



SAMUEL BECKETT AND E. M. CIORAN: THE PASSION FOR RUINS

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Abstract: In this article I will focus on three major intersections between Samuel Beckett's and E. M. Cioran's works, irrespective of the fact that Beckett chose mainly the medium of prose and theatre, while Cioran chose the philosophical essay. Starting from several biographical encounters mentioned in Beckett's *Letters* and Cioran's *Cahiers* and the section on Beckett from *Anathemas and Admirations*, I will first explore autobiography as a "figure of reading" (Paul de Man), and use my role as a reader to become a sort of judge who looks into the different ways in which Beckett and Cioran wrote a type of autobiography always veiled through what I will call Facing / Defacing / Figuring / Disfiguring, also searching for possible reasons why they insisted on believing that in life one must keep on trying against all odds. The second comparison will delve into Beckett's and Cioran's "absentheism" (a concept I borrow from Jean-Luc Nancy) and negative theology. The third analogy will deal with the way in which Beckett and Cioran performed failure in their works.

Keywords: Samuel Beckett, E. M. Cioran, stylistic proximities, autobiography, disguise, "absentheism," negative theology, failure.

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Preamble

Samuel Beckett and E. M. Cioran, two exiles in Paris, shared a lot. Both emigrated to France in the very same year, 1937. Both started to write in the language of their adoptive country to free themselves from the style of their native languages via the medium of French, although Beckett returned to English, while Cioran never returned to Romanian and he even changed his first name from Emil into E. M.¹ Both were influenced by Schopenhauer, and both were *à-la-page* readers of existentialism and scepticism, while often being associated by several scholars with nihilism. Both resorted to the theme of suicide and shared an interest in theology, mysticism, and saints' lives. Both wrote several works in fragments. Both were attracted by what Cioran called "the passion for the absurd" (*On the Heights of Despair* 10). While Beckett chose mainly the medium of theatre, creating what Martin Esslin coined as the

"Theatre of the Absurd," defined as a "convention," an "anti-literary movement" (xii, xxi, xxiii), but also that of fiction, Cioran chose the philosophical essay as praxis. Yet, as many scholars showed, both were close to poetry.²

This article will focus exclusively on the kinship between Beckett and Cioran. I would therefore like to start from the first sentence of Beckett's short book *Sans*, published in 1969, whose English translation, *Lessness*, appeared the following year, which reads:

RUINS TRUE REFUGE long last towards which so many false time out of mind. All sides endlessness earth sky as one no sound no stir. Grey face two pale blue little body heart beating only upright. (Beckett, *Lessness* 197, original emphasis)³

As one of Beckett's letters to Cioran (21 April 1969) reveals, Beckett had declared that he found refuge in Cioran's ruins: "I read *Le mauvais démiurge* with the same satisfaction that all your books you give me. In

your ruins I find shelter.” (Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 4 157).

Lessness was first written in English and the translation of its title is something that preoccupied Beckett for a long time, as Cioran reveals, recalling a conversation with the Irish playwright:

This word *lessness* (as unfathomable as Boehme’s *Ungrund*) so fascinated me that one evening I told him. I would not sleep until I found an honorable French equivalent... We considered together every possible form suggested by *sans* and *moindre*. None seemed to come close to the inexhaustible *lessness*, a mixture of privation and infinity, a vacuity synonymous with apotheosis. We parted rather disappointed. Back home, I went on worrying about that poor *sans*. Just when I was about to capitulate, it occurred to me that I should try something in the direction of the Latin *sine*. I wrote him the next day that *sinéité* seemed to me the word we were looking for. He wrote back that he had thought of it too, perhaps at the same moment. Yet it had to be admitted that our discovery was nothing of the kind; we agreed that the search would have to be abandoned, that there was no French substantive capable of expressing absence in itself, and that we would have to resign ourselves to the metaphysical poverty of a preposition. (Cioran, *Anathemas and Admirations* 131–132)

Thematizing the idea of the “true refuge,” *Lessness* focuses on “a ruin in the sand” that is neither “enclosed,” nor does it “protect the refugee,” offering “no way out” but a “sense of entrapment in a state of exposure [...] also reinforced by the text’s structure”: sixty sentences “being presented first in one ‘disorder’ and then in another.” (Shane, *Samuel Beckett and Cultural Nationalism* 48) Indeed, it seems that in Beckett’s text we find the way in which Cioran had imagined ruins as an apocalypse in his most important Romanian text. The philosopher ultimately associated these ruins to the absolute silence following the huge blast before the demise of humanity into nothingness:

Let there be tremendous commotion and noise, terror, and explosion, and then let there be eternal silence and total forgetfulness. And in those final moments, let all that humanity has felt until now, hope, regret, love, despair, and hatred, explode with such force that nothing is left behind. (Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair* 52–53).⁴

In his first French text, Cioran disguised himself as an architect of ruins. I will return to Cioran’s gesture of defacing himself in his essays in the section “Facing, Defacing, Figuring, Disfiguring,” yet here it is worth mentioning that in this particular fragment disguising consists in the use of quotation marks:

“I should have liked to sow Doubt into the entrails of the

globe, to imbue its substance with Doubt, to enthrone Doubt where the mind never perpetrated, and before reaching the marrow of mankind, to shake the calm of stones, to introduce there the insecurity and the anguish of the heart. *Architect, I would have built a temple to Ruin*, preacher, revealed the farce of prayer; king, hoisted the flag of rebellion.” (Cioran, *A History of Decay* 159, quotation marks in the original, my emphasis)

Nicolas Cavaillès regarded this performative gesture as an essential mark of the “corrupted corruptor” who “stages a dialogue, laying, to begin with, the existential framework in the form of a question – in ruins, decomposed: the man who did nothing with his life – before multiplying afterwards *ad libitum* variations on the lyrical theme of the regret for not having sowed doubts.” (“Le Corrupteur corrompu” 89–90)⁵ Yet, as Cavaillès discloses in his thought-provoking analysis of the genesis of Cioran’s text, this dialogue can be interpreted as an invitation addressed to the reader who must look for what Cioran left behind. This sentence marks the “time to take stock,” that time of an identity crisis when Cioran breaks himself free of Romania, of his maternal language (Cavaillès “Le Corrupteur corrompu” 90), and [my addition to Cavaillès’s sentence] also the time when Cioran changes his name as a result of this disentanglement.⁶

Beckett’s positive opinion about Cioran’s ruins was reciprocated by Cioran. After seeing Mac Gowran’s two-hour performance of several of Beckett’s dramatic works and prose, Cioran wrote in his *Cahiers* (26 April 1970): “I was struck by the affinities that exist between Sam’s *Weltanschauung* and mine. Fundamentally, the same impossibility of being.” (803)⁷

Cioran’s many comments on Beckett (“Beckett: Some Meetings,” in *Anathemas and Admirations* 129–136) were unfortunately never matched by similar comments on Beckett’s side. The Irish writer kept silent about all his critics, friends and acquaintances in a sort of “act without words” (I return here to paraphrasing one of Beckett’s titles, which is perhaps the best way to describe Beckett’s lack of reactions to any kind of criticism or praise he received, even after being awarded the Nobel Prize (see Ionescu, “Anathematizing Barthes and Admiring Beckett with Eugène Ionescu” 188).⁸

Literature Review

Up to date few scholars were interested in exploring the various elective affinities between Beckett and Cioran. From the three most well-known biographies of Samuel Beckett, Deirdre Bair never mentioned Cioran, James Knowlson affirmed rather dismissively that “[f]or some years, he had met, occasionally for dinner, the Romanian-born philosopher, E. M. Cioran, but was finding that he had less in common with Cioran in terms of outlook than he had at first thought” (576), while Anthony Cronin put



forward his conviction that Beckett and Cioran “had many things in common” (564). Cronin listed among the shared heritage “sentences which have their own interior order and dependencies,” “an interest in philosophy as a sort of underpinning of the writer’s work,” a “general outlook,” although in their meetings they never spoke about literature (564). Nevertheless, one page later, Cronin gave an example from literature when Beckett and Cioran talked about Jonathan Swift and Beckett revealed that “he had particularly admired the country of Houyhnhnms” (565).

More recently, several references to Cioran began appearing in Beckett scholarship. In a chapter included in *The International Reception of Samuel Beckett*, Octavian Saiu lists three Romanians Beckett befriended: the Romanian-French-Jewish Avigdor Arikha, one of his closest friends, with whom “Beckett spent many long hours, talking about art, listening to music and wandering through Paris’s pubs,” Marcel Mihalovici, “the first composer to turn a Beckett play into an opera, though with limited success,” and Cioran, with whom Beckett had “the deepest affinity” (256). Saiu considered that Beckett’s “understanding of Eastern Europe’s talent” was shaped by encounters with the three Romanians, plus Alain Bosquet (whose Slavic birth name was Anatole Bisk), who came from Ukraine (256). Dirk van Hulle and Mark Nixon’s *Samuel Beckett’s Library* mentioned that a dozen of Cioran’s books were found in Beckett’s library, which shows, alongside the correspondence between the two, that Cioran, “another philosopher-essayist who frequently expressed his fondness for Beckett” (169), was important for Beckett.

Most biographies and critical studies of Cioran published in Romanian, French and English (Balan; Bollon; Cavaillès, *Cioran malgré lui* and *Le Corrupteur corrompu*; Dur; Jaudeau; Modreanu, *Cioran and Le dieu paradoxal de Cioran*; Necula; Parfait; Petreu; Stan; Turcan; Vartic; Zarifopol-Johnston)⁹ do not investigate Cioran’s friendship with Beckett. Some mention it only in passing. For instance, analysing one of Cioran’s letters to Fernando Savater, Turcan includes Beckett among those who influenced Cioran, since he was one of the writers who “formulated his doubts about the legitimacy of existence” (note 2, 144). Dumitra Baron makes a parallel between Cioran’s essay “Sur le temps,” announced in *Cahiers*, and Beckett’s *Texts for Nothing*, concluding that in the metaphor on time that he used, Cioran must have conflated several of his readings: Beckett, Carlo Formichi and F. Scott Fitzgerald (*Variations po(i)étiques* 190). Baron also analyses the quotations from Beckett’s *Unnameable* and *Malone Dies* in *Exercices négatifs (Variations po(i)étiques* 231). Alexandru Sereș’s *Cioran, Omul incomplet* contains one chapter entitled “Un exercițiu de admirație ratat: Beckett” [A Failed Admiration Exercise: Beckett], which gives the most comprehensive up-to-date biographical reading of the relationship between Beckett

and Cioran.

The following part will deal with the more specific comparative studies on Beckett and Cioran. John Pilling remarked that while Beckett’s reputation among both French and English readers was “modish and misleading,” Cioran’s was practically unknown, thus making the contemplation of “why they have gone their separate ways” more gaining (Pilling, “Two Versions of De-composition” 313). Pilling was formulating these conclusions as early as 1977, yet this assertion is no longer sustainable nowadays, when a huge corpus of scholarship on Beckett and on Cioran exists and when Cioran’s reputation has been consolidated not only in his country of birth, Romania, and his country of adoption, France, but also in English-speaking countries, after most of his Romanian books were translated by Zarifopol-Johnston and his French books by Richard Howard and commented on by Susan Sontag (see her “Introduction” to Cioran’s *The Temptation to Exist*) and Eugene Thacker (see his prefaces to all English translations of his French books), among others. To these growing signs of recognition, we may add Cioran’s inclusion in *Encyclopedia of the Essay* (1997, see Lits, “Cioran, E. M.”), *Encyclopedia of Modern French Thought* (2004, see Lits, “Cioran, Emil Michel: Philosopher, Essayist”), *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (2007, see Pratt), and in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Essay* (2022, see Ionescu, “The Essay as Brinkmanship”).

William Kluback wrote a short essayistic text on Beckett and Cioran, where he put together some remarks Cioran made, without engaging critically with them. First, he looked into an interview with Gabriel Liiceanu about Cioran’s unease to define Beckett, then he selected a few more comments from Cioran’s *Œuvres*, especially the fragment on Beckett from *Anathemas and Admirations* and, finally, he analysed one of Cioran’s interviews with Michael Jakobs (1988). Kluback finally expressed his “temptation” to “adjust every word” which Cioran used “to describe Beckett to a word describing himself” and added his conviction that: “Nowhere else, except in invented figures of the past, do we find two writers so closely joined together. What a pleasure it would have been to listen in on their conversation!” (226)

The Irish poet, critic and Beckett scholar David Wheatley remarked that “[o]f the *émigré* figures who made Paris their home in mid-century, Cioran, with his cultural displacement, passionate pessimism, addiction to the fragment,¹⁰ unclassifiable *œuvre* and entirely relaxed view of the obscurity in which he laboured for most of his life, would appear to have more in common [with Beckett] than most.” (40) He brought together Beckett and Cioran in their absorption of negative theology and mysticism, with an emphasis on the God-haunted atheism of both writers for whom “blasphemy arises against faith” (Wheatley 44). He also drew several stylistic parallels between Cioran’s aphoristic method cultivating the fragment and Beckett’s mid-career use of the

fragment in his 1961 novel *Comment C'est* (translated as *How It Is* in 1964). The remarks on the fragmentariness of *How It Is* yet were partially contradicted by another scholar, Benjamin Keatinge, through a reading of Édouard Magnessa O'Reilly's Preface to the Faber edition of *How It Is*. Keatinge fairly noted that the compositional history of *How It Is* "militates against the view that Beckett was inclining towards aphoristic units of meaning, *pace* Cioran" (160). Keatinge is right to say that Beckett was rather looking for breaking up his prose into "units of breath" (O'Reilly's term), yet these "do not necessarily constitute wholes' and are therefore not 'units of meaning' in the way Cioran's aphorisms always are." (160)

In his unpublished MA thesis "Before the Curtain Falls: Samuel Beckett and E. M. Cioran," characterized as "an attempt to listen in on" the conversation between the two, which sounds like an echo from Kluback, Michael Friesen reconstructed Beckett and Cioran's friendship (4). A reference to Cioran and his "companion of misfortune and exile," Beckett, appears in Aurélien Demars's "Le pessimisme jubilatoire de Cioran. Enquête sur un paradigme métaphysique négatif," in an incisive analysis of Cioran's monologue about God that resembles Beckett's dialogue from *The Unnameable*, concluding that Cioran was also in search of an Unnameable, yet using both lucidity and ecstasy, since he "seeks to be in God where there is nothing anymore." (244, 224)¹¹

In 2016, Thomas Cousineau presented the paper "Samuel Beckett and Emil Cioran: Writing as Play-acting," based on a "biological reading."¹² His findings included interdependency as "a cantata for two voices" in *Endgame*, which emerged as what he called "a borderless poem" in Cioran's *The Trouble with Being Born*, in the form of "prose and poetic figures" (see Cousineau, "Samuel Beckett and Emil Cioran: Writing as Play-acting").

To these, we can add several studies on Beckett's and Cioran's linguistic turn and the consequences of bilingualism on their style and on their identity and alterity,¹³ which this article will not deal with due to space constraints. However, it is worth mentioning in passing Marie Dollé's *L'Imaginaire des langues*, which places Beckett among those who passed from one language to another and Cioran among the "defectors" [*les transfuges*], those who abandoned their mother tongue to adopt a new language out of "literary, personal and poetic reasons" (131). Baron also discussed being born in a new language (see Andrei-Baron, "Naître de nouveau dans une langue nouvelle: le problème du bilinguisme chez Cioran et Beckett," and Baron, "Ressorts du changement de langue," in *Variations po(i)étiques*, where she differentiated between *l'écriture* for Beckett, which consisted in translating his own texts, and *l'écriture* for Cioran, which also involved the work of translation but as an essential part of the transformation and preparation of his materials" (47). I focussed on Beckett's and Cioran's

"born-translated" works, a term I borrowed from Rebecca Walkowitz¹⁴ (Ionescu, "Language as Becoming").

Interestingly, Jean-Michel Rabaté reveals a Beckettian pun in an explanation that the Irish writer gave to his German translator about his choice to write in French: "Beckett confirmed that his own French language derives from poetry" and that he switched to French because of his "need to be 'ill equipped' (Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 2 464)" (Rabaté, *Think, Pig!* 186). The original French of this pun which is lost in the English translation "ill equipped" is "le besoin d'être mal armé" (Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 2 464), "a phrase in which anyone, especially his addressee, will recognize a reference to Stéphane Mallarmé; it might be read as 'the need to be Mallarmé.' In fact, Mallarmé himself often played on the echoes of his name, highlighting the weakness of his body and his art that it revealed." (Rabaté, *Think, Pig!* 186) By a strange coincidence, Mallarmé was also the reason why Cioran switched to French. Zarifopol-Johnston disclosed that while conversing with Cioran's partner, Simone Boué at dinner on March 11, 1995, she found out that in the summer of 1947 Cioran went to a village near Dieppe to translate Mallarmé into Romanian, an effort that he eventually saw futile, hence his decision to give up Romanian, ride his bicycle back to Paris and start his first work in French: *Précis de décomposition*" (206). The episode of Cioran's "conversion" appeared in many of his interviews, yet the date of the event was 1945 for Cioran and 1947 for Simone (Zarifopol-Johnston 206).

Facing, Defacing, Figuring, Disfiguring

Paul de Man regarded autobiography not as much as a genre but as a "figure of reading," in which the reader plays an active role and becomes "the judge, the policing power in charge of verifying the *authenticity* of the signature and the consistency of the signer's behavior." (923) For de Man, "the trope of autobiography, by which one's name [...] is made as intelligible and memorable as a face" is prosopopeia which indicates "the giving and taking away of faces, with face and deface, *figure*, figuration and disfiguration" (926). In a book chapter on E. M. Cioran as an essayist (Ionescu, "The Essay as Brinkmanship"), in order to explain the nature of abstraction, the philosopher's main tool to include autobiography in his essays, and to look into its textual and conceptual effects, I turned to de Man's analysis, invoking prosopopeia (from the Greek πρόσωπον/*prosopon*: face, person, and ποιεῖν/*poiein*: to make), the "rhetorical figure by which an imaginary or absent person is represented as speaking or acting" or "by which an inanimate or abstract thing is represented as a person, or with personal characteristics" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "prosopopeia"). According to Jean Lallot, "[s]ince Homer, *prosôpon* [πρόσωπον], etymologically



'what is opposite the gaze,' has designated the human 'face' [...], and synecdochically, the whole 'person' bearing the face" (11). As a compound, *prosopopoein* [προσωποποιεῖν] means "'to compose in direct discourse,' that is, to make the characters speak themselves [...]" (Lallot 11). Instead of composing their work in the form of autobiography, a genre that "veils a defacement of the mind of which it is itself the cause" (de Man 930), Beckett and Cioran defaced and disguised themselves in/through their writings. As all Beckett's biographers showed, especially Knowlson, Beckett's texts often betrayed or were a "reflection of his mood," behind the efforts made "to disguise some of the more directly autobiographical elements," making it possible, for instance, to identify "with some degree of certainty" most of the characters in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women's* (Knowlson 146). Knowlson recounts his first interview with Beckett and his doubt that a separation between Beckett's life and his work is possible: "I then adduced some of the images of his childhood in Ireland that appear often in his work, even in his late prose texts: a man and a boy walking hand in hand over the mountains; a larch tree turning green every year a week before the others; the sounds of stonecutters chipping away in the hills above his home" (21). Among many other events in his life, Beckett's relation with his parents becomes transparent in many of his texts. We know from Beckett's biographers that in the summer term of 1930–1931, returning home, Beckett found his mother "in a state of blind fury" (Knowlson 131) caused by having read one of his manuscripts while cleaning his room. She evicted him from the house on grounds that "she would not have him writing such monstrous work under her roof" (Knowlson 131). His relationship with his father was instead always good and Beckett's work insists on a recurring image that the writer deemed as "obsessional" (Knowlson 21) of a father and a son holding hands (see also Ionescu, "Blanchot in Infinite Conversation(s) with Beckett" 88). *Texts for Nothing* unfolds the story of a boy who lost his mother (or whose mother is not present) but whose father holds his hand. Father and son would go on their walk hand-in-hand, each "locked into their solitudes" (Weller, "Orgy of False Being Life in Common" 43), yet what is important is that they are together at present, now (*maintenant*), holding hands (*mains tenant*), an image that will appear again in *Worstward Ho*. His father's death in 1933, Knowlson informs us, "never failed to tear [Beckett] apart" (245). By the time the father figure disappeared from Beckett's life, the son will play both roles, that of the father and that of the son, one asking questions and the other answering them, and the holding of hands will take the form of a firm self-embrace that, although not so tender, has a soothing effect on the son who lost his father:

Yes, I was my father and I was my son, I asked myself questions and answered as best I could, I had it told to me

evening after evening, the same old story I knew by heart and couldn't believe, or we walked together, hand in hand, silent, sunk in our worlds, each in his worlds, the hands forgotten in each other. [...] I'm in my arms, I'm holding myself in my arms, without much tenderness, but faithfully, faithfully. (Beckett, *Texts for Nothing* 103–104)

Following several Beckettian narrators who are stripped of identity and become mere "voices," Bruno Clément noted that "the voice is a figure, nothing less." ("Mais quelle est cette voix?" 97) Endeavouring to see what this figure is connected to, Clément also invoked *prosopopoeia*, mentioning that a "prosopon designates well the face, the mask (the ill-seen, therefore – and perhaps all these strange silhouettes and quasi-humanoids); but in fact the *prosopopoeia* has always been a means less to show than to hear (and the ill-said, the ill-heard are obviously to be related to it)." ("Mais quelle est cette voix?" 97)

Without using the typical Beckettian device of letting himself be "ill-seen," "ill-heard," "ill-said" via his narrators, Cioran disguised himself in his work, although admitting that this was part of his game with the reader: "All my books are more or less autobiographical – a rather abstract form of autobiography, I admit." (Cioran quoted by Sontag in "A Note on the Author," in Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist* 223) In his Romanian texts, which are "visceral," and "intensely lyrical, almost savage," the "I" shows itself wounded, "unhealed, close to the surface" (Zarifopol-Johnston 14). In his French texts, the "I" is often disguised as a "you" or a "he," especially when describing the most personal and painful details of his life, such as his sleepless nights. Yet behind this device, we encounter the recollection of Cioran's own chronic insomnia, "a tragedy that has lasted many years" (see Cioran's confessions to Jakob in *Entretiens* 291, 287; see also Cioran, *Aveux et anathèmes* 1055 and *Anathèmes and Admirations* 111; Liiceanu and Ilesiu 38:36–39:00; Regier, "Cioran's Insomnia"). As I mentioned elsewhere, "[p]resenting his thoughts and divagations as someone else's makes his life story mutable to someone who changes further from 'you' to 'he,' sending a hint to the intelligent reader: 'Whoever has seen his face grotesquely *disfigured* can never forget it, because he will always be afraid of himself.'" (Ionescu, "The Essay as Brinkmanship" 350; Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair* 19, my emphasis)

More generally, to return to the idea of ruins that both Beckett and Cioran found themselves close to, similarly to their creator, some Beckettian characters live in "ruins" (derelicts like Krapp, bedridden like Malone or Mr Kelly, chairbound and crippled like Hamm and Clov, ash-binned like Nag and Nell, half-buried castaways like Winnie, mindless perpetrators like Malone) and experience despair and loneliness. They think of death and suicide, which are also the main themes of Cioran's work, starting with his first volume, *On the Heights of Despair*, which became the matrix of

his whole subsequent work. I wrote elsewhere that “Beckett’s characters who have made self-annihilation their permanent abode, those entrapped in servile dependency as ersatz for free, fulfilling relationships, those oblivious to the world and others, who suffer from unimaginable angst,” use a shielded passivity acting like “a carapace of self-defence against emotions and a numbing of desires” (Ionescu, *Memorial Ethics* 221). This was also characteristic of Cioran who concealed his identity behind fragments and aphorisms which leave the story untold through their incompleteness. Yet, despite being trapped in a sort of void, both Beckett’s and Cioran’s voices share *The Unnamable’s* famous final “I can’t go on. I’ll go on” (Beckett, *The Unnamable* 418). One can see it substantiated in Cioran’s thoughts on continuing an act: “I can distinctly imagine the moment when there will no longer be a trace of flesh anywhere, and yet I go on as if it made no difference.” (Cioran, *The New Gods* 94, my emphasis)

From the Passions of Christ to Absent(heim) and Negative Theology

This section uses a concept that was coined by Jean-Luc Nancy in relation to Maurice Blanchot’s work. Nancy had asserted that “Blanchot affirms a form of atheism, but he does so only to dismiss atheists and theists alike” (85). Moreover, Blanchot’s “coupling of atheism with writing” (Nancy 88) becomes the cry in the desert in *The Writing of the Disaster*, “the voiceless cry, which breaks with all utterances, which is addressed to no one and which no one receives, the cry that lapses and decries” (51). Nancy explained that “[t]he humanism of the cry would be a humanism that abandons all idolatry of man and all anthropo-theology;” taking up “a watchword phrase of biblical prophecy,” Blanchot invoked the prophet “who speaks for God and of God, who announces to others the call of and recall to God” (88). Nancy considered that no motif “of any return to religion” was present in Blanchot’s text, which means that we cannot talk of atheism, but rather “absentism, beyond all positing of an object of belief or disbelief” (88).

Absentism is perhaps the best word to describe Beckett’s and Cioran’s alignment to theology alike. In *The Dark Theology of Samuel Beckett’s Drama*, Sandra Wynands compared Blanchot’s work to Beckett’s in their deliberate undertakings “to separate God and the sacred from the conceptions of the positive religions” (4). Both Beckett and Blanchot called themselves atheists, yet what is at stake here is that “the profession of atheism is as much a profession of belief as that of the believer” (Wynands 4). Cioran puts forward a similar absence, in which, as Clément Rosset shows, human beings can count here on nothing or on nobody, including God. (95–101).¹⁵

Without being sure whether such convergence was “a

deliberate act on Beckett’s part or a coincidence born of the fact that sharing a very narrow preoccupation with a particular question might result in very similar formulations,” Wynands considered that Beckett aligned “himself much more closely with the man in the shadows of existentialist Paris” (4). It is that point brought into existence that Wynands considers the core of Beckett’s aporetic writing, which has exactly the same roots in Cioran’s work: the existentialist Paris where Cioran would silently spend whole evenings in the same café, Le Café de Flore, eavesdropping on the conversations between French intellectuals, always being behind Jean-Paul Sartre to whom nevertheless he never spoke.

Scholars have often read Beckett through the lens of existentialist atheism and the Theatre of the Absurd and Cioran through that of nihilism. Yet, as Wynands showed, “the aporia of writing as it is performatively enacted in Beckett’s texts bears the same mark of irreducibility as does the divine in the texts of negative theology” (6). Beckett’s writing attests to God’s absence in the same way that Cioran’s *Tears and Saints*, with its echoes from Nietzsche, does. The title *Tears and Saints* alludes to what is known in the Catholic tradition as the “gift of tears”: penitential, purifying tears, tears of love or compassion that saints wept for the Passion of Christ (the characteristic feature of Western European mysticism, a symbol of the passive experience of God’s presence – see Zarifopol-Johnston 129). Cioran endeavours to detect the saints’ ability to renounce the world, in other words, the Nietzschean “will to power” which interested him “for the delirium of self-aggrandizement hidden beneath its meekness, its will to power masked by goodness” (Zarifopol-Johnston viii).

Beckett’s and Cioran’s controversial dialogues with God are both mystical and blasphemous. For Beckett, the discourse on God cannot use the verb *to be*, since, as Hamm mentions in *Endgame*, “The bastard! He doesn’t exist!” (119). In *Watt*, the narrator imagines God as a simple man, even a termite (Beckett, *Watt* 64), exhibiting “an awareness of the necessity of a self-negating speech in relation to speaking of the inexpressible” (Fifield 83). Peter Fifield equates Watt’s reference to “effing”¹⁶ (see Beckett, *Watt* 52–53) to “the ineffable,” “a parody of negative theology” and “the seed of both forward motion and deletion in the approach to the other” (83).

In *Tears and Saints*, for Cioran, who grew sick of the “heavenly poison that grows ever more virulent as our loneliness increases,” whether God has ever existed or not was less important. What really mattered was that he was dead, as he was for Nietzsche,¹⁷ and theology represented “the negation of divinity” and the atheist’s “mode of believing” (14, 76). In *Tears and Saints*, the philosopher passed in the space of a single page from supreme admiration for saints to the passionate denial of divinity. He looked at saints as partial alter egos, devout existentialists “who live in flames,” whose “passionate



naïvété” fascinated Cioran who wet his soles in their tears (14, 20). The tears that come to saints’ eyes are tears of joy, that bring revelation, tears reminding of Saint Augustine’s surprising joy to the desire of grief (see Saint Augustine 39). However, as Sylvain David demonstrated, the thinker feels “incapable of being recognized by the Creator” and “the essential strangeness maintained by the essayist facing God represents a metaphor for his inaptitude to include oneself in a totality, to grasp the absolute” (272). David names this tendency “negative heroism” (see especially 173–187, 196–197, 278). Negative heroism is not atheism. Petre Țuțea remembered one of Nae Ionescu’s assertions, “The Atheist is closer to God, with whom he struggles than the indifferent person, whose soul is extinct.” (see “Full Documentary of E. M. Cioran” 2.08:38–2.08.45, translation modified). Țuțea admitted that Cioran’s struggle with God cannot be classified as atheism but rather as “metaphysical unrest that all intellectuals utter; all true intellectuals experience Cioran’s metaphysical unrest, yet they don’t take the explosive form of his honesty.” (“Full Documentary of E. M. Cioran” 2.08: 57–2.09:17, translation modified)

The absolute of literature enjoys absurdist expressions both in Beckett’s mock-religious, dramatic treatment of “passion” (especially) in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, and in Cioran’s more extreme, almost pathological notion of “despair” and his aphoristic renderings of a passionate advocacy of suicide as the best help for continuing to live (*The Passionate Handbook, On the Heights of Despair*).

In Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon play hide-and-seek with death while waiting for their own death in the paradoxical form of Godot who never comes; they contemplate committing suicide together to put an end to waiting but decide against it since they cannot hope to share this final act, if only because the tree cannot hold both their weights. The bare tree is a reminiscence of crucifixion as much as potential redemption (see Webner 3–31; Cormier and Pallister 86–87; Walling 105–118) and it reminds us of Christ’s Passion and absolute sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane; in spite of Christ’s absence, the bare tree may still become the cross where Vladimir and Estragon will share a place to die like the two thieves “poised between damnation and redemption” (McCandless 344), hanging side by side, as the two thieves died together. However, Vladimir’s Angst comes from the fact that one thief went to hell and the other was rescued from the flames of hell by Jesus who was not as amnesiac as God about repentance. Yet, in the *Bible*, Christ himself felt forsaken by God: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’” that is to say, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Mary Bryden pointed out that Beckett’s entire work evokes a Christ “as a type of even prototype of human suffering in any time and place” and the “crucified Christ [...] becomes an enduring image of enduring” (55).

Suffering with Christ may suggest that “human suffering is inevitable and inextricably linked with the Passion, but that it becomes bearable through this notion of sharing the pain with fellow sufferers” (Johansson 63).

In her excellent book *Beckett, Derrida, and the Event of Literature*, Asja Szafraniec’s reading of Beckett through negative theology focuses on God as absence; in Beckett’s world, which is a claustrophobic space with nothing in it but a tree replacing Jesus’ cross, God can be still alive, yet hidden in an old character with a white beard who never comes. In Cioran’s world, which is “a divine infinity,” God is hidden “behind the screen of Nothingness like a last temptation” (Cioran, *Tears and Saints* 28; 33). In *Tears and Saints*, Cioran exclaims: “Without God, everything is nothingness. But God is the supreme nothingness!” (74).

For Szafraniec, the discourse on God can be linked to a “linguistic breakdown known as aphasia” (167). Aphasia (from the Greek *aphatos*, meaning “speechless”) is an acquired language disorder in which there is an impairment of any language modality. Because God allocates redemption randomly, there is indeed “nothing to be done” (Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* 11), since not even repenting, or doing so perfunctorily, can bring about the hope of heaven. Lucky’s speech inscribes, among other Beckettian texts, the possibility to suggest that to speak about God is only possible through aphasia – or that speaking about God leads to aphasia. Szafraniec’s point can be extended from Lucky’s speech to Beckett’s entire work. Such grappling with God’s essence falls into what Szafraniec calls “the project of experimenting with the rhetoric of unsaying” (170), which culminated in Beckett’s last prose work, *Worstward Ho*. Here the Irish writer’s fictional constructions of divinity approximate Jacques Derrida’s understanding of God as a figure of difference (as in “All and Nothing, Life and Death,” “within difference, and at bottom as Difference itself” – see Derrida 144) and Martin Heidegger’s own distinction between “God as the Supreme Being and hence also an entity,” and “Being;” “to conceive of them as equivalent would mean to give in to onto-theology, to neutralize the ontological difference between ‘Being’ and beings (in making the former appear simply as a variation in degree of the latter).” (Szafraniec 171) Put more simply, Beckett approximates the Heideggerian distinction between “Being (the Being of beings) and God as the Supreme Being.” (Szafraniec 171)¹⁸

Cioran’s discourse on God is linked to anathema rather than aphasia, as he excommunicated himself through a method akin to prayer. (Ab) *surdus* makes Cioran *deaf* to patience / past and his books insufferable to his readers’ ears; it gives him joyful pessimism going towards the egotistical sublime. Cioran never killed himself despite advocating suicide with such a passion in all his works, autobiographies in disguise. At an extremely early age, Cioran turned Descartes’ “Cogito ergo sum” into “I suffer, therefore I am;”¹⁹ in *On the Heights of Despair*,

Cioran advocated suffering in shocking formulations: “I think that I alone suffer, that I alone have the right to suffer, although I also realize that there are modalities of suffering more terrible than mine, pieces of flesh falling from the bones, the body crumbling under one’s very eyes, monstrous, criminal, shameful sufferings.” (54)

In his project to design an unmistakable absentism, Cioran is not far from Sade who saw God as the original sin.²⁰ Christ’s image makes Cioran think of a bored God:

I can very well imagine God being bored with men who only know how to beg, exasperated by the triviality of his creation, equally disgusted with both heaven and earth. And I see him taking flight into nothingness, like Jesus escaping from the cross... (Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair* 96).

Cioran’s version of crucifixion (in “The Flight from the Cross,” which is the title of the chapter on Christ, included in *On the Heights of Despair*) leads us toward a Christ whose heart is filled with doubt. Doubt that he should have been the appointed one, doubt that he should have tried to save the world. Cioran (sur)passes the sacrificial passion of Christ, rewriting the *Bible* in a paradoxical way: Jesus Christ, still too illuminated to become a sceptic, and still proud does not ask the Roman soldiers to take him off the cross and let him escape. Yet Cioran’s Christ is obsessed by this thought even if “He must have truly believed that he was the son of God.” (Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair* 96). Cioran’s discourse resembles Beckett’s own predicaments on Christ’s disappearance: “He is fled, I’m inside, he’ll do himself to death, because of me, I’ll live it with him, I’ll live his death, the end of his life and then his death, step by step.” (Beckett, “Fizzles” 233)

Performing Failure

Worstward Ho repeats the refrain of trying and failing over and over again: “All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better. [...] Where none. The place again. Where none. Try again. Fail again. Better again. Or better worse. Fail worse again. Still worse again. (Beckett, *Worstward Ho* 7–8)

Beckett’s work testifies to what Marcin Tereszewski called “the aesthetics of failure,” a failure “to express and represent,” based on tropes of “ineffability, inexpressibility, unrepresentability” (5). According to Laura Salisbury who calls *Endgame* “the comedy of failure,” “Beckett’s comedy seems to advertise failure and uncertainty” (30, 21). The state of wretchedness failure of life from the very moment of birth is exposed by the hero of *First Love*, Molloy, Mahood and Beckett’s other narrators. Their sense of failure results from what Michael Worton called failure as “inevitable outcome”. Crucially, Beckett’s “various stories are never really finished – and they are told not only to give the teller a

belief that he or she does in fact have a past but, more importantly, to convince a listener that a past, or at least ‘their’ past, exists. Failure is the inevitable outcome – even the punch-lines of their jokes fail to be properly understood.” (Worton 73) Similar thoughts haunted Cioran’s thoughts on the “troubles of being born” from his homonymous book, and his thoughts on failure from *A Short History of Decay* and other works belonging to his French texts. Cioran was a writer who practised failure that he “identified with his very existence” (Nica 123) or he performed it “in style,” as Costica Bradatan put it in “The Philosopher of Failure” that became a book chapter of his recent *In Praise of Failure*, in which Cioran features as an example of “social failure” (8). Cioran’s work also yearns for the failure of language similarly to Beckett’s and deals obsessively with falling and failing (*The Fall into Time*, *The Trouble with Being Born* are a few of his titles deserving attention).

Beckett and Cioran put failure at work and performed it in through their characters and voices, their inaction and their assertions about writing. Knowlson quoted Beckett’s declaration from a letter to Jacoba Van Velde on 12 April 1958: “There are two moments worthwhile in writing, the one when you start and the other when you throw it in the waste-paper basket” (400). Cioran’s texts abound in similar declarations about his work that he interpreted as a permanent attempt to fail better, to endure life:²¹

When you detest someone to the point of wanting to liquidate him, the best thing is to take a sheet of paper and to write on it any number of times that X is a bastard, a fool, a monster, and you will immediately discover that you hate him less . . . This is more or less what I did with regard to myself and the world. The *Précis* I drew from my lower depth in order to insult life and insult myself. The result? I have endured myself a little better, as I have better endured life. (*Anathemas and Admirations* 254)

Concluding Remarks

Friesen’s “Before the Curtain Falls: Samuel Beckett and E. M. Cioran” reconstructed Beckett and Cioran’s friendship from their correspondence, diary entries, anecdotes, interviews, and “Encounters with Beckett,” an essay Cioran wrote on Beckett for the *Partisan Review* in 1976. Friesen divided this relationship into four periods: 1930–1945, when their pre-war political opinions were substantially different; 1946–1960, before they actually started to meet; 1961–1974, the most relevant period in their relationship, when numerous encounters took place; and, eventually, 1975–1990 (*sic!*),²² when Beckett estranged himself from most people, including Cioran, and started to fight for several causes, such as abuses against human rights in South Africa and Eastern Europe. What Friesen does not seem to remark



is that precisely because Beckett was so much involved in the cause of Eastern Europe, where Cioran had come from, and because he wrote the commissioned play *Catastrophe*²³ in support of the Czech playwright Václav Havel, at that time a political prisoner, the estrangement seems even harder to explain. One would expect Beckett endeavouring to find out more details about the political situation in Eastern Europe from his Eastern European friends who lived in Paris. A question like how come Beckett was not interested in what Cioran could relay about communism in Eastern Europe, where the philosopher's relatives were still living, comes to mind. In this period, Beckett still communicated briefly with Cioran via postcards, yet always postponed a future meeting which he imagined happening, as Simone Boué, Cioran's long-life companion, recalled in an interview, "sometime before the curtain falls" (38). However, the view that Beckett abandoned Cioran is contradicted by Cioran himself in one of his interviews with Liiceanu, where he blames himself for not having seen Beckett in the last period of his life: "I abandoned him in the last years because he became ill, and, after all, as I would say, I did not want to see his diminished image" (Cioran, in "Full Documentary of E. M. Cioran," translation modified" 2.46:39–2.46:53). It is true that from 1979 onwards Beckett's physical condition deteriorated significantly. Knowlson writes: "In the last few years of his life, Beckett became frailer and thinner. His hands were now noticeably distorted and he swung his right leg a little more stiffly than before as he walked. Greeting him with a fond embrace, you noticed how prominent his shoulder blades felt, even through a heavy wool sweater, and how thin his wrists and forearms had become." (581) Yet in the last years of his life, he was highly productive and travelled, often being seen as a "tyrannical figure, an arch-controller of his work, ready to unleash fiery thunderbolts onto the head of any bold, innovative director unwilling to follow his text and stage directions to the last counted dot and precisely timed pause." (Knowlson 606) He continued writing even if it was physically painful for him (Knowlson 617). His real collapse was on December 6 1989, followed by his death on December 22. Therefore, should we give credit to Cioran who says he did not want to see Beckett's diminished image for so many years? My hypothesis is that Cioran conceals the truth, offering a credible explanation for the public to hide the real cause of his estrangement from Beckett.

My conclusion attempts to connect the first and last periods of Beckett's relationship with Cioran (1930–1945 and 1975–1989), and to question whether this permanent postponement of the meeting that never took place was motivated by Beckett's suspicions about Cioran's past that was hidden by the philosopher when he moved to France. As early as 1933, when Cioran was awarded a fellowship to study at the Friedrich Wilhelm

University, while in Berlin, he saw in Hitler's ascension to power and the national-socialist experiment the promise of a great future for Germany and the source of Europe's regeneration, as he would write in several newspapers (*Vremea*, *Calendarul* and *Acțiunea*), also praising Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the leader of The Iron Guard, an infamous far-right ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic and anti-capitalist movement in Romania. Cioran had expressed strong admiration for Hitler's "pathos" and "frenzy" (Cioran, "Impresii din München" 52) which led him to write *Schimbaria la față a României* [*The Transfiguration of Romania*], a book in which he pleaded for the elimination of Jews and Hungarians from Romania. Cioran apparently managed to keep secret all these details about his youth that he later regretted, and repeatedly repented for, including by apologizing later and excising all antisemitic comments from the second edition of *Transfiguration* (for Cioran's fascist past and the subsequent abandonment of his "early delirium,"²⁴ see Bejan; Laignel-Lavastine "Le jeune Cioran" and *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*; Moraru; Ornea; Parfait; Petreu; Shapiro; Tismaneanu).

Beckett hated any kind of totalitarianism. He joined the Resistance in 1940, and, after the Nazi German occupation of France, he exposed himself to dangers while working as a courier between 1940 and 1942. He was nearly caught by the Gestapo, yet he continued to help the Resistance. After the War, the French government awarded him the *Croix de guerre* and the *Médaille de la Résistance* for his efforts to fight against the German occupation (see Bair 250–99; Knowlson 279, 305–306, 344, 597; Morin). Beckett's work is full of allusions to the Holocaust (see, among many others, Adorno 380; Morin, especially 130–131, 154–162, 181–182; Temkine, Rastier and Temkine; Ionescu, "The 'Differend' of Shoes").

Perhaps we will never know why Beckett estranged himself from Cioran. However, very likely, whether any of the details of Cioran's "infamous past"²⁵ became vaguely known to Beckett, it is clear that their final encounter could no longer be possible. Sereș launched the same hypothesis in his book, yet, similarly to me, added no proofs, since the two masters of failure left us no explanation whatsoever about the failure of their relationship (see also Sereș 168 and his conclusion that Beckett and Cioran reiterate Vladimir and Estragon's intention of going their separate ways; however, while Vladimir and Estragon fail to separate and always find reasons to keep on staying together, in the same way Hamm and Clov do, Beckett and Cioran did go separate ways).

To return to Bradatan's brilliant account on failure which also opens on the friendship between Beckett and Cioran, "[a]s a rule, we fail to take failure seriously. Even the idea of examining failure more closely makes us uncomfortable." (Bradatan, *In Praise of Failure* 5) Uncomfortable as it would be for those who want to believe in the friendship between Beckett and Cioran,

Beckett may have once found himself in Cioran's "ruins," an assertion on which this essay started, yet their pasts were incompatible. A last encounter failed to happen behind the fallen curtain. Ironically, Cioran's native Romania was the last Eastern European country where the curtain fell on December 22, 1989, when, scared by the crowds of people finally demanding their freedom in the streets, Nicolae Ceaușescu would flee in his helicopter taking off from the roof of the Communist Party headquarters in Bucharest. December 22, 1989 was also the day when Beckett failed to stay in our world. By this time Cioran had decided to stop writing as the Alzheimer's disease was taking hold of him, eventually causing the final failure he would call "la

démission totale" [total resignation] (see Bradatan, "The Philosopher of Failure").

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Notes

1. Cioran's gesture of inventing a new identity consisted also in changing his name into a "partly made-up" one that he used to sign his French debut, *Précis de décomposition* [1949], and his subsequent French works: E. M. Cioran, which does not stand for Emil Michel, as Marc Lits lists him in *Encyclopedia of Modern French Thought* (137), but rather points to an anonymous identity, like that of E. M. Forster: "Emil, the Romanian, the Transylvanian, turned himself into the cryptic E. M., and by this act of baptismal abbreviation he reinvented himself as a 'civilized' West European author." (Kenneth R. Johnston in Zarifopol-Johnston 8). See also Mavrodin's captivating study "Cioran: un réceptacle de multiples noms." See Boué 32 for Cioran's assessment of his own name: Émile is "the first name of a hairdresser."
2. On Beckett, see, among others, Rabaté, "Formal Brilliance and Indeterminate Purport: The Poetry of Beckett's Philosophemes;" Ross; Alber's narrative framework to Beckett's "Lessness," endeavouring to narrativize the disparate and jarring elements of the text and Wee's further exploration of the question of poeticity read in relation to narrativity in the same text; on Cioran, see Oprescu; Puică 63–64; Turcan 64.
3. For an insightful study on Beckett's ruins, see McTighe.
4. This silence reminds of Blanchot's "silent, harmless return" called "disaster" (Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* 6, 122), "the approach of the Outside" (Hart 186), a "passive affirmation of a non-present" (Milesi 165), which was familiar to Beckett too, and either took "the form of an endless waiting without expectation (an 'intransitive' waiting) to the point of an iterative paralysis of action: 'still time' (Maclachlan)" (Milesi 167) or that of a catastrophe (see Beckett's play *Catastrophe*, published in the same year as Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster*). For more considerations on Cioran's versus Blanchot's disaster, the former in the form of "demonic light," the latter in the form of the "falling of the star" see Ionescu, "'Channels of Interference:' Maurice Blanchot and Emil Cioran" 196–197.
5. All translations from French and Romanian, unless otherwise stated in the Bibliography, are mine.
6. Cavaillès's article was further developed into a homonymous volume. See Bibliography.
7. Dumitra Baron equates this comment to "the need to always be another through language and writing" (*Variations po(i)étiques* 49). There are several other remarks about Beckett in Cioran's *Cahiers* that were translated by Thomas Cousineau (see "E. M. Cioran on Beckett" 5). See also Cousineau's comment on one of the fragments from *Cahiers*, in *The Séance of Reading* 81–82.
8. See also Cioran's encomium of Beckett, where he declares: "What I loved enormously at Beckett, the one who came to France twenty-five years ago, is that one had the impression that he came to Paris yesterday;" Cioran contradicted Beckett who regarded himself as "Frenchified." Cioran explained that in Beckett's case one can speak of a "phenomenon of non-contamination" that left Beckett "completely Anglo-Saxon" ("Full Documentary of E. M. Cioran" 2.47:15–2.47:53, translation modified).
9. To these, we could add numerous volumes in German, Portuguese, and Spanish. For a comprehensive list, see *Portal E. M. Cioran Brasil*.
10. On Cioran's fragment, see also Elias and Zaharia.
11. See also Cavaillès's "Suicide, décomposition, corruption," where several references to Beckett occurred: the fact that Cioran preferred his company, as well as that of Paul Celan and Eugène Ionesco, the fact that the theme of exile is present in both writers' works, etc.
12. He borrowed the term "bilogic" from the Chilean psychoanalyst Ignazio Matte-Blanco in order to designate the two



- intertwined levels on which thinking occurs in the Beckett's *Endgame* and Cioran's *The Trouble with Being Born*: on the one hand, he checked whether "the principle of noncontradiction is respected: a thing cannot be both itself and its opposite," on the other hand, he was interested in the way in which "this principle is ignored: a thing must be both itself and its opposite."
13. For Beckett's bilingualism, see also Casement; Clément, *L'Œuvre sans qualités*; Clément and Noudelmann; Beer; for Cioran's switch from Romanian to French, see Baron, "Ressorts du changement de langue," in *Variations po(i)étiques*, 46–52.
 14. The term designates works that refuse "to match language to geography," that "seem to occupy more than one place, to be produced in more than one language, or to address multiple audiences at the same time," and "build translation into their form" (Walkowitz 6).
 15. See also Modreanu's *Le Dieu paradoxal de Cioran* on Cioran's paradoxical God, the "supreme figure", whose absence leads to Cioran's universal disenchantments; Bradatan, "Geography and Fragility" 3, on Cioran's notion of "le Néant valaque" and Codrescu who considered Cioran a religious man without religion, hence, underlining the same absence of God.
 16. "To eff" is one of Beckett's "nonwords," a verb that the writer meant as "to utter," "to speak, derived from the Latin *effārī*, present active infinitive of *effor* (to speak, to utter, to say out), and the adjectives "effable" and "ineffable" (see also Fifield 83).
 17. For Nietzsche's influence on Cioran see Acquisto 119–138; Bolea; Regier; "Cioran's Nietzsche" and Weller, *Modernism and Nihilism* 70–73.
 18. I would like to return to one of my previous ideas and elaborate it further. I connected Beckett's waiting to Heidegger's difference between *Gewärtigkeit* (awaiting/expecting) and *Vorlaufen* (anticipation), which Heidegger aligns with, inauthentic and authentic future, respectively. Hence, when Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for their death in the form of Godot, they look for the authentic form of their future. They can achieve this only when their waiting for someone (Godot) becomes waiting without an object, "waiting for waiting" (see Ionescu, "Waiting for Blanchot").
 19. The formulation was a reworking of Descartes' famous assertion, influenced by Blanchot's styling it to "I am in revolt, therefore we are" in his discussion on Albert Camus "Logical victory over 'the absurd'" (Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation* 178).
 20. For Beckett's reconsidering his choice of a French name that barely distorted the idea of an 'abject God', after reading Marcel Jouhandeau's *Godeau intime* in 1926, a work that was looking "back to Sadean principles," see Rabaté, *Beckett and Sade* 6.
 21. See also Demars and Stănișor, *Cioran, archives paradoxales. Tome VI. Nouvelles approches critiques* which deals with Cioran's passion for failure, his fascination with disaster.
 22. It is unclear why Friesen uses 1990 instead of 1989, the year of Beckett's death.
 23. *Catastrophe* was followed by another politically engaged work, *Quoi où* [What Where] coming from an author who otherwise avoided politically engaged literature.
 24. I use here Tismaneanu's formulation (234).
 25. Allusion to Petreu's title.

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