

MODERN CLASSICS

**NAXOS**
AudioBooks



Read by
Sean Barrett and
Dermot Crowley

Samuel Beckett **Molloy**

NA729212D

Part 1

1	I am in my mother's room	4:01
2	This time, then once more I think	4:37
3	Then each went on his way	6:48
4	But that is not, I mean my hand	6:10
5	And once again I am	5:53
6	Now of all the noises that night	2:34
7	But talking of the craving	8:07
8	In any case I didn't come to listen	6:06
9	Nevertheless I covered several miles	9:39
10	And suddenly I remembered my name	9:17
11	They were watching me	7:56
12	But I find the morning	5:43
13	And in winter, under my greatcoat	7:02
14	For I had perfected my plan	7:20
15	Someone was poking the dog	7:23
16	She ushered me into the drawing room	7:49
17	In the end it was magic	9:04
18	The next day	6:22
19	Now, with regard to the pockets	6:34

20	It was then that Lousse	10:58
21	Now as to telling you why I stayed	7:50
22	So I will only add	4:09
23	Now, with regard to my food	3:42
24	So I will confine myself	10:22
25	But I left Lousse	9:29
26	So I was able to continue on my way	8:38
27	So I set myself to this	10:30
28	So I crawled into some hole somewhere	2:47
29	I took advantage of being at the seaside	9:12
30	Good. Now I can begin to suck	7:33
31	It was a wild part of the coast	7:12
32	Let us try and get this dilemma clear	3:08
33	And another factor of desequilibrium	5:05
34	For the truth is I had other weak points	7:32
35	So I wait, jogging along	5:48
36	I had a certain number of encounters in this	7:34
37	For it was not so bad	5:48
38	This is taking a queer turn	5:45
39	But before I go on	8:50

Part 2

40	Moran – It is midnight	3:48
41	A man came into the garden	5:18
42	It was too late for mass	6:16
43	I left her and went out	6:01
44	I slept a little	7:47
45	The stew was a great disappointment	6:11
46	I got up and went to the window	8:44
47	That we thought of ourselves	8:00
48	I still had a few hours left	7:28
49	I knew then about Molloy	7:17
50	It was then that the sound of a gong	7:02
51	My son came back at last	8:00
52	Before going into my son's room	5:50
53	From distance the kitchen seemed	4:36
54	My son could only embarrass me	6:31
55	The night was fine	3:01
56	In the lane having locked the wicket gate	4:27
57	It was the summer holidays	4:33
58	I have no intention of relating	5:46

59	By the Molloy country	5:47
60	All these precautions	6:56
61	One night, having finally succeeded	4:24
62	The sky was that horrible colour	10:12
63	Now tell me what you are to do	5:42
64	The day seemed very long	5:27
65	I stayed out in the air	7:15
66	It was evening	10:27
67	But I did not go far	3:58
68	So this third day wore away	7:59
69	In this way we came to Ballyba	7:38
70	That night I had a violent scene	3:14
71	I was therefore alone	4:31
72	It was evening	6:56
73	That night I set out for home	4:39
74	Certain questions of a theological nature	8:05
75	I have spoken of a voice	6:30
76	The thought of taking to the road	5:48
77	Now I may make an end	6:51

Total time: 8:29:12

Samuel Beckett

MOLLOY

MOLLOY: A TWENTIETH CENTURY MASTERPIECE

Molloy was written between 1947 and 1949, Samuel Beckett's most creative period, when, having returned to Paris after the war years (when he worked for the Resistance or was hiding in the Vaucluse mountains after his cell was betrayed to the Gestapo), he could resume his career as an Irish writer who preferred to live in France. During that same two-year period he wrote his most famous play *Waiting for Godot*, the two novels that follow *Molloy* (although unconnected they are usually grouped together as 'the Beckett Trilogy') and much else. The reason for the concentrated activity was that he believed a tumour growing in his cheek was cancerous and that his days were numbered. Happily it turned out to be benign and he went on to write much more during the next forty years.

But *Molloy* will always be considered to be his fictional masterpiece, both because of its unconventional picture of the world we inhabit, seen from the bottom rather than the top, and because it has

characteristics – philosophical, satirical, erotic and whimsical – that are brought together in no other novel in previous literary history. Written in French, and then translated by the author in collaboration with Patrick Bowles, it breaks new ground stylistically in both languages. It is also shocking to the conventional mind that dislikes awkward questions, because *Molloy* himself has no moral or ethical motivation other than a need to survive, while the second character, Moran, whose story takes up the second half of the novel, is a caricature of the most conventional and devout personality imaginable, not that he does not torture himself under duress with difficult questions, which are in themselves extremely funny as well as wicked.

Molloy is a tramp, unsure of everything except that he is lost in an unfriendly world and is trying to find his way back to his mother's house. In this he ultimately succeeds because at the beginning we find him safely back in his dead mother's bed. We are not told how he got there, only that he ended lying in a ditch waiting for promised help that must have somehow

arrived to rescue him. His odyssey tells of his movements and encounters and if he gives a picture of normal people it is not flattering.

Molloy describes how the homeless see us, complacent, uncaring, comfortable in our little securities, cruel when we feel like it, not noticing the eyes of those who observe and hate us from the gutter. He is one of the great literary creations like Kafka's K, Proust's alter ego protagonist and Joyce's Bloom. Because we come to understand Molloy and see what he sees, we are able to understand ourselves better.

Moran, whose narrative is the second part of the novel, is a private detective who is sent to find Molloy by his undescribed but obviously significant superior, Gabe. Here a large part of the fascination of Beckett's novel lies in allusions that seem to have biblical parallels, particularly from the New Testament, and these continue to invite speculation about those unseen characters in the background in the same way that *Waiting for Godot*, written about the same time, does. Actors have always loved reading *Molloy* and often, when heard, some of the puzzles and conundrums become clearer although this is incidental to the enjoyment of a text which can be frightening, moving and very funny.

The link between *Waiting for Godot* and *Molloy* lies not just in their contemporaneity but in the similarity of the characters, their circumstances and their thinking. Tramps are both tragic and comic and Beckett was the first major writer to make them his principal characters and to get inside their minds. All his protagonists think, some as intelligent and questioning human beings, others as constricted and often tortured minds, deeply immured in dogma, prejudice or self-delusion. There have been more books written about Samuel Beckett than about anyone since Napoleon's day. Academics love the depth, but others will find in the humour, the poetic cadences and the unusual storyline, two narratives to enjoy that they will never forget.

The philosophy behind the writing can be summed up briefly and is derived from what Beckett has garnered to suit his outlook from earlier thinkers. These include medieval mystics like Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), renaissance and enlightenment thinkers such as Giambattista Vico (1668-1774) and Arnold Geulincx (1664-1729), as well as later philosophers, especially Schopenhauer and Heidegger. They all give a bleak view of human destiny in a hopeless world and this suited Beckett's own thinking and became

the well-spring of his writing. We are all born through no volition of our own, live a number of years that will contain more suffering than pleasure, depending on the chance of where, when and to whom we are born, and then we have to die. That certain death, and with it the disappearance of what we hold most dear, our consciousness, individuality and self-awareness, makes, as Beckett sees it, nonsense of all the rest. It is just bad luck to be born. The two parts of *Molloy* define the commonist attitudes to life, one that of someone who lives for the moment, largely because he has no choice, intelligent, bitter and crippled but determined not to give in and to fight every obstacle to surviving a little longer, and the other, that of Moran, pedantic, self-assured, religious and expecting a better life after death, his thinking limited to what it is comfortable to think.

Molloy's own narrative can be cruel and funny at the same time, as in his description of his mother in the days when he would go to her for money and in his meeting with the charcoal burner. It is high comedy when he encounters the policemen, the social-worker and a series of ladies, one of whom adopts him after he has killed her dog with a bicycle, and in the way he passes time by sucking stones obsessively. It can be heroic as he grimly

fights his way through the forest with crutches and it can be poignant and guilt-provoking (to us) when he sees himself as a hunted animal that sportsmen would enjoy pursuing like a fox or a stag. Humour saves Molloy the man from seeming maudlin or self-pitying; he is never that, but a fairly typical example of homo sapiens born on the wrong side of the tracks.

Moran's narrative has a different kind of humour, provoking outright laughter rather than chuckles. We laugh at Molloy's predicaments and the way he deals with them, not at the man himself. But with Moran it is the man who is himself comic, his pretensions and conceit inviting ridicule like Shakespeare's Falstaff and Malvolio, and one can enjoy his discomforture when circumstances reduce him to the same level as Molloy, because humour directed against an individual is usually cruel.

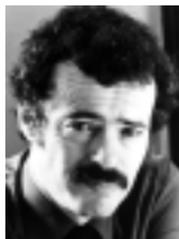
Academics have long found Beckett a rich mine for exploration and have frequently tried to make him seem more complex than he is. There are many underground rivulets under the magnificent descriptive prose, and although it helps to know something of the Beckett experiences, largely from wartime, that underlie *Molloy*, it is in no way essential to enjoyment. The episodes are riveting, laughter comes easily, and sometimes so inadvertently that one feels

guilty at laughing at misfortune, while self-discovery is the added plus. There is both a Molloy and a Moran in all of us somewhere and the novel helps us to recognise it. The unfinished endings are, like all endings, open to the imagination to ponder what will come next.

Notes by John Calder



Dermot Crowley was born in Cork and began his career with RTE Radio. His theatre work includes *The Weir* in London's West End and on Broadway, also seasons at the Royal National Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club and Hampstead Theatre. On television his work includes *Father Ted*, *The Sculptress*, *Falling For A Dancer*, on film *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, *Before You Go*, *Return of the Jedi*. He works extensively for BBC radio.



Sean Barrett started acting as a boy on BBC children's television in the days before colour when it went out live and grew up through *Z Cars*, *Armchair Theatre*, *Minder* and *Father Ted*. His theatre credits include *Peter Pan* at the old Scala Theatre to the first Ludlow Festival, Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, and in the West End with Noel Coward in his *Suite in 3 Keys*. Films include *War & Peace*, *Dunkirk* and *A Cry from the Streets*. He was a member of the BBC radio drama company and performs frequently on radio and as a reader of audio books.

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THE PHILOSOPHY
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Available from Calder Publications, London UK
Riverrun Press, New Jersey USA
ISBN 07145 4283 0

Samuel Beckett

Molloy

Read by Sean Barrett and Dermot Crowley

Molloy was written by Samuel Beckett initially in French. Only later was it translated into English. It was published shortly after WWII and marked a new, mature writing style which was to dominate the remainder of his working life. *Molloy* is divided into two sections. In the first section, Molloy goes in search of his mother. In the second, he is pursued by Moran, a private detective. Within this simple outline, spoken in the first person, is a remarkable novel, raising the questions of being and aloneness that marks so much of Beckett's work, but richly comic as well. Beautifully written, it is one of the masterpieces of Irish literature.

Molloy was written as a separate novel, but is often regarded as the first part of The Beckett Trilogy, followed by *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*.

AMD071215
CD ISBN:
978-962-634-292-3

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Produced by Nicolaas Somaes
Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London
Cover photograph courtesy of John Mirthian
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Total time
8:29:12