

# CURRENT BOOKS

## FELLOWS' CHOICE

*Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows of the Wilson Center*

### **SAMUEL BECKETT**

by Dierdre Bair  
Harcourt, 1978  
736 pp. \$19.95  
L of C 77-92527  
ISBN 0-15-179256-9

Samuel Beckett is arguably the most important English writer of this century after his great friend James Joyce. He has also been the most passionately private of men. But now Beckett has broken his long silence, responding to the questions of a hitherto unknown English professor from the University of Pennsylvania. Dierdre Bair's biography is thus something of a literary event as well as a treasure-trove of information. With assiduity and patience, she has constructed from interviews and previously unavailable letters the story—or *a* story—of Beckett's life, including many new details about his only recently disclosed service with the French Resistance in World War II, for which De Gaulle awarded him the Legion of Honor. Bair portrays Beckett's struggles with self-doubt as well as his heroic dedication to writing, even to writing about the pointlessness of writing. Both as an interpreter of Beckett's work and as a prose stylist, she leaves much to be desired. Such complaints are gratuitous, however, since her book presents a wealth of new material both for students of 20th-century fiction and readers with a special interest in one of the darkest and richest authors of our age.

—Frank D. McConnell

### **TWO CHEERS FOR CAPITALISM**

by Irving Kristol  
Basic Books, 1978  
288 pp. \$10  
L of C 77-20408  
ISBN 0-465-08803-1

This powerful, provocative statement on the modern liberal state is, says Kristol, editor of *The Public Interest*, "a kind of intellectual autobiography." Written over the past seven years, it clarifies the author's political evolution from "someone who was once simply content to regard himself as a 'liberal'" to one who "has come to be a 'neo-conservative.'" Although he withholds the third cheer for capitalism, Kristol denounces all forms of socialism, communism, and fascism as either