



# The Critical Response to Samuel Beckett (Critical Responses in Arts and Letters)

*Cathleen C. Andonian, Cathleen Culotta Andonian*

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Best known as the author of *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett was one of the most distinguished writers of the 20th century. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1969, and his works have secured him a lasting place in the literary canon. The critical response to his fiction has been overwhelming. Numerous books and thousands of articles have been published on Beckett, primarily in Europe, the United States, and Canada. Since he wrote most of his works in French, and then translated them himself into English, critics responded to different versions of his works. This reference book documents the critical response to Beckett from his earliest prose and poetry to the public reaction to his death in 1989. Reviews and scholarly articles representing the response to Beckett's creative works are included. Selections are arranged chronologically, so that the reader may trace the reception of Beckett's works over time. An introduction summarizes Beckett's enormous contribution to literature, and a bibliography lists works for further reading.

Winner of the 1969 Nobel Prize for literature, Irish-born author Samuel Beckett earned a solid reputation for being one of the most important authors of the 20th century. Best known as the author of *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett wrote other dramatic works, such as *Endgame* and *Krapp's Last Tape*. He wrote several novels, including *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, and a number of poems and short stories. His innovative approach to language, character, plot, and narrative style was appreciated but sometimes criticized, and his nontraditional concepts of time and space taught readers to approach literature in a new way. Though he experimented with literary forms, his works are within the 20th century intellectual tradition of alienation, isolation, and pessimism.

Through essays and reviews, this reference book documents the critical response to Beckett's poetry, fiction, and drama from his earliest works to the public reaction to his death in 1989. Because Beckett often wrote in French and then translated his works into English, scholars responded to several versions of the same work. Because Beckett also had an exceptional knowledge of world literature, philosophy, mathematics, and the sciences, his works are dense with meaning and have invited a broad range of critical approaches. This reference is divided into several sections that roughly correspond with the different genres Beckett utilized. Within each section, reviews and seminal articles are arranged chronologically, so that the reader may trace the response to Beckett over time. An introductory essay discusses the overall response to Beckett, and a bibliography lists works for further reading.

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