# Beckett, neurodiversity and the prosthetic:
## the posthuman turn in contemporary art

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This chapter argues that the posthuman in Beckett provides the most fertile ground for intermedial adaptation of his work in the contemporary arts. It focuses on the intersections between Beckett and posthumanism by analysing examples of how selected contemporary artists in different media draw on his work in order to expand and explore normative categories of human embodiment and subjectivity, such as the interface between the machinic, the prosthetic and the corporeal in work by Rebecca Horn (1970s–2010s), and neurodiverse theatre performance that reconfigures modalities of subjectivity and agency in Jess Thom's Touretteshero production of *Not I* (2017).[1] The chapter draws into the discussion an exploration of how ideas of silence, recalibrated by neurodiversity, are rendered somatic through Anne Niemetz's and Andrew Pelling's sound work *Dark Side of the Cell* (2004).[2]

## On the posthuman

In her landmark study on *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti maps out the 'historical decline' of Humanism and the Enlightenment ideal of the self, proposing instead 'alternative ways of conceptualizing the human subject' (2013: 37). She outlines three models of posthumanism. The first is reactionary posthumanism, which derives from moral philosophy and retains 'universalistic human values' (2013: 39) and a humanist concept of the individual subject. The second, analytic posthumanism, like the concept of transhumanism, turns to science and technology to extend the limits of human corporeality and expand human agency, prising open post-Enlightenment ideas of the human in order to reframe 'crucial ethical and conceptual questions about the status of the human' (2013: 39). However, according to Braidotti, analytic posthumanism fails to fully engage with the social and moral consequences of unequal access to advanced technologies, or to tackle the contested notion of subjectivity. The third model of posthumanism is critical posthumanism (where Braidotti situates herself), which integrates new materialities of the human with a refiguration of subjectivity as it engages with the discursive, affective and environmental to forge, as Braidotti explains, a 'reintegrated posthuman theory that includes both scientific and technological complexity and its implications for political subjectivity' (2013: 42).

It is crucial to our understanding of the importance of Beckett's work for twenty-first century artists, and the role of adaptation and remediation in that exchange, that we develop our thinking of Beckett in terms of the posthuman, counterpointing the transhumanism of analytic posthumanism, defined by a valorisation of technological engagements with embodiment and consciousness, with the materialist and relational subjectivity of critical posthumanism. Beckett

articulates the crisis of the '*anthropos*' through two distinct forms of posthumanism. In his early to middle work, in prose as well as theatre, the dissolution or disablement of the body, framed by its engagement with the prosthetic and the machinic (the bicycle, the stick, the tape recorder, the megaphone) can be identified as a search towards a transhuman subject characteristic of analytic posthumanism. This corporeal and machinic nostalgia, I contend, gives way in Beckett's later work to a more complex and mobile vision of the human characterised by critical posthumanism in which corporeality is no longer framed within the mensurated form of the body and its engagement with objects, but is disarticulated and re-formed among contested elements of subjectivity framed within an environment that does not adhere to a fixed, embodied materiality.

Jonathan Boulter configures posthuman Beckett as a 'diminishing of the material, phenomenal body' and a concomitant 'distance from discourse' arguing that 'to be posthuman is to be in a space where it is impossible to locate oneself within discourse' (2008: 124, 129). Elizabeth Effinger underlines the fluid nature of posthuman Beckett in her reading of *The Unnamable* as 'a subjectivity without a subject, and yet a subjectivity that has corporeality and spatiality that are equally and contingently metamorphous' (2011: 370). Alys Moody examines the interplay between the human body and the machine in her reading of the 'mechanised affect' generated by the language of Beckett's prose text *Ping*, arguing that the 'cyborg affect' attributable to his writing has 'a very specific temporality, staging an imagined future in the infinitely prolonged present of performance' (2017: 99). In these configurations of the posthuman Beckett, we see a tension between the body and the machine, informed by a focus on the discursive condition of his contested subjectivity.

Tracing the history of the critical reception of Beckett as either a 'transcendental writer who subscribed to a Cartesian dualism' or one who created a 'discursively produced body at the expense of the material fleshly one', Ulrika Maude argues that the 'material body forms the ultimate foundation of identity, by constituting that self that is both singular and, in its perpetual complexity and mutability, always plural and indecipherable' (2009: 1–2). She underlines how technologies such as the microscope, stereoscopes, chronophotography and x-rays transformed perceptions of the body and opened up the possibility of virtualisation and adaptation (2009: 127). Indeed, to return to Moody's argument, we might note Dan O'Hara's suggestion that Beckett's experience of an ECG or electrocardiograph machine led to the distinctive prose of *Ping* as 'a closed circuit between man and machine' (2010: 442). In *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body,* Yoshiki Tajiri points out that the distinction between body and machine has become increasingly complicated since 'the clear-cut distinction between the body (considered internal and organic) and technology (considered external and inorganic) is being rendered obsolete by advanced medical technologies including genetic engineering' (2006: 2). Tajiri retains a nostalgia for the boundaries characteristic of dualistic thought as he argues that Beckett's is a prosthetic body 'that harbours the outside or the alien within it, thereby becoming the locus of interactions between the inside and the outside' (2007: 167).[3]

In his study *Prosthesis,* David Wills affirms the necessary supplementarity of the prosthetic, arguing that prosthesis is 'inevitably caught in a complex play of displacements; prosthesis being about nothing if not placement, displacement, replacement, standing, dislodging, substituting, setting, amputating, supplementing' (2021: 9). This research on the interdependence between body and machine in Beckett's work (and in the experiences that informed his writing) underscores what for Donna Haraway is a fundamental condition of the late twentieth-century, a period she describes as the 'era of techno-biopolitics' (2013: 249n7). In

*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* Haraway argues that the prosthetic is not simply a conjunction of bodies and machines, but a relational exchange predicated on power and communication: 'Prosthesis becomes a fundamental category for understanding our most intimate selves. Prosthesis is semiosis, the making of meanings and bodies, not for transcendence but for power-charged communication' (2013: 249n7).

In order to explore further these posthuman interchanges between body and prosthetics, I turn to Rebecca Horn's work, including her more recent engagement with Beckett's prose text *The Lost Ones*, and to Jess Thom's neurodiverse performance of the play *Not I.*

## On Rebecca Horn

Rebecca Horn's prosthetic artworks or 'body modifications' – such as *Finger Gloves* (*Handschuhfinger*, 1972) and *Pencil Mask* (*Bleistiftmaske*, 1972) – were born out of physical disability and confinement, and they seek to stretch the body beyond itself while retaining a constraining nostalgia for habitual gesture and form. Poisoned by the fibreglass materials that she was using for her sculptures, Horn damaged her lungs and was hospitalised for months: 'that's when I began to make my first body-sculptures. I could sew lying in bed' (qtd. in Winterson, 2005). Katharina Schmidt notes that Horn's works of the 1970s, and particularly her 'hospital drawings'*,* are informed by 'the objects that so starkly resemble prostheses, surgical equipment, bandages, straps and body trusses' (2005: 50). In these works Horn explores the limits of the body in space and the role of the prosthetic in embodied agency and interrelations. Constructed out of cloth and balsa wood, Horn's *Finger Gloves* enable the wearer to extend the parameters of their reach by over a meter, reaching down to touch the floor with only a slight bend of the torso. Long, thin black forms extend from the tip of the fingers, elongating the body and reconfiguring its balance and reach. Horn describes the haptic experience of wearing 'finger gloves' as one which creates intimacy, yet reaffirms distance:

> The finger gloves are made from such a light material, that I can move my fingers without effort. I feel, touch, grasp with them, yet keep a certain distance from the objects that I touch. The lever action of the lengthened fingers intensifies the sense of touch in the hand. I feel myself touching, see myself grasping, and control the distance between myself and the objects. (Haenlein, 1997: 58)

*Finger Gloves* forms part of a series of prosthetic extensions that were filmed on site-specific performances as part of a moving image work called *Performances 2* (1973), in which Horn examines the possibilities of extending her body into space.[4] In *Performances II*, Horn is filmed touching the floor with her extended fingers, and tracing the back and hair of a person lying prone in an intimate gesture of exploration. *Finger Gloves* developed into a work that Horn called *Touching the Walls with Both Hands Simultaneously* (Mit beiden Händen gleichzeitig die Wände berühren, 1974-75), in which she recreated the body extension to fit a particular space, so that, when extended, the wearer's hands could touch both sides of a space simultaneously, leveraging the body to form an integral part of its own environment, achieving what Hamm fails to do in *Endgame* when he seeks to navigate the circumference of his room in his chair and then return to the centre: 'Hug the walls, then back to the centre again' (Beckett, 2009a: 18).

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While *Finger Gloves* extends the facility of the hands as haptic forms, *Pencil Mask* subverts the Levinasian idea of the face as a direct and defenceless place of engagement with the Other (Levinas, 1986: 24). Horn's *Pencil Mask* hides and protects the face while also allowing it a mode of expression normally associated with the hand. Fashioned out of a grid of green strips of cloth that is strapped around the whole head, the mask holds a series of pencils at the intersection of each strip. Facing outwards from the face, these pencils allow the wearer to express through drawing, obscuring the nuances of facial expression and substituting it with an expressive gesture both awkward and abrupt. Horn explains the work thus: 'All the pencils are about two inches long and produce the profile of my face in three dimensions … I move my body rhythmically from left to right in front of the white wall. The pencils make marks on the wall the image of which corresponds to the rhythm of my movements'.[5] The head approaches the wall with caution. Slowly, with the eyes fixed on the wall, the head turns sideways to the right. Moving forward imperceptibly, the pencils of the mask make contact with the wall and slowly swing to the left. The soft scratch of graphite on surface sounds the gesture, its silence signalling a pause, before the head turns to draw again, from left to right.

In these works the prosthetic element enhances the impaired body, extending the reach and actions of the body as it negotiates its relations with others and adapts to its environment. Power and agency underpin the transhuman impulse in Beckett's and Horn's work, recognising both the limitations and exigencies of the body, and the circumscription of the environment in which it operates. As Beckett's work drives towards configurations of prose and theatre in which the corporeal cogito is sidelined, fragmented and undone, bodies become words and selves become signifiers. Commenting on Horn's later development of larger drawing machines such as *The Little Painting School Performs a Waterfall* (1988), Armin Zweite notes that the 'ritualised turning of the masked head' of Horn's *Pencil Mask* has a 'robotic undertone' and 'could be performed not only with greater stamina but also far more effectively with an actual machine' (2005: 15-16). Horn's prosthetic bodyworks, engineered and controlled by human agency, give way in later works to self-contained performance machines that respond (sometimes) to the interaction of the viewer, yet are still considered by the artist as spectres of a self. 'I like my machines to tire', the artist notes: 'They are more than objects. These are not cars or washing machines. They rest, they reflect, they wait' (qtd. in Winterson, 2005).

Horn shares with Beckett an abiding interest in the work of Buster Keaton, the comic performer that stars in *Film*. Keaton ghosts Horn's only feature film, *Buster's Bedroom* (1991), which is set in Nirvana House, the place where the aging actor recuperated from alcoholism. The film follows a young woman, Misha, who is obsessed with Keaton, and it depicts the assorted idiosyncrasies of the inhabitants of Nirvana House that she encounters there. In its obscure metaphysics Nirvana House is reminiscent of Mr Knott's house in Beckett's novel *Watt,* and bears more than a passing resemblance (the uniformed nurses, the Doctor, the wheelchair) to the sanitorium where Horn recuperated from lung damage.

Horn engages with Beckett's work directly in her 2015 piece *The Lost Ones, Samuel Beckett*.[6] A steel cuboid, walled with glass, holds a series of objects. Like the accidental jerk of a pen, three wires scribe down from the roof of the vitreous space, each suspending an object: a brass wire coil (reminiscent of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) in miniature*),* a fragment of wood, and a feather. A small glass funnel pierces the lower right wall, a conduit for sound or substance (echoing a complementary piece from the same year, *Musical Funnel*). Above, attached to the top front of the cuboid, is a small steel circular blade, suspended as if waiting to slice the

space below. Obliquely, fire scorches a dark mark of carbon across the glass. On this flaming is scratched the words 'The Lost Ones', which are then partially erased by two transverse lines.[7] Horn's *The Lost Ones, Samuel Beckett* is not a translation of the cylinders and ladders of Beckett's prose text *The Lost Ones*, but rather an adaptation that evokes the closed space of the constrained environment, and the idea of the quest for a relationality that is traced between the iconographic signifiers of elements such as the feather, wire and wood that form the language of Horn's oeuvre. The human presence evoked by the prosthetic object in Horn's earlier work gives way to an associative environment animated by the machine (Horn's spinning circular saw) and witnessed by botanical, mineral and zoological traces (wood, wire and feather).

## On Jess Thom

The lens of posthumanism reveals both the corporeal sites of embodiment that intersect with prosthetic objects and machines in the work of Beckett and Rebecca Horn, and a fluid and recursive subjectivity that mutates in its relations with language, materialities and space, as in Jess Thom's performance of Samuel Beckett's *Not I*. Thom recognises the radical neurological environment of Mouth and extends the parameters of performance in three ways: by drawing out the corporeal and linguistic implications of neurological diversity, by making manifest the intersection between agency and intention in the speaking body, and by embedding corporeal translation of the voiced text at the heart of performance.

Thom, who plays Mouth in Beckett's play, has Tourette's Syndrome. She makes involuntary, repetitive movements and vocalisations that are sometimes coprolaliac. Writing in her blog, Thom explains that it was collaborator and co-founder of Touretteshero Matthew Pountney who introduced her to Beckett's play at a time when her tics were intensifying and she was 'struggling to recognise them' as part of herself (2017). In reading *Not I* she found a play that resonated with her: 'I was stunned to find line after line that spoke deeply to my lived experience. So much of what Mouth describes I can relate to, and there are lines in the text that cut right to heart of some of the struggles, challenges and joys of having a brain and a body that work differently from other people's expectations' (2017).

Thom's performance of *Not I* embraces her tics: the involuntary utterances of the performer interjected into Beckett's text in ways that deepen the lived experience of the play. Writing in *The New York Times*, Jesse Green agrees that 'far from masking Beckett's brilliance or diluting the play's power, Thom's speech patterns make uncanny sense of "Not I," in the process making it more overwhelming' (2020). Over a three-year period, Touretteshero toured with *Not I* playing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (2017); the Battersea Arts Centre, London; Staatstheatre, Mainz as part of the Grenzenlos Kultur Festival; Sophiensaele, Berlin (2018); and BRIC House, Brooklyn (2019). Touretteshero's production of *Not I* is divided into four parts. The members of the audience are welcomed into the auditorium by Thom and her sign language interpreter. In London, Charmaigne Wombwell signed in British Sign Language (BSL); in Germany, Julia Cramer signed in Deutsche Gebärdensprache (DGS); and in New York, Lindsey Snyder signed in American Sign Language (ASL). Thom gives a visual introduction of herself and her BSL/DGS/ASL interpreter for those with sight impairments and explains what will happen during the performance. Thom, who uses a wheelchair, is then elevated to a point eight feet above the stage. There is a brief pause, and then Thom begins to speak: '…out…into this world…this world…tiny little thing…before its time…in a godfor–…what?...girl?...yes…tiny

little girl…into this…out into this…before her time…godforsaken hole called…' (Beckett, 2009b: 85).

The play is followed by a short film that explores the rehearsal process, the challenges of the text for a neurodiverse performer, and how Beckett's exploration of the agonistic relation between body, voice and self in the play relate to Thom's own experience with Tourette's Syndrome. The performance closes with a discussion with Thom, her interpreter and the audience in which we are encouraged to exchange views with our neighbours, and concludes with a moment of collective release as we are invited to collectively shout, speak or make some noise. As Thom is a longstanding activist for the inclusion of disabled artists and audiences in theatre and performance spaces, each of Touretteshero's performances of *Not I* is relaxed, meaning that the theatre conventions of silence and stasis no longer apply and audience members are welcome to move about, come in and out, and make noise as they wish. Thom explains that, by playing Mouth in *Not I*, she also wanted 'to change some of the academic discourse on the text itself. I want to show that the character of Mouth is only as isolated as her community makes her. We've re-interpreted the stage directions in a way that works for my body and agreed with the Beckett Estate that my performance will come with extra "biscuits!"' (Thom and Hambrook, 2018).

Key elements of the staging of *Not I* are adapted into 'body modifications' – to borrow Rebecca Horn's term – that enable Thom's neurodiverse body to perform Beckett's exacting text. The frame-like structures that constrained the bodies of Jessica Tandy, Billie Whitelaw and Lisa Dwan (to name but a few of the actors who have played the role) in order to enable the spotlight to illuminate Mouth, are of no use to Thom for whom staying still is never a question of doing nothing, but rather a highly volitional condition. Instead of forcing her to adopt a fixed position (which, as we will see shortly, is an impossibility), the light is incorporated into a hooded garment that Thom wears, obscuring the upper part of her head from the audience's gaze and illuminating her mouth. The hood grafts onto Mouth the garb of the second figure of the play, the silent standing figure of the Auditor who, in Beckett's stage directions is described as follows: '*downstage audience left, tall standing figure, sex undeterminable, enveloped from head to foot in loose black djellaba, with hood, fully faintly lit*' (2009b: 85). Responding to Beckett's direction that Mouth be '*faintly lit from close-up and below, rest of face in shadow*' (2009b: 85), designer Maria Almena of Kimatica Studio worked within the parameters of Thom's neurodiversity, devising a body-sculpture that is part prosthesis and part scenography. Now, the actor is in charge. No longer a passive, constrained, disembodied voice centred by the objectifiying light of the spot, Thom's Mouth controls her own light. Here body and technology interact to reframe and reinterpret Beckett's directorial vision to include non-normative human agency and embodiment.

Thom has worked to examine and reconfigure normative ideas of the individual as an independent agent, proposing through her theatre, installation and collaborative performances a relational idea of the self as inherently connected to peoples, communities and technologies. Independence is always interdependence. Speaking of her decision to use a wheelchair when her physical tics intensified, orchestrating an unexpected series of trajectories that rendered walking difficult if not dangerous, Thom emphasises the affordances of technology. In a report for the BBC's Freedom2014 season, a series of events that explored what freedom means in contemporary society, Thom explains that it is not her tics or her wheelchair that disable her, but rather the inaccessible environments that she encounters (2014). Thom's wheelchair is an integral part of Touretteshero's neurodiverse production of *Not I*. Beckett requires that the actor's mouth

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be placed '*about 8 feet above stage level*' (2009b: 85), a direction that further decorporealises the actor in the eyes of the audience since that height is not within the normal range of a standing person. Working with designers Ben Pacey and Will Datson, Thom and Pountney commissioned a manually operated 'see-saw' structure calibrated by counterweights to raise Thom's wheelchair from stage level to eight foot above, in order to facilitate the performance while maintaining the security of the actor.[8] The machine is not only a means to fulfil the stage directions (a static structure would suffice in that case), but also facilitates the inclusive nature of the performance where audience participation is key. Additionally, the structure serves to spatially connect Mouth with her Auditor, in this case the sign language interpreters who stand adjacent to Thom, '*facing diagonally across stage intent on MOUTH*' (Beckett, 2009b: 85). Yet, rather than standing immobile and silent as Beckett's stage directions propose – '*dead still throughout but for four brief movements*' (2009b: 85) – the ASL and BSL interpreters are live, with movement, translating a dual discourse of Beckett's text and Thom's tics, the one interweaving with the other in a fluid gestural semiosis that foregrounds the multiple interdependencies of bodies, voices, selves and machines that are integral to Touretteshero's *Not I*.

In 2015, just as the Touretteshero production of Beckett's play was being considered, Thom and Pountney explored key elements of *Not I* (the relation between movement and agency and the impossibility of stasis and silence) in a performance piece called *10 Minutes of Nothing* at the South London Gallery. Working in collaboration with artist Will Renel (whose research examines involuntary performance from a human-centred perspective), Thom and Pountney devised a work that challenged normative ideas of 'nothing'. The ten-minute performance begins as Thom leaves her wheelchair to kneel on the floor of the Clore Studio of the Gallery. Those who assist her are nearby in case her tics intensify and she injures herself. For a moment, nothing happens. Then, with compellingly deliberate yet anarchic movement, Thom begins to swoop and turn from the waist, her head crashing directly towards the concrete floor before swerving and soaring, in a near miss that leaves the audience stunned. The energy and force of her body is palpable. As the performance develops it is clear that the narrative logic through which we are trained to understand movement has no place here. Yet we are drawn to an affective engagement with this urgent choreography that demands a response even as it refutes expectations. And then, it is over. Thom returns to her seat. In the post-performance discussion she explains how appearing to do nothing requires enormous physical and mental control on her part, and what we just witnessed was her doing nothing: a performance that undercuts the idea of the human as *homo agere*.

Touretteshero's *Not I* and *10 Minutes of Nothing* alter the debate about intention, volition and agency, shifting the parameters of that debate away from the epistemology of what Gilbert Ryle discredited as a category mistake (the distinction between mind and body) towards a pragmatics of agency and access (2002: 16). Deborah Barnbaum asserts the importance of cognitive pluralism in terms of both fact and value and, drawing on Joyce Davidson (2008), underlines that (as she writes), 'these different sets of neurological traits can, and do, comprise individual's identity and potentially provide a basis for culture' (2013: 43). Andrew Fenton and Tim Krahn point out that neurodiverse communities 'contest the default pathologizing of differences in brain circuitry that are revealed in behavioural deviances from the standard norm' and seek (as they emphasise) 'a recognition that, though they are neurologically, cognitively and behaviourally different, they do not necessarily suffer from being neurodiverse nor do they need to be cured' (2007: 1). At the heart of these debates lie issues of power and the dynamics of

social inequality that cut across communities to include longstanding debates concerning gender and ethnicity. Touretteshero's *Not I* challenges the pathologisation of neurodiversity and breaks new ground in theatre performance to include the neurodiverse body as a central agent and a vital audience.

Touretteshero's adaptations of Beckett's work also reconfigure the silence that marks the ellipses and pauses of the text of *Not I* and underscore so much of Beckett's writing. In *Not I*, narrative, performance and enactment fuse in a taut trajectory of sound. The rigours of Beckett's text play out on Thom's neurodiverse body in ways different to previous productions of *Not I*. Voluntary and involuntary speech contest within an agonistics of agency. The silence that punctuates Beckett's play during the brief moments when Mouth stops speaking become the points at which Thom's own body gives voice. The sounds that Mouth hears but does not recognise as her own voice – 'the buzzing?...yes…all the time the buzzing' (Beckett, 2009b: 86) – are rendered material through Thom's neurodiversity. *Not I* interleaves the voluntary and the involuntary. The first, the performed script about a woman's intermittent aphasia, traumatic affective experiences and logorrhea, is intercut by the second, the involuntary utterances or tics of the actor's body creating for the audience a multi-layered experience of Beckett's script in which ideas integral to the play are enacted within the performance.

Jess Thom's tics operate on a continuum with, rather than in contradistinction to, the voicings and sounds of the neurotypical body. What differs, here, is the question of agency understood in terms of the interaction between linguistic structures, neurological systems, and intentionality. Neurodiverse activists have taken to task twentieth-century philosophers of language such as Donald Davidson, Paul Grice and David Lewis, who ascribe a common set of propositional attitudes to language users that are predicated on a theory of mind based on the neuro-typical body. Davidson's idea of linguistic communication, for example, is based on what he terms 'prior' and 'passing' theories – whereby interlocutors enter into conversation with assumptions about what might be construed, assumptions that are then modified as the conversation develops (1986: 436, 442–3). Davidson's theory of radical interpretation is challenged by Barnbaum, who argues that the neurodiverse and the neurotypical are 'speaking different languages' (2013: 134).

However, new technologies can also alter our assumptions about agency and the corporeal production of sound. Is visceral silence a phenomenological impossibility, as in *10 Minutes of Nothing*? Composer John Cage wrote about experiencing the sounds of his own body within the putative silence of an anechoic chamber (as the anecdote goes, the high pitch he could hear was that of his nervous system, the low pitch that of his circulation system). While it is unlikely that Cage could indeed hear his circulatory or neurological systems, the visceral sonoscape is accessible through technology. Haraway notes in *A Cyborg Manifesto* that 'by the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism' (2000: 70). Haraway's idea of the machine is not a constraining metal contraption or carapace, but rather interrealated economies of information: machines are 'nothing but signals, electromagnetic waves, a section of a spectrum', 'floating signifiers' (2000: 73). Indeed, microelectronic devices radically alter scale and perception, 'the silicon chip is a surface for writing: it is etched in molecular scales disturbed only by atomic noise, the ultimate interference for nuclear scores' (2000: 73). Artist Anne Niemetz's and nanoscientist Andrew Pelling's collaborative sound work *The Dark Side of the Cell* enables us to hear the sounds created by the oscillation of living cells through the nanotechnology of an Atomic Force Microscope

(AFM). Transforming the local oscillating motion of Saccharomyces cerevisiae cells into sound, Pelling's work with James Gimzewski on sonocytology renders the condition of an individual cell audible, reminding us that silence and stasis are corporeal impossibilities. As the narrator of Beckett's novel *The Unnamable* notes, 'it is all very fine to keep silence, but one has also to consider the kind of silence one keeps' (2010: 19).

**Conclusion**

The conceptual frameworks through which we understand human corporeality and agency are under stress and need now to be reconfigured. Haraway argues presciently that 'biological organisms have become biotic systems, communication devices like others. There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic' (2000: 82). Similarly, in *How We Became Posthuman*, N. Katherine Hayles argues that the posthuman subject 'is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction (1999: 3). Through the remediative and appropriative strategies of the contemporary art and performance under discussion here – in which Beckett's work forms the mode and material for new constructions and behaviours – Braidotti's vision of a 'refiguration of subjectivity' that interrogates the ethical and conceptual frameworks of the human is realised (2013: 42).

This chapter has focused on how contemporary art and performance responds to the condition of the posthuman evident in Beckett's writing. By tracing his use of the prosthetic through the work of Rebecca Horn and the refiguring of subjectivity and embodiment in neurodiverse performances by Touretteshero we affirm the importance of the transhuman in recent key adaptations of Beckett's work. By counterpointing *Not I,* the disembodied but utterly material articulation of differential subject positions, with the sound work *Dark Side of the Cell,* we explore how artists generate new forms of intersubjective relationality and consider how the mutability of contemporary art is an essential experimental space for adaptation within the posthuman.

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**Notes**

[1] Touretteshero is a disabled-led multi-disciplinary arts organisation, see www.touretteshero.com/ (accessed 8 September 2021).

[2] See www.darksideofcell.info/about.html (accessed 8 September 2021).

[3] For more recent work on Beckett and the posthuman, see Rabaté (2016), Boulter (2018) and the special issue (32.2) of *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* on 'Samuel Beckett and the Nonhuman/Samuel Beckett et le non-humain' (2020), edited by Amanda Dennis, Thomas Thoelen, Douglas Atkinson and Sjef Houppermans.

[4] Horn's body extension work also includes *Unicorn* (*Einhorn*), *Head Extension* (*Kopf-Extension*), *White Body Fan* (*Weißer Körperfächer*), *My Hand Can Fly* (*Meine Hand kann fliegen*), *Gavin, Cockfeather Mask* (*Hahnenmaske*) and *Cockatoo Mask* (*Kakadu-Maske*).

[5] Rebecca Horn cited in the display caption for '*Pencil Mask*, 1972' (2004).

[6] Rebecca Horn (2015), *The Lost Ones, Samuel Beckett*. Steel, glass vitrine, writing on the glass treated with flaming, glass funnel, brush, saw blade, feather, wood, electronic device, brass, wire. Dimensions: 45 7/10 x 30 3/10 x 12 1/5 in / 116 x 77 x 31 cm.

[7] Although the words appear crossed out rather than erased, since they are still legible, the etymology of 'erase' – Latin *ērās-* participial stem of *ērădĕre* , < *ē* out + *rădĕre* to scrape or scratch – works well with the way the writing is treated in Horn's art piece. This procedure evokes Beckett's own use of 'textual scars', coined by Dirk Van Hulle (2014), i.e. passages omitted from the drafts whose erasure is still foregrounded in the published texts rather than completely effaced. A famous example is Molloy's comment 'What then was the source of Ballyba's prosperity? I'll tell you. No, I'll tell you nothing. Nothing' (Beckett, 2009c: 170), his refusal pointing to a deleted section in the manuscript and typescript where the source of that prosperity was still explained at length (see O'Reilly, Van Hulle and Verhulst, 2017: 63–8, 262–76, 380–7).

[8] For more information, see https://benpacey.wordpress.com/portfolio/not-i/ (accessed 14 September 2021).