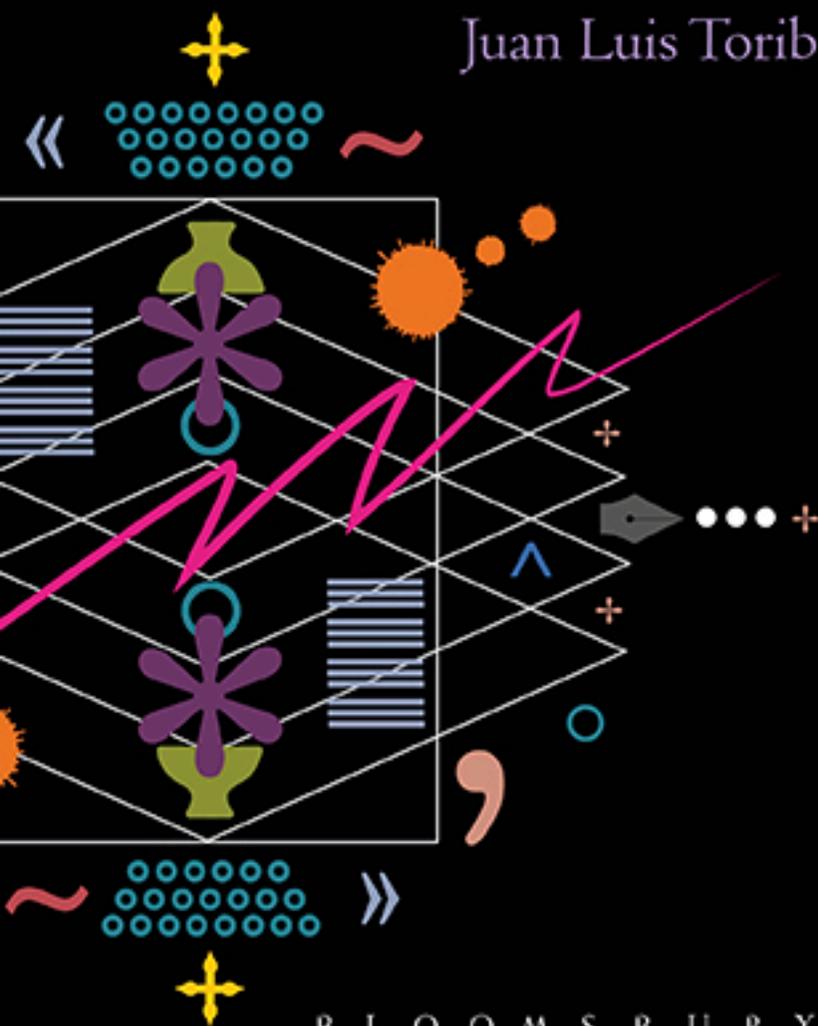


LITERATURES AS WORLD LITERATURE

Samuel Beckett as World Literature

Edited by
Thirthankar Chakraborty &
Juan Luis Toribio Vazquez



B L O O M S B U R Y

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Thirthankar Chakraborty and
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Echoes, rags and bones: A few Brazilian Becketts on the way

Fábio de Souza Andrade

When considering Beckett's reception in Brazil, one must sound at least a bit like Caliban (see Morse 1981: n.p.). The necessary perspective is of one being completely seduced by, yet at the same time rather suspicious and resentful of the compelling power of a master's voice, even if not one's own master's voice. How to avoid being converted into an echo chamber of such a prestigious, precise and alluring architecture of ruins? Is it at all possible not to be completely swallowed by his work, to read Beckett's plays and prose from an interested, active, unusual point of view, but still preserve the spirit of his poetics, so strictly connected to the flesh of his revolutionary form? Studying the Brazilian reception of Beckett's work provides an invaluable occasion for considering how world literature builds on the basis of a permanent political and aesthetic debate, a rather complex, active and not at all innocent process. Even though translation and untranslatability, editorial history and academic critical readings are also crucial aspects of this reception, nowhere are these conflictive aspects more visible than in practical matters concerned in staging and adaptation.

Some violence is intrinsic to any process of conceptual appropriation; reverence is constantly mixed with occasional fury. To misquote Titus Andronicus, a creative reading does not have to – and should not, by the way – ‘grind your bones to dust/and with your blood and it [...] make a paste’, a vital elixir that keeps no trace of its starting point. Beckett's backbone is far more resistant than that, *et pour cause*. Like the resurrected

Belacqua, in the recently published *Echo's Bones*, attending a concept play we must anxiously wait, breath suspended, to find out in the end if the current grave-diggers did not destroy the object of their quest in the hurry of revealing it. That certainly stands valid for Brazilian readings of Beckettian drama in our days.

This chapter provides an overview of the twenty-first-century reception of Beckett in Brazil, giving an account of three very recent local productions of his work: Isabel Teixeira's *Fim de jogo* (*Endgame*), Isabel Cavalcanti's *Moi lui* (based on *Molloy*) and Fernando and Adriano Guimarães's *Ocupação Sozinhos Juntos* (*Together Alone Occupation*). All of them are fully accomplished examples of the challenges involved in staging Beckett in a peripheral cultural context, each of them dealing with distinct and complementary aspects of his canon – early plays, late plays and the transposition of prose fiction to the stage.

Though many other contemporary Brazilian productions could be mentioned as well, none were exemplary as these mentioned above, having in mind Beckett's fundamental ambiguities. All three of them, each in its own way, pay a successful tribute to his profile as an artist, radically exploring an aesthetic of fragments, resistant to allegorical readings, firmly grounded on the tense instability of *aporia*, oscillating, on the page or on the stage, between the chaos of modern experience and the transfiguring power of fancy, presence and absence, physicality and imagery.¹

Fim de jogo (*Endgame*), Isabel Teixeira, Renato Borghi and Élcio Nogueira, 2016

Almost sixty years after the world première (and the Brazilian one too, as a matter of fact), Isabel Teixeira directed *Fim de jogo* (*Endgame*) in strict adherence to the original text, avoiding the trap of pinning down the characters to particular historical circumstances, such as life after the nuclear holocaust or under military dictatorship. Like previous Brazilian productions, it has managed to escape legal battles and public controversy, as JoAnne Akalaitis's American *Endgame* (1984), for instance, had not. Even in a globalized world, Brazilian stages are still quite remote and Brazilian directors enjoy an occasional indulgence, far away from the vigilant eyes of the Literary Estate of Samuel Beckett.

And yet this production is rather on the experimental side. The young director, Isabel Teixeira, and the also young stage partner of Renato Borghi, Élcio Nogueira, were both responsible for a very prolific Beckettian workshop in 1999. Meant for actors, playwrights, sound and light designers, it resulted in a series of Beckett-inspired performances, as well as visual

installations and musical compositions. Teixeira directed a staging of *Eleutheria* (2013) gathering the actors that were graduating that year at the Laboratory Theatre of Escola de Arte Dramática (EAD), the drama school at the University of São Paulo.

It is worth mentioning that at the same school Alfredo Mesquita (about whom Beckett wrote to Jerome Lindon, asking for his permission concerning the performance rights) produced the first Brazilian *Esperando Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*) in 1955. Actual productions of *Eleutheria* are rare and Teixeira corresponded to the explicit avant-gardist mood of the play in her production in many aspects. Having to deal with a plethora of characters in a rather modest theatre, without proper wings or backstage space, she even multiplied these characters into several actors playing the same role; the rotating platform on which the action was meant to take place, comprising both Victor's bedroom and the Krapps' living room – the latter occupying a growing part of the setting in each new act of the play – was replaced by a lit rectangular area at the centre of the stage, surrounded by niches in the dark. The costumes were colourful and very sharply angled, of modernist inspiration.

The famed Brazilian actor Renato Borghi, who played Hamm, has taken part in most of the key moments of recent Brazilian theatrical history, from the incorporation of twentieth-century politically engaged North American realism to the very origins of a modern local dramaturgy, an attempt to deal directly with Brazilian issues and, simultaneously, to assimilate the international language of the avant-garde. He has trodden the whole path from a Brechtian epic acting school to the rising role of physicality in performance, at the expense of the centrality of the text. He was personally involved in the founding of one of the most daring and long-lasting Brazilian avant-gardist companies, Teatro Oficina. Besides that, he took part in productions of another politically engaged sixties group, Arena, associated with Augusto Boal, during the first steps of what would turn out to be Teatro do Oprimido. He has discussed and digested from Stanislavski to Grotowski and has won several of the most prestigious awards in Brazil.

The confluence of Borghi and Teixeira around *Endgame* brought together, on the one hand, a whole life devoted to acting, directing and producing, with a yearning to sum it all up and, on the other, that of two young artists in search of new perspectives. The meta-theatrical material of the play was at the core of the project from the very beginning, as well as the *parti pris* that they were not going for a conventional production. What they most had in mind was to concentrate on the radical interrogation of the contemporary possibilities and limits of drama. They were not working on the same project for the first time though, for Élcio Nogueira and Renato Borghi have run their own company for more than ten years, having directed and produced Brecht, Chekhov and Genet, among others.

Endgame is a play about characters trapped in the stage so that spatial issues, such as scenic architecture and the symbolic or allegorical interpretations raised by the setting, are crucial to its dramatic effect. Aware of this, and willing to stress the theatricality and the reflexivity that sustain the text, Teixeira began by entertaining the possibility of producing it in a solemn house, such as the São Paulo Municipal Theatre, built after the Parisian Opéra Garnier. She envisaged the action as limited to the stage elevator. The audience would be reduced to a few spectators each night accommodated in temporary seat rows improvised back stage, opposite to the splendid, unoccupied velvet seats. Though inventive, this plan proved to be extravagant and costly enough not to be carried through.

Nonetheless, obsessed by the thought of relocating not the action in *Endgame* but the spatial circumstances involving the performance, the acting itself, she came across her solution looking through the wrong side of the eyeglasses, just like Clov. Instead of a sumptuous hall, they decided to invade another alien space: Borghi's own ground floor apartment's living room, conveniently emptied for the occasion. As in Kantor's experiences, their *Endgame* was now conceived as chamber, or rather pocket, theatre introduced in a strange, if not frankly hostile, domestic environment. Closeness and intimacy reinforced the play's tendency to be apprehended first by the nerves and only secondarily by the intellect.

Teixeira decided to recuperate solutions that Beckett had considered and eventually discarded during the process of writing the play. Exploring proto-versions and archival typescripts such as '*avant fin de partie*' and '*early endgame*', kept in Reading, Dublin and Austin, she decided to go back in time and restore a moment in the creative process when the actors on stage were only two, the pair of protagonists, Hamm, the blind tyrant confined to a chair, Clov, his factotum unable to sit, and both multiplying their voices to incorporate Nagg and Nell. The falsetto and transvestism once cogitated by Beckett found their way back into the play, as formal procedures that re-enact its reflexive essence.

Another layer of meaning came from the fact that Renato Borghi and Élcio Nogueira actually live together as a couple and the former had just overcome a long physical ordeal, which resulted in temporary paralysis due to excruciating pains in the spine. During Borghi's recovery period, Nogueira performed as his nurse for a certain time, and both suddenly realized that they were already living *Endgame*'s routine, tied to the house and involuntarily repeating circular dialogues. Jan Kott and Marjorie Perloff have written about the sort of memories Beckett's plays can activate in those who live the routine of being ill, restricted to a bed or a chair, in hospital, for instance, and have shown the great importance insignificant objects may acquire in these situations.

Beckett's plays farcically recapitulate modern dramatic history, parading, as Adorno points out, its failed techniques and senile conventions and

producing a second-degree realism made of fragmented expressions, meaningless words and reasoning leftovers. These make a profound impression on us, creating a language so flagrantly familiar and at the same time so very foreign. The same applies to the portrayal of forced confinement in an enclosed space, the delirious verbal fancy trying to counterbalance the lack of variety, the multiplied imaginary voices trying to fill the void of life 'together alone', as Beckett names this experience in *Ohio Impromptu* (1981). In this production, a realistic resonance of that kind certainly is part of the game, as Borghi recalls having performed as a young actor several times in private residences for the delight of wealthy people, but this is far from being a key for interpretation.

Taking seriously the confinement so dear to Beckett, particularly in his late drama, and having chosen to perform the play 'together alone' in the living room of the apartment they would continue to live in during the season, dealing with the complicated logistics was nothing compared to the consequences of having only a pair of actors on stage. Suppressing the actual physical presence of Nagg and Nell is by far the most profound and consequential intervention. They still are in the play but now, symbolized by portraits, turned into things, or rather puppets, now dependent on Clov to be activated. Though the text has not been cut and their lines are all delivered, their bodily presence, sometimes veiled, sometimes explicit, is no longer there. The grotesque elements such as their severed limbs, the sand, the alluded corporal holes, the hunger, tend to become more abstract. On the down side, though they are still the repositories of the infernal pregnancy of yesterday in the present day, accompanying the remembrance of the Lake Como narrative by a waltz – and discreet use of music is part of this show – simplifies their role in provoking pathetic nostalgia.

The transformation of the stage into a domestic space also brings surprising interpretative consequences to the production. Arriving at the apartment is part of the strangeness of the experience. After queuing at a cultural centre five minutes' walking distance from Borghi's house, the spectators are given tickets and a map. The role of welcoming the audience at the front door is taken by a prompter, an addition to Beckett's text, a new character that also operates light and sound during the play. Located behind the audience, he also repeats, once or twice, allegedly forgotten lines. The right window is the room's own window, facing the car entrance of the building, and the left one is represented by a lit opening in a wardrobe on the opposite side. There is a real kitchen, close to the left window, visible through an occasionally open door, where Clov still finds his shelter, and a real toilet, from where he speaks, out of scene, to Hamm. Two drawers, respectively at the right and left extremities of a large sideboard (a family piece of furniture) placed behind Hamm's chair, provide wombs/tombs for Nagg and Nell, who are represented by pictures of Borghi's actual parents.

Left to the audience, off centre, close to the prompt, a false mantelpiece decorated with several of the prizes collected by Borghi throughout his career (with busts of Molière and Shakespeare among them), displays an artificial blue light, the play's equivalent of Lake Como, where Nagg and Nell fly to, conducted by Clov's hands, when approaching their final silence. Playing Clov and Nagg, Nogueira uses the busts as puppets, helping him to tell the tailor's anecdote. When representing the tailor, he has Molière in hand and talks in French accent. When representing the Englishman, he holds Shakespeare's statuette.

Besides altering the dialectical interplay between immobility and movement, so vital in the play, the new stage configuration simultaneously changes the dynamic of the eye, for now there is action taking place close to the mantelpiece. Hamm's prerogative at the centre is no longer unique. At the same time, the intimacy of a minimum and less peopled setting, excluding the actors that play Nagg and Nell, so close to the audience, goes further in exploring the visual meanings that the symmetric and asymmetric postures adopted by the actors on stage suggest. A visual translation of this occurs in the final *agon*, when Clov, even if unable to sit, does so and faces Hamm directly, indicating perhaps a new correlation between them. In this production, actors are always on the edge of physical contact, recuperating the persistent menace of violence and tenderness already important in the final text, but much more so in the proto-versions of the play. As for the potential strangeness of the props, which might be naturalized in the context of the domestic realm, it is reinforced by the providing of a stick, taped as a splint to Clov's damaged leg, which later, when violently torn away from him, will alternately pass for a gaff, eyeglasses or a paddle.

The stress put on the meta-theatrical aspects of the play is reflected in the protagonists' acting, which is not naturalistic but suggests an implicit ironic subtext, a silent comment on their gestures, attitudes and words. Revealed or not, the uncertain aspect of the characters' memories, desires and intentions, a mix of presence and absence, invention and remembrance, assumes in this production a very concrete and material scenic translation and extreme physicality rules.

One might say that the fictional and dramatic voice of the late Beckettian style, dramatically consummated in the complex enunciative devices of *Nohow on* (1989) or plays like *Ohio Impromptu*, retroacts and influences the interpretative decisions of this production. This seems to be a good way of avoiding the risk of an officialized version of Beckett, by exploring the possible internal resonances of the different phases of his oeuvre *ex post* and renewing his own artistic procedures and experiences by providing new contexts to them.

Before moving on to another Brazilian production of Beckett's work, I should point that arrangements are being made to repeat this version of *Endgame*, this time replicating the whole apartment for a short period in a

cultural centre; the strange and the familiar are duplicated a second time. Overall, this would be perfectly coherent with the fundamental premise of the play – there's no other place allowed to the actor but the stage – and the rigorous attention to spacing, movement and position Beckett employed when writing it.²

Moi lui, Isabel Cavalcanti and Ana Kfourri, Sesc Pompeia, 2014

Isabel Cavalcanti, an actress and director from Rio de Janeiro, first approached Beckett as a scholar when writing a PhD thesis on the scattered I in his dramatic and narrative works, particularly in *Not I*, later published as a book (cf. Cavalcanti 2006). Her practical experience with his plays is also very significant and diverse, having directed Sérgio Brito, a recently deceased great Brazilian actor, in *Krapp's Last Tape* (1969) and *Act without Words I* (1957). His distinguished quality, his physical fragility on stage due to old age, and her informed intuition, following Beckett's indications very closely, resulted in a remarkable staging.

But it is precisely when she took risks in an already explored, though not nearly exhausted territory – the transposition to the stage of works originally conceived for other media – that Isabel Cavalcanti revealed herself as someone prepared to face the challenges Beckettian poetics poses. From Jack McGowran's *Beginning to End* (1968) to the recent production of the radio plays on the stage by the Pan Pan Theatre, this is a minefield which pays the lucky hits highly. Cavalcanti concentrated on the post-war works, namely on *Molloy* (1951), and directed Ana Kfourri performing solo extracts of the novel's first part, double billing with director Antonio Guedes's adaptation of 'First Love' (1941).

Both adaptations meant to materialize the voice's instability – permanently contradicting itself, suspending the truth of every single statement – and critically examine the way it plies into many. How to dramatically convey the characteristic self-analytical, self-despising, self-mocking process of the Beckettian prose of the period? From the title, a wordplay on the impossibility of saying I and a comment on the inevitable broken nature of modern subjectivity, her decision was to be as discreet and minimalist as possible, just underscoring the potential divisions of the voice already inscribed in the text. The choice of the fragments was faithful to the nature of the book and its peculiar form of plot, resistant to any attempt of paraphrase. Cavalcanti was successful in recreating on the stage the paradoxical nature of a voice in constant structural doubt and managed to avoid any trace of a conceptual framework which might have given birth to a misleading dramatic arc, non-existent in the novel.

Even though one will recognize episodes such as Molloy's sucking stones, his tumbling into social assistance, his sado-comic attempts at communicating with his mother, there is no imposition of a teleological progression upon them in the play. Dressed as a Beckettian clochard, set in a devastated land, she is alone on the stage, but for a few props (a lamp, projecting shades shaped like bicycle wheels, a suitcase, a wheelchair). Notwithstanding it is a woman playing Molloy, her very short haircut, as well as the sharpness of her features and diction conceal this circumstance. Playing to a small audience of about fifty people each night, Ana Kfourri utters the monologues as if they were a dialogue: dissenting from herself, alternating moods, darting here and there a suspicious and defying look, giving full release to her gangrenous, entropic voice, but not lacking humour (see Figure 1).

The moments when the play parts from this less-is-more aesthetics are only a few, but significant. In the opening section, Molloy is spoken of in the third person, suggesting he might be a character in the mind of an author unable to say I himself. The same happens in the final section, when a mist of glycerine invades the stage and a rope ladder falls from the top, similar to the bottle of water in *Act without Words I*, somehow suggesting a common ground to Beckett's several assaults on conventional language, both narrative and dramatic.



FIGURE 1 Ana Kfourri directed by Isabel Cavalcanti in *Moi lui*, 2014. Dalton Valério.

Primeiro amor (First Love), presented as a double bill with *Moi lui*, chooses a similar minimalist approach, observing the first steps of Beckett's first-person voice in the post-war period, its self-cancelling and scattering effects. The setting is arranged around a stone bench, central to the story, on which the protagonist remains seated throughout the whole play, alternatively staring at the audience seated in three improvised rows very close to the action. On the ground, projections evoke some of the central elements of her tale such as the autumn leaves in turmoil, later converted into a whirlwind of projected words, mixed together by the hesitant memory and language of the protagonist, his self-reflexive verbal bursts denouncing his own fictionalized nature and complete mistrust in the efficiency of his report.

The search for a scenic equivalent for this uncertain and tentative voice, moved by a compulsion to fail, contrasts flagrantly with another Brazilian transposition of Beckett's fictional prose to the stage which took place practically at the same time. A company called Club Noir, with its focus on the investigation of the voice both as theoretical object and dramatic instrument, staged *Triptico Beckett* in 2014, inspired by the so-called late trilogy.

In a black box, a particular favourite of the company's productions, and in the dark, three actresses – Paula Spinelli, Nathália Timberg and Juliana Galdino – speak alternately, fixed at precise spots during the whole play: Paula, left stage; Timberg, centre stage; and Juliana on the right. Their costumes mark them as women at different stages of their lives. Paula is dressed as a high school student; Timberg, the only sitting character, wears a black robe that contrasts with her long white hair, immediately recognizable as one of Beckett's late plays' female protagonists; and Galdino, wearing a jogging suit and running shoes, suggests a middle-aged woman. Each one performs extracts from a different volume: Spinelli recites some of *Company*'s second-person narrated memories, Timberg, passages from *Ill Seen, Ill Said*, and Juliana, parts of *Worstward Ho*.

In contrast to *Moi lui*, here the result completely ignores the beauty of the complex linguistic achievements of the narrator of Beckett's final prose. There's no trace left of the aesthetic and epistemological consequences involved in his writing. By suggesting that the same female voice runs throughout the three novels, reading them as sequential, the play creates a universe of its own, not only parallel, but rather plain, paying no heed to the anguishing pronominal war (to use Gontarski's phrasing) being fought in them. If drama is already there, taking place in language, there is no need to provide extra doses by forging a plot. Finally, the only meaningful stage prop is a huge skeleton, hanging close to the back wall behind the seated actress. It is almost impossible to figure out how one could be more literal, annihilating the huge evocative power of the expression/image 'frescoes of the skull'. The contrast between these two simultaneous productions

demonstrates how much reinventing Beckett depends on being conscious of his own formal consciousness, extremely demanding and precise in the origin.

Fernando and Adriano Guimarães's *Ocupação Sozinhos Juntos*, SESC Belenzinho, SP, 2015

Not only has Beckett frequently meditated on the imaginative process from the point of view of a fine connoisseur of visual arts – in his essays, notebooks and correspondences – but often inspired the imagination of composers, choreographers, video artists and painters as well, from Morton Feldman to Maguy Marin and Bruce Nauman. In Brazil nowadays, one of the most interesting and active aspects of the contemporary reception of his works relates to this feature. Adriano and Fernando Guimarães, known as *Irmãos Guimarães* (Guimarães Brothers), originally visual artists, migrated to performance and theatre and have been exploring sculpture and video art to promote exhibitions based on Beckett ever since. They also direct his plays, training and specializing actors in Beckettian procedures (both teach in Brasília). They have also performed worldwide: in Avignon, L.A., Paris and London.

Their most recent Beckettian season, *Ocupação Sozinhos Juntos* (*Together Alone Occupation*), four weeks of intense and varied activities in a cultural centre in São Paulo in May 2015, started with *Act without Words I* and *II*, then *Footfalls* and *Ohio Impromptu*, and the television plays *Quad I* and *Quad II*. The Guimarães Brothers organized a series of debates, productions of the plays and of plays inspired by them, as well as performances inspired by Beckett's prose. In one of them, for nine hours in a row, an actor occupying a glass room reads *The Unnamable* (1953) without interruption until exhaustion. Under constant observation and submitted to a diminishing light, he physically experiments a growing uneasiness, analogue to the one experimented by the novel's elusive I. In another one, the spectators sitting in total darkness on randomly disposed chairs listen to a blend of memories and fiction narrated by an actress who rambles between them, always hesitating between third and first person.³

As a whole, *Ocupação Sozinhos Juntos* offered a repertoire of Beckettian procedures and concerns – the exploration of series and repetition, care for the fragment and the presentational and representational aspects of the image – translated and recreated with diverse degrees of freedom by artists that have been digesting it for a long time. In alternate nights, two double-bill programmes, entitled *Fôlego* (Breath I) and *Sopro* (Breath II), brought together *Footfalls* and *Act without Words I* on the one hand, and *Act without Words II* and *Ohio Impromptu* on the other. The spirit oscillated between

a staging modelled after Beckett's own productions of his plays, tied to the instructions he inscribed in the texts, and frank recreations *d'après* Beckett. *Footfalls* and *Ohio Impromptu* were conceived in the former mode, both *Acts* in the latter.

The most impressive of all these productions is certainly *Act without Words I*. The Sisyphean dynamics of the play, the learning of resistance by desistance, was completely reinvented from the first intuition of an image: a huge industrial fan propellers like the ones employed by the airplane and car industry. Having *Breath* (1969) in mind, converting the stage itself into a gigantic breathing body, an ephemeral and entropic machine whose brief span a blink condenses and symbolizes, the Guimarães Brothers replaced the mythological background of the Beckettian mime for a modern domestic context, without neutralizing its strangeness. An extremely fragile old lady painfully crosses a long and narrow stage from left to right leaning on a stick. Half way, she passes a cupboard storing cups, kettles, towels; at the right end, a table, presumable place of her tea, waits, close to the fan, gradually gathering speed; at the left end, a music stand supports a ream of white paper.

The fan takes on the role of the unpredictable and sadistic machinery that in the original *Act without Words I* prevents the protagonist from fulfilling his plans and drinking his water. During her many attempts to set the table and prepare her tea, the intensity of the wind and the deafening noise increase exponentially, resulting in an invincible vortex. Against all odds, however, the old lady goes on trying, fragile, but resilient. Elements such as her long dancing foulard, the flying pieces of paper and the water coming out of the kettle that never reaches the cup visually materialize the wind's cruelty. The final image of great impact, just before the curtain closes, is of her drinking the tea under the implacable noise of the fan (see Figure 2).

This image subverts, in a way, what is implied by the final refusal of the thirsty dying man of *Act without Words I*, giving up the deceptive offers and finally finding out the power of resisting through denial. In the Guimarães reading of the play, ultimately and against all odds, the lady manages to have her tea, in contrast to the man who gives up on the *carafe* of water. This subversion shows how deeply the Guimarães have penetrated *in terra samuelis*, as collectors that developed a sharp internal memory of Beckett's dramatic universe, allowing themselves daring recombination of fragments, exploring the tattered syntax in their own fashion.

The same stands valid for *Quadrado (Square)*, a new recreation for the stage of the televisual plays, *Quad I* and *II*, set in a big black box. Abandoning the small screen frame, they have also left behind the single perspective which the camera forces on the spectators, who are now distributed on chairs that are placed along three walls surrounding the stage proper: a central square delimited by light. The naked actors wait for the audience to come in, under dim light, and take seats next to them, already sitting here



FIGURE 2 *Yara de Cunto* directed by *Guimarães Brothers* in *Sopro* (d'après *Act without Words I*), *Ocupação Sozinhos Juntos*, 2015. *Ismael Monticelli*.



FIGURE 3 *Quadrado* (d'après *Quad*), *Ocupação Sozinhos Juntos*, directed by *Guimarães Brothers*, 2015. *Ismael Monticelli*.

and there. Then the lights go off to the point of a complete blackout, only to come back very timidly and gradually, illuminating once more the central area, rather guessed than seen until then, in which the actors reappear, barely recognizable, combined in a huge collective body made of interwoven limbs. It takes some time before one can conclude that they are moving across the stage. Their minimal and slow movements, almost imperceptible under the feeble light, also intensify gradually (see Figure 3).

When the reflectors provide plenty of light, the collective body dissolves and the actors, four men and three women, rejoin the audience, to fetch boxes full of clothes, which they empty on the three sides of the square, leaving them on the floor. The square is visible once more and the following action brings some chaos and chance into *Quad's* original structure, as they come in and out of it, alone, in twos or threes, and walk within its limits, avoiding collisions. At the same time, they pick up and dress some of the abandoned clothes, no manifest method to be found: either just a skirt or a blouse and a coat, or only underwear, all of different colours and regardless of gender. In this come and go, when out of the arena, they sit again next to the audience, occasionally naked or half naked.

Two different moments follow: back on the stage, the actors first engage in dressing the clothes one piece over the other and, subsequently, begin to share the same piece of clothing simultaneously, one getting into the other's garments, building up sculptural pairs and trios, assuming multiple configurations, materializing androgynous and mutant bodies, the human origami, as Stanley Gontarski calls it, typical of late Beckettian prose. Finally, glasses and bottles are added to the game, complicating the choreography through their attempts of serving one another.

In his televised works Beckett dismissed the supposed documentary realism this medium is associated with, exploring different non-synchronous rhythms of voice-over and images, recurring to big close-ups and unusual framings and deconstructing conventions of televised language. *Quadrado* is a performance that translates this interrogative drive into another medium, incorporating the suspension between the representative and presentative, an ambiguity typical of his late work. Is it a body, many bodies, what you nearly see? Are we talking about men and women or a new creature, multi-limbed, a sort of human crab?

The superb light and setting design suggest this oscillation between form and formlessness, systolic and diastolic tempo that embrace Beckett's final images, simultaneously evanescent and full of energy, finding a performative, plastic-choreographic equivalent to it. They bring to one's mind the eventual androgyny of the closed space narratives' characters, the moving population in the cylinder from *The Lost Ones* (1970), the power games in the mimes.

It is hard to tell from these three examples if we could possibly extract a single common tendency in the Brazilian reception of Beckett's work, a Brazilian way of combining his unique language to local traditions and

debate. To extract unpredictable consequences of Western modernist drives has always been a way of affirming Brazilian identity and the melting pot has been a current (and accurate) metaphor to describe the process. Resistant to complete dissolution in a new synthesis, his paradoxes and aporias made of remains persist as irreconcilable foreign bodies in each new artistic resonance, hard as bones. In a way, the following lines from Yeats's later years finely sum up the reception of Beckett in Brazil:

Those masterful images because complete
 Grew in pure mind but out of what began?
 A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
 Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
 Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
 Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone
 I must lie down where all the ladders start
 In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.

(Yeats 1989: 347–8)

Notes

- 1 For a historical approach of Beckett's Brazilian reception, see Correa (2007) as well as Andrade (2014).
- 2 Indeed, a second production of Teixeira's *Fim de jogo* (*Endgame*) was staged in Rio's *Cassino da Urca*, in August 2016. Abandoned since 1946, when gambling was declared illegal in Brazil, the place was in ruins. After the end of the play's season, a complete renovation of the ancient building began.
- 3 On the Guimarães Brothers and the art of performance, see Gatti (2015).

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