

Waiting with the Void: Baradian Temporality in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

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Abstract

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* questions the idea of time as a straight line, much like quantum physics views time as something that arises from connections, emerges through actions, and unfolds in real ways. In the play, Beckett's repeating scenes of waiting and emptiness turn the void into a lively space where things take shape and change. This study examines how the play's repeating scenes, significant silences, and connections between characters and objects – like the tree, boots, and empty space – can be read through Karen Barad's ideas that differences emerge through interactions (diffraction), things shape each other (intra-action), and time forms through relationships (time-becoming). As the theater of the absurd, this play has an idiosyncratic style of waiting that avoids neat endings. It portrays time as repeating, endless, and deeply intertwined with nature's web. Here, the empty stage becomes a place of possibilities, where ruin and rebirth coexist. It may not resolve the crises of the Anthropocene, but it mirrors the challenges of our time. In the end, Beckett's open setting offers a connected way of seeing that rethinks time as intertwined, encouraging fresh approaches to handle doubt, show care, and take action in a wounded world.

Keywords: *Waiting for Godot*, agential realism (Karen Barad), intra-action, nonlinear temporality

Though Karen Barad's work focuses on science studies and feminist theory, it is highly relevant to analyzing Samuel Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*, because it offers tools to rethink time, objects, and relationships in theater, bridging science and humanities (Barad, *Meeting* 3-38). Barad applies their ideas to performance, such as in their exploration of quantum entanglements and nonlinear time, which they see as ways to stage ethical questions about history and responsibility, like the lasting effects of nuclear events (Barad, "TransMaterialities" 387-412). These concepts fit Beckett's play, where waiting, silences, and objects like the tree or boots create a sense of time that emerges through interactions, echoing quantum ideas and reflecting environmental crises like those in the Anthropocene (Barad, "Troubling" 56-86). Scholars in literary and performance studies have used



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Barad's frameworks to analyze plays. By applying Barad's concepts, this study sees Beckett's void not as empty but as a lively space of potential, encouraging new ways to think about care, uncertainty, and action in a world facing environmental and existential challenges (Barad, *Meeting* 353-96).

In *Waiting for Godot*, time does not progress in a linear fashion, nor does it remain entirely static. Instead, it unfolds through a state of suspended repetition – what might be called a recursive stasis. It means time in here feels stuck in repeating actions, like waiting, yet subtly changes, like the tree's new leaves. This quality of time challenges conventional, chronological understandings of temporality. Rather than presenting time as a neutral backdrop, Beckett's staging suggests that time is emergent, relational, and entangled with both human and nonhuman elements. This reading proposes that Beckett's theatrical world invites us to reconsider our temporal assumptions: our usual beliefs about time, like expecting it to move in a straight line from past to future. The play disrupts the human-centered view of agency and control, revealing instead how human existence is deeply dependent on nonhuman systems. In doing so, the play critiques modern views that treat nature as a resource to control, showing instead how humans are deeply tied to their environment, a perspective echoed by Barad's idea of interconnected existence (Barad, *Meeting* 353-96).

Beckett's stage, though minimal, is rich with meaning. Its few elements – such as the solitary tree, extended silences, and the looming presence of the void – act as more than passive scenery. These nonhuman elements can be understood as actants, a term from actor-network theory by Bruno Latour that suggests they have agency in shaping the play's world. Vladimir and Estragon's repeated acts – tying shoes, debating Godot's arrival, or saying “Nothing happens” (Act I, 26, 27) – create a looping time that feels stuck yet shifts slightly. These actions, alongside silences and the bare stage, make time feel alive, not a fixed line, showing humans as part of their environment, not above it (Barad, *Meeting* 55).

To illustrate, time can be considered in this context as ripples in water. Act II echoes Act I, but the tree grows “four or five leaves” (Act II, 37), and Vladimir and Estragon's talks shift slightly, like when they debate Godot's arrival differently compared to the first Act. Barad's idea of diffraction – where small changes in repeating patterns, like waves bending around obstacles, create new meanings – helps explain this (Barad, *Meeting* 71-96). The tree's change is not just scenery; it is a sign that time moves through connections between characters and objects, mixing hope and despair without a clear end. Barad's relational vacuum also fits here: what seems empty, like the stage's silences, is alive with potential, like tiny energy sparks in physics that can shift reality (Barad, “Troubling” 76). Godot and the play's silences act like Timothy Morton's hyperobjects – vast entities like

nuclear radiation, which lingers invisibly across time and space, shaping how characters act and feel without being fully seen, just as radiation from a bomb affects lives long after without being touched (Morton 1-12). For example, Godot's absence controls Vladimir and Estragon's waiting, and silences carry a heavy, unseen weight, guiding the play's mood. Godot's absence drives every action, and silences carry deep emotion, making time feel open and uncertain.

In this interplay of presence and absence, Lucky's fragmented and disjointed monologue embodies the disruptive energy of Beckett's void. Its refusal to offer coherence amplifies the entanglement of space, time, and language. The bare stage itself operates on multiple registers. Existentially, it dramatizes the paradox of presence through absence. Ecologically, it challenges human-centered notions of nature by placing human and nonhuman elements – like the tree, the stage, and silence – into a shared web of interdependence. On a quantum level, the pause mirrors Barad's vacuum, which is not truly empty but a lively space buzzing with potential, like tiny energy sparks (what physicists call virtual fluctuations) that appear and disappear, constantly reshaping matter and time in unpredictable ways – just as the play's silences are not dead air but moments full of tension where past regrets, present waiting, and uncertain futures mix without resolution (Barad, "Troubling" 76).

Vladimir's question, "Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today?" (Act II, 58), shows time as uncertain, like Barad's quantum indeterminacy, where the future stays open with many possibilities, not locked into one outcome, much like a coin toss that hasn't landed yet (Barad, *Meeting* 247-352). The bare stage, with its repeating silences and sparse objects like the tree, if read through the lens of Barad's intra-action – where people and things, like Estragon's boots or the tree's new leaves, shape each other's meaning through their connections, not as separate pieces (Barad, *Meeting* 132-88). These interactions – such as Vladimir and Estragon's endless waiting – turn the stage's emptiness into a space buzzing with potential, which Barad calls a void full of "indeterminate yearnings," like invisible sparks of energy that keep possibilities alive (Barad, "Troubling" 77). By focusing on the tree and silences, not human control, the play challenges the modern idea that nature is just a tool to use, showing instead a world where humans and nature are deeply linked (Lepenies 590).

This play challenges the modern view that nature is a resource for humans to control, a mindset Philipp Lepenies traces to Renaissance inventions like linear perspective, which made the world seem measurable and manipulable (Lepenies 590). For example, the bare stage, with its lone tree and heavy silences, puts objects and people on equal footing, unlike the human-centered idea that

nature exists for our benefit. The tree's subtle growth of leaves (Act II, 50) shows nature's unpredictability, not something fixed or dead as Vladimir first thinks ("It must be dead," Act I, 12), while Lucky's chaotic monologue, a jumble of words like "the skull, the skull" (Act I, 33), mimics nature's resistance to tidy logic, as his incoherent speech defies categorization or control, much like how real ecosystems evade human measurement.

Beckett uses disruption to show a world where uncertainty fosters care, not control, over nature. For example, when Vladimir and Estragon try to hang themselves but the belt breaks (Act II 59), their failure opens a space for waiting, not resolution. Estragon's quip, "We are all born mad. Some remain so" (Act II, 52), reflects a chaotic yet shared existence where Vladimir, Estragon, and the stage's silences, like a quiet forest, form a fragile, living space. Laura Salisbury's "in the meanwhile" describes this slow, unresolved waiting that avoids neat endings, capturing the play's blurry mix of loss and possibility (Salisbury 16, 36). Karen Barad's intra-actions show how this "madness" keeps futures open, like a dice roll with no fixed result (Barad, *Meeting* 132-88). Anna Tsing's disturbance, where disruptions like a forest fire spark new ties, such as fungi aiding pines, extends this idea: the play's chaotic moments, like Estragon's line, act like a fire, creating a "latent commons" – a messy, shared survival space where humans and nonhumans, like silences, collaborate without a plan (Tsing 255). Unlike Barad's focus on physical interactions, Tsing's reformation of assemblages – new, fragile connections after disruption – suggests Beckett's stage is a living patchwork, not just a void, advancing a vision of theater as a space where damaged worlds can still nurture care (Tsing 161).

The absent Godot epitomizes the elusiveness of hyperobjects, "massively distributed in time and space relative to humans" (Morton 1). Pozzo's blindness and Lucky's silence further illustrate the interference of hyperobjects with agency. Their deteriorating states reflect the entanglement of human and nonhuman beings in what Morton describes as "simply too vast to be ignored" (Morton 145). This entanglement extends to Beckett's sparse stage, where nonhuman actants such as the tree, boots, and silence disrupt anthropocentric hierarchies and demand attention to shared vulnerabilities. Beneath the surface of apparent stasis, deterioration occurs – Pozzo goes blind, Lucky becomes mute, and the characters' routines fray – revealing how iterative temporality can still accommodate gradual destruction.

Estragon and Vladimir's repetitive actions – tying their shoes, and debating Godot's arrival – may seem meaningless, but they mark time in a world where change is slow, ambiguous, and unsettling. These small routines reveal how people endure uncertainty, holding onto a kind of faith – not in resolution, but

in the act of continuing, a Kierkegaardian process of becoming:

If thinking disdains imagination, then imagination in turn disdains thinking, and the same with feeling. The task is not to elevate the one at the cost of the other; the task is equal proportions, simultaneity, and the medium in which they are united is in existing.

(Kierkegaard 292)

Beckett's work aligns with the ecological crises of the Anthropocene by rejecting dramatic narratives of sudden collapse. Instead, his aesthetics embrace what Salisbury calls "grey time" – a temporality marked by slow deterioration, where the boundaries between life and non-life blur, and decay unfolds gradually rather than catastrophically (Salisbury 22). The repeated assertion that "time has stopped" (Vladimir, Act I, 25) foregrounds waiting for itself as an action that resists closure. The absence of resolution speaks for the void's generative potential, where silence, sound, and repetition produce a dynamic interplay of presence and absence. The pauses and silences work like punctuation in this play, where these voids invite spectators, viewers, and readers for interpretive engagement (Dobkowska 7). Lucky's monologue, with its fragmented and incoherent torrent, materializes the void's disruptive energy, transforming language into an open site for multiplicity rather than coherence. This linguistic breakdown not only critiques the anthropocentric compulsion for meaning but also reflects how the past, present, and future collapse into incoherent simultaneity.

In Act I, Lucky performs a chaotic monologue that resists comprehension, highlighting the play's commitment to uncertainty over clarity. This breakdown of meaning challenges teleological storytelling and reinforces the unresolved nature of Beckett's void (Goebbels 98). In Act II, the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky shifts – Pozzo is now blind, and Lucky is mute. While this reversal does not entirely dissolve their hierarchical dynamic, it does destabilize it. Pozzo, once dominant, becomes dependent; Lucky, once voiceless through over-speech, now embodies silence. These changes suggest not the full collapse of hierarchy, but its transformation into a more ambiguous, co-dependent relation. The void thus becomes a space where roles are unsettled, and power is redistributed in unpredictable ways (Malabou 36-38). This shifting dynamic resonates with ecological thought, particularly in the Anthropocene, where dominant systems of control and extraction show signs of erosion and internal contradiction (Wood 42-43).

Lucky's chaotic speech, sparked by his hat being placed and removed (Act I, 28-30), shows thought as a messy dance between body and object, not a human-controlled act, suggesting a shared reliance. This echoes Karen Barad's void – a

space that seems empty but hums with possibilities, like a quiet room sparking new ideas, as Lucky's words disrupt the stage's silence. Rosi Braidotti's posthuman ethics, which sees humans, animals, and objects as connected in a web where all depend on each other, like a forest where trees, fungi, and animals thrive together, helps explain this (Braidotti 49-50). Unlike Braidotti's broad vision, Beckett's stage creates a theatrical commons, where Pozzo's failed commands (Act I) and pauses (Act II) build a fragile space of mutual need, not control. In this commons, props like the hat and silences shape the scene as much as characters, challenging human dominance and fostering care in an uncertain world.

"Nature is not just what is real, what is out there; it is culturally constructed, riddled with narrative" (Wood 33). This statement reflects eco-deconstruction's critique of nature as a fixed or self-evident truth. In *Waiting for Godot*, the tree – bare in Act I and sprouting leaves in Act II – serves as a powerful visual signifier that resists fixed meaning. Rather than standing solely for life or death, it simultaneously gestures toward both, embodying cycles of decay and renewal. In this sense, the tree becomes a symbol of indeterminacy, reflecting ecological processes that unfold beyond human perception and control.

Derrida's concept of messianic time – "a time of hope ... marked by impossibility and openness" (Wood 37) – resonates with the endless waiting at the heart of *Waiting for Godot*. Vladimir and Estragon's futile anticipation mirrors an Anthropocenic condition, in which human behavior is caught between foreknowledge of ecological collapse and a lingering desire for redemption. Walter Benjamin rejects the idea of history as a continuous, empty timeline and instead proposes "Jetztzeit" – a charged "now-time" capable of interrupting the flow of progress (Benjamin 197). Beckett's staging similarly suspends forward motion, holding time in a state of charged indeterminacy. The characters' anticipation of Godot becomes a placeholder for this interruption – an elusive promise that never arrives, but nonetheless structures their relation to time, responsibility, and the possibility of transformation.

Derrida's call to include nonhuman entities in a "democracy-to-come" (Wood 37) also speaks with the notion of "waiting." The Anthropocene exposes the "collapse of oppositional logic" (Wood 37), wherein actions aimed at sustaining human life simultaneously degrade ecological systems. With a similar paradox – in Pozzo's decline and Lucky's silence – entropic consequences of human domination and exploitation are brought into light. Beckett's stage becomes a site of ecological ethics, embodying Derrida's notion of "hyperbolic responsibility" – a call to embrace accountability for others, including nonhuman entities (Wood 42). This paper reads *Waiting for Godot* to rethink all these entanglements with

human and nonhuman systems in the Anthropocene. This void is fertile ground for eco-deconstructive inquiry (Wood 34-36).

Becoming, as Ilya Prigogine argues, is the condition of knowledge itself – a dialogue where the knower and the known interact, creating an irreducible difference between the past and the future (153). In Beckett’s theatrical minimalism, through moments of “becoming,” silence, repetition, and the decay of certainty reveal the constructive role of temporal disintegration. The absence of narrative finality in the play is not a deficiency but a reflection of time’s irreversibility. Beckett’s empty spaces – stark and minimal – can be understood through Prigogine’s theory of far-from-equilibrium systems, where disorder and instability are not signs of collapse but conditions for transformation. Similarly, the play’s desolate stage is not static; it holds the potential for change, however minimal or uncertain (153). The universe’s heterogeneity prevents equilibrium, making stasis a mere illusion. Energy flows from irreversible processes, and life itself arises from this asymmetry – matter’s unfolding dialogue with time (Prigogine 158). In Beckett’s fragmented worlds, objects are not mute props; rather, they enact meaning through their exposure to time and decay. The crumbling of stones, the immobility of trees and stones, the cyclical drudgery of characters – “Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful” (Act I, 28) – becomes an expression of material temporality, where entropy is not death but a form of becoming.

VLADIMIR, “Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! (Pause. Vehemently.) Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears!

(Act II, 51)

Gilles Deleuze’s view of time as open and unpredictable, not a straight line, fits *Waiting for Godot*, where moments like Vladimir’s plea, “Let us do something while we have the chance” (Act II, 51), break the routine of waiting, like a spark igniting new possibilities. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze’s third synthesis of time is a moment where time splits, like a river forking, freeing actions from a fixed path and letting chance shape what’s next, much like a dice roll with no set outcome (Williams 98-102). For example, Vladimir and Estragon’s repeated waiting shifts slightly each time, as when they debate leaving but stay, showing time as broken into unpredictable pieces, not a predictable loop. Deleuze’s “eternal return of difference” means these repeats create fresh meanings, not copies, as seen in Estragon’s line, “Either I forget immediately, or I never forget”

(Act II, 39), which muddles their identities over time (Williams 103). Unlike neat stories with clear endings, Beckett's bare stage and "selves are larval subjects" – characters as unfinished, shifting fragments, like caterpillars before becoming butterflies – reject fixed identities, echoing Deleuze's idea that time constantly reshapes who we are (Williams 93). This makes the play a space where time's wildness challenges human control, showing life as always open and uncertain.

Prigogine sees the world as a lively process full of unpredictable possibilities, not a fixed, certain system (4-7). In *Waiting for Godot*, this fits the way time unfolds through Vladimir and Estragon's aimless waiting, like when they debate leaving but stay put, saying, "We're waiting for Godot" (Act I, 10), showing a future that is open, not set. Prigogine's "arrow of time" means time moves forward with chance, like a river carrying surprises, not a clock ticking predictably (4). This matches the play's silences, which feel heavy with potential, as when Vladimir and Estragon fall silent, unsure of what's next. Unlike science's old view of a certain world, Prigogine's idea highlights uncertainty, showing Beckett's bare stage as a space where characters and objects, like the lone tree, create meaning together in a fragile, ever-changing present, inviting us to embrace life's unpredictability.

An attempt to fit Estragon's boots, like their perpetual waiting for Godot, mirrors a performance of activity without a linear advancement. "Mine were black. These are brown," followed by, "Well, they're a kind of gray" (Act II, 44), says Estragon, where we see the impossibility of anchoring objects in a coherent identity. Estragon's opening words, "Nothing to be done," are resistance to linear temporality and critique of time as a fixed continuum. Instead of progressing chronologically, time in the play emerges relationally, shaped by the characters' iterative interactions and rituals. Vladimir's reflective musings – "What did we do yesterday?" (Act I, 11) "It's already tomorrow." (Act II, 50) – unsettle chronological certainty, suggesting a temporal framework where past, present, and future intra-act rather than unfold sequentially (Barad *Meeting* 815). The temporal instability is reinforced by Estragon's question, "Is it not rather Sunday? Or Monday? Or Friday?" (Act I, 11). The tree, dead or dormant, resists stable classification – shrub or bush (Act I, 10), life or non-life.

Beckett's stage directions – "A country road. A tree." – make the empty stage a lively part of *Waiting for Godot*, not just a blank backdrop. Karen Barad calls this void a "field of possibilities," meaning it is buzzing with potential, like a quiet room full of unspoken ideas, ready to spark new meanings (Barad, *Meeting* 147). For example, Estragon's question, "Where are the leaves?" (Act I, 10), and Vladimir's reply, "It must be dead" (Act I, 10), highlight the tree's mix of lifelessness and potential life. Similarly, Vladimir's fidgeting with his hat – shaking and knocking it: "peers inside it, feels about inside it, knocks on the

crowns, blows into it, puts it on again” (Beckett 8, 41, 47, 60) – shows it as more than a prop; it shapes the waiting by drawing attention to his restless actions. Like the tree and silences, the hat and Estragon’s boot resist being mere objects, driving the play’s uncertain rhythm as they pull the characters into repeated routines.

About the performative and material dimensions of cognition, Pozzo directly asserts about Lucky that “he can’t think without his hat” (Act I, 27). The act of placing the hat on Lucky’s head to trigger his thinking is a dramatic strategy by Beckett that makes Lucky a machine-like being, and there is an externalization of thought. This absurdist ritual does not assume thought as an autonomous and purely human faculty. Instead, it reveals thought as contingent on material conditions. Lucky’s chaotic and fragmented monologue, beginning with an ironic invocation of a “personal God ... outside time without extension who ... loves us dearly” (Act I, 27), parodies theological and philosophical systems that attempt to rationalize an incoherent world. His speech exposes the inadequacy of such frameworks to address the chaos and entropy that define existence. The frenetic cadence of Lucky’s monologue mirrors the disorder it describes, with its references to “labors left unfinished” and “labors lost” punctuated by comically named figures such as “Puncher and Wattmann” (Act I, 27). These unfinished projects manifest humanity’s repeated failures to impose order on a resistant world, resonating with the Anthropocene’s struggle to reconcile its extractive legacies with ecological collapse. Lucky’s recursive structure – marked by refrains such as “in a word I resume” – emphasizes the futility of returning to a central logic. The monologue collapses under the weight of its absurdity, enacting the intellectual systems it critiques.

Disjointed phrases such as “in spite of the tennis” and “in the plains in the mountains by the seas” (Act I, 29) introduce fragmented images that resist narrative continuity. The repeated invocation of “the skull, the skull, the skull” (Act I, 29) underscores both the inevitability of death and the cyclical nature of humanity’s attempts to transcend it. Lucky’s chaotic references to “the air, the earth, the sea” and “abode of stones” (Act I, 29) further situate human existence within the broader ecological systems that sustain it.

“Avenged!” said Estragon, upon silencing Lucky by removing his hat. (Act I, 29). Pozzo’s response to Lucky’s collapse is: “He can walk” (Act I, 30). Beckett’s nonhuman agents seem to disrupt anthropocentric notions of temporality and suggest new ways of being in the Anthropocene. Pozzo’s fleeting recognition of this shared fragility – “I might just as well have been in his shoes and he in mine” – offers a momentary destabilization of power hierarchies (Act I, 21).

The ethical dimensions of waiting emerge through Vladimir and Estragon's shared persistence despite Godot's absence. Their refrain, "We'll come back tomorrow," reflects a mode of attending to uncertainty that parallels Anthropocene ethics, where survival necessitates an embrace of limitation and relational vulnerability. The play refuses to resolve the temporal ambiguities and chooses to be in this "grey time" (Salisbury 19). The circular debates – "You're sure it was here?" "He said by the tree" (Act I, 10) – are Beckett's aesthetics of nothingness and waiting as a relational and iterative act where time is an open-ended process, inviting an ethical engagement with the unknown. Lucky's "bags," are those objects which are active participants in intra-active processes. Estragon's repeated query, "Why doesn't he put down his bags?" foregrounds the entanglement of burden and agency. It reflects the Anthropocene's material complexities. Pozzo's lament, "The tears of the world are a constant quantity," – highlights a shared vulnerability that transcends individual suffering (Act I, 22). This redistribution of suffering challenges anthropocentric perspectives; the interdependence of all beings becomes the Beckettian ecological framework.

Vladimir's astonishment, "But yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now it's covered with leaves" (Act II, 42), contrasts with Estragon's dismissal, "I tell you we weren't here yesterday – another of your nightmares" (Act II, 42). Here, the tree's transformation resists human-centered narratives of cause and effect. Material objects such as boots, radishes, and turnips further embody the entangled materiality of existence in *Waiting for Godot*. The paradoxical relationship between survival and constraint is everywhere such as in Estragon's interactions with the boots – abandoning them and ultimately reclaiming them, "Because they were hurting me!" (Act II, 44). Similarly, the radishes and turnips operate as Deleuzian mediators, coupling the characters' raw forces of scarcity and bodily need to the play's iterative rhythms, where creation emerges "in-between" movements rather than fixed origins (Deleuze, *Negotiations* 122-24). As in Estragon's rejection of a black radish in favor of pink ones, "I only like the pink ones!" (Act II, 44) – thereby human and nonhuman actors co-constitute meaning and agency through relational mutual shaping.

Estragon's admission, "Either I forget immediately, or I never forget" (Act II, 39), contrasts with Vladimir's repeated attempts to reconstruct their shared past, such as their consideration of hanging themselves from the tree. This tension between memory and forgetting reveals their existence as unanchored and cyclical, where temporal coherence is supplanted by performative reenactments of the present. Vladimir's frustration, "Where else do you think? Do you not recognize the place?" (Act II, 39), hints at the absence of spatial and temporal fixity, resonating with Barad's assertion that time and space are not passive backdrops but active participants in the emergence of phenomena.

The motif of “dead voices” that “make a noise like wings” (Act II, 40) speaks of the entanglement of past and present, living and dead. These spectral presences, which “talk about their lives” because “to be dead is not enough for them” (Act II, 40), evoke the persistence of memory and history as burdensome traces that shape the characters’ experience. This interplay of presence and absence mirrors the Anthropocene’s material residues, where the remnants of human activity persist as disruptive forces. Vladimir and Estragon’s dialogue about waiting – “We always find something ... to give us the impression we exist” (Act II, 44) – epitomizes the absurdity of their condition, as their actions serve only to prolong a deferred resolution.

The repetitive rhythms of the hat-swapping sequence seem like Beckett’s critique of human attempts to impose meaning on seemingly “meaningless” acts. Vladimir’s frustrated rejection of the hat signifies the collapse of this illusion, as the futility of their actions becomes inescapable. Similarly, the reenactment of Pozzo and Lucky’s dynamic, where Estragon commands Vladimir to “Curse me!” and Vladimir responds with nonsensical insults (Act II, 47), exposes power as a performative construct devoid of inherent significance. The cyclical temporality of Act II stands out as the characters’ inability to leave, encapsulated in the final stage direction, “They do not move” (Act I, 35 and Act II, 60). They appear to be anchored in an entropic loop. Vladimir’s existential reflection, “What are we doing here, that is the question” (Act II, 52), captures the paradox of their condition, where recognition of absurdity coexists with paralysis.

In Beckett’s minimalist staging, the tree oscillates between presence and absence, bareness and growth, defying the stability and upward movement traditionally associated with tree metaphors. Beckett’s tree resists association with progress or a teleological endpoint, instead embodying an iterative and non-hierarchical temporality. Beckett’s tree disrupts anthropocentric narratives of mastery over nature. It resists being a passive backdrop and becomes an active participant in the unfolding of Beckett’s world. It is a reference to a radical way of perceiving evolutionary reversals. Evolution, here, is non-linear and unpredictable, challenging traditional hierarchical narratives that privilege human-centric notions of complexity (Hejnal 93-96). Thus, Beckett’s tree enacts relationality and the unpredictability of life’s processes. Its presence foregrounds a non-anthropocentric temporality and gestures toward a radical ecological ethics that calls for new conceptual framings to engage with life’s complexity.

Each tree that falls, each flood that ravages, or each nematode that infects a pine alters the landscape, initiating sequences of coordination or collapse. These shifting patches reflect “ecosystems engineering” (Tsing 161), where the deliberate or incidental acts of organisms redesign the environment. This sense

of instability, constantly “in the middle of things” (Tsing 160), evokes Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, where the barren tree, the shifting silences, and the small disturbances create fragile conditions for existence.

The human-animal relationship in Giorgio Agamben's *The Open: Man and Animal* is a tense push-pull, where humans define themselves by constantly separating from animals while still depending on that divide. Agamben calls this separation a “caesura” – a cut that both divides and connects, like a door that is half-open, half-shut. This process, “anthropogenesis,” shapes what it means to be human not as a fixed thing, but as an ongoing effort to suppress our animal side, capturing it to create identity (Agamben 79). He draws from philosopher Martin Heidegger's “clearing” (*Lichtung*) – an open space where existence becomes visible – but ties it to “negation” (*Nichtung*), meaning human openness relies on denying or hiding nothingness, like building a house by ignoring the empty foundation (Agamben 80). This ties into Agamben's “anthropological machine,” a way of thinking that enforces the human-animal split, turning human life into a “biopolitical zone of exception” – a special area where animal traits are excluded yet controlled, much like a law that suspends rules in emergencies (Agamben 37-38). In *Waiting for Godot*, the tree embodies this tension: bare and lifeless in Act I, it sprouts leaves in Act II, blending inertness (animal-like stillness) with vitality (human potential for change), without resolving the divide. Agamben's ideas fit here because they explain the tree not as passive scenery but as a symbol of humanity's struggle – stuck in a limbo where openness (possibility) and closedness (negation) coexist, mirroring the characters' endless waiting and blurring the line between human meaning and animal existence. This adds depth to Beckett's play, showing how the tree's shift challenges us to rethink human identity as something unfinished, not superior to nature.

In *Waiting for Godot*, the empty stage acts like a lively space where nothingness fuels existence, echoing Giorgio Agamben's idea of *Lichtung* (an open space for being) and *Nichtung* (negation that shapes it), as the bare set lets characters and objects, like the tree, share equal roles (Agamben 80). This challenges human superiority, creating a stage where people and things mix freely. For example, Vladimir's hat-fidgeting and the stage's silences shape the scene as much as the characters, resisting human control. This connects to Jennifer Cazenave's “radical visibility,” which demands we see marginalized beings – like Holocaust victims in films – as active, not erased, challenging dehumanizing views (Cazenave 27).

In *Waiting for Godot*, the Other – another person – appears not as something to understand but as a call to responsibility, pulling the self beyond its own desires, as Emmanuel Levinas describes (43). For Levinas, meeting someone else creates an ethical bond, not through grand truths but by recognizing their unique,

ungraspable presence, like facing a stranger who demands care without words (43). When Vladimir says, “We are waiting for Godot” (Act II, 45, 50, 51), and Estragon and Vladimir reply fifteen times throughout the play, “Let’s go,” only for both to remain, the refusal to act becomes an ethical moment of being-with, not as comprehension but as a radical inability to reduce the Other’s demand to an object of knowledge. The dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir reveals this, “There’s no lack of void” (Act II, 42). Levinas sees ethics, not systems of complete knowledge, as the heart of existence, where meaning comes from fragile connections between people and things (78). In the play, the bare stage and props, like the tree, become a space where characters and silences meet, creating meaning through their ongoing, incomplete bond, not through control or clear answers. This space of mutual reliance shows a world where care persists amid life’s fragility, aligning with Levinas’ vision of living together responsibly.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe the relationship between humanity, machines, and the Earth as a constant flow of change, where fixed ideas of self and world break down and reform. In their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, they call this “deterritorialization” – like uprooting a plant from its soil, freeing it from old boundaries and norms, creating space for new movement – and “reterritorialization,” which is like replanting that plant in fresh ground, building new structures or identities (Deleuze and Guattari 9-10, 312-13). This back-and-forth challenges simple divides, such as between humans and objects or nature and culture, by treating everything as ongoing processes, not rigid things. Drawing from Schroeder’s analysis, this “machinic ontology” sees the Earth as a “Body without Organs” – a wild, creative zone of energy flows, rhythms, and changes, not a layered hierarchy like a pyramid (Schroeder 255; Deleuze and Guattari 161-62). Traditional ways of knowing, which split subjects (thinkers) from objects (things thought about), are rejected through “mental ecology,” a way to rethink how we live by focusing on shifting relationships that create new values and spaces (Schroeder 256; Deleuze and Guattari 23-24). Through this “machinism,” ecology breaks free from capitalist exploitation – where everything is turned into resources – and becomes a process of building connections that value chaos and creativity over control (Schroeder 256). In *Waiting for Godot*, we see a similar push-pull: the bare stage, with its tree and silences, acts like a “machinic assemblage” – a setup where elements like the characters’ endless waiting or the tree’s subtle change uproot fixed human roles (deterritorialization), then reform them into new, uncertain bonds, like Vladimir and Estragon’s dependence on each other and their surroundings (reterritorialization) (Deleuze and Guattari 88-89). This makes the play a deep reflection on how we rethink who we are in a damaged world, like the Anthropocene, where human and nonhuman elements mix in unpredictable ways.

Braidotti critiques the Vitruvian model of the human, which privileges autonomy, rationality, and mastery, asserting that posthuman thought must embrace “heteronomy and multi-faceted relationality, instead of autonomy and self-referential disciplinary purity” (145). In Beckett’s minimalist world, the barren tree, the void, and even mundane objects like hats and shoes exemplify posthuman materiality. These nonhuman actants shape the rhythms of existence, aligning with Braidotti’s posthuman idea that we must move beyond divides like human/nonhuman or nature/culture, embracing instead a web of connections where everything is linked and interdependent, like a forest ecosystem where trees, soil, and animals all rely on each other to thrive (60). Beckett’s cyclical temporality is a mode of resistance. The characters’ refrain, “We’ll come back tomorrow” (Act I, 10), captures the interplay between persistence and futility. Transformative futures cannot simply be extrapolated from the present but must be “invented” through rupture and dislocation (Grosz 261).

The world, as Jean-Luc Nancy describes in *The Sense of the World*, is not a ready-made thing with built-in meaning – it is something we experience through our connections to it, like feeling the texture of a fabric rather than just seeing it from afar (54). Sense does not drop from the sky as a gift; it grows from existence itself, showing up as “spacing” (the gaps and distances between things) and “tangency” (the points where things touch or brush against each other), much like how a conversation builds from pauses and quick exchanges (56, 57). In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett brings this to life on stage, where simple elements like bodies, objects, and silences feel alive and tense. For example, Vladimir and Estragon’s repeated talks and actions rub against the emptiness around them, turning meaning into a faint echo trapped in real time, like a whisper hanging in a quiet room. But in this “nothing to be done” emptiness, sense still emerges as the basic leftover of being alive – raw and real. The pieces of existence – the tree, hat, boots – are not just background; they are active players, pushing their own weight and differences, like stones in a river altering the flow. Nancy puts it plainly: “If there is something, there are several things; otherwise, there is nothing” (58). This means life depends on differences – many separate parts making up the whole – or else nothing exists at all. So, materiality is not dead or still; it reveals things. The world, Nancy says, is “the totality of existences qua totality of signifyingness” (56) – a place where people and things mix in a constant flow, blurring lines between who thinks and what is thought about. Beckett’s simple stage resists easy explanations but still uncovers this, showing how everyday fragments create sense through their messy ties. Estragon mutters, “Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful” (Act I, 23). Here, the “nothing” exposes its own weight, “Reality is the reality of the several things there are” (Nancy 58). Absence is not void; it is a spacing – a

transimmanence – through which sense arrives, echoing Gilles Deleuze’s notion of pure “immanence” as a self-contained plane of life (Deleuze, *Pure Immanence* 25-31). This sense arises through internal relations and differences, not imposed from outside, and thereby free from top-down structures.

Livability unfolds as a polyphonic assemblage, a multispecies entanglement in which each participant’s rhythms shape and are shaped by others (Tsing 158). Organisms do not exist in isolation but in a constant interplay of “coordination and history” (160), much like Beckett’s characters, whose absurd repetitions – “Let’s go. [*They do not move.*]” (Act I, 35 and Act II, 60) – embody an interdependent inertia. Sense arises not from harmonious unity but through moments of coordination and dissonance, where the “polyphony of the assemblage shifts as conditions change” (Tsing 158). Similarly, Beckett’s aesthetics have silence, interruption, and fragmented dialogue that make the audience “listen” for the rhythms of relational becoming.

The end of the world is not a cataclysm but a breaking of old regimes of signification. That is what the play does. The world no longer “has a sense”; it is “sense” (Nancy 9). Beckett enacts this by stripping existence bare. There are no grand narratives in his works, no transcendent escapes – only bodies and objects exposed to the rawness of being. Beckett presents matter – dust, stones, voices – as not merely what remains but as what creates sense through exposure, through sheer persistence in space and time. Sense is a “singular coming,” a condition of exposure where existence is its own revelation (Nancy 58). The sense of the world, then, does not lie beyond; it emerges within. It is found in Beckett’s dust, in Nancy’s fragments, in Barad’s entangled materialities. What persists is the shared relationality of being. Singular and finite, existence becomes the praxis of sense, a world where silence and presence are enough to say everything.

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