondition of an art, not of representation, but of expression [...] this journey [toward the theory that art originates in its own impossibility] will involve a transformation not only in the manner and matter of art, but also in its very nature. Instead of representing an incoherent reality, the work of art will have to be the expression of a certain 'nothing.' (62)

This passage is on the cusp of the terminology used to approach Beckett in this thesis, but from Weller's position — as a theorist predominantly of the prose — it is difficult for him to see any way out. Indeed, within these limitations, Weller is correct that the act of reading is not inherently ethical. The book makes no claims for itself. He is also correct that it is not enough to be simply "for" or "against" Beckett, but it is also he who sets these up as the supposed alternatives. The limitations imposed by these vague dichotomies and his almost mathematical reading of nihilism amount to a definition of "enactment" which is idiosyncratic, hence the conclusion that Beckett's work can only be anethical.

The ethic of impossibility presented in this thesis does not amount to a new set of given circumstances which lend prose performance some automatic significance, nor does the use of "ethics" covertly insert a polemic or missionary intent. If the ethic resists anything, it is transcendence. When considered for the academic, the audience, and the practitioner, the ethic ultimately reveals the manifold ways that prose performance can stage this

resistance. In the space created by the void — Badiou's "proper name of being" — there is a gesture of possible reclamation against all odds, the uncertainty of even death, contained in the act of going on. It is in the context of all these vacancies, elisions, and aporias in language, theatre, and Beckett himself that the ethic of impossibility seems to give birth to a "theatre of the unword." An ethic of impossibility finally offers possible approaches to impossibility. It is these approaches that have been recorded here, and this final chapter of the dissertation locates an implicit gesture of reclamation beyond even the "constant rule" of genre and the law, the veil of language, the solitude of the mind, and the emptiness of space.

NOTES: CHAPTER SIX
The Ethic of Impossibility, Genre, and the Law

1. Cf. Chapter One, p. 43. My linkage of Beckett to this thought is by now probably familiar to the reader, but in the event that it seems like a clear biographical fallacy, it is worth remembering the repetition of this negative formulation across his whole career (as well as Abbott's "autography," which builds in some forgiveness to the conflation between Molloy and Beckett).
2. In a classic fallacy of intent, the "humans as rubbish" critique emerges from the association of Beckett himself with the theatrical image he created for Nagg and Nell in *Endgame*. The 1980 postcard referred to in Chapter Five uses the rubbish bin as part of its caricature. This also clearly speaks to the raw power of this theatrical image.
3. Weller notes that Adorno's "paradoxical definition" of nihilism in *Negative Dialectics* is the chief difference that allows for his deployment of Beckett as an anti-nihilist. Adorno's perspective on nihilism, already introduced in Chapter One with a reading of *Aesthetic Theory*, will be given a full treatment focused on *Negative Dialectics* later in this chapter.
4. In *Ashes Taken for Fire*, Kevin Bell traces a different heritage from Georg Lukács to Frederic Jameson and even Hazel Carby. He groups the critics who have "justified the all-but-wholesale dismissal of aesthetic modernism on the grounds of its supposed flight from reality into formalistic ephemerality"(5), a view of Beckett that is also relatively common. Bell thus aligns himself explicitly against "the more recent historicist designations of modernism's alleged apoliticism and solipsism" and somewhat more subtly critiques Leavis and Albert Guerard's "humanist logic of personal alienation by forces of modernity—a logic that these literary texts actually deconstruct in vigorous manner" (5). In his approach to the modernist texts themselves to investigate the way they function against these critiques, Bell actually replicates a strategy of criticism inherent in prose performance. His ideas are treated more comprehensively at the end of this chapter.
5. This is anecdotal, unfortunately, but it is based on a large number of conversations about Beckett in this time, many of which were with members of the public to whom Beckett's work was either mysterious or a source of active disdain. Since there is no agreed measurement of "general" public perception of Beckett, there is no convincing way to measure such a shift.
6. This review is from an article entitled "When Friends Collaborate," printed in *Time* magazine on 11 May 1970, pp. 64-65. It was found at Reading with the MacGowran performance archive in STAGE FILE / ADA-1970, MS3525. No author is given. In a remarkable coincidence, the facing page contains a review of *Company*, but this refers to the Broadway musical, not the work by Beckett.
7. This is a "sample" from Beckett's final piece of writing, "What is the Word," though the phrase does not occur in this sequence.
8. In particular, this thesis has eschewed biographical readings as much as possible, focusing on "work" much more than "life." It would be interesting to apply the ethical framework that has arisen here through prose performance to Beckett himself, as an extension of the complex "autographic" relationship.
9. This thesis has never claimed to present a "definitive" history, only a selective one. Nonetheless, a first attempt at a comprehensive catalogue of prose performance can be found in the appendices to this thesis. The only thing currently comprehensive about this record is the disclaimer on its first page.

10. Beckett heard MacGowran in *The Paddy Pedlar* in 1957, and requested him for the role of the Porter in *All That Fall*. The circumstances surrounding this first meeting are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.
11. I have cited this quotation previously in the Introduction, where I found it in Cohn, *Just Play*, 207. It is cited in nearly every book which discusses Beckett's genres, and has thus been taken as a far more definitive statement than its context deserves. Opinions expressed in a writer's correspondence, particularly with a publisher, and particularly with Beckett, take on all the significance of a legal precedent, which is not necessarily justifiable.
12. Letter to MacGowran, 13 December 1967. Quoted in Young, 120.
13. The programme and related material is held at Reading in STAGE FILE/ADA-1985, MS3300.
14. The 1984 *Endgame* controversy was with JoAnne Akalaitis, who had staged the production with a radically altered setting at Boston's A.R.T. The famous Beckett programme note ("a mockery") was arranged as a compromise to keep the show running, but the fight precipitated a painful split among the members of Mabou Mines, many of whom did not work with Beckett again.
15. The 1988 *Waiting for Godot* controversy was with the Dutch company De Haarlemse Toneelschuur, who attempted to stage an all-female *Waiting for Godot* and were served with a cease-and-desist order by the agents. These two are representative of many more controversies, including the "circus" productions of George Tabori in the 1980s and 1990s, Gildas Bourdet's "pink" *Fin de Partie* in 1988, Susan Sontag's 1993 *Waiting for Godot* in Sarajevo, Deborah Warner's *Footfalls* in 1994, Katie Mitchell's simultaneous *Beckett Shorts* at the RSC in 1996, and most recently Robert Bacci's all-female *Waiting for Godot* in 2006 (which was allowed to go ahead due to a legal judgment against the Estate).
16. This performance has been included in the Appendices as an event of prose adaptation. More information is recorded there.
17. It is important to note that no explicit threat of this "blacklisting" was ever made, but the force of any repeated "recommendation" when backed up by the power differential between a student and the Beckett Estate is effectively constraining. The full correspondence between the Estate and the artists creating the performance is in the possession of the director, and is not catalogued in this thesis as a source.
18. While Robert Hullot-Kentor's version of *Aesthetic Theory* has been relatively free of this problem, there are many instances of questionable translation in the widely used A.B. Ashton version of *Negative Dialectics*. The published version is used here to maintain consistency across sources, but I have supplemented some of the more curious phrases with Adorno's German.
19. I am indebted here to Weller (*TN* 11-13). Quite rightly, he suggests that Beckett's views in this area are derived from Schopenhauer, whose conception of subjectivity was explored in Chapter Two.
20. Badiou's system of thought uses "truth" quite unapologetically, and so I replicate his ease with the term when writing about him. Additionally, a more detailed explanation of Badiou's relationship to Beckett can be found in the second chapter of this work, in the section "Beyond Beckett's Boundaries."
21. Beckett's original German, idiosyncratic as it is, seems to contain some formal echoes of the process he is discussing, and is recorded here in full:

> Da wir sie so mit einem Male nicht ausschalten können, wollen wir wenigstens nicht

versäumen, was zu ihrem Verruf beitragen mag. Ein Loch nach dem andern in ihr zu bohren, bis das Dahinterkauernde, sei es etwas oder nichts, durchzusickern anfängt — ich kann mir für den heutigen Schriftsteller kein höheres Ziel vorstellen. (52)

22. Again, Beckett's original:

Gibt es irgendeinen Grund, warum jene fürchterlich willkürliche Materialität der Wortfläche nicht aufgelöst werden sollte, wie z.B. die von grossen schwarzen Pausen gefressene Tonfläche in der siebten Symphonie von Beethoven, so dass wir sie ganze Seiten durch nicht anders wahrnehmen können als etwa einen schwindelnden unergründliche Schlünde von Stillschweigen verknüpfenden Pfad von Lauten? Um Antword wird gebeten. (53)

CONCLUSION

Trajectories in Praxis

It's myself I hear, howling behind my dissertation.

—The Unnamable

This thesis has been an inherently interdisciplinary exercise, since the topic itself derives from a fusion of novel and drama. In its methodology, it has endeavoured to sample productively — albeit freely — from discourses of philosophy as well as literature and performance studies. The history of prose performance in Beckett, and the attempt to use phenomenological analysis to articulate its reading specifically, is itself an original contribution which may open further pathways in these fields. In drawing out the theoretical implications of a practical history, however, the fault lines inherent in any work of aesthetic theory have been exposed. While philosophical implications or methodological questions might be of interest for the academic, what of the artist? What of the theatre-makers and would-be adaptors who continue, during and after the research and writing for this dissertation, to work? Without a treatment of the current state of Beckett's prose in performance, and the possible outlook for this praxis in theatrical and pedagogical arenas, the risk of creating "ornithology for the birds" is acute. Accordingly, I address the bulk of this conclusion to the artist. If the "ethic of impossibility" is finally an "ethic of continuation," then the history and theory provided in textual form must find some recourse to action. This emphasis surely does not exclude the critic, however, since some artistic practices include scholarship, just as the academic practice involves some art. Rather than a polemic aimed at the theory-practice divide, this conclusion should illuminate possibilities and trouble distinctions. Like the Unnamable, I find myself at the end of this work with the sense of "a task to be performed, before one can be at rest. Strange task, which consists of speaking to oneself. Strange hope, turned towards silence and peace" (311). It begins with a look at what has been done.

Recapitulation

The first major section of this work, including the introduction and first and second chapters, established a theoretical framework for reading prose performance. This discussion began by extending Jean-Paul Sartre's category of the *négatité* into the structural absence of the theatre, observing a philosophical heritage of "negative phenomenology" defined in large part by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The distinction between postwar phenomenologists like Sartre and Merleau-Ponty and the more transcendently subjective philosophy of forerunners (such as Edmund Husserl) was observed for philosophical perspective on this tradition. In parallel, a few phenomenologists of the theatre — especially Stanton Garner, Bert States, and Erving Goffman — were useful primarily in establishing a conception of the performer as an "embodied mind," the theatre as a "bodied space," and the isolation of frames in which lived experience unfolds. These phenomenologists were challenged, however, for an increasingly questionable distinction between self and other in a zone where such boundaries are irregular, as well as for their recourse to a limited scope of classic dramatic works (without consideration of performance more broadly). The first chapter then traced the definition of performed prose, determining the variables which determine its troublesome distinction from dramatic scriptings on both sides of the audience / performer frame.

The positioning of the phenomenological subject within a wounded body and the conception of the self as a kind of absence were both considered to be a historical product of Merleau-Ponty's experience of postwar Europe, as well as a feature of his philosophy which links to Beckett and to Theodor Adorno. Adorno's writing on aesthetics, particularly in the monumental work of criticism-as-art that is *Aesthetic Theory*, forms a complementary system of ethical thought throughout the thesis. Though introduced in the first chapter as the origin of an ethic of impossibility, Adorno's work can be thought of as a

primary philosophical support for three key ideas: first, that a radical aporia pervades the Enlightenment consciousness, transforming both politics and aesthetics in the wake of its fall; second, that Beckett's work is a form of profound realism, and not absurdist; and third, that the reality of the Holocaust demands a reconception of art as an ethical and political space.

The phenomenological discourse established a place, a time, and a body on which prose performance could be mapped out. However, the problem of the self — a much more unitary notion in phenomenology than in Beckett — remained. Accordingly, the second chapter theorized the problem of subjectivity, beginning from a basis of Beckett's own "vocabulary of the subject." Essentially, the second chapter was a study of philosophical vectors in play within Beckett criticism, a gesture necessary to position this thesis in terms of the field. The chapter began with Beckett's own influences, in particular the philosophers that he studied at Trinity College Dublin: Berkeley, Descartes, Geulincx, and Schopenhauer. It moved on to those philosophers influenced by Beckett, and examined their response; this group includes Foucault, Derrida, Adorno, Lyotard, and Deleuze and Guattari. Finally, two associations were made with Beckett's thought which, while less directly related in temporal terms, were nonetheless significant in establishing a functional vocabulary: first was Lao-Tzu, the possibly mythical author of the *Tao Te Ching*; second was Alain Badiou, whose explicit role in Beckett studies comes in a later generation from the previously examined French philosophers. Chapter Two ended with a study of Beckett's own challenging model of subjectivity worked out through his own writing, and a comparison to mathematical operations functioned metaphorically to express Beckett's strategies in the worlds and selves he created.

With a "theory" thus falling into place, the next three chapters executed the "history" of Beckett's prose performance. These chapters provided concrete examples of different procedures in prose performance, isolating approaches and delineating key issues. The third chapter examined "pure-

audio" performances of prose, looking first at the historical, theoretical, and cultural markers that most clearly reveal Beckett's conception of language as speech and sound. Foremost among these was the *seanchaí*, the Irish itinerant bard, and a figure of whom Beckett shows a great deal of historical and stylistic awareness. A gloss of radio phenomenology together with an analysis of Beckett's own radio drama established Beckett's relationship to the history of audio performance, while a further philosophical study into the ancient problem of *logos* revealed a historical complexity in the notions of "reading" and "recitation." The increasing relevance of the audiobook, together with the conception of radio as a presence of voice (*logos*) within an absence of space (*aporos*), were both introduced at the conclusion of the third chapter, as part of a contemporary reversal of the "print book/audiobook" hierarchy.

Chapter Four isolated the performance of single texts, drawing a basic theoretical vocabulary from the time/space/embodiment discourse of the first chapter. The chapter added to these phenomenological notions, however, with some concerns specific to single-text performance, namely the narrator and the concept of style. While numerous historical examples were investigated in this extended "empirical" analysis, some of the key performances studied included those by Mabou Mines, Joseph Chaikin, Bill Irwin, Gare St. Lazare Players, and those of scholars such as Stan Gontarski, Katherine Worth and Sarahjane Scaife. Chapter Five had a similar size and approach to Four, but focused on multi-text performance. Drawing on the history of performance theory by Michael Jackson and Dwight Conquergood, this chapter argued that a combined procedure of "adapted authorship" and "anthropology of the Beckett man" created the additional conditions for the large number of one-man anthology shows to flourish. Barry McGovern's *I'll Go On* was the first reading, since it is a liminal performance caught between single- and multi-text adaptation approaches. Extended attention was given to Jack MacGowran, the most influential of the solo adaptors, with a chronological analysis of his prose performances between 1962 and 1973. Following this, three different multi-

text adaptors were investigated for their three distinctive relationships to MacGowran's legacy. Finally, the heritage of multi-text adaptation for the purpose of commemoration and celebration — the many occasions on which Beckett's prose was performed by a group of "Beckett actors" within a more commercialised or ritualised framework — was examined separately from ethnographic exploration or adapted authorship. In spite of these differences, all of the multi-text performances queried in Chapter Five seem to demand a similar effacement of original context, and tend to replace the "character" with a layered subjective instability of their own. Since Chapters Four and Five did not record "rich description" of these diverse performances, they also included a number of images and photographs to assist in the illustration of actors, settings, and structures.

Chapter Six investigated the practical realities of these productive "misreadings" of prose against the background of the ethic of impossibility, arising from the imperative of continuation and the aporetics of communication, both thematic across Beckett's oeuvre. The discourse returned both to the practical and material conditions of prose performance — the significance of genre in general, the relevant conditions of copyright law, and the barriers on this practice intentionally placed by the Beckett Estate — as well as to the theoretical constructs inaugurated by this work. The assessment of a recent experimental performance within Beckett studies showed the extent to which these boundaries continue to affect performances, in spite of their theoretical inadequacies. The outcome of an ethic of impossibility for the author, academic, and adaptor formed the final section, which referred back to philosophical readings in the first section of the dissertation as well as initiating some new discussions on ethical lines.

In essence, the thesis established three linked discussions in relation to Samuel Beckett's prose performance: theory, history, and practice. The next pages will serve this final arena, as it is the goal of any ethics to culminate in action. The form and conditions of the action still require some conclusion.

To the Artist

Especially after the discussion of the difficult conditions in which the prose adaptor can be placed by legal and generic challenges, it is a fair question for an actor to enquire why the performance of Beckett's prose might be a valuable, useful, or wise activity. Is it not possible to simply "opt out" of "going on"? I have repeatedly insisted that the ethic of impossibility is not totalitarian, so refusal of these terms must therefore be freely available. Nonetheless, the nomination of an ethic implies that it must be lived. No ethic can survive in a vacuum of action, just as no truth can exist without a believing subject (within Badiou's system). If this is the case, who lives the ethic of impossibility? If this is truth, who is its subject? The answer, given in this thesis previously, is simply "the artist": the actor, interpreter, director, or adaptor of Beckett. The recourse to the artist as the subject of the ethic of impossibility arises because, mirroring Beckett himself, the whole event of performance can only originate in a choice to create. Since the choice is embodied — the actor, one assumes, is a person — any fusion of "truth" with "ethic" returns the discourse to the phenomenological study where it began.

Performance is always concerned with truth, but there are major differences between the ways that this truth is conceived in different schools of thought. This is particularly the case with acting, which has been the subject of a long-running and increasingly circular debate pitting "internal" against "external" methods, "emotional" versus "physical" process, "becoming" versus "showing," Stanislavski against Meyerhold (or today against David Mamet). Mamet invoked "truth" in the title of his book on acting, *True and False*, and he offers some guidance which may demystify some of the theoretical terms deployed in these pages:

> The truth of the moment is another name for what is actually happening between the two people onstage. That interchange is always unplanned, is always taking place, is always fascinating, and it is to the

> end of concealing that interchange that most acting training is directed. (20)

Leaving aside for the moment the criticism of the training system — Mamet's main enemy in the book — the style of embodiment that he seems to put forward is one predicated on risk and genuine vulnerability in the performer. Much as he lampoons the "acting-as-therapy" school of training, this point has a psychoanalytic equivalent in the medical benefits of honesty with oneself (or, negatively defined, the consequences of denial). Mamet does not escape this therapeutic resonance in his own argument:

> Stanislavsky said that the person one is is a thousand times more interesting than the best actor one could become. And when the actor picks up her cue, then speaks out though uncertain, the audience *sees* that interesting person. They see true courage, not a portrayal of courage, but true courage. The individual onstage speaks because she is called upon to speak — when she has nothing to support her except her self-respect. (21)

A hint of the Levinasian ethics touched on in Chapter Six recurs here, with the suggestion that the Saying is an inherently ethical act. We can note again that this model of acting requires no transcendence, no notional mimesis, no perfect and fluid exchange between Self and Other. All that is required is a specific phenomenological task of standing on a stage and speaking. This can clearly reflect, in certain actors, the ethic for which Beckett himself stood up and spoke.

This is not to say, however, that there are no choices to be made by the artist who would adapt the prose. The conditions exposed through this analysis reveal the tremendous communicative significance of time, space, and the body, all three of which permeate every conceivable prose performance. In single-text performance, the authorial/audience/narrator positions as well as the style of the work are of major importance; in multi-text performance, a question of ethnographic ethics takes hold, and decisions as simple as the distinction between a one-character "I" and a multiple-character adapted "I" become a major determinant of the experience for actor and audience. There is

still a definite expectation that the Beckett actor, more so than nearly any other actor, will become familiar with, or even permeated by, a Beckettian consciousness, both in the sense of literary awareness and of emotional responsiveness. This nebula of Beckett-ideas is expected to guide the artistic choices in a performance.

Adorno offers ethical guidance which speaks directly to how this is meant to happen: "Each and every important work of art leaves traces behind in its material and technique, and following them defines the modern as what needs to be done, which is contrary to having a nose for what is in the air" (*AT* 35). In terms of prose performance, and particularly its relation to the culture industry by way of the Beckett Estate, this can be read as a doctrine of resistance and reassurance for the adaptor. First, it confirms that the key to manifesting art — the key to form, perhaps — always lies in the work itself. In this context, it means that one does not have to quarry for meaning far beyond Beckett. Second, Adorno holds that "what needs to be done" is not only superior to, but also aligned against, "what is in the air." There is a reflection of Beckett's own purgatorial aesthetic in this doctrine, the inescapability of suffering together with an endless striving for the necessary. One can sense a burgeoning ethics of adaptation, much as this argument has hitherto eschewed a polemical reading of impossibility.

Many actors begin to speak in imperatives when speaking about Beckett. Relating the terms of his conversation with Jack MacGowran, Robert Jaffe said that the main lessons that he learned — relevant first to Lucky's speech, but carried forward into his solo multi-text performance — were simply not to be afraid, not to be dismissive, and to approach the work as music. He noted that on his first reading of his one-man show, he went once through without stopping, concentrating more on the flowing sound than on the meaning or sense. This visceral experience of the work was also stated in the imperative: "Let it wash over you the first time and just feel." If these terms seem problematic (especially considering Mamet's thoughts above),

there is even more transcendent language from David Warrilow, one of Beckett's favourite actors:

> There's a place in me that does Beckett, a place I go to in myself. The process of working on his material is no different from working on any other writing, great writing, in terms of the way one sets about the work. But I know that there's a place in me which is for his work. I don't know how else to explain it. Everybody has in themselves a sanctuary that they can go when they need deep guidance. It's a place of natural knowledge and inspiration. I have a place in me like that for his work. (Kalb 221-222)

The place of this "natural knowledge" is immediately undercut by Warrilow, however, who denies thinking about the work in its literary form at all. He says in the same interview, "when I'm being totally honest I have to tell audiences that I do not understand what it is I am doing, I don't understand the writing. I'm not a stupid person [...] I either cannot give a true answer or I don't want to" (223). What he evidently means by knowledge is something quite different, and it returns us to Mamet's thought about the specificity of the task at hand. Warrilow answers the question "What kind of decisions do you make?" as follows:

> That I will read the text. And that I will read at a certain pace, using a certain kind of voice, and that there will be an intention [...] I barely deal with psychological reality. I don't have to. I mean, I can have ideas about that but it isn't what works. What works is finding what musicians have called the 'right tone.' (223-224)

The return to music and a concomitant rejection of psychological realism is virtually a universal among the "Beckett actors." Alan Mandell, who performed in the Los Angeles version of *Company* directed by Stan Gontarski in 1985, was interviewed in the Los Angeles Times about the production. After first arguing that the meaning and situation of the text is actually unclear, Mandell simply says that "It's all in the music of the piece -- you're dealing with his plays just as you would with chamber music. It's very precise in its structure, in its rhythms. How the lines flow, how the ideas flow. The poetry

of it. You see, Beckett is very exact about each word, let alone each sentence" (13 February 1985).

There is a dark side to Beckett's precision, and it cannot go unmentioned in any practical artists' discussion of performing the prose. This is the essential difficulty in the work, separated from Beckett's formidable theatrical intelligence and thus unanchored from a stage image that expresses the content in any significant way. First, for the performer, it can lead to a portentousness in the voice — Warrilow says that "usually what happens when people take the prose and put it onstage is that they indulge in front of other people their pleasure in reading it" (232) — or a self-conscious avoidance of this strategy through locution borrowed from standup comedy, making each word sound newly coined and exaggerating freshness. Both these strategies are exhausting for an audience. Even prose that escapes these pitfalls, though, can come across as simply too demanding. A large number of reviews seen during the research for this thesis suggested without reservation that the prose is simply better when read. One of these was Janice Paran, who reviewed the Mabou Mines *Mercier & Camier* for *Theatre*:

> The complexity of the words got in the way; they seemed to pile up, clogged, in the air, and the production's visual levity was constantly impeded by the plodding exchanges between the actors. Language was deprived of conventional expressiveness partly by default, in the more spectacular sequences, because watching precluded listening, but more importantly, by the acting. (67-68)

According to Paran, what was distracting about the acting was that it was presentational rather than representation, having no psychological or spiritual dimension as a matter of choice. Indeed, Mabou Mines is known predominantly as a theatre of images, so this avoidance of mimesis should come as little surprise. But it is nonetheless interesting that the effect, for this critic, was of an "over-extended performance art" piece, the "visual equivalent of the one-joke play" (68). She finds "nothing" underneath this bombardment of theatrical virtuosity (which could indicate a perverse sort of

success). Nonetheless, the conclusion at which Paran arrives — that the prose is "obviously intended to be read, not acted" — is only felt because there is a conception that is fundamentally at odds with the text. Rather than a productive tension of "active inactivity" (68) present in Beckett's great plays, the outcome in this case was boredom.

Density is an inevitable challenge, but a flexible and open theatrical vocabulary is the chief tool for defeating it. This is another paradox of an Estate policy which rejects performance as a strategy for the prose, asking instead for phenomenologically indistinguishable "recitations." Jonathan Kalb, who conducted the published interview of Warrilow, pressed him on the question of his critical intelligence and its role in the directorial aspects of a prose performance. Warrilow notes that "if an actor gets up on stage and starts to play the meaning of the thing it dies, it just dies" (229), and he admits to a kind of valve: "it could be that we *do* understand, and then we choose to let go of that aspect of the experience to be able to perform" (229). Yet again, here is an actor's recognition through practice of the urgency of a strategic void, of the power of subtractive subjectivity. Warrilow concludes in his interview that "Beckett's on to something when he takes away all that, takes away a lot of that aspect of personality, so that something about the essential experience can come through, without the warmth" (233).

The power of emptiness, coolness, and the many other categories of *yin* — to reach all the way back to the discourse on Taoism in Chapter Two — have been shown to be constitutive aesthetic elements both in Beckett's prose and in the space of the theatre. But it is necessary to acknowledge that these elements can fail to combine effectively, due again to phenomenological differences. While both the reader and the audience member experience darkness, the darkness surrounding prose is quite different in the realms of the book and of the theatre. The imagined darkness which encompasses the reading act is one which allows for many images to filter freely through, a space devoid of specific signification beyond the word. In the theatre, while

there is no such restriction on the mind, the visual is no longer empty. Whether the viewer sees one or many images — and the degree of control over these shifts — is a potentially violent shift away from an original. Countless examples exist, for instance in radio drama, where the effectiveness of a "mute" character is the absence of a body. A staged reading of such a play no longer accomplishes the same effect. To avoid any triumphalist streak in the anti-nihilist ethic of impossibility, it is necessary to acknowledge some of these failures and pitfalls of prose in performance. If Beckett himself spoke of his work as "another blot on silence" (Kalb 233), prose performance only moves the work further from this stated goal. Stan Gontarski, the scholar-director who worked with Beckett over many years, resoundingly summarizes the urgency of an absence:

> Beckett has both extended the primacy of the playwright, and so authorial power, to an unprecedented extent, while simultaneously proclaiming authorial impotence, a diminished authority. That creates an ideological and aesthetic vacuum, which many a director and actor are all too willing to fill. It is a vacuum, however, that Beckett expects no one to fill, that, in fact, defines Beckettian performance, separates it from that of others. If actor or director fills that space, Beckett becomes Ibsen. (Knowlson & Knowlson 261)

Of course, this thesis abounds with examples of this absence taking place not in the "ideological and aesthetic" realm so much as a profoundly metaphysical one, undercutting the notions of body, self, time, difference, and language. The strategic void in Beckett is finally a fragile ontological condition that *all* performance — not only adaptation — can easily destroy. It is not an absolute or totalizing guarantee. The challenge for the artist, then, is to discover a theatrical expression, whether it be through voice, movement, image, direction, or design, that sustains this ecosystem of absence. To do this in the face of insurmountable technical challenges, the inevitable failure of silence, and all the practical hurdles of law and genre is to embody an ethic of impossibility.

To the Academic

There was no intention to leave scholarship or scholars behind with the attention visited on the artists. Indeed, the separation is itself highly problematic. There is now a need to investigate a final thorny question about where the border lies, within the Beckett country, between theory and practice. To write about adaptation has required a certain adaptability, and questions about the role of performance or performative experience in this research are clearly more than merely methodological.

One benefit of the phenomenological position is that it permits the investigation of phenomena from a position both unapologetically subjective and physically located in the self. It is from this position that I will observe some of the indicative similarities and differences between an artistic approach to Beckett and an academic one. For example, while many of the actors quoted above speak of the musicality of Beckett, this music is read by many scholars as an obsession with silence. It is interesting to look at this dialectic, clearly a circular one, in terms of divergent approaches depending on the motive of the interest. The person who is likely to get up and speak the language is perhaps less likely to observe its silent qualities, and vice versa.

An analogous split can be seen in relation to chronology. The multi-text performer who visits the Beckett Archive in Reading for the purpose of gathering textual fragments to perform is engaged in a great flattening of difference, an aleatory journey across boundaries of text, context, and origin. If performance is the goal, the method and interest will be completely different than for a scholar. As discussed in Chapter Five, multi-text performance as a procedure is marked foremost by effacement of difference. Is it possible to imagine a scholar entering the archive for the purpose of book PhD research, and not writing down a single date? These differences will seem to show, at first, that the roles of artist and academic in relation to Beckett's prose performances are irreconcilably divergent.

Any reconciliation, however, may only come about through a reinvigoration of praxis in research. The great Stanislavskian tool of the "what if" may come into play here, so that an actor working to adapt the prose can envision a critical position from within their artistic intuition, or an academic discussing the prose can envision the possibility of a *Vorlesung*, an *ado*, a break from silence. The essential task on both sides might be to articulate and exercise what Beckett calls a "disruptive intelligence" (*Disjecta* 83), a bottomless will to question one's assumptions and the prevailing or accepted separation. This unruliness is the native mode of thought, and the attempts to professionalize this nomadic drive — whether in universities or in Brook's "deadly theatre" — are always doomed to failure. The question asked by the ethic of impossibility is whether this will be a productive failure.

The practice of performance studies has long attempted to bridge this divide in its pedagogy, and it might be an available pathway for future research to take performance both as a subject and method. Writing about this struggle, Dwight Conquergood wrote of his university's own commitment "to a bracing dialectic between performance theory and practice":

> We believe that theory is enlivened and most rigorously tested when it hits the ground in practice. Likewise, we believe that artistic practice can be deepened, complicated, and challenged in meaningful ways by engaging with critical theory. What all this means is that our curriculum, from freshman gateway course to advanced doctoral seminar, embraces courses in which students perform as an embodied way of knowing, as a supplement to (not a substitute for) the more conventional epistemologies and pedagogies of reading and discussing texts, writing research papers, conducting fieldwork, and so forth. (163)

This engagement between theory and practice seems to present a possible answer to a fundamental challenge about the *usefulness* of either art without thought or thought without action. The outcome could be a new fusion between the aesthetic and the political, part of the release from philosophical enquiry that becomes merely a system for creating and moving names. Beckett himself sensed the urgency of this fusion at an early age, writing a line

in *Proust* that examines the researcher and the artist through a permeable membrane: "The only fertile research is excavatory, immersive, a contraction of the spirit, a descent. The artist is active, but negatively, shrinking from the nullity of extracircumferential phenomena, drawn in to the core of the eddy" (65-66).

The practice of adapting prose to the stage involves a strategic "misperformance" that queries the nature of genre, the determinism of identity, and the phenomenology of theatre. In the rich heritage of adaptations of Samuel Beckett's prose, the tensions surrounding this form are powerfully heightened by the content. Beckett writes under the sign of failure. He exposes a fundamental impossibility in the linguistic act, but he does so by way of language. A similar philosophical process is found in Theodor Adorno's negative metaphysics in a transcendence of the subject by way of the subject, or an escape from nihilism by way of the negative. Reflecting this historical and theoretical process of productive failure, voiceless expression, dysfunctional function, and possible impossibility, Beckett's prose performances collide the "empty space" of theatre with the profound void staged in his novels and short fiction. The result is an ethical choice, visible in the artistry of those who have worked with this material in the past, and still alive today in the hands of the artists and academics who make and name this work. It is an ethic written in the imperative. First witness. Then struggle. Then give up. Then go on.

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Notes on Conventions and Abbreviations

This bibliography has been divided into four sections: Print Sources, Unpublished Sources, Performance Sources, and Personal Interviews. Citations follow MLA style throughout.

Unpublished sources include manuscript numbers wherever possible. Most can be traced to the Beckett Collection at the University of Reading, but some are uncatalogued performance documents held by the author.

Performance sources include only those cited in the body of the text. The current (though not exhaustive) list of all performances of Beckett's prose can be found in the appendices to this thesis. Performances dated with precise dates are those attended by the author; other performances will be dated only by month and year.

The following abbreviations have been used in place of authors' names for frequently cited works, or in cases where clarity demanded it:

Companion	Ackerley & Gontarski, *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett*
BwB	Abbott, *Beckett Writing Beckett: The Author in the Autograph*
AT	Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*
OB	Badiou, *On Beckett*
DN	Beckett, *Dream Notebook*
Dream	Beckett, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*
Plays	Beckett, *Collected Shorter Plays*
Prose	Beckett, *The Complete Short Prose*
Trilogy	Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*
EP	Blau, *Eye of Prey*
BB	Gibson, *Beckett and Badiou*
ND	Gibson, *Narrative Discourse*
PC	Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*
TN	Weller, *A Taste for the Negative*
NYT	*New York Times*

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Performance Sources

NOTE: A more complete list of prose performances encountered during this research is included in the appendices following the Bibliography. Those listed below are only those referenced specifically in this dissertation. Performances are alphabetized by title for ease of access. Not all citations will list specific dates of runs or specific dates for shows, due to varying availability of information; for further detail on collaborators, consult the appendices.

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Beginning to End. Jack MacGowran. Chloe Gibson, dir. Dublin: RTÉ TV. 1966.

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Beginning to End. Jack MacGowran. Paris: Théâtre Edouard VII. 23 April 1970.

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Beginning to End. Jack MacGowran. Alan Schneider, dir. Los Angeles: KCET TV. 4 November 1971.

Company. S.E. Gontarski, dir. Los Angeles: LAAT, 16 February - 27 April 1985.

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Le Dépeupleur. Serge Merlin, dir. Paris: Odéon Théâtre de l'Europe. 2-26 October 2003.

End of Day. Jack MacGowran. Dublin: Gaiety Theatre, 5 October 1962.

Enough. Alan Schneider, dir. Billie Whitelaw. New York: Samuel Beckett Theatre, 16 February 1984.

Enough. Judy Hegarty-Lovett, dir. Gare St. Lazare Players. Dublin: National Gallery, November 2004.

First Love. Judy Hegarty-Lovett, dir. Gare St. Lazare Players. Dublin: Helix, May 2008.

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From an Abandoned Work. Patrick Magee. London: BBC Radio 3, 15 December 1957.

I'll Go On. Colm O'Briain, dir. Barry McGovern. Dublin: Gate Theatre, 1985.

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Ill Seen Ill Said. Patrick Magee. London: BBC Radio 3, 1 July 1985.

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Lessness. Judy Hegarty-Lovett, dir. London: National Theatre, 24 September 2002.

The Lost Ones. Lee Breuer, dir. Mabou Mines. New York, 1974.

Malone Dies. Patrick Magee. London: BBC Radio 3, 18 June 1958.

Malone Dies. Max Wall. Edinburgh Festival, August 1984.

Mercier & Camier. Mabou Mines. Public Theater, New York City, October 1979.

Nohow On. Erick Weiss, dir. Ryan Cutrona. Los Angeles: Stages Trilingual Theatre, 10 August 1991.

A Remnant. Frank Doherty, dir. Jack Emery. Edinburgh Fringe Fetival, 1967.

Texts for Nothing. Joseph Chaikin, dir. Bill Irwin. 1992.

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APPENDIX A
A Selected Chronology of Prose Performance

Notes on the Appendices

This chronology of performances and the index of performances that follows are neither exhaustive nor definitive. They do not qualify as a full "bibliography" of Beckett prose performances. Instead, these lists are intended as a beginning of the archival labour that would be required to trace the practice of prose adaptation with authoritative completeness. The data collection is ongoing, but enough is collected here to show the overwhelming prevalence of the practice. Due to the accessibility of archives and the languages in which I have read press coverage, there is also a European-American bias. A number of adaptations not listed here have originated in Japan and Israel, but the tenuous nature of their documentation (i.e., only in conversation) has not met the criteria for inclusion. It is a fair assumption that there are many more national contexts for prose adaptation that I have simply not yet located. It is also worth noting that since a large number of these types of performances occur without the sanction of the Beckett Estate, it is unlikely that "completion" of a list is even possible.

Relying on arguments already made in the thesis, I am including performance of the prose for radio and television in this list with equivalent status to theatrical adaptation. I am also not separating between professional (i.e. Equity) or amateur work (i.e. community, private, or student theatre).

Performances have not been listed with specific dates, though many are available, since only the year of a performance has been a requirement for inclusion in the list. There is a great deal of room for increasing the precision of this information, but it should provide a sufficient starting point for further research.

The place or places listed with all performances indicate the original production, though many of the productions listed went on to tour widely. The list will not treat each touring city as a new production, nor will it necessarily list all places of performance. Repetition of a production's title in the list (i.e. *Beginning to End*) has only been allowed in cases where a re-staging or new textual selection marks a wholly new production. Of course, since every performance phenomenologically constitutes a wholly new production, this distinction is a lie, necessary to prevent the triumph of the infinite (which every such list conceals).

In most cases I have limited the listing of collaborators on a production to the director and actors, except where other staff members played a major role or had an ongoing significance in Beckett Studies. Again, there is room for increasing the precision of this information; such a limitation was required here to present the data coherently and briefly. In spite of all these caveats and compromises, the performances listed in these two appendices show decisively that there has hardly been a moment since 1956 when a prose adaptation was not in rehearsal or production.

YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	DETAILS
1956	*Molloy*	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee
1957	*From an Abandoned Work*	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee
1958	*Malone Dies*	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee John Beckett, incidental music
1959	*The Unnamable*	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee
	[excerpts from novels]	London, BBC Radio 3 — Jack MacGowran
1962	*End of Day*	Dublin, Gaiety Theatre — Jack MacGowran Donald McWhinnie, director London, New Arts Theatre Club
1965	*Beginning to End*	London, BBC TV — Jack MacGowran Patrick Garland, director
	From an Abandoned Work	Santa Barbara, CA — James Maguire
1966	*Beginning to End*	Dublin, RTÉ — Jack MacGowran Chloe Gibson, director
	MacGowran Speaking Beckett	Dublin, Claddagh Records — MacGowran Samuel, Edward, & John Beckett, music
1967	*Imagination Dead Imagine*	London, BBC Radio 3 — Jack MacGowran
	A Remnant	Edinburgh, Fringe Festival — Jack Emery Frank Doherty, adaptor/director London, Arts Theatre
1968	*Beginning to End*	Belfast, Festival 1968 — Jack MacGowran
	A Remnant	U.K. Tour, various venues — Jack Emery Frank Doherty, adaptor/director
1969	*Molloy*	New York, Projection Theater — E.T. Kirby
1970	*Beginning to End*	Paris, Théâtre Edouard VII — MacGowran
	Jack MacGowran in the Works of Samuel Beckett	New York, Public/Newman Theatre, NY Joseph Papp, producer
1971	*Beginning to End*	Mojave Desert, KCET TV — MacGowran Alan Schneider, director
	Beginning to End	US/European Tour — Jack MacGowran
	Lessness	London, BBC Radio 3 — Martin Esslin with Nicol Williamson, Harold Pinter, Patrick Magee, Donal Donnelly, Denys Hawthorne, Leonard Fenton

YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	DETAIL
1972	*Beginning to End*	Dublin, Gaiety Theatre — Jack MacGowran Dublin Theatre Festival production
	The Unnamable	Buffalo, NY, American Contemporary Theatre — Joseph Dunn
1973	*Lessness* (musical setting)	Dublin, National Concert Hall, D.S.O. Gerald Barry, composer
	[mixed reading]	Stratford-Upon-Avon — John Calder with Patrick Magee, Nicol Williamson
1974	*The Lost Ones*	New York, Mabou Mines — Lee Breuer with David Warrilow, Joseph Papp
1975	*The Lost Ones*	Paris/Germany Tour, Mabou Mines
1976	*Beckett at 70 (I Can't Go On, I'll Go On)*	London, National Theatre — Jack Emery with Peggy Ashcroft, Martin Esslin, Peter Hall, Harold Pinter
	The Lost Ones/Le Dépeupleur	Paris — Jean-Louis Barrault (bilingual)
1979	*Mercier & Camier*	New York, Public Theatre, Mabou Mines Frederick Neumann, adaptor/director with David Warrilow, Philip Glass
1980	*Company*	London, National Theatre (staged reading) with John Russell Brown
1981	*Compagnie*	Paris, Studio d'Ivry, Festival d'Automne with Daniel Zerki
	Texts for Nothing	New York, Public Theatre—Joseph Chaikin New York Shakespeare Festival London, Riverside Studios
	Enough	Buffalo, NY, Centre for Theatre Research Alan Schneider, director (with *Rockaby*)
1981	*The Lost Ones*	Paris, Théâtre du Rond-Point, Mabou Mines Lee Breuer, director; David Warrilow
1982	*Ill Seen Ill Said*	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee
	Company	New York, Public Theatre, Mabou Mines Frederick Neumann, adaptor/director/performer, with Honora Fergusson
1983	*All Strange Away*	New York, WBAI Radio — Ryan Cutrona
1984	*Compagnie*	Paris, Théâtre du Rond-Point — Pierre Dix Pierre Chabert, director
	Fizzles	New York, PS 122 — Ryan Cutrona Liz Diamond, director

YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	DETAIL
1984	*All Strange Away*	New York, LaMama — Ryan Cutrona Gerald Thomas, adaptor
	Malone Dies	Edinburgh, Festival — Max Wall (two hour one-man reading) Cheltenham, UK
	Imagination Dead Imagine	New York, Mabou Mines—Ruth Maleczech
	All Strange Away	New York, Samuel Beckett Theatre — Robert Langdon-Lloyd Gerald Thomas, director
	Enough	New York, Samuel Beckett Theatre — Billie Whitelaw (with *Footfalls* & *Rockaby*) Alan Schneider, director
1985	*Company*	Los Angeles, LAAT — S.E. Gontarski
	Compagnie	Paris, Théâtre du Rond-Point, Mabou Mines David Warrilow
	Ill Seen Ill Said	London, Theare of Literature—John Calder with Angela Pleasance, Leonard Fenton
	I'll Go On	Dublin, Gate Theatre — Barry McGovern
1986	*Dante & the Lobster*	Audiocassette Recording — B. McGovern
	From an Abandoned Work	Audiocassette Recording — B. McGovern
1987	*Company*	Edinburgh, Festival — Katherine Worth with Julian Curry London, Studio Theatre, Royal Holloway
1988	*Stirrings Still*	London, Riverside Studios — John Calder Leonard Fenton (staged reading)
	Company	London, Donmar Warehouse
1989	*Pour Finir Encore*	Avignon, Compagnie François Lazaro Paris, Théâtre Tourtour
	Stirrings Still	London, BBC Radio 3 — Barry McGovern
1990	*A Celebration of the Life and Work of Samuel Beckett*	London, National Theatre, Olivier Theatre with Barry McGovern, Pierre Chabert, Harold Pinter, Billie Whitelaw
	Beckett's Words: A Celebration of Samuel Beckett	New York, Lincoln Center, V. Beaumont with John Calder, Alvin Epstein, Barry McGovern, Ruth Maleczech, Rick Cluchey Barry McGovern, Billie Whitelaw
	Stille Sidders [Stirrings Still]	Tielt, Belgium, Malpertius Theatre — Julien Schoenaerts

YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	DETAIL
1991	*A Samuel Beckett Evening*	Monaco, Princess Grace Theatre Barry McGovern (mixed readings)
	Company	Monaco, Princess Grace Theatre Katherine Worth, Julian Curry
	Murphy	Washington, DC, Kelly's Irish Times Pub San Quentin Drama Workshop
	Nohow On	Los Angeles, Stages Trilingual Theatre Ryan Cutrona; Erick Weiss, director
1992	*Company*	Dublin, Project Arts Centre Sarahjane Scaife, director with Paul Johnson, Flo McSweeney
	Texts for Nothing	New York, Public Theatre — Bill Irwin Joseph Chaikin, director
1993	*Worstward Ho*	Netherlands, Vooruit-Gent — Tone Brulin Veerle Bakelants, choreography
1994	*Compagnie*	Paris, Théâtre de la Main d'Or, Daniel Zerki
	Foirades/Fizzles	New York, LaMama ETC — Michael Rush with Elizabeth Mozer, Jim Donovan, Peter Lucas
	Watt	Kraków, Poland, Teatr Buckleira Marek Kedzierski, director with Janusz Koprowski
1995	*Compagnie*	Paris, Petit-Ódeon, Mabou Mines with David Warrilow
1996	*Eerste Liefde*	Amsterdam, Frascati Theatre, Festival '96 De Wetten von Kepler
	Molloy	Battersea, UK, Arts Festival Gare St. Lazare Players Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
1997	*First Love*	London, Etcetera Theatre, Theatre Dark Katherine Mendelsohn, director with Rory Edwards
	Company	Williamstown, MA, Williams, Mabou Mines with Frederick Neumann
1998	*Molloy*	London, Riverside Studios, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett

YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	DETAIL
1998	*All Strange Away*	Edinburgh, Fringe, Asylum Theatre Co. Mark Stuart Carrie, director with Nigel Roper
2000	*Mercier & Camier*	Reading, UK, Asylum Theatre Company with Nigel Roper, Jon Armstrong, Toby Spearpoint (also co-directors)
2001	*The Beckett Trilogy* *Molloy, Malone Dies,* *The Unnamable*	Kilkenny, Arts Festival, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
	First Love	London, BBC Radio 4 — Stephen Dillane
2002	*Lessness*	London, National Theatre, Gare St. Lazare with Olwen Fouéré; Kilkenny
2002	*The Beckett Trilogy* *Molloy, Malone Dies,* *The Unnamable*	Netherlands, Schouwburg Amstelveen Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
	Le Dépeupleur	Neuchâtel, Théâtre du Pommer Serge Merlin
	First Love	Dublin, Crypt, Subterranean Productions / Malone Theatre Co. — Kevin Malone Edward Cosgrave, director
2003	*Le Dépeupleur*	Paris, Odéon Théâtre de l'Europe Serge Merlin
	On Going On	Chicago, Wallis Theatre — Nick Johnson multi-text one-man show
2004	*Enough*	Dublin, National Gallery, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Ally Ni Chiarain
2005	*Texts for Nothing*	Cork, Masonic Temple, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
	Worstward Ho	Cork, Public Museum, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Lee Delong
	Enough	Cork, The Other Place, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Ally Ni Chairain
	Murphy	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
	Beckett's Outbursts	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company, multi-text

YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	DETAIL
2005	*Molloy*	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
2006	*Beckett's Outbursts*	Paris, Centre Culturel Irlandais — J. Calder The Godot Company
	Premier Amour	Paris, La Compagnie La Belle Idee
2006	*Worstward Ho*	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
	Beckett Centenary Day Lecture & Reading	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company, mixed reading with Sean Barrett
	The Lost Ones	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
	The Unnamable	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
	Watt	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
	From an Abandoned Work	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
	The Expelled	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company with Peter Marinker, Anthony Jackson
	Enough	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company, Alison Skilbeck Peter Marinker, director
	On Going On	Dublin, Beckett Centre — Nick Johnson
	I'll Go On	Dublin, Gate Theatre — Barry McGovern
2007	*Company*	Dublin, Fringe, Ember Productions musical setting
	Malone Dies	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company with Oengus MacNamara
	Neither	Dublin, Bouffes du Nord — Peter Brook part of "Fragments" in Theatre Festival
	From an Abandoned Work	Dublin, Beckett Theatre — Nick Johnson part of "Disjecta"
	Dante & the Lobster	Dublin, Beckett Theatre — Nick Johnson part of "Disjecta"

YEAR	TITLE/TEXT	DETAIL
2007	*First Love*	Sydney, Australia — Ralph Fiennes Michael Colgan, producer
2008	*First Love*	Dublin, The Helix, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett Project, Dublin Theatre Festival 2008
	I'll Go On	New York, Lincoln Center — B. McGovern Michael Colgan, producer
	First Love	New York, Lincoln Center— Ralph Fiennes Michael Colgan, Producer

APPENDIX B
A Selected Index of Prose Performance

1. SINGLE-TEXT PERFORMANCES

TITLE/TEXT	YEAR	DETAILS
All Strange Away	1983	New York, WBAI Radio — Ryan Cutrona
All Strange Away	1984	New York, LaMama — Ryan Cutrona Gerald Thomas, adaptor
All Strange Away	1984	New York, Samuel Beckett Theatre — Robert Langdon-Lloyd Gerald Thomas, director
All Strange Away	1998	Edinburgh, Fringe, Asylum Theatre Co. Mark Stuart Carrie, director with Nigel Roper
Company	1980	London, National Theatre (staged reading) with John Russell Brown
Compagnie	1981	Paris, Studio d'Ivry, Festival d'Automne with Daniel Zerki
Company	1982	New York, Public Theatre, Mabou Mines Frederick Neumann, adaptor/director/ performer, with Honora Fergusson
Compagnie	1984	Paris, Théâtre du Rond-Point — Pierre Dix Pierre Chabert, director
Company	1985	Los Angeles, LAAT — S.E. Gontarski
Compagnie	1985	Paris, Théâtre du Rond-Point, Mabou Mines David Warrilow
Company	1987	Edinburgh, Festival — Katherine Worth with Julian Curry London, Studio Theatre, Royal Holloway
Company	1988	London, Donmar Warehouse
Company	1991	Monaco, Princess Grace Theatre Katherine Worth, director with Julian Curry
Company	1992	Dublin, Project Arts Centre Sarahjane Scaife, director with Paul Johnson, Flo McSweeney
Compagnie	1994	Paris, Théâtre de la Main d'Or, Daniel Zerki
Compagnie	1995	Paris, Petit-Ódeon, Mabou Mines with David Warrilow

TITLE/TEXT	YEAR	DETAILS
Company	1997	Williamstown, MA, Williams, Mabou Mines with Frederick Neumann
Company	2007	Dublin, Fringe, Ember Productions musical setting
Dante & the Lobster	1986	Audiocassette Recording — B. McGovern
Dante & the Lobster	2007	Dublin, Beckett Theatre — Nick Johnson part of "Disjecta"
Enough	1981	Buffalo, NY, Centre for Theatre Research Alan Schneider, director (with *Rockaby*)
Enough	1984	New York, Samuel Beckett Theatre — Billie Whitelaw (with *Footfalls* & *Rockaby*) Alan Schneider, director
Enough	2004	Dublin, National Gallery, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Ally Ni Chiarain
Enough	2005	Cork, The Other Place, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Ally Ni Chairain
Enough	2006	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company, Alison Skilbeck Peter Marinker, director
The Expelled	2006	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company with Peter Marinker, Anthony Jackson
Eerste Liefde [First Love]	1996	Amsterdam, Frascati Theatre, Festival '96 De Wetten von Kepler
First Love	1997	London, Etcetera Theatre, Theatre Dark Katherine Mendelsohn, director with Rory Edwards
First Love	2001	London, BBC Radio 4 — Stephen Dillane
First Love	2002	Dublin, Crypt, Subterranean Productions / Malone Theatre Co. — Kevin Malone Edward Cosgrave, director
Premier Amour [First Love]	2006	Paris, La Compagnie La Belle Idee
First Love	2007	Sydney, Australia — Ralph Fiennes Michael Colgan, producer
First Love	2008	Dublin, The Helix, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett Project, Dublin Theatre Festival 2008

TITLE/TEXT	YEAR	DETAILS
First Love	2008	New York, Lincoln Center— Ralph Fiennes Michael Colgan, Producer
Fizzles	1984	New York, PS 122 — Ryan Cutrona Liz Diamond, director
Foirades/Fizzles	1994	New York, LaMama ETC — Michael Rush with Elizabeth Mozer, Jim Donovan, Peter Lucas
From an Abandoned Work	1957	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee
From an Abandoned Work	1965	Santa Barbara, CA — James Maguire
From an Abandoned Work	1986	Audiocassette Recording — B. McGovern
From an Abandoned Work	2006	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
From an Abandoned Work	2007	Dublin, Beckett Theatre — Nick Johnson part of "Disjecta"
Ill Seen Ill Said	1982	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee
Ill Seen Ill Said	1985	London, Theare of Literature—John Calder with Angela Pleasance, Leonard Fenton
Imagination Dead Imagine	1967	London, BBC Radio 3 — Jack MacGowran
Imagination Dead Imagine	1984	New York, Mabou Mines—Ruth Maleczech
Lessness	1971	London, BBC Radio 3 — Martin Esslin with Nicol Williamson, Harold Pinter, Patrick Magee, Donal Donnelly, Denys Hawthorne, Leonard Fenton
Lessness (musical setting)	1973	Dublin, National Concert Hall, D.S.O. Gerald Barry, composer
Lessness	2002	London, National Theatre, Gare St. Lazare with Olwen Fouéré; Kilkenny
The Lost Ones	1974	New York, Mabou Mines — Lee Breuer with David Warrilow, Joseph Papp
The Lost Ones	1975	Paris/Germany Tour, Mabou Mines
The Lost Ones/Le Dépeupleur	1976	Paris — Jean-Louis Barrault (bilingual)
The Lost Ones	1981	Paris, Théâtre du Rond-Point, Mabou Mines Lee Breuer, director; David Warrilow
Le Dépeupleur [Lost Ones]	2002	Neuchâtel, Théâtre du Pommer Serge Merlin

TITLE/TEXT	YEAR	DETAILS
Le Dépeupleur [Lost Ones]	2003	Paris, Odéon Théâtre de l'Europe Serge Merlin
The Lost Ones	2006	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company
Mercier & Camier	1979	New York, Public Theatre, Mabou Mines Frederick Neumann, adaptor/director with David Warrilow, Philip Glass
Mercier & Camier	2000	Reading, UK, Asylum Theatre Company with Nigel Roper, Jon Armstrong, Toby Spearpoint (also co-directors)
Malone Dies	1958	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee John Beckett, incidental music
Malone Dies	1984	Edinburgh, Festival — Max Wall (two hour one-man reading) Cheltenham, UK
Malone Dies	2001	Kilkenny, Arts Festival, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
Malone Dies	2002	Netherlands, Schouwburg Amstelveen Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
Malone Dies	2007	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company with Oengus MacNamara
Molloy	1956	London, BBC Radio 3 — Patrick Magee
Molloy	1969	New York, Projection Theater — E.T. Kirby
Molloy	1996	Battersea, UK, Arts Festival Gare St. Lazare Players Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
Molloy	1998	London, Riverside Studios, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
Molloy	2001	Kilkenny, Arts Festival, Gare St. Lazare Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
Molloy	2002	Netherlands, Schouwburg Amstelveen Judy Hegarty-Lovett, director with Conor Lovett
Molloy	2005	London, Bookshop Theatre — John Calder The Godot Company

TITLE/TEXT	YEAR	DETAILS
End of Day	1962	Dublin, Gaiety Theatre — Jack MacGowran Donald McWhinnie, director London, New Arts Theatre Club
I'll Go On	1985	Dublin, Gate Theatre — Barry McGovern
I'll Go On	2006	Dublin, Gate Theatre — Barry McGovern
I'll Go On	2008	New York, Lincoln Center — B. McGovern Michael Colgan, producer
Jack MacGowran in the Works of Samuel Beckett	1970	New York, Public/Newman Theatre, NY Joseph Papp, producer
MacGowran Speaking Beckett	1966	Dublin, Claddagh Records — MacGowran Samuel, Edward, & John Beckett, music
Nohow On	1991	Los Angeles, Stages Trilingual Theatre Ryan Cutrona; Erick Weiss, director
On Going On	2003	Chicago, Wallis Theatre — Nick Johnson multi-text one-man show
On Going On	2006	Dublin, Beckett Centre — Nick Johnson
A Remnant	1967	Edinburgh, Fringe Festival — Jack Emery Frank Doherty, adaptor/director London, Arts Theatre
A Remnant	1968	U.K. Tour, various venues — Jack Emery Frank Doherty, adaptor/director
A Samuel Beckett Evening	1991	Monaco, Princess Grace Theatre Barry McGovern (mixed readings)