

## TOM PHILLIPS'S ILLUSTRATIONS FOR THE FOLIO EDITION OF *WAITING FOR GODOT*

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### **Abstract:**

In the light of the imagery associated with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, in set designs, posters and book covers, the present article examines Tom Phillips's illustrations for the Folio Society edition of *Waiting for Godot* (2000). Considering that Phillips's images embody a particular style in form and structure, functioning as pictorial elements recalling contexts, images and relations, we propose that the artist expands the visual interpretative frame of the play, predating his work on the premise that readers will have had previous contact with the work either in performance or as a text.

**Keywords:** Samuel Beckett; Tom Phillips; Illustrated Book; Art.

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## Introduction

A country road. A tree. Evening. Two men in bowler hats. They wait for Godot. Godot does not come. They keep waiting. They do not move. The light suddenly fails. In a moment it is night. The moon rises. Next day, same time, same place. Vladimir and Estragon are still waiting for Godot, who once again fails to appear. Silence. The sun sets, the moon rises. They do not move. This is the essence of the plot of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the two-act play in which nothing happens twice and which is now recognised as one of the masterpieces of twentieth-century drama. The play has achieved iconic status in Beckett's oeuvre of novels and plays, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969, cementing his status as the leading dramatist in the genre of absurdist-tragicomic theatre.

*Waiting for Godot* was written in the fertile five-year period following the end of World War II when Beckett returned to Paris from unoccupied France. In this prolific burst of creativity, prior to *En attendant Godot* (the original version of *Waiting for Godot*, written between 9 October 1948 and 29 January 1949), he wrote his first play, *Eleutheria* (1947), as well as four novels, *Mercier et Camier* (1946), *Molloy* (1947), *Malone meurt* (1947-8) and *L'Innommable* (1949-50), and a number of short stories. *En attendant Godot* premiered in Paris at the Théâtre Babylone on 5 January 1953. After a somewhat hesitant initial reception – "... the general audience reaction was by all accounts favourable, though some theatregoers were hostile ... The critical reaction too was mixed at first: some critics were for it, some against, but none was indifferent" (Beckett, E., 2000, 8) – the production had a run of around 400 performances. The first English production of the play opened at London's New Arts Theatre on 3 August 1955, where it received thirty-one performances before it transferred to the Criterion Theatre, running for a further 226 performances. *Waiting for Godot* has gone on to become a London staple, having received twenty-three productions in the fifty-five-year period between 1955 and 2010 (Harris, 2011, 157-225). The play's presence in the Irish theatrical canon is confirmed by the fact that, in the period from 1920 to 2013, the only Irish plays to receive more West End productions were Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Sheridan's *The Rivals*, Shaw's *Pygmalion* and Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (Harris, 2015, 183). Samuel Beckett himself is far and away the most frequently produced Irish dramatist in London, his plays having received almost double the number of productions (102) of Oscar Wilde's fifty-seven productions in the period from 1990 to 2013 (Harris, 2015, 184). Around the world *Waiting for Godot* is recognised as an undisputed classic, having been widely translated and staged in innumerable productions as well as having generated academic interest on an almost industrial scale. Outside the works of Shakespeare, *Waiting for Godot* is arguably the most ubiquitously recognised play in the theatrical canon. In fact, it should be noted how far Beckett's writings have extended beyond the theatrical and literary spheres and have broadly impacted on visual culture, providing a

range of iconographic elements that have inspired artists throughout the world. For Oppenheim (1999), any approach to the dramatist's work acknowledges the range of media involved in his productions, opening up the possibility of employing discourses drawn from other areas in order to investigate these texts and explore the diversity of artists who inspired him and were inspired by him. Furthermore, strengthening the idea that the connection between the Beckettian world and the arts is a two-way road, Knowlson (2003, p. 72) remarks that Beckett's post-Second World War plays and novels were still heavily influenced by the visual arts, albeit on a progressively diminished scale. One feels that if it were possible to X-ray Beckett's stage images, they might well reveal some of the ghost-like figures of the Old Masters lurking beneath the surface. Regarding the renowned *Waiting for Godot*, the present article argues that the global extent of the awareness of Beckett's masterpiece, even amongst those who have never seen it performed, enabled Tom Phillips to pursue what may be described as a minimalist approach to illustrating the Folio Society's edition of the play, which sets up a dependence between the illustrator's work and a knowledge of the play.

In his Preface to the Folio edition, Edward Beckett, Samuel Beckett's nephew and trustee of the Beckett estate, stresses that "Reading a play and watching a play are two different experiences but they complement and enhance each other" (2000, 12). For the purposes of the present study this notion of the complementary relationship between the play in performance and its published text may be said to have provided the keynote. In our analysis of this illustrated edition of Beckett's text, we have therefore sought to take into account not only an investigation of the relationship between the illustrations and the text, but also the ways in which they reflect the play in performance.

Considering that Phillips's drawings embody a particular conceptual style, the present study also discusses how symbols and their association with referential points work as pictorial elements, evoking contexts, images, and relations in order to expand significant possibilities. For Perry Nodelman, "the objects themselves become meaningful through the contexts they evoke, which relate them to our general knowledge and experiences of life, of literature, and of visual art" (1990, 101). Thus, based on the objects represented in Phillips's images and their symbolism, our study seeks to discuss the reader's endorsement and denial of those images with his/her previous experience of the elements present in the play-text itself.

### Tom Phillips

Any viewer of a work by Tom Phillips is likely to be led on an excursion through forms, angles, colours, designs, sounds and atmospheres. The artist's persistent preoccupations have provided him with a voice of his own, conferring a particular style on his art, which ranges from painting to concrete poetry to opera. "Always a figurative artist ..., he is as happy with a text as image as with a figure. Collage and the garbled text are staples of his practice, and the literary

allusion, reference or cryptic aside are irresistible, which leaves him always close and sympathetic to the art of the idea and the concept” (Blundell-Williams, 2005, 41). The artist is particularly engaged with the processes of art, painting and how the residual mixes of colour left on the palette at the end of the studio day may generate images of themselves. “He makes lists, diagrams, puts things together, works with systems of structure and perspective. And sometimes, as in his portrait of Michael Kustow that won the prize, some or even all of these interests, the literary allusions, the formal references, the pictorial structure and conventions, come together in one piece” (Blundell-Williams, 2005, 41). Phillips has also worked as a critic, curator and translator, but today, at the age of 80 and retired, he limits his role to that of being an occasional broadcaster and public speaker of wit and vision.

Born in London in 1937, Trevor Thomas Phillips came to painting comparatively late. He attended Bonneville Road Primary School in Clapham from 1942 to 1947 and continued his secondary education at Henry Thornton Grammar School. After his father's death, he was admitted to St Catherine's College at Oxford University, where he studied Anglo-Saxon literature and spent much of his time acting, doing theatre designs and making music. He attended Edgar Wind's lectures on iconography in Renaissance Art, as well as drawing classes at Ruskin School. In 1960 he signed up for an evening life-drawing course at Camberwell School of Art under Frank Auerbach. During this period, Phillips experienced moments of enlightenment, connected to his academic background and pioneering approach to art education and, added to this, an explosion of a new form of printmaking, silkscreen. One year later, he married Jill Purdy and began studying full time at Camberwell College of Art. Although the emphasis of the college was still on drawing from life, the classes in abstract exercises by Charles Howard were a source of inspiration. He graduated from Camberwell School of Art in 1964, going on to exhibit a selection of his works at the *Young Contemporaries* exhibition.

The following year was an important one in Phillips's life because it marked his first one-man-show exhibition at the AIA gallery in London. He started teaching at Walthamstow Polytechnic, where he met the pianist John Tilbury, for whom he wrote his first musical composition, *Four Pieces for John Tilbury*. Four years later he won the John Moore prize, one of the many prizes he would win in his career, such as the Frances Williams Memorial Prize of 1983 for his illustration and new translation of Dante's *Inferno*. In 1984 he was elected to the Royal Academy, and he was the second artist to receive a retrospective of his portraits at the National Portrait Gallery in 1989.

Among his most successful works are the touchstone of his oeuvre, *A Humument* (1966), a five-edition collection, still in progress, of second-hand books entirely reworked and altered on every page by painting, collage and cut-up techniques; *20 sites n years* (in progress since 1973), photographs taken during the same week, at the same time, in 20 locations that describe a circle around his studio; and portraits of Samuel Beckett, Iris Murdoch, Sir Harrison

Birtwistle, Richard Morphet (curator of the Tate Modern collection until 1998) and Brian Eno. All these paintings are at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

His portrait of Samuel Beckett is one of several works by Phillips relating to the dramatist. In fact, according to the artist himself, Beckett has a hold over his history as well as his imagination. Phillips is of a generation for which Beckett's work provided new (if slightly awkward and bare) mental furniture (Phillips, 2000, 13). The portrait, a lithographic work, came from the drawings the artist sketched at the Riverside Studios, during a rehearsal for *Waiting for Godot* in 1984, but what Phillips did not know was that, almost twenty years later, he would be invited to "draw for Beckett" again, providing the illustrations for the Folio Society edition of *Waiting for Godot*.

### ***Waiting for Godot* at The Riverside Studios**

*Waiting for Godot* was first published in French as *En attendant Godot* in 1952 and in English in 1954. It remains not only Beckett's best-known work, but is also considered an icon of the twentieth century. Writing in *The New York Times* on 22 April 2009, Charles Isherwood stated that the play "is among the most studied, monographed, celebrated and sent-up works of modern art, and perhaps, as influential as any from the last century [...]. The play became the ur-text for theatrical innovation and existential thought in the latter half of the twentieth century" (Isherwood, 2009).

Tom Phillips was just eighteen when he saw the first British production of *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Peter Hall (1930-2017). Almost three decades later, in 1984, he was invited by David Gothard, director of the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, to do some drawings of Beckett himself whilst he was rehearsing the play with members of the San Quentin Drama Workshop (Phillips, 2000, p. 13). According to Matt McFrederick, the Riverside Studios became an accommodating alternative theatrical home for Beckett in London:

Rehearsing at the Riverside was 'a happy time for [Beckett]', where he was in a relaxed mood amongst friends enjoying the creative energy and hospitality shown to him. ... The rehearsals saw Beckett fine tune the productions before they went on tour with Beckett paying greater attention to the shape and precision of the performance. He would often give the actors line readings or offer more specific notes on performing the characters in his plays. Beckett was also open to performing in rehearsals himself ... (2014).

For Jess Wiesner, from Chelsea Space, the place "was a hotbed of creative activity and the notoriously media shy Beckett was comfortable enough there to conduct interviews with the press, be seen drinking in the Riverside bar, and allow artists and school children into the rehearsals" (2006). Tom Phillips spent five or six days in the theatre, sitting in on the rehearsals, which enabled him to observe the playwright quite well. He describes Beckett as "a quiet and kind man",

but notes that he “grew noticeably tired of being questioned about his work and being treated with inappropriate bonhomie by some of the egrets. He was giving, all the time, both to actors and academics; and there was no one who had anything to offer him” (Phillips, 1992, 192-3). Even during the breaks, Beckett was often in danger of being inundated by enquiries from the academic circus and, on the few occasions Phillips had the opportunity to bring up a conversation with the playwright, they talked mainly about trivial matters, like smoking and cricket. However, as we shall see, in 2000, when the Folio Society invited him to work on their edition of *Waiting for Godot*, it was from these snatched conversations that Phillips drew his inspiration for the illustrations for a play with a “total absence of visual clues” (Phillips, 2000, 13).

### ***Waiting for Godot: Images and text***

The Folio Society's *Waiting for Godot* is a collectors' edition, which uses the text of the second Faber edition of 1965, with a preface by Edward Beckett. It is one of the only two limited editions ever produced. Just forty copies (of which seven were signed by Beckett himself) of the first limited version were published between 1977 and 1979, illustrated with fourteen original etchings by Dallas Henke (Ackerley; Gontarski, 2004, 490). The Folio Society's edition, produced for the publisher's members, would have had a print run considerably larger than forty but has nonetheless long been out of print. The Folio Society was founded in London in 1947, and is known for its carefully crafted editions of selected works from the literary canon. The company states that they consider each volume an individual object of value and that they care very much about the quality of every single book. According to the company,

[a] Folio book is a unique object, one in which typography, illustration, paper, and printing and binding techniques all play a part in creating a harmonious whole. The Folio Society has celebrated the particular joy to be derived from owning, holding and reading a beautiful printed edition. Our aim is to create books that are unique in their aesthetic and in their quality – this is what makes a Folio collection something to cherish. (THE FOLIO SOCIETY, 2017)

The publisher also mentions their commitment to the art of book illustration, an essential and treasured aspect of their publications:

We commission illustrations by emerging talents including Jonathan Burton, Jillian Tamaki, Sam Weber, and Anna and Elena Balbusso, or seasoned masters such as Quentin Blake, Paula Rego, John Vernon Lord and Tom Phillips. Wood engravings, paintings, collages, pen and ink, ... variety is at the heart of Folio's remarkable catalogue of commissioned artwork. And in a celebrated range of non-fiction books, our team of picture researchers know how to unearth images that are truly worth a thousand words. (THE FOLIO SOCIETY, 2017)

The Folio's manufacturing process maintains the highest standard and is monitored for evenness of ink-weight and freedom of blemishes. The books are sewn in 16-page sections (called signatures), mostly with decorative head and tail bands, and gilded or coloured top edges. Other features are the slipcase and the traditional protective covering of fine editions. The bindings incorporate a complexity of design and materials which place them in a class of their own and require exceptional manufacturing standards. The *Waiting for Godot* edition meets these criteria. It is a 29-cm hardcover book with green endpapers and a slipcase. No dust jacket. Pictorial yellow boards. Spine lettered in dark green. 110 pages typeset in Monotype Walbaum, printed on Klippan Book Design Smooth paper at Butler & Tanner, Frome, and bound by them in Hiflex Antique paper printed with a design by the artist. Besides the cover illustration and the frontispiece, four full-page coloured illustrations are included in the edition. The frontispiece is a lithograph and the four illustrations are cross-hatched pen and ink drawings.

The first image [Fig. 1] appears on page twenty opposite the opening of the play-text. As can be observed in the other images in this edition of *Waiting for Godot*, Tom Phillips makes use of objects which function as motifs in the play. Figure 1, for example, portrays two bowler hats, one above the other. Each hat is situated in its own light-coloured circle, which intersect in the middle of the page to form an ellipse of white reminiscent of the intensity of light formed by the overlapping of two spotlights on a stage. The cross-hatched image is produced with an almost monochromatic palette of black and sepia ink which results in shades of brown, grey, black and white, with the two hats and their respective circles of light set in a rectangular frame. Just as the intersecting circles of light resemble pools of light on the stage, so the dark rectangle recalls the area of the stage itself. Since the illustration accompanies the beginning of the text, the two bowler hats evoke the presence of Estragon and Vladimir on the stage. Throughout the play, these characters wear hats. According to Phillips, the hats did have some small qualified authorisation and endorsement from Beckett himself and they also "appear in the stage directions and at one point, unusually for a play with only five characters, one of whom is a hatless boy, there are five hats on stage" (2000, 14). It should be pointed out that this moment occurs in Act II, when Pozzo and Lucky reappear, "Lucky wearing a different hat" because Pozzo had trampled on Lucky's own hat after his monologue. The "remains" of his hat are seen at the "same place" at the opening of Act II.



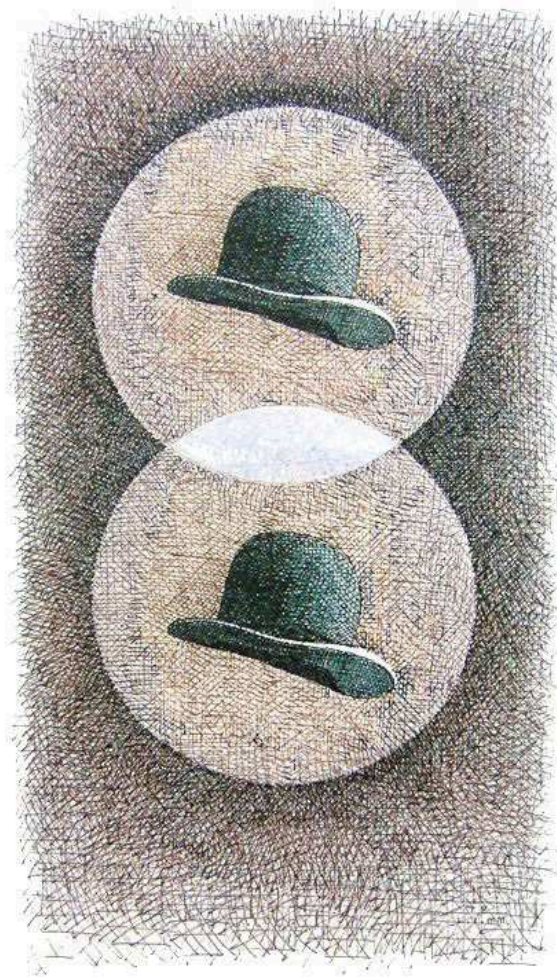


Fig. 1 The Bowler Hats

It can also be inferred that, in addition to the implied reference to the characters Estragon and Vladimir, the pair of hats evokes the two-act structure of the play. Recalling one of his conversations with Beckett at the Riverside Studios in 1984, Phillips refers to Beckett's cautious endorsement of his perception of the duality at the heart of the play:

I mentioned that *Waiting for Godot* reminded me of the many double acts (two toffs, two tramps, comics with straightmen and stooges etc.) and their routines and sketches. "All those bowler hats, you mean? ...yes, mmm, yes, ...something in that" said Beckett. I then went boldly on to say that the play felt like watching one such double act being invaded by another. "Mmm, yes," said Beckett, "...something in that". (2000, p. 14)





Fig. 2 The Five Hats

The bowler hat motif is in fact a leitmotif, present in three of the four illustrations. Accordingly, the last image in the book (Fig. 2), on page ninety-three, depicts five hats and the number five at the top right corner of the picture, but this time they are “disintegrating hats” as if each image had been cut up and reunited in a disjointed collage. As, pointed out above, Tom Phillips refers to the moment when there are five hats on stage at the same time. However, the symbolism of the hats goes beyond their allusion to the characters or even their number in the play. The bowler hats are associated with one of the most powerful moments in the play: Lucky’s speech at the end of the first act. Having been in almost total silence since his first appearance, with no evidence of rational thought beyond his exploited situation as Pozzo’s slave, he is jolted into action precisely after Vladimir has approached him cautiously and placed his own hat back on his head (Beckett, 2000, 56). Hats may be interpreted as symbols of authority and power: “[s]ince the hat covers the head it contains thought, .... The covered head, as with the cap, denotes nobility and freedom in contradistinction to the bare-headed slave” (Cooper, 1987, 80). Lucky’s initial entrance emphasises his relationship with Pozzo as that between a slave and his master. Lucky enters first, with a rope around his neck which is long enough to enable him to reach the middle of the stage before Pozzo, his master, appears

holding a whip. "Pozzo at the sight of Vladimir and Estragon stops short. The rope tautens. Pozzo jerks at it violently" (Beckett, 2000, 35-6). Nonetheless, when his hat is replaced on his head, the "speechless-slave" produces a free torrent of words which is only silenced when Vladimir once again removes the hat. On a first hearing, Lucky's speech appears to be a total dissolution of language and thought, verbal chaos, perhaps symbolising twentieth-century anarchy, although subsequent acquaintance reveals the "method in his madness". Like the "disintegrating hats", Lucky's speech is formless, a scrambled mixture of words. Without his hat he remains in silence, for his thoughts are also fragmented. The disintegrating hats may be seen as a reference to the trampled remains of Lucky's hat which are never removed from the stage floor. The next illustration [Fig. 3], on page twenty-nine, may be interpreted as a diagram of the chaotic randomness of the interactions between the five characters in the play. The image consists of a labyrinth or maze of white lines etched onto the same rectangular background of cross-hatched fine lines in dark brown and red ink. The interwoven lines all terminate in arrowheads which come to rest beside five Xs, clearly representing the five characters. The labyrinth gives the impression of a frantic coming and going with no evident resolution, thus establishing a figurative representation of the play's narrative structure, which has no traditional beginning, middle and end. The interwoven lines may also be seen as representing the movements of Estragon and Vladimir on stage as exemplified in the following stage directions:

Exit Vladimir hurriedly. Estragon gets up and follows him as far as the limit of the stage. Gestures of Estragon like those of a spectator encouraging a pugilist. Enter Vladimir. He brushes past Estragon, crosses the stage with bowed head. Estragon takes a step towards him, halts. (Beckett, 2000, 28)

Reflecting the non-linear narrative structure of the play, these two characters are in constant movement, much of which is purposeless, apart from their overriding motivation of waiting for Godot. Consequently, at the end of each Act, "they do not move" (Beckett, 2000, 110).

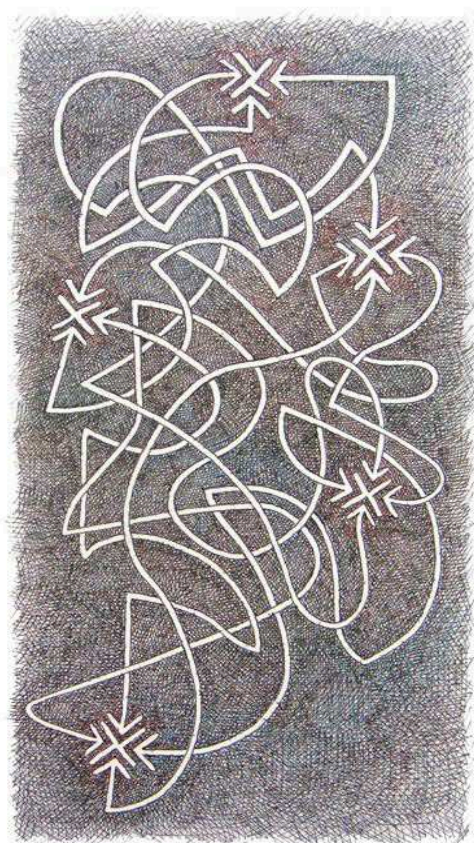


Fig. 3 The Labyrinth

The final illustration to be considered is that on page seventy-one [Fig. 4], which we have entitled “The Four or Five Leaves”, based on Beckett’s description of the tree at the beginning of Act II. The bowler hats once again make an appearance, four of them at least, but the primary focus of the illustration is the “four or five leaves” referred to in Beckett’s stage direction. The colour and form of the five leaves are not identical, and nor is the single leaf at the centre of the image identical to that depicted on the front cover of the book. However, what these two leaves have in common is that they are both transected by white lines which form a diagonal cross, reminiscent of the five Xs in Figure 3. As in the previous illustrations, the background is formed of a vertical rectangle of reddish-brown cross-hatching. At the top of the rectangle four squares are delineated by white lines, and in the centre of each one there is a diagonally placed leaf in the middle, each of which has a unique form and colour. From left to right there is a black leaf, a white one and a brown one, each without veins, followed by a black leaf with white veins. The large leaf at the centre of the illustration is grey with white veins. At the bottom of the vertical rectangle there are four further squares, smaller than those at the top of the image, each of which contains a black bowler hat, rendered greenish on its right-hand side by reflected light. The slightly larger hats in the central squares recall those seen in Figure 1 since each is located at the centre of a circular pool of light, as it were from a theatrical spotlight. The

slightly smaller hat in each of the outer squares is also located in a circular pool of light, which is not so bright and less well-defined than those around the two central hats. The background of the four squares is composed of small distinct pointillistic dots, with the exception of the second square from the left, which is cross-hatched. The leaf motif is one of the devices which distinguishes the play's minimalist set at the beginning of Act II from that seen throughout Act I, for the leafless tree seen in the first half of the play has sprouted "four or five leaves" during the Interval. The skeletal tree, like the moon which rises at the end of each Act, has become recognised as one of the most iconic representations of the play. Phillips responds to the play's minimalist set by using the leaves as a visual synecdoche for the tree itself:

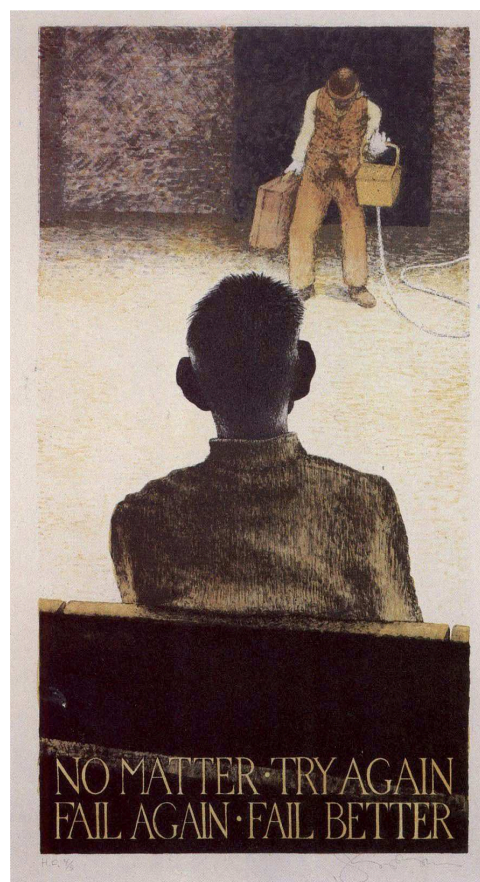
The other motif came out of a preliminary discussion with the Folio Society's Director in which we talked about the tree which Beckett specifically describes as having "four or five leaves". I enjoyed speculating as to what the leaf was like that may or may not have been there. I assume that somewhere in a learned paper there exists a thesis on this Berkleian leaf which might also discuss the parallel number of leaves and hats. Fortunately I have neither seen nor read it since I am happy to think in Beckett's words, "Something in that... yes, mmm, yes". (1992, p. 192-3)

Phillips's response to Beckett's deliberate vagueness with his "four or five leaves" is ingenious, since he has created a group of four leaves at the top of the illustration, which can constitute a group of five if the much larger leaf at the heart of the image is included. As in the play itself, the responsibility for the interpretation lies with the beholder. The larger leaf serves a similar enigmatic function to the number 5 placed at the top right corner of the illustration in Figure 2. Only four characters in the play wear bowler hats, so the fifth hat is Lucky's trampled hat, which he discards. Likewise, the viewer must decide for him or herself whether there are four or five leaves.





**Fig. 4 The Four or Fi**



**Fig. 5 Portrait of Samuel Beckett**

The book's frontispiece [Fig. 5] consists of Tom Phillips's celebrated portrait of Beckett. It is a full-page illustration which replicates the coloured lithograph first exhibited in the Primary Collection at the National Portrait Gallery in London in 1984. The size of the original image is 27 7/8 in x 16 7/8 in (708 mm x 428 mm). It shows Beckett towards the end of his life, during a rehearsal for *Waiting for Godot* at the Riverside Studios in 1984. According to the artist, the portrait seeks to echo Beckett's own simplicity (Phillips, 1992, 192-3). The phrases at the bottom of the picture, "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better" are quoted from Beckett's short prose piece, *Worstward Ho* (1983). The portrait is remarkable since its subject is seen from behind, depicted in silhouette against the brightly lit stage floor, on which stands Lucky at his entrance in Act I, the long rope snaking away from his neck, with Pozzo's heavy bag and picnic basket in either hand. Despite being seen from behind and in silhouette, the viewpoint of the artist watching the rehearsal, Beckett is instantly recognisable because of his "majestic" ears. Phillips comments that,

[a]t the beginning I did not know quite how to set about drawing him. I'm not a very good lightning sketcher. To move up in front of him would evidently have been an intrusion on his work there. Sitting behind, trying to form a strategy, I gradually realised that the back of his head was as eloquent as the front, and as recognisable... Initially I positioned myself so that I caught some of the side view of his face but settled in the end, in doing the most finished of the drawings, for a full back view in which each of Beckett's majestic ears is seen to good advantage: they are after all the most sensitive ears for language alive. (1992, p. 192-3)

Thus, while Beckett, seated in the foreground, with his back to the viewer, is depicted in silhouette, Lucky, in the middle ground, is facing the viewer and fully illuminated by the stage-lights. As in his illustrations to *Waiting for Godot*, Phillips relies on his viewer bringing prior knowledge of the play or, in this case, the playwright, to make a complete interpretation of the image possible. The portrait of Beckett is, above all, a depiction of the playwright at work as a director of his own play, the quintessential "man of the theatre". As Phillips explains:

Beyond the head from this viewpoint was of course the stage and his play. Beckett's privateness as a person would be both respected by the unobtrusive artist at his back and reflected in the picture which would emphasise, as he would, the work in favour of the man. Beckett has a half-military, half-monastic stillness which was helpful to my task. Mirroring this on the stage was a character who is condemned to remain still for a large slice of the action, Lucky. After a few false starts, this seemed the ideal combination for an image which corresponded to physical and moral aspects of the event, an image which might have "theatre". (1992, p. 192-3)

The binding design [Fig. 6] is an important element in the Folio edition because it serves as a visual overture to the style of Phillips's illustrations



themselves, introducing their minimalist symbolism. The book is bound in beige, with a line from the illustration on the front board being continued across the spine and disappearing off the edge of the back board, thus unifying the three structural components of the binding.

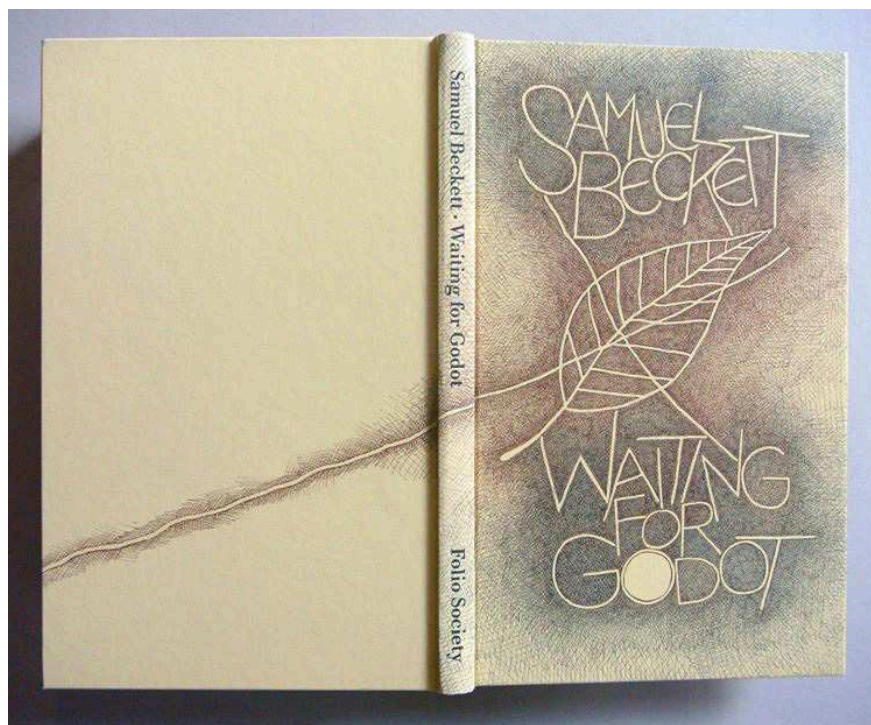


Fig. 6 Book Binding

The illustration on the front board consists of a single leaf diagonally placed, at the centre of which two white lines intersect, forming a diagonal cross. It is one of these two lines which continues around the spine and disappears off the edge of the back board. The playwright's name is situated above the leaf, while the play's title is placed beneath it. The block capitals of the words and the outline and veins of the leaf are etched with an almost childlike simplicity into the cross-hatched lines of the brown and grey background. The effect is reminiscent of lines etched into wet spray paint.

The first 'O' in the word "Godot" in the title is free of the hatching serving as a background to the rest of the title, and the resultant beige circle thus represents a full moon appearing through thin cloud, a clear reference to the moon that rises at the end of each of the play's two acts. Ever since the play's premiere, the moon has been understood to be a fundamental symbolic element in the play, not only as part of the setting but also on playbills and programmes and the covers of published editions of the play. In their endlessly repeated wait for Godot the rising of the moon marks the end of each day's fruitless activity and signals the inevitability of a repetition the following day: "the moon is universally symbolic of the rhythm of a cyclic time; ... The birth, death and resurrection phases of the moon symbolise immortality and eternity, perpetual renewal..." (Cooper, 1987,

106-7). In the play, the moon rises at the end of each Act, after the Boy has come to inform Estragon and Vladimir that Godot is not coming:

BOY: What am I to say to Mr. Godot, sir?

VLADIMIR: Tell him... (*he hesitates*) ... tell him you saw us.

BOY: Yes, sir.

*He steps back, hesitates, turns and exits running. The light suddenly fails. In a moment it is night. The moon rises at back, mounts in the sky, stands still, shedding a pale light on the scene.*

VLADIMIR: At last! (*Estragon gets up and goes towards Vladimir, a boot in each hand. He puts them down at the edge of stage, straightens and contemplates the moon.*) (Beckett, 2000, 66).

The rising of the moon depicts more than the end of a day in the play. It symbolises the closing of a cycle which will be repeated perpetually. The second act is a repetition of the first. There is no difference in either the setting or in the time, indicating the rhythm of a cyclic time and providing the play with a circular structure. The moon thus serves as a metaphor for Estragon and Vladimir's perpetual wait. The moon inserted within Godot's name on the book's cover is therefore a reference both to the play's narrative structure and to the symbolism that lies at its heart.

An illustration can assume different roles in a text in an illustrated book; in addition to its decorative function it may elucidate, change, expand, contradict, deride or even repudiate the text (Behrendt, 1997, 28). This reader/book interaction generates the experience in which the combination of words and pictures determines the individual's response to an illustrated book (Nodelman, 1990, 193). In our analysis of the Folio Society illustrated edition of *Waiting for Godot* two aspects are of particular importance: the reader's previous contact with a non-illustrated edition of the play, and his/her experience of having seen the play in performance. In the case of a canonic play like *Waiting for Godot*, it is almost certain that the reader of the illustrated edition will have prior experience of the play, and will therefore bring this frame of reference to bear on interpreting symbols and images associated with the play. Tom Phillips's spare, minimalist style leads him to concentrate on objects whose association with the play will be immediately apparent, but whose interpretation relies on an adequate knowledge of the play's plot, characters and themes. According to Perry Nodelman, "That people complete the meaning of these pictures by making use of their prior knowledge of other texts shows that the pictures themselves can imply narrative information only in relationship to a verbal context; if none is actually provided, we tend to find it in our memories" (1990, 195). Nodelman's fundamental insight here is not the relationship between pictures and words, but the fact that people tend to find in their memories points of reference in order to establish closeness to the symbols they see. He states that, "Symbolism is the habit of mind through which physical objects come to represent abstract ideas other than their actual selves. [...] Knowledge and experience can provide that familiarity (1990, 106).

With regard to Tom Phillips's illustrations for *Waiting for Godot*, his work is far from being a mere reproduction of pre-established imagery associated with the play; on the contrary, his illustrations serve as an increment which invites readers to forge their own renewed insights into Beckett's masterpiece.

### Notes

1. Although *Eleutheria* was Beckett's first completed play it was only published posthumously, in an English translation by Michael Brodsky, in 1995.
2. For further information about Tom Phillips's life and work, access: <http://www.tomphillips.co.uk/> and <https://www.flowersgallery.com/artists/view/tom-phillips>
3. Chelsea Space, located on the Millbank campus of Chelsea College of Arts, was established in 2005 and is a public exhibition space where guest art and design professionals are encouraged to work on experimental curatorial projects that might not otherwise be developed.

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