

Introduction

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with Robert Eaglestone*

Roger Luckhurst argues that the modern concept of trauma developed in the West through the interlocking areas of 'law, psychiatry and industrialized warfare' (2008: 19). However, over the twentieth century, trauma as a concept became increasingly medicalised and simultaneously significantly linked with wider political frameworks: with survivor and testimony narratives, with responses to persecution and prejudice, to the Holocaust, and other acts of mass atrocity and genocide. In such discourses, the concept of trauma is not fully material or bodily, nor simply psychic, nor fully cultural, nor simply historical or structural, but a meeting of all of these. As Luckhurst usefully suggests, it is precisely because it is a knot, or a point of intersection, of turbulence, that 'trauma' is such a powerful force and is impossible to define easily.

In terms of its growth in literary studies, the study of trauma and trauma theory also has a range of antecedents. As Kerwin Lee Klein from the discipline of history demonstrates, there was a turn to 'memory' in the 1980s, in part stimulated by the work of Pierre Nora and David P. Jordan (2009) and Yosef Yerushalmi's influential book *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982). Michel Foucault, too, invoked a politics of memory and, tracing this out, Ian Hacking explored what he named 'memoro-politics'. This turn to memory involved a rediscovery and translation of Maurice Halbwachs's work from the 1920s on collective memory (Halbwachs was murdered at Buchenwald in 1945). This shift in

historical discourse seems not only to align much in that field with similar questions about representation, politics and ethics and historical understanding in literary and cultural studies, but also to raise questions about trauma. Hacking, for example, wrote that 'there are interconnections between group memory and personal memory. One obvious link is trauma' (1995: 211).

Literary and cultural theory in the 1980s and 1990s seemed to turn towards trauma for other reasons as well, beyond the widely acknowledged 'turn to history' in the 1990s and 2000s. Research in the nascent fields of the medical humanities, sometimes inspired by Judith Lewis Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1994) or Arthur Frank's *The Wounded Storyteller* (1995), focused on traumatic events and the ways in which individuals may come to terms with them. The work of theorists inspired by Lacan, or by Slavoj Žižek's Hegelian-Lacanian politicised psychoanalysis (or, perhaps psychoanalytic politics), often uses trauma as a core concept. Judith Butler, too, turned to issues of trauma, grief and mourning in books such as *Precarious Life* (2004) and *Frames of War* (2009).

However, perhaps the most powerful source of trauma theory has been the work of Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, developing on works of deconstruction by Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man. Many have argued that there is something profoundly traumatic in the impulse that underlies deconstruction and Derrida's work, and that this work both enacts and responds to trauma (see Critchley, 1999; Eaglestone, 2004; Ofrat, 2001). A recent Derrida biography suggests political trauma in the events of his life (see Peeters, 2013). However, it is also the case that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Derrida and those inspired by his work were widely criticised by both the right and the left because many found his work overly textual and distant from the 'real world', unable to address political or ethical issues. This was aggravated by the Paul de Man scandal, when the influential Belgian-born critic was discovered to have published a handful of literary articles in a collaborationist newspaper in occupied Belgium during the Second World War. Much of Derrida's work in the 1990s and afterwards, and much scholarship on his work, aimed to correct this impression. It is in this context that Caruth's and Felman's work developed.

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony* (1992) also had a huge impact. *Testimony* shows an explicit debt to psychoanalysis and deconstruction, having at its core a sense of oddness and peculiarity connected to trauma: texts 'that testify do not simply *report facts* but, in different ways, encounter – and make us encounter – *strangeness*' (Felman and Laub, 1992: 7). Laub and Felman argue that the strangeness of trauma cannot be easily domesticated. While some of the claims of the book have been questioned, its impact remains powerful (see Trezise, 2008; Laub, 2009), not least in the academy itself, where so many have followed Felman's lead in organising their teaching modules around questions of trauma, testimony and witnessing.

The collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), edited by Caruth, draws on a wide interdisciplinary range of critics and theorists, film-makers and medical experts and practitioners. Her introduction to the volume serves almost as a 'mission statement' for this form of 'trauma theory' and is, perhaps, the most widely cited piece in this field. It claims that trauma consists 'in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it' (Caruth, 1995: 4). Caruth's understanding of trauma as a belated experience of the event that defies representation has had a great influence in the development of trauma studies.

The essays in the present volume consider the psychoanalytically based post-deconstructive theories of trauma not as ahistorical contributions to a universalised idea of 'the psyche', but as historically and culturally contingent articulations of issues crucial to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Yet we perceive that theories of trauma and the arguments about them have reached an impasse that involves oppositional poles – trauma as the 'unrepresentable' vs. trauma as historical representation, or a broader sense of the 'wounded' subject that exists outside of history vs. the specificity of historical catastrophes in particular places and times. For example, in the introductory essay in the collection *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, Michelle Balaev criticises the model of trauma introduced by Caruth in which she thinks '[t]he unspeakable void became the

dominant concept in criticism for imagining trauma's function in literature' (2014: 1). According to Balaev, one of the limitations of this model is that it 'moves away from the fact of the lived experience of trauma', 'forgetting that trauma occurs to actual people, in specific bodies, located within particular time periods and places' (7). She argues for a shift from 'the classic model of trauma' to 'the pluralistic model', from 'the focus on trauma as unrepresentable' to 'a focus on the specificity of trauma that locates meaning through a greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience' (3). Like this argument, many arguments about trauma are based on seemingly oppositional poles.

Samuel Beckett's work manages to walk the line between these two poles in unique ways: though often seen as abstract and anti-representational in many ways, it has connections to the historical and cultural contexts from which it emerged. The experience of trauma found in Beckett's work is characterised by its resistance to representation. Yet this cannot be understood superficially. *Samuel Beckett and trauma* attempts to regard the anti-representational aspect of Beckett's work as something that testifies to a profound question that involves a traumatic experience. Beckett explores the 'force and truth' (Caruth, 1995: vii) of trauma that cannot be resolved or assimilated. In this sense, Beckett's attempt can be read in relation to what is questioned in the post-deconstructive approaches of Caruth and Felman. As mentioned above, Caruth thinks that the pathology of trauma 'consists ... solely, in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it' (1995: 4). This 'belatedness', or in other words, the structure of trauma as 'afterwardsness', is an important element in Beckett. We need to 'look closely and more carefully not simply at the trauma, but at the structure of experience within which trauma is made manifest' (Eaglestone, 2014: 18). Each essay in this book attempts to 'look closely and more carefully' at the structure of traumatic experience in Beckett's work and to show how it is expressed as an unresolvable force of trauma.

This anti-representational aspect of Beckett's work cannot be grasped in terms of 'the use of experimental, modernist textual

strategies' (Craps, 2014: 50). One of the critiques of current trauma theory lies in 'its investment in fragmented modernist aesthetics' (Rothberg, 2014: xiii). Stef Craps, Luckhurst and others have suggested that trauma theory – influenced by Theodor Adorno – has valorised and even often prescribed 'a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma' (Craps, 2014: 46). Craps criticises 'the notion that traumatic experiences can only be adequately represented through the use of experimental, modernist textual strategies' (50). He holds that this assumption of current trauma theory may 'lead to the establishment of a narrow trauma canon' (50) and a 'rush to dismiss whatever deviates from the prescribed aesthetic as regressive or irrelevant' (51). He argues that trauma theory needs to be open to a wide range of cultural forms that bear witness to traumatic events.

Beckett's work sits at the intersection of these contemporary debates in trauma studies. It cannot be denied that his work is characterised by 'a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia'. However, the modernist aesthetic found in Beckett cannot be understood as mere 'textual strategies' (as suggested by Craps's characterisation). Beckett does not attempt to represent the psychic experience of trauma through the use of anti-narrative, fragmented, modernist textual strategies. For him, artistic expression is never an employment of certain means or strategies. Rather, as he articulated in his oft-quoted dictum from 'Three Dialogues', the artist should prefer 'the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express' (1984: 139). Beckett's theatre even enacts this challenge through embodiment and ethics, going far beyond 'mere' text.

While Beckett's work testifies to the profound dimension of traumatic experience, it is closely linked to the historical specificity of trauma. As Andrew Gibson points out, Beckett had 'an unusually profound grasp of the *zeitgeist*, and a power of conveying it unrivalled by any other contemporary artist': 'for all the ostensibly ahistorical character of much of Beckett's writing, it is above all *via* his works that the historical connection makes itself

felt' (2010: 21–2). A range of Beckett's works are responses to the historical and cultural situations of his times.

The essays in this volume try to move beyond the impasse that has come to characterise the more orthodox uses of trauma theory in literary studies, taking inspiration from Beckett's own paradigm-shifting formulations of physical and psychic trauma to find new ways of understanding the viewpoints that trauma theory can reveal. Drawing on insights from psychoanalysis, performance studies, philosophy, history and literary studies, *Samuel Beckett and trauma* attempts to open Beckett's work as an avenue for new insights and methodologies for the understanding of cultural trauma. Our selection of contributors and essays, emerging out of the Samuel Beckett Research Circle of Japan and also drawing in prominent and promising Beckett scholars from England, Ireland and Canada, creates a unique frame for viewing Beckett and trauma in historically specific ways as well as in trans-historical ways.

Reflecting the recent scholarly interest in trauma theories, some academics have related trauma to Beckett's work. Erik Tønning's essay 'Not I and the Trauma of Birth' (2006) discusses Beckett's idea of birth-trauma as a state of being unable to leave the womb, in relation to the Freudian 'death drive' depicted in the thematic content and structural build-up of *Not I*. Graley Herren's 'Mourning Becomes Electric: Mediating Loss in *Eh Joe*' in *Samuel Beckett and Pain* (2012) brings into play the writings of Freud, M. Klein and Abraham and Torok to read *Eh Joe* as a mediation on personal loss, comparing it with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in terms of a meditation upon the vicissitudes of melancholy. Lois Oppenheim's essay 'Life as Trauma, Art as Mastery: Samuel Beckett and the Urgency of Writing' (2008) explores Beckett's urge to write in order to heal his psychic pain. These essays focus on Beckett's work, taking into account the author's personal psychological disorder and incorporating psychoanalytic theories into literary analyses of his work. They examine Beckett's work according to psychoanalytic texts, not the texts of trauma theory.

A scholarly work that concentrates more on Beckett's work in relation to trauma theories is Alysia E. Garrison's "Faintly

Struggling Things”: Trauma, Testimony, and Inscrutable Life in Beckett’s *The Unnamable*, in *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive*. This essay explores Beckett’s text’s ‘undecidability between the “tranhistorical” and the “historical” dimensions of trauma’ (2009: 105), using Dominick LaCapra’s definition of “testimonial art” or “post-traumatic writing” that ‘bears witness to trauma ... “transmitted from intimates, or sensed in one’s larger social and cultural setting”’ (LaCapra, 2001: 105, quoted in Garrison, 2009: 91). It is an undeniable fact that Beckett’s experience working within a Resistance cell and then hiding from the Gestapo during the Second World War affected his post-war writings. Many scholars have referred to these experiences, from Adorno to Ihab Hassan, and in Beckett studies from S. E. Gontarski to Jackie Blackman. However, David Houston Jones’s *Samuel Beckett and Testimony* (2011) is the sole book on Beckett that focuses on this central theme of Holocaust studies. Garrison and Jones are successful in analysing the effects of trauma on Beckett’s post-Holocaust work, but they may be limited in the sense that their discussions are based on the past trauma theories that addressed events in the West, not least the Holocaust, as opposed to more broad and transcultural discussions of recent years, of which this volume aims to be a part.

Perhaps the most provocative essay concerning trauma in Beckett is Jonathan Boulter’s ‘Does Mourning Require a Subject? Samuel Beckett’s *Texts for Nothing*’. Boulter examines how the concepts of trauma and mourning play out in relation to the narrating subject in Beckett’s *Texts for Nothing*, ‘a subject without history or memory’ (2004: 333). He observes that the Freudian paradigms of trauma and mourning require a stable, unified subject, a subject ‘unified enough to perceive the originary shock, if only retroactively’ (336) and that ‘history – the process by which experience enters and becomes memory – is crucial to the workings of trauma and mourning’ (337). Boulter argues that since the subject in the Beckett text has no coherent sense of personal history or memory, its ‘ontology denies the viability of mourning and trauma’ in that sense (337). Further, he suggests that Beckett’s work fundamentally calls into question the value of trauma as a theoretical concept at work in contemporary literary

and cultural studies. He writes: 'Beckett's work, in its continual interrogation of the workability of the concepts of trauma and mourning, may in fact be read as a generalized critique of the use of trauma and mourning as interpretive tropes' (345).

However, Russell Smith responds critically to Boulter's reading of subjectivity and mourning in 'Endgame's Reminders', in *Dialogues: Samuel Beckett's Endgame*. Smith argues that Boulter's view that the Freudian paradigms of mourning and trauma require a unified subject is 'the attribution to Freud of an unsophisticated notion of the unified subject' which is 'one of the more unfortunate solecisms of orthodox post-structuralist thinking' (2007: 105). He also argues that Boulter's 'insistence on the impossibility of mourning is, precisely, the expression of melancholia' (107). Summarising LaCapra's account of the distinction between absence and loss, Smith writes, 'For LaCapra, absence tends to be non-specific and ahistorical, a kind of logical or even ontological category, whereas losses are always specific, historical events' (111). Boulter reads *Texts for Nothing* with an emphasis on the absence of the subject, therefore denying the existence of a specified subject and its historical meaning, whereas Smith warns that such an interpretation is dangerous because it ignores 'the ethical capacity to confront historical loss' (113). Michael Rothberg, the author of *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, also quoting LaCapra, comments that 'LaCapra's distinction between absence and loss and historical and structural trauma allow us to ask what it means to write ruins' (2009: 152). This suggests that absence and loss, or structural and historical trauma, are inseparable but must be considered separately. Smith holds that 'in *Endgame* Beckett is always careful to maintain the distinction between absence and loss'. While LaCapra's reading of Beckett as 'a novelist and dramatist of absence and not simply loss' (LaCapra, 2001: 67) 'may be true of much of Beckett's fiction (and here LaCapra's reading of Beckett's dismantling of ontological categories seems broadly to accord with Boulter's)', *Endgame* is a play of historical losses, not absences (Smith, 2007: 113–14). Smith reads *Endgame*'s end, wherein Hamm severs melancholic attachments to the remainders of lost objects, as a process of mourning. Smith interprets

Hamm's abandonment of these remainders as 'an ethical act of betrayal that constitutes the accomplishment of the tragic work of mourning' (115). By refusing melancholia, Beckett finally found 'a thoroughly humanistic acceptance of the work of mourning' (117).

While admitting that these different interpretations of trauma in Beckett's work between Boulter and Smith may correspond to the difference between the texts they approach, we could also think that it points to the ambiguity peculiar to Beckett's work. Beckett's work can be read as what involves the lack of history, memory or a subject (or LaCapra's idea of absence) on one hand, *and* as what addresses itself to historical situations (or LaCapra's idea of loss) on the other. It allows the two seemingly opposing approaches to exist, and we might say that thence comes its special appeal.

Building on and extending these preceding works, *Samuel Beckett and trauma* offers new ways of reading and understanding Beckett's work in relation to trauma. Beginning with biographical and intertextual readings of instances of trauma in his work, the essays take up a range of innovative approaches to Beckett, inspired by theories of trauma. The volume consists of three parts that are interrelated and together cover important aspects of the representation of trauma in Beckett's work.

Part I, 'Trauma symptoms', analyses the trauma symptoms that are shown in Beckett's characters, or that are experienced by performers enacting them, the audience watching them or the radio listeners hearing them. According to James Knowlson, Beckett when young was afflicted with symptoms such as insomnia, panic attacks, racing heartbeat and night sweats (1996: 64). Another comment by Knowlson reveals that Beckett had 'obsessional' images of the County Dublin coastline he visited with his family that 'permeated his imagination and pervaded his work' (29). 'The Bailey Lighthouse near Howth flashing across Dublin Bay ... Dún Laoghaire and the Forty-Foot were to stay deeply etched in Beckett's memory' (29), but these locations are often described in his work as suggesting something negative: darkness, death, fear, vexation, shame, remorse, etc. Julie Campbell, in 'Beckett

and trauma: the father's death and the sea', focuses specifically on the fear of diving that Beckett experienced at six years old, which recurs from the early poem 'For Future Reference' (1930) to the later fiction *Company* (1980), and analyses how and why it was traumatic for him. It was one of the most fearful and shameful experiences Beckett had, exposed not only to his father's eyes but also to the many other eyes upon him. Hesitating to dive, he felt ashamed of letting his father down. The incident, together with the shame and the sense of guilt he felt in mourning his father's death, traumatised Beckett. The author's trauma, caused by his remorseful feeling that he had betrayed his father's expectations, is perhaps most strongly reflected by the character of Henry in *Embers*. Henry is obsessed with the death of his father, who drowned at sea but whose body was not found. The main focus of Campbell's essay is this radio play. According to Campbell, Henry denies his father's death as if trying to expunge it from his memory. His distress, anger, bitterness and confusion are expressed in his commands of his own actions and of the story of Bolton and Holloway. The radio listeners witness Henry's inner feelings and share in his suffering.

Nicholas E. Johnson, in "Void cannot go": trauma and actor process in the theatre of Samuel Beckett', seeks to develop a new mode of attention in discussions of Beckett and trauma by foregrounding the lived experiences of actors performing Beckett. It is well known that Billie Whitelaw experienced panic and vertigo when she performed Mouth in *Not I*, partly because the play demands a great speed in speaking the lines, which caused Whitelaw to have difficulty breathing. Others of Beckett's plays demand physical stillness or constraint, often including stances that operate as 'stress positions' when sustained over time, such as in *Endgame*, *Happy Days*, *Play*, *That Time*, *A Piece of Monologue* and *Catastrophe*. In the rehearsal process, many actors report traumatic symptoms such as panic, fear, anxiety and nightmares, but it can be difficult to disentangle the overdetermined origins of these feelings: are they ingrained in the source material, individual to the actor's process, specific to the performance context, or simply authentic physiological responses to the physical demands? Working through these questions first in terms of

contemporary acting theory, Johnson introduces qualitative data from both experienced and early-career practitioners of Beckett. Alongside historical and theoretical explorations of acting, the chapter emphasises the concept of the 'void' as one possible key to navigating the potentially traumatic terrain within Beckett, as well as naming it as one of the tools at the actor's disposal. By connecting to urgent contemporary debates in the medical humanities and positing Beckett as core to a unified theory of acting that takes account of the 'cognitive turn', Johnson's focus on the materiality of these experiences extends a discussion beyond the fictive space of the texts and the biographical, currently the two most common approaches to Beckett and trauma.

Part II of the volume, entitled 'Body and subjectivity', moves on to the deeper questions of traumatic body and subjectivity. According to Ananya Kabir's arguments in 'Affect, Body, Place: Trauma Theory in the World', trauma studies should attend to the presence of 'affect-worlds within which the space of trauma is located'. These affect-worlds are 'epidermal and haptic' and 'invoked through the processes of embodiment'. She argues: 'the body, therefore, must be returned to the centre-stage of analysis; the original meaning of "trauma" – a bodily wound – must be revived in our considerations of how people cope with traumatic histories' (Kabir, 2014: 71–2). Three essays in this part return to the original meaning of 'trauma' by discussing the language of trauma related to bodily wounds.

For David Houston Jones, the privileged site of the body is the face. In his '*Insignificant residues: trauma, face and figure in Samuel Beckett*', Jones considers the face as a vector of the expressive capabilities of testimony. He examines a range of dramatic and narrative situations in which the expressive capabilities of the face are pitted against the epistemological problem of testimony, from the deterritorialised face of *Not I* to the inexpressive face in *Watt* and the later prose. This chapter helps to problematise trauma theory by critiquing and extending Agamben's theory of testimony in his *Remnants of Auschwitz*. Indeed, Jones says that 'Agamben casts a long shadow over this essay as a thinker of trauma'. Building on his detailed discussion of the impossibility of speech in Beckett's work in relation to Agamben's account

of testimony in his book *Samuel Beckett and Testimony*, Jones turns in this chapter to the question of the face, which Agamben himself left undeveloped after his article 'The Face'. Jones analyses the relation between the impossibility of speech and the expressive uncertainty of the face in Beckett's work. The face is of particular importance because it 'is seen here as the visual figure that best illuminates the interface between Beckett's work and trauma theory and, equally, in Beckett, as a visually coded response to unspeakability'. This analysis constitutes a unique critique of Agamben's idea of testimony and contributes to a rethinking of trauma theory with reference to the realm of the visual.

Michiko Tsushima's chapter, "'The skin of words': trauma and skin in *Watt*", discloses the relationship between trauma and skin in considering *Watt* as a 'skin of words' woven by Beckett – a psychic skin that he tried to recover – and, at the same time, as something that reveals the 'force and truth' (Caruth, 1995: vii) of trauma. In medical and psychiatric literature, especially in Freud's work, the term 'trauma' is used to mean 'a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind'. However, trauma originally meant 'wound' in Greek, 'an injury inflicted on the body' (Caruth, 1996: 3), implying something from the outside that tears, cuts or wounds the skin. Tsushima's chapter tries to return to the original relationship between trauma and skin and understand that relationship as it is presented in Beckett's novel, *Watt*. First, with the help of Didier Anzieu's concept of 'the Skin Ego', Tsushima explores the possibility that Beckett's act of writing *Watt* can be considered an attempt to recover the psychic skin by weaving a 'skin of words'. This act of writing has a therapeutic aspect: by writing *Watt*, Beckett tried to overcome his traumatic experiences and mental crisis during wartime. She also argues that *Watt* explores the 'force and truth' of trauma which cannot be resolved or assimilated. Reading *Watt*, with the help of Caruth's explanation of 'the structure of the experience' of trauma, this chapter discusses how the 'force and truth' of trauma is revealed by the subject 'possessed' by the traumatic experience. *Watt*, possessed by the traumatic event and alienated by the existing linguistic system, becomes a subject whose existence embodies the force to disrupt existing institutions or traditions. Tsushima shows how

the 'force and truth' of trauma manifests itself as a violence to the surface of language, a force that disrupts the apparatus of linguistic representation, in light of Steven Connor's idea of 'an assault upon the skin'.

In 'Bodily object voices in *Embers*', Anna Sigg argues that in this radio play Beckett represents trauma most of all through internal bodily sea sounds. The play effectively 'blinds' its listener and places him or her in a mental cave – a ghostly place of darkness from which the sound of *Embers* emerges. *Embers* focuses on Henry, who is tortured by a roaring 'tinnitus', an internal sea-like sound, which reminds him of the death of his father and his own mortality. Henry re-enacts the stories of his past, but is unable to finish them through the use of words. However, they can be completed by listening to the internal sea sound, which in the 1959 BBC production can be heard during the pauses. This chapter illuminates the connection between Henry's loss and the listener's perception of the 'tinnitus' by drawing on Mladen Dolar's idea of the acousmatic object voice and Jacques Lacan's concept of the *objet petit a*. Dolar states that the object voice is 'a voice whose source one cannot see ... [i]t is a voice in search of an origin, in search of a body' (2006: 60). Thus, Henry's 'tinnitus', Sigg argues, is a bodily object voice manifesting an uncanny intimation of the unconscious. It expresses Henry's mourning and his confrontation with mortality, while also generating countermelodies to the traumatic losses inside the listener's head. Sigg suggests that Henry's bodily countermelodies and object voices originate from what Dolar calls 'a blind spot' (2006: 4), a traumatic place of otherness. The BBC's first production of *Embers*, by inserting Donald McWhinnie's roaring sea-like tinnitus sound in the pauses and removing pure silence in the performance, proves that Henry's 'tinnitus', a disturbing head noise, is a powerful bodily internal sound which demands to be heard and reveals its potential for resistance. Inside the listener's head, Henry's 'tinnitus' re-enacts, speaks back to and destabilises the original malleable sonic sound memories.

Part III widens the scope and considers relevant historical and cultural contexts. Yoshiki Tajiri's chapter, 'Trauma and ordinary objects in Virginia Woolf and Samuel Beckett', explores

the connection between a traumatised psyche and the ordinary objects surrounding it. While a traumatised subject is compelled to return to the original shocking event, it also needs to cope with the flow of everyday life. In the process, ordinary objects may assume unexpected significance. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa is haunted by a sense of the precariousness of life. This mental instability derives from the trauma of the First World War. On the other hand, she pays constant attention to the ordinary objects she encounters by chance, as if to reassure herself that she is still alive. In the case of her 'double', Septimus, who is suffering directly from shell shock, the perception of ordinary objects becomes more unstable and problematic. Beckett's work shows the human psyche more radically destroyed than Woolf's. However, as humanity seems to be reduced to its barest minimum in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Holocaust, ordinary objects again become oddly meaningful. In *Happy Days*, for example, Winnie continues to use and even examine her toothbrush in an improbable ruin-like setting, thus stressing the absurdity of ordinary life against the trauma of the calamity. By discussing these two authors, who represent high and late modernism, this chapter illuminates the ways in which trauma and ordinary life are correlated rather than opposed. It also aims to demonstrate that trauma theory and everyday life studies can stimulate each other. Trauma is far from an everyday phenomenon, but it can shed light on the nature of everyday life after calamities of modernity as in the cases of Woolf and Beckett. Conversely, there may be ways of enriching trauma studies by incorporating reflections on everyday life. This chapter thus offers a close and careful look 'not simply at the trauma, but at the structure of experience within which trauma is made manifest' (Eaglestone, 2014: 18). To consider trauma in relation to the way a traumatised subjectivity comes to terms with everyday life may be conducive to such a project to open up trauma studies, particularly when it is applied to literature.

Conor Carville's 'Smiling tigers: trauma, sexuality and creaturely life in *Echo's Bones*' approaches the trauma in Beckett from a unique perspective. It is well known that Beckett was deeply interested in Otto Rank's 1924 book *The Trauma of Birth*. Its

influence is particularly conspicuous in Beckett's early works, including the early poems collected in *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (1935). By analysing 'Sanies I' and 'Serena II' meticulously, with special attention to the animal imagery, Carville links Rank's theory of the trauma of birth with Eric Santner's recent idea of 'creaturely life' – the life that is exposed to biopolitical power at moments of trauma. Trauma is here considered as constitutive of the subject, not as an exceptional phenomenon, and also as providing the raw material for biopolitical power. In the process of Carville's analyses emerge hitherto uncharted networks concerning Beckett's fixation on the trauma of birth and contemporary biopolitical concerns with birth, reproduction and population in Ireland and Britain. Carville's chapter not only provides original close readings of those difficult poems in light of Rank, but also illustrates how a highly personal unease about sexual identity caused by birth trauma can be connected to biopolitical discourses by the use of Santner's idea of 'creaturely life', which itself draws on the ideas of Benjamin, Foucault, Lacan, Agamben and other theorists.

Mariko Hori Tanaka, in 'The global trauma of the nuclear age in Beckett's post-war plays', focuses on how Beckett responds to the imagined nuclear winter inherent in the global competition in the production of nuclear bombs and energy during the Cold War years. In his biography of Beckett, Andrew Gibson writes, 'From the mid-1950s onwards, there is a strain in Beckett's art which seems less abstract than global. [... His works] clearly respond to a historical condition, that of the Cold War' (2010: 133). Many of his post-war plays, including *Endgame* and *Happy Days*, are clearly set in a post-apocalyptic world, where the only human survivors are the onstage characters. The earth uninhabited and the landscape of ruins with the last remaining human beings barely alive are suggested in many of Beckett's works. During the Cold War, science fiction that dealt with global calamity became popular. Porter Abbott categorises Beckett's works after *Endgame* as 'utopian fictions' (1996: 133), while Veronica Hollinger finds in the play the sense of forever unending, an end endlessly deferred. Such a sense is found in the post-9/11 novel by William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition*, set in the endless endtimes

of the future-present (Hollinger, quoted in Mousoutzanis, 2014: 125). Our post-Holocaust world is filled with repeated calamities such as wars, conflicts and natural disasters, so that we endlessly feel a sense of apocalypse. Beckett's sense of men and women living in worsening conditions towards the unseen ending is the global anxiety shared in the late twentieth and twenty-first century. Beckett's imagination of dead victims ruined and suffering in some traumatic event (which he never clarifies) reminds us, the audience and the readers, of those who have suffered and died in apocalyptic disasters. This chapter thus deals with the recent globally shared cultural traumas in our age. It will open up the discussion of the future of trauma studies and Beckett.

In his essay 'Future Shock: Science Fiction and the Trauma Paradigm', Luckhurst considers science fiction as the best place to examine the future of trauma, arguing that the technological transformation of subjectivity itself in science fiction may necessitate a reconsideration of the notion of trauma (2014: 161). In a similar manner, the transformation of subjectivity itself is inseparable from the unique representation of trauma in Beckett's work. In this collection, we thus present subjectivity in Beckett's work, such as the subject exposed to biopolitical power that Carville reads in his analysis of Beckett's poems, the subject as a ruin in the 'apocalyptic' time that Hori Tanaka examines, or 'the void' navigated by actors when performing Beckett's work in Johnson's chapter. The post-traumatic state of Beckett's new subject is explored in Campbell's biographical discussions of Beckettian characters, in Sigg's examination of 'tinnitus' and in Jones's study of testimonial potentials of the face, whereas Tajiri and Tsushima focus on how such a post-traumatic state influences behaviour in everyday life and its linguistic representation.

As we argued earlier in this Introduction, the anti-representational subject in Beckett transforms the concept of trauma itself. In his work, the concept of trauma is tested at the intersection of material, bodily, psychic, cultural, historical and structural concerns. The representation of trauma in his work traverses these and goes beyond simple binary oppositions. It also hints at, to borrow James Berger's words about sites of apocalypse, 'sites of unrepresentability out of which representation emerges, sites of

absolute rupture that impel transmission, sites of the destruction and generation of structures' (1999: 119). It marks a no-man's land suspended in void where silence and screams coexist, and yet it is not separable from historical particulars.

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