

Genealogy of “Waiting for Good Dream” in Modern Drama: Thematic Comparison of Strindberg’s *A Dream Play*, Brecht’s *Szechwan*, and Beckett’s *Godot*

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Introduction

Strindberg’s *A Dream Play* (1902) Brecht’s *Good Person of Szechwan* (1943), and Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (French 1948, English 1954) are historically and thematically connected to each other. When Brecht and Beckett started writing their early plays, Strindberg’s significance in the development of the modern European theatre had already been established. While Young Brecht studied Strindberg energetically, attending Max Reinhard’s production of *A Dream Play* in Berlin, Beckett asked Roger Blin to “direct the first Paris production of *Godot* because he had been impressed by Blin’s direction of *A Dream Play*” (Cousineau, 10). Beckett’s reaction to *A Dream Play* was more favorable than Brecht’s.¹ Brecht was displeased with Beckett’s *Godot* as well as with Strindberg’s *Dream Play* and he planned to write “counter plays” to both of them.²

The goal of this paper is to explicate how those three plays are thematically related to each other and how the three playwrights try to deal with our modern world. The key word of each play “dream,” “good,” and “waiting” plays a no less significant role in the other two plays. Brecht’s impossibility of being “good” in capitalist society is predicted by Strindberg’s de-

motion of words such as “right” and “truth” in modern society. Beckett deals with a similar problem in terms of the crisis of traditional mimetic assumptions. If Strindberg tries to mitigate the harsh reality by comparing it with an even harsher nightmare, Beckett carries the theme of dream and reality all the way to the radical skepticism, while Brecht strongly refuses confusing dream and reality. The act of waiting which play the central theme in Beckett’s *Godot* is also significant for the other playwrights. Strindberg sympathetically depicts those people who wait for the time when life’s secret will be revealed to them, but, for Brecht, waiting is the cause of all the human illusions. Thus the following argument will be arranged according to those three key words taken from the three plays: “good,” “dream,” and “waiting.”

Can We be “Good” in this World?

In *Modern Dream and the Death of God*, G. E. Wellwarth categorizes modern dramas into two types: fragmentative and analytical. He explains that the social upheaval as represented by the French Revolution and the demotion of religion as epitomized in Nietzsche’s death of God have cast men into the void, “the comfortless realm of existential solitude”. We have lost the centre of the world and the traditional values which used to give cohesiveness and order to the society. As a result, we can neither grasp the wholeness of the world nor comprehend the meaning of our life. Strindberg rejects such a world “by fragmenting it and withdrawing into self” (63). Wellwarth thinks that the trait of Strindberg’s drama is pure subjectivism, calling him “the ‘father’ of the twentieth-century fragmentational drama,” and that Beckett is one of the leading playwrights of the fragmentative school after Strindberg. On the other hand, the critic considers Henrik Ibsen as the originator of “the twentieth-century analytic drama” who

“reached out and tried to transform the world” (75). His drama attempts to “describe the world and analyze what [is] wrong with it” (76). According to the same critic, Brecht is one of the leading playwrights of the analytic school.

The demotion of the traditional social values greatly affects moral judgments. Demarcations between good and bad or right and wrong become blurred. In Strindberg’s *A Dream Play*, the “right-thinking people” are to blame for crucifying Christ (262), and the deans of four faculties fail in finding “truth” (265). According to Indra’s Daughter who descends to earth from heaven in order to register human sufferings, the beginning of the world is a rather accidental erotic connection between Brahman and Māyā (270). So it is implied that there are no intrinsic moral values in the world by which we can live our every day life. Instead of moral judgments, Strindberg introduces the idea of sublimating human sufferings by virtue of art. Thus Indra’s Daughter abandons her children for the “higher duty” just as the Poet ran away from his home for poetry. At the end of the play, various kinds of problems in human life are transformed into a giant chrysanthemum, possibly a symbol of art.

Brecht, who had seen Reinhard’s performance of Strindberg’s *A Dream Play* in Berlin in 1921, later wrote *Szechwan* as a “counterplay” to that as he thought *A Dream Play* “[was] not estranging enough ... and hence not provocative enough to shake the viewers awake” (Knust, 76). He must have been discontent with Strindberg’s less political and more private presentation of human life. In *Szechwan*, Brecht makes the point that capitalist society is to blame for the harshness of life. To be good or *gut* in that society implies being vulnerable to all kinds of problems the society has. Therefore, Shen Teh, a good person in *Szechwan*, must develop an evil character Shui Ta as her second personality to deal with the ruthless social reality.

C. Sartiliot explicates how the word *gut* is deconstructed in the play: "From the very beginning of the play the word *gut* is linked with money. It is through play on words that Brecht exposes the concept of morality in a society based on capital" (146-7). In other words, the meaning of the word "good" itself splits as Shen Teh acquires the split personality.

According to C. Zillacus, Brecht planned two "counterplays" to Beckett's *Godot*, too:

One [of them] involved staging *Godot* against a backdrop onto which a specially made film showing the building of socialism in various parts of the world was to be projected; this was to provide a dialectical negation of the wait. (128)

Though Brecht's wholehearted commitment to Marxism has not been historically rewarded, the problem he depicted in *Szechwan*, namely, the impossibility of a moral existence under capitalism, is still realistic to the present reader-audience. I believe that the demise of Marxism in the Eastern Europe does not prove the righteousness of the bourgeois-capitalist society we live in.

It is significant, however, that neither Brecht nor Beckett is a simple follower of their precursors. One of the main differences which divide Strindberg-and-Ibsen and Brecht-and-Beckett is how to deal with the problem of soul or self. While the former pair is more concerned with the problem of man's "interiority," the latter is less so or almost indifferent to it.³ R. Hayman quotes Brecht's words in his biography of the playwright:

Ibsen's and Strindberg's plays were unmoving and uninformative except as evidence about 'the way human relationships ... were regarded in earlier cultural periods.' In modern society what goes on

inside the soul of an individual is totally uninteresting. (180)

In other words, for Brecht, Ibsen and Strindberg belonged to the past, as he believed that since each individual was socially defined, the society itself had to be critically analyzed first. As for Beckett, P. Chabert says: "The one irreducible component of dramatic tension is conflict. In Beckett, this tension no longer stems from a psychological conflict, but rather from a conflict which is genuinely physical" (25), and W. E. Gruber explains: "Beckett ... is less likely to trust apparently sentimental confessions (whether intentional or gratuitous) as necessarily truer to selfhood than surfaces" (81).

In the opening of *Godot's* second act, Vladimir tries to make Estragon remember what happened yesterday and ascertain that they are now at the same spot as they were yesterday. Estragon, however, cannot identify anything, and when Vladimir asks him about his opinion concerning their location, Estragon answers: "How would I know? In another compartment. There's no lack of void" (66). Significantly, the only clue they can count on for ascertaining time and space is the bruise on Estragon's shin which was inflicted by Lucky. Even though Estragon remembers neither who did that nor when, the bruise, a trace of physical violence, enables Vladimir to explain its cause and reconstruct the past. In other words, this passage can be interpreted as a cynical presentation of human history, because it suggests that history is nothing but a combined product of people's vague memory and traces of physical violence.

Vladimir, however, does not succeed in his project of reconstructing time and space through his narrative. It is because Estragon fails to follow Vladimir's reasoning of causality and keeps fragmenting his narrative:

Vladimir: There's the wound! Beginning to fester!

Estragon: And what about it?

Vladimir: (letting go the leg). Where are your boots?

Estragon: I must have thrown them away.

Vladimir: When?

Estragon: I don't know.

(Vladimir: Why?)

Estragon: (exasperated). I don't know why I don't know!

Vladimir: No I mean why did you throw them away?

Estragon: (exasperated). Because they were hurting me!

Vladimir: (triumphantly pointing to the boots). There they are!

(Estragon looks at the boots). At the very spot where you left them yesterday! (Estragon goes towards the boots, inspects them closely).

Estragon: They 're not mine. (67)

Vladimir and Estragon cannot overcome the uncertainty of their memory and tend to lose their time-space consciousness. In such a world as a void, all they can do is just to talk, eat, sleep, and engage themselves in various kinds of actions which seem to lead nowhere. Actually, *Godot* reduces all theatrical conventions of mimesis to their minimum⁴. While Brecht still presupposes the existence of "reality" and its critical representation through his drama, for Beckett, the absence of "interiority" disrupts the base of mimesis or of attempts to represent "reality."

As a result, Vladimir's and Estragon's actions become repetitive and self-referential except for their only consensus that they are waiting for Godot. They both assume that Godot is some positive or "good" personality by whom they will be "saved" once it comes (94). If Strindberg and Brecht

request us to doubt nice words such as “good,” Beckett tries to depict how we become mesmerized by those words. In this sense, Godot and the word “good” have a similar function; they both work on people to suspend their critical mind. If so, the question we should ask is neither if we can be “good” nor if something “good” or Godot will come, but what we mean by the word.

Consequently, in *Godot* moral judgments seem to become extremely ambiguous except for the scattered images of holocaust. One of the best examples will be the final part of Lucky’s long speech: “alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis...” (44).⁵ Surely the scattered skulls must be a trace of physical violence, but the two characters on the stage have no means to interpret them. As Beckett wrote the play during World War II, these images must have direct referents, but he only dealt with them indirectly. Possibly, the holocaust was so overwhelming that Beckett could not find any other way than these subtle allusions.⁶ Facing the ultimate form of physical violence, the demise of traditional moral values has also reached its ultimate stage.⁷

Are We All in a Dream?

In *A Dream Play*, harshness and impossibility of life are emphasized or exaggerated in the nightmarish framework. As the title suggests, what takes place in the play is supposed to be in someone’s dream. Yet, Strindberg’s note that our reality would look relatively better after waking up from the dream sounds almost sarcastic.⁸ In spite of his note, the play seems to suggest that our “real life” is a nightmare from which we will never wake up, and that we just keep repeating the same nightmare generation after generation. In fact, the structure of the play underpins this interpretation. At the outset of the play, ruins of castles are mentioned as a backdrop and

through the play a castle keeps growing until it collapses in fire and becomes ruins. In other words, the play has a circular structure. The lawyer in the play says that the worst thing that can happen in the life is “the endless repetition” (250). The play seems to prove the validity of the lawyer’s words.

Godot also makes us face the problem of how we know the demarcation between dream and reality. Pozzo says: “I woke up one fine day as blind as Fortune.... Sometimes I wonder if I’m not still asleep” (86). Vladimir asks him when it has happened; Pozzo answers: “Don’t question me! The blind have no notion of time” (86). Since both Vladimir and Estragon also suffer from lack of time consciousness, their “reality,” namely, the whole play may be a blind man’s dream. A similar observation is made by Vladimir:

Was I sleeping while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now?
Tomorrow when I wake or think I do what shall I say of today?
That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I
waited for Godot?... But in all that what truth will there be? (90)

As Vladimir meditates on the uncertainty of real life, Estragon starts to doze off beside him. Looking at him sleeping, Vladimir continues his meditation: “But habit is a great deadener.... At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying” (91). First of all, Vladimir thinks that if we just repeat our daily routine, our life would be like a sleep. Secondly even if we think we are awake we may be still in someone’s dream. If so, who is the dreamer here? Is “someone” who looks at Vladimir God, Godot, or even a blind man such as Pozzo? Does it make any difference, for example, when the perceiver is God and not Godot? It seems to, at least, to Estragon. He asks, “Do you think God sees me?” (76), as he tries to mimic a tree standing on one leg. Though Estragon does not explicate the meaning of his question,

he means, I believe, that he will feel secure if he can ascertain that God sees him. It is possible to attribute Vladimir's skepticism and Estragon's efforts of overcoming it by referring to God to Descartes whom Beckett studied intensely in his early years in Paris.⁹

In a nutshell, the blurring demarcation between dream and reality in the play is caused by Vladimir's and Estragon's uncertainty about the existence of the absolute perceiver, namely, God. If God who perceives the whole universe does not exist, each individual would be trapped in his own dream and could not relate himself to the whole picture of universe. Then, the worst scenario would be an endless chain of perceivers and perceived. Nobody can gain the absolute standpoint of the perceiver; a perceiver will be always the perceived at the same time. Therefore, it is significant that meditating-looking-at Vladimir and sleeping-looked-on Estragon are juxtaposed side by side here, because the juxtaposition visualizes this pattern of perceiver and perceived in a concise manner.

Incidentally, we can find a similar pattern in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*. A character called Tweedledee and Alice have a conversation, looking at the Red King who is sleeping beside them.¹⁰ Tweedledee says to Alice that she will disappear when the king wakes up because she is "only a sort of thing in his dream" (238). Alice gets upset and insists that she is real, not a thing in the dream. The reason I am quoting Alice's episode here is not only because the passage shares a similar motif of perceivers and perceived with *Godot*, but also because the passage can be a clue for one of the enigmas in the play, namely, Vladimir's strong resistance to hearing Estragon's dreams. Let me quote an example:

Estragon: I was asleep! ... Why will you never let me sleep?

Vladimir: I felt lonely.

Estragon: I had a dream.

Vladimir: Don't tell me!

Estragon: I dreamt that--

Vladimir: DON'T TELL ME!

Estragon: ... It's not nice of you Didi. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?

Vladimir: Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that.

(15-6)

A similar dialogue is repeated twice more later in the play (70 & 90). Why does he refuse so frantically to listen to Estragon's dream? In the light of Alice's episode, we can suppose at least one reason: Vladimir fears that he may be "only a sort of thing" in Estragon's dream. To be in Estragon's dream means to be unreal, which is unbearable for Vladimir. He wants to be a perceiver of the world rather than the perceived in it. If he fails in fixing his position as a perceiver, he will be thrown into the sea of relativity and uncertainty. Therefore, he insistently refuses to listen to Estragon's dream.

There is something more however. In fact, an interesting difference between Alice's case and Vladimir's is while Alice is afraid to wake up the Red King so that she should not disappear, Vladimir does not want Estragon to sleep at all. Vladimir's answer to Estragon's question why he never lets him sleep is: "I felt lonely." We can understand the significance of this simple statement better when we compare it with Pozzo's similar statement:

Good. Is everyone ready? Is everybody looking at me? (He looks at Lucky, jerks the rope. Lucky raises his head.) Will you look at me pig! (Lucky looks at him.) Good.... I am ready. Is everybody listening? Is everybody ready?... I don't like talking in a vacuum. (30)

Here, Pozzo pretends to explain the reason why Lucky does not put down his bags. Even though his speech itself begins to meander and we are never given any satisfactory reason, this quoted passage clearly shows that the despotic master Pozzo needs his audience-slave Lucky in order to maintain his authority. If he loses his audience, he will also lose his position and power. Therefore, when Vladimir says he feels lonely while Estragon sleeps, his statement should imply something more than just a personal sentimentalism. Vladimir's existence also depends on Estragon or more precisely on the relationship between them.

Thus, the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon is comparable to that of Pozzo and Lucky. Vladimir-Pozzo needs Estragon-Lucky to ascertain his existence but the former has no intention to listen to the latter. In this sense, Vladimir is no less despotic than Pozzo. If Estragon is not allowed to speak about his dreams, Lucky is also silent through the play except for the explosive utterance of enigmatic words in the middle of the first act. We can interpret his silence as a sign that he has been deprived of a means of communication. Therefore, it is possible to see the relationship of Pozzo and Lucky as a caricature of the relationship of Vladimir and Estragon. While they wait for Godot, they encounter their own exaggerated mirror image which keeps coming back to them. According to the boy who enters the scene at the end of each act, even Godot beats the boy's brother. One is the master and the other is the servant; they collaborate to produce a closed universe.¹¹ Consequently they can find no way out of their own projected images. Similar scenes are to be repeated endlessly.¹²

On the contrary, in *Szechwan*, dream and reality are clearly divided. Except for the prologue and scene 10, the gods always appear only in the water-seller's dream. We can interpret this strict division between dream and reality as Brecht's message that life is not a dream but an arena of

fighting for improvement. At the end of the play, Shen Teh is left on the stage shouting "Help!" to the gods who ascend on a pink cloud. The ending of the play is open; the prologue encourages the audience to find a happy end for the play. The play's structure is neither circular like *A Dream Play* nor repetitive like *Godot* but progressive. When the play ends, it is we, the audience themselves, who are now in the position of Shen Teh. We are called to fight in life's arena with her.

What are We "Waiting" for?

In *A Dream Play*, Indra's Daughter comes down to the earth to experience and suffers from human conditions. She does not change them but only observes and registers them. In *Szechwan*, the three gods whose mission is to find good persons in the world are almost on equal terms with human beings; they give Shen Teh some money to start the ball rolling, express their antipathy regarding Shui Ta, and seem pleased when they are outwitted by Shen-Teh's split personality she acquired to deal with her hardship. Shen Teh observes and suffers from human conditions as Indra's Daughter does; yet the significant difference is that Shen Teh cannot leave the earth for the divine realm as Indra's Daughter is able to. If Indra's Daughter abandons people and gives no hope of redemption except for the possibility of sublimating human sufferings through art, Shen Teh struggles to find redemption in her own manner.

In Beckett's *Godot*, no divine figure is clearly introduced. The enigma of the play is of course what and who Godot is.¹³ R. Cohn considers Godot as "the promise that is always awaited and not fulfilled" (130). L. Graver suggests that Godot represents what "people aware of the absence of coherent meaning in their lives wait [for] in the hope that it will restore significance to their existence" (43). We should not forget, however, that Vladimir's

and Estragon's act of waiting gives to their life, and consequently to the play, a pattern, however insignificant and sterile such a pattern may seem to be.¹⁴ Estragon proposes to leave the place and Vladimir answers that they cannot do so because they must wait for Godot. This dialogue is repeated with variations nine times through the play. In spite of their difficulty in communication, the two characters always agree on this point. In fact Vladimir says: "Yes, in this immense confusion one thing is alone clear. We are waiting for Godot to come" (80), and Estragon suggests that they are "tied" to Godot (20). Here, I believe that it is not appropriate to ask whether Godot will really come or not. It is not that they wait for Godot because they are sure Godot exists. The situation is reversed: Godot begins to exist because they wait for it.

The theme of waiting is also introduced in both *A Dream Play* and *Szechwan*. In *A Dream Play*, an officer appears who has been waiting for a girl named Victoria at a door for seven years. She never comes because she is "the girl of his dream" (220), namely, a product of his fantasy. This door continues to exist through the play regardless of changing scenes and, as Indra's Daughter says, "People think that the solution to the riddle of the world is hidden there" (263). But when the door is opened towards the end of the play, people can find nothing behind it. This mechanism of waiting is basically the same as that in *Godot*. The act of waiting comes first before the object of waiting. The longer you wait, the stronger your passion becomes. H. Kenner suggests in his essay "Waiting for Godot" that "[i]f there has never been a play about waiting before, that is because no dramatist before Beckett ever thought of attempting such a thing" (Bloom 61). We may say, however, that Beckett was insightful enough to focus on the mechanism of waiting Strindberg depicted in 1902, and made it into a full-scale drama fifty years later. Brecht also noticed the significance of wait-

ing, but instead of presenting its mechanism in a pessimistic manner as Strindberg did or in a tragicomic manner as Beckett did, he attacked this mechanism in *Szechwan* in order to reveal its evil aspect.

As a Marxist playwright, Brecht believes that the act of waiting leads to all kinds of illusions and passivity which hinder people's ideal of social reform. People who agonize under Shui Ta wait for Shen Teh's return, hoping that Shen Teh will rescue them from their harsh life, the reality of the capitalist society. Yang Sun believes that she is confined in the back room of Shui Ta's office. Since Shen Teh also plays the role of Shui Ta, it is inevitable that the former is absent when the latter is present. Therefore, when the policeman enters the back room, Shen Teh is not to be found there. The significance of Shen Teh's absence, however, implies more than just the physical impossibility to be two persons at one time. The play shows that Shen Teh, a good person, cannot exist as an independent personality; the society does not allow her innocent goodness, unless she creates Shui Ta's cruelty as a balance.

As soon as Shen Teh opens her tobacconist's shop, people start rushing into the shop for shelter and food, taking advantage of her goodness. People's selfishness is revealed when the first comers begin to complain about Shen Teh's generous attitude to the late comers:

The Woman: You're too good, Shen Teh. If you want to hang on to your shop you'd better be able to refuse sometimes.

The Man: Say it isn't yours. Say it belongs to a relation and he insists on strict accounts. Why not try it? (14)

Though Shen Teh is reluctant at first to accept those people's suggestion that she should invent a fictional cousin as an excuse, when Mrs Mi Tzu, the proprietress of the shop, appears and demands a security for Shen

Teh, the crucial moment comes. Shen Teh herself finally utters the word "cousin":

Mrs Mi Tzu: But you must have someone who can tell me what kind of tenant I'm getting in my house....

Shen Teh slowly with lowered eyes: I have got a cousin. (17)

This passage clearly shows that it is the people who are responsible for producing Shen Teh's split personality. People kill Shen Teh as an innocent good person and call for Shui Ta, an efficient but cruel manager. In other words Shui Ta is produced by the society.

Society includes not only people but also deity. C. Sartillot points out that the three gods embody "the discourse of bourgeois morality":

[T]hey speak in proverbs and maxims--tools of political domination ... Such statements cannot be refuted because they are presented as established truths, as generalized truths based on the erasure of economic concerns. (148)

If even the gods are enmeshed in the capitalist discourse, then no wonder the people living in that society are. The drama suggests that the split personality may be the only possible solution to deal with the harsh reality of the capitalist society. Therefore, ironically, while people themselves make Shen Teh disappear, they suffer from and complain of her absence and wait for her return. It is this hypocrisy that Brecht reveals in the play.

Thus, Brecht and Beckett make an interesting contrast in their analyses of the mechanism of waiting. For Brecht, people's waiting, namely, their passivity makes it impossible for a good person to exist; for Beckett, people's waiting produces Godot, an idol-god, or an excuse for doing nothing. Brecht is more critical than Beckett because he believes that he has an

alternative for the capitalist society. Beckett is more skeptical than Brecht because he doubts such an alternative. People wait for the sake of waiting, pretending to believe in Godot, but, in fact, they do not really want it to come. Vladimir, for example, continually tries to deny the possibility that Pozzo is Godot. When Pozzo enters for the first time, Estragon wonders if Pozzo is the Godot they wait for. Pozzo's declaration that his name is not Godot but Pozzo does not really clarify his identity. After all Vladimir, who seems to have met Godot before, may have heard the name wrong. Phonetically Godot and Pozzo seem easy to confuse. In fact, the drama mischievously plays on the name Godot. Estragon confuses Pozzo with Bozzo; Vladimir says that he "once knew a family called Gozzo" (15). Even Pozzo joins the play saying: "Godin ... Godet ... Godot ... anyhow you see who I mean" (24). Towards the end of the play, Estragon asks once again if Pozzo was not Godot:

Estragon: Are you sure it wasn't him?

Vladimir: Who?

Estragon: Godot.

Vladimir: But who?

Estragon: Pozzo.

Vladimir: Not at all! (Less sure.) Not at all! (Still less sure.)

Not at all! (58)

In spite of his uncertainty Vladimir just keeps denying the possibility that Pozzo is Godot. This passage clearly shows Vladimir's reluctance to admit Godot's appearance. After all, the act of waiting implies the absence of its object. They wait for Godot because it does not come. In short, Godot's existence paradoxically depends only on its absence.¹⁵

Conclusion

The three plays I have discussed above inevitably make us face the dualistic problem, namely, the choice between “interiority” and “exteriority.” In other words, the choice we are left with is either the relinquishment of reality-claim for our subjectivity or the abnegation of subjective autonomy for the socio-historical environment. Strindberg’s play is inclined to the first choice; Brecht’s to the second. Therefore, in spite of Strindberg’s pessimism and Brecht’s optimism, their two plays seem to be two sides of one coin. Actually, has not history proved that Marxism can turn into another nightmare if we believe its infallibility? On the other hand, Beckett’s *Godot* seems to be uniquely suspended between the two plays. In spite of its dream-like unrealistic setting, the characters’ physicality is remarkably real.

Though we are not sure if this kind of reality will lead us to redemption or damnation, I believe that my analyses of the three plays have at least demonstrated the danger of the mechanism of waiting. While the mechanism makes people passive and egocentric, it presupposes some absolute solution for the problems of our society. To put it in another way, as we wait, a good dream will transform into something absolute which is not necessarily “good” any more but something dangerously obscure. Again our modern history proved that such a desire for the absolute can justify violence and lead us to total destruction. After the holocaust of World War II and the end of the Cold War, we are still waiting for a *Godot* or a “good dream” to come. To accept the absence of such a dream and realize the danger of “good” may paradoxically help us break through the impasse.

NOTES

- 1 Katharine Worth points out that “obviously Strindbergian elements fused with Maeterlinckian in the development of the European theatre and must surely help to form the background to Beckett’s drama” (*The Irish Dram of Europe from Yeats to Beckett*, London: Athlone, 1986, 4- 5).
- 2 “When Brecht began work on the new version of his early drama most likely during 1953, Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* was already extant. In fact, the German translation by Elmar Tophoven had been published and Brecht had read it. An edition of the Beckett play with textual changes in Brecht’s handwriting was discovered in his posthumous papers” (Hans Mayer, “Brecht’s *Drums, A Dog and Godot*,” *Casebook*, 131).
- 3 W. E. Gruber says: “In response to inherited dramaturgies that locate personal identity within a discrete subject, modern and postmodern dramatists stage characters who sometimes lack “interiority” whose outlines and edges blur into the environment and whose chief characteristic often turns out to be a collection of qualities not private but public” (9).
- 4 W. E. Gruber points out that though *Godot* still depends on “traditional mimetic assumptions” as exemplified by a one-leafed tree, Beckett later plays are less so (79).
- 5 Also the next dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon:
Es: The best thing would be to kill me like the other.
VI: What other?... What other?
Es: Like billions of others....
Es: All the dead voices....
VI: Where are all these corpses from?
Es: These skeletons....
VI: A charnel-house! A charnel-house! (62-4)
- 6 Critics attribute Beckett’s subtle allusions to the War to his aesthetic strategy. H. Kenner argues that “[t]he effort of Beckett’s play in suppressing specific reference, in denying itself for example the easy recourse of alarming audiences with references to the Gestapo, would seem to be like an effort to arrive directly at the result of time’s work: to perform, while the play is still in its pristine script, the act of abstraction which change and human forgetfulness normally perform, and so to arouse not indignation and horror but more settled emotions” (Bloom 60). Stanley E. Gontarski says in “War Experiences and *Godot*” that “[w]hat seems fairly plausible is that, despite very little direct reference to the war itself, *Waiting for Godot* grew out

- of Beckett's war experience, not so much disguised, although disguise may have been part of Beckett's intention, as universalized" (*Casebook*, 175).
- 7 In "Beckett's Philosophy," David H. Hesla, however, insists that Beckett is "a moralist" who can make "an explicit difference between right and wrong" in *Godot* and that "[i]f we do not understand this, it is because we are too decadent to receive it" (*Casebook*, 120).
- 8 *Strindberg. Five Plays*, p. 209.
- 9 T. Cousineau argues that "[t]he common feature uniting Descartes and Beckett is their profound and systematic skepticism," but that Beckett's play "seems to imply an even more radical form of doubt than Descartes" as Beckett refuses to accept Cartesian cogito (21-2). I suggest that Beckett should be more radical than Descartes because his play demotes God or the transcendental by exposing the mechanism of how they come to exist.
- 10 Martin Gardner, the editor of *The Annotated Alice*, makes a note that this scene is based on "Bishop Berkeley's view that all material objects including ourselves are only "sorts of things" in the mind of God" (238). It is insightful to recall that A. A. Luce, Beckett's tutor at Trinity College, Dublin, was an editor of Bishop Berkeley's philosophical works. See Enoch Brater, *why beckett* (London: Thames and Hudson 1989) 14.
- 11 It has been repeatedly suggested that this master-slave motif is attributable to Hegel. See for example Eric Gans, "Beckett and the Problem of Modern Culture" (Bloom 102).
- 12 "In *En attendant Godot*, Beckett's first published play, we find a clear example of cyclic action in that the events of Act 2 largely repeat those of Act 1." Rosemary Pountney, *Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama 1956-76* (Totawa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1988) 49. In fact, the problem of repetition has been one of the central issues in Beckett studies. T. Cousineau suggests that repetitions in *Godot* help "deprive time of its domination" (116) and liberate the audience (115-6). S. Connor suggests to describe Beckett's theatre as a "theatre of presence," referring to Antonin Artaud's terms: "a theatre freed from [mimetic] repetition." Thus, Connor argues "Vladimir and Estragon have to fall back on what they have said before. They quote themselves or it might perhaps be felt their language begins to quote them" (Steven Connor, "'What? Where?' Presence and Repetition in Beckett's Theatre," *Rethinking Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Lance St John Butler and Robin J. Davis, London: Macmillan, 1990, 3-4).
- 13 Beckett once said that "[i]f I had known who Godot is I would have said" (Richard

Gilman, "The Waiting Since," Bloom, 74).

14 T. Cousineau also explains that "Vladimir and Estragon's vigil produces frustrating repetition. However, the concrete elements of the play—props movements and gestures—create aesthetically satisfying patterns" (23).

15 This mechanism of presence / absence has been pointed out by several critics. Eric Gans explains that "this is precisely the role of the sacred in Judaeo-Christian society: God never makes himself present, but belief in his presence off-stage allows for worldly activity to go on while waiting for his return (Bloom, 99). In "A Semiosis of Waiting," Maria Minich Brewer suggests: "Godot is the absent Signified of Beckett's play, the proper name that language gives to Meaning" (*Casebook*, 151).

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