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Mouth on Fire in Not I : Speaking, Speaking, and Speaking Nothing

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“Mouth on Fire” in *Not I* : Speaking, Speaking, and Speaking Nothing

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Pshaw! Past? A stupid phrase! Why past?
Past and pure nothingness are one at last!
What boots this evermore creating, when
Things all sweep into nothingness again?
‘There! Now ‘tis past!’ From this what can we glean?
Yet round and round it goes, as though it were.
Eternal Void I, for my part, prefer.¹
(Mephistopheles, *Goethe’s Faust*)

Introduction

Samuel Beckett is the postmodernist writer obsessed by the absurd chaos between the Logos and Non-Logos Worlds, where he comes and goes endlessly. He can never escape from the chaos and continues to turn round and round in an endless, empty circle. Clove in *Endgame* (1958) sighs out the lingering endlessness of life, “Finished, it’s finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished” (93); it is the limitless eschatology. Clove never reach the end. Alan Schneider, the director of Beckett’s plays, also sees that there is no escape from the empty repetition of life:

We are in Limbo. . . . There’s no way out. This is an eternal search that will not yield any answer. All of you are defying the inevitable.²

If so, is the true meaning of life nothing more than the repetition of the unmeaning circle? Can birth and death be explained? Does the vicious circle bring the suffering and boredom of human existence?

In order to solve these absurd questions, Beckett experiments to describe this endless situation over and over, by using the absurd ways of the Non-Logos Theatre. He has been pos-

sessed by the tortures of “Logos and Body” and “Silence and Sound” in the endlessly suffering existence of human beings. He wrote a letter to Alan Schneider in the following works: “My work is a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended) made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else”.³ Beckett embodies the hopeless situation of human beings with weird performances on the real stage in *Embers* (1959), *Happy Days* (1961), *Play* (1964), *Come and Go* (1967), *Breath* (1971), *Not I* (1973), *That Time* (1974), and *Footfalls* (1975). That is, he continues to fill up the silent emptiness with the fragments of the broken “Logos and Body”.

In this essay, focusing on an old woman of *Not I*, and her endless story in silence like Hamlet possessed by words, “Word, word, word” (II. ii. 192),⁴ I will study the painful mind of modern human beings in the endless circle.

I Logos and Non-Logos

Logos is Words and God. It is said that Man is a Logos-animal who tries to establish his identity through Logos, which seems to be the most reliable weapon to prove Self-Existence; that is Man is logos-centerization. But after Nietzsche declared “the death of God”,⁵ the established Logos World collapsed, and the spiritless Non-Logos World arrived. The latter cannot be easily explained and understood with the old, existing language/words. Man falls into the crisis of absurdity. That is to say, both Logos and Body were taken apart, although Logos and Body should have always been united in whole. As a result, all the meanings and values of conventional word and body have decomposed and declined. Logos has lost both energy and the ability to express, qualities which people previously used to smoothly communicate with each other. Nevertheless, the decomposed, old Logos always urges a human being to be a Logos-animal and a poor clown, who still believes in Logos as a unique means to express the Self, truth, beauty, or purpose, and looks for the true Self within the withered Logos. And she continues to ask herself from birth to death, “Who am I? or “What is my life?” or “For what purpose do I live?”

Moreover, Logos loses not only colors and flesh, but is also cut up into separate pieces, and every piece gradually subdivides, and becomes extinct. In the loss of Logos, only the scream of silence remains in purgatory. Beckett comments on the scream of silence to Harold Pinter concretely, using an example which Beckett experienced at the hospital:

‘I was in a hospital once. There was a man in another ward, dying of throat cancer. In the silence I could hear his screams continually. That’s the only kind of form my work has’.⁶

In *Happy Days*, Winnie also hears the same continuous scream in her head: "No no, my head was always full of cries. [*Pause.*] Faint confused cries. [*Pause.*] They come. [*Pause.*] Then go" (164). But the situation, which is tormented by the scream, is not true silence. A human being never reaches "the still, peaceful silence", where Body will perfectly keep the bond with Logos. Even after death which should promise a calm, complete silence, a human being continues to be tortured severely by broken words in the darkest despair, and never dies out. "The cursed, talkative silence" begins to erode the Self at a crawling speed. The Self wishes for comfortable silence, as Hamlet's last speech, "the rest is silence" (V. ii. 363), but in vain. Like Tantalus⁷ who continues to seek for water everlastingly, or Sisyphus⁸ who goes on pushing his boulder to the summit of the mountain, a human being must keep on seeking the complete peace or true silence endlessly. In *Just Plays: Beckett's Theater* (1980), Ruby Cohn contrasts the temporality of Beckett's drama with that of classical theater as follows:

. . . , but whereas classical peripetias thrill through to a conclusion, Beckett's plays are unfinal. Rather than Aristotelian beginning, middle, and end, Beckett's plays are endless continua; his protagonists are in the tradition of the Wandering Jew, the flying Dutchman, the Woman without a Shadow – cursed to endure through time'.⁹

Therefore, in order to escape the suffering in this world he must do his best to release the Body from the oppressive Logos, and to recognize the strangeness of human existence. This will lead to the recovery of his own Self and identity.

II The Non-Logos Theater

Not I is a drama of about 15 minutes, adopted from the essay on humanity by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)¹⁰, whom Beckett respected. The first performance in America was at the Forum Theater, Lincoln Center in New York September, 1972, and in London at The Royal Court Theater, 16 January 1973. The stage setting is very simple but startling, and dark except for two parts. There are only two characters, who are spot lighted by the lighting. At the dark upstage, being separated from other parts of the body and shone by the lighting, Mouth is floating in the central space, 2 meters 50 cents (8 feet) above the stage floor like duckweeds floating in the air. Therefore, the audience cannot but look up at Mouth with mouth wide open. Meanwhile, Auditor is standing on a small box (1 meter 20 cents) stage right. Mouth seems to be the mouth of a ghostly woman and speaks something alone. Mouth is eager to speak all the truth, by using the remaining, broken consciousness and words, but in vain. This is a very ab-

stract, Non-Logos stage because of the separation of Body and Logos. The stage lighting is the key element in attracting the audience's attention to Mouth and Auditor, and suggesting "the light of their fading consciousness" under the weakening sense. In *The Broken Window*, Jane Alison Hale insists on the similar view of lighting:

The lighting . . . suggests the light of human consciousness as it endeavors constantly, yet unsuccessfully, to perceive itself up till the very moment of its extinction.¹¹

On the other hand, Auditor is of indeterminate sex, and a tall person, who wears a loose, black gown like a djellaba, which is a mantle with a hood and short sleeves worn by North Africans. Therefore, this atmosphere appears to be the instable, flexible Non-Logos stage, completely different from the determined Logos stage.

In "My Shade will Comfort You": Beckett's Rites of Theater', Susan D. Brienza describes Mouth transfixed on the center of the stage:

. . . the most fixed of all is Mouth in *Not I*, a disembodied fragment of a face pinned to a central spot at a particular height above the stage floor.¹²

The theme of this immobility is a common theme of torture and suffering in Beckett's works, like Hamm in the chair in *Endgame*, three man and women in *Play*, and Winnie embedded in the mound in *Happy Days*. The fixed situation symbolizes both the hardest prison and Man's fate not to escape from the Non-Logos World. Billie Whitelaw confesses that Mouth is the most painful role in an interview with Linda Ben-Zvi.¹³ Incidentally, BBC television takes a close-up of this Mouth, which is portrayed as a female. Although Beckett regards the female sex as the ultimate vomit of love, and is obsessed by the vicious circle stemming from sexuality, he is forced to describe the sexual complex in his works by an invisible power. There, it is said that he was pleased with this decision.

(i) Mouth

As the curtain rises gradually, the groan of the old woman breathing feebly spreads over the stage. This is the simple but fearful invasion of the voice, which is speedy like the music of Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951). In a sense, this panting may mean sexual sound. Or her groan may suggest a kind of the voice-over, whose voice at first the audience cannot understand and they are confused with the real character of this voice because Mouth denies herself, crying "Not I" again and again. In "Space invasions: voice-over in works by Samuel Beckett and Mar-

guerite Duras", Mary Kay Martin explains voice-over like this:

. . . the voice-over in live theater floats through the air, through the space of the event, like a ghost of the character, its disembodied spirit, its thoughts. The voice-over is neither completely inside the fiction nor outside of it; it is both; it hovers between them.¹⁴

Mouth may be the incarnation of a hidden spirit itself. In *Samuel Beckett*, L. Grave and R. Frederman say "one should grant that Mouth's monologue is extraordinarily difficult to grasp on first hearing";¹⁵ at first the audience cannot catch it clearly. But if they strain their ears, they can understand a little of the content. Though time passes on stage, Mouth is immovable in the air. What does Mouth symbolize? If we imagine Act X in *Happy Days*,¹⁶ we will get an answer. In Act X Winnie is embedded to the top of her head in the mound; her existence disappears from this phenomenal world completely. As her body vanishes, the audience cannot see her at all. But the problem persists. According to Beckett's theory of "Repetition", even if her body becomes extinct, the consciousness in her head keeps on living and burning furiously forever. The skull of Winnie groans desperately, surrounded by timeless silence in the darkest grave. In *Just Plays*, Ruby Cohn compares Winnie with Mouth:

Winnie and Mouth, to choose two feminine protagonists separated by over a decade, are sisters – immobile in space, confusedly mobile in time, attracted to a sack, dubious about love, and unable to curtail their compulsive monologues. . . . Repetition is a stabilizer for Winnie in her resolution to pass happy days and avoid a "wilderness" of lonely silence. . . . Frenzied repetition belies her denial of suffering.¹⁷

John Weightman emphasizes the similarity of these two dramas in *The Encounter*.¹⁸ Therefore, as the stage in *Not I* separates words from the body, it seems to be more miserable and hopeless than *Happy Days*. Billie Whitelaw, the leading actress in Beckett's plays, describes her hellish experience in an interview with Mel Gussow:

With *Not I* what happened for me was a terrible inner scream, like falling backward into hell. . . . I've done two seasons of it, and I will never do it again. I think I would lose my sanity if I did it again.¹⁹

Although the silence should be of a soundless world, Mouth complains about the droning and buzzing in Mouth's head:

. . . all the time the buzzing . . . so-called . . . in the ears . . . though of course

actually . . . not in the ears at all . . . in the skull . . . dull roar in the skull all
silence as the grave . . . no part – . . . what? . . . the buzzing? . . . yes . . . all silence
but for the buzzing . . . so-called . . . no part of her moving. . . (378)

In “From an Abandoned Work” of *No’s Knife* (1967), which collects Beckett’s short stories, he describes the leas of the murmuring like Mouth:

. . . but a long unbroken time without before or after, light or dark, from or towards
or at, the old half knowledge of when and where gone, and of what, but kinds of
things still, all at once, all going, until nothing, there was never anything, never can
be, life and death all nothing, that kind of thing, only a voice dreaming and droning
on all around, that is something, the voice that once was in your mouth.²⁰

Judged rationally, the situation of “the scream of silence” could never exist. But in reality in silence there exists a roar.

(ii) Auditor

Auditor quietly listens to the chattering of the dead possessed by words. A sexless, onstage audience. After “Mouth” rattles off the long speeches violently like a madwoman, she cries “what? . . . who? . . . no!. . . she!” (379, 381, 382). About whom does Mouth talk away? Who is Mouth? Who is the woman of the story? The second person singular? Or the third person singular? Or does she talk away about herself? Mouth does not know who she is. Therefore, Mouth insists that the heroine of her story is not herself but “SHE”, the third person singular. Nevertheless, Auditor would not accept her intent insistence, and slowly displays a desperate action, “a gesture of helpless compassion” (375). This slow gesture is repeated four times within about 15 minutes of the running time of the play. Each time the gesture becomes smaller and smaller. As we have seen, the law of tapering repetition is a well-worn device in Beckett’s Non-Logos plays. In *Happy Days*, Act X will also continue limitlessly, in *Not I*, Auditor is always silent and immovable except for that gesture. Though only “Mouth” continues to speak her weird story which spreads through the emptiness of the Non-Logos stage, the order of the story is unreasonable in terms of sequence. Conversely, as there is a listening partner, Auditor, Mouth can speak. Both are complementary connections. We can regard Auditor as “WAKI” in “Japanese Noh”, while Mouth is “SITE”. Why does she continue to speak? Because speaking is the way to prove her existence, and the way to endure the emptiness of the Non-Logos World. If she stops speaking, she will disappear. But it is impossible.

Who is Auditor? An examiner to whom is reported the total settlement of accounts in the life of Mouth? The God of Death? A Guardian Deity? A Deva King as the judgement after death? A judge at court? Christ? The audience? The director? According to his costume, he seems to be a Druid, a member of the priesthood among the Celts of Ireland. In *Beckett* (1973), A. Alvarez explains Auditor as the priest, who listens to the confession in a confessional:

On one side of a darkened stage stands a shrouded, silent, mostly immobile Auditor, like a priest listening to a penitent in the confessional,²¹

To support this idea, in *Beckett* (1972), J. Fletcher and J. Spurling also point out that the stage is an abstracted confessional.²² Ruby Cohn explains that Auditor is the actor-audience on stage in *Back to Beckett* (1973):

Beckett's actors undertake roles for one another, so that the real audience is almost always watching a stage audience. . . . *Not I* is the culmination of these actor-audiences on stage.²³

Therefore, the real audience must watch both Mouth and Auditor, the stage-audience. According to the record of Enoch Brater, when the director, Alan Schneider, asked Beckett, "Who is Auditor?", Beckett gave no answer except that gesture of Auditor, a shrug ("simple sideways raising of arms from sides and their falling back, in a gesture of helpless compassion" 375).²⁴ After all, Auditor remains a vague existence. But these answers are not right. I think that Auditor is the double of Mouth. As Mouth is not a vague existence, she cannot exist without being proved by others. Mouth needs somebody around her, in order to believe in Self-Existence. Therefore, Mouth creates Auditor in her mind. Her shadow, her double, is embodied as "Auditor", and appears in front of the real audience. The connection of Mouth and Auditor is similar to that of Winnie and Millie in *Happy Days*, May and Mother in *Footfalls*. By being seen by someone, Self exists. In the Non-Logos World without God, we are dependent on each other to escape the fearful solitude. We cannot exist by ourselves. But in the Non-Logos World there is no other person to rely on or communicate with. To do so, we create our own shadow, our own double. In this play, there is no other person who looks at, listens to Mouth, and proves her existence. By separating from her body, Mouth creates Auditor, who is similar with herself but another person. This Beckettian dramaturgy gives the spatial effect and the sense of existence to an empty stage. Because of Auditor, the silent murmuring in an endless hell obtains a status as important as "the hellish cry".

III The Muddy Stream of Words

(i) Reticence

Mouth continues to speak disconnectedly of a woman, like a complete stranger's story. The content of the story is never new information, but always the same pattern. Mouth tells the same events coolly and uses the same words. In *Just Plays*, Ruby Cohn points out that this minimum information arouses the curiosity of the audience, who want to know her situation more deeply and correctly:

A mouth has spouted an intimate alogical stream of words, whose meaning resonates outward from an unacknowledged self, . . . We see and hear, we think through the voice-brain conflict. Our minds "pick it up," seeking sense through the segmented syntax, staccato rhythms, and few swiftly sketched events. Beckett has conceived a whole play as soliloquy, in which he withholds knowledge of its protagonist only to immerse us all the more deeply in an emotional relationship with her.²⁵

This is the aim of Beckettian dramaturgy. Therefore, if we join together the many pieces of words and phrases like a crossword puzzle, her astonished autobiography, her hidden past reveals itself vaguely:

. . . he having vanished . . . thin air . . . no sooner buttoned up his breeches . . . she similarly . . . eight months later . . . almost to the tick. . . so no love . . . (376)

Her father perhaps is a loose vagabond, while her mother has no maternal instinct. To such poor parents, a baby was born prematurely and undesired. Beckett likes to use this image of a premature and good-for-nothing baby, so we can see the same theme in *All That Fall* (1957) and *Happy Days*. And the baby was abandoned by her parents, and was brought up at an orphanage, where all the children were disciplined with religious strictness but no love: ". . . brought up as she had been to believe . . . with the other waifs . . . in a merciful . . . [*Brief laugh.*] . . . God . . . [*Good laugh.*] . . ." (377). According to this speech, we can guess that she has been taught the solemn doctrine of God. Whatever, however, Mouth uses the word, "God", she laughs involuntarily. It is certain that Mouth cannot believe in God and only feels the sense of overpowering, fear, and indifference to God. She tries not to pursue the problem persistently, but to conceal the doubt through laughing. Beckett often uses the theme of this imprudent attitude to laugh God away, so we see the same ironical laugh of Mrs Rooney in *All That Fall*.

Though her body gets bigger and bigger, her mind never grows up. As she does not have

confidence in her existence, she always avoids others, cuts off her relation to the real world and withdraws into herself. As Mouth speaks, ". . . stood there staring into space . . . mouth half open as usual" (381), her head is empty and shows the symptoms of idiocy, autism and schizophrenia. Her reticence, like aphasia, manifests prominently the retreat of her mind. The disease symptoms get worse and worse, as she is possessed by the consciousness of sin. For example, when she is ordered to appear in court, she can do nothing to defend herself with her mouth wide open. She does not know why she stays in court, although she has to appeal her guilt:

. . . that time in court . . . what had she to say for herself. . . guilty or not guilty . . .
stand up woman . . . speak up woman . . . stood there staring into space . . . mouth
half open as usual . . . waiting to be led away . . . glad of the hand on her arm . . .
(381)

What is her crime in this trial? Is it similar to "original sin" in *Proust*?:

Tragedy is not concerned with human justice. . . . The tragic figure represents the expiation of original sin, of the original and eternal sin of him and all his 'soci malorum,' the sin of having been born.²⁶

Original sin is Beckett's favorite theme, so we can see it in all his works. If Mouth is judged by the crime of original sin, nobody can protect her. It is impossible to explain the secret of birth. Everybody was born in this world without knowing the real reason. Therefore, at court she has no way except opening her mouth.

Or she is silent as usual even when she goes to the market, though there she can communicate with others:

. . . busy shopping centre. . . supermart . . . just hand in the list . . . with the bag . . .
old black shopping bag . . . then stand there waiting . . . any length of time . . . middle
of the throng . . . motionless . . . staring into space . . . mouth half open as usual . . .
till it was back in her hand . . . the bag back in her hand . . . then pay and go . . . not
as much as good-bye . . .
(379)

If Man (Logos-Animal) forgets to speak, how will he prove his identity? He may no longer be a human being. But the reticent Mouth feels the urge to talk with others, in winter, once or twice. But as she speaks in a broad accent and with poor grammar, she cannot communicate with others well. Only in winter the silent Mouth becomes very talkative: ". . . once or twice a year always winter some strange reason . . ." (379). Why does Mouth have a fit of chattering in winter? According to Susan Brienza's opinion, 'winter' is the holy season when many spirits come

back to the living.²⁷ In the Christian divine service calendar, November 2nd is the day to worship all spirits. In Jewish tradition, the days of compensation and reminiscences to the dead encompass autumn and winter. In short, in winter many ghosts come back to this world, and are wandering and floating around the living. These spirits cannot die with their minds at peace. In order to confess their secrets, which they could not reveal in life, they come back to this world. As, however, the spirits have no flesh, they have no mouth to speak. Therefore, the spirits are hunting mouths, with which they can speak their secrets. In this way, a spirit possesses the flesh of this old woman, and takes advantages of her mouth. This old woman seems to be dead, because she lacks the energy and identity to live. As the feeble woman is the suitable type to possess, the wandering ghost seizes on her body (mouth). But the spirit cannot completely occupy her body and mouth. One day in winter only when her physical condition is beaten by the powerful energy of the spirit, the spirit can occupy her body. It happens once or twice in a year. Just then, the spirit invades her body, begins to speak its secret story like a madness, by borrowing her mouth.

Or take another instance. Some spirits communicate with each other, or with the living. For instance, Hamlet communicates with his father's spirit, Ghost. But as the words of the spirit are different from those of the living, at first they cannot understand each other and have no way to explain it. Horatio and the soldiers not only could not see their former king's Ghost, but they also cannot hear the words of the Ghost. Therefore, any living being cannot always listen to the spirits' words. Only a pure being, who has the same wavelength as the spirits, can communicate with the spirits. For instance, before Adam and Eve fall, they can listen to the Words of God and understand Them. But after falling, they cannot listen to Them. Because, before falling, they are pure and innocent; they can understand the Words of God. Moreover, when a living being and a spirit talk to each other, judged from a third person, the living being seems to become mad and to speak to himself. For example, when Hamlet demands to know why Gertrude was immoral with Claudius, suddenly the Ghost appears and says not to blame Mother. But as Gertrude cannot see her husband's Ghost and listen to the Ghost's words, she thinks Hamlet has gone mad. Judging from *Hamlet's* story, Mouth's mad monologue seems to be a conversation with spirits. As the words of the spirits cannot hear and understand by a third person, Mouth appears to be a mad woman, listening only to her own voice.

(ii) Loquacity

Something happens to the possessed woman one morning in April. A blessed moment? Or a

cursed moment? When she is wandering in a field, gathering cowslips, suddenly the light goes out and she falls into the darkness:

. . . wandering in a field . . . looking aimlessly for cowslips. . . to make a ball . . . a few steps then stop . . . stare into space . . . then on . . . a few more . . . stop and stare again . . . so on . . . drifting around . . . when suddenly . . . gradually . . . all went out . . . all that early April morning light . . . and she found herself in the – . . . what? . . . (376-7)

At this moment she seems to be dead. In *Beckett's Theaters* (1984), Sidney Homan points out, "Ironically, this seeming "death" came on an April morning, in the month of rebirth".²⁸ Why does Beckett have the heroine wander and die in a field in the morning in April? The early spring is the season of fresh verdure, reproduction and rebirth. Therefore, to die symbolizes to revive. According to Edith Oliver's essay in *The New Yorker* on 2 December 1972, this early spring morning has the image of a vivid sexual episode in her life:

We hear of a sexual episode that took place on an early April morning long ago, when she was meant to be having pleasure and was having none.²⁹

She is wandering not in a real field, but on a dreamy, soft cloud. Just then she feels pleasure, particularly sexual ecstasy, for a woman. Therefore, Mouth weaves a voluptuous vividness of the prime of her life into this fantastic scene.

The myth of Demeter touches the core of this play. Beckett often sees a woman as the repetition of "Mother and Daughter". Therefore, in order to explain this lyric, emotional flashback, Susan Brienza adopts the Mother/Daughter story of Demeter and Persephone in Greek Myth.³⁰ Demeter is the Goddess of agriculture, fertility, marriage and social order, and the symbol of reproduction of everything, a harvest, and grain. And Persephone is her daughter. When Persephone picks up cowslips in a field, suddenly she is kidnapped by Pluto, the King of the Underworld. At this moment, the spring sun disappears, and all around the fields change into a dark world. This event is the same fear as the terror which Mouth experiences in the darkness. After being kidnapped, Persephone is not only confined in the Underworld, but she is also forced to become the Queen, Pluto's wife. But as Demeter asks earnestly for the return of Persephone, her hope is fulfilled only half. During half the year, in winter, Persephone must dwell in the dark Underworld, while during half the year from spring she may come back to the world. During half a year Demeter must endure her daughter's absence in the depths of despair, grief and sorrow. Susan explains her hopeless situation:

Demeter is the only female immortal to suffer human grief and pain; she is “the divine sorrowing mother who saw her daughter die each year” and thus serves as the perfect analog for creatures in various purgatories and hells.³¹

While Persephone stays above ground from spring till summer, the ground is moistened, all flowers are in full bloom, and plants grow. Conversely, when she stays in the underground from fall till winter, Demeter protects all plants. The ground sees the harvest season. In short, Daughter takes charge of reproduction and birth, while Mother takes charge of maturity and fertility. As Daughter and Mother complement each other, they fill up a year on the ground. If they look away, the ground will become barren. If so, both Mother and Daughter will must wander the wasteland or purgatory. The theme of separation between Mother and Daughter often enters Beckett’s dramas such as *All That Fall*, *Happy Days* and *Footfalls*. The relation shows women’s unavoidable karma in the sorrow and emptiness of reproductive, sexual circles, which repeat “birth and death” from generation to generation. Furthermore, according to *The Great Mother* (1955) by Erich Neumann, Demeter and Persephone symbolize maturity and virginity respectively. Persephone and Demeter exist apart from men separately, and at the same time, they are connected with each other complementarily. Neumann points out the relation of Mother and Daughter:

Kore’s [Persephone’s] resurrection from the earth — the archetypal spring motif — signifies her finding by Demeter, for whom Kore had “died,” and her reunion with her. But the true mystery, through which the primordial situation is restored on a new plane, is this: the daughter becomes identical with the mother; she becomes a mother and is so transformed into Demeter. Precisely because Demeter and Kore are archetypal poles of the Eternal Womanly, the mature woman and the virgin, the mystery of the Feminine is susceptible of endless renewal. Within the female group, the old are always Demeter, the Mother; the young are always Kore, the Maiden.³²

Mouth also cannot establish equal relations with a real man, while she is dependent upon only SHE, Mother. In this sense, Mouth is identical with the wandering woman, Mother.

Nevertheless, as soon as the wandering woman realizes to be “the dead” on the ground, the taciturn woman begins to pour forth a flood of words, as “I can’t stop it, I can’t prevent it, from tearing me, racking me, assailing me” (307)³³ in *The Unnamable* (1958). Without stopping, Mouth moves automatically and speaks incomprehensible words one after another. The words would not stop. Mouth cannot understand what the spirit says. What trial? What crime? Original

sin? Tears in her hand or brain marrow streaming from unmovable eyeballs? No, not such physical things. About others? About herself? About her life? The fearful fact must be hidden in her loquacity. Mouth seems to have already known the truth. But as she will be greatly shocked if she knows it, she does not wish to recognize it. In *Back to Beckett*, Ruby Cohn points out that Mouth deliberately avoids knowing the correct meanings of her chattering, just as we cling to Logos:

The female stage mouth knows as little as the fictional voices about the provenance of words, and it denies knowing what they mean, intermittently refusing to acknowledge that they mean anything.³⁴

Sometimes vomiting out many broken pieces of idioms, sometimes crying too fearfully, and sometimes laughing ironically, she continues to speak. Like a burning flame, an incoherent mass of words surges on Mouth:

. . . mouth on fire . . . stream of words . . . in her ear . . . practically in her ear . . . not catching the half. . . not the quarter . . . no idea what she's saying . . . imagine! . . . no idea what she's saying! . . . and can't stop . . . no stopping it . . . she who but a moment before . . . but a moment! . . . could not make a sound . . . no sound of any kind . . . now can't stop . . . imagine! . . . can't stop the stream . . . and the whole brain begging . . . something begging in the brain . . . begging the mouth to stop . . . pause a moment . . . if only for a moment . . . and no response . . . as if it hadn't heard . . . or couldn't . . . couldn't pause a second . . . like maddened . . . (380)

Mouth on fire and a flood of Words. Words repeat self-reproduction and the broken words spread here and there. As a result, Mouth suffers from a diarrhea of words. In order to vomit the overflowing words in her mouth, she rushes into a public lavatory: ". . . nearest lavatory . . . start pouring it out . . . steady stream . . . mad stuff. . ." (382). Nevertheless the flood of words never stops, just like the murmuring in *The Unnamable*: "And at the same time I am obliged to speak. I shall never be silent. Never" (291). Also in "Three Dialogues", Beckett confesses an endless suffering forced to keep on speaking something, although there is nothing to say:

The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express.³⁵

In *Beckett*, A. Alvarez points out that this mad intensity is almost the same as the fearful image:

It is the theatrical equivalent of one of Francis Bacon's appalled images: a whole world of anguish squeezed into the tight, white circle of a mouth gabbling violently on the fine edge of hysteria, as if to pause would be to expose itself to pressures which would tear it apart.³⁶

What is the appalled image? The person of the endless story is unknown to Mouth. In the Note of this play, Beckett especially directs, "vehement refusal to relinquish third person" (375). Therefore, Mouth denies completely that the old woman of this story, "SHE," is not I, not the same person as I of the subject, but another person. The title of this play, *Not I*, means self-denial, <Not I>, so Mouth tries to say everything in the third person. In *The Unnamable*, Beckett expresses, "It's not I, I am he, after all, why not, why not say it, I must have said it, as well that as anything else, it's not I, not I, . . ." (402). In *Beckett*, Fletcher and Spurling express the same opinion, "holding fast to 'she', she is terrified of reverting to 'I' ".³⁷ And in Samuel Beckett, Jean-Jacques Mayoux points out the obsession of a third person, ". . . the title indicates the terrible detachment of the third person, of the SHE".³⁸

In this way, as "I seem to speak, it is not I about me, it is not about me" (291) in *The Unnamable*, the characters in Beckett's plays are apt to avoid the first person prominently; to desire the disappearance of the speaking subject, "I". Why does Mouth deny any identity with the subject in the story? Because Mouth does not want to be the heroine in the miserable story. The heroine's life was so sorrowful and unendurable that Mouth hopes not to acknowledge that her life was so desperately defeated. How was her life at all? Mouth hanging in the confused Non-Logos space suffers from seeking to answer the unanswerable questions, who "I" was and how "I" spent her life. Mouth wishes to think that the woman's life in the Non-Logos World belongs to another person, not Mouth. In *The New Statesman*, Benedict Nightingale expresses the same opinion:

. . . , she can't bring herself to utter the word 'I', and that, I'd suggest, is because she dare not admit that this wilderness of a life is hers and hers alone.³⁹

It is for Mouth more helpful to remain a lost-identity than to recognize its miserable life. Drawing a clear distinction between Mouth and the other woman of the story, Mouth desperately resists being pulled into the vortex of the woman's poor life. According to Graver and Federman, Robert Brustein noticed the denial of the subjective identity in *The Observer*: ". . . the speaker was engaged in a 'denial of subjective identity' in an effort to 'palliate the pain' ".⁴⁰ Whenever Mouth denies, ". . . what? . . . who? . . . no! . . . she!", Auditor makes the helplessly

sympathetic gesture. As Auditor must be the double of Mouth, Mouth has already recognized that the woman is Mouth herself. But considering the spiral falling repetition in Beckett's work, Mouth denies it endlessly and Auditor continues to make the same gesture endlessly.

Here we classify her chattering in two ways. As seen before, the content of the babbling in winter may be the story of Mouth herself or of a spirit of the dead putting its mind at ease. However hard Mouth denies it, judging from the use of vowels or tones, and the ways she moves her lips, we cannot but realize the story to be Mouth's. In *The New Yorker* Edith Oliver explains the flood of uncontrollable, pent-up words:

The words never stop coming, and their speed never slackens; they are, we finally realize, the pent-up words of a lifetime, and they are more than the woman can control.⁴¹

This situation is similar to the world of Japanese Noh, in which the spirit continues to tell how to live in this world oozingly. The spirit finishes telling its necessary story, and it wishes to be saved from the torture of chattering. But ironically, although the spirit was shadowy, enervate and insensitive during her life, it could not vomit all stress in speech. Now the pent-up curses swirl in the spirit's head. Therefore, after death, as if the spirit obtained dynamic energy, it vomited out the stress. The dead cries for her life. It proves "the immortality of the soul" after death. In *Waiting for Godot* (1956), Estragon and Vladimir speak their lives, and they are compelled to speak, as proof of having lived:

Vladimir: To have lived is not enough for them.
Estragon: They have to talk about it.
Vladimir: To be dead is not enough for them.
Estragon: It is not sufficient. (58)

"Mouth" speaks, speaks, and speaks, and never stops. The broken words dance like madness. The more the words dance violently, the louder the mad noise in the skull' becomes. Like Hamlet pondering with Yorick's skull at the graveyard, Beckett is always tortured by a skull, inside of a head.

Conclusion

It is Logos-Man's unavoidable custom to speak, even when the established Logos society and the reliable life-customs disappear, and words became meaningless. Only the suffering of existence remains persistently. After death, as the Body and Words of the dead cannot separate

completely and smoothly, the suffering of existence invades her mind and attacks her endlessly. There is 'the silence of the loquacity' of the dead, and 'the silent cry' whirls in her mind in writhing agony. The desperate cry of the ghost will never disappear. But if we move the confused words round in the centrifuge, the weakened words turn and turn more violently and are decomposed and corrupted into smaller pieces. As a result, Words and Body will separate completely and become independent from each other. Then the Words will have their own new lives. In the micro world each word reproduces from destruction like a phoenix. In "Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . . Joyce", Beckett expresses that "corruption is generation": "The maximum of corruption and the minimum of generation are identical: in principle, corruption is generation".⁴² When in her last days Mouth is wandering in a flower field, she thoughtlessly picks cowslip to make a ball. "A ball" reminds us of the egg of ants in *Happy Days*, and Dan's ball in *All That Fall*. This ball is connected with the circular theory in *The Origins and History of Consciousness* by Neumann:

The round is the egg, the philosophical World Egg, the nucleus of the beginning, and the germ from which, as humanity teaches everywhere, the world arises. It is also the perfect state in which the opposites are united – the perfect beginning . . . the perfect end. . . .⁴³

This ball is the symbol of a circle, the thought of regeneration.

In this way, whatever it is, when it gets older, it must end. From that, a small new life will emerge. Like the small fairies in *Midnight Summer Dream* (1595) by Shakespeare, the micro words freed from body completely, obtain new lives, and fly in the air pleasantly. It is possible to create Neo-Words (Logos). The more the micro-size words dance and dance madly, the deeper the silence of body becomes. Here it will be possible to find "the still silence of the skull", which Beckett wishes. Neo-Logos will be recreated. The old Logos, Destroyed!. And the fresh roots of words! Spring! Revive! and Dance, like whirling dervishes spinning uncontrollably around the still center of their hearts!

Notes

All quotations of Samuel Beckett's plays are cited by page numbers from *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

- 1) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Faust: Parts I and II*, trans. Sir Theodore Martin, ed. and intro. W. H. Bruford (London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1965), 401.

- 2) Rosette Lamont, "New Beckett Plays: A Darkly Brilliant Evening", *Other Stages* (16 June 1983), 156.
- 3) Samuel Beckett, in a letter to Alan Schneider (29 December 1957); quoted in Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Vintage, 1990), 497.
- 4) William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. Harold Jenkins, (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), II. ii. 192. All quotations of this play are cited by Act, Scene, and lines.
- 5) See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, eds. Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988). After Zarathustra recognizes the death of God, he decides to go down from the thoughtful mountain to the harsh town, and to live as not a hermit but a living man in a real world.
- 6) Samuel Beckett, quoted by James Knowlson and John Pilling, *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett* (London: John Calder, 1979), 200.
- 7) Tantalus is the son of Zeus in Greek Myth. In order to reveal the secrets of the gods, he is soaked up to his chin in hell of the water. Whenever he gets thirsty and tries to drink water, the water decreases, while whenever he get hungry and tries to catch the fruit, the wing flips. Therefore, he suffers from thirst and hunger.
- 8) Sisyphus is the wicked King in Corinth in Greek Myth. After death, he falls into hell and is made to push the biggest stone up the mountain as punishment. Whenever he pushes it up the top of the mountain, it rolls down to the bottom.
- 9) Ruby Cohn, *Just Plays: Beckett's Theater* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980), 35.
- 10) Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorism*, R. J. Hollingdale, trans. Harmondsworth (Penguin Books, 1970).
- 11) Jane Alison Hale, *The Broken Window: Beckett's Dramatic Perspective* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue UP, 1987), 135.
- 12) Susan D. Brienza, ' "My Shade will Comfort You": Beckett's Rites of Theater', *Critical Essays on Samuel Beckett*, ed. Patrick A. McCarthy (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986), 217.
- 13) Billie Whitelaw, "Interviewed by Linda Ben-Zvi", *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, (U. of Illinois P., 1992), 9. When Linda Ben-Zvi asked Billie Whitelaw, "Which play did you find the most painful to perform?", Whitelaw answered that "*Not I*. Oh boy, very painful, very painful. I felt as if I had an opened wound, and every night I went on in all that pain".
- 14) Mary Kay Martin, "Space invasions: voice-over in works by Samuel Beckett and Marguerite Duras", *The Theatrical Space* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1987), 244.
- 15) Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, eds., "Introduction", *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 36.
- 16) Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days, The Complete Dramatic Works*. As 'repetition' is the usual method of Beckett's plays, there are only two acts in *Not I*. This play also continues till the imaginable Act X.
- 17) Cohn, *Just Plays*, 131.
- 18) John Weightman, *Encounter* (April 1973), 38-9.

... finding oneself in a mental home and hearing a voice raised in a wild rhythmical rant in the next room, where some poor creature has lost the centre of her being; poignant enough, while it lasts, but not a variegated aesthetic speech, like Winnie's monologue in 'Happy Days.'

- 19) Billie Whitelaw, quoted by Mel Gussow, 'A terrible inner scream, like falling backwards into hell', *Conversations with (and about) Beckett* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1996), 85, 87-8.

- 20) Samuel Beckett, *No's Knife: Collected Shorter Prose 1945-1966* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967), 148.
- 21) A. Alvarez, *Beckett* (Fontana: Collins, 1973), 134.
- 22) John Flechter and John Spurling, *Beckett: The Playwright* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 124.

The Auditor in his 'loose black djellaba' cannot help but appear a priestly figure; the combination of priest and urgently talking mouth creates the unmistakable picture of a confessional, . . .

- 23) Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973), 213.
- 24) Enoch Brater, "Dada, Surrealism, and Genesis of *Not I*", *Modern Drama* 18, no.1 (March 1975), 57. Brater indicated Beckett's appearance: "Beckett shrugged his shoulders and then, imitating his own creation, lifted his arms slowly and then enigmatically let them fall in a gesture of helpless compassion".
- 25) Cohn, *Just Plays*, 71-2.
- 26) Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (New York: Grove Press, 1970), 49.
- 27) Brienza, "My Shade will Comfort You": Beckett's Rites of Theater', 222-3.
- 28) Sidney Homan, *Beckett's Theaters: Interpretations for Performance* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1984), 159.
- 29) Edith Oliver, *New Yorker* (2 Dec. 1972); reprinted in *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, 329. She has revived off-Broadway plays for *The New Yorker* since 1961.
- 30) Brienza, "My Shade will Comfort You": Beckett's Rites of Theater', 222.
- 31) Brienza, "My Shade will Comfort You": Beckett's Rites of Theater', 222.
- 32) Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series XLVII (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974), 308-9.
- 33) Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable, Three Novels by Samuel Beckett: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 307. All quotations of this novel are cited by page numbers from this edition.
- 34) Cohn, *Back to Beckett*, 214.
- 35) Samuel Beckett, "Three Dialogues", *DISJECTA: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment by Samuel Beckett*, ed. and fwd. Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 139.
- 36) A. Alvarez, *Beckett*, 134.
- 37) Flechter and Spurling, *Beckett: The Playwright*, 123.
- 38) Jean-Jacques Mayoux, *Samuel Beckett* (Harlow: The British Council by Longman Group, 1974), 40.
- 39) Benedict Nightingale, *New Statesman* (2 Dec. 1972); reprinted in *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, 331. He is a drama critic for *The New Statesman*.
- 40) Robert Brustein, *Observer* (21 Jan. 1973); reprinted in Graver and Federman, "Introduction", *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, 36.
- 41) Oliver, *New Yorker*, 328-9.
- 42) Samuel Beckett, "Dante . . . Bruno , Vico . . . Joyce", *DISJECTA*, 21.
- 43) Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, Bollingen Series XLII (New York: Princeton UP, 1993), 8.