

Samuel Beckett:

A Collection of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Beckett, Samuel, 1906-1989
Title:	Samuel Beckett Collection
Dates:	1864, 1930-1990
Extent:	10 boxes (4.17 linear feet), 1 galley folder, and 1 oversize box
Abstract:	The collection is composed primarily of Beckett works, including drafts of <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1952) in the original French and the English translation, <i>All That Fall</i> (1956), <i>Watt</i> (1953), and <i>Whoroscope</i> (1930). Also present is correspondence between Beckett and Kay Boyle, Andreas Brown, and others.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-00297
Languages:	Material written in English and French.
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Processed by	Chelsea S. Jones
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Samuel Barclay Beckett was born April 13, 1906, at his family's home in Foxrock, south of Dublin. He was educated at Miss Ida Elsner's Academy in Stillorgan, the Earlsfort House School in Dublin, and the Portora Royal School in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland (1919-1923). He began his law studies at Trinity College in order to become an accountant in his family's architectural surveyance firm, but in his third year he started studying modern languages, particularly French. His studies improved so markedly that he won a scholarship to pass the summer in France before his senior year, and he graduated first in his class in modern languages in 1927.

Following his graduation, Beckett taught at Campbell College in Belfast (1927-1928) and the École Normale Supérieure in Paris (1928-1930). During his stay in Paris, he established relationships with many important literary figures of his day, including Thomas MacGreevy, Richard Aldington, Brian Coffey, Denis Devlin, George Reavey, Samuel Putnam, Nancy Cunard, Sylvia Beach, and, most significantly for Beckett, James Joyce.

Beckett's early writings such as *Whoroscope* (1930), *Proust* (1931), *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934), *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (1935), and *Murphy* (1938) won him neither fame nor money. Despite his love for Paris and his periodic stays in Germany, France, and London, Beckett's financial straits repeatedly constrained him to return to live with his disapproving family in Dublin, where he became subject to mental breakdowns and frequent, severe bouts of depression.

Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, Beckett worked as a reviewer and translator for various magazines and projects, including Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology* (1934). He became increasingly interested in modern drama as he observed productions of the Dramiks, a Dublin troupe, and contemplated writing his own plays. In October 1940, he became a member of the French Resistance, and he and Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil (who he married in 1961) were forced to flee to unoccupied France in August 1942. The French rewarded his courage in 1945 with the *Croix de Guerre* and the *Médaille de la Résistance*.

During the late 1940s, Beckett began to write many of his works in French, including *Molloy* (1951), *Malone meurt* (1951), and the play that finally won him international fame, *En attendant Godot* (1952). Other works that helped to establish Beckett's reputation include *L'Innomable* (1953), *Watt* (1953), *Fin de partie* (1957), and *Krapp's Last Tape* (1960). After 1960, Beckett's works became increasingly brief, but he remained prolific until his death on December 22, 1989. Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1969.

Sources

For further information on the life and writings of Samuel Beckett, see:

- Andonian, Cathleen Culotta. *Samuel Beckett: A Reference Guide*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1989.
 - Bair, Deidre.
 - "Samuel Beckett." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1982. 13.1: 52-70 and 15.1: 13-32.
 - *Samuel Beckett: A Biography*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.
 - Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
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Scope and Contents

Holograph and typescript works make up the bulk of the Samuel Beckett Collection, 1930-1990, supplemented by his correspondence. The collection is organized into three series, arranged alphabetically and chronologically where possible: Series I. Works, 1930-1987 (7 boxes); Series II. Correspondence, 1864, 1935-1989 (1.5 boxes); and Series III. Works and Correspondence by other Authors, 1959-1990 (1.5 boxes). This collection was previously accessible through a card catalog, but has been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The Works Series contains a wide range of Beckett's writing, including poems, stories, and plays, spanning most of his writing career. Drafts of both the French *En attendant Godot* and English *Waiting for Godot* are present, as are versions of *All That Fall*, *Comment c'est*, *Krapp's Last Tapes*, and *Watt*. A holograph version of *Whoroscope* is also present.

The Correspondence Series is divided into Outgoing Correspondence and Incoming Correspondence. Outgoing Correspondence includes letters from Beckett to friends and associates, including Kay Boyle, Andreas Brown, Aidan Higgins, Mary Manning Howe, John Kobler, and others. The few pieces of Incoming Correspondence include letters from Boyle, Brown, John Calder, Ltd., and Kobler. Of note in the Outgoing Correspondence is an 1864 letter from British M.P. Charles Stewart Parnell to Richard Kelly, owner and editor of the *Taum Herald*, included with a Beckett letter to Jack MacGowran.

All Beckett correspondents are listed in the Index of Correspondents at the end of this guide.

The Works and Correspondence by other Authors Series is divided between works and letters. The works include holograph and typescript drafts of A Poem for Samuel Beckett, by Kay Boyle, a thesis by Magessa O'Reilly, lists of holding by other institutions with Beckett collections, publication announcements, and essays and interviews by various Beckett scholars. The correspondence and all of the literary works in this series are listed in the Index of Correspondence and Index of Works by other Authors found at the end of this finding aid. Elsewhere in the Ransom Center are 10

Vertical Files containing newspaper clippings with biographical information and literary criticism in addition to published works by Beckett.

Related Material

Other materials associated with Samuel Beckett may be found in the following collections at the Ransom Center:

- Beckett, Samuel/Lake Collection
 - Cunard, Nancy
 - Duncan, Ronald Frederick Henry
 - Fletcher, John/Beckett, Samuel/Lake Collection
 - Hone, Joseph Maunsell
 - Hutchinson, Mary
 - Leventhal, A.J.
 - *New Departures*
 - Reavey, George
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Index Terms

Correspondents

Boyle, Kay
Brown, Andreas
Higgins Aidan, 1927- .
Howe, Mary Manning
John Calder, Ltd.
Kobler, John

Subjects

Authors, Irish--20th century
Playwright, Irish

Document Types

Galley proofs

Series I. Works, 1930-1987

Act Without Words (Acte sans paroles), holograph with author edits, 1957, 2pp	box 1 folder 1
All Strange Away, two typescripts and layout notes, 1976, 30pp	folder 2
<i>All That Fall</i>	
Bound holograph with author revisions, 1956, 51pp	box 1 folder 3
Bound typescript with author emendations, 1956, 26pp	folder 4
<i>Anthology of Mexican Poetry</i> , typescript with author emendations and notes, 1950, 784pp	folder 5
Au loin un oiseau, typescript page proof with author note, 1973, 8pp	folder 6
<i>Beginning to End</i> , typescript with author revisions, ca. 1970, 41pp	folder 7
Breath, holograph, 1969, 1p	folder 8
Le Calmant, holograph notebook with author revisions and notes, 1946, 45pp	folder 9
<i>Comment c'est</i>	
Holograph in six notebooks with author revisions and notes, 1958-1960, 477pp	box 1 folder 10-11
Typescript with author revisions, nd, 88pp	box 2 folder 1
Typescript with author revisions, nd, 85pp	folder 2
Typescript with minor author revisions, nd, 88pp	folder 3

<i>Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates</i> , printed with author annotations, 1935, 19pp	box 3 folder 1
<i>Eleutheria</i>	
Holograph with author revisions and notes in two bound notebooks, 1947	box 3 folder 2
Typescript with author notes, 1946, 135pp	folder 3
<i>Embers</i> , three typescripts with author revisions, one script is a French translation, 1959, 37pp	folder 4
<i>En Attendant Godot</i> --See <i>Waiting for Godot</i>	
Endgame, holograph notebook with author edits, 1957	box 3 folder 5
L'Expulse, holograph notebook with author revisions and notes, 1946,	folder 6
Footfalls, typescript, nd, 7pp	folder 7
From an abandoned work, holograph with author edits, ca. 1954, 32pp	folder 8
<i>Happy Days</i> , two typescripts, nd, 64pp	folder 9
<i>L'Innommable</i> , two holograph bound notebooks with author revisions and notes, 1949-1950, 302pp	folder 10
<i>L'Innommable</i> cont.	box 4 folder 1
<i>Krapp's Last Tapes</i> , six typescripts and page proofs, includes French translation, page proofs include <i>Embers</i> 1958-1959, 76pp	folder 2
<i>Malone Dies</i> , typescript with author edits and notes, 1956, 159pp	folder 3
<i>Mercier et Camier</i> , typescript with author note, ca. 1947, 151pp	folder 4

Molloy

Holograph in four notebooks with author emendations, 1947, 388pp **box 4
folder
5-7**

Molloy cont. **box 5 folder 1**

Murphy, typescript with author edits and notes, 1936, 192pp **folder 2**

Not I

Typescript with author revisions, 1972, 9pp **box 5
folder 3**

Typescript, with *Krapp's Last Tape*, nd, 23pp **folder 4**

Play, typescript, nd, 17pp **folder 5**

Project I: Three original motion picture scripts by Samuel Becket, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter. Untitled film script, signed photocopy in loose leaf folio, 1964? **box
10
folder
7**

Premier Amour, holograph with extensive author edits and note, 1946, 38pp **box 5
folder
6**

Textes pour rien, two holograph notebooks with author revisions, 1950-1951, 82pp **folder
7**

That Time, typescript, nd, 9pp **folder 8**

The Unnamable

Three holograph notebooks with author emendations and deletions, 1957-1958 **box 5
folder
9**

Typescript with author edits and note, 1958, 146pp **folder 10**

Typescript and extract, nd **box 10 folder 4**

- Voyage de mercier et camier autour du pot dans les bosquets de Bondy, two holograph notebooks with author revisions and note, 1945 **box 6
folder 1**
- Waiting for Godot*,
- En Attendant Godot*, holograph with author emendations, nd, 150pp **box 6
folder 2-3**
- Two English holograph notebooks with author emendations, nd, 163pp **folder 4**
- Watt*
- Seven holograph notebooks with author edits and additions, includes *Malone Muert* in notebooks 5 and 7, 1940-1948, 1267pp **box 6
folder 5-7**
- Seven holograph notebooks (cont.) **box 7 folder 1-4**
- Typescript with author revisions and note, nd, 231pp **folder 5-6**
- Whoroscope*, holograph with author revisions and note, 1930, 5pp **folder 7**

Series II. Correspondence, 1864, 1935-1989

Outgoing Correspondence, 1864, 1935-1989

A-Z	box 8 folder 1
Beary, John, 1963	folder 2
Bouton, Grace 1981-1989	box 10 folder 6
Boyle, Kay	
1957-1966	box 8 folder 3
1967-1975	folder 4
1976-1982	folder 5
1983-1989	folder 6
Brown, Andreas, 1973-1977	folder 7
Gillespie, Michael, 1983	box 10 folder 5
Hayman, David, 1955-1982	box 8 folder 8
Higgins, Aidan, 1951-1965	folder 9
Howe, Mary Manning	
1939-1981	box 8 folder 10
1982-1989	folder 11
Kobler, John	
1966-1972	box 9 folder 1
1973-1989	folder 2
MacGowran, Jack, 1864, 1960-1972	folder 3
Manning, Susan, 1950-1981	folder 4
Ussher, Arland, 1935-1950	folder 5

Incoming Correspondence, 1959-1989

folder
6

Series III. Works and Correspondence by other Authors, 1959-1990

Works

A-Z

box 9 folder 7

Boyle, Kay, A Poem for Samuel Beckett, holograph and typescript drafts and notes, 1979-1981, 58pp

**folder
8**

O'Reilly, Magessa, "Formes et Rythmes Romanesques Dans "Molloy", "Comment c'est" et Compagnie de Samuel Beckett," typescript in French of thesis, 1990, 351pp

**box
10
folder
1-2**

Correspondence

folder 3

Samuel Beckett Collection--Index of Correspondents

Box and folder numbers are followed by a number in parentheses which indicates the number of items by that person. A single item is indicated where there is no number in parentheses following the box and folder number. Where there is correspondence from Samuel Beckett, the number in parentheses is followed by the phrase "from Beckett." So in the example:

Brown, Andreas--8.7 (9 from Beckett), 9.7 (8), 10.3 (8), Oversize Box 1 (3 from Beckett, 4)

there are 9 letters from Beckett to Brown in box 8, folder 7, 8 letters from Brown in box 9, folder 7, 8 letters from Brown in box 10, folder 3, and 3 letters from Beckett to Brown and 4 letters from Brown in Oversize Box 1.

- Beary, John--8.2 (2 from Beckett)
- Blake, Mitchell--8.1 (from Beckett)
- The Book Society--10.3
- Boyle, Kay--8.3-6 (139 from Beckett), 9.7, 10.3
- Brown, Andreas--8.7 (9 from Beckett), 9.7 (8), 10.3 (8), Oversize Box 1 (3 from Beckett, 4)
- Calder and Boyars, Ltd (firm)--10.3 (2)
- Coe, Richard N.--10.3
- Frank, Nino--8.1 (from Beckett)
- Grove Press--8.1 (from Beckett), 10.3 (2)
- Hayman, David--8.8 (21 from Beckett)
- Higgins, Aidan, 1927- --8.9 (33 from Beckett)
- Howe, Mary Manning--8.10-11 (64 from Beckett)
- Hudspeth(?)--8.1 (from Beckett)
- John Calder, Ltd.--8.1 (9 from Beckett), 9.7 (7), 10.3
- Kobler, Evelyn--8.1 (from Beckett)
- Kobler, John--9.1-2 (90 from Beckett), 9.7
- MacGowran, Gloria--9.3, 10.3
- MacGowran, Jack, 1918-1973--9.3 (59 from Beckett)
- Manning, Susan--9.4 (22 from Beckett)
- Olphant Press--10.3 (3)
- Richar-Rivier, Georges--10.3
- St. Peter's College, Oxford--10.3
- Schwartz, Jake--8.1 (23 from Beckett)
- Seaver, Dick--8.1 (from Beckett)
- Theatre Manager for Paris Beckett Festival--8.1 (2 from Beckett)
- Trinity University (Dublin, Ireland). Library--10.3
- Ussher, Areland--9.5 (18 from Beckett)
- Wenning, Henry--8.1 (from Beckett)

Samuel Beckett Collection--Index of Works by other Authors

- Boyle, Kay
 - A Poem for Samuel Beckett--9.8
- Gotham Book Mart
 - *All Strange Away* colophon--9.7
 - Announcement of *All Strange Away* --9.7
- Hayman, Ronald
- Interview with Martin Held--9.7
- Kroniek van Kunst en Kultur
- Review of Three Novels by Samuel Beckett--9.7
- Ohio State University
- List of Beckett holdings--9.7
- O'Reilly, Magessa
- "Formes et Rythmes Romanesques Dans "Malloy", "Comment C'Est " et Compagnie de Samuel Beckett"--10.1-2
- Parnell, Charles Stewart, 1846-1891
- 6 August 1864 letter to Richard Kelly, owner and editor of the *Taum Herald* (included with a Becket letter to Jack MacGowran)--9.3
- Tindall, William York
- Beckett's Bums--9.7
- Unidentified author
- Corrections to Samuel Beckett text--9.7
- Washington University Libraries
- List of Beckett holdings--9.7