

## Deconstructing Consciousness: The Search for Meaning in *Waiting for Godot*

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Samuel Beckett has long been recognized as a great playwright of the Theater of the Absurd, a theatrical genre identified by dramatic critic Martin Esslin. Early Absurdist playwrights were categorized by Esslin because of their use of narrative and character in order to expose the meaninglessness of a post-Nietzschean world. In his book *Theatre of the Absurd*, Esslin states:

“‘Absurd’ originally means ‘out of harmony’, in a musical context. Hence its dictionary definition: ‘out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical’[...] In an essay on Kafka, Ionesco defined his understanding of the term as follows: ‘Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless’ (Esslin 1973, p.5).

Because Esslin used Beckett as his first example, an Absurdist reading of *Waiting for Godot* has already been well explored by scholars and practitioners. Another popular reading is deeply rooted in the existential struggle of humanity after World War II. A deconstruction of this play offers the potential to explore Beckett beyond the existential and Absurdist readings that critics and audiences typically use to understand Beckettian plays.

This paper examines *Godot* through a post-structural lens. By integrating the theoretical concept of deconstruction suggested by Jacques Derrida with the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan's symbolic language, I seek to identify and interpret the symbols in this play as signifiers. The abundance and specificity of Beckett's symbols and their corresponding meanings can be further appreciated by a complete and thorough deconstruction of the text. This deconstruction opens up the potential to uncover a deeper understanding, illuminating the symbiosis which Beckett described when asked about the play's meaning.

*Waiting for Godot* portrays the events of two consecutive days in the life of Beckett's non-heroes Estragon and Vladimir. As they wait for the ambiguous Godot to arrive, they pass the time by debating about whether to commit suicide. While they wait, the two friends occupy themselves with mundane tasks such as taking on and off a pair of boots; taking off a hat, adjusting it and then putting it back on again; and arguing about eating vegetables. On both days, they encounter a master Pozzo who drives his slave Lucky about the stage with a rope around his neck. On the first day, Pozzo is bringing Lucky to the fair to sell him. On the second day, Pozzo has gone blind and needs Lucky to lead him around the stage. Each day ends with a young boy sent as a messenger to say that Godot is not going to come.

In *The Theater of the Absurd*, Esslin posits a working hypothesis that categorizes the works of the Absurdist as based upon the premise of senselessness. Esslin (1973, p.6) states “The Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.” In this context, Esslin uses senselessness to define Absurdism as a genre where characters intentionally try to

abandon meaning in words and actions in order to reveal how modern life lacks significance. Beckett's attitude toward plot is commonly equated with the manner in which the characters undermine action throughout the play:

**Estragon** Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful.  
(Beckett 1994, p.43)

Esslin's reason for defining Absurdism as such is that characters in *Waiting for Godot* do not function in the same manner as most theatrical archetypes.

Esslin's also seeks to identify a correlation between the senselessness of existence and the meaninglessness of words that Absurdist playwrights often use. Esslin states:

“The Theatre of the Absurd[...] tends toward a radical devaluation of language, toward a poetry that is to emerge from the concrete and objectified images of the stage itself. The element of language still plays an important part in this conception, but what *happens* on the stage transcends, and often contradicts, the *words* spoken by the characters” (Esslin 1973, p.7).

Esslin centers Absurdism around the use of devalued language as a means of contradicting the action of the play. In the introduction to a collection of *Absurd Drama*, Esslin supports his opinion thus:

“Such a sense of loss of meaning must inevitably lead to a questioning of the recognized instrument for the *communication* of meaning: language. Consequently the Theatre of the Absurd is to a very considerable extent concerned with a critique of language, an attack above all on fossilized forms of language which have become devoid of meaning” (Esslin 1984, p. 5).

When Esslin categorizes *Waiting for Godot* as Absurdist he argues that Beckett's language is intentionally devoid of meaning in order to create a different kind of theatrical experience.

There is also a clear connection to the existential struggle illuminated by this work. Throughout the play, the characters regularly pose the existential question seeking an explanation of why they are where they are. Although complex and conflicting viewpoints are presented by existential philosophers, in this context, Beckett's use of existentialism is to concisely question the reason for being. The characters perceive this existential struggle throughout the play:

**Vladimir** 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-- Or for night to fall.”  
(Beckett 1994, p.91)

The fact that this question remains unanswered may be the reason that *Waiting for Godot* is often analyzed in terms of Kierkegaard's, Nietzsche's and Sartre's reflections on the question of existence through the lens of the human condition.

In Edith Kern's book, *Existential Thought & Fictional Technique*, she offers

parallels between Beckett and existentialism. She defines “the [existential] paradox that has permeated Beckett's entire work [which] has made it an affirmation and a negation of individuality” (Kern 1970, p.240). Although the question of individuality is relevant to the play, having existential characters and incorporating existential thought does not necessarily make Beckett an existential playwright. Kern admits:

“Beckett defies philosophical pigeonholing, for the simple reason that he neither developed a specific philosophical system of his own nor identified himself with that of another [...] Beckett distanced himself from existentialism [because] he found the language of Hegel and Sartre too philosophical and differentiation between Being and Existence irrelevant to himself” (Kern 1970, p.167-170).

In revealing that Beckett both defied and distanced his work from existentialist thought, Kern presents an interesting contradiction to an existential reading of a prescribed meaning in *Waiting for Godot*.

Correlating the Absurdist and existential interpretations of this play is problematic, because the theories actually define themselves as oppositional. Kern dismisses Absurdism as a way to understand Beckett. Kern (1970, p. 219) says, “In this atmosphere, all that identifies as individual in the eyes of the ‘they’ become absurd.” For Kern, Absurdism is a means to get to the existential reading. In response, Esslin comments on the vast differences between Beckett and an existentialist like Sartre. Esslin (1973, p.6) states, “If Sartre argues that existence comes before essence [...] he presents brilliantly drawn characters who remain wholly consistent and thus reflect the old convention that each human being has a core of immutable, unchanging essence- in fact, an immortal soul.” Esslin intentionally separates Beckett from existentialism to make his Absurdist reading stronger. This debate between Esslin and Kern presents a myriad of problems when trying to interpret *Waiting for Godot*. At the same time, both the existential and Absurdist readings gain support from the ambiguity of the text.

**Estragon** We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?  
(Beckett 1994, p.77)

If these two popular theories of analysis for *Godot* both contradict and merge into each other, how can the actor, the director and the audience approach the process of understanding so central to the journey both inside and outside of this play?

How should we search for meaning in *Waiting in Godot*? In his book *Writing and Difference*, Derrida (1978, p.8) identifies “The consciousness of having something to say as the consciousness of nothing [...] It is the consciousness of nothing, upon which all consciousness of something enriches itself, takes on meaning and shape.” For Derrida, deconstruction is the articulation of the consciousness of nothingness—a theory based upon exploring the difference between something and nothing—or in this case, meaning and no meaning. When Derrida searches for meaning in language, he attempts to understand ideas in relation to their opposites—by residing inside of oppositions and exploring what makes things different. Derrida (1981, p. 24) suggests, “It is necessary, from within semiology, to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new configurations.” Deconstruction may not

be a methodology, but applying this theory to Beckett's text allows the reader to transform Beckett's concepts, giving individual words new meanings which can be oppositional to their commonplace definitions.

The application of Derrida's difference corresponds to Beckett's method of reinscribing ideas by their opposites. The play begins with our two conflicting characters struggling over the polarized nature of the thieves who were crucified with Christ:

**Vladimir** Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One--

**Estragon** Our what?

**Vladimir** Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other (*he searches for the contrary of saved*) ... damned.

**Estragon** Saved from what?

**Vladimir** Hell.

**Estragon** I'm going.

(Beckett 1994, p.6)

In a world where a turnip is not a carrot, Saturday is not Sunday, and staying is constantly compared with going, oppositional relationships take on greater meaning for the characters.

In fact, the action of *Waiting for Godot* revolves around inscribing deliberate meanings upon concepts. For example, the concept of time is continually dissected. Characters question the flow and importance of time:

**Vladimir** Will the night never come?

(Beckett 1994, p.33)

**Vladimir** Time has stopped.

(Beckett 1994, p.37)

**Vladimir** Let us not waste our time in idle discourse.

(Beckett 1994, p.90)

**Pozzo** What time is it?...Is it evening?

(Beckett 1994, p.98)

As this continues, time is inscribed with different meanings as the characters question when Godot will come:

**Vladimir** It's always at nightfall.

**Estragon** But night doesn't fall.

**Vladimir** It'll fall all of sudden, like yesterday.

**Estragon** Then it'll be night.

**Vladimir** And we can go.

**Estragon** Then it'll be day again.

(Beckett 1994, p.80)

Beckett presents the variety of opposites related to time: night/day, yesterday/tomorrow, dawn/dusk to create an atmosphere of waiting.

Meta-theatrically, this atmosphere functions symbiotically with the relationship

of the audience waiting for something to happen, but the manner in which Beckett presents the differences of time allows for time to eventually transcend meaning. Towards the end, Pozzo says:

**Pozzo** I woke up one fine day as blind as Fortune... Don't question me! The blind have no notion of time. The things of time are hidden from them too.  
(Beckett 1994, p.99)

While watching the play, the audience subconsciously begins to transform the concept of time with meaning filled with the potency of Derrida's difference.

Once a concept—such as time—begins to transcend meaning it becomes a signifier—any word or object which transcends meaning. Deconstruction, then, is the process of identifying and exploring the meaning of multiple signifiers in relationship to each other. Therefore, at the moment that the audience perceives that time signifies existence they start to interpret everything that happens in the play with the inscribed meaning of signification. Likewise, a simple object, such as the tree, cannot help but be amplified by the importance Beckett has his characters place upon it. At the beginning, the tree is merely there—the only scenery on the road, sadly suggesting a meeting place for the two tramps to wait:

**Vladimir** He said by the tree. (*They look at the tree.*) Do you see any others?

**Estragon** What is it?

**Vladimir** I don't know. A willow.

(Beckett 1994, p.8)

In an interview with Julia Kristeva, Derrida (1981, p. 23) says “communication [...] implies a transmission charged with making pass, from one subject to another, the identity of a signified object, of a meaning or of a concept rightfully separable from the process of passage and from the signifying operation.” According to Derrida, the signifier is the actual word or object which signifies a meaning, which is called the signified. So when the tree grows four or five leaves during the act break, the meaning signified by the tree also grows:

**Vladimir** Things have changed here since yesterday.

**Estragon** Everything oozes.

**Vladimir** Look at the tree.

**Estragon** It's never the same pus from one second to the next.

**Vladimir** The tree, look at the tree

(*Estragon looks at the tree*)

**Estragon** Was it not there yesterday?

**Vladimir** Yes of course it was there. Do you not remember? We nearly hanged ourselves from it. But you wouldn't. Do you remember?

(Beckett 1994, p.66)

Derridean deconstruction emphasizes the intentional separation between object and meaning—the signifier and the signified meaning of the object. This process can transform a simple concept like the tree into something more metaphorical than its

everyday meaning.

In the final moments, the tree takes on even greater meaning when they try, but ultimately cannot hang themselves:

**Vladimir** Everything's dead but the tree

**Estragon** What is it?

**Vladimir** It's the tree.

**Estragon** Yes, but what kind?

**Vladimir** I don't know. A willow.

*(Estragon draws Vladimir towards the tree.)*

**Estragon** Why don't we hang ourselves?

(Beckett 1994, p.107)

Simultaneously, the tree means life, signified by the hope of spring suggested from the growth of the leaves, and means death, signified by the characters' suicidal thoughts.

The challenge in interpreting *Godot* is to understand the unique experience of simultaneously interpreting the literal and figurative meanings from the specific objects signified on stage. Throughout the play, Beckett creates repetitive sequences that are the daily rituals in which Vladimir and Estragon find themselves trapped. In his book *The Forest of Symbols*, Victor Turner frames the anthropological process of liminality in an attempt to describe rituals that act as transitional periods. During this period of ritual, which includes the theatrical experience of a play, people are in a state of transition. Turner states:

“The subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, 'invisible.'[...] The transitional-being or 'liminal *persona*' is defined by a name and by a set of symbols” (Turner 1976, p.95).

How does liminality help us search for meaning? The exploration of meaning through liminality begins by identifying how the transitional beings—in this case, the characters—define themselves by interaction with symbols. In fact, poststructuralism in general views theatre itself as a liminal experience which reveals the construction of meaning. Reconciling the fact that a simple tree can mean two oppositional things at the same time is a liminal operation. Yet, the idea of objects signifying more than their meaning is the purpose of Beckettian symbols.

Derrida proposes signifiers for a specific purpose. He says, “to *comprehend* the structure of a becoming, the form of a force, is to lose meaning by finding it.” (Derrida 1978, p. 26). The loss of meaning by finding it is essentially to comprehending the experience of *Godot*. Lucky's three page monologue is a perfect example of how meaning has to fail to inspire the search for meaning:

**Lucky** Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown [...] I resume alas alas abandoned left unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard tennis... the

stones... so calm... Cunard... unfinished...  
(Beckett 1994, p. 45-47)

The inability of Lucky to express his thoughts through words does not mean that his words lack meaning. Derrida understands the difficulties of these problems in identifying the difference between signification and meaning. During an interview with Henri Ronse, Derrida said:

“I try to write the space in which is posed the question of speech and meaning. I try to write the questions: (what is) meaning to say? Therefore it is necessary in such a space, and guided by such a question, that writing literally mean nothing. To risk meaning nothing is to start to play” (Derrida 1981, p.14).

Why does Derrida’s difference provide a framework for transcending Absurdist and existential interpretations? Using Derrida focuses the importance on Beckett’s use of language itself—to deconstruct the play by analyzing its parts independently. The preceding examples of deconstruction alone would result in a symbolist interpretation of *Godot*, also well explored by scholars. In his article “Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot': A reappraisal”, George Watson states:

“Looked at from this angle we may simply say that dramatists like Beckett complete the modern artistic revolution on and for the stage: they reject the play which tells a story in a sequential plot, they reject the Ibsenite subtleties of characterization and psychological motivation, and they make no attempt to sketch in a realistic social background. Instead, their plays are essentially symbolic pictures of the situation of man: they tell no story because there is no story to tell, but only a basic condition or situation to be represented, a bleak stasis where temporal notions like beginning, middle and end, inextricably linked with the concept of story, simply have no place” (Watson 1974, p.23).

The backdrop of symbolism explains both Beckett's rejection of standard theatrical devices and why he imbues inane objects with important significance. Undoubtedly, Beckett received much inspiration from great symbolist playwrights like Maeterlinck and Strindberg, who encouraged exploration of symbolic meanings as the cornerstone of their genre, but deconstruction encourages the actor and the audience to search even deeper than symbolism. Tying a Derridean interpretation of *Godot* to the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan provides a way to encourage this search for meaning within a specific context.

In Lacan's essay *The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, he examines the function of analytic language by separating it into three distinct orders: the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. Lacan (1968, p.36) states, “the problem of Language [...] is a road which leads from signal to symbol [...] and the return trip from the symbol to the signal is illustrated by no less imposing works of art.” Lacan metaphorically describes language as a road, placing the Symbolic between the Imaginary and Real. Lacan (1968, p.42) asserts that “Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together.” Symbolic language is not just a means of interpretation, but the pathway between the Imaginary and the Real—another invaluable framework for interpreting

*Waiting for Godot.*

*Godot* is an illustration of a complete network of symbols, accounting for the psychically packed interaction of characters with objects in the play. Assigning each object a symbolic importance reveals how packed with meaning the objects in *Waiting for Godot* actually are:

*(Estragon with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot. He peers inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing, feels inside it again, staring sightlessly before him.)*

**Vladimir** Well?

**Estragon** Nothing.

**Vladimir** Show.

**Estragon** There's nothing to show.

**Vladimir** Try and put it on again.

**Estragon** I'll air it for a bit.

**Vladimir** There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet.

(Beckett 1994, p.4)

On the surface, a boot is just a boot—an object of clothing used to cover the foot. However, Estragon's boots are simultaneously the Derridean signifier and the Lacanian symbol. If the boots are assigned a hidden symbolic meaning—for instance, the body as the earthly container of our being—then the characters can spend the play searching for this appropriate symbolic definition. The routine of questioning the actuality of meaning evolves into a symbolic debate allowing the objects to also symbolically mean much more than their definition:

**Vladimir** Would you like a radish?

**Estragon** Is that all there is?

**Vladimir** There are radishes and turnips.

**Estragon** Are there no carrots?

**Vladimir** No. Anyway you overdo it with your carrots.

**Estragon** Then give me a radish. It's black.

**Vladimir** It's a radish.

**Estragon** I only like the pink ones, you know that!

(Beckett 1994, p.76)

The difference between a carrot, radish or turnip is overemphasized in a world where the carrot could “symbolize” hope, the radish could “symbolize” despair and a turnip could “symbolize” reality. Pozzo's declarative manner of ordering for his “Coat! Whip! Stool! Basket!” (Beckett 1994, p.22) draws attention to the objects as more than just commands. Whenever a character references an object in this play, he is either defining it or seeking a definition of the object from another character.

In an entirely Symbolic world, signifiers become symbols by representing multiple and contradictory meanings without losing their identities as objects. Lacan (1968, p.48) states, “The Symbolic function presents itself as a double movement within



the subject [...] a function in which action and knowledge alternate.” When action and knowledge alternate, the analysis of a Symbolic order operates beyond the limitations of the scope of understanding of the characters. Throughout the course of the play the tramps offer astute observations given the circumstances:

**Estragon** “People are bloody ignorant apes”  
(Beckett 1994, p.7)

When the blind Pozzo is rolling around the ground and cannot get up, Estragon says:

**Estragon** He's all humanity.  
(Beckett 1994, p.96)

Throughout the play, the characters often alternate action and speech which results in a fully depicted representation of Lacan's symbolic network, making comparisons all the more important:

**Vladimir** But you can't go barefoot!  
**Estragon** Christ did.  
**Vladimir** Christ! What has Christ got to do with it? You've not going to compare yourself to Christ!  
**Estragon** All my life I've compared myself to him.  
(Beckett 1994, p.57)

Using Lacan's Symbolic language, the implications of a symbolic network achieve relevance towards a greater interpretation of the play also suggested by Lacan.

In a later book of Lacan's *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, he presents an interesting theory about repetition. He states: “So there is no question of confusing with repetition either the return of the signs or reproduction or the modulation by the act of a sort of acted-out remembering. Repetition is something which, of its true nature, is always veiled in analysis” (Lacan 1977, p.54). Much of the action in *Godot* is rooted in fully symbolic repetition. Although critics often interpret these acts in terms of their differences, Lacan's theory suggests it would be more fruitful to interpret them in terms of their similarities. For instance, the repetitive hat interactions build into a unique and important symbolic function:

*[Vladimir] takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again... takes off his hat again, peers inside it. Funny. He knocks on the crown as though to dislodge a foreign body, peers into it again, puts it on again... takes off his hat again, peers inside it, feels about inside it, knocks on the crown, blows into it, puts it on again.*  
(Beckett 1994, p.4-5)

Action with hats continue to build throughout the course of the play resulting in a final triumphant moment where Vladimir and Estragon exchange three hats over the course of two pages of stage directions. When Vladimir wants Lucky to think, Pozzo says:

**Pozzo** He can't think without his hat.  
(Beckett 1994, p.43)

Linking the hat symbolically with the mind repetitively over the course of the play illustrates the importance of repetition in the creation of the characters and the world.

In answer to the question of when he went blind, Pozzo says:

**Pozzo** 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? They give birth astride a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.  
(Beckett 1994, p.103)

Interpreting the statement that life and death occur within the same second should be unfathomable. Yet within Beckett's world, this nonsense makes complete sense and a Lacanian interpretation leads in a more fruitful direction.

Lacan concludes that the first fundamental concept is the unconsciousness, which is in fact another representation of the symbolic network. Lacan (1973, p.20) says "the unconsciousness is structured like a language... [where] signifiers organize human relationships in a creative way, providing them with structures and shaping them." When the characters throw meanings back and forth, the process of language provides a way to shape meaning in the same manner that a psychiatrist evaluates patients by analyzing the unconscious.

**Estragon** All the dead voices.  
**Vladimir** They make a noise like wings.  
**Estragon** Like leaves.  
**Vladimir** Like sand.  
**Estragon** Like leaves.  
*Silence.*  
**Vladimir** They all speak at once.  
**Estragon** Each one to itself.  
*Silence*  
**Vladimir** Rather they whisper.  
**Estragon** They rustle.  
**Vladimir** They murmur.  
**Estragon** They rustle.  
*Silence.*  
(Beckett 1994, p.14)

Lacan (1968, p.27) frames this by saying "the unconscious is the discourse of the other." Dialogue which appears like bickering on the surface is actually the characters searching for meaning using the unconscious as a means of othering language.

If language is a means of othering in this play, then the search for meaning should result in the audience exploring the concept of unconsciousness as it relates to the theatrical experience. When the characters question an object, they are separating it as a specific symbol different from any other. The tree cannot be a shrub or a bush,

because it must be a tree.

**Vladimir** Where are your boots?

**Estragon** I must have thrown them away.

**Vladimir** There they are! At the very spot where you left them yesterday!

**Estragon** They're not mine.

**Vladimir** Not yours!

**Estragon** Mine were black. These are brown.

**Vladimir** You're sure yours were black?

**Estragon** Well they were a kind of gray

**Vladimir** And these are brown. Show.

**Estragon** Well they're a kind of green.

(Beckett 1994, p.74)

In practice, the relationship of the unconsciousness to symbols heighten the process in which the audience questions what they see and what they hear just as psychoanalysts do with the unconscious. In this world, the unconsciousness manifests itself as the reason for the uncertainty of meaning:

**Estragon** We weren't made for the same road.

**Vladimir** It's not certain

**Estragon** No, nothing is certain.

(Beckett 1994, p.59)

In fact, the uncertainty of unconsciousness allows the search for meaning to result in a deeper appreciation that comprehensive knowledge is always unattainable.

Lacan ends the first section on *The Function of Language in Psycho-Analysis* with the phrase: "The omnipresence of the human discourse will perhaps one day be embraced under the open sky of an omniconmunication of its text" (Lacan 1968, 27). Interpreting *Godot* as a discursive omniconmunication blending self and other through symbolic signification would unlock more meaning for director, actor and audience, cherishing the search for meaning as a means of meta-theatrically explaining symbolism. What is perceived to be an expression of the Derridean consciousness of nothing is better explained by applying the Lacanian unconscious as a filter to interpret the difficult search for meaning in *Waiting for Godot*.

## CONCLUSION

Pushing past the Absurdist, existential and symbolist readings of the play revealed the difficulties of searching for meaning in *Godot*. As Beckett plays with meaning, the characters' search for meaning is both the action and thematic journey of the play. In fact, the characters use language as a connection to their understanding of their world. Disrupting this connection for the actors and the audience makes the process of watching *Godot* all the more difficult, because the humor and the drama rest in the use of language through the poetic tone of the dialogue. Esslin's suggestion that Beckett devalues language has dangerous implications, even though it is a means for Esslin to explain the aesthetic experience of this play.

Derrida's use of difference was helpful to spin the way that Beckett uses dialogue

as a positive element of performance. Interpreting the script as a search for meaning allowed the questioning in the play to no longer be only a vaudevillian device. In the play, questioning becomes the action for the characters, making a liminal experience to encourage both the actors and audience to assign multiple and contradictory meanings to the symbols, which, on the surface, might be easily explained. Identifying how the process of meaning can function by a network of symbolic signifiers feels closer to how Beckett chose to work with the characters' interrelation to objects. Continuing to question the signification and symbolism of the many objects would allow greater meaning to be derived directly from the play, without imposing meaning from outside of the text.

Although the proposed method of deconstruction unlocked interesting ideas about the way symbols and meaning work in the play, the inexhaustible complexity of Beckett's text could not be entirely analyzed in the preceding paper. In fact, any macro-level discussion would take a compendium of research and speculation to fully achieve the deconstruction proposed. Perhaps that is why deconstruction has failed as a methodology—pushing against authoritative analysis is the only way deconstruction can function.

Because Beckett either was unable or just refused to explain *Godot*, the search for meaning in this play has always been complicated. Yet meaning is the process of experiencing this play. Connecting the Derrida to Lacan creates a lens through which Beckett's signifiers can be explored without the need to specifically define their meanings. Also, Derrida's consciousness of nothingness is a perfect counterbalance to Lacan's understanding of the unconsciousness. Although these theories seem counterintuitive, the semiotic and psychoanalytic parallels enable deconstruction of the text and provide a framework to further explore its meaning.

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