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In memoriam: Marius Buning

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Published in:
The Beckett Circle

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Engelberts, M. (2008). In memoriam: Marius Buning. *The Beckett Circle*, 31(1), 18.

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IN MEMORIAM

Marius Buning



Marius Buning passed away on January 11th, at the age of 77, after having been hospitalized for lung disease leading to severe respiratory problems. Just a few days before last Christmas, he was still corresponding actively on *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* matters, not only with the Dutch members

of the editorial board but with authors, with members of the Beckett Society, and with the advisory board of the bi-lingual journal he founded in 1992. It is, perhaps, not wholly improper to say that Marius was a society man.

For the numerous people who have met him, for instance during the 1992 The Hague conference which he initiated after having been contacted by the festival organizers, it will be very clear that that does *not* mean he was intent on “society” events; I don’t remember him wearing a suit, for instance. This may be – or may have been – a common attitude in the humanities, but for Marius it was a way to keep up with what happened in society at large. Although he was obviously not a student any more in the sixties and seventies, he was fascinated by the ideas and practices of that age.

However, he thrived even more in small societies than in the society. At the start of his career, that small society was mainly the classroom. He liked teaching, and he liked his students – so much so perhaps that there was hardly any time left for research and publishing. At his crowded funeral, one of his students, now a middle-aged woman, thanked him for his inspiring classes: that is quite a privilege for a teacher who retired – unwillingly – more than 10 years ago.

Gradually, other smaller societies attracted Marius. The first one was the Powys society: Marius wrote his Ph.D. thesis on allegory in T.F. Powys. But soon there were others: Meister Eckhart, the German mystic, seduced the man who had been born in a strict protestant community, but who had abandoned religion as a student. From allegory to mysticism; and then on to a meaning so hidden that no one will ever even know in which emptiness to search for it. The Samuel Beckett society proved to be his best ‘company’, since he collaborated closely and for many years with the board and with many members as the editor in chief of *SBT/A*. Which is not to say he did not cherish other companies: of Jewish American writers, for instance (he guided Chaim Potok during his visit to the Netherlands), or Joyce and his more or less concentric circles. Many will thus miss Marius, who very much appreciated company.

--Matthijs Engelberts