

LITTLE, James. 2022. *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Not I / Pas moi, That Time / Cette fois and Footfalls / Pas*. Brussels and London: University Press Antwerp–Bloomsbury. Pp. 520. ISBN 9781350269040, Hardback \$120.00.

James Little's *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Not I / Pas moi, That Time / Cette fois and Footfalls / Pas* is part of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (BDMP). This project is the result of a collaboration between the Centre for Manuscript Studies of the University of Antwerp (Belgium), the Beckett International Foundation of the University of Reading (UK) and the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin (USA). It combines digital genetic editions and accompanying monographs.

This digital archive aims to partake in Beckettian studies in at least two complementary ways: first, it makes facsimiles and transcriptions of manuscripts accessible online while providing tools for bilingual and genetic version comparison, thereby enabling researchers to discover archival material often scattered around the world; second, with the accompanying volumes and the analysis of the dispersed manuscripts offered, it aims to show how a work came to be.

Monographs started coming out in 2011 and are available internationally through Bloomsbury Academic. As for the genetic editions, they can be accessed through subscription (70€ for individuals and 400€ for an institutions, per annum) at [beckettarchive.org/geneticeditions](http://beckettarchive.org/geneticeditions). To this day, the following research modules have been made available: *What is the Word / Comment dire*; *Stirrings Still / Soubresauts*; *L'Innommable / The Unnamable*; *Krapp's Last Tape / La Dernière bande*; *Molloy*; *Malone meurt / Malone Dies*; *En attendant Godot / Waiting for Godot*; *Fin de partie / Endgame*; and *Not I / Pas moi, That Time / Cette fois and Footfalls / Pas*.

This 10th published volume analyzes the genesis of three late plays written and translated by Beckett in the mid-1970s. Previously, in *Samuel Beckett and Confinement: The Politics of Closed Space* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), Little analyzed representations of prisons and asylums. Here, the focus is not on the politics of the texts, but rather on Beckett's interest in the human mind and on how this is staged in these 1970s plays. Psychoanalytic concepts echo throughout the three plays. Little goes back to Beckett's reading of Ernest Jones in the 1930s, who, among other thinkers, provided him with the basis for exploring the breakdown between subject and object. Little shows how the space between subject and object is dramatized in the three plays and how it can be foregrounded in their bilingual genetic dossiers.

More precisely, Little sees Beckett's staging of the mind as a performative and enacted process, where the mind interacts with the material world. This takes place in the context of the proscenium theatre, in which Beckett regularly worked and which is seen by the critic as a form of "Cartesian theatre". With its clearcut separation of actors and audience and its face-to-face placing, the proscenium theatre functions as an apt space to problematize the metaphorical lines between mind and outside world. With these plays, Beckett presents the spectator with disorienting experiences that play with the limits of proscenium theatre and those of the human mind. Pervading darkness and mysterious stage images produce an epistemological uncertainty where the image of the human mind is impossible to fix.

The processes of "undoing" and "vaguening" at work in Beckett's writing, concepts coming from, respectively, S. E. Gontarski and Rosemary Pountney, are applied to the plays' genetic dossiers. These reveal Beckett's efforts to remove realist backgrounds from his stage images and texts. These concepts are applied throughout the three parts of the volume, each focusing on a different play. In turn, each part is divided into two respective sections: one describing the extant manuscripts, both in English and in French, the other analyzing the genetic process they reveal. Abandoned plays *J. M. Mime* (written for Jack MacGowran in 1963) and *Kilcool* and *Petit Odéon* (written for the *compagnie* Renaud-Barrault) are also under scrutiny for their resemblance to the three plays considered in the volume. From the *Kilcool* piece, one learns that Beckett's focusing on the human mind meant staging the interaction of the mind with other minds, however fraught this process might be. This complexity affects the texts of *Not I*, *Footfalls* and *That Time*: even when they are presented as monologues, there is a "polylogic" quality (126).

Little analyzes the creative context of the plays, focusing on draft material — preliminary forms of a version of a published text, including what Peter Shillingsburg calls "false starts or experimental forms" (qtd. in LITTLE 116). Detailed analysis of variants in first editions is very useful to academics, as are the descriptions of Beckett's annotated playscripts and production notes. These provide a valuable addition to the *Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett* series, especially volume IV (1999) — which includes *Play, Come and Go, Eh Joe, Footfalls, That Time* and *What Where* — edited by Gontarski. In this regard, of particular interest to the reader are the twenty-five full-page illustrations that Little provides. These facsimiles of documents otherwise little accessible to the general public help visualize some of the different stages of the genesis of the plays as we read Little's

analysis of them. For more, the (subscribed) reader can turn to the digital tools provided by the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project.

Beckett's way of writing stage directions is also scrutinized, especially the "unorthodox" — or maybe French — manner of writing them "from the point of view of the onlooking audience member rather than, as is standard in Anglophone theatre, from the perspective of the performing actor" (157). Generally speaking, Little notes, Beckett was influenced by Antonin Artaud's vision of an immersive and total theatre form. Little explores how these influences helped Beckett shape 20th-century experimental theatre.

*Not I / Pas Moi*, the first of the three plays analyzed, was inspired by a painting by Caravaggio titled *The Beheading of St John the Baptist*, which Beckett had seen in Malta. This painting presents a group of watchers observing the scene of the execution of John from a safe distance. The play also dramatizes a scene Beckett observed while staying in Taroudant, Morocco, of a motionless Arab woman waiting outside a school. It was written amid what Little calls the "aftershocks of a 'catastrophe'" (141): the awarding to Beckett of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. *Not I* is presented as a "strange" theatre experimentation (147): "in some strange way it's theatre in spite of all", Beckett wrote in 1973 (qtd. in LITTLE 147).

Furthermore, Little's exploration of the draft material related to *Not I* proves Beckett was interested in audience reception, as he wanted his play to address the nerves rather than the intellect of the spectators. Little shows how early drafts give insight into the woman's background — "coming up to 65 [. . .] walking in the field with her (my) youngest grandchild looking (searching) for cowslips to make a ball [. . .] when she found herself (myself) in the dark" (166) — and how Beckett gradually wrote this out of the text.

As for the French manuscripts, they show how the character of Mouth is further dehumanized in the translating process, as Beckett scatters the text of *Pas moi* with references to animals. Little also points to the general tendency towards syntactic fragmentation and textual reduction, a tendency sometimes contradicted by additions and explications.

As with the authors of preceding volumes in the series, Little underlines the interpretive relevance of intertextual references found in the manuscripts. In particular, Proustian, Shakespearean and Yeatsian intertexts are highlighted. Little also links the refusal of the first-person pronoun in *Not I* with Apollinaire's poem "Zone", which stages a persona who refers to himself both as "je" and "tu". Beckett had translated the poem for Georges Duthuit in 1950 and revised it for a deluxe edition in 1972.

Little is excellent at delineating, contextualizing and clarifying the chronology of Beckett's writing campaigns (282), cross-referencing dates

written on manuscript material, letters to friends and family, and other sources. He shows how the composition principle of *That Time / Cette fois* involves a complex organization of paragraphs, ages and memories, which he likens to the serialism that presided over the writing of *J. M. Mime* and, later, *Sans / Lessness* (285–86). *That Time* is further regarded as a “memory play” in which the phenomenon of memory and forgetting is explored. *That Time* also thematizes what Beckett called “a story of depersonalization” (313).

What is more, in *That Time* Little meticulously identifies traces of multilingual composition, when words in French appear on an English typescript (243–45). Intriguingly, in the first typescript, Beckett playfully fictionalized himself as an author, writing that “people” are “stopping to look” at the character “like something out of Beckett” (314). “By the 1970s, Beckett had enough of a name for a self-reference to carry weight, his audiences now fully aware what ‘something out of Beckett’ would look like”, Little comments (315).

A similar kind of “undoing” is present in the genesis of *Footfalls / Pas*, which Beckett wrote with actor Billie Whitelaw in mind. The manuscript indicates that Beckett originally envisaged three concurrent voices: V, Mary (later renamed May or M in the final text) and a “Speaker from dark” (412): “It seems the Speaker’s role was to announce the start of a new scene, but this was quickly replaced by a sound created via a musical instrument”, Little informs us (412). Epigenesis, defined as the continuing of the genesis after publication, further blurs the lines of subjectivity: in the first edition of *Footfalls* it is clear that V’s voice is part of M’s imagination, contrary to what was written in editions published after the first performances of the play.

*Footfalls* is seen as a play that stages the “elusive nature of performance” (402) and “interrogates the relationship between textuality and theatre performance” (404). Central to this is the pacing and the sound of footsteps. For Little, this is a “funereal text, in which rituals of death mark not an ending, nor a rest before eternal life, but incessant revolving in the mind(s) of its character(s)” (452). Having not been properly born, “May’s own tragedy is that there is no one to cut her thread of life” and “she cannot seem to definitively die”, the critic insightfully notes (459).

A French change of word in the second edition of *Pas* by Éditions de Minuit is also quite intriguing in this respect: Beckett replaced “inévitablement” with “fatalement”, introducing a reference to the Fates or Parcae who etymologically presided over human parturition. In line with this change and in light of Beckett’s experience directing the play

in London and Berlin, Little demonstrates how the playwright made the French stage directions more specific (463–64).

With this monograph, Little effectively convinces us that the successive drafts offer evidence of a heightening of interpretive ambiguity and uncertainty that blurs the line between self and other, inside and outside, reality and fiction. “Doing this”, Little concludes, “will probably not solve the questions asked by these works — Who is Godot? What happened to Mouth in the field? Is May alive or dead? — but it can help us better understand how these questions are posed” (483). For all these reasons, this volume in the BDMP series is without doubt a highly commendable and very rewarding read for those researchers interested in an in-depth foray into Beckett’s late theatre and creative mind.

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RICO, Francesco, ed. 2022. *Gli orizzonti dell’ecdótica. Autori, testi, lettori*. Roma: Carocci. ISBN: 978-88-290-1466-8. Pp. 389. Paper. € 35.

In the first number of the journal *Ecdótica*, which appeared in 2004 edited by Gian Mario Anselmi, Emilio Pasquini, and Francisco Rico, the term ‘ecdótica’ was defined in this way: “Tutti gli elementi che segnano l’intero cammino di un testo dall’autore ai lettori (o fruitori), sempre che tali elementi vengano contemplati nella prospettiva di un’edizione, antica o moderna, destinata allo studio della lettura, tipografica, informatica o sotto l’aspetto di un qualsiasi *tertium quid*” (5).<sup>1</sup> Authors, texts, and readers are thus at the center of the reflection proposed by *Ecdótica*. The same triptych — and not by chance — appears as the subtitle of an anthology, *Gli orizzonti dell’ecdótica. Autori, testi, lettori*, published by Carocci in May 2022, which aims to collect some of the most representative articles published within the journal. The purpose, as Francisco Rico explains in the introductory pages (*Introduzione*, 9–11), is to retrace the path of a text from its composition to the reader, thanks to a polyphony of voices capable of establishing a dialogue between textual studies and theoretical studies in the European and Anglo-American tradition.

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1. “All elements marking a literary work’s whole path between the author and the readers (or users), as long as such elements are intended in the view of an edition — early or modern — for reading or studying, in typographical or digital form, or in whichever ‘third’ form” (my translation).