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# Deleuze, Beckett, and the Art of Multiplicity

The relationship between Gilles Deleuze and Samuel Beckett has excited many scholars and continues to be of major interest today. This article explores the Deleuzian concept of multiplicity by considering quantitative and qualitative multiplicities in Beckett's work. In differentiating between these two types, Deleuze and Félix Guattari indicate that extensive or quantitative multiplicities are essentially numerical and can be counted and represented in space. This form of multiplicity is seen in Beckett's use of various lists of items such as Molloy counting his sucking stones or Watt considering how to dispose of Mr Knott's food. Qualitative multiplicities, by contrast, cannot be counted because they differ in kind from one another. They are represented in duration and are here observed in the minorization of language in *How It Is*, among other examples. S. E. Wilmer is Professor Emeritus of Drama at Trinity College in Dublin. His most recent publications include *Performing Statelessness in Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and (with co-editor Radek Przedpełski) *Deleuze, Guattari, and the Art of Multiplicity* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020). He is currently co-editing the *Palgrave Handbook of Theatre and Migration*.

**Key terms:** Gilles Deleuze, Samuel Beckett, stuttering, minorization, differentiation, self, becoming, social control.

ALTHOUGH Gilles Deleuze and Samuel Beckett never met, they both lived in Paris during the same period and were influenced by common concerns. While there is no hard evidence of Beckett commenting on Deleuze's work, he was clearly aware of the philosopher, apparently asking for a report about him from a mutual friend who attended one of his seminars. Deleuze, by contrast, commented on Beckett's oeuvre in several important essays, especially three chapters in the English edition of *Essays Critical and Clinical*, namely, 'The Greatest Irish Film (Beckett's *Film*)', 'He Stuttered', and 'The Exhausted'. One could say that some of Deleuze's philosophical concepts – his notion of 'stuttering' in minor literature, for example – were generated in response to Beckett's work.

The relationship between Deleuze and Beckett has excited such scholars as Mary Bryden, Bruno Clément, Steven Connor, Garin Dowd, Colin Gardner, Sarah Gendron, Andrew Gibson, Stan Gontarski, and Jean-Jacques Lecercle. Moreover, *Deleuze and Beckett*, a recent collection co-edited with Audronė Žukauskaitė, featured essays by David

Addyman, Ruben Borg, Arka Chattopadhyay, Garin Dowd, Stan Gontarski, Ben Keatinge, Daniel Koczy, Timothy Murphy, Isabelle Ost, and Anthony Uhlmann. Thus, it is clear that the juxtaposition of Deleuze and Beckett continues to inspire considerable academic interest.

As I observed in an article for *Deleuze Studies*, many common themes can be found in their work:

Both writers express a resistance to narrative, subjectivity, language, representation, exegesis, dogma, hierarchy, teleology, and closure. For example, they explore the idea of mutable subjectivity, with Beckett creating fragmented and disappearing characters and Deleuze expressing the notion of becoming: becoming-minor, becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-imperceptible, and so on. Likewise, both Beckett and Deleuze distrust signification and prefer ambivalence and nuance to clarity of meaning.<sup>1</sup>

As Cristina Ionica noted in a London Beckett seminar in 2021, Beckett's work is full of characters who seem confined, oppressed, and subjected to external powers – from Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* to Mouth in

*Not I* and the protagonist of *The Unnamable* – and yet they seem determined to carry on regardless. This irrepressible anarchic spirit coincides with Deleuze’s philosophy of life. His collaboration with Félix Guattari on such works as *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* emanated from the 1968 Paris uprising.<sup>2</sup> Further, their frequent references to becoming (becoming woman, becoming animal, becoming minoritarian, becoming imperceptible) harbour political overtones that express a revolutionary ethics in opposition to majoritarian culture and social control, while seeking alternatives to political, social and psychic oppression.

In his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, Michel Foucault observed, ‘One might say that *Anti-Oedipus* is an *Introduction to the Non-Fascist life* . . . The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to “de-individualize” by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations’.<sup>3</sup> The desire for a non-fascist life, especially evident in his work for the French Resistance during the Second World War, could also be said to lie behind Beckett’s representation of social control. While this theme is more overt in such plays as *Catastrophe* and *What Where*, it can also be discerned in *Not I*, *The Unnamable*, and the mysterious figures in *The Lost Ones* and *Quad*. As Audronė Žukauskaitė argues in the introduction to *Deleuze and Beckett*:

Both authors interpret the rational subject as an effect of power relations . . . [They] invent different strategies of evading both dominant significations and orders of subjection: they prefer incorporeal transformations as well as corporeal disarticulations, constant variations, and becoming. They give up the organic unity of the body, the order of signification, and the constraints of subjectification to invent their specific bodies without organs and to create what Deleuze calls a ‘crystalline regime’ of visual imagery. Both authors demonstrate distrust in transparent language as a means of communication and representation and prefer experimentation instead of interpretation.<sup>4</sup>

Building on such recognized interconnections between Deleuze and Beckett, this article explores the Deleuzian concept of multiplicity, and how it might relate to Beckett’s oeuvre in

general and to one specific theatre production of *Embers* in particular.

### Multiplicity in Deleuze and Beckett

Deleuze’s notion of multiplicity originates in his reading of Bernhard Riemann, a German mathematician, and Henri Bergson, a French philosopher. According to Jonathan Roffe, Deleuze took from Riemann ‘the idea that any situation is composed of different multiplicities that form a kind of patchwork or ensemble without becoming a totality or whole’, and, from Bergson, the notion that there are two types of multiplicity: ‘extensive numerical multiplicities and continuous intensive multiplicities’.<sup>5</sup> In his book on Bergson, Deleuze differentiates between multiplicities represented in space and multiplicities represented in time. A multiplicity in space is ‘a multiplicity of exteriority, of simultaneity, of juxtaposition, of order, of quantitative differentiation, of difference in degree; it is a numerical multiplicity, discontinuous and actual’.<sup>6</sup> A multiplicity in duration, by contrast, is ‘an internal multiplicity of succession, of fusion, of organization, of heterogeneity, of qualitative discrimination, or of difference in kind; it is a virtual and continuous multiplicity that cannot be reduced to numbers’.<sup>7</sup>

Deleuze’s notion of multiplicity developed over many years and appeared in numerous iterations. In *Difference and Repetition*, for example, Deleuze writes:

Multiplicity must not designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organization belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system. . . . [T]he art of multiplicities [is] the art of grasping the Ideas and the problems they incarnate in things, and of grasping things as incarnations, as cases of solution for the problems of Ideas.<sup>8</sup>

This understanding of multiplicity was further elaborated in conjunction with Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the pair propose that ‘becoming and multiplicity are the same thing. A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a centre of unification or comprehension. It is defined by the number of dimensions it has’.<sup>9</sup> They similarly discuss

multiplicity in relation to various formulations by Riemann, Meinong and Russell, and Bergson:

Thus we find in the work of the mathematician and physicist Riemann a distinction between discrete multiplicities and continuous multiplicities . . . And in Bergson there is a distinction between numerical or extended multiplicities and qualitative or durational multiplicities. We are doing approximately the same thing when we distinguish between aborescent multiplicities and rhizomatic multiplicities. Between macro- and micromultiplicities. On the one hand, multiplicities that are extensive, divisible, and molar; unifiable, totalizable, organizable; conscious or preconscious – and on the other hand, libidinal, unconscious, molecular, intensive multiplicities composed of particles that do not divide without changing in nature, and distances that do not vary without entering another multiplicity and that constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the course of their communications, as they cross over into each other at, beyond, or before a certain threshold.<sup>10</sup>

In differentiating between these two types, Deleuze and Guattari indicate that extensive or quantitative multiplicities are essentially numerical and can be counted, whereas intensive or qualitative multiplicities differ in kind from one another and so cannot be counted.

One way of relating this concept to Beckett's work is to use this distinction – that is, to differentiate between quantitative and qualitative multiplicities. On the one hand, quantitative multiplicities, which are represented in space rather than in time, could be said to appear in *Molloy*, with his sixteen sucking stones in his four pockets and the various strategies he adopts to ensure that he sucks each one without creating an unbalance in his pockets.<sup>11</sup> In *Watt*, we see various lists that appear in the book like discrete multiplicities. For example, Watt considers how Mr Knott's food that is left over after a meal should be consumed. He draws up a numerical chart of the possible solutions and objections before coming up with the rather extreme solution 'that a suitable local dog-owner, that is to say a needy man with a famished dog, should be sought out, and on him settled a handsome annuity of fifty pounds payable monthly, in consideration of his calling at Mr. Knott's

house every evening' to consume any left-over food.<sup>12</sup> Since his deliberations on how to solve this problem continue for several pages in the novel, one might say that Beckett exhausts both the problem and the reader.

In an essay titled 'The Exhausted', Deleuze explains:

Being exhausted is much more than being tired. . . . The tired person can no longer realize, but the exhausted person can no longer possibilize. . . . Beckett's characters play with the possible without realizing it; they are too involved in a possibility that is ever more restricted in its kind to care about what is still happening.<sup>13</sup>

Frequently in his prose and dramas, Beckett seems intent on exhausting all possibilities. His television dramas *Quad* and *Quadrat 1 + 2*, for example, exhaust various possibilities of movement. There is also the multiplicity of meanings that can be ascribed to specific words or phrases, since Beckett was fond of double entendres, wordplay, verbal nuances, opposites, and contradictions. As the narrator of 'Ding-Dong' says: 'He had a strong weakness for oxymoron'.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Derval Tubridy discusses the multiple voices that appear as a result of Beckett translating his own works from French to English or from English to French: 'Self-translation splits Beckett's voice in two, or doubles that voice. It introduces a dissonance which reverberates throughout his work. This voice speaking in two tongues further complicates the already uncertain status of the voice that speaks in Beckett's writing.'<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, Beckett experimented with what might be called intensive or qualitative multiplicities. After the somewhat stable characters in such early works as *More Pricks than Kicks* and *Murphy*, the characters in Beckett's later novels have an odd way of changing form or name, evolving, deteriorating, fragmenting, or disaggregating. This doubling or transformation of character resembles Deleuze's notion of becoming. The latter opposes the notion of essentialized and static identity and regards the self as a transitional process. As Žukauskaitė observes, Deleuze's ideas were heavily influenced by Gilbert Simondon, who:

creates a universal theory of individuation which is understood as a process which starts from the pre-individual state and moves to an individual, which, in its turn, becomes the starting point for new individuations. In this sense Simondon redefines ontology as based not on identity but on difference and disparity that force individuals to move from one phase to another and undergo a qualitative change.<sup>16</sup>

In his introduction to *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Dan Smith also explains:

The notion of becoming does not simply refer to the fact that the self does not have a static being and is in constant flux. More precisely, it refers to an objective zone of indistinction or indiscernibility that always exists between any two multiplicities, a zone that immediately *precedes* their respective natural differentiation. In a bifurcating world, a multiplicity is defined not by its centre but by the limits and borders where it enters into relations with other multiplicities and changes nature, transforms itself, follows a *line of flight*. The self is a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities, as in Rimbaud's formula 'I is another'. One can enter a zone of becoming with anything, provided one discovers the literary or artistic means of doing so . . . In a becoming, one term does not become another; rather, each term encounters the other, and the becoming is something between the two, outside the two.<sup>17</sup>

Beckett's trope of the divided or disaggregating self appears in numerous works, including Krapp in *Krapp's Last Tape* (with present, past, and earlier versions of self), the Listener in *That Time*, Mouth in *Not I*, and the protagonist of *Malone Dies*, who describes how he tried to 'be another, in myself, in another'.<sup>18</sup> The characters of Molloy and Moran undergo surprising changes in nature as they go on their various pursuits, both losing their ability to walk and becoming reptilian in the way that they drag themselves through the mud.

The disaggregating self is perhaps most clearly expressed in *The Unnamable*, where the form of the unnamable is a patchwork that seems to vary throughout the novel. From the beginning of the novel, the narrator expresses multiple uncertainties: 'Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning. I, say I. Unbelieving.'<sup>19</sup> He describes himself like an owl perched in an aviary with Malone revolving around him like a planet around

the sun, 'My eyes being fixed always in the same direction'.<sup>20</sup> Later, he describes his tears 'coursing over my chest, my sides, and all down my back', and his eyes, 'of which only the sockets remain', suggesting that he would prefer to have 'the shape, if not the consistency, of an egg, with two holes no matter where to prevent it from bursting, for the consistency is more like that of mucilage'.<sup>21</sup> Later, he transitions into Mahood, and then Worm, switches from the first person to the third person and back again, loses various body parts such as a leg and an arm, so that 'only the trunk remains (in sorry trim), surmounted by the head', and he seems to sink inside a jar, dissolving into 'slush'.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, his subjectivity is consistently undermined, not only by his alternative identities as Mahood and Worm, but also by reference to others who seem to govern his behaviour and his voice. As Tubridy notes:

The pensus that the unnamable must perform involves disengaging his voice from the voices of others, and speaking of himself in his own words . . . However, the unnamable can never be sure if he is speaking or being spoken, for those voices which are always other 'continued to testify for me, as though woven into mine'.<sup>23</sup>

By the end of the novel, the unnamable appears amorphous, powerless, uncertain of any identity or knowledge, and almost imperceptible, but nevertheless resolute in continuing his soliloquy: 'you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.'<sup>24</sup> Thus, the perseverance of the unnamable displays an anarchic spirit in spite of his life's seeming hopelessness. Similarly, Garin Dowd discusses the multiplicity of split voices in *How It Is*:

The porous I of *How It Is* has kept immanence operative in a more complete way than the almost equally porous subject of *The Unnamable*: it is a sounding chamber where accords enter into dissonant relations: 'this voice these voices meaning a choir no no only one but quaqua meaning on all sides megaphones'. On the plane of immanence peopled by the narrator, the question of the One and the Many is no longer valid: there may indeed be one voice, but it is a voice worked by multiplicity – megaphones multiply and therefore divide that voice.<sup>25</sup>

We also see an intensive multiplicity in Beckett's *Film* in the relationship between E and O. At the beginning of the film, the character tries to avoid being seen as he hurries along beside a wall. Once inside the room, he is confronted with objects and animals from which he again shields himself. However, a change takes place when he sits in his chair as he undergoes a surprising multiplication. According to Deleuze, O, who does not want to be perceived, falls asleep:

The camera perception takes advantage of this; it surpasses the angle definitively, turns around, faces the sleeping character, and draws near to him. It then reveals what it is: the perception of affection, that is, the perception of the self by itself, or pure Affect. It is the reflexive double of the convulsive man in the rocking chair. It is the one-eyed person who looks at the one-eyed character.<sup>26</sup>

### Deleuze's Minor Literature and Stuttering

In addition to the multiplicity of self, we can also consider the multiplicity of linguistic effect in Beckett's work that, again, is not merely denumerable but undergoes qualitative or continuous change. In the essay 'He Stuttered' (which follows from his earlier book with Guattari called *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*), Deleuze develops the notion of minor literature and asserts that great writers develop an unconventional approach to language, a kind of stuttering. He exemplifies this by referring to the 'stuttering' of some of his favourite authors – including Franz Kafka, Herman Melville, and Beckett – and examines several ways in which these authors stutter. In particular, he focuses on writers who work in a second language, such as Kafka (who wrote in German rather than in his native Czech and was also influenced by Yiddish and Hebrew), Gherasim Luca (a Romanian writing in French), and Beckett (who wrote both in French and English). He considers such writers as outsiders to the language in which they wrote. Through their idiosyncratic use of a major language they transformed it into a minor language. As Dan Smith explains, 'The foreign language is not another language, even a marginalized

one, but rather the becoming-minor of language itself.'<sup>27</sup> Deleuze argues:

What they do, rather, is invent a *minor use* of the major language within which they express themselves entirely; they *minorize* this language, much as in music, where the minor mode refers to dynamic combinations in perpetual disequilibrium. They are great writers by virtue of this minorization: they make the language take flight, they send it racing along a witch's line, ceaselessly placing it in a state of disequilibrium, making it bifurcate and vary in each of its terms, following an incessant modulation.<sup>28</sup>

Deleuze qualifies this concept of minor language by indicating that any writer can minorize their language. This does not have to be a minorization of a major language; it can equally be the minorization of a minor language. Paul Patton emphasizes the political undercurrent of this technique:

This becoming-minoritarian refers to the potential of individuals or groups to deviate from the standard. It expresses the sense in which individuals and societies never entirely conform to the majoritarian standard but exist in a process of continuous variation. It is from the perspective of their political preference for this creative process of minoritarian becoming that they suggest that 'the problem is never to acquire the majority'.<sup>29</sup>

One of the features of minorizing the language that Deleuze discusses is the use of stuttering. Deleuze recalls the speech impediments of specific characters in minor literature, such as the title character from Melville's *Billy Budd*, who is unable to respond at a crucial moment because of his stutter. Since he can't find the words to defend himself, he strikes and kills his accuser. Similarly, Gregor in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* disintegrates from normal speech to scratching noises as he transforms from a human into an insect. Deleuze also refers to the limited speech of Melville's 'Bartleby the Scrivener', who refuses to abide by conventional habits in the work place, and, when asked to complete a task, simply answers 'I prefer not to'.<sup>30</sup>

Further, in the article 'He Stuttered', Deleuze introduces a more complex notion of stuttering that contrasts with these types of impeded speech. He suggests that some

writers employ a sort of interrupted language in minor literature so that the stuttering comes from the use of language as opposed to the speech of the characters. Rather than praising beautifully flowing prose, Deleuze isolates moments where the language ceases to flow organically and appears to break down. In such cases, language is 'subject to a double process, that of choices to be made and that of sequences to be established: disjunction or the selection of similars, connection or the consecution of combinables'.<sup>31</sup>

In the types of work that Deleuze is identifying, 'the disjunctions become included or inclusive, and the connections, reflexive, following a rolling gait that concerns the process of language and no longer the flow of speech'.<sup>32</sup> Explaining this, Deleuze argues: 'Creative stuttering is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perpetual disequilibrium . . . Being well spoken has never been either the distinctive feature or the concern of great writers.'<sup>33</sup> Similar to the work of Francis Bacon, who, he says, creates sensation by disruptions in the canvas, Deleuze is particularly interested in the break or the interruption in the conventional flow of language in minor literature. He describes Beckett as the writer who 'took this art of inclusive disjunctions to its highest point, an art that no longer selects but affirms the disjointed terms through their distance, without limiting one by the other or excluding one from the other, laying out and passing through the entire set of possibilities'.<sup>34</sup> Deleuze refers to 'Comment dire' or 'what is the word' as an example of stuttering language, as is shown in the following:

folly –  
 folly for to –  
 for to –  
 what is the word –  
 folly from this –  
 all this –  
 folly from all this –  
 given –  
 folly given all this –  
 seeing –

folly seeing all this –  
 this –  
 what is the word –  
 this this –  
 this this here –  
 all this this here –  
 folly given all this –  
 seeing –  
 folly seeing all this this here –  
 for to –  
 what is the word –<sup>35</sup>

This stuttering results in a repetition of words and phrases such that the language distorts and multiplies expression. As Deleuze explains: 'When a language is so strained that it starts to stutter, or to murmur or stammer . . . then language in its entirety reaches the limit that marks its outside and makes it confront silence.'<sup>36</sup>

### Stuttering in *Embers*

Many of Beckett's prose works form a kind of stuttering in which he seems to become his own critic, questioning his own style as though what he is writing is only a work in progress. More precisely, he seems to suggest that it is a failed work in progress or one that stutters in its efforts to get going or get finished. An example of this can be found in his radio play *Embers*, where Henry seems to be trying to devise or write stories but never progresses or finishes them:

I usen't to need anyone, just to myself, stories, there was a great one about an old fellow called Bolton, I never finished it, I never finished any of them, I never finished anything, everything always went on for ever. . . . Stories, stories, years and years of stories, till the need came on me, for someone, to be with me . . .<sup>37</sup>

Some of the titles of Beckett's work illustrate this preoccupation with the failure to produce an adequate artistic work, including (among others) *Fizzles*, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, *Texts for Nothing*, *From an Abandoned Work*, *Rough for Theatre*, and *Rough for Radio*. In this connection Deleuze might also have mentioned the famous ending of *The Unnamable* that highlights

the misery of writing, reduced to a kind of stuttering to express oneself:

you must go on, I can't go on, you must go on, I'll go on, you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, strange pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps it's done already, perhaps they have said me already, 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, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.<sup>38</sup>

In many works, Beckett creates characters who are haunted by the past or who are 'not all there'.<sup>39</sup> *Play*, *Footfalls*, *Embers*, *Eh Joe*, *A Piece of Monologue*, *Ohio Impromptu*, *That Time*, *Ghost Trio*, and . . . *but the clouds* . . . all conjure up ghost-like figures in a repetitive purgatorial existence. Are these phantoms to be considered discrete or intensive multiplicities? Are they in an alternative world, in an alternative pattern of becoming? Are they becoming anything, changing in nature, or simply repeating themselves in a holding pattern? Perhaps they are closer to repetitions in appearance than undergoing changes in nature.

One particular theatre company that has enhanced the multiplicities in Beckett's work is the Pan Pan Theatre Company in Dublin. They have made a practice of transforming one art form into another, such as radio plays into stage plays, thereby creating a theatrical multiplicity by effecting a change in nature. One illuminating example is their production of *Embers*, directed by Gavin Quinn and designed by Aedín Cosgrove, presented in Dublin, the Edinburgh Festival, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York from 2013. The drama poses several contradictions, including between hearing inside the head and outside the head, between the past and the present, and between actuality and virtuality.

For their stage version, Pan Pan created a hybrid art form that utilized aspects of radio drama and stage conventions. Set on a stage floor covered in small stones, *Embers* featured a giant skull designed by Andrew Clancy that

faced the audience. The skull immediately conveyed the thought of death, alluding to the death of Henry's father and Ada, his wife (with whom Henry tries to speak), and perhaps to Henry himself. The two actors playing Henry and Ada – Andrew Bennett and Áine Ní Mhuirí, respectively – remained hidden inside the skull for the first part of the performance until their conversation with each other.<sup>40</sup> At this point they were dimly lit and became partially visible through slats in the eyeholes of the skull, as if they were the workings of the brain of this giant skull.

The production also featured 512 tiny disc-shaped speakers hanging in eight rows of polycarbonate strips in sixty-four columns, with eight speakers in each strip that emphasized visually the theme of listening. According to Jimmy Eadie, the production's sound designer: 'We were visually alluding to the fact that sound was the primary perceptive element within the piece . . . to visually look at the speaker component itself and make that connection back to the aural end of the Beckett work . . . We wanted you to look at the sound.'<sup>41</sup> As the hanging speakers did not have cabinets, they created what Eadie called 'vintage-sounding radio sound' to recall the sound of original radio transmissions.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the array of speakers, there was another surround system in the auditorium with sixteen full-range speakers and six subwoofers (or low frequency extended speakers), so the audience would be 'hit by the force of the sound'.<sup>43</sup> This multiplicity of speakers, designed so that the sound would move through the rows of speakers in waves driven by sixteen amplifiers, created intense moments that overwhelmed the audience with sound, reminiscent of the unnamable's 'meaning on all sides megaphones'. As critic Helen Shaw commented, 'Sound designer Jimmy Eadie has them saturate us in noise: there's a dim feeling that we can almost see sound.'<sup>44</sup>

Transitions in the lighting took advantage of the thousands of jigsawed layers of the wooden skull, creating mysterious shadows and an eerie mood that turned the skull into a personality, at times with a hideous grin, instead of just an object. At one point it

transformed the scene into a submarine environment with the strands of speakers appearing like seaweed or jellyfish, conveying the sense that the location of the skull had moved from the beach to the bottom of the sea. In describing the production to Judith Wilkinson, Quinn indicated its multiple nature as ‘an installation of sculpture with words . . . You look at something and you hear words, so it’s an experiment in those two parts coming together. Basically it’s the elements of light, sculpture, and words all oscillating and happening at the same time’.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, whereas Beckett feared that the staging of his play would destroy the ambiguity that he had written into it, Pan Pan managed to maintain the confusion about where and when it was happening. Rather than recreating physically the actions described in the radio play, the staging provided additional and contradictory dimensions, not only aurally but also visually. Therefore, the concatenation of dramatic conventions in the production of *Embers* maintained Beckett’s tension between reality and fiction, offering a ‘master class in sound, light and set design’<sup>46</sup> or, as Shaw concluded, ‘part-sound installation, part-performance: a purified listening experience’.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the production created a performative multiplicity, adding a new dimension to the play by giving sound a physical and visual impact, thereby transforming sound into space and immersing the audience into the auditory experience.

In conclusion, Beckett’s work expresses a variety of multiplicities, some of which we could consider as quantitative and others which we could call qualitative in that they imply a process of change. As Deleuze argued, ‘Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible’.<sup>48</sup> Beckett resisted the notion of static individuality, and in this his characters can be seen to relate to Deleuze’s notion of becoming and multiplicity. Likewise, productions of Beckett’s work such as those by Pan Pan can emphasize the possibility for qualitative change or for becoming other. As Dan Smith observes: ‘In a becoming, one term does not become

another; rather, each term encounters the other, and the becoming is something between the two, outside the two.’<sup>49</sup> Summing up his tendency to renounce coherence and unity, Beckett’s biographer James Knowlson added: ‘He clearly saw that in everything that matters, life is simply not like that – living creatures are too complex, mysterious and unknowable to be classified or controlled in such a crudely mechanistic way.’<sup>50</sup>

## Notes and References

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19. Beckett, *The Unnamable*, in *The Beckett Trilogy*, p. 267.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 272.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 300, 371.
23. Tubridy, *Samuel Beckett and the Language of Subjectivity*, p. 64.
24. Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 382.



25. Garin Dowd, *Abstract Machines: Samuel Beckett and Philosophy after Deleuze and Guattari* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), p. 187.
26. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 25.
27. *Ibid.*, p. xlvi.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
29. Paul Patton, 'Deleuze and Democracy', *Contemporary Political Theory*, IV, No. 4 (November 2005), p. 400–13 (p. 407).
30. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 112.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
32. *Ibid.*; original emphasis.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 110–11.
35. Samuel Beckett, 'what is the word', in *Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho, Stirrings Still* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 133.
36. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 113; original emphases.
37. Samuel Beckett, *Embers*, in *Collected Shorter Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 94–5.
38. Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 381–2.
39. In a rehearsal for *Footfalls*, Billie Whitelaw asked Beckett if her character is dead. He answered: 'Let's just say you're not all there' (quoted in Jonathan Kalb, *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 235).
40. When it was first staged at Trinity College Dublin, actors walked around the set as if on a beach at the beginning of the performance, and then removed a black sheet to reveal the skull. This scene was subsequently cut from the production.
41. Author interview with Jimmy Eadie, 29 August 2019.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. Helen Shaw, 'Embers', *Time Out New York*, 19 September 2014, <<https://www.timeout.com/newyork/theater/embers>>, accessed 27 August 2019.
45. See Judith Wilkinson, 'Theatre in an Expanded Field? *All That Fall* and *Embers* Reimagined by Pan Pan', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, XXIII, No. 1 (2014), p. 128–36 (p. 128).
46. Polly Davidson, 'Embers (Edinburgh International Festival/Pan Pan Theatre Company)', *Threeweeks*, 31 August 2013, <[www.threeweeks.co.uk/article/ed2013-theatre-review-embers-edinburgh-international-festival-pan-pan-theatre-company/](http://www.threeweeks.co.uk/article/ed2013-theatre-review-embers-edinburgh-international-festival-pan-pan-theatre-company/)>, accessed 27 August 2019.
47. Shaw, 'Embers'.
48. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 1.
49. *Ibid.*, p. xxx.
50. James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), p. 146.