



Arts over the border — 7th Enniskillen International Samuel Beckett Festival 2019: Waiting for Godoy in Highland Bog.

In late July 2019, [Sophie Barth](#) and I travelled to Enniskillen—just North of the North/South Irish border—to attend the International Samuel Beckett festival, hosted by Arts over the Border, featuring a selection of pieces from the [estate](#) and, to be sure, a *Godot* reading on a highland bog.

Seeing and hearing Beckett played in Ireland, had a tremendous impact on our understanding of the piece *Waiting for Godot* as primarily a container. If seen as a *modern* piece, the contemporary scene is Paris. If considered in a *historical* perspective the locus is late Mediaeval/early Renaissance Italy.

However, at the festival, on a highland bog—on the blurry frontier of the Irish border—we were on site, as it were. Having sojourned for some days in the area, we had been struck by how the Irish language speaks itself in *mazes*, and a *border* nowhere to be seen brought out Beckett in Beckett.



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According to Agamben/Melandri the signature is a sign *within* a field of signs—a semiotic field—that will remain silent till it is played. As such, the signature is inextricably linked to performance. Moreover, in the case of Beckett, the signature is a container for materials ill seen and ill said.

Evidently, the work worked by the work is largely dependent on where it is performed: not in the sense that it is site-specific, but in the sense of the question *where am I?*—as will always stir the audience—will be answered with more/less precision whether we are in Paris, Florence or Enniskillen.

In Paris, the location is—as it were—philosophical, and linked to a modern spiritual entourage. In Florence, it is tied to the making of a configuration of artistic problem, in the early Renaissance. In Enniskillen it is archaeological of certain ways in Irish culture, with a contemporary geopolitical horizon.

The North/South Irish daily traffic is pawned by the regimes of political correctness that rule the border. In *Waiting for Godot*, the piece is pawned by Beckett's signature: which, the reader is sure to understand, is *more* than a name. It is an *estate*. It acts as a container for contents on the ground.

By this we mean that contents the do not belong to the play, can be staged by the play: since it is a world unto itself, that contains its own reality. So tightly that it can be defended (as an estate), but never so tightly that it doesn't allow anything else to slip through: this happened at Enniskillen.

The reading of *Godot*, on the highland bog South of Enniskillen, wasn't so tight that it couldn't be held—physically and materially since the actors were holding each a copy of the script—and so also came through to the audience in a *specific* way. The only prop was a modular tree by [A. Gormley](#).

The presence of writing onstage—in the form of a script—and the highland landscape as the prevalent imagery, brought the play unto a realm of content beyond the linguistic contents: or, the linguistic content became a container for elements of writing and scenery *beyond* the estate.

But still enabled by Beckett's *signature*; linking it up—as it were—with the *event* and the *context*. That is, signature, event, context: a cluster we know e.g. from Derrida's deconstruction of [Austin's \*How to do things with words\*](#), in which the concept of communication is layered, counter-punctual, tense.

A major point being how the event and the context do not pair up in the signature (as a mark and a sign). In Benoît Peeters' biography on Derrida, it appears that a chief reason for his not having deconstructed Beckett was Derrida's sense that he was next of kin. Close enough to cause him trouble.

However, if it be considered that signs are the signifying units of agency, and containers are hatching-devices of contents seen-and-said, then the *signature* can be understood as a mark-in-performance; which is elusive because we know that it must exist, but motions between hit-and-impact.