Abstract
This paper aims to demonstrate that Samuel Beckett’s interest in functions of the brain is not only evidenced in his notebooks, taken from a number of psychology and psycho-physiognomy texts in the early 1930s, but is also explored and expanded in his fiction and drama. This paper investigates Beckett’s fascination with the limits of ‘cerebral consciousness’ and the brain’s failure to consciously perceive certain bodily modifications especially when processing emotion. Like Antonio Damasio’s definition of emotion as essentially the bodily modifications that include chemical changes, Beckett often exploits the idea of emotion as sorely a bodily phenomenon by creating characters who are unable to consciously perceive and process their emotion. For example, when talking about his own weeping, the narrator of *The Unnamable* attributes the tears to the malfunctioning of the brain, ‘liquefied brain’, denying, displacing or making physical the feeling of sadness. By examining the ways in which Beckett emphasizes a somatic dimension of emotion and its relation to the brain function and perception in his writing, this paper reveals how he explores the idea of the self and extends the idea to what he calls the ‘impenetrable self’ that cannot be consciously recognized. I argue that if, for Joseph LeDoux, the ‘notion of synapses as points of communication between cells is [...] essential to our efforts to understand who we are in terms of brain mechanisms’, for Beckett to expose such unconscious biological mechanism and ‘gaps’ becomes his own artistic challenge.

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