
Guide to the Samuel Beckett Papers

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Note

Arts and Humanities--Literature--Literature General>

Guide to the Samuel Beckett Papers, ca. 1959-1973

Collection number: Mss 5

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Date Completed:
10 December 2002
Encoded by:
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Samuel Beckett Papers,

Date (inclusive): ca. 1959-1973

Collection Number: Mss 5

Creator: Beckett, Samuel, 1906-

Extent: 0.4 linear feet (1 document box)

Repository: University of California, Santa Barbara. Library. Department of Special Collections
Santa Barbara, California 93106-9010

Physical Location: Vault

Language: English.

Access Restrictions

None.

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Preferred Citation

Samuel Beckett Papers. Mss 5. Department of Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Acquisition Information

Undetermined, ca. 1959.

Biography

(The following is drawn from online sources including those of the University of New Mexico and the Moonstruck Drama Bookstore.)

One of the most unique and powerful voices of the Twentieth Century, Samuel Beckett was born in Foxrock, Ireland, in 1906, and suffered, as he claimed, an eventless childhood. He attended Trinity College in Dublin, and left for Paris when he was twenty-two (he would later call this city home). In Paris he fell in with a group of avant-garde artists, including James

Joyce, who was to become a life-long friend. Although he continued to write in both English and French throughout his life, most of his major works were written in French between 1946 and 1950. Beckett was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1969. He died in Paris in 1989.

Beckett's bizarre world is explored in novels, short stories, poetry, and scripts for radio, television, and film. But he is best known for his work in the theatre. Samuel Beckett's first play, *Eleuthéria*, mirrors his own search for freedom, revolving around a young man's efforts to cut himself loose from his family and social obligations. His first real triumph, however, came on January 5, 1953, when *Waiting for Godot* premiered at the Théâtre de Babylone. In spite of some expectations to the contrary, the strange little play in which "nothing happens" became an instant success, running for four hundred performances at the Théâtre de Babylone and enjoying the critical praise of dramatists as diverse as Tennessee Williams, Jean Anouilh, Thornton Wilder, and William Saroyan. The strange atmosphere of *Godot*, in which two tramps wait on what appears to be a desolate road for a man who never arrives, conditioned audiences to following works like *Endgame*, *Happy Days*, and *Krapp's Last Tape*.

Beckett's drama is most closely associated with the Theatre of the Absurd. He employs a minimalistic approach, stripping the stage of unnecessary spectacle and characters. Tragedy and comedy collide in a bleak illustration of the human condition and the absurdity of existence. In this way, each work, from the lengthy productions (*Godot*, *Endgame*) to the very brief (*Ohio Impromptu*, *Catastrophe*) to the despairing monologues (*Rockaby*, *A Piece of Monologue*), serves as a metaphor for existence and an entertaining philosophical discussion. Although Beckett dissociated himself from the post World War II French existentialists, his works cover much of the same ground and ask similar questions.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection contains photocopies of what were three unpublished works by Samuel Beckett and correspondence with Beckett and UCSB Library staff regarding permission to supply photocopies to researchers.

The Department of Special Collections has an extensive collection of Beckett's published works including the three titles in this collection and a number of other first editions.

Related Sources

Abbott, H. Porter, *Beckett Writing Beckett: The Author in the Autograph*, Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1996.

Cronin, Anthony, *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist*, New York : HarperCollins, 1997.

Knowlson, James, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*, New York : Simon & Schuster, 1996.

The Samuel Beckett Endpage, UCSB, Department of English: <http://beckett.english.ucsb.edu/home.htm>

The Samuel Beckett On-Line Resources and Links Pages (Contains extensive reviews, biographies, essays and links to other resources): http://home.sprintmail.com/~lifeform/Beck_Links.html

Series 1. **Correspondence**

Box 1: 1 **1 letter (TLS) Christian Brun to Samuel Beckett, dated 2 Oct. 1973, requesting permission to photocopy *Eleuthéria*; Samuel Beckett's note (ANS), dated Oct. 17, 1973, written on same document, 1973**

Abstract: [Two envelopes enclosed.]

Box 1: 1 **1 note (ANS), Sept. 6, 1970, Samuel Beckett to Christian Brun, authorizing a photocopy to be made of *Eleuthéria*, 1970**

Series 2. **Copies of manuscript works**

Box 1: 2 ***Eleuthéria*- 1 typescript document, (in portfolio) undated, 133 continuously paginated pages, with an unnumbered title page; 1 thermofax reproduction; 3 photocopies, unmarked**

Box 1: 3 ***Mercier et Camier*-1 typescript document (in portfolio), undated, 150 continuously paginated pages; 1 thermofax reproduction; 2 photocopies, unmarked**

Box 1: 4 ***Premier Amour*-1 typescript document (in portfolio), undated, 32 continuously paginated pages; (thermofax reproduction with annotations in an unknown autograph), 2 photocopies**