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## ‘My fortieth year had come and gone and I still throwing the javelin’: Beckett’s athletics

A paper given at the Beckett International Foundation  
Research Seminar, University of Reading, 18 June 2005

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## STRIDES OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

Writers and artists, especially the kind that get called modernists, are not supposed to be jocks or hearties, and the locker-room and the library are normally thought of, without it being thought about very much at all, as mutually exclusive.

Beckett was, throughout his life, an unexpectedly enthusiastic player and spectator of games and sports. Of course, the most well-known aspect of his athleticism is his cricketing ability. He played for the school cricket XI at Earlsfort House prep school, playing some of his matches on the Lansdowne Road ground which is now the setting for Irish international rugby. He found a place in the cricket team of Portora Royal School almost immediately upon his arrival at the age of thirteen, where he opened the batting with Geoffrey Thompson, who was later to be instrumental in arranging his psychoanalysis. His place in Wisden was secured by the two tours of England he undertook with Trinity College cricket team, and the first-class matches they played against Northampton. He cycled, even played cycle polo, and also played a great deal of tennis up to the age of fourteen, frequently entering and winning tournaments at the Carrickmines Tennis and Croquet Club. He shared his father's love of golf, and spent much of his early life playing Carrickmines golf course. He was a strong, competitive swimmer, and even competed in motorcycle trials on the 2.75 horsepower AJS motorbike his father bought him (Knowlson 1997, 62-3).

There is little difficulty in digesting the ludic side of all this to Beckett's work as a whole – Beckett the player of bridge and chess, with partners like Duchamp and Giacometti – but Beckett's interest in the more athletic or corporeal side of game-play has been much harder to make more than anecdotal sense of. Or, perhaps we should say, there has seemed no need to make sense of it. Beckett's interest in sport is just part of the accidental texture of his life, which, unlike nearly every other accidental feature of that life – his relation to his mother, his Protestantism, his piano-playing, his politics, his turbulent epidermis – seem to have no serious relation to his work.

There have been some attempts to establish a stronger relationship between modernism and sport. Harold B. Segel's book *Body Ascendant* tries to chart the links between modernism and what he calls the 'body imperative' which swept across Europe in the early years of the twentieth century. 'Popular culture embraced the world of sport and the athlete with astonishing exuberance', writes Segel. 'But high culture was not to be found wanting. Artists delighted in the new subject matter and responded appropriately' (Segel 1998, 5) The story to which he tells is of the modernist embrace of the sensuous and the vigorously living, which runs from Nietzsche through Lawrence and beyond and even washes into Leavisian critical language, in the admiration of qualities like sinew and highly-toned suppleness (Leavis himself was a runner, and was often to be seen loping to lectures across Cambridge quads). Still, the examples chosen by Segel seem to indicate that the cult of life and physical expression was, for most modernists, a sort of sport in the head, or mind-game. Theodore

Roosevelt, Ernest Hemingway, Henry de Montherlant, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry would not be many people's idea of representative modernists.

In fact, it turns out that the celebration of the body in modernism is a very different thing from the celebration of the body to be found on the pitch or on the track. The modernist body is celebrated for its sensitivity, sensuality or (usually sexual) appetites rather than its strength, skill or endurance, and even the brawniest Nietzscheans – Yeats, Lawrence, Bataille – tend in their own lives to be a bunch of fops, weeds, and touchline-hugging wheezers. Sport was for the petit-bourgeois or the middlebrow also-ran. The distance between the artist and the citizen is measured in *Ulysses* by the inconceivability of Stephen Dedalus sharing Bloom's middle-aged worries about keeping up with his Eugene Sandow fitness regime. The huge expansion of competitive sport in the twentieth-century brings about a new form of the stand-off between scrawn and brawn. On the one hand there is the modernist body, frail, tremulous, hysterical, but infinitely sensitive: on the other hand there is hiking, mountaineering, the Olympic ideal, and the cult of the Aryan superman. On the castaway island of twentieth-century culture, modernists are the Piggys or the Simons, rather than the roughhanded Ralphs or Jacks. The ludicrous muscularity of counter-examples like Hemingway, a writer who so vulgarly failed to keep his sport in the head, is telling enough.

It used to be a commonplace of Beckett criticism to assert that his work retreats progressively from embodiment. More recent criticism has tended to stress the stubborn irreducibility of the body in Beckett's work, even though we scarcely need reminding how aged, unlovely, constrained and comically impotent his bodies are. Cerebration, when a character like Lucky manages to pull it off, addresses itself to a body whose destiny is to fail, which is the very opposite of 'physical culture':

man...wastes and pines... in spite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all kinds autumn summer winter winter tennis of all kinds, hockey of all sorts.. and ... simultaneously for reasons unknown to shrink and and dwindle in spite of the tennis I resume flying gliding golf over nine and eighteen holes tennis of all sorts (Beckett 1986, 41)

The short fizzle from which I take my title, 'Horn Came Always', incriminates athletics in actually hastening the process of decline:

What ruined me at bottom was athletics. With all that jumping and running when I was young, and even long after in the case of certain events, I wore out the machine before its time. My fortieth year had come and gone and I still throwing the javelin.

The French adds boxing and wrestling to the list: 'D'avoir tant sauté et

couru, boxé et lutté, dans ma jeunesse, et bien au-delà pour certaines spécialités, j'ai usé la machine avant l'heure' (Beckett 1976, 44). So Beckett's world is one of debility, disability, impairment and suffering, in which sport is not so much ludic as ludicrous. If sport means prowess, then what part can it possibly play in the consummate art of the non-can-er?

One source for this strain of revulsion against sport in Beckett might be supplied by the political culture of athleticism in which he grew up. The game of camogie which Lucky mentions is the female version of hurling, one of the games energetically promoted by the Gaelic League during the early part of the century, and its inclusion throws into relief the distinctively Anglo-Irish cast of many of Beckett's sporting affinities. The games of cricket, rugby and tennis at which he excelled, would have seemed to many in Ireland to typify the outlook of the English public school in exile. The years in which Beckett was learning his golf, cricket and tennis were years in which the influence of the Gaelic Athletic League were strong. The GAA had its beginning in December 1882, when the burly Michael Cusack, the original of the Citizen in Joyce's *Ulysses*, founded the Dublin Hurling Club. The Caledonian Games which took place 2 years later attracted 20,000 spectators. Cusack had been a good rugby player, but now turned emphatically against this imperial game, writing that it was a 'denationalising plague [carrying] on through winter the work of ruin that cricket was doing through the summer'. (quoted Mandle 1987, 5). The following rhyme appeared in the *Gaelic Athlete* magazine for 3 February 1912:

Each foreign game, we now disdain  
Golf, cricket, and ping pong  
Rugby and soccer in our midst  
Have flourished far too long (quoted Mandle 1987, 129)

Almost from the beginning, the Gaelic Athletic League had strong political associations with the IRB, prompting, for example, an 1887 police report to characterise it as a Fenian faction intent on 'combining the muscular youth of the country into an organization drilled and disciplined to form a physical power capable of overawing and coercing the Home Rule Government of the future' (quoted, Mandle 1987, 9). The parallels between the sturdiness of Irish culture and the cult of power and prowess that later swept across Europe may have been striking to Beckett.

### STAYERS

Lucky evokes a number of surprising sports. One wonders, for example, what the rules of 'floating' and 'dying' might be. But perhaps the oddest word in his panicky roster is 'conating', which is not itself usually thought of as a sport, though it is that element without which most sports would be unthinkable. Conation is defined as one of the three principal components of mind; where cognition covers thinking and knowing, and affect refers to feeling and emotional value, conation concerns motivation and striving towards goals. Although conation is not treated with much affection or respect in Beckett's

work, it does in fact run all the way through it. More than any other writer of the twentieth century, Beckett's works are concerned with and generated from ordeal, test, trial, striving, struggle, which often seem to predominate over the other two dimensions of mental activity. The ego in Beckett's work is never an abstractly self-reflecting ego, nor is floating a sport at which it excels. His is what Bachelard, following Maine de Biran, calls a 'cogito of striving' (Bachelard 1948, 78), a cogito that comes into being and sustains itself in the struggle to overcome obstacle, limit and resistance, even, or perhaps especially, when they are internal. And, more than any other writer, he sees the work of writing as fundamentally bound up with competition, and formed by the possibilities of winning and losing. The agon of Beckett's work is as much athletic as aesthetic.

Much of the action in Beckett's work involves meeting the arbitrary obligations of what seem like games or sports: 'Me – to play', are Hamm's opening words. One assumes the priority of chess, but Hamm can also be thought of as lining up his first service. 'Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?', says Vladimir to Estragon, as the latter's attention flags during his explication of the problem of the two thieves. Beckett's couples are game-playing couples, in whom antagonism is linked with dependence: 'Keep going, can't you, keep going!' shouts Hamm angrily, as though to someone who is incapable of returning serve (Beckett 1986, 121)

Beckett's world is one of endless exertion without the possibility of overcoming or outcome: of pervasive fatigue that never approaches the consummation of exhaustion, or full-time. But it is not always a world of depleted energy. Some of Beckett's characters are given to angry paroxysms, or deploy physical means to maintain composure:

The best thing I found was to start running. Perhaps I should mention here that I was a very slow walker. I didn't dally or loiter in any way, just walked very slowly, little short steps and the feet very slow through the air. On the other hand I must have been quite one of the fastest runners the world has ever seen, over a short distance, five or ten yards, in a second I was there. But I could not go on at that speed, not for breathlessness, it was mental, all is mental, figments. Now the jog trot on the other hand, I could no more do that than I could fly. No, with me all was slow, and then these flashes, or gushes, vent the pent, that was one of those things I used to say, over and over, as I went along, vent the pent, vent the pent. (Beckett 1984, 131)

Oddly enough, Beckett himself was more of a stayer in his own running: at Earlsfort House, he won races at middle to long distances, though the fags seem to have taken their toll by the time he was playing rugby in Paris, during his period at the Ecole Normale. One of his team-mates, Camille Marcoux, says he was an explosive centre for the first twenty minutes or so of the game, after which 'il s'écroulait dans les pâquerettes' (Knowlson 1997, 93). The value of endurance to Beckett is also suggested by Hugh Kenner's report in 'The Cartesian Centaur', his essay on cycles and cycling in Beckett, of the

teasing hint he tossed him concerning 'a veteran racing cyclist, bald, a "stayer," recurrent placeman in town-to-town and national championships, Christian name elusive, surname Godeau, pronounced, of course, no differently from Godot.' Another story, here reported in Matt Seaton's review of Tim Hilton's memoir of cycling, has been going the rounds for quite a long time:

One Roger Godeau was a track ace at Paris's Vélodrome d'hiver after the war - this when the Vél d'hiv was still haunted by the fact that it had been used as a transit camp for 12,000 Jews, shamefully rounded up during the occupation by the French police. From that detention, they were transported to Drancy and thence to Auschwitz. In the late 40s, some of the boys who hung around the stadium for a sight of their cycling heroes told Beckett one day: "On attend Godeau." So Beckett perhaps had this melancholy setting, not to mention the shadow of the Holocaust, in mind when he was scripting the lines of Vladimir and Estragon. (Seaton 2004)

Roger Godeau cannot be the same Godeau, since he was only just making his career in the 1940s, and even in 1951 could not yet be regarded as a 'veteran'. Though his arrival was indeed hailed by Raymond Hutier in the *Miroir des Sports* in 1944 as 'la révélation d'un vrai stayer' ('Roger Godeau') - he was not for the most part a touring cyclist.

#### ALL-ROUNDERS

When Joyce has Stephen Dedalus set aesthetic values against 'kinetic' ones, he was setting aside not just the body, but also more specifically the body in movement. Beckett's corporeality is kinetic, in the way that one should expect of an athlete or dancer. One of the striking features of Beckett's writing is its attentiveness to questions of weight, balance, position, orientation and speed, whether in its precise notation of Watt's way of walking, or its composition of the constricted figures of *Ping* and *All Strange Away*, or the precise characterisations of stance, gesture and movement when Beckett directed his plays. These are only superficially geometrical: for where geometry dispenses with embodied perspective, Beckett's choreographies are coenesthetically focussed in a body, with coordinates of top and bottom, left and right. Beckett pays precise attention to posture, gesture, gait and modes of locomotion, not because this reduces the body to an object of calculation or contemplation, but because it places the body in a field of action and reaction.

One of the curious aspects of Beckett's cricket was that he batted left-handed, apparently because that was how he had been taught by his brother, but bowled his medium-pace off-breaks right-handed. I think we can see this all-roundedness (the term that Joyce used of the unathletic Bloom) at work through Beckett's concern with doubles and couples, and, more particularly the attentiveness throughout his work to handedness. Perhaps we may draw on Michel Serres's account of the universal principle of orientation:

Only some living things have the pleasure of a sex, whereas everything, in the

world, whether animate or inanimate, is provided with a direction...

The stars turn and advance, oriented, like particles around the nucleus of an atom. Crystals and molecules are lateralized, with highly refined symmetries and asymmetries. Direction or orientation comes neither from men nor from their preferences, from their inclinations, but from the inanimate world that precedes the living, and from the living that precedes culture. Things lean to one side: force fields, boreal auroras, twisting turbulences, cyclones, spots on the planet Jupiter... the universal was born, it is said, from spontaneous symmetry breaking. (Serres 1997, 14)

For Serres, the handedness of the universe creates distortion and imbalance. The majority of human beings exist in a 'stupid pathology of division' between left and right.

How can a right-handed person be described? As a severed organism, suffering from severe hemiplegia. The pen, the knife, the hammer, and the racket are gathered together in one hand, while the other carries nothing. Hot and supple, one side of the body and its extension lives, trailing behind it a sort of cadaverous twin, stiff and cold, contemptible and impotent – in short, unconscious. (Serres 1997, 3)

There is a symmetry between the asymmetry of the right-hander and that of the left-hander, since '[e]ach, divorced, is composed of two twins, of which only one, whichever side you choose, has the right to life, the second never having been born' (Serres 1997, 3-4). Everywhere, Beckett's pseudocouples enact this oddity, this disorientation, this off-handedness. Mercier/Camier; Molloy/Moran; French/English. Beckett's spatiality is powerfully lateralized, or handed. This universal inclination or obliquity creates both agony and opportunity for Beckett, just as it does on the wicket or the billiard table. It marks the inescapability of irreversible time, for time too seems right-handed.

And yet, one might also say that there is a powerful drive running through all these couples to find a point of balance, the sweet spot of equipoise where neither left nor right dominates. Such a point would be out of time, though Serres finds in sport an image for this dwelling in possibility, which he calls a state of the 'future participle':

Have you ever kept goal for your team, while an adversary hurries to take a clean, close shot? Relaxed, as if free, the body mimes the future participle, fully ready to unwind: toward the highest point, at ground level, or halfway up, in both directions, left and right; toward the centre of the solar plexus, a starry plateau launches its virtual branches in all directions at once, like a bouquet of axons... Run to the net, ready to volley: once again, a future participle, the racket aims for all shots at once, as if the body, unbalanced from all sides, were knotting a ball of time, a sphere of directions, and were releasing a starfish from its thorax... It fills its space equally, high as much as low, right as much as left, it abandons preferences and determinations. (Serres 1997, 9, 24; translation adjusted)

Sartre also found in sport an illustration of the projectiveness of subjective space, which is never the inert 'being-there' of *Dasein* but always beside or out in front of itself, in the place where it must urgently, imminently reach in order to reach the drop-shot, parry the blow, or tip the ball over the bar. But Serres imagines the possibility of projection in all directions, an attention that is an attenuation: 'Let us call soul the kind of space and time that can be expanded from its natal position towards all exposures' (Serres 1997, 31)

There are hints of this unbodying, or ecstasy in Beckett's experience. Let us recall for example that he was a fearless diver, having learned the art from the rocks of the Forty-Foot at Sandycove. *Company* evokes the young boy's hesitation standing at the top, encouraged by his father:

You stand at the tip of the high board. High above the sea. In it your father's upturned face. Upturned to you. You look down to the loved trusted face. He calls you to jump. He calls, be a brave boy. The red round face. The thick moustache. The greying hair. The swell sways it under and sways it up again. The far call again. Be a brave boy. Many eyes upon you. From the water and from the bathing place.

One could be forgiven for reading this as a memory of a terrified holding back from the plunge; but in fact Beckett seems to have had little fear as a diver either in the Forty-Foot or elsewhere. *Company* suggests that the quest for the exhilaration of the mid-air led him also to leap from his bedroom window into the branches of a larch tree. (Beckett 1979, 28). At the age of fifty-two, Beckett still had the same relish for diving off high rocks (Knowlson 1997, 455).

However, for the most part, where Serres finds in sport an image for the many-angled star or corona of omnitude, Beckett seeks a different kind of equilibrium, in the ideal of an absolutely reversible game which would consume itself exhaustively. His ideal is absorption rather than exposure., and folded-over time rather than the expansion of the moment. The model for this is Mr Endon's game of chess in *Murphy*, in which he moves each piece one square forward and then moves them carefully all one square back. But the perfection of the retraction is not in fact available to Mr Endon, since pawns are not permitted to move backwards. The ideal of non-directionality, in which coming and going, backwards and forwards, will balance each other completely, is thwarted because the game must be played in time, which does not allow the complete return to initial conditions. The irreversibility of time is related to the necessary entanglement with others, or the other of the antagonist: having advanced into the other's territory, one can never then retreat from it back into one's own space. In fact, one has no alternative but to play out the game, since every 'on' constitutes a move, of a particular kind, with a particular aim, angle, spin and velocity, that can never simply be palindromically consumed by the 'no'. Serres celebrates the fact that, born a left-hander, he was trained to use his right, producing, not a stammering limper, but a 'lateral hermaphrodite' (Serres 1997, 13). Beckett's athletics is not the completion of the cackhanded looked for by Michel Serres, but an expertise of the maladroit, the off-kilter,

the ill-at-ease, the in-play. Beckett's work is full of these offcentred, unbalanced movements, most notably in Molloy's adjustment to stiffer and less stiff legs (Beckett 1973, 76-8) and the necessary asymmetry, or abandonment of the nautical principle he calls 'trim' (Beckett 1973, 71) that enables him to find his solution to the sucking stones problem, even though it results in him 'being off my balance, dragged to the right hand and the left, backwards and forwards' (Beckett 1973, 74).

Of course, Mr Endon is not really playing chess at all. Rather, we may say, he is pretending to play chess, or playing at playing. The simple, hair's-breadth, but far-reaching difference between game and sport is that sport is real. There is no display in the play involved in sport, no illusion or al-lusion. It is in this sense that Beckett's work is sporting rather than ludic, athletic rather than aesthetic. If we needed another term to distinguish the intensity with which games must be played in Beckett, we might borrow one coined by Bernard Suits: Beckett's work is *lusive* rather than ludic (Suits 1973, 49)

#### JUST A GAME

Philosophy of sport has taken three forms: the ethnographic, which concerns itself with the social meanings of sport; the ethical, which investigates the social bonds and commitments enacted through it; and the phenomenological, which attempts to derive an ontology of sporting behaviour. This last tradition, though the most promising for the understanding of the sporting life in Beckett, also throws up the greatest problems. The assumption which predominates in attempts to understand the ontology of sport is that sport involves a fulfilment or completion of the self. Often, sport is seen as a variety of play, which enables the athletic to be represented as cousin to the aesthetic. Clustering in the late 1960s and early 1970s as they do, phenomenological studies of sport often have a strongly existential cast, seeing sport as the arena of free and active human self-constitution *en situation*. As such, they follow out Schiller's assertion that

[H]ow can we speak of *mere* play, when we know that it is precisely play and play alone, which of all man's states and conditions is the one which makes him whole and unfolds both sides of his nature at once?... man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and *he is only fully a human being when he plays* (Schiller 1967, 107).

Surprisingly, Sartre has a similar formulation:

What is play indeed, if not an activity of which man is the first origin, for which man himself sets the rules, and which has no consequences except according to the rules posited? As soon as a man apprehends himself as free and wishes to use his freedom, a freedom, by the way, which could just as well be his anguish, then his activity is play... His goal, which he aims at through sports or pantomime or games, is to attain himself as a certain being, precisely the being which is in question in his being. (Sartre 1969, 580-1)

This seems a long way away from Beckett's work, in which the attractiveness of play often seems to lie in the fact that it provides distraction, or, using the word that Beckett used in describing his turn to writing plays, relief. Play seems to offer the calm or consolation, factitious but locally effective, of pattern given to a disorderly and chaotic world, the booming, buzzing confusion of phenomena sorted into the syntax of move and countermove. Thus, it is possible to interpret M's words in *Play* as testifying to the longed-for insignificance of the unserious, as a salve for the agony of responsibility: 'I know now, all that was just ... play. And all this? ...when will all this have been ... just play?' (Beckett 1986, 313). But play is actually more serious than this in Beckett. It is always absorbing, imperative, obligatory, never pastime, but the agonistic shaping of time's passage. The difference between game and sport is that, where games can be abstract, sports involve the putting into play of the body. It is the seriousness of this corporeal play in Beckett that seems to make it, in a perverse, but still recognisable sense, athletic.

The intensity of the lusive drive in Beckett comes from the fact that games are forms of world-making, which can sometimes violently displace the world of which they form a part. This is dramatised in the story of the birth of Larry which is patched together between his mother, Tetty, his father, Goff and Mr Hackett at the beginning of *Watt*. Having endured the pains of labour all the way through dinner, Tetty goes upstairs while the men retire to the snooker room, and delivers the child herself, snapping the cord with her teeth:

We heard the cries, said Goff.  
 Judge of their surprise, said Tetty.  
 Cream's potting had been extraordinary, extraordinary, I remember, said Goff.  
 I never saw anything like it. We were watching breathless, as he set himself for a  
 long thin jenny, with the black of all balls.  
 What temerity, said Mr. Hackett.  
 A quite impossible stroke, in my opinion, said Goff. He drew back his queue  
 to strike, when the wail was heard. Her permitted himself an expression that I shall  
 not repeat. (Beckett 1972, 13)

This is a replaying of the opening move of *Tristram Shandy*, but with the positions of biology and culture reversed. Here, it is not the mundane affair of winding the clock which interrupts the work of nature, but the untimely fact of human birth that botches Cream's master-stroke, jamming the paradigms of potting and parturition. The principle is enunciated somewhat more pithily in Beckett's adaptation of Terence: 'Nothing human is foreign to us, once we have digested the racing news'.

For Beckett, sport provides the impetus for the utter seriousness of a gaming in which everything, mind, body, world, is in play, which is not in the least to say up in the air, but rather to say risked, wagered, at stake. It is conventional for writers in the Schillerian tradition to associate play and art, but Beckett's play has little to do with art. Art always in some sense stands apart from the world. But sport

is lusive: it does not gesture to, or take up a relation to the world, it colonises or constitutes it. More than worldly, sport is, as we might say, *weltlich*, 'worldive', because it forms a complete gestalt, with all the interrelated elements of the game necessarily present at once. It is this which has often suggested the argument that play or sports create a kind of existential imperium, an arena in which man may make himself freely. But this space is also a space of subjection to necessity, the fascination of what's difficult, and to the ever-present possibility of defeat.

#### HAVING DONE WITH LOSING

'There is always in sport an appropriative component', insists Sartre, in the course of the chapter in *Being and Nothingness* entitled 'Doing and Having' in which skiing features centrally as an instance (Sartre 1969, 581). The athleticism of Beckett's play is to be found principally however in the intensity of this will to appropriation, or desire to win. This may seem counterintuitive, given the fierce determination with which Beckett's speakers claim to seek to lose or come unstuck. 'Old endgame, lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing', resolves Hamm (Beckett 1986, 132). Hamm wishes, like all of Beckett's carefully plotting, determined pseudo-failers, to follow to the end the rules of the game of the death-drive as set out by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, whereby '[w]e have no longer to reckon with the organism's puzzling determination (so hard to fit into any context) to maintain its own existence in the face of every obstacle. What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion' (Freud 1968, 39). The will to appropriate one's failure, to live it and be it, is the effect of that absolute putting oneself in play. The peculiar displaced athleticism of his Beckett's writing is a way of mediating the contrary tractions of the appropriative aspiration of will on the one hand and the recoil from will's cruder dominion on the other. The losing that Beckett has in view is not defeat; rather it is an active striving and contriving to outwit, or win out against winning. In the end, the athletic qualities I have made out in Beckett – endurance, expertise, equipoise, exertion of will – are not simply exercised through his work, but are themselves put into play, or sported with, by it.

What kind of athleticism is this, so expertly unsure of its capacities, so supple in its mock-incompetences, so alertly self-defeating, so dextrously maladroit, returning with such indefatigable fatigue to the being that is in question in its being?

A kind of its own.

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