

Beckett's Queer Hermeneutics

Eleanor Green

Beckett's œuvre is driven by a fascination with sexuality; however, it is rarely read in these terms. From sadistic carvings of 'YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT' (*How It Is*) to acts of 'licking, sucking, fucking and bugging' (*All Strange Away*), sex cannot be avoided. This paper focuses on the significance of intercourse in Beckett and maps its intrinsic absences and formal failures, which constitute a queer utopian drive and force alternative hermeneutic manoeuvres.

Deleuzian disjunctive synthesis offers a suitable perspective from which we can begin to read what might at first seem to be dysfunctional or incomplete acts of intercourse. Forcing a negative method of definition, Beckett's erotic blunders exhibit generative properties as a result of the transitory, volatile space created by their incommensurable bodies. They evoke José Muñoz's queer becomings, which, as opposed to positing a definite queer subject, might see in missing or inchoate parts a certain affirmation or force that does not negate – indeed it creates indefinitely.

I will explain these generative properties through Beckett's use of language as code, employing Yuri Lotman's analysis of codes as generative sequences instead of closed feedback loops. Relating this discursive propulsion to Muñozian optimism, I would read failure as force: 'somehow on' (*Worstward Ho*). Since meaning must be located in this transit, Beckett's texts evade the possibility of an essentialist interpretation, such that we might only approach hermeneutics tangentially, an action closer to translation than exegesis, whereby one seeks 'not to find the 'structure' (...) but consider the disruption of presumptive global place and time that can take effect.' (Emily Apter, 2013) Hence by finding the reading intercourse in Beckett one might answer the question of how to align identity and failure, or an inability to communicate with successful translation.

Short bio :

Eleanor has recently been offered a place at the University of Sussex to undertake a PhD in the School of English on Queering Intercourse in Beckett and Contemporary Theory and Literature. She has organized a series of seminars and screenings in London looking at popular reception of queer pornography following a research trip to San Francisco. Most recently she completed an MA in Comparative Literature at Queen Mary's, University of London, with a focus on Beckett in translation.