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Beckett and Badiou: The Pathos of Intermittency

Andrew Gibson

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Beckett and Badiou offers a provocative new reading of Samuel Beckett's work on the basis of a full, critical account of the thought of Alain Badiou. Badiou is the most eminent of contemporary French philosophers. His devotion to Beckett's work has been lifelong. Yet for Badiou philosophy must be integrally affirmative, whilst Beckett apparently commits his art to a work of negation. *Beckett and Badiou* explores the coherences, contradictions, and extreme complexities of the intellectual relationship between the two *oeuvres*. It examines Badiou's philosophy of being, the event, truth, and the subject and the importance of mathematics within his system. It considers the major features of his politics, ethics, and aesthetics and provides an explanation, interpretation, critique, and radical revision of his work on Beckett. It argues that, once revised, Badiou's version of Beckett offers an extraordinarily powerful tool for understanding his work.

Badiou and Beckett are instances of a vestigial or melancholic modernism; that is, in the teeth of a contemporary culture that dreams ever more ambitiously of plenitude, they commit themselves to a rigorous concept of limit and intermittency. Truth and value are occasional and rare. It is seldom that the chance event arrives to disturb the inertia of the world. For Badiou, however, it is the event and its consequences alone that matter. Beckett rather insists on the common experience of intermittency as destitution. His art is a series of limit-figures, exquisitely subtle and nuanced forms for a world whose state of seemingly rigid paralysis is also always volatile, delicately balanced.

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