University of Tulsa

Beckett and Queneau as Formalists
Author(s): Stanley E. Gray
Source: *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Beckett Issue (Summer, 1971), pp. 392-404
Published by: University of Tulsa
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486930
Accessed: 11-06-2016 11:49 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://about.jstor.org/terms

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Tulsa is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *James Joyce Quarterly*

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

Stanley E. Gray

Beckett and Queneau as Formalists

Beckett has said that he is interested in the shape of ideas, even if he doesn't believe in these ideas. Descartes, for example, the philosopher who has had the strongest influence on him, fascinates him mainly as an idea-shaper, an artist. "Beckett would seem to be the first to have read the *Discours de la méthode* as what it is, a work of fiction," says Hugh Kenner.[1] And the artists whom Beckett admires are those who clearly think of themselves as shapers, fabricators. Thus he praises Joyce because, as he puts it, this novelist does not write *about* something, he writes something.

The honor of being the first to see the *Discours de la méthode* as a work of fiction, if in fact it should not be bestowed on someone much earlier, should at least be shared with Raymond Queneau, whose earliest writing concerns Descartes and appeared at about the same time as Beckett's. It is true that Beckett's poem *Whoroscope* (1930), in which Descartes is speaker and protagonist, antedates Queneau's first novel, *Le chiendent* (1933), but one doesn't really find in this poem the shape of Cartesian philosophy as it will appear in Beckett's later works. *Le chiendent,* on the other hand, is a curious formalistic construction modeled on the *Discours de la méthode,* which Queneau clearly sees, along with other philosophical structures, as fictional. The question of priority is, of course, unimportant, and some such view of philosophy is perfectly natural in a period strongly influenced by Hegel, Freud and Surrealism. In any case, Queneau's masters are those of Beckett: Joyce and Proust, novelists who, as Queneau says, are among the earliest to have *constructed* a novel.[2] It is this interest in construction, this almost "constructivist" attitude (in the sense given this term in the plastic arts) which I wish to examine in the two

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

writers, first as it is expressed in humor (especially parody) and the criticism of culture, then as an aspect of creation.

Since Beckett and Queneau share an apparent unconcern for politics and since neither provides controls over the use to which society might put his works – Beckett is too closed or hermetic, Queneau too open or indeterminate – they are easy targets for standard Marxist attacks on formalism. Yet I think there is a sense in which these writers are critics of culture, and radical ones, precisely because of their formalist experiments.

I am assuming here that art and society are not simply two separate worlds which might or might not interact, interfere with or imitate each other, but that society is a culture, culture a symbolic system or language and the various arts forms of this language. Society, in other words, nowhere expresses itself more clearly than in artistic forms or structures. Beckett and Queneau are critics of culture because their humor is largely directed towards current norms in the articulation of this cultural language.

Dissimilar, even opposed in many ways, they are quite close in the way they regard the role of form in the literary message. From the beginning of their careers, both seem to have been sensitive to the comic possibilities of the fact that literary forms, like linguistic signs, are arbitrary. Since the concealment of the arbitrary nature of such signs has been a major feature of our modern culture, the unmasking and humorous exploitation of this arbitrariness amounts to a radical criticism, not just of culture but of a particular culture. Beckett and Queneau have practiced this criticism in several genres. To simplify my comparison, I will choose most of my examples from the form they have mainly worked in common, the prose *récit* or novel. I have divided these examples into three categories. The first consists of devices which call unexpected attention to the fact that a language is being used; the second assembles various means used to expose the arbitrariness of literary structures and criticize their mimetic pretensions; the third describes forms which, liberated from mimetic functions, are free to generate some other meaning.

Both Beckett and Queneau are fond of drawing attention to the *phenomenon* of language at moments when the language would

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

normally be transparent. In Beckett's French works one of the most amusing forms of this is the occasional allusion to the fact that this author is writing in what is for him a foreign language, French. Thus, for example, he will hesitate over a gender ("mon, ma, mon existence"), he will comment, after a particularly neat formulation: "ça c'est du français," or he will append to a list of French obscenities uttered by a parrot in a French novel (*Molloy*) the remark that the parrot must have learned these things from someone French, capping this with the observation that the parrot did sometimes use one four-letter English word, but may have discovered this word on its own. And then when his language is not French or English prose but the language of one of the media he practices, that is of the stage, or the television screen, or film, or mime, he finds ways of awakening us to a sense of these media as languages. No doubt the one sound (shh!) inserted into his silent film called "Film" is meant to call attention to the option of silence in a period of "talkies".

As for Queneau, it is this aspect of his work which has attracted the most attention. He, too, uses a parrot, in *Zazie dans le métro*, but to remind people of the fact that their essential activity is talking. Queneau's language never becomes transparent enough to become invisible. A list of techniques used simply to make us aware of the plasticity of language would be a long one. Most prominent are the use of popular speech in narration, its occasional phonetic transcription ("ltipstu," "Polocilacru," etc.), characters using a language inappropriate to class or situation (a concierge who talks like a philosopher or vice versa), playful linguistic distortions apropos of nothing in the story, and so on. I won't go into this at length because it has been commented on so extensively by others, but two features of this linguistic experimentation are particularly relevant: first, Queneau's manipulations criticize existing linguistic norms, or rather their use. The fact that language does not imitate something else which would be "real" is conveyed by reminders that language is normative, conventional, arbitrary, reminders which have the form of pointedly abnormal and inappropriate language uses. Secondly, the liberation of language from the myth of imitation of the real permits a playful creative manipulation, as though of a plastic material. Queneau's novels are not

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

just linguistic jokes; they are also bodies of words.

It is the exposure of mimetic myths suggested here that is the basis of my second category, which deals mainly with the articulation of language, on the level of the sentence, but more importantly, on the level of larger formal options of the prose *récit*. Here, criticism seeks not merely to unmask the fact that language is being used. It seeks to expose the myth that something in the ordering of that language corresponds to or imitates some prior reality which would not be language. When Queneau writes "Natur, dit-il, ellement," or "Je, continuait le passant en élevant le ton, vous disais donc que j'étais étranger," an amusing problem is suggested, going beyond that of the simple option of where to put annoying and monotonous clutter like "dit-il," or "demanda-t-elle". The normalization and standardization of all devices for articulating narrative, for moving from third to first person, from description to quotation etc. are undermined.

On a larger scale we have, for example, in Beckett's *Molloy*, a discourse which runs on in a rhythm of random accretion, as though it were constantly inventing things to say on the impetus of things just said. This discourse repeatedly turns back on itself in comic hesitations, parentheses, afterthoughts, rectifications. in a kind of parody of the search for the *mot juste*. What is ridiculed here seems to be some Flaubertian notion that there is a proper word or series of words to correspond to something real outside of language. Furthermore, Molloy constantly refers to the problem of narrative option, saying, for example, that he will explain something in due time, at the proper moment, as though there were a proper moment. It is as though he would have us believe that he was an accomplished artist, knowing already all the information he plans to give us, some of which he wishes to withhold for artistic purposes. But it is clear that he invents these pretended obligations and options as he goes along, no doubt compelled to create factitious and unsuccessful internal controls to compensate for the lack of directional sense in that mysterious primary obligation which directs him, he says, to speak, to write.

Since Queneau's novels are not written in the first person, one does not normally find such overt references to the artist's

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

problem of how to order narrative sequence, but his manipulation of sequences is anything but unobtrusive. One of his favorite devices is a play with different scales of represented time. The subject is a complicated one, but one can say that in most of his works there is no normal time scheme, no convention maintained consistently or long enough for us to get used to it. Queneau gives us the feeling that there is no norm, that one can describe a lifetime in one page or, like Joyce, a day in eight hundred-odd pages. If he uses a conventional scheme which resembles that of, say, most "realist" novels of the late nineteenth century, it will be interrupted here and there by sudden, unmarked transitions, abrupt cuts or telescopings. In his wildest books – *Le chiendent,* for example – the ending brings not only an eruption of fantasy but a drastic change in the time scheme. In *Loin de Rueil,* in which the duration of events covers many years, temporal anomalies are such that the life described resembles a dream, or perhaps better, many dreams of different sorts. One begins to realize that what differentiates fictional dream from fictional life is mainly a matter of how language is ordered, how the articulation of time is handled. Probably the Argentinian writer Borges had something like this in mind when he said that life and dream are like the pages of a book. The difference between them depends on how you read the pages, whether you follow closely from one page to the next, leaf through rapidly, dip in here and there and so on. And there are in this novel, as in others, what appear to be false tracks, possibilities not described as actualized but remaining alongside other tracks which apparently are not merely virtual because they lead on to subsequent events. Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* comes to mind here, and again Borges, with his *Garden of Forking Paths* or *The Library of Babel,* or Robbe-Grillet's *Dans le labyrinthe.*[3] In *Les fleurs bleues,* Queneau brings gradually towards each other two vastly unequal time sequences, the one covering probably not more than a few weeks, the other exactly seven centuries. While Queneau provides clues pointing to certain ways of relating these two time sequences, their relation is never clearly established.

The double series in *Molloy* is a bit like this, that is, the two *récits* which follow one another, first that of Molloy, then that of Moran. Here, Beckett seems to be playing with the operation

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

of the *post hoc propter hoc* fallacy which normally functions so strongly in prose fiction. What is the temporal relation of Moran's and Molloy's respective narrations? There are suggestions that the second series is prior to the first, that Moran precedes Molloy, becomes Molloy. There are also plenty of obstacles to this view. In any case, a pathos based on some kind of continuum, in this instance a continuum of decomposition or decay, is frustrated by this design.

The most interesting feature of these various arrangements of narrative sequence and represented time is their connection with the creation of fictional characters and with the theme of identity. From his first novel, *Le chiendent,* to his most recent, *Le vol d'Icare,* Queneau has been fascinated by the potential humor in the confusion of fictional and real existence, or, as I phrased it above, fictional life and fictional dream. The main character of *Le chiendent* comes into being, changes from shadow to profile to three-dimensional creature as he is perceived and as he himself begins to perceive things around him: *esse est percipe.* In *Le vol d'Icare,* which, incidentally, is called a novel but is written entirely in dialogue, the main characters are supposed to be escapees from the manuscript pages of various novelists. Their problem, like Pinocchio's, is how to fit into "reality". But reality appears to be simply another language.

All of Queneau's characters have at best a problematic identity. They are often aware of themselves as paper beings, as figments of someone's imagination or dream. Their identity resides, as it does of course for any fictional character, in a sequence of words, an arbitrary sequence which can be manipulated in all sorts of amusing ways by an unreliable author. There are some characters whose identity consists in little more than the working of some simple verbal play, tic or incongruity and who remain essentially unchanged (Zazie probably fits here, in spite of her final "j'ai vieilli"). Others who appear in various disguises as several different characters have identity by virtue of a single word: a name, like Trouscaillon (and even this turns out to be a false name). The inconsistent, absurd or inexplicably violent behaviour of some characters, like Narcense in *Le chiendent,* suggests some alienation of identity, even madness, but what kind

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

of alienation occurs is never clear. (In the case of Narcense I am tempted to attribute his aggressive and self-destructive behaviour to a kind of schizophrenia stemming from his separation, early in the novel, from a companion with whom he was closely coupled: Potice. Narcense and Potice, shouldn't they have been Narcisse and Potence?)

To exist is to be thought, or said, or dreamed. There are two main characters in *Les fleurs bleues*, each of whom exists because he is dreamed by the other, it seems. Towards the end of the book there is a suggestion that these two characters are really one and the same. But how could they be, since the existence of each depends on the dream of the other? It is only through some kind of doubling, some schizophrenic split that the characters can exist. That is to say that in this book, identity is a sequence, a series thought by someone else. A sequence exists only as an exteriority, from the outside, for someone. There is no identity without alienation. Queneau started his career with a parody of Descartes in *Le chiendent* and has clearly not abandoned this philosopher in *Les fleurs bleues*.

The Cartesian or post-Cartesian dilemma is familiar to readers of Beckett also, or at least to readers of Hugh Kenner's book on Beckett. In most of Beckett's plays and in his late novels existence is equated with speaking. The use of symbiotic pairs or couples in the major plays points to the need of the Other for the sense of existence. As in Queneau's novels, existence is established as exteriority, alienation. In the trilogy *Molloy*, *Malone meurt* and *L'innommable*, where there is no interlocutor, the speaker can exist only for himself, that is as he hears himself speaking, as he is alienated in his verbal creation. But the certainty of this sense of existence cannot extend beyond the immediate present. Since identity depends upon the coherence of a temporal sequence, and since the past and future, the origins and the destiny of the speaker are problematic, so too is his identity. Unable to remember whether or not he has a son, Molloy is going towards his origin, his mother, or so he thinks. Who he may be is not clarified when we read the Moran section. Molloy may or may not be what Moran was. When we read on into *Malone meurt* and the following, we realize that if we were tempted to decide that the two series did in fact

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

converge, that Moran is an earlier Molloy, we were wrong because these are questions that were not raised to be answered. All the identities, sequences, movements, structures and events are fictions of Malone who is himself no doubt dreamed up by the Unnamable who would himself like to be in someone's mind, that is to exist, and probably does, in Beckett's unless my two series have converged and the real author of all this is Queneau.

Actually, all of this sound and fury has been generated on the basis of several simple assumptions: that to exist, one must be exterior, that speech is the primary form of the effort to exteriorize oneself, that in the absence of an interlocutor one tells oneself stories in order at least to exist for oneself, that these stories are formed for the sake of form, not because they teach us anything about the world outside our head, that these forms can nevertheless interest us for a time because they have the potential to create other forms or because their internal coherence may make us forget that we created them ourselves.

So far, what I have compared in these two writers has been their common humorous exploitation of the arbitrariness of certain literary forms, their exposure of the myth of mimesis, their play with the ambiguities of these freed forms. For they seem to exploit and mock our penchant for thinking of whatever is latent in a text as therefore preceding it, giving rise to it, explaining and justifying it, whereas in point of fact the latent may be a potential waiting for the reader's use. It seems to be because it is easy to misunderstand this deliberate ambiguity of the latent or potential that critics have been tempted to reduce the texts in various ways: Godot is God, or, as Anne Clancier interprets *Les fleurs bleues,* Cidrolin is the ego, the duc d'Auge the id.[4]

At the point at which Beckett and Queneau cease to be critics of culture in this way I have described, the profound differences between them begin to appear. *Watt* and *Le chiendent* have much in common: *Comment c'est* and *Zazie dans le métro* much less. In his earlier works, Beckett's pleasure in the shape of ideas and the humor based on it is fairly close to Queneau's. Beckett's most humorous creations are constructions elaborated over a void, like the droll permutations which fill the pages of *Watt,* the symmetrical

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

motion of Murphy's rocker, or Molloy's system for alternating his sucking-stones. They are rather like miniatures of those fantastic philosophic, scientific and mathematical structures which Queneau includes in his "Encyclopédie des sciences inexactes". Like the vast dialectical construction of Charles Fourier (Queneau shares André Breton's enthusiasm for this eccentric social thinker), these forms are actually esthetic objects, neither true nor false, but beautiful, interesting, stimulating or comic.

While Beckett continues in later works to play with such forms for the distraction that is in them, it is within a larger dynamic system transcending individual literary works (i.e. the trilogy, and beyond that, Beckett's entire opus, which is really one large system), and this large system gradually robs the smaller, internal systems of their potential to distract and amuse. Beckett's literary space is a solipsistic one, limited to the distance from I to me. It will not let his speaker forget that he is inventing forms to distract himself. The constant turning inward of the discourse makes all the internal systems resemble each other as they become mere parts of an overall dynamic which is always the same and ever foremost. As a result of this entropy, Beckett, like Molloy, throws away one set of sucking-stones after another. The formalistic games cease to distract precisely because the alienation is unsuccessful. This is why I described Beckett's work as closed or hermetic at the beginning of this paper. More accurately, it is not closed, but always closing.

A most interesting variation and perhaps a further development of this closing movement may be found in Beckett's play called *Play*, or *Comédie*. In his prose works, a kind of solipsistic agony is conveyed by the provisional but unsuccessful alienation of the speaking voice in various pseudo-voices. In the dramatic works, just because they *are* dramatic, one would think that the kind of alienation just described would be successful because the sound of a single voice behind the characters, that of their author, would disappear. Actually, as in the novels, the characters seem to have independent existence only in so far as they are in a play of opposition or complementarity with another character, and progressively this play seems to reveal itself as originating somewhere beyond or behind the characters themselves. At certain

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

moments in *Godot,* for example, the characters' interchanges have a rhythm which seems imposed from without. If we pass to the play called *Play,* we see where this is tending. Here the form (again bi-partite, but with the two parts identical) and the rhythm of the play become detached from and override the potential tensions in the characters and in what they actually say. There is a story here, but only the shape of it seems to be important. It is as though there were an extreme point at which the progressive reduction of human resources for distraction portrayed in Beckett's other works could be converted into formalistic play, into a musical composition, a trio for hiccups, speech sounds and lighted faces not unlike certain actual musical compositions by Ligeti or Kagel which use human voices as instruments.

The play does not quite reach this extreme point. While it is true that what the characters are actually saying is almost unimportant, this *almost* cannot be overlooked. The banality of their problem is part of the message, along with the notion, conveyed by the inquisitorial spotlight which makes them begin speaking and directs their trio, that the existence of the characters, their visibility, coincides with their speech. What we are witnessing is a kind of formal agony, a play, a rhythm, a patterned and intermittent illumination which is like a single but anonymous voice. In some ways, this almost musical work seems closer to the formalism of Queneau than the earlier, more humorous pieces. Its real sense, however, is in a direction apparently opposed to that of Queneau's recent work. Formal play in Beckett reveals itself as the most authentic, rigorous and penetrating description of some kind of fundamental agony of the human. The humor is a grimace. The creative movement is irrevocably reflexive, closing.

Queneau's works, on the other hand, are open works for the reason that *Finnegan's Wake* has been called an open work. (Cf. Umberto Eco's *Opera aperta*) What would appear to be formalist serenity and the simple joy of invention is not quite so untroubled as one might think, as I shall try to show in a moment, but it is still largely true that Queneau's inventions succeed not only in distracting but also in generating something new. In his novels he achieves this by using not one but two or three structural systems at the same time. One of these systems is the kind I have

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

been referring to, based on a criticism of existing norms and exploiting their arbitrariness. I should acknowledge here Roland Barthes' analysis of *Zazie dans le métro* (in *Essais critiques*), which describes Queneau's procedure as a parody of the structures of the "well-made" novel, a parody which corrodes insidiously the sense of "reality" of this prior structure. Barthes does not, however, consider the other structural systems which Queneau says he uses. One of these is represented by the mathematical models or sets which he purportedly employs in his major works to govern the number of chapters and subdivisions of chapters, as well as the ordering and spacing of certain events, the "rhyming" of certain coupled characters, the distribution of types of narration and the like. A possible third system (but I am unsure about the degree of systematization) would be that provided by a concealed model other than the mathematical one, a work which is parodied, like the *Discours de la méthode* or *Totem and Taboo*.

Claude Simonnet, whose study of *Le chiendent* (in *Queneau déchiffré*) is the most rigorous effort to trace these various kinds of structuration, claims that the concealed form obliterates the gratuity of the fictional material by producing a kind of poem, and that this formal redemption represents a closed system. This is misleading, I think, not only because of the ambiguity in various uses of the words "open" and "closed", but because Simonnet seems to be talking about the kind of formal closing which consists in welding all the materials into a perfectly harmonized and homogenous whole, a feature I cannot find in Queneau's work. Queneau's recent experiments with the "Oulipo" group ("Ouvroir de littérature potentielle") suggest that it would be fruitful to compare the mathematical structuration of literature with that practiced for a long time now in music. A totally serialized musical work, that is serialized in every parameter, can perhaps be called "closed" in a sense. But the fundamental criterion for the definition of "openness" or "closedness" in these contexts must be not only the degree of alienation from the "I" which is the source of the work but also the degree of resistance of the work to any single focus or point of view. While Queneau eschews Surrealist aleatory, and makes use of mathematical sets, there is certainly nothing like total serialization in his novels. If these novels and

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

other similar works, literary or musical, are called "open," it is not only because they are almost entirely alienated from their creator but also because their status as "works" is felt to be connected to their capability to work, to generate something, to activate a potential. Queneau's most radical experiments in this line are pieces which, like *Cent mille milliards de poémes,* are prospective, permutational and combinatory.

But even in earlier, more conventional works, Queneau's procedure was to keep the work potential by building into it systems which cannot be assimilated into a single harmonic whole. We have inherited, from two great writers of the first half of the century, definite ways of valuing the large trends towards openness or cloture in musical forms. André Gide, in *Les Faux-monnayeurs,* sets against the stasis-seeking, deathlike predilection for total harmony the life-giving conflicts of fugal polyphony, and does so in musical terms. Thomas Mann's composer in *Doctor Faustus* rejects what he calls harmonic subjectivity in favor of polyphonic objectivity, in which mathematics guarantees the dialectical independence of the separate voices and the generation of expressive feeling is transferred from composer to work. In this sense, then, Queneau's works are open, because they are polyphonic and because their voices resist assimilation, succeed in remaining independent of each other and of their source.

Queneau is not Brecht, however. His alienation effects are not aimed at political ends and one cannot find in his work the kind of moral valuation of open forms which Gide and Mann have left us with. One of Queneau's most typical works, *Exercices de style,* is instructive in this respect. Here we see a close connection between parody and invention. If Queneau really comes close to a musical form in the *Exercices,* it is not so much because, as Leiris says (in *Brisées*), he wanted to imitate Bach by writing variations on a theme (Queneau has confirmed that he did want to do this), but because he comes close to reducing the "subject" or the "theme" of the variations to nothing. What is common to the variations is a bi-partite structure so bare and inert that it scarcely exists until it is given a variation, that is to say a language. There is no imitated reality, only language, or ninety-nine languages of all sorts: of the streets, of various literatures, of mathe-

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms

matics, of several professions. These languages are not invented or they would not be intelligible as languages; they are borrowed and combined. But they permit invention of a surprising kind. Here, I think, is an operation rather like that which the structuralists call, after Lévy-Strauss, "bricolage," whereby the new emerges from a reordering of elements or structures of the old and invention springs from criticism and parody.

Yet there is something troubling in Queneau's humor, even in so seemingly light-hearted a work as the *Exercices*. Behind the almost themeless variations of Queneau's language games, behind the verbal machines which supplant the author, one can sometimes detect an absence akin to that at the core of Beckett's system. As I have tried to show, their point of departure is similar.

Beckett is not Brecht either. There is polyphony, but only to reveal polyphony as a progressive agony. Perhaps it was because it gave him another voice and a provisional complementarity that Beckett began to write in French, that he split himself into one of those symbiotic couples he uses in his plays, an Irishman and a Frenchman.

University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign

NOTES

1. *Samuel Beckett, a Critical Study*, N. Y.: Grove Press, 1961, p. 81.
2. *Batons, chiffres, lettres, Paris*: Gallimard (Coll. "Idées") 1965, p. 225.
3. The sense of the "real" or at least of the *vraisemblable* depends, it seems, on the censuring and exclusion of virtualities of an action and the concomitant closing of the text upon one sequence within one horizon. This is, at any rate, how a number of structuralists have tried to define the *vraisemblable* recently. Cf. the revue *Communications*, No. 9. The labyrinths of Borges, like those of Robbe-Grillet, are "surreal" in their rejection of this closing.
4. in *L'Arc*, No. 28 (1966)

This content downloaded from 140.127.23.2 on Sat, 11 Jun 2016 11:49:14 UTC
All use subject to http://about.jstor.org/terms