



Echo's Bones

By Samuel Beckett

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In 1933, Chatto & Windus agreed to publish Samuel Beckett's *More Pricks Than Kicks*, a collection of ten interrelated stories, which was his first published work of fiction. At his editor's request, Beckett penned an additional story, "Echo's Bones", to serve as the final piece. However, he had already killed off the protagonist, Belacqua, and had to resurrect them from the dead. Despite Beckett's efforts, the story was turned down by his editor and excluded from the collection, as it was considered too imaginatively playful, too allusive, and too undisciplined—qualities now recognized as quintessentially Beckett. As a result, "Echo's Bones" (not to be confused with the poem and collection of poems of the same title) remained unpublished—until now, eight decades later.

It begins with the antihero returned to life, sitting on the cemetery fence and smoking cigars. There, he encounters a macabre triumvirate: a prostitute; an infertile baron who requests Belacqua's assistance in securing the future of his estate; and a groundskeeper who attempts to rob Belacqua's grave. The phantasmagoric events that ensure encapsulate Beckett's burgeoning preoccupation with the tragicomedy of existence that suffuses his later writings.

In the introduction and critical notes, Mark Nixon situates this little-known text in terms of its biographical context, its textual references, its Joycean influences, and he examines how it is a vital link in the evolution of Beckett's early work. Beckett confessed that he included "all I knew" in the story, harnessing an immense range of subjects, from science and philosophy to religion and literature, combining fairy tales, gothic dreams, and classical myth. The posthumous publication of *Echo's Bones* marks the unexpected and highly exciting return of a literary legend.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *Echo's Bones*

"It's pungent early Beckett, written while he was still under the sway of his mentor, James Joyce, but with a soundscape all its own: rude, surreal, death-haunted, sex-addled, dry as bone. . . . The story's pleasures are real, however, and reside in Beckett's full tilt, Devil-ready language. His paragraphs unfurl like parades, notations on life's sick pageant. . . . It's a punk's manifesto (Beckett was 27 when he wrote it) that gets at why Beckett continues to matter. . . . 'Echo's Bones' returns Beckett the troublemaker." —**Dwight Garner**, *New York Times*

"A fascinating glimpse at an essential author at the start of his career. . . . ['Echo's Bones' is] exuberant, allusive, full of puns and wordplay." —**David L. Ulin**, *Los Angeles Times*

"['Echo's Bones'] helps us to see Beckett becoming Beckett—a development of some importance in the genealogy of twentieth-century literature. . . . In this story, he is beginning to sense the path toward his own way of walking—that persistent, pointless, but strangely heroic trudge through the valley of the shadow of death that will be the trajectory of his mature work. . . . [It is] picaresque and fantastical . . . vigorous and engaging." —**Fintan O'Toole**, *New York Review of Books*

"We see Beckett the late-modernist offering homage to his overweening exemplar James Joyce and at the same time twisting and thrashing as he tries to fly the Joycean nets and become his own man. In the end, it is as a part of the record of this struggle that *Echo's Bones* is of interest. . . . This volume is a masterpiece of scholarship." —**John Banville**, *New Statesman*

"Glorious rhythms, ideas and wordplay . . . a rewarding and stimulating read for lovers of language and artistic inventiveness." —**Malcolm Forbes**, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"An elaborate, mock-heroic fantasy that combines existentialism with elements of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. . . . It is 'Echo's Bones' that shows us the things that Beckett would do so well in later decades." —**Arifa Akbar**, *The Independent*

"'Echo's Bones', with its comic brio and ostentatious learning, is a significant link between a novice intellectual and the mature author of one of the 20th century's most celebrated plays." —*The Economist*

"A fascinating immersion . . . sincere and gravely serious." —**Arts Fuse**

"An extended prose poem, an exercise in beautiful language and striking image . . . this short text finds its rightful place among Beckett's novels, plays and poems." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Flights of Wildean repartee alternate with a Joycean ornateness of prose. . . . ['Echo's Bones'] contains in embryo Beckett's whole extraordinary world of comic dread and Dürer-like imagination." —*Financial Times*

"[In 'Echo's Bones'] we see clear signs of the features that will blossom into Beckett's distinct aesthetic: the existential angst and the dialogue in which neither party is making any genuine contact. Best of all, the absurdist humor, mixed with despair." —*The Independent*

"A wonderful, mind-bending curiosity." —*Guardian*

About the Author

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), one of the leading literary and dramatic figures of the twentieth century, was born in Foxrock, Ireland and attended Trinity College in Dublin. In 1969, Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature and commended for having "transformed the destitution of man into his exaltation."

Mark Nixon is Reader in Modern Literature at the University of Reading, where he is also the Director of the Beckett International Foundation. He has published widely on Samuel Beckett's work, and is an editor of the *Journal of Beckett Studies*, a member of the editorial board of *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, and Co-Director of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project. He is the current President of the Samuel Beckett Society.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jane Nelsen:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Sure, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or maybe read a book titled Echo's Bones? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have some other opinion?

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Playing with family in a park, coming to see the coastal world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition of information. Even you love Echo's Bones, you are able to enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout people. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

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