



The Essential Samuel Beckett: An Illustrated Biography, Revised Edition

By Enoch Brater

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Samuel Beckett was one of the truly seminal and influential writers of the 20th century. The Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to him in 1969 symbolized his acceptance by the international community. He is undoubtedly a 'difficult' writer, and one of the virtues of Enoch Brater's concise literary biography is to give the general reader easier access to Beckett's work, particularly his later and more elliptical theatre and prose pieces. Professor Brater follows Beckett's career from the early days in Ireland, to the efflorescence in France just after the Second World War, and beyond that to the unfolding of his success in the rest of the world following the universal appeal of his cryptic, moving play *Waiting for Godot*. In his analysis of the way Beckett approaches his work, Brater emphasises the Irish rhythms in his writing, and examines, at all stages, the intriguing relationships between his fiction and his compositions for theatre, film and television. Supported by a large selection of photographs, personal and public, this is a brilliant and informed study of Beckett's life and works.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

For writers, the face of Samuel Beckett, in all its graven, leathery, wrinkled severity, remains an object of great aspiration—it seems to be what a writer's face should look like. So it's fitting that this updated biography of the self-conscious author and playwright offers so many photos. Moving from Beckett's youth in Ireland, through his Parisian years and into his world fame, the text presents a fairly straightforward, if episodic and lightly organized, narrative of the absurdist's ascension, without much in the way of probing speculation, but plenty of detail. "Beckett made his only known stage appearance in a short skit he wrote after his return to Trinity with George Pelorson, an exchange student from Paris," opens one paragraph, by the end of which Beckett has graduated from school. Filled with asides and passing critical commentary, the text meanders alongside the photographs to draw a picture of Beckett's emotional, intellectual and professional dimensions, settling finally on the story of *Waiting for Godot* and its global acclaim. The candid photo diary segues into production stills from early performances, and later ones featuring celebrity casts, and the text becomes increasingly impersonal. At moments, this book feels cobbled together from a slim archive of images, but for the Beckett completist it offers a wealth of rich material. 122 illustrations.

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Review

"After reading this book one has a true sense of the whole of Beckett's genius."

"122 photographs, personal and public, make the text breathe with life."

About the Author

Enoch Brater is the Kenneth T. Rowe Collegiate Professor of Dramatic Literature, Professor of English and Theater at the University of Michigan and the series editor of Methuen Drama's Miller scholarly editions. He has written extensively on the work of Samuel Beckett and Arthur Miller.

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