



NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF  
BECKETT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

# Translating Samuel Beckett around the World

*Edited by*  
José Francisco Fernández  
Pascale Sardin

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# New Interpretations of Beckett in the Twenty-First Century

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As the leading literary figure to emerge from post-World War II Europe, Samuel Beckett's texts and his literary and intellectual legacy have yet to be fully appreciated by critics and scholars. The goal of *New Interpretations of Beckett in the Twenty-First Century* is to stimulate new approaches and develop fresh perspectives on Beckett, his texts, and his legacy. The series will provide a forum for original and interdisciplinary interpretations concerning any aspect of Beckett's work or his influence upon subsequent writers, artists, and thinkers.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2015, *En attendant Godot* was performed in France starring two Ivory Coast actors: Fargass Assandé played the part of Estragon and Michel Bohiri played that of Vladimir. Directed by Jean Lambert-Wild, Lorenzo Malaguerra and Marcel Bozonnet, the production modernized the play written in the aftermath of World War Two as it was made to tell the story of two African migrants caught up in today's European refugee crisis in a postcolonial globalized context. Some years before that, in 2007, Paul Chan, in partnership with Creative Time and the Classical Theater of Harlem, had staged four outdoor performances of Beckett's *Godot* in New Orleans, just two years after the passage of Hurricane Katrina. The play was performed in two of the neighbourhoods worst hit by the devastating hurricane, in places where the sense of hopelessness was acute, and at a time when authorities were under intense criticism for their slow, and sometimes inadequate, response to the crisis. These examples illustrate both the universality of Beckett's first performed – and most famous and oft-performed – play worldwide, but also the desire that is felt by present-time directors to see the works of the Anglo-Irish playwright address topical issues. Such is also the case around the world, in places and territories that are sometimes greatly distant from Paris, London or Berlin where Beckett's plays often premiered, and where neither English nor French are the official languages in use. This book explores by whom, how and when Beckett's work has been translated in a number of countries and continents all over the globe, but also how it is received and

currently performed in contexts different from those of the English or French originals in which the author composed his novels, plays and poems.

In *What is World Literature?* David Damrosch writes that ‘world literature encompass(es) all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language’, and that ‘a work only has an effective life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture’ (Damrosch 2003: 4). That Samuel Beckett’s *oeuvre* is part of world literature thus defined is now largely accepted: Beckett has become a ‘global’ artist be it from the vantage point of his texts proper, which question the very concept of the ‘world’ (Connor 2008; Pearson 2017), or from that of the scope of his reception which has become international (Brater 2003; Perloff 2007; Gontarski 2008; Feldman & Nixon 2009; McDonald 2016; McNaughton, Doshi and Engelberts 2019; Chakraborty and Tobirio Vázquez 2020). As Rónán McDonald has noted in ‘Global Beckett’, an entry of *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Theatre*, ‘Beckett is inextricably caught up in a globalized culture, branded and consumed around the world’ (2016: 590). This ‘global turn’ in Beckettian studies had already been acknowledged a decade earlier, in a volume titled *Transnational Beckett* (2008), where S.E. Gontarski reflected upon the surge of interest in Samuel Beckett in a vast array of countries at the turn of the millennium. And recently, Thirthankar Chakraborty and Juan Luis Tobirio Vázquez have edited a volume entitled *Samuel Beckett as World Literature* (2020) that investigates what it means for Beckett to be part of a global literature. As noted by Renata Vaz Shimbo and Fábio de Souza Andrade in this volume: ‘Beckettian studies have become progressively more open to globalized readings of Beckett’s drama and fiction, no longer taken for an exportable formula of avant-garde art, a way into experimentation which could be replicated in different places as an internationalist handbook, but as a *corpus* encouraging emergent cultures to reinterpret the legacy of Western modernism according to the premises of their own histories and needs’. Beckett scholars cannot but rejoice at this vast interest in the writer in that it is bound to enrich our understanding of the work, as it renews interpretations of it. Nevertheless, as McDonald remarks in ‘Global Beckett’, there are also possible detrimental effects of globalization in that such a disseminating process often goes along with processes of standardization on the one hand, and domestication on the

other, the risk being that Beckett's texts lose their countercultural power in late capitalism's marketing forces (McDonald 2016: 591).

This collection of essays differs from previous ones in that it focuses on issues of translation, posing theoretical and practical questions about the art of translating Beckett texts in languages other than English and French, the languages in which Beckett created his works. In doing so, it takes into account Beckett's own bilingualism, and explores how the issues of translation and reception and influence are interconnected. As noted by Nixon and Feldman, the act of translation is 'necessary before any kind of sustained national reception can take place, and the quality of translations largely determinates the nature of that reception' (Nixon and Feldman 2009: 6). Beckett's career was involved from the beginning with translation, either when he translated the work of others, a task that he began in the late 1920s with fragments of James Joyce's *Work in Progress*, or when he translated poems for avant-garde magazines, and his gradual adoption of the role of exclusive translator of his own work in his mature period has been thoroughly studied (Van Hulle and Verhulst 2018: 21). Recent research has shown the extent of the author's involvement in the translation of his work by other translators and scholars, or has dwelt upon the extraordinary event of his translations affecting the content of the original work by means of changes implemented by the author in new editions of old texts. The study of (self)translation as a line of research in its own right has also become a fruitful and productive field in recent times (Collinge 1999; Louar 2018; Louar and Fernández 2018; Montini 2007; Mooney 2011; Oustinoff 2001; Sardin-Damestoy 2002), becoming the centre of a whole poetics, where Beckett's bilingualism is seen to take a prominent part in his aesthetics of failure. As a result, Beckettian self-translation has ceased to be a curiosity, almost an anomaly associated with the author, and as any other feature related to his style (like the ghostly presence of Ireland in his writing, his penchant for prosthetic bodies or his raids into a yet unknown but imagined posthumanistic world), it has become a central concern to interpret his *oeuvre*.

The last unexplored frontier in this endeavour pertains to the study of how Beckett has been translated in languages other than French, English and perhaps even German. There is plenty of evidence of the kind of interaction that Beckett maintained with Elmar Tophoven and his wife Erika, both the 'official' translators of his work into German. His collaborative work with the German translations of his work, therefore, is well documented (see Tophoven 2011 and Tophoven 2016). In

his lifetime, Beckett often recommended that translators have a look at the German authorized version of his texts. To Christian Ludvigsen, his Danish translator, when explaining textual allusions pertaining to *All That Fall*, Beckett wrote that the French translation, written by Robert Pinget and ‘revised’ by him, may be of help and that there is a ‘good German translation’ the translator might want to have a look at (Letter dated 6 Aug. 1957, Beckett 2014: 59). He was perfectly aware of the importance of providing ‘good’ translations and acted accordingly. But little is known of what happened with Beckett and his interaction with other languages beyond the safe area around English, French or German. What can be gathered from what translators into third languages have said is that he kept an open mind and encouraged inventiveness. Polish director and translator Marek Kędzierski once complained to Beckett that he did not know how to render into Polish the line from *Endgame* ‘The bastard! He does not exist!’: ‘I explained that in Polish there is a word *cham* meaning an uncultivated, rude person, derived like Hamm’s name from the biblical Hamm, just spelled differently. Would Hamm calling God *Cham*, pronounced like his own name, be too much? Beckett seemed amused, said it’s a good idea’ (Kędzierski 2016: 120). Beckett was also very keen that in the third language, as far as possible, the same register, sound pattern and rhythm of the original should be maintained. On one occasion, Spanish scholar Antonia Rodríguez-Gago sent him her translations of *Rockaby*, *Ohio Impromptu* and *Catastrophe*, which Beckett ‘returned ... very quickly including one of his little cards saying: “I have annotated your text to the best of my poor Spanish and I hope my suggestions – for they are nothing more – may prove of some help.” All his “suggestions”, though they [were] not many, refer[red] to structure, none to meaning’ (Rodríguez-Gago 1999: 234).

In a way, the investigation on Beckett around the world that is carried out in this volume simply expands on what Beckett did during his lifetime when his daily writing was inextricably bound to revisions of translations in other languages, as he frequently wrote to correspondents such as Barney Rosset: ‘Have just read the Spanish so-called translation of *Godot*. Bad. German ditto of *Molloy* is coming in for revision (pretty shaky from the extracts I have seen) and I begin on *Malone* in German with the translator of *Godot*, in Paris fortunately. Then there is Bowles’ (Beckett 2011: 448). It would not be completely true to say that *Translating Samuel Beckett around the World* is the first and only attempt towards moving beyond the comfortable boundaries of familiar

languages in Beckett. The publication of *The International Reception of Samuel Beckett* (2009), edited by Mark Nixon and Matthew Feldman, was a major landmark in Beckett Studies in the twenty-first century. In this deeply engaging collection of essays, Beckett was, for the first time, understood as a global phenomenon. It also showed the skills and ambition of a second generation of Beckett scholars who took over from those who had created Beckett Studies. *The International Reception of Samuel Beckett* showed the credentials of the next generation, characterized by a truly international spirit, as it is testified by the establishment of the Samuel Beckett Society annual conferences that started soon after (2015) and which stepped outside traditional centres of Beckett scholarship. The present volume is indebted to Nixon and Feldman's bold and inspiring project, although it presents a marked difference in its being focused on translation and thereby reflects upon how his work has been adapted and transformed in an assortment of cultures around the world.

Some such territories have by now been well charted by Beckett scholars – this is the case of Beckett's place in German-speaking countries, a topic explored as early as 1984 by Jack Zipes, and further elaborated upon in two chapters of the Feldman and Nixon collection of essays, and in a volume of the *Journal of Beckett Studies* in 2010, among others. On the other hand, other countries, sometimes whole continents, like the Indian subcontinent, where a wealth of languages are spoken, are just beginning to be explored in relation to Beckett's influence (see Mahmood 1993; Chakraborty 2017). This collection, with its opening up to countries such as Pakistan or India seeks to redress this situation and fill a void. It could also be argued that the volume shows a strong preference for Europe (5 of the 12 chapters deal with European countries) and therefore the opinion that a Eurocentric perspective is still very much associated with Beckett studies would have some ground to stand on. When *The International Reception of Samuel Beckett* was published, reviewers considered inevitable that Europe should carry such weight: 'This is understandable since Beckett was more closely connected to Western Europe than to the rest of the world, and because of his fluency in several European languages ..., he was more involved in the production and translation of his works in Western Europe than he was elsewhere' (Kager 2012: 181). Although we start from Europe in this journey around the world – and even if it is for obvious reasons impossible to be exhaustive in the exploration of *all* the countries of the world – we have included areas on the fringe of continental Europe (Iceland

on one side, Turkey and Israel on the other), and have paid attention to translations of Beckett in South America (Argentina and Brazil) for the first time in Beckett Studies. As for the spectacular surge of interest in Beckett in China in recent years, it has been made necessary to revisit this country from that first approach in Nixon and Feldman's book in 2009.

The reason for the extraordinary expansion of such a concrete field of knowledge in the humanities is to be found in the inexhaustible questioning provoked by Beckett's work about essential issues on human existence on this planet, as well as by the variety of topics that Beckett addressed in his literary production. As noted by Peter Fifield: 'For all its talk of impossibility and failure, [Beckett's *oeuvre*] remains remarkably responsive to interpretative approaches, and appears to grow even more fertile as shown by the research and performance it attracts' (Fifield 2013: 7–8). And as Jean-Michel Rabaté remarks, 'the complete works of Beckett, which fit snugly in four volumes, occupy a much vaster cultural space' (Rabaté 2016: 7). *Translating Samuel Beckett around the World* examines this cultural space from the vantage point of some of the languages into which Beckett's works have been adapted up to this day. It examines how Beckett texts have been appropriated, and re-territorialized, but also circulated, received and performed. It looks at issues of influence, fertilization, repercussion, approval, rejection and disruption in countries and linguistic territories that are sometimes quite far from the centres of 'the world republic of letters' (Casanova 2004) such as Paris, London or New York, which are arguably privileged places of global literary consecration and legitimization.

If this collection of essays proves anything, it is certainly that globalization and internationalization hide a variety of local and national situations and tableaux. The translation of Beckett texts abroad is the story of an uneven success that depends much on the historical contexts of the countries taken into consideration. Indeed translation cannot be isolated from historical factors and from the specific cultural and political backgrounds of the territories investigated. For example, translations into Mandarin Chinese are rather recent, and one can easily understand how Chinese authorities have been instrumental in delaying the circulation of Beckett's *oeuvre* in this otherwise huge market. Surprisingly enough, this is not only the case of distant, non-Western cultures; in Spain for instance, the Francoist regime has had a long-lasting effect on the reception of Beckett. Types of censorship actually vary from one country to another. Up until the early 1950s, Beckett books have generally suffered abroad

from a ‘market censorship’ (Schiffrin 2001: 106) that was lifted in many areas of the world by the *succès de scandale* of *En Attendant Godot* in 1953, and by Beckett’s association with Nouveau Roman writers in the following years. While this situation totally ended in most countries in 1969 when Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize, state censorship in some countries continued. As for cultural self-censorship, it is something that translators do not necessarily implement consciously when they cater for a target audience and seek to make their texts acceptable to them. One may perhaps even speak of a form of aesthetic self-censorship in the case of Icelandic literature, which has long resisted the importation of Modernist literature in general and of Beckett writing in particular, because Beckettian narrative experimentalism did not quite agree with the Icelandic tradition of the narrative epic. While some elements of Beckett aesthetics resist importation, others on the contrary seem to have been facilitators, like the non-mimetic dimension of his theatre, which resonated closely with an ancient Turkish theatrical tradition.

The papers collected here seek to understand where and why Beckett was translated first and why Beckett texts sometimes were on the contrary long to be deemed acceptable literary material. They demonstrate that there is a strong correlation between the power fluctuations in the sociopolitical environment of a country and the success of a foreign writer and playwright. Collective conditions – the presence of a democratic government or of a publishing industry open to experimentalism and avant-garde art – and/or individual efforts like that of Victoria Ocampo in Argentina, who had strong ties with European Modernism, are often necessary to make linguistic transfer happen and then enable translated texts to be accepted and successful. The case of *Godot* is particularly interesting in this respect. A recurrent problem in countries with (past) authoritarian regimes is the passivity of characters in *Godot*, which is difficult to accept. Likewise, Beckett’s apparent apolitical stance sometimes proved a problem for some national audiences; in Israel in 1955, for instance, reviewers attacked *Godot* for its lack of direct meaning and political commitment. Although various Beckettian texts are analysed in depth in this volume, namely *Endgame*, *Act Without Words*, *Krapp’s Last Tape*, ‘Immobile’, *Worstward Ho* and ‘what is the word’, many authors actually dwell on *Godot*. This should not surprise us as *Godot* – which has become an international classic – is by far Beckett’s best-known work and often the first one to have been translated in the countries explored here. It is also probably the most oft retranslated text in the Beckettian corpus.

The volume also proves that ready-made dichotomies about translation need to be reassessed. As illustrated by some of the authors in the book, the process of ‘domestication’ – usually connoted negatively in translation studies (Venuti 2008) – can actually conceal politically progressive and subversive appropriations of Beckett texts. What is more, questions of acceptability (moral, political or aesthetic) often go hand in hand with questions of accessibility; because of its hermetic dimension and because Beckett’s writing is rooted in European culture, it is quite often distant from some of the receiving audiences considered in the following pages. The linguistic and sociocultural challenges of translating Beckett into languages other than French, English and German are at the core of the investigations conducted by the authors of the essays collected here. Do Pakistani translators maintain Beckett’s puns in his theatre? How is the stylistic experimentalism of later prose or poetic texts like *Worstward Ho* rendered in different international variants of the Portuguese language?

Alongside such sociopolitical and aesthetic issues, the authors of the following essays underline the importance of biographical factors in the translating history of Beckett’s texts around the world. Beckett’s individual friendships with some translators have shaped the landscape of translation of his work in some languages. This was the case with Dutch in the Netherlands, due to the strength of Jacoba van Velde’s relationship with the author. The serendipitous agency of Avigdor Arikha in bringing Beckett’s texts to Israel is also explored. In the following pages as well, translation appears as a critical process of interpretation and negotiation that keeps evolving in time as retranslations of Beckett texts are felt to be needed by publishers or performers. The issue of language is also central to many of the papers presented. Translation as a linguistic transfer between different languages containing inbuilt differences, is an art in essence doomed to ‘incompletion’ and ‘imperfection’ (Derrida 1985: 165–166). It presented Beckett both with an ordeal and a blessing, a perfectly imperfect means of (re)writing. In that, it strongly echoes his own paradoxical sense of linguistic deprivation and predicament, and presented him with a fertile means of expression that pushed him to continue creating until his death. In seeking to create his ‘literature of the unword’, a kind of writing exploring the gulf between signified and signifier, Beckett already performed a form of translation and disrupted referential models of communication. Thus the difficulty for translators is to reproduce this radical rhetoric in their respective languages, a rhetoric, what is more, that evolved greatly during his career.

As stated before, what we are concerned with in this collection of essays is what happens when the process of translation continues, by other hands, beyond the usual languages in which Beckett wrote, English and French. Yet, partaking in a bilingual *oeuvre*, Beckett's texts actually thrive on the intersection between English and French. Beckett indeed favoured a dynamism or continuous movement back and forth between languages that translation in multiple settings all over the world is constantly re-enacting. The rationale behind this volume of essays is that the intermediate space in Beckett's writing where things happen is, in fact, occupied by the languages and cultures of the world, all of them effectively contributing through translation to creating the far distant murmur which is so familiar to readers of his work. The act of translation into a third language, in this particular case, could be aptly considered a continuation of the denaturalization of language that the author himself implemented when he started writing in French: "sinning" against a foreign language' writes Erika Myhálycsa, 'becomes a necessary step towards the creative misuse of the mother-tongue, a transgressive, demystifying linguistic practice' (2013: 347). French, explains James McGuire, had a 'weakening effect' on the language of his birth. When he in turn translated back into English, the same effect was duplicated, producing a strained language: 'That is to say, Beckett's English becomes estranged, no longer native ... It has acquired its own, original signifying potential, which has been twice distanced from the Queen's English' (1990: 259). When the text is repeated again by means of its translation into a third language, one more step in the same direction is made, a linguistic act connected to the original estrangement devised by the author. Language was always foreign to Beckett. Thus the Beckettian text finds itself at home by being abroad because it is never removed from the crossroads of languages where it was originated.

Of course, translation is a process fraught with external (societal, cultural and political) and internal (linguistic and personal ability of the translator) constraints that affect it. In the different chapters of *Translating Samuel Beckett around the World* the reader will have the opportunity to witness instances when the translator(s) could do nothing but acknowledge defeat and reach a compromise. But going back to the paradoxical condition of the Beckettian text in translation, there is an a priori set of qualities in Beckett's writing (its indeterminacy, its fragmentation and its continuous self-questioning nature) that is particularly fruitful when observing translations in other languages. Beckett was

always haunted by what could not be said and he always advocated the impossibility of saying, together with the imperious need to say. In this context, the study of the translation (diverse, uncertain, inchoate and subject to multiple contingencies) of his works into other languages suddenly appears as the ideal training ground for Beckett scholarship, as two factors are conjoined in a way that is not found together anywhere else – the necessity to make Beckett known in a third country through versions in a new language, on the one hand, and the impossibility to render his work with the same precision that the author conceived it, on the other.

Because they themselves translate a self-translator, translators of Beckett into languages other than French, English (and German), arguably have sometimes up to three source texts at their disposal. The enormous potential in terms of availability of resources that Beckett's bilingualism presents to the translator of his texts into a third language has not been lost for scholars working in the field: 'Contrary to what has been frequently said', Rodríguez-Gago writes, 'I have found Beckett's bilingualism a great help, for one can always turn to the author and see how he, as translator, has solved a particular problem and, if possible, follow his example' (Rodríguez-Gago 1999: 232). Finding a compromise between precision and a thorough knowledge of Beckett's work, together with the recourse to a certain audacity when stuck with a problem, seems to be an adequate way to approach the transfer of languages when it comes to Beckett's literary production (Fernández 2018).

But despite Beckett's example, which can be of great assistance to translators, the professionals in this field do carry out their work in sometimes complicated circumstances, as all kinds of pressures (political, societal and commercial) impinge on their task. The main force towards a good translation lies in the very handling of language on the part of the translator. The fragmented, obsessional and sometimes 'queer' (Beckett 2011: 356) quality of Beckett's discourse can put a great strain even on seasoned translators, who might find themselves tempted to domesticate the text they are working with in order to bring it closer to the reader. This situation is doubly complicated in the case of languages that bear little relationship to the original English or French in which Beckett wrote. As Mariko Hori Tanaka remarked, some 'words in English have more meanings than the equivalent in Japanese'. Considering with dismay the expression 'to and fro' at the beginning of Beckett's poem 'Neither', she realized that the phrase simply was not possible in her language: 'So to make sense I

had to use verbs instead', she lamented (qtd in van der Weel and Hisgen 1993: 353). Even the title she found impossible to translate: 'We have no words for "neither", so I had to explain it by saying something like "not knowing which is the way"' (Ibid.). At the end of the day, translating Beckett is like walking a tightrope and one of the aims of the present volume is to examine some of the solutions found in different languages to overcome such trial.

This book is divided into three sections: reception of Beckett in Northern Europe (Iceland, Sweden and the Netherlands), reception in Southern Europe and South America (Spain, Italy, Argentina and Brazil) and reception in the Middle-East and Asian countries (Turkey, Israel, Pakistan, India and China). An appendix with the list of main translations of Beckett into the language studied in each case is also included at the end of the chapters. Section I opens with an essay by Astradur Eysteinnsson entitled 'Embraces – Empty Spaces. Translation and Reception of Samuel Beckett in Iceland'. Surprisingly enough, Beckett translations started in Iceland in 1958 with the publication of *Acte sans paroles* published in an Icelandic literary journal. *Waiting for Godot* was not staged until 1960 at the Reykjavik City Theatre. Because of its lack of identifiable topics and its inherent nihilism, Beckett drama was difficult to accept by Icelandic audiences used to epic narratives. But this first production of a Beckett play was one further step in the introduction of European modernism in Iceland. *Godot* was followed on stage by Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* in 1961 and Pinter's *The Caretaker* in 1962, and further paved the way for a novel non-realist, experimental vein in Icelandic drama that began in the 1960s and continued into the 1980s. Strikingly, Beckett in Iceland has been more accessible as a playwright than as a prose writer. If some of his short stories were published in 1987, *Molloy*, the first Beckett novel to appear in its entirety in Icelandic, came out only in 2001. The translation did not attract much attention, perhaps because the epic tradition was still too strong and the literary culture still too resistant to such experimental writing.

In 'Beckett in Sweden Then and Now. (Re)Translating *Waiting for Godot*', Charlotta Palmstierna Einarsson explores how in her country Beckett's *oeuvre* is well known, and how, if most of his works have been translated, few people actually read them. To account for this paradox, the author of this chapter firstly surveys the modes of consecration of Beckett in Sweden after the first Swedish production of *Waiting for Godot* took place in 1954 in a peripheral theatre, and traces the trajectory of Beckett

plays from periphery to centre. Translations being without doubt one of the main channels of legitimization of an author and a work, the focus is secondly on the translation process itself, and on how it is likely to change the value of a text. Two translations of *Godot* are compared: the first 1954 one and a translation produced in 1990, which is in current use today. The translation process is examined from the vantage point of the respective translators, who did not translate *Godot* in the same era, and who did not share the same views on the act of translating. While the first translation was based on the French 1952 Minuit text, and was essentially *skopos*-oriented, the 1990 Swedish translation took into account Beckett's later English editions of *Godot*, as well as his theatrical notes. To the source-oriented retranslator, Beckett's interventions as director should be considered improvements to the text, which a translator must take into consideration.

Onno Kusters's 'Stopped in Holland: Samuel Beckett in Dutch Translation' traces the chaotic history of translations of Beckett texts in the Netherlands. This is intimately linked to the biography of the author and to his friendship with Jacoba van Velde. Van Velde, who occasionally served as an agent for Beckett and was instrumental in getting his first full-length plays to the Dutch stage very quickly, translated his drama and some of his prose works into Dutch until her death in 1985. Ever since the early fifties, Beckett, and the Estate after him, have defended van Velde's rights over her translations; and even if these are now outdated, full of flaws and based only on the French versions, they have never been revised. In the 1990s the newly founded journal of the Dutch Samuel Beckett Foundation became an important venue for new translations. And since 2000, next to such literary journals, small publishing houses and private presses have continued to publish Beckett's texts in Dutch. As a result, only *More Pricks Than Kicks* remains untranslated in the Netherlands to this day. What is more, the effect of Beckett translations on Dutch national literature was significant, especially in the late 1970s and 1980s, when interest in Beckett among avant-garde writers in the Netherlands surged. Finally, Onno Kusters discusses his own 2006 rendering of *Watt*, which he based on the two authorized source texts.

Opening Section II, Robert Patrick Murtagh's paper is entitled "'Half in Love": The Translation and Reception of Samuel Beckett in Spain'. Despite the geographical and cultural proximity between France and Spain, despite Beckett's friendship with Spanish dramatist Fernando Arrabal and despite the fact that *Waiting for Godot* was translated into

Spanish as early as 1954, Beckett's work has incompletely permeated Spanish culture to this day and the influence of his theatre is only marginal in Spain. The purpose of this chapter is to expose the political, historical and cultural reasons behind this surprising relative indifference to Beckett drama. Following the Spanish Civil War, foreign works were rejected by the Francoist regime to protect the state from possible subversive anti-Spanish sentiment. As a result, under Franco, *Final de partida*, Luce Moreau Arrabal's translation of *Fin de partie*, was performed in a heavily bowdlerized version, which rendered the play at times senseless and did not reflect well upon the playwright. When state censorship ended in the mid-1970s, new translations did arrive, but the 'Beckett moment' had passed, and the problem of translation remains to this day. Beckett texts in Spain suffer from being published by many different publishing houses, and a majority of translations are but poor reflections of their originals. There is also a pressing need for secondary sources, such as James Knowlson's authorized biography, to be rendered available in Spanish.

Antonio Gambacorta explores Beckett's collaboration with an Italian translator in "My Italian is not up to more": Samuel Beckett, Editor of "Immobile". As is well documented, Beckett showed interest in translations even into languages he did not master, and would proofread translations in the languages he knew like German and Italian, which he had studied as a young man alongside French, or in which he was self-taught like Spanish. But, as Antonio Gambacorta reminds us, Beckett's involvement with the Italian translations of his work was not a norm, and it was generally far from reaching the level of engagement he had with the Tophovens. One counter-example of his involvement with an Italian text is provided by 'Immobile', the translation of which is carefully examined in this chapter. The Italian text was done by Luigi Majno, the owner of a Milanese art gallery, when he took it upon himself to translate 'Still' for a *livre d'artiste* he was preparing with Stanley William Hayter in the early 1970s. On this occasion, Beckett adopted an editing role that impacted heavily on what would become 'Immobile'. This chapter examines the 'corrections and suggestions' Beckett provided. They show a concern to maintain the identity of the text, and represent a rare example of the author's involvement in the translation of his work in Italian.

In 'Translations of Beckett's Work in Argentina', Lucas Margarit and María Inés Castagnino show how Beckett has been present ever since the 1950s in Argentina, where interest in his theatre has influenced the revival of the theatre scene. *Waiting for Godot* was performed many times from

1956 to 1975 by the troupe that premiered it, and after the restoration of democracy, from the mid-1980s, Beckett plays have been even more present all over the country. In the late fifties and early sixties, *Molloy* and *Malone muere* were published by Victoria Ocampo's publishing house Sur, which also introduced Woolf and Faulkner to the South American public. Another important early translation was that of *Act Without Words* as *Acto sin palabras* by poet Roberto Juarroz in 1962, which is evoked at length in this chapter. More recently, Argentinian translations of Beckett texts have been authored by academics such as Laura Cerrato and have appeared, after 1992, in the journal *Beckettiana*. Finally, the author turns to *Esperando a Godot* translated by Pablo Palant in 1954 and published in Buenos Aires; this was the first Argentinian translation of a Beckett text. A playwright himself, Palant was linked to the Argentinian avant-garde of the first half of the twentieth century. He mainly did his version from the French text with an eye on the English one, which had just come out, making it accessible to a national audience, but also readable by Spanish speakers at large.

In the next chapter, entitled 'The Meremost Minimum: Beckett's Translations into Brazilian Portuguese', Renata Vaz Shimbo and Fábio de Souza Andrade study Beckett's influence in Brazil, a country where Beckettian reception began relatively soon. Since the late fifties, there have been many memorable Brazilian productions of Beckett plays, even if the translated play texts were not necessarily printed. As for Beckett's novels, they found their way into Brazilian Portuguese in the 1980s. Nevertheless, serious gaps in the translation of his works persist in Brazilian Portuguese, and Brazilian readers of Beckett sometimes only have access to translations made in Portugal, while differences between the spoken language in Portugal and in Brazil are more important than usually acknowledged. This fact is illustrated by the detailed comparative analysis of the two available versions of *Worstward Ho* in Portuguese – one by the Brazilian translator Ana Helena Souza and the other by the Portuguese translator Miguel Esteves Cardoso. Cardoso's *Pioravante marche* was published in 1988, while Souza's *Pra frente o pior*, came out in 2012. While Cardoso's translation seems to pay greater heed to the book's strangeness, which results in a rather hermetic Portuguese text,

Souza's version of *Worstward Ho* occasionally recreates the text's obscurities, while also, at times, mitigating its enigmatic dimension. Each translation presents us with a unique interpretive appropriation or reinvention of a text in which Beckett 'forces words into unforeseen grammatical instability'.

The first chapter in Section III, by Mehmet Zeki Giritli, is entitled 'Translating Samuel Beckett into a "Non-Western" Culture – the Journey of *Waiting for Godot* in Turkey'. *Waiting for Godot* premiered in Istanbul in 1954 to great acclaim. However, the play, which was blamed for being communist propaganda by the authorities, was quickly banned. This chapter studies the historical, sociocultural and linguistic challenges that presided over the introduction of Beckettian drama into Turkey and contains the first-hand testimony of Uğur Ün, Beckett's main translator in this country. As it happens, local tradition was rather propitious to Beckett aesthetics: the Turkish theatrical tradition is derived from unwritten theatrical sources and is based on improvisational storytelling, while the founding fathers of the new Turkish Republic of 1923 championed Western theatrical forms as part of the modernization ideals of the new state. Mehmet Zeki Giritli further compares two translations of *Godot*, a 1963 one based on the 1952 French original, and a 1993 one based on the 1965 English edition, and reflects upon the rendering of the specific national voices present in each text in a third language. Next to discrepancies due to the choice of source texts, adaptations are to be noted, that make the translations either more accessible or more acceptable to the Turkish public.

Einat Adar and Ronen Sonis, in 'Beckett in "A Distant Place": Early Translations in Hebrew', examine two early translations of Beckett plays into Hebrew in the decade following the creation of the State of Israel. The chapter questions the permeability of Israeli culture to Beckettian experimental theatre in the context of the shaping of a national literature. *Waiting for Godot*, with its lifeless and fatalistic characters seemingly at odds with the vigorous self-reliant figure of the 'New Jew' established by Zionism, got mixed reviews in 1955 when it premiered under the title *Anu Mehakim Le'marel*, 'We Are Waiting for Mr. God'. As suggested by the clarification introduced in the title, and despite its flaws, this first translation brought a new spoken language to the Israeli stage; after that, the play went on to become a classic, and some of the most significant new productions of the play are examined in the light of the tension between the strategies of domestication and foreignization that they evidence.

Likewise, a similar tension can be detected in the first, somewhat hasty translation of *Krapp's Last Tape*. This appeared in 1958 even before its first production in London thanks to Avigdor Arikha who passed on the text to the founder of *Keshet*, a literary magazine whose aim was to 'open windows and bring fresh wind into the rooms of Hebrew literature'.

In 'Domesticating Beckett: The Religious and Political Complexity of Pakistan and *Waiting for Godot*', Muhammad Saeed Nasir notes that very few discussions of Beckett have been undertaken from the angle of Muslim cultures. This chapter attempts to fill this void by analyzing a Pakistani adaptation of *Waiting for Godot*. Pakistan, founded in 1947, is an Islamic republic and Islam is a pervasive religious force in the country where blasphemy is punished against any recognized religion. In this context, the Beckett play, with its noticeable religious subtext, could seem quite unacceptable. In 2008 an NGO focusing on women's rights produced the play under the title *Insha ka Entezaar*, which makes the word 'God' explicit. Beckett's text was both localized and modernized, as the free adaptation evoked the plight of women and the sociopolitical situation of Pakistan at large. What is more, the Pakistani text avoided many of the religious allusions found in the original one, which were either domesticated or self-censored. Nevertheless, the evasion of Beckett's religious material ironically made the religious subtext even more present as it pointed to how the exploitation of religion has radicalized Pakistan by befooling the masses. Thus, it provided the Pakistani audience with food for thought.

In his chapter 'Translating Samuel Beckett into Hindi', Thirthankar Chakraborty starts his analysis of Beckett in India with the earliest translations of *Waiting for Godot* (1953) into Bengali and Hindi in the late 1950s. He argues that Samuel Beckett's works have circulated increasingly through India's rich theatrical scene, with further translations and adaptations into the major languages that occasionally have more than a single variation. In his essay, Chakraborty lists and briefly discusses a selection of these translations across the various Indian states, then analyses the variations between these translations that reflect the political scenario of the country. Furthermore, the study presents a close look at two recent Hindi versions of the play, adapted by the critically acclaimed theatre directors Satyabrata Rout and Mohit Tripathi, while exploring the universality of Beckett's chef-d'oeuvre and divulging the salient features that make these translations successful in the Indian context.

Finally, in ‘From Bits and Pieces to an Ensemble: Translating Samuel Beckett in Mainland China’ Aiying Liu shows that the engagement of scholars and literati with Beckett’s works in this part of the world was very slow in coming for political reasons. With the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, the translation, publication and circulation of any foreign literature had to cater for the political agenda of the new government, and Samuel Beckett was not among Western authors favoured by the Chinese Communist Party. *Waiting for Godot* was translated in 1965, but still the play remained inaccessible to the general public, and the translations really commenced after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when the need to learn from outside literature was championed by the Chinese government. But if Beckett attracted more and more critical attention from the 1970s onwards, progress in translation was still actually quite slow. Only very few of Beckett’s works were available in Chinese before the early 2000s, and there was also a lack of variety in terms of genre. 2006 was a critical year: Beckett scholars organized a series of events to celebrate Beckett’s centenary, and decided to publish Beckett’s complete works. Since then, a team of nineteen academics has joined forces to translate all of Beckett’s texts into Mandarin Chinese, which came out in twenty-two volumes in 2016–2017.

The translation of Beckett around the world tells the story of an uneven expansion and reception: only in the last decade has a full translation of Beckett’s works been completed in China, while *Godot* in Argentina was a success from the very beginning. It was in Buenos Aires that the first translation ever of a Beckett text was published in the Hispanic world (Fernández-Quesada, Fernández, Santano Moreno 2019). By offering a panoramic view of the intricacies and negotiations that Beckett texts have undergone in a variety of languages and parts of the world, this volume offers revealing case studies of foreign literature at the crossroads of a globalized culture, even if more countries have inevitably been left out than actually included. We have highlighted in this volume countries where Beckett-related events are happening and being documented, whether in the field of literary criticism or in the field of new publications and translations, and also where scholars have interrogated the reception of Beckett in their respective countries. This means that there is much room for more research, be it in mega-languages like Arabic or about continents like Africa where studies are only, for the time being at least, few and far between (Rabeh 2017; Saddiki 2008). With its apparently rootless characters, Beckettian texts resonate strongly in parts of

the Arabic world, where Beckett had strong ties – his wife’s father was a former French Colonial officer in North Africa and he had made a habit of sojourning in Tunisia and Morocco after he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1969. *Godot* has for instance been translated into Berber and Algerian Arabic, and is performed regularly in Maghreb. Indeed, among other topical issues, the play speaks to a new world order that is throwing more and more displaced people onto the roads, people who desperately seek refuge in former colonial powers like Britain or France. This study is thus of paramount importance if we believe in Beckett as a referent for mankind in our uncertain times. Hopefully, the reading of *Translating Samuel Beckett around the World* will trigger research in areas of the globe not covered in the following pages.

Almería, Spain  
Talence, France

José Francisco Fernández  
Pascale Sardin

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## PRAISE FOR *TRANSLATING SAMUEL BECKETT* AROUND THE WORLD

“It is an unprecedented critical journey around the world that José Francisco Fernández and Pascale Sardin present in this rewarding collection of essays. *Translating Samuel Beckett around the World* offers an inclusive foray into the art of translation beyond the confines of French and English. The bold series of linguistic explorations chronicles the shifting geography of the translations of Beckett’s works and probes into the cultural and political resonances of the rewriting practices in their various national contexts.”

—Nadia Louar, *University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, USA*

“That Beckett’s work is now treated as ‘world literature’ is largely thanks to translations into the most diverse languages, from Icelandic to Chinese. Fernández and Sardin have done a brilliant job in assembling this rich and timely volume of essays, drawing attention to the challenges of translating an author who was a self-translator himself and foregrounding the important work of translators around the globe.”

—Dirk Van Hulle, *University of Oxford, UK*

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