The Colours of Entropy in Beckett's Work
Ed. Swati Joshi, David Pattie, and Mark Byron

> 'And the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat remembers Murphy to this day, with pity, derision, contempt, and a touch of awe, as the male nurse that went mad with his colours nailed to the mast.'
>
> – Beckett 2009, 155

Murphy's bedside vigil with Mr Endon, following their iconic game of chess, has Murphy contemplate his disappearance into the near-void of Mr Endon's eyes. Although unseen by Mr Endon and ultimately by himself, Murphy is attuned to the physical condition of those eyes – 'pupils prodigiously dilated,' the iris 'reduced to a thin glaucous rim of spawnlike consistency' (155), 'the filigree of veins' (156) – as a gateway to his own extinction. Murphy narrates this process out of character and without affect, but which later gives way to a feeling of 'incandescence' (156). This episode bears the qualities of an entropic process, mingling physical, psychological and cognitive processes that diminish and flare out.

The concept of entropy is basic to the second law of thermodynamics, where isolated systems evolve toward thermodynamic equilibrium and maximum entropy, a state where energy is most dispersed. This critical idea takes on different forms in cosmology, chemistry, economics, and information theory. Beckett's lifelong curiosity regarding the principles of physics shapes the existential, economic, sexual, clinical, emotional, and above all, artistic entropy in his poems, short stories, novels, and plays. Recent scholarship on Beckett examines the representation of physical principles in his works. Brynhildur Boyce (2009), in his seminal article, attests to Beckett's long-lasting interest in physics. Katherine Ebury's *Modernism and Cosmology* (2014) analyses the influence on Beckett of Joyce's interest in astronomy. Brian Skinner (2015) employs Beckett's quote, 'Every word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness,' to explain the concept of particles and anti-particles. Chris Ackerley's 'Samuel Beckett and the Physical Continuum' (2016) examines Beckett's representation of chaotic continuum and the portrayal of monads. Patrick Armstrong (2020) analyses the correlation between the principles of physics and the movement of characters in Beckett's work. This scientific curiosity and its expression in various kinds of entropy comprise a rich field of interpretation for Beckett's work.

This special issue seeks to develop how the themes of entropy and its cognates function throughout Beckett's work: the ways in which motility, materiality, colour, climate, sexual desire, language, and affect, among other features tend toward concinnity, unpredictability, irreversibility, and other conditions. What are the potential implications of such processes for understanding Beckett's prose and drama? Are there exceptions to this tendency and do they signify change cross Beckett's career? How might the reader absorb entropy in Beckett in light of political, social, technological, and other potential crises? Is there such a thing as 'good' entropy, counter to the standard narrative of decline and failure?

We invite papers on Beckett's use entropy including but not limited to:

1) Cosmological
2) Thermodynamic
3) Political
4) Psychological
5) Sexual
6) Emotional
7) Linguistic
8) Socio-economic
9) Sensory
10) Environmental

Please share your 250-words abstract and 100-words bionote to sbentropy2026@gmail.com by 31 January 2027.