

Emily McClay
Beckett and Pinter
Review
4/5/13

Annotated Bibliography

Brustein, Robert. Rev. of *Happy Days*, by Samuel Beckett. *New Republic* (1961): 45-6. Rpt. in *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Raymond Federman and Lawrence Graver. London and New York: Routledge, 1979. 258-260. Print. The critic takes an overall negative position regarding *Happy Days* because he believes that, while the performance he saw was well done, the play itself is "the least of [Beckett's] dramatic efforts." Beckett is simply repeating the points he has made in his past plays and with less poetic style and creativity. Brunstein states that "the language... is flat and prosaic; the symbols are almost nude in their unambiguousness; and those repetitions of which Beckett is so fond... have finally become rather boring." He declares the play uncomfortably predictable as Beckett seeks "not new themes but new metaphors to dramatize the same theme." The critic asserts that Beckett convinced the audience of his views on existence well enough in plays such as *Godot* and *Endgame* that it's exasperating to sit through more of the same, and Brustein wishes to Beckett put his abilities to better use.

Coen, Stephanie. Rev. of *Happy Days*, by Samuel Beckett. *American Theatre* 13.9 (1996): 22. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 26 Mar. 2013. In this brief review, Coen links *Happy Days* to an art exhibit she viewed earlier, "Women, Body, and Soul" in the Musee de la Civilisation, which primarily demonstrates the mistreatment of the physical body; "distorted and contorted, female flesh becomes a repository for abuse both psychological and physical, the site on which others... impose their own wills." She goes on to say that this exhibit didn't convey its message nearly as well as the play did, showing an actual woman half buried and "sustained by her faded elegance and glamor, resolutely cheerful and without self-pity."

Cohn, Ruby. "Happy Days is Here Again." Rev. of *Happy Days*, by Samuel Beckett. *Educational Theatre Journal* 21.3 (1969): 354-355. *JSTOR*. Web. 26 March. 2013. Cohn compares two performances of *Happy Days*. She seems to respect each despite the differences each actor brings to their character. One version was an English performance at the Los Angeles Inner City Art Gallery, and the other was a French production at Berkeley's Zellerbach theater. The critic says that Manley of the English production was "cool, sophisticated, and almost independent," while Renaud of the French production was "gray, slack-necked, and weary-voiced," yet the latter appealed to the audience more in an emotional context. Still, Manley emphasizes the loneliness of mankind rather than just that of a wife or woman on her own.

Dennis, Nigel. Rev. of *Happy Days*, by Samuel Beckett. *Encounter* (1963): 37-9. Rpt. in *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Raymond Federman and Lawrence Graver. London and New York: Routledge, 1979. 261-266. Print. The critic states that "*Happy Days* is the tightest and best-managed of Mr. Beckett's plays," because it features double-meanings, noteworthy points, and is not over-crowded with characters. Dennis focuses on the fact that Beckett has finally created a larger female role in his work, how he expresses the different struggles of women in contrast to men, and additionally, how humor can be found in the process of all this which draws the audience in more thoroughly. The main aspect he did not like in the production he saw was that that the actress playing Winnie had a voice "without a trace of sonorousness and as flat, hard, and inflexible as a steel girder," which he believes detracts from a very great, albeit difficult, part.

Simon, Alfred. Rev. of *Happy Days*, by Samuel Beckett. *Esprit* (1963): 905-9. Rpt. in *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Raymond Federman and Lawrence Graver. London and New York:

Routledge, 1979. 266-271. Print. Simon seems to view this play in a primarily positive light, saying much about Beckett's ability to interpret the meaning of life and persuade the audience to share his view even though "it is untenable." He calls this a tragedy "dedicated to the torment of knowing the unknowable, of comprehending the irrational, of naming the 'unnamable,'" and shows us this tragedy through the character Winnie as she gains the knowledge of her fate. She is slowly losing the use of her natural tools – hands, voice, and thought – and she dreads the final moment of consciousness when all these things are gone at last in a world where a malicious God has killed himself. It seems the ultimate tragedy is that there is no salvation at the end of a lonely life without purpose.

Smith, Iris L. Rev. of *Happy Days*, by Samuel Beckett. *Theatre Journal* 51.1 (1999): 86-88. JSTOR. Web. 26 March. 2013. Smith has good things to say about the somewhat altered production of *Happy Days* she viewed. Rather than being buried in a pile of sand as is the case in my versions of the play, Winnie is surrounded by broken windshields that point more obviously to a post-apocalyptic environment and also bring attention to her lack of mobility. The critic admires Maleczek's portrayal of Winnie because she plays her "a bit cynical – by turns sarcastic and hopeful," and gives the character more depth. On the other hand, Fitzpatrick gives the character Willie much more emotion in just his gaze, since he has so few lines. Smith also points out in response to those who believe *Happy Days* works as an overview of marriage that "however close [Winnie and Willie's] proximity to one another, each faces this disaster alone." The characters may be physically and matrimonially together but their situations are very different.

Thomas, James. Rev. of *Happy Days*, by Samuel Beckett. *Theatre Journal* 31.4 (1979): 542-544. JSTOR. Web. 26 March. 2013. Aside from mistakenly referring to Winnie as "Minnie" throughout his

review, Thomas appreciated the actress Whitelaw's "very delicate stress on [W]innie's unextinguishable hope," despite the character's desolate situation but was disappointed that the production didn't build on or reinvent the original setting, saying that "the play might have proven visually and thematically richer if it had been freed from its scenic shackles." He suggests that some of the glowing reviews the production received might have been based more on Beckett's reputation than the production's actual quality.