

SAMUEL BECKETT CORRESPONDS WITH FATHER  
DAMIEN ON MOLOKAI.

The exoticism of place and people  
has nothing on the exotic nature  
of experience.

He said.

This disease comes wrapped ornately:  
non-native, inhabiting, like you,  
your own parcel.

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And there, too, you, lifting yourself  
as a gift from the selfsame box, wrappings  
drooping aside.

You, correspondingly, as background—  
all palm, surf, and volcano.

In the foreground you stand holding  
the present you are

before the recipient you  
are, like

a garment  
the birthday boy drapes across his chest, speculating on fit.

Yes, a birthday, I realize—that's what it is—

The alien nakedness of self to self.

The candles redundant in the balmy weather.

The breath peeling itself away from deadened tissue, whereas  
the lung  
extinguishes the light with its own rare, numb substance.