

## Samuel Beckett and Atom Egoyan's *Eh Joe*: a televisual and theatrical vision

Julie Bénard

*Eh Joe* is Samuel Beckett's first TV play, subsequent to his one and only work for the cinema, *Film*. *Eh Joe*, along with *Film*, were written and broadcast during the mid 60's, when media studies started to grow. In fact, a mere chronological overview of Beckett's "jumping genres", from theatre to radio, cinema and television, shows us how it runs parallel to the history of the evolution of the media.

Though it seems to exemplify a "natural" progression in technological development, a non-linear line of evolutionary progress is observed. In other words, instead of leading to the superseding of one media over an out-dated one, it leads to one medium being inherently linked and pregnant with another one. Peter M Bøenish says that a medium is a "remediation" of another medium. Nonetheless, theatre appears to expose the underside of such a remediation, insofar as it is a "hypermedium". Causing no change in how the primary media theatre relies or behaves, an in-betweenness ensues forcing the audience to negotiate a perceptive gap, or undergo what is known as an "intermedial effect".

As such, what has been described as a "doubling of media" among the beckettian critics, corresponds in *Eh Joe* to the contrapuntal relationship between the voice and the camera that never act together. In Atom Egoyan's *Eh Joe* scenic transposition, it leads to the superimposition of Joe's live presence and screened image. The optical opposition it is meant to create emphasizes the spectator's position of the one seeing as subject and the subject seen. Moreover, the scrim running along the proscenium and on which Joe's face is projected, enacts a fundamental convention of the realist theatre: the invisible fourth wall. Whether on TV or on stage, *Eh Joe* mobilizes a vision that is at the same time theatrical and televisual.

### Short bio :

Julie Bénard is a third year PhD student in English literature from the university of Paul Valéry, Montpellier III, France. She studies Samuel Beckett's practice of literary genres and use of the scenic, filmic and radiophonic devices. Her article, « Silence et dimension cognitive : la pensée dialogique dans la pièce radiophonique *Embers* de Samuel Beckett » ("Silence and cognitive perspective: dialogical thinking in the radiophonic piece *Embers* by Samuel Beckett"), is about to be published in the journal "Sphères" of the university of Avignon.