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SAMUEL BECKETT AND THE POSTCOLONIAL NOVEL

Samuel Beckett has long been seen as a distinctly “apolitical” and “ahistorical” writer, but this reputation fails to do him justice. Placing Beckett’s novels in the context of the newly founded Irish Free State, Patrick Bixby explores for the first time their confrontation with the legacies of both Irish nationalism and British imperialism. In doing so, he reveals Beckett’s fiction as a remarkable example of how postcolonial writing addresses the relationships between private consciousness and public life, as well as those between the novel form and a cultural environment including not only the literary tradition, but also political speeches, national monuments, and anthropological studies. With special attention to these relationships, the study demonstrates Beckett’s challenge to familiar narratives of personal identity and communal belonging, which makes his writing integral to understanding the history of the novel and the fate of modernism, in addition to the emergence of postcolonial literature.

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1. Samuel Beckett outside Burlington House (c.1954). Carlton Lake Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

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