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have judiciously collected a number of essays, from scholars both established and emergent, exploring Beckett’s interests in early modern European writers. The publication of Beckett’s reading notes, his reflections on the visual arts, critical descriptions of his personal library, as well as documentation of lecture notes taken by students during his time as an instructor of French at Trinity College Dublin, have been instrumental in identifying Beckett’s lifelong interest in figures such as Racine and Molière. Such sources also solidify the specificity of the explicit references made in his works to Descartes and the post-Cartesian philosophy of Arnold Geulincx. The essays collected in the present volume go beyond this mere documentary identification and begin the process of actually interpreting early modern intertextual references as they shape Beckett’s worldview, stylistics, and literary sensibility. Consequently, these essays are filled with a number of surprising observations, interpretative gestures, and previously unexplored connections. Among the volume’s most illuminating contributions are Carla Toban’s elegant inquiries into “rapports intertextuels probables entre les corpora [de Molière et Beckett], qui y opèrent via Proust” (23), as well as Angela Moorjani’s consideration of Racine’s role in shaping Beckett’s modernism, particularly as he adapts “the Racinian soliloquies à deux” in constructing what she calls “Beckett’s own polyloguing pseudo-couples” (47). Moorjani’s contribution is perhaps the volume’s most theoretically dense, while at the same time its most potentially fruitful, so it comes as something of a generous gift to future scholars when she remarks, regarding “Beckett’s imaginative reshaping” of Racinian structures, that “clearly, more is left to tell” (50). One can only hope that the volume’s fresh insights and new interpretive encounters inspire scholars and critics to accept Moorjani’s challenge. It must be said, however, that not all of the volume’s essays uncover such fruitful new terrain—the considerations of Geulincx’s ethics and of Beckett’s indebtedness to early modern painting are particularly redundant of recent scholarship. And yet there is still more than enough for readers interested in pursuing the early modern influence on Beckett—and indeed on modernist practices as a whole. Whether the point of departure is Racine or Molière, or, as in some of the other stronger essays, Pascal, Shakespeare, or Spenser, there is much to learn from this volume, while inspiring groundwork is laid for what are sure to be exciting new paths in Beckett scholarship.

Towson University (MD) Jacob Hovind


Recent scholarship has challenged the modernist notion of art’s autonomy and weakened the separation between aesthetic and economic spheres. Critics like Jacques
Rancière and Frederic Jameson point to not only the contradiction inherent in the
notion of full artistic autonomy, but also to a more heterogeneous condition histo-
rically for art as both idea and product. Murphy takes a similar approach, allying
with the new economic criticism that sees the relationships between aesthetic and
non-aesthetic categories as intertwined and complex. Focusing on nineteenth-century
France, where ideological debates about art and money raged, she challenges the
canonical understanding of the status of art and literature in modernity by examining
the relationship between political economy and aesthetics, the focus on aesthetics
in the marketplace and exhibition hall, and Baudelaire’s consciousness of the inter-
connection of economics and aesthetics in ways that shaped his understanding of art
and literature in a new material world of objects. Hence, Murphy’s book challenges not
only conventional notions of modernist aesthetics, but also traditional understandings
of Baudelaire, the so-called avatar of autonomy, the disillusioned dandy, the role model
of social disaffection argued by thinkers like Pierre Bourdieu. Murphy sees the author
instead as a spectator keenly aware of art’s new public face, a consumer desirous of
both art and goods whose sensibilities cast light not only on his own poetic texts, but
also on transformations in the tenor of everyday life and habits of perception. This book
is organized in six chapters, with an introduction and afterword. Chapter 1 explores
how, in early nineteenth-century France, the concepts of harmony (or equilibrium) and
utility dominated debates in both aesthetic and economic discourse. Chapter 2 examines
press coverage of the annual art Salon and of the periodic industrial exhibition during
the July Monarchy, underlining how reviewers in both venues generated an uncannily
similar “aesthetic of the commodity” (16). The latter chapters propose a reconsidera-
tion of Baudelaire’s art criticism and poetry in light of these discursive strains and the
growing commodity culture. Chapter 3 concerns Baudelaire’s first important work of
aesthetic theory, Le Salon de 1846, which treats the question of needs and desires vis-
à-vis the enjoyment of art. Chapter 4 addresses the development of particular threads
in his art criticism after 1848: the evolution of his attitudes concerning taste, the
transformation of the notion of the universal into a cosmopolitan ideal, his critique
of the notion of ‘progress,’ and the emergence of an exotic domestic in the aesthetic of
the bizarre. The final two chapters focus on the fascinating interplay of the aesthetic,
the social, and the material in Baudelaire’s verse and prose poetry. A picture emerges
of an artist striving to understand the dynamic relationship between self and things,
to articulate new aesthetic norms, and to make sense of a new bourgeois culture of
spectacle. Murphy’s eclectic discussions, ranging from Kant and Condorcet to ‘thing
theory’ and toys, are brilliant and exhilarating.

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