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Edited and with an Introduction by HAROLD BLOOM

Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot

NEW EDITION




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Samuel Beckett's
Waiting for Godot
New Edition

Edited and with an introduction by
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 BLOOM'S
LITERARY CRITICISM
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Editor's Note

My Introduction regards *Waiting for Godot* as a Gnostic drama, akin to Shelley's vision. It is no accident that Shelley is so real a presence in Beckett's play. I think that Shelley would have judged Pozzo to be Godot, which is a dreadful thought.

Time, the malign entity for Gnosticism, is analyzed in *Godot* by Richard Schechner, after which Walter D. Asmus gives an account of Beckett as his own director.

Martin Esslin defines theater of the Absurd, while Katherine H. Burkman sees the play's function as initiation, and Normand Berlin tries to define the aesthetic pleasure of *Godot*.

Endgame is compared to *Godot* by Michael Worton, after which Ruby Cohn gives us an informed sketch of the drama.

The problem of what lies beyond *Godot* is taken up by Christopher Devenney, while existentialism is invoked by Lois Gordon.

Gerry Dukes and Rónán McDonald give us contrary visions of *Godot*, both persuasive, again demonstrating that the play's enigmas are insoluble.

HAROLD BLOOM

Introduction

Hugh Kenner wisely observes that, in *Waiting for Godot*, bowler hats “are removed for thinking but replaced for speaking.” Such accurate observation is truly Beckettian, even as was Lyndon Johnson’s reflection that Gerald Ford was the one person in Washington who could not walk and chew gum at the same time. Beckett’s tramps, like President Ford, keep to one activity at a time. Entropy is all around them and within them, since they inhabit, they are, that cosmological emptiness the Gnostics name as the *kenoma*.

Of the name *Godot*, Beckett remarked, “and besides, there is a rue Godot, a cycling racer named Godot, so you see, the possibilities are rather endless.” Actually, Beckett seems to have meant Godet, the one-time director of the Tour de France, but even the mistake is Beckettian and reminds us of a grand precursor text, Alfred Jarry’s “The Passion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race,” with its superb start: “Barabbas, slated to race, was scratched.”

Nobody is scratched in *Waiting for Godot*, but nobody gets started either. I take it that “Godot” is an emblem for “recognition,” and I thereby accept Deirde Bair’s tentative suggestion that the play was written while Beckett waited for recognition, for his novels to be received and appreciated, within the canon. A man waiting for recognition is more likely than ever to be obsessed that his feet should hurt continually and perhaps to be provoked also to the memory that his own father invariably wore a bowler hat and a black coat.

A play that moves from “Nothing to be done” (referring to a recalcitrant boot) on to “Yes, let’s go,” after which they do not move, charmingly does not progress at all. Time, the enemy above all others for the Gnostics, is the adversary in *Waiting for Godot*, as it was in Beckett’s *Proust*. That would be a minor truism, if the play were not set in the world made not by Plato’s

Demiurge but by the Demiurge of Valentinus, for whom time is hardly the moving image of eternity:

When the Demiurge further wanted to imitate also the boundless, eternal, infinite, and timeless nature of the Abyss, but could not express its immutable eternity, being as he was a fruit of defect, he embodied their eternity in times, epochs, and great numbers of years, under the delusion that by the quantity of times he could represent their infinity. Thus truth escaped him and he followed the lie.

Blake's way of saying this was to remind us that in equivocal worlds up and down were equivocal. Estragon's way is, "Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?" Lucky's way is the most Gnostic, since how could the *kenoma* be described any better than this?:

the earth in the great cold the great dark the air and the earth abode of stones in the great cold alas alas in the year of their Lord six hundred and something the air the earth the sea the earth abode of stones in the great deeps the great cold on sea on land and in the air I resume for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis the facts are there but time will tell I resume alas alas on on in short in fine on on abode of stones who can doubt it I resume but not so fast I resume the skull fading fading fading and concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown.

Description that is also lament—that is the only lyricism possible for the Gnostic, ancient or modern, Valentinus or Schopenhauer, Beckett or Shelley:

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth—
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Shelley's fragment carefully assigns the stars to a different birth, shared with our imaginations, a birth that precedes the Creation-Fall that gave us the cosmos of *Waiting for Godot*. When the moon rises, Estragon contemplates it

in a Shelleyan mode: "Pale for weariness . . . of climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us." This negative epiphany, closing act 1, is answered by another extraordinary Shelleyan allusion, soon after the start of act 2:

VLADIMIR: We have that excuse.
ESTRAGON: It's so we don't hear.
VLADIMIR: We have our reasons.
ESTRAGON: All the dead voices.
VLADIMIR: They make a noise like wings.
ESTRAGON: Like leaves.
VLADIMIR: Like sand.
ESTRAGON: Like leaves.

Silence.

VLADIMIR: They all speak at once.
ESTRAGON: Each one to itself.

Silence.

VLADIMIR: Rather they whisper.
ESTRAGON: They rustle.
VLADIMIR: They murmur.
ESTRAGON: They rustle.

Silence.

VLADIMIR: What do they say?
ESTRAGON: They talk about their lives.
VLADIMIR: To have lived is not enough for them.
ESTRAGON: They have to talk about it.
VLADIMIR: To be dead is not enough for them.
ESTRAGON: It is not sufficient.

Silence.

VLADIMIR: They make a noise like feathers.
ESTRAGON: Like leaves.
VLADIMIR: Like ashes.
ESTRAGON: Like leaves.

Long silence.

VLADIMIR: Say something!

It is the ultimate, dark transumption of Shelley's fiction of the leaves in the apocalyptic "Ode to the West Wind." Involuntary Gnostics, Estragon and Vladimir are beyond apocalypse, beyond any hope for this world. A tree may bud overnight, but this is not so much like an early miracle (as Kenner says) as it is "another of your nightmares" (as Estagon says). The reentry of the blinded Pozzo, now reduced to crying "Help!" is the drama's most poignant moment,

even as its most dreadful negation is shouted by blind Pozzo in his fury, after Vladimir asks a temporal question once too often:

POZZO: (*suddenly furious*). Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (*Calmer.*) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.

Pozzo, originally enough of brute to be a Demiurge himself, is now another wanderer in the darkness of the *kenoma*. Estragon's dreadful question, as to whether Pozzo may not have been Godot, is answered negatively by Vladimir, but with something less than perfect confidence. Despite the boy's later testimony, I suspect that the tragicomedy centers precisely there: in the possible identity of Godot and Pozzo, in the unhappy intimation that the Demiurge is not only the god of this world, the spirit of Schopenhauer's Will to Live, but the only god that can be uncovered anywhere, even anywhere out of this world.

RICHARD SCHECHNER

There's Lots of Time in Godot

Two duets and a false solo, that's *Waiting for Godot*. Its structure is more musical than dramatic, more theatrical than literary. The mode is pure performance: song and dance, music-hall routine, games. And the form is a spinning away, a centrifugal wheel in which the center—Time—can barely hold the parts, Gogo and Didi, Pozzo and Lucky, the Boy(s). The characters arrive and depart in pairs, and when they are alone they are afraid: half of them is gone. The Boy isn't really by himself, though one actor plays the role(s). "It wasn't you came yesterday," states Vladimir in Act II. "No Sir," the Boy says. "This is your first time." "Yes Sir." [p. 58b] Only Godot is alone, at the center of the play and all outside it at once. "What does he do, Mr. Godot? . . . He does nothing, Sir." [p. 59a] But even Godot is linked to Gogo/Didi. "To Godot? Tied to Godot! What an idea! No question of it. (Pause.) For the moment." [p. 14b] Godot is also linked to the Boy(s), who tend his sheep and goats, who are his messengers. Nor can we forget that Godot cares enough for Gogo/Didi to send someone each night to tell them the appointment will not be kept. What exquisite politeness.

Pozzo (and we must assume, Lucky) has never heard of Godot, although the promised meeting is to take place on his land. Pozzo is insulted that his name means nothing to Gogo/Didi. "We're not from these parts," Estragon says in apology, and Pozzo deigns, "You are human beings none the less:"

From *Casebook on Waiting for Godot*, pp. 175–187. © 1967 by Grove Press, Inc.

[p. 15b] Pozzo/Lucky have no appointment to keep. Despite the cracking whip and Pozzo's air of big business on the make, their movements are random, to and fro across the land, burdens in hand, rope in place: there is always time to stop and proclaim. In Act I, after many adieus, Pozzo says, "I don't seem to be able . . . (*long hesitation*) . . . to depart" And when he does move, he confesses, "I need a running start." In Act II, remembering nothing about "yesterday," Pozzo replies to Vladimir's question, "Where do you go from here," with a simple, "On." It is Pozzo's last word.

The Pozzo/Lucky duet is made of improvised movements and set speeches (Lucky's has run down). The Gogo/Didi duet is made of set movements (they must be at this place each night at dusk to wait for Godot to come or night to fall) and improvised routines spun out of long-ago learned habits. Pozzo who starts in no place is worried only about Time; he ends without time but with a desperate need to move. Gogo-Didi are "tied" to this place and want only for time to pass. Thus, part way through the first act the basic scenic rhythm of *Godot* is established by the strategic arrangement of characters: Gogo/Didi (and later the Boy) have definite appointments, a rendezvous they *must* keep. Pozzo/Lucky are free agents, aimless, not tied to anything but each other. For this reason, Pozzo's watch is very important to him. Having nowhere to go, his only relation to the world is in knowing "the time." The play is a confrontation between the rhythms of place and time. Ultimately they are coordinates of the same function.

Of course, Pozzo's freedom is illusory. He is tied to Lucky—and vice versa—as tightly as the others are tied to Godot and the land. In the scenic calculus of the play, rope = appointment. As one coordinate weakens, the other tightens. Thus, when Pozzo/Lucky lose their sense of time, there is a corresponding increase in their need to cover space. Lucky's speech is imperfect memory, an uncontrollable stream of unconsciousness, while Pozzo's talk is all *tirade*, a series of set speeches, learned long ago, and slowly deserting the master actor, just as the things which define his identity—watch, pipe, atomizer—desert him. I am reminded of Yeats' *Circus Animals' Desertion* where images fail the old poet who is finally forced to "lie down where all the ladders start / In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart." Here, too, Pozzo will find himself (Lucky is already there). Thus we see these two in their respective penultimate phases, comforted only by broken bursts of eloquence, laments for that lost love, clock time.

The pairing of characters—those duets—links time and space, presents them as discontinuous coordinates. Gogo/Didi are not sure whether the place in Act II is the same as that in Act I; Pozzo cannot remember yesterday; Gogo/Didi do not recall what they did yesterday. "We should have thought of it [suicide] a million years ago, in the nineties." Gogo either forgets at once, or he never forgets. This peculiar sense of time and place is not centered *in* the

characters, but *between* them. Just as it takes two lines to fix a point in space, so it takes two characters to *unfix* our normal expectations of time, place, and being. This pairing is not unique to *Waiting for Godot*; it is a favorite device of contemporary playwrights. The Pupil and the Professor in *The Lesson*, Claire and Solange in *The Maids*, Peter and Jerry in *The Zoo Story*: these are of the same species as *Godot*. What might these duets mean or be? Each of them suggests a precarious existence, of sense of self and self-in-the-world so dependent on “the other” as to be inextricably bound up in the other’s physical presence. In these plays “experience” is not “had” by a single character, but “shared” between them. It is not a question of fulfillment—of why Romeo wants Juliet—but of existence. By casting the characters homosexually, the author removes the “romantic” element: these couples are not joined because of some biological urge but because of some metaphysical necessity. The drama that emerges from such pairing is intense and locked-in—a drama whose focus is internal without being “psychological.” Internalization without psychology is naked drama, theater unmediated by character. That is why, in these plays, the generic structure of their elements—farce, melodrama, vaudeville—is so unmistakably clear. There is no way (or need) to hide structure: that’s all there is. But still, in *Godot*, there are meaningful differences between Vladimir and Estragon, Pozzo and Lucky; but even these shadings of individuation are seen only through the couple: to know one character, you have to know both.

In Aristotelian terms drama is made of the linked chain: action > plot > character > thought. Connections run efficiently in either direction, although for the most part one seeks the heart of a play in its action (as Fergusson uses that term). These same elements are in *Godot*, but the links are broken. The discontinuity of time is reflected on this more abstract level of structure. Thus what Gogo and Didi do is not what they are thinking; nor can we understand their characters by adding and relating events to thoughts. And the action of the play—waiting—is not what they are after but what they want most to avoid. What, after all, are their games for? They wish to “fill time” in such a way that the vessel “containing” their activities is unnoticed amid the activities themselves. Whenever there is nothing “to do” they remember why they are here: To wait for Godot. That memory, that direct confrontation with Time, is painful. They play, invent, move, sing to avoid the sense of waiting. Their activities are therefore keeping them from a consciousness of the action of the play. Although there is a real change in Vladimir’s understanding of his experience (he learns precisely what “nothing to be done” means) and in Pozzo’s life, these changes and insights do not emerge from the plot (as Lear’s “wheel of fire” does), but stand outside of what’s happened. Vladimir has his epiphany while Estragon sleeps—in a real way his perception is a function of the sleeping Gogo. Pozzo’s understanding, like the man himself, is blind. Structurally as well as thematically, *Godot* is an “incompleted” play; and its

openness is not at the end (as *The Lesson* is open-ended) but in many places throughout: it is a play of gaps and pauses, of broken-off dialogue, of speech and action turning into time-avoiding games and routines. Unlike Beckett's perfectly modulated Molloy, *Waiting for Godot* is designed off-balance. It is the very opposite of *Oedipus*. In *Godot* we do not have the meshed ironies of experience, but that special anxiety associated with question marks preceded and followed by nothing.

What then holds *Godot* together? Time, habit, memory, and games form the texture of the play and provide both its literary and theatrical interest. In *Proust*, Beckett speaks of habit and memory in a way that helps us understand *Godot*:

The laws of memory are subject to the more general laws of habit. Habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability, the lightning-conductor of his existence. Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit. . . . Life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals. . . . The creation of the world did not take place once and for all, but takes place every day.

The other side of "dull inviolability" is "knowing," and it is this that Gogo/Didi must avoid if they are to continue. But knowledge is precisely what Didi has near the end of the play. It ruins everything for him:

Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? To-morrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of to-day? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? [Looking at Estragon] He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. [p. 58a]

Then, paraphrasing Pozzo, Didi continues:

Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (He listens.) But habit is a great deadener. (He looks again at Estragon.) At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying. He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (*Pause.*) I can't go on! (*Pause.*) What have I said?

In realizing that he knows nothing, in seeing that habit is the great deadener—in achieving an ironic point of view toward himself, Didi knows everything, and wishes he did not. For him Pozzo's single instant has become "lingeringly." For Pozzo "the same day, the same second" is enough to enfold all human experience; Didi realizes that there is "time to grow old." But habit will rescue him. Having shouted his anger, frustration, helplessness ("I can't go on!"), Didi is no longer certain of what he said. Dull inviolability has been violated, but only for an instant: one instant is enough for insight, and we have a lifetime to forget. The Boy enters. Unlike the first act, Didi asks him no questions. Instead Didi makes statements. "He won't come this evening. . . . But he'll come to-morrow." For the first time, Didi asks the Boy about Godot. "What does he do, Mr. Godot? . . . Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?" The Boy answers: Godot does nothing, the beard is probably white. Didi says—after a silence—"Christ have mercy on us!" But both thieves will not be saved, and now that the game is up, Vladimir seeks to protect himself:

Tell him . . . (he hesitates) . . . tell him you saw me and that . . . (he hesitates) . . . that you saw me . . . (With sudden violence.) You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me to-morrow that you never saw me! [p. 59a]

The "us" of the first act is the "me" of the second. Habits break, old friends are abandoned, Gogo—for the moment—is cast into the pit. When Gogo awakens, Didi is standing with his head bowed. Didi does not tell his friend of his conversation with the Boy nor of his insight or sadness. Gogo asks, "What's wrong with you," and Didi answers, "Nothing." Didi tells Estragon that they must return the following evening to keep their appointment once again. But for him the routine is meaningless: Godot will not come. There is something more than irony in his reply to Gogo's question, "And if we dropped him?" "He'd punish us," Didi says. But the punishment is already apparent to Didi: the pointless execution of orders, without hope of fulfillment. Never coming; for Didi, Godot has come . . . and gone.

But Didi alone sees behind his old habits and even he, in his ironic musing, senses someone else watching him sleep just as he watches Gogo: he learns that all awareness is relative. Pozzo is no relativist, but a strict naturalist. In the first act he describes the setting of the sun with meticulous hand gestures, twice consulting his watch so as to be precise. Pozzo knows his "degrees" and the subtle shadings of time's passing. He also senses that when night comes it "will burst upon us pop! like that! just when we least expect it." And for Pozzo, once it is night there is no more time, for he measures that commodity by the sun. Going blind, Pozzo too has an epiphany—the exact opposite of Didi's:

Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? [p. 57b]

Of the light gleaming an instant astride the grave, Pozzo has only a dim memory. He has found a new habit to accommodate his new blindness; his epiphany is false. The experience of the play indeed shows us that there is plenty of time, too much: waiting means more time than things to fill it.

Pozzo/Lucky play a special role in this passing of time that is *Waiting for Godot's* action. Things have changed for them by Act II. Pozzo is blind and helpless, Lucky is dumb. Their "career" is nearly over. Like more conventional theatrical characters, they have passed from bad times to worse. The rope, whip, and valise remain: all else is gone—Lear and the Fool on the heath, that is what this strange pair suggests to me. But if they are that in *themselves*, they are something different to Gogo/Didi. In the first act, Gogo/Didi suspect that Pozzo may be Godot. Discovering that he is not, they are curious about him and Lucky. They circle around their new acquaintances, listen to Pozzo's speeches, taunt Lucky, and so on. Partly afraid, somewhat uncertainly, they integrate Pozzo/Lucky into their world of waiting: they make out of the visitors a way of passing time. And they exploit the persons of Pozzo/Lucky, taking food and playing games. (In the Free Southern Theatre production, Gogo and Didi pickpocket Pozzo, stealing his watch, pipe, and atomizer—no doubt to hock them for necessary food. This interpretation has advantages: it grounds the play in an acceptable reality; it establishes a first act relationship of double exploitation—Pozzo uses them as audience and they use him as income.) In the second act this exploitation process is even clearer. Pozzo no longer seeks an audience. Gogo/Didi no longer think that Pozzo may be Godot (Gogo, briefly, goes through this routine). Gogo/Didi try to detain Pozzo/Lucky as long as possible. They play rather cruel games with them, postponing assistance. It would be intolerable to Gogo/Didi for this "diversion" to pass quickly, just as it is intolerable for an audience to watch it go on so long. What "should" be a momentary encounter is converted into a prolonged affair. Vladimir sermonizes on their responsibilities. "It is not every day that we are needed." The talk continues without action. Then, trying to pull Pozzo up, Vladimir falls on top of him. Estragon does likewise. Obviously, they can pull Pozzo up (just as they can get up themselves). But instead they remain prone. "Won't you play with us?" they seem to be asking. But Pozzo is in no playing mood. Despite his protests, Gogo/Didi continue their game. It is, as Gogo says, "child's play." They get up, help Pozzo and Lucky up, and the play proceeds. When they are gone, Estragon goes to sleep. Vladimir shakes him

awake. "I was lonely." And speaking of Pozzo/Lucky, "That passed the time." For them, perhaps; but for the audience? It is an ironic scene—the entire cast sprawled on the floor, hard to see, not much action. It makes an audience aware that the time is not passing fast enough.

This game with Pozzo/Lucky is one of many. In fact, the gamesmanship of *Waiting for Godot* is extraordinary. Most of the play is taken up by a series of word games, play acting, body games, routines. Each of these units is distinct, usually cued in by memories of *why* Gogo/Didi are where they are. Unable simply to consider the ramifications of "waiting," unfit, that is, for pure speculation (as Lucky was once fit), they fall back onto their games: how many thieves were saved, how many leaves on the tree, calling each other names, how can we hang ourselves, and so on. These games are not thematically meaningless, they feed into the rich image-texture of the play; but they are meaningless in terms of the play's action: they lead nowhere, they contribute to the non-plot. Even when Godot is discussed, the talk quickly becomes routinized. At one time Vladimir spoke to Godot. "What exactly did we ask him for?" Estragon asks. Vladimir replies, "Were you not there?" "I can't have been listening." But it is Gogo who supplies the information that Didi confirms: That their request was "a kind of prayer . . . a vague supplication." And it is both of them, in contrapuntal chorus, who confirm that Godot would have to "think it over . . . in the quiet of his home . . . consult his family . . . his friends . . . his agents . . . his correspondents . . . his books . . . his bank account . . . before taking a decision."

This kind of conversation populates *Godot*. A discussion or argument is transformed into routinized counterpoint. Much has been said about the beauty of Beckett's prose in this play. More needs to be said about its routine qualities. Clichés are converted into game/rituals by dividing the lines between Gogo and Didi, by arbitrarily assigning one phrase to each. Thus we have a sense of their "pairdom," while we are entranced by the rhythm of their language. Beckett's genius in dialogue is his scoring, not his "book." This scoring pertains not only to language but to events as well. Whatever there is to do, is done in duets. By using these, Gogo/Didi are able to convert anxiety into habit. Gogo is more successful at this than Didi. For Gogo things are either forgotten at once or never forgotten. There is no "time-span" for him, only a kaleidoscopic present in which everything that is there is forever in focus. It takes Didi to remind Gogo of Godot, and these reminders always bring Gogo pain, his exasperated "Ah." For Didi the problem is more complex. Gogo says "no use wriggling" to which Didi replies, "the essential doesn't change." These are opposite contentions; that's why they harmonize so well.

A few words about Time. If waiting is the play's action, Time is its subject. Godot is not Time, but he is associated with it—the one who makes but does not keep appointments. (An impish thought occurs: Perhaps Godot

passes time with Gogo/Didi just as they pass it with him. Within this scheme, Godot has nothing to do (as the Boy tells Didi in Act II] and uses the *whole play* as a diversion in his day. Thus the “big game” is a strict analogy of the many “small games” that make the play.) The basic rhythm of the play is habit interrupted by memory—memory obliterated by games. Why do Gogo/Didi play? In order to deaden their sense of waiting. Waiting is a “waiting *for*” and it is precisely this that they wish to forget. One may say that “waiting” is the larger context within which “passing time” by playing games is a subsystem, protecting them from the sense that they are waiting. They confront Time (i.e., are conscious of Godot) only when there is a break in the games and they “know” and “feel” that they are waiting.

In conventional drama all details converge on the center of action. We may call this kind of structure centripetal. In *Godot* the action is centrifugal. Gogo/Didi do their best to shield themselves from a direct consciousness that they are at the appointed place at the prescribed time. If the center of the play is Time, dozens of activities and capers fling Gogo/Didi away from this center. But events at the periphery force them back inward: try as they will, they are not able to forget. . . .

. . . Caught on the hub of this wheel, driven by “reminders” toward the center, Gogo/Didi literally have nowhere to go outside of this tight scheme. The scenic counterpart is the time-bracket “dusk–darkness”—that portion of the day when they must be at the appointed place. But even when night falls, and they are free to go, our last glimpse of them in each act is:

ESTRAGON: Well, shall we go?

VLADIMIR: Yes, let’s go.

They do not move.

As if to underline the duet-nature of this ending, Beckett reverses the line assignments in Act II.

What emerges is a strange solitude, again foreshadowed by Beckett in his *Proust*. “The artistic tendency is not expansive but a contraction. And art is the apotheosis of solitude.” In spinning out from the center, Gogo/Didi do not go anywhere, “they do not move.” Yet their best theatrical moments are all motion, a running helter-skelter, a panic. Only at the end of each act, when it is all over for the day, are they quiet. The unmoved mover is Time, that dead identity of instant and eternity. Once each for Didi and Pozzo, everything is contracted to that sense of Time where consciousness is possible, but nothing else. To wait and not know *how* to wait is to experience Time. To be freed from waiting (as Gogo/Didi are at the end of each act) is to permit the moon to rise more rapidly than it can (as it does on *Godot’s* stage), almost as if nature were illegally celebrating its release from its own clock. Let loose

from Time, night comes all of a sudden. After intermission, there is the next day—and tomorrow, another performance.

There are two time rhythms in *Godot*, one of the play and one of the stage. Theatrically, the exit of the Boy and the sudden night are strong cues for the act (and the play) to end. We, the audience, are relieved—it's almost over for us. They, the actors, do not move—even when the Godot-game is over, the theater-game keeps them in their place: tomorrow they must return to enact identical routines. Underlying the play (all of it, not just the final scene of each act) is the theater, and this is exactly what the script insinuates—a nightly appointment performed for people the characters will never meet. *Waiting for Godot* powerfully injects the mechanics of the theater into the mysteries of the play.

WALTER D. ASMUS

Beckett Directs "Godot"

Beckett is coming to Berlin to direct *Waiting for Godot*. He is no stranger at the Schiller Theater: after *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, and *Happy Days*, this is his fourth visit as a director. He also took part in the rehearsals of *Godot* ten years ago, and it was then that he met the actors Bollman, Wigger, and Herm. Bollman and he had also worked together on *Endgame*.

Rehearsal conditions are ideal: from 28 December to 8 March, mornings only, mostly on stage. Everybody taking part in the production brings enormous sympathy and respect toward Beckett—to such an extent that this will be inevitably, though not obtrusively, reflected in the working process. But he is not only respected as an authority, as a competent interpreter of his own script; more than that the working relationship with him is characterized by caution, attention, concessions, and openness—criteria for attitudes to set free his own attitude. On this basis, everybody tries not to disturb, but to strengthen the tacit mutual trust and to do their job with the highest possible degree of understanding and appreciation toward Beckett. As the weeks go by, there is a strong and at the same time a very vivid and dynamic structure to the group, interchangeable relationships evolving. Beckett's immaculate German is characterized by a typical idiomatic exactness that seems to influence the tone of all taking part. The language gains generally a slight overemphasis, expressive of care and consciousness. As a result of this linguistic precision, most

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