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Beckett's Manipulation of Audience Response in Waiting for Godot

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BECKETT'S MANIPULATION OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE IN WAITING FOR GODOT

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BY

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BECKETT'S MANIPULATION OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE IN WAITING FOR GODOT

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ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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This thesis examines one of the many paradoxes of Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot--that although on the surface Beckett reduces his characters to the barest minimum in human terms, the spectator still finds himself, mysteriously, identifying with those pathetic stage creatures and their plights.

The dual purpose of this paper is to examine the methods Beckett used to foster this sense of spectator-character likeness and to assess its impact upon the spectator. It explores the contrast between the near-caricatures, Pozzo and Lucky, and the more complexly humanized Vladimir and Estragon. It discusses Beckett's universalization of character, time, place, and action in the play and his success in forcing the spectator to apply the universals to himself. And it examines the nature and effect of the plentiful humor, including the stage laughter.

Beckett presents his main characters as clown-bumbs, at best once-respectable men now reduced to seemingly pitiable circumstances. But he universalizes them in appearances, time, and place so as to make them representative of all men. At the same time he draws the spectator into association with them so that the spectator feels included in the general representation. The characters seem at first glance to be merely caricatures, exaggerated and bizarre in their appearances, actions, and responses; but Beckett fills his two main characters out with enough humanity to allow the spectator to develop sympathetic responses to them.

Stage laughter is rare in the play, but through it Beckett shows that the characters laugh in response to their own misery and the misery of others. In many of the comic sequences he also shows that the characters entertain themselves at the expense of others. However, he manipulates

responses so that the spectator realizes that his own laughter and amusement, so curiously copious in response to a world wherein laughter is virtually prohibited, is as much laughter in the face of misery as is that of the characters; that the spectator's entertainment is as much rooted in someone else's misery as theirs is. The revelation that the spectator's responses are similar to those of the characters, coupled with the previous identification of spectator with character, forces the spectator to realize that when he continues to laugh at the ridiculous actions on stage, he is also laughing at himself. In the end the spectator is hung suspended between the urge to laugh and the simultaneous moral consciousness that laughter is somehow inappropriate. Like the characters he is trapped between the compulsion to act and the inability to bring anything off.

The result is that the spectator experiences the enlightenment that his own life, despite its complexities, is not very much grander than the existences in which the characters are trapped, and, perhaps more shockingly, that his own responses to life are not very much different than theirs or much more appropriate than theirs.

In Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot, the conditions of man's existence have been reduced to the barest minimum, so reduced that on surface examination identification with the characters and their circumstances would seem unlikely. The characters appear to be bums, so thoroughly deprived materially and socially that identification with them, for most readers and theatre goers, would seem impossible; and they are trapped in circumstances which seem equally remote from ordinary experience. But, paradoxically, through subtle textual detail and careful control of audience response, Beckett enables, if not forces, the spectator to find a sense of likeness between himself and the characters, between his circumstances and theirs. The twofold purpose of this paper is to examine in detail the methods Beckett uses to foster this sense of likeness and to assess the impact the identification has upon the spectator.

Beckett's characters are not universally seen as figures with whom an audience or reader can identify. In fact, generalizing about the dramatists of Theatre of the Absurd, Beckett included, Martin Esslin theorizes that these playwrights express their "critique . . . of our disintegrating society" by "suddenly confronting their audiences with a grotesquely heightened and distorted view of a world gone mad." This, Esslin says, is shock therapy which achieves a Brechtian "alienation effect--the inhibition of the audience's identification with the characters on stage . . . and its replacement with a detached, critical attitude." The characters possess motives and perform actions which "remain largely incomprehensible," thereby becoming characters with whom "it is almost impossible to identify."[1]

Beckett's characters in Waiting for Godot seem, at first glance, to fit Esslin's descriptions fairly well, and probably because of that the spectator does develop a somewhat detached, critical attitude toward them. However, that we as spectators identify with the characters is undeniable, and the result of that identification is that we turn the detached critical attitude upon ourselves and our own lives.

To Esslin, audience identification with a character is the result of a fine characterization, apparently a more "realistic" characterization than is common in Absurdist drama. Identification with a character means that "we automatically accept his point of view, see the world in which he moves with his eyes, feel his emotions."[2] Though Esslin notes the absence of this degree of characterization in plays like Waiting for Godot and assumes that its presence would hinder development of the desired critical attitude, he nevertheless hints at a degree of audience identification with the characters in both Waiting for Godot and Endgame, since he finds both to be "dramatic statements of the human condition itself."[3] For a spectator to apprehend either play as such a statement, some sense of his likeness with the characters and with what occurs on stage is necessary.

That this likeness is present in Waiting for Godot is testified to by a number of critics who have either personally identified with the characters or at least have seen them as representative figures for modern man. Colin Duckworth, having surveyed audience responses to London productions of both Waiting for Godot and Endgame in 1972, concluded, in response to Esslin's denial of audience identification with the characters, that "Audiences no longer have difficulty identifying with Estragon, Vladimir,[and] Clov."[4] Of her response Ruby Cohn says, "I knew almost at once that those French-speaking tramps were me; more miserable, more lovable, more humorous, more

desperate. But me."[5] She finds Vladimir and Estragon to be self-deprecators who "deprecate us in deprecating themselves, for their actions mimic ours."[6] She sees them as representatives of every individual in the modern world -- a "metaphor for modern man."[7] Gunther Anders considers it undeniable "that Estragon and Vladimir, who do absolutely nothing, are representatives of millions of people";[8] and even Jean Jacques Mayoux, who points out that the characters are dehumanized by mechanization, thinks that they "play physically and intellectually in such a way as to show that ordinary, respectable people, people committed to life, are doing the same thing."[9]

The resemblance of the characters to clowns accounts for a sense of spectator identification for both J. L. Styan and Hugh Kenner. Styan wonders if Beckett "could have anticipated the extent of the warm identification and sympathy between the audience and each of the characters in such an apparently alienating drama. Circus clowns are loved."[10] Kenner, who discovers antecedents of Beckett's plays in "Emmett Kelly's solemn determination to sweep a circle of light into a dustpan," perceives the likeness that Beckett establishes between spectator and character in setting before us "a leaping mind encased in ignorances very like our own, and [letting] that mind . . . pantomime its own (our own) incapacity for reposing in stale conclusions." But he accounts for our sympathetic response to the characters not in terms of those like ignorances, but in terms of the recognition that "to the clown, whatever his despairs, our heart goes out in what one reviewer called 'profound and somber and paradoxical joy'."[11]

That the characters appear to be bum-clowns, vaudevillians, or circus performers is undeniable. The critical comment on their similarities to such figures is plentiful. Their hats, their exaggerated gaits, their slapstick antics, their pantomimes, their gestures, their word gamesmanship all come straight out of the circus and off the vaudeville stage. The things

which cause us to laugh at them are the same kinds of things that inspire us to laugh at circus clowns, Charlie Chaplins, and Buster Keatons. But our total response to Beckett's "clowns" is of a different order than our responses to the circus clown or vaudevillian comedian.

The greatest of the sad-faced clowns, Emmett Kelley, inspired a mixture of sympathy and ridicule in that famous light-sweeping routine of his, a mixture of sadness and laughter. Kelley and other clowns entertain us with the futilities of their actions; but, except perhaps on the rarest occasions, they do not communicate to us that their futilities are ours. Sweeping his spotlight, Kelley is engaged in an occupation we recognize immediately as absurd, one which none of us can imagine ourselves doing at home. But, as Cohn says, the futile actions of Vladimir and Estragon "mimic ours"; and as Mayoux observes, they "show that ordinary respectable people . . . are doing the same thing." As Geoffrey Brereton notes:

> One could laugh unreservedly at the traditional antics of clowns, such as trying to fill a holed bucket with water, because one knew of a more effective way of doing the same thing. One would fetch a sound bucket. But in watching Vladimir and Estragon one does not readily think of better alternatives to their awkward actions.[12]

Further, the ridiculous actions of the circus clown and the vaudeville comedian are largely intended to entertain us, not be perceived as representative of the actions of "ordinary respectable people" except through the grossest exaggeration and with the thinnest resemblance. Unlike a real clown, Beckett's "hero," John Fletcher points out, is only "a sort of clown who uses words and performs gestures that are intended to be amusing, in order to pass time . . . he seeks not to amuse others, but to cheat his own boredom; he is acting, but for himself."[13] However, we are better entertained by the actions of Vladimir and Estragon than they are;

and, much of the time, as Cohn suggests, the stage figures "have to wait in boredom while we laugh."[14]

The hats worn by the four characters are seized on by almost everyone who has written at length about Waiting for Godot as Chaplinesque, part of the total effect which identifies the characters as clowns. In addition, the bowlers aid in the universalization of the characters, as perhaps they did for Chaplin. That all four wear the same hats suggests a similarity among all men in this stage world. That the hats are commonly worn by the middle-class Englishman confers the status of declined respectability upon the four stage characters and at the same time associates them with a broad body of people in the real world. The hats also stand as a symbol of the insignificance of change in the world of Waiting for Godot--an element which further contributes to the universalization of circumstances and events. In Act II, when Vladimir finds the hat which was seized from Lucky in Act I, he and Estragon put on a classic vaudevillian scene, exchanging hats four times until Estragon has his own again and Vladimir has Lucky's. Estragon tells Vladimir that he looks neither more nor less hideous than usual in the new hat. Vladimir settles on keeping it in preference to his own, which irked and itched him, even though he immediately has the same problem with Lucky's: "He takes off Lucky's hat, peers into it, shakes it, knocks on the crown, puts it on again"[15]--a routine he went through many times with his own hat.

The universalizing of the characters should signal to the spectator that these four representatives of "naked unaccommodated man"[16] are "men like us."[17] Beckett makes clear with numerous textual clues that they are representatives of all men, at any place, in any time. In Act I Estragon

identifies himself as "Adam" (25a), and Pozzo's answering to both "Cain" and "Abel" (53b) in Act II leads Estragon to conclude that "He's all humanity" (54a). Vladimir also says that the four are "all mankind," at the same time belittling all humanity:

> To all mankind they were addressed, those cries of help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not . . . Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us. (51a)

Pozzo makes it clear that these modern men, reduced to essentials, are no different from the ancients whose names they respond to: "Let us not speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. Let us not speak well of it either" (22a). The characters on stage are like billions of others, Estragon says:

> VLADIMIR: We have kept our appointment and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?
> ESTRAGON: Billions. (51b)

Estragon's estimate comically undercuts what seems to be a statement of some pride from Vladimir, but it also assigns to the billions of others the same insignificant degree of accomplishment--can those billions, the spectator included, boast any more than Vladimir and Estragon?

Place too is universalized in Waiting for Godot. Their location is only vaguely defined as "the Cackon country" (40a) and the only scenic "reality" to remind the spectator of home is a barren road and a parody of a tree. One place is all places to Estragon: "All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery!" (39b). Paris is now only a remote place where they cannot commit suicide, since they are no longer respectable enough to be allowed up the Eiffel Tower; the rich Rhone Valley is only a place where Estragon once tried to drown himself.

The universalization is seen by Duckworth as representing "in many varied images and forms, the imprisonment of human consciousness within the bounds of infinity and eternity--not very promising ground, on the face of it, for fiction or drama."[18] It could be difficult to foster a sense of likeness between spectator and these "everyman" characters in infinite and eternal bounds. Such figures, although clearly meant to represent all mankind, are often abstract and distant enough to be ignored. However, Beckett controls the aesthetic distance between the spectator and the stage characters to prevent the spectator from dissociating himself from the universality presented. He effects this control, in part, by associating those on stage directly and indirectly with those in the auditorium, primarily through mockery of the audience by the characters on stage--a levelling device which begins quite early in the play:

> ESTRAGON: Charming spot. (He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.) Inspiring prospects. (He turns to Vladimir.) (10a)

It is easy to understand why these scenes inspire laughter. Beckett's world a "charming spot"? His audiences "Inspiring prospects"?--doubtful, since half the audiences left the early performances. (That Beckett sensed that his audience might not be entirely ready for his play, that they might not be "inspiring prospects" is hinted in Alan Schneider's recollection that would have been disappointed if a few had not left.[19]) Vladimir refers to the auditorium as a "bog" (10b), putting the audience at a lower level, physically and metaphorically, than the characters on stage. Vladimir, Estragon, Lucky and Pozzo are high and dry on the roadway, however diminished they are, however devoid of meaning their lives. The audience is seated in a bog. More

definitively, through one of Vladimir's speeches, Beckett bursts any bubble of spiritual superiority the audience may feel in relation to the characters:

> VLADIMIR: (Gestures toward front) There! Not a soul in sight! Off you go quick. (He pushes Estragon toward auditorium. Estragon recoils in horror.) You won't? (He contemplates the auditorium.) Well I can understand that. (47a)

The double meaning of "soul" effectively diminishes the audience both numerically and spiritually. That Estragon, who has just said he is "accursed" and "in hell", recoils in horror from the audience serves the same levelling purpose, perhaps more effectively.

There is no escape even for the member of the audience who may consider himself most aloof and superior--the drama critic. In Act II Vladimir and Estragon square off like duelists and hurl abuses at each other in yet another game they play to pass time. At the climax of their exchange, Estragon triumphs by uttering the most abusive epithet, "Crritic!" which he spits out "with finality," wilting and vanquishing Vladimir, who can only respond with a feeble and shocked "Oh!" (48b).

John J. Sheedy sums up the impact of this mockery of the audience in his essay "The Net":

> When the two tramps, in bowler hats, advance to the front of the stage and make observations about, but not to, the audience, the audience is contained in the viewpoint of the players; and all are contained in the "muck" and "firmament" and "void" of the world of the play and outside the play.[20]

Beckett has effectively pierced the invisible barrier between the audience and the characters on stage with a mockery not quite scornful, but he also ties the two together by sympathetic associations between characters and audience.

This binding may come through asides to the audience--such as early in Act I when both Vladimir and Estragon speak the line "Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!" (7b); or in Vladimir's soliloquy late in Act II: "At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on" (59b). Duckworth identifies this as "the periodic injection of statements that involve our being."[21] Fletcher interprets it as "rhetorical appeal to the audience."[22]

This sympathetic association is also developed in those exchanges between the characters which suggest their awareness of being in a somewhat tiring, boring play;[23] exchanges which no doubt strike accord with the responses of a substantial portion of the audience:

POZZO: You find it tedious?
ESTRAGON: Somewhat.
POZZO: (to Vladimir) And you, Sir?
VLADIMIR: I've been better entertained. (26a)
.....
ESTRAGON: I find this really most extraordinarily interesting. (9a)
.....
VLADIMIR: How time flies when one has fun! (49a)

Cohn, saying these ironic lines "are detached from the action as though Vladimir and Estragon are spectators at a play," acknowledges this sympathetic sharing of identities between Vladimir and Estragon and the audience.[24] The role of these two as spectators at their own play is overtly stated in Act I:

VLADIMIR: I'll be back.
He hastens towards the wings.
ESTRAGON: End of the corridor, on the left.
VLADIMIR: Keep my seat. (23b)

The play is full of those textual associations of the audience with the characters; but if the spectator found no attractive human likeness between himself and the characters--if, that is, all the characters were merely caricatures--the textual associations could not force him to respond sympathetically. At first glance, all four characters here may seem to be

caricatures, easy to laugh at but difficult to identify and sympathize with; but closer examination reveals that it is only Pozzo and Lucky who fit this category. Pozzo, as his name implies, is primarily a stage representation of artificiality, he is a poseur; Lucky, as his name ironically suggests, is a lackey, a slave. The characteristics embodied in Pozzo and Lucky are human enough qualities, but they are characteristics we can laugh at derisively with a degree of scorn and superiority. We can laugh down our noses because their most noticeable traits are characteristics we do not easily recognize or admit to in ourselves: pretentiousness, pompòsity, despotism, lack of will, total loss of identity, mindless submission, prostitution. We laugh at these two, recognizing in them ridiculous characteristics we see often in others but rarely in ourselves.

We laugh liberally at the antics of Vladimir and Estragon also, but sympathetically rather than derisively. Sensing that they are aware of the futility of their lives and that they still manage to put their best face on much of the time, we laugh with them as much as we laugh at them. Identifying with them, we also feel a sense of sadness when they despair. Although we may feel sorry for Lucky because he is enslaved, any sympathy we feel for Pozzo has to be forced upon us.

What sets Vladimir and Estragon apart from Pozzo and Lucky, allowing us to identify with them, is their awareness of their plight compared to Pozzo's blindness and Lucky's apparent insanity, their spontaneity compared to Pozzo's pretentiousness and Lucky's plodding submissiveness, their solidarity[25] while also maintaining individuality compared to the mutually parasitic dependence of Pozzo and Lucky, and their ability to sense the

ironic humor in their own actions compared to Pozzo's self-importance and Lucky's total loss of self. Pozzo and Lucky stand as very watery representations of men, but, as Cohn points out, they serve to amplify the more completely human characteristics we find in Vladimir and Estragon:

> Pozzo and Lucky alone would have been a caricature of human master-slave tendencies, a caricature of human obsession with moving on. Caricatures summon no sympathy. Without these contrasting caricatures, however, we would respond less immediately to the concreteness of Didi and Gogo.[26]

That Vladimir and Estragon are aware of the nature and magnitude of their circumstances as men in Beckett's world is not always recognized. Wolfgang Isser finds them unaware of their problems and opines that "this very acceptance of abnormality . . . is bound to puzzle the spectator." The characters, Isser says, "do not meditate about their own incapacity, although the very obviousness of the contradiction--to want to go on and yet remain--ought to force them into a realization of their situation."[27] Isser seems to be moralizing, lamenting the fact, as one respondent to Duckworth's survey put it, that Vladimir and Estragon are "so visibly wasting time and . . . incapable of doing anything concrete."[28] However, the self-awareness Vladimir and Estragon reveal is precisely the recognition that they are incapable of doing anything to change their circumstances.

There is wealth of textual evidence to show that Vladimir and Estragon are very much aware of their plight. Fourteen times in Act I alone they express the awareness that in the world Beckett has trapped them in there is "Nothing to be done." Given that construct, they are play actors and they know it only too well:

> VLADIMIR: Charming evening we're having.
> ESTRAGON: Unforgettable.
> VLADIMIR: And it's not over.
> ESTRAGON: Apparently not.
> VLADIMIR: It's only beginning.

ESTRAGON: It's awful.
VLADIMIR: Worse than the pantomime.
ESTRAGON: The circus.
VLADIMIR: The music-hall.
ESTRAGON: The circus. (23a-b)

In Act II, which is generally more somber than Act I,[29] their awareness shifts from the rather playful "Nothing to be done" of Act I (expressed only twice in Act II) to a more self-indulgent "I can't go on," (58b) followed by the immediate recognition that there is no other choice. However, Estragon and Vladimir still remain very much aware that they are playing games to pass the time:

ESTRAGON: That wasn't such a bad little canter.
VLADIMIR: Yes, but now we'll have to find something else. (42a)

For Vladimir and Estragon, as Genevieve Serreau observes, the self-entertainment is "perpetual entertainment . . . a ridiculous parody of human existence, and they are both aware that it is parody and that it is ridiculous."[30]

Their somewhat mocking awareness of themselves as play actors contrasts sharply with the inflated efforts of Pozzo, whose acting is prefaced by throat spraying and clearing and demands that everyone listen--"I don't like talking in a vacuum" (20b). The only awareness he expresses of himself in the player's role is his egocentric concern about how his performance was received: "How did you find me? ... Good? Fair? Middling? Poor? Positively bad?" (25b).

Pozzo's artificiality as an entertainer in Act I is an extension of the pretentious concern for appearances which marks his character. He cannot speak without his atomizer, he cannot smoke a second bowl of tobacco without encouragement, and once he has stood up he needs an artificial reason to sit again, be it having his stool moved (19b) or provoking repeated invitations from Estragon to be seated. All this to appear unfaltering.

Vladimir and Estragon, however, could not be less concerned about appearances than they are. They are willing to launch spontaneously into any idle discourse, seize immediately upon any potential entertainment which might serve to pass the time more tolerably. This quality makes them "scintillate with variety"[31] in comparison with Pozzo and Lucky.

Lucky's acting is done only on order from Pozzo, and his performances, dancing and "thinking," have the conviction of a prostitute's lovemaking, since he has sold his creativity to Pozzo for 60 years.

If in Act II Vladimir and Estragon are more despairing, less able to carry off their games with the vitality they possessed in Act I, at that point Pozzo and Lucky are positively undone. Pozzo's egocentric self-concern is replaced with self-pity, his only lively speech is the despairing gravedigger metaphor, and Lucky has gone dumb.

It is not just Vladimir and Estragon's awareness of futility that humanizes them for the spectator, but their ability to view their plight with a sense of irony which allows them to mock themselves in good humor, although it sometimes results in one deriding the other. The self-mockery begins almost immediately after the curtain rises when Vladimir makes the apparently ironic statement "Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how?" (7a). He addresses Estragon, who spent the night in a ditch and who has been struggling hopelessly with his boots, as "His Highness" and later as "Your Worship" (13b). He recalls the days when they were "respectable." And, buttoning his fly, he belittles himself with the great comic line "Never neglect the little things of life." Estragon potentially doubts his own existence, answering, "Am I?" when Vladimir

greets him with "So there you are again." His response to Vladimir's assertion that he would be "nothing more than a little heap of bones" if Vladimir did not protect him is "And what of it?" He tells Vladimir to "stop blathering," a designation he will give to their conversations several times over. His response to Vladimir's "You should have been a poet" is to point to his rags and say "I was. Isn't that obvious?" (7a-9a).

This self-parody continues throughout the play, and even when there is a hint of lamentation in it, even when it is utterly ridiculous, it still indicates their awareness of the circumstances which govern their lives. When Pozzo indicates his "inability to depart" as he and Lucky are attempting to move on again late in Act I, Estragon replies, "Such is life" (31a)--a cliché response on the surface, but on a deeper level testimony to his understanding of his own life. Likewise, in his despairing, Jewish-motherish "All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery!" (39b) he hides no truth about his circumstances.

Vladimir's parody in Act II of the "To be or not to be" soliloquy from "Hamlet" seems on the surface to indicate a failure on his part to grasp his circumstances; but it is in fact a synopsis of his and Estragon's existence: "What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come--" (51b). If he stopped there, his speech would seem self-deceiving. However, after interruptions from Estragon and Pozzo, he continues with "Or for night to fall," revealing his understanding that what they are really doing is waiting for whatever gives them relief. It is his recognition that the subject of the play "is not Godot but waiting, the act of waiting as an essential and characteristic aspect of the human condition."[32]

Vladimir and Estragon are set off in their waiting from Pozzo and Lucky in theirs, as Esslin observes, not because they "pin their faith on Godot, but because they are less naive. They do not believe in action, wealth, reason . . . They are thus superior to Pozzo and Lucky because they are less self-centered and have fewer illusions."[33] Pozzo hides behind his pretensions, which literally blind him to the essential problems of life in Beckett's limited world and hurtle him into the despair of his gravedigger speech:

> 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. (57b)

Vladimir later picks up the gravedigger metaphor, but for him the gravedigger applies the forceps "lingeringly" and "We have time to grow old." He indicates that the process of growing old may not be pleasant and that we may hide from its unpleasantness: "The air is full of our cries . . . But habit is the great deadener." He understands that his admission about the great deadener--that habit, as Esslin says, "prevents us from reaching the painful but fruitful awareness of the full reality of being"[34]--is also a recognition of the realities which habit hides. He despairs momentarily ("I can't go on") before realizing that he has no choice ("What have I said?"). He has not been so deadened by habit that he does not hear those cries in the air or that he lives in the self-deceptive artificiality that characterized Pozzo in Act I or in the habitual self-denying prostitution that characterizes Lucky.

Pozzo and Lucky have fed off each other like mindless parasites, Pozzo

wielding the whip and Lucky submitting to it. In Vladimir and Estragon, although they become irritated with each other and angry at each other from time to time, we see the "human solidarity and mutual help" which Duckworth says Beckett recognizes "as a basic need of our mutual dependence."[35]

Vladimir and Estragon are at times cruel to each other, denying each other comfort. Vladimir refuses to listen to Estragon relate his dreams, perhaps in fear that they will remind him too painfully that he is trapped, perhaps with the knowledge that the flight into dreams is as inappropriate a response to their circumstances as the artificiality Pozzo uses to get along. Estragon refuses to include Vladimir in his plea for mercy:

ESTRAGON: (stopping, brandishing his fists, at the top of his voice) God have pity on me!
VLADIMIR: (vexed) And me?
ESTRAGON: On me! On me! Pity! On me. (49b)

They are amused by each other's pains, a point to be examined in detail later. But the pervasive image of the two is one of a friendly, mutually cooperative effort to make it from sunup to sundown with as little breakdown as possible, an effort in which they sometimes seem like one man, particularly in those one-line exchanges which are the product of one vision:

ESTRAGON: In the meantime let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent.
VLADIMIR: You're right, we're inexhaustible.
ESTRAGON: It's so we won't think.
VLADIMIR: We have that excuse.
ESTRAGON: It's so we won'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. (40a-b)

They have a mutual understanding of their hopeless circumstances which keeps

them knit together despite their differences from time to time:

VLADIMIR: Nothing you can do about it.
ESTRAGON: No use struggling.
VLADIMIR: One is what one is.
ESTRAGON: No use wiggling.
VLADIMIR: The essential doesn't change.
ESTRAGON: Nothing to be done. (14b)

Like an old married couple they snap and bite at each other, tell each other to go to hell, ask not to be tormented, threaten to abandon each other; but they stay together, recoupling each morning, because they know they have no one else. Hayman finds this evident in their "playful language, language that plays with itself as language, but for all its mockery it also expresses a positive tenderness between Vladimir and Estragon."[36] Fletcher calls it "vividly conjugal bickering."[37]

They function as a team much of the time, entertaining each other, protecting each other back to back like sentries, giving excuses for each other ("We didn't intend any harm" . . . "We meant well" (16a), they reply individually to Pozzo's assertion that they are on his land). They cooperate in mocking Pozzo, each playing word games with his name. It is a team on which Vladimir seems to be the stronger. He says he will carry Estragon if necessary after Lucky has kicked him. He sings Estragon to sleep, puts his own coat over Estragon to keep him warm and then shivers himself, comforts him like a mother with "there . . . there . . . Didi is there . . . don't be afraid . . ." (45b), and provides most of the answers, though the answers are just forms. But Estragon plays the role in their friendship that is required of him. He perhaps gives Vladimir some sense of being needed: "Don't touch me! Don't question me! Don't speak to me! Stay with me!" (37b). To Vladimir's "Say you are [happy], even if it's not true," he replies, "I am happy" (39a). In combination, in that human

solidarity and self-awareness, they possess strengths and sensitivities that have allowed many who have examined Waiting for Godot to find an uplifting element in a world of apparent despair.

The world which confronts and contains Vladimir and Estragon is the same world which confronts and contains Pozzo and Lucky; what separates the two couples is their responses to that world. Anders sees the distinction as relating to "the will to go on":

> That Estragon and Vladimir [rather than Lucky and Pozzo] are representative of millions of people is undeniable. But they are so fully representative only, because, in spite of their inaction and the pointlessness of their existence, they still want to go on.[38]

However, it is not the sheer desire to go on that separates the two couples and allows us to identify with Vladimir and Estragon while spurning Pozzo and Lucky. Lucky and Pozzo too have the will to go on; otherwise they would stay down when they fall. They need help getting up (we see them get it from Vladimir and Estragon); but Pozzo says that if they fall far from help they will just wait until they can get up again, as Vladimir and Estragon do in Act II. Actually, neither of the couples has any choice but to go on. What separates them is that Vladimir and Estragon, knowing they have no options, choose to make the best of going on when they can, instead of letting circumstances get the best of them. In this pluckiness Ludovic Janvier discerns "a certain happiness,"[39] Eric Bentley sees "human dignity,"[40] Isser detects a preservation of "their impeturbability in spite of this dilemma,"[41] Fletcher finds unflagging courage,[42] and A. Alvarez sees them exercising "the only virtue they can exercise . . . to continue."[43] Happiness, dignity, impeturbability, courage, virtue--these qualities seen in Vladimir and Estragon allow us to identify with them.

The same qualities are lacking in Pozzo and Lucky.

Near the end of the play Vladimir asks the question "Where do you go from here?" and Pozzo answers "On." He has been ordering Lucky onward with the exclamations "On!", but this reply to Vladimir is a flat statement, indicating Pozzo's sense that "on" is the only place they have to go. However, Lucky responds to the statement as if it were another order and "takes his place before the whip," revealing that to this couple, continuance is a motor response, a blind Pavlovian reaction. We see that this purely physical on-goingness is leading them eventually to disintegration--when they come back in their endless circle in Act II, Pozzo is blind and Lucky is dumb. They wander, as Cohn says, "in obvious deterioration."[44]

Pushed to identify ourselves with the characters on stage through the universalization of characters and circumstances and through the shortening of the aesthetic distance between the stage and the auditorium, we will opt to associate ourselves with Vladimir and Estragon--with happiness, dignity, impeturbability, courage, virtue. This is the choice that reviewer Robert Shaw made after seeing the play in 1960: "I don't know why so many people call it a depressing play. Beckett writes about suffering in a way that makes me feel exhilarated--so that I must get up and go out and do what I can."[45] However, if we identify with Vladimir and Estragon in their heroic continuance, we must also identify with their circumstances. The establishing of the universality and the breaking of the stage barriers not only identifies us with the characters, but also includes us in their world. This double association, with the positive in the characters and the negative in their world, leaves us, in Vladimir's words, "Relieved and at the same time . . . appalled. . . . AP-PALLED" (8a). Only with a

blindness equal to Pozzo's can we find hope for traditionally meaningfully acitivity and existence in Beckett's world. Only thus can we assert with Duckworth that "We do not know Godot will never come"[46] and complete the unresolved action of the play with the expectation of salvation realized. Faced with the evidence, we can assert that we possess, like Vladimir and Estragon, the human strength to stare absurdity in the face and persevere; but we cannot deny that there is "Nothing to be done." To do otherwise would be to fly in the face of the heavily stacked evidence that Godot will not come and that the characters we identify with are trapped in a no-exit universe.[47]

The wait for Godot, for Vladimir and Estragon, is clearly just another of those gambits they use to make time pass. Although it is their most trustworthy, standby gambit, the one they fall back on when all else fails, it is just another method to keep going. Hayman asserts that "We can be fairly sure that they were waiting for him on the previous day and the day before that and the day before that. Godot will never come, but they will never be sure that he is not coming because there will always be some reason for hoping he will come tomorrow."[48] However, from the very first mention of Godot, Vladimir and Estragon themselves betray doubt that he will ever come:

> VLADIMIR: He didn't say for sure he'd come.
> ESTRAGON: And if he doesn't come?
> VLADIMIR: We'll come back to-morrow.
> ESTRAGON: And then the day after to-morrow?
> VLADIMIR: Possibly.
> ESTRAGON: And so on.
> VLADIMIR: The point is--
> ESTRAGON: Until he comes.
> VLADIMIR: You're merciless. (10a-b)

Godot should be there; he has not appeared; and Vladimir's "You're merciless"

indicates that Estragon is stretching doubt to denial in his switch from questions (which imply possibility) to statements (which anticipate the answer tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow).

Their dependence on the alleged salvation Godot could offer is a "take it or leave it" situation (12b); they have asked him for "Nothing very definite . . . a vague supplication"; they come in on their hands and knees (13b) but are tied to Godot only "for the moment" (14b). Estragon's response to the news that they cannot leave because they are waiting for Godot is often a despairing "What'll we do, what'll we do?" which indicates a telling lack of faith on his part in the salutary promise held out in the potential coming of Godot.

That the Godot routine is another of their methods for coping rather than a possible means to salvation is indicated in the de-emphasizing of the formality of the routine, which most often runs:

ESTRAGON: Let's go.
VLADIMIR: We can't.
ESTRAGON: Why not?.
VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.
ESTRAGON: Ah!

but which is abbreviated in Estragon's single speech late in Act II: "Let's go. We can't. Ah!" (58a). The de-emphasizing of the formality is an indication that it is just that, a formality, an empty ceremony. Vladimir betrays the same awareness that the routine is a sham when he substitutes statements for questions in the final exchange with the boy messenger:

VLADIMIR: You have a message from Godot.
BOY: Yes sir.
VLADIMIR: He won't be coming this evening.
BOY: No sir. (58b)

Both Vladimir and Estragon greet the boy with "Here we go again"--a statement which indicates they know what will transpire before it happens. They have seen this show before. Vladimir does not question the boy here; he simply provides for confirmation statements he already knows to be true.

The Godot routine is resurrected again at the end of Act II when Vladimir says they must come back "to-morrow" to wait for Godot. Estragon adds a note of positive reinforcement with "Ah . . . He didn't come?" (59b); however, the reinforcement is clearly only a re-establishment of the gamesmanship of the Godot routine, for night has already fallen, giving them all the relief they need for this day. It is clear, as Alain Robbe-Grillet observes, that the wait-for-Godot routine "represent[s] neither hope, nor longing, nor despair. It is merely an excuse."[49] And it is an excuse which becomes unnecessary when other excuses are handy or when night falls and the characters can forget their plight in unconsciousness. Estragon can imply faith with his question "He didn't come?" only because now he does not have to face the truth that the wait for Godot is a game. When they use the routine out of need, they are conscious of the fact that there is really nothing to be done, nothing to be hoped for.

The hopelessness of Vladimir and Estragon's situation, that they are in no different external circumstances than Pozzo and Lucky, is clearly laid out in their discussions of suicide. The talk about suicide is no different from their other gambits for getting on. The "suicide" scene in Act I is an overt burlesque:

> ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?
> VLADIMIR: Hmm. It'd give us an erection.
> ESTRAGON: (Highly excited) An erection!
> VLADIMIR: With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you know that?
> ESTRAGON: Let's hang ourselves immediately. (12a)

The scene's comic quality is extended in the parodic logic of Estragon's attempt to persuade Vladimir to hang himself first: "Gogo light--bough not break--Gogo dead. Didi heavy--bough break--Didi alone." The humor is continued with Vladimir's question "But am I heavier than you?" and Estra-

gon's response: "So you tell me. I don't know. There's an even chance. Or nearly." It is underscored, according to Fletcher, by the fact that Vladimir is normally cast as "a thin and nervous man opposite Estragon's stouter and more turgid physique."[50] The suicide discussion at the end of Act II is likewise comic, with this exchange:

> ESTRAGON: Wait, there's my belt.
> VLADIMIR: It's too short.
> ESTRAGON: You could hang on to my legs.
> VLADIMIR: And who'd hang on to mine? (60a)

Estragon yields his belt for examination, his trousers fall down, and he stands there in classic comic unawareness that they have fallen off. The two of them test Estragon's belt, it breaks, and they nearly suffer another slapstick fall. The surface comedy continues through the end of the play, with Estragon's misunderstanding of Vladimir's instructions:

> VLADIMIR: Pull on your trousers.
> ESTRAGON: What?
> VLADIMIR: Pull on your trousers.
> ESTRAGON: You want me to pull off my trousers?
> VLADIMIR: Pull ON your trousers. (60b)

Their talk of suicide cannot be taken as a serious thing both because "when they talk about hanging themselves we laugh at the clowning"[51] and because in the world Beckett has created for them, it is not an option. Vladimir and Estragon know "that such quick and easy solutions are no longer available to them."[52] However, they can toy with the idea as a method of passing time in the same way they toy with the idea of parting. The possibility of suicide is something they can only look back on as a past option, when they were picking grapes on the Rhone or when they were respectable enough to be allowed to ascend the Eiffel Tower. Now, their ropes are rotten, their belts too short. Although they vow at the end of each act to bring a better bit of rope tomorrow, tomorrow they will arrive

without it. If they did find that rope, if they borrowed the umbilical between Pozzo and Lucky, it is obvious that Beckett's parody of a tree, which they did not trust in Act I, would either break, causing them another comic pratfall, or bow gracefully as their weight pulled upon it, causing them to look equally ludicrous.

Their discussion of suicide could be seen as a hint of tragic defiance--if there were anything to defy. The suggestion of defiance is contained in Vladimir's early statement of his intent in waiting for Godot: "I'm curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we'll take it or leave it" (12b). But this is cancelled when he tells Estragon, in another Godot sequence, that they "come in" on their hands and knees. Defiance can be read into Estragon's repeated vows to leave, but he has no place to go in Beckett's world. There they will be until the curtain finally stays down. And when or if that will occur seems to be an open-ended question, since Beckett drops hints throughout the play, and particularly towards its end, that what will await them the next day will be something like a return to Act I. Clearly their only choice is either staring the absurdity of their existence in the face and enduring in spite of it, or embracing the entropic wasting away of Melville's Bartleby the Scrivener or of Beckett's own silent sufferer in "Act Without Words I," whose ultimate response to the unattainable, tantalizing hope held out in a perverse deterministic world is to give up and contemplate his own hands as if they, and not the external circumstances over which he has no control, were the problem.[53]

The choice is not particularly attractive if the spectator expects his life to signify something more than a tolerable winding down to death

through three score and ten. We are hung suspended between an uplifting vision of the heroic continuance of man in the face of absurdity and a demoralizing and acute awareness of the futility of man's actions, the insignificance of his existence. We are suspended in one of those "provocative gaps . . . in Waiting for Godot between matter and manner" which Hayman says have invited "so much comment that it is easy to leave the most important point of all relatively unstated--that it is consistently so very funny."[54]

Whether the consistent funniness of Waiting for Godot is "the most important point of all" is quite questionable, but it is a play which can correctly be labeled "consistently funny." However, it is not a "funny" play. It is a play during which we laugh a great deal, but we close the book or leave the theatre wondering in bewilderment why we laughed, or more significantly, how we could have. We come to realize that we have laughed, uproariously at times, at man "reduced to the role of a helpless, hopeless impotent, who talks and talks and talks in order to postphone for a while the silence of his own desolation."[55] Beckett has developed our realization that our laughter is an inhumane response as carefully as he developed our sense of identification with the characters. Through most of the play our laughter is an unconscious, automatic response to what appear to be ludicrous actions or statements by the characters. Yet to the final image of Estragon standing in ignorance with his trousers down and comic exchange about pulling them on, we find laughter an inappropriate response. We find that although this final scene is at least as comic as many we have laughed at throughout the play, we are incapable of laughing in response to it. Our enlightened apprehension of the abysmal futility of the lives of these characters and of our own

contributes to our mixed response--this urge to laugh and simultaneous moral consciousness that we should not--but our enlightened understanding of the nature of our previous laughter also holds us from laughter in the end.

We see Vladimir and Estragon as mutual entertainers and self-entertainers, and their efforts to provide entertainment for themselves reflect indirectly one of our purposes in reading any play or going to the theatre--to be entertained. Revealing that much of their entertainment is rooted in someone else's misery and misfortune, Beckett prepares the spectators for the realization that their own entertainment by Waiting for Godot (in its most obvious guise, the laughter) is similarly rooted in misery and misfortune.[56]

The instances of stage laughter and what the characters say about laughter serve as signals to the audience that its own laughter may often be an inappropriate response to the comic elements within the general misery depicted on stage. In so consistently funny a play there is a dearth of laughter on stage. We appreciate the humor in the characters' circumstances and responses to them much more than they do, and we have seen that Vladimir and Estragon at least are aware of those circumstances and the nature of their responses. When they do laugh, their laughter is either rooted in someone else's pain or surrounded by their own. When they otherwise amuse themselves, their activities are often carried out at someone else's expense.

Vladimir, whose physical malady, evidently venereal, causes him to suffer pain when he laughs, reveals that laughter is "prohibited" in the world Beckett has created on stage and that the only remaining response, to

smile, "is not the same thing":

> VLADIMIR: One daren't even laugh anymore.
> ESTRAGON: Dreadful privation.
> VLADIMIR: Merely smile. (He smiles from ear to ear, keeps smiling, ceases as suddenly.) It's not the same thing. (8b)

After his second and last painful laugh he remarks, "You'd make me laugh if it wasn't prohibited" (13b). Estragon makes only one statement about laughter and it is indirect--his "dreadful privation" response to Vladimir's assertion that laughter is prohibited. But this single tongue-in-cheek, ironic remark carries the suggestion that Estragon feels little has been lost in the prohibition. What can the loss of laughter mean to him, reduced as he is to existence in the most minimal definition? Pozzo's speech on the constancy of tears and laughter is perhaps the most striking single comment about laughter, taken with his immediate and apparently inhumane response:

> He's stopped crying. (To Estragon) You have replaced him as it were. (Lyrically) The tears of the world are in a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh. (He laughs) (22a)

With his laugh, Pozzo seems to be deliberately stealing someone else's laughter, someone else's momentary happiness, reinforcing his earlier self-assessment: "I am perhaps not particularly human, but who cares?" (19b). Pozzo goes on to universalize his constancy theme, indicating that the world has always been a place of limited happiness: "Let us not speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. . . . Let us not speak well of it either" (22a). The completion of that last elliptical statement is "It is not any happier either."

Our laughter in response to Waiting for Godot is seen by Fletcher as the only method we have found to come to terms with our misery.[57] However, this is a salvation not available to the characters on stage. They can amuse themselves in good humor; but laughter itself is either prohibited, in limited supply, or of no comfort.

Both of Vladimir's stage laughs are responses to suggestions that traditional religious ideas may still have currency--that mankind is born with original sin which requires us to repent "Our being born" and that man might still have free will, that we might have "rights." His laughter is an immediate response rejecting those ideas, and it is significant that those rejections cause him immediate pain. This pain is assumed to be rooted in his physical infirmity, but it may also be seen as psychic pain brought on by confrontation with the horrifying truth about his existence--that his only sin was to have been born, that miraculous salvation is not available, and that he has lost even the freedom to end his life. Cohn suggests that laughter in Waiting for Godot is a mask for despair, though not a release from it;[58] however, it is a mask Vladimir can not put on, and the despair is such that a smile will not cover it up.

The paucity of stage laughter also suggests that if laughter is a mask for despair it is one all of the characters have difficulty wearing. There are only nine stage laughs in the entire play, eight in Act I, only one in Act II, which "shrieks" with "the horror of the situation."[59] Of the nine stage laughs, Pozzo, who is almost a personification of the masquerade, has four; Estragon, who, with his repetition of despairing comments, seems most troubled by stage circumstances, has three; and Vladimir, who seems most conscious of the horrible reality of the circumstances, has two, which have already been considered. Lucky, the most obviously degraded and the one for whom we have immediate sympathy for being enslaved, has none.

Pozzo's four laughs all betray the cruelty which sometimes accompanies laughter, most obviously when he steals the laugh in his "constancy of tears" speech. His laughter suggests an ignorance on his part that their distress is mutual. When Vladimir is his most despairing and utters the question "Will night never come?" feeling that "Time has stopped," Estragon makes an excuse for him: "Everything seems dark to him today." Pozzo responds with "Except the firmament" and laughs, "pleased with his witticism" (24a-b). But he alone appreciates this reaction to Vladimir's misery. The callousness is emphasized by Estragon's concern for his friend, a concern which led him to make the excuse for Vladimir.

However, two of Pozzo's laughs betray a veiled sense of understanding of their plight as men in Beckett's world. He "bursts into an enormous laugh" at the idea that Vladimir and Estragon are human beings like him:

> You are human beings none the less. (He puts on his glasses.) As far as one can see. (He takes off his glasses.) Of the same species as myself. (He bursts into an enormous laugh) Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image! (15b)

Pozzo seems to be sneering at Vladimir and Estragon, laughing down his nose. He may be returning tit for tat to them since, after his self-important introduction ("I am Pozzo! . . . Pozzo! Does that name mean nothing to you?") they ridicule his name with "Bozzo . . . Bozzo" and "I once knew a family named Gozzo. The mother had the clap" (15b). Pozzo continues his apparent derision of Didi and Gogo with the statement that he cannot go long without the company of his likes "even when the likeness is an imperfect one" (16b). But in his "enormous laugh" Pozzo may also be sharing a joke with Vladimir and Estragon--the joke that any of them were "created in God's image." He has said that he is "not particularly

human," and he may be laughing because none of them are. In this sense he would be laughing at all mankind as it is represented in Waiting for Godot. And perhaps he is, since one of the other little personal jokes he appreciates enough to laugh at briefly is his response to Estragon's request that Lucky dance before he thinks:

> By all means, nothing simpler. It's the natural order.
> He laughs briefly. (26b)

What is the joke he is laughing at here if not his sense of man's ridiculousness--that it is "natural" for man to act (dance) before he thinks?

Estragon's laughter is more simple-minded than either Pozzo's or Vladimir's, and it is clearly rooted in Pozzo's misfortune in all three instances. Both of his Act I laughs come in reaction to Pozzo's loss of his pipe:

> POZZO: What can I have done with that briar?
> ESTRAGON: He's a scream. He's lost his dudeen.
> Laughs noisily.
> .....
> POZZO: (on the point of tears). I've lost my Kapp and Peterson?
> ESTRAGON: (convulsed with merriment). He'll be the death of me! (23b)

Pozzo's pretensions have been amusing to the spectator, but with an amusement inspiring an ironic smile, not a noisy laugh or a sense of merriment. One has to wonder what Estragon finds so funny in Pozzo's loss of his pipe. Estragon seems particularly callous in being convulsed with merriment when Pozzo is on the point of tears, no matter how trivial or how pretentious the cause of his tears is.

Estragon's Act II laugh, also at Pozzo's expense, comes at a point when the spectator has been made acutely aware of the misery on stage.

Pozzo is blind, Lucky is dumb, and we have seen the characters show overt cruelty in urging physical violence against each other. Again Estragon's laugh is one no one else shares:

> POZZO: I used to have wonderful sight--but are you friends?
> ESTRAGON: (laughing noisily). He wants to know if we are friends.
> VLADIMIR: No, he means friends of his. (54b)

Estragon apparently laughs because to him Pozzo's question is ridiculous--of course they are friends. The spectator is amused by the whole exchange, but amused by Estragon's misunderstanding, not by Pozzo's question. Again the spectator's reaction to the comedy is more temperate than Estragon's, and the spectator is struck by the inappropriateness of this laughter in the face of a blind man. For Estragon's second unconscious remark, "Do we look like highwaymen?" Vladimir scolds him with "Damn it, can't you see the man is blind!" (54b).

We see that the laughter of the characters, scarce as it is, is contingent upon the misery of others, or at least on an understanding of the miserableness of all mankind. But methods the characters use to amuse themselves also prepare us for the realization that our laughter, in the face of misery, is inappropriate. As their laughter depends upon the misery of others, much of their entertainment is rooted in either physical or psychological pain.

Pozzo lives by the enslavement of another, by the whip:

> Guess who taught me all those beautiful things. (Pause. Pointing to Lucky) My Lucky! [My lackey?] . . . But for him all my thoughts, all my feelings, would have been of common things. (Pause. With extraordinary vehemence.) Professional worries! (Calmer) Beauty, grace, truth of the first water, I knew they were all beyond me. So I took a knook. (22a-b)

The inhumanity of this relationship in which Pozzo lives at the expense of

Lucky is emphasized by the incompatibility of Pozzo's statements. At his introduction, Pozzo's speeches jump from demeaning orders to Lucky to meaningless, innocuous chit-chat with Vladimir and Estragon. He orders Lucky about with "Up hog! . . . Back! . . . Stop! . . . Turn!", etc.; he makes Lucky hold in his mouth the whip which drives him onward and then return it; and he injects into this string of despotic orders such bland statements of social routine as "Gentlemen, I am happy to have met you" and "Touch of autumn in the air this evening" (16a-b). While the spectator is being amused intellectually at the incongruity of Pozzo's speeches and actions, he forgets that Lucky is being victimized, albeit willingly.

The same kind of intellectually comic incongruity is evident in Pozzo's explanation of what he is doing traveling the road with Lucky--an answer to Vladimir's inquiry as to whether or not he wants to get rid of Lucky:

> I do. But instead of driving him away as I might have done, I mean instead of simply kicking him out on his arse, in the goodness of my heart I am bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good price for him. The truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them. (Lucky weeps) (21b)

The ironic interplay here of Pozzo's impression of himself as a well-intentioned, benevolent, and compassionate man with the grim image his words convey brings at least an ironic smile to the spectator, if not a laugh--a laugh, a smile while Lucky weeps. "But instead of driving him away" sets up the expectation of a compassionate follow-up from Pozzo, as does "in the goodness of my heart"; but the goodness he proposes is "to get a good price for him" and the best thing "would be to kill him." It is a terribly inhumane speech, but we have been amused rather than incensed by it because Pozzo has just revealed himself to be a thoroughgoing ass, the buffoon whose language belies his fond impression of himself.

Lucky's weeping sets up yet another instance in which Pozzo entertains himself at someone else's expense in the classic example of that activity--the practical joke. Estragon first notices that Lucky is weeping, and Pozzo continues the callousness of his past speeches with "Old dogs have more dignity." Pozzo then offers his handkerchief to Estragon and urges him, although he is hesitant, to comfort Lucky:

> POZZO: . . . Comfort him since you pity him. (Estragon hesitates) Come on. (Estragon takes the handkerchief.) Wipe away his tears, he'll feel less forsaken. (Estragon hesitates).
>
> VLADIMIR: Here, give it to me, I'll do it.
>
> Estragon refuses to give the handkerchief. Childish gestures.
>
> POZZO: Make haste before he stops. (Estragon approaches Lucky and makes to wipe his eyes. Lucky kicks him violently in the shins. Estragon drops the handkerchief, recoils, staggers about the stage howling with pain.) Hanky! (21b-22a)

Pozzo's quadruple urging on of Estragon and his apparently feigned concern for Lucky, inserted as it is between the disdainful "Old dogs have more dignity" and the sharply ordered "Hanky!" which follows Estragon's howls of pain, clearly suggests that this whole scene has been a practical joke. That Pozzo has been amused by what he knew would happen is clear when he betrays his sense of accomplishment: "I told you he didn't like strangers" (22a) as if to say "I warned you and you were still suckered in."

However, we too have been amused by the scene, by the staggering about after the kick, the howls of pain which follow Estragon's attempt to be compassionate. In fact, we do not see the event as a practical joke except upon careful textual examination, rather as simply a turn-about in our expectations. We do not sense that we are laughing at Estragon's expense, but just at the unexpected and ridiculous outcome of the event.

Lucky's only apparent amusements come when he extracts pain of one sort or another from the others on stage--as when he kicks Estragon. His incoherent three-page harangue produced on command to think indicates some sense on his part that he is inflicting a measure of pain on the other characters. The result of his "entertainment" is dejection, disgust, protest, increasing suffering, agitation, groaning, violent protest and general outcry; and Lucky, who has been docile in response to Pozzo's orders, "pulls on the rope, staggers, shouts his text . . . struggles and shouts his text" (28a-b). His streaming incoherence causes the others to suffer, and he may be conscious under his innocuous appearance of the effect of his parodic monologue on them. Once started, despite their visible protestations, he can be stopped only when they pounce on him physically and remove his hat (28a-29b).

Although Vladimir, Estragon, and Pozzo have had their expectations defused, the audience has been entertained by the whole slapstick scene, amplified by Pozzo's exaggerated gesture of stomping on Lucky's hat, and by Lucky's babbling, stuttering parody of the academician, with its richly suggestive word play: Essey-in-Possy, Testew, Cunard, Puncher, Fartov, Belcher, etc.

That Lucky carries the same potentiality for inflicting pain on others in amusing himself is accentuated in Act II when Vladimir and Estragon are debating whether or not they should help Pozzo get up. Vladimir says "there's one thing I'm afraid of . . . That Lucky might get going all of a sudden. Then we'd be ballocksed." Estragon asks, "Is he there?" and Vladimir replies, with a degree of trepidation, "as large as life. For the moment he is inert. But he might run amuck any minute" (50b-51a).

Even the entertainments of Vladimir and Estragon, in whom we see enough positive humane qualities to allow our identification with them, are

based in or result in the infliction of physical pain or mental anguish on each other and the other characters. The painful impact of these two on each other in their struggle to keep time passing onward is evident quite early in the play when Estragon, who has been sleeping and dreaming, is wakened by Vladimir because he "felt lonely" (11b). Estragon is thereby "restored to the horror of his situation" and says despairingly, "Why will you never let me sleep?" Vladimir not only has awakened him but follows by refusing selfishly to listen to Estragon's dreams. "DON'T TELL ME!" he shouts. "Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that" (11b). For this refusal Estragon seems to get even almost by design. He reminds Vladimir of his painful physical problem by remembering the joke about an Englishman in the brothel. The mere suggestion of a funny story, especially one about whores, is sufficient to cause Vladimir the pain of anticipated laughter; and he exits hurriedly to relieve himself. Estragon is obviously entertained by Vladimir's physical problem since he follows him to the edge of the stage and "gestures . . . like a spectator encouraging a pugilist" (11b). Later in the act, after he has laughed about the loss of Pozzo's pipe, he offers, almost by way of atonement, to share this entertainment resulting from Vladimir's misery. When Pozzo arrives too late, Estragon informs him, "You missed a treat. Pity" (24a).

Vladimir and Estragon call our attention directly to the physical and psychological cruelty inherent in the enslavement of Lucky, at first giving the impression that they are very much concerned:

VLADIMIR: Look!
ESTRAGON: What?
VLADIMIR: (Pointing) His neck!
ESTRAGON: (Looking at the neck) I see nothing.
VLADIMIR: Here.
Estragon goes over beside Vladimir.
ESTRAGON: Oh I say!
VLADIMIR: A running sore!

Indignation seems to be in their voices, but they quickly forget the veiled criticism of Pozzo as they convert their initial concern for Lucky to a curious effort to pass time, trailing off into a clinically objective examination of him as if he were a laboratory specimen devoid of any human associations:

ESTRAGON: It's the rope.
VLADIMIR: It's the rubbing.
ESTRAGON: It's inevitable.
VLADIMIR: It's the knot.
ESTRAGON: It's the chafing.
(They resume their inspection, dwell on the face.
VLADIMIR: (grudgingly) He's not bad looking.
ESTRAGON: (Shrugging his shoulders, wry face). Would you say so?
VLADIMIR: A trifle effeminate.
ESTRAGON: Look at the slobber.
VLADIMIR: It's inevitable.
ESTRAGON: Look at the slaver.
VLADIMIR: Perhaps he's a halfwit.
ESTRAGON: A cretin. (17b)

They forget Lucky's misery and we too forget it, caught up in their clinical blathering.

Vladimir twice indicates moral indignation at Pozzo's treatment of Lucky:

VLADIMIR: (exploding) It's a scandal . . . (stutteringly resolute). To treat a man . . . (gesture towards Lucky). Like that . . . I think that . . . no . . . a human being . . . no . . . it's a scandal. (18b)

. . . . . .

VLADIMIR: And now you [Pozzo] turn him away? Such an old and faithful servant!
POZZO: Swine!
Pozzo more and more agitated.
VLADIMIR: After having sucked all the good out of him you chuck him away like a . . . like a banana skin. Really . . . (23b)

But his sympathy for Lucky quickly vanishes after a brief bantering exchange in which Pozzo's misery is discussed:

VLADIMIR: (to Lucky) How dare you! It's abominable!
Such a good master! Crucify him like that!
After so many years! Really! (24a)

Again we are amused, this time by the ironic turn-about in Vladimir's attitude towards Lucky, his apparently unconscious double application of the same moral indignation to both victimizer and victim. While the change-about is comic, it also carries the idea that each of these characters, consciously or not, inflicts pain upon others in his own attempt to survive the long wait for Godot or darkness or death.

Again and again we see Vladimir and Estragon in this light. Again and again we find ourselves laughing at the low-humor slapstick results or at least smiling at the incongruities their activities unveil, our smiles and laughter allowing us to push to the backs of our conscious minds the misery, pain, and despair that alternates with the amusing scenes. The comic elements have so blinded us to serious consideration of the misery which the characters must endure in Beckett's world that we are thoroughly shocked by Estragon's treatment of the boy messenger from Godot near the end of Act I. We see clearly the lengths to which Beckett's miserable world can drive man when in his desperation Estragon advances threateningly toward the boy and shakes him by the arm (32b-33a). As it shocks us to see this behavior in Estragon, it also apparently shocks him into feeling ashamed of his action: "Estragon releases the Boy, moves away, covering his face with his hands. Vladimir and the Boy observe him . Estragon drops his hands. His face is convulsed" (33a). And it shocks Vladimir, who says,"What's the matter with you?"

However, the shock to our sensibilities is a brief one; and when it is immediately followed and undercut by indication of Vladimir's sense of the absurdity of their situation, we again find ourselves smiling mentally at least

at his sarcasm.

ESTRAGON: I'm unhappy.
VLADIMIR: Not really! Since when?
ESTRAGON: I'd forgotten.
VLADIMIR: Extraordinary tricks the memory plays! (33b)

The tension has been broken and it is not re-established through the end of Act I. Estragon finds the moon "pale for weariness . . . of climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us," but his observation is dispassionate and he follows it with the selfless decision to leave his boots for someone with smaller feet. The act is ended with Vladimir, in a comforting tone, urging Estragon not to "go on like that. To-morrow everything will be better," and reminding him that the boy said "Godot was sure to come to-morrow." Both men reinforce the idea that they must continue together. Vladimir diverts Estragon from thoughts of suicide by saying, "Come on. It's cold" and "There's no good harking back on that. Come on." Estragon dispels Vladimir's thoughts of parting with "It's not worth while now" (34b-45b).

The idea that things will be better tomorrow is picked up immediately in Act II. Vladimir enters singing (his song, it is true, is a capsulization of their miserable entrapment, but he <u>is</u> singing). The tree now has leaves. The tramps find the boots which they believe to be new ones for Estragon; the boots fit loosely, and Vladimir holds out hope for his partner: "Perhaps you'll have socks someday."

Misery still lies underneath this apparently improved situation, but again the surface comedy allows the spectator to avoid direct confrontation with that misery through the first portion of the act. The unfortunate pair return to the self-tormenting games which served them in good stead throughout Act I and also kept the spectator laughing. However,

although their gamesmanship still carries some of the same elements we laughed at in Act I with near complete unconsciousness of the misery beneath the surface, the tone changes in Act II so that the comic response seems more forced.

Early in the act Estragon states his understanding of their entrapment with a furious speech in stronger language and more direct appraisal than anything we experienced in Act I. It is a reaction to Vladimir's concern about the location:

> ESTRAGON: (with sudden fury) Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery! (Looking wildly about him). Look at this muckheap!
>
> .....
>
> ESTRAGON: No, I was never in the Macon country! I've puked my puke of a life away here . . . (40a)

But Beckett has framed the response in a manner which forces us to be amused at the fact that in their circumstances Vladimir was concerned about where they were.

Seeing the two pick up their desperate attempts to make time pass, we laugh at the comedy inherent in those attempts. Although Vladimir says they are inexhaustible (40a), we see them launch into one attempt after another to keep the ball rolling; they can sustain their pretenses of trying to "converse calmly" (40a), starting "all over again" (41a), contradicting each other (41a), and asking each other questions (41b) only so long before they realize that "This is awful" (41a) and fall to pleading with each other to keep things going--"Help me! . . . I'm trying" (41a). But we find ourselves more amused by their attempts than concerned about the despair which the admission "This is awful" betrays.

Vladimir assumes the role of Pozzo, demanding that Estragon show him

the wound from Lucky's Act I kick with the order "The other [leg], pig!" He takes delight, is triumphant in finding the wound: "There's the wound! Beginning to fester!" (43a). He continues in the role of Pozzo in forcing Estragon to put on the boots he would just as soon ignore: "The other, hog! (Estragon raises the other foot.) Higher!" (44b). Their relationship has momentarily deteriorated to that master and slave dependence of Pozzo and Lucky. Yet we are amused by the entire scene, with the two of them staggering about the stage in an attempt to get the boots on Estragon's feet.

We see them rush and stumble and be pulled about the stage in a parody of expectation and fear at the coming of Lucky and Pozzo. We laugh at the fumbling image this creates while Estragon is feeling "accursed" and "in hell." We are amused that Estragon refuses to flee into the auditorium and by Vladimir's comment: "You won't . . . Well I can understand that." We are forced to laugh at the ridiculous attempt to hide behind the parody of a tree. And, in all these reactions, we lose sight of the torment Estragon is afraid of (47b-48a). The examples of these miserable but comic antics are as many as there are pages in the play; but we do finally reach the point in Act II where Beckett slaps us in the face with the debilitating recognition that we have been laughing at misery.

The framework for this realization is built up in the change in tone which has left the misery more thinly veiled behind the comedy and by the greater sense of strain between Vladimir and Estragon. Before they seize on mutual abuse as a method of passing a little time (48b), they have come close to physical confrontation, glaring at each other angrily and advancing upon each other. Vladimir, who has sung Estragon to sleep and covered him with his own coat to keep off the cold, reaches the point where he has had "about his bellyful of Estragon's lamentations! (46a). Finally, Estragon selfishly refuses to include Vladimir in his plea for pity (49b).

However, the real moment of enlightenment for the spectator as to the nature of his responses to the overlying comedy comes when Beckett inspires him to laugh at a blind man and then confronts him with the fact that he has done just that.

When Pozzo and Lucky enter again in Act II we are told in a stage direction that Pozzo is blind. But the stage directions do not show Pozzo groping along behind Lucky, and when Lucky stops abruptly and Pozzo causes them to fall by bumping into him and holding on, we probably laugh. If we don't laugh then, we certainly are amused by the responses of Vladimir and Estragon to their arrival: "Is it Godot?" Estragon asks, and Vladimir responds, "At last! (He goes toward the heap.) Reinforcements at last" (49b). It is incredible that a heap can be seen as reinforcements, that the blind and the dumb [Lucky] can be greeted as saviors and reinforcements by the lame and the venereal. If we are aware that Pozzo is blind, we quickly forget that fact in our response to the whole scene.

Although Beckett does not make it clear how Pozzo is to enter to betray his blindness, he does provide him with gestures later which should signal to the audience that he is blind. His despair is apparent when he "writhes, groans, beats the ground with his fists" (50a); and his sightlessness is apparent when he "stops, saws the air blindly, calls for help" (53a). However, in setting up scenes in which we laugh at one character or another, Beckett allows us for the moment to forget Pozzo's disability. We hear Estragon urge Vladimir to "Kick him [Pozzo] in the crotch" (53a) and see Vladimir strike Pozzo, adding insult to injury with "Will you stop it! Crablouse!" This seems an inhumane enough act; but, remembering the Pozzo we saw in Act I, we are probably not particularly sympathetic. Beckett then has Pozzo "extricate himself with cries of pain" and crawl away, sawing the air blindly. But the author immediately creates a scene at which the

spectator cannot help laughing: Vladimir, propped on his elbow, observes Pozzo's retreat and, like a sportscaster capturing the suspense of the game, says "He's off! . . . He's down!"

Beckett also fosters the spectator's forgetfulness of Pozzo's blindness by creating an amusing sequence between Estragon and Vladimir:

> ESTRAGON: We might try him with other names.
> VLADIMIR: I'm afraid he's dying.
> ESTRAGON: It'd be amusing.
> VLADIMIR: What'd be amusing?
> ESTRAGON: To try him with other names, one after the other. It'd pass the time. (53b)

Obviously Vladimir and Estragon are not concerned about Pozzo's blindness. Estragon is concerned with passing the time; and we, caught up also in passing time, are amused by the juxtaposition of "It'd be amusing" and "I'm afraid he's dying." We too forget Pozzo's misfortune in gratifying our own appetite for amusement.

Vladimir has shown us his appetite in the lengthy "let us not waste time in idle discourse" speech, in which he comically does just what he says they should not do--he wastes time discussing the response he has to the idea of helping Pozzo (51a-b); and Estragon has illustrated the idea that these characters are profiting from each other's misery in his suggestion that they "should ask him for the bone first. Then if he refuses we'll leave him there" (50b). They indicate again that they are very much unaware of his disability in an exchange just before they help him up:

> VLADIMIR: What about helping him?
> ESTRAGON: What does he want?
> VLADIMIR: He wants to get up.
> ESTRAGON: Then why doesn't he?
> VLADIMIR: He wants us to help him to get up.
> ESTRAGON: Then why don't we? What are we waiting for? (54a-b)

Vladimir does not explain that Pozzo does not get up because he is blind. In fact, once they help Pozzo up, Vladimir immediately asks him, "Do you not

recognize us?" And Pozzo replies, "I am blind." Beckett appropriately leaves a brief silence to allow this statement to sink in--perhaps so the audience will realize more forcefully that it has been laughing at the misfortunes of a blind man and the ridiculous responses of Vladimir and Estragon to him in those misfortunes. How could he better bring home to us the realization that our laughter at the apparent miseries and misfortunes of others is a somewhat inappropriate response, even though that laughter may be good natured rather than derisive?

If this is not enough, he reinforces the effect by characterizing Estragon as rather dense in this situation:

> ESTRAGON: Highwaymen! Do we look like highwaymen?
> VLADIMIR: Damn it [,] can't you see the man is blind?
> ESTRAGON: Damn it [,] so he is. (54b)

Estragon also adds cynically and callously, "So he says" (54b), a statement we will recall when Vladimir later expresses doubt: "I wonder is he really blind . . . It seemed to me he saw us" (57b-58a). But until we hear Vladimir's expression of doubt, and even after hearing it, we are burdened with the consciousness that we laughed at a man we were told was blind. This is enough to make us doubt the appropriateness of our laughter, the humanity of it. And it is enough to cause us to be cautiously hesitant about laughing at the comic elements of the characters and situations which follow to the end of the play.

Bert Lahr, who played Estragon in the first American productions of Waiting for Godot, understood the tension that Beckett set up in the spectator's mind with this realization, although Lahr did not sense the impact of the realization:

> You never laugh at a blind man on stage or people with their legs off. But Beckett wrote in Pozzo and made such a heavy out of him that, by the second act, when he comes back blind we play games with him. We taunt him. We ask him how much he'll give us. We slide. We poke--you understand. The audience screams.[60]

Lahr understood that the audience's normal humane response would be the suspension of laughter because the brunt of the joke or the means to the laugh is a cripple; he saw that the audience did laugh in the face of the blind man; but he did not see that Beckett finally confronted the audience with the fact that its response was something it would ordinarily consider inhumane. As Styan observes, "Beckett . . . forces an audience to laugh helplessly at suicide, mortality, and despair, and induces a kind of blasphemy against its sensibilities."[61] That blasphemy against the sensibilities does not become fully realized, I believe, until we are hit with the knowledge that we have been laughing at a cripple. Throughout the play we have been laughing at cripples, but here we see our responses put into everyday terms we cannot ignore. We are forced to re-examine ourselves as human beings, forced to it by the doubt of the appropriateness of our responses.[62]

Beckett amplifies this sense of doubt about our laughter in the scene in which Estragon kicks Lucky, who is lying on the stage apparently unconscious. Pozzo, who wants to resume his wandering, asks Vladimir and Estragon to "go and see is he [Lucky] hurt," and then gives very explicit instructions for going about this:

> Well to begin with he [Estragon] should pull on the rope, as hard as he likes so long as he doesn't strangle him. He usually responds to that. If not he should give him a taste of his boot, in the face and the privates as far as possible. (56a)

And Vladimir gives some incredibly inhumane practical advice: "Make sure he's alive before you start. No point in exerting yourself if he's dead." Estragon relates that Lucky is still breathing and Vladimir says, "Then let him have it" (56b). Estragon assails Lucky, kicking him "with sudden fury" and "hurling abuse at him." We no doubt laugh uproariously at the surprise of Estragon hurting his own foot in this vicious attack, at the

slapstick limping and groaning, and at the ironic designation of Lucky as "the brute" (56b). But that earlier presentation of the explicit and intentional cruelty of this scene was so vivid that we must stifle our laughter as quickly as Vladimir cuts his off. We understand that "one daren't even laugh any more." We dare not because it may expose the inhumane and the ridiculous in us. This realization is so well laid upon us that we cannot laugh at the end of the play when Estragon stands for several minutes in an exceedingly comic posture, his trousers down around his ankles, and when he and Vladimir exchange those several comic speeches betraying their momentary inability to understand each other.

The response we would ordinarily expect to occur at this superficially comic scene is held in abeyance because, identifying with the characters, we are fully sympathetic with their plight, and because we have been taught that our laughter is a questionable response to the comic elements we see in these pitiful characters and miserable circumstances. In showing us that our amusement, our laughter, is similar to the amusements of the characters on stage in being rooted in misery, Beckett shows us that like them, we can find little comfort in the laugh. As Cohn says:

> Instead of laughing in a civilized and detached way at comic figures whom we do not resemble, instead of reforming after laughing at our own weakness as seen in another, we come, in Beckett's work, to doubt ourselves through our laughter.[63]

However, we must return to that dual vision of the positive we perceive in the characters and the negative we find in their world. We must add as Cohn does: "But through the obsessions of Beckett's heroes we understand our own deepest humanity."[64] Although we may feel like Estragon that we "can't go on like this," we still must affirm like Vladimir "That's what you think" (60b). It is an ambiguous response which Beckett has fostered by allowing us to identify with the character and by forcing us to associate our world with theirs.

Beckett has universalized his characters in appearance, time, and place so that the spectator can see them as representative men, essentially like any man; but he has also directly associated the spectator with the characters so that the spectator does not exempt himself from the application of the universal. He has presentented characters who appear to be merely caricatures, exaggerated and bizarre in their appearances, actions, and responses; but he has filled them out with enough humanity to allow the spectator to develop sympathetic responses to them. Although he has shown that the characters on stage laugh in response to their own misery and the misery of others and that they entertain themselves at the expense of others, he also has revealed that our own laughter, so curiously copious in response to a world in which laughter itself is prohibited, is as much a laugh in the face of misery as theirs is, our entertainment as much rooted in misery as theirs. The total sense of identification developed forces on us the realization that when we continue to laugh at the ridiculous actions of the characters, even though our laughter is more sympathetic than derisive, we are also laughing at ourselves.

The result is that the spectator experiences the enlightenment that his own life, despite its complexities, is not very much grander than the existence in which the stage characters are trapped and, perhaps more shockingly,that his own responses to life are not much different from theirs or much more appropriate than theirs.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 360-61.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 53.

[4]Colin Duckworth, Angels of Darkness (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1972), pp. 53-4.

[5]Ruby Cohn, Back to Beckett (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 129-30.

[6]Ruby Cohn, Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1962), p. 216.

[7]Ibid., p. 291.

[8]Gunther Anders, "Being Without Time: On Beckett's Play Waiting for Godot'" in Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Martin Esslin (Englewood CLiffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 143.

[9]Jean Jacques Mayoux, "Samuel Beckett and the Universal Parody," ibid., p. 86.

[10]J. L. Styan, The Dark Comedy: The Development of Modern Comic Tragedy (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), p. 219.

[11]Hugh Kenner, Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study (Berkely: University of California Press, 1968), p. 57.

[12]Geoffrey Brereton, Principles of Tragedy: A Rational Examination of the Tragic Concept of Life and Literature (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1968), p. 261.

[13]John Fletcher, "Action and Play in Beckett's Theatre," Modern Drama IX (December, 1966), 243.

[14]Cohn, Comic Gamut, p. 216.

[15]Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot: A Tragicomedy in Two Acts (New York: Grove Press, 1954), p. 46b. (Subsequent textual quotes will be identified in the paper with the page number followed by "a" for the left hand page and "b" for the right in parenthesis following the quotation.)

[16]Eric Bentley, "The Talent of Samuel Beckett," in Casebook on Waiting for Godot, ed. by Ruby Cohn, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), p. 66.

[17]Ludovic Janvier, "Cynical Dramaturgy," ibid., p. 170.

[18]Duckworth, p. 22.

[19]Alan Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett: A Personal Chronicle," in Casebook on Waiting for Godot, ed. by Ruby Cohn, p. 56.

[20]John J. Sheedy, "The Net," ibid. p. 160.

[21]Duckworth, p. 69.

[22]John Fletcher and John Spurling, Beckett: A Study of His Plays (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 63.

[23]Ronald Hayman, Samuel Beckett (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1973), p. 10. "The audience is involved most directly when they [Vladimir and Estragon] look out in horror at the auditorium, but in fact the audience is involved all the way through because Beckett is playing around with the fact of having actors on a stage playing parts and playing around with idea of a play."

[24]Cohn, Comic Gamut, p. 218.

[25]Duckworth, p. 104.

[26]Cohn, Back to Beckett, p. 131.

[27]Wolfgang Isser, "Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Language," Modern Drama IX (December, 1966), 252-53.

[28]Duckworth, p. 134.

[29]Fletcher and Spurling, p. 67, and Sheedy, pp. 164-5.

[30]Genevieve Serreau, "Beckett's Clowns," in Casebook on Waiting for Godot, ed. by Ruby Cohn, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), p. 175.

[31]Cohn, Back to Beckett, p. 131.

[32]Esslin, p. 29.

[33]Ibid., p. 37.

[34]Ibid., p. 38.

[35]Duckworth, p. 104.

[36]Hayman, p. 29.

[37]Fletcher and Spurling, p. 62.

[38]Anders, p. 143.

[39]Janvier, p. 170.

[40]Bentley, p. 65.

[41]Isser, p. 259.

[42]Fletcher, p. 250.

[43]A. Alvarez, Samuel Beckett (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p. 87.

[44]Cohn, Back to Beckett, p. 131.

[45]Duckworth, p. 103.

[46]Ibid., p. 106.

[47]Hayman, p. 9. "There is nothing to force them to stay, but there is no incentive to make them go. The only way out is death, and the only relief is night." Isser, p. 258. "The events of the play appear tragic because there is no way out for them; but no conflict arises because they believe there can be no alternative."

[48]Hayman, p. 9.

[49]Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Samuel Beckett or Presence in the Theatre," in Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Martin Esslin, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 111.

[50]Fletcher and Spurling, p. 63.

[51]Hayman, p. 29.

[52]Alvarez, p. 87.

[53]Beckett, Endgame, (New York: Grove Press, Inc. 1958), pp. 87-91.

[54]Hayman, pp. 30-31.

[55]Bentley, p. 66. Bentley quotes English poet and critic Al Alvarez, giving no citation of source.

[56]Ruby Cohn, "The Laughter of Sad Sam Beckett," in Samuel Beckett Now, ed. by Melvin J. Friedman, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 187.

[57]Fletcher and Spurling, p. 58.

[58]Cohn, Comic Gamut, p. 287.

[59]Sheedy, p. 164.

[60]John Lahr, Notes on a Cowardly Lion: The Biography of Bert Lahr, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 256-57.

[61]Styan, p. 219.

[62]Ibid., p. 234.

[63]Cohn, Comic Gamut, p. 295.

[64]Ibid.

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