



Connecting Contexts: Eight Stories from the Life and Work of Samuel Beckett

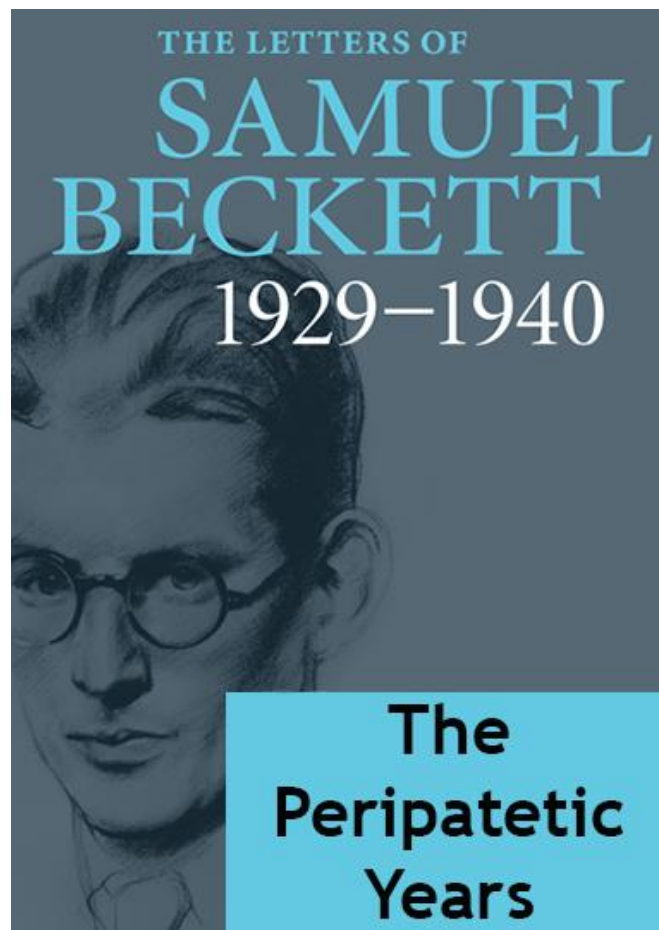
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All quoted letters from Samuel Beckett from vol. 1-4 of *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* / editors, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Lois More Overbeck ; associate editors, George Craig, Dan Gunn. Cambridge, UK ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2009-2016.

Story 1: The Peripatetic Years, 1929-1940

Beckett was on the move and restless, but place was central to his writing. Born and raised in the south Dublin suburb of Foxrock, he spent periods here at intervals. From Paris (1930-1931) as an exchange lecteur (reader) at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, he returned to Dublin to live and teach at Trinity College Dublin, until December 1932. Wandering by foot and bicycle in the countryside of County Wicklow and areas north of Dublin offered great pleasure. From 1934, Beckett resided in London where his walks were in the city and in Hyde Park: the backdrop for *Murphy*. Back in Dublin in 1936, he sought a way out - contemplated studying film in Russia with Sergei Eisenstein, then headed off for six months in Germany (1936-1937). Nominally a journey to visit old masters and meet younger artists, he witnessed on every side the effects of Nazi suppression and reflected that it was rather a journey *from* old masters. By 1938 Beckett had moved permanently to Paris.



Part 1: Trinity College Dublin and County Dublin

From autumn of 1931 through December 1932, Beckett taught French literature at Trinity College Dublin. In letters to Thomas MacGreevy, he reported: "I don't get on well with my classes and that flatters me and exasperates my pride ... I read a paper to M.L. S. on a non-existent French poet - Jean du Chas - and wrote his poetry myself and that amused me for a couple of days" (14 November 1930). Beckett also reflected on his surrounds: "Dublin is as ever only more so. You ask for a fish & they give you a piece of bog oak" (1 January 1935). "Dublin is lovely with no trams & buses, the hills & sea seem to have crept nearer... I don't want to accept this life quite yet, but I loathe the thought of returning to London" (5 May 1935). "[I] have no inclination to leave the light & the sea for a city" (7 May 1936).

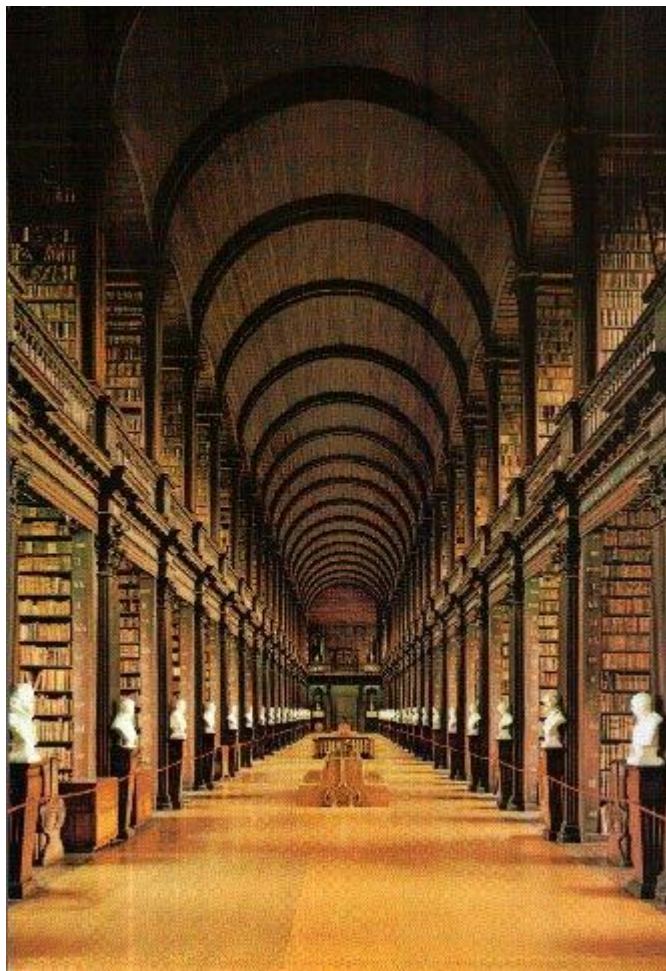


Image 1 The Long Room of the Library of Trinity College Dublin

Part 2: County Wicklow

Beckett wrote to Thomas McGreevy: “I walk immeasurably & unrestrainedly, hills and dales, all day, and back with a couple of pints from the Powerscourt” (18 October 1932). “Lovely walk this morning with Father...Barging through hedges and over the walls with the help of my shoulder...I’ll never have any one like him” (23 April 1933). After his father’s death, “I can’t write about him, I can only walk the fields and climb the ditches after him” (2 July 1933). “The best days have been these spent walking with the dogs. One was specially lovely, over the fields from here across the 3 Rock & 2 Rock & back by Glencullen & the Lead Mines....Then the white air you can see so far through, giving the outlines without the stippling. Then the pink & green sunset that I never find anywhere else and when it was quite dark a little pub to rest & drink gin in” (1 January 1935).



Image 2 - A view over the Wicklow Mountains

Part 3: London, City of *Murphy*

Beckett wrote to Thomas MacGreevy: “I begin to think I have gerontophilia on top of the rest. The little shabby respectable old men you see on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, pottering about ... or flying kites immense distances at the Round Pond, Kensington. Yesterday there was a regular club of the latter ... sitting in a crescent waiting for a wind. The kites lying in the grass with their long tails beautifully cared for, all assembled and ready ... Then great perturbation to get them off at the first breath of wind. They fly them almost out of sight ... Then when the string is run out they simply sit there watching them, chucking at the string ... presumably to keep them from losing height ... Then after about an hour they wind them gently in and go home. I was really rooted to the spot yesterday, unable to go away and wondering what was keeping me. The book closes with an old man flying his kite, if such occasions ever arise” (8 September 1935). The occasion was *Murphy*.



Image 3 - The Round Pond, Hyde Park, London

Part 4: Thoughts of Russia

Beckett had loved film, the silent, black and white variety, for years. He wrote to Nuala Costello: “I saw *Man of Aran* and felt I am afraid irretrievably glued to the seat ... the trucs of montage and photography ... The boy fishing is pure Harold Lloyd” (10 May [1934]). Beckett asked director Sergei Eisenstein: “to be considered for admission to the Moscow State School of Cinematography....I have no experience of studio work and it is naturally in the scenario and editing end of the subject that I am most interested. It is because I realise [sic] that the script is function of its means of realisation [sic] that I am anxious to make contact with your mastery of these, and beg you to consider me a serious cinéaste worthy of admission to your school. I could stay a year at least” (2 March 1936).

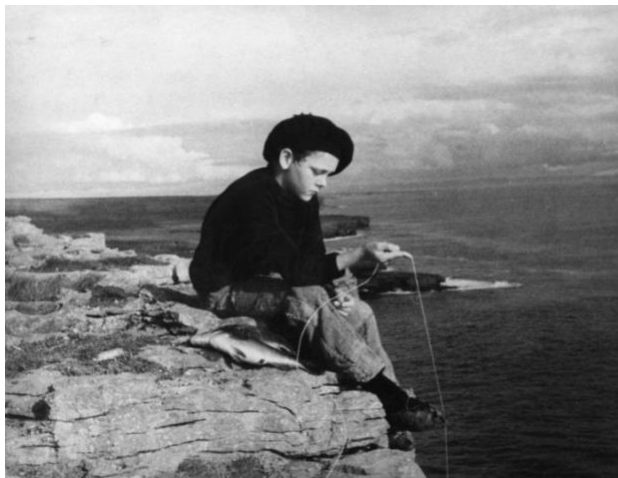


Image 5 - Man of Aran (1934) directed by American filmmaker Robert Flaherty (1884-1951)

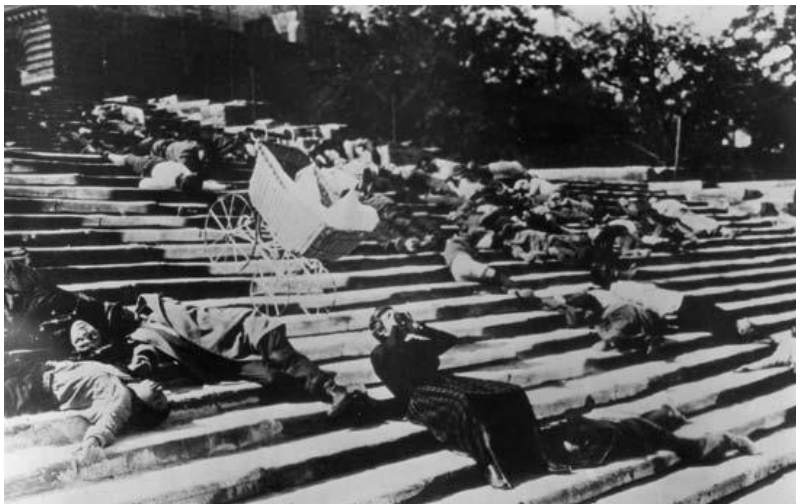


Image 4 - The Odessa Steps scene from The Battleship Potemkin (1925) directed by Sergei Eisenstein. The montage of this film made a strong impression on Samuel Beckett, as the camera alternated between the gradual but inevitable rolling of a baby carriage down

Part 5: Germany

September 1936 - March 1937 Beckett travels in Germany: Hamburg for two months; Hannover, Lüneburg, Brunswick, then Berlin for a month. Next he goes to Halle, Erfurt, Naumburg, Leipzig and Dresden for three weeks; then on to Freiberg, Bamberg, Würzburg, Nuremberg, Regensburg; and, finally, a month-long stay in Munich.

From Hamburg he writes to Thomas MacGreevy: "I have met a lot of friendly people here, mostly painters. Kluth, Ballmer, Grimm, Bargheer, Hartmann- They are all more or less suppressed, i.e. cannot exhibit publicly and dare sell only with precaution ... I have seen several excellent private collections (Where alone living art is to be seen in Germany at present.) ...The campaign against 'Art Bolshevisim' is only just beginning" (28 November 1936).



Image 6 - Hamburg, Germany

“The Kaiser Friedrich-Museum is terrific....But a gallery is not the names in its catalogue”
(Beckett to MacGreevey, 18 January 1937).

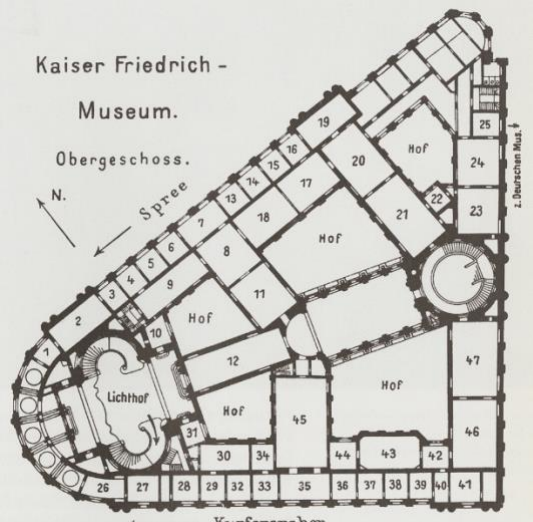


Image 7 - The Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin



Image 8 - The Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin

“You would like Dresden....The Zwinger is much restored, but well restored.” (Beckett to MacGreevey, 16 February 1937).



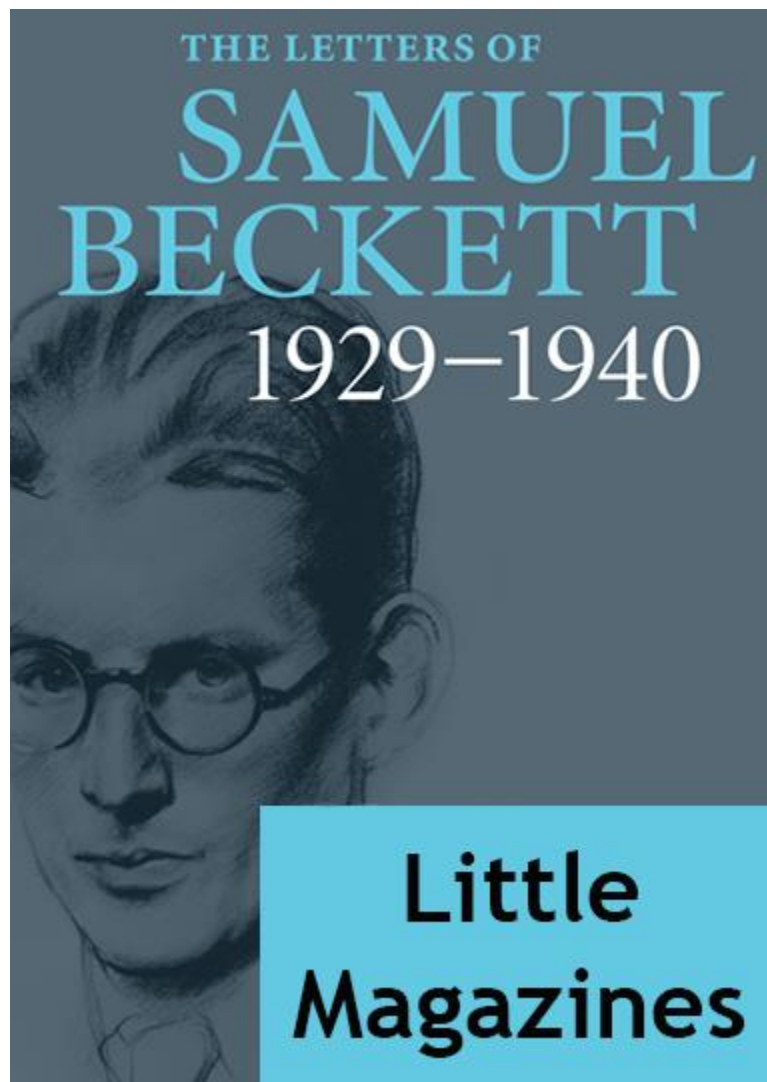
Image 9 - Dresden, Germany



Image 10 - Two Men Contemplating the Moon (Zwei Männer in Betrachtung des Mondes, c. 1819) by Caspar David Friedrich, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden. Commonly thought to be the source of the motif in En attendant Godot.

Story 2: Little Magazines, Beckett's Publishing Outlet

As a young writer in Dublin, Beckett found few outlets for publishing his work, save *The Dublin Magazine*. By contrast, Paris in the early 1930s was filled with American expatriates, and with their English and Irish counterparts who found Paris an affordable and congenial place to be. Among them were writers, translators and publishers who embraced modern literature and pan-European culture: Eugene and Maria Jolas (*transition*), Edward Titus (Black Manikin Press and *This Quarter*), Samuel Putnam (*The New Review*), and a group from Cambridge, including George Reavey, that published the anthology, *The European Caravan*. All wished to publish new work by European writers, which they translated into English to attract a wider audience.



Part 1: *Dublin Magazine*, October - December 1931

Two poems, both entitled “Alba” were submitted to Seumas O’Sullivan, editor of *The Dublin Magazine*, on 7 August 1931: “May I propose these samples of embarrassed respiration to you in the first instance and to your magazine in the second instance?”

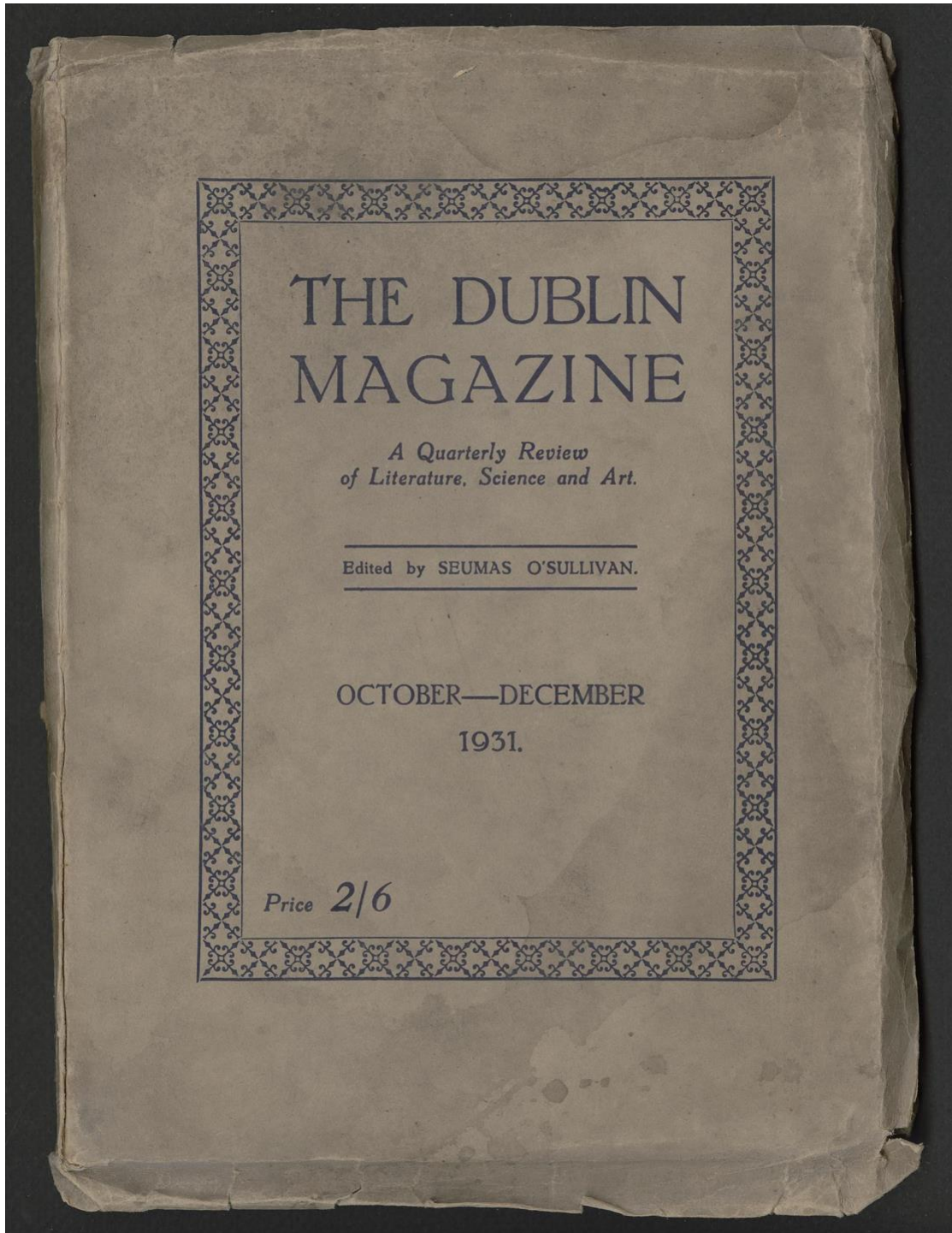


Image 11 - Cover of *The Dublin Magazine*, featuring "Alba"

SONNET WITH THE SHAKESPEAREAN RHYME
SCHEME AND THE ITALIAN MOVEMENT

By R. L. Megroz.

Tonight I need your thoughts, movements of love
Between the heart and brain, mere whisperings
Of music, over water. My thoughts prove
No soul in the silence over which wind rings
A thousand tempestuous bells that cannot drown
The soundless clamour of an empty heaven.
No solitary influence pours down
Where you, my Star, should this dull sky have riven.
Is it the cloud of loneliness or the storm
Rampaging in the forest of my mind,
That on the screen of space I cannot form
Your image now, or between the clangs of the wind
Hear the continuous murmuring music of
Your thoughts I need tonight vibrating love ?

ALBA

By Samuel Beckett.

Before morning you shall be here
and Dante and the Logos and all strata and mysteries
and the branded moon
beyond the white plane of music
that you shall establish here before morning
grave suave singing silk,
stoop to the black firmament of areca,
rain on the bamboos, flower of smoke, alley of willows
who though you stoop like fingers of compassion
to sign the dust
cannot add to your bounty,
whose beauty shall be a sheet before me,
a statement of itself drawn across the tempest of emblems,
so that there is no sun and no unveiling
and no host,
only I and then the sheet
and bulk dead

Image 12 - "Alba" in The Dublin Magazine

Part 2: *The New Review*, April 1932

Samuel Beckett wrote to editor Samuel Putnam: "Herewith the latest, positively the latest hallucinations. I take one fleet pace to the rere [rear] and submit them with the chiroplatonic flourish that it has taken me years to master. Thanks for nice things in preface to Reevey [for Reavey]. But I vow I will get over J. J. ere I die [i.e. "I will get over James Joyce before I die"]. Yessir" (28 June 1932). Putnam had written of the young Irishman: "There is Samuel Beckett, the closest, perhaps as yet too close, to Joyce; but then, he sees a task for himself in poetry which Joyce has left untouched, - [sic] the task perhaps of expressing, as Rimbaud expressed, passionate nihilism, and transcendental vision at one and the same time." (Samuel Putnam, in the introduction to George Reavey, *Faust's Metamorphoses: Poems, Fontenay-aux Roses, Seine, France: The New Review Editions, 1932, 7-8.*)

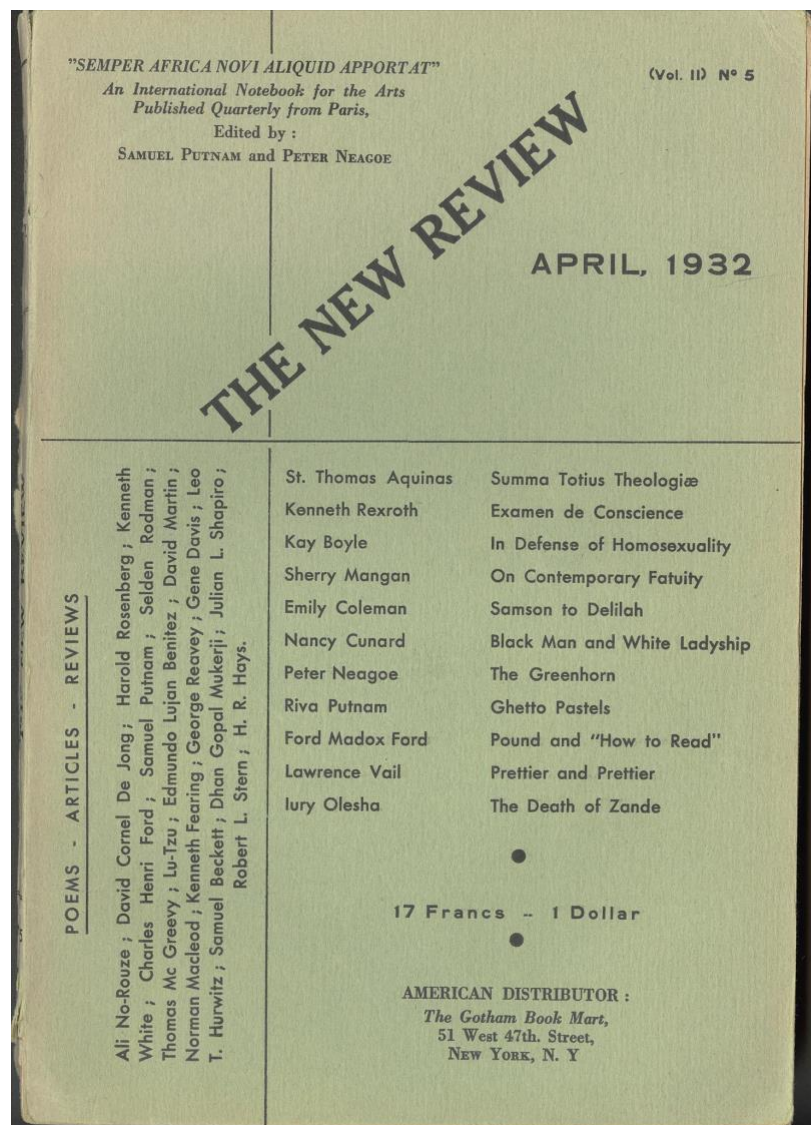


Image 13 - *The New Review* featuring the Beckett poem "Text"

Text

By SAMUEL BECKETT

Come come and cull me bonny
bony doublebed cony swiftly my
springal and my thin Kerry twin-
gle-twangler comfort my days of
roses days of beauty week of red-
ness with mad shame to my lips of
shame to my shamehill for the
newest news the shemost of she-
news is I'm lust-be-lepered and un-
well oh I'd rather be a sparrow for
my puckfisted coxcomb bird to bird
and branch or a coalcave with goldy
veins for my wicked doty's poty-
stick trimly to besom gone the hart-
shorn and the cowslip wine gone
and the lettuce nibbled up nibbled
up and gone nor the last beauty day
of the red time opened its rose and
struck with its thorn oh I'm all of
a galimaufry or a salady salma-
fundi singly and single to bed she
said I'll have no toadspit about this
house and whose quab was I I'd
like to know that from my cheer-
fully cornuted Dublin landloper
and whose foal hackney mare toing
the line like a Viennese Taubchen
take my tip and clap a padlock on
your Greek galligaskins before I'm
quick and living in hope and glad
to go snacks with my twingle-
twangler and grow grow into the
earth mother of whom clapdish and
foreshop.

Part 3: *The European Caravan: An Anthology of the New Spirit in European Literature* (1931)

The European Caravan had been planned as a two-volume anthology. Beckett made suggestions and translations for the Italian section that was to appear in the second volume, but this was not published. On front book flap: "This is the first volume of a very necessary work ... an anthology direct and exact in its presentation of the Europe of today. It is ... concerned with that generation which, while it was not in the trenches, bears none the less an indelible impress of the great struggle; a generation distinguished by spiritual intensity and by a repudiation of pre-War aesthetics (and often enough of pre-War social and political systems); a generation without parallel in America, where this conflict, this turning of the young upon the old with a bitter and despairing reproach, is practically non-existent."

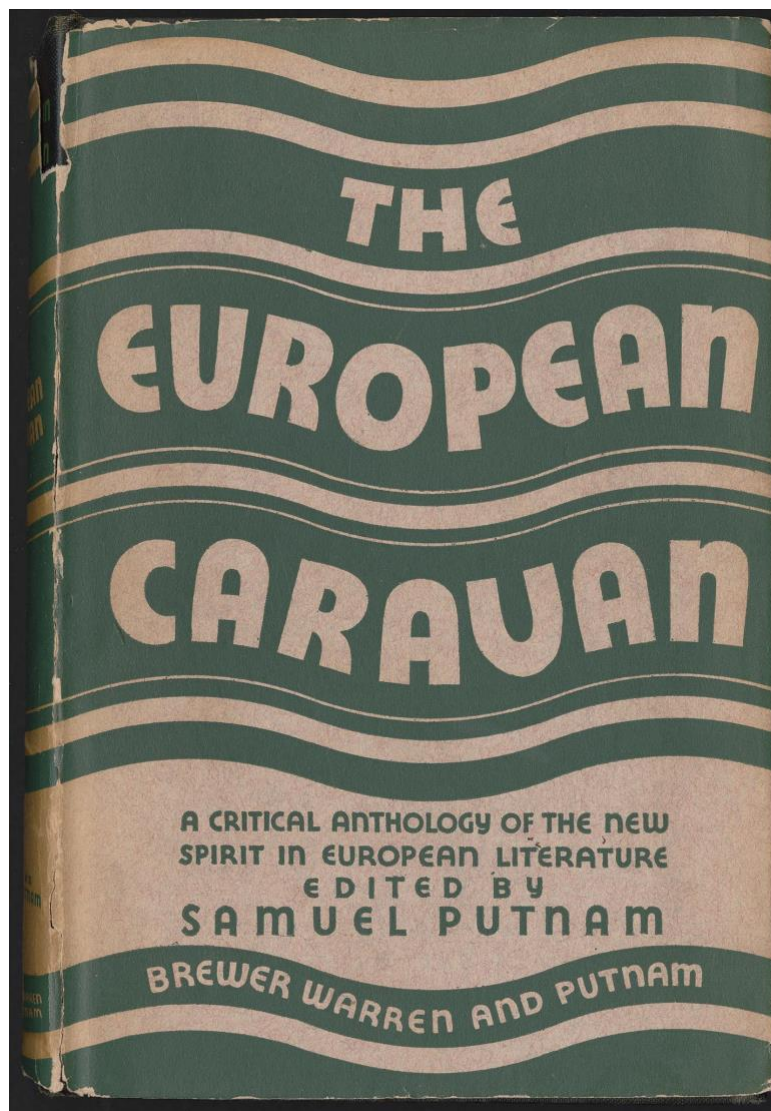


Image 15 - *The European caravan : an anthology of the new spirit in European literature / compiled and edited by Samuel Putnam ... [et al.] New York : Brewer, Warren & Putnam, 1931*

Samuel B. Beckett

S. B. Beckett is the most interesting of the younger Irish writers. He is a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and has lectured at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. He has a great knowledge of Romance literature, is a friend of Rudmose-Brown and of Joyce, and has adapted the Joyce method to his poetry with original results. His impulse is lyric, but has been deepened through this influence and the influence of Proust and of the historic method. He has recently won the Hours Press prize with a poem Whoroscope: and has contributed to transition and This Quarter, and to the examination of Joyce's Work in Progress.

HELL CRANE TO STARLING

Oholiba charm of my eyes
there is a cave above Tsoar
and a Spanish donkey there.

You needn't bring wine to that non-relation.

And he won't know
who changed his name
when Jehovah sprained the seam of his hauch
in Peniel in Peniel
after he'd sent on the thirty camels
suckling for dear death
and so many fillies
that I don't want log tablets.
Mister Jacobson mister Hippolitus-in-hell Jacobson
we all know
how you tried to rejoin your da.
Bilha always blabs.

Because Benoni skirted aftercrop
of my aching loins
you'll never see him
reddening the wall in two dimensions
and if you did
you might spare the postage to Chaldea.

But there's a bloody fine ass
 lepping with stout and impurée de pommes
 in the hill above Tsoar.

CASKET OF PRALINEN FOR A DAUGHTER OF A
 DISSIPATED MANDARIN

Is he long enough in the leg?
 Già but his faice. . . .
 Oh me little timid Rosinette
 isn't it Bartholo, synthetic grey cat, regal candle?
 Keep Thyrsis for your morning ones.

Hold your head well over the letter darling
 or they'll fall on the blotting.
 Will you ever forget that soupe arrosée
 on the first of the first,
 spoonfeeding the weeping gladiator
 renewing our baptismal vows
 and dawn cracking all along the line.
 Slobbery assumption of the innocents
 two Irish in one God.

Radiant lemon-whiskered Christ
 and you obliging porte-phallic-portfolio
 and blood-faced Tom
 disbelieving
 in the Closerie cocktail that is my
 and of course John the bright boy of the class
 swallowing an apostolic spit
 THE BULLIEST FEED IN 'ISTORY
 if the boy scouts hadn't booked a trough
 for the eleventh's eleventh eleven years after.

Now me boy
 take a hitch in your lyrical loinstring.

What is this that is more
than the anguish of Beauty,
this gale of pain that was not prepared
in the caves of her eyes?

Is it enough
a stitch in the hem of the garment of God?

To-night her gaze would be less
than a lark's barred sunlight.

Oh I am ashamed
of all clumsy artistry
I am ashamed of presuming
to arrange words
of everything but the ingenuous fibres
that suffer honestly.

Fool! do you hope to untangle
the knot of God's pain?

Melancholy Christ that was a soft one!
Oh yes I think that was perhaps just a very little inclined to be
rather too self-conscious.

Schluss!
Now ladies and gents
a chocolate-coated hiccough to our old friend.
Put on your hats and sit easy.

Oh beauty!
oh thou predatory evacuation,
from the bowels of my regret—
readily affected
by the assimilation of a purging gobbet
from my momery's involuntary vomit—
violently projected,
oh beauty!
oh innocent and spluttering beautiful!

What price the Balbec express?
 Albion Albion mourn for him mourn
 thy cockerup Willy the idiot boy
 the portly scullion's codpiece.
 Now who'll discover in Mantegna's
 butchery stout foreshortened Saviour
 recognitions of transcendent
 horse-power?
 Sheep he wrote the very much doubting
 genial illegible landscape gardener.
 Gloucester's no bimbo
 and he's in Limbo
 so all's well with the gorgonzola cheese of human kindness.

Though the swine were slaughtered
 beneath the waves
 not far from the firm sand
 they're gone they're gone
 my Brussels Braut!

TEXT

Miserere oh colon
 oh passionate ilium
 and Frances the cook in the study mourning
 an abstract belly
 instead of the writhing asparagus-plumer
 smashed on delivery
 by the most indifferential calculus
 that never came out
 or ever disdressed
 a redknuckled slut of a Paduan Virtue.

Show that plate here to your bedfruit
 spent baby
 and take a good swig
 at our buxom calabash.
 There's more than bandit Glaxo
 underneath me maternity toga.

So she sags and here's the other.
That's the real export or I'm a Jungfrau.
Now wipe your moustache and hand us the vaseline.

Open Thou my lips
and
(if one dare make a suggestion)
Thine eye of skyflesh.
Am I a token of Godcraft?
The masterpiece of a scourged apprentice?
Where is my hippipit's cedar tail
and belly muscles?
Shall I cease to lament
being not as the flashsneezing
non-suppliant airtight alligator?

Not so but perhaps
at the sight and the sound of
a screechy flatfooted Tuscany peacock's
Strauss fandango and recitative
not forgetting
he stinks eternal.

Alas my scorned packthread!
No blade has smoothed the forrowed cheeks
that my tears corrode.
My varicose veins take my kneeling thoughts
from the piteous pelican.

Quick tip losers narcissistic inverts.
Twice I parted two crawlers
dribbling their not connubial strangles
in Arcadia of all places.
Believe me Miss Ops
swan flame or shower of gold
its one to ten at the time
(no offence to your noble deathjerks)
I know I was at it seven . . .
the bitch she's blinded me!
Manto me dear
an iced sherbet and me blood's a solid.

We are proud in our pain
our life was not blind.
Worms breed in their red tears
as they slouch unnamed
scorned by the black ferry
despairing of death
who shall not scour in swift joy
the bright hill's girdle
nor tremble with the dark pride of torture
and the bitter dignity of an ingenious damnation.

Lo-Ruhama Lo-Ruhama
pity is quick with death.
Presumptuous passionate fool come now
to the sad maimed shades
and stand cold
on the cold moon.

YOKE OF LIBERTY

The lips of her desire are grey
and parted like a silk loop
threatening
a slight wanton wound.
she preys wearily
on sensitive wild things
proud to be torn
by the grave crouch of her beauty.
But she will die and her snare
tendered so patiently
to my tamed and watchful sorrow
will break and hang
in a pitiful crescent.

(Courtesy of the Author.)

Part 4: *Transition*, June 1936

Transition founder Eugene Jolas and James Joyce were close friends, and as portions of *Finnegans Wake* were published in *transition*, Beckett's own writing also found a place in the journal.



Image 22 - Issue of *transition* featuring three Beckett poems

SAMUEL BECKETT

Malacoda

thrice he came
the undertaker's man
impassible behind his scutal bowler

to measure
is he not paid to measure
this incorruptible in the vestibule
this malebranca knee-deep in the lilies
Malacoda knee-deep in the lilies
Malacoda for all the expert awe
that felts his perineum mutes his signal
sighing up through the heavy air
must it be it must be it must be
find the weeds engage them in the garden
hear she may see she need not

to coffin
with assistant ungulata
find the weeds engage their attention
hear she must see she need not

to cover
to be sure cover cover all over
your targe allow me hold your sulphur

divine dogday glass set fair
stay Scarmilion stay stay
lay this Huysum on the box
mind the imago it is he
hear she must see she must
all aboard all souls
half-mast aye aye

nay

8

Enueg II

world world world world
and the face grave
cloud against the evening

de morituris nihil nisi

and the face crumbling shyly
too late to darken the sky
blushing away into the evening
shuddering away like a gaffe

veronica mundi
veronica munda
give us a wipe for the love of Jesus

sweating like Judas
tired of dying
tired of policemen
feet in marmalade
perspiring profusely
heart in marmalade
smoke more fruit
the old heart the old heart
breaking outside congress

doch I assure thee
lying on O'Connell Bridge
goggling at the tulips of the evening
the green tulips
shining round the corner like an anthrax
shining on Guinness's barges

the overtone the face
too late to brighten the sky
doch doch I assure thee

Dortmunder

In the magic the Homer dusk
past the red spire of sanctuary
I null she royal hulk
hasten to the violet lamp to the thin K'in music
of the bawd.

She stands before me in the bright stall
sustaining the jade splinters
the scarred signaculum of purity quiet
the eyes the eyes black till the plagal east
shall resolve the long night phrase.
Then, as a scroll, folded,
and the glory of her dissolution enlarged
in me, Habbakuk, mard of all sinners.
Schopenhauer is dead, the bawd
puts her lute away.

Part 5: *This Quarter*, September 1932

Edward W. Titus was a Polish-born American citizen publisher and founder of the Black Manikin Press. His bookshop in Paris, At the Sign of the Black Manikin, opened in 1924, and soon became a gathering place for expatriate writers. He had married cosmetics businesswoman Helena Rubinstein in 1908 who subsidized the Black Manikin. Titus embraced new work, publishing a version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1929. Titus assumed ownership and editorship *This Quarter* in 1929. Both the press and the magazine were short-lived and ended in 1932. As Associate Editor of *This Quarter*, Samuel Putnam compiled the "Miniature Anthology of Contemporary Italian Literature" (April-May-June, 1930), for which Beckett provided translations of poems by Raffaello Franchi, Eugenio Montale, and Giovanni Comisso.

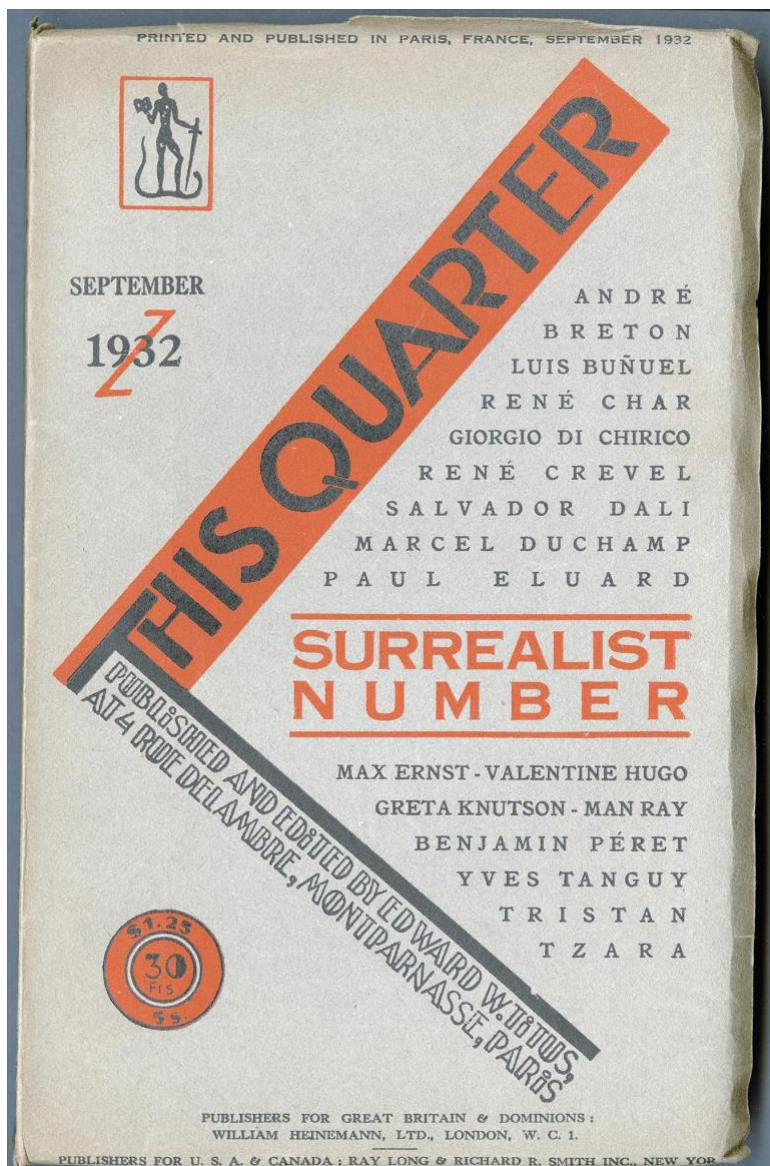


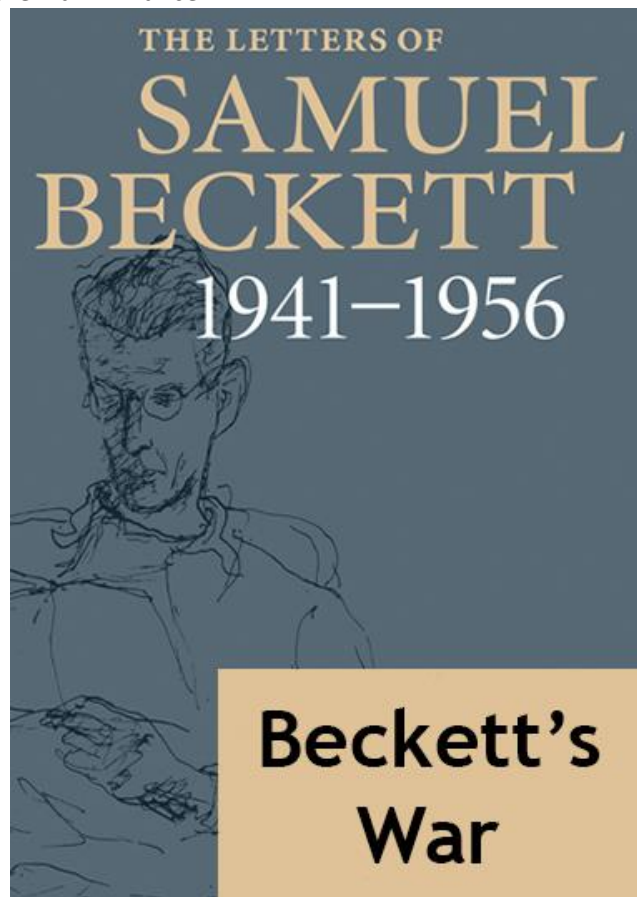
Image 26 - *This Quarter* issue featuring Beckett translations

Story 3: Beckett's War

Starting on 14 June 1940, the Germans occupied Paris. Samuel Beckett and his companion Suzanne Déchevaux-Dumesnil had left the city for Vichy on 12 June, where they were given assistance by Valery Larbaud. They continued, first to Toulouse, and then in the direction of Bordeaux as far as Cahors; finally, they were able to find a way to Arcachon on the Atlantic, where they were assisted by Mary Reynolds and Marcel Duchamp, staying there during the rest of summer 1940 (James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame* [New York: Grove Press, 2004] 274-276, 677 n. 8 and 9).

German occupation of Paris brought with it censorship of mail. In 1941, Beckett joined the French Resistance; naturally, this further curtailed letter writing. When, in August 1943, his resistance cell was broken by the Nazis, Beckett and Suzanne again fled Paris, ultimately finding their way to "free France" in Roussillon. There he eked out a living in the fields, and continued to participate in reconnaissance which he called "boy scout stuff." He also began his novel *Watt*.

During this time there was no direct mail between France and Ireland, only brief messages that could be sent by wire through the Irish Legation in Vichy, France. Beckett finally returned to Paris in October 1944, after the Allied liberation, and from there was able to return to Ireland early in 1945. His manuscript of *Watt* was confiscated by the British authorities, thought to be written in code by an Irish national who had spent the war in France.



Part 1: Beckett's Last Letter to Joyce

Beckett's last letter to James Joyce was forwarded to him, because Beckett did not know his address in Switzerland. Joyce died before it was received. Beckett knew Joyce would be worried about how his daughter Lucia would fare in France, and so wrote about her Christmas celebration. Notice the pre-printed card. Letter writers were to cross out the phrase that did not apply, and because of the censorship of mail, could only add a few personal words.

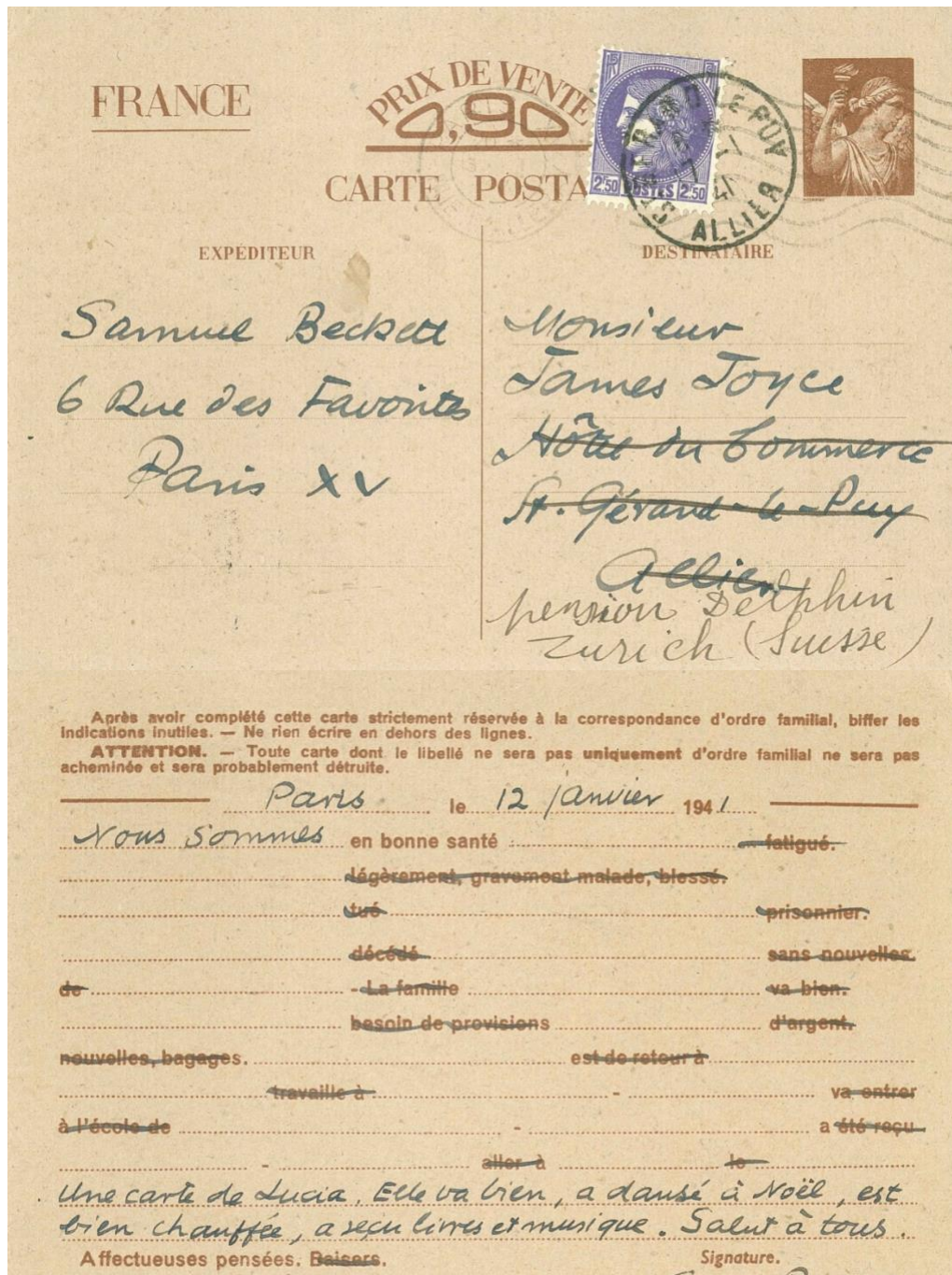


Image 27 - Samuel Beckett to James Joyce, 12 January 1941 The Letters of Samuel Beckett, 1941-1956

Part 2: Roussillon, France

Beckett joined the French Resistance later in 1941. He provided English translations of information for microfilming, so that it could be smuggled into England. After his friend Alfred Péron was taken by the Gestapo, Beckett and Suzanne fled south to Free France. They spent the rest of the war in Roussillon, in the Vaucluse. Beckett was constantly interrogated about his nationality and activities. He wrote to Cornelius Cremin of the Irish Legation in Vichy that local officials could not “believe that I can be called Samuel and am not a Jew” (17 October 1942).



Image 28 - The French village of Roussillon, Vaucluse, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region in Southeastern France

Part 3: St. Lô

Beckett returned to Paris in October 1944, and to Dublin in April 1945. He joined the Irish Red Cross Hospital in the heavily bombed town of St. Lô, in September 1945, as a driver, stock-clerk, and translator.



Image 29 - St. Lô was left in ruins by American bombing of the German occupied area of Normandy, destroying nearly 95% of the city and extremely high casualties.

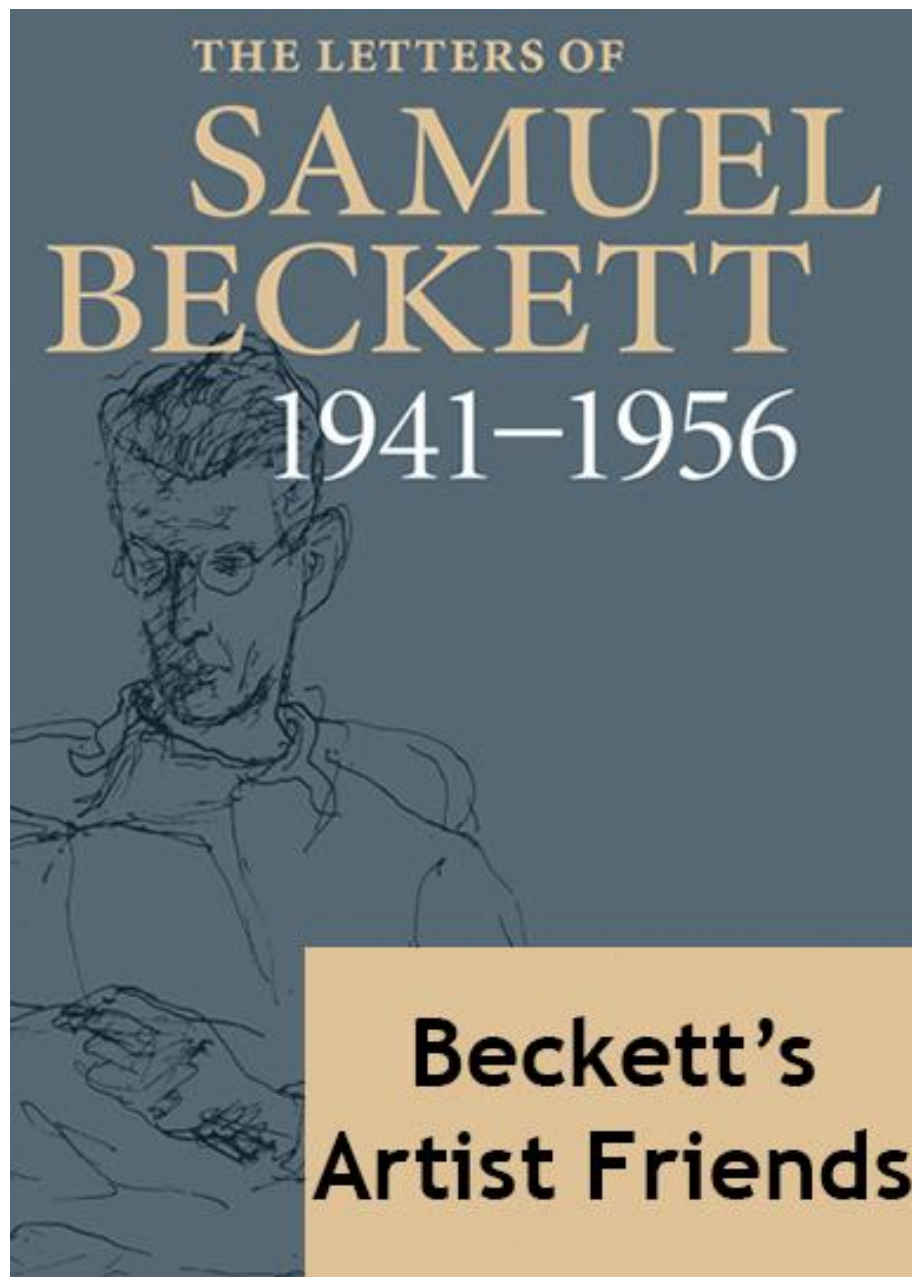


Image 30 - Staff of the Irish Red Cross Hospital, St. Lô, Samuel Beckett, first row, third from the left.

Story 4: Beckett's Artist Friends

Many of Samuel Beckett's friends were artists or art historians. Certainly in the early years, his friendship with the art historian Thomas MacGreevy, influenced his interest in art. Indeed, most of the detailed letters about the museums and artists he visited in his 1936-1937 travels in Germany were written to MacGreevy.

Friendships with artists were deep and influential on Beckett's writing, and included the French art historian Georges Duthuit, and the Irish artist Jack B. Yeats, brother of the poet W. B. Yeats



Part 1: Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957)

Thomas MacGreevy introduced Beckett to his friend Jack B. Yeats, who from circa 1920 moved away from illustration to an expressionist style, most often of Irish subjects.

Beckett wrote to Thomas McGreevy: "Yesterday afternoon I had Jack Yeats all to myself,... and saw some quite new pictures. He seems to be having a freer period.... In the end we went out, down to Charlemont House to find out about Sunday opening, & then to Jury's for a drink. He parted as usual with an offer to buy me a Herald. I hope to see him again before I leave, but do not expect ever to have him like that again" (5 May 1935). "Jack Yeats brought up the subject of the picture, & though I was too broke even to make an offer at the time, I since borrowed £10 which he accepted as a first instalment, the remaining £20 to follow God knows when, & have now got the picture....It is nice to have Morning on one's wall that is always morning, and a setting out without the coming home" (7 May 1936).



Image 31 - Jack B. Yeats, "Morning," a painting that Beckett bought on what he called the "stuttering system." It is now owned by The National Gallery of Ireland.

Part 2: Henri Hayden (1883-1970)

Beckett met Henri Hayden, Polish-Jewish French painter, and his wife Josette in Roussillon. They frequently played chess together, then, and in the years to come when the Haydens had a cottage in Reuil-sur-Marne, not far from Beckett's own in Ussy-sur-Marne. In 1952, Beckett wrote "Henri Hayden: homme-peintre" (*Arts-Documents* 22 [November 1955]) as well as several other short texts for catalogues. (*Hayden: Soixante ans de peinture*, Musée National d'Art Moderne [Paris, 1968]).



Image 32 - Josette and Henry Hayden, Reuil-en-Brie, photographed by Samuel Beckett [Christian de Bartillat, *Deux amis: Beckett et Hayden* {Erepilly: Les Presses de Village, 2000}).

Part 3: Georges Duthuit (1891-1973)

Georges Duthuit was an art historian whose special interests were Byzantine, Oriental and fauvist art. His wife Marguerite was the daughter of Henri Matisse. Stuck in New York during the war, Duthuit returned to France in 1945. His wife had been active with the resistance and was arrested but escaped. Duthuit took over the license of *transition* from Eugene and Maria Jolas, and continued to publish the journal as *transition*, with an emphasis on the visual arts. Beckett began working with him on translations for this journal in 1947 and the two formed a stimulating and important friendship. They published "Three Dialogues" about contemporary artists, in *transition* (1949), and the format of conversation helped Beckett overcome his hesitations of writing about art.

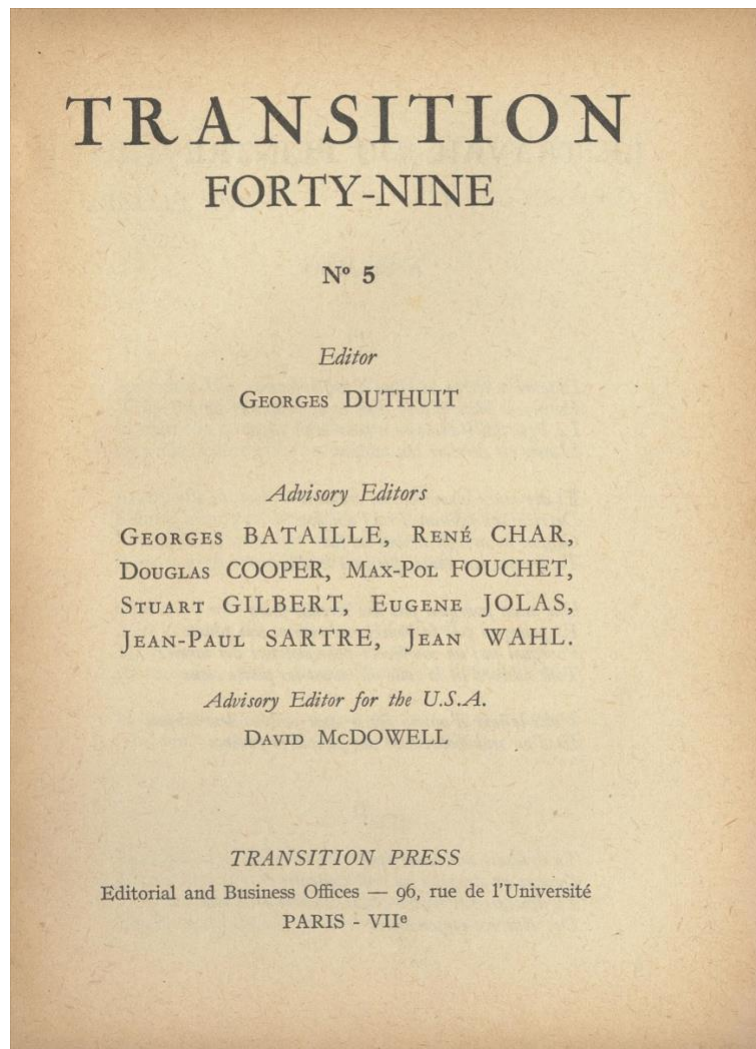


Image 33 - Transition Forty-Nine No. 5 which includes "Three Dialogues"

Part 4: Geer van Velde (1898-1977)

Beckett met the Dutch painter Geer van Velde through George Reavey. Beckett wrote to Mania Péron: “Geer is showing great courage. Ideas a little strident, but maybe only in appearance. I have always had a high opinion of him. But not high enough, I think” (28 August 1951). Beckett owned two paintings by Geer van Velde, *L’Imprévue* and *Composition* which was shown in London as part of the Royal Academy of Arts exhibition, *L’Ecole de Paris, 1900-1950 (L’Ecole de Paris, 1900-1950 [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1951] 42)*. Beckett wrote the article “Geer van Velde” in 1938, and also articles on Geer and his brother Abraham (Bram) van Velde: “La Peinture des van Velde ou le monde et le pantalon” and “Peintres de l’empêchement.”



Image 34 - Samuel Beckett and Geer van Velde, at Petersfield, England, 1938 (Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of this Century: Confessions of an Art Addict* (New York Universe Books, 1979).

Part 5: Bram van Velde (1895-1981)

Beckett's friendship with Bram van Velde, younger brother of Geer, grew into great respect for his integrity as an artist who painted despite his inability to paint.

Beckett wrote to Bram van Velde: "I've thought a lot about your work these last few days. And understood the uselessness of all I've said to you. As an artist, you hold out against everything and anything that might prevent you from making your works, even the plain facts. That is admirable. I am searching for a way of capitulating without giving up utterance - entirely" (14 January 1949). Beckett wrote to Georges Duthuit "What matters is that he does not succeed. His painting is, if you will, the impossibility of reconnecting. There is, if you like, refusal and refusal to accept refusal. That perhaps is what makes this painting possible" (9 March 1949).



Image 35 - Bram van Velde, copyright Joe Bokma, Nederlands Fotomuseum)



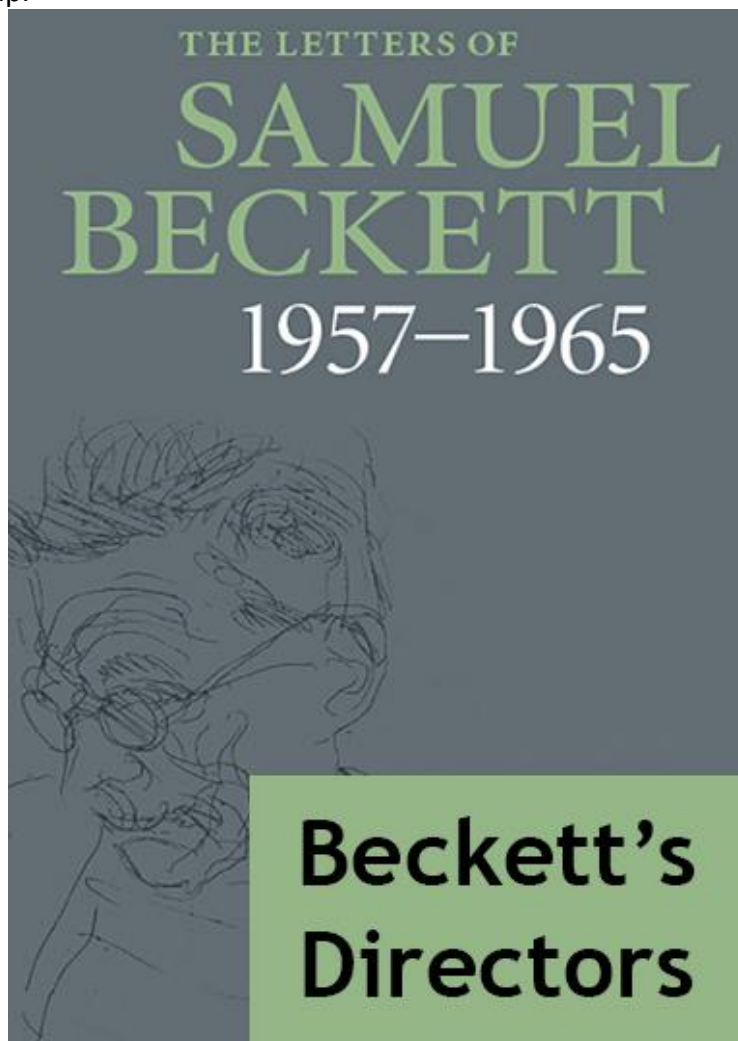
Image 36 - Sans Titre (1937), Musée national d'art modern, Centre Georges Pompidou, inv. AM 1982.-244 (Bram van Velde, donated by Samuel Beckett (Musée national d'art modern, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989).

Story 5: Beckett's Directors

Samuel Beckett is perhaps best known for his plays. The first to be produced was *En attendant Godot* (Waiting for Godot).

Beckett had great loyalty to the directors of his plays, and he preferred to continue with those he had come to know and trust. The French director, Roger Blin, brought *Godot* to the stage in January 1953 in Paris; he directed (and acted in) many of Beckett's other plays as well. The BBC director, Donald McWhinnie, created Beckett's radio play *All That Fall* as well as many others, and also directed Beckett's plays on stage. George Devine, directed Beckett's work for the Royal Court Theatre in London, and also for the National Theatre. Alan Schneider was Beckett's American Director. Walter Asmus, who assisted Beckett when Beckett directed his own plays at the Schiller-Theater in Berlin, was asked to direct in Beckett's stead when, in his later years, Beckett no longer felt up to the task.

In each case the bond between Beckett and his directors was built on trust and a strong working relationship.



Part 1: Roger Blin (1907-1984)

Roger Blin directed the premiere of most of Beckett's plays in French. To Georges Duthuit, Beckett did not necessarily have a positive first impression of Blin. He wrote to Georges Duthuit: "I have seen Blin. He wants, sorry, would like to put on *Godot*... Nice fellow, very Montparnasse ...I know him well by sight ... Not very good either as actor or as director, if I am to judge by the *Sonata* that we saw, along with 17 other people, but great love of theatre." (27 February 1950). Blin directed the French premiers of *En attendant Godot*, *Fin de partie*, *Actes sans paroles I*, *La dernière bande*, *Oh Les beaux jours*.

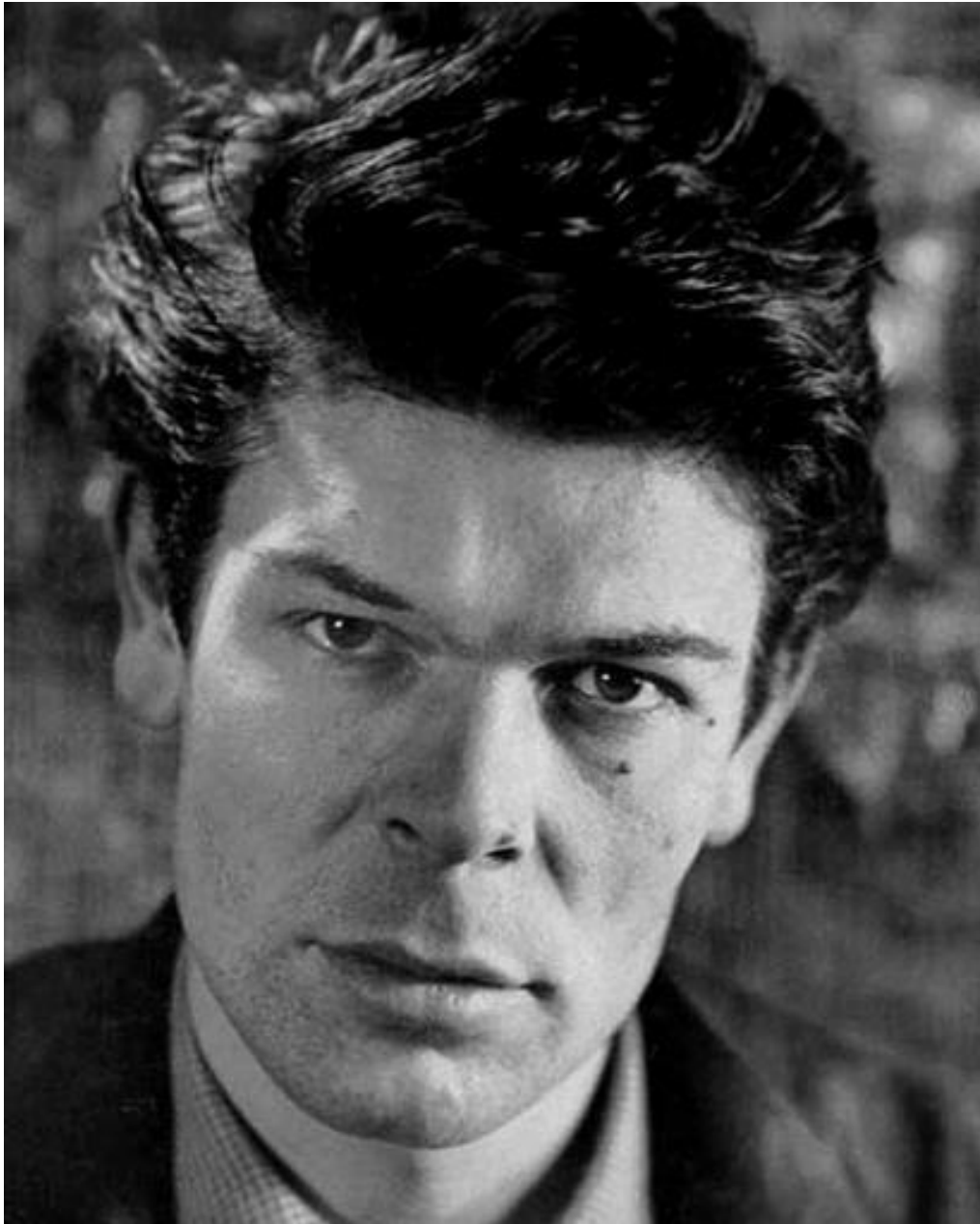


Image 37 - Roger Blin, Discogs

Part 2: Donald McWhinnie (1920-1987)

Donald McWhinnie worked in BBC drama and directed Beckett's radio plays *All That Fall* and *Embers*, as well as recordings of excerpts from Beckett's fiction. When he left the BBC to concentrate on theatre, McWhinnie directed *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, and *That Time*. He also directed Beckett's plays for television, *Eh Joe* and *Ghost Trio*. Beckett wrote to Ethna MacCarthy-Leventhal: "Very exciting working with Magee and McWhinnie, I want no other director henceforward" (18 November 1958).



Image 38 – Donald McWhinnie, photographer unknown, courtesy of Pauline McWhinnie

Part 3: Alan Schneider (1917-1984)

Alan Schneider was Beckett's American director. His production of *Waiting for Godot* opened inauspiciously in the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami. He and Beckett had attended the London production directed by Peter Hall in late 1955, so Schneider knew what Beckett wanted in this play. But the audience of the Coconut Grove, a dinner theatre, had no idea of what they were getting. Beckett wrote reassuringly to Schneider: "Success or failure on the public level never mattered much to me, in fact I feel much more at home with the latter, having breathed deep of its vivifying air all my writing life up to the last couple of years....This Miami fiasco does not distress me in the smallest degree, or only in so far as it distresses you..." (11 January 1956). Schneider became a sounding board for Beckett and directed most of Beckett's American premieres.



Image 39 - Alan Schneider, Samuel Beckett, Joe Coffey, on the set of *Film*, New York, 1964; copyright Steve Schapiro

Part 4: George Devine (1910-1966)

George Devine, Artistic Director of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre in London, offered Beckett's work a home theatre there. Devine directed and acted in Beckett's plays both there and at the National Theatre. Beckett was always grateful for Devine's work, calling him "the great inspirer." After Devine's death in 1966, Beckett remained close to his companion Jocelyn Herbert who designed many of his productions.

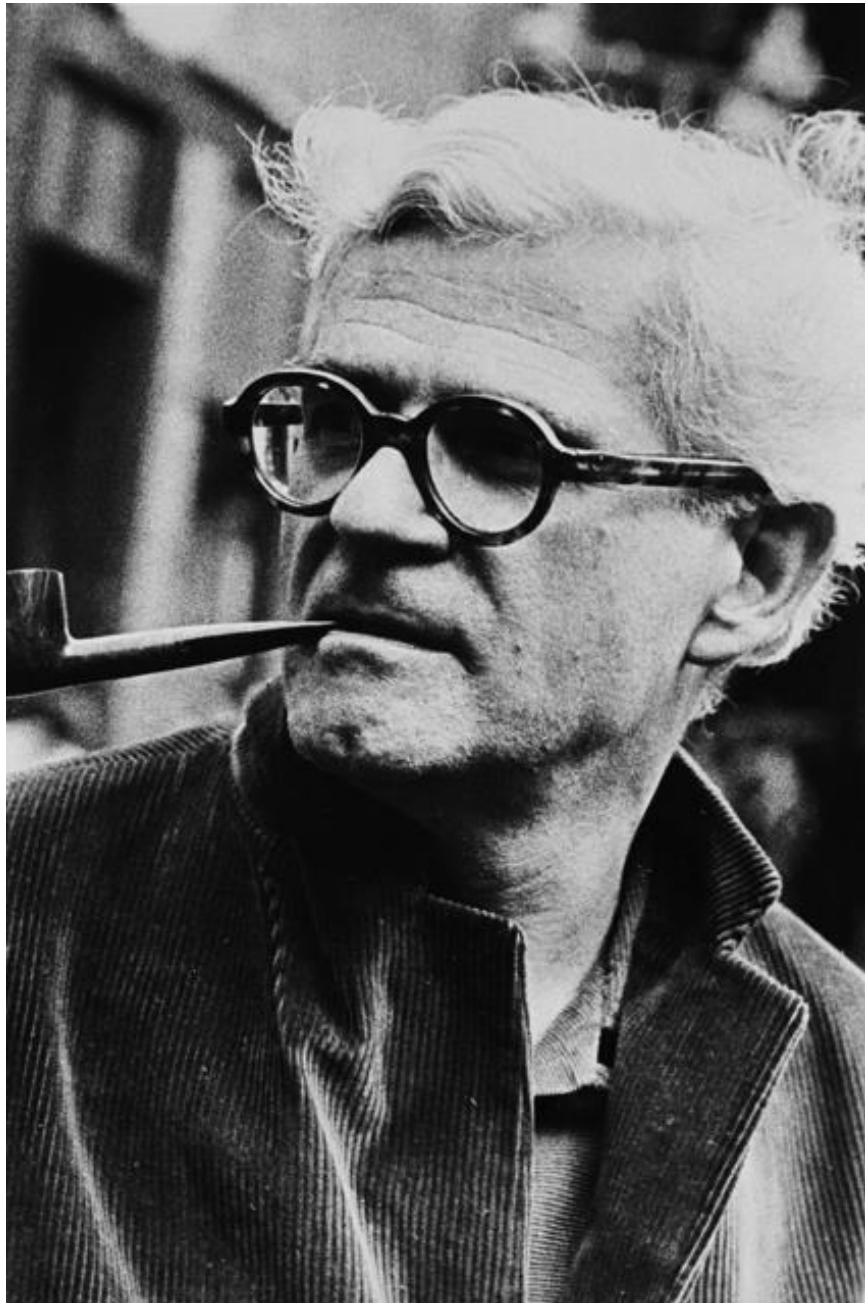


Image 40 - George Devine, photograph copyright Sandra Lousada

Part 5: Walter Asmus (b. 1941)

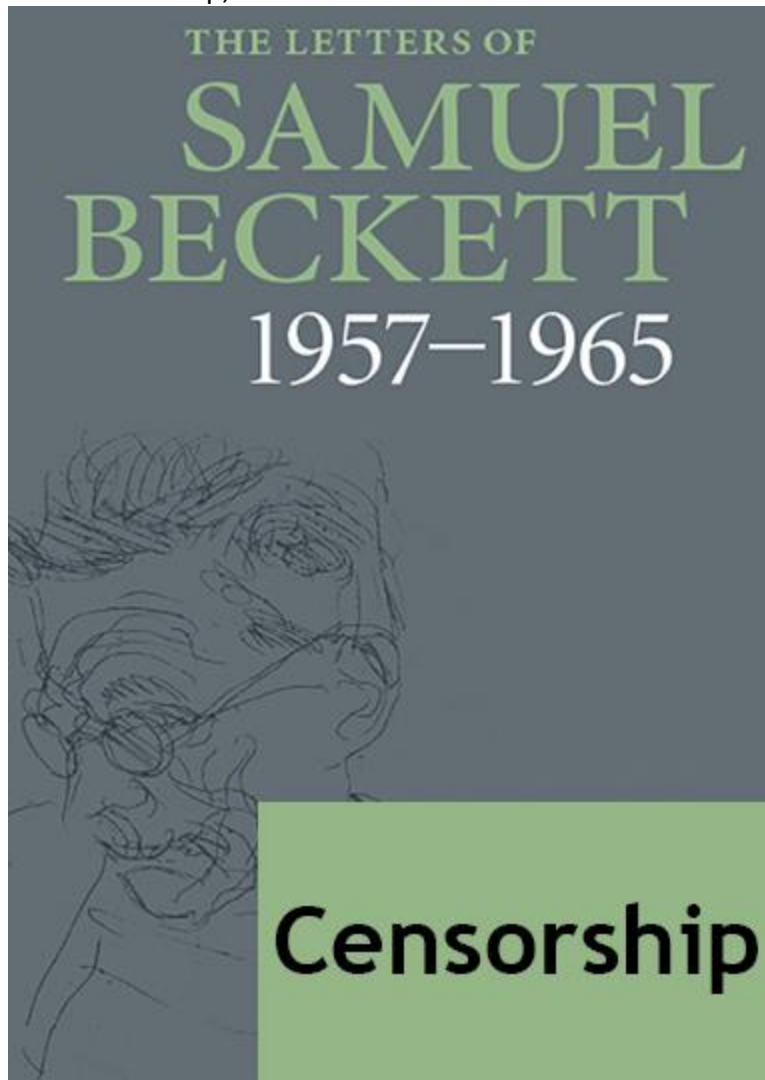
Walter Asmus, a German director, worked as an Assistant to Beckett when he directed his plays at the Schiller Theater in Berlin. Beginning with *Warten auf Godot* (1974-1975), he continued in this role with Beckett's productions there: *Footfalls*, *That Time*, and *Play*, as well as his work for television at Süddeutscher Rundfunk in Berlin. He directed most of Beckett's plays all over Europe and in the United States. Beckett continued to call upon Asmus as his preferred director, as he wrote to Reinhart Müller-Freienfels at SDR, "he gave me then, as now, unsparing and invaluable help" (27 September 1976).



Image 41 - Walter Asmus, copyright John Haynes.

Story 6: Censorship

Samuel Beckett's writings were subject to censorship at several points throughout his career. In each instance he was outraged that anyone would alter his work. In turn this made him incensed at any form of censorship, and took stands on behalf of other writers being censored.



Part 1: "Mahood," *Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française*

In 1953, "Mahood," an excerpt from *L'Innommable*, was published in *Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française*. The editorial board demanded that an offending passage be cut. Infuriated, Beckett drafted an angry letter to Jérôme Lindon, Editor, Editions de Minuit: "Obviously I would not want to give him an opportunity ... to attack me. And at the same time I would like it to be as nasty as possible" (9 February 1953). Two days later, Beckett had assessed the damage in another letter to Lindon: "I got the N NRF yesterday. It is not a few sentences that have gone but nearly half a page....Well, the whole passage dammit. It makes me literally ill. A letter, even a stinger, no longer seems to me enough....Can I sue him?.... This affair concerns far more than just me....In spite of the horror that I have of polemic and publicity, I have no choice but to see the matter through" (11 February 1953).



Image 42 - Samuel Beckett, "Mahood," *La Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française*. 1.2 (February 1953) 214-234.

SAMUEL BECKETT

L'INNOMMABLE

ROMAN



LES ÉDITIONS DE MINUIT

Image 43 - Samuel Beckett, *L'Innommable* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1953).

d'hallucinations exactement, à beaucoup de choses près il est vrai, c'est à cette cangue que je devrai d'en connaître les joies. Au fond il n'y a qu'une seule chose qui me tracasse, c'est la perspective de me pendre, si jamais je venais à raccourcir davantage. L'asphyxie ! Moi qui ai toujours été le type respiratoire. La preuve, cette cage thoracique qui m'est restée, avec l'abdomen. Moi qui murmurais, quand j'y pensais, à chaque inhalation, Voilà l'oxygène qui rentre, et, en expirant, Voilà les saletés qui s'en vont et le sang qui devient vermeil. Le teint bleu. L'obscène protrusion de la langue. La tuméfaction de la pine. Tiens, la pine, je n'y pensais plus. Quel dommage que je n'aie plus de bras, il y aurait peut-être quelque chose à en tirer. Non, c'est mieux ainsi. A mon âge, me remettre à me masturber, ce serait indécent. Et puis ça ne donnerait rien. Après tout, qu'est-ce que j'en sais ? A force de tractions bien rythmées, en pensant de toutes mes forces à un cul de cheval, au moment où la queue se soulève, qui sait, j'arriverais peut-être à un petit quelque chose. Ciel, on dirait que ça remue ! Est-ce à dire qu'on ne m'a pas coupé ? Pourtant il me semblait bien qu'on m'avait coupé. Je confonds peut-être, avec d'autres bourses.

Du reste ça ne bouge plus. Je vais me concentrer à nouveau. Un percheron. Allons, allons, un bon mouvement, voyons, finis de mourir, c'est la moindre des choses, après tout le mal qu'ils se sont donné, pour te faire vivre. Le principal est fait. Ils t'ont assez assassiné, assez suicidé, pour que tu puisses te débrouiller tout seul, comme un grand garçon. Voilà ce que je me dis. Et j'ajoute, déchaîné, Dépouille cette inertie immortelle, elle n'est pas de mise, dans ce milieu. Ils ne peuvent pas tout faire. Ils t'ont mis sur le bon chemin, ils t'ont donné la main jusqu'au bord du précipice, à toi maintenant, en faisant le dernier pas sans assistance, de leur marquer ta reconnaissance. J'aime cette langue colorée, ces apostrophes aux figures si franches. A travers les splendeurs de la nature c'est un paralysé qu'ils ont traîné, et maintenant qu'il ne reste plus rien à admirer, il faut que je saute, afin qu'il puisse être dit, En voilà un autre qui a vécu. Ils n'ont pas l'air de se douter que je n'ai jamais été là, que ces yeux révulsés, cette bouche bée et la bave aux commissures ne devaient rien au Golfe de Naples, ni à Aubervilliers. Le dernier pas ! Avec quoi ? Moi qui n'ai jamais su faire le premier. Mais peut-être s'estimeraient-ils

Image 44 - Detail of the censored passage, from the uncut French edition.

not know one's riches until they are lost and I probably have others still that only await the thief to be brought to my notice. And today, if I can still open and close my eyes, as in the past, I can no longer, because of my roguish character, move my head in and out, as in the good old days. For a collar, fixed to the mouth of the jar, now encircles my neck, just below the chin. And my lips which used to be hidden, and which I sometimes pressed against the freshness of the stone, can now be seen by all and sundry. Did I say I catch flies? I snap them up, clack! Does this mean I still have my teeth? To have lost one's limbs and preserved one's dentition, what a mockery! But to revert now to the gloomy side of this affair, I may say that this collar, or ring, of cement, makes it very awkward for me to turn, in the way I have said. I take advantage of this to learn to stay quiet. To have forever before my eyes, when I open them, approximately the same set of hallucinations exactly, is a joy I might never have known, but for my cang. There is really only one thing that worries me, and that is the prospect of being throttled if I should ever happen to shorten further. Asphyxia! I who was always the respiratory type, witness this thorax still mine, together with the abdomen. I who murmured, each time I breathed in, Here comes more oxygen, and each time I breathed out, There go the impurities, the blood is bright red again. The blue face! The obscene protrusion of the tongue! The tumefaction of the penis! The penis, well now, that's a nice surprise, I'd forgotten I had one. What a pity I have no arms, there might still be something to be wrung from it. No, tis better thus. At my age, to start manstuprating again, it would be

indecent. And fruitless. And yet one can never tell. With a yo heave ho, concentrating with all my might on a horse's rump, at the moment when the tail rises, who knows, I might not go altogether empty-handed away. Heaven, I almost felt it flutter! Does this mean they did not geld me? I could have sworn they had gelt me. But perhaps I am getting mixed up with other scrota. Not another stir out of it in any case. I'll concentrate again. A Clydesdale. A Suffolk stallion. Come come, a little cooperation please, finish dying, it's the least you might do, after all the trouble they've taken to bring you to life. The worst is over. You've been sufficiently assassinated, sufficiently suicided, to be able now to stand on your own feet, like a big boy. That's what I keep telling myself. And I add, quite carried away, Slough off this mortal inertia, it is out of place, in this society. They can't do everything. They have put you on the right road, led you by the hand to the very brink of the precipice, now it's up to you, with an unassisted last step, to show them your gratitude. I like this colourful language, these bold metaphors and apostrophes. Through the splendours of nature they dragged a paralytic and now there's nothing more to admire it's my duty to jump, that it may be said, There goes another who has lived. It does not seem to occur to them that I was never there, that this glassy eye, this fallen chap and the foam at the mouth owe nothing to the Bay of Naples, or Aubervilliers. The last step! I who could never manage the first. But perhaps they would consider themselves sufficiently rewarded if I simply waited for the wind to blow me over. That by all means, it's in my repertory. The trouble is there is

Image 45 - Detail of the censored passage, from the English translation, *The Unnamable*, tr. by Samuel Beckett (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

Part 2: Dublin 1958

Beckett withdrew his work from the Dublin Theatre Festival because of censorship of a dramatization of Allan McClelland's *Bloomsday* (an adaptation of James Joyce's *Ulysses*) and Sean O'Casey's *The Drums of Father Ned*. Beckett wrote to Barney Rosset: "The Roman Catholic bastards in Ireland yelped Joyce and O'Casey out of their 'Festival', so I withdrew my mimes and the reading of *All That Fall* to be given at the Pike. Now the whole thing seems to be off" (20 February 1958.).

January 20th 1958

6 Rue des Favorites
Paris 15me

Dear Mr Smith

I have been told that the Ulysses adaptation and the new O'Casey play will not be performed at your coming Festival, because of opposition from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin.

I should be obliged if you would let me know if this is the case.

If it is I am afraid I shall have to withdraw my participation.

Yours sincerely

Samuel Beckett

Image 46 - Samuel Beckett to Brendan Smith, 20 January 1958

February 17th 1958

6 Rue des Favorites
Paris 15^{me}

Dear Alan

After the revolting boycott of Joyce and O'Casey I don't want to have anything to do with the Dublin Theatre "Festival" and am withdrawing both mimes and All That Fall. I have written to Brendan Smith to this effect. I am extremely sorry for any difficulties this may create for you. I know you will understand that it is quite impossible for me to do otherwise.

Yours ever



Part 3: South Africa

During Apartheid, audiences and performances were white only or black only. Frieda Troup asked Beckett to join other playwrights to boycott this regulation. He responded to her: "I am in entire agreement with your views and prepared to refuse performance of my plays except before non-segregated audiences" (13 May 1963).

48 PLAYWRIGHTS IN APARTHEID PROTEST

WORKS WITHHELD FROM THEATRES

CLAUSE WHERE COLOUR BAR EXISTS

Forty-eight playwrights, all but one of them British, will from now on refuse to allow their work to be performed in any South African theatre which discriminates against coloured people. Although South Africa is foremost in their minds, they intend the ban to apply to any theatre anywhere which excludes coloured people.

Mrs. Barbara Castle, M.P., president of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, yesterday issued on their behalf the public declaration they have all signed. It reads:—

"While not wishing to exercise any political censorship over their own or other works of art, but feeling colour discrimination transcends the purely political, the following playwrights, after consultation with the Anti-Apartheid Movement and with South African artists and writers, as an expression of their personal repugnance to the policies of apartheid and their sympathy with those writers and others in the Republic of South Africa now suffering under evil legislation, have instructed their agents to insert a clause in all future contracts automatically refusing performing rights in any theatre where discrimination is made among audiences on grounds of colour."

"NOT STERILE GESTURE"

The full list of signatories is:—

Janet Allen, John Antrobus, John Arden, Mary Hayley Bell, John Barton, Samuel Beckett, Robert Bolt, Ray Cooney, Clemence Dane, Paul Dehn, Shelagh Delaney, Daphne du Maurier, Ronald Duncan, Charles Dyer, Graham Greene, Robert Gore-Brown, Elizabeth Hart, Frank Hilton, N. C. Hunter, Stephen King-Hall, Bernard Kops, Hugh Leonard, Benn Levy, Henry Livings.

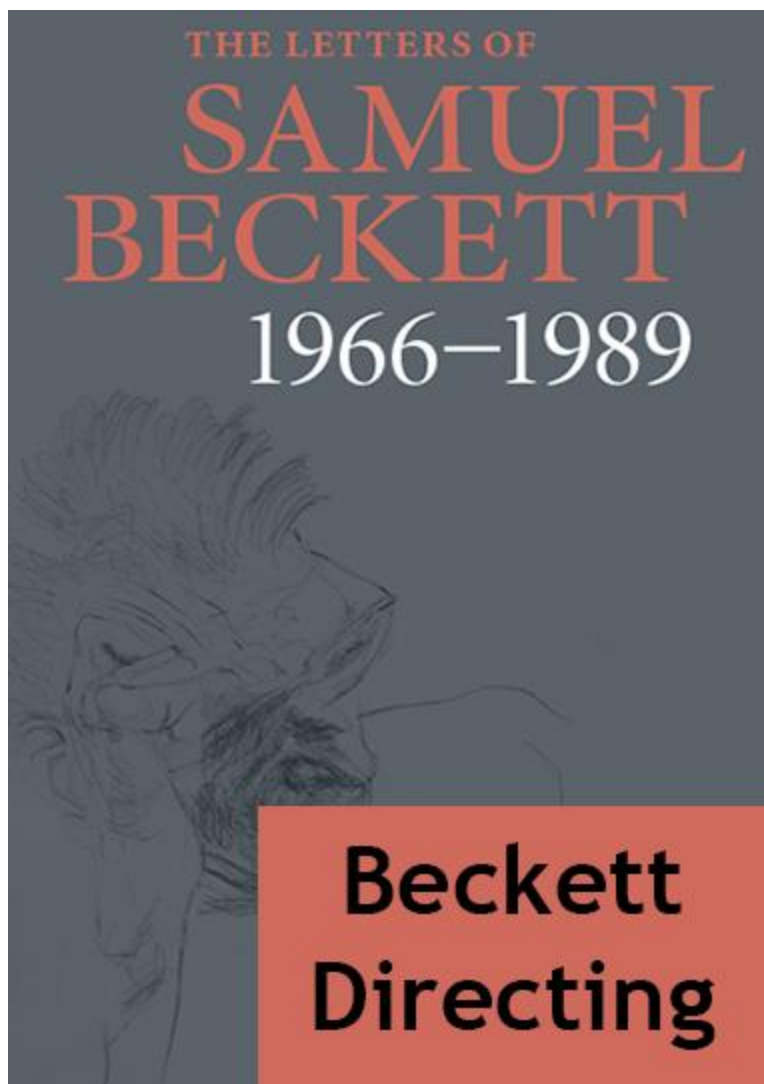
Alan Meville, Bernard Miles, Ronald Millar, Arthur Miller, Jonathan Miller, Spike Milligan, John Mortimer, Robert Muller, Iris Murdoch, John Osborne, Harold Pinter, J. B. Priestley, J. D. Rudkin, James Saunders, Gerald Savory, Dodie Smith, C. P. Snow, Muriel Spark, Lesley Storm, Gwyn Thomas, Arthur Watkyn, Fred Watson, Arnold Wesker, Angus Wilson.

In a statement accompanying the declaration the movement points out that its aim is not separate performances before white and coloured audiences, which are already arranged for some shows in some theatres, but performances before mixed audiences in all theatres. Honest opponents of apartheid, the statement says, have called the playwrights' resolution a sterile gesture.

"This is completely to misunderstand it. Its significance is far greater than any immediate dent in apartheid barriers which may or may not follow. A public stand taken on a matter of principle by a large number of significant individuals who are prepared to accept loss of contract with financial loss and non-performance which must be a serious frustration for a playwright . . . can never be regarded as a sterile gesture. It is an avowal of personal philosophy."

Story 7: Beckett Directing in Berlin

Among other places, Beckett directed his own work at the Schiller Theater in Berlin. His German was good, and he often had the assistance of Walter Asmus, who later became one of his trusted directors. The German theater system offered ample time for the rehearsal process. Beckett was at times impatient that actors did not always know their lines before rehearsals began, but many of them were cast in several plays at a time in long-term repertory. As is evident from the Rehearsal Notebooks, Beckett prepared well in advance, working rehearsal strategies and learning all the lines himself. When he directed he was often physically demonstrating the choreography of the actor's movements.



Part 1: *Warten Auf Godot (Waiting for Godot)*, Berlin 1975 (Horst Bollman, Stefan Wigger, Klaus Herm, Carl Radditz)

Beckett prepared for directing his plays in Berlin, and also made changes during the production. As a result of direction, the *Directing Notebooks* (London: Faber and Faber; New York: Grove Press) present the record of direction as well as the corrected scripts of the plays.

That said, each time Beckett directed his own plays the physical circumstances (actors, stage, design) differed, and also he made adjustments to the play.

We are fortunate that Beckett *did* direct or had his hand in several productions of the same work, not for the record of how a *perfect* performance should look, but for the experience that each performance finds its own measure.

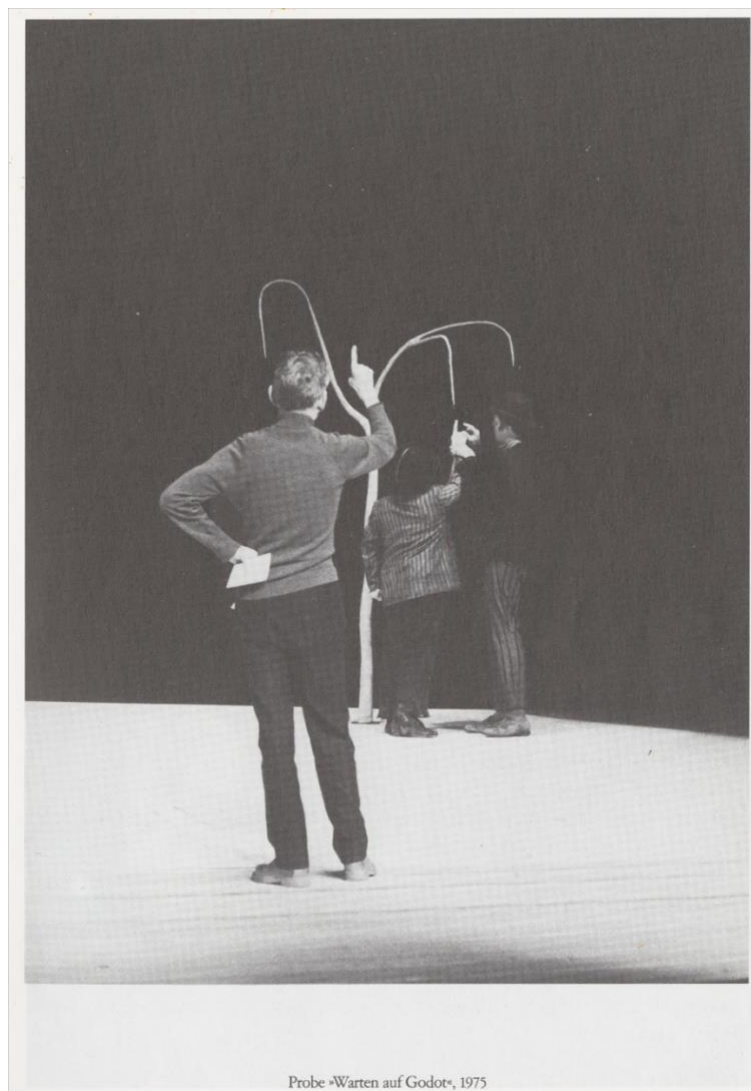


Image 49 - Beckett, with Horst Bollman (*Estragon*) and Stephen Wigger (*Vladimir*), *Warten auf Godot*, 1975. Beckett in Berlin zum 80. Geburtstag, ed. Klaus Vöker (Berlin: Edition Hentrich Frölich and Kaufmann, 1986) 6.



Image 50 - Beckett with Stephen Wigger and Horst Bollman, Warten auf Godot, 1965. Beckett in Berlin zum 80.Geburtstag, ed. Klaus Vöker (Berlin: Edition Hentrich Frölich and Kaufmann, 1986) 71.



Horst Bollmann, Samuel Beckett, Klaus Herm

Image 51 - Horst Bollman, Beckett, and Klaus Herm (Lucky), Warten auf Godot, 1975. Beckett in Berlin zum 80.Geburtstag, ed. Klaus Vöker (Berlin: Edition Hentrich Frölich and Kaufmann, 1986) 129.

Part 2: *Endspiel (Endgame)*, Berlin, 1967 (Werner Stock, Gundrun Genest, Ernst Shroeder, Horst Bollmann)

In a rehearsal for *Endspiel*, Beckett addresses Gundrun Genest (Nell) and Werner Stock (Nagg) in their “trash cans”.



Image 52 - *Endspiel* (1967). *Warten auf Godot*, 1975. *Beckett in Berlin zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Klaus Vöcker (Berlin: Edition Hentrich Frölich and Kaufmann, 1986) 163.

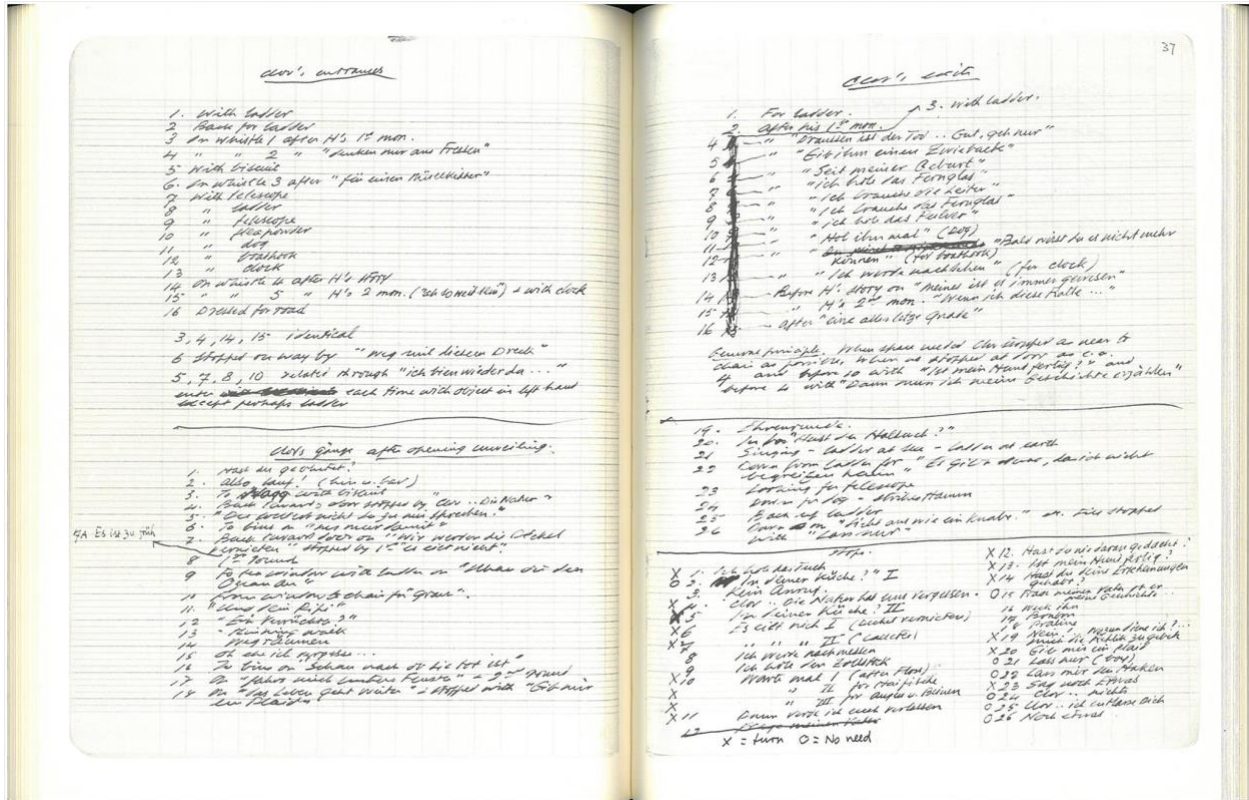


Image 53 - The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett, Volume II, Endgame, ed. S. E. Gontarski (London: Faber and Faber; New York: Grove Press, 1999).

Part 3: *Das letzte Bande (Krapp's Last Tape)*, 1969 (Martin Held)

Samuel Beckett encountered the reel to reel tape recorder for the first time when he had difficulty hearing the broadcast of his first radio play by the BBC in London. He was invited to the Paris office of the BBC to hear it directly from the tape.

Evidently, this struck a chord: the tape recorder could be played, stopped, re-wound, re-played. And so we have in Beckett's next play for the stage, a tape recorder, and a character named Krapp who has recorded a diary each year on his birthday, and in the play prepares to record the next installment. But first he replays what he has recorded before. In this play time is both linear and circular, and in it Beckett created a monologue in dialogue with itself: *Krapp's Last Tape*.

Here, Beckett works with Martin Held on the pre-recorded sections of the play.



Image 54 - *Das letzte Bande (Krapp's Last Tape)*, 1969. Beckett in Berlin zum 80.Geburtstag, ed. Klaus Vöker (Berlin: Edition Hentrich Frölich and Kaufmann, 1986) 106.

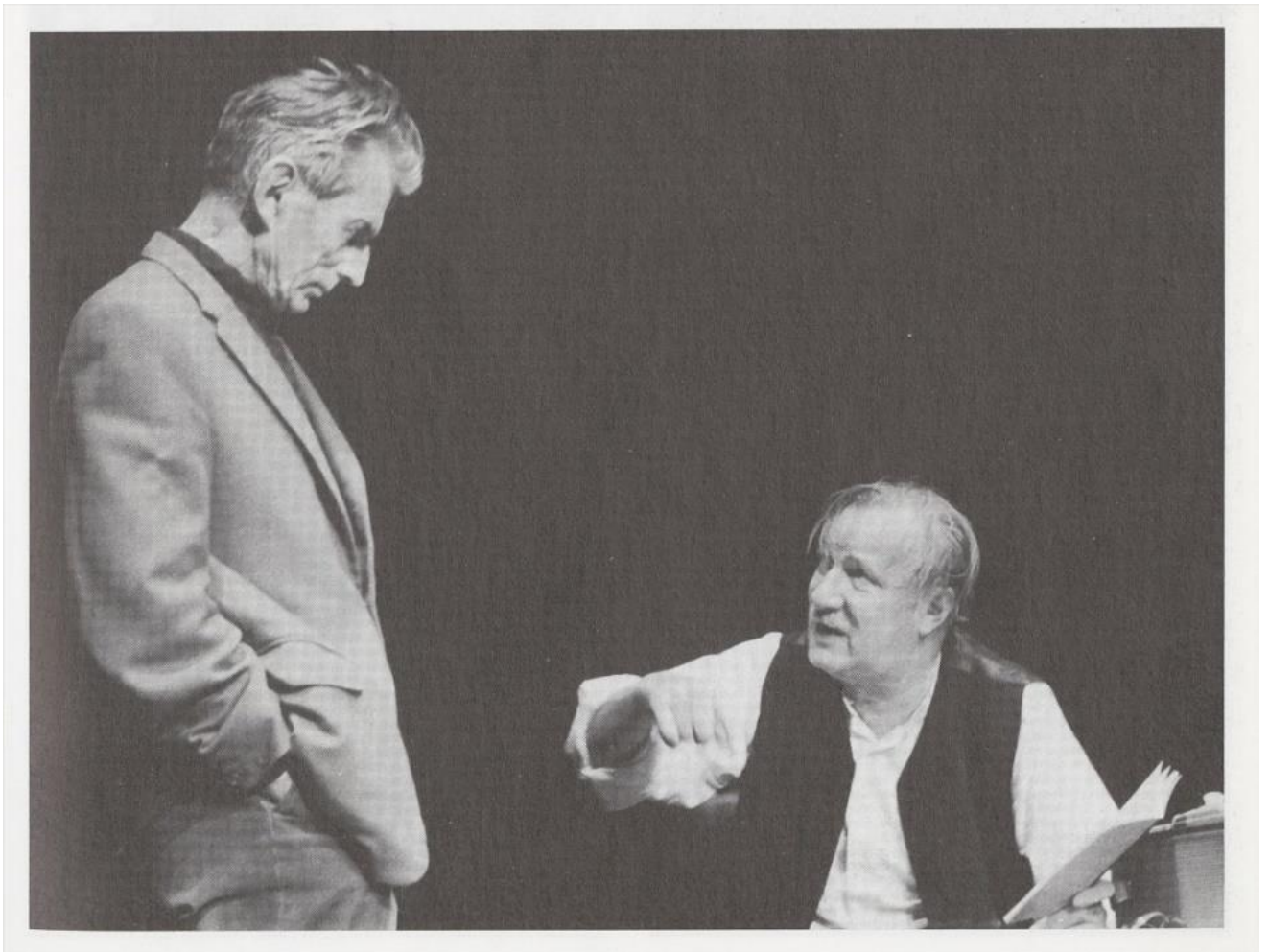


Image 55 - Das letzte Bande (Krapp's Last Tape), 1969. Beckett in Berlin zum 80.Geburtstag, ed. Klaus Vöker (Berlin: Edition Hentrich Frölich and Kaufmann, 1986) 107.

Part 4: Glückliche Tage (*Happy Days*), 1971 (Eva-Katharina Schultz)

This play features the actress stuck in a mound: up to her waist in Act I, up to her neck in Act II. Willie remains only marginally visible behind the mound, until the end, when he emerges from his hole and climbs the mound toward Winnie.



Image 56 - Rudi Schmidt, Beckett, and Eva-Katharina Schultz, *Running lines and staging in Glückliche Tage (Happy Days)*, 1971. *Beckett in Berlin zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Klaus Völker (Berlin: Edition Hentrich Frölich and Kaufmann, 1986) 112.

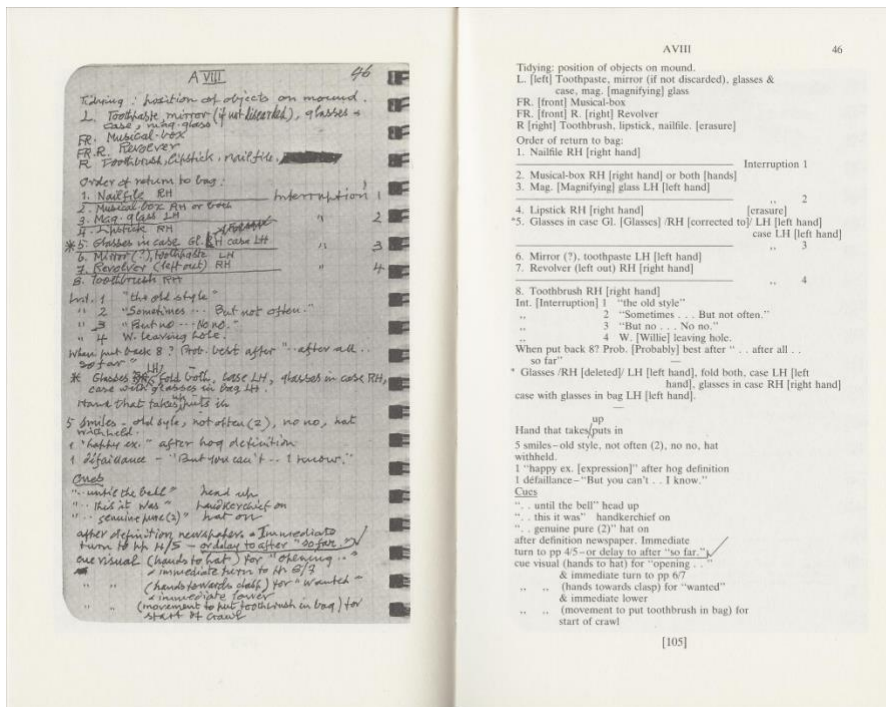
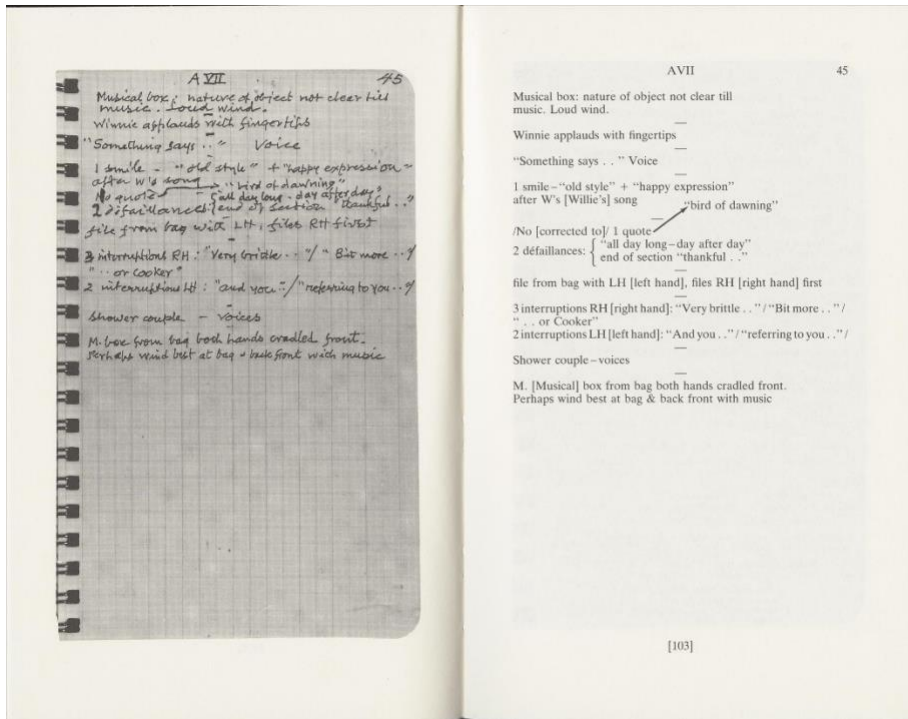
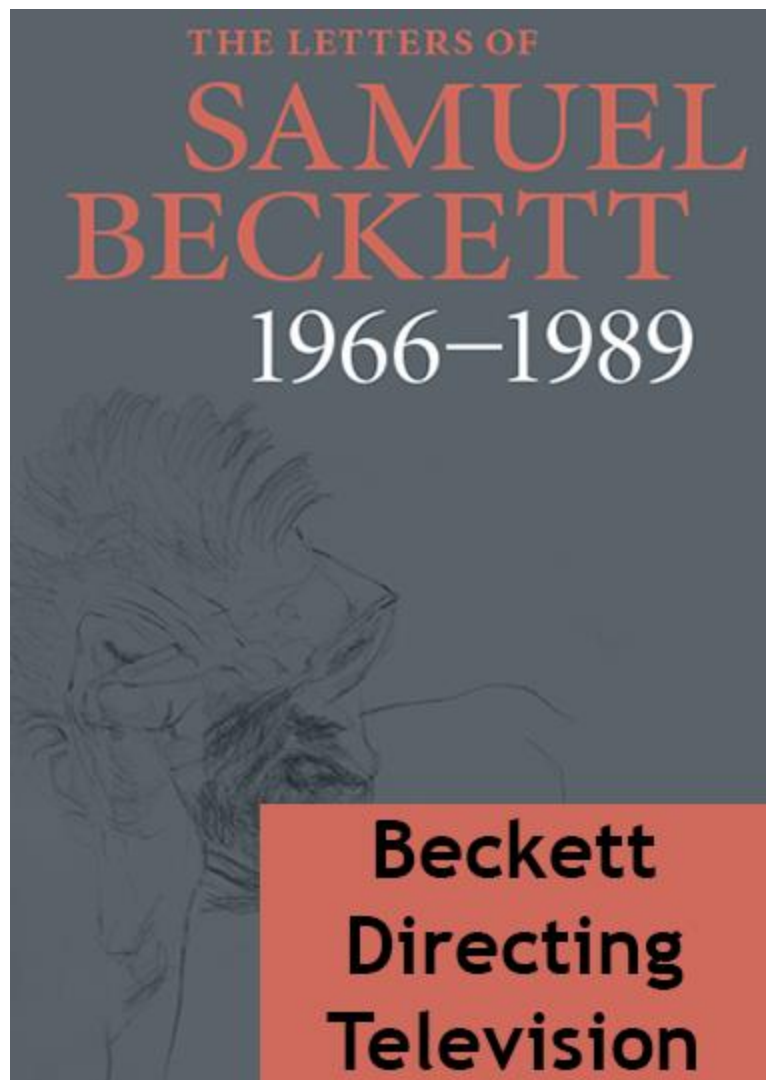


Image 57 - Happy Days: The Production Notebook of Samuel Beckett, ed. with an introduction by James Knowlson (New York: Grove Press, 1985) 45-46.

Story 8: Beckett Directing Television

Samuel Beckett had written the television play *Eh Joe* as a “spoken mime” for actor Jack MacGowran, who presented the first English version on the BBC in 1966. The teleplay is in fact a mime, for the actor does not speak but responds to a recorded spoken voice, who also comments on his reactions. The German version, *He, Joe*, had its first production at Süddeutscher Rundfunk in Stuttgart; this was Beckett’s first acknowledged directing effort. Television was a medium that intrigued Beckett. The camera eye (so central in *Film*) could tightly focus and control what the viewer saw. With the improvements in electronic equipment, many effects could be explored, including the doubling of images on the screen and the integration of recorded sound. The plays intrigue through their interior landscape. The team of technicians at SDR allowed ample time for experimentation and changes, which Beckett appreciated. As the Director of Drama Reinhart Mueller-Freienfels said, “We had fun together.”



Part 1: *Eh Joe* (Jim Lewis, Samuel Beckett, Walter Asmus. Heinz Bennent)

In *Eh Joe*, Joe listens to the voice in his mind, voices that are also heard, if not seen, on the screen.

In every way, Beckett's work for television was created by a team, not just assisting Beckett, but interacting, bouncing ideas off of one another, experimenting with a range of techniques.



Image 58 - Jim Lewis, an American living in Germany, cameraman; Beckett; Walter Asmus (assistant director), and Heinz Bennent, playing the role of Joe. Photographer, copyright SWR/ Hugo Jehle

Part 2: *Geister Trio (Ghost Trio)*, 1977 (Klaus Herm and Samuel Beckett)

In *Geister Trio*, the actor is directed to peer through a window opening, which he holds slightly open, very deliberately and delicately so that it is “imperceptively ajar.”

Each move of the camera is emphatic, moving in to close up. Faint sound of music stops. Camera shifts again. Faint sound of music begins.



Image 59 - Photographer, copyright SWR/ Hugo Jehle

Beckett demonstrates, again, the gesture of tense alertness to an unheard sound outside the room.

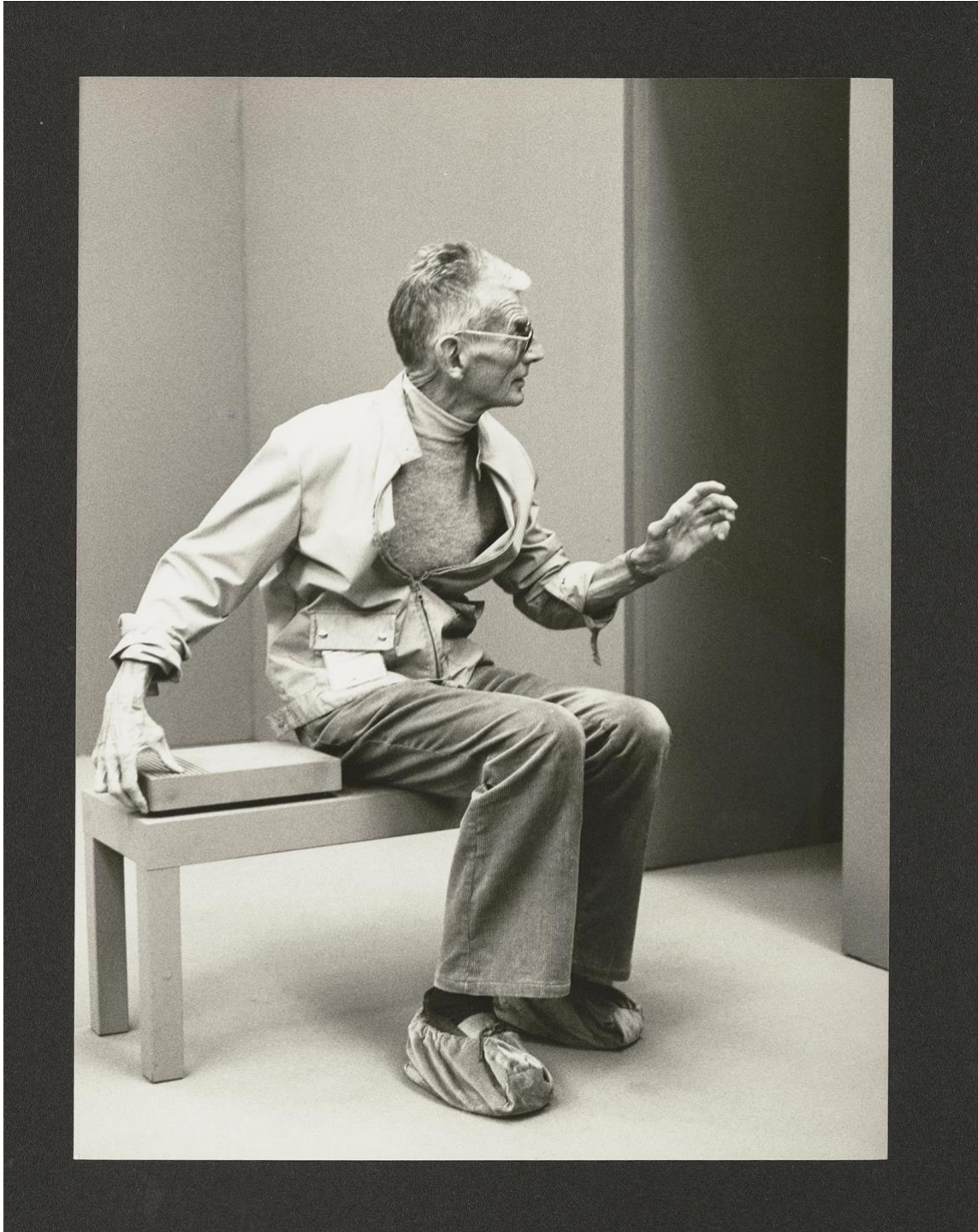


Image 60 - Photographer, copyright SWR/ Hugo Jehle

Part 3: *Nacht und Träume*, 1986 (Jim Lewis, Samuel Beckett, Stephan Fritz, Helfrid Foron)

Nacht und Träume was written for and produced by Süddeutscher Rundfunk in 1982; it was first transmitted on 19 May 1983.

The two actors play two figures: one a Dreamer, is seated, head bowed, hands resting on the table before him; the other provides the Dreamt hands, which appear from behind the Dreamer, to give him comfort.



Image 61 - Cameraman, Jim Lewis, Beckett, with Stephan Fritz and Helfrid Foron. Photographer, copyright SWR/ Hugo Jehle