

MODERN CLASSICS

NAXOS
AudioBooks



Read by
Sean Barrett

Samuel Beckett **Malone Dies**

NA531912D

UNABRIDGED

1	I shall soon be quite dead at last in spite of all.	4:30
2	This time I know where I am going,	2:09
3	I must have thought about my time-table during the night	5:55
4	Present state.	4:55
5	There is a cupboard I have never looked into.	2:14
6	Not only am I left here, but I am looked after!	3:31
7	I don't know how long I have been here,	3:15
8	The man's name is Saposcat.	7:12
9	What tedium.	1:50
10	I have tried to reflect on the beginning of my story.	5:18
11	I shall not give up yet.	2:18
12	Sapo's phlegm, his silent ways,	3:49
13	We are getting on.	1:55
14	The summer holidays.	0:59
15	I fell asleep.	1:02
16	Live and invent.	4:07
17	The market.	1:09
18	I have rummaged a little in my things,	3:59
19	I told myself too that I must make better speed.	2:03
20	My body does not yet make up its mind.	4:37

21	The Lamberts.	4:38
22	The son, or heir, was a great strapping lad	1:37
23	Dead world, airless, waterless.	1:06
24	In the filthy kitchen, with its earth floor,	2:29
25	Sapo remained alone, by the window,	5:23
26	And so he went, all unsuspecting,	4:48
27	When I stop, as just now, the noises begin again,	6:20
28	Yes, it is quite dark.	2:03
29	I fear I must have fallen asleep again.	5:04
30	The summer holidays were drawing to a close.	4:17
31	The Lamberts.	5:36
32	Edmund and his mother passed each other by in silence.	4:40
33	Mrs Lambert was breathing hard.	3:17
34	What tedium.	0:46
35	Then Mrs Lambert was alone in the kitchen.	3:16
36	Mortal tedium.	3:10
37	What tedium.	2:52
38	There is naturally another possibility	3:58
39	Yes, no doubt one may speak of grey,	4:24
40	What a misfortune,	2:56
41	Now while I was hunting for my pencil	3:02

42	And during all this time,	3:19
43	But what it is all about exactly I could no more say,	3:59
44	I have taken a long time to find him again,	2:28
45	And there he is as good as gold on the bench,	3:15
46	Now with regard to the buttons of this coat,	3:13
47	But to pass on now to the garments that really matter,	3:23
48	So there they are for a few hours in safety.	3:31
49	But for Macmann, thank God,	6:03
50	I feel.	5:01
51	No matter, what matters is	2:59
52	But let us leave these morbid matters	2:08
53	That settles that.	5:17
54	Caught by the rain far from shelter	5:42
55	But Macmann would have been more than human,	5:28
56	And on him already this important quarter-truth	5:37
57	And yet he had done his honest best to give satisfaction,	2:38
58	But to pass on now to considerations of another order,	3:15
59	Quick quick my possessions.	5:37
60	In this way I disposed of things I loved	5:37

61	Should I go on I wonder.	5:50
62	It is some days now since my soup was renewed,	2:42
63	I shall therefore die of old age pure and simple,	3:55
64	I have lost my stick,	5:58
65	One day, much later, to judge by his appearance,	4:48
66	It seemed probable to Macmann	1:48
67	One day, not long after his admission,	3:22
68	This must be the selfsame hat that was abandoned	1:30
69	A thousand little things to report,	3:48
70	Sweetheart,	4:42
71	Such was the rather rambling style of the declarations which Moll,	1:43
72	I am lost.	4:04
73	Weary with my weariness,	0:55
74	Moll.	5:19
75	A last effort.	4:59
76	I have had a visit.	3:45
77	The visit.	3:31
78	Standing by the bed he watched me.	3:11
79	At a certain moment,	2:07
80	I shall tear a page out of my exercise-book	5:01
81	That reminds me,	2:00

82	Macmann pygmy beneath the great black gesticulating pines	2:06
83	Wearing over his long shirt	4:49
84	The birds.	2:11
85	Try and go on.	5:17
86	Beyond the gate	3:29
87	On. One morning Lemuel,	4:18
88	The cells of the five were far apart	3:00
89	In the third a small thin man was pacing up and down,	1:39
90	A few lines to remind me that I too subsist.	2:01
91	Surrounded by his little flock	2:11
92	The waggonette.	3:48
93	The boat.	1:00
94	No, they are no more than hills,	0:30
95	The island.	3:44
96	When the sun had vanished,	2:36

Total time: 5:39:27

Samuel Beckett

Malone Dies

Malone Dies was the first novel by Samuel Beckett to be published in Britain after the Second World War and then only in 1958. It was also the first translation made by the author of his own fictional work written in French, having previously reluctantly accepted the help of others with **Molloy** and his short stories. Two earlier novels written in English had appeared in London in the thirties, but they had no success and **Murphy**, the second, was almost entirely destroyed in the London blitz, having achieved a tiny sale and only one good review from an Oxford student, Iris Murdoch. One copy of the first edition was found many years later by Harold Pinter in a London public library. It had not a single stamp in it and had evidently never been borrowed, so assuming that fate had destined it for him, he kept it. It was only **Waiting For Godot**, successfully performed in Paris in 1951 and two years later in London, that had given Beckett any reputation at all, and that was as an eccentric and puzzling Irishman who was writing plays in French and translating himself into English.

Although **Malone Dies** is the second novel in what is today called the Beckett Trilogy, it is totally unconnected from either; **Molloy** which preceded it or **The Unnamable** which followed it. **Molloy**, which has also been recorded by Naxos, is the story of two quests, one of a curmudgeonly vagrant looking for his mother's house, and the other of a prissy detective in search of him. It is a highly unusual narrative with many biblical overtones, a novel that broke the mould of literary fiction as drastically as **Godot** had changed the theatre of its day, but British publication came later than **Malone Dies**. This latter is, on the surface at least, more conventional, in that it tells a story in sequence, is not full of ambiguities and does not offer a series of puzzles. But it cannot be called particularly conventional either. It is the first person monologue of Malone, an old man, lying in bed and waiting to die. He is not a nice old man: his 'bitterness' at having had to live at all, his spite against others he has known, and his sour memories which make up the real or imagined stories he tells

himself between naps and other thoughts, make that clear enough, the tone is fiercely ironic, highly quotable and, because of its extravagance, also very comic. Old actors like Max Wall have sometimes extended their careers and found new audiences by doing public readings of **Malone Dies** when they could no longer memorise a stage play. The novel catches the reality of old age in a way that is grimly convincing, cruel as humour so often is, and memorable because of Beckett's way with words, giving new meanings to familiar concepts and making language perform new functions.

From the beginning Malone makes it clear that he is resigned to his forthcoming death, speculating as to how long it will take, going through the dates of the theological year with its saints' days and public holidays, and wishing terrible things in this or the next world to all who have crossed his path. He is not in a hurry to die; boredom is worse, but he has an inventive mind and can think up little stories, even if they are not entirely made up, about people and families, their public and private habits and ways of getting through life, with vignettes that give colour to daily commonplaces that might shock or disturb some readers or listeners, accustomed to very

different ways of living, and who might not want to think too much about the unpleasantnesses of life. Sexual descriptions, which might awaken an erotic response if phrased by another, become in Malone's (or Beckett's) speculations, either comic or extremely off-putting, comparing, for instance, the single remaining tooth in a sexual partner's mouth to Christ's cross. There is comedy and pathos in the situation of Lambert, convinced that pigs will fatten better if kept in permanent darkness, and he remains unconvinced by the repeated experience of always having in the end 'a weak pig, blind and lean' to slaughter that he would curse for its ingratitude. The casualness of farmyard killing, even of coddled pets, is brought home to the reader as unconventionally as the sexual descriptions, human activities that might be enjoyed or could lead to disgust.

In spite of the universality of his themes with their applicability to all cultures and nationalities, and persons of all classes and backgrounds, Samuel Beckett's work always has an Irish feel and it is rural Ireland that is most often recalled. In reality, of course, the occasion described or the place where it is set might be very different. Beckett has admitted that the situation of Malone is not

unlike that of an elderly man with whom he shared for at least a few days, a room hidden in a loft outside Paris in late 1940 when he was wanted by the Gestapo. The man was the Jewish father of Nathalie Sarraute, who shortly after died in that hidden room. In the same way references to places far from his native Dublin crop up in different Beckett works, nearly all of them based on his early life and his wartime experiences. In translating himself or in supervising translations into other languages, even into the American versions of some of his work, there are changes of association and even place names to fit into local resonances and associations. But the feeling of Ireland nevertheless pervades everything, whether written before or after the war. Most of that was, after escaping capture in Paris, spent at Roussillon in the Vaucluse, a mountainous region that he describes accurately enough in many works, but still manages to make sound like the Irish landscape, which tends to be flat with low, rolling hills.

"What tedium," exclaims Malone as he tires of his stories, told to himself to pass the time until 'the throes' warn him that death is imminent. We begin to realise that Malone seems to be in a kind of purgatory, although that is certainly more true of the narrator of

Beckett's next novel **The Unnamable**. There is always some Dante in the background, the medieval author who Beckett studied intensely at Trinity College. As the novel – and Malone's ebbing consciousness – nears its end, the stories become wilder and more sadistic and a Dante-like demon appears, Lemuel, surely from Hell, who in Malone's imagination kills the characters one by one. The novel ends in nightmare and Malone's own death. Another recurring Beckett image comes up at the end, a boat trip, which is of course sailing off to infinity, so that different images of dying are mixed as Malone's own mind fades out.

In spite of the grimness of the theme, Beckett's extraordinary use of language, both in the French original and the translation, makes **Malone Dies** compulsively readable with a flow that seems intended for the human voice, constantly finding a new way to say something, surprising the listener with a new idea or a carefully-placed obscenity. There are incidents from the author's own childhood memories, some coming from other novels, thoughts that he has worded differently in plays and poems, references to persons who might have different identities or functions, but who seem destined or interested in watching over this curious,

question-asking invalid, never quite sure whether he wants to die or live a little longer. Always on his guard against surprise, Malone is constantly surprised and so is the reader or listener.

Malone's mind, the real hero of this novel, can make as much out of a trivial incident that it has invented as of a major one, changing the story half-way through, changing the name of a character on a whim or going back to start again, in other words doing what a writer does and which Beckett, the most punctilious and self-demanding of writers, did himself. He was never satisfied with what he had written and was constantly cutting, editing and rephrasing. It must also be remembered that when **Malone Dies** was written, Beckett was in a state of considerable distress and anxiety. He had survived the war, but many of his mentors and friends had not. He had had two novels published a decade or more earlier, but they had been failures and were forgotten. He knew what he wanted to write, but considered it unlikely that any publisher would take him on or that anyone would want to read him. He was over forty with no reputation or prospects, little money and, perhaps worst of all, believed that his own days were numbered. A growth in his cheek

was giving him pain and he thought that it was probably malignant. As he had done most of his life, he avoided going to a doctor and was preparing himself for the worst, writing desperately to get out of his system what he wanted to write, plays and novels that would catch the essence of the time he had lived through and what he had concluded from it. He knew it would require a new use of language, sparer than the overly-flowery way that Irish writers always use words. That was one reason that he began to write in French. When he translated himself or wrote directly in English, he had to discover new ways of using the language.

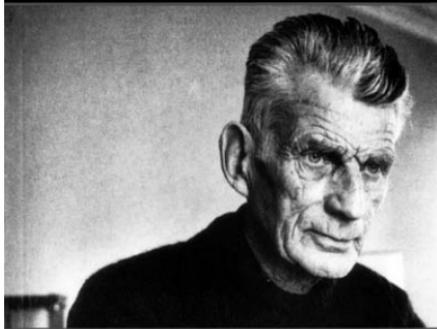
When his mother was dying in a nursing home, he returned briefly to Ireland and during a stormy night near Dun Laoghaire he had a sudden insight that his way forward as a writer lay, not in trying to push down his instinct to always see the dark side of life, but in allowing himself to develop that tendency and find in his pessimistic view of the human condition a new and individual voice that would depict life in a different way, avoiding the hypocrisies and sugared lies we use to make our existence more pleasant, including the comforts of religion.

Beckett was aware that Proust and Joyce had never been able to find ways of looking

at life that did much more than describe it, that they had died moving the boundaries of literature and thought forward, but never far enough to satisfy them. In spite of his problems with frustration, neglect and health, Beckett spent two intensive years, 1947-1949, writing, while believing that he too, like Malone, was dying. He put himself into the minds of characters that did not belong to the comfortable middle-class background in which he grew up, the minds of drop-outs, failures, tramps and the dispossessed of the earth, whose existence was closer to the world of want that he had come to know and to which spiritually he belonged. Although the tumour, once removed, turned out to be benign, and he was to live for another forty years and write much more, Samuel Beckett's reputation and acceptance as a writer depends principally on the two years in the late forties when he wrote **Waiting for Godot**, the **Trilogy** and some shorter works, including his best-known poems, all first in French, then in English. He not only accomplished a revolution in the use of two languages, but opened the door to subject matter previously untouched and an honesty about the realities we all have to face that no other writer has had the courage to attempt.

Notes by John Calder

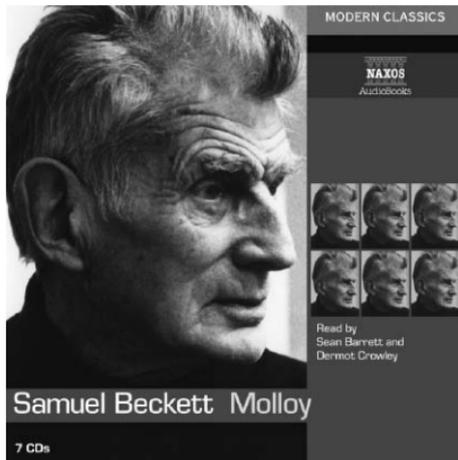
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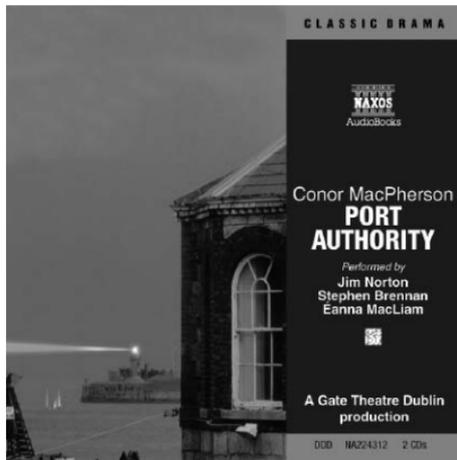
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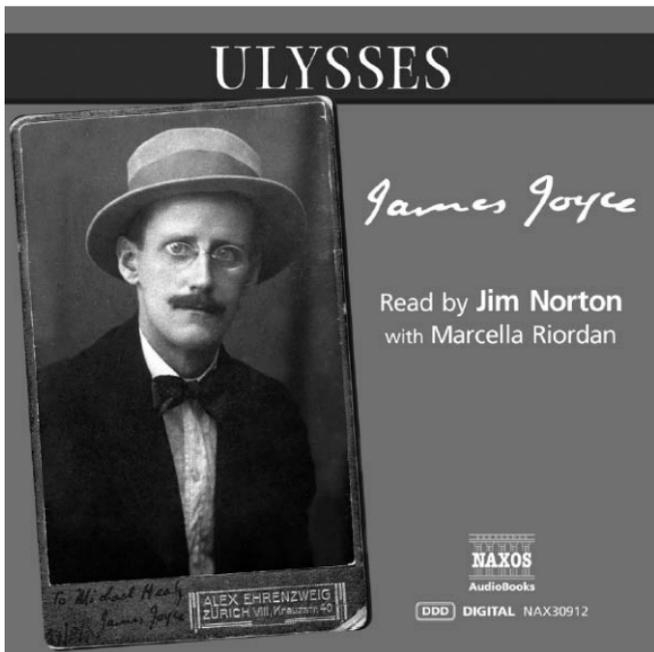
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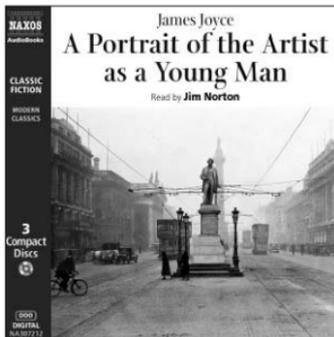
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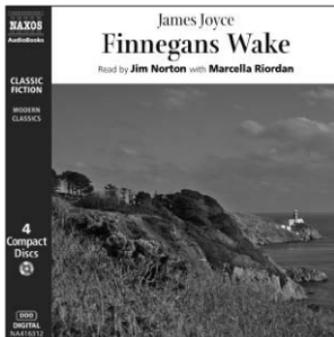


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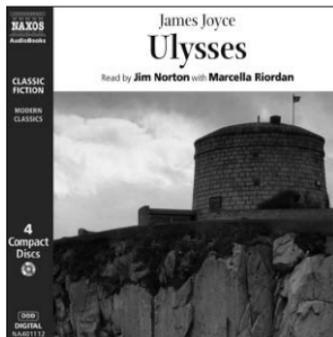


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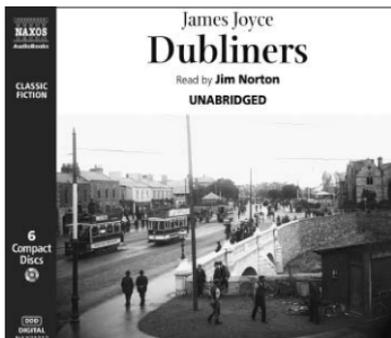
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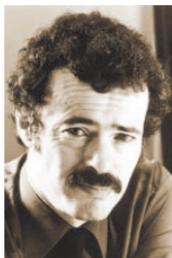
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Samuel Beckett Malone Dies

Malone Dies is the first person monologue of Malone, an old man, lying in bed and waiting to die. The tone is fiercely ironic, highly quotable and, because of its extravagance, also very comic. It catches the reality of old age in a way that is grimly convincing, cruel as humour so often is, and memorable because of Beckett's way with words. A master dramatist, Beckett's novels can be even more effective when heard, and especially when read by a such a Beckett specialist as Sean Barrett.



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 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. He also features in *Molloy*, *Voice of the Buddha* and *Canterbury Tales III* for Naxos AudioBooks.

MALONE DIES was written as a separate novel, but is often regarded as the second part of **The Beckett Trilogy**, preceded by **MOLLOY** and followed by **THE UNNAMABLE**.

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