Samuel Beckett's narrative innovations are among his most important contributions to twentieth-century literature. Yet contemporary Beckett scholarship rarely considers the effect of his literary influences on the evolution of his narrative techniques, focusing instead on Beckett's philosophical implications. In this study, John Bolin challenges the utility of reading Beckett through a narrow philosophical lens, tracing new avenues for understanding Beckett's work – and, by extension, the form of the modern novel – by engaging with English, French, German, and Russian literature. Presenting new empirical evidence drawn from archives in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the United States, Bolin demonstrates Beckett's preoccupation with what he termed the 'European novel': a lineage running from Sade to Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Gide, Sartre, and Céline. Through close readings of Beckett's manuscripts and novels up to and including *The Unnamable*, Bolin provides a new account of how Beckett's fiction grew out of his changing compositional practice, even as he moved beyond early exemplars.

John Bolin completed his M.Phil. and D.Phil. at Exeter College, Oxford. From 2008 to 2011 he lectured at Oxford, where he was the Bamborough Junior Research Fellow at Linacre College. He currently lectures at the University of Wollongong in New South Wales.
For my mother and father
Beckett always saw himself – his post-war, as well as his pre-war self – as part of a continuum with the European literary and artistic past. We cannot, therefore, understand the remarkable leaps of the imagination that he made to produce some of the most radical work in prose … of the twentieth-century without knowing where he is leaping from.

(James Knowlson, *Images of Beckett*)

No theory is good except on condition that one use it to go on beyond.

(André Gide, *Journals*)
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Abbreviations

In the citations from Beckett’s letters, SB indicates Samuel Beckett, TM Thomas McSweeney, MM Mary Manning, and GD Georges Duthuit.

**Works by Samuel Beckett**

- **Dis**  *Disjecta* (London: John Calder, 2001).
- **DFMW**  *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (London: John Calder, 1993).
- **M**  *Murphy* (London: John Calder, 2003).
- **NB**  *Watt* Notebooks, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, box 6 (folders 5–7); box 7 (folders 1–4).
- **PTD**  *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1999).
- **WTS**  *Watt* Typescript. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, box 7 (folders 5–6).
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