UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
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Beckett and the Institution of Literature

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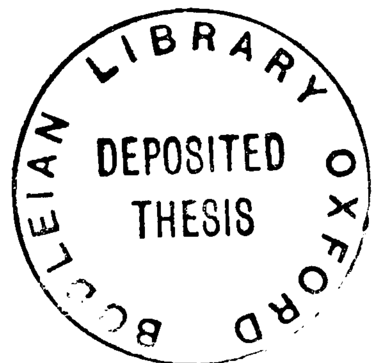
Merton College
University of Oxford

In partial fulfilment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Trinity 2004



ABSTRACT

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Beckett and the Institution of Literature investigates the evolution of Samuel Beckett's reputation over the latter half of the twentieth century, focussing on two questions: what are the institutional frameworks and operations that have effected Beckett's work, and what effect has the work had on the institution of literature?

The first half of the thesis explores Beckett's relationships with his French publisher. Editions de Minuit, in the 1950s, and his English publisher, John Calder, in the 1960s. By situating Beckett in institutional and historical contexts, the thesis seeks to avoid the uncritical acceptance of Beckett's consecration that underlies so much scholarly writing on his work. Archival evidence reveals the process by which Beckett was circulated and promoted, first, to an elite avant-garde readership, and thence to a wider public, and challenges the popular conception of Beckett as utterly uninterested in publication and publicity matters. The latter half of the thesis considers the legal and promotional (particularly visual) frames of reference by which Beckett is often characterised today. It is suggested that conflicts over staging rights, and the widespread use of a uniform image of Beckett to promote his work, are instrumental both in determining and in jeopardising the work's current cultural status.

The thesis argues that the relation between Beckett's work and the literary institutions that have produced it is mutually transformative, and that the work has consistently challenged, exceeded, and disrupted the institution of literature. It is proposed that there are, however, indications that the public is tiring of Beckett's now familiar classic works, and so the thesis asks why it has come about that in being canonised the work has also been domesticated, what this means for the way we have been reading Beckett's texts, and whether there is anything to be done about it.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RUL, BC	Reading University Library, Beckett Collection
LL, CBA	University of Indiana, Bloomington, Lilly Library, Calder and Boyars Archive

INTRODUCTION

I assign *Godot* to my freshmen students, since every educated person should know it. But ye gods, do I loathe the colossally overrated Beckett![1]

Is Beckett's work overrated? Camille Paglia, for one, does not doubt it: shortly before the turn of the millennium, she nominated the 'parched neurotic' playwright as the most overrated author of the past one thousand years. His work has certainly long been the object of what at times amounts to the fetishistic devotion of a group of ardent fans, 'members of a strange club', who, one reviewer has suggested, are immediately recognisable by their 'loved, defiled, embellished' copies of his books.[2] But a wider population of readers also regards Beckett as one of the foremost writers of the twentieth century, and many deem him its greatest dramatist. One consequence of this popularity is that a large body of Beckett criticism exists. Despite the challenges inherent in embarking on an exegetical exploration of a writer who so devastatingly contested the legitimacy of art criticism, Beckett's work seems to hold a magnetic appeal for literary critics.[3] Yet critical debate tends to work from an assumption that the oeuvre warrants attention because it is 'great literature', the type of writing that 'every educated person should know', meaning that two important questions have been almost entirely overlooked: how the work came to be considered great and, more fundamentally, in what sense it has been considered literature at all.

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[1] Camille Paglia, 'Millennium Reputations', *Sunday Telegraph*, 14 February 1999, p. 13.

[2] John Calder, Introduction, *Beckett at 60: A Festschrift* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967), p. 3; B.S. Johnson, 'Nothing from the Bargain Basement', *New Statesman*, 14 July 1967, p. 54.

[3] For a discussion of how Beckett's discursive writing demonstrates 'the untenability of the metatextual status' of critical commentary, see Rupert Wood, 'Beckett as Essayist', in *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*, ed. by John Pilling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-16 (p. 3).

This thesis confronts both these issues, taking as its starting point a series of questions posed in the early 1970s by Jacques Derrida, a theorist who claims that it is 'too hard for me, too easy and too hard' to respond to Beckett's work because he feels 'too close' to it.[4] Invited to submit a piece on Mallarmé to a book on canonic French writers, *Tableau de la littérature française*, Derrida opened his essay with a series of questions that are, despite the unsettling affinity he feels he has with Beckett, exceptionally apt to this project.

> Is there a *place* for Mallarmé in a 'history of literature'? Or, to begin with: does his text take place, take its place, in some overall picture of French literature? In a picture? of literature? of French literature? We have been reading him for close to a century now: we are only beginning to glimpse that something has been contrived [...] in order to elude the categories of history and of literary classification, of literary criticism, and of all kinds of philosophies and hermeneutics. We are beginning to glimpse that the disruption of these categories is also the effect of what was written by Mallarmé.[5]

Derrida's observations pose a double challenge: how is writing effected as literature, and what are the effects of this literature? Or, to put it differently, what is the nature of the mutually disruptive relation existing between the processes of literary production and the body of writing that constitutes Beckett's oeuvre?

The thesis, then, has two overarching aims. The first line of exploration involves asking how literary institutions (the publishing and reviewing industries, the law, and promotional practices, to name those that receive most attention in the thesis) have operated on Beckett's writing. In so doing, I seek to reveal the historical origins of the reputation of Beckett's work, and to trace the evolution of this reputation over the latter half of the twentieth century in order, ultimately, to assess its current cultural status.

[4] Jacques Derrida, 'An Interview with Jacques Derrida', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 33-75 (p. 55).
[5] Derrida, 'Mallarmé', in *Acts of Literature*, pp. 110-26 (pp. 111-12).

Underpinning this first challenge of situating the work in its historical and social contexts is Bourdieu's examination of the transformative relationship that exists between a work of art and its location in society:

> The producer of the *value of a work of art* is not the artist but the field of production as a universe of belief which produces the value of the work of art as a *fetish* by producing the belief in the creative power of the artist. Given that the work of art does not exist as a symbolic object endowed with value unless it is known and recognized -- that is to say, socially instituted as a work of art by spectators endowed with the aesthetic disposition and competence necessary to know it and recognize it as such -- the science of works takes as object not only the material production of the work but also the production of the value of the work or, what amounts to the same thing, of the belief in the value of the work. [His emphasis.][6]

Because Beckett's personal remove from the public sphere and the non-conformist originality of his writing are more often than not portrayed as decidedly anti-institutional in nature, an approach that privileges the question of how the work has been 'socially instituted' as art may strike some readers as surprising. It is true that one of the more powerful aspects of Beckett iconography has to do with the isolation and uniqueness attendant on one seen to be positioned outside (or above) the social, legal, and promotional domains of the literary field. One of the objectives of the thesis is to rethink Beckett's role in the production and dissemination of his work. Although received narratives depict him as a writer entirely uninterested in, if not disdainful of, the apparently sordid business of publication and publicity, his involvement with the realities of cultural production, and the ways by which he managed to negotiate a balance between protecting his privacy, and ensuring appropriate publicity for his work, were often surprisingly shrewd, if not always enthusiastic. Evidence for this involvement comes from archival material virtually untouched by scholars to date, and it is through analysis

[6] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. by Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 229.

of this material that the thesis hopes to provide a balance for the dehistoricised readings that form the bulk of Beckett criticism, and to provoke new ways of thinking about the history of Beckett's work and about the development of his iconography. The thesis in no way claims to present a comprehensive history of the construction of Beckett's fame and the belief in his work's value. It does, however, begin the task by examining a range of institutions and discourses through which Beckett and his work have been, and continue to be, circulated; it considers the dispersal of the work in different sites in the public sphere, and so identifies certain processes by which a private, reclusive artist becomes a public figure, and a private document enters the public domain as a work of art.

There is an obvious objection to this kind of approach to literary works. Its opponents protest that by historicising literature, we strip it of its mystery and rob it of its power to move us viscerally. This is an objection that must be taken seriously when thinking about Beckett's work, which has such an irresistible ability to engage and disturb its readers and audiences on levels quite distinct from the realm of the intellect. Indeed, Beckett himself, in his youth, insisted that 'between the banality of life and the magic of literature there is a great gulf fixed'.[7] But the very fact that we are able to read Beckett's prose and watch his drama proves that the gulf *is* bridged. Literature, however magical, does not reach us by magic means -- books do not publish themselves, and nor do plays stage themselves. On the contrary, the processes of literary production and dissemination are concrete and, at times, all too quotidian. The path from creator to reader (or viewer) is thick with intervenient agents and institutions. The analysis undertaken in each of the thesis's four chapters is, therefore, anchored to historical specifics, because any treatment of the construction of Beckett's reputation for 'greatness' must, of necessity, look at how

[7] *Proust* (London: John Calder, 1965), p. 83.

the work is socially implicated. But the thesis also presents a counterpart to its historical focus. Just as Derrida insists is the case with Mallarmé, we find that a purely institutional perspective is not adequate to explain Beckett, and cannot properly account for his work's troublesome 'magic'.

The second major challenge the thesis undertakes is to ask why not: how is it that Beckett's work has resisted and tested, and in certain respects continues to resist and test, what Derek Attridge calls 'the cultural construction of the literary', and why does it matter?[8] These questions hinge on the Derridean conception of literature:

> Literature is an *institution*: it is not given in nature or the brain but brought into being by processes that are social, legal, and political, and that can be mapped historically and geographically. [...] [A]lthough the historical origins and geographical limits of this institution can be (roughly) calculated, it cannot simply be *contained* by our usual socio-economic-historical thought about such human constructions, because of the way it takes that thought's founding oppositions to the limits, including the oppositions between the given and the produced, and between nature and its series of others such as culture, art, education, technique, and institution. [Attridge's emphasis.][9]

I urge that far from being a capitulation to 'the banality of life', seeking to understand how the literary field's institutions operate, and how they have effected and affected Beckett's work, is not only interesting in itself. Such an understanding in fact enables us better to appreciate the 'magic' in the work by allowing us to see the ways in which it confounds social classification, the exigencies of the marketplace, and the culture industry with its competing authorities who are constantly seeking to define and appropriate the work. In other words, it allows us to contemplate how it is that Beckett's work, as literature, exceeds the institution of literature, how it 'does not belong to the field, [but] is the

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[8] Derek Attridge, 'Singular Events: Literature, Invention, and Performance', in *The Question of Literature: The Place of the Literary in Contemporary Theory*, ed. by Elizabeth Beaumont Bissell (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 48-65 (p. 49).
[9] Attridge, Introduction, in *Acts of Literature*, pp. 1-27 (p. 23).

transformer of the field', how it occupies a paradoxical position of 'subversive juridicity', being at once that which has been inaugurated by institutions and that which has the power to question and destabilise those same institutions.[10] Furthermore, by recognising where its resistance is fragile, we will be better equipped to discuss how to preserve the work's potency, its singularity, its irreducibility.

The first two chapters of the thesis explore the peculiar, specifically avant-garde mechanisms by which Beckett's works first appeared and were disseminated in France and Britain, and endeavour to judge the significance for Beckett of being published as a new writer under the Editions de Minuit imprint in the 1950s, and the John Calder imprint in the 1960s. In other words, in seeking to answer *how* Beckett's reputation was formed, I ask first *who* formed it and then examine by what means they did so, thereby attempting to avoid the uncritical acceptance of Beckett's consecration that underlies so much scholarly writing on his work.

Chapter one traces Beckett's emergence from the pre-war expatriate little magazine world in Paris to the position of pre-eminence he soon enjoyed as one of Jérôme Lindon's most important authors. The chapter disputes the popular conception of Beckett as a writer who achieved sudden international fame in a blaze of glory with the publication of *Waiting for Godot* in 1956. Instead, it demonstrates that for several years before the publication of *Waiting for Godot* (and before that of *En attendant Godot* in 1952), Beckett enjoyed a considerable reputation among the French intelligentsia, having won the support of a number of enormously influential critics. This support was due in great measure to Lindon's remarkable strategy of exploiting the dense network of relationships in the Parisian intellectual and avant-garde elites in the immediate post-war

[10] Derrida, 'Before the Law', in *Acts of Literature*, pp. 181-220 (pp. 215-16).

period for the cultural capital they afforded. A central concern of this chapter is to explore the different ways in which literary works can be valued. Beckett and Lindon privileged cultural, or symbolic, value over economic worth, distinguishing between different kinds of publicity and pursuing endorsements that would resonate with a specific audience. Especially interesting is evidence that shows Beckett's concern to cultivate key critics, and his awareness of the importance of, and appropriateness of, certain kinds of promotion. The post-war years were equally formative for Beckett and for Editions de Minuit, which, as a Resistance press, was struggling to survive in the shadow of the established publishing houses that had reasserted themselves after the Liberation. Lindon succeeded in nurturing a relationship with Beckett that was mutually beneficial, as it effected the branding and promotion of both Beckett's work and of Editions de Minuit. Significantly, the publisher deliberately highlighted the challenge that Beckett's work posed to the contemporary conception of literature, and celebrated the alien, alienating, aspects of his work -- what Editions de Minuit called the 'secret' of literature. The way that Lindon's agenda for Editions de Minuit was closely and publicly associated, by the most important critics of the day, with Beckett's work, reveals just how vital an intermediary a publisher can be in determining the reception of an author's work, and ultimately in affecting the process by which that work reaches a readership.

The focus of the second chapter shifts to the British publishing industry of the 1960s. John Calder was at the forefront of the revolutionary developments in the literary field that characterised this era: he was publicly and often controversially involved in the publication of material that had hitherto been subject to censorship, in the production of literary 'egghead' paperbacks, and with innovative appeals to new readerships.

Consequently, Beckett was not only moved beyond the avant-garde realm in which Lindon had circulated his work in France in the 1950s, but, more significantly, was also introduced to a wider public in radically new ways. Archival and bibliographical evidence illustrates that the obvious similarities between Lindon and Calder (who were both young, daring, and committed avant-garde publishers at the head of small, financially beleaguered companies) were outweighed by differences in the material production techniques and promotional strategies the two men employed. The analysis concentrates on three ways in which Beckett's work was framed through his association with Calder: the material (which includes the work's issue in paperback format), the co-textual (which concerns the kinds of authors with whom Beckett was associated through his presence on Calder's list and in particular series of books), and the promotional (meaning not only how Calder advertised Beckett, but also how, through his journalistic, eulogistic, and critical writing, he encouraged specific ways of reading Beckett). The chapter proposes that the effect on Beckett of being published by Calder was that his work was drawn into the movement to democratise literature, and that the publisher's new approach to producing and advertising the work initiated its popularisation.

The final two chapters move on to assess the place Beckett has come to occupy in the public realm in more recent years. These chapters concentrate on the legal and promotional (particularly visual) frames of reference by which Beckett is often popularly characterised. Chapter three explores the ownership and appropriation -- legal and otherwise -- of Beckett's drama, and how his (and, since his death in 1989, his Estate's) notorious rigidity over staging rights shapes the oeuvre's cultural status. The commentary typically associated with this subject (which is, a trend intriguing in itself, far more

frequently journalistic than scholarly in nature) is polemical and misleading. Not only are the Estate and the supposedly iconoclastic directors who flout the Estate's dictates both, in turn, demonised or sanctified, but the tendency to oversimplify masks more compelling issues about textual ontology. In other words, this issue takes us to the heart of the question of how Beckett's work can be said to exist in public, because competing textual ontologies underlie the power plays between different cultural authorities who lay claim to the 'spirit' of Beckett's drama. The matter is greatly complicated by the inconsistencies that are rife in the criteria by which staging rights are granted, as well as by the instability of Beckettian texts. The struggles over staging rights, many of which have been highly publicised, that form the case studies in this chapter, demonstrate that the oeuvre to which we as the theatre-going public have access is in part determined by its legal context. These cases show just how socially and historically contingent Beckett's work is. This contingency means that the work exists in a natural state of fluidity, and further, that it is continuously and unavoidably being refashioned, whether in a legal manner or not. It is with this textual mutability in mind that I attempt to unravel the seeming illogicality of Beckett's refusing to explicate his work while intervening so meticulously in staging matters. This attempt leads us to think about the singularity of Beckett's work, and to ask how we might best confront this singularity in the ways that we stage and read the work.

The fourth and final chapter investigates two paradoxes. First, the irony of such a publicity-shy author becoming a widely recognised literary pin-up is given consideration, which leads us to contemplate the extent to which Beckett may have been complicit in his own image-making. Second, we confront the tension between, on one hand, Beckett's position as a leading example of the theory that propounds the 'death of the author', and

as an author whose work is profoundly interested in the absence of the authorial voice, and on the other hand, his evergrowing presence in the public sphere. I explore the construction of 'Beckett' as a visual brandname, and its signification in the marketplace, and suggest that promotional practices have revivified the author-figure in specific, and specifically damaging, ways. There exists an entrenched practice of fusing Beckett the individual both with Beckettian character stereotypes and with a paradigm of *l'artiste maudit*. The practice of imaging the author in this falsely stable manner is at odds with Beckett's beliefs on art and representation. But it also at once evidences and furthers the process by which Beckett is being monumentalised and, consequently, by which his work is being fixed, and denied its uniquely transformative energy.

It is my contention that an investigation such as this is timely because of indications, which are examined in chapters three and four, that the reading and theatre-going publics may be tiring of Beckett's now familiar 'masterpieces'. There is a danger, I urge, that Beckett's work may atrophy into cosy, classic reading under the forces of canonisation and commodification. It is not that these are new concerns. As early as 1967, Christopher Ricks, in a scathing review of the Festschrift that John Calder had assembled to mark Beckett's sixtieth birthday, warned of the risk of reining Beckett's work in and turning it into anodyne entertainment.[11] Beckett, Ricks urged, 'requires you to seek and not to find'. He noted a recent critical movement to rebrand Swift, who

> has lately been washed and brushed up, and offered as a decent cleric who valued compromise. There is something equally preposterous about the institutionalising of Beckett, the comfortable assimilation, the pretence that his work isn't really obscure, isn't ever boring, isn't on the face of it cold and hard. John Calder achieves the bizarre and demeaning feat of selling Beckett as a good read.[12]

[11] Calder, *Beckett at 60: A Festschrift.*
[12] Christopher Ricks, 'Mr Artesian', *The Listener*, 3 August 1967, p. 148.

The corollary of the domesticating effect of commodification (which entails both the promotion of Beckett himself and that of his oeuvre) is the impact of reductive literary critical approaches to the work. I argue throughout the thesis that readings of Beckett too often fail to credit his refusal of what he called the 'plane of the feasible'.[13] Analysis of the early reception of Beckett's work shows that it was not easily recognised by the literary authorities of the time, for it confounded the notions that had previously underlain the category of 'literature'. The newness of Beckett's vision, the otherness or alterity of his work (which, following Attridge, can be understood as 'that which is, at a given historical moment, outside the framework provided by the culture for thinking, imagining, feeling, perceiving'),[14] resisted allegory and symbolism and other explanatory tools and paradigms with which his readers sought to make sense of it. In *Proust*, the young Beckett poured scorn on such approaches to literature, aligning them with artificial stability and the stultifying comfort of habit; the mature Beckett's attitude to staging rights, I suggest in chapter three, may have been rooted in a desire to preserve the alterity that makes his work so forceful. Yet our encounter with Beckett's work today can frequently be characterised as one of habit.

The ultimate significance of analysing the work's cultural standing and its relations with literary institutions is to bring to the attention of those who are interested in Beckett the panoply of practices (be they academic, theatrical, legal, or promotional in nature) that are not just influential in determining and sustaining the work's cultural value, but that also, in key respects, jeopardise that value. I believe, however, that there

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[13] *Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*, in *Disjecta* (London: John Calder, 1983), p. 139.
[14] Attridge, 'Singular Events: Literature, Invention, and Performance', in *The Question of Literature: The Place of the Literary in Contemporary Theory*, p. 49.

are ways to read, stage, and talk about Beckett's work that recognise and honour his conception of the irreducibility of art. I propose this not only as a justification of my own work. Rather, a conviction in the potential for exploring the Beckettian text in ways that celebrate its alterity stands at the heart of the thesis's engagement with the oeuvre as something both requiring and resisting the institutions of literature.

CHAPTER ONE: BECKETT AND EDITIONS DE MINUIT

It was not simply the institutions that were the vehicle of the poem; the poem also became the vehicle of the institutions.[1]

Bravo pour *Molloy* [...]. Voilà qui classe une maison.[2]

Je n'oublie et n'oublierai pas l'énorme part qui vous revient dans toute cette histoire. Sans vous nous n'en serions pas là.[3]

Le Nobel de Samuel Beckett? Quel Nobel? Ah! Vous voulez probablement dire 'Le Nobel de Jérôme Lindon'.[4]

On 29 October 1946, when Beckett was forty years old, he signed a contract with the Parisian publisher Pierre Bordas. A small publisher of schoolbooks with a nascent interest in contemporary writing, Bordas wished not only to bring out the French translation of *Murphy*, but also to secure the rights to all Beckett's future writings. Such wholesale interest, and the formalised commitment to Beckett that the contract with Bordas assured, were, seemingly, a cause for celebration for a writer who had had so little published despite having devoted himself singlemindedly to his craft for almost two

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[1] Lawrence Rainey, writing about *The Waste Land*, in *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 106.

[2] 'Bravo for *Molloy* [...]. That is what ranks a [publishing] house.' From a letter from Jean Paulhan to Jérôme Lindon, 'lundi soir', probably September 1951, quoted by Anne Simonin, *Les Editions de Minuit 1942-1955: Le devoir d'insoumission* (Paris: Imec Editions, 1994), p. 379. I will take the opportunity to explain here why, throughout the thesis, I have incorporated quotations into the text in their original language, providing translations only in the notes. I argue in chapter three that unilingual editions of Beckett's self-translated texts cannot hope to do justice to the complexity of these texts, implying that there can be no substitute for the unique words a writer or speaker chooses when working within a given language. I therefore opt to give primacy to the original quotations and to indicate the derivative nature of the translations through their inclusion in the notes. The translations are my own, and although I am grateful for assistance I have received with translating, any errors that remain are also mine.

[3] 'I have not and will not forget the enormous part you have played in this whole story. Without you we wouldn't have made it.' Beckett writing to Lindon, thanking him for his role in helping to bring *En attendant Godot* to the stage. Beckett to Lindon, 8 January 1953, Reading University Library, Beckett Collection, Editions de Minuit archive, uncatalogued. This collection will henceforth be referred to throughout the thesis as RUL, BC. All letters quoted in this chapter, unless specified otherwise, come from this archive, which is as yet uncatalogued.

[4] 'Samuel Beckett's Nobel Prize? Which Nobel Prize? Ah! You probably mean to say, 'Jérôme Lindon's Nobel Prize'.' Philippe Sollers, quoted by Simonin, p. 393.

decades. But the relationship with Bordas swiftly turned sour. Not only did it fail to prove fruitful for either author or publisher, but also, and more significantly, it jeopardised the formation of Beckett's all-important association with the man who was to become a loyal friend, one of his chief publishers, and finally the executor of his literary estate, Jérôme Lindon. The story of Beckett's dealings with Bordas has, until now, been but a historical footnote.[5] Although it has barely registered in biographical writing about Beckett, this story is deserving of closer consideration because it provokes questions that concern the foundational moments in the creation of literature, and that therefore go to the heart of this thesis's endeavour. As the thesis is interested in the nature of Beckett's success and the construction and evolution of his reputation over more than half a century, the history of Beckett's relationship with Bordas, coming as it does at a critically formative period in Beckett's development, provides an ideal point of departure. By taking us back to the moment at which an author hands over a manuscript to a publisher, the Bordas-Beckett story prompts us to ask what the effects of this handover are, not just on the manuscript itself, but on its writer, its publisher and, ultimately, on its reader. I am less interested, in other words, in how a manuscript becomes *a* book in the general sense. than I am in asking what the determining factors are in the process by which it comes to be adjudged *a particular kind* of book with a particular literary status -- factors that do not have to do with literary content and formal linguistic qualities alone. This story also leads us to ask how an author finds (or has found for him, on his behalf) a particular readership. It is clear that this inquiry has, broadly, to do with canonicity, but my interest does not lie in the usual debates about canon formation. It is concerned not so much with whether

[5] For mention of Bordas, see Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), pp. 355, 359-60; Anthony Cronin, *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 362: and James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) pp. 362, 376.

Beckett *ought* to be considered great as it is with analysing the nature (the establishment and evolution, and in some respects, as we shall see in chapters three and four, devolution) of what is so widely considered to be his greatness.

Beckett's contract with Bordas for the French edition of *Murphy* was not only his first post-war publishing contract, it was the only contract he had had since Routledge brought out the English-language original of this same book in 1938.[6] Bordas's interest in Beckett must have been the more welcome because of the company Beckett was to join through inclusion on Bordas's list: by 1950 he had published works by, among other contemporary writers and thinkers, Antonin Artaud (*Artaud le momo* in 1947), Tristan Tzara (*Morceaux choisis* in 1947), and Paul Eluard (*Le dur désir de durer*, illustrated by Marc Chagall, in 1950). Despite including a selection of avant-garde works, the list, which featured guides to Goethe, Leibniz, Montaigne, Renan and Sartre, reflected an intellectual augustness to which not all of Beckett's publishers (Maurice Girodias's Olympia Press comes to mind) aspired. It is interesting to speculate whether the reception of Beckett's work may have differed if, rather than being so closely associated by the French press with Jérôme Lindon and the authors at Editions de Minuit, he had instead been aligned with these works. This was not to be, however, despite the fact that in the four years that followed the signing of their contract Beckett presented Bordas with the manuscripts of *Mercier et Camier*, *Molloy* and *Malone meurt*. No doubt due in large part

[6] Beckett had a sizeable number of short pieces, poems and reviews published in newspapers and little magazines in Paris and Dublin before the war. His more important works published before the war were: the essay 'Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce' in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, which Shakespeare and Co. brought out in 1929; also in Paris, one year later, the prize-winning poem 'Whoroscope' with Nancy Cunard's Hours Press; *Proust* and *More Pricks Than Kicks*, with London's Chatto and Windus, in 1931 and 1934 respectively; and the collection of poems *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates*, which appeared with the Paris-based Europa Press in 1935. For more information on Beckett's pre-war publishing history see pp. 33-34.

to the abysmal sales of *Murphy* (of which only 100 copies sold in five years),[7] Bordas rejected each of them.[8]

By late 1950, Beckett was engaged in discussions with Jérôme Lindon, who, having begun work at Editions de Minuit immediately after the war as an unpaid intern, had bought the firm just two years later. Lindon was eager to publish the three novels that would finally form the trilogy, even though Beckett was still working on *L'Innommable*. They signed a contract on 15 November 1950. Over the next months, both Lindon and Beckett wrote to Bordas to indicate that, as a consequence of Bordas's refusal of everything Beckett had written since 1946, their agreement must be considered terminated, and Beckett stressed the importance of his finding a publisher who could not only print his work quickly, but also publicise it in an appropriate manner.[9] Bordas did not respond. In March 1951, Lindon offered to buy the remaining unsold stocks of *Murphy*, but although he later agreed in principle to this scheme, Bordas failed to show up at the meeting that was arranged to discuss the matter.[10] It took Lindon nearly three years to win Bordas's approval of this arrangement.

By April, a series of increasingly rancorous letters and telephone conversations had made it clear that Bordas was unwilling to relinquish any of his rights to Beckett's work. Lindon rightly maintained that, given his first refusal of *Molloy* and *Malone meurt*,

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[7] Bordas to Beckett, 26 May 1951. Bair writes that Bordas blamed the poor sales of *Murphy* on 'Beckett's refusal to do anything to promote the book'. (Bair, p. 360.) Cronin repeats this claim. (Cronin, p. 362.) However, the claim is contradicted by Beckett's assertion that it was Bordas who was failing to do his duty in this area. See note 9. Bair also wrongly contends that since Beckett 'had proven so intractable with *Murphy*' Bordas considered Beckett 'free to find another publisher, when he would relinquish all his rights.' (Bair, p. 360).
[8] Bordas to Toni Clerx, 13 January 1948; Beckett to Lindon, 9 September 1951.
[9] Lindon to Bordas, 5 December 1950. Beckett told Bordas he required 'un éditeur qui puisse [...] leur assurer une publicité *convenable*' ('a publisher who will be able to secure *appropriate* publicity for [the books]'). (My emphasis). Beckett to Bordas, 22 January 1951.
[10] Lindon to Bordas, 7 September 1951.

Bordas could not legitimately assert any claim over these two works. The danger lay with the as yet incomplete *L'Innommable*, to which, as 'future work' and under clause 12 of his contract with Beckett, Bordas insisted he retained the rights. 'Il s'agit là,' Lindon wrote to Beckett's girlfriend (and future wife) Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 'vous le pensez bien, d'une affaire très grave pour les Editions de Minuit. Bien entendu, les droits des ouvrages pour lesquels nous avons signé un contrat ne peuvent être contestés par Bordas puisqu'il les a refusés, mais il s'agit des suivants. Naturellement, je tiens par dessus tout à pouvoir les publier.'[11] Two days later, he suggested that they employ against Bordas the very arguments Bordas himself was using, in other words, that they have recourse to the details of the contract itself. Had Bordas honoured it to the letter? Lindon's suspicions were aroused after he discovered, by chance, that Bordas had sold a number of copies of *Murphy* at a reduced rate; having done so without consulting Beckett constituted a breach of contract.[12] (It is interesting to note that, unbeknown to Beckett, even the signing of the contract bore within it an indication of the trouble that was to arise later, for it was not entirely legitimate. On the day they signed the contract, 29 October 1946, Bordas also gave Beckett a cheque for 45,000 francs. But it was only on this same day that Bordas addressed a letter to the publisher George Routledge in London to enquire whether the rights to the French edition of *Murphy* were in fact free. As it happens, they were, but Bordas nevertheless entered into his contract with Beckett fully aware that they might not be.)[13]

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[11] 'You must realise that this concerns a very serious matter for Editions de Minuit. Of course the rights to the works for which we have signed a contract cannot be contested by Bordas since he has refused them, but this concerns those that are to follow. Naturally I am eager above all else to be able to publish them.' Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 10 April 1951.

[12] Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 12 April 1951.

[13] Bordas to George Routledge, 29 October 1946.

Lindon now asked Beckett to request that Bordas furnish him with an account. This, the first that Beckett had ever received, contained two surprises. The first was that it confirmed *Murphy*'s print run to have totalled only 3,500 copies, whereas the contract stipulated that it was to comprise 6,000 copies. The second surprise was Bordas's demand to be reimbursed for over 20,000 francs from the advance he had given Beckett on the signing of the contract.[14] This, as Beckett and Lindon asserted in their response (which Lindon scripted for Beckett to sign), was 'au mépris de tous les usages'.[15] They proposed that the 'debt' be written off if Bordas retained ownership of the unsold copies of *Murphy*, although Beckett would reclaim exclusive rights over any future editions of the work, just as he had, he wrote, for those of his works that Bordas had already refused. Beckett, borrowing Lindon's words, was resolute in his insistence that he was interpreting Bordas's stance as a decision 'de ne plus avoir avec moi aucun contact professionnel'.[16] This bravura disguised a degree of wishful thinking that was all too warranted, as Bordas's categorical reply made evident. He reasserted his rights to all Beckett's future works, casting doubt on Editions de Minuit's claim to any of them, and announced his intention to pursue a legal course for damages and interest.[17]

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[14] Bordas to Beckett, 26 May 1951. The figure of 20,000 francs was reached thus: from the total advance of 45,000 francs, Bordas deducted the payment for translation at 20,000 francs, and Beckett's eight per cent royalty on the copies of *Murphy* that had sold to date, at nearly 5,000 francs. Bordas had also asserted, however, that he was in the habit of giving Beckett money whenever Beckett asked for it, without making a record of it, simply 'pour lui rendre service' ('in order to help him out'). (Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 12 April 1951). Deschevaux-Dumesnil insisted that the two men met only once, and that Beckett never requested nor received any more money after the first payment. (Deschevaux-Dumesnil to Lindon, 15 April 1951).

[15] 'in defiance of all common practice'. Beckett to Bordas, 6 June 1951.

[16] 'to have absolutely no more professional contact with me'. Beckett to Bordas, 6 June 1951.

[17] Bordas to Lindon, 10 August 1951; Bordas to Beckett, 13 August 1951.

Bordas's strategy was odd. He was certainly right in insisting, as he had from the outset, that 'ce n'est pas avec une lettre qu'on se libère d'un contrat qu'on a signé.'[18] Nevertheless, he weakened his position (to the point that Lindon accused him outright of having lost touch with reality)[19] by making bizarre demands, such as that Editions de Minuit immediately stop any payments that they might be making to Beckett.[20] In September Lindon wrote a long letter to Bordas restating his and Beckett's joint position. He protested that it was not Beckett, but Bordas who had not honoured the terms of their original contract; reminded Bordas that Editions de Minuit was not seeking rights to *Murphy* but had instead repeatedly offered to buy the unsold stocks from him; and finally stated that, confident of his position, he would welcome arbitration.[21] Bordas responded simply that he did not accept the terms of Lindon's letter.[22]

There followed a long silence. Neither party took legal action, but by the time contact between Lindon and Bordas was renewed, Editions de Minuit had published *Molloy* (1951), *Malone meurt* (1951), *En attendant Godot* (1952), and *L'Innommable* (1953). In late November 1953, Lindon telephoned Bordas to suggest, once again, that Editions de Minuit might buy the unsold stocks of *Murphy*.[23] Bordas at last agreed. In their final arrangement, Lindon purchased the remaining copies for 40 francs each (the original retail price had been 150 francs, with a small number at 300 francs). In addition, he reimbursed Bordas for the 20,000 franc advance, in exchange for which Bordas ceded all his claims to Beckett's work, past and future.

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[18] 'it is not with a letter that one frees oneself from a contract one has signed.' Lindon was well aware of this fact, as he admitted to Deschevaux-Dumesnil in a letter on 10 April 1951.
[19] Lindon to Bordas, 7 September 1951.
[20] Bordas to Lindon, 10 August 1951.
[21] Lindon to Bordas, 7 September 1951.
[22] Bordas to Lindon, 3 October 1951.
[23] Lindon to Beckett, 30 November 1953.

As vexing as it was at the time, Beckett and Lindon's dispute with Bordas has been almost entirely forgotten, largely because its resolution -- even if in the telling it seems somewhat bathetic -- was to Beckett's advantage. Indeed, Beckett's connection with Lindon and Editions de Minuit was never seriously under threat: from the first, in spite of the difficulties posed by Beckett's relationship with Bordas, Lindon was equally as committed to his belief in Beckett's artistic abilities as to the pragmatics of protecting and promoting his work. However, the wrangle with Bordas held within it the potential to cause lasting trouble. The fact that it was ultimately resolved peaceably owes more to Lindon's tenacity and diplomacy than to any inevitability about the outcome, and as it was, the affair was bitter and relatively drawn out, lasting almost three years to the day. As insignificant as it may seem after half a century of stunning public success, the prospect of what might have been, had Bordas pursued an aggressive legal course to defend his claim to Beckett's future work, should alert us to the uncertainties and the potential pitfalls and windfalls of the author-publisher relationship. This chapter, and that which follows, endeavour to allow a fuller appreciation of just how crucial an intermediary a publisher is in the process of bringing a literary work into the public domain.

The story of Beckett and Bordas warrants attention for two main reasons. The first has to do with timing. We know, in retrospect, that in the late 1940s Beckett was on the cusp of international success. *Molloy*, when it appeared under the Editions de Minuit imprint in March 1951, made a substantial impact on the French *monde littéraire*, but it had already been turned down by many publishers, and it was by no means evident at the time that Beckett was about to enjoy (with however much ambivalence on his part) a

rapid ascent to fame and acclaim.[24] The immediate post-war period was a foundational moment in Beckett's career, a moment at which, as the Bordas story evinces, the role played by a publisher in the creation of an author's reputation is particularly important. The second, more important, reason that the affair rewards investigation is that it highlights the contingent and in certain respects even arbitrary nature of the processes by which private manuscripts become public documents. This observation is not to suggest that the unique qualities of Beckett's work were not present in it from the moment of its creation. But that the work would find an audience, and the route by which it might find its audience, and who that audience might comprise, were by no means assured, as Beckett in 1946, after years of rejection by publishers, must have been only too aware. The success of a work in the public domain can, to a large extent, depend on factors over which an author exercises little or no control. The Bordas-Beckett-Lindon triangle marks a critical moment in the French construction of Beckett's reputation. Minor incident though it is in the grander scheme of Beckett's publishing history, it brings into relief (particularly when compared with Lindon's treatment of Beckett's work, which is detailed below) the complex relationships, the conflicting, sometimes petty imperatives, and the delicate negotiations upon which so much (in the form of an author's success and reputation) depends. It is easy to overlook the fragility and uncertainty that attend the publication of a work of which, in hindsight, the success seems assured. It is equally easy to underestimate the difficulties inherent in the establishment of an author's reputation, particularly a reputation so seemingly unassailable more than fifty years later that it is almost impossible to imagine it ever having been otherwise.

[24] For more on the reception of *Molloy*, see below, pp. 52-57.

If Beckett's rise to fame is legendary, then it makes for all the more satisfying a narrative since it came, according to popular accounts of his life, on the tail of many years of ignominy, of countless rejections from publishers, of 'regular intervals' of 'tragedy and instability'.[25] But there exists a temptation in biographical constructions of Beckett of too closely aligning the vicissitudes of his professional failures and achievements to the myth of *l'artiste maudit.* I consider the phenomenon of the 'cursed artist' in more depth in chapter four.[26] Suffice it to note, for now, that in the collective imagination, over which this figure exercises a curious potency, years of unknown struggle seem not only to make the reward of eventual acclaim of an artist just, but they also seem to validate the artistic merits of the work itself. This pattern -- of the public first violently rejecting and then passionately embracing an artist -- is in fact true of Beckett in only the crudest terms, and it is much less true of his position in French culture than it is of his place in the English-speaking world. The intricacies and import of Beckett's bilingualism have been the subject of much exegetical debate, but that Beckett also occupied two distinct institutional spaces is a concept that has received almost no attention.[27] The significance of Beckett's role in the French cultural arena has been neglected in both scholarly and popular writing, perhaps in part because each of the major Beckett biographies is written in English, and is by either an English or Irish researcher. But it is also true that the idea of Beckett's having been almost completely

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[25] David Pattie, *The Complete Critical Guide to Samuel Beckett* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 20.

[26] See chapter four, p. 214.

[27] The best studies on Beckett's bilingualism are: Brian T. Fitch, *Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Status of the Bilingual Work* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), which includes an extensive bibliography of articles on Beckett and translation, and translation theory (pp. 231-38); Christopher Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); and, for a rigorously scholarly approach, Charles Krance, ed., *Samuel Beckett's* Company/Compagnie *and* A Piece of Monologue/Solo*: A Bilingual Variorum Edition* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1993); and by the same author, *Samuel Beckett's* Mal Vu Mal Dit/Ill Seen Ill Said*: A Bilingual, Evolutionary, and Synoptic Variorum Edition* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1996).

invisible before *Waiting for Godot* was established early. In a 1961 *Observer* article revealingly titled 'Poet Waiting for Pegasus', Al Alvarez wrote dismissively that before *Godot* opened in Paris in 1953, Beckett

> was just another dusty, unknown Irishman among the exiled *avant-garde* of Paris -- one of the group that had gone on being remorselessly *avant-garde* for thirty-odd years. His poems and stories had been put out by the usual experimental publishers and little magazines, which hatch and die like the mayfly. His chief claim to fame was that he had once been James Joyce's disciple. Then came 'Godot' and Beckett was suddenly transformed into the spokesman for a generation.[28]

One of the goals of this chapter is to reveal that even before *En attendant Godot* and *Waiting for Godot* took the theatrical world by storm, Beckett did in reality already possess a reputation of considerable weight, if not for the French public at large, at least more narrowly within the French cultural sphere. Far from having languished unknown in the years prior to the 1952 publication of *En attendant Godot*, Beckett had already won a formidable reputation among the French intelligentsia and had fervent supporters in some of its leading figures. It is more accurate to say, however, that a reputation had been won for Beckett -- his early success with the French cultural elite was achieved almost single-handedly, through the tireless efforts of the inexperienced but canny young publisher with whom Beckett first signed a contract in November 1950, Jérôme Lindon.

Although Lindon, newly at the helm of the financially struggling but defiantly principled Resistance press, Editions de Minuit, was not Beckett's first publisher, he was the first with whom Beckett developed a relationship which was to become a pattern for him -- an exclusive (or near-exclusive) bond that extended further than purely professional boundaries and was to last the author's lifetime and beyond. Beckett was closely linked to, and has become indelibly associated with, three publishers: Lindon of

[28] Al Alvarez, 'Poet Waiting for Pegasus', *Observer*, 31 December 1961, p. 21.

Editions de Minuit in France; John Calder of Calder Publications (formerly Calder and Boyars) in Britain; and Barney Rosset of Grove Press in the United States. During the latter half of the twentieth century, each of these was a pre-eminent avant-garde publisher, and Beckett's relations with them had a profound effect on his consecration. But the harmoniousness that (with only a few exceptional incidents) characterised Beckett's long history with Editions de Minuit and John Calder has done nothing to encourage investigation of just why these relationships were so successful. Furthermore, although Beckett was renowned for his loyalty in friendship (and each of these three men became an intimate friend), a biographical explanation for the remarkable nature of these alliances barely acknowledges, let alone explicates, their real significance. Indeed, to investigate them solely from the viewpoint that places Beckett and his motivations in the foreground is inhibiting. In the same way that the careers and reputations of certain directors (such as Alan Schneider) and certain academics (like James Knowlson and John Pilling) can be characterised by their special involvement with Beckett and his work, so these three publishers are frequently framed by virtue of their relation to Beckett, who, stellar and universally respected, tends to act as the fixed point against which such auxiliary actors are measured.[29] This chapter and the next posit that a new perspective might prove illuminating, one from which the publishers' positions in their respective cultural contexts is taken as the starting point, and the development of Beckett's reputation is considered in relation to these.

[29] Consider, for example, the attention that is accorded Calder's relationship with Beckett in the Festschrift written in Calder's honour nearly a decade after Beckett's death. The annotated bibliography of Calder's publications is divided into six sections with generic headings like 'Literature' and 'Politics', except for one, which is dedicated to Beckett. Howard Aster and Amy Land, eds, *In Defence of Literature: for John Calder* (New York: Mosaic Press, 1998) pp. 163-202 (pp. 193-95).

In the early 1950s, Editions de Minuit occupied a unique position within (or, more accurately and perhaps more tellingly, on the periphery of) the space that comprised the uniquely innovative and vibrant cultural world of post-World War II France. A correspondence exists between the evolution of Editions de Minuit and Beckett's development as a writer, as their respective histories illuminate. The post-war period calls for attention because it was equally formative for Beckett and for Editions de Minuit, but its importance is also intimately related to the history of the French avant-garde. Roland Barthes, writing only just over a decade after Beckett first signed a contract with Editions de Minuit, insisted that the avant-garde scene in which Beckett's drama first appeared no longer existed, because it was already accepted, already historical: 'C'est déjà une *légende* de l'avant-garde' (my emphasis).[30] In other words, the cultural moment at which Beckett's work was first launched was unique, and the nature of this, too, influenced the work's reception.

In any telling of the history of Beckett's oeuvre, the author's relationship with Jérôme Lindon must emerge as one of the pillars that supported his longstanding success with critics and public alike. Lindon played an all-important role in, first, the commodification of Beckett's work (by which I mean the creation of its lasting economic value, and the relation of this to its cultural value), and second, in its consecration, by investing in and exploiting particular networks and sources of cultural capital. Recent research suggests that the book-buying public pays little heed to the imprint of a book at the moment of purchase (or at least that the buyer is usually unconscious of the effect the material format of the book -- which is a carefully thought out kind of coding -- might

[30] 'It is already a legend of the avant-garde.' Roland Barthes, 'Le Théâtre français d'avant-garde', *Le Français dans le monde* (June-July 1961), pp. 10-15 (p. 11).

exercise over her as she tries to determine what sort of book she is about to buy).[31] Claire Squires suggests that the role of imprint is, rather, 'performative', and that imprints 'are used by industry insiders, in order to assert genre and signal value judgements.'[32] This observation indicates that the real significance of an author's relationship to a particular publisher (or to a particular *type* of publisher) has to do with the power that the publisher wields, in terms of connections and influence, inside the publishing world. Further, it has to do with the effect that the publisher's reputation has on how a book is classed (and even, in some instances, read) by virtue of its association with that publisher. The book's cultural value, in addition to its economic value, will be defined not only by what is said or written about it, but by who talks or writes about it, and where they do so. Agents, reviewers, critics, and other publishers set store by the associations a text enjoys, and it is these figures who herald a text's public appearance and who are most influential in determining its initial reception. 'L'avant-garde', writes Barthes, 'est une affaire de famille.'[33] I examine here how this 'family' network was constituted in Paris in the early 1950s, and how Lindon and Beckett operated within it.

The publication and reception of *Molloy*, the first work Beckett published with Editions de Minuit, serves as a case study that demonstrates just how crucial its publisher's role was in securing the channels by which the work was introduced first to a limited and exclusive, and thence to a wider, audience. Once pieced together, information about the history of *Molloy* (gleaned from hundreds of letters exchanged by Beckett, Lindon, and their intimates and colleagues) also reveals a picture of how Lindon sought

[31] Claire Squires, 'Fiction in the Marketplace: The Literary Novel and the UK Publishing Industry' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, Wolfson College, 2003), p. 171.
[32] Squires, p. 173.
[33] 'the avant-garde is a family affair.' Barthes, 'Le Théâtre français d'avant-garde', p. 10.

and nurtured a redoubtable cultural status not just for Beckett, but for Editions de Minuit. Close examination of their early letters shows the evolution of a symbiotic relationship between the two parties in which the growing reputation and strengthening identity of each impacted on the other. These archival materials demonstrate that, to paraphrase a cardinal idea of Rainey's in *Institutions of Modernism*, not only did the institution act as a vehicle for Beckett's work, but also that the work simultaneously acted as a vehicle for the institution.[34] My research suggests that the process of Beckett's consecration was not initiated by sheer virtue of the qualities inherent in his writing but, rather, that it came about largely as a consequence of Lindon's wider ambitions for his newly acquired publishing house. A publisher's political and artistic agendas can be decisive in a book's life cycle and, by extension, in the career of its author, as Bourdieu explains with reference to the historical importance of Baudelaire's reliance on and regard for his publisher, Poulet-Malassis. This alliance created a precedent for the kind of relationship Beckett was to enjoy with Lindon:

> We know that at a time when the growth of 'commercial' literature is making fortunes for a few large publishing houses -- Hachette, Lévy, and Larousse -- Baudelaire chooses to associate, for *Les Fleurs du mal,* with a small publisher, Poulet-Malassis, who frequents the cafés of the avant-garde. Refusing the more favourable financial conditions and the incomparably wider distribution offered him by Michel Lévy, precisely because he is afraid of a mass exposure of his book, he takes up with a smaller publisher, but one who is himself engaged in the struggle on behalf of young poetry. [...] Baudelaire effects for the first time the break between commercial and avant-garde publishing, thereby contributing to the upsurge of a field of publishers homologous with that of writers; at a stroke, he achieves a structural liaison between the publisher and the writer at the front line [...] (an expression which is not excessive if one remembers that Poulet-Malassis was roundly condemned for the publication of *Les Fleurs du mal* and obliged to go into exile).[35]

[34] See note 1.
[35] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. by Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 67.

John Simon describes, furthermore, a common ground between writers and literary critics in France, urging that 'one recurrent thread in the development of criticism from Valéry and Proust on has been its confidence in regarding the enemy as one it holds in common with creative writers'.[36] We will see this affinity, or at very least a marked interrelatedness, when we examine the reception of *Molloy*, below. A homology between the publisher's and writer's situations, which Bourdieu describes, is precisely what emerges from the correspondence between Lindon and Beckett, particularly with regard to their position *vis à vis* the cultural establishment. Lindon -- with Beckett's encouragement (albeit a sometimes exasperated and limited encouragement) and in his full knowledge -- deliberately exploited a dense network of relationships for the cultural capital they afforded. Within this network, Beckett's and Lindon's shared avant-garde concerns were such that, in the eyes of cultural commentators, the traditional boundary between publisher and writer was overridden and the two were seen to be allies in a common cause.

The Lindon-Beckett correspondence also mounts a challenge to the idea of Beckett as an artist who categorically resisted commodification. John Pilling, in his Preface to the *Cambridge Companion to Beckett*, introduces Beckett by referring, in the first ten lines of text, to his 'adamant refusal to become a commodity', and by arguing that the writer 'shunned publicity to the point where it became inevitable he would attract it'.[37] Pilling is right in suggesting that due to this conception of Beckett's attitude toward publicity 'an aura of 'difficulty' and 'unapproachability' [has] attached itself to his

[36] John K. Simon, ed., *Modern French Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. ix.
[37] John Pilling, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. xiii.

writings'.[38] But although Pilling is anxious to deny that Beckett's work is unapproachable, he fails to challenge the fundamental misconception about Beckett's relation to publicity in any substantive way; instead, he perpetuates the idea. The significance of this issue is not restricted to refining our understanding of Beckett's biography, although that is a matter of considerable interest in itself. That a mainstream critical text as well respected as the *Cambridge Companion* encourages us to regard Beckett as a writer 'indifferent to the imperatives of the market-place' does indeed contribute negatively to our encounter with Beckett's oeuvre, partly by oversimplifying the works' actual histories, and partly by sustaining the very 'aura' of aloof inaccessibility that Pilling laments.[39] In the Conclusion of this thesis it is proposed that Beckett's works are indeed, in certain respects, perplexingly difficult to access, but that acknowledging this difficulty is no bad thing. However, the conundrums provoked by Beckett's artistic vision have nothing to do with the author's desire to safeguard his personal privacy. To draw a causal link between the two matters greatly diminishes the significance of the work's impenetrability and the challenges it poses to the institution of literature.[40] This chapter, then, seeks to address the problem that Pilling succeeds only in identifying.

The first necessary step towards this goal is to tease out, and to complicate, just what the phrase 'imperatives of the market-place' means. In this regard, Rainey's observations about the modernist work of art are illuminating:

> Modernism is commonly considered 'a strategy whereby the work of art resists commodification, holds out by the skin of its teeth' against the loss of aesthetic autonomy. But it may be that just the opposite would be a more accurate account: that modernism, among other things, is a strategy

[38] ibid.
[39] ibid.
[40] The significance of the work's inaccessibility in Beckett's relationship with Editions de Minuit is discussed on p. 68.

> whereby the work of art invites and solicits its commodification, but does so in such a way that it becomes a commodity of a special sort, one that is temporarily exempted from the exigencies of immediate consumption prevalent within the larger cultural economy, and instead is integrated into a different economic circuit.[41]

In this passage, Rainey defines his position against the Marxist critic Terry Eagleton, whose understanding of the relationship between the modernist work of art and the market is, Rainey urges, simplistic.[42] But in seeking to counter this oversimplification, Rainey puts forward an oversimplification of a different sort. His proposition that the modernist artwork's value was of the kind offered by a long-term investment is useful, but the claim that this artwork simply moved from the larger economy sideways to circulate in a different economic circuit, that, as Peter D. McDonald puts it in his critique of Rainey, 'the anti-commercial is *really* commercial after all' (his emphasis), overlooks what is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the work's value.[43] 'Value', here, has little to do with monetary worth.

In redefining 'value' in the context of the literary field, and more generally in endeavouring to grasp what the imperatives of the literary marketplace are, Bourdieu's distinctions between the material economy and the symbolic economy, between economic capital and cultural capital, are crucial. He outlines how this separation came about, and how it necessitated the development of a new kind of market, in which "pure' works destined for symbolic appropriation' could find recognition:[44]

> The symbolic revolution through which artists free themselves from bourgeois demand by refusing to recognize any master except their art

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[41] Rainey, p. 3.
[42] Rainey's quotation of Terry Eagleton comes from 'Capitalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism', in David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 392.
[43] Peter D. McDonald, 'Modernist Publishing: 'Nomads and Mapmakers'', in *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) pp. 221-42 (p. 224).
[44] Bourdieu, p. 130.

> produces the effect of making the market disappear. In fact they could not triumph over the 'bourgeois' in the struggle for control of the meaning and function of artistic activity without at the same time eliminating the bourgeois as a potential customer. At the moment when they argue [that a work of art...] is *without price*, that is to say, foreign to the ordinary logic of the ordinary economy, they discover that it is effectively *without commercial value*, that it has no market. [His emphasis.][45]

The work is not thereby rendered valueless. Instead, its value resides in cultural (or symbolic), rather than economic (or market) capital. This broad concept can be refined. Symbolic capital resides in particular signatures in particular locations -- many of which are powerful precisely because of their remove from the general 'market-place', as Pilling refers to it, precisely because of their worthlessness in Rainey's 'economic circuit', and because of their distance from established institutions that are firmly rooted in the material economy.[46] Indeed, in his study of French literary criticism, John Simon maintains that 'most of the significant literary criticism in France [...] has appeared outside the academy, toward which it has maintained an attitude of ignorance, ridicule, contempt, or spite.'[47] As we shall see below, what is significant about the publicising of *Molloy*, as orchestrated by Lindon with Beckett's approval, is exactly that the work was steered away from the mass market, and integrated into a special network of publications and critics, where cultural prestige and intellectual respect counted for more than economic wherewithal.

It will be prudent at this point also to draw attention to the particular use of the term 'publicity' as it appears in this chapter. Just as Rainey's description of the modernist

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[45] Bourdieu, p. 81.
[46] Derek Attridge explains the Derridean concept of the signature by emphasising that its function 'is dependent upon two contradictory properties, its unique affirmation of the here-and-now of the signatory, and its repeatability, recognizability, and reproducibility'. A signature is loaded with meaning, and derives power from the fact that 'it does not exist until it calls forth some response that affirms its status as signature'. Derek Attridge, Introduction, *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-27 (p. 18).
[47] Simon, p. viii.

artwork as a new kind of commodity, but a commodity nonetheless, does not suit our purposes, so the publicity that features so markedly in this investigation is not just marketing by another name. Rather, it is, to use a phrase of Beckett's that we have already come across, 'une publicité convenable', which is part of the functioning of the symbolic economy. It does not rely on quantitative, or mass, marketing but eschews this in favour of promotion based on the 'right' kind of recognition by the 'right' kind of people in the 'right' kind of places. Just what 'right' meant for Beckett's work in Paris in the 1950s is made clear below.

Although the body of this chapter concentrates on Beckett's place in the cultural arena in France in the decade after the end of World War II (specifically, in Paris, where intellectual life was markedly concentrated at this time),[48] it is nonetheless worthwhile reminding ourselves that even before the war Beckett was well acquainted with the Parisian literary elite. By the outbreak of war he had had only five works published in book form (and those, except for the poems *Whoroscope* and *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates*, which came out in Paris, were published in England, in English), and during much of the war he was away from Paris in hiding in the south. Nevertheless, by the time we reach the post-war period on which this study focusses, the French intellectual elite and the expatriate community which contributed so vitally to Parisian cultural life in the inter-war period were not unknown to Beckett, and nor was he unknown to them. Beckett lived in Paris for the first time in 1928 (during his lectureship at the *Ecole Normale*

[48] Although the capital was a traditional centre of artistic life in Europe, the centralisation of cultural life was exacerbated after the Liberation of Paris by the presence there of the Communist Party, which largely controlled the underground cultural sphere during the war and remained powerful in this regard for years afterwards. Despite considerable pressure from the Communists to accept all kinds of assistance after the war, the founders of Editions de Minuit refused their help, certain that 'l'autonomie structurelle reste la source la plus sûre de la liberté des Editions de Minuit' ('structural autonomy remains the most certain guarantee of Editions de Minuit's freedom'). Simonin, p. 273.

Supérieure), but did not settle there permanently until 1937. As is well known, however, he succeeded during the intervening years in publishing a large number of short pieces (mainly poems and translations) in Parisian reviews and magazines and, more significantly for the development of his reputation as a member of the literary set, he became intimately involved with the life and work of James Joyce.[49] Although accounts of how the two Irishmen met differ, it is clear that Beckett's contact with Joyce drew him into an influential network of experimental literary activity.[50] The reputation Beckett developed for being Joyce's secretary has long been countered by Beckett's admirers -- but this renown, however misleading when the exact nature of their interactions is examined, is significant. At the time, it not only evidenced but also intensified the degree of closeness that Beckett *was seen to have* to the leader of what has been called 'the Irish mafia', to the man widely considered, even by his contemporaries, to be the most important writer living in pre-war Paris.[51]

Beckett was, further, associated with the most important of the expatriate little magazines, *transition*, which was founded in 1927 by Eugène Jolas. Jolas eventually constructed a list of illustrious contributors, publishing a great deal of important avant-garde literature (notably Joyce's *Work In Progress* and much of Gertrude Stein's work), and printing works by Picasso, Ernst, Klee and Kandinsky, among others. The magazine was, Jolas claimed, a place 'of research into the state of the revolutionary currents in

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[49] See note 6 for more on Beckett's pre-war publication history.

[50] Dougald McMillan contends that Beckett 'found his way to Shakespeare and Company and through Sylvia Beach, he and Joyce became friends.' According to James Knowlson, however, they were introduced by Tom MacGreevy. Whether or not Sylvia Beach effected the introduction to Joyce, she was a valuable contact for Beckett, as it was she who recommended him, 'in the warmest terms as a coming writer of importance', to the American publisher Barney Rosset. (Dougald McMillan, *Transition 1927-38: The History of a Literary Era* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975), p. 148; Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 97; John Calder, ed., *As No Other Dare Fail: For Samuel Beckett on his Eightieth Birthday by His Friends and Admirers* (London: John Calder, 1986), p. 97.)

[51] Noel Riley Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation* (London: Souvenir Press, 1984), p. 258.

international literature'.[52] A number of pieces by Beckett appeared in *transition*. The short story 'Assumption' and the essay in praise of Joyce, 'Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce', came out in June of 1929 in *transition* 16-17; the essay 'For Future Reference' appeared in issue 19-20 in June 1930; the poems 'Malacoda', 'Enueg II', and 'Dortmunder' in *transition* 24. June 1936; and the poem 'Ooftish', along with a review of the Irish writer Denis Devlin's *Intercessions*, in the last pre-war issue, *transition* 27, April-May 1938. By the time Beckett and Deschevaux-Dumesnil had to flee Paris to escape capture by the Nazis, he was, as the critic Maurice Nadeau put it in a 1951 article on *Molloy*, 'connu [...] d'un petit nombre d'initiés'.[53]

Before the nature of the relationship that Beckett struck up with Jérôme Lindon in 1950 can be assessed it is vital to have an understanding of the background of Editions de Minuit. A brief survey of the venture's short history tells us much about its ideological, activist origins, and of the dilemma with which Lindon was struggling when he was first enchanted by the manuscript of *Molloy*, a dilemma that was to have an impact of inestimable importance on the publication and reception of Beckett's work. In April 1945, more than a year after the Liberation, Editions de Minuit put out its first publication as a legal commercial enterprise. This slender volume was nominally a history of the Resistance origins of the press. In reality, however, its author Jacques Debû-Bridel, who had been involved in the operation of the Press since its early days, made no claims to objectivity (or indeed even to historical accuracy). In a self-congratulatory and highly rhetorical manner. the book celebrates the grand aims of the little press, which were to do no less than 'grouper autour des *Editions de Minuit* le plus grand nombre possible

[52] Eugène Jolas and Elliot Paul, 'A Review', *transition* 12 (March 1928), pp. 139-47 (p. 139).
[53] 'known by a small number of the initiated'. Maurice Nadeau, 'Lettres', *Mercure de France*, 1-8 (August 1951), pp. 693-97 (p. 693). For more information on Nadeau's influence, see p. 54.

d'écrivains français à la réputation mondiale pour affirmer la résistance de l'esprit français à l'emprise nazi.'[54] The self-congratulation is forgivable, for the book has a great deal to tell us about the founders' pride in the tradition of independence, defiance, and intellectualism that they succeeded in establishing during the Occupation. But it reveals too, and possibly despite itself, at what pains the founders were to conserve this tradition by making it publicly known. The work is, in fact, a blatantly self-serving promotional exercise. As such, much of its interest lies in the way it demonstrates that the concept of branding was, from the outset, of cardinal importance to those running Editions de Minuit. Debû-Bridel rails against 'la veulerie individuelle de trop d'auteurs' and 'celle, collective, des éditeurs', lauding instead the fact that 'les Editions de Minuit, elles du moins, demeuraient entièrement libres, entièrement pures'.[55]

In her excellent history of Editions de Minuit, Anne Simonin details the conditions in occupied Paris under which the press was established. On 14 September 1940, the Propaganda Abteilung issued the infamous Otto List, which named forbidden books. This list was accompanied by a 'Convention de censure' that established new rules for publishing in the occupied zone, and which effectively imposed self-censorship on publishers. The Otto List was extended on 15 July 1941, when all new books were forbidden, as were all French and English works first published after 1870.[56] It was not, however, until paper supply was regulated in April of 1942 that the Nazi restrictions

[54] 'to group around Editions de Minuit the greatest possible number of French writers with an international reputation in order to affirm the resistance of the French spirit to the Nazi enterprise.' Jacques Debû-Bridel, *Les Editions de Minuit: Historique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1945), p. 49.
[55] 'the individual spinelessness of too many authors [...] and the collective spinelessness of publishers [...] Editions de Minuit, at least, remained completely free, completely pure'. Debû-Bridel, pp. 14, 36.
[56] Simonin, pp. 13-15.

began to have a significant impact, and it was from this time that the black market in books began to develop vigorously.[57]

Editions de Minuit came into being as a consequence of the efforts of two men, Pierre de Lescure and Jean Bruller, to publish the latter's novel, *Le Silence de la mer*. This work, which Bruller published under his pseudonym Vercors, by which name he went for the rest of his life, caused a sensation in intellectual Resistance circles. Its success -- and the mystery pertaining to the real identity of its author, which was not revealed until after the Liberation -- launched not only Vercors, but Editions de Minuit. The aspirations of the founders extended beyond this one book, however. In a radio interview conducted in Geneva in 1944, Lescure remembered how the issuing of the Otto List politicised and galvanised him:

> Je me suis dit, dès le début de l'Occupation, qu'il y aurait, autour de moi, des Français qui demeureraient des hommes libres. J'ai voulu qu'ils s'expriment en artistes et en hommes [...] Il fallait donc créer une maison d'édition, malgré l'Occupation de la France, une maison d'édition clandestine, et j'ai fondé avec mon ami Jean Bruller, Vercors, les Editions de Minuit, voilà tout.[58]

Simonin's account of Lescure depicts a driven and idealistic character. He had been involved in literary enterprises since his youth, having founded a small publishing house in 1919 and, ten years later, a successful critical review. By the time war broke out, he had also published five of his own novels with Gallimard. The contacts he had developed during a career focussed on literary matters, not just within the intellectual milieu generally but especially among the left-wing intelligentsia, would be vital to the

[57] Simonin, pp. 17, 89.

[58] 'From the start of the Occupation, I said to myself that there would be Frenchmen around me who would remain free men. I wanted them to be able to express themselves as artists and as men. So we had to create a publishing house, despite the Occupation of France, an underground publishing house, and I founded with my friend Jean Bruller, Vercors, Editions de Minuit, and that's all there was to it.' Pierre de Lescure, in an interview on Radio Geneva in Autumn 1944, quoted by Simonin, p. 19.

success of Editions de Minuit. Vercors's path to literary renown was less direct. As a young man he worked as an electrical engineer, later finding employment as a satirical cartoonist. But it was not until he and Lescure met that he was encouraged to indulge his longstanding interest in *livres d'art*. Eventually Vercors became a critic of these, specialising in the technical aspects of luxury editions. It was thanks to his expertise in this area that Editions de Minuit was noted for the fine quality of its books during the war ('remarquablement presentés, sur beau papier'),[59] despite the difficulties of supply consequent upon their underground status.

From its inception, Editions de Minuit was a publishing house run by the intellectual elite for the intellectual elite. As the first financially and politically independent publisher in occupied France, it offered the first real opportunity to French artists to express themselves as artists (and not merely as political activists) under Nazi rule. As a consequence of this unique position, the house managed to win the support of some of the country's most prestigious writers. In June of 1943, the literary directorship was officially handed to Paul Eluard, widely considered at the time to be the greatest living French poet. But it was the patronage of Jean Paulhan, who acted as unofficial literary director from the end of 1942, which was decisive in Editions de Minuit's fortunes. Paulhan was one of the most influential figures in mid-century French cultural life, and his role in the process by which Editions de Minuit established itself, particularly after the Liberation, should not be underestimated. One-time literary director of the venerable publishing house Gallimard, Paulhan was also, from 1925 to 1940, the chief editor of the Gallimard revue *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (the *NRF*), perhaps the most important pre-war literary magazine, and again of *La Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française*

[59] 'remarkably presented on beautiful paper'. Debû-Bridel, p. 33.

(the *NNRF*) from 1953 to 1963. Alvin Eustis contends that Paulhan's 'receptivity to experiment and innovation caused him to appear, superficially at least, a modern among moderns', and, further, that, 'several of the most influential critics in France today [the early 1970s] consider [Paulhan's *Fleurs de Tarbe*, 1941] the most important critical work of the century'.[60] Paulhan was renowned as a discoverer of great literary talent, and was an invaluable contact for anyone seeking to establish a career in the literary sphere.[61] George Lambrichs, who after the war assumed the literary directorship at Editions de Minuit, was one such young aspirant who benefitted from Paulhan's support from their first meeting in 1937. Commenting on their relationship, Simonin observes:

> Avoir accès à Paulhan est capital pour un homme jeune, d'origine provinciale, qui souhaite pénétrer le milieu littéraire parisien. Jamais, peut-être, un magistère si puissant n'a été excercé sur la République des Lettres par un seul homme. [...] *La NRF* disparue, Paulhan demeure, symbole de la continuité et de l'autonomie de la république des lettres.[62]

Simonin goes so far as to argue that 'les distinctions littéraires que parviennent à obtenir les Editions de Minuit pendant ces années [the early 1950s], un prix Sainte-Beuve et trois prix Fénéon, c'est à Jean Paulhan, membre du jury de ces deux prix, qu'elles les doivent.'[63]

As unimpressive a concern as it was in terms of size, Editions de Minuit had, by the time of the Liberation, won itself an influential position at the nexus of French intellectual and cultural life. But its survival in the peacetime marketplace was far from

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[60] Alvin Eustis, 'The Paradoxes of Language: Jean Paulhan', in *Modern French Criticism*, ed. by John K. Simon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 109-22 (p. 109).

[61] <http://www.imec-archives.com/fonds/ficheauteur1.asp?num=109> [accessed 28 October 2003].

[62] 'To have access to Paulhan is crucial for a young man of provincial origin who wishes to enter the Parisian literary milieu. Never, perhaps, had a single man exercised such a powerful sovereignty over the Republic of Letters. [...] The *NRF* gone, Paulhan remains, symbol of the continuity and autonomy of the republic of letters.' Simonin, p. 253.

[63] 'The literary distinctions that Editions de Minuit managed to obtain during these years [the early 1950s], one Sainte-Beuve and three Fénéons, were owed to Jean Paulhan, who was a member of these two prizes' juries.' Simonin, p. 425.

assured. Simonin's history of the house's convoluted, obstacle-ridden route to success in the post-war French publishing scene -- a cut-throat rule-governed commercial world totally alien to the Resistance press -- makes for fascinating reading. 'Elles auraient dû faire faillite', Simonin admits in her conclusion.[64] Personal feuding, and battles about editorial policy, constant financial woes, pressure to accept 'assistance' from the Communists, the loss of authors to their pre-war publishers (mainly to Gallimard, 'the old avant-garde house long since arrived at the summit of consecration'),[65] and particularly the poisoned chalice of a Resistance pedigree, which at once marked the house out as independent and principled, but also mired in, even dependent on, a past that many wanted to forget[66] -- so many difficulties made Lindon's accomplishment at the helm of the house the more extraordinary.

Lindon, like Lescure, Vercors, Beckett, and many of the others involved with Editions de Minuit in its early years, had been active in the Resistance. It was thanks to the injection of family money that Lindon was able to assume control of the publishing house in 1948 when he was just twenty-three years old. At the time, few people thought he would have any success at its head, but when he died at the age of seventy-five in 2001 he was considered to be 'among the most influential publishers in France'.[67] Although at his death Editions de Minuit employed a staff of just nine and rarely produced more than twenty books annually, he had published many of France's most

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[64] 'they ought to have gone bankrupt'. Simonin, p. 463.

[65] Bourdieu, p. 144.

[66] The French publishing world as a whole received much criticism for widespread collaboration with the Nazi occupiers. Vercors was outspokenly active in the 'purification' process that took place within the industry after the Liberation, but his intransigent crusading attitude made him few friends in the powerful firms most guilty of collaborating. Simonin, p. 231.

[67] Obituary of Jérôme Lindon, *Telegraph*, 14 April 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2001%2F04%2F14%2Fdb03.xml> [accessed 30 April 2004].

important twentieth-century writers including, most famously, the *nouveau romanciers* (such as Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, Duras, who won the Prix Goncourt in 1984, and Simon, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1985).[68] Lindon managed both to exploit and refashion the characteristics that made Editions de Minuit unique, and thereby succeeded in maintaining its independence and its influence. In the early years of his leadership he updated the house's political agenda and, particularly through his commitment to Algerian independence, succeeded in making it relevant to the post-war generation. But his other great strategy was to pursue an avant-garde editorial policy. These two pillars of Editions de Minuit, the political and the artistic, complemented each other, but, crucially, remained separate. The division of these agendas meant that Editions de Minuit enabled a new type of intellectual figure to emerge, in opposition to the Sartrian 'engaged artist' mould, one whose association with Editions de Minuit signalled a political awareness and even a political position, without necessitating the overt politicisation of their art.

While Lindon's political interests are under consideration, it would be germane to think briefly about what is meant by the term 'avant-garde' as I am using it in relation to Lindon and to his authors. Josephine Guy contends that, traditionally, the avant-garde has been taken to comprise artistic work that is *either* artistically *or* politically subversive.[69] Guy proposes a new, more flexible, theory of the avant-garde, which is able to incorporate both artistic and political motivations and techniques, and which is rooted in a belief in the historical specificity of avant-garde movements. Her theory enables us to counter the common claim that Beckett and the *nouveau romanciers* were apolitical, as if

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[68] ibid.
[69] Josephine M. Guy, *The British Avant-Garde: The Theory and Politics of Tradition* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 21-30. The leading exponents of these positions respectively are Renato Poggioli and Peter Bürger.

the aesthetic subversiveness that is so evident in their work precluded any kind of political interest or commitment.[70] Guy argues that the aesthetic and the political are not mutually exclusive categories. She insists, too, on the importance of context in determining the nature of avant-gardism (she resists using the misleading phrase '*the* avant-garde'), urging, 'we may only understand the politics of a particular avant-garde after we understand the attitude which that avant-garde adopts towards tradition; and that attitude may only be understood in terms of contemporary cultural orthodoxies about the past. An intellectual context is thus the basic reference point by which avant-garde politics have meaning.'[71] This formulation allows us to understand that just because Lindon did not tend to publish overtly political literary works (although he did publish political writing too) does not mean that the books he brought out were detached from political concerns. It is rather that the intellectual context in which Beckett and the *nouveau romanciers* were working was dominated by Sartrian thinking that insisted on explicitly politically engaged art. If 'what all avant-garde movements [...] have in common is simply a self-conscious opposition to the past or tradition', then in relation to the dominant intellectual currents of the time, the literary works Lindon was publishing can be considered avant-garde as well as politically conscious, both in spite of and because of their refusal to flaunt political engagement.[72] Guy's understanding of avant-

[70] Knowlson challenges this same myth from another perspective in *Images of Beckett*, recounting several anecdotes that demonstrate Beckett's profound interest in politics, especially in Eastern Europe, and that evidence his personal and even professional involvement in political issues. Knowlson makes a further important point that I have come across nowhere else: 'It is often forgotten that [Beckett] held an Irish passport right up to the end of his life and lived in France on a renewable, hence readily revocable, *carte de séjour* (or residence permit). His foreign status imposed certain restrictions on him, therefore, as far as joining in political demonstrations, signing manifestos, and so on. As a result, after the war his political activism operated mainly at a private and individual level.' James Knowlson and John Haynes, 'A Portrait of Beckett', *Images of Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-41 (p. 33).
[71] Guy, p. 15.
[72] Guy, p. 2.

gardism accords well with the modernist novel's treatment of politics. If we wish to look for politics in Beckett's work, we must remember that a cardinal feature of modernism is the collapse of the distinction between form and content. The modernist novel is not a vehicle for social or political comment. But nor does it operate purely on an aesthetic plane. Instead, recognising the political implications of representation itself, it does its politics by literary means: 'for the various Modernist and avant-garde Marxist artists of the early twentieth century, the whole point was to overthrow existing representations, complicit as they were with the dominant political power.'[73]

Let us return now to the moment, in late 1950, at which Lindon and Beckett signed their first contract. It was alluded to above that at this time Lindon was wrestling with a dilemma that he had inherited from the wartime founders of the press, namely, the founders' narrow insistence on the pedigree of 'Resistance purity'. This branding, and the limiting (and thus damaging) consequences it had on the house's list, had become deeply problematic in the post-war marketplace, where Editions de Minuit was floundering as a newcomer lacking finances and literary credibility, and it was with this reputation that Lindon was battling when he met Beckett. But the way in which Lindon proposed to resolve this issue, coupled with the good fortune of forging a relationship with Beckett at the very time he did, resulted in a set of circumstances that favoured both Editions de Minuit -- as Lindon conceived the press -- and Beckett's work. Simonin calls Lindon's discovery of Beckett's work the 'miracle' that saved Editions de Minuit, and she notes Jean Paulhan's stunned response to *Molloy*, the first Beckett novel to appear under the Minuit imprint: he wrote to Lindon, 'Bravo pour *Molloy* [...]. Voilà qui classe une

[73] Terry Eagleton, 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', Review of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, *London Review of Books*, vol. 25, no. 20, 23 October 2003, pp. 17-19 (p. 18).

maison.'[74] It was thanks to this novel, in other words, that Lindon managed to effect a rebranding of Editions de Minuit, at once winning personal credibility as a publisher, and decisively positioning his firm in the vanguard of contemporary culture: 'Davantage que de la naissance, c'est donc bien de l'avènement d'un éditeur qu'il conviendrait de parler.'[75]

But what was it about the publication of this dark, dense, strange work that had such a significant influence on Editions de Minuit? We cannot attribute, in a straightforward fashion, the impact *Molloy* made only to its ideas or style, even though this impact was predicated on the provocative nature of these internal elements. The work's success did not rest, either, on sales but instead on its overwhelmingly positive critical reception. We might aptly recall here Barthes's likening of the avant-garde community to a family. The interrelatedness that characterised the literary field in post-war Paris benefitted *Molloy* greatly. This was an era in which the critic's role was immensely influential, and reviews were truly 'creusets d'histoire de la littérature contemporaine'.[76]

> Robert Kanters, collaborateur des *Nouvelles Littéraires*, pouvait alors écrire: 'De nos jours, non seulement les critiques sont nombreux, attentifs, zélés (dans aucun domaine le renouvellement des équipes depuis 1944 n'a été plus important et plus brilliant), mais encore presque tous les grands écrivains doublent leur oeuvres créatrice d'une oeuvre critique.' Chaque grand journal se doit d'avoir une rubrique littéraire tenue par un de ces êtres hybrides, mi-écrivain, mi-journaliste [...]. Le Prix des Critiques, qu'ils décernent tous les ans, est un prix très côté.[77]

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[74] 'Bravo for *Molloy* [...]. That is what ranks a [publishing] house.' Paulhan to Lindon (see note 2). Simonin, pp. 376, 379.
[75] 'More than the birth, it would therefore be appropriate to talk rather of the accession of a publisher.' Simonin, p. 385.
[76] 'crucibles of the history of contemporary literature'. Simonin, p. 378.
[77] 'Robert Kanters, who worked at *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, was thus able to write: 'These days, not only are there a great many searching, zealous critics (since 1944 the replenishment of these groups has not been as important and as brilliant in any other area), but also, almost all the major writers combine their creative work with critical work.' Each major newspaper was duty bound to have a literary section overseen by one of these hybrid beings, half-writer, half-journalist. [...] The Prix des Critiques, awarded each year, is held in

Simonin recognises that Lindon's strategy in cultivating these powerful critics was central to his long-term success as an avant-garde publisher.[78] In those early days, Editions de Minuit had no advertising budget whatsoever, but Lindon turned this to his advantage, 'activant essentiellement un réseau de critiques savants -- qui, à l'époque, a accès à la grande presse --, il réussit à obtenir pour ses auteurs non des rentrées d'argent mais une légitimité immédiate. Il est à proprement parler un 'auteur d'auteurs'.'[79] Simonin's phrase, dubbing Lindon an 'author of authors', is an interesting one, but she fails to explore her own observation. Her formulation can be read as a response to Foucault's famous inquiry into the nature of authorship, as it posits that an 'author' is someone who has been 'authored' by (in this instance) a publisher. Lindon, in this sense, can be regarded not merely as a middleman making and distributing copies of written works to the public, but as a figure invested with the authority to create 'authors' out of writers. The idea that a writer is an active subject (someone who writes, as Beckett had been doing for the last twenty years, but whose freedom as a subject is limiting since it equates with a lack of recognition), but that, conversely, an author is an object that has been acted upon by an external authority, an object that has been named or consecrated as an author and thus accepted into the network of relations that constitute the literary domain, concords neatly with the Foucauldian emphasis on the institutional nature of literature. These semantic niceties about object and subject are therefore useful because

very high esteem.' Robert Kanters, quoted by Simonin, pp. 377-78. For more on the Prix des Critiques, see p. 57.

[78] The lasting influence of the most important of these critics finds testament in John Fletcher's 1968 *New Directions in Literature*, the first study of contemporary French literature for English-speaking readers, where Blanchot, Bataille, and Nadeau all find mention. Each of these critics is discussed in more detail below. John Fletcher, *New Directions in Literature* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), pp. 59, 66.

[79] 'essentially activating a network of learned critics -- who, at this time, have access to the popular press -- he succeeds in obtaining for his authors not financial returns but an immediate legitimacy. He is, properly speaking, an 'author of authors'.' Simonin, p. 389.

they help us to distinguish where the influence lies -- the grammatical power structure illustrates the cultural power structure.

However, drawing out Simonin's phrase in this manner cannot provide a formula to explain the secrets of literary success generally nor of Beckett's success in particular. We wish to avoid an approach that invests too much in the idea of faceless, implacable cultural institutions sweeping up certain writers or works arbitrarily, like Fortune's wheel, and turning them into literary sensations. The reality of the creation of a literary reputation, certainly that evidenced by the Beckett-Lindon correspondence, is that it involves a subtle and hard-won interplay between numerous individuals with varying degrees and types of influence. It is in managing these interactions that Lindon was particularly astute. He was able to develop a list of authors who, thanks to his efforts to this end, quickly amassed the kind of symbolic cultural capital that would bring lasting benefits both to themselves and to Editions de Minuit. That initial sales were usually slow was less important to Lindon than the fact that the foundations for enduring careers were being laid.[80]

Simonin does not explore the intricacies of Lindon's relationship with Beckett, and nor does she accord enough emphasis to Beckett's role in the promotion of his work, insisting rather (perhaps due to relying overly on letters demonstrating Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil's feisty defence of Beckett's privacy) that he remained entirely detached from publicity matters. A detailed analysis of Lindon and Beckett's

[80] Lindon's strategy has proved prudent. Bourdieu notes that in 1975, for example, Editions de Minuit's budget was, not atypically, in deficit if only new publications were taken into account. The firm survived on its assets, in other words on works, like *En attendant Godot*, that had become famous. *Godot*'s sales increased at a steady rate averaging about 20 per cent per annum in its first fifteen years of publication -- Bourdieu contrasts this with the short-term success of a book that sells well in its first year and then falls off to a static sales rate. (Bourdieu, pp. 144-45.)

correspondence reveals, however, that each man played a part in encouraging the all-important critical coverage that launched Beckett's early works into the French public sphere. Beckett's legendary resistance to all forms of publicity was in reality more complicated and more strategic than is commonly allowed. His unwillingness to participate personally in any publicity-related events certainly posed a challenge for Lindon, but this challenge, far from discouraging him, brought the young publisher's promotional abilities to the fore. Lindon was remarkably sensitive to and indulgent of Beckett's wishes in this regard, and the limitations within which he worked render his achievements the more impressive. Beckett was acutely aware of the need to create a suitable reputation for his work, and thence to control it as much as possible, by seeking the support of the key critics whose influence would increase the likelihood of the work's safe passage from the private into the public domain. His refusal to put *himself* into the limelight (which is usually accepted as indicating a comprehensive disapproval of and disdain for publicity as a whole) in actual fact rendered the promotion of the *work* the more vital, and resulted in a particularly assiduous cultivation of the most influential members of the *monde littéraire*. These figures were, in essence, enlisted to speak for Beckett's work on his behalf, since Beckett was adamant 'de ne mêler en rien sa personne à la publicité qui pourrait être faite autour du livre.'[81]

Beckett's ongoing efforts to protect himself from publicity made manifest the close link between the promotion of a book and the promotion of its author. Indeed, there was a sense in which Lindon was able to harness Beckett's *re*clusiveness and market it as *ex*clusiveness: 'Le retrait de Samuel Beckett va être utilisé par son éditeur comme un

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[81] 'that he himself in no way be dragged into the publicity that might arise around the book [here, *Molloy*].' Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 20 April 1951.

moyen de promotion: il fournit la preuve de l'authenticité de l'artiste et de son travail.'[82] But Lindon was forced largely to abandon an author-reliant promotional strategy in favour of a work-reliant one. Although this policy stimulated journalistic interest in Beckett's private life (increasingly so, as his fame grew), it was also successful in directing critical focus away from the author and onto the work itself, as is made evident in the following excerpt, which appeared in an article in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* in 1966:

> Rien de plus bref que la fiche biographique de Samuel Beckett, et rien de plus strictement littéraire. Cet écrivain est l'un des seuls, aujourd'hui, à s'être maintenus à l'écart des parades et des pompes de la publicité. On ne connaît de lui que son oeuvre, et tout juste sait-on de sa vie privée qu'il demeure aux environs de Paris. Indépendant de toutes les écoles, il ne s'est expliqué dans aucun manifeste et ne s'est jamais mêlé à la moindre polémique. Inutile, donc d'essayer d'imaginer le personnage: il faut aller directement à ses livres.[83]

The distinction between these two forms of promotion, author-reliant and work-reliant, is vital to understanding Beckett's publication history. It is as if, once publication made possible (and inevitable) the transition of his work into the public domain, Beckett simultaneously recoiled from personal publicity and began to take an active role in pursuing alternative avenues of promotion. His letters to Lindon reveal a sometimes surprising canniness about the exigencies of the publishing business. Indeed, as we have seen above, in breaking with Bordas Beckett had emphasised the need to entrust his

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[82] 'Samuel Beckett's reticence would be used by his publisher as a means of promotion: it offered the proof of the authenticity of the artist and the work.' Simonin, p. 390. For further discussion of the relationship between Beckett's desire for privacy and the promotion of his work, see chapter four, p. 226.

[83] 'There is nothing shorter than a biographical sketch of Beckett, and nothing more strictly literary. This writer is one of the only ones, today, to have kept himself apart from the parades and pomp of publicity. We know nothing of him but his work, though of his private life we do know that he lives in the vicinity of Paris. Independent from all schools, he has never explained himself in any manifesto and has never involved himself in any polemic whatsoever. So it is useless to imagine his character: we have to go directly to his books.' Robert Abirached, 'La Souffrance des Fantômes', *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 24 February 1966, p. 6.

books 'à un éditeur qui puisse [...] leur assurer une publicité *convenable*' (my emphasis).[84] It is most significant that he appears to have had an almost instinctive appreciation of the concept of 'publicité convenable', or, in other words, that certain kinds of promotion simply would not be right for his work, but that certain other kinds were absolutely necessary for it. This made for a happy conjunction with Lindon's beliefs, not just about what was valuable in literature, but also about how to ensure that this value could be translated into both cultural and economic capital.

This appreciation of Beckett's may have been somewhat obscured in the early years of his and Lindon's relationship, when Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil attended to most of Beckett's correspondence (and, as I have suggested above, an over-reliance on the letters from these early years may account for Simonin's failure to grasp the extent of Beckett's role in publicity matters). Deschevaux-Dumesnil's devotion to Beckett's work, and his gratitude to her, have been well documented by Beckett's biographers. Her pursuit of publishers who might take on Beckett's early writing was vigorous, and once his contract with Editions de Minuit was secured in November 1950, she undertook much of the administrative work necessitated by the relationship. Indeed, she initially corresponded more frequently with Lindon than did Beckett. It is clear from her letters, however, that Beckett was far from indifferent to or withdrawn from the daily cares of his work's publication and promotion. Deschevaux-Dumesnil consulted with him at every step, thereafter conveying his wishes to Lindon. Over time, her role as an intermediary decreased, and by 1952 Beckett more often than not wrote directly to Lindon. The correspondence between Lindon and Beckett furnishes evidence of the author's

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[84] 'to a publisher who will be able to secure appropriate publicity for them'. Beckett to Bordas, 22 January 1951. See note 9.

involvement in cultivating the *monde littéraire*, whose attention Lindon so assiduously sought. Beckett's contribution was not limited to vague interest or detached encouragement. Rather, he did, at times, occupy himself with the minutiae of promotional business. We find among the Editions de Minuit papers, for example, a dated list of fifteen names handwritten by Beckett: these are the critics to whom he intended that signed copies of *En attendant Godot*, which had appeared just ten days earlier, be sent. Among them are influential reviewers such as Nadeau, Blanzat, Lemarchand (who also wrote for the *Figaro Littéraire*), Bataille, and Blanchot, and luminary avant-garde figures including Tzara and Adamov.[85] Lindon was meticulous in realising this wish, going so far as to write to Tzara's office at the *Lettres Françaises* to request his home address, as he felt this would better ensure the play would reach its destined recipient.[86]

Beckett was not an avid follower of the press, especially when staying at Ussy, where the papers were not readily available, but Lindon keenly read each review, and sent Beckett and Deschevaux-Dumesnil regular updates on who was writing what, where.[87] In a letter written soon after the opening of *Godot* at the Babylone theatre in Paris in early January 1953, he enthused: 'Vous savez que la Presse est très favorable et qu'ont paru déjà des articles dans l'Aurore, le Parisien Libéré, Paris-Presse, Libération, Ce Matin, Le Figaro Littéraire, Combat, Franc-Tireur, l'Observateur.'[88] He assured Beckett that he would keep copies of each for Beckett to see on his return to Paris. A few weeks

[85] Beckett, 27 October 1952.
[86] Lindon to Tzara, 30 October 1952.
[87] Lindon would even chase up what he perceived to be noticeable silences. For instance, after the appearance of *Malone meurt* he was surprised to find that Max-Pol Fouchet (who had written in praise of *Molloy* just months earlier -- see p. 66) had not yet reviewed the new work in *Carrefour*, and, before taking the matter further, was anxious to ascertain that Fouchet had received a copy of the book as intended. Lindon to Beckett, 5 December 1951.
[88] 'You know the Press is most supportive and articles have already appeared in [etc]'. Lindon to Beckett, 8 January 1953.

later, after noting new ('assez bons') articles that had appeared in *La Revue de Paris* and *La Table Ronde*, he was able to inform Beckett that '*En attendant Godot* a été primé le Livre du Mois par une association des Librairies de toute la France. Vous succèdez, dans ce choix, à Hemingway pour 'Le viel homme et la mer'. Vous voyez qu'ils font bien les choses.'[89] As ever, cultural pedigree weighed heavily in Lindon's assessments of the worth of different types of public acknowledgement.

Writing just over ten years after *Molloy* appeared about the rise to fame of Ionesco, Adamov and Beckett, Barthes attested to the combined power of a well-known critic and the 'journaux 'bien-pensants'' to exercise 'une sorte de droit de vie ou de mort sur le théâtre d'avant-garde': although Ionesco had long been deemed 'un auteur hermétique, joué pour quelques initiés [...] il a suffi qu'Anouilh consacrât dans le *Figaro Littéraire* un article favorable à Ionesco, pour que, du jour au lendemain, la bourgeoisie accueillît Ionesco, et changeât entièrement les conditions d'exploitation de son théâtre.'[90] The in-house nature of this network is evidenced in Editions de Minuit's 1956 catalogue. Six of Beckett's works appear in the literary 'Collection Blanche' (*Murphy*, the three novels of the trilogy, *Nouvelles et textes pour rien*, and *En attendant Godot*), which advertises just nineteen authors and thirty titles in total, but which features no fewer than eighty-six quotations from critics with columns in important newspapers or reviews. Of the sixteen critics enlisted to promote Beckett's work, eight of them are quoted at least twice, and some as many as five times, elsewhere in the 'Collection Blanche' section.

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[89] '*En attendant Godot* has been awarded the prize of Book of the Month by an association of bookshops from all over France. You are following Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea* in winning this. You can see how well they are doing things.' Lindon to Beckett, 4 March 1953.

[90] 'the 'right-thinking' newspapers'; 'a kind of power of life or death over the avant-garde theatre'; 'an abstruse author played for an initiated few [...] it was enough that Anouilh, in *Le Figaro Littéraire*, consecrated a favourable article to Ionesco that, from one day to the next, the bourgeoisie welcomed Ionesco and entirely altered the conditions of how his work operated.' Barthes, 'Le Théâtre français d'avant-garde', pp. 12, 15.

Furthermore, seven of the quoted critics (including Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, and Jean Paulhan, each of whom is referred to elsewhere in this chapter with regard to their support of Beckett) *also* appear in the catalogue as Editions de Minuit authors.[91] This demonstrates the influence of a small number of individuals, but the catalogue also reveals the concentration of cultural power in terms of publications: the eighty-six quotations are sourced from forty different papers and journals, but over half of the quotations (forty-six) have come from just nine of these papers and journals.[92] The *Figaro Littéraire* stars most frequently -- a total of nine times. The catalogue reveals Lindon's recognition of the critics' power, and, furthermore, his willingness to participate in the game of cultural consecration.

A different aspect of the relationship-building between in-house groups that characterised Lindon's promotional strategy is evident in a pamphlet issued by the Editions de Minuit bookshop in 1961. It is obvious, in this small, glossy publication, that Lindon was seeking to launch the idea of two complementary elites -- one made up of writers, the other, of readers -- who would be brought together via Editions de Minuit. The pamphlet announced the creation of 'Les 412', a select group of subscribers (which the publisher undertook to limit in number to just 412) for whom a numbered first edition would be reserved, of books 'que nous estimerons dignes d'enrichir une bibliothèque de littérature contemporaine.'[93] Lindon promotes his literary stars as a community of *nouveau romanciers*, writing that 'avec la publication de *Molloy* par Samuel Beckett,

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[91] Editions de Minuit published Blanchot in 1949 (*Lautréamont et Sade*). Two of Paulhan's works appeared in 1951 (*Petite Préface à Toute Critique* and *Lettres aux Directeurs de la Résistance*), and a third in 1953 (*La Preuve par l'Etymologie*). Bataille's *La Haine de la Poésie* came out in 1947, *Eponine* and *La Part Maudite* in 1949, and *L'Abbé C* in 1950.
[92] Editions de Minuit catalogue, 1956. Included as supplement in Simonin.
[93] 'which we will deem worthy of enriching a library of contemporary literature'. 'Les 412', Editions de Minuit Pamphlet, 1961, Lilly Library, Calder and Boyars Archive, Series V, Box VI, Folder 1. This collection will henceforth be referred to throughout the thesis as LL, CBA.

1951 marque probablement la date où commença de se constituer en France ce qu'on appela ensuite le 'nouvean roman'.'[94] Symbolic value is cleverly employed here as a means to an economic end; the pamphlet's first page lists the distinctions earned by Lindon's writers (the Prix des Critiques to Robbe-Grillet in 1955; the Renaudot to Michel Butor in 1957; the Prix de l'Express to Simon in 1960; and the International Publisher's Prize to Beckett in 1961), but it goes to greater lengths to detail the increase in monetary value, over the last decade, of the writers' first editions. As a sales tactic the coupling of the works' cultural and monetary value is effective if somewhat unsubtle. What is particularly interesting about the pamphlet is the way that it quietly manifests links between the publisher and his writers. Indeed, its cover features a photograph of Lindon and his most successful authors (he stands in the midst of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, Claude Mauriac, Robert Pinget, Beckett and Nathalie Sarraute), standing together chatting and smoking on the street outside Editions de Minuit. (This same photograph was published in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* a few years later with a feature on Beckett, under the title "L'Ecurie' des Editions de Minuit'.)[95] Having established the existence of this group, the pamphlet then appeals to an elite readership who, by agreeing to become one of the privileged 412 subscribers, will enjoy a unique association with Lindon's 'stable' of thoroughbreds.

But the fact that Lindon was able to build up such a distinctive list was due, in some measure, to the terrific critical success of *Molloy* back in 1951. Bound between plain white covers that were adorned only with the blue Editions de Minuit star, and the

[94] 'with the publication of Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*, 1951 probably marks the date when what would later be called the 'new novel' began to take shape.' 'Les 412', Editions de Minuit Pamphlet, 1961, LL, CBA, Series V, Box VI, Folder 1. Beckett's relationship with the *nouveau romanciers* is discussed further in chapter two. See pp. 97-98.
[95] 'The Editions de Minuit 'Stable". *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 24 February 1966, p. 6.

title and author's name in blue print, *Molloy* appeared on 15 March 1951, with a print run of 3,000 copies.[96] Its reception was avidly -- though not anxiously -- awaited by Lindon. The publisher was not simply confident of the response *Molloy* was likely to elicit. He in fact knew in advance that certain vital, and favourable, reviews were going to appear. He eagerly anticipated the publication of an article by the critic Jean Blanzat (who, as Lindon affirmed, was known to be exacting and sparing with his praise, but who was greatly influential) which was to appear in the august journal, the *Figaro Littéraire*. Lindon was convinced that Blanzat would strenuously defend Beckett: 'Il faut que Samuel Beckett sache que Blanzat dit tout simplement: 'Je considère que c'est ça, la critique: pouvoir dire, au moins une fois dans sa vie, qu'un grand écrivain vient d'apparaitre.' Il est prêt, j'en suis sûr, à défendre l'oeuvre de Beckett, qu'il vient de découvrir, de toutes ses forces.'[97] What made the publisher's desire to win the approval of this critic so acute was Blanzat's standing in literary circles, and beyond that the forum in which his approval was to be made public. During the Occupation, Blanzat had helped found the Comité national des Ecrivains. His distinguished career included the literary directorship at Grasset, and a position on the reading panel at Gallimard.[98] And indeed, just three weeks after *Molloy*'s appearance, Blanzat's highly complimentary article was printed in the *Figaro Littéraire*,

[96] The bibliographical coding of Editions de Minuit's literary editions, which have been published in virtually unchanged material format for over fifty years, is striking. Much as the works published during the Occupation had been renowned for the high quality of their paper and bindings, it was hoped that, as artifacts, the books would help to establish the image of the young publishing house. Their austerity embodies intellectual rigour, and advertises, misleadingly, a kind of 'pure' literature, which is uncontaminated by the fuss of promotional appendages or manipulations. I have been unable to find any evidence in early reviews that the materiality of the books struck critics. But John Fletcher, writing in 1968, refers to the 'select company' appearing between the 'austere but elegant covers that characterize Jérôme Lindon's publications'. Fletcher, p. 199.

[97] 'Samuel Beckett must know that Blanzat says quite simply: 'I consider criticism to be this: to be able to say, at least once in one's life, that a great writer has just appeared.' He is prepared, I am sure, to defend Beckett's work, which he has just discovered, with all his strength.' Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 20 April 1951.

[98] <http://www.imec-archives.com/fonds/ficheauteur1.asp?num=41> [accessed 28 October 2003].

much to Lindon's delight: 'Tout le monde ici', he wrote excitedly to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 'a été sensible au ton tout à fait exceptionnel de l'article de Blanzat qui pratiquement ne s'est pas 'engagé' sur beaucoup de livres depuis qu'il tient cette rubrique. Qu'un critique de sa position affirme: 'Il s'agit vraiment là d'une oeuvre capitale de l'après-guerre', celà aidera grandement, j'en suis sûr, au retentissement du livre.'[99]

But this was not the only influential article that heralded the publication of *Molloy*. Two days earlier, a laudatory article by Maurice Nadeau had appeared in the prestigious left-wing review, *Combat*. In 1951 Nadeau, who went on to found his own publishing house in 1979, was already a respected, powerful critic and had recently been appointed director of *Combat*.[100] He was known for his uncompromising and daring support of literary causes, and had earned a certain infamy for publishing the first public edition of de Sade's work soon after the war.[101]

> L'édition est devenue une industrie, Nadeau est resté un artisan. [...] La marque Nadeau: découvrir de nouveaux talents. Et le 'catalogue' est impressionnant! Comme critique littéraire, d'abord -- à *Combat* puis à *France-Observateur* et à *L'Express* -- Maurice Nadeau défend Michaux, Leiris, Queneau, Borges, puis fait découvrir au grand public un certain Samuel Beckett.[102]

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[99] 'Everyone here was aware of the completely exceptional tone of Blanzat's article, Blanzat who, since he took over this column, has 'fought for' hardly any books. That a critic of his standing affirms: 'This is really one of the major post-war works', will hugely help, I'm sure, to create a stir around the book.' Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 17 April 1951.

[100] Martine de Rabaudy, 'Maurice Nadeau', <http://www.bibliomonde.net/pages/fiche-editeurs.php3?id_editeur=107> [accessed 30 April 2004].

[101] François Busnel, 'Maurice Nadeau, éditeur franc-tireur', <http://livres.lexpress.fr.dossiers.asp/idC=3994/idR=4> [accessed 30 April 2004].

[102] 'Publishing became an industry, Nadeau remained an artisan. [...] Nadeau's hallmark: discovering new talent. And the 'catalogue' is impressive! First, as literary critic -- in *Combat* then in *France-Observateur* and in *L'Express* -- Maurice Nadeau defends Michaux, Leiris, Queneau, Borges, then introduces to the general public a certain Samuel Beckett'. François Busnel, 'Maurice Nadeau, éditeur franc-tireur', <http://livres.lexpress.fr.dossiers.asp/idC=3994/idR=4> [accessed 30 April 2004].

Nadeau, mystified but enchanted by *Molloy*, upheld Beckett as the 'champion du Rien porté à la hauteur du Tout'.[103] Further, in a great promotional coup, Nadeau had printed an extract of the opening pages of *Malone meurt*, and he alerted readers that this second novel would be appearing in November, specifying that it would be under the Editions de Minuit imprint. Once more, Lindon's pleasure was palpable: 'Ces deux papiers vont certainement attirer l'attention du Monde Littéraire, et j'en serai heureux. Comme le journaliste, l'éditeur a de ces désirs...'[104] He asked that Deschevaux-Dumesnil assure Beckett that 'ces premiers résultats ne nous satisfont pas encore et que nous faisons tous nos efforts dans tous les domaines pour contribuer à la divulgation de cette oeuvre'.[105]

Two further important articles on *Molloy* warrant mention. One was a long, favourable piece by Georges Bataille in *Critique*. Simonin dubs Bataille 'inclassable', and his position has also been characterised as being 'on the margins or in the interstices of the major French intellectual and cultural movements'.[106] Nonetheless, Bataille's association with Editions de Minuit was an important marker in the process by which Lindon rebranded the house, abandoning its founders' one-dimensional political focus in order to participate instead 'dans le débat intellectuel et se positionner à l'avant-garde en

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[103] 'champion of Nothing brought to the height of Everything'. Maurice Nadeau, 'Samuel Beckett, ou: En avant, vers nulle part!', *Combat*, 2107, 12 April 1951, pp. 4-6 (p. 4). Nadeau also heralded *Molloy* as a 'cas-limite [...] dans la littérature d'aujourd'hui' ('on the outer boundary of today's literature'). 'Lettres', *Mercure de France*, p. 693. Lindon did express some concern that Nadeau, having had *Molloy* for just ten days, may have 'brûlé quelques étapes pour pouvoir 'être le premier à en parler' ('taken a few shortcuts in order to be 'the first to talk about it"). After all, he added wryly, 'le journalisme a de ces ambitions...' ('journalism has these ambitions...'). Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 12 April 1951.

[104] 'These two articles will certainly attract the attention of the Literary World, and I am delighted about that. Just like a journalist, a publisher has these desires...' Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 12 April 1951.

[105] 'these early results have not satisfied us yet and we will do all we can in all spheres to contribute to the publicising of this work'. Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 17 April 1951.

[106] Simonin, p. 312; Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, eds, *Bataille: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 5.

accueillant matières et auteurs qui ne sont pas encore légitimes'.[107] Although Bataille suffered from both a lack of recognition and from misrecognition during much of his lifetime, in the words of the historian of *Tel Quel*, the review that, according to Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, did much to claim him as a major thinker after his death in 1962, he became the 'acknowledged hero' of the 1960s avant-garde review.[108] Bataille founded *Critique* in 1946, and in 1950 it was taken over by Editions de Minuit. At the time, a review journal was considered a vital part of any literary publisher's armoury; it bolstered their literary credibility and also served as an excellent means of advertising new works. The unique formula of *Critique* was to publish no fiction but to devote itself entirely to reviews and studies of important works, be they literary, philosophical, theological or political. The revue 'jouit d'un grand prestige auprès d'un public cultivé tant sur le plan national qu'international. Elle est un rouage capital dans un cycle de consécration de nouveaux auteurs. Elle sera un élément décisif dans la constitution de l'image littéraire de la maison [Editions de Minuit].'[109] In an advertisement for *Critique* that appeared in Editions de Minuit's 1956 catalogue, François Mauriac is quoted (and the source, the *Figaro Littéraire*, is prominently displayed), as calling the revue 'la mieux faite qui paraisse aujourd'hui'.[110]

The other noteworthy article about *Molloy* was a second piece by Nadeau, longer than the first, which appeared four months later in the journal *Mercure de France*. Here,

[107] 'in intellectual debate, and to position themselves in the avant-garde by welcoming subjects and authors [who were] not yet legitimate'. Simonin, p. 316.
[108] Patrick Ffrench, *The Time of Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 28, quoted by Botting and Wilson, p. 6.
[109] 'enjoyed great prestige with a cultivated public, as much on the national as the international scene. It played a vital part in the consecration of new authors. It would be a decisive element in the constitution of Edition de Minuit's literary image.' Simonin, p. 362.
[110] 'the best made revue published today'. Editions de Minuit catalogue, 1956, p. 58. Included as supplement in Simonin.

Nadeau asserted that with *Molloy*, Beckett 's'établit parmi les grands écrivains et prend place dans notre littérature'. Nadeau noted, too, the extraordinary amount of commentary that had arisen around the book: 'Il a suscité des commentaires enthousiastes ou savants, et le voici déjà chargé de significations si diverses que l'obscurité s'épaissit à mesure qu'on parle de lui.'[111] It was all grist to Lindon's mill.

Despite being displeased with some errors in Blanzat's article in the *Figaro Littéraire*, which Beckett and Deschevaux-Dumesnil compared unfavourably with Nadeau's more accurate piece in *Combat*, Deschevaux-Dumesnil assured Lindon that 'Beckett est très sensible à la chance qu'il a eue d'avoir attiré l'attention de deux critiques aussi écoutés.'[112] This shrewd acknowledgement of the significance of Blanzat's and Nadeau's support did not, however, alleviate Beckett's concern about exposing himself to publicity ('non seulement son nom et son travail, mais sa personne').[113] Nonetheless, Lindon went on to seek Beckett's permission to submit *Molloy* for the Prix des Critiques, which literary prize he described as 'le plus valable, puisque il [sic] comprend parmi les membres de son jury des critiques comme Nadeau, Blanzat, Paulhan, Marcel Arland, Maurice Blanchot, Armand Hoog, etc... Les deux précédents lauréats ont été, je vous la rapelle, Albert Camus pour 'La Peste' et Jules Supervielle.'[114] Lindon was not merely indulging in name-dropping; he was declaring the cultural pedigree of the prize to be of the first order. As ever, this letter makes explicit Lindon's belief that, for him as a

[111] 'establishes himself among the great writers and takes his place as part of our literature'; 'It has excited enthusiastic or learned commentaries, and now here it is loaded with meanings so diverse that the more we talk about it, the more its obscurity intensifies.' Nadeau, 'Lettres', *Mercure de France*, p. 693.
[112] 'Beckett is very much aware of the good fortune he has had in attracting the attention of two such influential critics.' Deschevaux-Dumesnil to Lindon, 19 April 1951.
[113] 'not just his name and his work, but his self'. Deschevaux-Dumesnil to Lindon, 19 April 1951.
[114] 'the most valuable, because it includes among the members of its jury critics like [etc]. Let me remind you that the last two laureates were [etc].' Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 17 April 1951. The Prix des Critiques was founded in 1945.

publisher, the value of a literary work was determined not simply by the quantity of cultural capital it was able to amass, but by the quality of that capital (which was largely bound up with the questions of 'who?' and 'where?' -- the power of the signature, and the power of location). He was seeking to help shape a reputation for *Molloy* by virtue of association, and correlatively, he was establishing Beckett's reputation and -- once again by the value of association -- that of Editions de Minuit.

But Beckett was fearful of the publicity to which the winning of the Prix des Critiques might oblige him. Deschevaux-Dumesnil intimated that he would rather sacrifice the prestige of this award, or any other, than have to endure interviews and photographs, which, she said, he dreaded above all else: 'Il se sent tout à fait incapable d'un tel comportement.'[115] Lindon pressed his case, however, and even offered that should Beckett win, he would accept the award on the author's behalf, just as he was to do nearly two decades later with the Nobel Prize. In any event, Lindon sought to assure Beckett, he could always avoid the press with the excuse that he was unavailable because he was staying in the country. 'L'attribution du Prix des Critiques à 'Molloy'', insisted Lindon, 'aurait certainement un grand retentissement'.[116] To this end, would Beckett agree to the request of *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* by granting an interview, even a written one? Deschevaux-Dumesnil's response on Beckett's behalf was categorical: 'Beckett ne veut pas entendre parler d'interview que ça se fasse oralement ou par écrit. Je crains qu'il ne soit inébranlable sur le chapitre. [...] Beckett répugne à invoquer son absence de Paris

[115] 'He feels completely incapable of such behaviour.' Deschevaux-Dumesnil to Lindon, 19 April 1951.
[116] '*Molloy* winning the Prix des Critiques would certainly create a huge stir.' Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 20 April 1951.

pour justifier sa carence sur le plan publicitaire.'[117] Making excuses in order to dodge the media, as if in valuing his privacy Beckett were in the wrong, was not acceptable to him.[118] *Molloy* did not, in the end, win the Prix des Critiques, but Lindon consoled him with the news that Blanchot, Blanzat and Nadeau had supported the book to the end.[119]

It is interesting to note Blanchot's comment on this event forty years later, in his obituary of Beckett:

> In a way, when *Molloy*, then *Malone Dies* first appeared in France, it was naive of us (Georges Bataille, Maurice Nadeau and myself) to hope to alert the Prix des Critiques to these texts, even though so many remarkable writers and critics were on that committee, admittedly still as members of the 'literary establishment', when it was clear that even Beckett's early books [...] were foreign to the resources of 'literature'.[120]

In other words, in the literary field of the early 1950s, Beckett's work did not accord with *a particular idea* of what literature was. Blanchot underlines the fact that the establishment figures of the time (or at least, those figures who were, in this instance, occupying establishment positions) were unwilling to, or perhaps incapable of, according Beckett's work the legitimacy that would come with winning the Prix des Critiques because of the work's 'foreign' (or alien, hence alienating) nature. The jury would not

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[117] 'Beckett wishes to hear nothing about any interview, be it oral or written. I'm afraid he is unshakeable on the issue [...] Beckett loathes the idea of invoking his absence from Paris to justify his shortcomings in publicity matters.' Deschevaux-Dumesnil to Lindon, 24 April 1951.

[118] It is worth noting that Beckett's attitude softened considerably with the passage of time. Even by 1953, he was suggesting that Lindon tell a would-be interviewer that he, Beckett, was unwell and thus had to stay in Ussy, adding drily, 'c'est d'ailleurs un peu vrai' ('what's more, it's kind of true'). Beckett to Lindon, 1 December 1953. Beckett's increasing use of excuses to protect his time and privacy are also noted in chapter four, p. 226.

[119] Lindon to Deschevaux-Dumesnil, 29 May 1951. Beckett's reluctance to grant interviews can be read not only as a personal idiosyncracy, but as part of a wider cultural discourse. As articulated by Deschevaux-Dumesnil, Beckett's attitude is individual and temperamental, but it also typifies a larger cult of opposition to interviews that has its roots in the late nineteenth century: Beckett fits into an unhappy concatenation involving the modernist aesthetic of distancing the author, and the growth of a journalistic interview culture that foregrounds, or at least seeks to draw out, the author. See Peter D. McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 7-9.

[120] Maurice Blanchot, 'Oh All to End,' in *The Blanchot Reader*, ed. by Michael Holland (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 298.

employ their authority, to borrow Simonin's terminology, to 'author' Beckett as an 'author'. Blanchot's obituary illuminates the limitations of Bourdieu's anti-essentialist conception of literature. Bourdieu maintains that the key question to ask about what literature is, concerns not its formal qualities so much as who decides:

> It is enough to pose the forbidden question to perceive that the artist who makes the work is himself made, at the core of the field of production, by the whole ensemble of those who help to 'discover' him and to consecrate him as an artist who is 'known' and recognized [...] [The merchant in art] contributes to 'making' the value of the author he supports by the sole fact of bringing him or her into a known and renowned existence, so that the author is assured of publication (under his imprint, in his gallery or theatre, etc.) and offered as a guarantee all the symbolic capital the merchant has accumulated.[121]

Blanchot's insight allows us to see that Bourdieu underestimates the potential of new writing to transform institutional frameworks -- Beckett's work exceeded the category of 'literature', and so posed a challenge to the agents and institutions possessing consecratory power.

Lindon sought out and cultivated avant-garde critics who would not just champion Beckett, but who would first -- and most significantly -- recognise his work, claim it, allow it to exist in the cultural sphere by situating it in (and in opposition to) a tradition. Bourdieu cautions, however, that 'in moving backwards from the 'creator' to the 'discoverer' as 'creator of the creator', we have only displaced the initial question'.[122] In other words, how was it that Blanchot's support of Beckett had any weight in the cultural sphere? What was it about Blanchot that prompted Deschevaux-Dumesnil to say, with regard to the Prix des Critiques, that 'avoir été défendu *par un homme comme Blanchot,*

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[121] Bourdieu, pp. 167-68.
[122] Bourdieu, p. 168.

cela aura été le principal pour Beckett quoi qu'il arrive' (my emphasis)?[123] In certain respects, Blanchot might be considered Beckett's ideal literary critical counterpart. A highly reclusive figure who supposedly never permitted his photograph to be taken, he was profoundly concerned with themes and ideas central to Beckett's work, such as the disintegration of the subject and the disappearance of the author. Before World War II he worked as a political journalist, but increasingly devoted his energies to writing about literature. By the mid-1950s, 'his position as the most original voice of the time was confirmed', and, although 'present on the Paris scene as little more than a signature, he became probably the most influential literary figure of the period.'[124]

Blanchot was very much part of the cultural network to which Editions de Minuit also belonged, partly due to his close friendship with Georges Bataille (Blanchot helped Bataille found *Critique*, which Editions de Minuit later took over). In some respects, however, he also inhabited the margins of the avant-garde literary scene. This was not due just to personal reticence -- Blanchot's politics, which were considered to be suspiciously right wing, meant that his status in an overwhelmingly left-oriented cultural grouping was always contested.[125] Beckett's work, in receiving Blanchot's backing, was in effect countersigned by Blanchot, but this support was not of the relatively straightforward kind represented by other less controversial critics like Nadeau. Blanchot's support, then, may have been twofold in its effect, with one consequence contradicting, or working against, the other; whereas Blanchot's standing as a writer, thinker and critic would have tended to consecrate Beckett, his politics may have had the

[123] 'To have been defended by a man like Blanchot, that will have been the main thing for Beckett whatever happens.' Deschevaux-Dumesnil to Lindon, 25 May 1951.
[124] Obituary of Maurice Blanchot, *The Times*, 26 February 2003, p. 31.
[125] Blanchot's politics have been debated, and defended, since his death. See Ullrich Haase and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 85-95.

tendency of marginalising the work that he approved. The force of this effect is difficult to gauge, however, especially when we consider Blanchot's beliefs about the relationship between art and politics. His connection with Editions de Minuit was founded more deeply than on acquaintances alone, since both his and Lindon's philosophy 'ran counter to the prevailing belief that literature and art should be committed to a cause'.[126] By the time *Molloy* appeared, Blanchot was, despite the controversy that accompanied his politics, established as an enormously influential critic. He not only championed new avant-garde writers (many of whom, such as Beckett and Alain Robbe-Grillet, were Editions de Minuit authors) but, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, engaged in written dailogues with leading thinkers such as Heidegger, Sartre, Lacan, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, and later, Foucault and Derrida.[127]

That Lindon as a friend was sensitive to Beckett's passion for privacy did not mean that tensions between the two men over Beckett's attitude towards promotion did not arise. Nor did it prevent Lindon from applying ongoing, if gentle, pressure as an editor to encourage Beckett to see the benefits that would accrue if only he would embrace a slightly more prominent role in the promotion of his work.[128] Towards the end of 1953 Lindon included at the end of a long letter a diplomatically phrased, but explicit, plea for Beckett to ingratiate himself with Georges Charensol, one of the members of the

[126] Douglas Johnson, Obituary of Maurice Blanchot, *Guardian*, 1 March 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/obituaries/story/0,3604,905220,00.html> [accessed 30 April 2004] . This is a rather crude reading of Lindon's position on this matter. For further discussion, see above, pp. 40-42.
[127] Holland, *The Blanchot Reader*, p. 104.
[128] A further example of this pressure, which also evinces the importance of personal relationships and influence within publishing circles, is Lindon's request that Beckett give, not so much an interview (as Lindon is at pains to point out) as an introductory reading to an excerpt from one of his texts that was to be broadcast on Radiodiffusion Française. The programme director, Michel Polac, used to work for Editions de Minuit. 'Je crois qu'il serait très bien que vous puissiez lui donner, dans la mesure de vos moyens, satisfaction.' ('I think it would be very good if you could give him, as far as you feel capable, what he is after.') Lindon to Beckett, 23 January 1952.

jury for the Prix Théophraste Renaudot and editor of the journal *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*. *L'Innommable* had, Lindon contended, 'de très sérieuses chances d'obentir le prix, sur l'insistence de gens comme Maurice Nadeau et Claude-Edmonde Magny.'[129] It was likely, however, that it would be Charensol who would finally determine the winning entry. 'Il n'y a pas de doute', Lindon reminded Beckett, 'que cela aurait une énorme répercussion sur la vente des trois livres et aiderait également les éditeurs anglais et allemands.' To this end, he asked that Beckett consider granting Charensol the exclusive interview that the critic was eager to secure for *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, all the while assuring Beckett that 'naturellement, je n'ai pas donné mon accord sur ce point'.[130] Charensol had that very morning telephoned Lindon to inquire whether Beckett, should he win, would be willing to take part in the celebrations, which would involve publicly thanking the jury and agreeing to dine with the committee the following year. Lindon closed the letter with a somewhat pathetic assurance that he would perfectly understand if Beckett refused the requests, but that as publisher he was obliged to ask. Predictably, Beckett did refuse the requests, although he lamented that he was 'bien malheureux de toute cette histoire'.[131] Later the same day, he wrote a second, fuller response to Lindon, apologising for the trouble he realised he was causing for his publisher, but emphasising that he would never grant any interviews to anyone, and insisting that 'si l'attribution de ce prix dépend de singeries pour ne pas dire de marchandages pareils, merde.'[132] It is

[129] 'a very serious chance of winning the prize, on the insistence of people like [etc]'. Lindon to Beckett, 30 November 1953. It was Nadeau who first suggested that Lindon submit the novel for the prize. Lindon to Beckett, 30 October 1953.
[130] 'there is no doubt that this would have an enormous impact on the sale of the three books, and it would likewise help the English and German publishers'; 'of course I have not agreed to this point'. Lindon to Beckett, 30 November 1953.
[131] 'most unhappy about this whole business'. Beckett to Lindon, 1 December 1953 (i).
[132] 'if the award of this prize depends on such nonsense, not to mention such haggling, bugger it.' Beckett to Lindon, 1 December 1953 (ii).

likely that the prize did in fact rest, at least to some degree, on such mercenary haggling, although to what extent we can never be certain. What is clear is that Charensol did not interview Beckett, and that Beckett did not win the Renaudot. When Lindon relayed the bad news to Beckett, he informed him that three of the judges (Nadeau, Claude-Edmonde Magny and Marcel Sauvage) had supported him right throughout the judging process. Pointedly, Lindon did not fail to give Beckett their addresses.[133]

The extent to which Lindon's careful promotion of Beckett's writing affected not only the initial reception of Beckett's early work, but also the likelihood of his achieving lasting success, is elaborated by Simonin in a comparison of Lindon's treatment of Beckett and Georges Bataille, another of Lindon's authors. Lindon failed to nurture relations between Bataille, in his authorial role, and other critics. The difference in Lindon's treatment of these two writers had, Simonin asserts, extraordinary results: 'l'un, Beckett, étant presque immédiatement classé parmi les 'grands'; l'autre, Bataille, ne commençant à franchir les barrières de la renommée que cinq ans après sa mort.'[134] In terms of public success, the trajectories of these two writers is vastly different; their different fates highlight the vital role a publisher plays in properly promoting his authors' work.

Once Beckett's presence was secured in the journals and reviews that essentially provided public display cases for his work, three important types of association were played out. The first, as has already been discussed, was the association of the critic's name, or signature, (and by extension, his reputation and cultural status) with Beckett's

[133] Lindon to Beckett, 4 December 1951. Whether Beckett took the none too subtle hint and wrote to thank these critics is not clear.

[134] 'One, Beckett, being almost immediately ranked among the 'greats'; the other, Bataille, beginning to be known only five years after his death.' Simonin, p. 397.

work. The second was the association that these critics frequently vaunted between Beckett and other writers. At its worst this practice was (and is) but name-dropping, without any substantive debate of literary parallels, as evidenced in a *France-Soir* column which noted the appearance of *Molloy*, and mentioned alongside Beckett's name those of Michel Vinaver, Albert Camus and François Mauriac, but entered into no discussion about the work of any of these writers.[135] More sophisticated comparisons were explored in literary journals, such as in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* where, in April 1951, Beckett was likened to Kafka and Proust and, six months later, to Joyce.[136] The expression differs but the effect is nonetheless similar -- the new writer is assigned his place alongside peers of whom he is deemed worthy. He is culturally classified, and promoted accordingly.

The third association that these reviews invoked was the public linking of Beckett (and his designated peers) with Editions de Minuit. Although not all reviews mentioned Beckett's publisher, many did. Maurice Nadeau, for example, when reviewing *Molloy*, rejoiced that Editions de Minuit had, 'avec un beau courage', undertaken to publish all Beckett's oeuvre.[137] Max-Pol Fouchet's laudatory review of *Molloy* is an exemplary instance of the way in which the characteristics of a publishing house can be read in relation to a work it has published, and how the work in turn is seen to reflect the publishing house. Each is read in relation to the other: they become mutually defining. We should attend, too, to the way in which the first association (between the critic and the work) operates in this review. Fouchet was an avid supporter of Beckett's work. As early as 1949 he was in contact with Deschevaux-Dumesnil, and wrote to her (via a

[135] Pierre Fournier, 'Les Lettres', *France-Soir*, 9 November 1951, p. 7.
[136] Jean Rousselot, Review of *Molloy*, *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 19 April 1951, p. 3; René Lalou, Review of *Malone meurt*, *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 8 November 1951, p. 3.
[137] 'with great courage'. Nadeau, 'Samuel Beckett, ou: En avant, vers nulle part!', *Combat*, p. 4.

mutual friend) that he considered Beckett 'l'un des plus importants écrivains d'aujourd'hui.'[138] Fouchet published *Fontaine*, a Resistance revue, in Algiers from July 1940. Contemporaries described this journal as 'la revue officielle de la France libre' and 'le lieu de rassemblement d'écrivains notoires'.[139] With Fouchet we again find the infamous 'family network' at work, for, immediately after the Liberation, *Fontaine* jointly published a number of poetic texts, notably by Aragon and Breton, with Editions de Minuit. Fouchet's admiration for the publishing house was unstinting:

> 'Quoi qu'en disent aujourd'hui les publicistes et quelques écrivains pressés, la littérature demeure une chose secrète qui ne se laisse pas simplement dévoiler par quelques prestigieux lancements américains.' En ces termes, les Editions de Minuit définissaient, l'an dernier, la tâche qu'elles se proposaient d'entreprendre. Nous pouvions donc espérer de leur part un dévouement à 'la littérature, chose secrète'. Si nous ne fûmes pas déçus, jamais ce dévouement ne s'est mieux manifesté que par l'édition du *Molloy* de Samuel Beckett, par l'annonce des autres oeuvres de cet auteur. C'est un acte de discernement, de conscience littéraire. Et de courage.[140]

The elitist impulses in both the self-positioning of Editions de Minuit's mission statement, and Fouchet's reading of it, are clear. First, Editions de Minuit (in true Resistance Press style) appeals to French national pride, sniffily referring to American promotional strategies. This denigration has much less to do with national politics, however, than it has to do with cultural politics. 'American', here, is used as shorthand for mass culture. The *unsuitability* of the 'prestigieux lancements américains' to the kind of literature in which Editions de Minuit is interested, and the difference between this sort of

[138] 'one of the most important writers of the day.' Max-Pol Fouchet to A. C. Gervais, 27 October 1949.
[139] 'the official revue of free France'; 'the assembly point for notorious writers'. Simonin, p. 236.
[140] "Whatever publicists and a handful of pressured writers say these days, literature remains a secret thing which does not allow itself simply to be disclosed by a few prestigious American launches.' These were the terms in which, last year, Editions de Minuit defined the task they proposed to undertake. We might hope then for a devotion on their part to 'literature, the secret thing'. If we are not mistaken, this devotion has never been better manifested than by the publication of Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*, [and] by the advertisement for other of this author's works. This is an act of discernment, of literary conscience. And of courage.' Max-Pol Fouchet, 'Une chronique de la décomposition', *Carrefour*, 24 April 1951, p. 8.

promotion and Beckett's 'publicité convenable', are the key points to notice. But it is the second appeal that is most interesting. Editions de Minuit makes a deliberate ploy (its deliberateness holds part of its force, because it is defiant, confrontational) to exploit the reader's intellectual elitism. Literature, it is claimed, is a 'secret thing'. Editions de Minuit intends, far from rendering this secret accessible, to preserve it. But there is more to this provocation than mere rebelliousness. By undertaking not to expose the supposed secret nature of literature, the publishers are committing themselves to respecting the otherness, the irreducibility, of literature. This is, therefore, a statement about what the publishers at Editions de Minuit believe is essential in -- meaning, what is at the essence of -- literature. This is an approach that is serendipitously appropriate for a publisher of Beckett's work. It is also, perhaps, an approach that owed much of its force to its cultural moment. To recall Barthes's insistence that the avant-garde scene that Beckett first appeared in had already, by the early 1960s, been so well accommodated by the bourgeoisie that it had taken on the status of 'a legend', is to be aware of the historical specificity of both Editions de Minuit's and Beckett's provocations.[141] The ability that each of them possessed to disturb conventions was peculiarly powerful in post-World War II France, and helped make their partnership such a success. It is noteworthy that both Fouchet and Nadeau describe Lindon's commitment to *Molloy* as courageous. The very difficulty of Beckett's writing, and his rejection by the mainstream publishers, recommends him both to Editions de Minuit and to Fouchet. Editions de Minuit, the critic contends, are standing up to 'les éminences grises [...] de nos lettres' as well as to 'les experts financiers'. Lindon and Beckett's 'récits rebelles', in other words, are positioned outside French literature's literary and economic comfort zones; they confound the

[141] See p. 25.

institution of literature. Editions de Minuit (and, in reporting the publisher's action so approvingly, Fouchet) are embracing the kind of institutional rejection that Blanchot spoke of in his obituary of Beckett, as well as what Blanchot would elsewhere refer to as 'the work's freedom [...] this distance of the work with respect to itself, to the reader, to the world's doings, to other works';[142] they are taking the 'foreign' or 'secret' aspect of Beckett's work, and using it to their advantage, turning it into a mystique that can be employed as both an intellectual and a promotional weapon. They are claiming Beckett's work, branding it and brandishing it as unique and uniquely theirs.

To the most powerful arbiters in the serious game of building reputations and according cultural value, the defining characteristics of Beckett and Editions de Minuit were closely bound together. Just as the iconoclastic, innovative and highly intellectual nature of Beckett's writing helped Lindon both to form and consolidate a literary avant-garde reputation for Editions de Minuit, so the publishing house's situation on the periphery of the established (in essence, pre-war) cultural marketplace associated Beckett with the outsider's subversive potential. Beckett's early relationship with Editions de Minuit teaches us to reconsider the popular image of Beckett as a writer almost completely unknown until *Waiting for Godot* met with such success on the international stage. In fact, thanks to Jérôme Lindon, the foundations for Beckett's long-term success were being laid years before. The role this publisher played in Beckett's consecration was of such magnitude that, in an interview in 1989, the writer Philippe Sollers commented

[142] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 201.

dryly: 'Le Nobel de Samuel Beckett? Quel Nobel? Ah! Vous voulez probablement dire 'Le Nobel de Jérôme Lindon'.'[143]

[143] See note 4.

CHAPTER TWO: BECKETT AND JOHN CALDER

First of all, a Happy New Year etc. May we both stay out of gaol.[1]

[Calder] is not much concerned with the means to his particular end -- to get his authors talked about and their books read.[2]

We were, for the first and only time, on the *Sunday Times*' best-seller list. Not only was the press full of [*The Tropic of Cancer*] but to have a copy of it in one's hand was both a signal that one belonged to what soon came to be called 'swinging London' and an act of solidarity with the new underground culture.[3]

Perhaps that was what I always was at heart: a popular educator with a fire in his belly to make life more interesting for others by opening up new horizons in the arts and literature.[4]

In the Introduction, I quoted Christopher Ricks's stinging accusation that with the Festschrift that celebrated Beckett's sixtieth birthday John Calder had achieved 'the bizarre and demeaning feat of selling Beckett as a good read.'[5] It would be too easy to dismiss these words as casual malice from a highminded reviewer. Ricks's convictions about and commitment to Beckett's work were longstanding: from his first encounters with the work in the early 1950s, Ricks believed 'simply that Beckett is very difficult to understand', and his evident belief that Beckett was 'a great writer' should not be in doubt.[6] The earnestness of Ricks's assessment of the Festschrift is of less interest to me here, however, than the fact that his review, written in 1967, was reflective of much larger developments that were playing out during the 1960s in both the status of Beckett's oeuvre and in literary culture more generally. The review is prescient in so far as it

[1] Calder to Maurice Girodias, 10 January 1963, LL, CBA, Series V, Box X.
[2] Jane Wilson, 'The New Bookmen', *Town*, September 1967, pp. 41-44 (p. 44).
[3] John Calder, *Pursuit* (London: John Calder, 2001), p. 222.
[4] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 269.
[5] Christopher Ricks, 'Mr Artesian', *The Listener*, 3 August 1967, p. 148; John Calder, ed., *Beckett at 60: A Festschrift* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967).
[6] Christopher Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 206, 122. Ricks was one of those who recommended Beckett to the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy in 1968. *Beckett's Dying Words*, p. 207.

recognises a trend that has, in latter years, resulted in vigorous commodification of Beckett and his work. But the piece also touches on something of which, at the time, Ricks can have been at best only partly aware: namely, the pivotal influence of John Calder in the evolution of, specifically the popularisation of, Beckett's reputation in the British public domain. It is not just that Calder was instrumental in expanding Beckett's readership in numerical terms, although that was certainly the case. Rather, Calder's reputation and activities as a publisher, bookseller, political campaigner, and even as a sometime theatre impresario, impacted at once on the social make-up of Beckett's readership and on the ways Beckett was read. In other words, the Beckett that Lindon was promoting when *Molloy* was published in 1951 was significantly different from the Beckett that Calder was promoting when the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded in 1969. Indeed, the erudite obscurity that so baffled and impressed the post-war Parisian critics had been transformed by Calder, not entirely but in certain key respects, into what may fairly be termed -- with or without Ricks's condemnatory emphasis -- a 'good read'.

Equally important is the fact that the small, elite, avant-garde part of the public domain in Paris in which Lindon began to circulate Beckett's name in the early 1950s was radically different from the British public domain that received the news of Beckett's having won the Nobel nearly two decades later. The evolution of Beckett's status is intimately linked with the changing place of literature in post-World War II England. The decades after the war (extending to the present, although arguably most strikingly in the 1960s) saw revolutionary developments in the publishing industry, in the kinds and quantities of books published, in how they were produced and marketed, and in the reading public. These developments both mirrored and stimulated important alterations in

the relationships between publishers, books, and readers, relationships which, in turn, shaped and were shaped by shifts in society more broadly. This chapter endeavours to assess John Calder's position in this world of flux, and considers how, through his association with Calder, Beckett was moved beyond the literary avant-garde and into the vanguard of wider social change.

It will be clear that in general terms the concerns of this chapter are similar to those of chapter one. Both chapters explore the relationship between Beckett and one of his major publishers, and both are especially interested in how Beckett's reputation was affected by the relationship that the publisher in question enjoyed with various kinds of readers. We will find, too, arresting similarities between John Calder's publishing house and Editions de Minuit. Both Calder and Lindon were new, small, independent publishers when they first published Beckett; both of them developed a list that was noteworthy for its avant-garde literature and its left-wing politics; both men were conscious of and anxious to protect the avant-garde pedigree of their best writers; both were deeply committed to the ideal of publishing books they believed in regardless of those books' saleability; and both of them were closely and publicly linked to Beckett and to the *nouveau romanciers*.

It is, however, the dissimilarities between the two publishers that make an enquiry into Beckett's relationship with Calder so compelling. In order to draw out these differences, and to elucidate what it meant for Beckett to be published and promoted by Calder, this investigation focuses on three key areas, or frames. The first way in which Beckett was distinctively framed by Calder has to do with the material format of Calder's books, and with what his books signified through their materiality. These considerations

are linked to a second frame, larger in scale than the first, which encompasses not just individual books, but groups of books. This line of analysis follows Peter D. McDonald's example in looking beyond 'explicit framing devices at the readerly effects of [...] an implicit or co-textual frame', to try to understand how being linked with other authors on Calder's list, and especially with other authors in specific series of Calder's books, contributed to the construction of Beckett's reputation.[7] In this section, we will see that, in being taken up by Calder, Beckett was moved beyond the mostly French community of writers that he belonged to as an Editions de Minuit author, to become a star on a truly international list. Finally, we will extend our view further into the literary field, and discuss how Beckett was framed by virtue of Calder's innovative and varied promotional strategies. Calder championed his authors with verve and originality, frequently causing offence, but almost always attracting attention. Analysing these three frames makes it evident that, although conceptually distinct, these areas were in reality interrelated in many important aspects. They were, too, related to the currents of change that animated all facets of 1960s society, in part because Calder's production techniques and promotional activities challenged so many kinds of conventional boundaries. As a consequence of being such an integral part of Calder's publishing venture, Beckett's work was also drawn into these currents of change.

It is not easy to find biographical information about Calder, nor is it straightforward to find reliable historical information about his publishing business. The richest source of material is Calder's autobiography, *Pursuit*, but this long, shaggy work tends not only to be anecdotal in nature, but is also rife with inaccuracies and self-

[7] Peter D. McDonald, 'Modernist Publishing: 'Nomads and Mapmakers'', in *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 221-42 (p. 238).

contradictions. Beckett's biographers are unhelpful on the subject, and the recently published *Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, a veritable treasure trove, also manifests this perplexing paucity of information. What is most interesting about the *Companion*'s entry on Calder, however, is not its brevity per se, but its relative brevity -- Beckett's other publishers receive disproportionately extended consideration.[8] This predicament is telling in itself and, I would suggest, indicative of the fact that the significance of Beckett's and Calder's relationship has gone largely unrecognised.

Calder was born into a Scottish brewing dynasty in 1927. After studying economics at Zurich University he worked for some time in family businesses, particularly in the timber industry, but began to indulge his longstanding love of books in 1950, when he established his first publishing venture.[9] According to Anthony Cronin, by this time Calder's capital 'was limited and he did virtually everything himself, even bringing review copies round to the literary offices to save packing and postage'.[10] In the first few years he collaborated, with varying degrees of closeness, with Eric Turrell, André Deutsch, and Neville Spearman, while simultaneously operating a number of other business interests. But in 1957 he moved to his own premises and began to focus his energies on establishing his own imprint.[11] In 1964 he went into partnership with Marion Boyars, and the firm was renamed Calder and Boyars, under which imprint it operated until the relationship soured eleven years later, and the pair split.[12] Calder reverted to his

[8] Calder's entry is under 150 words in length. The entry for Faber and Faber, however, is nearly twice as long, that of Lindon nearly three times as long (there is also a short, separate entry under 'Minuit'), and the Grove Press entry is close to 1,000 words. C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp. 79, 190, 320-21, 372, 237-39.
[9] John O'Mahony, 'Publishing's One-Man Band', *Guardian*, 20 July 2002, pp. 16-19 (p. 18).
[10] Anthony Cronin, *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist* (London: Flamingo, 1997), p. 477.
[11] John Calder, 'Profile: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd', *Independent Publishers' Group Bulletin*, July-August 1965, pp. 2-3 (p. 2).
[12] Ackerley and Gontarski, p. 79.

original name, John Calder (Publishers) Ltd. Difficult years followed, for which Calder blames 'the changing climate fostered by Margaret Thatcher and the 'dumbing-down' policies of a new breed of newspaper proprietor [that] made the publication of innovative literature more difficult to sell and less likely to be reviewed.'[13] There were times when he could not afford to pay his authors (Beckett among them), and in the early 1990s John Calder (Publishers) Ltd was bankrupted. Calder set up a new company, Calder Publications Ltd, which, although based in Baltimore, traded for the most part in England.[14] Calder continues to publish today as the self-proclaimed 'doyen of active publishers'.[15] Remarkably, he remains independent, and although he now publishes very few new books, he claims to have 'retained [his] place in the affection and respect of [his] readers and intelligent booksellers'.[16]

Calder's activities in spheres peripheral to, or altogether outside, the publishing industry are also relevant to this study. Not only have these affected Calder's reputation as a publisher, but in some instances they have also impacted directly on Beckett's work. The sustained public controversy around the censorship trials in which Calder was several times embroiled, his tireless campaigning for the arts, his prominent role within the publishing industry in general and as a founding member of the Independent Publishers' Group in particular, his ties to the bookselling industry, his promotion of theatrical and operatic events, his prolific output of articles on all manner of subjects that interested him, and his political activities (he was asked to stand as a Scottish Liberal

[13] 'About Us', <http://www.calderpublications.com/aboutus.html> [accessed 30 March 2004].
[14] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 561. Calder claims that when he could not pay Beckett the 'great deal' that he was owed, Beckett 'was extremely sympathetic and told me not to worry; I could pay when things were better or when I could.' *Pursuit*, p. 511.
[15] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 602.
[16] 'About Us', <http://www.calderpublications.com/aboutus.html> [accessed 30 March 2004].

Party candidate in 1970)[17] -- all these dimensions of Calder's position in the post-war British cultural domain had an impact on what it meant for Beckett to be published by Calder, and resulted in a presentation of Beckett's work that was much more varied, materially and otherwise, than was the case with his work as it was published by Editions de Minuit.

This chapter departs from chapter one by shifting its focus from the early years of the 1950s to concentrate instead on the 1960s. A number of factors suggest that this decade offers an appropriate timeframe on which to base a study of Beckett's relations with Calder. The first and most obvious reason is that, although Calder made his initial foray into publishing in 1950, he did not properly get underway until towards the end of the decade. Furthermore, he did not publish his first Beckett book, *Malone Dies*, until 1958, and it was only in this year that 'the 'avant-garde' tendency of the firm became more evident with the publication of Beckett, Ionesco, and a number of continental writers'.[18] But this timeframe is particularly interesting because the 1960s was a period of unparalleled vibrancy in the publishing industry. Not only was it a period in which the industry enjoyed relative financial freedom,[19] but radical developments in wider society, such as changing attitudes towards sex and sexuality, and the ascent of youth culture, had far-reaching ramifications for publishers. The decade opened with Barney Rosset's

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[17] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 358.

[18] Calder, 'Profile: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd', *Independent Publishers' Group Bulletin*, July-August 1965, pp. 2-3 (p. 2).

[19] It has been estimated that it took at least fourteen years for the book trade to recover from World War II (Joseph McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 52), and then, after about a decade of relative prosperity, the industry entered a sharp financial decline in the early 1970s, consequent upon the inflation and recession that accompanied the 1973-74 oil crisis. Production and distribution costs in these years sometimes doubled or even tripled. See Randall Stevenson, 'A Golden Age? Readers, Authors, and the Book Trade', in *The Oxford English Literary History Volume 12: 1960-2000: The Last of England?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 125-61 (p. 145); and J. A. Sutherland, *Fiction and the Fiction Industry* (London: Athlone, 1978), pp. xv-xviii, and chapter two, 'Fiction in a Siege Economy', pp. 25-45.

watershed victory for Grove Press with *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the Supreme Court in America, and Penguin's victory with the same work in the British Courts.[20] This era also saw the popularisation of the paperback, the significance of which must not be underestimated. Ian Norrie observes that 'the word 'revolutionary' has been applied unstintingly in this connection but it was really 'evolutionary' in that it took so long to come about, even if one dates it only from the start of Penguin in 1935.'[21] Calder was among the first to capitalise on and innovate with respect to this hitherto little-exploited format.

This investigation requires, however, that we look back from the 1960s to discover how the conditions that characterised that decade developed out of changes that were beginning to take place in the literary field at least as early as the end of the nineteenth century. In *The Haunted Study*, Peter Keating proposes that the fate of Henry James's hero Neil Paraday, in 'The Death of the Lion' (from which Keating's work takes its title), is emblematic of a movement that was, more than ever before, dividing kinds of writing and kinds of readers into two main groups. Keating argues that the late Victorian writers' violent rejection of mid-Victorian values (such as piety and moral earnestness), of mid-Victorian literary techniques (especially authorial didacticism), and, critically, of the commercial success enjoyed by the likes of Dickens and Trollope (who, straightforward and industrious, regarded writing as a craft or trade more than an art), promoted the rise of the 'Artist'. This figure was devoted to innovation in form and,

[20] Despite Penguin's much vaunted success with this work, it is not often conceded that Rosset both published and was prosecuted for the book first. Sutherland cites Penguin's having followed Grove Press as an example of the 'atmosphere of passive, but pervasive censorship' that has characterised British publishing in the twentieth century, charging that the battles between art and authority that have been fought in America have happened in Britain 'always late and always on a minor scale.' Sutherland, pp. 20-21.

[21] Ian Norrie, *Mumby's Publishing and Bookselling in the Twentieth Century* (London: Bell and Hyman, 1982), p. 160.

regardless of readers' expectations, conceived the novel as art: "Popular' has clearly become a very dirty word indeed unless it is used to indicate a certain level of success attained after years of neglect: to describe oneself as an 'unpopular author' has ceased to be simply a factual statement of poor market expectations (though that may still be involved) and has become a boast.'[22] Conversely, Joseph McAleer, while identifying the same trend, attributes it largely to the increased commercialisation of the publishing industry at the end of the nineteenth century and in the years before World War I: 'With publishing increasingly in the hands of accountants and marketing men, and overtly aiming at a 'mass' market, writing became a profession, and 'fiction' was detached from 'literature' as each attracted different publics.'[23]

Correlative to the growing gap between 'fiction' and 'literature', then, was a gulf that began to open up between the fiction-reading, or mass, public, and a small sophisticated readership. Keating draws a parallel between James's character, Paraday, and writers such as Conrad, Browning, and Meredith, who were long ignored or rejected by a hostile public. Paraday's tale, Keating writes, is 'a parable of compounded wish-fulfilment and fear that offers finally an unresolvable paradox: in this case, the artist is unable to live without recognition and is destroyed by the only kind of recognition possible in such an age.'[24] The trajectory of late-Victorian careers that show a marked change in fortune in later years, with sudden and widespread acclaim and popularity, is.

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[22] Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989), p. 386.
[23] McAleer, p. 27.
[24] Keating, p. 385. Randall Stevenson discusses this same situation, but employs Conrad's *Lord Jim* (published in 1900) to make his point: 'Much of Conrad's story takes the form of a long after-dinner monologue, supposedly delivered by his narrator Marlow to a circle of largely silent and rather patient listeners. This means of telling the story might be seen as a figuration of Conrad's anxiety about the chances of finding an actual audience for his work -- as an attempt to create within the fiction itself an audience which he suspected might not otherwise exist for it'. Randall Stevenson, *The Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 1.

of course, reminiscent of Beckett's rapid rise to fame. Beckett, however, lived in a quite different age -- his star was in the ascendant in the 1960s, and the kinds of recognition that he won and, especially, the ways in which he won them, were unique to that time. Unchanged, however, is the fact that just as the late Victorians' reputations were inextricably linked to the social context in which their works were published, so Beckett's success, and crucially the nature of his success, was tied to the world in which his works appeared. It was not until the 1960s that the conflict in priorities that marked the division of readers and writers in the early twentieth century began to be bridged. At least until this time, Stevenson asserts, 'rather than being entirely accepted into the mainstream of writing in Britain, the example of modernism [...] more often functioned as an alternative to it -- even, as [Walter] Allen suggests, a kind of permanent avant-garde'.[25] Calder played an important part in the process whereby modernist and avant-garde writing started to find a mainstream readership. Thanks to his relationship with Calder, Beckett, as unlikely a candidate as he may seem for the role, took part in that great advance that gathered such momentum in the 1960s, the democratisation of literature.

The background against which Calder began to operate in the late 1950s, although in some ways acting as a hindrance, also provided a foil for the bold young publisher's innovations. At that time, most of the leading publishing houses in Britain had been founded in the nineteenth century, causing Richard Findlater to write in 1963 that in the current industry 'the dynastic principle still shows', and to lament the 'anarchic conservatism of the industry as a whole'.[26] J. A. Sutherland, surveying the post-war publishing scene, contended in 1978 that:

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[25] Stevenson, *The Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain*, p. 52.

[26] Richard Findlater, *What Are Writers Worth?* (London: Society of Authors, 1963), pp. 9, 16.

> as regards its production and marketing processes, British literature is famously conservative. It is very rigidly controlled; it maintains retail price maintenance long after it has been elsewhere removed, and strenuously discourages direct selling which then inhibits the more adventurous kinds of advertising. [...] The book trade has discouraged such things as paperback reviewing or primary publishing in paperback. The inhibition on paperbacks for libraries, or on the setting up of university bookshops, undoubtedly stunted the evolution of the 'quality' or 'egghead' paperback in this country [...] The book trade has made relatively little impact on the new youth market, to whom 1960s bookshops seemed antiquated and parental institutions.[27]

Calder made an exception to each of these general rules. He was an audacious advertiser, he pioneered 'egghead' paperbacks, he won over a youthful readership and he encouraged and practised a fresh, dynamic approach to sales in bookshops. Indeed, 'the 60s proved to be a golden era for Calder.'[28] The dynamism of the decade, however, was not to last. In the early 1970s, publishing entered a crisis that deeply affected Calder, who later admitted that 'our period of discovering and publishing best-selling authors was now over'.[29]

It has already been indicated that a series of important differences between Calder and Editions de Minuit must be drawn out. The first is that although the French publishing house enjoyed an almost wholly exclusive relationship with Beckett's work in France, Calder was not Beckett's only British publisher. As is well known, Faber and Faber publish Beckett's plays; Calder publishes his prose, poetry, and critical writing.[30] It is less well known that Penguin and Picador (an imprint of Pan Macmillan) have also

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[27] Sutherland, pp. xx, xxii.
[28] John O'Mahony, 'Publishing's One-Man Band', *Guardian*, 20 July 2002, pp. 16-19 (p. 19).
[29] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 384.
[30] An exception exists in the play *Come and Go*, which Beckett dedicated to Calder, and which Calder published with Faber and Faber's blessing in 1967. *Come and Go* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967).

published a small number of Beckett's prose works.[31] Moreover, English-language editions of Beckett's works by other publishers have also been available in Britain, and some of these have even been distributed by Calder. Beckett's earliest publishers were Chatto and Windus (for *Proust* and *More Pricks Than Kicks*) and Routledge (for *Murphy*); in the 1950s Calder sold Grove Press editions of *Proust* and *Murphy* before publishing his own in 1965 and 1963 respectively; the Olympia Press edition of *Watt* was available in Britain in 1953, and Olympia's *Molloy* was available in 1955 -- each was later sold by Calder until he obtained full rights and could bring out his own versions, in 1963 and 1959 respectively.[32] The relative complexity of Beckett's publishing history in Britain means that the ways in which his work has been framed by publishers, the ways it has been presented to the public, and the kinds of public to which it has been presented, are more varied than has been the case in France, and have resulted in a diverse array of effects on Beckett's cultural status.

To illustrate why it matters how Beckett's publishers have materially presented his texts, it is worthwhile quoting the following passage from J. M. Coetzee's memoir *Youth*, in which the narrator unexpectedly discovers that Beckett, whom he hitherto knew only as a playwright, is also a novelist:

> In the window of a second-hand bookseller off Charing Cross Road, on another of his expeditions to the city, he spots a chunky little book with a violet cover: *Watt*, by Samuel Beckett, published by Olympia Press.

[31] *Malone Dies* (London: Penguin, 1962); *The Expelled and other Novellas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980) (reissued in 2000 under the title *First Love and Other Novellas*); *Murphy* (London: Picador, 1973); *More Pricks Than Kicks* (London: Picador, 1974); *The Beckett Trilogy* (London: Picador, 1979).

[32] *Proust* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931); *More Pricks Than Kicks* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934); *Murphy* (London: Routledge, 1938); *Proust* (New York: Grove Press, 1957); *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957); *Proust* in *Three Dialogues: Samuel Beckett and Georges Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1965); *Murphy* (London: John Calder, 1963); *Watt* (Paris: 'Collection Merlin', Olympia Press, 1953); *Molloy* (Paris: Olympia Press, 1955); *Watt* (London: John Calder, 1963); *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (London: John Calder, 1959).

> Olympia Press is notorious: from a safe haven in Paris it publishes pornography in English for subscribers in England and America. But as a sideline it also publishes the more daring writings of the avant-garde -- Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, for instance. It is hardly likely that Samuel Beckett, author of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, writes pornography. What kind of book, then, is *Watt*?
>
> He pages through it. It is printed in the same fullbodied serif type as Pound's *Selected Poems*, a type that evokes for him intimacy, solidity. He buys the book and takes it back to Major Arkwright's. From the first page he knows he has hit on something. Propped up in bed with light pouring through the window, he reads and reads.
>
> *Watt* is quite unlike Beckett's plays. [...] Why did people not tell him Beckett wrote novels?[33]

Coetzee's narrator's experience makes evident not only the role of institutions in determining the significance of a book as a material object, but also the influence of the material object in shaping what is publicly known about an author. Until this time, Beckett has existed for Coetzee's narrator as a playwright only. When he stumbles across the Olympia Press edition of *Watt*, the book *as an object* provokes a series of associations that confuse the narrator and challenge his conception of Beckett. The narrator registers immediately that the work has been produced by the Olympia Press. This imprint conjures two seemingly contradictory kinds of writing: pornographic, and literary avant-garde. In addition, because it is based in Paris to avoid prosecution in England or the United States, the imprint is evocative of the outsider, of the exiled subversive who smuggles dangerous ideas home.[34] The narrator is further intrigued by the typography, which impresses on him the sense of 'intimacy, solidity' that he associates with Pound's poetry. The incongruous pairings (sex at its most predictable and an unconventional, intellectual kind of literature, subversiveness and solidity, exile and intimacy) that the Olympia Press *Watt* provokes in the narrator's mind before he has even begun to read the

[33] J. M. Coetzee, *Youth* (London: Secker and Warburg, 2002), p. 155.

[34] Indeed, a 1961 press release advertising the *Olympia* magazine asserts that Olympia 'will devote all its efforts to the discovery of real talent, and the rehabilitation of literary exiles.' LL, CBA, Series V, Box X.

text give him cause to rethink entirely who Beckett is, what he writes, what 'Beckett' *means*.[35] Before Calder published *Malone Dies* in 1958, Beckett, as a writer of prose, was represented in Britain by only five editions: by the outdated Chatto and Windus *Proust* and *More Pricks Than Kicks*, and the Routledge *Murphy* (each of which had sold badly when first published, meaning it would be unlikely that they could be easily found in bookshops twenty years later), and by Olympia's *Watt* and *Molloy*. Calder's editions of these same works re-presented Beckett -- the very look and feel of his editions, their materiality alone, signified richly, prompted new associations, and so encouraged new ways of thinking about Beckett.

Before we begin to examine Calder's books as artefacts, we ought first to recall that Beckett himself was greatly concerned with the material presentation of his writing. It is surprising that, for all the attention his linguistic and narrative self-consciousness receives, Beckett's critics have almost entirely overlooked his self-awareness at the level of printed form. However, not only did Beckett's love of the visual arts render him preternaturally conscious of the impact of the visible in artistic expression, but his formative years were spent in an environment where experimentation with the disposition of printed words on the page was much in vogue.[36] Mallarmé and Rimbaud were the modern fathers of this movement, and we know that Beckett was well acquainted with their work -- his so-called 'Sottisier' notebook contains quotations from Mallarmé, and he

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[35] It is interesting to read Barney Rosset's quite different response to the Olympia Press *Watt*: 'One irritation did jut out at me and that is the lack of good proofreading in the pages I went through. I do hope that the misspellings, inverted letters, etc., are dealt with before the printing is done. To find one word deliberately distorted and the next botched by the type-setter can spoil the tone so easily. Also it is a shame that the type-face used is so scrubby and ugly. Good writing can look well without losing any of its intrinsic value -- or so it would seem to me.' Rosset to Beckett, 4 August 1953, *The Grove Press Reader 1951-2001*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 2001), pp. 30-31.

[36] Beckett's interest in vision and the visible is discussed in more depth in chapter four. See pp. 192-202.

translated Rimbaud's 'Bateau Ivre'.[37] But the little magazine *transition*, in which Beckett was published many times before World War II, must have exercised a more immediate influence on the young writer.[38] The look of *transition*, as well as its contributors' preoccupations, clearly evolved towards increased visual experimentation, so that by the time Beckett made his second appearance in the magazine in 1930, with the essay 'For Future Reference', almost all the entries in the issue -- even the critical essays and reviews -- played with and foregrounded typographical and bibliographical codes.

Although Beckett was far from being one of the more innovative experimenters with the book's physical format, his work exhibits a growing recognition of the expressive effect of the architecture of the page, and an ever-present awareness of his books' status as objects. *Watt*, for example, challenges basic assumptions of rationality and logic in its content and in its visible form. This novel is not a well-wrought urn, nor even (to borrow Watt's favourite example of the incommensurability of word and world) a well-wrought pot. Songs, poems, and musical scores blur the margins of the text, of which the sections are by the narrator's own admission arranged in non-linear order, and even within the linguistic text, the typography asserts itself -- interminable lists chain words across pages, drawing the reader onwards into the pattern of logical paradigms. engaging the eye and disengaging the intellect as the page visually 'chants' all possible permutations of terms in a series. The Addenda, which can be regarded as a coda or encore to the novel's main performance, effectively frames the book *as a book*. It identifies itself as a crafted object by laying bare the tools of the writer's trade, displaying the writer's off-cuts, and (since many of the Addenda's contents are excerpted from early

[37] RUL, BC, MS 2901; *Drunken Boat* (Reading: Whitenights Press, 1976).
[38] For the full list of Beckett's appearances in *transition*, see p. 34.

manuscripts) as an 'enigmatic fossil' presents evidence of the evolutionary process of creating the text.[39] The Trilogy, too, is flagrant in its corporeality. Its pages are thick with print. The books' first readers noted the effect of this density on the reading process: *Malone Dies*, complained one of the readers at Secker and Warburg, who rejected the manuscript, is 'long, unbroken by paragraph [...] It has a soporific effectiveness of vividness through repetition and endless boredom.'[40] *The Unnamable* is even more difficult to penetrate with the eye. The unrelenting stream of characters functions as a visual equivalent of white noise, threatening to overwhelm the linguistic meaning of the text.

The Unnamable contrasts with later, physically delicate pieces that feature small clusters of words strung loosely across the white ground of the page. The manuscripts of *Comment C'est* and *How It Is* reveal that these works' visual aspect was integral to their composition, as even the very first notes for *Comment C'est* exhibit the strikingly disconnected units of text that appear in the finished version.[41] The manuscripts are of particular interest because they show how, over time, Beckett experimented with layout, frequently changing the way the work was structured in print. For instance, the second manuscript of *Comment C'est* (which retains the punctuation and capitalisation that were ultimately entirely dispensed with) abandons the shorter unit of text in favour of longer paragraphs, which are, in turn, rejected later.[42] Beckett was also intimately involved with the printing process for both the French and the English versions of this novel. He complained to Alan Schneider about the 'very difficult proof-correcting' he was

[39] Ackerley and Gontarski, p. 632.
[40] Reader's report by 'K.V.B.', 11 April 1956, Secker and Warburg correspondence, RUL.
[41] RUL, BC, MS 1227/7/7/1.
[42] RUL, BC, MS 1661.

undertaking for *Comment C'est*, and he meticulously oversaw the publication of *How It Is*.[43] Knowlson states that 'Beckett had decided that each page should always end with a broken line. He was even prepared to make small textual changes if necessary to ensure that this could happen.'[44] That Beckett would sacrifice linguistic content to layout demonstrates powerfully the importance to him of the material form his writing assumed on publication.

This kind of experimentation with the works' visual dimension did not always strike readers favourably. A review of *The Lost Ones* grumbled that although 'those two intellectual rubbishers Calder and Boyars say it is S. Beckett's most sustained text to appear for many years [...] there are 63 pages in this book including what the rubbishers call prelims and the type is so big it reminds me of those cards opticians show you with real big print. I'm no accountant but I've worked out the cost at roughly 20p per 1,000 words.'[45] For Calder, however, any attention the look of his books could attract was to be welcomed. This was in part because he was establishing his business at a time when it was more of a challenge than ever for a newcomer to stand out in the publishing industry. The increased popularity of reading as a leisure activity during World War II, and a consequent growth in demand for books, had led to an upsurge in the number of publishing houses. The number of British and Irish firms stood at 320 in 1939; this had risen to a remarkable 572 by 1950.[46] During the interwar period, furthermore, the increased commercialisation of literary production had resulted in intensified competition

[43] Maurice Harmon, ed., *No Author Better Served: The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 78.
[44] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), p. 800.
[45] Robert Greacen, Review of *The Lost Ones*, *Books and Bookmen*, October 1972, p. 78; *The Lost Ones* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1972). To put this figure in perspective, a 1977 survey in the *Sunday Times* refers to the most expensive novels reaching an 'outrageous' 11.6 pence per 1,000 words. Cited by Sutherland, p. 26.
[46] McAleer, p. 47.

in the marketplace.[47] Calder made it a priority to produce books that looked distinctive.[48] 'Most of my publishing up to the late fifties had been in the conventional hardcover format and there was nothing to distinguish my books from those of other publishers visually, but with a new designer, Brian Sewell, our covers began to have a modernistic look, often based on cubist, surrealist and collagist models.'[49] *Malone Dies* appeared in 1958 with 'a striking cover that depicted a particularly gruesome skull', a format that could not have been more different from the clean, understated *Malone meurt* issued by Editions de Minuit seven years earlier.[50]

Calder did not relinquish all responsibility for design to Sewell, however, and remained on the lookout for ideas for evocative covers. After visiting an exhibition of Giacometti's sculptures in London in the summer of 1965, he suggested to Beckett that they ask Giacometti whether he would agree to designing a new piece especially for the cover of a limited edition of *Come and Go*, the short play that Beckett had dedicated to Calder. Despite Beckett's discouragement ('I do not think he [Giacometti] should be bothered with such things')[51] Calder pursued the idea, and ultimately won permission to use an image of the sculpture 'Head on a Stalk'.[52] Calder was also acutely conscious of

[47] McAleer, pp. 81-82.
[48] When in 1954 Calder had his first publishing success with the *Opera Annual*, which developed into a mainstay of his list, he became convinced that what appears on a book's cover has a significant impact on its reception. Calder was certain that the book's popularity was due to its having Lord Harewood's name on the cover (Lord Harewood, first cousin to the Queen, was not only director of the Royal Opera House, but was also much in the tabloid press at the time). Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 74.
[49] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 101.
[50] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 212.
[51] Beckett to Calder, 21 July 1965, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 45.
[52] Mme S. Mangin (of the Galérie Maeght, Paris) to Calder, 12 November 1965, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 45. In his autobiography, Calder remembers that 'art publishers were constantly approaching [Beckett] to let his texts be illustrated by artists who wanted to associate their names with his.' (*Pursuit*, pp. 434-35). It is interesting to compare Calder's somewhat disparaging opinion of others who sought out the prestige of a link with Beckett, and his evident eagerness to associate his own name, as publisher but also as dedicatee, not only with Beckett but with Giacometti as well. Calder was anxious to secure Faber and Faber's agreement to allow him to publish the play, and he also went to considerable lengths to ensure that

the appeal, and rapidly increasing value, of luxury editions of Beckett's work. Reflecting and, as Calder doubtless hoped, encouraging the change in Beckett's status that was turning him into a collectable author, Calder brought out, during the 1960s, limited print runs of various special signed editions on handmade paper, bound in cloth, vellum, and goatskin.[53] The production of these deluxe editions surely reached a pinnacle with the publication, in 2002, of a limited edition of *Poems 1930-1989*. This huge tome, of which only ninety copies were sold, ten being hors-commerce, was bound in quarter goatskin, with raised bands, hand tooled spines, top edge gilt. and marble boards with a matching slipcase. It included the lithograph 'Images of Samuel Beckett' by Louis Le Brocquy, which was signed by the artist. The book went on sale for the handsome price of fifteen hundred euros. But even with his least expensive lines Calder was always concerned to produce solid, well-made books, because by selling the books as objects of quality he hoped to manifest physically what he believed to be the high literary quality of the books' content. In 1963, he launched Jupiter Books, a paperback series in a mass market format, 'but heavier and better produced than most, on good paper and thread-sewn.'[54] Two of the first four titles published were Beckett's *Murphy* and *Watt*. All the books in the series figured a photograph of the author's face on the cover, which, as Calder bluntly remarked, 'worked well for some books, but not where the face was overly grouchy or off-putting'.[55]

The most important aspect of the Jupiter Books' material format was not, however, what was depicted on their covers. Rather it was the covers themselves. Calder

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he was able to produce the world premiere. Ultimately, after a dispute with the actor David Warrilow, who wanted to stage the work in Edinburgh, he used the premiere as a drawcard in fundraising for the *Last Exit to Brooklyn* trial. (Calder to Warrilow, 4 July 1967, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 48).

[53] Calder to John Fletcher, 2 March 1967, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 48.

[54] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 285.

[55] ibid. This practice makes Beckett's Jupiter Books a precursor of the Beckett Shorts series, released by Calder in 1999, the covers of which feature famous portraits of the playwright. The series is further discussed in chapter four. See p. 182.

was one of those at the forefront of the paperback revolution, in large part thanks to his collaboration with Beckett's American publisher, Barney Rosset of Grove Press. The paperback format had existed in the nineteenth century, but it only began to make a discernible impact in publishing when Allen Lane launched Penguin in 1935, and even so it took almost three more decades (and milestone victories for Grove and Penguin with *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the courts in 1960) before the paperback became a real force in the industry.[56] Calder contends that even in the mid-1950s, 'paperbacks, other than Penguins and a few other popular series of fiction classics and light novels, were still a thing of the future, especially for serious books of non-fiction.'[57] Nonetheless, 'quality' hardcover publishers had begun to take an interest in paperbacks soon after World War II, and in 1947 Chatto and Windus, Faber and Faber, Hamish Hamilton, Heinemann, and Michael Joseph all signed exclusive contracts with Penguin, who started to bring out cheap two shillings editions of their books.[58] By the late 1950s, Faber and Faber, Macmillan, and Routledge all had their own paperback imprints, as did Grove Press.[59]

Barney Rosset bought the struggling Press in 1951, and rapidly established a reputation as a crusading and uncompromising publisher. He developed the firm into, 'for nearly three decades, the most aggressive, innovative, audacious, reckless, and finally self-destructive publishing concern in the United States.'[60] Calder and Rosset were to forge an intimate but explosive friendship, which was based on mutual respect and admiration, and similarity of literary tastes and politics, but which, despite many years of

[56] Stevenson, 'A Golden Age? Readers, Authors, and the Book Trade', in *The Oxford English Literary History*, p. 137.
[57] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 114.
[58] McAleer, p. 59.
[59] Stevenson, 'A Golden Age? Readers, Authors, and the Book Trade', in *The Oxford English Literary History*, p. 137; Gontarski, ed., *The Grove Press Reader 1951-2001*, pp. xix-xx.
[60] Gontarski, ed., *The Grove Press Reader 1951-2001*, p. xi.

close cooperation, also involved an energetic rivalry that sometimes degenerated into bitter feuding.

The two men first met on one of Calder's scouting trips to New York in the late 1950s, and Calder immediately began to import both Evergreen paperbacks (including editions of Beckett's *Proust* and *Murphy*) and the *Evergreen Review*. The freshness of approach that characterised the Evergreen imprint had not gone unnoticed:

> Most of [the paperback publishers] have hesitated to take on the publication of new fiction. The reason seems obvious. Paperbacks, by and large, are not reviewed, and publishers hesitate to gamble on the softcover publication of a work which is likely to be critically ignored and then literally buried in a shelf full of reprints a week after it appears in the bookstores. For the same reason, young, up-and-coming authors and those with a reputation to uphold undoubtedly think twice before agreeing to a paperback first edition. [...] It is encouraging to report, therefore, that at least two publishers are experimenting with relatively large printings of new works which in hardcover editions would almost certainly have had very limited sales. Grove Press, through its Evergreen paperbacks, has begun regular publication of original -- and often unusual -- fiction. And Knopf has ambitiously started a series of 'Borzoi Originals' designed to introduce 'new and little-known' authors to as wide an audience as possible at 'about one-third the normal price'.[61]

Indeed, as late as 1963, Richard Findlater affirmed that 'nearly all the [paperback] industry outside Penguins is concerned only with reprints.'[62] Calder became involved not only with the distribution of Evergreen books (of which, he claims, he sold 'many thousands')[63] but also with certain aspects of production, such that at the end of 1958, Rosset agreed to put the Calder imprint on the books alongside the Grove imprint, and to print the English price on the back cover.[64] But it was the *Evergreen Review* that was most radical in its material format, particularly after 1964, when Rosset, wanting to create

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[61] John Unterecker, 'New Paperback Novels', *New Leader*, 6 September 1958, p. 26.
[62] Findlater, p. 14.
[63] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 96.
[64] Rosset to Calder, 11 December 1958, LL, CBA, Series V, Box VII.

a slicker, more cutting-edge image, decided to foreground the visual aspects of the review. Gontarski explains the symbolic significance of the review's new look:

> The shift in *Evergreen* to a more commercial format reflected a Rosset preoccupation, first in print, then in theater and film, to move radical politics -- which for him included explicit sexuality -- onto a broader, more populist stage. His principal vehicle was the house magazine, *Evergreen*, which had grown from a circulation of 7,500 as a literary quarterly in 1957 [...] and would peak at just over 200,000 in 1970, just before its demise. Many a critic would decry the change. The shift from print-driven quarto to slick, glossy monthly, however, reflected the spirit of its time. If one of the longest-lasting effects of the sixties was the erosion of elite, high culture and the celebration of popular arts, a sort of artistic democratization, that ideological change was reflected in and abetted by what was now called simply *Evergreen*.[65]

Calder, like Rosset, enthusiastically embraced the paperback format, and not long before 1960, he and Rosset jointly purchased the rights to a series of illustrated paperbacks from Editions du Seuil. They had the books translated and in 1960 the series, now named Profile Books, was launched; it later became Illustrated Calderbooks.[66]

The Calderbooks imprint, which appeared in 1959, was the first paperback venture Calder undertook independently. At this time, paperbacks were still widely associated with light, popular fiction. Calder was anxious to exploit the bigger market to which relatively cheap paperbacks would give him access, but not at the expense of the intellectual reputation he was in the process of establishing for his young company. The solution was a neat one: he began to issue the Calderbooks in exactly the same format as his hardcovers, which

> made them appear similar to Evergreen Books. The typography was the same for both editions and soon we were dividing the sheets we printed between hardback and paperback editions. The term 'egg-head' was now applied to these large format paperbacks to denote the presence of a more

[65] Gontarski, ed., *The Grove Press Reader 1951-2001*, p. xxiii.
[66] Calder, 'Profile: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd', *Independent Publishers' Group Bulletin*, July-August 1965, pp. 2-3 (p. 3).

> intellectual content than was contained in the smaller mass-market paperbacks.'[67]

Calder went against the trend in paperback practice by issuing in the egghead format writers he believed needed time to develop -- conversely, most paperback publishers had 'understandably concentrated upon marketing [as paperbacks] the most immediately and sensationally successful of current hardback novels'.[68] It is evident that, in part due to the fact that he sold the *Evergreen Review* and Evergreen paperbacks, and in part due to his own products that were, in their material format, inspired by the Grove Press books, Calder -- and Beckett with him -- was positioned at the forefront of the most exciting developments in international publishing circles. But as a pioneer of this new format, Calder found it difficult to persuade 'more traditionally-minded' bookshops to accept the Calderbooks, which were treated with 'considerable suspicion', even though what Calder called 'better bookshops' welcomed the innovation.[69] Similarly, the usually reliable library market rejected many of Calder's books, to such an extent that as late as 1978, J. A. Sutherland could write that 'my own public library does not have, or does not record as having: *The Naked Lunch*, *Cain's Book*, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, any 'obscene' Genet, either of Miller's *Tropics*.'[70]

The demand for paperbacks grew rapidly, however, and within four years Calder established the Jupiter Books series. Previously, many of the Jupiter Books had either not been available in Britain at all, or had been expensively produced as the work of difficult avant-garde writers and marketed as such to a select readership. Beckett featured prominently in this series. This prominence was partly visual, since his portrait was

[67] Calder, *Pursuit*, pp. 101-02.
[68] Findlater, pp. 15-16.
[69] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 102.
[70] Sutherland, pp. 18-19. Except for Genet, Calder published all of these works.

displayed on his books' covers, but was also due to Calder's having selected two of his books to launch the series.[71] Within two years, three of the sixteen titles thus far published under the Jupiter imprint were Beckett's (*Murphy*, *Watt*, and *Molloy*).

That exploring the significance of the materiality of Calder's books has inevitably led us to look beyond the books themselves evinces the interrelatedness of the three frames (material, co-textual, and promotional) that I proposed earlier in the chapter as central to Beckett's relationship with Calder. One series of Calder's books in particular demonstrates the relation between the material and the co-textual frames. The Signature Series was established in 1969 with a volume of poetry by Robert Nye.[72]

> We followed this volume of poetry with experimental work by new (although not necessarily in their own country) work by Kenneth Gangemi (American), Nicholas Rawson (English and recommended to us by Beckett), Reinhard Lettau (German), Mark Insingel (Flemish), Ted Joans (Black American jazz poet), Peter Bichsel (Swiss), Yuli Daniel (Israeli), Robert Creeley (American), Christian Enzensberger (German), Lyman Andrews (American), Chris Searle (English) and Eugenio Montale (Italian, later to win the Nobel Prize). Through this collection of lesser-known names, at least to the British reading public, we threaded shorter works by Beckett, Sartre, Higgins, Trocchi (his poems) and Artaud, whose *Theatre and Its Double* would turn out to be one of our most important best-sellers in future years: it started life as Number Four in the series.[73]

Each book in the series was numbered: Beckett's *Lessness* was published as Signature 9, his *Texts for Nothing* as Signature 21, and his short text *Still* was included in the Signature anthology that came out in celebration of Calder and Boyars's twenty-fifth anniversary.[74] The back cover of the anthology proclaims that 'the series was established to publish work by writers of the highest quality that is specifically idiosyncratic in form,

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[71] The other two books that launched the series alongside *Murphy* and *Watt* were Ionesco's *Three Plays*, and André Pieyre de Mandiargues's *The Girl Beneath the Lion*.
[72] Robert Nye, *Darker Ends: Poems* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1969).
[73] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 376.
[74] *Lessness* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1970); *Texts for Nothing* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1974); Beckett et al., *Signature Anthology* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975).

length, or subject matter. Each volume bears the unmistakable *signature* of its author, perhaps in the sense that each represents a personal idea that could not be expressed or arranged into conventional forms.'

But each volume also bears the author's signature in a literal sense. On the glossy white jacket of the anthology all the contributors' signatures are boldly displayed in black and red.[75] The back cover insists that 'the ten writers in this anthology are very different from each other', and yet the cover itself promotes them as a distinct group. On the cover, they are explicitly linked by the claim that they are writers of the 'highest quality', each of whom occupies 'a special niche in modern writing', and by the 'idiosyncrasy' and 'unconventionality' of the pieces that represent them in the anthology. This supposed unity is sealed, or concretised, by the display of their signatures -- each one individual, and yet, through the intimacy evoked by the very individuality of the handwriting, through the evocation of personality, the contributors stand together in a scriptural equivalent of the photograph of Beckett and the *nouveau romanciers* that was used to promote Editions de Minuit in their 1961 pamphlet for 'Les 412'.[76] Each of the contributors therefore countersigns the work of the other contributors, not only in the literal sense of the word, in that each signature is added to the others, but also in the sense about which Derrida speaks, meaning that the symbolic weight of each signature contributes to, and hence alters, the meaning of the others to which it is adjoined. In other words, that Beckett is linked with this particular group of writers through his inclusion in the Signature Series is not important just because it provides a new context in which his

[75] The other nine writers included in the *Signature Anthology* were Elspeth Davie, Eva Figes, Kenneth Gangemi, Aidan Higgins, Eugène Ionesco, Robert Nye, Jan Quackenbush, Ann Quin, and Nicholas Rawson.
[76] See chapter one, pp. 51-52.

work can be read, and a new series of associations by which to situate him in the contemporary literary field. Rather, what is demonstrated is that by being 'repeated' through publication in various editions and series, Beckett's work *itself* changes as an inevitable consequence of that repetition: 'what happens is always some *contamination*' (Derrida's emphasis).[77] The Series epitomises that unavoidable and irrevocable process by which, little by little, Beckett's work -- singular, unique, new, at its origin -- loses its singularity as it is circulated in the public sphere, and as it is read alongside, and so through, the work of other writers:

> Singularity 'shared' in this way does not keep itself to the writing aspect, but also to the reading aspect and to what comes to sign, by countersigning, in reading. There is as it were a duel of singularities, a duel of writing and reading, in the course of which a countersignature comes both to confirm, repeat and respect the signature of the other, of the 'original' work, and to *lead it off* elsewhere, so running the risk of *betraying* it, having to betray it in a certain way so as to respect it, through the invention of another signature just as singular. Thus redefined, the concept of countersignature gathers up the whole paradox: you have to give yourself over singularly to singularity, but singularity then does have to share itself out and so compromise itself, *promise to compromise itself*. [His emphasis].[78]

Unlike Lindon, Calder's interests were, from the earliest days of his publishing career, international in scope. This distinction was borne out in the relationship that developed between Calder and Lindon, which was, although close, supportive, and mutually beneficial, almost exclusively one-way in terms of the authors and works passed between the two publishers. Lindon's focus was decidedly on French writing, and this focus became more pronounced with time. In 1969, in response to Calder's having sent and recommended the manuscript of Denis Williams's *The Third Temptation*, Lindon

[77] Jacques Derrida, 'An Interview with Jacques Derrida', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 33-75 (p. 68).
[78] Derrida, 'An Interview with Jacques Derrida', in *Acts of Literature*, p. 69.

wrote, 'comme vous le savez, nous ne publions pratiquement plus d'ouvrages littéraires traduits de l'étranger: en fait, la seule exception que nous ayons consentie ces derniers temps a été en faveur d'Higgins.'[79] Calder did not always accept Lindon's position with good grace, complaining a few years later, when Lindon turned down Higgins's *Balcony of Europe*, 'We buy books from you that we know perfectly well will sell slowly with us for a number of years, and once in a while we think you should take a book from us [...] I really feel you ought to have second thoughts about this. You know that I seldom try to convince you against your will, but I think this time you could be making a serious mistake.'[80] However, in spite of this grievance, and others (usually relating to Calder's failure to keep his financial dealings with Editions de Minuit in good order -- in 1962 Lindon had to remind Calder that he owed money on every one of the twenty-two works that Calder had thus far obtained from Editions de Minuit, a situation Lindon understandably lamented as 'parfaitement intolérable'),[81] Calder assured Lindon that his relationship with Editions de Minuit was 'le premier priorité de notre maison.'[82] His autobiography confirms that, during the early 1960s, Editions de Minuit remained his 'main source'.[83] To the extent that Beckett was linked with the *nouveau romanciers* of Lindon's 'stable' in France, he was also loosely associated with those writers in England, partly because he was often simply regarded as a contemporary French writer (or at least, writer of French) newly available to an English readership, and undiscriminating

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[79] 'as you know, we publish hardly any translated literary works from abroad: in fact, the only exception we will have allowed in recent times was in favour of Higgins.' Lindon refers here to Aidan Higgins's *Felo De Se* and *Langrishe, Go Down*, which he published on Calder's recommendation in the early 1960s. Lindon to Calder, 17 February 1969, LL, CBA, Series V, Box IV, Folder 5.
[80] Calder to Lindon, 5 April 1973, LL, CBA, Series V, Box IV, Folder 6.
[81] 'perfectly intolerable'. Lindon to Calder, 8 October 1962, LL, CBA, Series V, Box IV, Folder 1.
[82] 'our firm's top priority.' Calder to Lindon, 27 October 1962, LL, CBA, Series V, Box IV, Folder 1.
[83] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 185.

commentators tended to lump all such writers together, and partly because both Beckett and the *nouveau romanciers* were published by and championed by Calder.[84]

However, Calder also promoted Beckett in ways that associated him with groups and ideas that had nothing to do with contemporary French writing, even though he regarded Beckett as, if anything, a French writer.[85] Because of Calder's more catholic publishing tastes, Beckett was linked with much more diverse groups of writers through inclusion on Calder's list than he was through inclusion on Lindon's list, as is borne out in the international list of authors, of varying degrees of fame, featured in the Signature Series. One of the most important implications of Beckett's presence on Calder's list was the way it changed his relationship to the French writers who were Lindon's other star authors, chiefly the *nouveau romanciers*. Both Beckett and the *nouveau romanciers* defy, and always have defied, easy categorisation. Whether Beckett was a French or Irish writer, whether it is true that his 'literary inspiration [was] primarily James Joyce',[86] whether he is a modernist (or the 'last' modernist, as Anthony Cronin styles him) or a postmodernist ('as I have yet to see any real consensus of opinion about what exactly a postmodernist is' Lois Oppenheim observes, 'for the term covers far too broad an aesthetico-historical domain, I do not see how there could be serious agreement about

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[84] See p. 52.

[85] In response to Peter du Sautoy, of Faber and Faber, questioning whether it would be appropriate for Calder to include Beckett in an anthology of French avant-garde theatre, Calder responded: 'I would have thought that it is now generally accepted that although of international standing, [Beckett] essentially belongs in the French theatre as all his early and best-known plays were written in French, and it is the French theatre in this respect that is now influencing the English, Americans and Germans. Sam has now been living in France for so long that he is certainly considered a Frenchman there. After all, Ionesco is of Rumanian origin, Adamov of Russian.' Calder to du Sautoy, 28 May 1965, LL, CBA, Series V, Box VI.

[86] Laurent LeSage, *The French New Novel* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), p. 47.

why Beckett should be called one')[87] -- these are typical questions raised in response to any attempt to pin Beckett down too neatly. Equally, the meaning, and even the validity, of the term *nouveau roman* has been hotly contested, and 'the list of who is and who is not considered a New Novelist has evolved a good deal.'[88] Arthur Babcock observes that the first two important published discussions of the *nouveau roman* (special issues devoted to the subject put out by the journal *Esprit* in 1958, and by *Yale French Studies* in 1959) both included Beckett as a *nouveau romancier*.[89] In spite of the conundrums bedevilling attempts to assess precisely what Beckett's relationship with the group was, however, it is nonetheless clear that, over time, Beckett has ceased to become closely linked to the group. For instance, in the *Nouveau Roman Reader* that Calder published and jointly edited with John Fletcher in 1986, Calder mentions Beckett in his introduction only as a precursor of the new novelists.[90] Babcock suggests that the reason for this change is that 'the consensus is probably that his work is difficult to assimilate.'[91] I would suggest that although the most important reasons that Beckett has been 'difficult to assimilate' have to do with the nature of his writing, the difficulty may also be located in the variety of co-textual frames with which his work has been related.

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[87] Lois Oppenheim, *The Painted Word: Samuel Beckett's Dialogue with Art* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 4.

[88] Arthur E. Babcock, *The New Novel In France: Theory and Practice of the Nouveau Roman* (New York: Twayne, 1997), p. 3. Babcock notes that 'given that the notion of the New Novel revolved around a single publisher and that the chief proponent for the movement [Robbe-Grillet] was employed by the same publisher [as literary consultant], another negative conclusion is that the New Novel was in fact not much more than a publicity campaign.'

[89] Babcock, pp. 3-4.

[90] John Calder, Introduction, *The Nouveau Roman Reader*, ed. by John Fletcher and John Calder (London: John Calder; New York: Riverrun Press, 1986), pp. 7-37.

[91] Babcock, p. 4. It is worth noting that in his 1966 study of the *nouveau roman*, Vivian Mercier distances Beckett from the *nouveau romanciers* by asserting that he (along with Kafka and Raymond Roussel) is one of their major precursors. Mercier singles out *L'Innommable* as particularly influential. However, this work was published in 1953, by which time Sarraute, Duras, Simon, and Robbe-Grillet had all published important works. This chronological proximity demonstrates some of the difficulties inherent in trying to define the extent of Beckett's relationship with the *nouveau romanciers*. Vivian Mercier, *The New Novel: From Queneau to Pinget* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), pp. 19-20.

The influence of Calder has been central to this process of complicating the make-up of the public Beckett. Calder's approach to marketing Beckett has been anything but systematic, and the way in which he has projected Beckett has certainly not been one-dimensional. It is true that in the early years of their relationship, Beckett was linked with the other French writers that Calder accessed through Lindon, in large measure simply because it was Lindon who published these writers in French, and it was Calder who published them in Britain, and so the writers were bound by their affiliation with these publishers. But Beckett was as much linked with new experimental dramatists (who often, like Ionesco and Adamov, wrote in French although they were not French) as with the *nouveau romanciers*, which makes sense when we recall that Beckett was first known in Britain as a dramatist, and that his main champion was Harold Hobson, the *Sunday Times* drama critic who was also a passionate advocate of the French playwrights whose work was just beginning to be staged in London.[92] Furthermore, Martin Esslin's influential 1961 study, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, linked Beckett together with Ionesco, Adamov, and Genet.[93] But, even though Calder regarded Beckett as a French writer, he did not classify Beckett as a *nouveau romancier*, nor did he programmatically promote him alongside his other Editions de Minuit authors.[94]

[92] Calder writes that Hobson's taste 'was catholic in every way: he enjoyed musicals and farces as well as Shakespeare [... he went] also to the pocket theatres to see the new emerging playwrights of the avant-garde: Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov, and Duras, all of whom he promoted in his *Sunday Times* column.' *Pursuit*, p. 91.

[93] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961).

[94] In 1960, Calder organised an enormously successful reading tour with three of his French writers: Duras, Sarraute, and Robbe-Grillet. That Beckett was apparently not invited to take part might reasonably be put down to Calder recognising that Beckett would be likely to resist participating in such an event. Even so, for the British public who attended the readings or heard about them, although Beckett's absence may not have been remarked, it meant nonetheless that whereas the group of three was closely linked in front of their British readers, Beckett was not being actively associated with them, as he had been in France.

Calder was acutely conscious of his position as a publisher of foreign literature, as is revealed in the transcript of an interview conducted by G. Almansi:

> The antagonism of our critics to alien cultures has been quite disastrous [...] This is why every publisher's list should show some kind of unity, a common stylistic approach, a common political philosophy, sometimes a common iconoclastic quality. In our own particular list, what we have done is to publish a great deal of important European literature written between 1950 and the present day, and as a result of this -- because there are now enormous gaps in continuity between what went on before 1914 in Europe and what has happened in 1945 -- we find ourselves now engaged in a great programme of translating the French, German, and Italian literatures of the interwar period.[95]

Calder viewed literature as a chain (he wished to develop 'series that supported the way I viewed literature, as a continuing chain, where each generation tried to build on or revolt against what had gone before'),[96] meaning that he had a definite conception of what literature was, and of what his role was in promoting that conception of literature. Calder was eager to create connections and to draw parallels between writers, kinds of writers, and pieces of writing. Beckett, for better or for worse, was to be made part of this project.

In practice, however, Calder's aims did not result in Beckett being buttonholed neatly into a pan-European 'chain' or literary lineage. Conversely, thanks to Calder's eclectic range of professional relationships, the environment into which Beckett was drawn as a Calder author was diverse. The extent of Calder's relations with Grove Press has already been alluded to, but it will be germane to emphasise here just how iconoclastic Barney Rosset's enterprise was, and to remind ourselves that, through his involvement in the production and promotion of many Grove publications, Calder was very much part of this enterprise:

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[95] Transcript of G. Almansi interviewing John Calder. It is not clear when this interview was conducted, and I have been unable to discover whether it was published. The transcript is valuable nonetheless for its insight into Calder's conception of his role. LL, CBA, Series VII, Box II, 'Writings'.
[96] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 375.

> By the end of the '50s Grove had moved quickly to bring to national prominence the art and artists of the disillusioned counterculture, provocative and even pugnacious material that appealed to Rosset's sensibility: the San Francisco and New York poets; the New York 'action' painters; the French Surrealists and Pataphysicians; the German Expressionists; the dramatists of the Absurd and the romanciers of the Nouveau roman. Under Rosset Grove focused attention on and developed such nascent fields as black, ethnic, and third-world literatures, [...] published books on the politics of the New Left, on the alternate or counter psychology of Transactional Analysis, on the international art film, and musically on jazz, the African-American avant-garde.[97]

Calder imported, promoted, and sold the *Evergreen Review*. This stridently controversial publication often featured Beckett texts (his short story 'Dante and the Lobster' appeared in the first issue in 1957), so linking Beckett to provocative, sometimes banned, contemporary American writing. Hence, thanks to Calder's relationship with Grove Press, Beckett was introduced to the British market in an American context, too. Like Rosset, Calder was also intent on promoting 'the ideas that came from contemporaries in other fields, painting, music, the performance arts and new philosophical thinking.'[98] We shall see that his interest in challenging conventional genre boundaries had an important impact on Beckett's work -- as an energetic supporter of contemporary theatre, he was greatly concerned to advance Beckett's drama and, crucially for the development of different approaches to Beckett's work generally, to promote his prose texts in theatrical settings.

Anthony Cronin singles out Calder's relationships with Grove Press and the Olympia Press as having been 'rewarding', since they lent 'both an avant-garde appearance and a risqué air to the list.'[99] Although this assessment implies an unfair belittling of both Calder's own talent for discovering new writers, and his courage in

[97] Gontarski, ed., *The Grove Press Reader 1951-2001*, pp. xvi-xvii.
[98] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 375.
[99] Cronin, p. 477.

publishing work that risked prosecution, Calder's involvement (both personal and professional) with Maurice Girodias of the Olympia Press was highly significant. Calder confirms that their association was 'in many ways as important as the one with Barney Rosset', but records too that 'all my dealings with Maurice landed me in problems.'[100] Girodias was undoubtedly one of the most fascinating personalities in twentieth-century publishing. Calder writes, 'I have never known a more panglossian optimist than Maurice Girodias, always living in a golden tomorrow, about to be brought into being by his latest plan, idea or project. 'C'est sûr', he would say. 'Cette fois il n'y a aucune possibilité d'échec'.'[101] But it was precisely the possibility of failure that constantly dogged this hapless, fearless, irrepressible, and usually penniless publisher. Despite a history of publishing a heady and remarkable mix of pornography and daring literary writing (by William Burroughs, Henry Miller, Jean Genet, Jean Cocteau, and Vladimir Nabokov to name but a few), Girodias operated in an ongoing state of chaos and conflict (with any number of authors and publishers, let alone State authorities), and seemed always to be on the brink of legal, financial, and personal disasters. He frequently turned to Calder for help and advice, and made numerous attempts to go into business with him.

Their professional relationship started when Calder published *Malone Dies* in 1958, and 'its dispatch to the literary journals was accompanied by a copy of the Olympia Press edition of *Watt*, over which Calder had pasted his own imprint as distributor.'[102] In the early 1960s, Calder advertised the Olympia Press magazine, *Olympia*, and sold British subscriptions to it. In 1965 he agreed to publish *The Olympia Press Reader*,

[100] Calder, *Pursuit*, pp. 217, 219.
[101] 'It's certain. This time there is absolutely no chance of failure.' Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 476.
[102] Cronin, p. 478.

although this plan did not eventuate,[103] and in 1966 plans were drawn up for the Olympia Book Society, in which Girodias, Calder, and the New English Library were to participate as publishers. Calder, however, decided to withdraw from the project because of the *Last Exit to Brooklyn* trial: 'we can engage in no other dangerous publishing venture until the matter is settled.'[104] In a later letter, Girodias grudgingly acknowledged the risk that the *Olympia Reader* could be invoked by the prosecution in the *Last Exit* case 'as a treatise on sadism, and as a connecting link between you and me'.[105] By the end of the 1960s Calder and Boyars seemed to have had enough: 'Your missionary zeal is really yours, and although we are completely in sympathy with everything you do, we don't really want to do it ourselves. It's as simple as that. Please don't interpret this as an unfriendly gesture. As I said before, we all love you.'[106] Despite this disavowal, however, their relationship, in both personal and professional respects, remained strong. In the early 1970s, Calder agreed to sell Olympia's hardcover editions in Britain, on the proviso that they draw up an agreement that would 'very specifically state that we are in no way responsible for the editorial content of the books and that we would not be involved in any obscenity or other legal difficulties that the books might encounter.'[107] At the same time, he also accepted, in principle, that certain of Olympia's books of 'a much higher quality' might in the future bear the joint imprint of Calder and Boyars and the Olympia Press.

On the continuum of publishers Calder was linked, on one side, to the Olympia Press and its subversive, often illegal, publications, and to the revolutionary spirit of

[103] Grove Press published this book in the United States.
[104] Calder to Girodias, 23 December 1966, LL, CBA, Series V, Box X.
[105] Girodias to Calder, 19 March 1967, LL, CBA, Series V, Box X.
[106] Boyars to Girodias, 18 June 1969, LL, CBA, Series V, Box X.
[107] Boyars to Girodias, 25 June 1971, LL, CBA, Series V, Box X.

Grove Press, and on the other side to the reputable firm Faber and Faber. Beckett was, of course, framed by this venerable establishment house, who published his plays, as well as by Calder. But the division in Britain between the plays and the prose was not absolute. One reason for this was Calder's promotion of the prose in theatrical settings, which is examined below. The other is due to the cooperative relationship that Faber and Calder enjoyed. They publicised their respective relationships with Beckett, agreeing in 1964 to print each other's list of Beckett publications in their own Beckett books.[108] Beckett, then, was implicitly linked with (or co-textually framed by) a dazzlingly wide range of writers and writing. But other of Calder's activities also served to enlarge and complicate the field in which he operated, and hence the field in which Beckett was circulated in Britain.

In the 1950s, Calder identified a 'new school of British fiction, which needed to be promoted as a school'.[109] The degree to which Calder succeeded in this task is debatable, but in his recent survey of publishing since 1960, Randall Stevenson acknowledges the importance of Calder's efforts in fostering innovative young British writers, who, without his support, may not have found an audience.[110] Calder also earned a certain cultural cachet as a champion of the anti-censorship movement. His most contentious novels graphically explored sex, drugs, and the controversial aspects of the beatnik subculture: his first radically notorious novel was Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, which he brought out in 1963. In 1964 he lost an obscenity trial brought against Alexander Trocchi's *Cain's Book*, and in 1966 he was famously prosecuted for Hubert

[108] Calder began to do so almost immediately, but it took nearly two years for Faber to carry out its part of the bargain. Charles Monteith to Calder, 3 March 1964, and Calder to Peter du Sautoy, 21 January 1966, LL, CBA, Series V, Box VI.
[109] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 186.
[110] Stevenson, 'A Golden Age? Readers, Authors, and the Book Trade', in *The Oxford English Literary History*, p. 159.

Selby Jnr's *Last Exit to Brooklyn.*[111] The case was won on appeal in 1968. Beckett was no stranger to censorship: *More Pricks Than Kicks* was banned in Ireland in 1934, and for many years, even after he was well established, he had to battle to keep the more controversial words and passages in his work. During the 1960s Beckett's work did not attract the sensational kind of censorious attention with which novels like *Last Exit* had to contend, but his relationship with Calder meant that he continued to be associated with controversial writing. Yet the publicity generated by Calder's most daring works also meant that he began to attract a youthful readership -- he contends that 'during the 60s I was perhaps the most fashionable publisher, the one most talked about.'[112] As Calder achieved this popularity and his reputation evolved, so Beckett's position in the cultural sphere, as one framed by Calder, was also altered.

But thanks to Calder, Beckett was also popularised in another, more clearly discernible, and ultimately more significant way. In 1962 Calder allowed Penguin to publish *Malone Dies*. He did so without consulting Beckett, but justified the decision to Lindon by explaining that 'we agreed to let them have the one novel to help create a market for all the others [...] We do not intend to sell any other Becketts to Penguin, but as the Penguins are able to get into all the little villages, it may help to make a Beckett public and sell all the other works.'[113] The book was reprinted in 1965, and in 1968 came out for a third time, this time issued as part of the 'Modern Classics' series.[114] This act of consecration not only increased Beckett's popularity, as Calder had hoped, but hastened

[111] John O'Mahony, 'Publishing's One-Man Band', *Guardian*, 20 July 2002, pp. 16-19 (p. 19).
[112] Calder, in Howard Aster and Amy Land, eds, *In Defence of Literature: for John Calder* (New York: Mosaic Press, 1998), p. 29.
[113] Calder to Lindon, 9 November 1962, LL, CBA, Series V, Box IV, Folder 1.
[114] See note 31 for more recent Penguin issues of Beckett's work.

the canonisation of Beckett, a movement that gathered force the following year when the Nobel Prize was awarded to him.

One of the more intriguing aspects of Calder's keen embrace of the marketing of series of books (and I refer here not only to Calder's own Calderbooks, Jupiter Books and Signature Series, but also to other series in which he was jointly involved -- whether as part-owner or as distributor and promoter -- with other publishers, such as the Profile Books and the Evergreen series with Grove Press, the Independent Publishers' Group Riband Books,[115] and Olympia Press's Traveller's Companion Series), has to do with the history of this kind of marketing. It has been alluded to above that Calder concentrated increasingly 'on developing series that supported the way I viewed literature, as a continuing chain, where each generation tried to build on or revolt against what had gone before'.[116] Calder may not have realised his own debt to the previous generation of a group of publishers markedly different from himself. He was employing promotional strategies that were pioneered in the nineteenth century, and that, in the first half of the twentieth century, came to be most closely associated with mass market publishers of 'light' fiction, and especially with Mills and Boon. Founded in 1908, Mills and Boon put 'to best use' the marketing 'of publishing imprints rather than individual authors'.[117] John Boon recalls that the marketing technique the firm inherited from the 'quality' publishers (both the founders began their careers with Methuen) involved the individual promotion

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[115] It was Calder's idea to launch this series, which came out in October 1964. Initially, it was to be called Seal Books, and was to be divided into fiction, non-fiction, and academic and technical lines that, like Penguin books, would be denoted by colour (White Seals, Blue Seals, and so forth). 'Small Publishers Hold Conference', *The Bookseller*, 18 April 1964, p. 1646.
[116] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 375.
[117] McAleer, p. 27.

of each book deemed to warrant any promotion at all: 'We changed that, and promoted the list, with some heart-searchings from the older members of the establishment.'[118]

Calder, too, used his list of authors, as a group, to promote his company generally. A 1965 advertisement in the programme for a fundraising evening at the Prince of Wales Theatre, for instance, names no individual book. It advertises, quite simply, the John Calder publishing house, but contains no description of the house other than stating that it is the publisher of thirty-one authors, whose names are listed alphabetically.[119] The authors' collective kudos is summoned to represent Calder -- he becomes his list.[120] Similarly, as we have seen with the Signature Series, a group of contributing authors would be employed to define the nature of a particular series, and the evocation of their names would serve as a kind of assurance, or guarantee, of the value of the individual books making up the series. We will see below how Calder attempted to invoke buyers' trust in his imprint generally in order to bypass promoting the merits of individual books, as with the marketing of the Evergreen Books Stand: 'If you let us pick out what we think you can sell, we will see you safe.'[121] Ironically, given Calder's avant-garde pedigree, this was precisely the technique employed by Mills and Boon to win over their target market in the interwar years. The blurb from the endpages of their books from the 1930s urged that 'really the only way to choose is to limit your reading to those publishers whose lists are carefully selected, and whose fiction imprint is a sure guarantee of good reading';

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[118] McAleer, p. 104.
[119] The advertisement also lists a series of composers about whom Calder publishes books. Advertisement in Programme for 'Artists Against Apartheid', Prince of Wales Theatre, 22-23 March 1965, p. 19.
[120] This advertisement calls to mind Bourdieu's assertion that 'the discoverer's symbolic capital is inscribed in the relationship with the writers and the artists he or she supports ('a publisher', says one of them, 'is his catalogue')'. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. by Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 168.
[121] See p. 114.

there followed 'an extensive publication list, usually running to sixteen pages, of new and reprinted novels'.[122]

In 1970, Calder brought out his own copy of *More Pricks Than Kicks*, which engendered a bitter dispute with Chatto and Windus, who claimed they still retained full rights to the work, originally published by them in 1934, and who threatened legal proceedings against Calder unless he agreed to cease publication and pay damages.[123] Calder's fiery response accused Chatto (who, he said, 'did very badly with the book when it was first published') of trying 'to cash in on Mr. Beckett's present celebrity against the wishes of the author'.[124] Given that Calder was in turn accused, and not unfairly, of adopting a 'truculent tone and intransigent attitude', Chatto's reply (penned by Ian Parsons) should have come as no surprise:

> 'Cash-in' is an emotive phrase, with offensively pejorative overtones, which I prefer to ignore. But you must be well aware that there was little or no demand for Beckett's work in this country until 'Waiting for Godot' made him famous, and an impartial observer might well ask, noting that the first Beckett title published by you came out several years after the phenomenal success of that play, just what Calder and Boyars have been doing for the past ten or twelve years if not 'cashing-in' on it.[125]

Calder vigorously defended himself against this charge, reminding Parsons that he had in fact wanted to publish *Waiting for Godot* but that Faber and Faber, by sheer luck, got in first, and that Beckett's work had only very recently become commercially viable.[126]

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[122] McAleer, pp. 106-07.

[123] After Calder made it clear that Beckett believed his contract with Chatto and Windus to be ended, and that he wished Calder, and Calder only, to reissue the book, Chatto agreed to let the matter drop. Parsons to Calder, 20 July 1970, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 52.

[124] Calder to Michael Rubenstein (solicitor to Chatto and Windus), 13 July 1970, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 52.

[125] Parsons to Calder, 20 July 1970, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 52.

[126] Calder to Parsons, 22 July 1970, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 52. For Calder's version of the unhappy mishap that resulted in his losing the plays to Faber and Faber, see *Pursuit*, pp. 93-94. In *Pursuit*, Calder also counters the suggestion that he was not a discoverer of talent but merely rode on Lindon's

Both of these claims were true. It would, moreover, be unjust to suggest that Calder had sat back complacently and waited for the public to accept Beckett. On the contrary, his search for an audience for Beckett was characterised by enormous dedication, energy, and inventiveness.

This brings us to the third way in which Beckett was framed by being published by Calder, and a consideration of how Calder promoted Beckett, and what the effects of his promotional strategies were. In terms of traditional advertising, Calder's approach was relatively conservative. He regularly sent short pieces, or excerpts from Beckett's longer pieces, to the literary editors of the broadsheets.[127] However, his narrow focus when advertising in the print media creates a misleading picture of his role as a promoter. He regularly toured bookshops in order to vouch personally for his books, writing to Beckett in 1960 that he had 'been doing a tour of booksellers during the last month and have pushed up the sales of all your books that are with us.'[128] He toured with his writers (recall his successful 1960 tour with Duras, Sarraute, and Robbe-Grillet), and he also toured with actors who would perform passages from various books -- more often than not, from Beckett's. Calder's involvement with the theatre was highly significant for Beckett. The publisher's interest in all kinds of theatre spanned his personal and professional lives: he was an avid, even obsessive, opera-goer; his second wife, Bettina Jonic, was a Croatian opera singer; and in 1963, after inheriting from an uncle a Scottish

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success by stating that he had met with Ionesco, and offered to publish him, even before Ionesco had a French publisher (p. 90).

[127] For example, 'Imagination Dead Imagine' appeared in the *Sunday Times* in late 1965 (*Sunday Times*, 7 November 1965, p. 48); 'Lessness' was published in the *New Statesman* before Calder issued his own edition (*New Statesman*, 1 May 1970, p. 635); and Calder sent a proof copy of *More Pricks Than Kicks* to the *Observer*, asking whether they would like to print one of the stories prior to the book's upcoming publication (Calder to Richard Findlater (at the *Observer*), 5 May 1970, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 51).

[128] Calder to Beckett, 15 July 1960, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 42.

country estate that Calder decided to develop into a venue for musical performances, he initiated the 'Ledlanet Nights Festival'.[129] He was also a passionate advocate of contemporary theatre, often writing about recent developments and attempting to explain experimental theatre by placing it in its historical context.[130] His interest was not limited to journalism and publishing (Randall Stevenson confirms that Calder was one of only a handful of publishers who 'strongly supported' new drama in the 1960s),[131] but extended to organisational and administrative activities that encompassed Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre (he joined the board in 1963),[132] the Edinburgh Festival itself, as well as smaller events such as the evenings Calder arranged at Better Books,[133] and liaising with radio and television stations to promote readings and screenings. In 1962, Calder persuaded the organisers of the Edinburgh Festival to allow him to run the 'immensely successful' Edinburgh Conference, a literary event that was held alongside the main Festival.[134] To advertise the first Conference, Calder admits to having written a number of fake and inflammatory letters to the press, such that after the first day the Conference was 'the hit and main talking point of the festival'.[135] The following year, hoping to repeat the triumph of 1962, he organised a drama conference. This, however, was less provocative, until the close of the conference, when the organisers staged a 'happening', which involved a naked young woman being briefly exposed to the audience.[136]

[129] John O'Mahony, 'Publishing's One-Man Band', *Guardian*, 20 July 2002, pp. 16-19 (p. 18).
[130] See for example, John Calder, 'The Theatre of Noise', *Flourish*, vol. 2, no. 1, Autumn 1968, p. 5.
[131] Stevenson, 'A Golden Age? Readers, Authors, and the Book Trade', in *The Oxford English Literary History*, p. 152.
[132] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 234.
[133] See p. 113.
[134] 'About Us', <http://www.calderpublications.com/aboutus.html> [accessed 30 March 2004].
[135] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 203.
[136] 'The Edinburgh authorities decided to bring an obscenity suit against the conference organisers, but lost the case.' John O'Mahony, 'Publishing's One-Man Band', *Guardian*, 20 July 2002, pp. 16-19 (p. 18).

The chief way in which Calder's theatrical interests impacted on Beckett was through his promotion of readings of Beckett's prose works. Indeed, Calder organised an entire movement around the activity, which was centred on Beckett's work. He had a band of actors whom he 'recruited' to read extracts, as well as explanatory notes that he wrote himself. He called this 'The Theatre of Literature':

> Under that name we appeared in many places, especially at Festival and Arts events. I offered these programmes to the organisers at a flat fee, which depended on the number of actors involved, so it was up to the hosting body to do well or badly out of them according to the numbers they attracted. We had several engagements at the Edinburgh Festival, even more at the Cheltenham Literature Festival and we appeared at major events all over Britain. This helped to sell books and we featured several authors, but pre-eminently Beckett, who was ideal for public presentation as so much of his work is in monologue form. [...] I found [Beckett's short prose texts] ideal for my own group at art centres, lasting just an hour.[137]

Despite Beckett's misgivings ('please go easy with these readings [...] no more without my knowing what extracts and read how and by whom. Forgive if I sound cantankerous'),[138] Calder pursued this line of promotion wholeheartedly. Their benefit, as Calder saw it, was twofold, as it brought in much-needed royalties, as well as expanding Beckett's readership: 'I have organised several public readings of Beckett novels recently all of which will bring in some royalties, and find that this is the best possible way of interesting the public, especially young people. [...] The texts come immediately to life when read out loud.'[139] The following chapter discusses more fully the ramifications of this kind of genre-defying approach to Beckett's work, both legally and critically, as well as Beckett's inconsistent attitude towards it. Suffice it to note, here. that although Calder's influence in this regard seems never to be recognised by critics, he was at the forefront of

[137] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 501.
[138] Beckett to Calder, 23 October 1965, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 45.
[139] Calder to Lindon, 21 September 1965, LL, CBA, Series V, Box IV, Folder 3.

the movement to encourage readers to consider the prose texts in a dramatic light, and laid much of the groundwork for later, sometimes controversial, adaptations.

Other of Calder's activities challenged other kinds of boundaries. His involvement in the bookselling industry advanced a more general democratisation of literature, by encouraging the growth of a new market of readers. Stevenson records that as late as 1960, 'the book trade had scarcely recovered from the loss in the London Blitz of the comprehensively stocked wholesaler Simpkin Marshall, obliging bookshops to deal directly with as many as two hundred individual publishers instead.'[140] The administrative and distributive problems associated with acquiring and displaying stock were not the only difficulties to beleaguer the bookselling industry in the two decades after the war. Turnover was worryingly low in the 1950s and 1960s, and many in the industry were struggling to stay afloat. Calder, despite his assiduous courting of the booksellers, had a particularly difficult battle in trying to win support from what he described as 'a very conservative breed':

> They did not like what I published very much. [...] I was an eccentric publisher outside the accepted mould, bringing out literary books that few people could or wanted to understand, and that sold too slowly. [...] There was also a suspicion that my creative literature, not being written just to make money, was in some way subversive.[141]

One of the most serious problems besetting the industry, and one which went largely unrecognised until the large bookselling chains like Dillons became active in the 1970s, was that many readers 'have never entered an orthodox bookshop in their lives: to them it seems out of bounds, the precinct of another class [...] and the management of

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[140] Stevenson, 'A Golden Age? Readers, Authors, and the Book Trade', in *The Oxford English Literary History*, p. 129.
[141] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 150.

many bookshops does little to dispel it, unwelcoming and unimaginative as it is.'[142] The standout exception to the dark, uninviting bookshops that were the norm in post-war Britain was Tony Godwin's Better Books, which, although 'not the first modern bookshop' was 'the one which had most influence on other booksellers'.[143] Godwin's bookshop, on Charing Cross Road, was known as an avant-garde store that stocked unusual titles. It was bright and attractive. Not only did it have a coffee bar, but in a space next door to the bookshop poetry readings and other literary and dramatic events were held, often presided over by Calder.[144] Godwin, 'a charismatic owner who loved literature', was one of Calder's best customers.[145] In 1965, he offered Calder a space within the bookshop that came to be known as Calder Corner. The responsibility of stocking and presenting the Corner was left entirely to Calder himself. By the end of 1965, the space carried the complete range of Calder's books.[146] He claimed that his sales at the shop went up eleven times.[147]

Ever the innovator, Calder had come up with a simple and effective idea for combating one of the most frustrating difficulties that publishers faced in their dealings with booksellers. In 1964, 21,000 new titles appeared in Britain.[148] Booksellers were beset with distributive and economic worries that were exacerbated by publishers' restrictive terms (publishers tended to pressure the bookstores to stockhold large quantities of each title in exchange for reasonable prices on those titles), which meant

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[142] Findlater, p. 17.
[143] Norrie, p. 206.
[144] Calder claims that the events he organised were extremely successful and attracted considerable press coverage, but that when Godwin asked other publishers to run some evenings, they did a 'bad job'. *Pursuit*, p. 277.
[145] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 277.
[146] *Flourish*, vol. 1, no. 5, Winter 1965, p. 8.
[147] *Independent Publishers' Group Bulletin*, September-October 1965, p. 5.
[148] Jane Wilson, 'The New Bookmen', *Town*, September 1967, pp. 41-44 (p. 44).

that there 'simply was not room' for all the titles published to be displayed in the bookshops: 'the average 'shelf-life' of a book is about six weeks. If it has not sold in that time it will be moved out to make room for new stock.'[149]

In response to this dilemma, Calder designed and, at considerable trouble and expense, produced what he called the Evergreen Books Stand, which he promoted to booksellers *as part of* his promotion of Evergreen paperbacks. A mock-up for an advertisement dating from 1960, titled 'A Square Foot of Culture', evinces Calder's concern to link the materiality of the books, the display of the books, the content of the books, and Calder's own proficiency as both businessman and arbiter of cultural taste:

> Here is the answer to the bookseller who wants to keep a small stock of better class books for his more literary customers but suffers from chronic shortage of space and in any case has trouble in deciding what to keep. This is the most modern, attractive and space-saving stand yet manufactured in England. Only one square foot of table space holds about forty books with eighteen faces fully displayed. It has been manufactured specially for the EVERGREEN BOOKS which are the most modern, varied and well-produced series of high class paperbacks available in England. All books are demy 8vo, sewn, good paper, clear print, bulking like a hard cover book, with outstanding art jackets, laminated and durable. Write in for a stand and a selection of the 50 titles so far available. If you let us pick out what we think you can sell, we will see you safe.[150]

By promoting the Evergreen paperbacks to booksellers in a way that would allow him to control their presentation to the book-buying public Calder was, in effect, challenging the longstanding beliefs that 'quality' literature (especially if it were new) could have little or no commercial value, and that 'high class' books were of interest only to a necessarily limited 'high class' readership. Until the 1960s, the term 'high class paperback' would generally have been considered oxymoronic. Calder, however, was convinced that if the

[149] ibid.
[150] LL, CBA, Series VII, Box III, Evergreen Books.

conditions, or context, of sale (meaning the physical product, its display, and the environment in which it was displayed) were altered, then a wider market for his books could be developed, without having to compromise the nature of the writing at stake. His views per se were not new:

> In a leading article in 1930, *The Publishers' Circular* ranked books with the 'indispensable necessities of life', and condemned the 'intellectual snobbery' of booksellers and publishers who still regarded the trade as a sacred luxury -- in spite of declining sales. 'Books *are* a commodity, and we cannot get away from that fundamental fact', the journal claimed. 'Author, publisher and bookseller alike are engaged in business, the business of selling.'[151]

What was novel was that a publisher of Calder's avant-garde pedigree was embracing these views with such vigour. In an industry where even in the 1960s selling remained 'absurdly lop-sided and anarchic', Calder, under-capitalised but energetic, was putting these ideas into action.[152]

To Calder's chagrin, Godwin accepted a position as Penguin's fiction editor, and 'sold out' to Collins in 1966.[153] Calder had hoped to be able to buy the bookshop himself, as Godwin suspected after a long silence from Calder ensued after the sale. His letter to Calder addressing the issue paints a vivid portrait of the crusading publisher:

> Have you got a chip on your shoulder about Better Books? Do you feel I should have given it to you? Did it ever occur to you, if that is the case, that you never once mentioned that you were at all interested in taking over and running the shop? Did it ever occur to you to wonder what I would think of your behaviour, charging around the publishing trade like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza rolled into one, trying to rescue Better Books from the evil clutches of Collins? And then never even bothered to write to me, or contact me, or find out what happened? Hm![154]

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[151] McAleer, p. 42.
[152] Findlater, p. 18.
[153] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 277.
[154] Godwin to Calder, 6 June 1966, LL, CBA, Series V, Box II.

As Better Books changed under its new ownership to cater to more mainstream tastes, Calder decided to create his own replacement. His plan which, typically, was nothing if not ambitious, was to open a complex of interrelated literary and dramatic venues at a large site in Wardour Street in London's Soho. The proposed bookshop would form the heart of this cultural centre, and was to connect to a theatre, a lecture and concert hall, a gallery and a 'continental-style' cafe, all of which would be used to promote Calder's authors' works, and especially to promote contemporary experimental theatre.[155] Ashley Hill, who interviewed Calder about the project, affirmed that 'meeting Mr. Calder has convinced me that there is no pretentious intellectualism in his scheme. He is clearly a man with no time for those who wear their culture on their sleeve.'[156]

It is important to note that although Calder disapproved of the changes that Collins instituted at Better Books in order to attract a larger, mainstream market, and although he intended to use the Wardour Street complex to support new and experimental drama with a small following, far from fostering a sophisticated clique, he too was endeavouring to open up the kinds of theatre and literature in which he was interested to a much larger public. What marked Calder out from mainstream thinking was his conviction that instead of simply catering to current demand, publishers could encourage readers to learn to appreciate more challenging writing: 'Calder believes that the biggest job to be done with the British reading public is to convince it that the kinds of awareness and self-examination with which serious modern writers concern themselves are worth a

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[155] Ashley Hill, 'New Theatres -- New Ideas: John Calder talks to Ashley Hill', Interview, *Prompt*, no. 7, 1966, pp. 16-17 (p. 16); Jane Wilson, 'The New Bookmen', *Town*, September 1967, pp. 41-44 (p. 44).
[156] Hill, 'New Theatres -- New Ideas: John Calder talks to Ashley Hill', Interview, *Prompt*, no. 7, 1966, pp. 16-17 (p. 17).

little effort at comprehension.'[157] Such was the democratic impulse at the heart of Calder's efforts. Literary writing should not be reserved for a select few whose tastes and education predisposed them to enjoy it, but nor should difficult writing have to make concessions to the marketplace. Rather, quality ought to be preserved, and the mass market ought to have the opportunity to learn how to value it.

> Increasingly I was turning into an auto-didactic free-lance academic, trying to popularise the arts and to push up public taste, in sharp contrast to what governments and the media were to do later. Perhaps that was what I always was at heart: a popular educator with a fire in his belly to make life more interesting for others by opening up new horizons in the arts and literature.[158]

The complex planned for Wardour St did not come to fruition, for which Calder mysteriously and acrimoniously blamed the 'Soho mafia'.[159] In 1969, however, Collins unexpectedly offered to sell Better Books to him. The sale was concluded in January 1970, and Calder immediately set about restoring the shop 'to what it had been, a haven for the serious booklover, where he could find titles rarely stocked elsewhere.'[160] He owned the shop until its closure in 1974.

Calder's role as a bookseller, whose aim was to sell as many books as possible, and so to attract as wide a public as possible, sat oddly alongside his reputation as an avant-garde publisher. Similarly, for all the significance of Calder's paperback publications, he continued to publish hardcovers -- revealingly he also continued to think of himself chiefly as a hardcover publisher.[161] By the mid-1960s the production of

[157] Jane Wilson, 'The New Bookmen', *Town*, September 1967, pp. 41-44 (p. 44).
[158] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 269.
[159] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 335.
[160] ibid.
[161] Calder positioned himself, even in the 1970s, in opposition to the paperback companies, and worried that their power was growing at the expense of publishers like himself: 'the next step was that paperback companies, being now in a position to approach authors and agents directly where a big sale was

hardcovers and paperbacks was beginning to integrate: it was the norm for hardcover publishers to have their own paperback imprint, and in 1966 Penguin, the leading paperback publisher, launched its own hardcover line, Allen Lane, 'to ensure that it could compete with other publishers in securing the kind of material usually released in hard covers before going into paperback.'[162] Calder's practice, however, differed from most other hardcover publishers, because his paperbacks looked as similar as possible to the hardcovers that he usually issued as first editions, 'using the same sheets as the hardcover, either holding them when the hardcover was printed for a year or two, or printing another edition if the hardcover sold out', which was 'rarely done among publishers'.[163] This smooth transition between the two formats, their very material similarity, and the apparent ease with which Calder carried out the double role of producing hardcovers and paperbacks masked an underlying incongruence in his attitudes toward what the two formats represented, and how he, as publisher, related to what they represented.

These apparently conflicting aspects of Calder's role were made manifest in his Signature Series, which came out towards the end of the period in which this chapter is most interested, in 1969.[164] What is particularly intriguing about this series is that, despite the fact that in the last decade Calder had brought out both the Calderbooks and the Jupiter Books -- reasonably-priced paperbacks designed to attract a wide readership -- and although a large number of the authors published in the Signature line had previously appeared under either the Calderbooks or the Jupiter Books imprints, the driving idea

anticipated, would buy all the rights, sometimes bringing out their own hardcover or issuing a book directly in paperback without one.' *Pursuit*, p. 384.

[162] Stevenson, 'A Golden Age? Readers, Authors, and the Book Trade', in *The Oxford English Literary History*, p. 140.

[163] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 284.

[164] See pp. 93-95.

behind the Signature series was to produce 'an 'elite' collection [...] in the days when that word was not yet a football of denigration used by the popular press to sneer at the whole concept of quality.'[165] It is difficult to see how we might reconcile, on the one hand, Calder's support of what he proudly and openly pronounced to be 'elite' literature, with, on the other, his dismissal of the idea of niche marketing to an 'elite' readership, and his embrace of production strategies designed to attract a popular market and promotional strategies designed simply to attract attention -- and almost any kind would do. By virtue of the fact that he occupied so many different roles, Calder managed to span sites in the public domain that had traditionally been well-segregated from each other and, moreover, that those in a position like Calder's (as an intellectual and a publisher of the avant-garde) were usually anxious to police, rather than to break down.

Calder's motivation for bringing out writers such as Beckett, Ionesco, Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, and Borges in paperback as Jupiter Books, and thereby attempting to expose these writers to a wider public, was not purely economic, although this was certainly an important factor behind his interest in the format ('those were the days, the middle-sixties, when hardcover publishers published largely to get reviews and library sales, and then sold paperback rights, which became their most important source of revenue, often exceeding the money earned from all other sources').[166] Rather, Calder's paperbacks reflected, and furthered, his deeply held political and social beliefs. To the extent that we can reconcile the apparent contradictions in Calder's attitudes to literature and the marketplace, the answer is to be found in his politics. Calder was a zealous campaigner for the arts, especially contemporary art. He wrote countless articles and

[165] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 376.
[166] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 284.

letters to newspapers, advocating the importance of the arts in enabling and fostering independent thinking, and enumerating the benefits of intelligent reading to individuals, to society, and indeed to civilisation itself. His progressive, liberal politics meant not only that he was fiercely opposed to censorship, but also that he believed that the arts should feature more significantly in education curricula for even the very youngest school children. 'The ability to think critically and intelligently is the best possible safeguard against 'corruption'', he wrote in the Glasgow University Magazine in 1966. 'To enable people to do so, you have to allow them to be exposed to the influences that can help them to think for themselves and develop a critical faculty.'[167]

Calder's politics cannot be divorced from his role as a publisher. He himself not only viewed his various activities as complementary, but deliberately used the notoriety he gained in one sphere to further his aims in others. That he campaigned for the Homosexual Law Reform Society, against capital punishment, against censorship, and that he was active in the Committee of 100 (which was organised by Bertrand Russell, and encouraged Ghandian-like civil disobedience) 'did me no harm as a publisher because I was frequently referring to books, which brought custom to booksellers and to me.'[168] Calder was also 'constantly asked to give talks and lectures, to take part in university debates and to defend the positions I had taken on censorship, social reforms and the innovative arts. This meant that I was always scouring my books for support for my arguments, quoting my own authors where possible to make their names and works better known'.[169]

[167] John Calder, 'The Anachronism of Censorship', *Glasgow University Magazine*, April 1966, pp. 23-25 (p. 25).
[168] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 239.
[169] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 268.

Understanding Calder's politics is vital to being able to situate him in the literary field of post-war Britain. As a publisher of avant-garde literature, and especially as a publisher of foreign avant-garde literature, he was certainly not in the industry's mainstream. Although he had a pragmatic, if haphazard, approach to accounting ('if you have a list that sells badly, so it seemed to me, you have to diversify it so that books you might not care for personally help those that you do'),[170] he was not profit-driven. But Calder's passion was not limited to avant-garde intellectual literature and he was less interested than Lindon in exploiting promotional possibilities purely for their cultural capital. Although he believed in elite writers and elite writing, and although he was adamant that individuals like himself as well as the government, through subsidies and education, should do everything possible to foster experimental and intellectual writing, Calder was not a thorough-going elitist. Indeed, not only, as one of the first to promote avant-garde writing in paperback, did he *produce* intellectual literature in a more accessible format, he also *sold* it in a more accessible and more effective way to a wider public.

The 1960s was a vital period in the evolution of Beckett's cultural status. At the start of the decade he was still a relatively little-known author, much-championed in certain avant-garde literary and theatrical circles (especially after the 1955 staging of *Waiting for Godot* at the Arts Theatre in London, and the play's publication by Faber and Faber the following year), but not much known and certainly not much read beyond those circles. By 1967, however, in his Festschrift marking Beckett's sixtieth birthday, Calder felt able to assert that in 'Beckett Land' readers are not 'dealing in obscurities. Beckett's plots are good, understandable, interesting plots, his situations believable, his characters

[170] Calder, *Pursuit*, p. 105.

quickly become old friends.'[171] By the decade's end, of course, Beckett had been marked for an international public as a great writer by that greatest of consecrators, the panel sitting for the Nobel Prize for Literature. Calder was aware that, in winning the Nobel Prize, Beckett had crossed an important boundary, and that the Prize formalised the new kind of recognition that he had achieved. In a 1970 publicity notice, he wrote, 'The award of the 1969 Nobel Prize for Literature to Samuel Beckett is significant in that it is the first time the prize has gone to a writer, not of the central literary establishment, but of the avant garde, whose subject matter and approach to life is still highly controversial and anathema to most traditionalists.'[172] The canonising process was well under way.

As a publisher, Calder was intimately caught up in the democratisation of literature that gained such powerful and popular momentum in the 1960s, and in myriad ways, ranging from the smallest of material details through to promotional activities that toured around Britain, Beckett was caught up in it with him. But it is perhaps in his guise as a literary critic that we find the ultimate evidence of Calder's drive to make Beckett more accessible. Calder's critical writing epitomises the trend to read Beckett as a profoundly humanist author with a universal message -- and yet a message which is peculiarly rooted in twentieth-century concerns. The two Festschrifts he has produced in Beckett's honour, the introduction to the *Samuel Beckett Reader* he edited in 1983, and his *Philosophy of Samuel Beckett* are all thick with references to contemporary life: to Reagan's America and Thatcher's Britain, to Colonel Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein, to feudal capitalism, political Darwinism, concentration camps, industrialised society, the

[171] Calder, Introduction, *Beckett at 60: A Festschrift*, pp. 1-4 (p. 2).
[172] Publicity Notice, 1970, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 58.

break-up of rural life, and even the 'greed' of machine intelligence.[173] Beckett, Calder contends, exhibits 'a realism that has had the courage to face the naked truth on a poisoned planet which is increasingly living on lies and pretence and where the tears of the world do not diminish.'[174] True to his vision of literature as a chain, he places Beckett into a tradition, deeming him variously 'the last of the Romantics', or an existentialist writer in the tradition of Kierkegaard and Sartre.[175] What this means, for Calder, is that 'once the language has been mastered' it is 'easy to involve oneself in [Beckett's] particular world', in part because he 'produces characters of universal relevance with whom his readers can identify themselves once it is realised how deceptive is the outer envelope in which he wraps them. Vladimir, Molloy, Hamm, and Krapp are all personifications of twentieth-century man.'[176] Calder's writing about Beckett has always been, without question, motivated by enormous admiration for and love of Beckett, both as an artist and as a friend. But in seeking to share Beckett with others, in endeavouring to show that he is the 'good read' that Christopher Ricks so adamantly resisted, Calder has also denied Beckett much that makes his work powerful -- the very things that render it inaccessible, alien, uncomfortable -- and paradoxically, these may be the very things necessary to the work if its popularity is to survive into the twenty-first century.

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[173] John Calder, ed., *As No Other Dare Fail* (London: John Calder; New York: Riverrun Press, 1986), p. 11; John Calder, *The Philosophy of Samuel Beckett* (London: John Calder; New Jersey: Riverrun Press, 2001), pp. 10- 11; John Calder, ed., *A Samuel Beckett Reader* (London: Picador, 1983), pp. 15-16.
[174] Calder, *As No Other Dare Fail*, p. 14.
[175] Calder, ed., *A Samuel Beckett Reader*, pp. 11, 16.
[176] Calder, Introduction, *Beckett at 60: A Festschrift*, p. 2; Calder, ed., *A Samuel Beckett Reader*, pp. 9, 31.

CHAPTER THREE: POETIC JUSTICE? BECKETT AND THE LAW

What matter who's speaking, someone said what matter who's speaking.[1]

There are more than fifteen recordings of Beethoven's late string quartets in the catalogue, every interpretation different, one from the next, but they are all based on the same notes, tonalities, dynamic and tempo markings. We feel justified in asking the same measure of respect for Samuel Beckett's plays.[2]

What matter who's speaking.[3]

Shut up, Sam.[4]

This last quotation brings us brutally to the point. What matter who's speaking, indeed, if no one wants to hear it. An investigation into the legal status of Beckett's work, and the associated issues of authority, authorship and ownership, of quotation, appropriation and transformation, is overdue. This is because the legal status of the work is intimately bound up with its cultural status, and readers of Beckett's work -- along with the guardians of Beckett's legacy at the Beckett Estate -- would do well not to become too complacent about its value being eternal and unassailable. The cultural affiliation of a work (which is regulated, in part, by the law) helps create and define its reputation, and the questions of who uses whose words, whether they do so legitimately and in whose service (how does my quotation of Foucault's quotation of Beckett's narrator serve my own interrogation into the nature of authorship?), lead to the very crux of the grand question of how Beckett's work *exists* -- how it exists in the public domain, as literary property, and how it exists in the public imagination, as a literary aesthetic or experience.

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[1] Text 3, in *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp. 85-90 (p. 85).
[2] Edward Beckett, Letter, *Guardian*, 24 March 1994, p. 25.
[3] Michel Foucault, quoting Text 3 of Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*, in 'What is an Author?', in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113-38 (pp. 115, 138).
[4] American Repertory Theater Programme for *Endgame*, 1984-85 season, RUL, BC, MS 2663.

Edward Beckett, the playwright's nephew and executor of the Estate since the death of Jérôme Lindon in April 2001, demands for Beckett's work the same respect accorded Beethoven's. Even though, as we shall discover, his analogy between music and drama does not bear close scrutiny, the association alone rests on a terrific confidence in the playwright's cultural status. Yet as the Beckett industry goes mainstream, the danger that Beckett's fame might pall into familiarity increases apace. The *Observer's* Susannah Clapp, writing about *Waiting for Godot* in 1999, grumbled that 'it's time to move on' because 'there are other plays'.[5] Charles Spencer, critiquing a contemporary production of the same play for the *Daily Telegraph*, complained that it 'now has 'important modern classic' written all over it' and that it 'has perhaps become too familiar'.[6] What matter? Perhaps we ought simply to write such mutterings off to cultural snobbery. But in an era when Channel 4 has broadcast the short plays in easily digestible chunks during the dinner hour, is it not worth rethinking what value the work has, and what its place is, was, could be, should be in twenty-first-century culture?[7] Is it not timely to ask *how* it is valued and, more specifically, how its value is constructed? This chapter and chapter four bring the historical focus of the first two chapters up to date, by examining Beckett's place in present day society. The concerns raised in this chapter are not just those of the avant-garde elitist who feels that the plays' very inaccessibility is a barometer of their worth, and who would preserve the ineffable Beckettian mysteries from the contamination of popular regard. If the theatregoing public (and more ominously, the

[5] Susannah Clapp, *Observer*, 23 May 1999, p. 8.
[6] Charles Spencer, Review of *Waiting for Godot*, dir. Matthew Lloyd, Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, May-June 1999, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1999, p. 27.
[7] Ten of Beckett's plays were broadcast on Channel 4 in June and July 2001, and March and April 2002. *Radio Times*, 23-29 June 2001, pp. 107, 115; 30 June - 6 July 2001, pp. 59, 67; 23-29 March 2002, p. 121; 30 March - 5 April 2002, pp. 75, 91.

reviewers and critics who influence the theatregoing public) is showing signs of becoming tired of Beckett's work, bored of it, catcalling 'shut up, Sam' from the house, then the work may well be under threat. Before we can decide, however, whether or not there is 'nothing to be done', we need better to understand how and why those with authority over the work seek to protect and preserve it in the way that they do.[8]

This consideration of Beckett and the law endeavours to expose some of the myths, assumptions, and oversimplifications that dog most forays into the subject. During his lifetime Beckett achieved infamy for his exigent approach not only to his own, but also to others' staging of his plays, to the point where conflicts over staging rights have become an integral aspect of the Beckett mythology. As we shall see, however, the main players are typically characterised in a caricatured and inaccurate manner, while the instabilities and inconsistencies that make this history so intricate and so compelling go largely unrecognised. Crucially, this means that the complex, engrossing question of textual ontology remains to be fully unpacked -- different cultural authorities define the work in markedly different ways, and these competing ontologies have great bearing on the way we read (or are permitted to read) Beckett's texts. What this chapter finally aims to do, by questioning the reasons underlying Beckett's stance on staging, is enable us better to understand the unique nature of his drama, and to approach that vexed issue that this thesis proposes to tackle -- just why it is that we consider Beckett's work *great literature*.

In the midst of the tussle over staging rights we find ourselves at the threshold of the redistribution of power between the private and the public domains, and on the cusp between art as idea, and art as enactment. Joseph Grigely contends that 'many changes

[8] *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 9.

that occur [or, in the case of adhering to Beckett's precisely delineated wishes, do not occur] in the transmission of cultural texts do in fact occur for political reasons -- reasons that relate, more specifically, to the displacement and distribution of power among those involved in making and remaking cultural texts.'[9] The paradox of the artist is that he at once struggles to retain power over his idea and to control its expression, as well as seeking to release his work into the public realm, to have it published and consumed, read, performed and discussed. We have seen in chapters one and two how from the earliest days of Beckett's career he was torn between, on the one hand, preserving a private ideal and maintaining authorial control, and on the other hand, the inevitable consequences of requesting and requiring the agency of others to effect the dissemination of his work. The move from private to public spheres is not just a transition, but also a transformation; a literary work will be transformed materially, it will become a social product as others construct and seek to control it, and it will be changed by the new discursive spaces it comes to occupy. As a private manuscript becomes a public document the terms of its ownership alter and are contested. This process is a lengthy one, because under European Union legislation a work of literature (or, with few exceptions, any work covered by copyright law) does not pass fully into the public domain (in other words, out of copyright) until seventy years after the death of its author. It is this fraught question of ownership that I see at the heart of the debate over staging rights. The dilemma is not whether alterations can be made to Beckett's texts, for the reality is that they are, and although this is often without official sanction, it is almost as often with it. The key question is: who has the power to legitimise these changes? The

[9] Joseph Grigely, *Textualterity: Art, Theory and Textual Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 6.

dominant arbiter is usually the law, which defines and enforces a particular type of ownership -- and the power that is institutionally invested in the Beckett Estate has a direct impact on the versions of the work to which the public is allowed access. This chapter argues, however, that the legal mandate to ownership is contested by those who lay claim to different sorts of cultural power and prerogative.

Before we move on to examine the nature of this contest, we must ask what, exactly, the law protects. David Saunders cautions that 'in a culture as juridified as ours, the phenomenon of authorship cannot be defined independently of or prior to its legal conditions.'[10] Similarly, the legal status of a literary or dramatic work is intimately bound up with its very existence, for, in most developed nations, the law considers that a property right (that is, copyright) naturally flows from the act of creation.[11] It is particularly when a private manuscript enters the public domain as a product or a commodity that, in order for its unique objecthood to be recognised and maintained, it must be legally protectable. But just what is this 'it' that is to be protected? How does the law define it? The theoretical presuppositions of copyright assume, and actualise, a very particular ontology for literary and dramatic texts. The aims of copyright have never been, it must be noted, to define what 'art' is.

[10] David Saunders, *Authorship and Copyright* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 213.

[11] In other words, no formal registration or notification is required to gain copyright. It is interesting to note that the 'copyright notice' that appears in published works (the symbol ©, the name of the copyright holder and the year of first publication) does so in order to attract copyright in countries that do not belong to the Berne Convention (see below). William Cornish and David Llewelyn, *Intellectual Property: Patents, Copyright, Trade Marks and Allied Rights* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 2003), p. 404.

At this point, a précis of the history of British copyright law may be instructive.[12] Copyright law finds its origins in a system of control developed in the sixteenth century for the benefit of Stationers (the forerunners of modern publishers), who sought exclusive rights against copiers. This system also profited the Crown. In 1556, building on a 1534 ban on the importation of all foreign books, Mary granted the Stationers' Company a charter to search out and destroy books that contravened her rulings and through licensing ensured a means of continued censorship. Elizabeth strengthened this system by lending the Stationers the Star Chamber's support, but by the end of the seventeenth century parliamentary disapproval led to its demise. The Stationers won a new form of protection, however, when under Anne the Copyright Act of 1710 appeared. This statute set the tone for future British copyright law, in that it stemmed 'from [the interests of] commercial exploitation rather than literary creation pure and simple.'[13] During the course of the twentieth century, however, other countries' legislation has influenced and complicated the values and aims underpinning British copyright, which has 'emerged as an amalgam of differing passions'.[14] In addition to economic considerations,

> two other value systems contribute to the outcome. First, the ideal values which have been placed upon the contribution of all arts to human culture, notably in Europe, have been an essential part of the rhetoric for copyright from the French Revolution onwards. [...] Secondly, copyright's role in underpinning the democratic process is presented as a distinct and vital function. [...] By outlawing pirate copying in the marketplace, copyright fosters the presentation of arguments on social, political, religious and economic policy.[15]

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[12] See, for a concise survey, Cornish and Llewelyn, pp. 345-50. For more extensive discussions see, John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London: Croom Helm, 1988); and Paul Goldstein, *Copyright's Highway: The Law and Lore of Copyright from Gutenberg to the Celestial Jukebox* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994). Goldstein also examines the development of copyright in the United States. Saunders, in *Authorship and Copyright*, thoroughly investigates copyright history in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the United States.

[13] Cornish and Llewelyn, p. 346.

[14] Cornish and Llewelyn, p. 365.

[15] Cornish and Llewelyn, pp. 365-66.

Different legal systems place varying amounts of emphasis on the importance of copyright in encouraging artistic endeavour and protecting artistic integrity. In Continental Europe, for example, reverence for the creator (and thus greater legal rights for the creator) has historically been a weightier consideration than in the United Kingdom and the United States, where commercial and entrepreneurial interests have tended to dominate: 'Indeed, many European countries call their statutes protecting literary and artistic works, not 'copyright' laws at all, but 'author's rights' laws -- *droit d'auteur* in France, *Urheberrecht* in Germany, *diritto d'autore* in Italy.'[16] However, the moral basis of copyright everywhere is that works should not be copied or used without permission. Its means are pragmatic and prosaic. This is 'an area of law whose object [is] the regulation of a traded commodity', which establishes protective norms for the copying and distribution of texts, and which 'protects only a work's expression, not its underlying idea'.[17] In other words a work of literature, even dramatic literature, *is*, in the eyes of the law, its words.[18] The ontology that copyright defines for such works is entirely textual, being based on what is scripted, fixed to the page and, in theory at least, able to be copied exactly for distribution and sale.

The field of copyright law is enormously complicated and hotly contested and, with the rise of the Internet, increasingly so. Nonetheless, certain practices have been widely accepted and many of these are relevant to this investigation. The first British statute pertaining to copyright was the Copyright Act 1911, which adopted the standards

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[16] Goldstein, p. 168.
[17] Saunders, p. 237; Goldstein, p. 19.
[18] Literary and dramatic works (which include mime and so cover Beckett's late, wordless texts) are treated similarly by the United Kingdom's Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988. See Cornish and Llewelyn, pp. 384-85.

laid out by the multi-lateral Berne Convention of 1886 (which now forms the basis of copyright law in most of the world). In 1956 a new Copyright Act repealed virtually all of the first Act. Similarly, the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 repealed most of the 1956 Act, such that 'the current copyright law of the United Kingdom is now almost entirely contained in the Copyright Act 1988 and the case law pertaining to it.'[19] This Act has in turn, however, been subject to a number of Directives from Brussels aimed at harmonising copyright law across the European Union. Two changes to British law are of particular significance to the legal status of Beckett's work. The first came in 1988, with the introduction of moral rights. The scope of moral rights varies from country to country but, although Britain and America have traditionally been sceptical towards these rights, the Berne Convention requires that members provide 'in principle for as long as economic rights, independent rights to claim authorship and to object to modifications or other derogatory action in relation to a work which would be prejudicial to the author's honour or reputation.'[20]

The second relevant change to British law was introduced on 1 January 1996, as a result of a 1995 Brussels Directive extending the duration of copyright to the life of the author plus seventy years (previously in Britain it had been life plus fifty years).[21] As the

[19] Cornish and Llewelyn, p. 380.
[20] Cornish and Llewelyn, p. 453. The authors note that 'truly committed systems of moral rights may go further than the Berne Convention in extending protection beyond cases where there will be injury to honour or reputation. Notably in France the subjective reaction of the author to the alteration or use of the work is generally the governing consideration' (p. 460). For the Beckett Estate, the difference between the Continental and Anglo-American approaches to moral rights may mean that British and American courts would be less willing to uphold objections to alterations to Beckett's dramatic texts.
[21] The cultural value attached to artistic creation helps explain why authors' rights last so long -- well beyond the influence of any economic incentive, and much longer than, for instance, the protection offered by patents. Another explanation is that the long duration of copyright encourages publishers to take risks in promoting work that may not seem financially viable, at least in the short term. This has certainly benefited Beckett's publishers. (See Cornish and Llewelyn, pp. 371, 375.) The position in the United States is more complex. The duration of copyright there varies: for books whose copyright was secured after 1 January 1978, the term is the author's life plus 70 years (as is the case in European law); for books whose copyright

increased term applied to works created before the Directive's introduction date as well as to works that would be created after it, all of Beckett's works were affected.[22] *Proust*, Beckett's first book to be published in the United Kingdom (by Chatto and Windus in 1931), will therefore enjoy an extraordinary copyright life of 128 years.[23]

Let us remind ourselves of the Beckett Estate's legal position. The author, or creator, of a work, owns copyright. On Beckett's death, according to the terms of his will, the Estate (under the executorship first of Jérôme Lindon, and subsequently of Edward Beckett) inherited his works' copyrights. The Estate operates its ownership of these rights by entering into contractual relationships (often via a literary agent, such as Curtis Brown in England) with those organisations or individuals who wish to 'use' Beckett's work. These contracts determine the conditions for use, as well as how returns on use are to be divided.[24] Central to (and in) this process is the publisher, whose role, as a kind of middleman, encompasses both the position of the Estate (as right-owner) as well as that of a user (or entrepreneur seeking to make money from the work at issue): 'Copyright sustains a triangle of relationships. While industrial property tends to establish bi-polar linkages -- between right-owner and user -- copyright has, on the right-owner side, both creators and entrepreneurs. As against users, their interests are largely the same [...] But

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was secured before this date, the general rule is that copyright is deemed to have run for 28 years from the date it was first secured, and it may be extended and renewed for a further 67 years. ('Copyright Law of the United States of America, and Related Laws Contained in Title 17 of the United States Code, Chapter 3', <http://www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap3.html> [accessed 4 May 2004]).

22 Cornish and Llewelyn, pp. 381, 411. It has been standard practice that where new acts enhance rights, those enhancements are applied to existing works, whereas where rights are diminished, those changes tend to apply only to future works.

23 The date of publication (1931) to the author's death (1989), means 58 years plus 70 years, totalling 128 years.

24 The Beckett Estate does not always use a standard contract for granting staging rights, and this practice has been the source of some trouble for the Estate. See below, p. 162.

between themselves there will exist tensions.'[25] The publisher finances all the operations of publishing a book, and usually before a single copy is sold. In order to make this investment possible, the publisher has the exclusive (or non-exclusive only by agreement) right to publish the book.[26] The publisher does not now own the copyright -- rather, he has the use rights, while the author retains the possession rights, or copyright proper.

Due to the controversy of its stance on rights to Beckett's work, the Estate is frequently called upon to justify its position. It does not do so simply by recourse to the letter of the law, whether that be statutory or contractual. 'There are more than fifteen recordings of Beethoven's late string quartets in the catalogue, every interpretation different, one from the next, but they are all based on the same notes, tonalities, dynamic and tempo markings. We feel justified in asking the same measure of respect for Samuel Beckett's plays.'[27] Edward Beckett draws a parallel here between the playtext and a musical score. His definition of the plays therefore appears to accord with copyright's letter-based approach to textual essence. Musicians, Edward Beckett suggests, however freely they may 'interpret' a piece of music, do not take it upon themselves to deviate from the composer's notes, so why should a director depart from Beckett's dialogue or stage directions? At a glance, this seems a fair point. We do not accept that a classical musician break into a freewheeling jazz riff in the middle of performing Beethoven. This sort of spontaneity has its place, and a Beethoven quartet is not it. And if, similarly, we have dramatic forms that not only allow but rely specifically on extemporisation, why

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[25] Cornish and Llewelyn, p. 371.

[26] John Feather puts this arrangement in clear terms: 'When [a publisher] buys a book from an author he buys more than the paper on which the words appear. He buys the words themselves, or rather the arrangement of them which the author has made in writing his book. A property, created by the author from his intellect or imagination, is traded with the publisher on the understanding that once sold or leased it cannot be sold or leased to anyone else.' Feather, p. viii.

[27] Edward Beckett, Letter, *Guardian*, 24 March 1994, p. 25.

should we not accept that there are those that do not, and why, if we expect that a conductor will follow a score, should we accept that a director flout a playwright's very particular written instructions where they exist?

In spite of Edward Beckett's emphasis on the importance of following the script, however, the Estate does not regard this as an end in itself. A letter-based approach to textual ontology is not, of course, the only one. To borrow the biblical formulation, a text may be followed either in letter or in spirit, and the debate over staging rights is rife with references to the Beckettian spirit. The Estate's claim is that the best way to preserve the Beckettian spirit is *via* a strict observation of Beckett's text. The ultimate goal, in other words, is the reproduction of what is deemed to be a spirit unique to Beckett's work.[28] At this point we run into a conceptual problem, which Edward Beckett's analogy neatly exposes for us. In fact the analogy starts to break down as soon as it is interrogated, begging the question, as it does, as to just where the line is drawn with regard to the letter of a score or dramatic text. What is iterable? What is copyrighted? The notes? Certainly. Dynamic and tempo *markings*? Indeed. But *actual* dynamics and tempo and tonalities? It is these very qualities, surely, which cannot be repeated, cannot be fixed, cannot always be the same. This point is pertinent because it speaks to the issue of how far the reproduction of a piece of music can be policed. Edward Beckett defines the reach of his authority, as granted by copyright, according to a letter-based textual ontology. What is written must be obeyed, he insists, in drama as it is in music. But case law has established that copyright does not extend beyond the written or printed expression of a work to

[28] The problematic nature of the notion of the Beckett 'spirit' is discussed more extensively below. See pp. 165-72.

performance or interpretation.[29] To analogise upon Edward Beckett's analogy, as copyright owner he stands authoritatively under the protection of the textual umbrella, under the aegis of the 'text', but in the mere space of a comma manages to slip in a great collection of elements, significant exactly because they are not textual but rather performative in nature, to stand beside him. Copyright's authority is limited to the letter. How far does the Estate push the argument?

The analogy with Beethoven's quartets is problematic in further ways. First, it presupposes that there is but one score, or one dramatic text, and fails to take into consideration the indeterminacy of Beckett's texts. This issue is of cardinal importance, and is investigated in more detail below.[30] Suffice it to note, for the moment, that ample bibliographical evidence exists to demonstrate the complexity of Beckett's texts even in print -- multiple versions of copyrighted, authorised texts exist. (Indeed, according to United Kingdom law, the definition of 'literary work' includes a distinct copyright in each draft of a work.[31]) Edward Beckett also overlooks the much more direct line between composer and performance in the case of Beethoven's quartets (where not even a conductor mediates between score and musicians), compared with the multiple agency necessitated by the production of a play, where a whole series of collaborators (producers, directors, sometimes literary directors, set and costume designers, stage crew and cast) vie for influence. No matter how compatible their general aspirations for the production are, they inescapably operate as a series of barriers between playwright and performance. Even were we to accept that a musical score could be contained, a dramatic

[29] This rule emanates from the necessity that a work's subject-matter be fixed in a permanent form (as copyright does not protect an idea, only its expression). It means, however, that a sound-recording or film of a performance might attract its own copyright. Cornish and Llewelyn, pp. 394, 404.
[30] See pp. 148-52.
[31] Cornish and Llewelyn, p. 390.

text, with the Chinese whispers effect that is an integral and unpreventable aspect of its enactment, could not hope to be so well contained.

Edward Beckett furthermore misses, or deliberately sidesteps, the obvious point that classical music is in reality frequently appropriated and altered. Music composed for one medium is transferred to another, and this is not just a modern phenomenon.

> A Prelude or Fugue by Bach for the organ is complete, self-sufficient, and, if you will, perfect, as it is. But if Elgar transcribes it boldly for full orchestra, it becomes another work of art, secondary to and derived from the original but yielding a new satisfaction. Like everything else in art the actual transcription may be good or bad and each instance must be judged on its merits. [...] Bach himself, it may be recalled, was an assiduous transcriber of his own music.[32]

To note that Liszt worked up Schubert songs for the piano, and that Rachmaninov reinvented Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty as a piano duet is adequate to remind us that musical scores are not immune from remakings even before they fully enter the public domain by passing out of copyright. What is more, such remakings do not yield only a 'new satisfaction', but also, in many cases, new copyrights. Although copyright law protects against the unauthorised reproduction or adaptation of a work, in cases where there is no dispute over authorisation the law does acknowledge the legitimacy of transformations of original works: 'Secondary activities which have been held to attract their own musical copyright include arranging music [...] and transcribing it for different musical forces.'[33]

What Edward Beckett's problematic analogy finally shows us is that the Estate's putative role as guardian of Beckett's texts is in fact a good deal more complicated, confused, and compromised than is generally acknowledged, perhaps even by the Estate

[32] Frank Howes, *Fontana Guide to Orchestral Music* (London: Collins, 1958), p. 166.
[33] Cornish and Llewelyn, p. 394.

itself. We will return to the question of textual ontology towards the end of the chapter, but let us consider now just what the Estate's guardianship does entail, and examine how it has operated, and how it has been defined, in a number of recent conflicts over staging rights.

Deborah Warner's 1994 production of *Footfalls* at the Garrick Theatre in London provoked a furore. The *New York Times* declared it 'the centre of a theatrical tempest'; the *Guardian* featured the story on its front page; Billie Whitelaw (for whom the play was written) proclaimed that it made her feel 'as if Samuel Beckett were burned at the stake'; and when Paul Taylor wrote his 1994 review of the year in British theatre for the *Independent*, it was this controversial production that he singled out as the defining moment of the theatrical year.[34] What was it about 'Beckett's dull old play' that gave rise to such a fuss?[35] Why did this particular production provoke Michael Billington to denounce it as tantamount to 'doodling on a Rembrandt'?[36] What did Warner do to the play that prompted John Calder to accuse her of exploiting it simply 'as a peg for her theatrical imagination'?[37] Did Fiona Shaw's performance warrant Whitelaw's allegation that she played May 'as a brain-damaged spastic'?[38] Censure such as this, coming as it did from revered representatives of the reviewing, publishing and acting communities respectively, demonstrates that the merits of Warner's production were fiercely contested. However, despite appearances to the contrary, it was not the production itself, which ran for only one week, that proved provocative enough to give rise to the sustained and

[34] Mel Gussow, *New York Times*, 26 March 1994, p. 12; Madeleine Bunting and Angelia Johnson, *Guardian*, 19 March 1994, p. 1; Quoted by Gerard Raymond, *Theatre Week*, 2-8 May 1994, p. 26; Paul Taylor, *Independent*, 21 December 1994, p. 21.
[35] *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 April 1994, NB column, p. 14.
[36] Quoted by Mel Gussow, *New York Times*, 26 March 1994, p. 12.
[37] John Calder, Letter, *Guardian*, 29 March 1994, p. 23.
[38] Quoted by Mel Gussow, *New York Times*, 26 March 1994, p. 12.

polemical attention the case received in the British press. In fact, Warner's and Shaw's on-stage efforts were of secondary importance, piquing interest chiefly because they sparked off a battle whose ground was decisively off-stage. This was not, at base, a theatrical conflict, but a legal one. At issue was the contentious question of rights. Unfailingly provocative, this topic can be relied on to trigger inflamed commentary, a commentary that frequently displays dogmatic and misleading characterisations of Beckett and of the Estate, and which both buys into and perpetuates myths about the playwright and his work. The media's reluctance to explore this off-stage drama fully is not, perhaps, surprising. What is curious, given the notoriety of Beckett's uncompromising control of the staging of his drama, is the failure of Beckett scholars to investigate dispassionately the complex politics surrounding the playwright's continued claim to sole authority over his work.

Warner's production of *Footfalls* gave the play, which was written in 1976, its West End debut. It opened at the Garrick Theatre on Monday, 14 March 1994.[39] Warner directed Fiona Shaw as May, and Susan Engel as May's dying mother. The production led to the first significant clash over the staging rights to Beckett's plays since his death in 1989. The Beckett Estate had granted Warner the right to stage the play, but, despite the contract's standard stipulation that the text and stage directions be strictly adhered to, the director chose to make several small but significant changes. Crucially, she did so without consulting with the Estate. For the Beckett aficionado, the alterations were conspicuous. Warner departed from the text by reassigning two short lines from the mother to May. Beckett stated that May must wear a trailing grey wrap, and that her feet

[39] *Footfalls* was published by Faber and Faber in 1975, and debuted at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 20 May 1976.

must not be visible; Shaw, however, wore a red dress that stopped just below her knees and revealed lumpy stockings and clumpy shoes. At the moment May refers to Christ's agony on the cross, Shaw interrupted the halting pacing Beckett specified and threw out her arms as if miming the crucifixion.[40] But the most striking innovation Warner introduced was a rearrangement of the play's spatial structure. Beckett's stage directions state that the entire action of the piece takes place on a single strip on which May paces, 'downstage, parallel with front, length nine steps, width one metre, a little off centre audience right', but Warner had a special platform built in the centre of the dress circle.[41] Shaw, in the very midst of the audience, which itself remained brightly visible (contravening Beckett's wish that everything remain in darkness save the dimly lit strip), spent most of the play on this platform, with her mother's voice emerging from beneath her (not 'from dark upstage') so that it seemed she walked on her mother's tomb. In the latter part of the play she disappeared and emerged on the stage proper, where she resumed her pacing.

Although the lay observer may have sympathised with the reviewer who deemed the production a 'not particularly daring departure from Beckett's Holy Writ', the fallout was considerable.[42] Edward Beckett attended the opening night performance, and 'was amazed to find that not only had virtually every stage direction been ignored but even the text had been altered.'[43] He demanded that the mother's lines be reassigned to her, and, in order to avoid a threatened injunction, Warner complied. Five days later, it was reported

[40] 'Slip out at nightfall and into the little church by the north door, always locked at that hour, and walk, up and down, up and down, his poor arm.' *Footfalls*, in *Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), pp. 237-43 (p. 242).
[41] *Footfalls*, in *Collected Shorter Plays*, p. 239.
[42] Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 1994, p. 23.
[43] Edward Beckett, Letter, *Guardian*, 24 March 1994, p. 25.

on the front page of the *Guardian* that Leah Schmidt, Beckett's literary agent, had announced not only the withdrawal of the rights for the production's planned television version and European tour (it was financed partly by the Maison de la Culture Bobigny in Paris, and was to play in Paris), but also that Warner would be banned for life from ever again directing a Beckett play.[44] A number of letters and articles appeared in the press in response to this announcement, some in defence of the Estate, but most in defence of Warner. Her piece was hailed as 'a Beckett breakthrough' to be championed in defiance of the Estate's 'Beckett profiteers'.[45] It was not until 24 March, ten days after the opening, and once the play's run was over, that the *Guardian* printed a letter from Edward Beckett denying the supposed ban. He insisted that the Estate 'does not seek to restrict freedom of interpretation', warning nevertheless that 'if Deborah Warner is to direct Beckett in the future, and I personally hope that she does, it must be with frankness and with the collaboration of the estate.'[46] Despite the conciliatory tone of this letter, the damage had already been done. The radical nature of the rumoured ban so caught the imagination of Beckett enthusiasts that it entered Beckett folklore as having actually happened, and is, even today, still popularly spoken and written of as such.[47]

It is not the aesthetic merit or otherwise of Warner's *Footfalls* that makes this case so compelling, it is not the outcome of the argument, nor is it even that the production engendered such polarising debate. Rather, what fascinates is the terms in which this debate was couched by eminent figures within the theatre, media, and publishing worlds,

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[44] Madeleine Bunting and Angelia Johnson, *Guardian*, 19 March 1994, p. 1.
[45] Michael Coveney, *Observer*, 20 March 1994, p. 11.
[46] Edward Beckett, Letter, *Guardian*, 24 March 1994, p. 25.
[47] See for example, William Montgomery, *Complete Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett*, Review, *Observer*, 1 February 1998, <http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/generalfiction/0,6121,96054,00.html> [accessed 3 May 2004]; Nicholas Kelly, 'Beckett on Film', 1 February 2001, <http://www.rte.ie/ace/2001/0201/beckett.html> [accessed 3 May 2004]; Jane Albert, 'You're Killing Beckett, Nephew Told', *Australian*, 10 January 2003, p. 1.

and what those terms reveal about the naïve assumptions widely held about the legal and theatrical status of Beckett's drama. Commentators' focus is typically eristic rather than scholarly, meaning that discourse on the topic is often emotive, and frequently ill-informed. What would seem to be regarded as the dry stuff of legal realities is overlooked in favour of the personality clashes and incendiary opinions that make good copy. A rigorous investigation into the assumptions surrounding this issue permits a more nuanced understanding of how Beckett's work exists in the public domain -- of how it is constructed, how it is owned, and how it is valued.

The manner in which the main players are commonly identified demonstrates the degree to which most critics and reviewers become embroiled in the controversy over directorial freedom and authorial rights. The dilemma is typically conceived as a battle between two clearly defined camps, in which Beckett, a loyal band of followers and his representatives at the Estate square off against a group of iconoclasts from, as Beckett derisively put it, the 'modern school of directing'.[48] The press coverage of the 1994 *Footfalls* production is, again, instructive:

> Initially, the Beckett brouhaha presented a pleasingly Stoppardesque spectacle: the inner play, with Shaw's May communing with her mother's spirit and Warner looking on, and the outer play, with Edward Beckett communing with his uncle's spirit and Ms Schmidt [Beckett's literary agent] scribbling furiously whenever Shaw deviated from Billie Whitelaw's 1976 performance.[49]

John Dugdale's parallel is satisfying in its neatness, but he is guilty of indulging in a degree of dramatic licence of his own. We cannot be any more certain that May is communing with her mother's spirit (much of the power of the piece resides in Beckett's

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[48] Jonathon Kalb quotes Beckett in conversation with him on 16 November 1986: 'I detest this modern school of directing. To these directors the text is just a pretext for their own ingenuity.' Jonathan Kalb, *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 71.
[49] John Dugdale, *Sunday Times*, 27 March 1994, Feuds Corner, p. 31.

refusal to reveal whether the mother has died) than that Edward was in communication with Samuel's. Dugdale misrepresents the action: slightly, it is true, but enough to demonstrate a deliberate desire to dramatise the conflict and to make of it ideal fodder for his 'Feuds Corner' column. This results in a reductive, black and white representation of the protagonists and their motives.

John Calder, among others, has objected to what he calls 'the sense of injury and censorship built up by the press.'[50] The tendency of the press to polarise the Beckett world into a group of narrowminded purists, whose ultimate aim is to freeze the work into a condition of stasis, and a group of irreverent iconoclasts, who would open the oeuvre to constant and radical reinventions, is widespread. James Knowlson contends that Beckett is, wrongly,

> often represented as a tyrannical figure, an arch-controller of his work, ready to unleash fiery thunderbolts onto the head of any bold, innovative director, unwilling to follow his text and stage directions to the last counted dot and precisely timed phrase.[51]

Paul Taylor's justification for selecting Warner's *Footfalls* as the defining moment of his theatrical year exemplifies this trend. Remarking that plays exist only through being remade and 'recreated afresh by later generations', Taylor opines that 'Beckett, first through the control-freakdom of his stage directions and now through the watchdogs of his estate, endeavoured to opt out of this process'. His mordant suggestion that the Estate 'take the mummification process to its logical conclusion and just arrange for a hologram which could be inspected at intervals' is typical of the media's inclination to demonise Beckett and the Estate.[52] In the *Footfalls* case alone, the representatives of the Estate are

[50] John Calder, Letter, *Guardian*, 29 March 1994, p. 23.
[51] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), p. 691.
[52] Paul Taylor, *Independent*, 21 December 1994, p. 21.

characterised as 'vindictive and short-sighted'; they are accused of 'beady monitoring', and of seeking to 'exact revenge' on Warner for failing to meet with 'their skinny, nit-picking methods of approval'; they are charged with consigning Beckett's work to a 'world of imitative productions', or to 'a purgatory of repeated reverential productions' where the plays will be but 'museum pieces', and where audiences will be subjected to 'endless, mildewed productions of *Waiting for Godot*'.[53] Michael Coveney, in defence of Warner, expostulated, 'I have seen this piece performed twice before (by Billie Whitelaw in London and Susan Fitzgerald in Dublin) to Beckett's exact specifications, and the suffocating aroma of High Art hung thickly and off-puttingly all about.'[54] In contrast, although Fiona Shaw claimed her collaboration with Warner was situated 'at the heart of experiment where Beckett flourished', certain commentators believed it was not innovative enough -- that a production threatened with an injunction for its innovations could be called 'a ludicrous act of homage' demonstrates the media's proclivity for polarisation.[55]

It is characteristic of the press to express support for an innovative director by attacking the Estate. This process defines the Estate by helping to create its reputation for formidable and sometimes perverse inflexibility. But what of the reputation of the innovators themselves? It is far from being the case that they are always cast as angels to the Estate's demons. The sense that to disobey Beckett's text is tantamount to sacrilege can be so deeply ingrained that Jonathon Kalb believes 'many critics have avoided serious

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[53] John Peter, *Sunday Times*, 27 March 1994, pp. 26-27 (p. 27); Paul Taylor, 'Way Out of Line', *Independent*, 18 March 1994, p. 23; ibid.; Michael Coveney, *Observer Review*, 20 March 1994, p. 11; Fiona Shaw, Letter, *Guardian*, 25 March 1994, p. 25; Anna McMullan, Letter, *Guardian*, 21 March 1994, p. 23; Madeleine Bunting and Angella Johnson, *Guardian*, 19 March 1994, p. 1; Michael Coveney, *Observer Review*, 20 March 1994, p. 11.
[54] Michael Coveney, *Observer Review*, 20 March 1994, p. 11.
[55] Fiona Shaw, Letter, *Guardian*, 25 March 1994, p. 25; Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 1994, p. 23.

discussion of [...] productions that obviously run counter to Beckett's wishes', as if even to investigate the phenomenon is to lend it tacit support, and to be seen to do this, unconscionable. Kalb does recognise that the actual status of a performance is no less certain whether it is authorial or not, or authorised or not. Nonetheless, in deciding to research unapproved productions of the work, he 'took the opportunity to apologize to Beckett in advance for not complying with this unwritten rule'.[56] Kalb's example shows us that censure of innovative directors can come from unexpected quarters. Although he is one of the most objective investigators of Beckett productions, Kalb nevertheless contends that the attempt to reinvent Beckett's work, more than that of any other playwright, 'shows up the swollen, desperate egotism at work in the theater'.[57] And it is within the theatrical world that we find the origins of the condemnation that has dogged innovators for so many decades.

Although Beckett lamented 'the omnipresent massacre and abuse of directorial function', he enjoyed the loyal and outspoken support of a number of prominent directors, whose influence has done much to generate the innovators' reputation as Beckett's arch adversaries.[58] It is true that a small number of innovative directors has advertised a desire, and what they see as their right, to impose a personal vision on Beckett's texts. For instance, it is the stated aim of the Hungarian director George Tabori, who famously presented a circus-inspired spectacular of an entire cycle of Beckett's plays, 'das Tabu zu brechen'.[59] Tabori argues loftily that 'mit dem Experimentieren aufhören, hiesse mit dem

[56] Kalb, p. 72.
[57] Kalb, p. 4.
[58] Letter to Barney Rosset, 13 February 1972. Quoted by Kalb, p. 1.
[59] 'to break down taboos'. Quoted by Cobi Bordewijk, 'The Integrity of the Playtext: Disputed Performances of *Waiting for Godot*', in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui: Samuel Beckett 1970-1989*, ed. by Marius Buning et al. (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1992), pp. 143-54 (p. 146).

Leben aufhören, wozu ich noch nicht bereit bin'.[60] JoAnne Akalaitis, whose 1984 *Endgame* notoriously inspired Beckett's wrath, speaks of an 'unnatural reverence for Beckett' and of what she sees as a 'Becketty cult'.[61] To her mind, 'his stage directions are no more important than any other writer's stage directions -- those of Ibsen, Shakespeare, anybody.'[62] Despite statements such as these, however, it is the directors loyal to Beckett whose proclamations about the appropriateness of freely interpreting the plays have been most powerful in defining innovators as a band of outlaws, and in setting up a distinct opposition between the two groups. These directors' names have become synonymous with Beckett's drama. As Lois Oppenheim asserts:

> Beckett's indebtedness to Roger Blin and Alan Schneider is incalculable. His theatrical oeuvre might never have been staged were it not for Blin's steadfastness [...], and Schneider's immediate and unwavering dedication to the playwright's work on this side of the Atlantic has been well-documented. Although no longer with us, these two directors continue to play a most vital role in any consideration of the history and continuity of Beckett's theater.[63]

Kalb agrees, noting that Blin (the French director who first staged *En attendant Godot*) and Schneider (the American who dedicated much of his career to Beckett's oeuvre) 'not only adhered to the very specific instructions in his scripts but also made frequent public comments about the propriety of that strictness.'[64] First-generation directors such as these tended to regard their role as that of a conduit for the playwright. Blin was explicit: 'What is a director? Nothing; he shouldn't be talked about; his personality shouldn't exist; he shouldn't seek a style; he should be rigorous about rendering the thought of the author,

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[60] 'To put an end to experimentation would mean putting a stop to living, and I am not ready to do that.' Quoted by Julian A. Garforth, 'George Tabori's Bair Essentials: A Perspective on Beckett Staging in Germany', *Forum Modernes Theater*, 9, no. 1 (1994), pp. 59-75 (p. 62).
[61] For further discussion of this production, see below, pp. 166-70.
[62] Quoted by Lois Oppenheim, ed., *Directing Beckett* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 138.
[63] Oppenheim, *Directing Beckett*, p. 8.
[64] Kalb, p. 71.

without adding anything.' This position is extreme, and innovative directors are defined against it. Pierre Chabert, who enjoyed a close friendship with Beckett for over twenty years, and who acted under Beckett's direction as well as directed a great number of Beckett's plays and prose works with the playwright's assistance, puts forward a caveat: 'I believe that to reproduce exactly what Beckett wanted is impossible. But I make a distinction with regard to the principal stage directions, which are fundamental and inviolable.' He maintains, furthermore, that any director who chose not to use Beckett's own productions as a basis, and not to consult his directions, notes, and the videos of his work, would be 'a Philistine, an ass'. When Lois Oppenheim suggested to him that even directors who move far from Beckett's instructions often argue that they remain faithful to the essence of the text, Chabert protests: 'They are insincere.' Walter Asmus assisted Beckett on many productions, most famously that of *Waiting for Godot* at the Schiller Theater in Berlin (1975-76). Asmus contends that directors who depart from Beckett's directions do 'damage' not merely to the text, but 'to Beckett'. The dismissive accusation that innovative directors are simply self-serving is commonplace. Robert Scanlan, who in the 1990s acted as the literary director of the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which, ironically, staged JoAnne Akalaitis's notorious *Endgame* in 1984, infers from at least one occasion on which Beckett intervened (Gildas Bourdet's *Fin de partie* at the Comédie Française in 1988) that Beckett objected to 'dealing with nothing more than a young director's struggle to get noticed and advance his career'.[65] Deborah Warner and Fiona Shaw's innovations in their 1994 *Footfalls* similarly led to the accusation that they were 'self-advertising'.[66]

[65] Quoted by Oppenheim, *Directing Beckett*, pp. 3, 76, 74, 72, 47, 147.
[66] Alastair Macaulay, *Financial Times*, 17 March 1994, p. 19.

The most vocal exponents of directorial fidelity have frequently been friends of Beckett, and the dichotomy over fidelity or damage to him and his work has its roots in the support granted him by directors who were, more often than not, personally known to him. These figures, variously called the Beckett 'network', Beckett's 'praetorian guard' and the '*Beckett people*' (Akalaitis's emphasis), defend Beckett vehemently, inspired as they are or were by their friendship with the playwright.[67] Even today, the debate is often couched in personal terms, meaning that the discussion over staging rights is, typically, emotionally charged. The result is, perhaps inevitably, a polarisation of the issue. Understandably, this is exacerbated by the fact that theatre practitioners invest a great deal of emotional energy in their productions. Gildas Bourdet, who withdrew his name from the credits of the 'mutilated production' of *Fin de partie* that Beckett finally allowed to be performed at the Comédie Française, said he was so 'burned' by the experience, 'which was perhaps the most painful of my professional life, that I will be careful not to dare stage any other of his plays.'[68] A handful of notorious productions, such as Warner's *Footfalls* and Akalaitis's *Endgame*, have received a good deal of media and critical attention, and this small number of cases creates the popular conception of the drama over staging rights being a pitched battle between Beckett, who was all too aware of the likelihood that he would be thought a 'purist bastard', and reckless theatrical rebels bent on dishonouring the Beckett text in pursuit of self-aggrandising aims.[69] Becoming conscious of the tendency to caricature is the first step towards dismantling the

[67] Robert Scanlan, Gildas Bourdet, and JoAnne Akalaitis, quoted by Oppenheim, *Directing Beckett*, pp. 148, 156, 140.
[68] Quoted by Oppenheim, *Directing Beckett*, pp. 158-59. See pp. 160-61 for more information on this production.
[69] In a letter to Jack MacGowran (13 December 1967) in response to the actor's request, on behalf of Roman Polanski, to film *Godot*, Beckett wrote: 'I'm terribly sorry to disappoint you and Polanski but I don't want any film of *Godot*. As it stands it is simply not cinema material. And adaptation would destroy it. Please forgive me... and don't think of me as a purist bastard.' Quoted by Kalb, p. 257.

Manichean oversimplification that characterises representations of the debate over staging rights.

In addition to the problem of oversimplification, the history of conflict over rights and approvals is complicated by enormous inconsistencies. In Knowlson's view, for all Beckett believed in the principle of absolute authorial control, in practice 'it made a tremendous difference if he liked and respected the persons involved'. Knowlson confirms that 'whether any action was taken in a particular case depended on some very human factors. As a result, Beckett could appear, and indeed was, inconsistent.'[70] Those who have failed to profit from this unpredictability lament it, not infrequently, but their complaints address only a fraction of the true extent of the oeuvre's instability. If the work is, as I contend, not Beckett's alone, and if it is continuously fashioned by other individuals and institutions, then it must exist in a natural and fundamental state of fluidity. Joseph Grigely, who argues that culture comprises the constant and inevitable remaking of artworks, reminds us that 'the fixedness of a text is as illusory as the fixedness of an interpretation; neither is final, neither is authorial.'[71] If we wish to recover the history of indeterminacy that shapes the debate over staging rights to Beckett's drama, it would indeed be placing a naïve confidence in the inviolate objecthood of the text itself to pretend that publication marks a definite fixing and finishing of the work.

The instability of the Beckettian text, even in print, opens up copyright's conception of textual ontology. The dilemma concerning how the text exists in the public domain cannot be resolved simply through recourse to a straightforward notion of the 'letter' of the text for, as Grigely warns, there is always 'an enormous difficulty

[70] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 692.
[71] Grigely, p. 108.

demarcating the boundaries at which a text ends and a context begins.'[72] Textual critical scholars tend to focus on textual history at the expense of production history, whereas theatre critics concentrate on the latter but neglect the former. Each tendency lends weight to the notion of a clearly delineated boundary between text and context. Yet each of these realms informs, and indeed deforms, the other, and we ought to be aware of their impact on each other. It is erroneous, if common, to assume that there is an ideal script from which to base interpretations and performances, or, for that matter, arguments to justify those interpretations and performances. There is no such thing. It would be suspect, in the search for inconsistencies, to look only at the decision-making processes that came about after one of Beckett's text's was printed; we must trace back from context to the text itself, from dissemination back to composition.

George Bornstein points out that copyright law obscures the fundamentally protean nature of modernist texts by artificially, if temporarily, authorising and controlling certain versions. He observes that 'the modernists eventually settled into long-term copyright arrangements with their publishers'. The result, he suggests, 'was to 'freeze' the principal texts in the form distributed by those publishers, to the loss of all earlier forms [so that] projects that existed in ongoing states of evolution and change came to seem fixed and stable products rather than ongoing processes.'[73] This was certainly the case with Beckett. As we have seen in chapters one and two, he established long-term relations with Editions de Minuit in France, Suhrkamp in Germany, Calder (for the prose) and Faber and Faber (for the drama) in England, and Grove Press in the United States. None of these publishers' codex editions approaches -- and most do not attempt to

[72] Grigely, p. 40.
[73] George Bornstein, *Material Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 40.

approach -- any kind of representation of the process of reworking that characterised Beckett's mode of authorship both as writer (notably with the self-translated texts) and as director (with the self-directed plays).[74]

However, Bornstein underestimates the extent to which instabilities can, and certainly in Beckett's case, have been captured in print. One example (germane in part because it seems no other scholar, let alone publisher, is aware of its true complexity, even though this complexity does to a large extent appear in print) are the self-translated short plays *Come and Go* and *Va et Vient*.[75] Close examination of the manuscripts of these works has revealed an enormously complex compositional process.[76] It is usually held that the French version of the play was a straightforward translation of the English version, and that Beckett later made small changes to the French translation. By creating a detailed stemma of the manuscripts, however, I discovered that the genesis of the two versions was interdependent, meaning that drafts of the French 'translation' resulted in changes being made to the putatively finished English 'original': in three French manuscripts, innovations result in four significant changes to later English manuscripts. A number of published textual variants exist in French, English and German, yet no

[74] The notable exception is the series of theatrical notebooks, whose general editor is James Knowlson, which attempts to capture in print the revisions Beckett made as he directed his own plays. Gontarski asserts that the revisions were 'the result of the author's dissatisfaction with his own text as *published*, his recognition that his original script, even if published, was unfinished, in need of revision.' (His emphasis.) *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: The Shorter Plays*, vol. 4, ed. by Stan E. Gontarski (London: Faber and Faber; New York: Grove Press, 1999), p. xxii.

[75] The manuscripts have received some critical attention. Rosemary Pountney and James Knowlson have discussed the evolution of the play's content, and Breon Mitchell has compiled a chronology of the manuscripts (oddly missing out two early English drafts) but offers no evidence to explicate the rationale underlying his stemma. He suggests in passing that the French manuscripts may have impacted on the English play, but does not identify where, or how. Rosemary Pountney, *Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama 1956-1976* (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe Limited, 1998), pp. 43-45, 76-86; James Knowlson, 'Good Heavens', *Gambit: International Theatre Review*, 7, no. 28 (1976), pp. 101-05; Breon Mitchell, 'Art in Microcosm: The Manuscript Stages of Beckett's *Come and Go*', *Modern Drama*, 19, no. 3 (September 1976), pp. 245-54.

[76] Clare Beach, 'Bilingual Beckett and the Univocal Edition' (unpublished Master's dissertation, Merton College, University of Oxford, 2001).

reference is ever made to the existence of alternative versions in other languages nor, more surprisingly, in the same language.[77] The instability of the published 'text' (that is, texts), and the dilemma this creates (or should create) for publishers has been little acknowledged by publishers and almost entirely overlooked in literature about Beckett.[78] This lack of transparency in the editorial process, this failure to manifest difference, to reveal and revel in the gaps and lacunae and silences that are such a powerfully present absence in the Beckettian universe, inhibits the reader's encounter with the work. Nonetheless, these differences do exist, even if they are sometimes unrecognised, and sometimes ignored.

Such inconsistencies in the material texts prove that Beckett's plays do not exist in a condition of stasis or purity. The Estate endeavours to protect the scripted works from alterations in performance -- and yet variant published editions of most of the plays are available, and we know certain of them to conflict directly with Beckett's recorded intentions. Theatre practitioners' arguments about how to stage a *Godot* that will be respectful of Beckett's wishes are frequently based on the false assumption that there is a

[77] The complete list of differing published versions of the play, and Beckett's translations of it, is: *Comédie et actes divers* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1966); *Aus einem aufgegebenen Werk und kurze Spiele* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1966); *Come and Go: A Dramaticule* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967); *Cascando and Other Short Dramatic Pieces* (New York: Grove Press, 1968); *Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1984); Mitchell, 'Art in Microcosm: The Manuscript Stages of Beckett's *Come and Go*'; Gontarski, ed., *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett. The Shorter Plays*, vol. 4. Two editions replicate earlier editions by other publishers (*Collected Shorter Plays of Samuel Beckett* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), and *Kommen und Gehen, Come and Go, Va et Vient: Original-Radierungen von H.M. Erhardt* (Stuttgart: Manus Presse, 1968)). Again, no explanation is offered for the choice of which edition to copy.

[78] An exception to this rule is Ruby Cohn's *Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1962), pp. 260-82, but this study limits itself to enumerating differences between different language versions of a work. John Calder several times raises the prospect of bilingual editions in his correspondence, but, apart from the *Collected Poems in English and French* (London: John Calder, 1977), and the *Collected Poems 1930-1978* (London: John Calder, 1984), no such Calder edition ever came into being. The German publisher Suhrkamp is, to date, the most ambitious promoter of Beckett's bilingualism, having printed bilingual and trilingual editions of many of his plays. Their bilingual texts, however, are English and German, so fail to display the uniquely related originals and self-translations. A limited number of deluxe bilingual and trilingual editions of various of Beckett's works also exists.

single authoritative script of the play. In the general editor's preface to the *Theatrical Notebooks*, Knowlson notes of *Godot* that 'whole sections of the text have *never* been played as printed in the original editions' (his emphasis).[79] Gontarski explains that by late in Beckett's career, 'critics and directors were forced into a position of building interpretations and mounting productions of Beckett's work not so much on *corrupt texts such as almost all English versions* of *Waiting for Godot*, but on those the author himself found unsatisfactory, unfinished' (my emphasis).[80] Due to the complexity of Beckett's texts, then, the Estate's aim to preserve the spirit of the plays via adherence to the texts is ultimately unsustainable.

The ontological status of the text is even further complicated when we come to consider performance, which opens up a new realm of possible ways a dramatic text might be said to exist. Noel Carroll explains that there are 'ontologically profound differences' even between theatrical performances and film performances (or screenings), and argues that 'theatrical performances are artworks in their own right':

> In the best case, the play, its interpretation, and its performance are integrated, though we recognise that these are discriminable layers of artistry, even if one person writes the play, directs it, and acts in it as well. For there are many cases where a bad play finds a commendable interpretation, embodied in superb performances, while, at other times, a good play is poorly interpreted but performed well, and so on. That we make these distinctions so easily indicates that there are different ontological strata of artistry when it comes to the stage.[81]

According to the exponents of textual innovation, the ontology of a dramatic work is rooted in its performance. This formulation not only takes into account changing directors, contexts and audiences, but also, of necessity, foregrounds their indispensable

[79] Knowlson, Preface, *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: The Shorter Plays*, vol. 4, ed. by Gontarski, p. vii.
[80] Gontarski, ed., *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: The Shorter Plays*, p. xxv.
[81] Noel Carroll, *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 211, 213, 214.

relation to the text. Not the least of the variables complicating the Estate's position with regard to its legal rights are the criteria by which Beckett, Lindon, and Edward Beckett have approved performances. These criteria frequently blur the textual boundary that copyright decrees as defining the limits of the Estate's legal authority. This authority is founded on guardianship of the printed text, but thanks to the Estate's power of veto over all (legal) productions, it extends in practice to the ever-changing (and distinctly non-textual) elements inherent in performance (directors, contexts, audiences and so forth). It is an authority which, as we shall see, has always permitted and continues to permit certain, often surprising, innovations in performance.

Any attempt to pin down Beckett's intentions is a fraught affair, challenging enough with regard to the material texts, but complicated greatly by the unpredictable, even capricious, manner in which on a case by case basis he granted approvals for staging rights during his lifetime.[82] A notable example of what Knowlson calls the 'very human factors' which motivated Beckett, include his (grudging) approval of the George Tabori's circus-inspired productions. Tabori's *Not I* featured a trumpeting elephant which carried the actress out of the ring on its trunk; his textually altered *Happy Days* was set in a double bed, and starred a paraplegic actor with underdeveloped limbs as Willie, who scrambled on and off the bed and over a pillow-smothered Winnie; his *Waiting for Godot* was presented as a rehearsal; his adaptation of the *The Lost Ones* included sixteen naked men and women who smeared each other in a white clay, listened to a recording of the

[82] Jonathon Kalb charts Beckett's increasing tolerance of adaptations, especially dramatic renderings of the prose works. However, Kalb himself is not always consistent in recognising the extent to which Beckett's engagement with his work was an ongoing process. He suggests that television offered the ideal medium for Beckett, because 'the pinnacle of linguistic economy is to tell a story through pictures, and the ultimate directorial control is to freeze the perfect performance forever, like an icon.' (Kalb, p. 116.) This statement sits ill with the rest of Kalb's chapter, which is devoted to enumerating the extensive changes Beckett made during the filming process. Kalb appears to miss the point about the instability that underlies the filmed fixity of the television work.

text (which had silences of up to twenty minutes), kissed, fought, copulated and clambered over a large tower of scaffolding.[83] Beckett was known to have disliked these innovations, but 'with his usual humour he wished Tabori 'all the best of agonies'.'[84] As early as 1954 Beckett's unpredictability over staging rights was clear. He wrote to Lindon:

> Je crois qu'on aurait tort d'empêcher des groupements de jeunes de monter *Godot* pour un nombre limité de représentations et dans des conditions à définir. Je serai donc plutôt d'avis que nous donnions notre accord de principe à cette jeune compagnie de Toulouse. [...] Comme on ne peut contrôler chaque mise en scène il semble injuste de laisser à l'étranger le monopole du massacre. Voilà mon point de vue. Mais à vous de décider.[85]

Beckett's letters are full of traces of his potential to be flexible. 'I suppose', he conceded to John Calder in 1973, 'there are many ways of doing *Godot* and mine not necessarily the best.'[86]

There was, as Knowlson affirms, one issue on which Beckett was 'less inconsistent' than others.[87] This was the question of cross-gender casting. In 1973 Estelle Parsons and Shelley Winters sought permission to stage a women-only *Godot.* Beckett refused, and, in a letter to Barney Rosset, exploded: 'I AM AGAINST WOMEN PLAYING GODOT, and wrote to Miss Parsons to tell her so. Theatre sex is not interchangeable and *Godot* by women would sound as spurious as *Happy Days* or *Not I* played all by men.'[88] The only time Beckett went so far as to take a company to court was in 1988, when the

[83] Garforth, 'George Tabori's Bair Essentials', in *Forum Modernes Theater*, pp. 59-75.
[84] Garforth, 'George Tabori's Bair Essentials', in *Forum Modernes Theater*, pp. 59-75 (p. 60).
[85] 'I think it would be wrong of us to prevent groups of young people from putting on *Godot* for a limited number of performances and according to conditions we must define. I think rather that we should, in principle, give our agreement to this young company in Toulouse. [...] Since we can't control every staging it seems unfair to leave the monopoly on massacre to foreigners. There's my point of view. But it's up to you to decide.' Beckett to Lindon, 18 November 1954, RUL, BC.
[86] Beckett to Calder, 21 January 1973, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 54.
[87] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 694.
[88] Letter to Barney Rosset, 11 July 1973. Quoted by Anthony Cronin, *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 561.

Dutch theatre De Haarlemse Toneelschuur mounted a *Waiting for Godot* with an all-female cast. Beckett sued. The case went to court in the city of Haarlem, where the judge found in the theatre's favour, determining that:

> since the play was about the human condition in general, it transcended the sexual identity of men and women. Hence it was within the limits of the artistic freedom of director and actors to have actresses in male roles. The performers' intentions had been incorruptible and there was no question of eagerness for sensation, scandal or the use of the play for preaching a feministic message.[89]

Beckett, infuriated, took revenge by banning all productions of his work in the Netherlands.[90]

The judge's rationale for allowing the production to go ahead because it was not 'feministic' in intent, and because it supposedly honoured, rather, the fact that the play was 'about the human condition in general' (implying, thus, that the production was in keeping with the 'spirit' of Beckett's work), demands analysis. The question of giving the play a feminist slant addresses only part of the issue, which perhaps explains Beckett's anger. The judge's reading of the play, while nominally understanding that its message should not be a narrow one (that is, reduced to the question of sexual identity and politics), is in fact itself narrow. In referring to the 'human condition in general', the judge appeals to a humanist cliché about the universality, or framelessness, of 'great' art. The singularity of the play that I suggest Beckett was at pains to observe (this concept receives greater attention below) is denied by any conception of universality. To explain *Waiting for Godot* as being about 'the human condition in general' is as reductive, and as comfortable, as explaining it with reference to any other readymade allegory, and so

[89] Bordewijk, 'The Integrity of the Playtext: Disputed Performances of *Waiting for Godot*', in Buning et al., p. 152.
[90] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 695.

diffuses the problem the play poses. Vladimir and Estragon are not 'humans in general' transcending sexual identity -- they are, rather, Vladimir and Estragon. Likewise, the play is a product of its time and culture.

The rare absolutism evidenced in Beckett's reaction to the Dutch case was undermined after his death, when the Estate, under the executorship of Jérôme Lindon of Editions de Minuit, began to demonstrate in its regulation of the staging rights an erraticism worthy of Beckett at his most fickle. The long arm of the Estate reached all the way to Australia in 1994, when the rights were revoked for the Sydney Wayside Theatre's *Waiting for Godot*, to protest women playing the characters.[91] That the production was abandoned may not at first seem surprising, for that is not an atypical outcome of conflict with the Estate, but that it had to be jettisoned *is* peculiar given that, not a year earlier, permission had been granted to Susan Sontag to stage a radical reinvention of the same play in war-torn Sarajevo. In the summer of 1993 Sontag mounted a production of the piece, which, although written over forty years earlier, seemed to her 'written for, and about, Sarajevo.' She was intent that her casting be gender-blind,

> confident that this is one of the few plays where it makes sense, since the characters are representative, even allegorical figures. [...] Then it occurred to me that I could have three pairs of Vladimir and Estragon and put them all on the stage at once. [...] There was no reason *not* to use what Beckett envisaged, two men, at the center; but they would be flanked on the left side of the stage by two women and on the right by a woman and a man -- three variations on the theme of the couple.[92]

Six actors concurrently playing the main roles was not the least of the changes the Estate permitted -- Sontag introduced changes to the set, the props, and the text, and excised the second act entirely. A number of her decisions were influenced by the difficult conditions

[91] *International Herald Tribune*, 20-21 August 1994, p. 18.
[92] Susan Sontag, 'Godot Comes to Sarajevo', *New York Review*, 9, no. 17, 21 October 1993, pp. 52-59 (pp. 52, 54, 55).

that confronted her in the besieged city (she did not speak Serbo-Croat and most of her cast spoke no English, they had no electricity, the theatre was partly bombed out, and there was the risk from constant shelling -- on one day during rehearsals the city was hit by over 4,000 shells).[93] But as compelling as these reasons were, they do not render the Estate's position any more consistent.[94]

The criteria by which the Estate grants permission to make changes to texts remain mutable. Director Katie Mitchell, a self-confessed 'anal purist', believes she was granted freedom to make limited adaptations in certain of her Beckett productions after she proved herself to Edward Beckett by staging a critically successful *Endgame*, which was faithful to the text in every way. Mitchell mounted *Endgame* at the Donmar Warehouse in London in 1996. In October and November of 1997, as director of The Other Place, the Estate gave her permission to stage what she titled *Beckett's Shorts* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. *Not I*, *Footfalls*, *Rockaby*, *A Piece of Monologue*, *That Time* and *Embers* were presented 'peripatetically', meaning that each play was set in a different space within the theatre, and the audience promenaded from space to space to view each performance. Mitchell developed 'linking journeys that would help them concentrate more deeply', and, 'to keep the audience within the strange, magical atmosphere of the pieces when moving from one to another', she used the sound of traffic

[93] Sontag, 'Godot Comes to Sarajevo', *New York Review*, p. 56.

[94] Curiously, in the considerable attention Sontag's production received in the British and American press I have unearthed just a single reference to the approval granted her changes, in the *Times Literary Supplement*: "Dear Mr Girodias,' an exasperated Nabokov once wrote to the wily French publisher, '*I* wrote *Lolita*.' And Beckett wrote *Waiting for Godot*.' (*TLS*, 30 July 1993, NB Column, p. 14). The absence of commentary on the issue is noteworthy, and may indicate the media's preference for controversy, the niceties of the play's legal status being less tantalising than the stunning array of plaudits and insults Sontag received as one of the few celebrities to go to Sarajevo during the siege. 'It's hard to know which is the more excruciating -- Susan Sontag visiting Sarajevo to direct a play or neoconservatives having a cow about it. In a pinch, we'd pick the neocons.' (*New Republic*, 'Notebook', vol. 209, issue 10, 13 September 1993, p. 10).

and strobe lighting between plays so that the flanking silences and darkness would be more striking. 'For each play the relationship between audience and performer alters. Chairs are arranged in rows or in shallow curves, scattered, or placed against the walls of two adjacent rooms where the central spaces are occupied by tables spread with framed installations of, as it might be, one dancing shoe or a few hundred spent matches.'[95] Although Mitchell's production was faithful to the letter of the texts (the radio play *Embers* was performed live but was not, strictly, staged, for the actors remained offstage and spoke through microphones),[96] it is evident that 'all the drama [...] was in the installation'.[97] Beckett nowhere makes mention of dancing shoes or spent matches. For all her claim that Edward Beckett recognised that 'the chances of me fucking around and trying to do something that was clever and conceptual was very low', Mitchell's approach was incontrovertibly innovative.[98] Elsewhere, (in an article aptly titled 'A New Angle on Beckett') she admitted as much: 'we have to move on from what has become the conventional way of staging these plays, in a rather cold, abstract, over-reverent style [...] There's a danger that Beckett's plays could turn into mummified museum pieces, labelled as a little theatrical backwater and not treated as living art.'[99] So why did the Estate grant her permission for *Beckett Shorts*, when arguably its staging departed more

[95] Katie Mitchell, Interview with Julie Campbell, *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1998), pp. 126-40 (p. 133).
[96] Mitchell maintained she did not consider adapting *Embers* for the stage, because 'we weren't allowed to consider it.' (Mitchell, Interview, *Journal of Beckett Studies*, p. 134.) Intriguing, then, that not long after the *Footfalls* furore, the director Stephen Daldry ('never one to be cautious', *The Times*, 27 February 1995, p. 15) had secured permission from the Estate to direct the stage premiere, at the Royal Court, of Beckett's 1957 radio play *All That Fall*.
[97] *Guardian*, 1 April 1998, p. 15.
[98] Mitchell, Interview, *Journal of Beckett Studies*, p. 135.
[99] Rupert Christiansen, 'A New Angle on Beckett', *Daily Telegraph*, 28 October 1997, p. 21.

radically from Beckett's own versions than did Warner's *Footfalls*? Mitchell believes it was 'because they liked *Endgame*'.[100]

It would appear that those who can first demonstrate that they understand, and accept, the Estate's conception of the Beckettian 'spirit' may then be granted permission to make changes to the scripts, whereas newcomers who wish from the outset to put their own mark on Beckett's plays are allowed no leeway at all. Lindon, defending himself against accusations of tyranny, inadvertently confessed this policy not long before his death: 'Je n'ai pas l'âme d'un policier. Si je vois qu'un metteur en scène n'a pas respecté le contrat, je conclus que le monsieur n'est pas honnête, et je lui enlève simplement ma confiance pour l'avenir.'[101] If we recall Edward Beckett's narrow ideal that every production of a play resemble the last in the way that (he argues) the 'notes, tonalities, dynamic and tempo' of a piece of music resemble each other from one recording to the next, it is clear that there is little correspondence between the putative role and the actual role of the Estate. They are not, in reality, guardians of the text at all -- unless they are dealing with directors of whom they do not, or do not yet, approve. Their decision-making criteria seem to have less to do with *what* is being done to the text than with *who* is doing it. Approvals are often granted based on trust, prestige, and cultural authority, as is evidenced by the impact Susan Sontag's cultural credibility had on what she was allowed to do to *Waiting for Godot* in Sarajevo. We should note that the Estate's tendency in this regard is at odds with Beckett's dislike of anything that smacked of celebrity. He wrote 'exhaustedly' to Calder in 1969 that

[100] Mitchell, Interview, *Journal of Beckett Studies*, p. 135.
[101] 'I do not have the soul of a policeman. If I see that a director has not respected the contract, I conclude that the gentleman is not honest, and I simply withdraw my trust in him for the future.' Pierre-Louis Chantre, 'Samuel Beckett, toujours implacable', *L'Hebdo* [Switzerland], 12 March 1999, pp. 74-76 (p. 76).

> Curtis Brown has issued without my consent a license [sic] to the Abbey Theatre to present *Godot* in a super-production with O'Toole 'leading' the cast. I have wired him to put a stop to this immediately. I ask you to support me in this and ensure compliance with my wishes. The decision is absolutely final.[102]

On superficial inspection, the Estate *fixes* meaning by insisting on adherence only to Beckett's own conception of his work. However, I propose that with the power invested in it by the law, the Estate in reality *creates* meaning in two key ways, meaning that the work is defined in part by its juridical context. The first is effected within the theatre. The Estate delimits a director's possibilities when staging a Beckett play. However, this is not just by faithfully following Beckett's precedents and approving only what he approved. Rather, the Estate allows certain novel transformations, usually, and at times unpredictably, justified by what it considers to be in keeping with the Beckettian 'spirit'. The Estate therefore shapes what the audience sees, not only by closing down potential variations, but also by admitting certain changes. This influence is germinative: the Estate predetermines the range of readings and meanings available to an audience at any given performance. A pertinent example of this effect is an altercation that took place not long before Beckett's death. When Gildas Bourdet mounted *Fin de partie* for the Comédie Française in 1988, reports of his mise-en-scène offended Beckett. Although neither Beckett nor Jérôme Lindon ever saw the set, they requested that the production be withdrawn altogether. A compromise was reached whereby the offending raspberry coloured walls, and the wax dummies that littered the set, were covered with grey muslin. Bourdet withdrew his name from the programme.[103] As a result, Beckett enjoyed a kind of pyrrhic victory, and a crippled production came before the public, in which neither the

[102] Beckett to Calder, 13 November 1969, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 51.
[103] Oppenheim, *Directing Beckett*, p. 156.

wishes of the author nor those of the director were truly adhered to. This new version of the play was brought before the public in this particular form as a direct consequence of Beckett's intervention.

The second process by which the Estate assumes a formative role through its guardianship of Beckett's work originates outside the theatre. The controversy and public debate over the dead playwright's rights help form the meaning of the work by moulding the theatre-going public's perception of it. The controversy affects Beckett's reputation and gives rise to particular expectations of the work, expectations which in turn impact on directors seeking to produce a performance conversant with contemporary audiences' thinking. A recent and striking illustration of this effect came about at Sydney's much-feted international symposium in 2003, which celebrated fifty years since the first production of *Waiting for Godot*. Renowned Australian theatre and opera director Neil Armfield attracted the ire of Edward Beckett and, as a result, a great deal of publicity for his production of the play at the Company B Belvoir Theatre. After attending the opening night performance, Edward Beckett threatened the production with an injunction for breach of contract. He objected to the illegal addition of a percussive accompaniment to the script, as well as to four Latin words that were sung by the boy from offstage. The dispute received considerable media attention, including a front-page article (with two accompanying photographs, one of the director standing in front of a poster advertising the production, and one of Edward Beckett) in the establishment *Australian*, the country's only national newspaper.[104] Negotiations lasted two days, and the quarrel was resolved when Armfield agreed to make the minor, and decidedly trivial, alteration of dropping the

[104] Jane Albert, 'You're Killing Beckett, Nephew Told', *Australian*, 10 January 2003, p. 1. This edition of the newspaper also featured an editorial (p. 10) and an opinion (p. 11) on the issue, and a review of the production (p. 15).

consonants from the four Latin words (so that they could not be considered 'text'), and when Edward Beckett conceded that the director was not, in fact, in contravention of his contract. Unlike the standard American contract, the Australian agreement did not specifically prohibit music.

What is significant about this case, aside from the embarrassment the Estate caused itself, is that the Estate's rigidity led directly to a public debate about public expectations of Beckett's work, with calls for greater directorial radicalism to face off 'a slow death' and the worry that 'others won't be bothered to take on the challenge of this great dramatist, given the pain and restrictions involved.'[105] The *Australian*'s editor, cautioning that 'not only do times change, but even the social context in which plays are performed undergoes transformation', raised the prospect of opening Beckett's work to experimentation much as Wagner's opera was successfully 'revolutionised' and 'revivified' after World War II.[106] This debate, which is rehearsed every time the question of staging rights is opened to public comment, contributes to the process by which the reputation and value of Beckett's work are created, and by which it, and Beckett himself, are mythologized in the public imagination.[107]

Crucially, whether in the press or in critical literature, discussions on rights become almost without exception evaluative assessments of Beckett's role as creator and master of his text, either as actual director of his work, or as virtual director whose intentions dictate from the grave. Debate centres on how control is manifested on the stage, so that Beckett's stance is usually explained or dismissed on purely aesthetic

[105] Neil Armfield, 'Sounds of Dissent Offstage', *Australian*, 10 January 2003, p. 11.
[106] 'All Change While We Wait for Godot', Editorial, *Australian*, 10 January 2003, p. 10.
[107] Mel Gussow of the *New York Times* testified pithily to the eternal ability of controversy to stimulate interest when reporting on Deborah Warner's *Footfalls*: 'English critics were diametrically opposed in their assessments, while audiences filled the Garrick Theater.' *New York Times*, 26 March 1994, p. 12.

grounds. These sorts of critique, while nominally exploring the vulnerability of the text to 'outside' influences (whether they regard those influences as contaminating or vivifying), fetishise the text by focussing on the representation of the fictive world as the locus of conflict. The assumption underlying this approach is that it is the degree of fidelity to the script itself that ensures or jeopardises the value of the work (however that value be defined). My understanding of the issue differs from that of other critics because I suggest that the struggle inherent in the creation of the work's value is not ultimately played out on the floorboards, but in the legal arena, in the media, and in academia. These institutions are the 'outside' forces that are so influential in deciding how we see, or are shown, Beckett's work.

Beckett's plays are historically contingent, and they are constantly being recreated, not merely on the stage, but in the public domain, as different parties, both the contemporary mainstream and the avant-garde, lay claim to them and identify them with different traditions, and situate them within different types of theatre. We must only compare the effect of performing Beckett in an intimate, avant-garde theatre with the impact of Channel 4's primetime showings of his plays, to realise that *producing* Beckett does not mean simply staging his work, but rather that the term production is appropriate in its fullest sense. Consider, for instance, that when *Catastrophe* and *Rockaby* were screened on Channel 4 in late June 2001 (at 7.50pm and 11.45pm respectively), the two plays were separated by *Big Brother* and *Da Best of Ali G. Play*, screened the following day, competed with other Friday night primetime programmes: *Top of the Pops* on BBC 1, Wimbledon on BBC 2, *Coronation Street* on ITV, and Penn and Teller in Las Vegas in *World's Wildest Magic* on Channel 5. *Waiting for Godot*, shown the next Saturday night,

was juxtaposed with *Big Brother Reveals More*, which immediately followed it.[108] These contexts could not differ more from a production like Felicity Kendal's recent critically acclaimed performance of *Happy Days* at London's Arts Theatre, an intimate venue with an impeccable cultural pedigree (Peter Hall directed the premiere of *Waiting for Godot* there; the premieres of plays by Eugene O'Neill, Jean Anouilh, Harold Pinter and Tennessee Williams were staged there; and it was the Royal Shakespeare Company's first London base).[109] It is not just that Beckett's plays are transformed into live theatre, but that the reputation of his theatre and the myth of 'Beckett' himself are constantly being manufactured out of the raw materials of his texts, the legal documents pertaining to those texts, and the locations in which the work is experienced by its audience.[110] We might appropriately recall here Dugdale's comments on Warner's *Footfalls*, where the inner play was circumscribed by the outer drama of director and Estate.[111] Such is the layering of events and power games that gives rise to Beckett as he exists for us today. The work is deeply imbricated in social power plays, and it is in the social world, not simply in the theatre, that its cultural status and value are constructed.

Beckett's dramatic writing has not, I contend, been wholly released from the private into the public realm, but is caught in an ongoing struggle between competing cultural authorities. My suggestion is that on the contested ground between the poles of legal ownership (or rights) and what I will term symbolic ownership (or rights) a power play takes place that contributes to the 'social construction of the very reality' of Beckett's

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[108] *Radio Times*, 23-29 June 2001, p. 107; 30 June - 6 July 2001, p. 59. These startling conjunctions were noted with relish in many newspapers at the time: 'I can't help enjoying the thought of indolent Ali G fans, finding themselves plunged from *Da Best Of* into *Rockaby*, Beckett's bleak and mortal rap'. *Independent on Sunday*, 1 July 2001, p. 14.
[109] *Happy Days*, Programme, dir. Peter Hall, perf. Felicity Kendal, Arts Theatre, London, 18 November 2003 - 31 January 2003, p. 1.
[110] The myth of Beckett himself, and how this is created and sustained, is examined in Chapter four.
[111] See p. 141.

work, 'and hence of the theoretical and practical conditions of its existence'.[112] How is it, then, that the Estate's ownership of Beckett's work is contested? The Estate is the inheritor of a material legacy, and enjoys institutionally and legally sanctioned guardianship of that legacy. In conflict with the Estate are the innovators, who regard themselves as inheritors of Beckett's legacy of commitment to artistic innovation. Members of this group employ certain strategies to align themselves with Beckett, but against the Beckett Estate, and claim more truly to honour the Beckettian 'spirit'. I propose that these strategies and claims constitute a new conception of ownership, which characterises itself in opposition to the legal definition of ownership.

Let us return to the case of Deborah Warner's 1994 *Footfalls*. Paul Taylor, in proclaiming this production as the defining moment of the year in theatre, exhibits a deeply ingrained notion that informs much debate about legal and artistic rights to Beckett's work.[113] Warner's production captivated Taylor 'because the row that it sparked off with the Beckett estate [...] trains a particularly revealing light on the nature and uniqueness of theatre and on how these things can be misunderstood by writers, their legal minders, directors and critics alike.'[114] Just what does Taylor mean by the 'nature and uniqueness' of the theatre, and how is it that this concept can be 'misunderstood' by the very people who constitute living theatre? The implication is, of course, that a correct way of 'understanding' the theatre exists, and that Taylor knows what it is. In an earlier article, he had queried Warner's assertion that she was motivated by a desire to communicate the spirit of Beckett's play, asking rhetorically, 'What spirit though, and

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[112] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. by Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 294.
[113] See note 34.
[114] Paul Taylor, *Independent*, 21 December 1994, p. 21.

whose notion of it?'[115] Taylor is right to question this appeal to a Platonic ideal of the spirit of Beckett's theatre, which sits uncomfortably alongside a writer who gave us, as the director Herbert Blau puts it, 'the intellectual, theoretical, and ideological grounds on which any text becomes liable to dispersion.'[116] But in spite of this, and for all Taylor disavows the Estate's inflexibility over time, his position is rooted in an ahistorical conception of theatre. With his talk of 'misunderstanding' the 'nature' of the theatre, he betrays an assumption about the legitimacy of a certain type of approach to a certain type of theatre.

At the heart of the debate over directorial fidelity to Beckett's texts lies this question of legitimacy, in terms both of legality and of artistic validity. And it is the notion of artistic legitimacy, the supposed possession of the Beckettian 'spirit', that underlies the claim to symbolic ownership of Beckett's work. The corollary of the assumption that the spirit exists at all is that those who cannot access it can make no legitimate claim. Paradoxically, however, 'understanding the spirit' is a justification used to legitimise both the legal ownership and the illegal appropriation of Beckett's work. The controversy surrounding Joanne Akalaitis's infamous 1984 production of *Endgame* illustrates the pattern.

Akalaitis, a founding member of the experimental theatre group Mabou Mines, which performed many of Beckett's works with his blessing (notably adaptations of prose works such as *The Lost Ones*), aroused Beckett's ire by setting *Endgame* in an abandoned subway station with a burned out subway car for a backdrop. She produced the play under the auspices of the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The

[115] Paul Taylor, 'Way Out of Line', *Independent*, 18 March 1994, p. 23.
[116] Herbert Blau, quoted by Oppenheim, *Directing Beckett*, p. 57.

use of incidental music by Philip Glass and inter-racial casting did nothing to strengthen Akalaitis's case, but it was her set that was of principal concern to Beckett.[117] He sought to halt the performance; however, a last minute out-of-court settlement was reached whereby the show was allowed to proceed, but with each side defending its position in statements inserted into the programme. Beckett wrote that the A.R.T.'s version of his play was a 'completely unacceptable [...] parody', and declared that 'anybody who cares for the work couldn't fail to be disgusted by this'.[118] The production was vociferously debated in American theatrical circles for months afterwards, even occasioning an evening debate at New York University the following year, which was attended by leading writers, directors, designers, publishers and theatre lawyers.[119] Since then, the conflict has received extensive critical coverage, and yet no comment has been made on the peculiar, if not uncommon, nature of the defence that Akalaitis and her supporters issued. What is interesting about the case, and typical of many, is not the innovators' claim that theatre is a collaborative art. It is rather the particular way in which the A.R.T. aligned itself collaboratively with Beckett. It is especially pertinent in this case that Akalaitis's team allied itself to Beckett despite the fact that Beckett specifically, and vehemently, dissociated himself from their production.

Douglas Stein, the set designer for the production, summed up the A.R.T.'s view of the situation as follows: 'When a play is born [...] the playwright has the greatest power. When a work enters the public domain, that power always diminishes.'[120] Beckett could hardly have objected more decisively to this perspective: 'Any production of

[117] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 692.
[118] A.R.T. Programme for *Endgame*, 1984-85 season, RUL, BC, MS 2663. Unless specified otherwise, all quotations in the following two paragraphs are taken from this programme.
[119] *New York Times*, 14 March 1985, p. 21.
[120] ibid.

Endgame which ignores my stage directions is completely unacceptable to me. My play requires an empty room and two small windows. The American Repertory Theater production which dismisses my directions is a complete parody of the play as conceived by me.' The first page of the 1958 Grove Press edition of *Endgame*, which included the stage directions 'as written by Samuel Beckett', was also inserted into the programme, and Barney Rosset, who identified Grove Press as 'personal friend and publisher of Samuel Beckett', asked the audience to 'judge for itself how the stage before you differs from Beckett's directions as they are reproduced here from the printed text.' Rosset was no less vituperative than Beckett:

> In the author's judgment -- and ours -- this production makes a travesty of his conception. A living author of Beckett's stature should have the right to protect himself from what he perceives to be a gross distortion of his work. We deplore the refusal of the American Repertory Theater to accede to Beckett's wishes to remove his name from this production, indicate in some way that this staging is merely an adaptation, or stop it entirely.

Beckett's opinion of the production could hardly be considered ambivalent. And yet the A.R.T.'s spokespeople refused to accept that they were dishonouring Beckett. Robert Brustein, the artistic director of the A.R.T., insisted: 'We believe that this production, despite hearsay representations to the contrary, observes the spirit and the text of Mr. Beckett's great play -- far more so, in fact, than a number of past productions, which to our knowledge evoked no public protests from Mr. Beckett's agents.' The A.R.T. aligned themselves not only with what they deemed to be the Beckettian 'spirit', but also specifically with Beckett's personal approach to theatre. They claimed that they were honouring him for 'what he always was: an original', further insisting that 'when directing his work, Mr. Beckett makes significant revisions in his own text and stage directions, suggesting that even he recognizes the need for changes with the passage of

time.' Jonathon Marks, the A.R.T.'s literary director, contended that Beckett was in danger of becoming irrelevant, of being viewed as 'old hat'. He recounted a cautionary tale:

> At a conference of theatre professionals at Amherst last summer, one playwright said that 'Beckett is no longer a well for us to draw from, though we revere him and love him.' Another regaled the audience with a poem ridiculing Beckett: 'Shut up, Sam', he said, and the flower of the American theatre howled in laughter. When Beckett became a classic, did he become a bore?

Marks went on to imply that the members of the A.R.T. were restoring Beckett to his rightful place as one of the greatest theatrical innovators of all time, and, what is more, that they were following Beckett's own example.

> In 1976 Beckett himself directed *Waiting for Godot* with the company of the Schiller Theater in Berlin. It was a production that was full of theatricality, full of life, full of invention, of the shock of discovery. Beckett treated the play he had written three decades before as a new script; he made free with it, violated the written stage directions, staged it as it had never been staged before. There was even a touch of self-mockery. Some of the Beckettians were dismayed. Had the master betrayed himself?

It is also noteworthy that the production was dedicated 'to the memory of Alan Schneider'.[121] (Schneider had been knocked down and killed by a motorcycle in London just months earlier.[122]) Given that he was such an influential figure in American theatre, and particularly given his close and long association with Beckett, it was not surprising that the A.R.T. made some sort of acknowledgement of his death. But the inevitable effect of such a dedication is powerful: 'The dedication always is a matter of demonstration, ostentation, exhibition: it proclaims a relationship, whether intellectual or personal, actual or symbolic, and this proclamation is always at the service of the work,

[121] A.R.T. Programme for *Endgame*, 1984-85 season, RUL, BC, MS 2663.
[122] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 697.

as a reason for elevating the work's standing or as a theme for commentary.'[123] The irony at work here is that Schneider represents a purist tradition of unwavering fidelity to the text. The programme notes thus distinguished the A.R.T. as being aligned with, and therefore legitimised by, the Beckett purists as well as being legitimate innovators inspired by Beckett's own example and in touch with the true Beckettian 'spirit'.

This tendency to align oneself with the so-called spirit or essence of Beckett's work is endemic, so much so that we even expect to hear it asserted as a reasonable justification for almost any kind of interpretation. It does not strike us as surprising that Deborah Warner would insist of her *Footfalls* that 'her changes are motivated by a desire to communicate the spirit of the piece', nor perhaps that John Calder would respond that, 'Deborah Warner did not understand what Beckett's play is about'.[124] Michael Kustow, who commissioned Channel 4's Beckett-approved television version of *Footfalls*, which starred Billie Whitelaw, claimed that for him, Warner's version 'communicated the heart and spirit of Beckett's piece'.[125] John Peter likewise summoned Beckett to his side in defending Warner: 'The Great Decanter [...] was not a dogmatist and [...] also recognised a good idea when he saw one.'[126] The French director Charles Joris, who toured *En attendant Godot* in Switzerland in March 1999, and who sought to render the play contemporary, 'léger, véloce', and to break with tradition, rather than to "trainer' sur ses didascalies', stated that his most important motivation was 'retrouver l'esprit de

[123] Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 135.
[124] Paul Taylor, 'Way Out of Line', *Independent*, 18 March 1994, p. 23; John Calder, Letter, *Guardian*, 29 March 1994, p. 23.
[125] Michael Kustow, Letter, *Guardian*, 21 March 1994, p. 23.
[126] John Peter, *Sunday Times*, 27 March 1994, p. 26.

Beckett au moment de la création'.[127] More radically, Susan Sontag was convinced that her reconception of *Waiting for Godot,* as produced in Sarajevo in 1993, was 'an effort which did honour to Beckett's play'.[128]

> The set I had designed -- as minimally furnished, I thought, as Beckett himself could have desired -- had two levels. Pozzo and Lucky enter, acted on, and exited from a rickety platform eight feet deep and four feet high, running the whole length of upstage, with the tree toward the left; the front of the platform was covered with the translucent polyurethane sheeting that the UNHCR brought in last winter to seal the shattered windows of Sarajevo.[129]

Sontag maintained that 'Beckett would approve of the setting'.[130] A further example of this tendency is provided by George Tabori, who claimed that, even though he would not dare to attempt to copy Beckett, his extraordinary versions of the plays were based on Beckett's own productions, in which Beckett 'setzt seine eigenen Massstäbe. Seine Modelle [...] sind nicht zu übertreffen. Sie zu copieren, wäre eine mittelalterliche Aufgabe, die Beckett nicht bedienen würde und uns auch nicht.'[131] Equally, Neil Armfield insisted he was not working against the 'spirit' of *Waiting for Godot* when he produced it in Sydney in 2003. When Edward Beckett threatened Armfield with an injunction, the director proclaimed 'a loyalty to the work' and that Beckett too knew that 'the act of producing theatre is an act of collaboration and of play.'[132] The practice extends to those on the peripheries of the theatrical community. In fact, commentators of all persuasions regularly flaunt their understanding of and commitment to the Beckettian

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[127] Not to 'dawdle over his stage directions' but 'to rediscover the spirit of Beckett at the moment of creation.' Charles Joris, quoted by Pierre-Louis Chantre, 'Samuel Beckett, toujours implacable', *L'Hebdo*, 12 March 1999, p. 75.

[128] Sontag, 'Godot Comes to Sarajevo', *New York Review*, p. 58.

[129] Sontag, 'Godot Comes to Sarajevo', *New York Review*, p. 56.

[130] Sontag, quoted in *Observer*, 25 July 1993, p. 13.

[131] 'sets his own standards. His models [...] are not to be surpassed. To copy them would be a medieval exercise, which would do justice neither to Beckett nor to ourselves.' George Tabori, quoted by Garforth, in 'George Tabori's Bair Essentials', *Forum Modernes Theater*, pp. 59-75 (p. 62).

[132] Neil Armfield, 'Sounds of Dissent Offstage', *Australian*, 10 January 2003, p. 11.

'spirit' in order to justify whatever position they may be taking. In Matthew Lloyd's production of *Godot* at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester in May and June 1999, Richard Wilson (who played Vladimir) wore a bright red t-shirt emblazoned with the Coca Cola logo. Charles Spencer, reviewing the piece for the *Daily Telegraph*, declared confidently, 'Beckett would have loved that flourish!'[133] Far be it from me to presume to suggest that Beckett would not.

These appeals to the Beckettian 'spirit' clearly require interrogation. Supposedly, they solve the problem of legitimate right to the plays, be that a legal right or an artistic one. Both the purists and the innovators identify themselves as the rightful custodians of the work by claiming they are keeping faith with Beckett, or with what he stood for. But what Beckett stood for is a contested notion -- or at least, it should be. Ought we not be distrustful of basing claims to legitimacy on a neo-Platonic ideal, on some sort of Beckettian 'essence' that can be summed up as 'spirit', given that our subject is a playwright who ushered in the age of postmodern drama, whose characters, struggling to construct an identity out of the 'demented particulars' of language, embody the fragmentary nature of being?[134] A playwright, what is more, who, fearing the reduction of potential meaning in his plays to allegory, was rigorous in protecting the singularity of their staging, and fiercely and repeatedly refused any assumption of authorial authority by explicating the work's meaning. The notion of the Beckettian 'spirit' is exploited by all players, and has been from the early days of his writing, right up until the present day. It is gestured towards and at times explicitly conjured as a transcendent ethic that not only lends the oeuvre continuity on spurious (or at least unexamined) terms, but also founds

[133] Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1999, p. 27.
[134] *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), p. 13.

the position of whichever interest group has appropriated it in the historical tradition of the theatrical avant-garde, thereby lending the group a status and weight they might not otherwise have.

A particularly intriguing aspect of the appeal to the Beckettian ideal concerns the common contention that Beckett's late drama, especially, ought to be preserved from reinterpretation, because it is not 'drama in any accepted sense of the word'.[135] Rather, it is said to approach Noh, or choreography, or music, or 'something akin to a three-dimensional painting'.[136] Edward Beckett's analogy between the plays and Beethoven's quartets is a prime example. These parallels are attractive because the late drama does confound conventional notions of stagecraft, and because rhythm, silence and visual tableaux are core elements of its impact. But even so, this line of argument will not do. The idea that the late work ought to be immune from reinvention operates as if, because Beckett's genius challenged the bounds of contemporary drama, he has earned a special privilege -- the greater the artist, the greater the legitimacy of the right to preservation and purity. But Beckett's reputation for genius and greatness are no less ineffable or ahistorical than is the reputation of his work. His reputation is subject to the vicissitudes of cultural and academic fashion just as his texts -- all of them, early and late -- are vulnerable to change. '*A* text is of *a* time', Grigely reminds us, and indeed, any kind of cultural text is of *a* time, and other genres are no less susceptible to the inevitable sullyings and enrichments of the public sphere than are Beckett's late plays.[137] All texts are reread and recontextualised. Noh is performed in new settings; sculptures are

[135] Michael Billington, 'Foot Fault', *Guardian*, 22 March 1994, pp. 4-5 (p. 5).
[136] ibid.
[137] Grigely, p. 96.

damaged and relocated; paintings are 'restored'; music is rearranged; 'Swan Lake' is danced with a happy ending.

Subversive and transgressive transformations are equally important, if neglected, aspects of any work's textual history. Grigely makes the neat formulation that 'a work of literature is ontologised by its texts'.[138] Likewise, a play is ontologised by its performances. Any new performance will always be created and consumed in counterpoint to those that have preceded it. It is not Beckett's plays that define themselves as iconic, genre-bending twentieth-century drama. We do that. They are historically and culturally contingent entities. These entities are at once socially constructed and resistant to social construction, yet the critical apparatus hitherto applied to them does not acknowledge just how much they can, and do, encompass by way both of their flexibility and their powers of resistance. If our descriptions of what constitutes a Beckett play are not to remain limited, critics must claim the unauthorised versions of his work, as well as the conflict that defines them as such, not as part of the 'illegitimate history' of his oeuvre, but as part of its actual history.

Every text of Beckett's stands in the shadow of his will. Or rather, of his wills, for the question is not just one of fulfilling his intentions, but one of conforming to the legal standards set by his last testament. Nevertheless, the reputation of his stage works, or what we might, following Grigely, call their extratextual myth, is undergoing constant revision. Beckett's work exists in the public domain, as any cultural entity exists, only in as much as the public allows it to. Although his plays have gone through many of the procedures that transform private manuscripts into public documents, and although they have been published many times over and widely disseminated and discussed, they

[138] Grigely, p. 110.

nevertheless have always been and remain in part private documents controlled by the wishes of a small number of private individuals. Legal institutions endow these individuals with power; therefore the law shapes the Beckett oeuvre, and the oeuvre is thus historically contingent. Not fully released into the public domain, these texts are analogous to those of Beckett's characters he referred to as never having properly been born. Simultaneously occupying multiple positions in the cultural field, the plays are by no means fixed and finished products. Rather, they are entities undergoing a process of continuous construction and reconstruction as different cultural authorities lay claim to them, and to alternative methods of actuating, and thus of ontologically defining, them.

Despite a handful of famous exceptions (Brecht notable among them), Beckett's attitude towards the staging of his plays -- and by extension towards the granting of staging rights -- was highly unusual for a modern dramatist, and broadly speaking ran counter to late twentieth century theatre, which tends to accommodate flux by emphasising and embracing the contingent and uncontainable nature of performance. Why was Beckett so exercised by this issue? Why is it that censorship and rights have played such a weighty role in the creation of the popular perception of him and his work? Can his obsessive concern with the presentation of his plays be explained away as a tick of personality, a diva syndrome, the compulsion of a 'purist bastard'?[139] And is the equal and opposite reaction his stance has provoked in those with iconoclastic leanings simply a matter of poetic justice? He did give us, after all, 'the conceptual ground for doing precisely what he didn't want us to do'.[140] It seems extraordinary that a writer so notoriously intent on giving nothing away with regard to explicating the meaning of his

[139] Beckett to Jack MacGowran, 13 December 1967. Quoted by Kalb, p. 257.
[140] Herbert Blau, quoted by Oppenheim, *Directing Beckett*, p. 56.

prose works could be so meticulous and interventionist with regard to his dramatic oeuvre. Yet, on closer inspection, if we unfold this paradox, we may find lying within it the answer to the dilemma.

It does in fact make good sense that Beckett so assiduously distanced himself from publicly interpreting or explaining his work, all the while seeking (if not always succeeding) to maintain a steely grip on the control of his plays. The reason for this lies at the very heart of the Beckett universe, and it makes evident why this investigation into the legal status of the work -- with all the attendant implications regarding its ontological status -- is germane to how we read Beckett. His work had such a cataclysmic and far-reaching effect on the literary and theatrical worlds because it offered the challenge of the *new*. It could not be reduced to the interpretative paradigms with which early readers sought to understand it. I concur wholly with Leslie Hill, who charges that

> Beckett's critics -- despite exceptions -- have often seemed too willing to domesticate the author's texts and too ready to recuperate them within well-worn and reductive norms [...] In Beckett's texts there are no valid positions of transcendence or final stability which might enable the critic to reconstruct an all-embracing authorial vision with which then to explain -- or explain away -- Beckett's writing.[141]

Beckett's writing challenged, indeed continues to challenge, pre-existing hermeneutical categories and knowledge, and resists all forms of allegory. Realising this, Kalb proffers an opinion on which types of performance are most successful:

> The polyvalence of the works itself, for instance, can be seen to support a standard of judgment: styles that imply choice among meanings, or among realms of meaning, are inferior to those that do not. And that simple standard, that idea of considering ambiguity as a positive performance value, is really all the critical raw material one needs to discuss a poetics of Beckett performance.[142]

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[141] Leslie Hill, *Beckett's Fiction: In Different Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. ix-x.
[142] Kalb, pp. 37-38.

However, Kalb fails to explore fully the reasons underlying his insight. The inevitable corollary of the stupefying achievement of bringing something new into the world is that it engenders a widespread temptation to make the work comprehensible and manageable by mapping it onto the known. Beckett was all too aware of this propensity, and his insistence on fixity to his scrupulous stage directions, as printed in the text, speaks of this awareness.

Derrida, who, as we saw in the Introduction, asserts that literature is an institution but, precisely because it brings something new into being, is also that which subverts institutions, may help us to understand the unique operation of the Beckettian text and its relation to Beckett's performance ideals.[143] It is useful to borrow Derrida's distinction between a text as an *object*, which exists over time, and the text -- or performance -- as an *event*, which is a singular, unique experience. Derek Attridge explains that Derrida sees the literary text 'as radically *situated* -- written and read and re-read at particular times and places -- and as possessing a singularity (each time) which can never be reduced by criticism or theoretical contemplation' (his emphasis).[144] We reach a paradox: Beckett, insisting that his instructions be obeyed to the last punctuation mark, sought to preserve the text-as-object over time *in order to* preserve the performance-as-event, as a one-off inimitable experience that challenges our best reductive efforts to allegorise it until it becomes manageable and familiar. He was obsessed with the letter of the text precisely because he wanted us ultimately *not* to serve the object, but to do honour to the

[143] Derrida conceives of literature as an 'historical institution with its conventions, rules, etc., but also this institution of fiction which gives *in principle* the power to say everything, to break free of the rules, to displace them, and thereby to institute, to invent and even to suspect the traditional difference between nature and institution, nature and conventional law, nature and history.' Jacques Derrida, 'An Interview with Jacques Derrida', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 33-75 (p. 55).
[144] Attridge, Introduction, *Acts of Literature*, pp. 1-27 (p. 15).

singularity of the event. It is by faithfully following his directions that Beckett and his representatives at the Estate believed, and continue to believe, that we will best ensure that the work is not reduced to one-dimensionality, and that the disconcerting singularity or otherness or newness of the work will retain its punch.

But the work is not new. *Waiting for Godot* is over fifty years old. The oeuvre may well still confound and provoke critics of all theoretical persuasions, and rich veins of academic imponderables may well await extrusion, but we ought to recall Charles Spencer's complaint that was quoted at the outset of this chapter: *Godot* 'now has 'important modern classic' written all over it' and 'has perhaps become too familiar'.[145] Beckett has long been admired for his artistic integrity. Even in the early days of his writing career, when he was rejected for publication time and again, he resolutely withstood pressure to change his texts in order to conform to external expectations. The Estate, of course, is endeavouring to emulate that so widely respected integrity. It is tempting to draw a facile parallel between their current aims and the stance taken by the young Beckett, to summon the myth of that surly impassioned youth as a justification for the Estate's rigidity today. There are, however, crucial differences. Over the last seventy years the road from ignominy and failure to fame and canonisation has been run. As a young defiant outsider Beckett's stubborn loyalty to his own aesthetic marked him -- chiefly within his peer group in Paris but also, especially in Ireland, publicly -- as a committed avant-gardist unwilling to bend to the conventions and compromises demanded by the marketplace. The Estate's stance cannot possibly have the same effect today. Does it not, in fact, have the quite opposite consequence of pinning Beckett's plays firmly into the midst of the consecrated classics?

[145] Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1999, p. 27.

There are dangers inherent in this position. The Estate is hoping to protect the drama and all it stands for but it may, in fact, be neutralising, if not nullifying it. Audiences are the ultimate creators, arbiters and owners of the reputation of Beckett's plays, and there is growing evidence of a certain disillusionment with old-school Beckett. Take for example Rosette C. Lamont's review of the French avant-garde director Phillipe Adrien's staging of *En attendant Godot* in the mid-1990s, which she extols as 'original and thought-provoking': 'This is a post-Beckett, post-Roger Blin, post-Alan Schneider *Godot*. It could not have been staged in this manner while Beckett was alive.'[146] Five years later, Frédéric Ferney dares to ask in *Le Figaro*, 'Et si *Godot* était devenu injouable? [...] on se la pose, cette question, en frémissant de notre audace. Car oui, c'est une horreur de penser cela (mais, si on le pense, il faut oser le dire), et j'espère me tromper, mais il me semble que Beckett s'éloigne un peu de nous.'[147] It is Luc Bondy's 1999 *En attendant Godot* at the Odéon-Théâtre de L'Europe, in Paris, that prompts Ferney to make this observation. He suggests that if the play is losing relevance for contemporary audiences, it is saved, in this instance, by Bondy's innovations. Such mutterings are heard on this side of the Channel as well. The *Observer*'s Susannah Clapp insists, exasperated:

> It's time that *Waiting for Godot* was given a rest. Two years ago, Peter Hall directed it at the Old Vic; last year his production reappeared, newly cast, at the Piccadilly. Matthew Lloyd has now directed the play at the Manchester Royal Exchange, and in the autumn, the Gate Theatre brings its version from Dublin to the Barbican. This makes it one of the plays I've seen most regularly during the two years I've been writing for the

[146] Rosette C. Lamont, 'Letter from Paris: From the Comédie Française to the Folies-Bergère', *Theater Week*, 14-20 February 1994, pp. 14-23 (p. 18).
[147] Frédéric Ferney, *Le Figaro*, 19 September 1999, p. 18: 'And if *Godot* has become unplayable? [...] we ask this question with a shudder at our audacity. Because yes, it's horrific to think it (but if you can think it, you have to dare to say it), and I hope I am wrong, but it seems to me that Beckett is becoming rather estranged from us.'

> *Observer*. It doesn't always come up fresh. It's beginning to look like a star vehicle. [...] It's time to move on. There are other plays.[148]

When writing in the *Guardian* about the upcoming 'Beckett on Film' series that was about to appear on Channel 4 in 2001, Mark Lawson, noting the fanfare that had greeted the project, observed that 'you have to keep reminding yourself that the aim of all this is not the saving of starving children but the restoration of Sam Beckett's reputation.'[149] Lawson himself does not expand on why he thinks such a restoration is necessary, but his interview with Anthony Minghella, who directed the film of *Play* for the series, is revealing. In his response to Lawson's enquiry as to whether *Beckett on Film* would 'help to confirm the playwright's reputation as the king of twentieth century theatre', Minghella warned that, 'Beckett is in danger of being seen as passé'.[150] In another interview, Minghella was even more explicit: 'The only reason to film the plays is to refresh interest in Beckett.'[151] The significance of filming the plays did not go unnoticed:

> And if any project is going to change the shape of cinema today it's this one. Through exploring the language of Beckett, filmmakers seem to have absorbed some of their beloved playwright's freedom, his need to break boundaries and explore new territory. There's already talk of a Beckett purist backlash -- terror at the notion of messing with treasured words when the author is no longer here to police them.[152]

These complaints bring to mind Jonathon Marks's tale, printed in the A.R.T.'s *Endgame* programme -- how concerned should the Estate be at the voices calling, 'Shut up, Sam'?

Is Beckett's resolute commitment to singularity, in the face of the reality of the inevitable vagaries of iterability, ultimately self-defeating? Singularity cannot be

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[148] Susannah Clapp, *Observer*, 23 May 1999, p. 8.
[149] Mark Lawson, 'Worth the Wait?', *Guardian*, 25 June 2001, pp. 16-17 (p. 17).
[150] Anthony Minghella, quoted by Lawson, 'Worth the Wait?', *Guardian*, 25 June 2001, p. 16.
[151] Anthony Minghella, quoted by Dominic Cavendish, 'Would Sam Have Approved?', *Guardian*, 26 June 2001, p. 17.
[152] Nicola Christie, 'Samuel Beckett: the Movie', *Independent*, 6 April 2001, p. 11.

preserved over time -- it has to be actively recreated for new times and new places and, therefore, risked. It is debatable, moreover, whether the Estate, as legal guardian of Beckett's work, is achieving its aims. Is the power it has over the material text actually serving to keep Beckett performances alive in the minds of the audience? It is, in fact, an inevitability that Beckett's oeuvre will be reopened to the potential of genuine newness, for in 2059 the plays will pass out of copyright. But that is a long way off, and the danger of the work atrophying in the meantime is not inconsiderable. Perhaps it is time for the Estate to embrace, transparently, what Steven Connor calls 'a practice which instances the powerful possibilities of reproduction over the sterile compulsions of replication'.[153] In some instances at least, practice and theory coincide. The Australian director Neil Armfield says: 'The act of producing theatre is an act of collaboration and of play. You don't always get it right, but you don't set out to see how you can wreck it. But you can't play if you're afraid of causing offence, of not 'getting it right', of being incorrect.'[154] And Derrida asks: 'Why, in wanting at all costs to avoid play, because it could be bad, do we also risk depriving ourselves of 'good' play, which is as much as to say, of everything[?]'[155]

[153] Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 201.
[154] Neil Armfield, 'Sounds of Dissent Offstage', *Australian*, 10 January 2003, p. 11.
[155] Derrida, 'An Interview with Jacques Derrida', in *Acts of Literature*, pp. 64-65.

CHAPTER FOUR: IMAGING THE AUTHOR

Dear Mr Minihan
Thank you for your letter of April 2. I should be glad to see you in Paris -- provided you leave yr camera at home.
Best, Sam Beckett [April 1985][1]

I mentioned the many Beckett celebrations Paris had organised for his eightieth birthday and that I would like to take a new portrait. With no hesitation he said that I should return at three o'clock the following day and bring the camera. [December 1985][2]

But my dear man, come, be reasonable, look, this is you, look at this photograph [...] to have no identity, it's a scandal, I assure you, look at this photograph, what, you see nothing, true for you, no matter, here, look at this death's-head, you'll see [...] look, here's the photograph, you'll see, you'll be all right [...] yes, I was right, no doubt about it this time, it's you all over, look, here's the photograph, take a look at that [...][3]

Appearances may sometimes be deceptive.[4]

That appearances may sometimes be deceptive is a commonplace, but like many commonplaces that deceptively appear straightforward, it holds truth to which we frequently pay little heed. Another such, even more apt to our enterprise, is that books cannot be judged by their covers. But they are, and, as competition intensifies in the marketplace, increasingly so. One wonders whether John Calder had this adage in mind when he issued the twelve volume series 'Beckett Shorts', which in 1999 commemorated the tenth anniversary of Beckett's death. The back cover of each of the books proclaims that 'all have covers with the photographs of Samuel Beckett taken by the Irish photographer John Minihan, which, catching the author in different moods, have become

[1] Postcard from Samuel Beckett, in John Minihan, *Samuel Beckett: Photographs* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1995), p. 22.
[2] Minihan, *Samuel Beckett: Photographs*, p. 24.
[3] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), pp. 289-414 (p. 377).
[4] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 389.

classics on their own.'[5] What Calder in fact intended was precisely that his public would judge these books by their covers. He gambled that images of Beckett, resplendently craggy and austere in black and white, would sell. And he is right, because images of this famously reclusive author have come to assume both cultural and economic value of their own. Beckett, the man who shunned publicity to such a degree that he refused to collect his Nobel Prize in person, has become an icon of twentieth century literature. But I must be more specific, for I refer here not to some diffuse notion of Beckett as an individual, and still less to his work, but rather to the image of Beckett, to Beckett the literary pinup.

This then is what has become of the author we examined in chapter one; a difficult writer who was promoted to a small, select readership, whose sales were low, and who at least in the immediate post-war years hardly ever met with his publishers, and so who would certainly not have been recognisable to most of his small band of readers. And yet it is not only that the road from ignominy to fame has been run over the last half-century, as I say at the end of chapter three. Beckett truly has become an icon, and as befits an icon, myths about him abound: he was a wilfully obscure pessimist; he was a hermit; he was arrogant; he was a saint. James Knowlson addresses each of these myths in turn in his recent book, *Images of Beckett*, and succeeds in painting a more nuanced picture of his subject. There seems to be an implicit link, in the essay 'A Portrait of Beckett', between the legend-ridden image of Beckett that Knowlson undoes, and John Haynes's photographic portraits of the playwright that, along with photographs of the plays, form the book's main material.[6] But if the authors *do* recognise the mythmaking role played by the photographs in the book, the ironic disjunction between the visual

[5] *Beckett Shorts*, 1-12 (London: John Calder, 1999).
[6] James Knowlson, 'A Portrait of Beckett', in James Knowlson and John Haynes, *Images of Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-41.

construction, and the verbal deconstruction, of Beckett that the book presents, is not made explicit. What the book does make clear, however, is that the time is ripe to challenge received narratives about Beckett.

The paradox concerning Beckett's reputation for reclusiveness and its relation to his iconic status is tantalising on more than one level. The biographical imperative is to address the myth of the private camera-shy man so that the pervasiveness of images of him might be explained. The key question here risks upsetting those commentators, and they are legion, enamoured of the conception of Beckett as one entirely removed from the supposedly distasteful exigencies of publication and publicising: to what degree was Beckett complicit in his own image-making?[7] The critical imperative demands a consideration of any effect the Beckett icon might have on the Beckett oeuvre. Beckett, though he has been at rest in the Montparnasse cemetery for well over a decade, is ever more with us. What does this mean for how we approach his work? Does his reputation, which has in part been fashioned by, and is in part maintained by, images (primarily photographs) of him, affect readers' expectations of his work? Is a text with a portrait of the author positioned prominently alongside it different from a text without such a bibliographical context?

These questions are not addressed until towards the end of the chapter, for before we can hope to posit an answer to them, we must examine the evidence. An abundance of images of Beckett exists in the public domain. This chapter analyses a sizeable number of

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[7] Gerard Genette, discussing writers' different levels of involvement in marketing and promotion, opines: 'My reader will work out the proportions for himself, and as he sees fit, not without a respectful nod to those -- a Michaux, a Blanchot, a Beckett, for example -- who have always, or almost always, refused to get caught up in the 'meshing gears' and whom, by definition, we will not have occasion to meet in this piece of machinery.' But that simply cannot be so, for Beckett's is one of the literary world's best-known faces. Does this mean his right to a 'respectful nod' is forfeit? Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 6.

these portraits chiefly in order to cast light on the reputation and status of Beckett's work and of Beckett himself in contemporary culture. But the chapter also aims to maintain a link between its analysis, which concerns materials that may at first seem to bear little relation to the inner workings of Beckett's fictive universes, and themes that do indeed lie at the heart of Beckett's writing and that form the subject-matter of investigations with a more traditional literary critical focus. Maintaining this link is important because of the thoroughgoing fashion in which Beckett treats the topic of visual representation in his work.

Beckett's preoccupations reflect the fact that our culture's relationship to visual phenomena is complex and fraught. In the age of advertising, it is a rare thousand words that would be worth more than a glossy picture, and yet, as technological advances bring reality and images of it closer together, making it ever more possible to achieve breathtaking verisimilitude, our wonder may grow, but our unease about what to rely on as real grows with it. Quotidian warnings that beauty is skin-deep, that appearances deceive, that books' covers are not to be relied upon, point to a deep mistrust of seeing. These suspicions have been present in academia, too, as, until relatively recently, the material props of the book trade have not been approved for scholarly investigation.[8] Deemed to be even less worthy of study have been the ephemera of promotion, which to a great degree comprise visual material. Regarded as superficial, unenduring, heterogeneous and at too great a remove from the text, the potential impact of

[8] Classical bibliographical scholarship has been radically opened up in the last two decades, thanks especially to the groundbreaking work of Jerome McGann, whose interest not just in the materiality of texts, but in the meaning inherent in that materiality, has found expression in three major works: *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); and *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993). Equally important is Donald F. McKenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

promotional forms on reception (and by extension on interpretation) has been underestimated if not entirely disregarded. 'Resistance to the serious study of *visible* cultural objects such as films and photographs begins here, with the ancient belief that the sources of value are unseen' (the authors' emphasis).[9] This chapter works against such resistance, seeking to assess the construction of the publicly imaged, and publicly imagined, 'Samuel Beckett' (icon), and the relationship of this figure to the work of Samuel Beckett (writer).

Barthes has argued that 'Mallarmé was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner', but it was perhaps with Beckett that the expression of this 'necessity' reached its apogee.[10] Indeed, Beckett can arguably be regarded as the representative author of the 'death of the author' era: his central artistic endeavours of questioning the origin of the voice and complicating conventional assumptions about authorship and authority were coupled with, and complemented by, personal qualities of shyness and humility. These characteristics kept him always at an enigmatic remove from his work, whether within a narrative or within the public realm. But even if an author is literally dead, his role cannot be regarded as obsolete, effaced or irrelevant, when his image is ubiquitous. The programme of absenting an author from his text, so compelling a feature of Beckett's writing, is undercut and finally given the lie by contemporary promotional and publishing practices, for which the owner of the language (or text) at

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[9] James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger, 'Six Artistic Cultures', Introduction, in *Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. by Naremore and Brantlinger (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 1-23 (p. 3).
[10] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-48 (p. 143).

issue is of vital importance. These practices have, in fact, brought us to the point that we can almost entirely reverse the following formulation of Antonio Gramsci:

> One of the most characteristic attitudes of the popular public towards its literature is this: the writer's name and personality do not matter, but the personality of the protagonist does. When they have entered into the intellectual life of the people, the heroes of popular literature are separated from their 'literary' origin and acquire the validity of historical figures.[11]

The public imaging and imagining of Beckett the historical figure is contibuting to a process, I urge throughout this chapter, in which he is assuming the validity and position of a fictional hero. I explore more closely below how the mechanisms of promotion have created of Beckett a brandname, which circulates in the public arena independently of the author as an individual, and of his work.[12]

Susan Sontag's assertion that 'to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed' is telling -- the subject of a photograph is denied his liberty, not just because his image is frozen in ink, but also because he is subjected to a new authority.[13] This authority is free to recontextualise, and so to a degree remake, the subject, which prompts Sontag's discussion of 'the didacticism of the whole [photographic] enterprise.'[14] Barthes calls this 'connotation', which he describes as 'the imposition of a second meaning on the photographic message proper, [which] is realized at the different levels of the production of the photograph (choice, technical treatment, framing, lay-out) and

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[11] Antonio Gramsci, Frontispiece, in Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (London: Macmillan, 1987). This is the only work in which I have found a concrete example demonstrating the theory that the construction of an author-figure can be inspired by the author's own characters. Maintaining that 'the figure of the author is clearly a malleable construct which may be discursively related to the same set of texts in different ways' (p. 65), Bennett and Woollacott investigate the relationship between James Bond and his creator, Ian Fleming. They suggest that 'biographies and reminiscences of Fleming have [...] as it were, 'Bondianised' his life in order that the figure Bond might thus, in being 'Flemingised', be constructed on a real-life support' (p. 91). The relation between Beckett and his characters is not so straightforward, but the general principle is instructive.

[12] See p. 216.

[13] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p. 4.

[14] Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 7.

represents, finally, a coding'.[15] This chapter proposes that the process of imaging Beckett, and its relation to the commodification of his work, has brought about not quite the rebirth of the author, but rather the birth of a fictional, an authored, 'author'. However, because the 'living' (that is, the circulating) image of this character is fixed, it enjoys but a life-in-death: 'All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.'[16] We must remember, too, when we come to study a range of pictures of Beckett later in the chapter, that 'the portrait's meaning exists within wider codes of meaning: of space, of posture, of dress, of marks, of significance which has, in turn, already framed and fixed the individual. The photograph thus reflects the terms by which the culture itself confers status and meaning on the subject, while the subject as image hovers problematically between exterior and interior identities.'[17] It is precisely by investigating how Beckett is framed and fixed in images that I hope that his status or reputation will be revealed, a status that in turn affects further framing of him. Beckett's work, however, warns us away from the treacherous allure of the stable (or seemingly stable) visual image. So, although this chapter aims to clarify what the promotional materials related to Beckett and his work signify, and how they operate, its ultimate interest is in determining whether any danger to our relationship with the work lies in the stabilising of his image, and if so, how that danger might be overcome.

Sontag's message in *On Photography* is echoed in Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. 'Photography', Barthes proposes, 'is a kind of primitive theatre, a kind of *Tableau*

[15] Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', in *Image Music Text*, pp. 15-31 (p. 20).
[16] Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 15.
[17] Graham Clarke, ed., *The Portrait in Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), p. 3.

Vivant.'[18] This statement is nowhere more pertinent than in relation to Beckett's late drama where, as language is pared away, greater power devolves upon the visual. Despite their balletic and sculptural qualities, plays such as *That Time*, *...but the clouds...*, and *Ohio Impromptu* come so close to no other art form as to photography. The characters' faces or bodies are suspended, often all but immobile, denied spatial or temporal context and cocooned in the dark from which they emerge and into which they vanish. The stage directions for *That Time* begin: 'Curtain. Stage in darkness. Fade up to LISTENER'S FACE about 10 feet above stage level midstage off centre. Old white face, long flaring white hair as if seen from above outspread.'[19] The characters appear indeed to be 'a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead'.[20] It is here, with these late, quintessentially Beckettian images, that we reach the compelling point at which illusion and reality merge, and at which we are introduced to the confluence between Beckett's interest in the relation of visual perception and representation to identity, as expressed in his work, and this chapter's investigation into the creation of Beckett's own image. For out of this same dark, though set in a different frame, comes now another ravaged visage, stripped of colour, white-haired, starkly lit. I refer here specifically to the cover of James Knowlson's acclaimed biography on Beckett, *Damned to Fame*, which features a John Haynes portrait of the author (see Figure 1), but the reference is as apt to a great many other images of Beckett, as we shall see below.

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[18] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 32.
[19] *That Time*, in *Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1984) pp. 225-35 (p. 228).
[20] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 32.

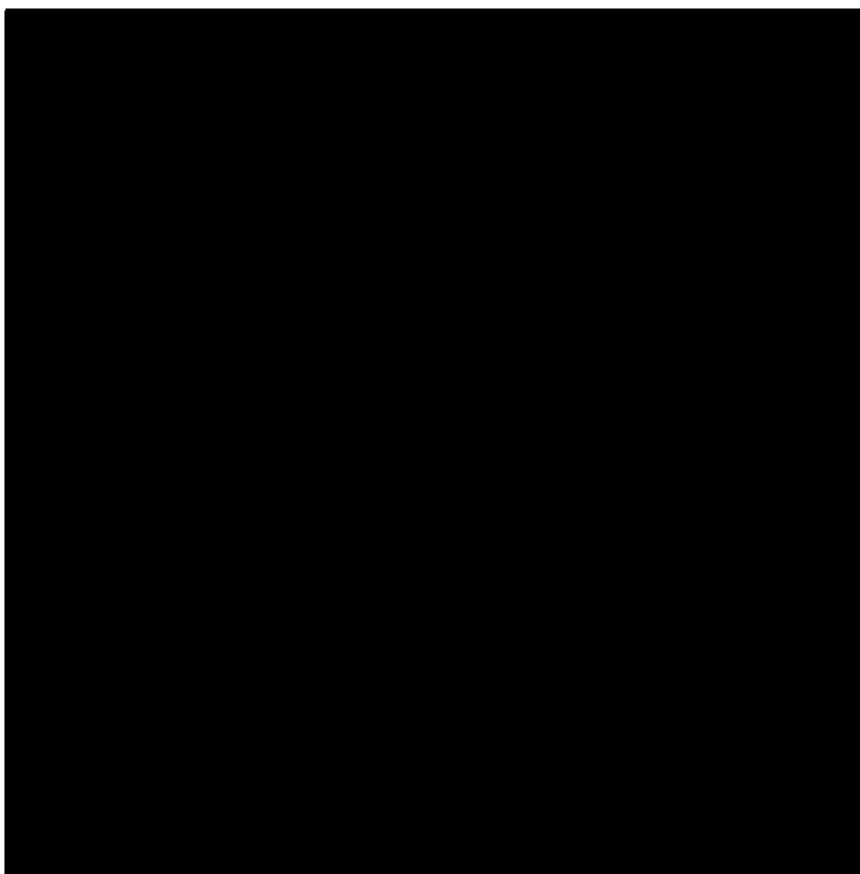

Figure 1: Beckett in 1973, by John Haynes, as featured on the cover of *Damned to Fame*

Knowlson's biography, authorised by Beckett and shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize, 'tells you as much as anyone can about Samuel Beckett'.[21] As a widely admired and

[21] Edward Albee, quoted in James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), inside front cover. The influence of Knowlson's work is particularly marked given that only three full English-language biographies of Beckett exist. One of these, Deirdre Bair's *Samuel Beckett* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), is rife with inaccuracies and has long been vilified by Beckett devotees. The other, Anthony Cronin's *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist*, also appeared in 1996, with HarperCollins. Its less scholarly focus ('in short' charge Ackerley and Gontarski, 'Cronin didn't do his homework'. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), p. 59) may explain its comparatively limited impact in academic circles. A third biographical work came out in 1996 (Lois Gordon, *The World of Samuel Beckett: 1906-1946* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1996)), but this focusses only on Beckett's formative years. Enoch Brater's *The Essential Samuel Beckett: An Illustrated Biography* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003) concentrates less on biographical matters than on Beckett's work. Shorter memoirs in French (André Bernold, *L'amitié de Beckett, 1979-1989* (Paris:

rigorously scholarly book, it is greatly influential in shaping our contemporary understanding of Beckett.[22] Its cover is not only a vital promotional tool, but also a metonymy of the work's overall subject. Who, then, is the Beckett imaged by Haynes and authorised by Knowlson and his publishers? Which of the thousands of images of Beckett have they chosen to represent *their* Beckett (and consequently, *our* Beckett, for although the possibility of challenging this conception exists, few people seize the opportunity)? A brief flick through the photographs contained within the biography's covers makes the allusion clear -- Haynes is visually quoting from another of his own photographs, that of Patrick Magee in *That Time* at the Royal Court Theatre, London, in 1976 (see Figure 2).[23] But for the angle (the camera is slightly left and down for the Magee portrait), the image is almost identical to that of the *Damned to Fame* Beckett. Cut off at the neck, with wild white hair and deep shadows texturing the faces, both heads hang suspended against a black background. In the Haynes portrait, Beckett inhabits his own dramatic realm.

This striking convergence of author and character is far from being an isolated instance. On the contrary, much of the fascination in Beckett portraits arises from their

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Hermann, 1992); Charles Juliet, *Rencontre avec Beckett* (Saint-Clément-La-Rivière: Fata Morgana, 1986)) hold interest for their personal insights but are highly subjective.

[22] The de- and re-mythologising role Knowlson's work plays is summed up in this extract from a Swiss article on *Damned to Fame*: 'Non, Samuel Beckett n'était pas seulement ce grand maigre au visage d'aigle dont aucun photographe n'a jamais réussi à fixer le sourire, cet homme solitaire qui ruminait de sombres visions dans une petite villa terne. C'était aussi un joyeux drille qui aimait les matchs de rugby à la télé [...] Dix ans après la mort de l'énigmatique Irlandais, voici donc venu le temps de corriger son image, de le rapprocher du commun des mortels, de l'ensoleiller quelque peu. Une large part de sa légende demeure cependant impossible à adoucir, et sort même renforcée par la biographie américaine [sic]. ('No, Samuel Beckett was not just that tall thin man with the eagle face, which no photographer ever captured smiling, that solitary man who ruminated over dark visions in a dull little villa. He was also a happy old sport who loved rugby matches on tv [...] The time has come, ten years after the enigmatic Irishman's death, to correct his image, to bring him closer to the community of mortals, to brighten him up a bit. Nonetheless, a large part of his legend remains impossible to soften, and even emerges from the American [sic] biography reinforced.') Pierre-Louis Chantre, 'Samuel Beckett, toujours implacable', *L'Hebdo*, 12 March 1999, p. 74.

[23] Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, Photograph 58.

almost universal tendency to rely on Beckettian imagery for their inspiration and in their composition. This trend is analysed below.

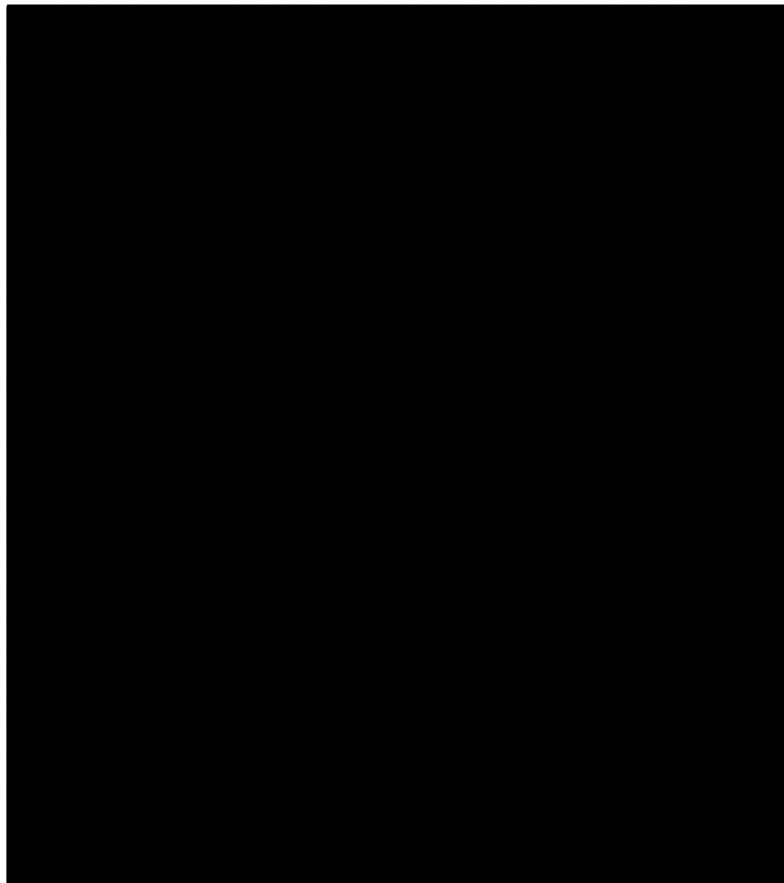

Figure 2: Patrick Magee in *That Time*, Royal Court Theatre, London, 1976, by John Haynes

Any such analysis ought to begin, however, with a consideration of the dramatic realm itself, as it is here that we find not only the visual prompts for so many images of Beckett, but more importantly the ideas that render these images so curiously and ironically restrictive. The work's sustained preoccupation with the insistent yet treacherous nature of the visible, and the characters' ongoing concern with imagining the self and identifying

others through images, provide sanction for our investigation. Lois Oppenheim goes so far as to argue that 'the unifying force of all Beckett's work is a preoccupation with the visual as paradigm. For the fixations on the inexpressivity of language; on the, at best, tenuous link of identity to a fragmented self; and on the ego-world relation are all modelled on the sensory perspective of the eye.'[24] Whereas I hesitate to exalt the visual at the expense of the verbal in Beckett's work, I do suggest that commentators have failed to accord the metaphor of the eye the critical attention it warrants.[25] Oppenheim is the critic who most fully appreciates the scope and import of Beckett's obsession with the visual, although the extraordinary range of Beckett's allusions to the visual arts has been documented elsewhere, and various critics have discussed his often reciprocally inspiring relationships with painters and sculptors.[26] Oppenheim, however, extends her study beyond the question of influence, exploring rather what she calls Beckett's 'positing of consciousness, in both his creative and critical work, as a distinctly sensorial, and specifically visual, corporeality.'[27] It is my concern here not only to consider the imaging of Beckett himself in relation to the 'ontological indeterminacy' that Oppenheim contends he allegorises through seeing in his work, but, further, to question how this imaging of the author might be affecting his cultural reputation.[28]

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[24] Lois Oppenheim, ed., *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts and Non-Print Media* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1999), p. xxi.

[25] The standout exception to this rule is James Knowlson. Especially in his essay 'Images of Beckett' (Knowlson and Haynes, *Images of Beckett*, pp. 43-95), Knowlson lends the visual its due weight, exploring why Beckett thought that images could communicate more effectively than words. See also chapter ten, 'Germany: The Unknown Diaries', in *Damned to Fame*, pp. 230-61, for information on the young Beckett's love of painting and a history of his visits to galleries, especially in Germany.

[26] See Oppenheim, *Samuel Beckett and the Arts*; and *The Painted Word: Samuel Beckett's Dialogue with Art* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

[27] Oppenheim, *The Painted Word*, p. 100.

[28] Oppenheim, *The Painted Word*, p. 4.

Well known to any reader familiar with the oeuvre are certain recurrent (or obsessional, as Beckett himself acknowledged) images -- decrepit bicycles, precipitate larches, hulking greatcoats, bowler hats. Such images form a motley collection of reference points that not only render the Beckett country such an eccentrically vivid realm, but that also go a long way towards lending the body of work as a whole its coherence. But it is perhaps the image of the eye that resonates most eerily, exposed as it is to its always attendant, perilous pun. In Beckett's world the eye, legendary window on the soul, is invitation, temptation, threat, and many of his characters endure the 'anguish of percievedness'[29] that springs from 'the great Magical Ability of the Eye, to which the lunatic would easy succumb'.[30]

The conundrums of vision are manifold. The tension (at times, the sheer incommensurability) between the mind's internal vision and the physical reality of the object perceived is at best a mystery and at worst a torment, and this dilemma is complicated by the fact that the inner and the outer worlds, which Murphy terms the little and big worlds, entail two quite different ways of seeing.

> Wylie came a little closer to Murphy, but his way of looking was as different from Murphy's as a *voyeur*'s from a *voyant*'s [...] The terms are only taken to distinguish between the vision that depends on light, object, viewpoint, etc., and the vision that all those things embarrass. In the days when Murphy was concerned with seeing Miss Counihan, he had to close his eyes to do so.[31]

When they are closed, eyelids enhance inner vision, but they may do so only at the expense of verisimilitude. And yet their ability to keep the outside out, to define physically the parameters of the individual's consciousness, prompts Belacqua's

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[29] *Film*, in *Collected Shorter Plays*, pp. 161-74 (p. 163).
[30] *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), p. 32.
[31] *Murphy*, p. 90.

insistence that the eyes, 'posterns of the mind' are 'safer closed'.[32] When they are open, eyes betray. At times they simply do not function as they ought, as is the case for Molloy, whose sense of place and security are jeopardised by unreliable eyesight.

> And my eye too, the seeing one, must have been ill-connected with the spider, for I found it hard to name what was mirrored there, often quite distinctly. [...] I misjudged the distance separating me from the other world, and often I stretched out my hand for what was far beyond my reach, and often I knocked against obstacles scarcely visible on the horizon.[33]

But there are more dangerous failures than straightforward failure of vision. Operating as a turnstile that regulates the flow of information from without to within, the open eye, for all its potential to effect the integration of self and world, also permits disturbing images to enter the mind and take it over.

> It's an image, in my helpless head, where all sleeps, all is dead, not yet born, I don't know, or before my eyes, they see the scene, the lids flicker and it's in. An instant and then they close again, to look inside the head, to try and see inside, to look for me there, to look for someone there, in the silence of quite a different justice, in the toils of that obscure assize where to be is to be guilty.[34]

Many characters in Beckett's work are blind, or almost (Pozzo in the second act of *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm in *Endgame*, A in *Rough for Theatre I*, Dan Rooney in *All That Fall*, the narrator's companion in *Enough*), and bleak references to eyes and seeing abound. A wished-for death in *The Calmative*, for example, is imagined 'under the blind sky', where the narrator would 'close with [his] own hands the eyes soon sockets';[35] the narrator of *Worstward ho* obsesses about 'clenched staring eyes', insisting he must focus

[32] 'Yellow', in *More Pricks Than Kicks* (London: John Calder, 1993), pp. 171-86 (p. 173).
[33] *Molloy* in *Three Novels*, pp. 5-176 (p. 50).
[34] Text 5, in *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp. 95-99 (p. 95).
[35] *The Calmative*, in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, pp. 27-46 (p. 29).

on 'skull and stare alone. Scene and seer of all';[36] and the Unnamable frets, 'this eye, curious how this eye invites inspection, demands sympathy, solicits attention, implores assistance, to do what, it's not clear, to stop weeping, have a quick look round, goggle an instant and close forever'.[37]

Beckett subjects this unfocussed pessimism about eyes and images, which pervades the entire oeuvre, to a more sophisticated interrogation of how visual perception operates. A metaphor with special relevance to this chapter describes eyes working as a camera ('they open and shut by the force of habit, fifteen minutes exposure, fifteen minutes shutter'),[38] framing and isolating certain objects for inspection, and necessarily omitting others. The metaphors to which Beckett consistently returns, however, are those of windows and mirrors, which represent, and effect, the identification and framing of the tenuous relation between the seer and the seen. As Watt finds, they limit and even distort one's view: 'The few glimpses caught of Mr Knott, by Watt, were not clearly caught, but as it were in a glass, not a looking-glass, a plain glass, an eastern window at morning, a western window at evening.'[39] Malone too sees the world but darkly, and through a glass, though his conception of his link to the outer world makes explicit the life-affirming significance of the window: 'It is the same grey as heretofore, literally sparkling at times, then growing murky and dim, thickening is perhaps the word, until all things are blotted out except the window which seems in a manner of speaking to be my umbilicus.'[40] And the Unnamable, seeking to conjure images of how life might be in the world, reckons: 'someone must have explained to me, what it's like, an eye, at the window, against the air,

[36] *Worstward ho* (London: John Calder, 1999), pp. 22-23.
[37] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 375.
[38] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 392.
[39] *Watt* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), p. 147.
[40] *Malone Dies*, in *Three Novels*, pp. 177-288 (p. 223).

opening, shutting, grey, black, grey, black'.[41] The metaphor of the malfunctioning eye encompasses both the primary importance of the role of visualisation in the relation of self to world, and also the failure of visual representation per se. The question of perception brings us to the heart of Beckett's enterprise, to what Oppenheim calls the 'opacity of art': the insoluble dilemma that the attempt to represent can ultimately reveal only the process of that attempt, and not any reality outside itself.[42]

This is an important message to bear in mind, not just for its general significance, but because it makes for an ironic and devastating juxtaposition alongside those images of Beckett, soon to be analysed, that confidently construct a visual identity for him. It is, nonetheless, a search for a unified sense of identity that underpins and connects all these anxieties about seeing in Beckett's work. Broadly, this search comprises two main aspects. The first concerns the role of memory in constructing the self. The Unnamable provides an excellent example of this process. Although he is before all else a narrator, meaning that it is the verbal dimension that allows him to exist, or to believe in his existence, in the present, his experience of memory is nevertheless primarily visual: 'you must go on thinking too, the old thoughts, they call that thinking, it's visions, shreds of old visions, that's all you can see, a few old pictures'.[43] The narrator of *Company* is even more reliant on images in his painstaking assembly of a remembered self. It is a voice that comes to him in the dark (he names himself 'H. Aspirate. Haitch', for Hearer)[44] but the memories come in images. And it is these memories, looked over with the mind's eye, that enable him to string together a sense of identity. 'You lie in the dark with closed eyes

[41] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 405.
[42] Oppenheim, *The Painted Word*, p. 67.
[43] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 405.
[44] *Company* (London: John Calder, 1996), p. 42.

and see the scene. As you could not at the time. The dark cope of sky. The dazzling land. You at a standstill in the midst. [...] You look behind you as you could not then and see their trail. A great swerve. Withershins.'[45] Such scenes from childhood and his young adult life are recounted with minute attention paid to visual details (the 'narrow clay path edged with sere box edging' where he found the ill-starred hedgehog; 'the white pasture afrolic with lambs in spring and strewn with red placentae'; the 'small stained diamond panes' in the summerhouse windows; the second hand of a watch, 'now followed and now preceded by its shadow'),[46] but images, however vividly conjured, cannot be relied upon. Time and again Beckett warns his readers that in essence images are only figments, and they cannot bridge the gulf between the seer and the seen. In wretched mood, the Unnamable rails against this impossibility: 'Balls, all balls, I don't believe in the eye either, there's nothing here, nothing to see, nothing to see with, merciful coincidence, when you think what it would be, a world without spectator, and vice versa, brrr! No spectator then, and better still no spectacle, good riddance'.[47]

The Unnamable's compulsive return to the eye, or the coeval I ('Ah yes, there's great fun to be had from an eye'),[48] leads us to the second aspect of the search for identity, which concerns the philosophical foundation of Beckett's concern with vision; namely, his engagement with the dictum of the Irish philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753), *esse est percipi*.[49] With *Murphy* Beckett entered into a lifelong debate with Berkeley, who sought to discredit the scientific, Lockean world-view, and thereby to uphold religion and morality, by arguing that an object cannot be said to exist unless it is

[45] *Company*, p. 52.
[46] *Company*, pp. 40, 48, 53, 81.
[47] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 375.
[48] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 373.
[49] To be is to be perceived.

perceived by an other. He contended that 'perception was not causal but that the 'proper objects' of vision are purely visual ideas 'in the mind', the cause of these being ever the will of God.'[50] Of even greater relevance to understanding Beckett is Berkeley's correlative idea that a *subject* cannot be said to exist outside of an other's perception. That Beckett explores the fraught relation between he who sees, and what he sees, has already been shown. However, when the self/world disjunction is internalised, these boundaries collapse into a more sinister fragmentation of the self. In lieu of an external perceiver, one perceives oneself, becoming both subject and object, I and me. Berkeley's concern with apperception, or the capacity to perceive oneself, is therefore predicated on a sundered self, which becomes Beckett's concern.[51] The concept of living by proxy, of viewing oneself from without, provides a dramatic manifestation of this dilemma. The following passage from *Texts for Nothing* typifies this theme. The texts' narrator finds he can imagine himself only by imaging himself, in other words by creating a picture of himself that he can view as a discrete object: 'when comes the hour of those who knew me, it's as though I were among them, that is what I had to say, among them watching me approach, then watching me recede, shaking my head and saying, is it really he can it possibly be he, then moving on in their company.'[52]

The confrontation of *l'Autre* and the self, and *l'Autre* as the self, is treated most fully in Beckett's sole foray into the cinema. *Film*, starring Buster Keaton, is the enactment of an individual's doomed attempt to escape all forms of perception (and as

[50] Ackerley and Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, p. 49.
[51] Knowlson cautions that ideas that Beckett found in Berkeley, and other philosophers like Heraclitus, are in Beckett's writing 'for their dramatic value, and not for their 'truth value'' (Knowlson and Haynes, *Images of Beckett*, p. 140). The notes to *Film*, quoted below, attest to this. Nevertheless, Berkeley's thinking structures much of Beckett's own, and is grappled with throughout his oeuvre.
[52] Text 11, in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, pp. 127-31 (p. 131).

such, it inescapably brings to mind Beckett's own reputation for evading public view). Recoiling from randomly met strangers, the film's protagonist avoids the gaze of other people, but also seeks to annihilate all other forms of the eye, be they actual or symbolic. These measures include 'occlusion of window and mirror, ejection of dog and cat, destruction of God's image, occlusion of parrot and goldfish.'[53] Beckett provides the following notes:

> All extraneous perception suppressed, animal, human, divine, self-perception maintains in being.
> Search of non-being in flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception.
> No truth value attaches to above, regarded as of merely structural and dramatic convenience.
> In order to be figured into this situation the protagonist is sundered into object (O) and eye (E), the former in flight, the latter in pursuit.
> It will not be clear until end of film that pursuing perceiver is not extraneous, but self.[54]

Film is particularly instructive for this chapter, in which the main focus is photographic portraiture of Beckett, in so far as it demonstrates (perhaps even more decisively than the better-known *Krapp's Last Tape*) Beckett's awareness of living in a multi-media age, and especially his consciousness of the peculiar relationship of the tools of this age to identity. Central to his project is the camera's twofold function, which is not only technical (it is, of course, the chosen medium, and the audience views what it frames and records), but also metaphorical, for, during most of *Film*, it assumes the role of eye (E). The 'search of non-being' is revealed as impossible -- the camera, as E, simultaneously effects self-perception and enforces 'being'. It brings about two distinct kinds of existence; O, no matter how he 'cringes away from perceivedness', exists for himself *and*

[53] *Film*, in *Collected Shorter Plays*, p. 167.
[54] *Film*, in *Collected Shorter Plays*, p. 163.

for the audience.[55] *Film* dramatises, furthermore, not only self-perception but also the dilemma of self-representation. Again, the camera is crucial. O's life is encapsulated by seven photographs, images of him that range from his infancy to his adulthood. These photographs, isolated moments in time, symbolise O's identity through time. He looks at them, hands trembling, one by one, and then tears each of them up. The lesson that emerges is that neither the eye nor the camera, be they turned within or without, are tools that enable us to construct a stable sense of identity.

But Beckett testifies, too, to the potent attraction that the photograph is able to exercise. Not all his characters reject photographs as worthless. On the contrary, they are invariably cherished keepsakes. For characters such as Molloy and Malone their value is sentimental; they are reminders of the existence of others or of their past selves. One of Malone's few 'treasures' is his photograph (pointedly not 'a' photograph, but 'my' photograph) of an ass 'at the edge of the ocean, it is not the ocean, but for me it is the ocean'. He directs a deft jibe at the puzzle of illusion and reality, a puzzle that the camera complicates: 'The ocean looks so unnatural that you'd think you were in a studio, but is it not rather the reverse I should say?'[56] Malone's character Macmann also has a favoured photograph, which he carries about with him and contemplates 'from time to time'. It is a childhood portrait of his lover Moll, although, and who can blame him, it is not bucktoothed Moll but the straw-seated chair in the picture that Macmann likes best.[57] But for all photographs' charm as souvenirs, Beckett's work consistently warns that they are not guarantors of identity. The Unnamable grudgingly admits this to himself, playing out an argument between a measured, authoritative, rational voice and the voice of a radical,

[55] *Film*, in *Collected Shorter Plays*, pp. 168-69.
[56] *Malone Dies*, p. 251.
[57] *Malone Dies*, pp. 279-80.

deconstructing self: 'But my dear man, come, be reasonable, look, this is you, look at this photograph [...] to have no identity, it's a scandal, I assure you, look at this photograph'.[58] This clamorous reasonableness is finally undercut, however, and dismissed as 'all lies'.[59] A photograph would be no more revealing or real a representation of the Unnamable than his 'puppets', Mahood and Worm and the others. The immense power of the photograph's apparent truth, and its mute but insistent appeal to reason are, however, no less alluring for this fact.

Let us consider now the connection between photographs as Beckett presents them in his work, and photographs outside, although usually associated with, his work, which present (or more precisely *re*present) Beckett. 'Beckett's face is as familiar as his characteristic images; a tree, a country road, tramps, tape recorders, bananas and boots. A still photographer's dream sequence.'[60] So claims John Minihan, an Irish photographer who has taken thousands of photographs of Beckett and of productions of his plays. In a sense, I would suggest, the Beckett face with which we are familiar *is* one of the author's characteristic images. The cover of Knowlson's biography, *Damned to Fame*, which was discussed above, is indicative of a widespread and longstanding practice of framing Beckett in reference to his work. Time and again he is displaced into his own fictive universe, imagistically textualised in relation to his characters. The artist Tom Phillips was invited to make a portrait of Beckett during rehearsals of *Waiting for Godot* at the Riverside Theatre in London in 1986 (see Figure 3). Seated behind the playwright, Phillips decided from preliminary sketches that a back view would make an 'eloquent'

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[58] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 377.
[59] *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 378.
[60] Minihan, *Samuel Beckett: Photographs*, p. 23.

and 'recognisable' portrait. Just why he considered that it would be recognisable is the point to observe.

> Beckett's privateness as a person would be both respected by the unobtrusive artist at his back and reflected in the picture which would emphasize, as he would, the work in favour of the man. [...] Mirroring this on the stage was a character who is condemned to remain still for a large slice of the action, Lucky. After a few false starts, this seemed the ideal combination for an image which corresponded to physical and moral aspects of the event, an image which might have 'theatre'.[61]

Phillips relies on the viewer to identify the back of Beckett's head by virtue of his being 'mirrored' in Lucky, who faces Beckett (and, consequently, the viewer). This is a precarious enough assumption, but what of Phillips's provocative belief that the playwright and the play can, and should, be wed not merely graphically, but *morally*? As we go on to investigate a range of portraits of Beckett, we must bear in mind what Phillips's example demonstrates. Namely, that the pairing of images of Beckett with images of his work cannot be explained away as a matter of decorative convenience. It is important to note the artist's insistence that a moral dimension to Beckett's relation to his work not only exists, but also ought to be communicated. The ramifications of this sense of responsibility are far-reaching, going beyond simply depicting respect for Beckett's reputation for artistic integrity (although Phillips's sensitivity towards Beckett's desire that his work eclipse him must be acknowledged). On initial consideration, Phillips's portrait might be deemed an apt response to the Beckettian themes of absence, silence, and the impossibility of representation, because Beckett is figured as a silhouette. But Phillips at once creates silence and speaks into it; he inscribes within the empty sign of the back of Beckett's head a very particular code. In Beckett, we see Lucky; in Lucky, we

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[61] Tom Phillips, 'Portraits, Samuel Beckett', <http://www.tomphillips.co.uk/portrait/sbec/index.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].

see Beckett. It is not a simply a question of the work being emphasised over the man, for in Phillips's portrait Beckett's work does not just speak for him, it speaks *as* him.

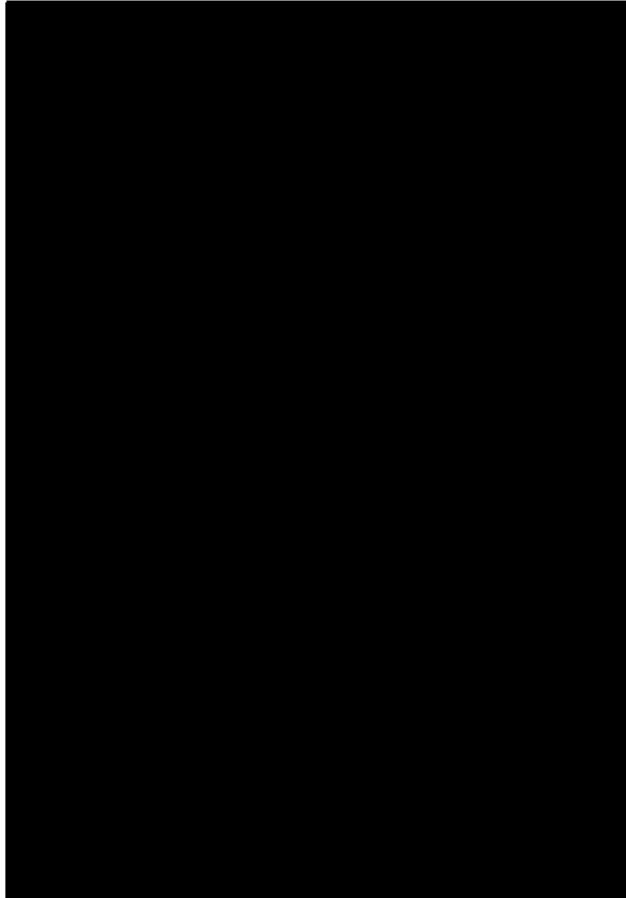

Figure 3: Samuel Beckett, 1984, by Tom Phillips

But is this example representative of a wider and, critically, of a more widely circulated, trend? Although Phillips's image has been exhibited and is still sold in postcard format at London's National Portrait Gallery, is displayed on his website, and features, in cropped form, on the cover of Steven Connor's *Samuel Beckett: Repetition,*

Theory and Text, its audience is probably of limited size.[62] Conversely, posters, because of their prominent and varied sites of display, rank not only among the most visually arresting but also among the more widely dispersed promotional forms. They are peculiarly effective in disseminating the image of an artist or producer and his or her work in the public sphere. This capacity lies in part with the way posters' reach extends beyond the (literal) halls of academe and wings of the theatre, into the public's domain -- into cafes and reception rooms, onto footpaths and tube station walls. Posters also have the advantage of being much more cheaply and easily manufactured than recorded or filmed advertisements, and so of being plentiful and expressive of a wider range of producers and purposes than is generally the case with radio and television advertising. Commentators writing about the 1991 Beckett Festival in Dublin testified to the effect created by the widespread use of posters in promoting the event: 'Among the numerous fly posters for rock concerts plastered over Dublin's semi-derelict quays there are several displaying two black and white photographs of an elderly gentleman with a crew cut: Samuel Beckett. Larger versions on more conventional hoardings announce the city's three week Beckett Festival.' Irving Wardle enthused, 'this has been an immaculately organised event, well attuned to the austere intelligence of its subject whose eyes burn into you from posters all over the city.'[63] These portraits were taken by Richard Avedon, a photographer renowned for his celebrity portraits and fashion work. It is noteworthy that inscribed boldly at the foot of the posters is the phrase: 'Photograph by Richard Avedon'. The vaunted association with this photographer is indicative of a desire (not

[62] Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988). The image on this book's cover shows only the back of Beckett's head.
[63] Alannah Hopkin, 'A Blitz of Beckett', *Financial Times Weekend*, 5-6 October 1991, p. 20; Irving Wardle, 'A Beckett-fest Worth Waiting For', *Independent on Sunday*, 20 October 1991, p. 21.

necessarily Beckett's own, but certainly his promoters') not simply to publicise Beckett's work, but to control his image-making, and to gloss it with a fashionable public relations spin.[64]

In its promotional role, the lifespan of a poster is short and its value transient, for it operates in the service of a specific event and so becomes redundant once that event has taken place. However, posters remain valuable as indices of change. Through them the scholar is able to chart developments in trends, technology, and the relationship of their subject to its public. Particularly intriguing about posters advertising Beckett-related events is precisely how little they change over many years. A survey of posters from a vast range of sources, from many countries, advertising many different events and products, spanning the years from Beckett's winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969, to his death twenty years later and beyond to the present, reveals a singular sameness of approach in the promotion of the writer and his work. Posters for a New York University Beckett Festival in the late 1970s, for a series of Beckett plays in Communist Warsaw in the mid-1980s, for a small theatre company's production of *Krapp's Last Tape* in Sheffield in the mid-1990s, and for Deutschland-Radio Berlin's month-long broadcasting programme of plays in 2000, to take a disparate and chronologically diverse selection of examples, display, contrary to expectation, remarkable similarities not only in the means employed to promote the work but in the portrayal of Beckett himself.[65]

Advertising a festival hosted by New York University in October and November 1978, the first poster mentioned in the line-up above exhibits, as an individual instance,

[64] RUL, BC, MSS 3902, 4849.
[65] RUL, BC, MSS 2794, 2777, 4364, 4788.

nothing unusual. It bears no text except the name, place, and date of the festival, stamped haphazardly across the background in small print. A close-up of Beckett's face is the only, and outstanding, feature of the poster. The subject, frowning slightly, peers down and off to the right. The poster, although striking, does not warrant particular attention on its own terms. However, upon placing it in the context of a number of other promotional posters (the Beckett Collection at Reading University Archive houses an extensive collection) an intriguing and disconcerting uniformity emerges. I limit myself to mentioning but a few.

To advertise their 1985 productions of *Fin de partie, Catastrophe, Play, Krapp's Last Tape, Not I, Footfalls,* and *Rockaby,* Warsaw's Centrum Sztuki Studio Theatre used a black and white image of Beckett who, in a manner strikingly similar to that in the New York poster just discussed, gazes down and off to the left as if in deep contemplation. In 1981 Ohio State University produced *Waiting for Godot*; the poster almost entirely comprises forty repeated images of one black and white photograph of the playwright, seated in profile on the edge of a desk, gazing determinedly down at his hands in his lap. The same year, Alan Schneider advertised *Rockaby*, starring Billie Whitelaw, with a poster nearly two thirds of which features a close-up black and white photograph of Beckett's face. He frowns, and looks down and off to the left. In 1985 Stan Gontarski directed an adaptation of *Company* at the Teatros del Circulo in Madrid. At just under a metre high, the poster for this production showcases another massive black and white portrait of Beckett's face. Pale and masklike, it hangs isolated against a black background. The Franco-Portugese Institute in Lisbon promoted their 1988 programme of *Rockaby, Rough for Theatre 1, Come and Go, What Where,* and *Footfalls* with a poster

devoting over three quarters of its space to a large black and white sketch of Beckett's face. Once again, severely frowning, Beckett looks down, and off to the right. The following year *Fin de partie* played at the Théâtre National de la Communauté Française de Belgique in Brussels -- yet another sketch of Beckett's head, looking down and off to the right, dominates the poster. Similarly, the poster for Katie Mitchell's *Beckett Shorts*, produced for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1997, displays a large stylised likeness of Beckett's head, which emphasises deeply shaded eyes, an aquiline nose and frowning mouth. Still other black and white photographs of Beckett (almost without exception of his face only) adorn posters for 1990s productions of *Krapp's Last Tape* in Sheffield, *Happy Days* in Bolton, *Come and Go, Play,* and *Endgame* in Reading, and *Watt* in Krakow.[66]

It is eminently logical to employ an image of an author to promote a festival, be it academic or otherwise, celebrating his work in general. However, the ubiquitous practice of using images of Beckett to advertise productions of his plays themselves is one of the most puzzling aspects of the promotional phenomena associated with his work. It is particularly baffling given that there is far from a paucity of arresting images that might be used to represent the plays more directly, for these are among the most visually distinctive works written for the modern stage. As Michael Colgan, artistic director of Dublin's Gate Theatre and co-producer of Dublin's 1991 Beckett Festival, asserts, 'even if they don't remember the name of the plays, people tend to remember the images.'[67] But instead of exploiting the plays themselves for their pictorial riches, we find promoters

[66] RUL, BC, MSS 2777, 2105, 4184, 3966, 3537, 4565, 4346, 4556, 4326, 4219.
[67] Quoted by Sean O'Hagan, 'Beckett Goes to Hollywood', *Observer Review*, 19 November 2000, p. 5.

time and again opting to use Beckett himself to represent and publicise his dramatic work.

The similarities that unite the photographs featured in this otherwise diverse range of posters, and in other posters advertising festivals, conferences, films, book publications, and speeches, provoke several challenging but easily overlooked questions. Why is it that Beckett is almost without exception represented in black and white? The budgetary consideration of using few colours in promotional material is without doubt the first explanation, but it is not a satisfactory explanation when we discover that colour photographs are at times rejected in favour of black and white images, such as when a black and white photograph of Beckett is used in an otherwise full colour print. The poster for Sheffield's Compass Theatre Company's 1996 *Krapp's Last Tape,* for example, amply demonstrates promoters' inveterate preference for Beckett in black and white. Most of this bill consists of a colour photograph of a small wooden cupboard with little drawers and shelves holding props from the play -- a banana, spools, a glass of whiskey. A lit, bare bulb is fastened inside the cupboard, and underneath it, at the poster's centre, is pinned the same black and white Haynes photograph of Beckett's corrugated visage that adorns the cover of Knowlson's *Damned to Fame*.[68] It would seem that there is something about black and white that promoters deem to be inherently suited to Beckett's image -- or rather, to their image of what Beckett's image ought to be.

It is also interesting to observe that Beckett's posture is similar in so many of the posters listed above. It is rare that he looks at the camera. His typical attitude, staring fixedly down to one side, seems both to demonstrate a reluctance at being photographed at all (which speaks to the myth of 'Beckett as recluse') and, at the same time, to suggest a

[68] RUL, BC, MS 4364.

sort of staged indifference, as if he is so preoccupied with his own thoughts that he is not even aware of the photographer's presence (which speaks to the 'Beckett as genius' myth, that of the profound and inaccessible intellectual). We find, furthermore, that his eyes are frequently emphasised, although this is as often by their impenetrability as otherwise, for they tend to be darkly hooded under the shadow of his brow, or his glasses reflect the light or, in sketches, are blacked in. Beckett's friends' reminiscences about his piercing light blue eyes abound, but eyes, as we know, are also one of the obsessional images to be found throughout his oeuvre.[69] The emphasis on Beckett's eyes, which uncannily parallels his focus on his characters' eyes within his work, points toward a significant trend.

In his introduction to a collection of portraits of Irish writers, Gerald Dawe observes, 'we become who we are by imagining ourselves. But which image stays and stabilises?'[70] It is a great oddity that Beckett's image has been so quickly stabilised, given his work's treatment of photographs (of the self and of the other) and their relation to identity. The work's lesson is that the stabilised image cannot be relied upon to reflect reality in a stable manner. This is not to suggest, however, that the image cannot resonate with meaning or exercise considerable influence. On the contrary, since it creates a new reality, its signification is doubly compelling: 'The photograph displaces, rather than represents, the individual. It codifies the person in relation to other frames of reference and other hierarchies of significance.'[71] Clarke's formulation is tremendously useful to us.

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[69] The actress Anna Massey recalled that when the playwright appeared at rehearsals of the production of *Play* in which Massey played W1, 'it felt like having God watching you, this frail man with piercing blue eyes'. Mark Lawson, 'Worth the Wait?', *Guardian*, 25 June 2001, pp. 16-17 (p. 17).

[70] Gerald Dawe, ed., *Faces in a Bookshop. Irish Literary Portraits* (Galway: Kennys Bookshop and Art Gallery, 1990), p. 15.

[71] Clarke, p. 1.

In what ways do images of Samuel Beckett, and the contexts in which we find those images, create and codify 'Samuel Beckett'? And what are these contexts, these 'frames of reference' and 'hierarchies of significance'?

It is a brooding, solitary character (and I choose the term advisedly) who is almost universally employed to represent Beckett's work. So often captured in cheerless black and white, he shuns the camera's eye; when his clothes are visible, they are invariably heavy winter garments.[72]

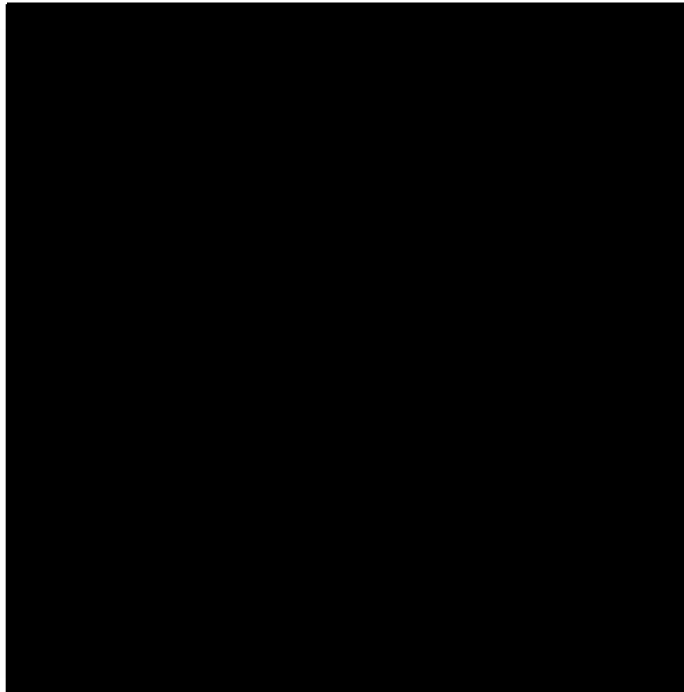

Figure 4: Samuel Beckett, 1979, by Paul Joyce

[72] See for example the poster for Reading University's 1986 'Beckett at Eighty' festival, which features John Minihan's black and white portrait of Beckett, who, wrapped in a dark scarf and heavy duffle coat, stands before bare winter trees. RUL, BC, MS 2807.

He is, wherever he appears, elderly, his wrinkles deeply cut and highlighted with shadow; his silver hair is unruly; he even, on occasion, sports unkempt stubble.[73] Of what, of whom, might he remind us? Paul Joyce's 1979 portrait of Beckett answers this question succinctly (see Figure 4). It is, not surprisingly, black and white. Beckett stands in a junkyard, wearing a long bulky anorak, his hands thrust deeply into his pockets. In the background is a graffiti-covered brick wall, and in front of this, behind Beckett, are two enormous (they are almost as tall as Beckett), full, trashcans. The reference is, quite obviously, to *Endgame*. The National Portrait Gallery sells this photograph as a postcard, and it was the logo image of the Sydney Beckett Festival of 2003. It is an exemplary instance of the deeply entrenched practice of fusing Beckett the concrete individual, to 'Beckett' the author-figure and icon, to the Beckettian character stereotype. All these images rely on an archetypal Beckettian hero, the shuffling solitary old man, swamped in a winter coat, shunning and shunned by society, physically decrepit but mentally alert. Popular images promoting Beckett's work blur the boundary between fiction and reality, and frame the author in reference to his work. Constant and continued reinforcement of this particular frame of reference renders it difficult to conceive of Beckett in isolation from it. His identity is contained, fixed within an artificial generic image and a falsely stable notion of the artist.

This trend of marrying Beckett to his work found expanded, and sustained, expression in a recent exhibition of photographs held at the Royal National Theatre in London. The exhibition featured dozens of photographs taken by Haynes, over several decades, of Beckett productions and of Beckett himself. (In 1998, when Haynes was the

[73] An excellent instance of this dishevelment is the poster for Pierre Chabert's 'Voix de Samuel Beckett', at the Théâtre Renaud Barrault, Paris, 1987. RUL, BC, MS 3217.

Annenberg Beckett Fellow at Reading University, a number of the images in the National Theatre exhibition were shown at a gala held at Reading University.)[74] The exhibition effected a concrete conflation of the author with his work. If we can hypothesise a viewer who did not know in advance what Beckett looked like, we can suggest that it might have proved impossible to determine whether a given figure in a photograph was a character or not, due to unchanging themes in composition, colour, and lighting. This effect was further confused by the installation itself, which mixed pictures of Beckett seemingly randomly with pictures of actors at work. Not entirely indiscriminately, however, for visual parallels between the images of Beckett and images of the characters were often highlighted by being positioned side by side. One particularly resonant example of this practice was the placement of the photograph of Beckett from the cover of *Damned to Fame* immediately alongside the picture of Patick Magee in *That Time*, which was discussed earlier in the chapter. There seemed to be no clear reason to display these photographs together (the former portrait was taken in 1973, the latter not until 1976) other than to emphasise their visual resemblance. *Images of Beckett*, the book that the exhibition promoted, has been cited above. While the work is testament to the enduring fascination of images of Beckett, and to the beauty of Haynes's work, Knowlson's commentary does not engage with the questions this chapter is interested in. Knowlson recognises Beckett's iconic status, but aside from acknowledging the role that Haynes's portraits have played in constructing the icon's image, he explores neither the influences that have shaped the image, nor its significance for Beckett's reputation and for our

[74] Sontag notes perceptively that 'needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted.' (Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 24.) It has indeed become a common practice to exhibit photographs of Beckett in order to promote events such as academic conferences or festivals of his plays.

encounter with his work. (It is interesting to observe that as early as 1970 interest was expressed in publishing a book of pictures of Beckett. John Pilling and John Fletcher communicated with Grove Press and John Calder about the possibility of their putting together an 'iconographical study' of Beckett, which, subject to space and rights, was to comprise eighty photographs. Both Calder's partner Marion Boyars and Richard Seaver of Grove Press were enthusiastic about the proposal, and Boyars suggested the two firms produce the book together, but the project never eventuated.[75])

The visual conflation of Beckett and his creations characterises him in a singular way. Strengthening and strengthened by this effect is a second frame of reference into which Beckett is displaced by those images that depict him as solitary, intellectual, rejected, dejected. In *The Rules of Art* Bourdieu conjures the powerfully attractive 'Christlike mystique' of *l'artiste maudit*, 'sacrificed in this world and consecrated in the one beyond'.[76] The mythic pattern of the outcast poet, struggling with but committed to his genius, scorned by his contemporaries but resurrected by those who come after him, exercises a peculiarly compelling effect on the collectively imagined literary hero. Beckett's reputation for artistic integrity, however well-founded in fact, is deeply enhanced by the cultural cachet lent it by this myth. 'Nothing divides cultural producers more clearly', Bourdieu writes, 'than the relationship they maintain with worldly or *commercial success*' (his emphasis).[77] The process is not only one of division, but also of definition. Beckett's popular image is in part modelled on, and in part perpetuated by, the paradigm of *l'artiste maudit*, onto which the outlines of his biography can be so neatly

[75] Fletcher and Pilling to Seaver, 12 May 1970; Boyars to Seaver, 16 June 1970; Seaver to Boyars, 19 June 1970. All from LL, CBA, Series V, Box VIII.
[76] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. by Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 83.
[77] Bourdieu, p. 218.

mapped. That he suffered so many early commercial failures, that he achieved international fame (or, to use Knowlson's preferred formulation, was damned to it, which perspective accords with the myth) not gradually but in the blaze of controversy *Godot* engendered, that his prose masterpieces (notably the trilogy) were only retrospectively acclaimed once *Godot* had revolutionised Europe's and America's theatres, that he continued to shun popularity, publicity, and institutionalised recognition and rewards, choosing instead to commit himself to increasingly spare and difficult works -- all these elements of his life form part of a familiar story, and one profoundly imbued with Romantic notions of poetic transcendence and lasting artistic 'value'.

Beckett's very inaccessibility is harnessed to a ready-made myth, which incorporates and explains that inaccessibility, thereby rendering him, or the centuries-old character whose role he is made to assume, accessible. The resulting construction, 'Samuel Beckett', embodies, however, a distinctly twentieth-century version of the myth of *l'artiste maudit*, and it is in this that the photographic images of him exert a significant influence. The original cursed artist (the clichéd poet alone in a cold candlelit garret) is replaced by a new vision of a solitary figure in a desolate, urban landscape. Paul Joyce's portrait makes an immediate reference to *Endgame*, but it also signifies more broadly. Joyce, picturing his subject surrounded by the detritus of modern life, before a graffiti-strewn wall, places Beckett in the archetypal metropolitan Waste Land; consequently, Beckett's figure assumes an archetypal prominence -- the poet, 'classless, or outside class', as Coetzee says of Beckett, solitary yet inhabiting a landscape of his own making, familiarising and familiarised by his own fictive universe.[78] This relocation is figured even more remarkably in Alannah Hopkin's description of the huge black and white

[78] J.M. Coetzee, *Youth* (London: Secker and Warburg, 2002), p. 155.

portraits of Beckett that peopled the 'semi-derelict quays' in Dublin before and during that city's 1991 Beckett Festival.[79] Here, the urban wasteland has moved beyond the frame of the camera's lens, and become real. Samuel Beckett, the reclusive Parisian who spent as much of his time as he could at his countryside cottage at Ussy sur Marne, has become 'Samuel Beckett', imaged for us, and imagined by us, as a brilliant urban derelict, as a misunderstood but finally lionised modern *artiste maudit.*

We must further explore the important distinction drawn throughout this chapter between the historical concrete individual who wrote the Beckett texts, and the constructed 'Samuel Beckett', a signature or name, or perhaps more accurately a brandname, that circulates independently of the texts. I am not the first to note the perplexing disjunction between the 'death of the author', which concept has for decades shaped critical theory, and the ever-growing presence and foregrounding of the author in publishing and promotional spheres, although this idea has not before been related to Beckett.[80] Andrew Wernick describes the authorial brandname as 'an identification tag, which circulates, independently of the phantom individual, and which functions at once as the signatured assertion of a property right, and as a vehicle for whatever significance, reputation, or myth (including, generically, the myth of the author-creator itself) that name has come to acquire.'[81] I agree with Wernick's thesis that the function of the author's brandname is to 'guarantee the value of the goods (the text) which one consumes

[79] Alannah Hopkin, 'A Blitz of Beckett', *Financial Times Weekend*, 5-6 October 1991, p. 20.
[80] Steven Connor, however, in examining the power Beckett exercises, particularly on and through his dramatic texts, contends that '[critical] discourse is magnetized around the image of the writer, and seeks to approach ever more closely to this authorial 'presence' at its core.' Connor, pp. 185-210 (p. 196). On the foregrounding of the author through promotion, see Andrew Wernick, 'Authorship and the Supplement of Promotion', in Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller, eds, *What Is An Author?* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 85-103.
[81] Wernick, 'Authorship and the Supplement of Promotion', in Biriotti and Miller, p. 87.

(reads).'[82] And yet, while originally engendered in service of the promotion of his texts, Beckett's brandname now signifies far more extensively in the social sphere than the penetration of the texts themselves would suggest. This is in part thanks to the promotional materials that at once create and carry the brandname, the presence of which is most often made manifest in such images as those discussed above. The publishing, academic and media industries have certainly each played a part in the 'birth' of this 'author', but it is the role of promotional phenomena in authoring this figure, whose authority is employed to legitimise -- dare I say, to authorise -- Beckett's work as well as a host of other cultural products and events, which most interests me here. The idea that reproduction and commodification of works of art impact on the function and reception of those works has been well rehearsed in theoretical writing, but I argue that commodification impacts also on the social apprehension of the author.[83] (This in turn, it is proposed below, affects our relation to the texts.) Promotion, then, forms a third frame of reference (in addition to the work itself and the myth of *l'artiste maudit*) into which photographic images displace Beckett.[84]

Barbara Klinger argues that 'part of the text's mass cultural status relies on [a] lack of self-containment -- its social life depends on the extension of its elements, through the

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[82] Maurice Biriotti, 'Authorship, Authority and Authorisation', in Biriotti and Miller, pp. 1-16 (p. 10).

[83] See the seminal essays by Walter Benjamin ('The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Jonathon Cape, 1970), pp. 219-53); and by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer ('The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1977), pp. 120-67). Barbara Klinger writes that for members of the Frankfurt School (including Adorno and Benjamin) 'mechanical reproduction within a capitalist regime transforms reception from a state of absorption in the totality of the artwork to one of inattentiveness, resulting in the atomisation of the work'. Although the pessimism about and resistance to mass culture that marks Adorno's work, in particular, strikes us as dated, the ideas about artworks losing their unique objecthood in modern consumer culture remain provocative. Barbara Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in Naremore and Brantlinger, pp. 117-34 (p. 119).

[84] My understanding of the term 'promotion' accords with Wernick's: 'any act or process of communication that serves to stimulate the circulation of something in the context of its competitive exchange.' Wernick, 'Authorship and the Supplement of Promotion', in Biriotti and Miller, p. 88.

agency of certain contextual forms, into the everyday social domain.'[85] I would extend this observation by noting that it is important not just to trace the transitions of the author and his work from private to public domains, but also to consider their transition from site to site within the public sphere. The author-as-brandname functions in these transitions as an extension of the texts, by which they have been able to journey from avant-garde, to academic, to upper-middle-class realms, and additionally from recognition, to canonisation, to popularisation. As Beckett's popularity grows, his promotional value grows apace. Each process stimulates the other. An excellent indication of the degree to which Beckett's work has made a definitive move out of exclusively intellectual and avant-garde domains into popular *and* commercial sectors is found in an Eton college catalogue for a 'Festival of Plays by Samuel Beckett' that was staged at the school in 2001.[86] Titled 'Why do so many people like Beckett's plays?', the catalogue tells us that,

> In the five years after the first production, *nine million people* saw *Godot*, worldwide. Andrew Lloyd Webber would buy a property like that. [...] Across the globe, leading actors and directors clamoured for new plays from Beckett, and as soon as one became available it went into immediate and simultaneous production in several countries. By the early sixties, Beckett studies had become an industry [...] To producers everywhere, Beckett means bums on seats. [The author's emphasis.][87]

As a promotional site, 'Samuel Beckett' is employed on dustjackets, in newspaper and magazine reviews, in theatre programmes, on postcards, posters, t-shirts, bookmarks, fridge magnets and other merchandise, on television, and on the Internet. Black and white

[85] Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in Naremore and Brantlinger, p. 122.

[86] It is also interesting to note that several of the Beckett plays that were filmed as part of the 'Beckett on Film' project were broadcast on Channel 4's Schools Schedule, as Beckett is a named author on the national curriculum. Jojo Moyes, 'C4 Recruits Star Actors to Film All of Beckett's Plays', *Independent*, 9 February 2000, p. 7.

[87] 'Why do so many people like Beckett's plays?', Eton catalogue for 'A Festival of Plays by Samuel Beckett', Eton College, 23-27 May 2001, RUL, BC, MS 4827.

images, preponderantly by John Haynes and John Minihan, dominate in these sites (which Genette terms the peritext and the public epitext)[88] as they do elsewhere. Genette insists that the *raison d'être* of the paratext, to use his umbrella term, is that it is 'dedicated to the service of the text'.[89] However, although images of Beckett may well in most instances (but not in all) be auxiliary to the text, and although they may explicate the text (but not necessarily in expected or helpful ways), their primary purpose is mercenary. These images are designed to sell: witness the commodification of Samuel Beckett.

This commodification takes place on three levels. On the first, elements of Beckett's work are appropriated as marketing tools, as we have seen in the borrowing of images from the drama to stage portraits of the playwright. As is evidenced by the programme from the Beckett Festival at Dublin's Gate Theatre in October 1991, this kind of appropriation -- of both visual and verbal material -- has penetrated to the very core of what, in this circumstance, can rightly be called the Beckett industry. Advertisers in the Festival programme, each of whom was assigned a full page, agreed for their company logos to appear alongside a single line from one of Beckett's texts.[90] The Irish Tourist Board opted for the understated opening stage directions from *Waiting for Godot*: 'A country road. A tree. Evening.' The insurance company Standard Life chose the somewhat less subtle 'one departs wiser, richer, more conscious of one's blessings'.

[88] Genette defines the peritext as 'the jacket, the band, and the slipcase [...] protective boxes, covers for the boxes, and so forth, not to mention [...] the promotional material intended solely for bookstores and ultimately for their clientele: posters, blow-ups of covers, and other gimmicks'; and the epitext as 'any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space [...] anywhere outside the book'. *Paratexts*, pp. 32, 344.

[89] Genette, p. 12.

[90] RUL, BC, MS 4849. I mention here just three of numerous such advertisements in the programme.

Telecom Eireann's logo appeared with a line from *Murphy*: 'The telephone that she found useful in her prime, in her decline she found indispensable.'

The second level of commodification covers merchandise where selling (or buying) 'Beckett' is not a means to the larger end of promoting something else, but is rather an end in itself. A host of products of this nature is on the market. A favourite is a sculptured ceramic 'Irish Literary Bookmarker', as its label proclaims, which features a (poor, in fact virtually unrecognisable) three-dimensional image of Beckett's head, and from which is suspended a long gold tassel. The souvenir is distributed by the Shamrock Gift Company of Dublin, and is part of a range that also pays tribute to Swift, Wilde, Yeats, Joyce, and Shaw.[91]

On the third level of commodification, images of Beckett are employed to market products and services entirely unrelated to his work. On his business card, the artist Alan Flood features his stunning series of six drypoints of Beckett, entitled 'A Beckett Metamorphosis', and so uses Beckett (whose face, he claims, 'exerts an extraordinary iconic hold on the spectator') to promote his own work more generally.[92] '*Largely* Literary', a Californian design company, sells a range of t-shirts featuring cartoons of famous writers. Beckett is honoured with an original caricature by Steven Cragg. Depicted with a grossly elongated head, he peers suspiciously and malevolently from behind a great mound, a wiry hand holding a cigarette with a precarious tail of ash. The t-shirt is packaged in a black box, on the back of which it is asserted that 'Samuel Beckett is one of those great writers few of us have ever actually read. Why? Well, much of his

[91] RUL, BC, MS 4779.
[92] <http://www.alanflood.co.uk> [accessed 10 November 2002]. See Figure 5 on p. 236.

work is, shall we say, singular.' *Breath*, *Come and Go*, and *Happy Days* are then briefly, and drolly, summarised.

> So there you are: three plays you already know about without having cracked a spine.
>
> And yet, there is a great deal more out there, books by Beckett filled with lots and lots of words. What do you do? Read them?
>
> No. Just summarize them. For instance, in *Malone Dies*, Malone doesn't die. There you have it: an entire novel in just over three words.
>
> Beckett would be proud.[93]

The cartoon's blunt visual allusion to *Happy Days* results in a caricature of Beckett which suggests that the other two frames of reference discussed earlier in this chapter are significant in the promotional context in two ways. The first involves the myth of *l'artiste maudit*. This myth fosters a belief in the cultural value of the work, which is, in turn, frequently and slickly translated into economic value. In different instances the work's intellectually elite origins are either subverted or glamorised to render it attractive to a target market. '*Largely* Literary' cashes in on Beckett's reputation for elitism in order to appeal to an inverse snobbism. Their caricature relies on satiric over-simplification. The dandified detail of the ash-laden cigarette, for example, invokes a stereotype of the French intellectual (the bereted, polo-necked, chain-smoking, café-frequenting existentialist), and the rendering of *Malone Dies* into three words mocks Beckett's infamous brevity.[94] Metamorphosing modernism's highbrow into a post-modernist 'nobrow' can make for good profit margins -- the t-shirt's comic levelling tone exploits Beckett's very inaccessibility. His fame alone, and not the reasons for the fame, furnishes material for further publicisation and so becomes a self-sustaining celebrity.

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[93] RUL, BC, uncatalogued.

[94] This summation is outrageous if for no other reason than its spurious and reductive assumption about the novel's conclusion. But it is, admittedly, funny.

In their 'Think Different' advertising campaign, Apple Computers played on Beckett's elitism in a manner not necessarily more sophisticated, but certainly more serious-minded, than that of *'Largely* Literary'. The campaign, drawn up by the advertising agency TBWA Chiat/Day, was designed to take Apple's image 'out visually on the streets where people are and where they are not expecting to be touched by a tribute from a computer company.'[95] Apple's touching tribute involved the launch of a series of black and white portraits of famous twentieth-century figures including, in addition to Beckett, Picasso, Amelia Earhart, Maria Callas and the Dalai Lama. These bore only the two word slogan, 'Think Different', the company's web address and familiar logo, and copyright details, all of which appeared in inconspicuously small print. As Vit Wagner, of the *Toronto Star*, observed, 'the purpose of the ad is not to link Beckett with computers'.[96] The campaign appeals, rather, to a sense of intellectual elitism: 'As a symbol of genius, Beckett is the bridge between the brains at Apple and the smart, discriminating Mac user. While the ad might not flatter Beckett, it nudges and winks at the consumer, not only for recognizing Beckett (many wouldn't), but for comprehending his exalted place in the cultural scheme of things.'[97] The campaign succeeded in so far as it was visually distinctive, controversial, and effected a bold appropriation of Beckett's (among others') intellectual reputation for purely promotional purposes.

The strategy employed by these advertisements (which appeal to their target by hinting at the target's special ability to recognise and affirm Beckett and what he stands

[95] Jessica Schulman, <http://www.apple.com/creative/collateral/ama/0101/chiatday.html> [accessed 10 November 2002]. Schulman was the executive producer of the 'Think Different' campaign. The advertising team's aims for the campaign were nothing if not ambitious: 'I hope the advertising campaign that we did [...] could become part of the school curriculum so that kids don't forget what it means to think out of the box.'
[96] Vit Wagner, 'Apple's Samuel Beckett Ad Unsavoury at Core', 24 April 1999, <http://www.samuel-beckett.net/despic.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].
[97] ibid.

for) finds a correlative idea in Beckett's work. The role of the witness, which is closely related to Berkeley's ideas on perceivedness and existence, receives considerable attention in Beckett. Many of his characters experience a longing, indeed a need, to be observed by an other in order to feel that their own existence is verified. Murphy's desperation at his failure to register on Mr Endon's 'unseen' is echoed in the plaintive call of the man in *Play* ('Am I as much as ... being seen?'), and in the Unnamable's deduction that 'I wasn't there' because 'the sky didn't see me'.[98] Knowlson, discussing Winnie in *Happy Days*, sums up the reasoning: 'by adopting the Cartesian *ergo* from the 'cogito, ergo sum' formula [Winnie deduces] that, since she, Winnie, needs to continue to have a witness to her own existence, therefore, *ergo*, he, Willie, must still exist.'[99] In *Watt* it is obliquely suggested that Knott's existence, like God's ('a witness that cannot be sworn')[100] may be wholly reliant on his staff of 'witnesses'. Suggesting the same of an author is not as facetious a proposition as it may at first seem. Apparent proofs of the absent authority figure (Knott's house, God's 'creation', an author's books) go only so far as assurance of these figures' existence -- we can believe in them, but without witnessing, we cannot know of them. It is worth considering how much our 'knowledge' of Beckett is influenced by our 'witnessing' of him (in other words, by our visual perception of him) in unexpected sites within the public domain, such as on an Apple Computer billboard. Widely circulated, popularly recognised images of Beckett like this one, which have almost nothing to do with his work, play a significant role in constructing and sustaining the author-figure as a brandname. This observation calls to mind Beckett's interest in the

[98] *Murphy*, p. 250; *Play*, in *Collected Shorter Plays*, pp. 145-60 (p. 157); *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels*, p. 405.

[99] James Knowlson, *Light and Darkness in the Theatre of Samuel Beckett* (London: Turret Books, 1972), p. 37.

[100] *Watt*, p. 9.

Gestalt concept of figure and ground.[101] The Gestalt psychologists considered pattern and form ("The face', said Neary, 'or system of faces, against the big blooming buzzing confusion")[102] to be essential to the process of seeing. This understanding of visual differentiation is not, perhaps, immaterial to our discussion, because promotion transports a text into discourses, and cultural sites, which seem to be at odds with it. It is likely that the blooming buzzing confusion of modern advertising, from which we pick out Beckett's face and against the background of which we often view it, may well affect our apprehension, and indeed our comprehension, of his face.

The second way in which one of the previously discussed frames of reference impacts on the promotion of Beckett's work (the third frame of reference under consideration) occurs through the mythologizing of the author as one of his characters. The construction of Beckett as one of his own inventions is harnessed to promote and sell his notoriously difficult texts. Michael Colgan, artistic director of the Gate Theatre in Dublin, and co-producer of the 1991 Dublin Beckett Festival, suggests that 'Beckett [is] one of the most famous writers in the world and one of the most ignored. Because he wasn't Broadway- or West-End-friendly. most of his plays became the domain of student groups or impoverished experimental companies.'[103] Promoters have cleverly opted to utilise what is familiar to render that which is dauntingly unfamiliar in the texts easier to approach and, most importantly, easier to sell. In other words, discourse about the author, be it verbal or visual, may be tied to character in order to distinguish it as what Barbara Klinger terms a 'consumer highlight', creating a foothold by which to access texts

[101] Oppenheim goes so far as to claim that the Gestalt, or vision of the whole, 'is Beckett's metafictive point of departure'. *The Painted Word*, p. 34.
[102] *Murphy*, p. 4.
[103] Quoted by Dominic Cavendish, 'Would Sam Have Approved?', *Guardian*, 26 June 2001, p. 17.

sometimes considered to be impenetrable.[104] We might imagine the possible operation of portraits of Beckett such as Paul Joyce's (which pictures the author in front of two large trash cans) or the John Minihan photograph that adorns the cover of Anthony Cronin's biography (in which Beckett stands beneath a leafless tree that is markedly reminiscent of the tree Giacometti designed for the first production of *Waiting for Godot*), on the imagination of a student who is approaching *Endgame* or *Godot* for the first time (or indeed, given the presence of these texts on high school reading lists, a student for whom this may be their first exposure to any playtext). These photographs may register in the student's mind, triggering an association between Beckett and the disconcerting images revealed to them in the plays. In other words, the author/character unit can empower readers who lack what John Fiske calls 'the cultural competence (or motivation) to decode [a text] on its own terms' to enter or relate to the text in alternative ways.[105]

Publishers and promoters are not solely responsible for the creation of the brandname, and accompanying image, thanks to which the playwright's longevity, well after his actual death, has in part been assured. The pervasiveness of images of Beckett prompts us to consider whether Beckett himself condescended to be involved in the process of image-making. The popularity of Beckett's image in various coffee-table portrait books, where he is granted precedence over other subjects, is curious. In John Minihan's *An Unweaving of Rainbows*, which features Irish writers, Beckett's is the first portrait in the book, although there is no system (the entries are not in chronological or alphabetical order) that would rightfully assign him this place. The following pages sport photographs of Cooldrinagh (the Beckett family home) and the Cooldrinagh nameplate,

[104] Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in Naremore and Brantlinger, p. 127.
[105] John Fiske, 'Popular Discrimination', in Naremore and Brantlinger, pp. 103-16 (p. 109).

and of bookshelves in the study of what used to be Beckett's flat in the Boulevard Saint-Jacques in Paris. This last image was taken as late as 1997, making the link with Beckett himself at best tenuous (although the Irish connection is apparent, as the only two legible spines on the shelf read 'Joyce' and 'Kavanagh').[106] Minihan grants no other writer such supplementary photographs. *Faces in a Bookshop: Irish Literary Portraits* features photographs of paintings, sketches, and sculptures from a 1990 exhibition in Galway.[107] Beckett stars four times. No other writer has this many likenesses included in the book.

Is all this attention unsolicited, as the myth would indicate? Beckett is, after all, known as a person 'morbidly averse to having his private life exposed to public curiosity'.[108] He went to considerable lengths to avoid having to give interviews. His usual practice was to have Lindon's secretary answer letters on his behalf, 'often with a number of standard replies: 'Mr Beckett never gives interviews'; 'Mr Beckett does not read theses and manuscripts about his work'; 'Mr Beckett is away in the country'. This last comment was not always true, but it provided a plausible excuse and was often the only way for him to carve out sizeable slices of time for his writing.'[109] Lüfti Ozkök's experience was typical for a photographer:

> Samuel Beckett would meet visitors in a café near his home in Paris. [...] He was always reluctant to have his picture taken. Every time I clicked the shutter, he sort of ground his teeth. I felt terrible. I could see something in his eyes, like an animal -- he was just ready to bolt. I had wanted to take pictures as he interacted with others, but I had the feeling he didn't like candid pictures. If he posed, he expected to sit there and look at you, and that was that.[110]

[106] John Minihan, *An Unweaving of Rainbows* (London: Souvenir Press, 1998).
[107] *Faces in a Bookshop*. The portraits of Beckett featured in the book are: two lithographs by Louis Le Brocquy, a pastel by Miriam Silke, and a bronze bust by John Coll.
[108] Martin Esslin, *Essays on Brecht, Beckett and the Media* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980), p. 161.
[109] Knowlson and Haynes, 'A Portrait of Beckett', in *Images of Beckett*, pp. 1-41 (p. 4).
[110] Quotation inset on portrait of Beckett taken by Lüfti Ozkök, 2 February 1968. RUL, BC, MS 4036.

Paul Joyce's request to take a new portrait of Beckett for an exhibition of his, Joyce's, work at the National Portrait Gallery was delicately refused.[111] Knowlson writes in *Images of Beckett* that 'having his photograph taken was no laughing matter for Beckett. He tolerated it for the sake of his friends or as a minimal concession to publicity for the sake of the theatre or the production.'[112]

There are simply too many tales of Beckett's reluctance to be photographed for us to be in any doubt that he was, characteristically at least, an unwilling subject. Perhaps I should say, rather, that he was an unwilling object -- if, as Barthes has it, 'the 'private life' is nothing but that zone of space, of time, where I am not an image, an object. It is my *political* right to be a subject which I must protect.'[113] However, it has been made evident throughout the thesis that Beckett's attitude towards publicity matters was not as rigid or as straightforward as is usually thought. John Minihan's experience shows that Beckett did make exceptions in his general rule of safeguarding his privacy. Beckett not only allowed Minihan to photograph him but, on more than one occasion, invited him to. The quotations opening this chapter provide one example of this practice. Minihan photographed Beckett in London in 1980, when Beckett invited him to rehearsals, and again in 1984.[114] As we have already seen, Tom Phillips was another artist invited to make a portrait of Beckett (this time, on Beckett's behalf, by the director of *Waiting for Godot*, David Gothard, whom Beckett was assisting in rehearsals at the Riverside Theatre in London in 1986): 'S.B. was happy about the idea when David Gothard suggested it

[111] Joyce to Calder, 18 April 1977, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 55. 'Please tell Mr Joyce that I shall not be in England again this year, remember with pleasure our meeting and wish him success with his exhibition.' Beckett to Calder, 17 May 1977, LL, CBA, Series II, Box I, Folder 55.
[112] Knowlson and Haynes, 'A Portrait of Beckett', in *Images of Beckett*, pp. 1-41 (p. 20).
[113] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 15.
[114] Minihan, *An Unweaving of Rainbows*, p. 11.

[...] [he] saw preparatory drawings and was pleased [...] it was an informal affair and done in relaxed amity.'[115] It is important to remember, too, that the best-known photographs of Beckett are not paparazzi shots snatched without his knowledge or consent. Rather, they are studio, or at least staged, images. Portraits such as those taken by Richard Avedon, which were employed in the promotion of the 1991 Dublin Beckett Festival, are posed, requiring not just assent, but active participation on the part of the subject. There is, therefore, some evidence to demonstrate that the playwright was, to a degree, and however reluctantly, complicit in the construction of his own image.

What, then, is the significance of all these images? Ample evidence exists to demonstrate the extensive circulation of images of Beckett that not only exhibit a singular sameness but that also take their inspiration from visual elements in Beckett's own creations. But does the public image of Beckett have any relevance to the reader's encounter with his work? I contend that just as the work has helped to stabilise the image of Beckett, so the image of Beckett contributes to the stabilisation of the work. The two are, for better or worse, indissolubly linked. Those of formalist persuasion who insist upon the absolute integrity of the text, and argue for the dehistoricised text, will object that biographical information about the author (especially from the relatively narrow field of visual information in which this chapter is interested) is irrelevant to the text, and further, that it cannot penetrate either the formal properties or the fictional universes of any given literary work. It is clear, however, that throughout this thesis my position denies the notion of either hermetically sealed texts, or of any conception of literature that strips it of historicity and social imbrication, and rejects the 'functioning' and 'experience' of literature in favour of 'intentionality' and 'essence', to borrow a Derridean

[115] Tom Phillips, Email to me, 25 November 2002. See above, pp. 203-04.

formulation.[116] And I urge, furthermore, that promotional discourse (which is largely responsible for the imaging and dispersal of the 'Samuel Beckett' with whom we are most familiar) does have the capacity to impact on literary texts, and that it does so in two key ways.

The first aspect to consider is promotion's ability to break open the text, thereby encouraging extra-textual elements to insinuate themselves into the reading process. I noted at the beginning of this chapter that promotional ephemera have traditionally been excluded not only from interpretative and theoretical criticism, but also from bibliographical scholarship. However, promotional materials are not extraneous to matters of reception and interpretation; their existence outside the text is always predicated on the disturbance of textual boundaries when, as is often the case, their material originates within the text itself. Elements of the text, then, extend into the public domain, and these, 'which arm the spectator with background information, [...] fall into relation with moments of [a] film being screened' and, equally, with those of a play being viewed or a text being read, thereby affecting the viewer's or reader's interaction with the text.[117] Referring to Barthes, Klinger describes 'a kind of *textus interruptus*, a narrative consistently subject to intertextual interferences, which result in meaningful excursions during the process of its reading.'[118] In explaining the importance of commodification strategies in both opening the text and priming the reader, Klinger writes,

> Industrial practices constitute an inter-textual network which pluralizes the classic text during its circulation as a commodity. A recognition of this

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[116] Jacques Derrida, 'An Interview with Jacques Derrida', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 33-75 (p. 45).
[117] Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in Naremore and Brantlinger, p. 119.
[118] Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in Naremore and Brantlinger, p. 120.

inter-textuality helps us to better understand the text/spectator interaction, and to approach certain economies of viewing that *fragment* rather than assemble the text, truly 'manhandling' and 'interrupting' it. [Her emphasis.][119]

Promotional practices, then, open the text. An apparent contradiction becomes evident here, which must be disentangled. If, as Klinger asserts, promotional practices pluralise the text (in order to 'produce multiple avenues of access to the text that will make [it] resonate as extensively as possible in the social sphere, to maximise its audience'),[120] how is it that the influence of this process can also be stabilising, as I argue? This confusion is resolved when we consider that although they do open the text, ready-made 'avenues of access' do so in a manner both prescriptive (in so far as, in the case of pictorial materials, they establish visual norms) and proscriptive (in that they forcefully inhibit imaginative interaction with the text). This process is figured in Tom Phillips's portrait, in which Beckett, whose face is not depicted, is mirrored in and so represented through Lucky.[121] Similarly, promotional strategies (such as the author/character unit forming the basis of the brandname 'Samuel Beckett') at once open and fill a signifying space. The operation of promotional materials is, thus, one that neutralises the alienating singularity of Beckett's work.

The second key way in which promotional discourse impacts on literary texts concerns the potential of promotional forms to complicate the way in which a reader relates to a text even before he reads it, particularly by encouraging certain expectations of it. 'The paratext is itself a text', Genette teaches us, a 'privileged place of a pragmatics

[119] Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in Naremore and Brantlinger, p. 125.
[120] Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in Naremore and Brantlinger, pp. 124-25.
[121] See p. 204.

and a strategy, of an influence on the public.'[122] Genette, however, chooses not to 'dwell' on the epitext, discounting it as 'value-inflating hyperbole inseparable from the needs of trade.'[123] His dismissal is regrettably hasty, for, in a society in which 'there is no *hors-promotion*', promotional forms do not need to be physically appended to the text to play a role in forming our expectations of that text.[124] The impact of epitextual images on the reader may not be as immediate, temporally speaking, as those that are interpolated in a text. However, most images are less, rather than more, directly linked to the physical text. As David Ellis explains, the ideal marriage of word and image is rare:

> For a photograph to illustrate certain passages in a text satisfactorily it needs to be adjoining, so that the eye takes in words and then moves across to the visual image which confirms or amplifies the sense. But the truth is, the publisher quickly explains, that having the photographs precisely where one wants them means either the expense of printing the whole book on appropriate paper, or reproducing images of such poor quality that they are a discredit to the publishing house.[125]

It would be a grave oversight to discount the influence of the body of material constituting the epitext. Indeed, Genette's observations on the paratext are no less true of the epitext, which constitutes equally a zone of strategy, pragmatics, and potential influence on the public. I discussed earlier the force of the Haynes portrait of Beckett that features on the cover of Knowlson's biography. It is clear that photographs in a biography, whether on its cover or grouped together in the inserts commonly used to divide the text, shape the reader's imagined subject, even when those photographs are not of the subject, but of his family, friends, and places significant in his life. Similarly,

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[122] Genette, pp. 7, 2.
[123] Genette, pp. 344, 347. See note 88 for definitions of peritext and epitext.
[124] Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression* (London: Sage, 1991), p. 195.
[125] David Ellis, 'Images of D.H. Lawrence: On the Use of Photographs in Biography', in Clarke, pp. 155-72 (pp. 155-56).

images related to fictional writing act upon our encounter with the work, whether they form part of the paratext, or are epitextual phenomena such as posters or theatre programmes, and whether they depict the author or characters and scenes from the text. Such images may operate in a polysemous and imprecise manner, such as by indirect association of mood, but they are no less impactful for that. The mood conjured by most of the popular Beckett portraits is intensely affective; sombre black and white tones and an unsmiling elderly subject are viscerally evocative, contradicting Barthes's assessment that photography from the 'realm of Advertising' must be clear and distinct in meaning 'by reason of its mercantile nature'.[126] Promotional photographs are not necessarily clear in function or meaning. Portrait photographs of Beckett may be primarily commercial in nature in the sites on which this study focusses, but their impact extends well beyond this one function, as they also position the author 'on the boundary of the text's meaning'.[127]

Lombrosian theories concerning the relation of facial characteristics to personality traits have a deep-seated, and troubling, effect on how we read faces as texts.[128] It is not only the mood of Beckett's portraits that influences our approach to his texts, but also his face itself, which seems disturbingly well-suited to the task of promoting his work. What do his features symbolise? We have been conditioned to read, if unconsciously, the 'code' of Beckett's piercing deep-set eyes, high forehead and hawk-like nose. His hollow-cheeked, long, thin visage evokes an asceticism and, indeed, a pessimism, that are all too easily translated from the man to his work.[129] Sontag writes about the way in which a

[126] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 36.
[127] Juliet Gardiner, 'Recuperating the Author: Consuming Fictions of the 1990s', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 94:2 (2000), pp. 255-74 (p. 258).
[128] Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909) was an Italian physicist and criminologist who postulated that the criminal type could be distinguished by facial characteristics.
[129] Even in the relatively early days of Beckett's career, his personality, as publicly conceived, was intimately entwined with his work's reputation. John Harrington notes wryly the ingenuity required to

photograph is able to work away at the viewer's imagination, and to encourage associative processes to play themselves out: 'The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: 'There is the surface. Now think -- or rather feel, intuit -- what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way.' Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, fantasy.'[130] It is impossible to be certain whether promoters would have appropriated Beckett's face in the same way had he been cheerfully round-faced and snub-nosed, but it is unlikely. The spartan humourlessness so typical of images of Beckett is famous -- 'ce grand maigre au visage d'aigle', goes the myth, 'dont aucun photographe n'a jamais réussi à fixer le sourire'.[131] Beckett hoped, in vain, that the cover of the first edition of *Murphy* would feature a photograph of two chimpanzees sitting at a table playing chess.[132] How different a mood this image conjures, in comparison with the sombre pictures of Beckett that adorn the covers of so many editions of his work. The image of the chimpanzees 'confirms and amplifies', to borrow David Ellis's phrase, the humour and absurdity that is so cardinal a characteristic of *Murphy*.[133] This effect is entirely absent in, for example, the *Murphy* in John Calder's Jupiter Books, a series that featured portraits of the books' authors on their covers.

Juliet Gardiner claims that contemporary Western practices of circulating an author's brandname 'present the author as the meaning of his/her text beyond the writing

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explain Beckett's being honoured with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969: 'Alfred Nobel's stipulation that literature deserving of his prize be 'uplifting' required special grandiloquence from the academy for justification of its choice of an author popularly notorious for absolute pessimism.' John P. Harrington, *The Irish Beckett* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p. 2.

[130] Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 23.

[131] Pierre-Louis Chantre, 'Samuel Beckett, toujours implacable', *L'Hebdo*, 12 March 1999, p. 74. See note 22 for translation.

[132] This image can be seen on the cover of Chris Ackerley's *Demented Particulars: The Annotated* Murphy (Tallahassee: Journal of Beckett Studies Books, 1998).

[133] Ellis, 'Images of D.H. Lawrence: On the Use of Photographs in Biography', in Clarke, p. 155.

of it'.[134] This may be the case in the vigorous marketing campaigns associated with some best-selling mass market authors. Mercifully, Beckett's critics are infrequently tempted to explicate his work through any naive reliance on his biography, although exceptions exist. The public 'biographisation' of the author does nonetheless have an impact on scholarship, as is evident in the relatively recent initiative to claim Beckett for Ireland, a movement that has its ramifications for both biographical constructions of Beckett and for literary criticism of his work.[135] Beckett's Irishness, and how his national roots have or have not manifested themselves (or been made manifest) in his writing, was unquestionably a realm of Beckett studies long neglected. Books such as John Harrington's *The Irish Beckett*, and Eoin O'Brien's *The Beckett Country: Samuel Beckett's Ireland* (a work that evolved out of a photographic exhibition in honour of Beckett's eightieth birthday), go some way to redress this want.[136] A wealth of biographical references, however oblique, is embedded in Beckett's work. Yet the danger alluded to above, of tending to align the work too closely with elements of Beckett's life, does exist, and can result not only in reductive readings of individual pieces, but also in a failure to confront Beckett's broader artistic innovations and provocations. One of the most unfortunate instances of this kind of approach is Deirdre Bair's insistence that the 'epiphany' scene recounted in *Krapp's Last Tape* is taken directly from Beckett's life, a claim Beckett many times refuted:

> On one of [Beckett's] late-night prowls, when he had been drinking just enough to make his thought processes churn, he found himself out on the

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[134] Gardiner, p. 263.

[135] John Harrington rightly points out that occasions such as Beckett's birthdays have also, understandably, encouraged 'the-man-and-the-work sort of quasi-biographical celebratory treatment'. Harrington, *The Irish Beckett*, p. 45.

[136] Harrington, *The Irish Beckett*; Eoin O'Brien, *The Beckett Country: Samuel Beckett's Ireland* (Monkstown: Black Cat in association with Faber, 1986).

> end of a jetty in Dublin harbor, buffeted by a winter storm. Suddenly the vision occurred which was to result in [...] the kind of writing that has come to be defined as 'Beckettian'. He inserted part of this revelation in the final text of *Krapp's Last Tape*.[137]

In the play, Beckett, however sympathetically, however poignantly, satirises and dismantles the Romantic overtones of this wild moment in which Krapp believes his creative genius is revealed to him. A narrowly biographical reading such as Bair's skews this central aspect of the text. Biographical references can be useful in explicating Beckett's work. However, too neat an identification of Beckett with the work leads, in more cases than not, to a conflation of the author's real life and his fictive worlds. The texts, by being linked with Beckett, the historical concrete individual, as well as with 'Beckett', the constructed brandname, are located in 'real' life: the reader 'fragments the text by resorting to background stories that draw the text out and give it a social identity'.[138] This positioning promotes reductive readings that I believe to be at odds with the transformative power that lies at the heart of Beckett's work.

It is worthwhile noting here exceptions to the general rule I am proposing, which dictates that the most widely circulated images of Beckett are intimately and frequently informed by his characters' images. James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger remind us that 'it isn't clear that the ideology the media disseminate is all of a piece -- that it is uniform, standardized, or 'mass' in the sense of devoid of internal cracks and contradictions.'[139] No sole conception of Beckett can possibly mould all images of him.

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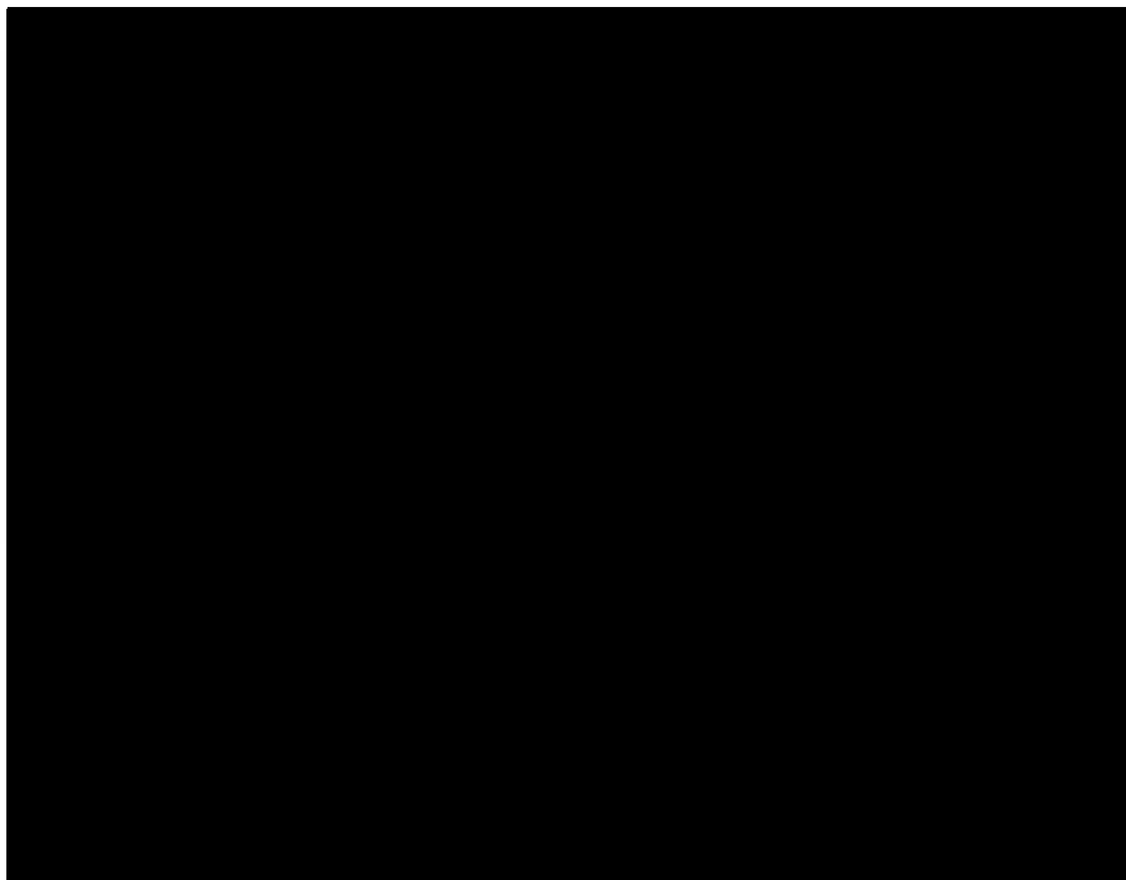
[137] Bair, pp. 350-51. Knowlson cautions that in this play 'personal elements cannot simply be pinned down [...] to comfortable real-life equivalences', and elsewhere, that the event was not a 'Road to Damascus' turning point. *Damned to Fame*, p. 445; 'A Portrait of Beckett', in *Images of Beckett*, pp. 1-41 (p. 38).

[138] Klinger, 'Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture', in Naremore and Brantlinger, p. 129.

[139] Naremore and Brantlinger, 'Six Artistic Cultures', in Naremore and Brantlinger, pp. 4-5.

My argument is that, given this axiom, the relative standardisation of his image is a phenomenon striking enough to demand investigation. But exceptions exist.



Indeed, there are a number of portraits of Beckett that, far from delimiting his identity, question it, and explode it, in ways congruent with Beckett's own beliefs on the impossibility of representation. Alan Flood's drypoints are a fine example of this type of work (see Figure 5). The series of six enacts a progressive stripping away to the formal elements of the face, what Flood calls 'the disintegration of the figurative and physical'.[140] The prominent Irish artist Louis Le Brocquy has also produced a range of kinetic,

[140] <http://www.alanflood.co.uk> [accessed 10 November 2002].

enigmatic portraits of Beckett that rely as much on absence as on presence.[141] However, in their circulation in the public sphere, images such as these are relatively static, and are rarely used to promote Beckett's work. In particular, posters, dustjackets and theatre programmes tend to use photographs, which fix, or contain, their subject.

The concern of this chapter is to demonstrate that the practice of imaging Beckett, despite its being peripheral to the work itself, and although it is relatively limited in scope, is nonetheless a practice that at once evidences and furthers the domesticating effects of popularisation. That which Barthes says of the modern scriptor's hand in general, might once have been said of Beckett's hand in particular: 'cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), [it] traces a field without origin -- or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins.'[142] But the photographs of Beckett with which we are, today, so familiar, deny Beckett's work its lack of origin, deny it its studied lack of authority and its authorless quality. With its uniformity and its ubiquity, Beckett portraiture insists instead in coupling the author's image and brandname closely with his texts. The persistent imaging of Beckett in terms that accord visually with a contemporary version of the myth of *l'artiste maudit*, the eternal marriage of the author to his characters, and the widespread reliance in promotional materials on a small selection of photographic portraits by a smaller selection of photographers, all conflict with and work against the problematising of authority, identity, and representation to which Beckett's work aspires. The potential of promotional forms that so frequently feature photographic portraits of Beckett to shape a reader's expectations of his work, and the

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[141] Some of these portraits can be viewed online. See 'Louis Le Brocquy: Catalogue of Works', <http://www.anne-madden.com/LeBPages/Individual.html> [accessed 4 May 2004].

[142] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image Music Text*, p. 146.

potential of these promotional forms to disturb the work, may result in readings that counter the unique alterity of the Beckettian text. Whether we are reading images or texts, the same dangers apply both to Beckett and his work, namely, the monumentalising and consequent domestication and death of each.

CONCLUSION

I argue throughout this thesis that much of the value of Beckett's work, and indeed much of its pleasure, resides in its alterity. Beckett's oeuvre has challenged us to confront ways of being, of seeing, of artistic (particularly dramatic) representation, and of interaction between a work of art and its audience, all of which have required new modes of understanding. Familiar tools of analysis, explicatory archetypes and allegories and critical language, have been -- and in some ways continue to be -- confounded by the unique problematics of Beckett's work. My hesitation to employ the present tense in an unqualified manner speaks to a dilemma that I believe has not yet been fully apprehended by members of the Beckett community (or, to indicate more plainly my beliefs regarding the widespread commodification of the author, the Beckett industry). In chapter four I discussed the importance of being aware that Beckett and his work have travelled from site to site within the public sphere. It is equally important to realise that this journey, having taken place over the better part of a century, means that the Beckett we know today (in the sense of both the individual and his work) is no longer the same Beckett whose early Joycean texts met with such consternation and disapproval in his native Ireland, nor the same Beckett whose *Godot* radicalised the Western stage. Beckett entered the new millennium already canonised, his 'greatness' long accepted.

Paradoxically, the acknowledgement (and all too often, the assumption) of Beckett's greatness that is implicit in most of the critical writing honouring his work has not only bolstered his great reputation but has also, simultaneously, diminished the very reasons for its greatness. The huge body of work comprising the critical exegesis of

Beckett's writing has gone a long way towards taming his otherness, for not only has it unravelled many of the enigmas of the work itself, but it has also monumentalised Beckett. The overly reverential and predictable fashion in which his plays are frequently staged, as well as the public imaging of Beckett, in its peculiarly static and uniformly referential style, are both indicative of and contributory to this trend. We might aptly recall here Barthes' term, referred to at the beginning of chapter four, 'photographic connotation', which describes the coding inherent in the photographic procedure. This, Barthes maintains, 'like every well structured signification, is an institutional activity; in relation to society overall, its function is to integrate man, to reassure him.'[1] However, as Derrida explains, the 'subversive juridicity' that characterises literature's challenge to the very institutions on which it relies requires that the identification of literature 'never be assured, nor reassuring'.[2]

Derek Attridge's views on what he calls the 'hypertextualized *Ulysses*' are similar, if more vehemently decisive, to my views on Beckett's work:

> The work of exegesis and commentary, allusion-hunting and cross-referencing, theoretical and cultural placing, though it has inevitably failed to exhaust the text's difficulties, has succeeded only too well in disarming it of its alterity and finding a snug cultural home for it. No longer a challenge to the way we read and think, it has become a triumphal assertion of the scope and integrity of the culture of which it is one of the finest monuments.[3]

Attridge suggests that Beckett's writing may be more immune than Joyce's to the domesticating effects of scholarship. The implication is that Beckett's strangeness and otherness may better resist reduction to coherence, because in contrast to Joyce's supreme

[1] Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', in *Image Music Text*, pp. 15-31 (p. 31).
[2] Derrida, 'Before the Law', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 181-220 (p. 216).
[3] Derek Attridge, *Joyce Effects: On Language, Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 184.

confidence in language and representation, Beckett's work has written into it a profound doubt about its own viability.[4] I contest Attridge's suggestion, because, although Beckett's writing is sustained at least in part by anxiety over its very capacity to be sustained (consider the paradigmatic 'I can't go on, I'll go on' and 'fail better' formulations), this anxiety has nevertheless been assuaged -- because explained -- by decades of exegetical debate. Beckett's resistance to cultural authority does not automatically safeguard his writing against the workings of the culture industry, even if, as Attridge contends, Joyce's writing lends itself more readily to those workings than does Beckett's.

The temptations and dangers of closing down meaning have been recognised by other critics, too. Lois Oppenheim observes that 'the classification of so ticklish a writer, one whose art is at once exceedingly indeterminate yet extraordinarily precise, is thought to ease the anxiety such apparent incongruity provokes'.[5] As early as 1964, Susan Sontag wrote that Beckett's oeuvre 'has attracted interpreters like leeches'; in urging that 'real art' has the ability to make its audience 'nervous', she charged that 'by reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting *that*, one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, comfortable.' (Her emphasis.)[6] More recently, Steven Connor has argued that Beckett criticism in general has assimilated Beckett into 'a whole cultural patrimony, an inherited tradition', and has thereby worked against, and perhaps failed to recognise, the challenge the work poses to that tradition:[7]

> For all of its alleged challenge to the notion of 'the human', and the decisive breaks which Beckett's work makes with history, Beckettian critical discourse has devoted itself energetically to reforging the continuities between his work and the traditions of Western literature and

[4] Attridge, *Joyce Effects*, pp. 184, 186.
[5] Oppenheim, *The Painted Word*, p. 4.
[6] Susan Sontag, 'Against Interpretation', in *Against Interpretation* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 3-14 (p. 8).
[7] Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 199.

> culture. So the story of Beckett's acceptance within literary culture is more than just a repetition of the familiar classicization of the avant-garde, for Beckett's work comes to stand for the power of tradition itself.[8]

This is not to say that room does not exist for projects that celebrate and extend Beckett's alterity. On the contrary, there is much potential, as I argue elsewhere, for publishers and directors to vivify, and in some crucial respects, revivify, his work. One recent instance of employing the camera to do this is Anthony Minghella's filmed version of *Play*, which was produced as part of the 'Beckett on Film' project. I agree with the review that praised the piece as

> a negative of standard film-making. With over 300 cuts in 16 minutes -- 'It's a mosaic of all the versions we shot' [said Minghella] -- you're constantly aware of the editing. Instead of hiding the film-making technique, he exposes it in an outstandingly successful attempt to illuminate Beckett's text. [...] Ironically, by taking the most cinematic route, he has been truest of all to Beckett's supreme theatricality.[9]

Likewise, the remarkable portraits of Beckett by artists like Alberto Giacometti, Avigdor Arikha, Louis Le Brocquy, Sorel Etrog and Alan Flood must be acknowledged for the ways in which, as mentioned above, they succeed in exploding comfortable notions of identity, and thereby enhance and honour Beckett's own artistic endeavours.

Certain notable critics, too, continue to explore and explicate in provocative, unsettling ways that enhance the contingencies and disruptions so vital in the work. One fine example of this kind of criticism is Connor's study of 'the complexity of the displacements effected by repetition in Beckett's work, [and] the challenges which it proposes to notions of essential unity.'[10] The best discussion of the inhospitability of Beckett's work is offered by Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, with their disquieting

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[8] Connor, p. 198.
[9] David Benedict, 'Beckett On the TV (It's Krapp's Last Videotape)', *Independent on Sunday*, 24 June 2001, p. 10.
[10] Connor, p. 12.

investigation of works of art that, as I believe to be true of Beckett's writing, resist appropriation by cultural authorities seeking to explain them in ways that propound, explicitly or not, the 'epistemologically or morally superior nature of art, and even [...] its redemptive value'.[11] Bersani and Dutoit argue of Beckett (and Rothko, another of their subjects) that at times

> their principal concern seems to have been to discourage an audience from coming to their work. It is as if each of them were saying to his reader or spectator: I have very little (perhaps nothing) to say to you, I have very little (perhaps nothing) to show you. To put this another way: *my work is without authority*. You will learn nothing from it; you will gain no moral profit from it; it will not even enhance your life with that delight or superior pleasure which, you have been led to believe, artists have the obligation to provide you. [The authors' emphasis.][12]

Beckett's work is opaque, elusive, and difficult to access, insofar as it has written into it a problematisation of our position, as readers and spectators, *vis à vis* the work, since 'if the artist loses his status as a privileged subject, so does his audience. If there is nothing to appropriate within the work, we can no longer be, in our relation to the work, appreciatively appropriating subjects.'[13] Correlatively, the work's relation to the institutions of literature -- including the academic and literary critical industries -- is complex, since it is in large part to these institutions that the work owes its cultural value and hence its enduring readership, but it is also the authority (and to some extent even the viability) of these same institutions that the work challenges. It is possible, however, to approach the work without denying or attempting to diminish the ways in which it complicates questions of authority and of the artwork's putative responsibility. It has been my purpose throughout this thesis to urge that we should not cocoon ourselves from these

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[11] Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Arts of Impoverishment: Beckett, Rothko, Resnais* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 3.
[12] Bersani and Dutoit, p. 3.
[13] Bersani and Dutoit, p. 4.

provocations to the status of the work and of ourselves; we ought rather to consider whether the time may be right to risk the authority we assume by virtue of our position as competent readers of classic literature, and, in risking it, to give the work the space it demands to try again, and if need be to fail again -- perhaps even to fail better.

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