

**The Bilingual Musicality of *Textes pour rien / Texts for Nothing*
Llewellyn BROWN**

If the notion of “world literature” can be counted among the effects of our postmodern reality, Beckett’s bilingual work can assuredly be understood as one of its symptoms: both revealing its existence and offering a salutary response.

Rather than seeing Beckett’s bilingualism as an expression of the postmodern rejection of an “original” text – in reaction to traditional conceptions –, it would seem preferable to view it in relation to a non-negotiable, “impossible” dimension inherent in language, and the singular “*jouissance*” (Lacan) attached to it. This enables us to see the “abortive” status of *Textes pour rien / Texts for Nothing* in a more positive light.

The two versions of what, on the level of meaning, would seem to be the same literary work, prove to be substantially different as regards the effect produced on the reader, and doubtless for the author. The musicality of these texts involves the impact of language on the subject, and is immediately apparent in the specific qualities inherent in French and English. The divergent accentual systems are complemented by the “weaker”, more fluid and allusive language in French, while the English tends to reinforce the substance of words. The two languages thus appear not to be equivalent but to maintain their radical difference in relation to each other.

Bilingualism thus seems to provide a structuring framework whereby Beckett can enclose and situate the subjective part of language that refuses to be assimilated within universal exchange and communication.

Short Bio:

Llewellyn Brown is a professeur agrégé and teaches French literature at the Lycée international de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. He has published *Figures du mensonge littéraire: études sur l’écriture au XX^e siècle* (2005), *L’Esthétique du pli dans l’œuvre de Henri Michaux* (2007), *Beckett, les fictions brèves : voir et dire* (2008), *Savoir de l’amour* (2012), *Beckett, Lacan and the Voice* (2016). He is a member of the editorial committee of publisher Lettres modernes Minard (Paris), and directs the “Samuel Beckett” series.