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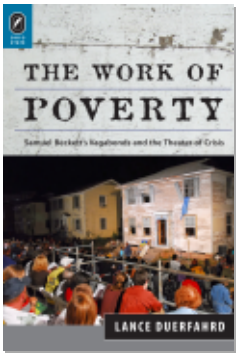

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"*The Work of Poverty* is an impassioned meditation on the theater in times of crisis, penury, and precariousness. Lance Duerfahrd accounts for the enduring appeal of a play like *Waiting for Godot* and, what is more, makes the reader experience the excitement felt by underprivileged audiences and actors in situations of danger or terror."

– *Jean-Michel Rabaté, Vartan Gregorian Professor in the Humanities and professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania*

"Lance Duerfahrd investigates Beckett's continuing relevance to our world and the conditions under which Godot speaks not just as intellectual enigma to scholars of literature but empathetically and urgently to the survivors of life in prison, civil war, and floods. *The Work of Poverty* is energized by an eye toward this relevance, not only for these audiences in what Duerfahrd terms 'landscapes of crisis,' but for the author and his reader."

– *Eyal Peretz, Indiana University, Bloomington*

"Duerfahrd's *The Work of Poverty: Samuel Beckett's Vagabonds and the Theater of Crisis* honors the life of Beckett's legacy: poetic despairing themes matrixing human historical constants, desperation without destination, the poetry of man's universal suffering."

– *Rick Cluchey, Co-Founder of the San Quentin Drama Workshop*

How did Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* come to be performed in such places as San Quentin Prison, Mississippi during the Civil Rights Movement, Sarajevo under military siege, New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward after Hurricane Katrina, and Zuccotti Park during the Occupy Wall Street protests? *The Work of Poverty: Samuel Beckett's Vagabonds and the Theater of Crisis* studies the appeal of *Godot* to audiences in settings of historical crisis and suffering. Lance Duerfahrd argues that these circumstances transform the performance and the reception of the play, thereby illuminating a cathartic and political dimension of Beckett's work that goes unseen in traditional performance contexts.

The resonance of one of the most canonical plays of the twentieth century within landscapes of disaster fulfills the aesthetic of "ultimate penury" that Beckett hones in his work. Here the subtractive and reductive dynamic of the Nobel Prize–winning author's craft comes into clearer view, echoing with the despondent condition beyond the stage. In developing an aesthetic of penury, *The Work of Poverty* brings together the dispossessed characters in *Godot;* the derelict narrators of Beckett's *Molloy, Malone Dies,* and the *Unnamable;* and the formal experimentation in poverty witnessed in his *Endgame* and *Worstward Ho.* Beckett forged increasingly destitute forms of theater and prose on the periphery of writing. Duerfahrd illustrates how this work speaks to our age by emphasizing characters on the periphery of society.

Lance Duerfahrd is associate professor of English at Purdue University.

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