

Spring 2011

# Book Review: Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others

Jennifer Jeffers

Cleveland State University, j.m.jeffers53@csuohio.edu

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## Recommended Citation

Jeffers, Jennifer, "Book Review: Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others" (2011). *English Faculty Publications*. 65.  
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part responsible for the musical streams of words. Overall, a more useful approach might have been to examine the very different ways in which Beckett and Cage invite us to reconsider our own relationship to sound and in particular its absence.

The chapter on Cage's *Songbooks* includes some useful background information. However, while the chapter title refers to the "Collaboration of Words and Music," there is no exploration of the range and diversity of Cage's notion of a "song," or of the contrast between songs that start from the patterns of spoken words and those in which they are deliberately ignored. It is true Cage often "disrupts conventions of more conventional songwriting and explores a variety of ways to provide instructions and to organize the score" (94), but little of that was new to the *Songbooks*; this extraordinary collection is more remarkable for Cage's anthologizing of his own practices, which range from the repetition of established approaches, through variation on those techniques, to specifically new approaches (primarily in the song category "Theatre with Electronics"). Reading this chapter, one gets little sense of this variety and there is no contextualizing within the context of Cage's own work or the field of experimentalism in which he was operating at this time.

This is, then, an extremely disappointing volume. At certain points in the book, Weigel seems to backtrack, retreating into the assertion that her musical focus is really just metaphorical (for example on page 33, or note 14 on page 91). However, this is contradicted by the very definite statements about specific "affiliations" with musical form (20, 40 and especially 41) and the determination to produce strong and specific comparisons, whatever the cost to the quality of the reading. Weigel cites warnings from Werner Wolf on the dangers of reading "musical-ness" into literary works (39–40) and Eric Prieto on the quality and function of musical metaphors (138). It's a shame that Weigel did not appreciate the significance of this advice.

***Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia.* Rina Kim. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Pp. xi + 210. \$80.00 (cloth).**

**Reviewed by Jennifer M. Jeffers, Cleveland State University**

Rina Kim's *Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others* is one of a number of recent books to combine archival research with theoretical analysis of Beckett's texts. Kim claims that Beckett was greatly influenced by Karin Stephen's *Psychoanalysis and Medicine: a Study of the Wish to Fall Ill* (1933), which he read and took notes on while undergoing psychotherapy in London during the 1930s. More ambitiously, Kim wishes to connect Stephen's work with Melanie Klein's work on child psychology and establishes this connection, with some sleight of hand, in the introduction to *Women and Ireland*. The specific Klein texts that Kim wishes to utilize were written after Stephen's text and long after Beckett's stay in London—key texts such as "Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States" (1940). Kim explains, "I attempt to read Klein through Stephen and through Beckett's reading of Stephen because Klein added significantly to Freud's theory of mourning and melancholia, and developed her theory of loss further than Freud to include symptoms such as mania and paranoia as reactions to the loss of the love object" (8). Thus, one of the key elements of Klein's theory, the "positions," would not have been something that Beckett read in the 1930s. However, what Kim is interested in showing is that later Beckett works make "reparation" with earlier Beckett texts; or, more precisely, restore the damaged "objects" of women and Ireland presented in the early texts through creating positive female characters or female centered plays, such as *Footfalls* (1975) and *Rockaby* (1980). In this

932 way, Kim's theory is sweeping and plays solidly into the idea that Beckett repeats and rewrites the same (or nearly the same) text over and over.

On the one hand, the psychoanalytic framework is interesting and Kleinian psychoanalysis has some curious features, which could relate to certain Beckettian manifestations. On the other hand, the "long sonata" of the first chapter, "Severing Connections with Ireland: Women and the Irish Free State in Beckett's Early Fiction," requires a degree of faith on the reader's part that may not be readily forthcoming. If she is to make her claims convincing, Kim must first combine women and Ireland—a familiar theme more widely, but less so in Beckett criticism—with Beckett's poor treatment of each in his early work; if we are to read Beckett's later writing as a form of reparation, there must first be something to repair. The "French fiction," in turn, is presented as a "melancholic disavowal of the loss of the loved ones and therefore as an emotional reaction" (16).

The fact that Beckett treats his early female "characters" rather badly—Smeraldina is a case in point—is widely known and does not present an interpretive problem. But some of Kim's attempts to marshal Beckett's regret in later life as evidence of fictional reparation represent a bit of a leap. She points to Beckett, as an old man, recounting to Knowlson the regret he felt for modeling his grotesqueries on his cousin, Peggy Sinclair: "such a sense of guilt and repressed grief [in regard to Peggy Sinclair] affects the representation of the females in Beckett's later works, . . . Ireland, equally important, stands for the place where male characters have left their loved ones behind" (47). The route to reparation is through the "French fiction" in which Kim selectively returns to the Beckett archive, not to quote Karin Stephen but to cite Beckett's notes on Ernest Jones's *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (1912). This selectivity is all right in itself, but the insights gleaned from Jones are not particularly salient. For instance, in a subsection of chapter two, "Memories and Melancholia in Beckett's Early French Fiction," titled "Taboo of Names," Kim discusses "First Love" and *Molloy* and the difficulty with names: Lula/Anna and Ruth/Edith, respectively. With the latter example, Kim argues that failure to remember Ruth/Edith's proper name brings the narrator around to a discussion of Ireland and censorship. This connection is in the text, but, interestingly, Molloy is also unsure whether Ruth/Edith is a man or, as she appears, a woman. In fact, Molloy admits that while sexual relations with women could not keep him from his mother, those with men have detained him. This curious ménage à trois wherein the mother's breast, Klein's good object, is rejected, not for another potential good object, but for a man, is not explored. Kim needs to account for the distance between the early fiction's "devouring females" and the complete (or near complete) rejection of sexual and gender difference—amounting to indifference—in this period of Beckett's oeuvre.

Ultimately, Kim's core argument succeeds if one buys into the fact that Beckett texts such as *Not I*, *Footfalls*, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, and *Rockaby* present the female in a positive way so that he achieves a Kleinian reparation of the lost love object. Instead of resolving, for example, the simultaneous presentation of the good object and bad object in *Not I*, Kim moves off to unpublished "Kilcool" and then to *From an Abandoned Work* without satisfactorily accounting for the "vagina dentata" image of Mouth that everyone, including Beckett, knows to be an image of castration. In fact, this section takes the long way home—through Caravaggio and "Crazy Jane"—only to end where we began: with ambiguity. "Those old crones" represented by Mouth might in fact be Beckett's attempt to show Ireland at its most abject, not to show a reparation with Ireland and the wronged female. Of course, every psychoanalytic discussion of these "old crones" always involves the Mother, May Beckett, and her "savage loving."

Near the end of *Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others* Kim turns to Beckett's ultra-personal fictional recollection, *Company*, in order to reassert her Kleinian reading, especially indebted to Klein's "On the Sense of Loneliness" (1963). Overall, the last chapter, "The Kleinian Work of Mourning in Beckett's Late Works," rehearses Beckett's late texts as elegiac, concluding with "Stirrings Still." In sum, *Women and Ireland As Beckett's Lost Others* reviews some familiar

territory in Beckett studies; yet, if one is working along the lines of object relations theory and Beckett, or, for example, working on making a more concrete connection with the Karin Stephen's text that Beckett read in the 1930s, then this text is a must read.

**Beckett's Masculinity. Jennifer M. Jeffers. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Pp. xii + 203. \$80.00 (cloth).**

**Reviewed by Susan Mooney, University of South Florida**

Following the recent turn among many Beckett scholars towards the inclusion of archival and biographical information in their study of this author, Jennifer Jeffers insightfully historicizes critical thought about Samuel Beckett's portrayal of men throughout his oeuvre. She argues that Beckett's men should not be read as asexual representations of the human condition, but understood on a more personalized and specifically masculine level. She explains how Beckett became imbued with a particular sense of manhood through his upbringing in a prosperous Anglo-Irish Protestant family, in a "tribe" that "dictated his gender and ideological formation as a child and a young man" (3). To accept Jeffers's reading, one must appreciate how she interprets the Anglo-Irish Protestants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as having a modicum of localized power but never really possessing "hegemonic masculine political power."

Jeffers applies a pronounced biographical reading to Beckett's texts, relating them both to his childhood in Ireland and to aspects of his life concurrent with the composition of each of his works. Thus, novels like *Murphy* are read juxtaposed with Beckett's struggles with psychotherapy and with unemployment in London in the 1930s, while he was being goaded by his demanding mother and haunted by the loss of his beloved father. Here, as much as elsewhere in her reading of Beckett, Jeffers sees him as having experienced a dual masculine trauma in his youth: the Irish Protestant community's loss of status in the Irish Republic and the death of William Beckett. She uses Cathy Caruth's writings on trauma and its aftermath, particularly its symptoms of repetition of the painful experience in the sufferer's imagination, and relates these to Beckett's repeated motif of the lone, roaming man without home or nation, who bears traces of an Anglo-Irish youth and education. Through his writing, Beckett returns to the sites of loss by using these characters and scenarios of abandonment and solitude.

Jeffers recognizes *Murphy* as "Beckett's first full-fledged enactment of the trauma of emasculation and exile" (47). One of the finer aspects of her reading is her exploration of psychoanalyst Alfred Adler (1870–1937) and his influence on Beckett's composition and store of ideas. From the late 1920s through the 1930s, Dr. Wilfred Bion gave the writer psychoanalytic treatment in London, and Bion's eclectic therapy included Adlerian ideas and concepts. Beckett's notes ("Psychology Notes") show his extensive reading of Adler and suggest that he may have related some of these concepts to his own literary writings as well as his self-perceptions. Jeffers recognizes how Adler differed from Freud on several crucial points, including neurotic compulsion and what Adler termed the "masculine protest" and "masculine fiction." Beckett took substantial notes on both topics. It is easy to see a relation between Murphy and the Adlerian compulsive neurotic who tends "to construct a subsidiary field of action in order to be able to flee from the main battle-field of life & fritter away time that might otherwise compel him to fulfill his individual tasks" (a quotation from Adler copied directly by Beckett in his notes; quoted by Jeffers, 43). Even more compelling, though, is Beckett's interest in the connection Adler established between the (male) neurotic and the masculine protest: "The goal, especially in neurotics, is the erection of the *masculine protest* against an effeminate self-estimation" (46). Jeffers notes how Beckett