The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett

This book is an eloquent and accessible introduction to one of the most important writers of the twentieth century. It provides biographical and contextual information, but more fundamentally, it considers how we might think about an enduringly difficult and experimental novelist and playwright who often challenges the very concepts of meaning and interpretation. It deals with Beckett’s life, intellectual and cultural background, plays, prose, and critical response and relates his work and vision to the culture and context in which he wrote. McDonald provides a sustained analysis of the major plays, including Waiting for Godot, Endgame and Happy Days and his major prose works including Murphy, Watt and his famous ‘trilogy’ of novels (Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable). This introduction concludes by mapping the huge terrain of criticism that Beckett’s work has prompted, and it explains the turn in recent years to understanding Beckett within his historical context.

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Cambridge Introductions to Literature

This series is designed to introduce students to key topics and authors. Accessible and lively, these introductions will also appeal to readers who want to broaden their understanding of the books and authors they enjoy.

- Ideal for students, teachers, and lecturers
- Concise, yet packed with essential information
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The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett

RÓNÁN MCDONALD
For Sarah Montgomery
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Note on editions

Page numbers are cited parenthetically throughout. They are from the following editions.

Fiction

More Pricks than Kicks (London: John Calder, 1970)
Murphy (London: John Calder, 1963)
Watt (London: John Calder, 1963)
The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable (London: Pan, 1979)
How It Is (London: John Calder, 1964)

Drama

Waiting for Godot (London: Faber and Faber, 1965)
Endgame, followed by Act Without Words (London: Faber and Faber, 1958)
Happy Days (London: Faber and Faber, 1962)
All other plays from Collected Shorter Plays (London: Faber and Faber, 1984)

Criticism and Miscellaneous