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Beckett and Pinter

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Reviews of *Waiting for Godot*

Zegel, Sylvain. Rev. of *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett. *Libération* 7 Jan. 1953.

Rpt. L. Graver and R. Federman. *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1979: 88-89. Print. Zegel, a “little-known French critic who wrote the perceptive first review of ‘En attendant Godot’ soon after its premiere in Paris” (88), presents a favorable review of the play’s first showing. He praises Beckett as someone who “deserves compassion with the greatest” (89). While the critic understands how “grumblers” (89) could take issue with the use of everyday words and lack of conventional plot, he also admits “they [the grumblers] did not understand that they were watching their own lives” (89). Zegel ends his review with the democratizing assertion that Didi and Gogo, “who represent all humanity, utter the remarks that any of us would utter” (89). The main lesson of *Godot*, states Zegel, is that the suffering, joy, and boredom apply to every member of the audience.

Hobson, Harold. Rev. of *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett. *Sunday Times* 7 Aug.

1955. Rpt. L. Graver and R. Federman. *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1979: 93-95. Print. Hobson responds favorably to *Godot*, even if he does yield that the progress in the play is “not towards a climax, but towards perpetual postponement” (93). The majority of the play, states Hobson, is so

unconventional that many critics and most audience members do not understand its point. While Hobson believes that the play is basically about how humanity always waits for tomorrow, and never realizes today as today, Beckett has “got it all wrong” (94). Opposed to Becett’s suggestion, Hobson stresses that humanity is far too busy busying itself to be waiting for anything. He seems to miss that Gogo and Didi attempt quite often to busy themselves, but to no avail. The truth to Beckett’s play, however, is besides the point, as “[t]here is no need for the dramatist to philosophize rightly; he can leave that to the philosophers” (94). Because of the “swagger” of Beckett’s philosophy and style, and the universality of the characters, Hobson urges his readers to see the play.

Tynan, Kenneth. Rev. of *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett. *Observer* 7 Aug. 1955.

Rpt. L. Graver and R. Federman. *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1979: 95-97. Print. Tynan reviews the play in a flattering light, suggesting that it “appeals to a definition of drama much more fundamental than any in the books” (95-6). The critic argues that *Godot* asserts and proves in a very simplistic and minimalistic style that “[p]assing the time in the dark, [...] is not only what drama is about but also what life is about” (96). Tynan goes on to relate the characters to Buster Keaton, Chaplin, and Laurel and Hardy, and the dialogue to “the double-talk of vaudeville” (96). To Tynan, the play forces a reexamination of the rules of drama, one that he is fully willing to embrace.

Fraser, G.S. Rev. of *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett. *Times Literary Supplement* 10

Feb. 1956. Rpt. L. Graver and R. Federman. *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1979: 97-104. Print. Fraser presents a favorable and expansive review of *Godot*, asserting that the play is a “modern morality play, on permanent Christian themes” (100). In his symbolist analysis that follows, Fraser draws parallels between the characters and all fallen Christians, between the young boy(s) and God’s angels, and between the tree in the play and a whole number of tree in the Bible (Tree of Knowledge, Tree of Life, Tree of Judas, and the Cross). For Fraser, the play presents a very symbolic commentary of on the Western world, which ultimately leaves the audience with a better understanding of reality and the current state of Christianity.

C.B. Rev. of *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett. *San Quentin News* 28 Nov. 1957. Rpt. L. Graver and R. Federman. *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1979: 111-113. Print. Though he notes that it presents no dramatized moral or specific hope, for the critic *Godot* is a very pleasurable play. C.B. explains how Beckett expects each member of the audience to “draw his own conclusions, make his own errors” (111). In summation of his review, the main value in *Godot* for the reviewer is that it is so universally applicable that nearly everyone watching can imagine himself in the play’s situation. He executes this point by going through each of the events of the play and suggesting the audience draw a parallel to reality. Overall, the play is the only place to go, even if it leaves you with nowhere to go; it was “effective” (113).

Marcabru, Pierre. Rev. of *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett. *Arts-Spectacles*.

Rpt. L. Graver and R. Federman. *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1979: 113-115. Print. Maracabru address a production of *Godot* eight years after it was first staged, saying that something was lost with the play's success. It no longer has the same bite. In his words, "[i]t no longer improvises, it organizes, slowly" (113). As Beckett was very meticulous in his construction of the play and everything has its place, producers now understand the play too simply and kill the surprise and astonishment with "a somewhat too methodical arrangement" (115). In part, Marcabru states that this has come from those striving for eloquence and meaning who have crassly accentuated the symbolic dimension of the play. For the critic, what prevails even through a poor production of the play is "a physical, and not a metaphysical, horror of the human condition"(114), presented in Beckett's characteristic malaise style.