HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REVIEWS OF *The Letters of Samuel Beckett Volume I: 1929–1940*

"The most bracing read [of 2009] was *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, 1929–1940*, a portrait of the Dubliner as a young European with a hard gemlike gift for language, learning and mockery. Beckett's genius exercised itself most exuberantly in the correspondence with Thomas MacGreevy, another Irish poet more at home in Paris, his senior but his soulmate. Constantly Beckett is veering between certainty about his need to write and doubt about the results, all expressed in prose that is undoubting, delighted and demanding." Seamus Heaney in "Books of the year 2009," *The Times Literary Supplement*

"This edition of letters has been annotated with knowledge and care, using vast research. It will, for the most part, please admirers of Beckett's art and satisfy those who respect his wishes that only letters which have bearing on his work should appear." Colm Tóibín, *The London Review of Books*

"The editorial work behind this project has been immense in scale. Every book that Beckett mentions, every painting, every piece of music is tracked down and accounted for. His movements are traced from week to week. Everyone he alludes to is identified; his principal contacts earn potted biographies. When he writes in a foreign language, we are given both the original and an English translation . . . The standard of the commentary is of the highest . . . *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* is a model edition." J. M. Coetzee, *The New York Review of Books*

"One of the highlights of the year was the publication of *The Letters of Samuel Beckett Volume I: 1929–1940* . . . Every page is a hoot. Beckett comes across as even smarter, and more smarting, than one already knew." Paul Muldoon in "Books of the Year 2009," *The Times Literary Supplement*

"*Imagination Dead Imagine* is the title of one of his late pieces, but the point is that the Beckettian imagination continued lively to the very end. In that letter to Axel Kaun he placed himself on 'the road toward this, for me, very desirable literature of the non-word,' but a few lines later he states his program with a contrary succinctness: 'Word-storming in the name of beauty.' *The Letters of Samuel Beckett Volume I: 1929–1940* is a preliminary record of that storm." John Banville, *The New Republic*

"Can a writer's letters – occasional and ephemeral as these tend to be – really qualify as great literature? In Beckett's case, yes. For here is the most reticent of twentieth-century writers, one who refused to explain his plays and fictions, wrote almost no formal literary criticism, and refused to attend his own Nobel Prize ceremony – revealing himself in letter after letter as warm, playful, unfailingly polite even at his most vituperative and scatological, irreverent but never cynical, and, above all, a brilliant stylist whose learning is without the slightest pretension or preciosity." Marjorie Perloff, *Bookforum*

"This edition . . . is a triumph. The introductory and supplementary material is well judged and helpful, the annotations and identifications are tirelessly thorough. The later Beckett declared that 'every word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness,' but these letters are packed with wonderfully necessary words." Stefan Collini in "Books of the Year 2009", *The Times Literary Supplement*

"The editorial labor in this first volume is immensely impressive." Denis Donoghue, *The New Criterion*

"The first volume of Beckett's letters, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett Volume I: 1929–1940* (Cambridge), was the funniest, most intelligent and most poignant book I read this year, and since three more volumes are promised by Cambridge University Press we should be moved and entertained for some years to come." Gabriel Josipovici in "Books of the Year 2009," *The Times Literary Supplement*

"This first of a promised four volumes (to include 2,500 out of a total 15,000 items of correspondence) represents already a heroic achievement by the editors who embarked on the project nearly a quarter of a century ago . . . Each letter has demanded a dense undergrowth of notes in minuscule print, providing information on every allusion, every reference, even acknowledging where such information has been sought but not found . . . The editorial team deserves all our thanks for their patience, their stamina and their scholarly rigour." Nicholas Grene, *The Irish Times*

"An elating cultural moment is upon us. It is also a slightly surprising moment. Beckett, in his published output and authorial persona, was rigorously spare and self-effacing. Who knew that in his private writing he would be so humanly forthcoming? We always knew he was brilliant – but this brilliant? . . . The knowledge of what lay ahead for Beckett – the writing of the plays and the great prose fiction – makes one very impatient for the further volumes of letters, almost as if Beckett were in actual correspondence with oneself." Joseph O'Neill, *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* and *The International Herald Tribune*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REVIEWS OF *The Letters of Samuel Beckett Volume II: 1941–1956*

"Here it is: just two years after the first volume, the second instalment of what promises to be one of the great productions of literary scholarship of our time, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* . . . There is in this volume, Gunn tells us, 'a new absence of hostility and recrimination, a lack of grievance towards the world and its inhabitants.' That is true, and it is one of the reasons why this book is so much more enjoyable to read than the first volume . . . This magnificent volume of letters, so painstakingly prepared by the editors, takes us a bit closer to answering those questions." Nicholas Grene, *The Irish Times*

"Not to beat about the bush, here's the book of the year." David Sexton, *London Evening Standard*

"Few writers have been better served by their editors than Samuel Beckett. This sumptuous volume, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett Volume II: 1941–1956*, like its predecessor and the two that will follow, is beautifully designed and laid out, while the editorial apparatus includes lavishly detailed notes, yearly chronologies, an extensive biographical appendix and more than 90 pages of introductory matter, highlighted by a brilliant summary essay by editor Dan Gunn. The letters in French – at least half of them – are followed by English translations. Anyone who admires Beckett will want to read and own this book." Michael Dirda, *The Washington Post*

"This is the second volume of what looks set to be a major achievement of 21st-century publishing, an astonishing work of scholarship, appraisal and documentation . . . The erudite and indefatigable editors have put together an outstanding and illuminating selection from Beckett's correspondence with friends, acquaintances, publishers, translators, all kinds of business associates – all having a bearing, in some sense or other, on the imperishable work." Patricia Craig, *The Independent* (London)

"Few modernist writers speak with such intensity as Beckett does of what was his to love; or have felt so keenly the impossibility of speech and, at the same time, its beauties and exactions . . . The accompanying translations, introductions, notes . . . chronologies and profiles of the principal correspondents make of this volume, like its predecessor, an *embarras de richesses*. It is one for which we are greatly in the editors' debt." Alan Jenkins, *The Times Literary Supplement*

"One more masterly stroke in this landmark project . . . Whether the [subsequent] letters are as moving and entertaining as in the first two volumes remains to be seen. I for one can't wait." Gabriel Josipovici, *The Wall Street Journal*

"Annotated with generous and attentive scholarship . . . What is fascinating in these six hundred pages of correspondence with friends, lovers, publishers, translators, aspiring writers, critics and theatre directors, is the slow meshing in our minds of the Beckett narratives we know with the author's peculiar manner of dealing with people, and also with the aesthetic he sets out to define in pages of the most tortuous prose addressed to the art critic Georges Duthuit. The reader understands, that is, just how bound up with Beckett's personality the work is." Tim Parks, *The London Review of Books*

"A large proportion of the letters in this volume are in French. They are translated with scrupulous panache by George Craig, himself an Irishman, whose Englishing of Beckett's slangy and playful French is pitch-perfect, and whose sparkling 'Translator's Preface' is a highlight of the book . . . the personal, intimate affectionate side of Beckett is much in evidence . . . What these letters celebrate, and do justice to, is the sound of a unique voice, telling the truth." Roy Foster, *The New Republic*

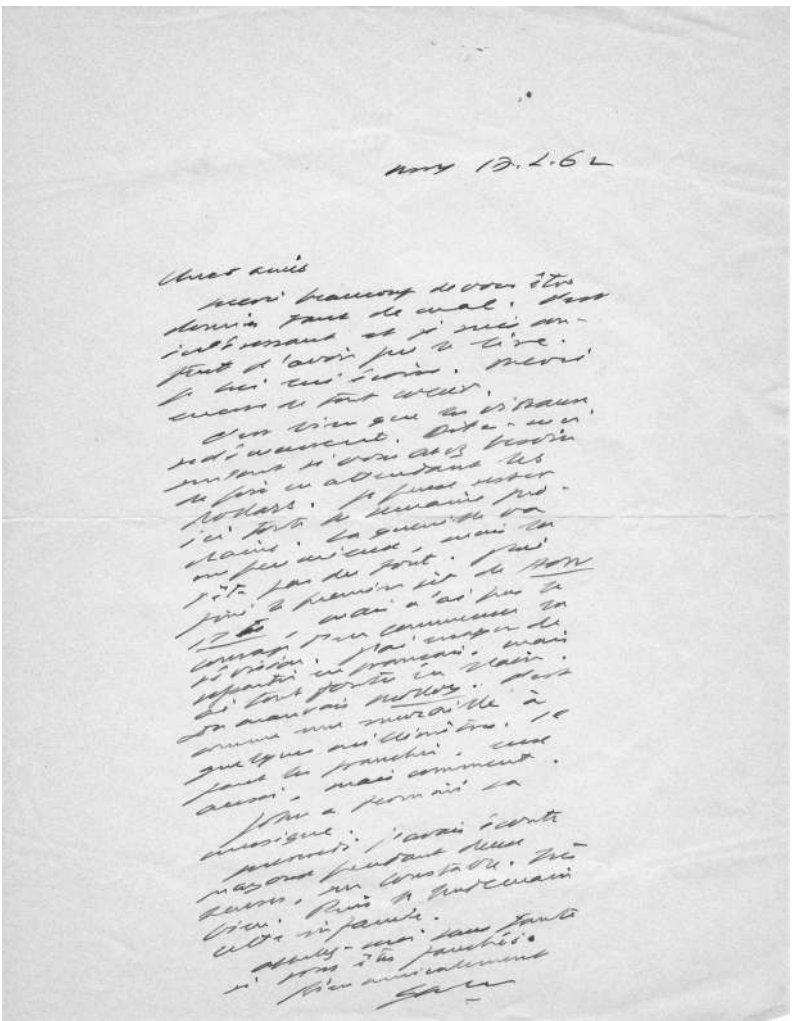
"This is an important work of impeccable scholarship directed not only at Beckett academics but informed fans seeking the man behind *Godot*. This volume is a landmark in our quest to understand Beckett's great esoteric works and has definitely been worth the wait." Brian Odom, *Washington Independent Review of Books*

"Magisterially edited, with George Craig's splendid translations and Dan Gunn's really sensitive introductory essay, all forty pages of it, obvious highlights." John Pilling, *Journal of Beckett Studies*

"*The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume II: 1941–1956* is, like its predecessor, a model of editorial diligence and inspiration. The scholarly apparatus is impeccable. The range of citations of sources boggles the mind – is there *anything* these Four Masters have not followed up and tracked to its lair? And what a marvel the translator, George Craig, has wrought . . . No author, no letter-writer, could have been better served." John Banville, *The New York Review of Books*

THE LETTERS OF SAMUEL BECKETT

Volume I *The Letters of Samuel Beckett: 1929–1940*
Volume II *The Letters of Samuel Beckett: 1941–1956*
Volume III *The Letters of Samuel Beckett: 1957–1965*
Volume IV *The Letters of Samuel Beckett: 1966–1989*



Letter from Samuel Beckett to Avigdor Arikha and Anne Atik,
17 February 1962.
Avigdor Arikha Collection, Lilly Library,
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

THE LETTERS OF SAMUEL BECKETT

Volume III: 1957–1965

George Craig, *Editor and French Translator*

Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, *Founding Editor*

Dan Gunn, *Editor*

Lois More Overbeck, *General Editor*

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ILLUSTRATIONS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Volume III of *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, dealing as it does with the period 1957–1965, reveals a Beckett who, astonished by the critical and commercial success of his plays, finds himself having recourse more than ever before to letters as a way of conveying thoughts, intentions, projects, even aspirations, to his friends and to his ever more numerous colleagues and collaborators – as well as his by now customary doubts and hesitations, about his own work above all. Unlike its predecessor, Volume II, which began after the incomparably important interruption of the War years (during most of which Beckett was hardly able to write or send letters at all), the present volume's points of departure and of closure have something arbitrary about them: readers will find a continuity rather than a break with what comes before and after. Beckett, the author already known in France where he continues to reside, and internationally for the highly successful play *En attendant Godot* / *Waiting for Godot*, goes on during this period to become even more famous, even more admired – despite all his animadversions to the contrary – for this play and for the two long plays that follow it. The first, *Fin de partie* / *Endgame*, though already written by 1957, now receives its premiere; the second, *Happy Days* / *Oh les beaux jours*, occupies – from its composition to its staging – several of the central years and many of the central pages of the present volume. The playwright, recognized also for a series of challenging and obscure novels, goes on to translate much of his work, both from French into English and from English into French; he writes several more short prose works; and he writes an even more challenging novel, which is eventually given the title *Comment c'est* after much deliberation and discussion. He fears this work to be genuinely impenetrable, yet for him it represents the first major step out of an impasse in which he has felt trapped ever since completion of the third volume in his "trilogy" (a trilogy which, as he makes clear here, he did not wish to be called such), *L'Innommable* (*The Unnamable*). These are, after years of what were experienced as drought and blockage, years of comparative flow and

expansiveness, years that see Beckett experimenting in new media too: radio, film, and later television.

There is, indeed, so much going on in Beckett's life during this period – so many productions, foreign visits, foreign guests, so many publications, translations, innovations – that it is at times hard for the reader of his letters to bear in mind the context within which Beckett was moving, the larger processes impinging upon the writer. There are at least two elements which merit mention here, not least because they appear only intermittently in the letters, and almost never in a manner that encourages Beckett himself to attempt an overview. The first of these is personal, and bears upon the possibility of having any sort of a *view*: the author's body, and the challenges it faces as it enters its fifties; Beckett's health problems affect his teeth, his ribs after he falls and breaks several of them, and most importantly of all – in that it afflicts a capacity crucial to a writer – his eyesight. The health worries – and they are set to become still more serious in the four years leading up to his being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in late 1969 – are the more worth mentioning here, in that Beckett himself, in stark contrast to his habit when he was a young man, when physical decrepitude was a major topic of his letters, makes only passing, and often joking, reference to his afflictions.

Nobody who has visited the archives to read Beckett's letters of this period in their original – or we should perhaps say *attempted to read* them – can fail to suspect that his weakening eyesight is a factor contributing to their illegibility. Not that his hand was ever an easy one to decipher; yet, aware of this, he referred to his own "foul fist" and could be seen to be making a conscious effort to write more legibly, or, better still from a reader's point of view, to use a typewriter. Whereas now – and the letters to Barbara Bray from the period of the present volume are the most extreme example of this in the entire corpus, nearly all of them being handwritten rather than typed – the words move across the page, frequently, in a series of strokes and flattening lines that it is hard to imagine even their author being able to discern clearly. And indeed Beckett admits as much, when, just two lines into a letter to Bray (on 17 October 1959) he writes: "At this point of my letter my eyes begin to go, an old trouble. It means a couple of hours mild migraine and semi-blindness. Never know why it comes on. I continue none the less, don't need a clear view of what I'm writing." That Beckett was able to write legibly is attested to by the very existence of the letters collected here, since they did reach their destination: the envelopes

are almost invariably printed clearly. But deciphering has offered challenges to the editors beyond anything experienced heretofore, and has required hours and days and weeks of inspection, re-transcription, re-inspection, and re-re-transcription – indeed at times little short of inspiration – for the full text to reveal itself.

The second element in the larger context that it may be helpful to establish briefly here is not private, and it is one that appears only occasionally in the letters themselves, usually when Beckett is evincing concern for a friend. Whether one dates the origins of the war that pits France against those seeking Algerian independence to 1954, or later, what is certain is that these were violent years for anyone living, as Beckett did, in the French capital, years that led to what almost turned into civil war within France. The General Introduction to Volume II contained a section entitled "The War Years." Clearly, no event had anything like an impact upon Beckett that could compare with that of World War II (which also had the consequence for Beckett the correspondent of producing a four-year hiatus). Yet there is a sense in which "The War Years" would be a meaningful section header for the present volume too, since at least one half of the years covered here were marked, in France at least, by the fact – the brutal fact – of war.

From 1954, France was increasingly preoccupied with the rise of Algerian nationalism, its effects seen at first as no more than local skirmishing, but soon developing into a full-scale war, with the French Army pitted against the nationalists, above all the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale). France was recovering from the humiliating loss of its colonies in what was then called Indochina – Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam – following the defeat of its Army at Dien Bien Phu. To many French people, Algeria was the most highly organized of its colonies, and its loss seemed unimaginable. The government of the day seemed powerless to control the situation, and in early 1958 there were rumours of a possible military coup in Metropolitan France (based on statements attributed to the parachutist General Massu, famous for having started one of these with the words "Moi, Général Massu," deliberately echoing an earlier historic speech by de Gaulle beginning "Moi, Général de Gaulle"). Responding to this crisis, General de Gaulle took power in May 1958, as he had done in the confusion of 1944. His military standing and unblemished reputation reassured many, but the violence continued, as did the tension between the large population of white settlers and the Algerian nationalists. As it became clear that the drive for independence might well succeed, many of the settlers, the

"pieds noirs" as they were called, left Algeria for France, bitterly resentful, and convinced that they had been betrayed by their own government. They were not alone in thinking this.

Two factors emerged to create new dangers. One was evidence of the widespread use of torture by the French Army. The first overview came in Henri Alleg's *La Question* (1958, published by Jérôme Lindon and the Editions de Minuit). There followed book after book of personal testimony: the next was *La Gangrène* (1959), a collection of testimonies by tortured Algerian students, also published by Minuit. Both were seized by the authorities. The best known of these revelations was the earlier (1957) *Lieutenant en Algérie* by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, first Editor of the journal *L'Express*, who had been called up for service in Algeria. The effect of the overwhelming evidence was to divide the nation (in ways dismally reminiscent of the Dreyfus Affair), with conservative opinion on the side of the Army, and the views of intellectuals opposing that. The split was illustrated in the launching of a "Manifeste des 121," signed by that number of prominent intellectuals and artists opposed to the war, further inflaming conservative opinion.

The other important factor was the response of the "pieds noirs." The fiercest of them founded what in any other context would be called a "terrorist organization," the OAS (Organisation Armée Secrète). A catalogue of bomb attacks on those seen as sympathetic to the Algerian cause (and therefore anti-French) showed the lengths to which opponents of independence could go (even de Gaulle was not spared: the failed assassination evoked in *The Day of the Jackal* had a real basis). Two obvious targets were Lindon and the Editions de Minuit, subjected as they were to both legal process (he himself was charged with damaging Army morale) and direct attack by bombs. Others suffering similar attacks included academics such as Jean-Jacques Mayoux. Both these men were friends of Beckett; neither had been a political activist, both were motivated by principle. The recurrent expression of these ideological and political differences in public demonstrations brought in another factor: the almost ineradicable anti-Left attitudes of the police – even a conservative newspaper like *Le Figaro* could speak of the manifest enthusiasm with which the police attacked demonstrators. (One of the editors remembers a Philosophy student at the Ecole Normale Supérieure who took judo lessons solely in order to find a way of surviving the police treatment of demonstrators, especially young ones, all assumed to be "leftist.")

Beckett's characteristic reticence about public affairs cannot conceal the fact that these were years of real terror, not just in Paris. Memories

of the Occupation were still fresh for all except the young, but the streets of the capital now were again dangerous, and the fate of the country worrying. Nothing changed until 1962, when the Accords d'Evian were signed and Algeria was granted independence. The war had ended, but not the divisions. Even Beckett with his characteristic reticence touches on the dire reality of those days, as when he speaks of Suzanne and himself listening out for the latest outrage, "the two of us with our ears glued to Europe No. 1 every hour," for a bulletin that might well signal a military coup; or mentions, to another friend, "Here apparently all quiet again. Tanks etc. gone. Great sigh of relief on coming back late from Odéon last night and hearing news on radio."[1] (That "Tanks etc. gone" must rank as one of Beckett's most remarkable understatements.) There were solid grounds for apprehension. In a desperate attempt to wrest control of Algeria from the French government, four senior officers rebelled on 22 April 1961, claiming that Algiers was now under their exclusive command: Generals Challe, Salan, Zeller (Army), and Jouhaud (Air Force). General de Gaulle invoked Emergency Powers and warned the French people of possible attacks. Support for the Government was widespread and immediate. Faced by this, Challe surrendered on 26 April.

For an understanding of these years, the three essential contextual factors are: (a) from the Algerian side, the gradual strengthening of the militant FLN, after bitter internal struggles among Algerian groups, and in particular its violent opposition to the French treatment of Algerian immigrants; (b) on the French side, the similarly violent response of the Paris police to any dissident, anti-Government activity by Algerians; and (c) the growing importance of the at least equally violent OAS in its total rejection of the idea of Algerian independence, before – and still more after – the signing of the Accords d'Evian, the official end of the war. The activities of the opposition, however fierce, were, of course, non-violent: letters, demonstrations, articles and editorials in the press, books. Each day brought new violence and new responses, not only from professional commentators, academics, and writers, but from priests, teachers, even serving soldiers. The testimony of many of these can be found in *Les belles lettres*, a remarkable, and deeply moving book put together by Charlotte Delbo, a survivor of Auschwitz, and published by the Editions de Minuit. Among the contributors, many previously unknown, are Jean-Paul Sartre, Claude Simon, and Graham

1 Letter to Robert Pinget, 6 February 1960; letter to Barbara Bray of 26 April 1961.

Greene. This was the world in which Beckett was living and working; it is hard not to see a grim relevance in the title of the novel he was writing at this time, *Comment c'est* (*How It Is*).

RESEARCH FOR VOLUME III

As the range and number of Beckett's contacts grows in the period presented here, so too have those of the editors, in their search first to locate the author's letters, then to understand the matter and people to which they make reference. In addition to the numerous libraries and archives mentioned in the Acknowledgments, the editors were often fortunate to receive help from the recipients of Beckett's letters themselves – more in the case of this volume than of earlier ones, for obvious reasons. The painter Avigdor Arikha, for example, in the two years before his death in 2010, devoted much time, and his remarkable memory, to assisting with comprehension of the context of the letters Beckett had addressed to him – assistance that was subsequently extended by his widow, the poet Anne Atik. Judith Schmidt worked in the Grove Press Record archives at Syracuse University alongside the editors before the Grove Press papers were fully catalogued. This was especially helpful as she understood the various stages of publication at the press; Beckett's letters were scattered throughout files related to translation, production, publicity, and reprint and performance rights.

SELECTION, PRESENTATION, AND ANNOTATION

While the principles guiding the editors' selection of the letters to be included in the edition are set out in full in Volume I, it may be helpful to indicate how these principles play out here, where the sheer quantity of materials is so much greater than it was in the early years of Beckett's correspondence. Where Volume I printed approximately 60 percent of the total corpus for the years 1929–1940, and Volume II approximately 40 percent for 1941–1956, here the percentage is a little over 20 percent. It can of course be hard for readers, keen to have access to every word Beckett wrote, to accept that so much has had to be sacrificed. And as it is hard for readers to enjoy the sacrifices, so it can be easy – certain reviews of Volume II indulged in this – to weave elaborate fantasies about the content of what has been lost: Beckett's letters on cricket, his love letters, his letters to his wife, and so on. It behoves the editors to be categorical in stating: first, that the option that might satisfy the truly

hungry Beckett reader – doing a complete letters – was not one they had (not least for the obvious reason that it is too soon for this to be achieved, with letters still surfacing today); second, that they have not suppressed, or in the case of this volume been asked to suppress, any letters whatsoever; and third, that it is not the case (as certain reviewers of earlier volumes assumed) that by the current edition access is blocked to the corpus of letters that have *not* been selected, most of which exist in archives (signalled here) to which the truly curious and determined have access. The editors' choice, it should be repeated, has been made on the basis not of what to exclude, but of what best to *include*: while the latter implies the former, certainly, it nonetheless forms a different basis on which to work. This is so much the case, and the richness of materials is so great during the late 1950s and the 1960s, that the editors have chosen to restrict the range of the present volume to fewer years than originally advertised, ending in 1965 and not, as was earlier announced, in 1967.

This is an edition of Beckett's letters organized according to principles laid down by the author himself before his death, when he asked that letters "having bearing upon my work" be chosen. While the significance of this phrase "bearing upon my work" is endlessly debatable – especially with a writer such as Beckett for whom writing is never a profession but a need, a compulsion even, and where the work and the life are so inseparable – it is not the case that the selection made by the editors has been subject to other occult criteria. There is only a certain number of letters that can fit into four volumes, and in the present case into the nearly 900 pages between the front and the back covers. In response to a few examples that provoked speculation with respect to Volume II, let it be stated again (as it was there): if there are no letters here to the woman Beckett marries during the period covered by the present volume, Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil, this is not because they have been removed by the editors or by the Beckett family, as being judged too private or revelatory; it is rather because, quite simply, these letters do not exist, to the best of the knowledge of both editors and the Beckett family. That Beckett wrote to his partner-then-wife is a certainty; that these letters no longer exist appears, if not a certainty, then at least a very strong probability.

When making their selection, the editors have understood "the work" to be above all the work *literary*. For of course during this period, as a direct consequence of his rapidly increasing popularity, there is an ever growing mass of letters that need to be written about other sorts of

work – work that Beckett must do, however reluctantly. Though he may never have thought of himself as having a "career," he nonetheless does find himself having to manage what to all intents and purposes looks like a career. There are letters to be sent to agents, to publishers he barely knows, to actors he has never met, to enquirers looking for comment on countless subjects on which he has no wish to pronounce. Of the letters not selected for inclusion in the present volume, a high proportion bear upon that aspect of Beckett's work for which the author himself has little taste and at which he often confesses himself hopelessly incompetent, letters which may be summarized in the single word: *business*. This includes scores of letters about contracts, fees, royalties, manuscript sales, and so on. It is not that such letters, written by Beckett for whom no letter was ever wholly perfunctory, are entirely without interest; the information gleaned from them has been indispensable in establishing many of the notes to the letters which were indeed included. Rather, it is that such letters were judged to be less significant acts of writing in their own right, less in themselves literary, than many others, and in this sense less relevant to or revealing of the real *work*.

Rather less clear, and the subject of many letters that have been included as well as of many that have not, is that work which Beckett puts in, not to the composition of this or that story, novel, or play, but to the ways in which these are produced and disseminated. This can go from consideration of book covers, to inclusion of illustrations in his novels, to selection of a font or page size, to the choice of an actor for a particular role in one of his dramas, of a theatre director, or indeed of a theatre: choice, then, of the myriad other elements, as Beckett becomes more and more drawn toward the practicalities of directing his own plays, that turn a play from words on the page into an event on the stage. The quantity of letters in the corpus for this period dealing with matters theatrical is large. The editors have sought to provide a selection that is representative, that enables some narrative continuity to be achieved (and thereby a minimizing of the footnotes), that illustrates the vacillations in Beckett's own attitudes to his deepening involvement in theatre (from fascinated absorption at one extreme to disgusted rejection of the entire world of theatre at the other extreme), and that reveals how deeply enmeshed his affective life becomes with individuals – his preferred actors, of course, but also his producers and directors and set-designers – who themselves live in and for the theatre.

Fortunately, to offset all the work in the world, there is work in the room and on the page, most frequently carried out in the small house in Ussy-sur-Marne to which Beckett retreats. This is, as the Introduction to Volume III makes clear, a period of great and determined productivity for Beckett, often experienced by him as a return to basics, to essentials, to the writing that needs to be committed to paper for his other more worldly dealings to continue to matter. In letter after letter, and with an explicitness and consistency that is unprecedented in his correspondence, Beckett discusses his work in progress – or in regress as he regularly characterizes it, as he destroys draft after draft in order to start over again.

The relative openness with which Beckett writes about his own work here, when added to his increasing familiarity and friendship with many of his correspondents, as well as to the fact that an increasing number of his friends know each other, has two consequences in the presentation of the letters in this volume, of which the reader should be advised. The first consequence, and the less demanding of a reader's attention, is that Beckett makes many more allusions than he did previously to individuals whom he presumes his addressee to know, at times practically giving lists of friends and colleagues he has recently encountered. Letters in English preponderate in the present volume, and adding to the informality is the fact that in English the first name was (and still is) used more readily than in French, as well as the fact that standard practice in both languages over the decades has moved in the direction of greater informality. The result is a veritable proliferation of first names (and occasionally nicknames). It would quickly become tedious were every first name to receive a footnote indicating the family name, yet even an attentive reader can easily forget who is "George" or "Anne." It was judged prudent, therefore, to offer an index of first or familiar names, with surnames following, in the Appendix. It is hoped that in the cases of "Jean" (which can be the French male as it can be the English female first name) and of John (where there are four "John"s to whom Beckett refers), the context will make the individual's identity clear. Where there is a chance of doubt, the editors have erred on the side of caution and offered a footnote.

The second consequence of the increased informality, openness, and frequency of Beckett's letters is that it becomes harder – downright impracticable – to annotate each letter individually, as a discrete entity. Certain discussions, as for example the elaboration of *Comment c'est*, run for more than a year, while discussions of the production of *Warten auf*

Godot in Berlin in 1965 may not last as long but are spread over numerous correspondents. The editors have chosen to presume that, while a reader may sometimes wish to dip in and sample a letter here or there, the bulk of readers will wish to read sequentially; and that, therefore, an issue under discussion, whether a novel being written and re-written or a play being pulled apart as it is being produced, need not be explained or cross-referenced every time it appears. So, for example, when on 20 May 1961 Beckett says, "Poor John is still up to his neck in plaster, and will be for a long time yet," it is presumed that the reader will remember that it is John Beckett who has been injured in a car accident. When Jean-Jacques Mayoux's apartment is bombed in February 1962, the incident is given a full note in the first reference to it, in a letter to Mayoux himself; it goes footnote-free in subsequent mentions in letters to others. Beckett begins his letter of 30 March 1958 to Alan Schneider by saying he is "glad you like the monologue," and goes on to give several indications concerning his current work. As most of the explanatory details have already been furnished in previous letters (including those of 26 February and 7 March to Donald McWhinnie), the information is not given twice. The implication should be clear: the reader's first instinct, when something is judged insufficiently explicit in a letter or footnote, should be to read, or re-read, the letters immediately preceding; failing this, the Index of first names, as already mentioned, is there to help identify individuals; and this in turn can be supplemented by the Index proper which can further assist in the tracking of an individual's path through the volume.

There is one final aspect to Beckett's range of relationships that merits mention here, generative as it has been of hesitation and debate on the part of the editors – an awkwardness indeed (and one that pertains not only to Beckett). It is simply: how to call – what name to give to – the women who enter his life, when these women are more than "merely" friends or acquaintances? In 1961, Beckett marries the woman he has been living with since shortly before the Second World War, Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil: the "companion" or "partner" becomes the "wife," that much is so ostensibly uncontroversial; though to anyone interested primarily in the biographical, even this simple fact and the terms it implies will beg for qualification. What name to give to the status of the woman he meets early in the present volume, Barbara Bray, with whom he will continue to spend at least part of his days and weeks and years up until his death in 1989? His "companion"? His "lover"? His "mistress"? His "principal mistress" (as one biographer of Beckett has called her)? Then, what name to give to the figure to whom

he is increasingly drawn in the final year of the present volume, Jocelyn Herbert, and to whom he will become intimately attached in 1966? Then again, what name to give to the man in Jacoba van Velde's life when Beckett is writing to her during the years covered by the volume, or to the woman with whom Beckett's American publisher Barney Rosset was involved at the start of 1957? The modern resonances of the available terms, *companion/lover/partner/man-friend/mistress* (this last lacking its male counterpart), can be misleading. The editors have therefore gone back and forth, trying this term and then that, finally admitting a defeat whose sting has been mitigated only by their sense that defeat is perhaps inevitable when writing of an era when private lives could remain largely private, and when the individuals involved, not least Beckett himself, seem to have deployed considerable energy in attempting to prevent any of the convenient appellations from hardening into life-sentences.

Editorial policy has been, here as in earlier volumes, to publish certain letters that have already been published (often in less than ideal transcriptions), such as letters to Alan Schneider or to Barney Rosset. However, the fact of a letter's being publicly available in print has added a further chance of this letter's *not* being included, unless seen to be of particular interest – an interest offered here not least by the new context provided by the letters written to others that now surround it.

As in previous volumes, letters are presented here as they were written, and include Beckett's idiosyncratic spelling, his omissions – for example of diacritics in French (parait-il for paraît il, ca for ça) – and his punctuation preferences. There are frequent misspellings of proper names: McGowran for MacGowran; Jérome for Jérôme; Gauthier for Gautier; Hüsserl for Husserl. Beckett frequently uses a surname of a couple in the singular, sometimes following French practice to identify the couple, sometimes to identify only one of the couple: the Gilbert, the Hayden, the Barrault.

The letters, that is to say, appear as they were received, in their final state, by those to whom they were sent. Only when a correction made by Beckett is judged as being of special significance is the correction noted. Throughout, the editors have endeavoured to interrupt the flow of the letters as rarely and as little as possible. Their choice of whether to remark on an oddity within the body of a letter, using square brackets (as in [*for* clearer] or [sic]) or to relegate a comment or correction to a footnote has largely been dictated by this principle of minimizing

interruption. Where the editors cannot be certain, either of their reading of a word or of an intended Beckett name or term, their interpolation is preceded by a question mark. Only in the case of letters from authors other than Beckett have trivial errors, such as typos, been silently corrected. In this volume, unlike in Volume II which contained whole letters from Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil, all letters are from Beckett's own hand. However, some contain passages written by others, and these are signalled by their appearing in italics. Beckett received lists of questions, particularly from translators and bibliographers, and he often wrote his replies directly on the pages containing the lists; the questions are presented here in italics, and Beckett's responses in roman.

Every letter has, preceding it, the name of its addressee as well as of the place to which it was sent (where this is known). The date on which, and the place in which, the letter was composed are given as written, as is Beckett's signature. Postscripts appear after the signature, with their placement noted if it differs from this. A note following each letter provides a description of the physical document and of its current whereabouts. There follows, where relevant, a note concerning the letter's previous publication and an explanation of the date assigned to the letter where this is not explicit. Dating and place supplied by the editors are given within square brackets, with uncertainties acknowledged.

Where in previous volumes the editors' selection of letters and passages was not always accepted by the Samuel Beckett Estate, for this volume responsibility for the selection lies solely with the editors.

LACUNAE

While the editors have built up a corpus of copies of nearly 20,000 letters written by Samuel Beckett, it is certainly the case that there remain letters by and to him which have not yet surfaced. There are also certain – fortunately few – collections to which the editors have had no, or only limited, access. Such is the case with two letters to William York Tindall, Professor at Columbia University. In 1963, Tindall sent questions which appear to have been answered by Beckett in two parts. These letters are now in unidentified private hands, so the editors cannot consult, still less quote from, these. By far the most important collection to which the editors have not had access is constituted by the more than 300 letters addressed to Josette and Henri Hayden, sold at

auction by Sotheby's in 2008. Through intermediaries, the editors have repeatedly asked the purchaser of this collection for access to it. Regrettably for the entire community of readers of Beckett, this access has been denied by the current owner, whose identity remains unknown both to the editors and to the Beckett Estate.