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Excerpt

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LETTERS

1957–1965

CHRONOLOGY 1957

1957	4 January	SB writing “The Gloaming,” a play for two actors (abandoned; later <i>Rough for Theatre I</i>).
	7 January	All police powers in Algiers taken over by General Massu.
	10–19 January	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> with an all black cast in previews at the Shubert Theatre in Boston. It opens on 21 January at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York, but closes after five days.
	13 January	The BBC Third Programme broadcasts <i>All That Fall</i> .
	After 30 January	Publication of <i>Fin de partie</i> and <i>Acte sans paroles</i> , Editions de Minuit.
	February	SB begins English translation of <i>L’Innommable</i> .
	c. 11–15 February	John Beckett works with Deryk Mendel in Paris so that his music reflects Mendel’s movements in <i>Acte sans paroles I</i> .
	Before 12 February	SB’s first meeting with the Director of London’s Royal Court Theatre, George Devine, in Paris.
	19 February	SB’s first meeting with BBC radio producer Donald McWhinnie, in Paris.
	March	<i>Tous ceux qui tombent</i> published in <i>Les Lettres Nouvelles</i> .
	15 March	Grove Press publish <i>Murphy</i> .
	21 March	SB in London to supervise rehearsals of <i>Fin de partie</i> at the Royal Court Theatre for its world premiere.
	28 March	Death of Jack B. Yeats in Dublin; SB unable to attend the funeral.
	2 April	Gala performance of <i>Fin de partie</i> , as part of the French Festival Week in London.

Chronology 1957

3 April	SB leaves London for Paris.
26 April	Avant-première of <i>Fin de partie</i> at the Studio des Champs-Élysées, Paris; Générale (with critics), 30 April.
30 April	A. J. Leventhal talk on Beckett for the BBC Third Programme.
2 May	The BBC Third Programme broadcasts <i>Fin de partie</i> recorded with the original London cast.
7 May	SB begins English translation of <i>Fin de partie</i> .
22 May	The term “Le Nouveau Roman” is coined in <i>Le Monde</i> by Emile Henriot, reviewing works by Alain Robbe-Grillet and Nathalie Sarraute.
After 27 May	Publication of <i>Lieutenant en Algérie</i> by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, which denounces French military policy in Algeria.
24 August	SB has completed second mime, <i>Acte sans paroles II</i> , for Deryk Mendel.
30 August	Faber and Faber publish <i>All That Fall</i> .
20 September	SB goes to Etretat for two days, guest of Jérôme Lindon.
4 October	Launch of the first earth satellite, the Soviet Sputnik.
8 October	Alan Schneider in Paris for four days of discussions with SB about <i>Fin de partie</i> ; they attend the Paris production together, twice.
12 October	<i>Fin de partie</i> closes after ninety-seven performances in Paris.
After 18 October	Publication of <i>Tous ceux qui tombent</i> , Editions de Minuit.
10 December	The BBC Third Programme broadcasts extracts from <i>Molloy</i> , read by Patrick Magee, with music by John Beckett.
14 December	The BBC Third Programme broadcasts “From an Abandoned Work,” read by Patrick Magee.
20 December	Michel Butor’s novel <i>La Modification</i> awarded the Prix Renaudot. Albert Camus awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

ADAM TARN
WARSAW

le 10 janvier 1957

6 Rue des Favorites
Paris 15me

Cher Adam Tarn

C'est avec beaucoup de peine et de déception que je me vois dans l'impossibilité de me rendre à votre émouvante invitation.¹ Les répétitions de ma nouvelle pièce m'accaparent, sans parler d'autres obligations et d'autres soucis qui me clouent ici.²

Je suis infiniment touché par l'amitié et la générosité auxquelles je dois d'être convié à la création de Godot à Varsovie et à un séjour dans votre pays et c'est de tout coeur que je vous adresse, à vous-même et aux dirigeants du Théâtre Wspolczesny, ma très vive reconnaissance et mon espoir de pouvoir un jour vous l'exprimer de vive voix, et mieux, en vous serrant la main, chez vous.

Avez-vous reçu le texte de All That Fall que j'avais prié Curtis Brown de vous envoyer? Sinon dites-le-moi et je vous l'envoierai moi-même.

J'ai été très heureux de rencontrer Julian Rogozinski et regrette seulement que ce ne fût pas plus longtemps. Faites-lui mes amitiés.³

En vous renouvelant mes remerciements et mes regrets je vous prie de croire, cher Adam Tarn, à mes sentiments très amicaux.

s/
Samuel Beckett

TLS; 1 leaf, 1 side; BP.

10 January 1957, Adam Tarn

10 January 1957

6 Rue des Favorites

Paris 15

Dear Adam Tarn,

To my great distress and disappointment, I find that it is impossible for me to accept your very moving invitation.¹ The rehearsals of my new play take up all my time, not to mention other obligations and concerns that keep me pinned here.²

I am greatly touched by the friendship and generosity to which I owe my being invited to see the first staging of *Godot* in Warsaw and to stay in your country, and I send, to you and to all those in charge of the Współczesny Theatre, my heartfelt thanks and my hope of being able one day to express them to you direct, and, better still, with a handshake, where you live.

Have you received the text of *All That Fall* that I had asked Curtis Brown to send you? If not, let me know and I will send it myself.

I was very glad to meet Julian Rogoziński and am only sorry that it was not for longer. Give him my regards.³

Once again my thanks, my regrets, and my warmest wishes.

s/

Samuel Beckett

1 Adam Tarn (1902–1975; Profile, II), Editor of *Dialog*, Warsaw, the first publisher of SB's work in Poland.

The Warsaw premiere of *Czekając na Godota*, directed by Jerzy Kreczmar (1902–1985), opened at the Teatr Współczesny on 26 January 1957. August Grodzicki commented: “Cela a été un véritable événement dans la vie théâtrale, culturelle et même politique du pays” (in Ahmad Kamyabi Mask, *Qu'attendent Eugène Ionesco et Samuel Beckett?* [Paris: A. Kamyabi Mask, 1991] 136) (This was a genuine event in the theatrical, cultural, and even political life of the country).

2 Rehearsals of *Fin de partie* had begun in anticipation of the Paris production at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre; the opening had been scheduled for 15 January, but it was postponed to 26 February (see 15 December 1956).

3 Julian Rogoziński (1912–1980) was the Polish translator of *En attendant Godot* (*Czekając na Godota*), and, later, of *Endgame* (*Końcówka*), *Act without Words I* (*Akt bez słów I*), and *Eh Joe* (*Sluchaj, Joe*). SB had met him and Adam Tarn in late 1956.

11 January 1957, Barney Rosset

BARNEY ROSSET
 GROVE PRESS, NEW YORK

January 11th 1956 or rather 57

6 Favorites

Paris 15

Dear Barney

Glad to have your long letter.¹ Bad news here. The Oeuvre has suddenly backed out of its engagements. Reason given: on the verge of bankruptcy they had to choose between selling the theatre and signing for a play with two cinema stars and strong financial backing.² To the latter spike their rectum has inclined, leaving us high, dry and theatreless. The rehearsals were well advanced. Blin and Martin are desolate. So it goes on this bitch of an earth.³

Thanks for figures. Very encouraging. Lindon received a whack from Saunders. Perhaps my personal was among it, for to me directly gar nix.⁴

Thanks for Canada dossier and for your efforts to edify the bastards.⁵

Glad you liked All That Fall. Rereading it I realize I wrote it too fast and missed a good few chances. First broadcast day after to-morrow evening from the 3rd. Second I am told the following Saturday or 19th. I hear from Curtis Brown that their New York agent is in touch with you. I know the BBC are broadcasting a recording and I am sure they would put the tape at your disposal. Would you like me to write myself to John Morris, director of the 3rd?⁶ Tell me what you would like me to do and it will be done. Harper's Bazaar were after it too.⁷ It is being translated into French at the moment, for publication in Nadeau's *Lettres Nouvelles* next month.⁸ No objection at all to your publishing the *Bones in the Evergreen*, on the contrary. Please indicate date of composition, also of Dante and the L.⁹ I feel very shaky about undertaking translation of *Fin de Partie* (of which I have just corrected second proofs), and wanted to see it here before doing so. But at the turn events now taking I think I shall have a shot without much further delay. The Royal Court Theatre, London (George Devine) want to do it in the Fall. I don't see how they can without cuts which I won't have.

11 January 1957, Barney Rosset

Perhaps the new Watergate Theatre Club.¹⁰ I have asked Lindon to let me have a few sets of proofs to send out - notably to you and to Germany - pending appearance of book.

Curious to hear about black Godot in Boston.¹¹ Première in Warsaw 26th inst. They very kindly invited me. But as usual I have had to decline.

So glad there is Linc whom salute from me.¹² And to you both all the best for the new jolt beginning of the buckled old wheel.

Yours ever s/ Sam

Suzanne has been very poorly. But a little better now.¹³

TLS, with APS; 1 leaf, 1 side; Burns Library, Samuel Beckett Collection, SB-BR.

1 Barney Rosset (1922–2012; Profile, II) was the Editor of Grove Press and SB's American publisher and theatrical agent.

2 The arrangement to produce *Fin de partie* at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre had been broken abruptly on 9 January ("Attestation" prepared for SB's signature, dated 1 February 1957; IMEC-Fonds Samuel Beckett, Boîte 11, *Fin de partie* divers). Jérôme Lindon (1925–2001; Profile, II), Director, Editions de Minuit, wrote to the Service Juridique of the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques on 22 January: "Le préjudice causé à Samuel Beckett est évident" (The damage to Samuel Beckett is obvious). There had already been thirty rehearsals, and, by now, other Paris theatres were booked for the season (IMEC-Fonds Samuel Beckett, Boîte 11, *Fin de partie*, contrats, représentations [1]).

The Théâtre de l'Œuvre chose to produce *Vous qui nous jugez* by Robert Hossein (b. 1927), with Hossein as director and actor, and his wife Marina Vlady (b. 1938), a film star, in her first stage role. The play opened on 9 March.

3 Roger Blin (1907–1984; Profile, II) directed *Fin de partie* and played the role of Hamm; Jean Martin (1922–2009; Profile, II) played Clov.

4 Grove Press reported that 49 hardbound and 374 paperbound copies of *Molloy* had been sold in 1956. Grove Press paid royalties to Marion Saunders, the New York agent acting on behalf of Editions de Minuit and SB. She had sent a single payment to Lindon, publisher of the original French edition, which included the payment to SB as author and translator (Saunders Agency to Jérôme Lindon, 4 January 1957; IMEC-Fonds Samuel Beckett, Boîte 3, Correspondance 1957 - droits étrangers. Barney Rosset to SB, 14 January 1957; NSyU).

"Gar nix" combines English slang "nix" (nothing) with the German "gar nichts" (nothing whatsoever).

5 When the Canadian government prohibited the Grove edition of *Molloy*, Rosset demanded an explanation and threatened to make "the Canadian policy of cultural suppression" known to the press of Canada and the world (Raymond Labarge, Customs and Excise Division of the Department of National Revenue of Canada, to Barney Rosset, 10 December 1956; Rosset to Labarge, 25 December 1956; NSyU). On 27 December, Labarge replied that although *Molloy* had been considered indecent, Rosset's letter would be treated as an informal request for an appeal (NSyU). Rosset

11 January 1957, Barney Rosset

sent copies of this correspondence to SB. The Canadian prohibition was rescinded on 29 January.

6 Rosset had sent SB a telegram on 19 December 1956: "RADIO SCRIPT MARVELOUS HOW CAN I OBTAIN PUBLISHING PHONOGRAPH AND PERFORMANCE RIGHTS" (NSyU).

John Morris (1895–1980; Profile, II) was Controller of the BBC Third Programme from 1952 to 1958.

7 Carmel Snow (1887–1961), who had met SB in Dublin in 1937, was Editor-in-Chief of *Harper's Bazaar* from 1932 through 1957. *Harper's Bazaar* had shown interest in publishing *Murphy* in 1946 (SB to Thomas McGreevy, 7 July 1937; TCD, MS 10402/128; 1 September 1946). Snow had arranged for SB to be photographed by Brassai; the photograph was published in *Harper's Bazaar* (May 1957) 143.

8 Robert Pinget (1919–1997; Profile, II) wrote of the experience of working on the French translation of *All that Fall* with SB in his (unpublished) memoir written mostly in 1960 (Doucet, unclassified Pinget Collection, "Notre ami Samuel Beckett"):

All That Fall est une petite pièce et c'est pour m'être utile qu'il m'a demandé ce service. Il me faisait l'honneur d'associer mon nom au sien pour la publication dans la revue des Lettres Nouvelles dont le directeur Maurice Nadeau lui avait demandé un texte. Cet honneur s'est renouvelé plusieurs fois par la suite. C'est tout juste si je m'en suis rendu compte sur le moment. Beckett est venu chez moi pour travailler à All That Fall: c'était la première fois que je le recevais. J'avais fait tant bien que mal une sorte de dégrossissage du texte et il me fallait son avis pour une multitude de choses. Il a ensuite entièrement repris ma traduction, ma connaissance de l'anglais étant encore plus que rudimentaire, ce qui lui aura donné double travail. Il a insisté pour que mon nom figure également sur la publication de Minuit. Ces sortes de gestes, quand on pense à l'importance qu'accorde Sam au moindre mot qu'il écrit, sont inoubliables. J'ai retiré un grand bénéfice de cette collaboration. L'honnêteté de ce travailleur acharné, sa précision, son refus de se laisser aller à la moindre faiblesse quand il s'agit d'écrire, m'ont confirmé ce que je savais sur le soin qu'on doit apporter à ce qu'on fait. Travail en profondeur, toujours plus en profondeur. (11–12.) (*All That Fall* is a small play, and it was to be helpful to me that he asked this favour of me. He was doing me the honour of putting my name alongside his for publication in the review *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, whose Editor, Maurice Nadeau, had asked him for a text. This honour has come my way more than once since then. I hardly took it in at the time. Beckett came to my flat to work on *All That Fall* – the first time he'd been there. I had done a first sort of run-through of the text, and needed his advice on heaps of things. He then went back over the whole of my translation, my knowledge of English being worse than rudimentary, which will have doubled his work. He insisted that my name too should appear on the Minuit publication. These sorts of gestures, when one thinks of the importance Sam gives to the slightest word he writes, are unforgettable. I benefited enormously from this collaboration. The honesty of this most determined of workers, his precision, his refusal to give in to the faintest weakness when it comes to writing, confirmed what I already knew of the care that must be taken in what one does. Work in depth, in ever greater depth.)

9 A selection of poems from SB's *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (Paris: Europa Press, 1935) was published in the first issue of *Evergreen Review* (1.1 [December 1957])

11 January 1957, Barney Rosset

179–192). In the same issue was published “Dante and the Lobster” (24–36), the first story in SB’s *More Pricks Than Kicks* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1934).

SB’s sentence about “Dante and the Lobster” appears in the top margin of the letter, with a line pointing to where it is to be inserted. Neither republication gives the date of composition.

10 George Devine (1910–1966; Profile, II) wished to produce *Fin de partie* in English at the Royal Court Theatre. As had been the case with *Waiting for Godot*, SB anticipated that the Lord Chamberlain’s Office might refuse to grant a license for a London production unless there were cuts to the text. The New Watergate Theatre Club was formed in 1956 to present “outstanding plays ... for which no licence for public performance in this country has been granted” (“The Comedy as a Club Theatre,” *The Times* 7 September 1956: 3).

11 Directed by Herbert Berghof (1909–1990), this new production of *Waiting for Godot* featured a black cast: Mantan Moreland (1902–1973) as Estragon, Earle Hyman (b. 1926) as Vladimir, Geoffrey Holder (b. 1930) as Lucky, Rex Ingram (1895–1969) as Pozzo, and Bert Chamberlain (n.d.) as the boy. It opened at the Shubert Theatre in Boston on 10 January.

12 Mary Lincoln Bonnell (1929–2013), a sculptor, was Rosset’s companion at this time; here SB writes “Linc,” but in subsequent letters she is referred to as “Link.”

13 Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil (1900–1989; Profile, I) was SB’s partner.

MARGUERITE DURAS

PARIS

le 12 janvier 1957

Paris

Madame

Je n’avais pas été voir votre pièce au Studio. Je viens de l’écouter à la radio. Elle est merveilleuse, merveilleuse.¹

Samuel Beckett

ALS; 1 leaf, 1 side; Mascolo Collection. Previous publication (facsimile and transcription): Marguerite Duras, *Romans, cinéma, théâtre, un parcours (1943–1993)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997) 521.

12 January 1957

Paris

Dear Mme Duras

I had not been to see your play at the Studio. I have just been listening to it on the radio. It is marvellous, marvellous.¹

Samuel Beckett

12 January 1957, Richard Roud

1 Marguerite Duras's play, which she adapted from her novel *Le Square*, had played at the Studio des Champs-Élysées from 18 September to 3 October 1956 with Kitty Albertini (1926–1986) as Elle, and René-Jacques Chauffard (1920–1972) as Lui, directed by Claude Martin (n.d.). It aired on Paris National Radio on 12 January with the same cast.

RICHARD ROUD

LONDON

12.1.56 [for 1957]

Paris

Dear Round

Thanks for your letter. Sorry for the hitch.¹ Hope you'll be back soon.

Bad news here. The Oeuvre has suddenly backed out of its arrangements with us, preferring to Fin de Partie a God knows what with two film stars (Hossein & Vlady) and solid financial backing. So now we are theatreless. Blin & Martin are effondrés.² So it goes on this turd of an earth.

Suppose now publication will also be held up. I'll send you the book when it appears and let you know how things turn out.³ Vague talk already of the Vieux Colombier (pure delirium) and The Mathurins (Popeye thinking).⁴ Personally don't seem to care very much, except that I feel more like trying to translate the bloody thing here and now.

Glad you like the Renard. For me it's as inexhaustible as Boswell.⁵

Black Godot at Boston – of all tea-parties – last Thursday.⁶ No news to date.

All the best

yrs. ever

Sam. Beckett

ALS; 1 leaf, 2 sides; Smolens Collection. *Dating*: The new production of *Waiting for Godot* with black actors opened in Boston on Thursday, 10 January 1957.

1 Richard Roud (1929–1989; Profile, II), whose name SB here writes as "Round," American film critic, at this time an Instructor of English in the University of Maryland Overseas Extension in England; he became Programme Director of the London Film