

"I met ondiste Nathalie Forget, the world's leading exponent of the ondes Martenot, in Paris in January 2014, following an introduction from composer Judith Ring, who wrote the luminous "FLUX – jeux de bague" for her whilst in residence at the Centre Culturel Irlandais in 2012, and in whose footsteps I now trod. The first time we met we went for a coffee, perhaps a beer, I don't remember. It felt as if we had known each other for a long time.

The second time we met was at Thomas Hirschhorn's installation "Flamme Éternelle" in the Palais du Tokyo, a vast micro-city built of rubber and tape, with a cheap bar and the complete works of Samuel Beckett. There Nathalie gave me a copy of Beckett and Animals (Cambridge, 2013) which includes Angela Moorjani's illuminated essay "The Dancing Bees in Samuel Beckett's Molloy: The Rapture of Unknowing."

Moorjani focuses on a seemingly innocuous passage in Molloy where the author explores his wonder, and 'unknowing', with the bees – "I often thought of my bees...and I thought above all of their dance, for my bees danced...in a different way." (Les Éditions de Minuit, 1951).

The passage refers to German-Austrian ethologist Karl von Frisch's Nobel-prize winning discovery of the precise ways in which bees communicate complex spatio-temporal information through dance. Beckett was likely the first writer to include this particular unravelling of the code in a novel.

Unreal Cities is a multi-disciplinary arts company founded by Adrian Dunbar and I in 2020, emerging from our 2015 setting of T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land for four actors, jazz quintet and film for the Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival. Unreal Cities follow an ethos centred on the power of three, with each new work the meeting point of three disciplines.

Photo by Jose Miguel Jimenez



When Adrian suggested dance for Beckett: Unbound 2024, our Beckett Biennale for the Liverpool Institute for Irish Studies and the CCI, I immediately thought of Moorjani's insight as a vital well from which to draw.

I have been a deep admirer of Liz Roche's choreography since seeing "Näher... closer, nearer, sooner" at the opening of the newly-renovated Goethe Institut in 2018 – a joyous and intricate exploration of the new architecture of the space, possessing a profound sensibility for structural narrative. In 2021, whilst Liz was in the making of "YES AND YES" for the centenary year of James Joyce's Ulysses, we were connected by the inspirational producer Síobhra Quinlan, and began a long series of cherished, exploratory walks through the Phoenix Park.

It felt as if we were both travelling the same road in parallel lanes – both Ulysses and The Waste Land were published in the same year of 1922, and whilst "YES AND YES" crossed the Atlantic to go to Washington, Unreal Cities celebrated Eliot's centenary by performing The Waste Land in the Great Library of Alexandria in Egypt...one of the five 'Unreal' Cities in the poem.

As Adrian said recently, "Art is the making of connections." This is a sketch of the living web of inter-relationship, encounter, and tracing of unknowable resonances that formed the genesis of Sentient. Sometimes the singularly most important thing you can do is to get out of the way of the inevitable. This show was staring everybody in the eyes all along – snarling, stalking, purring, crawling, humming, crackling and jumping out at all of us. Now we unleash it on the world in its raw form, possessing an energy that will transmute through performance, ritual and togetherness, with its creators and its audience."

Nick Roth
Bealtaine '24, Dublin