

Titles in the Samuel Beckett series

ENDGAME

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SAMUEL BECKETT

More Pricks than Kicks

Edited by Cassandra Nelson

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faber and faber

Preface

'You seem to be installed quite comfortably at the Trianon', Samuel Beckett observed in a November 1931 letter to Thomas McGreevy, the Irish poet and critic, whose penurious literary life in Paris seemed vastly preferable to his own steady but unfulfilling appointment as a lecturer in French at Trinity College Dublin.¹ Within three months, Beckett decided to follow his friend abroad. In another letter to McGreevy, written shortly before he left Ireland, he laid out his plan:

I have had to reintegrate my father's roof for a few days but am off, malgré tout et malgré tous [despite everything and everyone], immediately after Noel, via Ostend, somewhere into Germany, as far as Cologne anyway, next Saturday night from North Wall, not to return I hope (& entre nous [between ourselves]) for many months, though I have not resigned from Trinity. If I have to let them down, tant pis [too bad]. [. . .] It's madness really to go away now with the exchange u.s.w. [and so on] but it really is now or never. And as usual I'm not burning any boats! I'm hoping to spit fire at them from a distance.²

In Germany for Christmas and the New Year to see his aunt, Cissie Sinclair, and her family in Kassel, Beckett abruptly resigned his post at Trinity by telegram only a few weeks before the start of the Hilary term. He left at the end of January for Paris.

That spring Beckett had his first chance to devote his energies wholly to his fiction. He used it to write the novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, parts of which would be reworked for reuse in *More Pricks than Kicks*. Most mornings between March and May found Beckett in his room at the Hôtel Trianon, surrounded by dictionaries, etymologies, biblical concordances, and other

reference books useful for employing the allusive and accretive style he then favoured. Also to hand were a well-worn study copy of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and a notebook he had filled with striking words and phrases encountered in his reading; these he checked off one by one as they were put to use in his fiction. *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* emerged in a matter of weeks, a veritable 'white heat' of composition.³

While in Paris, Beckett also undertook translation work for a special Surrealist issue of Eugene Jolas's magazine *transition*, and sold a translation of Rimbaud's 'Le Bateau ivre' to Edward Titus, editor of *This Quarter*. In July, he used the remuneration to go to London and make the rounds of publishers. He offered the manuscript first to Charles Prentice, the editor at Chatto & Windus who had accepted his short monograph on *Proust* for their Dolphin Books series in 1930. Since that time, Prentice had become a trusted and constructive critic of Beckett's fiction, whose comments were highly valued although he had yet to accept any of the stories or poems offered to him.⁴ Beckett undertook revisions to *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* based on Prentice's comments but, even so, the manuscript was rejected.

Among the other houses he tried were Hogarth Press, Wishart, Jonathan Cape, and Grayson & Grayson. The waiting for an answer was as distressing as the rejection that came, sooner or later, from each, leading Beckett to complain to McGreevy, 'I'm tired of being held up by discourteous bastards who won't let me know where I am.'⁵ For most firms, the decision to accept or reject *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* was not a close one. English publishers were at the time acutely aware of the accusations of pornography being leveled at *Ulysses*, and the word 'indecent' featured prominently in a number of readers' reports, including this one by Edward Garnett for Jonathan Cape:

I wouldn't touch this with a barge-pole. Beckett probably is a clever fellow, but here he has elaborated a slavish and rather incoherent imitation of Joyce, most eccentric in

language and full of disgustingly affected passages – also *indecent*: this school is damned – and you wouldn't sell the book even on its title. Chatto was right to turn it down.⁶

Beckett fared little better in his search for paid work as a critic and book reviewer (for along with his lectureship at Trinity he had relinquished a salary of £200 p.a.). By late August, he had run out of money and was forced to return to his family's home at Cooldrinagh, in the Dublin suburb of Foxrock. Before he left London, he sent a short story entitled 'Dante and the Lobster' – separate from *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, though sharing with it a central protagonist, Belacqua Shuah – to Edward Titus in Paris. Six weeks later, word of the story's acceptance reached him in Ireland.⁷

In Foxrock Beckett also received the last of the rejections of *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. 'The novel doesn't go', he reported in October:

Shatton & Windup thought it was wonderful but they couldn't they simply could not. The Hogarth Private Lunatic Asylum rejected it the way Punch would. Cape was écoeuré [disgusted] in pipe & cardigan and his Aberdeen terrier agreed with him. Grayson has lost it or cleaned himself with it. Kick his balls off, they are all over 66 Curzon St. W.I.⁸

Without necessarily giving up hope or desire that *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* might someday be published, he set aside the manuscript and instead began work on a set of interlocked stories, also centring on Belacqua. In this, he was not starting from scratch. 'Dante and the Lobster' was already complete and scheduled to appear in *This Quarter*; it would be revised only slightly for inclusion in *More Pricks than Kicks*. Beckett also had a version of the story 'Walking Out', which may have been written as early as the summer of 1931, that is, prior to the composition of *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. In addition, two sections from the latter were extracted more or less intact and

made to stand on their own; these became 'A Wet Night' and 'The Smeraldina's Billet Doux'.

At Cooldrinagh, Beckett's experience of writing was very different from his experience in Paris. There was no 'white heat' of composition, only a slow and unsatisfactory plodding. 'This writing is a bloody awful grind', he told McGreevy. 'I did two more "short stories", bottled climates, comme ça sans conviction [anyhow, with no conviction], because one has to do something or perish with ennui.'⁹ Progress was slow, and, for a time, work on the stories ceased completely. Beckett returned to them only reluctantly, believing that at least a dozen would be needed to form a publishable collection: 'But it is all jigsaw and I am not interested.'¹⁰ Nine months after returning home, he had only five stories.¹¹

When not writing, Beckett spent his time translating poems and prose from the French for Nancy Cunard's *Negro: An Anthology*, reading widely – including novels by Fielding and Swift, whose satirical impulses would find their way into several stories in *More Pricks than Kicks* – and cycling or walking for hours through the hills and fields around Dublin.¹² It was, for several reasons, a difficult summer. The return home had been an unwelcome defeat, a repetition of the boomerang pattern that had already twice brought Beckett away from and back to Ireland more rapidly than he had intended. Belacqua Shuah's travels are marked by a similar trajectory. In 'Ding-Dong', the narrator tells us that Belacqua subscribed to 'the belief that the best thing he had to do was to move constantly from place to place. [. . .] The simplest form of this exercise was boomerang, out and back; nay, it was the only one that he could afford for many years.' Beckett also had troubles with his health and underwent a double operation for a cyst on his neck and a painful hammer-toe in May 1933. He took careful notes of his time in hospital, which provided the raw material for the story 'Yellow', in which Belacqua undergoes the same dual procedure, with fatal results.

On the day of Beckett's surgery, his first cousin Peggy Sinclair died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-two. The two had been

attracted to each other several years before, when she visited Dublin from Kassel, and had had a brief, unconsummated love affair. Peggy became the model for the Smeraldina-Rima in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* and *More Pricks than Kicks*, and 'The Smeraldina's Billet Doux' is based to some degree on a love letter she wrote to Beckett. Exactly how much or how little he changed in the letter to meet the needs of fiction has been a subject of speculation among his biographers, but it may safely be said that the story bore a sufficiently strong resemblance to Peggy's writing style that her parents, and his, had no difficulty recognising its origins.

Six weeks after Peggy's death, Beckett's father suffered a heart attack. William Beckett rallied for a week and appeared to be on the road to recovery when he collapsed with a second attack on 26 June and died later that day, with his family at his side. His death had a profound effect on Beckett. In preparation for the funeral, Beckett and his mother lined William Beckett's grave with soft and scented greenery, as Belacqua's widow and best man do for him in the story 'Draff'. Though it isn't clear when the decision to kill off Belacqua was made, the elegiac tone that sounds occasionally throughout the book and with particular strength in the final story surely owes something to these events.

By September, Beckett had managed to assemble ten stories, totaling around 60,000 words – close enough to a dozen, he felt, that he might begin searching for a publisher. Again, he started by offering the manuscript to Prentice. Somewhat to his surprise, given that only one of the stories had been previously published, the collection was accepted within weeks. Prentice had only two suggestions. He asked for a new title for the collection, 'something tripping and conversational', to replace the working title 'Draff', and also indicated that the book would be well served by an additional 5,000 to 10,000 words.¹³ Beckett soon supplied *More Pricks than Kicks* as an alternate title.¹⁴ A month later, he sent along an eleventh story, 'Echo's Bones', which follows an inexplicably reanimated Belacqua through a series of strange encounters with fantastical characters named

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Zaborovna and Lord Gall of Wormwood, who have not appeared before in *More Pricks than Kicks*. The story's length caught Prentice off guard – twenty-eight closely typed pages – and its contents even more so. 'It is a nightmare', he wrote to Beckett. 'Just too terribly persuasive. It gives me the jim-jams. [...] People will shudder and be puzzled and confused and they won't be keen on analysing the shudder. I am certain that "Echo's Bones" would depress sales considerably.'¹⁵ In a letter filled with apologies, Prentice took responsibility for what he called 'a dreadful débâcle – on my part, not on yours'.¹⁶

Though Beckett was very much discouraged by this response, for he felt that he had put into this 'recessional' story 'all I knew and plenty that I was better still aware of', he agreed to publish the book in its original form.¹⁷ On receipt of the rejected story from Prentice, he wrote a poem entitled 'Echo's Bones', published in *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (1935), but refused to allow its namesake story to be printed in subsequent editions of *More Pricks than Kicks*.¹⁸ In December 1933, proofs reached Beckett at a makeshift apartment he had set up at 6 Clare Street in Dublin, above the offices of his late father's quantity surveying firm, in order to escape his mother's censorious eye and the oppressive atmosphere of mourning she continued to maintain at Cooldrinagh. A letter to McGreevy suggests that he took some care in reviewing them:

The proofs have begun to come in, and I returned a consignment, corrigées si on peut dire [corrected, if you can call it that], to them to-day. If you have blank hours you would be kind to run your eye over them. But if not it doesn't matter. They've been corrected so often, long before they got near Charles, that it's beyond further mitigation. Only compositor's errors. I hate the sight of them.¹⁹

The following month, Beckett left Cooldrinagh and moved to London to begin psychoanalysis, a practice not yet legal in Ireland, with Wilfred Bion at the Tavistock Clinic.²⁰ It was, in a

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way, a different kind of boomerang trajectory – in which outward physical motion, away from home and family in Ireland, was balanced by inward psychological motion, a return journey of introspection and self-reflection, out and back.

On 24 May 1934, *More Pricks than Kicks* was published in London, with a blurb that promised

a new independent spirit at work, one that employs the intellect to illumine the comicality and poetic beauty which permeate ordinary vulgar feelings and events. [...] Mr. Beckett's humour proceeds by the mock heroic as much as by the emphasis of crass poignant fact; it is brusque and defiant – that rare humour, the last weapon against despair. His dazzling moments are won with a strong punch. *More Pricks than Kicks* is a piece of literature, memorable, exceptional, the utterance of a very modern voice.

Prior to publication, Beckett seems not to have shown the stories in *More Pricks than Kicks* to anyone other than Prentice and McGreevy. When the book appeared, a number of people close to him recognised themselves in its pages.²¹ In most instances, it was not a flattering depiction. Though the potential for giving offence had occurred to Beckett – 'I wish there were no P.B. in Dream', he wrote in 1932, after his former professor Thomas Rudmose-Brown, the basis for the character of the Polar Bear, recommended him highly for a job – he was surprised by the level of discomfort his portrayals were capable of causing and by how much that in turn bothered him.²² Fortunately, most of his friends and family took it in their stride. The most significant breach was with his aunt and uncle, Cissie and William 'Boss' Sinclair, who were hurt that he had used Peggy's letter, and so soon after her death. 'I didn't know what I was undertaking', Beckett wrote to Peggy's younger brother, Morris, that summer, 'peinlich [painful] no matter what angle contemplated'.²³ More than fifty years later, he still regretted his decision to use the letter in 'The Smeraldina's Billet Doux'.²⁴

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Any embarrassment that *More Pricks than Kicks* caused in Ireland may have been mitigated by the scarcity of copies to be found there. A few were on hand at Switzer's Lending Library in Dublin, none for sale in stores. Five months later, even the library copies were removed, when *More Pricks than Kicks* was placed on the Register of Prohibited Publications.²⁵ Beckett gave a copy to his mother; this she put away without comment, as she had the similarly baffling and upsetting *Whoroscope* some years before.²⁶ His alma mater, Portora Royal, a Protestant boarding school in Enniskillen, noted the book's publication in its newsletter, but did not acquire a copy for its library.

In England, *More Pricks than Kicks* received a surprising number of reviews for a first work of fiction – and a collection of short stories at that. Reviews appeared in *The Bookman*, *John O'London's Weekly*, *The Listener*, *The Morning Herald*, *The Morning Post*, *The Observer*, *The Spectator*, *Time and Tide*, and *The Times Literary Supplement*.²⁷ Reactions ranged from dismissive ('A farce for highbrows' and 'too clever a book to be first-rate') to baffled ('The meaning of *More Pricks than Kicks* completely eludes me') to cautiously approving ('there is a definite, fresh talent at work in it, though it is a talent not yet quite sure of itself').²⁸ Comparisons to Joyce were inevitable, though several reviewers emphasised that Beckett was 'no fashionable imitator'.²⁹ Other perceptive critics noted his debts to Fielding and Sterne. 'The incidents themselves do not matter much', wrote Edwin Muir in *The Listener*. 'The point of the story is in the style of presentation, which is witty, extravagant, and excessive. Mr. Beckett makes a great deal of everything; that is his art. Sometimes it degenerates into excellent blarney, but at its best it has an ingenuity and freedom of movement which is purely delightful.'³⁰

Perhaps because of reviews that suggested the book was unlikely to appeal to a wide audience, it sold poorly. So much so that, after his first statement of accounts, Beckett was moved to write a letter of apology to Prentice, who reassured him:

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After all, it is taking a chance to publish literature, and though we don't welcome disappointment, we are steeled against it. The author's position is much worse, and we do beg you again not to take your own disappointment to heart. [. . .] So please, when the time comes and you are free, take up pen once more with enhanced vim. Don't for a moment think that we regret having published *More Pricks Than Kicks*.³¹

In all, Chatto & Windus lost about one-third of their outlay on the book, and Beckett's royalties never totalled more than half of his original advance of £25.³² The firm had been unable to find an American publisher, despite Prentice's efforts to interest editors at Viking, Farrar & Rinehart, Harrison Smith Haas, and Doubleday, Doran & Gundy.³³ In Britain and the Commonwealth, fewer than 500 copies – out of an edition of 1,500 – sold in the first four months. Twenty-one copies were purchased in the six months after that, some twenty-five more in total over the next three years. At that point, there seemed little purpose in binding up the remaining quires. These were pulped in two batches in 1938 and 1939.³⁴ As a result, copies of *More Pricks than Kicks* were hard to come by when Beckett's writing began to attract wide critical and popular acclaim in the 1950s. Even the author himself no longer possessed a copy.³⁵

By then, Beckett's regrets about the book had assumed a different form. He regarded the stories in *More Pricks than Kicks* as juvenilia and was reluctant to see the work back in print, although he did permit three of the stories to be reprinted individually. 'Dante and the Lobster' appeared in the first issue of the *Evergreen Review* in 1957, and was also anthologised in *A Samuel Beckett Reader* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1967) and the *Evergreen Review Reader* (New York: Grove Press, 1968). In 1956, 'Yellow' was reprinted in *New World Writing* (Vol. 10, November), a somewhat ironic venue for a story that had first been published more than twenty years prior. 'The Smeraldina's Billet Doux' was included in the *Zero Anthology of Art and Literature* (New York: Zero Press, 1956) and also appeared in *Vogue* magazine in May 1970.

As demand for the collection as a whole continued to grow, scholars petitioned Beckett's publishers – Calder & Boyars in Britain and Grove Press in the USA – for a reissue. By 1964, both publishers had secured his approval, though Beckett was candid about his reservations. 'Better send me the contract', he warned, 'before I start weakening backwards or before I have time to reread the muck.'³⁶ Later that year, when galley proofs arrived, he did re-read the stories, and was so dissatisfied with them that he asked Grove Press to stop work on their edition.³⁷

For the British market, Beckett and Calder reached a compromise in the form of a small second edition, published in 1966. Limited to 100 mimeographed copies, this edition was not to be listed in the Calder catalogue or in any way sold or advertised directly to the public.³⁸ The pages are typewritten not typeset, on little more than 100 oversized and single-spaced sheets (the Chatto & Windus edition, by way of comparison, has 278 pages), and stapled not bound. The large number of errors in the text suggests that it was put together in haste, and that the typescript was not reviewed by Beckett. Even so, the 100 mimeographed copies went quickly, and a second 100 were run off in 1967. These too were gone within months.

A third run of 100 copies was agreed to but never printed, for in the wake of Beckett's Nobel Prize, in October 1969, the pressure on him to authorise a new trade edition of *More Pricks than Kicks* became too great to withstand. Grove Press secured permission first. On learning that an American trade edition was in the works, John Calder wrote to Beckett immediately, requesting permission to start on a trade edition of his own and expressing concern that too great a head start by Grove might cost him sales in the Commonwealth market. Beckett replied:

Paris
31.1.70

Dear John,

Your express letter from Scotland to hand.

Some days ago I had a letter from [Richard] Seaver saying 'they could wait no longer to publish M.P.T.K.' I answered that this was against my wish. But in the last few days pressure on all sides has grown so strong, and I so tired, that I capitulate. You may therefore proceed with trade editions of this juvenilium. I also capitulate for *Premier Amour & Mercier et Camier* – but NOT for *Eleutheria*. I consider you control European rights of *M.P.T.K.*

I hope you don't realize what this will involve for me.

Yours,
Sam³⁹

By June and October respectively, Calder and Grove had new editions on sale.⁴⁰

Note on the Text

The present text follows that of the first edition, published by Chatto & Windus in 1934. A small number of obvious errors in the first edition have been corrected.⁴¹ Besides these corrections, the text that follows diverges from the first edition with respect to six variants, specified below. In these instances only, I have preferred the readings of the 1970 editions by Calder and Grove.

On the whole, the later editions by Calder (1966, 1970) and Grove (1970) have less authority. There is no evidence that Beckett read proofs of any of these three editions (unlike the first edition, which he carefully reviewed and revised in proof; see Preface, above). They differ from the text of the first edition with respect to hundreds of variants. Many of these are small changes in punctuation and orthography that appear to be the result of the publisher or typesetter attempting to standardise, or failing to reproduce accurately, the highly idiosyncratic

Chatto & Windus text. Some variants are plainly the result of typesetting error – or, in Calder’s case, typewriting error, for the typist employed to produce their 1966 mimeographed second edition changed all but two instances of italicised type to roman (without underlines, which would have been the standard way of indicating italic) and also omitted most accents on foreign words. Regrettably, this second edition was used to set the Calder trade edition. As a result, it can be difficult at times, when reading the Calder texts, to see the effect that Beckett is trying to achieve when his wordplay spills over into half a dozen languages, or when his jokes depend for their humour on an emphasis which has been lost. Elsewhere, words and even entire lines of dialogue have been omitted in the Grove and Calder editions owing to eyeskip (e.g., ‘She will do this thing, she will, she will be belle of the ball’ [1934] is reduced to ‘She will do this thing, she will be belle of the ball’ [1970, Grove]).

In several instances, I have undone efforts by previous publishers to ‘emend’ the text of the first edition. A few examples follow. In ‘Dante and the Lobster’, I retain ‘a horse was down and a man sat on his head’ (1934) and not the reading which appears in both 1970 editions (as well as in the version of ‘Dante and the Lobster’ published in *This Quarter* in December 1932), which ends ‘on its head’ and therefore loses the nice confusion between the man and the horse; for Beckett is here attempting to establish the horse as something closer to human than the loaf of bread (with ‘its face’) and the lobster (repeatedly referred to by the narrator as ‘it’). In ‘A Wet Night’, the correct reading is ‘sandy son of Han’ (1934) and not ‘sandy son of Ham’ (1970/1970) for two reasons: first, because the phrase ‘son of Han’ also appears in the section of *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* which became the basis for the story and is evidently what Beckett intended to write; second, because we are presumably not meant to think of the biblical Ham, whose children would not be described as ‘sandy’; perhaps ‘son of Han’ simply means what it sounds a bit like when you put it the other way around: handsome. Again in ‘Dante and the Lobster’, I retain ‘shewed’ (1934) over ‘showed’ (1970/1970),

because the old-fashioned spelling is the more appropriate given the context. (Beatrice is instructing Dante in the fourth canto of *Il Paradiso*.) A similar rationale lies behind the decision to retain ‘B.T.M.’ (1934) – a prim colloquialism for ‘bottom’ – over ‘arse’ (1970/1970); ‘asterisked’ (1934) over ‘buggered’ (1970/1970); and ‘Flutter the —’ (1934) over ‘Flutter the fucker’ (1970/1970); such a process of making explicit does an injustice to the stories of 1934, by forcing the productions of a more genteel era to conform to standards acceptable in the 1960s and 1970s.

Though it has been suggested that Calder and Grove collaborated on their 1970 trade editions, or that the editions are ‘identical’, this is not the case.⁴² Collation shows that these editions were typeset independently: Calder’s from their 1966 mimeographed edition, and the Grove text from a copy of the first edition. That the two 1970 editions should agree, then, with respect to six variants – variants which are not self-evidently the result of editorial interpolation, typesetting error, or eyeskip – suggests that these changes were authorial, perhaps made by phone or letter.

Taking them in order of appearance: In ‘Walking Out’, the 1970 reading ‘heimlich’ is retained over the 1934 reading ‘heimatlich’.⁴³ In ‘Love and Lethe’, three excisions have been adopted. First, ‘dee-licious’ (‘the dee-licious afternoon’ [1934]). Second, ‘Belacqua in his glee was like a big baba’, which in 1934 follows ‘He was keenly conscious of her standing knee-deep in the ling before him, grateful for a breather and not bothering to ask what.’ And third, the exclamation “‘Hein?’”, which in 1934 follows “‘Are gone astray” sneered Ruby.’ In ‘What a Misfortune’, 1970 ‘clot’ has been retained over 1934 ‘thrombus’ and 1970 ‘greed’ over 1934 ‘avarice’.

Neither the manuscript of *More Pricks than Kicks* nor proofs of the first edition have been located. The version of ‘Dante and the Lobster’ published in *This Quarter* in December 1932 follows the same sequence of events as does the version here, although a number of sentences are worded differently, offering insight into Beckett’s process of revision. Stories reprinted individually in periodicals and anthologies after 1934 contain only minor variants and show no evidence of revision.

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- Fame*, p. 177); *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26 July 1934 (Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, eds., *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979], p. 44).
- 29 Francis Watson in *The Bookman* 86 (514) (July 1934): 219–20 (quoted in Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 177).
- 30 Edwin Muir in *The Listener*, 4 July 1934, p. 42. In Graver and Federman, *The Critical Heritage*, pp. 42–3.
- 31 Prentice to SB, 8 November 1934 (Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, pp. 177–8). By the time Beckett completed work on his next book, Prentice was no longer with Chatto & Windus. The firm did not take up its option on *Murphy* in June 1936.
- 32 Pilling, *Chronology*, pp. 44, 52, 121.
- 33 In his reader's report for Viking, B. W. Huebsch advised against taking on *More Pricks than Kicks* but noted that 'the author strikes me as a very good bet for the future' (Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, pp. 175–6).
- 34 Pilling, *Chronology*, pp. 184–5.
- 35 Pilling, *Chronology*, p. 113.
- 36 SB to Calder, 28 April 1964 (Courtesy, The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana).
- 37 See letter from Richard Seaver of Grove Press to John Calder, 13 November 1964 (Grove Press collection, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library).
- 38 In spite of these injunctions, the supposedly *hors de commerce* edition was advertised in the *London Magazine* in December 1966 and in the Calder catalogue in 1968. The former advertisement apparently escaped Beckett's notice. He was none too pleased to learn of the latter and, as a result, initially denied Calder's request to run off a third 100 mimeographed copies.
- 39 SB to Calder, 31 January 1970 (Courtesy, The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana).
- 40 These were the last new editions in Beckett's lifetime. Calder's was set from the mimeographed second edition, Grove's from a copy of the first edition. It is clear that Beckett did not proofread either 1970 edition, but he does seem to have supplied a handful of changes which appear in both. See the Note on the Text, below.
- 41 In 'A Wet Night', an 's' has been changed from italic to roman type (1934 'retro me's'). In 'Love and Lethe', an erroneous reference to 'Lucy' has been changed to 'Ruby'. In 'Walking Out', a quotation mark and a comma have been transposed (1934 "private experience,"). In 'What a Misfortune', 'than' has been changed to 'that' and 'overhead' to 'overheard'. Twice in 'A Wet Night' and once in 'Yellow', four-dot ellipses have been changed to three-dot ellipses.
- 42 John Calder says in *Samuel Beckett: A Personal Memoir* (Naxos Audio Books, 2006) that the two publishers cooperated on typesetting; however, inaccuracies

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- with respect to dates and details of other events relating to the republication of *More Pricks than Kicks* suggest that his account was constructed from memory and without consulting his files. The claim that the 1970 editions are 'identical' is made in C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski, *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), p. 381.
- 43 Though *heimlich* is the more familiar word to English speakers, introducing the possibility that typesetters at two different presses might have made the same alteration independently, it also lends itself to a greater number of interpretations which Beckett may have been trying to capture by shifting from *heimatlich* ('homelike', in the sense of being like one's homeland or native region) to *heimlich* (whose principal definition is 'secretive, covert', but which can also mean 'homely, cosy' in some regional German usage). I am indebted to William Waters for this explanation.

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Notes

- 1 SB to Thomas McGreevy (after 1943, known as MacGreevy), 8 November 1931. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck, eds., *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume 1: 1929-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 93.
- 2 SB to McGreevy, 20 December 1931 (*Letters*, 99). Here and in later letters, the text in square brackets is mine, based on annotation in the *Letters*.
- 3 Richard Seaver, Publisher's Note, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (New York: Arcade, 1993), p. vi.
- 4 Prentice turned down the story 'Sedendo et Quiescendo', for instance, with characteristic tact and kindness. In response, Beckett wrote, 'For your more than charming letter gratias tibi. You're right about my top heavy *Sedendo et Quiescendo* [...] And of course it stinks of Joyce in spite of most earnest endeavours to endow it with my own odours. Unfortunately for myself that's the only way I'm interested in writing. [...] I meant what I said to you in London. I wasn't showing it to Chatto & Windus. I was showing it to you.' SB to Charles Prentice, 15 August 1931 (*Letters*, p. 81).
- 5 SB to McGreevy, August 1932. Quoted in James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), pp. 160-1.
- 6 Michael S. Howard, *Jonathan Cape, Publisher* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 137.
- 7 'Dante and the Lobster' appeared in *This Quarter* (Vol. 5, No. 2) in December 1932, in what was to be the magazine's final issue.
- 8 SB to George Reavey, 8 October 1932 (*Letters*, p. 125).
- 9 SB to McGreevy, 13 May 1933 (*Letters*, p. 157).
- 10 SB to McGreevy, 22 June 1933 (*Letters*, p. 168, n. 3).
- 11 Fehsenfeld and Overbeck identify the five stories likely to have been completed by this time as 'Dante and the Lobster', 'Fingal', 'Ding-Dong', 'Walking Out', and either 'Yellow', 'What a Misfortune', or 'Love and Lethe' (*Letters*, p. 162).
- 12 'I push the bike up into the mountains in the late afternoon to the Lamb Doyle's or Glencullen or Enniskerry and have a pint and then free wheel home to Tom Jones. Yes, as you say, as far as he goes. But he's the best of them. I like the short chapters more & more and the ironical chapter-titles. His burlesque is rather clumsy but his serious mood is very distinguished.' SB to McGreevy, 4 November 1932 (*Letters*, p. 139).
- 13 'Draff' may allude, as does the title of *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, whose Prologue asks: 'what eyleth thee to wryte / The draf of stories, and forgo the corn?' Beckett may also have had Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, lines 573-6, in mind:
Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread,
Till vermin or the draff of servil food

PREFACE

Consume me, and oft-invoked death
Hast'n the welcom end of all my pains. (emphasis added)

- 14 Less than a week after signing a contract for 'Draff', Beckett referred to the book by its published title in a letter to McGreevy, 9 October 1933 (*Letters*, p. 166). *More Pricks than Kicks* plays on Acts 9:5 - Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, when the voice from Heaven says, 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks' (KJV) - and also on the phrase 'more kicks than half-pence', that is, more harshness than kindness, as might be meted out to performing monkeys by their owners (see 'monkey's allowance' in the *OED*).
- 15 Prentice to SB, 13 November 1933 (Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 168).
- 16 Prentice to SB, 13 November 1933 (*Letters*, p. 173).
- 17 SB to McGreevy, 5 December 1933 (*Letters*, p. 171).
- 18 John Pilling, *A Samuel Beckett Chronology* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 45.
- 19 SB to McGreevy, 5 December 1933 (*Letters*, pp. 171-2). Beckett made substantive changes to the ending of the final story, 'Draff', to incorporate elements of the rejected 'Echo's Bones'. McGreevy did review the proofs as requested; see Pilling, *Chronology*, p. 45.
- 20 He would remain in treatment, which was paid for by May Beckett, until December 1935.
- 21 For a thorough and helpful account of the parallels between characters in Beckett's early fiction and his contemporaries at Trinity College Dublin and École Normale Supérieure, see Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, chapters 3 and 4.
- 22 SB to McGreevy, 13 September 1932 (*Letters*, p. 121).
- 23 SB to Morris Sinclair, 13 July 1934 (Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 176; note in original). Beckett reconciled with the Sinclairs in August and spent his customary week in Kassel for Christmas and New Year.
- 24 Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 176.
- 25 *More Pricks than Kicks* was entered on the Register of Prohibited Publications on 23 October 1934, which lent a personal touch to Beckett's essay on 'Censorship in the Saorstát': 'My own registered number is 465, number four hundred and sixty-five, if I may presume to say so.' In *Disjecta*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: Calder, 1983), p. 88. The censorship essay was commissioned by *The Bookman* in August 1934 but did not appear in print, as the magazine ceased publication not long thereafter. It was revised by Beckett in 1936.
- 26 Beckett's volume on *Proust* (1931), by contrast, was deemed respectable enough to be displayed on a shelf in the dining room at Cooldrinagh.
- 27 See Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, pp. 177, 653, nn. 71-80. Beckett deemed the advance review in *The Observer* 'sufficiently imbecile'; SB to Nuala Costello, 10 May 1934 (*Letters*, p. 208).
- 28 Richard Sunne in *Time and Tide*, 26 May 1934 (Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, pp. 177 and 653, n. 78); *The Morning Post*, 22 May 1934 (Knowlson, *Damned to*