



All That Fall: Beckett's Other Picture of Home

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All That Fall: Beckett's Other Picture of Home

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Ciaran Ross est professeur à l'université de Reims après avoir été maître de conférences à l'université de Strasbourg. Irlandais, diplômé de Maynooth College (B. A.) et de Trinity College (M. Litt.), il a consacré sa thèse, soutenue à l'université de Bourgogne en 1991, à l'œuvre de Samuel Beckett. Il a publié de nombreux articles sur Beckett et sur d'autres écrivains irlandais tels que McGahern et O'Brien. Il travaille actuellement sur l'autobiographie gaélique.

Les nombreux exils vécus par Samuel Beckett – Paris, Allemagne, Londres – ont été décisifs pour l'œuvre en gestation. Les circonstances psychosomatiques de ces exils s'y trouvent ressaisies dans la nécessité de l'écrit, nécessité de donner corps à ce qui est étrange et inconnaissable. Les rapports complexes entre corps, lieu et langage ne constituent pas tant une identité pour Beckett qu'une véritable poétique d'espace, une topographie corporelle et textuelle habitée par la mort, ses fantômes et ses voix. L'analyse textuelle s'appuie sur la pièce radiophonique, *All That Fall*.

“The artist who plays his being is from nowhere. And he has no brothers.”¹

There is rarely anyone at home in Samuel Beckett's work or at least no one stays at home, even if there were such a place. One thinks of the imaginary house of Mr Knott, a not-house, the “ruinous old house” in *All That Fall*,¹ the dangers of returning home in *Molloy*, returning to discover chaos and havoc as Moran does. Beckett's writings, particularly in their idiosyncratic and cryptic use of places and names, such as the Cackon Country in *Waiting for Godot*, Turdy, Hole in *Molloy*, Boghill in *All That Fall*, indicate, among other things, that these are strange places to be, places not to be, non-places of a sort, places of non-being. Indeed, all is “strange away.”²

Beckett's first literary home was expatriate Paris of the twenties. The modernists' legacy of exile, uprootedness, deracination had become the universal of contemporary life, the signature of the first avant-garde, exile becoming virtually institutionalised and legitimised through Joyce, Gertrude Stein and many others. Like *Molloy*, Beckett, too, vanished “happy” in that “alien light” which “must once have been” his.³ This does not mean that one day, Beckett booked a one-way passage to no man's land, or in the words of a leading Irish critic went overnight from the “historical island of Hibernia, towards the metaphysical island of inwardness”.⁴ Such thinking ridicules the complex commuting between languages, literatures and cultures that did go on in Beckett's life and work throughout the twenties and thirties, culminating in his decision to finally settle in Paris before the war and write bilingually henceforth. There is indeed a line to be drawn going from the sort of broken German and French which instills much of the burlesque comedy of a very early work like *Dream to Fair to Middling Women* (1932) (written in Paris) to the formal use of bilingualism in the late forties.

The only relations that ever mattered to Beckett were foreign relations, foreign languages, translating, extensive travelling. During his first Parisian sojourn Beckett became almost

¹ Samuel Beckett, *All That Fall* (London / Boston: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 7.

² Pun here on the title of a Beckett text entitled: *All Strange Away* in Samuel Beckett, *As the Story was told* (London: Calder, 1990), pp. 41–80.

³ “Molloy,” in *The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (London: Picador, 1979), p. 40.

⁴ Richard Kearney is of such an opinion. See Richard Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988), p. 61.

famous for his work with Joyce and on Joyce, among which his translation of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* into French. But he also carried out an important number of translations from French (Apollinaire, Breton, Eluard) and Italian, wrote important critical essays (*Proust*) and reviews for publication in the influential journal *Transition: An International Quarterly for Creative Experiments*.⁵

One must also be mindful of his interest in Italian and German literatures and languages.⁶ For example, the influence of Schubert is significant. Here one thinks of the haunting use of “Death and The Maiden” in *All That Fall*, of the Schubert title Beckett actually gave in German to one of his last short plays, *Nacht und Träume*. One also thinks of the bleak Baltic scenery that haunts Krapp’s memories (*Krapp’s Last Tapes*) or the intertextual importance of Theodor Fontane’s novel, *Effie Briest*. As regards painting, Beckett’s biographer, James Knowlson claims that Beckett’s unknown diaries of 1936–1937, a period Beckett spent touring Germany and her museums, show us someone fascinated with painting, modern and classical, and in particular with nineteenth century German painting. Knowlson argues that the visual images of Beckett’s plays were often modelled on paintings that Beckett saw during this time, one in particular being Friedrich’s “Two Men Observing the Moon” which may provide a clue to Estragon and Vladimir’s waiting at the tree.⁷

But Beckett’s exile was far from being a literary affair, an exotic cultural phenomenon. It certainly was more than just an antidote to the Irish literary nationalism of the thirties, a hoary argument, in my view, that sums up much, if not all, of Beckett Irish criticism, from Vivian Mercier right through to David Lloyd.⁸

Beckett’s London period (1929–1932) was not a gentleman’s gesture to some genteel Anglo-Irish tradition of expatriation. It was a bodily passage in every sense of the word. Beckett had gone there to be analysed by Bion; his severe depressions, bordering on psychosis, had left both him and his work in an impasse. This may explain why Beckett links place with body and invests his estranged and estranging toponymies and topographies with so much infernal pain, physical and mental. One sense we can give to Beckett’s exile, if we wish to see it as conditioning and being conditioned by writing, is to reread it in terms of the trajectory of

⁵ Beckett’s personal contacts with the Unanimists, the Surrealists and the Verticalists amply confirm his juvenile avant-gardist affiliation. He did after all translate Breton, Eluard and Crevel’s respective works for the 1936 September issue of *This Quarter*. The influential journal “Transition” was to publish much of Beckett’s earliest work (essays, poems). It should also be remembered that Beckett wrote his first major works in Paris: the poem “Whorescope” (1930) and the unpublished novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, a sort of parody, among other things of *Finnegans Wake*. On Beckett’s first Paris stay, see Beckett’s two biographies which differ little: Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Picador, 1980), pp. 61–102, and James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (Bloomsbury: 1996), pp. 87–119. Norma Bouchard in her article “Rereading Beckett’s *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*” in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd’hui. 6. Crossroads and Borderlines/L’œuvre carrefour, l’œuvre limite* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 137–149, discusses the question of Beckett’s use of the French avant-garde.

⁶ On Beckett’s Italian translations, see Laura Visconti, “The Artist and the Artisan: Beckett as a Translator of Italian Poetry,” *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd’hui. 6. Crossroads and Borderlines/L’œuvre carrefour, l’œuvre limite*, pp. 387–398.

⁷ *Damned to Fame, op. cit.*, “Germany: The Unknown Diaries 1936–7,” pp. 230–261.

⁸ The political, cultural and religious reappropriation and recuperation of Beckett within an Irish tradition, a trend which started back with Vivian Mercier in the seventies, helped on, albeit differently by Kearney, Kiberd and Brown, leading on to the post-colonialist jargon of a David Lloyd. See: Vivian Mercier, *Beckett/Beckett* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Richard Kearney, *Transitions, op. cit.*; *Myth and Motherland* (Derry: Field Day Theatre Company, 1984); Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: (The Literature of the Modern Nation), Jonathan Cape, 1995*. Cf. “Religious Writing: Beckett and Others”, pp. 454–467; “Beckett’s Texts of Laughter and Forgetting”, pp. 530–550; Terence Brown, *Ireland’s Literature: Selected Essays* (Mullingar: Lilliput, 1988); David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993), “Writing in the Shit,” pp. 41–58.

body. The body-place relationship — topography/corpography — is one which Beckett's work specifically invokes and merits analysis.

Beckett's post-war work slowly does away with detailed concrete topographies and real-world toponymies, but in doing so Beckett actually strengthens the metonymic interplay between place and body, especially bodily waste, excrement, turd, muck, bog. The Rooney's Boghill (*All That Fall*), Krapp's "old muckball" in *Krapp's Last Tape*, the grey landscape of *Endgame*, the unbroken arid expanse of scorched grass in *Happy Days*, with its "blazing light," or the Godforsaken hole in *Not I*, all come to mind. In *Waiting for Godot*, French toponymy, the Macon country is playfully swapped for the lavatorial wastes of the Cackon country:

VLADIMIR But you were never there yourself, in the Macon country.

ESTRAGON No, I was never in the Macon country. I've puked my puke of a life away here, I tell you ! Here ! In the Cackon country!⁹

There is in these lines a particular and very personal sense of Beckett being embodied in his estranging style, a style which has nothing to do with alienation, his or anyone else's, but rather has more to do with a highly idiosyncratic spatial and corporeal poetics of otherliness.¹⁰ Bodies in Beckett's work are never simply a source or even an object of desire, to be represented by language, but are always grammaticalised otherly, articulated through another language that resists mastery. The beckettian language of the body is a foreign language of a sort, one requiring self-translation, a foreign body marked and traversed by the need to evacuate, expell, eject that which is not proper, that which is not one's own. For example, in Beckett's trilogy, the body is that through which all is comprehended, yet is itself comprehended by nothing. For all its incapacities and failings, the voice of the Unnamable, for example, weaves another language whose grammar is predicated on being elsewhere, on not being there. Body and voice fail miserably and comically to enlighten one another. Where in Beckett's prose, the rhythms of rejection and expulsion propel the Unnamable towards an end, an end which promises to be an opening, an entry, a reentry into story and language, into silence and the I,¹¹ in beckettian theatre, it is the body which becomes a strange presence for the spectator or reader, a presence that is for the reader alone. Winnie and Maddie are unfailingly unable to reinhabit or repossess, to reenter their own persons and bodies.

This is all the more true when it comes to Beckett's experiments with radio drama, that supreme medium of darkness and silence where everything depends so much on the disembodied voice. It is probably no surprise that Beckett's first radio play, *All That Fall* (1957), given its pseudo Irish setting, should be read, as it has been, as representing some sort of homecoming or reappropriation of identity on Beckett's part. However, by returning to this play and staying with it for the remainder of this article, despite its ghostly presence, I would like to show how otherliness lies at the very heart of what seems to be homely and familiar.

Very much in the same way Joyce was commissioned by *The Irish Homestead* to write "something simple, which would not shock its readers,"¹² stories which were to lead to *Dubliners*, Beckett was commissioned by the BBC¹³ to write something suitable for radio. By returning to English, Beckett reverted the bilingual pattern that had been established over the previous twelve years and signalled the end of the ten-year lull that followed the creative period of the late forties.

⁹ *Waiting for Godot* (London / Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 62.

¹⁰ For a similar view, although partly based on a sociological analysis of Beckett's protestant identity, see Michel Beausang, "L'Exil de Samuel Beckett: La Terre et le Texte," *Critique*, 38 (juin-juillet 1982), pp. 561–575.

¹¹ "perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my own story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, [...]" *The Unnamable*, pp. 381–382.

¹² See Richard Ellman, *James Joyce* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, Revised edition 1983), pp. 163–165.

¹³ Deirdre Bair, *op. cit.* p. 401.

To briefly summarise the play, Maddie Rooney, to her great distress, discovers that the up-train is found to be late, and the main suspense of the play is constituted by this unexplained delay. “All traffic is retarded” (*All That Fall*, p. 25), says the station-master, Mr Barrell, whose peculiar use of the verb “retarded,” instead of “late,” displays a peculiar desire to linger within the charming confines of an outdated Latinate language, not to mention the obvious pathological connotations of the word.¹⁴ The hitch, once revealed, turns out to be the death of a “little child” on the track, possibly pushed by Dan Rooney.

If the text of *All That Fall* is plainly drawn up in Anglo-Irish,¹⁵ it is not all the more familiar for that. It is rather written in a private idiosyncratic idiom, a language of the body, reserving its own meaning, covertly, on the sly, by the back roads, one might say, using a motif Beckett himself employs in several of the late texts (notably *Company* or *Stirring Still*).

Beckett’s theatrical return to an Irish subject-matter is a ghostly return as he manages to strip away any motherliness, homeliness, or loveliness, echoing thereby an earlier text aptly entitled, “First Love”: “what goes by the name of love is banishment, with now and then a postcard from the homeland.”¹⁶ Or in Maddie’s idiom: “Love that is all I asked, a little love, twice daily, fifty years of twice daily love like a Paris horse-butcher’s regular” (p. 9).

The invisible postcard Beckett sends from abroad is indeed monstrous, comically depicting a place of irremediable loss and losses, where keeping out of pain is locally considered to be “the great thing” (p. 13), Maddie preferring “wasting slowly, painlessly away rather than coughing or spitting or bleeding or vomiting, just drifting gently down into the higher life” (p. 18).

Through his return to Irish speech rhythms, to an older sonority of voice, tone and idiom, an earlier syntax, Beckett returns, in the words of Maddie, to a dead language. Dan Rooney aptly remarks to his wife that “sometimes one would think that (she) were struggling with a dead language” (p. 35). “Unspeakably excruciating, replies Maddie, just like our own poor dear Gaelic” (*ibid.*). What I would like to suggest here is that Beckett is simply getting in touch again with bodies, hearing voices all over again or to use Kristeva’s term, reencountering a dead maternal semiotic.¹⁷

Kristeva distinguishes two orders within language: the *symbolic*, dominated by the father, the phallus, and the law ; and the *semiotic*, haunted by sounds, sonority and rhythm, the very stuff of speech, in which language coalesces with the body and the orchestration of the drives. The semiotic survives as a pulsional pressure within language, resurfacing wherever the acoustic matter of the signifier threatens to disrupt the sense. It is, as it were, the nonsense that is interwoven indistinguishably into sense. Avant-garde art, Kristeva argues, channels the semiotic into an exploration of the limits of language, where the fixities that grammar imposes on the world succumb to flux.

All That Fall struggles with sound, sounds struggle with meaning in a theatrical cacophony of machines, animals, bodies, voices, songs, hymns. It is no surprise that the simplest statement is liable to succumb to flux and fluxion, words managing to dissolve the solidity of the object they describe, and disseminate a playful indeterminacy. For example, the ball Dan drops and

¹⁴ Leslie Hill makes this point in his essay, “Late Texts: Writing the Work of Mourning,” in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd’hui*. 1. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), pp. 10–25.

¹⁵ Vivian Mercier studies this in his “Samuel Beckett and Anglo-Irish Stage Dialect,” *James Joyce Quarterly*, 8 (1971), p. 315. As regards Irish dialect, Mary Junker has devoted a book, albeit disappointingly, to what she calls Beckett’s “Irish dimension”: *Cf. Beckett: The Irish Dimension* (Dublin, Wolfhound, 1995).

¹⁶ In Samuel Beckett, *The Expelled and Other Novellas* (Penguin, 1980), p. 15.

¹⁷ See Julia Kristeva, “From One Identity to Another,” in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gorz, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), pp. 124–47. A useful discussion of the place of Kristeva in literary criticism can be found in Maud Ellmann’s introduction to Maud Ellmann, ed., *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 1–35.

which is picked up by Jerry, “looks like a kind of ball and yet is not a ball” (p. 40). “As Dan violently reminds everyone, it is *a thing* he carries about with him” (*ibid.*, my emphasis).

Body, language and place are inextricably locked or blocked in a discourse that deposits the characters somewhere in between. Maddie reminds us that she is “not half-alive nor anything approaching it” (p. 12). She wonders if there is anything bizarre about her way of speaking. Despite using the simplest of words, she finds her way of speaking “very bizarre” (p. 8). Like Maddie’s body, Boghill is indeed a world breaking down, dissolving, its dust “will not settle in our time” (p. 12). “Oh to be in atoms, in atoms. Atoms” (p. 13), exclaims Maddie, “seething out of (her) my dirty old pelt, out of (her) my skull” (*ibid.*), the first modernist ode to fragmentation or is it Beckett pulling Lacan’s leg, an Irish burlesque of Lacan’s famous morcellated body? In any event, body and language meet here on a demolition site of non-differentiation. Maddie’s speech is uncanny, foreign, and scatters everyone in front of her: “I estrange them all. They come towards me, uninvited [...] anxious to help. A few words [...] from my heart [...] and I am alone [...] once more. I should not be out at all” (p. 19). But Maddie is out, out on the public road: “this is no place for you at all”, says Mr Barrell to Tommy (p. 17). Like young Tommy, Maddie is vulnerably outside, outside all recuperative interiority and lost inside the strangeness of exteriority.

Indeed, what seems to mark a return on Beckett’s part to some nominally or toponymically Irish setting in the representation of the fictive Boghill, turns out to be Beckett’s most direct infernalisation of place and body. Boghill returns in Beckett’s imagination not as an object lost, introjected, symbolised, but, as Maddie graphically puts it, as “a big pale blur” (p. 21). It survives only as the putative subject of memory and incorporation, a strange embodiment that has difficulties resisting the desire for disembodiment.

On her way to the station, her *via dolorosa*, Maddie dreams of falling, like “a big fat jelly out of a bowl and never move again” (p. 9). She would be “a great big slop thick with grit and dust and flies, they would have to scoop (her) up with a shovel” (*ibid.*). Like Maddie’s jellyish body, Boghill also lacks solidity. For all its hints at an Irish setting, it sinisterly turns out to be that indeterminable *topos*, the *spacing* of a ‘resemblance’ that has nothing to resemble. The blind Miss Fitt manages to have “piercing sight” — “literally piercing” (p. 21) — for she is able to describe Maddie as “just another big pale blur” (p. 20). The scene that Maddie manages to describe “is nothing,” incomparable to that other scene, the “things” her eyes “have seen [...] and not looked away [...] this is nothing [...] nothing” (p. 24). Between the ‘here’ and the ‘elsewhere,’ between looking at and looking away, lurks the dreaded ‘nowhere,’ the undescrivable ‘in between.’

And yet however decrepit, the beckettian body is still at the mercy of erotic fantasies, in particular, anal obsessions. Maddie’s obsession with horse’s buttocks which took her to one of those “new mind doctors” (p. 36) is foregrounded by an earlier scene where she is asked by Christy if “she is in the need of small load of dung” (p. 8), a question she also puts to Dan. Indeed, what has she done, she says to herself, to deserve a horse gazing at her “with her great moist cleg-tormented eyes” (p. 9)?¹⁸ There are clear echoes here of Freud’s famous case-history Little Hans. Maddie’s encounter of the horse can be seen as an inversion of Hans’s fear of encountering horses. Hans developed a phobic fear of being bitten by horses and encountering horses drawing heavily-laden carts who might fall down and make a row with their legs. This central fear was connected by Freud to observations of the primal scene, the heavily-laden carts representing the pregnant mother; the underlying anxiety was the young boy’s curiosity about conception and birth, about which he had been given no accurate

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy, Standard Edition, 10, 3. For a treatment of the horse theme in Beckett, see Sjeff Houppermans’ very original reading: “A cheval,” in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd’hui. 5. Beckett and psychoanalysis/et la psychanalyse* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 43–55.

information, but had been fobbed off with the stork story. To return to Boghill, it is Maddie who is heavily laden not with future life but with sorrow and pining. The horse that stares her out is more a hinny, that is a half-breed between stallion and ass, the very epitome of sterility. Dan Rooney's interest in the same bodily parts, less psychoanalytical or scatological than eschatological, takes him to a Dantesque hell. On their journey home, he compares himself and his wife to Dante's damned sorcerers, thus by implication, comparing Boghill to the Fourth Bowge of the Eighth Circle, described by Dante as a boggy abyss or chasm "drenched [...] with tears most miserable," where the punished Sorcerer's necks are turned round, so that "the tears of their eyes / bathed their buttocks along the cleft," or as Dan Rooney puts it, "you forwards and I backwards. The perfect pair. Like Dante's damned, with their faces arsy-versy. Our tears will water our bottoms."¹⁹ As the critic Keir Elam mentions, the Rooneys' round trip, unfinished, evokes the infinitely repeated movements of Dante's wet-bottomed magicians around their "round vale," Beckett's grotesque vale of anal tears.

While it may be a world predicated on loss and mourning, illness and atrophy, Beckett's return to Boghill is not to mourn an object of desire but rather to circumscribe what Kristeva calls "the thing," "the real that does not lend itself to signification,"²⁰ a loss without limits, a light without representation, a miscarriage of a sort: "it was a little child fell out of the carriage," says Jerry at the end of the play (p. 41).

The putative murder of the child spurs a radical suspicion not so much of Dan as character but of signifying itself. The primordial loss of the "thing" spurs suspicion for to enter into the symbolic order one must at least trust that language can express a gap between oneself and another and who indeed could trust a character like Dan Rooney?

If it is suicide to be abroad, then what is it to be at home? "A lingering dissolution" (pp. 10–11), replies Maddie, signification here turning out to be both the possibility and the impossibility of there being any distinction between being here or being elsewhere. Death is the other that both invests and exceeds the distinction between same and other, inside and outside. But perhaps there is a slight semantic difference here to be pointed out. A lingering home-death somehow reserves and maintains a sense of temporality which the phrase "it is suicide to be abroad" does not. A lingering dissolution evokes then the bodily process of falling into a temporality of loss, falling bodies that never fall, an "all that falling" rather than an "all that fall." Just as the train lingers to arrive with its dreaded message of death and killer aboard, lingering to bring people home, living at home then is made equal to a process of delaying or retarding. After all, *All That Fall* is a play about late arrivals, bad timing, belatedness.

However worryingly strange, Beckett's Ireland provides so much of his work with its energy and pathos. In a way, it forms the subject for a strange love-affair, the strangest of pictures for there can exist no real picture or full text of home since no precise image can ever manage to encompass it. Beckett, in a letter, frankly acknowledged that it was his mother's savage loving that made him: "I am what her savage loving has made me."²¹ And perhaps it is this love that his work revisits, with its impasses and blockages, impossible demands, all motherliness stripped of its narcissistic gratifying "m," and made into a perverted otherliness.

Jean-Michel Rabaté is right when he recently wrote that Beckett's later work is concerned with ghosts, haunting, a haunting for Nothing, the ghostly condition of textuality.²² I would

¹⁹ Quoted by Keir Elam in "World's End: West Brompton, Turdy and other Godforsaken Holes," in *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui*. 6. *Crossroads and Borderlines / L'œuvre carrefour, l'œuvre limite*, p. 175.

²⁰ Julia Kristeva, "Gérard de Nerval, The Disinherited Poet," in *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

²¹ *Damned to Fame*, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

²² Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Beckett's Ghosts and Fluxions," *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui*. 5. *Op. cit.*, 1996. pp. 23–40.

add that radio drama allows Beckett to exploit and perfect his unique haunting techniques and processes. As we have seen in *All That Fall*, Beckett's protagonists no longer shrink from their ghosts but on the contrary seek them out, live with them as it were. One is struck by the ghosts of so many dead children fluttering in the dust of Boghill – Maddie's dead child,²³ the young girl who died prematurely for "never been really born" (p. 37), the child who fell out of the carriage and Dan Rooney's fantasmatic child that he wishes to kill ("nip some young doom in the bud", p. 31), Beckett here twisting Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten" into "A Child is Being Nipped in the Bud." There is also the ghost train of Boghill: "has it sped by unbeknown to me?" wonders Maddie who is "so plunged in sorrow she wouldn't have heard a steam roller go over her" (p. 19).²⁴

It is the ghostly images and memories of love and loved ones that will haunt the later shorter plays and texts. The words in the late texts often seek to backtrack somewhat, track down memory and love, and in doing so, they unwork themselves, become sidetracked as it were. They hover and linger around the graves of love, hinting at the possibilities of expression rather than demarcating any distinct territories. To say love is to all but say love and yet it is the only way of saying love, however ghostly however faint: "Ghost light. Ghost nights. Ghost rooms. Ghost graves. Ghost... he all but said ghost loved ones."²⁵

*This article is a development of earlier work: Ciaran Ross, "Homewards to the Centre of Nowhere: difference and (Irish) identity at play in Samuel Beckett's Theatre," *Cycnos* 10, 2 (1993), pp. 97–115.

ⁱ Quoted in Richard Kearney, ed., *The Irish Mind* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985), p. 269.

²³ Or the mysterious little girl who died as a result of not having been properly born, an actual case-history Beckett had heard about when attending Jung's lecture in London and here remembered by Maddie. The Jungian motif is commented by Bair, *op. cit.*, pp. 180–84 and by Knowlson, *op. cit.*, pp. 176, 177, 207–208, and 375–376.

²⁴ See Katherin Worth, "Beckett's Ghosts," in *Beckett in Dublin*, ed. by S. E. Wilmer (Dublin: Lilliput, 1992), pp. 62–74.

²⁵ A Piece of Monologue," in *Three Occasional Pieces* (London / Boston: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 15.