

**Towards Delogocentrism:  
A study of the Dramatic works of Samuel  
Beckett, Tom Stoppard and Caryl Churchill**

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Fereshteh Varziri Nasab Kermany

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1. Gutachter: Herr Prof. Dr. Eckhard Lobsien

2. Gutachter: Frau Prof. Dr. Susanne Scholz

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To those whose voices remain unheard

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## **Abstract**

The relation between reality and language, the instability of language as a signification system, the representation crisis, and the borders of interpretation are the controversial issues that have engaged not only philosophers, but also many authors, translators, and literary critics. Some philosophers like Derrida accuse Western thinking of being obsessed with binary oppositions. In Derrida's view, Western tradition resorts to external references as God, truth, origin, center and reason to stabilize the signification system. Since these concepts lack an internal sense and there is no transcendental signified that can fix these signifiers, language turns to an instable system by means of which no fixed meaning can be created. Many authors like Beckett, Stoppard, and Caryl Churchill also noticed this impossibility of language. While Derrida's deconstructive approach to this crisis has an epistemological nature, these playwrights present an aesthetic solution by turning the deconstructive potential of language against itself in text and performance.

This dissertation aims at exploring their performing methods and dramatic texts to demonstrate how their delogocentric strategies work. By analyzing their plays, I will examine if their use of signifiers that have no references in reality, intentional misconceptions, disintegrated subjectivities, decentered narratives, and experimental performances can help them undermine the prevailing logocentrism of Western thought. The examination of the change in aesthetic strategies from Beckett, who belongs to earlier stages of post modernism, to Caryl Churchill, who should perform in a globalized world with increasing dominance of speed and information, is another aim of this research. In my view, Beckett's obsession with unspeakable, absurdity, and disintegration of subjectivity develops to Stoppard's language games, metadrama, and anti-representation and culminates in Churchill's anti-narrative texts and pluralistic performances. The monophony of Beckett's dramatic texts is replaced by the polyphony of Churchill's performances, which are a mixture of theater, dance and music. However, all explored dramatic texts in this dissertation have something in common: they are language games, which have no claim on a faithful representation of reality or transcendental truth.

## Introduction

The clarity of language has always been the aim of those who were in search of truth or meaning. Because of the inefficiency of their medium, namely language, their hermeneutical efforts for finding the exact meaning, the truth, or the core of an idea in a text have failed. Throughout the history of thought, the reluctance of language to yield to clarity, and its high potential for creating misunderstanding, ambiguity, and vagueness have been the main hindrances for theologians or philosophers for understanding the metaphysical form of reality. Their ideal of finding a transparent language through which the reader can settle a concept or idea without problem, has permanently been disappointed by the free play of signs. With the weakening of positivistic approaches to language and thought in the twentieth century, language crisis took new dimensions. Not only language but also the issue of truth were examined in a new light. By bringing language into a focus of interest for philosophy, philosophers like Mauthner and Wittgenstein opened the way for new interpretation of reality and its representation. Wittgenstein's book *Tractatus*, for instance, is devoted to the examination of the relation between thinking and language. In his view, the borders of language determine the borders of our world (*Tractatus*: 5.6), because we can only explain our experiences through words. Thus, as Begam maintains, "Where there are no sentences, there is no truth..." (1996:16) Wittgenstein proposes in this book, that tautological expressions of logic are literally nonsense; they do not convey any information about what the facts are, they only reveal the underlying structure of all language, thought, and reality (*Tractatus*: 6.1). In his later books, like *Philosophical investigations*, he takes a closer look at language and comes to the conclusion that there is no ultimate language; we have only local language games (*Sprachspiele*), whose rules are set in the games themselves. One

word in a language game may vary in signification in the other. Wittgenstein's idea that "Alle Philosophie ist nur Sprachkritik"(Wittgenstein,1953: 299), invalidates philosophy as an ontological means for discovering reality or transcendental truths.

Following Wittgenstein, many other twentieth-century philosophers, like Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault, deny the stability of signification system and the referentiality between language and reality. In Derrida's view, for instance, meaning is perpetually deferred by supplementation or substitution. In his texts *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology*, he argues against the validity of logocentrism in the world after Nietzsche and Freud. Freud's claim, that writing is not completely conscious and Nietzsche's statement, that "truth" is just "a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms" (Nietzsche, qtd. in Anthony Easthope & Kate McGowan 114), contradict the positivistic presumptions about language, identity, and truth. Derrida believes that although the "decentring" that happened in our age is "part of the totality of an era," nevertheless, "the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of being and truth,...the Freudian critique of self-presence, that is, the critique of consciousness, of subject, of self-identity" and "Heideggerean destruction of metaphysics of onto-theology, of the determination of being as presence," have played an important role in this disruption of the concept of structure (1970:226). Derrida also maintains that there is no pre-existent truth, "transcendental signifier," or "logos" to which we can appeal to find meaning. Derrida's deconstruction, as Ulmann maintains, "Affirms the importance of ambivalence, of the relation *between* terms rather than the choice of one term over another" (1999:23). Derrida calls the futile search for truth and ultimate meaning, by resorting to the binary oppositions or "transcendental signified," the logocentrism of Western thought. Additionally, criticizing Saussure's structuralist interpretation of sign, he affirms that in

a system of signification, meaning can only be *inferred*; no sign or chains of signs can give in a determinate meaning. In his view, one cannot speak of truth apart from signification. Different elements, such as substitution, differentiation, repetition, or non-identity of the original truth, are involved in the creating of meaning in language and make the ultimate meaning unattainable. Derrida also stresses that the “undecideability” of meaning is not just an outcome of figurative language, but it is inherent in language itself. Since meaning must be decided in a system of differentiation, it will be open to different interpretations or inferences. In his view, pure original concepts, from which the Western thought has always dreamed, those, which were supposed to control the chain of words, granting them the desired decidability, do not exist. Although context can control meaning to some extent, it is not stable enough to fix it. Nealon believes that, “For Derrida, undecideability is a consequence of the functioning of the general system, a system that is grounded in difference rather than identity, a system that cannot purge the difference, the nonpresence...” (1993:44).

To overcome this undecideability, Western philosophy after Plato has tried to resort to “presence” to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. The preference of speech over writing comes from the same idea that the presence of phonetic sounds and tone of the speaker can provide us with exact meaning. In *Grammatology*, Derrida criticizes this tendency towards the subordination of writing to speech, or priority of presence over absence, and calls it “phonocentrism” or “logocentrism” of Western thought. Derrida’s attack on phonocentrism is indeed an attack on the whole “metaphysics of presence,” which has dominated Western tradition since Plato. This criticism incorporates not only the priority of speech over writing and dominance of meaning, but also the prevailing



rationalism in Western thought. Central to logocentrism, suggests Derrida, is the belief that the whole body of human knowledge originates in a primal language granted to humans by God or another transcendental signified. To prove the existence of the world and the ethical system hidden in the “holy word of God,” philosophers have to prove the existence of a first cause. The absence of God in the modern Philosophy after Nietzsche changed the Cartesian view of world into a more pessimistic one. The confidence of modern man in anchoring himself in a secure relation to his environment was weakened. The claim to the presence of abstract truths in many fields was replaced by the hesitancy of subjective views, which refuted the efficiency of language as a strong argumentative medium. Many philosophers began to examine the nature of language as the medium of retrogressive arguments. The transparency of this medium, which was the goal of all those who were trying to present a rational discussion or a body of knowledge, was questioned. Some philosophers like Wittgenstein ceased to see language as a unified signification system, affirming that the meaning of a word is determined according to the system in which it functions. As Norris suggests:

If meaning could only attain to a state of self-sufficient intelligibility, language would no longer present any problem but serve as an obedient vehicle of thought. To pose the question of writing in its radical, Derridean form is thus to transgress- or violently oppose- the conventional relation of language and thought (30).

Derrida's delogocentrism denies the possibility of finding transparency in language and affirms that "the central signified, the originality, or transcendental signified is revealed to be never absolutely present outside a system of differences, and this absence of an ultimate signified extends the domain and play of signification to infinity. (Derrida, qtd. in David Lodge and Nigel Wood, 2000: 246). Furthermore, from a poststructuralist view, reality is the world perceived in a human sign system which determines and interprets events and objects. As Derrida in "Structure, Sign, and Play in The Discourse of the Human Sciences" maintains, "In the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse..." (1993:225) Thus, there is no direct reference between words or concepts of language and objects in the real world; in other words, language actuates reality. If between a signifier and a signified no identity or representation exists, meaning falls into a net of possibilities of interpretation, which makes it rather perplexing and misleading than transparent.

Unlike metaphysical philosophers, who strive to escape from this multiplicity of meaning or ambiguity of a written text, some modern and postmodern authors, like Samuel Beckett, Tom Stoppard, and Caryl Churchill use this potentiality to escape from the boundaries of language and text. The "unreadability" of their works derives from their intentional protest against language, which resists their challenges for articulating themselves. In a letter to Axel Kaun, Samuel Beckett expresses hope that "the time will come....when language is most efficiently used where it is most efficiently misused" (qtd. in Marjorie Perloff. 1996:120).

This dissertation aims at exploring the delogocentric aspirations of these writers, who subverted the tyranny of dramatic text and the overhang of thought over language by innovations in text and performance. Tracing the changes in the literary style and dramatic techniques of these writers, as a consequence of the reciprocation

between existing philosophical and language theories and their art, is another undertaking of this study. Beckett's protest against the logocentrism of Western thought, in my view, still suffers from monophony in Bakhtinian term, but Churchill's experimental style creates a carnivalesque theater, which defies all logocentric power structures, including that of a dramatic text. In my thesis, I offer an in-depth analysis of some plays by Beckett, Stoppard, and Churchill, which share a deep critique of the discourse through which Western thought has claimed to discern reality and subject positions. Although the three playwrights offer very distinctive approaches to deconstructing a text, I try to examine the methods by which they succeed to create texts without a "legitimation narrative." In my view, the understanding of their texts is based rather on individual inferences and linguistic experiences of the reader/spectator than logocentric binaries. The binaries like good/evil, spiritual/physical, man/woman and God/evil, lose their validity and determination in their texts, which contradict their own words. They introduce a kind of literalization onto the stage performance, which defies the supposed theatrical presence and fulfill the Derridean deconstructive aspiration.

I have chosen drama as the study field of my dissertation because in theater, many other factors other than pure text are at work, which make theater the appropriate genre for escaping the dominancy of language. Movements, gestures, face mimics, lights, and spectacle are all semiotic elements, which escape determinate meaning and prepare more room for different interpretations. Moreover, drama is a form of writing that tries to create the illusion of presence and spontaneity, while absence and arbitrariness are inseparable from it. As Jernigan points out:

The tenets of aesthetic and theoretic postmodernism would seem to be effortlessly captured and expressed in theater. For instance that reality, truth and identity are determined by language and the various discursive and power formation inhabiting language, the core premises of poststructuralist theory is enacted in aesthetic postmodernism through its self-reflexivity, its foregrounding of artifice, its play with the author function, its textualizing and decentering of character and its experiments with narration. What can be more obviously self-reflexive, more obviously a vehicle of self-representation than theater? (2001: 9)

This self-reflexive quality of theater suggests that there are just words and conventions in theater; there is no truth or reality outside the unique performance of every night. The bond between character and the body of an actor can be broken in different performances of different directors. Being performed in a new language, evoking new connotations, the dialogs acquire new dimensions. With the disintegration of a universal language, postmodern theatre undertakes to de-theologize itself, changing the concepts of self, speech, and presence and looking into historical and cultural contexts for new possibilities to express itself.

The artificiality of theater in re-presenting truth or reality becomes the main basis for a postmodern approach. The space that a director or an author creates to give the illusion of a real world becomes the scope of imaginary characters in the body of actors to show that they are experiencing something new. The spectators, on the other hand, pretend that they are sharing a real experience, although they are aware of the arbitrary nature of the whole game. Jernigan believes that “the

playwright's word and often his or her vision [is] inevitably subject to potentially radical meditation by directors and actors. The closure of the text is also, more or less, shattered by exigencies of staging and contingencies of performances"(2001:9). Besides, the illusory "presence" of the characters on stage paradoxically contradicts the logocentric preference for presence and contributes to a poststructuralist theory of theater. Theatrical presence is indeed an illusion; although the characters are present, their presence does not help the accessibility of truth or meaning; it manipulates the truth and provides the ground for a deconstructive approach. "New performances," as Elinor Fuchs suggests, "have complicated the spectator's experience of theatrical presence."(74)She also believes that, "Derrida opened a theoretical route to the new theater, where old vocabularies of plot and character had lost their interpretative power."(72) In her view, by denying the capability of human beings "to enter a self-same present" (Fuchs,74), Derrida challenges the metaphysical illusion of theatrical presence.

This dissertation undertakes to examine the possibility of producing non-definitive, deconstructive texts by using Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, *End game*, and *Not I*, Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, and *Dogg's Hamlet*, Churchill's *Blue Heart*, *Softcops*, *Mad Forest*, and *This is a Chair* as proof texts,. I am concerned with that part of Derrida's criticism of Western philosophy that deals with issues of reality, meaning, identity, and metaphysics of presence. I explore the dramatic works of these authors to see if Derridean concept of deconstruction and delogocentrism is practically applicable in theater. My approach, however, does not aspire to be a deconstructive one.

In my analysis of the dramatic texts of the mentioned playwrights Lyotard, with his definition of postmodern situation and the impact of such situation on postmodern

narrative, and his prophecy that “the legitimation narratives will meet rejection in the postmodern era,” is another point of interest. Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* asserts that the grand or meta-narratives of the past, according to which the validity of other texts was evaluated, can no more inspire certainty. His proposed “incredibility towards meta-narratives” in postmodern era, provides the basis for later arguments against the dominance of the grand narratives of the past on literature and life. Lyotard maintains that the same principle that is used to legitimate knowledge is used to legitimate decision-making in society, government, laws, education, and many other basic elements of society. Legitimation in the Enlightenment was tied to what Lyotard calls meta-narratives, or grand narratives. Meta-narratives are the philosophies which make ethical and political prescriptions for society, and generally legalize decision-making and the settlement of what is considered truth. In his view, the liberation of humanity through science (the modern) is a meta-narrative, and the establishment of a universally valid philosophy for humanity is another one. Lyotard claims that postmodern age has deprived us from the belief in meta-narratives and the legitimating function they once played in society. (*The Postmodern Condition*) The overarching narratives of past are replaced by local narratives or, in Wittgenstein’s terms, language games. These limited contexts have clear rules for judging knowledge and evaluating behaviors, which help different social groups to regulate their behavior through linguistic codes. In Lyotard’s view the heterogeneity of these games makes the consensus impossible. By breaking life into different micro-games, with particular rules for judging and acting, the dominance of metanarratives is destabilized. He coins the word “paralogy” to explain how the legitimizing principle in postmodern age works. Fragmentation, repetition, syntactic failure, polyphony, and chaotic structure are the features of the petite-narrative of the postmodern age.

By scrutinizing the interaction between the ideas of these postmodern ideologues and the dramatic methods of the mentioned playwrights, I indicate how the episodic structure, which jumps forward and backward in time rather than following a smooth progress of narration, along with repetitive patterns and other techniques, help these authors produce postmodern deconstructive narratives. In my view Beckett, Stoppard, and Churchill take a deriding standpoint from Western thought by writing texts that lack a decidable, definite meaning and creating performances that defy old concepts of spectacle, character, and plot. The first three chapters of this dissertation examine Beckettian drama, which, as Martin asserts, “breaks down the barriers between speech and writing and presents a postmodern carnivalesque notion of language: his display of the ambivalence of language connotes the lack of determinant meaning in his texts” (Martin, 2004:3). In Beckett’s plays presence becomes meaningless; the speech incomprehensible; and language totally confusing. Reaching a meaning in Beckettian drama is difficult because characters have lost the assurance necessary for meaningful expressions. They are compelled to speak, although they have no interesting thing to exchange. They speak to overcome the fear of loneliness. Their words echo in the cold fearful solitude in which they are trapped and make their miserable life tolerable.

In *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, the futility of a binary signification, the non-relationality of the coined word “Godot,” the resistance of the play to define the identity or the meaning of this absent entity, and the absence that invalidates the characters’ presence embody an unsolvable ontological problem, which challenges the spectator’s interpretative assumptions. Beckett refuses to give a fixed meaning for “Godot,” asserting that he himself does not know. The word, like Derrida’s *différance*, escapes a one-to-one correspondence in signification system because it

does not refer to a concrete object in the outside world. There is no signified to give it a meaning and this “absence of an ultimate signified,” as Abraham maintains, “Extends the domain and play of signification to infinity” (246). The insufficiency of language as a means of communicating idea is also shown in Lucky’s speech. The miserable philosopher of the play tries to express himself through the words that fail in conveying meaning. The ambivalence of his situation is that his lecture is simultaneously meaningless and meaningful; his philosophy is entangled in the grips of rhetoric. The paralyzed philosopher is also bereft of the logic necessary for his arguments and repeats the motif “of reason unknown” throughout his long mechanical lecture. By asserting that, “Time will tell,” he attempts to persuade the unseen audience that the sacred truth can be accessed someday. His argument, like that of his idealist predecessor Descartes, proves to be ineffective because the thinking self is bereft of a structured language. His speech turns to be a chaotic mixture of words, or a language game without rules. The metaphysical signified “divine apathia,” “divine athambia,” or “divine aphasia” signifies nothing in the realm of experiencing reality; it is just an abstract word made for Lucky’s language game. Like Godot, this divine existence can only be defined in the boundaries of language or in a series of arbitrary rules and does not have a counterpart in reality.

Endgame is another language game, which, as Martin points out, “Examines the irony that is at the heart of human relationship...” (2). The characters know and openly announce that they are playing. Hence, the theatrical space between character and actor disappears. Ham and Clov play different roles simultaneously: they are father and son, director and actor, author and performer, and master and servant. Their role-playing keeps them from breaking down in a meaningless world, a world dominated by insignificant, incoherent memories, a world without any



progression. The experience of reality becomes pointless in their case because there is no world outside the characters' minds. From the characters' limited view, the two windows of the play, only a selected perception is possible; therefore, they take the stage for reality. They do not even try to bring their representation close to reality; they live in this representation and set the rules of their game under the very eyes of the audience. Hamm, who yearns for being in the center, announces now and then, "Me to play," and Clov scrutinizes the audience by his binoculars and comments on their reaction. Tired of the misery of their arbitrary life, the characters try to reduce the burden of their theater/life by story-telling or speaking. Words, however, do not help them communicate; they deepen their misery. Being exhausted from the futility of communication through words, Hamm cries, "Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark" (Beckett, 1990, 26) The words become babbles, conveying no meaning, the contact is just appearance, and the center for which Hamm craves cannot be achieved. His centripetal quest fails because in the thought and philosophy of an apocalyptic world no divinity, no transcendental signified keeps the ties to the center.

This decentredness not only prevails the world but also the self in Beckett's work. *Not I, for instance*, demonstrates how the wholeness of a subject is disintegrated into a mouth, which speaks uninterruptedly, and an ear, which listens to the obscure narration. The Mouth in *Not I* relates the story of a "she" whose identity remains unknown to the audience. The auditorium, to which the mouth speaks, remains in darkness of anonymity as well. The mouth speaks with "lips", "cheeks" "jaws" and "tongue." No more identity, no more knowledge. Identity and language become one and none of them reveals any truth. As Martin maintains:

Beckett's use of "character" in this manner provides us with a window into the theoretical gap that is fundamental to postmodern thought. This "gap" represents that absurdity of language: simultaneously, language provides us with an excess of meaning while also providing a lack of meaning because language is always already overdetermined. Language is slippery; we explain concepts through the use of other concepts, via the chain of signifiers; thus we can never "get to" the truth. We are alienated from (or lack) absolute truth (3).

Mouth's hopeless struggles to narrate something meaningful fail because her head is filled with "buzzing" words that resist producing any meaning. The totality of self is also lost in the broken structure of language. The narrator and the narrated are not distinguishable in the fragmented narration. As Martin maintains, "Not I does in fact succeed in making a poem out of the decentring of the speaking subject and the delogocentring of language, discourse in general"(14).

In all of the three mentioned plays, the tradition of Western world in providing the reader/spectator with a meaningful definitive text is ignored. The pauses and silences that are integrated in the body of the play and share to the understanding of the situation, the overlapping systems of signification, the inability of the language to communicate, and the inevitable gaps in the language and existence of the characters, which cannot be filled or closed in spite of their hopeless challenge, contribute to the Derridean view of delogocentrism and deconstruction. Beckett challenges against the closure of the gaps in the signification system by the broken

sentences of Not I, by the meaningless exchange of words between Estragon and Vladimir, by showing the gaps in the thinking system of Lucky, and by undoing Hamm's struggles for maintaining his authority over the text. As Martin asserts, "Discourse is constituted by the uncontrollable free play of signification; it is everywhere and nowhere at the same time. It simultaneously limits and orders our world, our thoughts and our emotions"(14).The gaps become deeper in Beckettian drama as he moves from his early plays to the later ones, till the silence of "unsayable" overcomes language.

Stoppard contributes to Derridean challenge against the prevailing logocentric thought in western tradition by building his metadramatic texts on the borrowed elements of the other texts. He takes his point of departure from the mimetic theories of art, which take art as a representation of the real world, by employing the symbolic order of other texts as the realities for his texts. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, analyzed in chapter four of this study, is a metadramatic work, which borrows dramatic elements from Shakespeare, Beckett and Pirandello to provide the audience with a new reading of Hamlet's story. "The metaphysics of presence" loses its validity in this play because the characters are declared dead from the beginning; they should be understood in their absence. This ambivalence of presence/absence, this remoteness of truth, which makes the accessibility of the signified impossible, contributes a lot to Derridean idea that no sacred -text and no author-God could exist in postmodern thought and literature. The literariness of characters' being, and the arbitrariness of the plot invalidate any search for reality in the background of the play. The characters hopeless search for identity also becomes meaningless because they have no power on Shakespeare's established text that has already determined their fate. Thus not only language, but also the characters are reduced to signs which should be perceived in an ambiguous system of signification. How could two unreal,

dead characters come upon knowledge about their identity or reach the inaccessible eternal truth? The gap in their existence is too deep to be filled with a meaning. Since the whole world of the play is an arbitrary one, the language becomes more than ever foggy, misleading, and obscure.

The characters try to discover pattern and purpose in their existence by appealing to scientific logic, but patterns and purposes are denied to them in the world of the dead. They cannot find the missing part to complete the puzzle of their existence because such a part does not exist. In fact they are obsessed by the logocentrism of Western metaphysics; their lives need a piece of narrative of past, or a prophecy of future, or a piece of information, like the reason why they are summoned, to find a meaning. But meaning remains absent from the text of their existence; the world of uncertainties, in which Ros and Guil are put, does not provide them with any reasonable answers. As Andretta states it, "The inaccessibility of knowledge, the inscrutability of fate, the absence of logic, justice and moral purpose in the universe, the difficulty of communication, all underscore the absurdity of life and man's inevitable plight"(1993:40). In their search for truth, they come upon the disastrous knowledge that truths are just foggy concepts which evade recognition. Guil's protest that, "Words, words. Words, they're all we have to go on" (45), is the protest of the postmodern man against a language that confines his existence. If "truths" are just ambiguous, undefined terms, asks Stoppard, why not abandoning them? Like the "Chinese philosopher from the T'ang Dynasty<sup>2</sup>," who "dreamed he was a butterfly and from that moment he was never quite sure that he was not a butterfly dreaming it was a Chinese philosopher"(Stoppard:66), we can never be sure about our cognitive integration. Stoppard, like Derrida and Lyotard, asserts in his play that, "Reality is susceptible of many versions and many perspectives, each of which is valid but not necessarily true."(111) By denying the existence of objectivity, truth,

and logic, Stoppard takes his point of departure from the positivism of Enlightenment; by writing a sub-text, which finds meaning just through intertextuality, he breaks the boundaries of modern drama and defies the modernist concept of author/God. The text of R&G does not refer to a story in the real world or to certain truths; on the contrary, it aspires to move smoothly among the polyphonic worlds of literary and philosophical traditions.

In his later plays, like *After Magritte* or *Jumpers*, Stoppard puts forwards other ontological questions about the world that the stage characters inhabit and about the boundary between reality and performance. The philosopher George Moor, for instance, who struggles to justify the existence of God or the eternal Truth in his lecture, is unable to deal with his own domestic problems. As Stoppard in *Hapgood* asserts, "Truths which are important don't reside in particular events in the physical world....on the contrary, the essential truths are foggier things which we recognize instinctively rather than analyses and establish by demonstrative proof" (1988:73). Moor's bombastic lecture is nothing but a tricky language game, which just leads to blurred concepts. In *After Magritte*, Stoppard questions the reliability of perception. As Andretta observes, "In his paintings, Magritte tried to show that reality is susceptible of many versions and many perspectives, each of which valid but not necessarily true" (111). Following Magritte, Stoppard opens his play with a bizarre tableau, which proves to be just a domestic scene that has nothing to do with the narrative that Inspector's "panoptic eye" tries to extract from it. Stoppard ridicules not only the Inspector's attempt to discover the truth, but also that of the audience.

*The Real Inspector Hound*, which is the focus of the fifth chapter of this study, not only subverts the boundaries of representation and reality, but also demonstrates how destructive the audience's interpretative tendencies can be. By producing

different levels of spectators and narratives, Stoppard opens a metadramatic window in his dramatic work and engage the spectators in his ontological questions. The incomprehensibility of language and its insufficiency to provide us with clear ontological answers is what Stoppard in *Dogg's Hamlet* demonstrates. He creates an aesthetic distance for the audience between the abbreviated performance of *Hamlet* and the scenes that the schoolboys, in a strange English, perform. Wittgenstein's theories of ostensive learning turn to a farce of dumb communication between Easy-as the learner of Dogg's language- and schoolboys, or the construction workers of the play as teachers. English in its new sense can only be understood accidentally and after a lot of erroneous trials. Wittgenstein's philosophical attempt for composing a world out of linguistic experiences is ridiculed in Stoppard's play. He demonstrates how unreliable Wittgenstein's "logical space" is. Torn from their context, the habitual words become nonsensical for Easy and for the audience. The audience of abbreviated *Hamlet* should have the same experience, because the English they know and speak is used in a new sense. The parodic prolog of Shakespeare at the beginning of Dogg's *Hamlet*, which is an amalgam of most quoted sentences of *Hamlet*, shows the futility of bombarding the audience with ideas. The Shakespeare of this prolog, like his predecessor Lucky, tries to keep the authority of his text and is unaware of the nonsensicality of his lecture. Whether Easy learns English in its new sense or not remains unclear. In any case, the audience cannot share any linguistic experience with the characters/actors. Stoppard's language game leaves the spectators in perplexity, resisting their interpretative desires by robbing them from their only medium of interpretation.

Jernigan believes that "a thoroughly postmodern work would simultaneously raise ontological questions about the nature of the past and epistemological questions about how we are to know the past, all the while remaining incredulous about that

past's grand meta-narrative (2001:148). In his view, Stoppard raises many such questions but finally finds answers for them. Jernigan differentiates between Stoppard's anti-realism and that of Caryl Churchill, and maintains that instead of "encouraging his audience to leave with widely different perspectives, Stoppard strives to instill a homogeneity of thought." (66) I think, the postmodernism of Stoppard lies in the multiplication of the textual voices participating in, and simultaneously commenting upon the dramatic event, the anti-representational narrative form, the disruption of the coherent narrative, and the logical impossibility of his theatrical spaces.

In Churchill's work, "the incredulity toward metanarratives," and the alienation of reality start from her earlier works like *Traps*, with its permanent change of signs, and culminates in her later books, like *A Mouthful of Birds*, *Ice cream*, and *Hotel*. Her anti-narrative style in *This is a Chair* and *Blue Heart*, discussed in the last two chapters of this study, are deconstructive attempts, in Derridean sense, to subvert the domination of text and thought in theater. As Aston maintains:

In challenging the ways in which we make sense of meaning, Churchill's experimental style demanded a different reading of the staged world: one where rules are broken and meaning is constantly being made and unmade through the language of performance rather than the word of the dramatic script (2001:81).

In *Blue Kettle*, for instance, the words "blue" and "Kettle", which are arbitrary signs at the beginning, gradually devour all other words and create a linguistically

incomprehensible text. Because of the multiplicity of references, even in the play's internal system of signification, the signifiers lose their referentiality.

While the master narratives of the past searched unification, Churchill's deconstructive works are formed by fragmentation. The repetitive form of *Heart's Desire*, for instance, rejects any consistency in narration and fights against unification of textual elements. As Jernigan maintains "while *Heart's Desire* questions the sovereignty of the author and director and draws an analogy between their power in producing theatre to that of the head of the household, *Blue Kettle* takes things even further by questioning the sovereignty of the text itself (2001:41). The sovereignty of texts is also questioned in *Mad Forest* and *This is a Chair*. The titles of the short scenes of *This is a Chair* propose important political or social issues, like "The War in Bosnia," or "Genetic Engineering." But, instead of discussing these issues, Churchill provides us with the scenes of the routine life, like dating, feeding a child, or discussing a trivial thing. The discrepancy between our expectations, raised by the titles, and the staged scenes breaks the epistemological stability in this play in a Magrittean style. Jernigan believes "while Stoppard tries to fix heterotopias, Churchill revels in them in such a way that her drama becomes heterotopian" (2001:37) I think whereas Stoppard's approach to postmodern issues is rather textual or theatrical, Churchill's approach is socio-political and anti authorial. Her theater fights against those powers, which in the name of being, presence, absolute truth, or faithful representation, try to give shape to society and art.



## Chapter 1

### **Beckett and the Impossibility of Language**

All his life Beckett struggled with language, dissatisfied with its inability to express exactly the meaning that always just eluded him. What he nearly achieved was a scream of agony containing the total impotence of a human life (Cadler 4)

Beckett's work has been signified as "the literature of silence" by Ihab Hassan. The reason is the futile attempt of these works to communicate in a situation in which words do not cooperate with the writer in conveying meaning or in articulating ideas. In *Ohio Impromptu*, Beckett repeatedly asserts that, there is "nothing left to tell." His obsession with language derives from the incompatibility of words with the thoughts and feelings they are supposed to convey. The writer is thus pushed towards creating a "literature of unword" (Beckett 1983: 173). His awareness of the impossibility of metaphysical immobility of signifieds made him think about silent speaking, in which nothing can be approached through naming. He aspires, therefore, to create the "unnamable." Most of his critics agree that because of its inherent impossibility, his language is rather a barrier than assistance in the way of understanding him. His works, like abstract paintings, can be perceived in different ways without coming to a definitive interpretation. He intentionally avoids providing the audience with a definite logocentric text with decidable meaning. The failure of language to communicate, the

disability of words to convey a fixed signification, and the inefficiency of texts to come to a closure, are all portrayed as inevitable in his works. As Barella maintains, “Beckett, destroying grammatical, syntactic, lexical rules and meaning, creates a sort of non-language (or rather a way of expression which is to a certain extent not subject to conventional rules). His readers cannot be conventional either; they have to interpret the text at different levels from the lexical to allegorical” (1999: 54).

Beckett’s obsession with language led him to the exploration of different philosophical insights into the relationship of thinking and language. His first published work, *Whoroscope*, is a long poem dedicated to the examination of Cartesian project for liberating the thinking self from the constraints of body. The aspiration of the *Cogito* to free itself from the restraints of reality, which was a serious matter for Descartes, turns to be the subject of literary parody for Beckett. The same parody becomes the central theme of *Murphy*, an explicitly philosophical novel. The criticism of Cartesian enlightenment, idealism, and dogmatic interpretation of world can be traced throughout Beckett’s literary career. His treatment of these ideas, however, is often ambivalent and parodic rather than clear-cut and serious. His “*Godot*,” though having the mysterious characteristic of a religious savior, is presented too ambiguously and mockingly to embody the possibility of a sacred solution for the eternal suffering of humans. The demythification of theological interpretation of being, though very dominant in *Endgame*, cannot be taken as a leitmotif in this play; the multiplicity of the levels of meaning hinders the critics from understating it to a criticism of theological dogmatism. Although its reference to religious theme of apocalyptic ending of the world can be inferred from the title, the halt position of the characters and the promising appearance of the boy at the end of the play, though uncertain, deny a checkmate to the play. Beckett, though familiar

with the ideas of Heidegger and Sartre in this relation, avoids taking a philosophical position and remains skeptic about determined definitions. The classical concept of self-identity is another realm of investigation for Beckett. If the Cartesian “self-thinking thought” cannot exist and the possibility of accessing reality through perception is also questioned, identity can only be defined in terms of language. Since language itself is an unstable system, no stable identity can be extracted from its abstract definitions. The search for self-identity, an identity separate from language and environment, ends in the negation of self in *Not I*. The traumatized self loses its ability to differentiate between first person “I” and third person “she.”

The examination of philosophical and ethical considerations can be observed throughout Beckett’s works. The ambiguous waiting of the two vagabonds for a savior or a “second coming” in *Waiting for Godot*, the speculations about the end of the world in *Endgame*, the endeavors of a self to capture his identity by resorting to the past in *Krapp’s last Tape*, the hopeless efforts of the individual for remaining invisible in *Film*, the difficulty to say “the unsayable” in *Unnamable*, and the negation of a center in *Quad*, demonstrate how the spirit of time is reflected in his works. Kearney believes that, “Beckett’s demythologizing of the scientific pretensions of Cartesian idealism, dogmatic theology and linguistic positivism may be seen as a literary counterpart to Jacques Derrida’s recent philosophy of deconstruction. Derrida develops Heidegger’s destruction of the logos of being into a radical deconstruction of the logos of language” (1987, 291). Beckett’s approach to philosophical arguments, as Kearney mentions, is a literary one. His dramatic and fictional works obliterate the certitude of all philosophy, theology, and language by turning them to parody or pastiche. His literature not only questions the nature of God, self, and reality, and endorses the role that language in the determination of such concepts

plays, but also stresses the difficulty of embracing the formlessness of being into a form of art. Hence, he calls his art an “art of failure,” an art whose very medium, language, turns against itself.

Feeling defeated by an impossible language, Beckett turns to the theories of language expressed by Mauthner and Wittgenstein to examine new explanations. Mauthner’s assertion that there would be no thought without language, and Wittgenstein’s suggestion that world is only commensurable through words, seemed to express what Beckett endeavored to say. Wittgenstein’s statement in *Philosophical Investigation* that, “Wovon Man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss Man schweigen,” is very similar to what the character of the Unnamable experiences. To capture silence, to free oneself from the babbling of words, however, seems to be impossible for Beckett. Consequently, the comic efforts of Beckett’s characters to stop talking - like his efforts to stop writing- fail; language resists every conscious confrontation. A split appears between what the characters claim to do and what they really do. In other words, the constative and performative dimensions of language oppose each other. Language loses its function as a vehicle of meaning in his drama and becomes obscure and incommunicable; therefore, instead of influencing other characters or the audience, it remains ineffective and aimless.

The incompetence of language to capture silence or to create fixed meaning is portrayed in all of Beckett’s works. As Kearney points out:

Beckett’s writing masterfully deconstructs itself by directing our attention to itself as writing, that is a system of sounding signifiers irretrievably at odds with the ideal of a corresponding silent signified. It is only by deconstructing the word’s pretention to achieve self-

adequation by means of silence, that we can uncover its hidden self-alienation. The Irony which Beckett makes such great play of is, of course, that one is obliged to use language to deconstruct language (360).

This deconstruction takes place during the very process of creating a text. The endless repetition in his plays, which seems to be necessary for the process of creation, manifests Beckett's uncertainty about the stability of his expressions. Like all unstable systems, his texts fail to complete themselves and reach a meaning.

The parodic quest of the two clowns of *Waiting for Godot* for absolute meaning, for instance, like other similar quests in his works, remains futile. The unnamable God does not show himself, the past remains unreconstructable, and the future obscure. The impasse of memory drives the characters towards the invention of stories about their past and quoting their own words. The permanent repetition of these quotations causes the loss of their significance and renders the play a spiral descending towards a non-closure. The characters either repeat their own actions and words (intratextual references) or those of others (intertextual references). These frequent references break the structure of the play into fragments and hinder the reader/audience from bringing his different interpretations to a final conclusion. Danziger believes that, "A narrative that zigzags between multiple versions of itself is bound to destroy the illusions of reality that most readers tend to crave (11). Beckett breaks these illusions in his plays by portraying characters, scenes, and texts which escape representation. The illusion of reality in *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, is destroyed by staging an empty scene with a withered tree, peopled by two vagabonds, who are obsessed with serious ontological questions. The scenery proposes more a circus with two clowns than the real world. However, the characters are suffering in their comic situation.

Their tie with time and space is broken and they lack both personal and historical memory, but they are searching for something to give a meaning to their existence. Mr. Godot is the solution, the “logos” which can bind up the fragments in their narrative and brings it to a conclusion. The identity of this absent presence is unknown though, both for the characters and for the audience. As Worton maintains:

Much has been written about who or what Godot is. My own view is that he is simultaneously whatever we think he is and not what we think he is: he is an absence, who can be interpreted at moments as God, death, the lord of the manor, a benefactor, even Pozzo. But Godot has a function rather than a meaning. He stands for what keeps us chained - to and in - existence. He is the unknowable that represents hope in an age when there is no hope; he is whatever fiction we want him to be - as long as he justifies our life-as-waiting (1995: 70-71).

Godot can answer the questions which engage the characters’ mind; he can define past, present, and future for them; and he can give them a task to do, if he comes.

His everlasting absence, however, frustrates their hopes and makes them nervous. The following dialog shows the hidden desire in the characters to liberate themselves from the distressful act of waiting for an unknown or metaphysical entity:

Estragon: [His mouth full, vacuously.] We are not tied!

Vladimir: I don’t hear a word you’re saying.

Estragon: [Chews, swallows.] I’m asking if we’re tied.

Vladimir: Tied?

Estragon: Ti-ed

Vladimir: How do you mean tied?

Estragon: Down

Vladimir: But to whom?

Estragon: To your man

Vladimir: To Godot? Tied to Godot? What an idea! No question of it. [pause] For the moment.

Vladimir's denial of their bondage to Godot is followed by a pause, showing his hesitation, and a phrase which contradicts the first statement, emphasizing that this bondage is just a temporary one. The temporariness of their waiting, however, is discarded in the progression of the play because the same act is repeated. The characters get more obsessed with finding a way out of their miserable situation every time that Godot's presence is postponed. Estragon's lament, "Nothing to be done" (Beckett 1990:11), repeated later by Vladimir, expresses the agony of the human race, trapped in the circularity of life between birth and death. Vladimir's reply, though irrelevant to what Estragon has said, expresses his deep despair of going on the same vicious circle: "I am beginning to come round to the opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't tried everything. And I resumed the struggle" (11). As a Christian, however, he knows that being desperate is a sin; therefore he tries to overcome his emotions and tells Estragon that they must take heart and keep waiting. To justify himself he resorts to the Bible, or to the immobile Word, stressing that, "Hope deferred maketh the something sick." "The something," which he cannot remember, or is unable to utter, turns his religious philosophizing to a parody. He also tries to console himself by resorting to the probability of being saved like one of the two thieves who were hanged together with

Christ. The fact that he loses his heart very soon and welcomes Estragon's idea of hanging themselves while waiting, shows that the center to which he tries to resort cannot hold for a long time. This process of losing and taking heart repeats itself throughout the play and they keep waiting.

During this act of waiting, they should do something to pass the time; therefore, they try to reconstruct the past by evoking the different pieces of their narrative from their memory:

Vladimir: Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? [He reflects.] Get up till I embrace you.

Estragon: [irritably.] Not now, not now.

Vladimir: [Hurt, coldly] May one inquire where His Highness spent the night?

Estragon: In a ditch

Vladimir: [Admirably.] A ditch! Where?

Estragon: [Without gesture.] Over there.

Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?

Estragon: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.

Vladimir: The same lot as usual?

Estragon: The same? I don't know.

Vladimir: When I think of it...all these years...but for me ...where would you be ...? [Decisively] You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it.

The evocation of the memories of the past just reveals that they had to go through the same kind of tormenting experience in the past and that there will be no promising end for their narrative. They are doomed, like Prometheus or Sisyphus, to repeat the same undertaking, without knowing the philosophy behind it or its goal. The inevitability of the situation has paralyzed them so much that they cannot react to it. Estragon does not even know if he was beaten the same as before. Vladimir on



the other hand tries to philosophize and justify the whole suffering. Throughout the first act of the play, he introduces different elements of Christianity to give a meaning to their deeds, but he finally gives up and asserts angrily that, "Nothing is certain when you're about."

This uncertainty manifests itself in their dialogs, which are sometimes the repetition of each other's sentences. What they cannot communicate is the pain and suffering that they have:

Vladimir: It hurts?

Estragon: Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!

Vladimir: [angrily] No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say If you had what I have.

Estragon: It hurts?

Vladimir: Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!

Wittgenstein believes that propositions about pain are among those speech acts whose communicative aspect can never be sure, because one has no idea what kind of experience of pain the other side has, and how one can sympathize with him. The exchange of feelings between Estragon and Vladimir turns to an absurd role-changing for them. Like clowns, they repeat whatever they hear, discharging the words "hurt" and "suffering" from their signification. Communicating misery in this scene turns to a pastiche, demonstrating the incommunicability of experience through language. It is more a language game of imitating suffering than communicating it. Repetition distances them from the original pain.

The role attributed to Godot is putting an end to the characters' pain and turning their game of chaotic structure, fragmented message, and decentered narrative to a linear and ordered modern work. His presence is supposed to produce a meaningful

whole of their shattered existence. Nevertheless, Godot is an equivocal entity. Like Jehovah of Old Testament, his wrath can be frightening, and like Messiah, his Second Coming can be redeeming. He punishes if the characters leave, and he redeems if they stay and wait. Although waiting is promising, the void of hope and order in their existence and the circularity of their experience are severe and perturbing. The characters' yearning for turning Godot's absence to presence, resembles the endeavor of Western thought for substituting the absence of the immobile signified by the presence of theoretical logos. Presence promises clarity and creates a concrete, touchable truth. Vladimir's desire to have an exact picture of Godot's appearance shows his desire for bringing him down to the level of human understanding:

Vladimir: (Softly) Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?

Boy: Yes Sir.

Vladimir: Fair or... (he hesitates)...or black?

Boy: I think it's white, Sir.

Vladimir tries to adjust Godot's picture to what Western metaphysic has provided for him as the foundation of his logocentric beliefs. Estragon, however, is more concerned about Godot's personality and his behavior. For Didi, the priest/philosopher of the play, the physical image of god figure is accompanied by the religious menace of punishment. Godot is the logos, positioned in the center of metaphysical thought.

As an entity that escapes definition, however, Godot is closer to Derrida's definition of "différance" than to the metaphysical concepts of divine logos. Derrida describes différance as "the formation of form" (Derrida 1976: 63), "the historical and epochal unfolding of Being" (Derrida 1982: 22), something that negates origin. The

absent Godot, throws the idea of "origin," of true original meaning, into radical question, because it cannot be easily categorized or adjusted to an object outside the text; it can be a lot of things simultaneously and nothing at all; it is an aporic being, which escapes interpretation. The characters' attempts to capture this non-entity, to enter this unknown creature into the realm of known by meeting him or making him present are all in vain. He does not appear and the repetitive structure of waiting, of meaninglessness, of babbling words, keeps going on to infinity.

Inventing devices to make their waiting tolerable is the only thing that the characters can do in Godot's everlasting absence. Their language manipulation, their exchange of trivialities, and their role-playing have the same function for them as carrot eating: they are pastimes. Hence, the characters move easily from one topic to another without bringing it to a definite conclusion. They speak in order to feel that they are still living. When the element of communication is omitted from speech, the bound between language and characters' deeds will be broken. Didi and Gogo claim that they go and they do not move; they speak about pain but they do not convey any feelings. The whole situation, therefore, creates a kind of non-relationality between language and reality. Since the tie between language and reality is broken, words lose their vocation of expressing feelings or thoughts; they become the very feelings or thoughts:

Vladimir: Say I am happy

Estragon: I am happy

Vladimir: So I am

Estragon: So I am

Vladimir: We are happy.

Estragon: We are happy. (Silence) What do we do now, now that we're happy?

(56)

In this dialog, they seem to imitate the feelings that are prescribed for them by the text. Their emotions are products of language and as arbitrary as the language itself. Instead of being expressive, language becomes creative; the characters play the emotions that language dictates. Consequently, the feelings become alien for them and they ask themselves, "What do we do now, now that we are happy?" The disconnection between thought and language turns the words to their toys. Playing with these toys helps them overcome the anxiety created by the aimless act of waiting and fills the gap in their existence. The scenes are more extended language games than vehicles of meaningful communication. The aim of these games is not giving fun to the characters, but defending them against a world they cannot comprehend or cope with. Neither is there any thought behind all their exchanges. They do not even know what they should do with thoughts:

Vladimir: Oh, it's not the worst, I know.

Estragon: What?

Vladimir: To have thought.

Estragon: Obviously.

Vladimir: But we have done without it.

Estragon: Que voulez-vous?

Vladimir: I beg your pardon?

Estragon: Que voulez-vous?

Vladimir: Ah! Que voulez-vous? Exactly(60).

The language that the characters use strikes the spectator as unreal because it does not fit into the situation in which the characters act. Although the sound effects of the words are there, they do not stimulate a meaning. The association on the part of audience fails because there is no correspondence between characters' deeds

and their words. The articulated words remain dangling and create a kind of detachment between performance and audience. Since the characters switch quickly from one subject to another, building a logical interpretation becomes impossible for the spectators. Besides, the incompatibility between language and character's behavior hinders the reader/spectator from coming to a semantic conclusion. As Banham points out:

When we reach the "edge of language" through the encounter with that which defies naming, we find that language itself is an edge which cuts between the world and the one who speaks....If language is at such an edge than to engage with language is to be forced into a poverty which is original. This poverty consists in learning that grounding of utterances is nothing. Before and after language is nothing (1999:55).

Language loses its continuity in repetition, in the exchange of banalities, or asking and answering questions that play no role in the progression of the narrative. Narrative development is replaced with fragments of speech which are irrelevant to each other and to the narrative as a whole. The characters themselves claim that their words are meaningless sounds, signifying no truth. They show their disconnection with reality by showing doubt about being somewhere or doing something. Their words are not supported semantically by a nonverbal reality or a transcendental truth; they are merely language games.

Even in their arguments about serious religious topics, like the disparity between different narratives of the four Evangelist about the saved thief, they are more playing

with words, throwing them aimlessly like balls, than performing an organized argument. Their dialog resembles the discussion of two clowns in a circus over a serious matter:

Vladimir: One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.

Estragon: who?

Vladimir: What

Estragon: What's all this about? Abused who?

Vladimir: The Savior.

Estragon: Why?

Vladimir: Because he wouldn't save them.

Estragon: From Hell?

Vladimir: Imbecile! From death.

Estragon: I thought you said hell.

Vladimir: From death, from death.

Estragon: Well what of it?

Vladimir: Then two of them must have been damned.

Estragon: And why not?

Vladimir, the religious thinker, is in search of truth in the holy text of the New Testament. But even in this text, there is no certainty. The probability that one of the thieves is saved is one to four, because just one of the Evangelists mentioned salvation. The characters may, like the two thieves, be both damned. No sacred text can relieve them by securing truth or providing them with a promise of redemption; grand narratives can no longer inspire confidence. Vladimir's perplexity is the confusion of a layman in understanding the body of metaphysical knowledge, presented to him as a logocentric unchangeable text. Beckett refutes the stability of these texts by presenting truth as an unauthorized, confusing, or even chaotic matter, which, like "hell" and "death" in Estragon's mind, is not really distinguishable. Yet the

characters are so stricken with a cosmic distress that they crave to find the ultimate truth of their destiny. Regardless of whether or not the ultimate mysteries of reality can be clarified by grand narratives or metaphysical systems such as religion or philosophy, they insist on discovering the truth behind narratives. The destructive control of religious grandnarratives over their life is manifested either in their conversations or their constant references to these texts as the origin. As Worton observes:

Suspicious of all authority and especially of the authority of the founding texts of Western culture, Beckett studs *Godot* and *Endgame* with references to these very texts in order to make his readers think and speculate, to make them participate in his anxious oscillation between certainty about what is untrue and uncertainty about what may be true. This abdication of authorial power and this appeal to the creative intervention of readers mark Beckett out as one of the founding fathers of, and one of the major witnesses to, our Post-Modern condition (85).

The “uncertainty about what may be true” manifested itself, as we observed, in the conversations between Estragon and Vladimir about the Holy Scripture, the memories of the past, or the identity of Godot, who, like a meta-narrative, should define their life. The grand mysteries, however, resist clarity because their encoding foundation is a vague language. Language keeps dominating truth so strongly that breaking away from its grips resembles coming out of a well by excavating it.

The relationship between language and power is shown in the scenes of Pozzo and Lucky. Master Pozzo controls his servant, Lucky, by the power of words. Pozzo's one-word commands manage and direct Lucky. Like a programmed robot, he reacts just to the orders that he hears from Pozzo. "Back", "stop", "turn", "basket", are the key words that the programmed lucky responds to. Pozzo, as the controlling agent issues orders and lucky performs them automatically. Orders, maintains Wittgenstein in *Philosophical investigations*, are tools for proving that we are understood by others and that we are able to impose our will on them. The rational philosopher has turned to a mock figure in Beckett's play, who only babbles the words dictated to him. Like Lyotard, Beckett questions the power of reason by demonstrating the dominance of non-rational forces, which contradict the traditional notions of humanism. His philosopher cannot defend human being as the central subject of knowledge, who masterfully controls heterogeneity and difference in the way of progress. After questioning the validity of theological grandnarratives, Beckett goes further in Lucky's speech to expand his critique to philosophical metaphysics. By demonstrating the scientist/philosopher's slavery to power structure, he dismantles all philosophical searches for truth, origin, or immobile signified.

Furthermore, Beckett mocks Cartesian "cogito ergo sum" in his mock philosopher, Lucky. Descartes' idea, that being can be made perceivable by meditating, is discarded in *Waiting for Godot*. Thinking is presented as something controllable, like other human activities such as dancing or singing. Pozzo asks Vladimir and Estragon what they prefer Lucky to perform for them: "Shall we have him dance, or sing, or recite, or think, or\_" Lucky can start any of these activities by Pozzo's command. The control of power agents over philosophers' thinking process is depicted in the way Pozzo directs lucky. That thinking is an agent of language, not



vice versa, is also portrayed in Lucky's thinking, which is an observable activity; he thinks aloud and in terms of language. Pozzo claims that, Lucky "even used to think very prettily once, I could listen to him for hours." The modern idea that the source of language is thinking, is substituted by the postmodern notion that one can think only when language is out there! Lyotard believes that, when one is within the framework of an institution, whether family, religion, university, or government, the rules and orders of this institution control his language games. In other words, the established grand narratives of these institutions shape our lives and determine the way we think.

Lucky's speech, which is a parody of a philosopher's lecture, shows the depth of chaos in the postmodern thought. His demented thought/discourse, which obstructs and violates the limits of Western metaphysics, not only deconstructs the sacred philosophical text, but also discloses the lines of objective thought. As Brewer puts it:

Drawn to the side of the signifier rather than the signified (though as immaterial meaning), the hybrid "thought-performance" breaks down the distinction between words and their meaning. The disjunction between character's actions and their speech is here repeated in the disjunction between discourse as performance and his cognitive content. (152-153)

Language dissolves itself into a kind of rhyme sequence, like the one in nursery rhymes, in which the meaning plays no role. His declamations turns to be an ecstatic performing act, very similar to a show or a mystic dance, which goes out of control as lucky approaches the end of his speech. Indeed the other characters have to stop him with violence because he destroys the modern order with his postmodern chaos.

Furthermore, none of the different functions of language works in his monolog; it does not communicate; it denies self-expression; it has no effect on the other characters; and it conveys no meaning. What Derrida calls aporia, or the impossibility of language, is realized in Lucky's lecture; whatever we try, we cannot access a meaning. His speech is a pastiche of the different postulates of Western thought and nonsense, as if different voices are uttering ideas from different phases of the history of thought. It is a polyphony, or better to say a cacophony, of all philosophical and theological ideas about existence.

The failure of both sacred and secular narratives in making sense of human existence is demonstrated in this cacophonous lecture, directed by Pozzo, the power agent. With Pozzo's command, "Think pig," the thinker, Lucky, starts performing a text/think. But after uttering one sentence, first Pozzo and then all three characters try to stop him because he has broken the presumed order of his language game. The performance, however, is already out of control; the actor continues to shout his unauthorized text out. The beginning, with its disappointed reference to God, this "Prima causa," seems like the desperate attempt of a positivist philosopher (Descartes?) who contempts his own beliefs with "quaquaquaqua" and "for reasons unknown." The "qua," or the Latin equivalence for God, develops into the cacophonous "quaqua" of a duck in the outcry of this postmodern lecturer. Both Western Christian metaphysics with its God of "Divine aphasia" "apathia" or "athambia" and modern Enlightenment, with its causa prima prove to be ineffective and ridiculous in this chaotic speech. The modern man of reason, "for reason unknown", has metamorphosed to a bestial creature which destroys his own generation and leaves the ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or the scandal of Holocaust. The promise of the Age of Reason, that man can come closer to God than

angels, is broken by his being “the waste and pine” (Beckett, 1990:42). Man can neither physically nor spiritually (by resorting to metaphysics) be redeemed. Lucky’s speech displays a turn away from empirical reality of which Descartes was so sure. The Cartesian cogito, or the indisputable first truth, is bereft of validity in this kind of philosophic chaos. Logic, the desired proof of existence, is lost in anarchy. This loss of logic, of center, and of metaphysical justification for existence creates a farce out of a serious thinking process.

Referentiality is also discarded in Lucky’s lecture. Instead, Derrida’s *différance* is realized in the words that move between borders of different concepts and never fall in a single concept. Language fails to convey any fixed meaning and hinders the text from becoming a meta-text. As Nealon points out:

Beckett directs Lucky’s long monologue against the popular notion that philosophy’s job is to restore unity to man’s learning, a job which philosopher can only do by recuperating some metanarratives which link together all moments in human history within a single, continuous metaphysical system. Lucky’s think, though, is a narrative that disrupts and deconstructs all notions of universal ahistorical meta-narrative- all Godots (1992. 47).

Since the characters do not achieve the unity and certainty that they expect, they try to stop the delogocentrized Lucky violently. By damaging Lucky’s hat, they can restore the programmed philosopher to a controlled state of mind. The authority and order overcomes the chaos and freedom of thought and Pozzo turns back to his former state of power and control of text.

Pozzo's desire for controlling text and maintaining his authority is demonstrated effectively in the following dialog between the two vagabonds and him:

Estragon: Why doesn't he put down his bags?

Pozzo: I too would be happy to meet him. The more people I meet the happier I become. From the meanest creature one departs wiser, richer, more conscious of one's blessing. Even you...[He looks at them ostentatiously in turn to make it clear they are both meant]...even you, who knows, will have added to my store.

Estragon: Why doesn't he put down his bags?

Pozzo: But that would surprise me.

Vladimir: You are being asked a question.

Pozzo: [Delighted.] A question! Who? What? A moment ago you were calling me sir, in fear and trembling. Now you're asking me questions. No good will come of this

By ignoring their questions, despising them as "the meanest creatures" whose function it is to serve him, Pozzo tries to impose his control over their texts. Conversation for him means issuing orders for others to be performed, not communicating with them. For this reason Pozzo does not let a conversation begin that is not authorized by him. He neither answers the questions nor listens to what the other characters say. His sharing of feelings with them is just a role playing. After lamenting for a while that he is a miserable creature and is suffering because of lucky's misconduct, he pulls himself together and asserts that, "There wasn't a word of truth" in what he said (34). It is strange that neither Estragon nor Vladimir is offended by this theater; they even participate in it.

Being relieved from the tense situation, Vladimir and Estragon return to their familiar act of waiting, taking the whole thing for a pastime. Vladimir admires the evening as being charming and Estragon as unforgettable. Then, they try to identify

the type of theater in which they were engaged; was it a pantomime, a circus, or a music hall? Indeed, it is a farce, created out of the denied misery of all characters involved in this scene. The seriousness of their tragic situation is reduced to the ludicrous playfulness of farce. The implicit self-reflectivity of their final comments on their own performance also renders a metatheatrical characteristic to this scene and reduces its tragic sense. Furthermore, the binary opposition between reality and performance or representation vanishes. The parallel that is drawn between life and a theater stage anticipates two important postmodern notions: first the belief that life is dominated by text, or language; second that life, like theater, is just a representation of reality by means of language.

Then, Pozzo says “audio” to depart, but they do not move. The scene is repeated many times till they finally leave without leaving any effect on the lives of the two characters. Estragon even denies their being a pastime by asserting that, without them, time “would have passed in any case” (46). Speaking about them, though, becomes a theme for a new narrative/game for them. Vladimir’s attempts to connect them to an empirical reality of the past fail because Estragon is unable to recognize anything familiar in them. Vladimir logocentric aspiration to unite the different pieces of their narrative and to give them a meaning remain futile. Instead, Estragon’s uncertainty makes Vladimir doubt the trustworthiness of his knowledge because all they have is just scattered pieces of information that cannot be bound together. Their author, the absent Godot, has also forsaken them. The appearance of the boy at this point, asserting that “Godot” will not come, takes away all their courage and wakes the idea of suicide in them. Although Vladimir tries to keep heart by asserting that, “Tomorrow everything will be better,” the idea of hanging themselves is expressed in Estragon’s regret for not having the rope necessary for it.

They do not even have the means to put an end to their narrative. Without a metaphysical being, the Logos, or a controlling agent, they cannot bring their text to a closure.

The uncertainty aroused in them increases as they lose their hope for redemption. If nothing happens, if there is no progression in the world, if every thing is just the repetition of the same phenomenon of waiting in vain, then, they may just imagine that they exist. The Cartesian subjectivity cannot connect them with an empirical reality. Vladimir even doubt about their “Dasein.”:

Boy: What am I to say to Mr. Godot, sir?

Vladimir: Tell him... [He hesitates] ...tell him you saw us. [Pause.] You did see us, didn't you? (50)

He needs a proof for their existence. His longing for finding a center, a logos or an explanation for the phenomenon of being is fully expressed in his imploration to the Boy: “Words, words. [Pause.] Speak” (49). He needs words, Godot's words perhaps, to adjust his presuppositions with a transcendental truth. Words, these messengers of clarity, are the only means for creating finality for him. The Boy, however, denies them the promised message and they remain in the same anxious situation of uncertainty. This dangling state, which can keep going to eternity, is so distressing for the characters that a disparity appears between what they say and what they do:

Vladimir: Well, shall we go?

Estragon: Yes, let's go.

[They do not move.]

With Godot's refusal of coming, the access to the center and to the meaning is denied to the characters and spectators simultaneously. The continuing absence deprives the characters of salvation and the reader/spectator of completing the gaps in narrative. As Brewer asserts:

Characters invent plays and games to undo the authority and limiting effect of theater's frames of meaning. The principal medium of such inventions is language, the same language that is assigned to semiological ends. Yet it is the paradoxical Beckettian attack on language through the use of language that allows for the remarkable number and variety of plays and linguistic inventions to be performed. Repetition, contradiction, phatic refrains, rhythms, slippages and word series... (1987:153)

The plentitude of references outside these language games hinders the audience from constructing a homogeneous narrative. The contingency of language is intentionally used to defy the idea of a solitary truth.

The second Act starts with repetition, repetition of the same scene and the same act of waiting. Estragon is again beaten and suffers from the pains of the past. Even his refusal of embracing Vladimir in the first scene is repeated here. The only change in the whole scene is the appearance of a few leaves on the tree. The cyclic structure of Vladimir's song at the beginning of this act, which repeats itself as a natural sequence of its course, portrays both repetition in text and repetition in life. In Beckett's play the recurrence of circular actions and dialogs, contrary to Cartesian

circle which seeks a reference point outside itself, is usually within a predetermined cycle. *Waiting for Godot* moves within the same obsessing questions which it creates and so takes its point of departure from modernism. Beckett's repetition can be considered Derridean in the sense that it negates the possibility of supplementing an absence. His employment of repeated structures defies Western tradition of completeness and order. The repetitive structure of the play also denies the progression of time. The stage direction of the first scene of the second Act tells us that just one day has passed. Vladimir insists too that they were there yesterday, but the tree has got some leaves now and Estragon can scarcely remember anything about the events of the first act. The boy cannot remember the characters either. Pozzo and Lucky have also changed a lot for a day: Pozzo has gone blind and Lucky dumb. The concept of time cannot be fixed here because memory, this third speech act in Wittgenstein's theory of language, fails to connect them to any historical time. In other words, although time functions as a driving force both for the characters and the spectators, because of the shortage of memory its continuity makes no sense. This contradiction between the concept of time in the text and the linear concept of time increases the uncertainty and anxiety created in the first Act and culminates in the confusion and hopelessness of both characters and spectators in finding the truth. The play suggests that if all days are alike, how can one perceive the passing of time? Godot's arrival, if it happens, can realize future; without his coming the past, present, and future lose their distinction.

The only thing that can give the characters a sense of the past and create an identity for them is the invention of stories about their past life. However, like the play itself, their stories can never have an end. They were in countries, which they cannot remember or differentiate. Both narration and subjectivity in the characters become



unreliable sources. The skeptical conclusions, developed in Cartesian argument on dreams, insanity and illusion, is testified here without coming to a persuasive conclusion. The belief in an unchangeable reality is treated with postmodern skepticism and relativism in Beckett's play, a philosophical skepticism from which there is no escape.

In the absence of a "comprehensive image," through which truth can be apprehended immediately, they should resort to "phantasia." They frame their phantasia in words for they are "incapable of keeping silent." The assertion that they "won't think" and "they won't hear" while talking manifests the automatic nature of conversing for them, which lacks any teleological end. Language is described as the assimilation of "dead voices," "noise like wings," "leaves," "sand," or "ashes," which "talk about their lives" because "to have lived is not enough for them" (Beckett, 58). Didi and Gogo need to speak about their lives too. The sound effect of the words is more important for them than the meaning they are supposed to convey. They seem to recite a poem, one which keeps them amused while waiting; an escape from time. The words gather in their heads and disperse so quickly that no structured text is produced. The long silences between their short sentences show their inability to perform any meaningful dialog. Vladimir's imploration, "Say something," is responded by Estragon's answer, "I am trying," (59) and is followed by a long silence.

Being disappointed with the hope of redemption, the characters turn to the idea of death as an escape from their miserable situation. In the disappointing absence of a metaphysical savior, the tree on the stage can become their redeemer. Their repetitive reference to the tree, which has both symbolic and intertextual function, is indicative of the role it plays in their life. It symbolizes not only change, nature, and life, but also crucifixion and resurrection. As Worton observes:

The many references to the tree are not so much circular as labyrinthine. Wandering in a textual maze with no centre, the reader follows up one reference, establishes a sense, and then comes across another reference which suggests another sense. The tree is not just 'an arbitrary feature in an arbitrary world' nor is it a symbol of hope. Rather, in its multiplicity, it serves as an indicator of the play's strategies of saying indirectly - and functions as a 'visual' and 'concrete' representation of - the essential textuality of the play (77).

The tree, like many other things, is a topic for discussion for the characters. They return to it whenever all other topics are exhausted. Estragon interprets the changes in the tree, or even the existence of it, as one of Vladimir's "nightmares." Finally they agree that it has no use for them. The idea of hanging themselves to it, however, lingers till the end of the play. The tree, as the only concrete prop that the playwright has introduced in the structure of the play, irritates the characters. Its denial suggests an attempt to deny the use of representation in theater. The characters defy the idea that this allegorical element plays a necessary role in the progression of the narrative. The characters, like the audience, are tired of perpetual reinterpreting of it.

Another symbolical element in the play is hat: it gives Lucky the ability to perform; it helps Vladimir finding out something unknown, and it grants the characters a new identity. Estragon, for instance, tries on Lucky's hat to see if it makes a difference and decides to wear it instead of his, which is already worn out. Hat for Estragon becomes a seat of beliefs, ideologies, thoughts, or even subjectivity. But substituting his theological beliefs with philosophical ones (having Lucky's hat instead of his) does not bring any solution; the mystery of being remains unsolved for him.

The other symbol, Godot, resists being adhered to a fixed signified as well. Its identification as a metaphysical or transcendental signified is lost in the obscurity of the text and uncertainty of the characters. Consequently, the symbolism of the play fades into game playing; words, hats, shoes, and carrots, just fill the theater space for the characters. Characters' clownish exchanges and the quick shift of every discussion from seriousness of modernist tragedy to the popular discourses of music hall deprive the symbols of the play from acquiring any eloquent signification.

This strategy of doing and undoing of latent meaning can be seen in all other discourses of the play. Beckett intentionally makes his audiences overinterpret the topics of the play by proposing thoughtful or eloquent connotations, which he immediately deconstructs by driving serious discussions into farcical baloney. Additionally, the elements of undecideability, self-referentiality, negation of linear time, and repetition, which have taken the place of modern elements of certainty, representation, continuity, and resolution, hinder the discourse of the play to fall into a serious modernist discourse. The discursive strategies, which are constructed and deconstructed perpetually, turn the discourse of the play into a postmodern one.

## Chapter 2

### The Defeated Author and his Endgame

Vladimir's hope that meaning, unity, presence, or *Logos* may someday come back to life and text becomes totally frustrated in *Endgame*; the search for meaning and closure in this play is disappointed from the first sentences. The play starts with "It is finished," giving the hope that some end has been achieved, and goes on to prove that the paralyzed author/director of this game or play is unable to attain his aim of bringing an end to the text or to the world. The second sentence is, "It is nearly finished," and the third, "It must be nearly finished." The hope and certainty of the first sentence turn to hesitation of the third. Even the tenses of the sentences sway between past, present and future. The nature of "the thing" that is going to end is unclear as well. What is *it* really? A game? The world? life? The text? Or the endless playing of the roles? The multiplicity of referents hinders us from any comprehension or interpretation. In any case, Clov is looking forward to this end because it means the end of punishment for him. "The impossible heap" is going to have its last grains and he waits for it. His waiting, however, is a passive one. Like the two tramps of *Waiting for Godot*, he just plays his given role faithfully: "I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle me" (Beckett 1990:93). The

actor/character (Clov) is shown to be in a power relation to the author/director (Hamm); he should appear on the stage whenever he is summoned.

Hamm, the blind paralyzed author/director of this game or play, appears later from under the bloody handkerchief of history with the assertion, "Me to play." Is he going to fulfill his vocation of bringing an end to the play? The answer is negative; he is just a miserable creature, whose bombastic words cannot bestow him a logocentric position. His lament, "Can there be misery-[he yawns]-loftier than mine?" is an ambivalent proclamation. Despite the assumed loftiness, his incapability as an author to achieve a center or to provide an unconditional end deprives him of any heroic characteristic. Although he claims he has the power to "end it", yet his invalidity contradicts his boastful claims. Being bereft of all his capabilities, he tries to take the role of a paralyzed Hamlet: "And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to...to end. Yes it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to-[he yawns] end". But the indecisive mock hero of the play can only make a pastiche of his work and himself because his perceptions are completely dependent on Clov's reports of the outside world. This confinement of his imagination to the fictitious world reconstructed by Clov's words turns language to his only reality. Since words are his single resource; he tries to play with them as effectively as possible to create his logocentric, teleological game. He is obsessed with a logocentric desire to bring a center to the world and to the text; therefore, he permanently demands to return to the center, where he can find equilibrium, power, control, and security. Though, the center, or the *Logos*, he is searching for is not achievable in the apocalyptic world of *Endgame*. Chaos has denied center, clarity, and certainty to our author; he must do without them.

In the absence of clarity and certainty, the characters can only interpret the world around them. As Henning suggests:

If life is, in fact, a dream to be interpreted, hence an interpretation that can only be interpreted, we are faced with the problem of interpreting from the inside, as it were. How can we judge among interpretations? Are some truer than others? Better? And what would this mean? Can interpretation ever constitute knowledge? (95)

Hamm tries to ignore these questions and keep control over his text, but even the spectacle of the play confirms the futility his attempts to clarify something that is inherently obscure. The darkly lit stage (suggestive of the interior of the human mind?) and the two highly projected windows, which give just a very limited insight into the world, powerfully suggest that the outside world is only restrictively perceivable. Eyes (the two windows of the play?), as well as other senses, are unreliable sources. So are Clov's reports of the world because he cannot see appropriately. He even denies the existence of nature:

Hamm: Nature has forgotten us.

Clov: There's no more nature.

Hamm: No more nature. You exaggerate.

Clov: In the vicinity.

Hamm: But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!

They can only trace the existence in the changes they observe in themselves; they cannot fix any reality. In the absence of a solid proof for their observation, they should interpret the world the way they want. Hamm desperately examines the bricks

of the wall around him (the limits of his perception?) and cries, "All that's hollow." They are unable to find a way out of their miserable situation or to connect to a historical time.

Their apocalyptic world, however, transfers no tragic sense because in their life everything is superficial; they laugh at their own misery and their own philosophizing. The same superficiality is shown in their treatment of their personal history: they laugh at the unlucky parents, who are thrown in the garbage; their memories of the past are so mixed with fictionality that no truth can be extracted from them; and oblivion hinders them from closing the gaps while reconstructing the past. They know that time exists because they can feel it by the changes they see in themselves, but because of the repetitive nature of the daily activities rebuilding a linear history is impossible for them:

Nagg: I've lost me tooth.

Nell: When?

Nagg: I had it yesterday.

Nell [Elegiac.] Ah yesterday.

Time is just a word in their world, a dangling signifier, a concept that is not related to a concrete referent. In order to make sense of this concept, resort to their memories to find something significant in the past to distinguish it from present:

Nagg: When we crashed on our tandem and lost our shanks. [*They laugh heartily.*]

Nell: It was in the Ardennes. [*They laugh less heartily*]

Nell: On the road to Sedan. [*They laugh still less heartily.*] Are you cold?

Their attempts to master reality, however, do not help them reconstruct a history or an identity; their past seems as uncertain and unhappy as the present. Instead of giving them relief, the memories, revitalizing the past suffering, create pain in their hearts. This game of remembering the past neither reduces the suffering they feel nor constructs anything around them. On the contrary, speaking about the painful memories of the past and trying to laugh at them makes their dialog self-deconstructive. The articulated words do not fit in the reaction they create in the characters. Instead of being sad or thoughtful about the misery of these past memories they laugh at them. Their dialog turns to a parody of the concept of memory. Beckett suggests here that tracing the lines of a narrative to create a pleasant totality is just a dream or even a nightmare; human beings, like the tailor of Nagg's story, can rather add to the chaos of their life narratives than producing a neat *histoire*. The language game that the characters invent to legitimize their past is just a cheap version of the metanarrative of existence and has no referentiality. By contrasting characters' narratives of the past and their reactions to them, Beckett breaks the hermeneutic bond of meaning and deconstructs characters' meta-narrative of historical time. The grotesque image of the two miserable creatures, trapped in garbage cans and placed in an apocalyptic surrounding, also deconstructs the metanarratives of love, which they try to resort to. Their sentimentalism does not fit in their situation. These deconstructive strategies drive language in a playful function. The Characters' interactions fall in a realm, in which there is no sever distinction between real and imaginary.

The characters in *Endgame* are not only engaged in their own game of storytelling, but also in those of Hamm and Beckett. If we take role playing as an attempt to give temporary order to the disorder we feel around ourselves, it is an art,



which like the tailor's handicraft, aspires to give shape to the chaos. Nevertheless, this logocentric yearning for creating order, for restoring a center, fails in this play because language has lost its vigor in producing shapes. The stories that they relate each other, or the dialogs that they perform, lack a structure because the characters do not have the certainty or power to put an end to the games they play. The speech act of memory, in Wittgenstein's term, is like language itself just performative, not communicative. The recurrent dialogs, which are performed with a reversal or change of the characters' roles stresses that no identity or reality provides the background for the characters' stories. The same words heard from one character are uttered by another. Bereft of all meta-references and historical certainties, the characters have to refer to their own texts as the only reliable reference. They cannot even control the course of their own dialogs. Their chaotic dialogs hinder the audience from extracting a conventional plot. As Schwab observes:

The audience could give up its search for neatly circumscribed wholes and instead, try to illuminate the iridescent plasticity of characters and play. This would also mean abandoning an interpretive gesture of closure in order to become involved in a decentring language game of endless substitutions, that is, a game in which fragmented units of speech appear to be randomly substituted for each other (89).

Their words achieve meaning in the structure of the language game in which they are engaged. Hamm's game, for instance, as Schwab suggests, is "an end-game which focuses on ending and non-ending" (90). The end game is indeed an unending

game, which moves in a domain which the characters cannot control. As Clov expresses it:

I say to myself-sometimes, Clov, you must be there better than that if you want to let you go-one day. But I feel too old, and too far, to form habits. Good, it will never end, I'll never go. [Pause.] I don't understand that either. I ask the words that remain-sleeping, waking, morning, evening, they have nothing to say. [Pause] (Beckett, 1990:132).

The words do not have clear referents; they do not communicate anything; they do not help the character to express themselves; and they do not help the audience to come to a closure in the narrative.

Not only are the characters/actors of this play unable of extracting or producing meaning, but also Hamm, the director/ author. He is even afraid of creating meaningful speech: "We are not beginning to...to...mean something?"He asks Clov fearfully.(108) Clov takes his question as a joke: "Mean something? You and I, mean something![Brief laugh.] Ah that's a good one" (Ibid). Since there is no link between the signs that they use and the desired sense, they cannot bring any order or center to the whole textual world, in which they live. Clove openly accuses Hamm, the author, of teaching him the words that lack any signification: "I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything anymore, teach me other. Or let me be silent" (113). What can "morning" mean for the characters, if there is no difference between morning and night? Sleeping and waking for them are parts of their performance;

they do not have any performative function in the real world. Hamm's sleeping begins with having the handkerchief on the face and ends when Clov takes it away.

Time does not have any meaning either; the day starts whenever they decide and ends with their own decision. In fact the structure of the play denies any world outside their role-playing. There is no representation in their performance; it is just a game with its own rules and regulation, which determines the reality it needs. Hamm's permanent demands for having a centralized position to control the course of his game are resisted by centrifugal tendencies of other characters. The ridiculous attempt of the modernist author in creating a neat kind of literature, far from the chaotic reality, proves to be ineffective.

Instead, repetition dominates his game/text. Repetition happens not only in language but also in action. Hamm's repetitive acts of sleeping and waking up, moving to the center and diverging from it and asking for his pet, Clov's movement between the two windows, or between the stage and his kitchen, his ascending and descending the ladder, and the repetitive appearance and disappearance of Nag and Nell, all deny the linearity or teleological ends of performance or narration. In Beckett's work, as Connor observes, "Repetition is not only a form of survival in language, it is a way of negating it, for, if repetition is the sign of the endlessness of language (it is always possible to say something again), then repetition is a strategy for turning language against itself, using words to erase other word (1988:16-17). The inseparability of repetition from games justifies these repetitions and stresses the arbitrariness of any game/performance.

Since the characters pretend to be real ones playing a real end-game, and simultaneously deny their realness by commenting on their own words and behavior, a deconstruction of text and performance happens. The creation of an exact

representation of the reality in realistic theater derives from a Cartesian idea that reality is clear and accessible. Beckett, on the contrary, emphasizes the incommensurability of the real by giving different versions of an action. The characters in *Endgame* deny representation by their metadramatic reference to their role playing. Clov, getting up the ladder, lets the telescope falls and says, "I did it on purpose." He then turns the telescope on the auditorium and comments on the audience: "I see .a multitude...in transports...of joy. [Pause.] That's what I call a magnifier." and turning to Hamm asks, "Don't we laugh?" (106) Hamm, too, insists on signifying his speech as aside and ridicules Clov for not knowing the theatrical conventions. These metadramatic devices are parts of Beckett's attempt at deconstructing the conventions of mimetic representation. Furthermore, the insistence of the author/director (Hamm) on not having the intention to mean anything denies the signification of words and transparency of language. The movements of his game/play aim at undoing the interpretational or cognitive strategies of the audience for closing the gaps of meaning. The audience is engaged in the attacks and counterattacks of the players or in the ending and non-ending strategies of the designer of the play. Every time that the spectators think they have reached the end, something blocks their way to close the circle of understanding. Thus, the characters play a double game, one on the stage and one with the audience. Schwab believes that, "The corresponding aesthetic strategy which consists in the rejection of the structure of double meaning, and the denial of closure produces very complex effects. It not only challenges the familiar relation between manifest and latent meaning, but also unsettles the audience's habits and conventions of communication" (93). The spectators of *Endgame* are confronted with language games whose rules are unknown for them. Since contrastive differences provide the basis for understanding a text or the meaning of a dialog, a text which is stripped

away from contrastive opposition, a text in which the words constantly cancel out the predicted meanings and defy the attempts to stabilize comprehension, fights against the construction of the text and becomes deconstructive. In *Endgame*, as Schwab suggests, "The pervasive structure of negation and contradiction frustrates all partial investments of meaning and thereby fundamentally impedes every gesture of interpretation which strives for closure" (91).

Besides, both characters' application of words and their treatment of the words they hear, demonstrate the undecideability of meaning and ambiguity of language. The following dialog is an example of such ambiguities:

Hamm: Is Mother Pegg's light on?

Clov: Light? How could anyone's light be on?

Hamm: Extinguished!

Clov: Naturally it's extinguished. If it's not on it's extinguished.

Hamm: I mean Mother Pegg.

Clov: But naturally she's extinguished [Pause.] what's the matter with you today?

Hamm: I am taking my course. [Pause.] Is she buried?

The incongruity between Hamm's questions and Clov's responses is indicative of difficulty of fixing a sign in the signification system; we are confronted with an aporia in dialog. The words light and extinguish, which are semantically related, are put in an aporiac situation so that they lose their referentiality. The context of the dialog does not betray any meaning either. The denotative meaning of the word "light" does not fit in Pegg's situation (being in a dustbin she cannot have any light) and the connotative meaning, life, cannot be put in a correlative relationship with the word extinguished. If we take her light as a symbol for her life, again Clov's question, "How could anyone's light be on?" is irrelevant. Hamm's correction is rather confusing than

clarifying. The binary opposition in this conversation blocks the way of perception instead of illuminating it. The rest of the conversation keeps blurring the meaning for reader/spectator, opening new gaps in meaning whenever he thinks that he has accessed a closure. Clov's assertion, that Pegg "is extinguished," breaks the referentiality between the adjective "extinguished" and its referent Pegg, and entangles the spectator in a net work of different associations, which ultimately tire his interpretative attempts. This absurd language game deters the language from being a means of communication and distorts the process of comprehension in audience. The spectators begin to question their power of understanding and feel disappointed from permanent dissolution of meaning.

Schwab believes that different "disillusioning strategies" are at work to prevent the spectators from imposing their logocentric needs on the text of *Endgame*. As she maintains:

The subtlest and most far-reaching of these strategies is the "withdrawal of double meaning", i.e. the play's insistence on rejecting latent meaning which interestingly enough itself operates as a double strategy. The separation of conscious from unconscious appeals accounts for the fact that the spectators themselves are decentred subjects. The importance of this double strategy lies in allowing them to transgress the border between consciousness and the unconscious. As our decentred subjectivity depends on polarizing these domains, transgressing the boundaries between them also affects our decentred condition (Schwab 96).

This subdivided consciousness hinders the audience from passive observing and make him participate in the action of the play, the way that Artaud in his ritualistic theater aspires. Beckett makes us think both about the reception of a text and the accessibility of knowledge. By putting the audience in such a decentered position, he moves away from the modern concepts of consistency, order and construction and comes close to Derridean concepts of delogocentrism and deconstruction.

Beckett's delogocentric strategies also work through absence and the role that this absence in the whole performance plays. From the beginning of the play the characters are waiting for an end; the impossible heap cannot be completed without a transcendental force interfering in the course of their game/narrative, putting an end to it. Life is somehow absent in this play, both inside and outside the shelter in which they live. Since their own experience does not give way to acquisition of meaning, they should appeal to an imaginary absence to acquire significance for their being. The impaired characters of *Endgame*, who suffer from different sorts of disabilities, are just a duplicate of what they are supposed to be. The king of the game is crippled and blind, Clov cannot sit and the other two are confined to their dustbins. Although life is dead in this grotesque world, the players have to continue their biological life/game. There is no break in the predestined repetition of their game and time plays no role for them. Every exit is followed by an entrance. Even after the final performance, repetition continues on the life stage; finality is denied to them. The hope of being the last creatures in the world becomes disappointed by the appearance of the Boy, who can be the threatening herald of a new life. They have already exterminated the flea and the rat, which predicted the possibility of life and the impossibility of an end, but the Boy's appearance invalidates Hamm's game

strategies for achieving closure; the game continues to infinity and fixes the absence in their narrative. The characters, like those in *Waiting for Godot*, must cope with the eternal absence of a supplementary element.

To fill the vacuum of this absence, the author/director Hamm appeals to storytelling. Nonetheless, none of his stories can be finished orderly. His attempts to create a meta-narrative, which have the power of controlling the sub-narratives of other characters, fail because he cannot bring all the scattered fragments under a stylized narrative. Not only his narration, but also all other narratives of the play fail to communicate. None of the many autobiographers/narrators of this play can provide us with a plausible account or a version of truth; their experiences are all invented and arbitrary. Furthermore, Clov's refusal to listen to Hamm's story can be interpreted as the audience's resistance against easy reception of playwright's fiction or his authoritative power. If the author/director tries to control the course of the play with his grand narrative, the characters, as the producers of sub-narratives, can disturb the unity and homogeneity of the text and impose their chaotic, pluralistic system on the presupposed order of modern text. Not only Clov, but also other characters refuse to listen to Hamm's story; his father even asks for payola to listen to his story. Hamm, on the other hand, tries to manipulate them or play tricks on them to impose his narrative on them. His audience, which is tired of the supposed task of finding truth in his chaotic fragments, is not interested in participating in this game. Finally, the unique voice of the playwright, which used to dictate everything, loses his might and submits to other narrative voices; postmodern chaotic polyphony destroys the modern principled unity.

The invention of a past for the characters in *Endgame* is indeed a hopeless effort for constructing an identity. By deconstructing their efforts, Beckett undermines



the idea that characters are able to present a self-image in their performance. Autonomous character proves to be an illusion. The subject is shown to be discontinuous and arbitrary. The arbitrariness of Hamm's subjectivity is displayed in his narrative style:

Hamm: One! Silence! [Pause.] Where was I? [Pause. Gloomily.] It's finished, we're finished. [Pause.] Nearly finished.[Pause.] There'll be no more speech. [Pause] (116).

By these self-conscious interruptions and the comments that he gives on his own narration like "No, I've done that bit," "That should do it," or "Nicely put, that", he separates himself as a narrator from the narrated of his stories, fulfilling the aesthetic aspiration of many postmodern authors to separate themselves from their texts. He becomes the absent author in the present actor. His hesitation in portraying the past events, the continuous breaks in speech, the pauses and silences, the change of tone from narrative to normal, and the lack of a given structure shows the inability of the author to authorize his text. The self-conscious attempts of the modernist author to bring order to his text fail, and an unexpected fragmentation prevails his creation. Beckett demonstrates the failure of all attempts at creating a cohesive narrative, independent from contingent language and disordered world. Since the author, Hamm, cannot overcome "non-closure," his narrative, like that of *Endgame*, circles back to the beginning. Furthermore, the narrative moves so swiftly between different versions of itself that it destroys the illusion of reality the audience tends to have. Hamm's trick in introducing the elements of reality in the structure of his game, the description of the weather for instance, does not save his narration. Like the tricks of realistic theater in creating an illusion of reality, his artifice is dismantled by the theatricality inherent in his game/play. Hamm's attempts for telling a story, like those

of Beckett, prove to be deconstructive practices in the absence of something worth saying.

Hamm is not only an author, but also an actor. He and other characters play both their human roles as a part of a divine play and their role as characters. Commenting continuously on their roles, they stripe the audience from any illusion that they are watching a representation of reality. Hamm permanently refers to different theatrical conventions like aside, soliloquy, or exit to affirm that they are playing on a stage. Interrupting the dialogs to correct a point, or to change it, hinders the spectator from sitting undisturbed on their seats or being emotionally involved. Near the end of the play, when the spectators are aroused by Clov's emotional monolog, he suddenly declares that, "This is what we call making an exit" (132). The Brechtian technique of alienation works here in a very peculiar way. The validity of both subjectivity and narration as media for accessing a unified truth is so discarded. As Begamm maintains:

Various forms of self-reflexivity and intertextuality, for example, undermine the mimetic notion that literature mirrors what lies beyond it in the world, while ideas like the "death of the author" and the "loss of the origin" undermines the expressive notion that literature reveals what stands behind it in the mind of its creator (1996:15).

Beckett's great art in his plays is dismantling the formal structure of the playwrights of previous traditions and to offer a new form that suites the chaotic structure of existence of the postwar world. He breaks "the centered circle" that

Derrida in *Structure, Sign, and Play*, as the “image of authority and control,” identifies. Worton believes that, “This abdication of authorial power and this appeal to the creative intervention of readers mark Beckett out as one of the founding fathers of, and one of the major witnesses to, our Post-Modern condition”(Worton 85). Beckett himself anticipates the coming of a new form in literature:

There will be a new form and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos, and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist. (qtd. in Pilling 1995:74)

Another feature that gives Beckett’s play a postmodern characteristic is his fragmentation of text. By frequent use of pauses and silences, introducing different topics without bringing them to an end, breaking the course of narrative by commenting on the text, he tries to avoid dominating the audience with a uniform idea. Pauses and silences give the reader/spectator the chance to fill in the blanks with their own ideas. The words that the characters fail to find are substituted by the ideas of the audience, which may radically differ from what they say after the long pauses or silences. Worton believes that, “This strategy of studding a text with pauses or gaps poses the problem of elitism, but above all it fragments the text, making it a series of discrete speeches and episodes rather than the seamless

presentation of a dominant idea” (75). In the circularity of Beckett’s centrifugal texts, the spectators move from one interpretation to another without being able to stabilize the signification process. Even the most familiar quotations or references, for instance to Bible, suffer from the same uncertainty or unreliability.

Intertextual or intratextual references, which are very frequent in Beckett’s work, are presented in a tentative way. Numerous intertextual references can be found both in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, which are just intended to deny the originality desired by modernism. One should permanently reconstruct a text against another one or against itself in Beckett’s works. This reconstruction, however, is not illuminating at all because most of his references are used in a parodic or satirical sense; therefore trying to extract a signification out of them is fruitless. This intentional misleading strategy, or trapping the audience in a net of fake intertextuality, helps Beckett frustrate the illusion in audience that allusion to familiar texts is an aid in understanding them. The defamiliarisation of the familiar senses inaugurates “the incredulity towards metanarratives.” Lack of seriousness, unreliability of the articulators of the references, the element of parody, and the inappropriateness of the references to the context in which they appear, all provide the opportunity for Beckett to destabilize the relationship between signifiers and their referents and to deconstruct his text. As Gibbs points out:

Watching this play [Endgame], we too exhaust our means of diversion and delusion, slowly “discarding” them like the pieces sacrificed in a lost chess match. In the end, faced with the same Great Doubt as the characters before us, it will be our choice whether to accept the continued suffering of an ambivalent

dualism or throw off these conceptual shackles and seeing the horrors and joys as the same achieve nirvana through the veil of tears (108).

This discarding of the illusion of reality in *Endgame* is accompanied by the removal of a standard communicative language from our experience. Language is reduced to fragments of information which cannot be bound together. These language fragments, which are devised to legitimate the characters' surrounding world, fail to fill in the void of a metaphysical, transcendental ground for their existence. Instead, they teach us how to perceive the world without our traditional eternal truths. Since all these secondary games find sense in their relation to a primary metagame of closure, the absence of this end hinders the discourse of the play to access unity. The impossible heap of the play, therefore, can be the impossibility of bringing the grains of words into a comprehensible unit of meaning. The individual signifiers remain floating in this heap, unable of connecting to immobile signifieds or contributing to a transcendental, fixed truth.

The fragments of experience, identity, and meaning, which remain impotent till the end of the play, deprive Hamm of constructing his desired homogeneous text. The words in *Endgame*, like in many other Beckett's play, turn to have revolutionary identities that frustrate all the attempts of the author to bring them under a unified entity. The author becomes dethroned because the action defies the text. In Barth's view giving an author to a text is limiting its signification. If we omit him from the background, the attempts for deciphering a text become futile. In *Endgame* the discrepancy between narration and stage action, between words and mimics, between desires and deeds, between speakers' immobility and narrative's movement, dismantles the authoritative strategies which aim at bringing order to the

narrative by resorting to the author's linguistic reservoir. The dying author cannot save his text from decentredness, even if he sits metaphorically in the center. His promise of conclusion, "I'll soon have finished with this story", is denied immediately by his own hesitation, "Unless I bring in other characters" (118). His inability to continue is also revealed in his contemplation, "Where would I look for them?" His final remedy "let us pray to God" is an elegiac appeal to some metaphysical absence to help him," and his immediate blasphemous disdain, "The Bastard! He does not exist!" is the disappointment of all his metaphysical attempts, concerning writing and living: To find a way out of the impasse of text or of life is not easy. His cry of despair, "The end is in the beginning and yet you go on" (126), can be Beckett's objection both to writing and living. One is obliged to write, though he has nothing to tell or at least the language does not assist him in expressing himself; one has to live because he cannot determine his end; that is a miserable situation. Hamm, like Beckett, cannot stop storytelling, because "alone against the silence" he hears "babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together in the dark." It is somehow inevitable for the writers to submit themselves to these "millet grains" and to speak, despite the fact that their words do not communicate anymore. Like the grains of time that do not "mount up to life" Hamm's (Beckett's?) words do not mount up to an orderly text. Both for Hamm and for Beckett language becomes impossible. As Henning puts it:

Without the divine *Logos* it provides, man cannot slake his taste for an Ultimate Word. Thus, he cannot attain what he wants most of all from the world, and perhaps even more than the world: a final, certain answer to all questions, a solid foundation or core of Truth, sure and unchanging, a

stable point of reference on which he may rely, the lasting security, the peace this would bring (112).

If self-reflectivity, foregrounding of the artifice, the play with author function, textualizing and decentring of character, and experimentation with narrative can be taken as the aesthetic aspirations of Poststructuralism, Beckett has fulfilled all of them in *Endgame*.

## Chapter 3

### **The Fragmented Self: Beckett's "Not I"**

In Beckett's earlier dramatic works the duo structure of characterization plays a very important role. Estragon and Vladimir, Pozzo and Lucky, Hamm and Clov, Nagg and Nell are somehow bound to each other. They are either in a power relationship to each other, like Pozzo and Lucky, or one of them has authority over the other, like Estragon and Vladimir or Hamm and Clov, or they share the same misery, like Nagg and Nell. Although most of them are trauma-stricken characters, trying to escape from their everlasting pain, the matter that they are suffering together reduces the effect of painful memories they try to remember and to forget. In these works the disintegrated self is still in the framework of a unified body, trying to remember a past that can justify its being. Both Vladimir's struggle for finding a logocentric explanation for his being and Hamm's attempt at presenting a legitimization narrative and bringing harmony and centeredness to the chaos and decentredness around him are constructive attempts, which are undone by Beckett's continuous introduction of new openings. Like the two ashbins in *Endgame*, which suffer from everlasting separation, the fragments of their texts cannot unify in a homogeneous narrative of self.

This disintegration develops to character delineation in Beckett's later works: his characters "fall into pieces", as he describes it. Krapp's character is split between his



memories of the past, embodied in a recorded voice, and his present being. He strives nervously to bring the two pieces of his self together by adjusting the narrative of the past to the present entity. The dismembered mouth in *Not I*, like all memory-hunters in Beckett's later plays, is a piece of the split self, which tries to connect to the missed entity by appealing to her memories. The fragmented character, which appears as a mouth speaking uninterruptedly to a completely cloaked auditor, is a narrator and a narrated at the same time. The isolated mouth speaks while the rest of her body is covered in darkness. Through the stream of its monologue, we discover that a seventy-year-old woman, who has been silent most of her life, has suddenly started to speak. The sudden outburst of words, according to Mouth, is the attempt of the suppressed woman at releasing herself from the "buzzing" in her head, an almost involuntary act. Throughout its interior monolog, Mouth refuses to take the first-person pronoun, and pretends that she is speaking about a "she." This absent she, however, is present in the speaking "I" throughout the play. The autonomous confession of Mouth is observed by a silent Auditor, a shrouded figure whose reactions are concealed from the audience and except for his four slow movements, no other responses can be seen from him. Mouth's hysterical need to talk, and the way that she pours out the words, makes the meaning of her speech unimportant; It is the image of the play that gives the work its power. the dangling mouth and tongue, which move swiftly to get rid of the buzzing that disturbs the psyche, create an unforgettable tableau. We see every movement of the Mouth without realizing, or minding to realize, what we hear. The disintegrated self, with its body negated and its whole being restricted to this single oral cavity, transfers the hallucinatory feelings obsessing it to the audience through this steadily moving cave. Mouth is moved by the words that have an enchanting power over it and move it due to the demands of articulation. Language is portrayed as a controlling agent, which determines its

course in a mechanical progression. To stop is to die; thus the speaking Mouth continues its act even after the play ends. Although communication is denied to her, yet a compulsion drives her to speak, to break the wall of her seventy years of silence. Beckett implies in this play that speaking is a pushing drive. Even if you speak to a passive audience, like the Auditor, or language resists your attempts in expressing yourself; you are compelled to utter words. Mouth's speech is not meant to be communicative; it is an interior monolog uttered loudly. Like Krapp who listens to his young voice coming from a tape recorder, Mouth reacts to an inaudible inner voice, and speaks before an invisible auditorium or judge. The self in this play is disintegrated into the two organs which are related to language: a mouth, which utters the words, and an ear, which hears the words. The reality of body or of existence is reduced to two arbitrary organs which function autonomously.

The way that mouth speaks, and the effect that this rapid movement has on the nerves of the audience, render language an irritating nature. The close-up on an isolated body fragment along with the fragmented narrative, uttered brokenly from a mouth moving anxiously in a dark space, conveys the same state of trauma, in which the voice is seated, to the audience. For the spectators it creates most of all a break in their cognitive perception; they are bereft of their expectation of an illusion of reality. The former Beckettian characters, though strange in their behavior, still were in the category of a human being, embodying something that the audience could adjust to an outer reality. In this play, however the spectators are confronted with a dark theatrical space, which comes to life with the first movements of the lips and the tongue. After the first shock of confronting with such disillusionment, they are attacked with a flood of words pouring on their heads without giving them the time for analysis or interpretation. The fragments of the narrative that the mouth hears,

repeats, or utters, increase the anxiety that the first scene has created in the audience. Furthermore, the swiftly escaping words defy every kind of perception or interpretation. Watching Not I on the stage, the spectators feel such a disruption of cognition that they only wish to escape the pressure of this non-cognitive reception. Their attempt to create a relation between the image and the voice remain fruitless and they are drawn with the Mouth into the trauma that it is experiencing.

In this immediate experience of anxiety, language plays the role of an intensifier. Each attempt for closing the text on the part of audience is confronted with the resistance of the Mouth with a renewal of narration. The sentences are reformed by an unheard inner voice and are reproduced in another form. The narrative cannot come to an end because the text suffers from perpetual amendment. Enoch Brater believes that, "The repetition, extension, and alliteration of sounds expand the limits of the written word and makes the listener discover that such limits are much wider than might have been initially supposed" (1994:39). In Not I, however, the collapsing words, which leave just sound effects, make the text intangible and create a sort of anxiety in the spectators. The words, which cannot complete their vocation in constructing a bridge between the articulating Mouth and the listening audience, fall apart from a center of text and meaning in a centrifugal movement. The speech is like a crazy flood that overwhelms the audience without giving it the opportunity to resist it. With character's perpetual emphasis on self-denial, the perplexity, created by this sudden flood of words, increases. Auditor's hands, which rise in protest and drop with compassion, show the inevitability of moving from "self" to "other" in order to discover the "self." This repeated gesture, which is the only interruption in the torrent of words uttered by Mouth, focuses the audience on the "self" as a divided entity, an entity, whose longing for communication destroys the space between "self" and "the other."

The incapability of the self in finding the answers to its ontological/epistemological questions, including its own existence, results in self-denial. This ruined space creates disturbance in the spectators' habitual act of cognition and makes them anxious.

Indeed Beckett intentionally transfers the anxiety of his characters to the audience. His post-war characters are always challenging the anxiety aroused from the feeling of a catastrophe: Estragon and Vladimir, left alone on a deserted stage and confronted with the vanished civilization, think desperately of hanging themselves; Hamm and Clov, like the reminders of a nuclear war, cannot do anything but waiting for their end; Krapp cannot stop his hopeless reconstruction of an absent past to fill in the vacuum of the present identity; Mouth is overwhelmed by the inner pressure of a nervous monologue. The fretful struggles of Beckett's deformed characters for liberating themselves from internal and external burdens affect the audience and involve them in the anxiety of these hopeless creatures. For these characters, there are no more sacred texts or legitimization narratives in which all answers can be found. Since language itself is an endless "play of differences, the characters feel themselves entrapped in a spider net. Malkin believes that, "The unique twentieth-century intersection of rationality and genocide, of advanced technology and nuclear destruction, of an ideology of progress and a practice of barbarism, have become constitutive paradigm of the postmodern mind"(25). The helpless victims of this strange age are so panic-stricken that they disintegrate into broken selves. As Adorno in "Trying to understand Endgame" states it, "The position of the absolute subject, once it has been cracked open as the appearance of an over- arching whole through which it first matures, cannot be maintained.(Pdf doc.127 )

The massacre of the World War II, the possibility of a nuclear war in future, and millions of dead bodies(mentioned both in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*), which have lost meaning for the powers because of their massiveness, reduce the value of the individual and destroys all the dreams of progress of modernism. The ego, which used to have the touch of rationality and equilibrium in positivist philosophy, loses its control over the psyche and the totality of the self is broken to pieces; self-identity becomes a myth like other modernist myths. Beckett's demythologizing strategies undo all myths of Western tradition including that of a rigid, unified self. A fragmented existence deprives the characters in Beckett's later plays of the unity of an entity. They are many in one; therefore, they speak with different voices, voices that are sometime even contradictory.

These hopeless fragments of self, like the two speaking voices of *Not I* (one heard, one unheard), try to acquire unity by appealing to the past memories. Through their narratives of the past they should access a unified self. The trauma of the characters, however, resists any kind of rational explanation or linguistic articulation. Expecting a neat, linear discourse from the trauma-stricken characters of the postwar age is futile; their narratives are self-reflexive, repetitive, decentered, and chaotic. Trauma, says Malkin, "is generally agreed to be the result of an overwhelming event or events, not fully experienced by the victim during its occurrence, which leads to repeated hallucinations, intrusive dreams, uncontrollable actions, along with a numbing that distances the emotional effect of the event" (29). The anxious character of *Not I*, for instance, is under the pressure of different fragments of its broken self to confess a unity. The narrating mouth is permanently interrupted by an inner voice interfering, correcting or commenting on her narration: "Imagine what position she was in!...whether standing...or sitting...but the brain-...What? Kneeling?"

Yes...whether standing...sitting or kneeling but the brain-  
What?...Lying?...Yes...whether standing...sitting...kneeling...or...or lying...but the  
brain still..." (377) The voice that interferes is the absent self which is just present in  
the character's mind. This absent presence not only frustrates the character, which is  
always defending itself against its attacks, but also frustrates the audience by  
deferring meaning. The different fragments of the self try to join the speaking  
fragment to reconfirm an "I," which the speaker is continuously denying, but their  
unifying strategy fails; like her chaotic narrative she remains fragmentary. Barella  
believes that, replacing the "narrator" and "narrated" with a Derridean *écriture*,  
Beckett inaugurates literary postmodernism not by attempting to overcome  
modernism but by surrendering himself to a form of absolute textuality, the narrative  
equivalent of "différance" and "unnameability" (7). Furthermore, in picturing a self that  
is filled with the voices of others, Beckett comes very close to poststructuralist notion  
of self. His negation of the holistic view of self and his emphasis on the role of  
language in making identity anticipate poststructuralist interpretations of self and  
Derridean *aporia* of subjectivity.

The dispossession of self in *Not I* results in the open-ended sentences, floating  
fragments of narrative, contradictory images, and disconnection of voice and image  
in the play. The isolated mouth and the veiled ear give the impression to the  
spectators that they are observing a trial. The Mouth (defendant) tries to convince the  
Auditor (judge) that the unknown "she" is not guilty. Since the Judge/Auditor does not  
respond, the anxiety in her increases. The Auditor plays the role of the Lacanian  
gaze; even its absence does not reduce its hidden observation. The failure of the  
Mouth in separating herself from the guilty "she" and proving herself a responsible "I"  
deconstructs the modernist humanistic notions of self.

As the play progresses the rhythm becomes faster, the words more incomprehensible, and the voice shaking. The dark background, which stands in contrast with two red lips speaking uninterruptedly, adds to the atmosphere of terror and creates anxiety in the spectators. They are confronted with a schizophrenic presentation of self, which despite its strangeness is not completely foreign. The scattered memories resist making a personal history; the shattered body does not admit oneness; the disintegrated psyche does not achieve balance; and the language loses referentiality. Beckett defies the idea of a single presentation of identity in this play. The broken pieces of memory, which are supposed to restore wholeness for the Mouth, become circular pieces of speech returning continuously to their beginning without any progression. Mouth, a totally language-based identity, remains trapped in the constraints of self-interpretation; no claim of autonomy can rescue it.

Furthermore, the shattered memory of the old woman deprives the audience from a cohesive memory as well. In Derrida's view, the catastrophe of memory is its disability of reconstructing any past. Since knowing fully is denied to us and every memory is a heterogeneous reservoir of the fragments of our dislocated past, the ideal of mastery over past or extracting an identity by appealing to memories, whether personal or historical, is not realizable. Poststructuralism rejects the unconditional understanding and stresses that identity is both temporally and spatially dividable. It is the reason that neither Krapp nor the speaking Mouth can connect themselves to the past identity. There is not a fixed real identity that goes its course without change. Reality in this sense is no longer an unchangeable, unique phenomenon; it is prone to different interpretations and evaluations. Each observer

forms his own version of reality by weaving his desires and linguistic experiences in the texture of his observations; therefore, authenticity of memories is relative.

The degree of authenticity of Mouth's narration, however, does not play any role in Beckett's play. The speaking mouth is under the pressure to speak, to pour out the words that are buzzing in her head. The brain does not have any control on the process of word making; words are not supposed to relate her to a reality outside her mind. As she herself confesses, "Words were coming...a voice she did not recognize...at first...so long since it had sounded...then finally had to admit...could be none other...than her own...certain vowel sound... she had never heard" (379). She (the narrator) repeats many times that "she" (the narrated) had no idea what she was saying. The trial/psychotherapy of Not I has a circular structure; it returns without any progression to its beginning. In fact the play can be started anywhere in the monolog because it is just a continuous torrent of words without a structure. The meaning of the words does not play any role; the piece is meant to work on the nerves of the spectators, producing torturing images in their mind. The unconscious production of language deprives the narrated from any connection with reality. She cannot even stop Mouth from speaking. She gradually feels that her lips, or better to say the speech organs, are moving, producing something that she does not recognize as her voice. At first she insists that, "It was not hers at all," but seeing "the whole being ...hanging on its words" (379) she has to give up and to admit that it was her voice. The strange thing for her is that with the restoration of language "the feeling was coming back" and "then thinking". Beckett here comes very close to Derrida in recognizing the role of speech in giving form to the feelings and thoughts. Feelings and thoughts return as soon as she finds her connection with words. But this critical point of reunion with language is the starting point of disintegration for the



self. Mouth does not perform the orders of the brain to stop speaking anymore, and gradually assumes control over the rest of the body; the speaking Mouth becomes the dominant organ and the rest of the self is dissolved in the unheard inner voice and the buzzing, which disturb the speaking Mouth. The speaker avoids identifying herself with the narrated “she” because her access to language has granted her articulacy. As Malkin maintains:

Beckett’s late texts enact a typically postmodern reshaping of our notions of theatrical space and time; they perform multiple dissolutions of the boundaries of the (mostly absent) self and stress the process of viewer reception over the self-sufficiency of the text. These texts are self-reflexive, open-ended, multiply fragmented- from the fragmentation of the image on stage (Mouth, Listener), to the fragmentation of speech and text and perception (39).

Indeed, *Not I* is intended to be a denunciation of unified self and an approval of the fragmentary nature of identity. As Malkin suggests:

*Not I* invests in every form of fragmentation and splintering, imaging through text, figure and performance a consciousness inherently multiple, crucially divided against and within itself. This demonstration of splintered being produces far more than a binary opposition of unified I versus fragmented self. Mouth is both cognizant of self-fragmentation (and seemingly gives it some united

“form” through the formless, instantly disappearing medium of voice) and herself prisoner to a nonunitary logorrhea that she did not initiate and cannot terminate. Moreover, and increasingly as the play continues, the words that have “come” are contested and denied by, perhaps, additional fragments of self (49-50).

The fragmentation happens in this play in two levels: fragmentation in self and fragmentation in discourse. The character of the play is torn between the splitting forces of her desires and the social voices of “the other”. Her objection to these unheard voices in different points of the play is both the rejection of a united self and a unifying discourse. The repeated questions “What? And Who?” and the following response “No . . . She,” which draws each time a protesting response from the still standing Auditor, are the refutation of oneness with “the other.” The inner voice, the narrated “she,” and the listening ears remain alien to the distressed narrator. The challenge of the ostensibly unified self (the narrating Mouth) to deny disintegration disables the need for acknowledgement of the inner voices and causes Mouth’s further isolation. Furthermore, the lack of a central referent results in the perpetual interaction of the inner selves. This endless interaction provides the linguistic foundation for the derangement of a single consciousness. The center can not be achieved because the centrifugal forces in the self are very strong. The spectators can examine the archeology of a presence that the self once was, just by the ruins it has left. The fifth or last self-denial of the Mouth draws no reaction from the Auditor. It seems that she/he has accepted that the retrieval of the lost presence is impossible.

This absence of a centered self brings about the decentredness of the text and narrative. We do not see a linear narrative in the whole story of Mouth. It seems that

it is fixed on a specific time in the past and its sudden act of speaking. What it expresses is the feelings and perceptions of this moment of dispersal of self. All we know about her is that she is born into this cruel world and is left alone, dumb and helpless, till a day in April when she started to pour out the words that had irritated her for a long time. The narrator is caught in this moment and cannot escape its confusion. The repetition of the same statements in different forms shows her deep obsession with her situation in this world. She is, like many other Beckett's characters, obsessed with the same ontological and epistemological questions: Why is she brought into this world? What should she do with this "Dasein?" How long should this suffering continue? This "God-forsaken hole," which is a place for everlasting punishment, disturbs the character in the beginning, but she learns to forget it. The character's disintegration starts when the suffering self hides itself behind a disguise of oblivion to reduce the burden of the deep anguish. She wears the mask of a "she" and starts her performance. Her show, however, is confronted with a counter-play. The neglecting self tries to escape the distress, and the suffering self imposes the buzzing on her head. She should release herself from the frustrating sounds by pouring them out in the form of words. That is a dilemma that Beckett himself was confronted with. Despite his awareness of the inconquerability of language and futility of communicating through words, there was a drive in him to speak out; writing was inevitable for him. The result of such kind of compulsive writing is a torrent of words. This compulsion can be compared to a moment of inspiration or performance for an overwhelmed artist.

This moment of performance for the character of Not I is also the moment of great pressure. She should make her fictive "she" plausible on the stage and in front of an audience, which, despite of his stillness, functions as a critic of her

performance. The actor/ character of the play should have a double performance. As an actress, she plays the role of the character retelling her story to the Auditor; as an individual she plays her own role in front of an evaluating audience. Malkin suggests that, "Diffusion and fragmentation in Not I extend of course beyond the textual to the performative and receptive aspects of the play as well" (52). The ray or the beam, which Mouth as Moonbeam describes, can be the beam of light that is shed on the actress's speaking mouth, because it shines always on "the same spot." In fact the present actress and the absent character become one, the experience becomes immediate, and the written text becomes the spoken words. Pure performance becomes accessible in this play. It seems that Mouth is describing her position as an actress on the stage and the audience is discerning her difficulty in acting. Thus her performance becomes self-reflective. The inner pain of the actress, who has to utter the words of the playwright under the pressure of the spotlight, is transferred to the audience which is participating in this suffering. In this sense it is an immediate experience, an interaction between the present performing actress and the absent character. It creates a state of presence that is simultaneously absence. Since words do not play any role in this interaction, the binary oppositions disappear and the text loses its authority on the performance. What functions here is not the power of cognition, but the immediate reaction of the nerves, perceiving and being involuntary involved. The perplexed stares of the spectators prevents Mouth, who is struggling under the spotlight to tell the story of a fictional "she," from distancing herself from her invented character and being dissolved in non-being. Her anxiety increases as her attempts at denying the ontological core "I" is confronted with the sympathizing protests of Auditor. Auditor can actually be the audience on the stage; he does not interfere in the course of monologue, but his gestures, like the inner voice, affect the performance.

This tripartite arrangement (a narrator, an editor personified in different voices, and a subject, who is simultaneously present and absent) displays a polyphony which occurs within a character. This polyphony, which haunts the character in form of indeterminacy, affects the course of her narrative, her childhood memories, and her definition of love and old age. The recounting voice cannot finalize its narration, because it is continually twisted into questions, either forced from the inner voices or aimed at the listening Auditor. Contrary to Krapp's neatly recorded memory, the random memory in *Not I* portrays the chaos of consciousness. The shattered visual image helps us imagine the break in the character and the broken sentences give us a picture of the distorted psyche, which is unable of producing a proper language. The outcome is a kind of non-language or a "text of unword".

This non-language creates a fundamental problem in depicting the subjectivity of Beckett's characters because the spectator/reader does not know if the character in a Beckettian play is moving in a world delineated by the text or in a world confined to the stage. Is he/she immediately present on the stage or incarcerated in the time and space of the text? How can the audience come in touch with the meaning if the form of the play escapes such meaningful representation? How can one sketch out the precise location and the precise position of his characters in the linear narrative of life? The standard pattern of time/space prescribes certain relations between the time/space of the text and that of performance. The limitation imposed on the performance is the result of the fact that normally the enacted events on the stage are themselves extracted from a larger number of events, imagined as taking place offstage. This spatial and temporal order gives the opportunity to the audience to grasp the subjectivity of the characters; they can be understood in the performing confines because they are supposed to have an existence outside the performance.

A dramatic narrative, therefore, is perceived in two levels-onstage and offstage-simultaneously summoned by the dramatist and recognized by the audience. In *Not I*, however, the eventuality of the narrative hinders us from the easy identification that we, as the member of the audience, make between Mouth and her narrative. We are not observing the experience of a character that through Mouth's voice is delineating her past in a consistent narrative; we are confronted with the interaction of a tripartite self in one narrative. Mouth is relating her story to an auditor that is somehow familiar with her narrative because he/she protests to Mouth's denial of identity with hopeless gestures. Through Mouth's narrative we are informed about an absent self, signified as "she." In addition to the present Mouth and the imagined "she" the performance stages an unseen "presence," which dominates Mouth and controls the course of her narrative. The narrating voice, which, as discussed before, can also be the voice of the present actress, is interrupted by an unheard voice-perhaps that of the author-that edits the narrative. This internal voice, which is unseen and unheard by the audience, is present to Mouth throughout her performance. In addition to these, an absent subject, which is not completely embodied either in the narrated or in the narrator, exists somewhere. The aspiration of a logocentric modern writing for the incarnation of a unified subject -even though the subject might deny subjectivity- in a centered, homogeneous text, is so dismantled.

This inhomogeneity is not only discernible in the text but also in the spatial relations of performance. Since the text of the play is embodied in the body of the actor, that is a fragment of the whole in this play, performance turns to be fragmentary as well. The modernist holistic view of performance is discarded in *Not I*. As Poutney observes:

The actress is thus forced to go beyond the norms of performance. Rather than a process of assertion of building up a character, she must try to strip her performance down to the inner core, creating an interior space, an emptiness, denounced of self, yet actively alert to the Beckett's text. In effect she becomes a receptacle for the text and it is the challenge of going beyond the normal boundaries of performance that produces the depth of identification with the role that actors find so exhilarating and brings about their close rapport with Beckett (2006 71-72).

The text turns to a transitory image, the image of an absent being, which struggles to haunt the present body of the actor. Since the character in *Not I* does not have any access to its selfhood through a coherent past or in a planned-out future, it exists just by acting. The coherent self of such characters as Hamm and Vladimir is gone. The whole play is reduced to a moment, to a fragment of action which has no temporal or spatial connection with a reality outside this performing moment. It is a piece, stolen from some one's narrative; finality is denied to this piece.

Beckett has created a situation in *Not I* in which language has become alienated from meaning. This estrangement breaks the "logos" of language as a metaphysical myth, which is able to create a transparent correspondence between the words and some meta-linguistic signified in the real world. This vocation of language is denied in the pure linguistic monolog of the Mouth. The impersonal voice creates a meta-language which is just there, like Beckett's characters, which are just there to prove that there is no meaning behind their being on the stage. They are there to express their anguish of being in a world whose aim is unknown for them. "The narrative I," as

Kearney suggests, “is a split I, a not I, forever in pursuit of itself, forever falling short of itself. The Beckettian narrator is a victim of the voices he utters and hears, a prey to language” (292).

As we observed the temporality of signification and its dependence on the immediate presence of sign deny the transparency of language, which was taken for granted in Western thought for centuries. Kearney believes that, “Beckett debunks our habitual approach to language as a representational expression (Ausdruck) of some self-present subject and reveals it as a perpetually self-deferring signification (Anzeigen) irreducible to presence” (365). By breaking the links between the words that we hear (signifiers) and the expected immobile subjects (signifieds), Beckett invalidates language. The words, which are evacuated from meaning, turn to be just sounds, voices, which are alienated from the subjects producing them. Language becomes a meta-existence whose only function is irritating the nerves of the audience.

The presence or absence of a subject, the binary opposition of self/other, and the apprehensibility of language become secondary in Beckett’s work. Krapp’s failure in catching up with his past identity, the collapse of language in *Not I*, the inability of the Unnamable to speak in spite of the compulsion of words, the hopeless cry of *Breath*, and finally the eternal silence of the decentered characters of *Quad*, demonstrate Beckett’s deviation from language into a minimalistic, silent performance. Furthermore he invalidates the Western myth of self-identity. Most of his characters have lost their connections with the world as an assured reality. They are not sure about the memories of the past; they cannot build a connection between what they relate as their life story and what they might call truth. The identity that they are trying to construct is perpetually deconstructed by the failure of their memory.



They are under the pressure of serious ontological/epistemological questions whose answers cannot be found in any sacred text; the self is left alone in finding the answer to its questions including its own existence. Since the world of objects can only be interpreted through words or language and language itself, as Derrida suggests, works in a system of differences, an impasse surrounds the searching self. The puzzled self cannot express its mystery by this medium because it lacks origin. Through the mouth of the narrator of *Unnamable*, Beckett declares that, "I am all these words, all these strangers, this dust of words, with no ground for their settling." This identification with the words fits in the poststructuralist notion that, identity is not an observable, explicable phenomenon; it is an invention of language.

The instability of the system of signification makes identity an unstable entity as well because we can define it just temporarily. The "unnamability," to which Derrida in his study of language refers, is what Beckett has discovered in his *Unnamable*, an entity that is not approachable through naming. This unnamability breaks both the bound between individual and reality and the bound between individual and his self. Self-identity becomes a relative concept like many other concepts in postmodernist thought; it is a story that the individuals invent to interpret their "Dasein." Beckett portrays this misery of self in his *Texts for Nothing*. Entangled in the grips of language and obsessed with different tenses, the character tries to name the "I", which is reluctant to come from its fictive shell to take an objective identity. Finally the author/character of these texts surrenders to the tyranny of language and stops searching for an independent self.

Beckett's approach to this impasse, however, is not a nihilistic or pessimistic one; "his answer to our existential anguish," as Kearney maintains, "is humour" (291). One can find this humor even in the way his characters suffer. The image of enslaved

Lucky, for example, is presented with a philosophical laugh at both Christian idealism and positivism of the modern age. The poor philosopher is more a slave of his own beliefs and language than of his master. The talkative Mouth is more a confused, distracted old woman who deserves pity than a tragic figure. Her hopeless self-negation and her fight against a unified fictive character are more funny than disastrous. Even Hamm and Vladimir, as the preservers of the past logos, prove to be comic figures by their insistence on dedicating to the old dogmas. We can just laugh at their helpless efforts for keeping the centers that are already fallen apart. As Kearney suggests:

Beckett's entire literary oeuvre embodies a modern critique of traditional notions of "identity" –whether it concern to the self, being, language, God or one's sense of national belonging. His aim, I suggest, is a nihilistic deconstruction of sense into non-sense than a playful wish to expose the inexhaustible comedy of existence. His writing delights in disturbing all hard-and fast categories and distinctions which seek to simplify experience –including those which would rigidly divide literature and philosophy; it powerfully illustrates how all our rational concepts are ultimately related to an ongoing process of artistic rediscovery and revision (293).

This carnivalizing of the speech is in indeed a criticism of language. Beckett's parodic images show the deficiencies of all seemingly unbreakable institutions, which try to stabilize themselves by appealing to language. He questions the validity and solidity of all these canons without discrediting them. All controversial voices appear

to present themselves in an incoherent being in his works. The latent force of undoing interferes in every dialog to prevent the idea from establishing itself. This strategy is the source for hesitations and contradictions, which manifest themselves in frequent pauses, silences, and repetitions, hindering his texts from achieving harmonious integrity. The self-evidence of the meaning of a given text, which implies that a text is present, limited, and fully realized, is frequently questioned. Beckett undermines the “metaphysics of presence” by constant redefinitions, gaps in memory, intratextuality, and arbitrariness of the dialogs. In reflecting about past events or searching the missed objects, the characters resort constantly to words. The torrent of confusing words, uttered in these moments, discredits the communicative function of language and renders the presence of the characters an absent quality. The relationship between word and world is broken. Since Beckett is more fascinated by the shape rather than the validity of the ideas, as Dearlove suggests, “His narratives are united less by stylistic, metaphoric, and thematic designs than by unremitting efforts to find a literary shape for the proposition that perhaps no relationships exist between or among the artist, his art, and an external reality”(3). These “non-relational” narratives meet Derrida’s expectations of a deconstructive text.

## Chapter 4

### **Metadrama, Intertextuality, Reality: Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead***

While the non-relationality of narrative and non referentiality render Beckett's work its post modern touch, the arbitrariness of subject, characters, and plot, the pluralistic voices, the idea of a meta-game prevailing the course of events, and the rejection of a universal reality brings Stoppard's work close to the later phases of postmodernism. The emphasis on the intellectual uncertainty (*R&GAD*), the mockery of the grand-narratives of the past (*Travesties*), the instability of language and fragmentation of narrative (*Dogg's Hamlet*), the illusory nature of observation (*After Magritte*, *Inspector Hound*), postcolonialism (*the Indian Ink*), the relativity of our perceptions as the result of the discoveries of quantum physics (*Arcadia*), and chaos theory (*Hapgood*) are all postmodern issues which Stoppard exploits as the topics of his plays. He questions the stability of the modernist positivist values in a postmodern world, in which the intellectual, social, and political perspectives have radically changed. A faithful representation of reality is discarded in his works by his perpetual use of intertextuality, metadrama, theatricality and the games and tricks that he plays on the reader/spectators to rob them of the sense of reality. The illusory scenes

which are taken to be real in the beginning and prove to be just illusions, like the opening scene of *After Magritte*, make the audience skeptic about the reality of what it is observing. The uncertainty, created by these scenes, prevents the spectators from occupying their secure seats of passive observation because each time that they come to a conclusion the playwright's tricks and games interfere to block their final interpretation. In Stoppard's work the credible metanarratives of the past turn to playful language games, which have no claims on transcendental truth. The travesty of the established grandnarratives, the placement of his texts in a web of other texts, and the theatricality that he employs to discard any relation between his text and an outside reality, manifest his deep "incredulity towards metanarratives."

In *Postmodern Condition* Lyotard discredits the totalizing stories about the history and goal of humankind that legitimize cultural practices and forms of knowledge. For him, metanarratives or master-discourses, which try to establish a basis for an overall judgment, are arbitrary legitimations for those who hold these discourses as transcendental truths and try to impose them on others. In his view the totalitarianism of modern metanarratives such as Hegel's teleology, Hermeneutics, Marxism, and Capitalism has been replaced by a postmodern "heterogeneity of language games" (1984:xxv), which no longer aims at providing systematic theorizations of human society or prescribing universal remedies. Instead, the rules of these language games only apply to a particular context and have to be agreed upon by its present participants. The postmodern condition, according to Lyotard, replaces the totalitarian statements with "multiplicity of finite meta-arguments" that are "limited in time and space" (1984:66). Wittgenstein's theory of language games, which gives a picture of the regulation of behavior through rules of linguistic conduct among sub-groups in society, provides a basis for Lyotard's little narratives. If giving

credence to total philosophical contexts has become difficult in postmodern age, we can refer to smaller context within which we act. This system of judging actions and knowledge in confined contexts discards the necessity of metanarratives. Lyotard's "performativity" stresses the inevitability of performance in a closed local system rather than in a universal one.

What Stoppard in many of his plays does is similar to Lyotard's "performativity"; he tries to replace the universal stages of performance by local ones. Employing decentring strategies, Stoppard aims at substituting the eternal and universal truths by temporary and "local" ones. The postmodernist literary conventions that his texts deploy—such as temporal disorder, metafictionality, intertextuality, and magical realism—and the preoccupation of his drama with issues such as fragmented subjectivity, cultural hybridity, and skepticism about metanarratives, put him among postmodern playwrights who intentionally undertake a deconstructive and delogocentric enterprise.

In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, for instance, the global, elevated truth of Hamlet turns to be the secondary story of two minor characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who wish to bring their senseless narrative to a conclusion. In Kępczyńska's view, "The seeds of delegitimation" (2004:111) are already present in Hamlet. She believes that, "In Hamletian world of continually subverted meaning, the nostalgia for the lost grand narrative and for the metaphysical appears in young Hamlet's desire to interrogate the ghost of the past and to restore, even if the task seems to be impossible, the patriarchal authority" (112). Ros and Guil also want to find the origin of their plight by appealing to the past. The desperate hope in them for finding a narrative that can legitimate their whole situation has its source in the same kind of nostalgia for the ordered past. But the lack of memory disconnects

them from reality and deprives them of an epistemological knowledge of life. The two minor characters of Hamlet, like the characters in Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, are searching for a logocentric explanation, first for their presence, and second for their origin. But unlike Pirandello's characters, who have a story to tell, Ros and Guil are summoned by someone, an author perhaps, to play the roles that are not clear for them. Their presence is the consequence of an imposed vocation:

Ros (promptly). I woke up, I suppose. (Triggered) Oh- I've got it now- that man, a foreigner, he woke us up-

Guil. A messenger. (He relaxes, sits.)

Ros. That's it- pale sky before dawn, a man standing on his saddle to bang on the shutters- shouts- What's all the row about?! Clear off!- But then he called our names. You remember that- this man woke us up.

Guil. Yes

Ros. We were sent for.

Guil. That's why we're here....(16-17)

In *Metatheatre*, Lionel Abel stresses that some characters have the potentiality to impose themselves on playwrights. Stoppard summons Ros and Guil because he thinks they are innocent characters whose comical situation derives from their involuntary but inevitable presence in Shakespeare's text. This presence, however, does not explain the purpose of their vocation; they just know that it "was urgent" (Stoppard, 17).

The play opens depicting Ros and Guil throwing coins, wondering that the "law of probability" does not work in their game. The observation that they make does not correspond to the scientific legitimization narratives of the time. Although their game of

“heads and tails” invalidates one of essential certainties (Law of Probability), they continue playing because the main rule of having a winner and a loser is still valid in this game. Indeed at this point they separate themselves from an outside reality. Unable of connecting their life to a universal narrative or a determinable reality, the characters appeal to Shakespeare’s local text for defining themselves. They do not know since when they were playing; they do not have any memory of the past; and they do not have any plans or destination for future; they just move on aimlessly. The assumption that time must have stopped dead, because “the single experience of one coin being spun once has been repeated ninety times” (12), helps them explain the inaccommodable phenomenological chaos around them. To overcome their fear of the unknown, they resort to the authorities of the original text, Hamlet, to control the menacing chaos. With great despair, they understand that no authority in the ur-text takes the responsibility to redeem them from the plight of an obscure signification. As Keblowska-lawniczak suggests:

Whether spies or ambassadors, Ros and Guil require legitimation, almost by definition, the seal that confirms their identities and legitimates their movement throughout the play. No grand narrative provides such a seal, and hence we have the growing sense of the two being belated travellers who follow into the footsteps of their predecessors, but unlike their imaginary guides, are doomed not to discover anything (114).

They have to “act on scraps of information” (113). Being disappointed with their search for omniscient knowledge, they amuse themselves with different games,



among which the popular game of asking question and giving answers. Their logocentric thought, however, prevents them from realizing that the aim of these questions and answers is not acquiring knowledge; therefore, they become deeply frustrated when they cannot find determinate answers. The inability to connect to a logical world, to a past which suits in the grandnarratives they have in mind, creates fear in them:

Ros: I'm afraid

Guil: So am I.

Ros: I am afraid it isn't our day.

Guil: I am afraid it is (11).

Moreover, Ros and Guil, as Jonathan Bennet asserts, "are haunted by the fear that they are already unreal" (78). Cutting his fingernails, Ros expresses his mistrust in science by confiding Guil that, "Another curious scientific phenomenon is that the fact that the fingernails grow after death..." (Stoppard, 11). They realize that in their world the scientific principles do not work, and it creates fear in them.

To overcome this existential fear they cling to each other. Guil even tries to logocentrize their situation and soothe Ros who is obsessed with many ontological questions: "There is a logic at work-it's all done for you, don't worry. Enjoy it. Relax" (43). But his metaphysical justification is not even convincing for him and at the end of his speech doubtfully asks, "Do I contradict myself?" (Ibid) He has lost the certainty that the logocentric metaphysics used to provide for him. Cadler attributes certainty to a "devotional religion," which "is a language of its own." The scripture of this religion, as Cadler states it, "Appeals to human insecurity and fear, and the willingness of the adherents to accept any answer rather than none," so that "the imprimatur of authority" will be "gratefully accepted" (92). In Lyotrad's view science is another

metanarrative or discourse, which gives its own explanation for overcoming fear. Although Guildenstern himself emphasizes that, "The scientific approach to the examination of phenomena is a defence against the pure emotion of fear" (13), he tries to explain their situation with this language because it brings a "kind of harmony and a kind of confidence" (15).

The irony of their situation is that they are not aware that the fictional reality of their existence is not limited in time or space. They can be born with each performance and die with its end; therefore their life is an arbitrary one, made by the playwright and recreated by the director. This arbitrariness is emphasized in Stoppard's character delineation: "Guil is not worried about the money, but he is worried by the implications; aware but not going to panic about it- his character note" (6). Or, Ros "betrays no surprise" about the run of heads he is just "nice enough to feel embarrassed at taking so much money off his friend. Let that be his character note" (5). These precise descriptions hinder us from mixing these characters with those of Shakespeare. Although they are borrowed from Hamlet, they are not the same characters; they are modern projections of Ros and Guil, trapped in Shakespeare's text. What Stoppard apparently does is summoning them from the Hades, rendering them the opportunity of replaying a determinative part of their roles, and providing them the possibility to decide their ends. Nevertheless, they cannot interfere in the metanarrative of Hamlet because the rules of this game are already written. In answer to Rose who asks "who decides?" the Player confirms that everything "is written" (88). They cannot change their fate because they are already dead in another text. Stoppard context cannot save them; it just engages them in another game. Guil, being perplexed by the Player's explanations about the arbitrariness of their situation, innocently asks: "Operating on two levels, are we?"(71)

These levels of reality and fictionality cannot be separated either. Stoppard violates the illusion/reality making rules to create a truth that has no existence other than on-stage. Ros and Guil are only character/actors and their presence is an arbitrary one or a non-presence. Even the player recognizes them as “fellow artists” and emphasizes that, “We have played to bigger, of course, but quality counts for something” (22). Ros, irritated by being called a “fellow artist”, objects that, “I thought we were Gentlemen” (22). The Player, who does not differentiate between the two worlds of reality and fiction, emphasizes that, “For some of us it is performance, for other patronage. They are two sides of the same coin”(22).

This equivocality is imposed on them by the two language games in which they are involved. When Ros asks Guil about the thing he is playing at, he, like Hamm complains, “Words words, words. They are all we have to go on”(45). He also knows that they are not going to come upon any knowledge or truth in these games. As he asserts, “It’s a matter of asking the right questions and giving away as little as we can. It’s a game”(44). The irrelevancy of meaning in these games is a part of the deconstructive project of the play. Koblowski-Lawniczal believes that, “Absence of insistence on meaning and meaningfulness, present both in Lyotard’s and Wittgenstein’s proposition, invites reflection on what is beyond this poorly defined sphere”(121). Stoppard text, like the two other philosophical texts, discards the accessibility of knowledge or consistency of meaning; it becomes the playground of two simultaneous language games of Shakespeare and Stoppard. The characters are also aware of this duality; they know that the rules change when the game changes; therefore, they adjust their language to the text in which they enter. In Stoppard’s text they use a modern language and engage themselves with modern

themes, but in Shakespeare's text they turn to be Hamlet's ignorant attendant, who, as Prufrock in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" asserts:

... will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.

They are no great men like Hamlet, but little men like Prufrock, who dare not to act outside the text; the text determines their identity. The reality of their existence is a fiction, interwoven in the web of other fictions; therefore, we can neither speak of perception nor of presence in their case.

The grand discourse of Hamlet becomes the logos with which Stoppard plays in order to establish his local narrative of the two poor attendants, who were killed without knowing the reason. Stoppard's "chief interest and objective", as he himself asserts, was "to exploit a situation which seemed ...to have enormous dramatic and comic potential- of these two guys who in Shakespeare's context don't really know what they're doing" (Anthony Jenkins 1990:38). He just portrays the chaotic situation of these two courtiers, who like their counterparts in *Waiting for Godot*, are put in a metadiscourse of an author, who has omnipotently prescribed their lives. Unlike Didi and Gogo, however, who are assumed to be alive and present, our courtiers are dead and absent. Since the metatext provides no explanation about their past or their future, they are unable to construct an identity for themselves; text determines their identity. Bigsby believes that, "In his early plays, Stoppard presents a series of

images of the individuals trapped inside a mechanistic world and destroyed by a logical system , which fails to accommodate itself to human aspirations” (6). I do not think that Stoppard believes on this logical system; on the contrary, he presents a world in which the lack of any expected logic or reason is the cause of perplexity and uncertainty in characters. Stoppard deprives his characters from any logical order, any Godot, who can save them from the chaos encircling them. The Godot of R&GAD is the original playwright who is already dead. Now they appear as dead characters in the play of another playwright, who is giving them the possibility of redefining themselves in a closed, circular system. Their hopeless wandering between the worlds of the two plays, however, does not help them redefine themselves or find an orientation. They are totally lost in this double game because the chaos they experience is not surmountable; the modernist idea of the knowing-subject is so denied.

The knowledgeability of the audience is discarded as well; the play gives open hints that the spectators are involved in a game (that of the play), and they should not have the illusion that the natural rules function there. The audience is bereft of the possibility of mimetic representation by confronting two dead characters of Hamlet, who engage themselves with modern epistemological and ontological questions. The arbitrariness and theatricality of the play deprives them from forming any illusion of reality or constructing a reality in the background of the play. By eliminating the binary opposition of presence/absence, Stoppard deconstructs the philosophical discourse that presence helps the perception of reality. Stoppard not only invalidates the mimetic theories of theater and emphasizes the fictionality of the genre, but also discards the idea that dramatic performance should communicate a metanarrative or

share in it. He demonstrates the inability of any dramatic act of presenting unchangeable truths or creating finality in performance.

The trauma-stricken characters are, like didi and Gogo, unable to establish a logical ground to stand on. The inaccessible language of Hamlet is the only existential basis for them. Hamlet is their key to an unknown world; therefore they decide to follow this Godot to find the truth:

Ros: Shouldn't we be doing something- constructive?

Guil: What did you have in mind?... A short, blunt human pyramid....?

Ros: We could go.

Guil: Where?

Ros: After him (45).

Hamlet becomes the logos for them through whom they can define themselves. They are, however, aware of the theatricality of the whole situation; therefore, they do not intend to follow a real prince named Hamlet, but a text which dominates their existence:

Ros (At footlights.): How very intriguing!(Turns.) I feel like a spectator- an appalling prospect. The only thing that makes it bearable is the irrational belief that somebody interesting will come on in a minute....

Guil: See anyone?

Ros: No. you?

Guil. No. ( At footlights.) What a fine persecution- to be kept intrigued without ever quite being enlightened...(Pause) We've had no practice.

Ros. We could play at questions (Ibid).

The textual basis of their existence, as we may confer from the above dialog, is not only Hamlet, but also Waiting for Godot. Like the characters in Beckett's work, they

comment on the genre of theater and their own performance. The whole debate on “the intriguing nature of theater” or “the disturbing lack of rehearsal” stresses on the intentional self-reflectivity implied in this game. They not only know that they are performing, but also participate in the discussion about their performance.

This metadramatic technique is a device for Stoppard to break the dominance of the original text. Jenkins believes that, “Throughout the play he breaks our sense of illusion to remind us that we are in a theatre watching actors” (43). The existent gap between the role and the actor, representation and reality, is not denied in this play; conversely it is magnified. As Attila Kiss in “Cloud 9, Metadrama and the Postsemiotics of the subject,” points out:

Through the performance of the actor, a dialectic is established between surface and depth, theatrical illusion and actual reality, role-playing and original identity, and this dialectic inevitably foregrounds the problems of subjectivity. At the same time, the theater as a thick semiotic context semiotizes every element of the stage, and the idea of representation is brought into the focus of attention by the ostension of the sign and the thematization of presence. From a semiotic point of view, this results in a representational insufficiency because it is impossible to establish the total presence of things that are absent, and for which the theatrical representation stands on the stage. When it is staged in the actual theatrical context of reception, or the imaginative staging of the reader, drama can either thematize and foreground, or ignore and conceal the representational insufficiency which is in

its center. This idea of presence and this representational insufficiency have been the primary concern of drama and theater from the earliest mimetic theories up to the poststructuralist deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence (2001:224).

The representational insufficiency is thematized in *R&GAD* by establishing the presence of two dead (absent) characters on the stage, which is essentially contradictory. By collocating absence and presence on one stage, Stoppard has created an aporiac situation from which there is no escape, neither for the characters nor for the audience. The presence of absent things, though not totally perceivable, can be imagined, but the presence of dead people renders representation a surreal touch and breaks the boundary of realistic presentation.

Another element that distorts the perception of the audience is the implicit intertextuality. In the wandering courtiers of Stoppard's text, one can trace the longing of Pirandello's characters to terminate their narrative in a new context, the perplexity of the two vagabonds of *Waiting for Godot* in being situated in an impasse, and Hamm's hopeless search for a center. It seems that the past dramatic texts have contrived to appear in Stoppard's text in order to destroy the modernist claim of originality, emphasizing the inevitability of intertextuality. In Jenkins' view, Stoppard uses *Godot* "as part of the game he plays with the audience, juxtaposing its rules with those of *Hamlet*." (41) He thinks that although Stoppard puts these characters in the context of Beckett's *Godot*, the narrative differs from that of Beckett in its linearity. He asserts that, "Whereas *Godot* presents us with an entrapping circle or a spiral at best, *Rosencrantz* is linear" (40). In my view there is the same kind of circularity in



R&GAD. The play starts with a scene portraying two characters, which are declared to be dead in the title of the play, playing a game of tossing coins which proves to be against the law of probability and a logical order. Later, the characters enter the text of Hamlet, the original context of their existence, to play their roles as Ros and Guil. In this context they die again, but in Stoppard's context they just disappear, first Ros and a few minutes later Guil, confirming that they were just actors playing their roles:

Ros All right, then. I don't care. I've had enough. To tell you the truth, I'm relieved. (And he disappears from view.)

Guil. Our names shouted in a certain dawn...a message ..a summon....There have been a moment, at the beginning, where we could have said- no. But somehow we missed it. (He looks round and sees he is alone.)

Rosen-?

Guil-? (He gathers himself.)

Well, we'll know better next time. Now you see me, now you- (And disappears) (141-42).

The circle ends here by the play returning to its first stage of temporary absence. The audience knows that this absence will change to presence in another performance. The fact that Guil even mixes his own name with Ros's and for a moment, before he disappears, hesitates about the role he is playing, stresses that he does not assume any identity. As an actor he plays the roles assigned to him. Ros and Guil are anonymous individuals, submitted to the play of narrativity. Their disappearance from the stage shifts the spectacle to that of Hamlet with the Ambassador's declaration that "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead." The play ends in the middle of Horatio's monolog with a fading scene, "Overtaken by dark and music." So returns the play to its starting point with no progression. The two dead courtiers of Hamlet remain dead; we just share their trauma in their death sleep, presented to us in the

circularity of repeated performances. Time does not proceed in the world of texts. The repetition of the same phenomenon of falling of the coin on its head in the first scene is also demonstrative of this standstill of time. Not only is this phenomenon repeated, but also their life and death. The repeated appearance of characters in different performances or different adaptations defies the linearity of real life.

Repetition is an indissoluble element of intertextuality. But repeating does not mean producing the same; it means that, each textual system includes the traces of other discourses and languages. Derridean *différance* works both in repetition and in adaptation because each adapted text is simultaneously similar to and different from the original. There is always a renewal, a change in adaptation, though the original keep staying in the background; it is the same and the other simultaneously. Repetition also includes a non-closure because remaining open to the opportunities of new discoveries means structural openness. Intertextuality, therefore, makes a text instable, because it interferes in the text, changes it and deconstructs its foundation. In Stoppard's play, for instance, the metatext of Hamlet, which is supposed to have a firm construction, is taken to task and loses its dominance. As Scolnicov suggests:

In a tone that is always amused, ironic and sophisticated, Stoppard seems to be conducting a dialogue with the best in art and philosophy, and, through it, articulates his position on a variety of contemporary intellectual, social and political issues. His consummate wit and ingenuity ensure the originality of what is said via intertextuality. Stoppard's wide use of obligatory intertextuality does not however preclude an aleatoric intertextual reading of his plays. In fact, the opposite may be the

case, since the obligatory intertextuality of the plays encourages us as readers to explore beyond the work for more and more significant intertexts in ever widening circles (1995: 19).

The openness of his texts to exploring new traces of ideas makes his plays pluralistic. The web, created out of different values, languages, insights, and settings, creates a polyphony of different voices in his works, which liberates these texts from the dominance of logocentric thoughts. In *R&GAD*, for instance, the Elizabethan supreme values and formal language stand side by side with the contemporary uncertainty and relativity of language and thought. The metatext of *Hamlet* and its values are questioned. Ros and Guil are treated not as two traitors, who betray their friend, but as two innocent, naïve characters, who are unaware of the aim of their mission. They are not killed by a tragic hero (*Hamlet*), but by an unreasonable man, who, instead of demolishing the letter or changing its content, kills them to meet the ends of a Shakespearian tragedy. The text of the play becomes the meeting point of Stoppard's critical views and Shakespeare's text. Looking at one plot from different perspectives discards the unity of disclosure, not only for Shakespeare's text, but also for Stoppard's play.

This break from traditional conceptions also happens in the notion of subjectivity. The safe identity position is disturbed because self is no more a solid homogeneous entity that can be separated from other. "What follows," as Jernigan points out, "is a disintegration of the theatrical contract, resulting in the loss of stage and audience relations as semiotised object and semiotising subject, visually paralleled by the Lacanian gaze and eye"(2001:130).The fact that Guil does not distinguish between Ros and himself, short before his disappearance in the last scene, shows his hesitation in identifying himself or his companion with a name. Their names are just

given to them as characters; thus the recognition of any self in these names is impossible. They are not the “one in many” which asserts the unity or logos of self; they are many in one. If the individual is taken as the production of a cultural imagery that circulates identity patterns for the subjects to internalize, it is not necessary to be distinctively identified. This makes the spectators move from passive identification with the character to the stage of doubtful confusion. The characters represented to them are not claimed to be real or even a representation of real; they are made of words based on a text without any context. As the Producer in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* explains, “Characters don’t act...it’s actors who act...The characters are there in the script\_”. Real character is therefore an illusion; all characters are the products of the imagination of an author. Deconstructionist views of “the subject as text” could be properly applicable to the analysis of Stoppard’s characters. As Kvale maintains:

The radical deconstructionist move is to constitute the subject as text (or the text as subject), making it impossible for that subject to refer to itself in any consistent way, independent of the world of signs it is enmeshed in. The text replaces the transcendental ego of Kant. In this scheme the subject is doomed to perpetual exile from itself. It is exposed to endless substitutions of meaning. “The absence of transcendental signifier ...extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (Derrida, 1981:278). By letting the subject be swallowed up in the text, the transformation of “essential” rational man into “relative” postmodern man is fulfilled (1992: 124-25).

The metamorphosis of rational, educated Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to relativist, postmodern Ros and Guil, who are busy with different games, is a fulfillment of Stoppard's text to turn the centredness of a classic text into the decentredness of a postmodern one. The dead characters of the old text, which have purchased their way into Stoppard's text, are trapped in the structure of postmodern thought and have lost their individuality.

Moreover, their present/absent condition deprives the audience from experiencing them "live" on the stage and magnifies the difficulty of understanding or interpreting them. Since we learn to identify everything in terms of binary oppositions and these paradoxical creatures cannot be restricted in such definitions; the metaphysics of presence is deconstructed in their dual absence/presence. The characters who discuss their own death cannot be present; still the epistemological and ontological questions that engage their mind are familiar for us as the audience. The issues of death and life, the existential angst that they have, the meaninglessness of the world in which they are put, are ontological issues, which not only engage their mind, but also ours. Nonetheless, the incompatibility of these philosophical speculations with the characters' situation turns the play to a pastiche of these speculations.

The concept of representation is also parodied in Stoppard's play. A pure game or theatricality, which questions both the nature of reality and that of identity, takes the place of an authentic presentation of the real world in the naturalistic theater. Theatricality stresses the arbitrary nature of presentation, reminding the audience permanently that they are not observing a natural phenomenon. It is a discursive practice which interferes in the aesthetic form of performance and brings in wider

cultural implications in the context of theater. Additionally it radically changes the mode of perception. The decentredness derived from theatricality, as Kiss asserts, gives the audience “a metaperspective on their positionality in the cultural imagery” (225). The emphasis on the theatricality and playfulness of all performances, including those of the audience, makes the spectators cease seeing their subjectivity as a harmonious one, which is neatly proportioned in the socio-psychic context. By revealing the identity crises and epistemological confusion of the characters, which are themselves the audience of another play (*Hamlet*), Stoppard makes his spectators doubt that their perceptions have a solid foundation. In metadrama, claims Abel, there is no sense of reality; the world is just “the projection of human consciousness” (113). Furthermore, he suggests that, metadrama “glorifies the unwillingness of the imagination to regard any image of the world as ultimate” (113). By involving the spectator in conscious playing instead of passive observing, metatheater destroys the illusion that the audience is experiencing reality. In Stoppard’s play, for instance, the surrealistic characters appear on the stage to affirm that the spectators are involved in a game: the game of theater. The fact that Ros and Guil do not sense any wind on the stage (Stoppard, 101) obliterate the naturalistic interpretation of the world they inhabit. Representation of reality is replaced by pure performance. Abel believes that, “The characters are puppets and the playwrights insist on the fact that they are puppets and the audience should not try to take them as real people” (111). As a defender of fictionality, the Player justly stresses that, “We’re actors—we’re the opposite of people” (Stoppard, 68).

This theatricality makes reality an abstract concept, which can be changed due to the individual experience. What the spectators encounter is just a version of reality that the playwright or the actors try to present. The audience cannot differentiate

between the stage and the world because it is stressed that the world is a stage where we, the actors, play. Besides, we do not even play one role, but different roles. This multiplicity of roles is also an integrated part of R&GAD. Ros and Guil enter Stoppard's play as Shakespearean characters to play the roles of modern Ros and Guil. In the same play, they leave their present identities to take their past ones by entering Shakespeare's text. They also play the role of the audience not only for the theater troop, but also for their own play because they just remain passive spectators and do not interfere in its action to change their prescribed fate. Contrary to the players, who try to establish their own reality in theater, they are passive actors who are captured in their roles and would rather get rid of the text and the roles appointed to them by an author than to play actively. This multiple role playing is a part of theatricality that Stoppard employs to establish his on-stage reality which stands above the reality of "off-stage world" in Brassell's term (1985).

This on-stage reality or fictionality is not related to an objective reality outside the fictional structure; it is only a part of the game in which the characters and the audience are involved. Stoppard takes the idea of objectivity and truth in science, in nature, and in logic for a "colossal confidence trick" and asserts that, "The advancing edge of objectivity must be replaced by a revival of radical consciousness." In his view only the position holders in universities like Goerge Moor, the professor of ethics in Jumper, are the defender of such truths. The facts need the support of a theory to be acceptable. Ros affirms that, "The sun goes down or the earth's coming up, as the fashionable theory has it" (92). It is this "fashionable theory" that, as Lyotard in Postmodern Condition observes, decides for reality. The postmodern uncertainty of truth and Lyotardian paralogy can be heard in the Player's statement that, "Everything has to be taken on trust; truth is only that which is taken to be true. It's

the currency of living. There may be nothing behind it, but it doesn't make any difference so long as it is honoured. One acts on assumptions..." (72). Each observer of reality gives a new dimension to it, but he does not make it clear. The number of observers or witnesses, as Guil maintains, makes the experience more touchable and "the more witnesses there are the thinner it gets and the more reasonable it becomes until it is as thin as reality, the name we give to the common experience" (19). In this sense the world created on stage is more genuine than the real world because there are no pretention and no arbitrary values there. Art can present its own world, without being obliged to imitate or mirror the reality, which is anyway undeterminable. The two "little men" of Hamlet, who seem comical outside the framework of Hamlet's tragedy, are truer than the great Hamlet seeking revenge in performing the orders of a great father figure.

The task of Stoppard's modern anti-heroes in finding orientation in a world of disorder and chaos, a postmodern world of coexistent values and insights is not an easy one. They see the grand structure of Hamlet from their own point of view and are confused about their own roles in this meta-discourse. Are they philosophers dreaming of metamorphosing into butterflies or they are butterflies dreaming of being philosophers, as in Guil's story(63)? Since postmodern characters are no longer living in a world in which "there were answers to everything," truth, as Guil asserts, "becomes a permanent blur" in the corner of their eyes. The truth that they are trying to find does not exist outside the text in which they are moving. If they get rid of its grip they will realize that they are "ambushed by a grotesque"; "uncertainty", as Player says "is the normal state." (71) They are the "two blind men looting a bazaar for their own portrait." And when their portraits are shown to them by the players, they are unable to recognize themselves. Like all other "little men," they "don't know the



ins and outs of the matter". It is even appalling for Ros to feel "like a spectator"; the grand structure of the world creates fear in him. "The unbearable lightness of being" can only be relieved by "the irrational belief that somebody interesting will come in a minute." When they are disappointed with being surprised by a new comer, they engage themselves in playing games. Although in their discussion with the Player, they strongly discard the idea of "being just players", Ros and Guil, like Didi and Gogo, make their situation tolerable by resorting to games. The order they are searching for cannot be achieved in their story. Events which "must play themselves out to aesthetic, moral and logical conclusion," fail to come to such a conclusion and the characters just disappear in the end to appear again in another piece. They should know that they can just play their roles and they "can't go through life questioning" their situation" (72).

In such situations reality cannot fill the background for the characters and memory becomes a loose concept. Throughout the play, the characters try to relate themselves with a world in which they can be identified, but there is no source of information but a text. It is not only the absence of memory that deprives them from being attached to a firm identity, but also the fluidity of language. What Ros & Guil try to do is to forget rather than to remember. The centrality of remembrance is questioned in this play because the effort of the traumatized characters in remembering their mission ends in unimportant details; they are unable to form their memory in a linear narrative of past. If they do, they will certainly remember their disastrous end, from which they try to escape. This lack of memory hinders them from identifying with the characters of the players' play. Indeed, they are unable of any kind of identification because they are traumatized by their unexpected death. The absence of any kind of anticipation or preparation for their fate in Hamlet's text

has traumatized them so deep that they escape any identity. Like the narrator in *Not I* they avoid a reunion with the self; they would rather remain the other. The differentiation between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern loses its significance because their existence finds a sense in the role they play in *Hamlet* and the relationship they have with Hamlet. Although Brassell believes that Stoppard “locates meaning...in the identifiable context of *Hamlet*” (1985: 62), I think that Shakespeare’s text only provides information about these characters, it neither gives meaning to their situation nor explains their plight. Stoppard’s *R&GAD* stresses that all we have is these scattered pieces of information; we are denied an encircling truth. As Andretta expresses it:

It [the play] aims at showing that actors, audiences, and characters in a play share the same destiny of limited comprehension. The actors and the characters they impersonate do not know more than their assigned parts. The audience, likewise, [does] not know more than what relates to their daily routine. None are offered any insight into a comprehensive reality, a metaphysical pattern, or even a moral or logical purpose that is being worked out” (1992: 24).

The only ostensibly logical pattern that they have is language. The characters search the order that they cannot find in the real world in language and literature. Ros ask for a logical pattern in a play, with a beginning a middle and an end. Guil longs for a piece of art that can mirror the real world. The dramatic irony in Stoppard’s play dismantles the classic theories of literature, which emphasize the

mimetic nature of art. The poor textual characters are unaware that their whole fate is just a text. It is a text that controls their life and gives them an identity, not their life that is mirrored in a piece of art. They come to being and die in a text and they reappear, and disappear in another one. They are not only the products of language, but also preoccupied or even perplexed by it. In a scene in the first act Guil asks Ros, "Has it ever happened to you that all of sudden and for no reason at all you haven't the faintest idea how to spell the word-"wife"-or "house"-because when you write it down you just can't remember ever having seen those letters in that order before...?"(41) They have lost their connections with the meaning or signification beyond the words, or even with their shapes. Like reality, language has lost its denotative references and is just used to help the characters cop with their playful situation.

Since they are confined to the borders of their textual fate, language controls their freedom too. Stoppard uses deflation to fight against the certainties of the metatext of Hamlet and discredit its control. We can see it in their contradictory dialogues or different languages that they speak. As modern men they use the language of ordinary people, but when they enter Shakespeare's text, confronting Hamlet, Cladius, or other courtiers, they should use the archaic, poetic language of Shakespeare. The perplexity and frustration that language, both as a means of communication and as a controlling agent, creates in them is one of the main themes of the play. On one hand, they do not have any other device except language to communicate or to explain the phenomena in their environment; on the other hand, it hinders them from expressing themselves. Consequently, they start playing with it by repetition, self-referentiality, or fragmentation. "The system of language", asserts Derrida (1977), "associated with phonetic-alphabetic writing is that within which

logocentric metaphysics, determining the sense of being as presence, has been produced...”(qtd. in Christopher Norris: 43) This sense of being, this presence, is disturbed in the world of Ros and Guil by Stoppard’s intentional literariness. In his text, performativity tries to dissolve the dominance of language and text, making language an unstable system devoid of any logical pattern.

Furthermore the play explicitly discusses different views of art and literature. Self-reflexivity, theatricality, active role playing of the audience, and the interchangeable roles of spectators and actors in this play are part of the metatheatrical discourse and a vehicle of intermedial and intercultural transformation. This challenging approach, with its underlying assertion on the role of play as a key feature of human creativity, suggests that metadrama can be a subject for many intersecting scholarly discourses.

## Chapter 5

### **Beyond Representation: The Real Inspector Hound**

Derrida believes that the element of presence is absent in performance because it fails to represent the logos of presence, which is aimed in a dramatic text. In other words performance always remains in the level of representation. In *The Real Inspector Hound*, Stoppard breaks the boundaries of presence/absence, subject/object and actor/spectator in a farce of the genre whodunit to realize Derrida's deconstructive aspirations. He puts forward the same ontological questions about the world that the stage characters inhabit and about the boundary between reality and performance as Derrida does. The possibility of cognition, the ontological status of reality, the adequacy of language as a means for describing experiences, the boundaries of subjectivity, the plurality of the self, and the nature of performance are all issues with which Stoppard, like Derrida, engages himself. He breaks the double dichotomy of Illusion/reality in life/art through a hybrid performance beyond the boundaries of mimetic theories of theater. From the first scene of *The Real Inspector Hound* the spectators are forced to quit their customary treatment of performance and their position in it. The mirror, which projects their image on the stage, changes their status from passive consumers to active participants and the

scenes that follow deprive them of the habitual modes of perception. The two sophisticated spectators of the whodunit in the play, or the two critics, are perplexed encountering a play that starts with a pause and announces the stage direction on the phone. The audience, confronted with the interchanging role playing and mixing identities, experience the same perplexity. They begin to ask themselves if they are really percipient “knowing subjects”, discerning an “object” named theater or they are involved in an ingenious game. To be a knowing subject, one requires to observe and to be aware that he is observing. If one is not sure, like the Chinese philosopher(R&GAD), if he is observing or being observed, he will be overwhelmed with confusion.

The interchangeability of subject and object, the merging of real and symbolic, and the simultaneity of presence and absence help Stoppard deconstruct the audience’s sense of perception in *The Real Inspector Hound*. Stoppard’s non-traditional and anti-narrative style proves to defy the logocentric aspiration of the spectators who are looking for conceptions. Haney II believes that, “While the experience of the sublime is often associated with the grandeur of sayable qualities, to comprehend the unsayable involves shifting our attention from conceptuality toward the direct experience of non-thought...” (2006: vii). The first stage direction of the play manifests Stoppard’s tendency towards this kind of experience:

The first thing is that the audience appear to be confronted by their own reflection in a huge mirror. Impossible. However, back there in the gloom- not at the footlights-a bank of plush seats and pale smudges of faces. (the total effect having been established, it can be progressively faded out as the

play goes on, until the front row remains to remind us of the rest and then, finally, merely two seats in that row-one of which is now occupied by moon. Between moon and the auditorium is an acting area which represents, in as realistic an idiom as possible, the drawing room of Muldoon manor (Stoppard, 1996: 4).

The word “impossible” at the end of the first sentence shows Stoppard’s awareness of the way that the audience may react. He intentionally distorts the audience’s sense of order. The opening bizarre spectacle, like the opening scene of *After Magritte*, plays with the logocentric tendency of the audience to interpret and creates false expectations in them. The spectators, as Haney suggests, “Find their attention moving from meaning to non-meaning, thought to non-thought, contingency to non-contingency representing two types of intersubjectivity, as reflected in the play’s bifocal mirror” (35). The primary emphasis on the authenticity of the experience is followed by the entering of the audience of the first play into the scenes of the second one to be killed there, which strikes the audience with its implausibility and its fantastic qualities. In spite of the pretended reality, this entrance seems extreme improbable and theatrical. The spectator would surely say, “Impossible,” because the cultural external reality, which is the basis for their interpretation, is invalidated here. The mixture of different levels of reality not only happens in intra-theatrical fiction, but also in the extra-theatrical reality because the audience in this play plays different roles of actors and characters. The primary engagement of the audience in the performance, which gives place to pure witnessing, discards the connectedness of meaning and consciousness. Both the interchangeability of roles and the improbability of action create a kind of detaching, non-interpretive mode for the

audience. Indeed, the participants start with the desire for interpreting (the two critics as well as the audience of the first play), but as the boundaries of absence and presence disappear, the cultural exterior, which is the basis for their interpretive frameworks, loses its control over them. In his metadramatic experience, Stoppard removes the context of one play or mix it with another so that the interpretive devices lose their validity. Clear-cut judgments prove to be individual interpretations, which in the case of two critics are based on personal benefits as well.

The primary denial of the illusion and the emphasis on the authenticity of the play, presented to the audience by showing their reflections on the stage, is destroyed in the course of the play, emphasizing the illusory nature of theater. The first impression of the spectators that they are part of the play they discern, or the feeling that they are going to participate in the events of the play, is disturbed as they fade from the scene and leave the fictive audience (Moon and Birdboot) there to continue viewing the second play and playing in the first one. This shift from the role-player to the audience will also happen later to the actors of the whodunit-within-the-play. Two of them, Simon and inspector Hound, leave the structure of whodunit to enter the other play as audience, demonstrating that the body of the actors can take different shapes. The playwright also appears on the stage by announcing the stage direction through the mouth of a minor character. This interaction of characters, playwright and spectators makes the distinction between fiction and non-fiction difficult. Schwantz believes that, "The audience is led to doubt its own faculty of distinguishing between levels of reality and frames of reference" (140). The habitual categorization, which functions as a basis for reference, disappears in this play and causes the spectators to lose their sense of reality. In the very act of realizing the fiction, the audience is robbed of its touch with reality. They start questioning the



nature of reality and the relation between the observed objects and familiar frames of language which used to help them interpret the events, theatrical or actual.

The fictional audience of the play, Moon and Birdboot, who are being observed in the very process of observing, give the impression that the audience is also engaged in role playing in a greater design; it is engaged in a double act of observing and being observed or double role of knowing subject and ignorant object. The two critics who, like the audience, are present in the play and absent from it, must interpret and evaluate a whodunit, a version of Agatha Christie's *Mousetrap*. In their restless waiting for the beginning of the performance, they realize with frustration, that the play has already begun with a pause. They are not there to observe or to give detailed comments because they already have a formulated interpretation and want to adjust the play to its frame:

Birdboot: Underneath?!? It's a whodunit, man!- Look at it!

(They look at it. The room. The BODY. Silence.)

Has it started yet?

Moon: Yes (7)

The whole scene gives the impression that they are supposed to watch a play, categorized under the genre of whodunit or thriller. They even have a predetermined criticism, based on the cultural subjectivity outside the performance. Birdboot openly declares that he and his fellow critics "had a meeting in the bar and decided it's a first-class family entertainment" (6). They get the first disturbance in their interpretive undertaking with the unconventional beginning to which Birdboot reacts immediately: "You can't start with a pause! If you want my opinion there's total panic back there" (Stoppard, 7). The gap in their perception widens during the performance as the mystery of the play becomes the mystery of their own life. Using a familiar genre of

detective stories and creating a plot that does not fit in the signification system, Stoppard obstacles the way of familiar modes of perception or easy interpretation. The two critics, who are supposed to find meaning and solve the mystery of interpretation, prove to be the mysterious figures devoured by the performance. The play demonstrates how critics try to give a shape to a performance, interpreting it with their fantasy or evaluating it to their own benefit. The pre-interpretive cultural-based subjectivity, which is parodied by Stoppard as “the public voice” or “critic voice” (15), affects both critics and spectators. This critical voice, which both the critics and the audience use to sustain “the pronouncement of opinion” or to give shape to the ideas, as Stoppard demonstrates, is like language arbitrary in nature and has nothing to do with reality.

Besides, Birdboot/Simon and Moon/Inspector Hound parallel beings, which take form in two different levels of fictionality for the audience, suggest that the looking subject can transform the observed object. The mechanism that works between them also proposes that the subject can be reformed by its relations to the object. From this view, critics’ interpretations can change the objects of their observation due to the relation they have to them. Birdboot, for instance, explicitly ask for Moon’s complicity in bringing fame to Cynthia, one of the actresses in the whodunit, because he has a love affair with her. Language is his assistance in this reality-making: “I don’t put words into your mouth but a word from us and we could make her” (9). His criticism is not a search for truth or meaning; it is a manipulation of truth and order. In portraying the partiality of the two critics and lack of objectivity in their criticism, Stoppard demonstrates how subjective any extraction of reality from a text or a performance can be. Both Moon and Birdboot are deeply obsessed with their own desires and replicate them on the object of their observation. Moon, as a second rate

critic, desires to get rid of his rival Higgs; therefore the symbolic order of the whodunit becomes a place for the fulfillment of his hidden desire for killing Higgs. Birdboot's criticism also derives strongly from his sexual tendencies and is everything except an objective commentary on the play. His object of admiration, which has changed from Felicity to Cynthia, is the basis of his theatrical judgment in the symbolic order of Stoppard's play. He is permanently thinking about the means of bringing fame to Cynthia and seducing her by his criticism.

Because of their disparate standpoints, the dialogs between the two critics sound totally absurd. Each of them follows his own line of thought and does not react or even listen to the other side. Consequently, language becomes dysfunctional in their interaction and loses its vocation to convey meaning. In the following dialog, for instance, the characters are so obsessed with their own personal engagements that they never come to a point of understanding each other:

Birboot: Do you believe in love in the first sight?

Moon: It's not that I think I am a better critic-

Birdboot: I feel my whole life changing-

Moon: I am but it's not that.

Birdboot: Oh, the world will laugh at me, I know....

Their realities deviate from each other and become totally subjective. What we hear is actually two parallel monologs, which do not even overlap each other. Their dialog lacks the features of a real conversation. In Stoppard's plays as Uchman suggests:

The physical reality is tinted by subjective, personal elements. It is something different to individual people. On the other hand, while providing a

description of it, the people try to interpret it, to find a logical explanation of the seemingly absurd elements. In doing so, they make use of their individual, subjective impressions and employ language as a means of describing it (97).

This irrelevancy of language is accompanied by an absence of logic. Characters' faulty way of reasoning makes the conversation hilariously funny. Stoppard creates a pastiche out of their seemingly serious engagements. The fruitless endeavor to interpret the object of observation in *After Magritte* turns to reality-making in *The Real Inspector Hound*. In this creation of reality, however, the interpreters become the victim of their own imagination. By entering the structure of the whodunit, the two critics change their identity from inspectors or interpreters to the victims of the jealousy of other dreamers. In the new structure they lose their pre-interpretive awareness and the discordance of their thoughts, emotions, and actions cause them to appear farcical. This movement from meaning to non-meaning, which happens on two levels, breaks the expected order of both plays. The critics, who have a seemingly sound judgment as subjects in one play, lose the analytical frameworks of thought in the thriller and begin to defend themselves as observed objects. This dual identity, which sums up subject and object, self and other, mind and body, dismantles the established metaphysical thought, which interprets reality, self, and identity in terms of binary oppositions. Stoppard breaks the centredness that both critics and audience desire and put them in a signification system which deprives them of the security of binary thinking or rational solutions.

The search for a rational solution in whodunit, which is an inseparable aspect of this genre, is reversed in Stoppard's play. The incorporation of the fictional audience

of the first play into the structure of the second play creates a breach in the signification system and blocks the logical solution. The logocentric assumption in this genre is that a logical explanation exists and should be acquired. The logical explanation that Puckeridge, the third rate critic, has killed Higgs, the first rate critic, and goes on to kill the second rate critics Moon and Birdboot to clear his way, is acceptable in itself. Nonetheless, the way that this solution is related to the fictional structure of the thriller and the coincidental merging of fictional and real makes the dénouement implausible and illogical. This anti-Aristotelian implausibility is intensified as the critics, who have left their seats to take the roles of victims or murderers on the stage, are criticized by the characters, who are occupying their chairs of critics. Evaluating the play as not having “pace, point, focus, interest, drama, wit or originality” (40), the character/actors of the detective story take a new identity as observing subjects.

Although the death of the critics on the stage is considered as a new game of the playwright (of the first play) to mislead the audience, the critics’ interference in the structure of whodunit destroys the sovereignty of the author in it. The complexity of the metadramatic techniques in this play not only disrupts the continuity of narrative but also the referentiality of language. Consequently, the hermeneutic tendency in the audience to interpret is confronted with a deadlock. The predesigned perception assumes that the chaos comes to order and the mystery is solved in a meaningful denouement. As Birdboot formulates it:

It is at this point that the play for me comes alive.  
The groundwork has been well and truly laid and the  
author has taken the trouble to learn from the  
masters of the genre. He has created a real

situation, and few will doubt his ability to resolve it with a startling denouement. Certainly that is what it so far lacks, but it has a beginning, a middle and I have no doubt it will prove to have an end(31).

But the play proves to be just the opposite; the “clean show,” which Birdboot admires, turns to a chaotic mess, which swallows the two critics as its victims. In this play the clarity and order of the beginning ends in a confused resolution.

Ironically the chaos is created first as the two critics enter the structure of the whodunit. By involving themselves in the plot, they reverse the logical order and make the situation more confused and complicated. Like “the catalytic figure” or “the outsider,” whom Moon blames for the chaos created in the structure of whodunit, the two critics plunge “through to the center of an ordered world” and set up “the disruptions”(Stoppard,15). “The shock waves” as Moon asserts, “will strip these comfortable people- these crustaceans in the rock pool of society” (15), expose them to a void of conception and deprives them from logocentric interpretations. Hence the contact between the audience and the text is blocked and the playwright’s delogocentric desire is fulfilled. The finite system of signification, which both the audience and the critics explore, dissolves in non-meaning and non-signification.

The signification system is also distorted by the different roles played by one character and the movement between different levels of reality or fictionality. The incompatibility of the unfamiliar theatrical or linguistic conventions with the audience’s normative frame of reference creates the deconstructive effect that Stoppard aspires. In R&GAD the two characters just move between real and symbolic worlds or past and present and keep their names. In RIH, however, the characters take different identities and different names. Birdboot plays the roles of Simon and Birdboot at the

same time; Moon appears as Inspector Hound; and worse of all, Puckeridge takes the roles of Magnus, Mc Coy, Albert and himself. "Self" and "other" are so interwoven in the two plays that sometimes a dialog of one identity is followed by the words of the other. Even Moon, who is reluctant to participate in this new-identity game and warns Birdboot to leave the fictional realm and get back to the real one, takes his fictional role after recognizing the dead body as Higgs'. Lest his hidden desire for removing Higgs from his way is revealed, he announces, as the Real Inspector Hound, that he is in "a position to reveal the mystery" (42). Instead of revealing the mystery, however, he hides the truth by declaring the corpse to be McCoy. Truth, as Magnus complains, becomes just a set of words, those of Moon, who in the double role of critic/inspector tries to shape it the way he desires:

Magnus: We only have your word for that, Inspector.  
We only have your word for a lot of things. For instance-McCoy. Who is he? Is his name McCoy? Is there any truth in that fantastic and implausible tale inflicted in the Canadian street? (43)

The arbitrariness of the relation between reality and language, stressed in this dialog, is also displayed in the instability of the names. One signifier (the given name of a person) is shared by different signifieds and makes the identification in a definite system impossible. Since signification can work only through difference or putting each signifier in its linguistic context, the different levels of fictionality in this play hinder the text from falling in a given context. "Categories", as Schwanitz asserts, "are not only the instruments of analysis but- much more importantly- they also form a structure which is lived" (148). Stoppard deconstructs this structure and creates a

breach in the audience's mental composition. The very name of the Real Inspector Hound proves to be the most unreal identification system in the play, emphasizing that the names are just arbitrary attributions and cannot carry specific identities or meaning. Every stable system of signs is supported by social codes and structures. By undermining these codes, Stoppard's creates unsteadiness between signs and the things they name and destabilizes the sign system.

The destabilization of the signification system and the deconstruction of text and performance are also caused by implausibility. The unobserved corpse, which questions the trustworthiness of observation, the characters, whose mobile identity makes them unnamable, and the fusion of the audience with the actors, which disturbs the borders of self and other, render Stoppard's play a deconstructive nature. Stoppard takes the familiar cognitive structures from the spectators and drives them to a non-cognitive void.

Critic's superficial search for philosophical interpretations in the structure of a thriller is parodied in the farcical treatment of these characters. Moon, affirming that the whodunit "aligns itself uncompromisingly on the side of life," criticizes the inadequacy of the presence of Descartes's dictum "Cogito ergo sum" in the thriller:

Moon: Je suis, it seems to be saying, ergo sum. But is that enough? I think we are entitled to ask- and here we are concerned with what I have referred to elsewhere as the nature of identity...I think we are entitled to ask – Where is God?(25)

Stoppard's parody is targeting the intellectual efforts to over-interpret a work of art. Even Birdboot is stunned by such an interpretive expectation and asks perplexedly, "Who?"(25) Moon's effort to relate a sophisticated philosophical issue, like the contrast between Cartesian definition of identity and metaphysical search for God's



inspiring idea, to an entertaining detective story is ridiculed here. The critics' desire to impose meaning on a text from outside or from a cultural context irrelevant to the narrative of the play is the source of a pastiche for Stoppard. The irrelevancy of such discussion to the performed melodrama is extreme farcical. Moon, however, insists on giving an intellectual touch to the whodunit:

Moon: If we examine this more closely, and I think close examination is the least tribute that this play deserves, I think we will find that within the austere framework of what is seen to be on one level a country-house week-end, and what a useful symbol that is, the author has given us- yes I will go so far- has given us the human condition.

This bombastic interpretation and Moon's ludicrous endeavor to over-interpret a cheap melodrama becomes the target of Stoppard's mockery. He, like Derrida, questions the interference of predetermined cultural or linguistic structures in the process of cognition or extraction of meaning. "To search for a meaning in drama," proposes Rothstein, "in order to explain the rules by which the dramatist plays may contradict the nature of drama itself as Stoppard thinks of it" (130). Rothstein believes that for Stoppard theater is just a game and should be treated like a game too. Although in every game there are some rules that should be followed, they are just valid for that particular game; they do not have any meaning or universal suggestion. Stoppard insists in his plays that reality and meaning are irrelevant to theater. This irrelevancy can be observed in the free movement of the characters between different worlds of real and fictional in *The Real Inspector Hound*.

Game playing is also interwoven in the structure of Stoppard's plays. In *Inspector Hound*, for instance, the characters are involved in different games

throughout the play: Tennis, card playing, solving riddles, role playing and finally language games:

Cynthia: Simon?

Birboot: And I call yours bluff!

Cynthia (imperturbably): I meld.

Felicity: I huff

Magnus: I ruff

Birdboot: I Bluff.

Cynthia: Twist.

Felicity: Bust

Magnus: Check.

Birdboot: Snap

This wordplay, which is a part of the game, stresses the irrelevancy of the words to reality. Each word acquires a new signification in the structure of the game; so does the narrative in the structure of language. Haney II believes that, "Liminal interiority in theater involves a void of conceptions shared by performer and spectator" (8). He attributes this void to "the gap between words and thoughts, in the background of all language and ideas as a silent beyond-ness, and immanently within knowledge as its generative condition of unknowingness" (8). In other words, every play should be perceived within a series of rules that the playwright sets. In Rothstein's view, Stoppard changes the conventional expectations from an audience. He maintains that, "An audience obeys certain rules. It sits in pre-determined seats and remains seated throughout the performance, saving intermissions."(1979:174) The spectators in Stoppard's play- the two critics- are restless throughout the play. They talk, they comment on the play, they object to the rule-breakings, and they interfere in the course of the play and determine its end. By displacing the familiar structure of

theater, Stoppard demands his audience to notice their casual process of interpretation.

The progression of the play, as in *After Magritte*, proves to demonstrate the unreliability of perception and its exposure to different other factors. The audience is subject to the epistemological questions about the way it can acquire knowledge and the extent of trustworthiness of this knowledge. Jernigan believes that, "A thoroughly postmodern work would simultaneously raise ontological questions about the nature of the past and epistemological questions about how we are to know the past, all the while remaining incredulous about that past's grand meta-narrative" (2001:148). In Jernigan's view, Stoppard raises many epistemological questions, but finds finally answers for them; therefore he does not categorize Stoppard as a postmodern writer. He differentiates between the anti-realism of Stoppard and that of Caryl Churchill and maintains that instead of "encouraging his audience to leave with widely different perspectives, Stoppard strives to instill homogeneity of thought" (2001:66). I think, anti-representational narrative form, the infusion of fiction and reality, the disruption of the coherent narrative, and logical impossibility are the characteristics that make Stoppard's dramatic works delogocentric. By destroying the illusion of absolute space and time, he establishes a kind of relativity in his plays, which is postmodern in nature. *The Real Inspector Hound*, for instance, as Brassell mentions, "Demonstrates the unreality of all acting, and invites the audience to consider whether, in terms of another focus beyond their perception, they too are no more than actors in a play"(101). Furthermore, by incorporating the two critics in the world of the detective fiction, he destroys the consistency of conventional time and space and creates his own conventions for the game he has devised. The characters enter their dreams, where they can fulfill their desires. Birdboot takes the role of Simon, Cynthia's lover,

and Moon, who is afraid of being accused of killing his rival Higgs, takes the role of the Inspector, ostensibly to discover the truth, really to hide it as long as possible. In answering Magnus' question about the identity of the body, Moon answers: "I don't know. Quite unlike anyone I've ever met. (Long Pause.) Well...now..." (41) The long pause, which is indicative of his hesitation and confusion, helps him incorporate himself in his new role. Being afraid of revealing his hidden desires to kill Higgs, he intentionally hides the identity of the corpse. His invented story about the encounter of Simon and McCoy in Canada is a fictional mixture of the different narratives and has nothing to do with the truth he claims to have just learned. Stoppard deconstructs the genre of detective stories by replacing the detective role as the discoverer of the truths by an anti- detective game player. The spectator/critic takes the role of a playwright, trying to manipulate the plot for achieving a logical dénouement. Stoppard suggests that, the inspector/critics not only impose the cultural/linguistic context on the events they are observing, but also create the truths the way they like.

Whodunit, an established genre of the twentieth century, emphasizes the solvability of the mysteries by appealing to the reason. Taking for granted that a discoverable truth and a logical order exist and can be restored, the detective story aims at finding the truth and restoring the order. In *The Real Inspector Hound*, however, the existing elements deliberately negate the fundamental purposes of the genre. The coherent narrative discourse and plot is distorted; the Apollonian control is replaced by Dionysian disorder; the ability of language to refer truthfully to the world is denied; the dramatic representation is replaced by metadramatic self-referentiality; the teleological conception of art is parodied; and finally the strict classical structure, comprising of beginning, middle and end, is defied. The metadramatic and ironic features of postmodernist art take the place of the

narrative's logical sequence and serious undertakings. In the disjointed world of Stoppard's play, the fragments function by the law of random events and unpredictable possibilities. Birdboot, who accidentally answers the telephone on the stage, is involved in the plot and incorporates the chaos into the orderly-designed plot of the whodunit. The linear progression of the plot is disrupted and the narrative is disintegrated into fragments. The absence of an organizing center (desired by Birdboot) or a divine truth (desired by Moon) leads to a pagan multitude of meaning. Complexity makes the accessibility of a unique solution improbable. Furthermore, the repetition of performance, especially in the scenes followed by the entrance of the two critics in the plot of the detective story, subverts the representational expectations of the realistic drama and emphasizes the freedom for endless possibilities and combinations. Stoppard invites his audience to overcome their interpretive desires and stop searching for the patterns ruling the endless interplay of disparate events. He challenges our quest for fixing the meaning by rationalizing and asserts that, "the speculative unity of knowledge" (Lyotard) is denied to us. By presenting something beyond the control of playwright, characters, or audience, something that destroys the neat ordering of cause and effect, Stoppard causes disruption in the mind of controlling subjects As Haney maintains:

Instead of emphasis on epistemology, so characteristic for detective fiction, Stoppard's play focuses more openly on the ontological dilemmas of the logic governing his projected worlds. Thus the function of the visually powerful set opening the play is to puzzle the audience and to facilitate their visual and verbal apprehension of the generative

mechanisms resting on the alternatively employed parody and defamiliarisation”(146).

## Chapter 6

### **Playing with Wittgenstein: Stoppard's Dogg's Hamlet and Cahoot's Macbeth**

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein suggests that language becomes meaningful just within given cultural contexts. In other words the meaning of a word is determined by the context in which it is used. Then, he proceeds to examine the different ways of language acquisition by individuals and the reason of misunderstandings in communicating by language. For this purpose, he depicts a builder and his assistant during the construction of a building. There are a limited number of words they need to communicate, namely the names of the material they use. They employ a language consisting of the following words: block, pillar, slab, and beam. Wittgenstein calls this a "primitive language." Then, he imagines a society in which the only language system is this. The adults teach the children to use this language by pointing to the objects they name. This ostensive teaching (*hinweisende Lehren*) establishes "an association between the word and the thing" (Wittgenstein 4e). He concludes later that this kind of teaching has nothing to do with understanding of a word because "with different training the same ostensive teaching of these words would have affected a different understanding" (5e). He calls the

different processes of naming objects or communicating ideas “language games”: “I will call these games language games and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language game” (5e).

Looking from this perspective, a word makes sense only within the language game in which it is used. Therefore, in his view, reviewing philosophical problems in terms of words is often problematic because words have different functions in different language games. The difference remains unnoticeable by the individual because the symbols, letters, or phonemes that represent a word remain the same. The source of perplexity is the dependence of the meaning on the context in which it is used and the multiplicity of the contexts or the language games in which the words are employed. Because of the multi-functionality of words, neither presence nor the fixed nature of the written texts can stabilize the meaning. Thus, labeling things or naming them is just a kind of preparation for involving in a game. By giving names to objects, we are not rendering them a fixed or true meaning; we set conventions to play on. Truth, therefore, is a concept from the language game of logic, and is inapplicable to our everyday reality; its meaning for the logical philosopher radically differs in other contexts. In other words, signification system is not a stable one and can change from one game to another game.

A narrative, which is also a signification system, suffers from the same instability. Every narrative is a game with some rules, which should be discovered to become comprehensible. The application of words in this system does not facilitate interpretation because the writer’s encoding strategies do not always correspond to the reader’s decoding methods. Like all other games we do not need to understand a literary game; we should engage ourselves in its course. Dagg’s Hamlet and Cahoot’s Macbeth are two also two literary games, which aim at entertaining the



audience. Dogg's Hamlet is based fundamentally on a part of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations in which the process of ostensive learning is depicted. In this section a group of construction workers are shown building a platform by throwing different pieces of wood in a line. Stoppard describes it in the preface as following:

An observer notes that each time the first man shouts 'Plank!' he is thrown a long flat piece. Then he calls 'Slab!' and is thrown a piece of a different shape. This happens a few times. There is a call for 'Block!' and a third shape is thrown. Finally a call for 'Cube!' produces a fourth type of piece. An observer would probably conclude that the different words described different shapes and sizes of the material. But this is not the only possible interpretation (Stoppard, 1980).

Stoppard's depiction of this scene in Dogg's Hamlet emphasizes the possibility of different interpretations.

The play begins with a game of catch between two schoolboys performed in Dogg language, a language consisting of English words with new meanings. Abel, for instance, tests a microphone by counting, "sun, dock, and trog," instead of one, two, and three. The game continues introducing new players, like the schoolmaster Mr Dogg, who speaks the same language. The complication begins as Easy, the truck driver, enters the scene carrying the material for building the theater platform. His common English greeting offends the headmaster because in Dogg's language it is an insult. On the other hand, Easy, who cannot understand any of their words, reacts

confusedly to the manipulated English they speak. The two different games they play block their contact. By showing a diagram of the platform, Easy succeeds in communicating with Dogg. Then, Dogg positions the boys and the truck driver in a line to carry the lumber from the truck to the stage, where the platform is arranged to be built. When he calls, "plank", which means "ready" in Dogg language, the first piece of lumber is passed down the line. Since it is a plank, Easy thinks that he has understood what is going on and he also calls out, "plank." Confusion is first aroused when after the first few planks, lumber in the shape of blocks, cubes, and slabs come. After constructing the platform, some letters appear on the blocks that say "maths old egg." Seeing this phrase, Mr. Dogg gets angry and knocks Easy through the wall. The driver is compelled to reconstruct the wall, which this time displays the phrase "Meg Shot Glad." Easy is again knocked through the wall. The second reconstruction of the wall is ostensibly successful and the ceremony begins by giving different awards to a student named Fox by Mr. Dogg. Then, Mrs. Dogg announces that it is time for William Shakespeare's Hamlet. When all three exit the stage, the Lady, who was helping the headmaster by awarding the trophies, is clearly shocked that the wall now reads GOD SLAG THEM. Mr. Dogg looks angrily at Easy and he readily hurls himself through the wall. Easy learns Dogg language in the course of building the platform and starts speaking it. During the rebuilding of the wall for the last time, Easy and the school boys exchange some insults about Mr. Dogg. With the appearance of the words "Dogg's Hamlet" on the wall, Easy announces the beginning of the play, a confusing version of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Mrs. Dogg and the students are the actors and Dogg's favorite student, Fox Major, plays the role of Hamlet. The version is so condensed that it turns to be more comical than tragic. Although the play is performed in English, the English of Shakespeare's play has a performative function for them; they cannot communicate by it. Upon the conclusion

of the play, Easy begins deconstructing the stage by carrying a cube away, thanking the audience in Dogg language using the word “cube.” Whether he has learned the language or he is referring to the cube he is carrying away remains ambiguous.

In the introduction to the play, Stoppard asserts that, in the case of ostensive learning(Wittgenstein construction builders or Stoppard’s stage builders), “the observer could have made a false assumption, but the fact that he on the one hand and the builders on the other are using two different languages need not be apparent to either party”(1993: 142). As long as they do not consider the difference between languages and the language makes sense, they can communicate. “This happy state of affairs,” as Stoppard suggests, “would of course continue only as long as, through sheer co-incidence, each man’s utterance made sense(even if not the same sense) to the other”(142). However, the undecideability of meaning, which is the result of different language games that different parties play, is the source of comical misunderstandings. The best example is the story that “Easy with considerable gusto,” relates and “falls flat being, of course, not understood” (142). Even radio, which is supposed to have a standardized language, is incomprehensible for Easy. His question, “What wavelength are you on?” shows the degree of his irritation with language. It seems that he is in a wonderland where his realities have turned to dreams. He finally dares asking Dogg, “What’s your game?”(158) He answers “cube,” and goes away. All Easy’s efforts for understanding these people or making them understand him remain ineffective.

The estrangement of English language happens not only in the dialogs of the headmaster and the schoolboys but also in the prologue of Dogg’s Hamlet, performed by Shakespeare:

For this relief, much thanks.  
Though I am native here, and to the manner born,  
It is a custom more honoured in the breach  
Than in the observance  
Well.  
Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.  
To be, or not to be, that is the question.  
There are more things in heaven and earth  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy-  
There is a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.  
I must be cruel only to be kind;  
Hold, as t'were, the mirror up to the nature.  
A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.  
(The lady in audience shouts "Marmalade")  
The lady doth protest too much.  
Cat will mew, and Dogg will have his day!

Shakespeare's prologue, whose chaotic structure resembles Lucky's speech, is an amalgam of famous quotations of Hamlet, which, being put together randomly, are evacuated from their established meaning. As Stoppard's Shakespeare affirms, the custom of theater is more honored in the breach than in observance. The self-referentiality of the monolog, which discusses the state of theater, turns to nonsense about cat and Dogg as it progresses. The Shakespeare of the play even accuses a lady in the audience of protesting too much. He comically warns the philosophers like Wittgenstein who search for clarity that, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt in your philosophy." Both Lucky and Stoppard's Shakespeare mock logical philosophy, which aims at interpreting the existence within the realm of logic. Shakespeare even admires the "madness" of literary games. The postmodern artist (Stoppard's Shakespeare) joins the postmodern philosopher (Lucky) to declare the

invalidity of ordered, logocentric structures, both in philosophy and in art; the “Madness” of Dionysian art is honored for having a “method.”

Stoppard’s parodic treatment of the pompous discourse of conventional prolog and his pastiche of its presumed elements demystifies the logos of conventional theater. The myth of immobile signification is also obliterated in this play; Stoppard makes his audience question themselves if Shakespeare language is more comprehensible for the contemporary readers than Dogg language. Comprehensibility, clarity, rationality, and causality are proved to be arbitrary conceptions. The quotations from Shakespeare’s play, which create a sort of disarticulation of the rational language, help Stoppard criticize the mediated language of the conventional literary, religious, and scientific discourses. He disconnects the various discourses present in Shakespeare’s Hamlet by presenting them in an incongruous synthesis of rational logos. The fragmentation and repetition of Shakespeare’s prolog and the abridged text of Hamlet reflect the linguistic chaos, which is resulted in the absence of an absolute language. The incompatibility of Shakespearean language with the context of modern English is as confusing and misleading as Dogg language. In the absence of logic or interpretation, one can easily laugh at the madness of the world. Wilcher in “Stoppard and the Art of Communication” argues that, “Since language is constantly changing, each generation gradually loses touch with its own speech-community, retaining out-of-date idioms which begin to sound bizarre, until eventually whole language-systems fall into disuse”(www. english. fsu. edu/ jobs/num08/Num8Wilcher.htm).

The confusion rises when the spectator/readers, as the participant in the literary game, approach the narrative and its language with different sets of assumption as the original context. By contrasting the three languages of the play, Stoppard proves

the problematicity of language as a medium of communication. The disjunction between words and reality, or between words and the different referents that each spectator imagines, destabilizes the concept of language as an interpretable meaningful system. Stoppard's Dogg language, which comes close to the linguistic "informese" or primitive language, helps Stoppard create an interesting comedy in which the nature of language and its practicality in communication is questioned. The game-like usage of Wittgenstein's theories is aimed at teaching the spectators to discard their habitual thinking in the framework of English language and focus their perception on casual inference. The pragmatic functions of English words are changed so that the audience does not understand anything if it relies on its past knowledge. Like Easy, the spectators gradually learn to adopt the new language, but no one knows if the inferred meaning is also meant by the characters or the playwright. As Wilcher maintains:

Each piece of language is only 'a way of putting it.' Other ways can be tried, but every attempt to complete the circuit of communication between writer and reader will be thwarted by the nature of language. The writer must wrestle to encode meaning in an appropriate pattern of words; the reader must wrestle to decode the meaning from the words. But difficulties arise at each stage of the process—because it is a process and therefore subject to the operation of time. First of all, the message that the writer seeks to communicate is unstable, like the writer himself and everything else in a time-governed world (PDF doc.).

Stoppard's play is a double game, one with Wittgenstein and one with the audience. Keir Elam believes that, "What Stoppard attempts, in effect, is to out\_wittgenstein Wittgenstein, applying to the latter's dramatized primitive language-game the very 'it could be this too' principle expounded later in the *Philosophical Investigation*" (2001: 184). Although Easy learns Dogg language by similar ostensive learning that Saint Augustine describes, whether the audience is also able to decode this language and to understand Stoppard remains dubious. The defamiliarisation that Stoppard in his literary game creates is the outcome of the contrast between the schoolboy's usage of common English and what the audience from these words understands on one hand, and the contrast of elevated archaic language of Hamlet with the primitive language of construction builders on the other hand. The language-game in which Easy learns Dogg Language is not comparable with the literary game in which the audience decodes the playwright's language. Stoppard changes the signifiers so that they refer to unfamiliar signifieds, emptying them from accepted meanings. As Wilcher states it:

If the configuration of sense-impressions that makes up each individual's experience of being alive changes from moment to moment, then any pattern that the mind creates to embody experience in a form that can be communicated to other minds will be a valid expression only of what was, not of what is. The self that seeks to express its knowledge of the world participates in the flux of all temporal things. Furthermore, the medium of language is not only difficult to master, but is itself also subject to time. Having spent twenty years 'trying to learn to use words,' says Eliot, he has discovered that 'every

attempt/Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure(PDF doc..).

The resulted incomprehensible language dissolves the centeredness of the text and creates confusion. Stoppard demonstrates how the dominancy of clichés has deprived the contemporary audience from creative understanding. Bereft of these clichés, they are unable to communicate with a text. The continuity of narrative is also broken by the use of different languages. Finally the endless interpretational regresses frustrate the audience and make them submit to the game the playwright plays on them and quit their interpretational strategies. This “non-finality of definition” (Elam) and the aporia of meaning that Stoppard creates is in Derridean term deconstructive. The author’s attempt to express the “unsayable” by appealing to language is as difficult as its discovery by the audience/reader.

The expression of the “unsayable” in a non-decodable language becomes a political goal in Cahoot’s *Macbeth*, which is dedicated to Pavel Kohout, the dissident Czech playwright. The play shows the efforts of dissident artist to save theater performance from censorship by holding private performances like that of *Macbeth*. The perpetual interruptions of the their performance by different events, like the arrival and departure of the inspector and his Secret police, the entrance of the truck driver of Dagg’s *Hamlet*; and the symbolic construction of a wall, hinder the performed play from completing its course and coming to an end. The main conflict of the play arises from the desire of the authorities to control language or discourse. The harmless Inspector of *The Real Inspector Hound*, who was in search of truth, turns to be the sinister agent of secret police in this play, who tries to fix established truths by controlling the discourse of society and finding the transgression of rules in



the performance. To protect themselves from the censorship of the dominant discourse, the audience adopts a new language, Dogg, introduced to them by Easy. The funny language game of Dogg's Hamlet turns to a verbal "hide and seek" in this play. The Inspector's logocentric desire for finding a clear-cut single meaning, which can provide an ordered basis for supporting the authoritarian regime, is confronted with the centrifugal disorder of Dogg language and the fragmented performance. The centeredness of word in the Inspector's desired discourse gives place to the chaos of *différance* in the discourse of the small audience of dissidents. First, they resort to Shakespeare's narrative to criticize the power, but the transparency of this discourse proves to be prone to despotic interpretations; therefore they decide to substitute it by the confusing sign system of Dogg language to demolish the authority of the totalitarian discourse. The deferred end gives a comical, fragmentary nature to the performed Macbeth and modifies its tragic effect. The different language games employed in Stoppard's play create a linguistic and theatrical collage, which depicts the strangeness of performing under a totalitarian system. In this play, Stoppard explores the relation between language and power and the way language can be manipulated.

The relationship between language and power is the focus of Foucault's investigations of discourse. In his view in every society the production of discourse is dictated by the authorities. There are different prohibitions that control our free speech: moral, social, political, and ritual. The authorities decide the authenticity of truth, the acceptability of behaviors, the virtue or wickedness of the words, and the righteousness of the power. The will to truth settles its dominant discourse and excludes all other existing discourses. In Stoppard's play, the inspector,

representative of the prevailing totalitarian discourse, tries to control the discourse of the dissidents. To do this, he needs the mastery of the language they speak. The dissidents, on the other hand, should hinder him from accessing their language. Both Macbeth, with its unfamiliar language, and Dogg help them obstacle the access of authorities to their discourse. The main conflict of the play derives from the challenges of the two discourses to nullify each other.

Inspector's desire to produce a unique interpretation of a text is expressed in the following dialogs:

Inspector: (to Macbeth.) Now listen, you stupid bastard, you'd better get rid of the idea that there's a special Macbeth which you do when I'm not around, and some other Macbeth for when I am around which isn't worth doing. You've only got one Macbeth. Because I'm giving this party and there ain't no other. It's what we call a one-party system....So let's have a little of the old trouper spirit, because if I walk out of this show I take it with me (188).

Or

Inspector: Who's to say what was meant? Words can be your friend or your enemy, depending on who's throwing the book, so watch your language (191).

He not only tries to confine the interpretations to a single one, but also insists that any narrative other than the prevailing one should be demolished. He even threatens that the one-party system will show violence, if they trace any violation of the law of this hegemonic discourse. The inspector himself is a master of language games and plays skillfully with language. Bursting in the middle of the performance of Macbeth, he asks the hostess if her house is the National Theater. After hearing her negative answer, he begins a sarcastic show of an innocent police detective:

Inspector: Isn't it? Wait a minute-I should have made a mistake...is it the National academy of Dramatic Art, or, as we say down Mexico way, NADA? ...No? I am utterly nonplussed. I must have got my wires crossed somewhere....(185)

His theater should warn the dissidents that the regime is aware of the rules of their game and has traced their deviation from the normalized discourse.

He also stresses on his dissatisfaction with the interference of other voices in the singular monologue of the totalitarian system, affirming that they cannot “project their voices around.” The audience and the hostess are warned against the danger of intervening voice of literature and are required not to put themselves “at the mercy of any Tom, Dick or Bertolt.” In Foucault’s view the dominant discourse controls the society by classification, ordering and distribution. The control system is therefore against the commentary- principle and author-principle. They do recognize the existence of the individual writers, but they try to limit their function to the admirer of the grand narratives. The authors must fit their narratives in the structure of the totalitarian system and do not try to give hidden messages in form of symbolism or other literary devices. The audience is thus warned against the temptation of any “Tom, Dick, or Bertolt,” who, deviating from the grand-narratives, aims at misleading them. For maintaining the monophony of discourse, the Inspector has persecuted “the Committee for Free Expression” and asserts that he can put an end to any kind of idea, which dares to exist outside the “normalization” process. The totalitarian truth should not be disturbed with any “infection of an uncontrolled idea” (Stoppard 194).

In Cahoot’s *Macbeth*, Intertextuality, fragmentation of narrative, defamiliarisation of language and chaotic performance help Stoppard delogocentrize the dominant discourse. Being entrapped in the web of this confusing system, the Inspector

hopelessly struggles to assimilate the unfamiliar forms of expression, making them compatible to the predominated frames of meaning. Words in this system, like the dissidents, can be his enemies. As Scolicov in “Stoppard’s Intertextual Web” puts it:

Even more than weapons, the words have become the dissidents themselves, refusing to accept the dictates of any predetermined, fixed meaning. Let loose in Dogg’s Hamlet, they seem to run wild here. The spiritual dexterity of the dissidents playing with the words, passing them around as in a ball game, is contrasted with the Police Inspector’s frustration at not being able to follow these quick moves. Our enjoyment as spectators and readers depends on our own ability to free ourselves from the accepted meanings of the words and follow what is taking place despite the willful neglect of conventional dictionary meaning (PDF.doc).

Finally the dissidents’ manipulation of language affects the Inspector and makes him lose control over his own language:

Inspector: Thank you. Thank you! Thank you! Scabs! Stinking slob-crooks. You’re nicked, Jock. Punks make me puke. Kick back, I’ll break necks, smack chops, put yobs in padlocks and fix facts. Clamp down on poncy gits like a ton of bricks (210).

Easy, whose entrance in the structure of the play helps the dissidents to discord the governing discourse by adapting his Dogg language, returns to his common English at the end of the play, asserting the playfulness of the whole experience: “It’s

been a funny sort of week. But I should be back by Tuesday” (211). The dissident’s language game, however, keeps abolishing the dominancy of the unifying system. The will to power, exemplified in the narrative of Macbeth, which tries to fixate the icons and signifiers, fails and the words remain in a system of différance, losing their relation to any object or truth outside the experience in which the audience participates. Stoppard’s play demonstrates how a self-contained system of signifiers, dissociated from their conventional signifieds, can function successfully. As Scolincov points out:

For Stoppard, language has thrown off the yoke of semantics and become an acrobat taking upon itself risks without the safety net provided by the frameworks of the past. Instead of serving plot and character, language now enslaves them, turning them into intertextual elements with which it can play, re-arranging them in patterns that express its novel ideas (PDF).

## Chapter 7

### **The Construction and Disruption of Power Structures through Discourse: Softcops and Mad Forest**

The relationship between power and language has always been very controversial. Many contemporary philosophers, like Nietzsche, Lyotard, Wittgenstein, Derrida, and Foucault have explored the role of language and discourse in establishing power. Foucault, for instance, believes that power creates values through realizing its concepts in a sign system, excluding some areas as evil. In other words, the discourse of power functions mainly through “exclusion”; it excludes all discourses that are not in the framework of power and all unapproachable areas as wicked. In Foucault’s view, the “three great systems of exclusion” work mainly by prohibition (1972: 219). He suggests that, “We have three types of prohibition: covering objects, ritual with its surrounding circumstances, the privileged or exclusive right to speak of a particular subject” (216). The web, created by the interrelation of these prohibitions, is “most tightly woven” in the areas of sexuality and politics. The process of value formation creates moral and political taboos that form and deform the subjects of power, namely human beings. The will to domination- individual, religious, or political- seeks to present its values as truth and

its desire to dominate as the will to truth. This ostensible “will to truth” in the dominant discourse claims the right to prohibit others as untrue, mad, unreasonably feminine, belonging to lower races or violating the law and order. Since truth can only be secured by language, the violence of power manifests itself in the *truth discourse*. The different punishments that the individual, religious, or political powers impose on others can be implemented in a complicated system of words. This symbolic employment of power in language occurs throughout the process of physical realization of power and so is violence institutionalized. The dichotomy between true and false, emphasized in this discourse, also appears in other fields, defining the different concepts in terms of binary oppositions: sane/insane, appropriate/inappropriate, white/black, man/woman, and so on. By this binary sign system the authorities can include people in power structure or exclude them from it. The representation of power and its justification in a sort of theater playing is very important for the establishment of the oppression discourse. Consequently, theater, not as art but as a social activity, gains special importance. Theodoros Kiros argues that, “Power would be a fragile thing if its only functions were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage, and repression in a manner of a great superego, exercising itself in a negative way.” (1998: 2) The strength of power lies in its ability to produce “effects at the level of desire- and also at the level of knowledge” (Kiros, 2). The writing of a complicated system of law and keeping this *sacred* system inaccessible for laymen on one hand, and referring to these written words as a basis for the punishment of the excluded members on the other hand, give a special power to the statesmen to control different fields of family, beliefs, state, education and production. The objection of the oppressed to this written law is interpreted as transgression and is punishable. In Foucault’s view, this

system of law making also stresses on the internalization of values and disciplines of power. As Kiros observes:

One of the most important effects of power is its astonishing production of highly “disciplined” individuals. The disciplined individual of modernity, however, did not consciously choose to discipline himself/herself. Rather, one of the silent forces of power is that it disciplines through internalization of value, such as the law, the norm, or the normal, etc (3).

In this sense, power discourse is present in every individual. The visible embodiments of power, the king, the dictator, the tyrant, are substituted in many modern societies by the disciplined individuals who try to discipline others. Kiros suggests that, “Power governs indirectly, by producing truths that are reexperienced by individuals as if it is they who organized them” (4). In Foucault’s view, language, as the main hegemonic medium, undertakes the task of legitimating power and disciplining individuals. The “linguistic subjects” in different fields of religion, politics, education, literature, psychology and even philosophy help power maintain its domination.

The criticism on Foucault is his negligence of individual resistance in this system. His critics believe that, the desires in individuals sometimes stand in contrast with the “totalizing structures” and modify, change, or subvert the power structures. The “excluded” oppose the established way of behavior by deviating from the norms of society and making new discourses. The large “empire” of women, black people, non-westerns, outsiders, and *insane* artists are trying to “write back,” to create the



discourse of the oppressed. Since they have no other medium except language, subverting the structure of this language, or at least finding a new approach towards it, is in the agenda of these individuals. Approaching the established texts skeptically, questioning the values set in this sign system, and avoiding given answers should be the aim of a new sign system, which aims at liberating language from logocentric interpretations.

Caryl Churchill is among those authors who, in their opposition to the dominant systems, try to question rather than providing predetermined answers. She herself asserts that “playwrights don’t give answer, they ask question” (qtd. in Kritzer 1988: 1). Churchill, As Kritzer maintains, “deals with some of the most difficult questions of contemporary life- and typically concludes with these answers resolutely left unanswered.”(1991: 1) Her approach to the different issues of postmodern, as Kritzer suggests, is rather “playful, startling, and subversively comic rather than authoritative and confrontational” (1991: 446). She challenges not only against the oppressive structures, but also against the logocentric disposal of these structures. Her aim is to intersect the dominant discourse by posing questions, the answer to which should be sought by the audience/reader in the world outside the stage. The experimentation with new forms of expression gives her the opportunity to discover new potentialities in text and performance. Different issues like language and its relation to power, history, race, class, gender, erotic identity, and the patriarchal system in theater are examined in a new light in her theater. In *Cloud Nine* (1979), for instance, history takes a new dimension. The Victorian patriarchal value system proves to be present in the postmodern, postcolonial individuals without any difference in time. In Churchill’s works the untold, hidden, or invisible histories of the past are retold in a new narrative. The polyglot, multicultural, anti-heterosexual, disruptive characteristic

of her work provides her audience with vivid examples of open and indeterminate texts or non-authoritative expressions. The reader/viewers of her works begin to revise their interpretation of individual words, scenes, plot or theater in general. The theatricality that she employs renders the experience of the audience a unique characteristic. The women roles played by men and vice versa, the child substituted by a doll (*Cloud Nine*), the women who are manlier than men (*Top Girls*), the multiplicity of the roles each actor plays and heteroglossia (*Mad Forest*), the displacement of center, and fragmentation of the narrative and language (*Blue Heart*, *This Is A Chair*) render her work the features of postmodern experimental art. She expounds the provisional and fragmentary aspects of signification, the arbitrary nature of reality and identity, the centrifugal pull of history, the fragility of grand narratives, the gradual disintegration of awe-inspiring authority, the collapse of authoritarian explanations of the world, and the inaccessibility of meaning. Her works, which subvert the Aristotelian “structural and stylistic unity” (Kritzer, 1991: 2) and his primacy as a reference in drama, are concerned with plurality, marginality, ambiguity, parody, and pastiche. “Her plays,” as Kritzer maintains, “offer fragmentation instead of wholeness, many voices instead of one, demands for social change instead of character development, and continuing contradiction instead of resolution.”(1991: 3-4) The consistency of character is intentionally undermined; the mimetic theories are denied; and the phallogocentric conventions are destabilized. Producing her theater in the framework of different workshops and introducing choreography and music into the structure of her plays have liberated her theater from the authority of text and playwright. Churchill has established her individual discourse in theater in the course of her career as a playwright and has moved towards a delogocentric performance.

Churchill's earlier plays, which challenge most of established institutions and definitions, are discussed very often; therefore, I will concentrate on her more recent plays to demonstrate how her politics of style has developed. Many critics believe that after *A Mouthful of Birds* she has started a kind of experimentation in theater, which differentiate her style from that in her earlier plays. Her recent works are more concerned about the domination of language on individuals and the role that the prevailing discourses play in deciding the meaning and establishing the social and political structures. The violation of the aesthetic conventions of the traditional male-oriented theater in her early works has turned to an upheaval of the aesthetic norms and a denial of any kind of representation. The obstacles in the way of establishing an independent subjectivity, the difficulty of acting in a sign system that fundamentally denies feminine consciousness, and the insufficiency of language to cover the experience of chaos in postmodern age are all portrayed in Churchill's recent works.

The idea that a loyal representation in theater serves to give an authentic picture of reality is the basis of classic and realistic theater. The dominant patriarchal ideologies assumed particular modes of presentation in theater. Space, time, action, and character delineation were strictly defined. The stages remained inaccessible to those who dared to deviate from these established conventions. Women were mainly excluded from performance or remained on the margin. There was an army of marginalized women in theater, like Ophelia, who at best could be the source of inspiration for men. As Kritzer states it:

The operation of patriarchal ideology in structuring theatrical convention mimics its structuring of subjectivity

in male-dominated culture. Individual subjectivity is constructed by means of a self/other opposition which establishes the self as a mediator between all that is truly individual (including, but not confined to the unconsciousness) and the finite choices offered by a given society (including language, appearance, and modes of behavior) (1991:7).

This male/female or self/ other division pushed the women in the established frameworks, depriving them from self expression. The hegemony of the patriarchal grand narratives made them interpret their identities according to the normalizing discourses and created identity crises in them. The meaning they gave to their experiences was an acquired or borrowed one. They had no choice except finding new potentialities in language and new ways of expression.

The voice of the disempowered women, however, began to open its way to the male-dominated stages after the feminist movements of the 1970's. Actresses, women directors, and playwrights tried to express themselves and to establish a new identity on the stage. Appearing on the same stage without changing its pillars by producing new narratives and modes of performance, was indeed restricting oneself in the same structures. To break the hegemonic structures, one needs to subvert the narratives that help power set up itself. What Churchill has achieved in her recent plays is an anti-narrative, which challenges not only the existing master narratives including theater, but also the language itself. Through a fragmentary pastiche of form, she demonstrates how the ostensibly firmly-constructed power structures create chaos and how this chaos brings about their own collapse. The ironic pictures that her works present make the audience question their established beliefs and their own position in the world.

In *Softcops*, for instance, following Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Churchill shows how "penal mechanism" with the help of educational system establishes power discourse. This play, which has its setting in nineteenth century France, is the outcome of Churchill's reading of *Discipline and Punish* and the memoirs of Vidocq and Lacenaire, the robber and the cop who changed their roles at different moments in their career. Being impressed by the attempt of the hegemonic systems in depoliticizing illegal acts and excluding the criminals as a separate class, Churchill concentrate on the exclusion systems in her play. Like *Discipline and Punish*, *Softcops* portrays how the new modern systems of control are formed and how they start to separate the poor, the criminal, and the insane from the rich, the obedient, and the sane and how this exclusion is justified. Churchill traces the development of the punishment system from a public one, which applied violence to the body of the criminal in a theater of menace, to a softer system of turning individuals to self-disciplined agents, who not only control their own behavior, but also that of others. Foucault compares the public execution of the eighteenth century with the prison rules of the nineteenth century to show how the new codes of law and order have developed. The most important change in the penal system, according to Foucault, is the disappearance of punishment in the public.

*Softcops* demonstrates how this new system of punishment, which aims at "panopticism"- a term used by Foucault to describe the moderate way of control through self observation- develops. After being confronted with the threat of street revolts in the scenes of public punishments of criminals, especially the political ones, the dominant systems start searching for other mediums to control criminality. The representative of the authorities, Minister, summons the ideologue, Pierre, and the educator, Headmaster, to devise new means for setting their controlling strategies.

Pierre proposes a didactic theater of punishment to affect the public, whom he takes for a passive audience. The self-observation system, in his view, should be taught by a didactic theater in which the punishment of the body of criminals, like Aristotelian tragedy, would simultaneously create fear and pity and purge the unlawful tendencies in the spectators: "There is a balance if I can get it. Terror, but also information. Information but also terror" (Churchill 1983: 6). Panoptic system, as Foucault maintains, will be chiefly successful with schoolchildren, madmen, and subordinates. Pierre's delight at having schoolchildren in the scene of public punishment in the first scene of the play is suggestive of such kind of ideas:

Pierre: Ah, you brought them for me. I need children with their soft minds to take the impression (6).

Nonetheless, his positivistic idealism, which aims at imprinting the "tabula rasa" of children minds, proves to be invalid because the children do not react the way Pierre expected. Pierre's didactic theater is not only ineffective, but also dangerous for the system because the revolting potential of the public has been neglected in it. The next step is finding a new system which can reduce the dangers of a public show. The suggestion of the modern positivist of the play, Pierre, is a place for the confinement of large groups of prisoners:

Pierre: But I dream of something covering several acres and completely transforming-as you know. I won't bore you. But if the minister is impressed today I hope for a park (6).

In this imaginary "park," the fear of punishment should hinder the criminals from violating the rules in any form and makes them love their duty, as the Headmaster

expresses it (6). Information, as Pierre emphasizes, plays an important role in this system. The interrelation of power- knowledge-discourse is demonstrated in Pierre's insistence on writing a speech for the magistrate and the condemned men. (6) Nevertheless, the presented information should be a controlled one; written texts hinder the discourse from going astray. The course of the performance, however, happens to run out of control. The deviation of Lafayette, one of the criminals, from Pierre's written text becomes the source of frustration for Pierre and revolt for the audience. A group of the spectators, affected by Lafayette's speech, attacks the scaffold, trying to free him. After this defeat, Pierre tries to realize another utopian dream for controlling the discourse:

What I visualize you see is a garden of Laws. Where, over several acres, with flowering bushes, families would stroll on a Sunday....Different coloured posters. Guides to give lectures on civic duty and moral feeling. And people would walk gravely and soberly and reflect. And for the worst crime. Patricide. An iron cage hanging high up in the sky. Symbolic of the rejection by heaven and earth. From anywhere in the city you could look up. And see him hanging there, in the sun, in the snow. Year after year. Quietly take it to heart. A daily lesson (14).

In his patriarchal "garden of laws" patricide is the worst crime. Those who insult the father-figure, king, will suffer a long-term punishment and their destiny will become an example for other people, who gradually take the message of the power to heart. The Minister, however, doubts the effectivity of such utopian solutions and asserts that, "Reason uses whips" (16). Pierre, though totally fascinated by the idea of the garden

of laws, finally realizes the impracticality of such an idea and confesses that it never happens (30). It is Vidocq, the criminal/policeman, who finds the alternative:

Pierre: Vidocq is bringing some order into crime. He knows who the criminal are and he will catch them. But then what? What do you do with them? If you don't use their bodies to demonstrate the power of law- Never mind. Let someone else solve it...(Ibid)

The final solution is proposed by the social scientist Jeremy Bentham, whose theory is an upgrading of Pierre's scheme:

Bentham: No, no, your idea has to be reversed. Let me show you. Imagine for one moment that you're the prisoner. This is your cell, you can't leave it. This is the central tower and I'm the guard. I'll watch you day and night (39).

What he describes seems like a prison or a concentration camp, which mainly excludes the "unwanted" from the wanted by putting them in a closed society. Bentham's contribution to panoptic system is indicative of the role of human sciences in stabilizing power relations.

Both Foucault's and Lyotard's analysis of knowledge stresses that a claim to truth is also a claim to power because truth can determine the right and is able to exclude those who are wrong. The concepts of normal and abnormal are also formed in this discourse: normal is a standard against which people are measured. The sound man, the dutiful citizen, and the submissive child are all "normal" and the madman, the criminal and the defiant child "abnormal." The state takes the responsibility of purifying the society through confining the abnormal people to prisons, mental hospitals or pedagogical centers. In Foucault's view, norms are



constantly used to evaluate and control us. They also exclude those who cannot conform to "normal" categories. The power to punish establishes its "normalization" process with the help of discourse. The educational system undertakes to carry out these systems by categorizing the students into "the very good, the good, the mediocre, the bad" (31). Bentham's soft control system works like a hidden observer, or in Kiebuszinska's term "a panoptic eye of surveillance" (131). The feeling of being watched even hinders the prisoner from contacting each other. As Pierre describes it:

You can see all of us prisoners and we can't see each other. We can't communicate by tapping on the walls because you're watching us. Is that right? Mr Bentham? I understand how it works.... (39)

Pierre is finally forced to give up his utopian garden and his didactic theater, accepting that "the application of Mr. Bentham's panopticon" is "far more reasonable" (40). The so called reformatory of Bentham is watched by a big brother, who, despite his tendency towards "beating," accepts the cell as a better alternative. (41) The rehabilitation system not only aims at reforming the convicts, or turning them into spies, but also extends its domain to the patients and ordinary people. The dialog of the last scene of the play between Holiday maker and Pierre shows that the categorization of the people has found new dimensions. Now a "long nose and close-set eyes" can be signs of abnormality. The call for "an association of workers" (47) is also defined as a crime. Pierre's utopia of a garden of law has proved to include the "whole city." "All on the great panoptic principle" (48) is the result of exclusion discourse. Pierre's last speech, however, shows that the system does not work that rosy that he claims. Although he wants to define their panopticism as a security

system for defending the citizens, he mixes up the different systems of education, registration, supervision, cure, normalization and punishment in a slip of tongue (49). His broken utterance affirms that the controlling system includes all social institutions and does not differentiate between the subordinates. Not only Pierre and the authorities, but also the Holidaymaker, as an ordinary citizen, have adopted this categorization system and differentiate people according to their appearances. Separating himself from others, and feeling safe as included, Pierre presents a comic figure, which is unaware that the unstable borders of categorization may include him as well. Churchill's implicit criticism of the public view makes the audience question their own standpoint in the complicated system of power-knowledge. As Jernigan states it:

No doubt, Churchill intends the character of the Holidaymaker to cause the audience to be uncomfortable in just the way that Kritzer suggests. For, if categorical distinctions among prison inmates, hospital inmates, and finally even students have dissolved, the implication is that these distinctions have broken down with respect to various audience members as well. The very role that this character fulfills as one who is on holiday is similar in nature to that filled by the audience members themselves, engaged as they are in a similar act of leisure. To put this another way that points to the paradox shared by Churchill and Foucault, the audience members are meant to identify with the Holidaymaker, and this identification should, in turn, make them question their own role in the power/knowledge system: are they themselves repressed subjects? or are they, rather, oppressive producers of knowledge? (2003:36)

The narrative of the play does not allow a consistent story or outstanding character delineation. The characters are meant to be either in the power structure or among the oppressed; no personal information is given. Some characters like Vidocq and minister appear and disappear without having any roles in the progression of the story; they are just tools which help the system work or symbols through which Churchill presents the historical function of the individuals. The introduction of the English philosopher, Jeremy Bentham- whose panoptic system is also discussed in *Discipline and Punish*- and the influence of the social sciences on the modern systems of control, show how the master narratives develop and how global their influence is. The presence of this enlightened reformer with his rehabilitation system (panopticon) and his interference in the formation of hegemonic system emphasize the interaction of knowledge and power structures. Kritzer believes that, “As an intermediary between the source material and the play, Churchill keeps her viewpoint in the background, stays within the conceptual boundaries of the original- even in the using the metaphor of theater- and does not broaden the scope of Foucault’s argument” (1999:318). Churchill, however, stresses that she had the outline of the play in mind and reading Foucault’s book just helped her find a narrative for her play. Even if Kritzer’s claim is true, the intertextuality between her play and Foucault’s study place the narrative in the boundary of postmodern interplay of ideas, which denies pure originality.

Churchill’s decentralizing “l’écriture féminine” in *Softcops* stands in contrast to the male cast and denies the individuality of those in power. The fact that no character in this play has a value or a story as an individual renders them a comic touch. The serious topic of Foucault’s thesis becomes the material for a pastiche of

scientific enterprise for amending control systems in Churchill's play. Instead of giving humanistic shape to the cruel system of punishment, Bentham's reforming ideas turn to a larger system of control of mind and body. Pierre's utopiac undertakings make him a funny, unsuccessful stage manager, whose didactic strategies turn against him. His playing the role of a dog for Vidocq, fetching the coins that he throws, demonstrates the ambivalent nature of mastery/slavery of ideas to power and criminality; his submission to Bentham's panoptic system makes him a double slave of power and knowledge.

By portraying the failure of Pierre's didactic theater, Churchill also questions the efficiency of the patriarchal, traditional system of theater. Her sardonic discourse stands in contrast with holistic authority of all-male cast of the play. Palma believes that Churchill's play, as a feminine comedy, defies male dominancy both in society and in theater (1992: 74). He argues that, "In her use of the revue, Churchill tries to make Foucault's historical survey of evolving structures of state power accessible to an audience viewed and defined primarily in terms of their position as theatergoers, as the audience of a musical revue, not as people who are victims of these evolving structures" (1992: 74).

Her rejection of the conventional mimetic aesthetic and her criticism of the discourse of power, develop later to the episodic plot in *Mad Forest*. Churchill assimilates the narrative of this play with the chaotic state after the collapse of power structures in Romania. The performance, which is the outcome of a workshop, depicts the country in time of the downfall of the communist regime, overwhelmed by confusion and mistrust. Through the scenes of wedding engagements of two families, this play explores the reactions of ordinary people to the realities (or illusions) of revolution. The title of the play alludes to the story of a horseman who, being lost in

the forest where Bucharest now stands, named it “mad forest.” Kiebuszinska believes that the title derives from “the difficulty of finding access to the paths of the subject by the foreign playwright and workshop group, and relates to the tentative, inconclusive shape the play assumes by going around the subject instead of penetrating through the mazes of history and ideology in Romania” (231).

The disjointed truth, which the workshop members as foreigner observed, affected the structure of the play and made it a collage of fragmented narratives. Each narrative is introduced by a statement, once in Romanian and once in English: “Lucia are patru oua. Lucia has four eggs”; “Doi oameni stau la soare. Two men are sitting in the sun”; or “Elevii asculta lectia. The pupils listen to the lesson.” The titles are suggestive of banal things or situations, but what they portray is the difficulty of living under control. Having four eggs or buying meat, which seem banal to us, are luxurious events for Romanian people in the socialist structure. One of the two men sitting in the sun is in fact a security who blackmails Lucia’s father (the other man) because of Lucia’s marriage to an American. The lesson that the pupils must learn is not a scientific one; it is a part of the grand narrative of the totalitarian system, which they have to assimilate:

Flavia: Today we are going to learn about a life dedicated to the happiness of the people and noble ideas of socialism. The new history of the motherland is like a great river with its fundamental starting point in the biography of our general secretary, the president of the republic, Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, and it flows through the open spaces of the important dates and problems of contemporary humanity. Because it is evident to everybody that linked to the personality of this great son of

the nation is everything in the country that is more durable and harmonious (Churchill 1990: 20).

Flavia's bombastic lecture, whose claim to truth is emphasized perpetually, is a great lie, which manipulates not only the contemporary events, but also the historical facts. In the dominant discourse of communist party the leader is the "founder of man," and Romanians are the fighters against "fascism and war" for achieving "freedom," "justice," and "progress." Like in *Sofcops*, educational system is demonstrated to have an active role in establishing the grand narratives of the power and presenting a manipulated sort of knowledge. Flavia's stupefying history class is followed by a scene that demonstrates how Radu's whisper "down with Ceausescu" terrifies a queue of people who are waiting for meat. All the scenes in the first Act are indicative of a large scale theater that dominates the life and language of Romanian people. Being perpetually under control, like the dissidents in *Cahoot's Macbeth*, they have invented their own language to communicate.

They have also invented a symbolic system of behavior in which truth does not play any roles. The contradiction between their uttered words and the reality of their everyday life discards the validity of their narratives or their language. The same ambivalence dominates the spectators' consciousness as the viewers of the play. Although they observe how the society is infected by the myth making discourses of truth, their positions force them to construct a truth out of the play. Nevertheless, the characters' parallel lives and the secret languages they use, make the extraction of any truth difficult. This difficulty is magnified by Churchill's interweaving of parallel languages-English and Romanian-in the structure of her play. The play, being the outcome of a workshop of English/ Romanian artists, reveals its polyglossia in its

structure and discourse. Polyglossia or heteroglossia, a Bakhtinian term, as Wing maintains, “Would seem to be a remarkably appropriate term for describing Churchill’s strategies, especially since it playfully recalls Bakhtin, whose theories have proved to be irresistible to a wide range of scholars struggling to construct an ethical framework for discussing political theater in an increasingly deconstructed universe” (1998: 131). By producing “polyglossia,” in her theater, Churchill contradicts Bakhtin who believes that theater is inherently monophonic. The many voiced-ness of her play is a protest against the sovereignty of unifying strategies of the truth discourses, whether in theater or in society. Questions, manipulation of words, inventing incomprehensible languages, and finally silence are the strategies that both Romanian people and Churchill use to free themselves from the grips of a totalitarian language. Furthermore, these are the devices that help Churchill demonstrate the difficulty of extracting truths among a heterogeneous multitude of information presented to us from different sources. The second Act of the play is particularly indicative of the complexity of finding a single narrative among the different voices that relate the events of revolution; Polyphony deprives history from intactness.

The first Act, which is supposed to depict Lucia’s marriage, turns to be a vivid image of the misery of life in Romania under communistic tyranny. The shortage of food, represented through the importance of Lucia’s eggs, the perpetual power failure, the control of private issues, like contraception or abortion (scene seven), and the way that ordinary people cope with their situation turn the expected cheerfulness of a marriage to a bitter gloominess. Marriage is just an opportunity for Lucia, already pregnant from another man, to fulfill her nomadic desires. She dreams of escaping from the troublesome life in Romania to the *rosy* horizons of America. The whole act depicts the big show or theater in which Romanian people were engaged during

Ceausescu's reign. "To make sure that the people enacted their role effectively," maintains Kiebuszinska, "institutionalized paranoia became the means of control at every level of private life" (242). The different fragments that Churchill in this act chooses serve to show the power relations. "How the power of unseen systems controls human thought and behavior, and how the symbols of suppression regulate, govern, and ultimately eliminate resistance" (Kiebuszinska 241), constitute the main theme of this act.

People are in perpetual attempt to keep to their roles and do not reveal anything that can be dangerous for them. The following scene is indicative of this role playing:

Radu: Down with Ceausescu

*The woman in front of him starts to look around, then pretends she hasn't heard. The man behind pretends he hasn't heard and casually steps slightly away from Radu.*

*Two people towards the head of the queue look round and Radu looks round as if wondering who spoke. They go on queuing.*

The reaction of the people displays the degree that these "unseen systems" and their paranoia have destroyed their resistance. Their silent playing, which can be seen throughout the first act, shows the dumbness of language under the dominance of paranoia. Gestures take the place of language, which has been deprived of signification. Words, as in the scene of Lucia's conversation with the doctor, are not related with an outside reality; they negate it:



Doctor: There is no abortion in Romania. I am shocked that you even think of it. I am appalled that you dare suggest I might commit this crime.

Lucia: Yes. I am sorry.

Lucia gives the doctor an envelope thick with money and some more money.

Doctor: Can you get married?

Lucia: yes.

Doctor: Good. Get married.

The Doctor Writes again, Lucia nods (24-25).

The artificiality of language and its non-relation reminds us of abstract painting. Instead of being a means of grasping or communicating reality, it has turned to be a dangerous medium. Out of fear of being overheard, the people whisper in the presence of a loud radio, communicate through gestures, or remain silent.

Their appeal to jokes, these distorted languages, is another way to be relieved from the suppressed anger. The symbolic defamiliarisation of jokes can save the reality for them. The vast situational irony of their life, for instance, finds its articulation in the joke about the dominance of man over God because of his great power in defying God's will for creating order. Man creates "chaos," and no authorizing power, no text can bring this chaos under control, suggests Churchill. The danger of being overheard by the system made jokes the only possibility to talk openly. The honest moments of communication, cannot happen in reality; the characters can only express themselves truthfully when they are speaking with unreal creatures like angels or ghosts (Flavia in scene twelve and the Priest in scene nine) or through their defiant jokes. Both laughter and speaking with metaphysical creatures have healing effects for them. In their speeches with ghosts, they can reveal their inner thoughts and sufferings without being compelled to censor them.

The self-knowing, self-mirroring entities serve as a pre-symbolic or imaginary mode of identification. Through the co-presence of the temporal existence (the other), which carries a latent insight within itself, the character can overcome the problems of self. Both Flavia and the Priest are hesitant about the roles that they are playing in the structure of power and need approval from a metaphysical “other” to give them self-confidence. As Kiebuszinska observes, “Only in exchanges between the real and other-worldly characters are questions of authenticity raised, for....it isn’t simply thought and identity that are suppressed as an outcome of sinking down inside oneself”(238). Being authentic or telling the truth, as Flavia states it, “Would hurt” (Churchill 26). Therefore, they refuse to be honest with themselves and with others. As Kim suggests, “They escape their pain causing situations as home, society, and identity”(1999:203). Instead of knowing subjects, we have manipulated, helpless objects of power or “useful bodies” –in Foucauldian term-in *Mad Forest*.

Act two serves to break up the original, though fragmentative, narrative of the two families of Vladu and Antonescue with pseudo-original monologs of Romanian people. These monologs, which recount the week-long revolution, are apparently the words of those who participated in and observed the uprising. The pseudo-authenticity of the monologues stands in contrast to the theatrical role playing and has an alienation effect. Eleven actors play the sixty roles of this act, representing different Romanian people. Although each monolog starts with a detailed self-introduction, the assumption of a real identity is denied by the playing of different roles by one actor. The identification of the role with the actor is intentionally eliminated and the constitution of the speaking subject is shown to be governed by the macrodynamics of power. The absence of any signification system and the difficulty of identifying the actors with their roles contradict the presence of the

characters as real entities; individuals lose their importance in this dynamics. Moreover, the body of the actor as signifier cannot connect itself to a unified signified, namely the conventional personality. The actors' alienation from the characters help Churchill destroy the stability of identity, emphasizing the variety of the roles that an individual adopts. As Kim observes, "For Churchill character is no longer a stable locus of identity with which the spectator can identify" (202); it is a semiotic sign, which can assume different signifieds. In addition, the multiplicity of narratives in this Act emphasizes the difficulty of coming to a conclusion about the reality of events during the process of shifting of power from one party to another. The polyphony occurs in two levels: in the outer level of performance (theater body) because of the abundant views that the spectators hear and in the inner level of actor's body, because of its multifunctionality. The confusion that this collage of voices creates is representative of the chaos and perplexity of the situation. The uncertainty and fear aroused by the disruption of power structures in Romania renders the pseudo-reportage a postmodern characteristic. Churchill shows how many different interpretations of a situation may exist and how uncertainty is the normal state of performance. "Was it really a revolution or a coup d'état," is a question that engages both the mind of characters and that of the audience. The playwright, however, provides no answer for this question; she lets the spectators find their own answers. Like in Stoppard's *After Magritte* eye-witnessing proves to be invalid and unreliable because everyone has his own interpretation of the observed events and this affects the reality. The inability of the characters in coping with the quick changes, the multivocality of events, and the constantly renewed identity of the actors turns this Act to an effective portrayal of the revolutionary chaos. Not only have the actors many identities, but also the events. This multivocality turns Churchill's play to a hypertext.

Act III, which again depicts a marriage, begins with a scene in a hospital. Churchill's typification of characters culminates here in her refusal of giving an identity to the individuals or labeling them with proper names. They are intentionally reduced to their situation or the disease they suffer from, like "Sorethroat" or "Patient." Due to the rupture of the totalitarian order, the individuals are now overwhelmed with paranoia and insecurity. Being released from the dominion of power structure, they do not know how they should manage to do without it. The futility of the crazy struggle of the characters for finding the truth among a chaotic collage of narratives is identical with that of the audience, the playwright, and her workshop. They all try to summarize the events in a text, but the chaos escapes shaping.

The second scene of the Act depicts a vampire and a dog in conversation. The surrealism of the scene, however, is immediately discarded by the use of human body for these roles. These poor creatures can be symbolic of those who use a chaotic situation for their own gain. The Dog is searching for an owner. Like those in a society who should belong to a master or else they become disoriented, it feels miserable and forsaken. Its sentimental illusion that a mutual relationship may exist between an owner and a dog is expressed in its last dialog with the Vampire: "You could talk to me. I could talk to you. I'm your dog"(Churchill 1990:50). Instead of giving support to the miserable dog, the Vampire "puts his mouth on the Dog's neck." Churchill powerfully portrays how the long-lasting hegemony deforms the individual desires and how the post-revolutionary chaotic state provides the possibility of collective vampirism. This vampirism proves to be the general state of being in the post-revolutionary society.

The anti-Semitic, anti-Hungarian, anti-gypsy fervors, which were repressed to the latent reservoirs during the reign of totalitarian regime, reappear in the form of

new xenophobic tendencies in the later scenes of this Act. After the first fantastic scene, the play once again revisits the Vladu and Antonescu families in Florina's Wedding, which turns to a battlefield of different ideas in the post-revolutionary Romania. The audience is immediately able to see a change in the characters because they express themselves freely and their conversations are not overwrought. But after a period of euphoria and freedom, the situation reveals itself to be as irrational and tense as before. The desire for order, which is expressed in Bogdan's repeated sentence, "This country needs a strong man," contradicts the chaos prevailing Florina's wedding. Moreover, the articulated animosity against Hungarians or gypsies shows the depth of the domination of the power structures and master narratives over their minds. Although they all claim a search for truth, they become completely violent when they encounter other versions of truth. As Kiebuszinska states it, "In Mad Forest, Churchill playfully calls attention to the continuity of words like "human face," "truth," and "realistic basis" from one act to the other. These words signal to what extent these terms from Socialist Realism have entered into the discourse of ordinary life"(245).

Flavia's conversation with Florina, for instance, shows her extreme desire for a single truth:

Flavia: I'm going to write a true history, Florina, so we'll know exactly what happened. How far do you think Moscow was involved/ in planning the coup?

Florina: I don't know. I don't care (82).

Her naïve struggle to present a single version of history, demonstrates her logocentric desire for having fixed metanarratives. She is unable to live without master narratives or attaching to a party and is ready, as she herself asserts, to teach

anything if it is given to her: “let them give me a new book, I will teach that”(69); truth for her is a written narrative presented to her by an authority. Other characters of the play also try to find an established source for truth. For Lucia the western media is the source for truth; if it confirms the revolution, then, there was a revolution:

Radu: Who was shooting on the 22nd? After that, what was going on? It was all a show.

Lucia: No, it was real, Radu,/ I saw it on television(57).

They do not even trust their personal experiences without the confirmation of a reliable (!!), authoritative source. Their personal life is dominated by the paranoia of a conspiracy behind their backs. The conspirers can be Ceausescu’s family, Hungarians, gypsies, Jews, or their own neighbors. The weddings in Churchill’s play, as Wing observers, “Begin as difficult attempts to straddle national, ethnic, and class differences and disintegrate into indecipherable hostilities featuring the two families and their guests, and significantly including what could be seen as the cyborg constructions of a vampire and an angel” (140). The chaos prevailing Florina’s wedding is indicative of the hidden despotic structures inside the individuals, which make them intolerant of any otherness of thoughts or origins.

The will to exclusion and its consequent xenophobia not only have deformed their life but also their language. The paranoiac silence of the first Act changes to broken sentences in the second one and ends in a cacophony of angry voices in the last scenes. The latent masculine violence rises as the authoritative control system loses its dominance; the vampire in them finds its way out to their language. The play and the text lose their linguistic control as well; the signification system collapses as the violence rises. The institutionalized violence, which had its source of justification

in the rhetoric of truth, gives place to the violence based on racial truth of the masses. The binary conceptualization assumes a single subjectivity and excludes all other subjectivities out of focus.

Churchill tries to break the violence of such conceptualization by her cacophonous polyphony. Throughout the play the overlapping dialogs create a sort of unintelligibility, but in the end the voices are so blended that they deny the audience any accessibility to the language. The aloofness is intensified by a complete shift from English to Romanian at the end of the play. The created gap can no longer be filled by any linguistic or logical link. Not only truth but also the hopes for perception are lost in the last dialogs. Churchill, as Kim suggests, “Links nomadic flights to linguistic nomadism”(248). Due to Malkin’s definition in *Memory–Theater and Postmodern Drama*, *Mad Forest* can be categorized among postmodern memory theaters. Malkin maintains that, “One of the distinguishing features” of this theater “is its overabundance of disconnected stimuli: conflicting discourses, intruding images, overlapping voices, hallucinatory fragments. There is no easy way to read or organize- or to bind- this sensual and discursive overload” (29). In *Mad Forest*, memory and history prove to be just one-dimensional, artificial accounts of past, which cannot be fitted in the realities of the events.

The intratextuality of the play, manifested in the repetition of the dialogs in the last scene and the multiplicity of the roles played by one character in Act II, are other postmodern features of the play. The repeated words sound like voices that are captured in a festive orchestra, they don’t have any meaning:

Bogdan: This country needs a strong man.

Irina: You’r not going to marry a Hungarian.

Mihai: Nothing is on a realistic basis.

Flavia: Isn't history what's in the history book?

Florina: The head doctor locked the wounded in a room.

Radu: Who was shooting on the 22<sup>nd</sup>? That's not a crazy question.

Lucia: Whose side was he on?

Ianos: You are on trial for genocide.

Gabriel: The Hungarians make people despise us.

Angel: I try to keep clear of the political side.

Vampire: You begin to want blood (91).

In this fragmentary dialog, the scattered sentences, which are in no structural connection with each other, demonstrate the disintegration of society and its medium of communication, namely language. Depicting all characters speaking simultaneously in Romanian, "the play concludes, then, on a note of indecipherable chaos. Individual voices merge and produce a roar that annihilates meaning." (Kritzer 163) By employing a fragmentary structure, heteroglossia, and unreliable narratives, Churchill challenges the audience with a performance that is overwhelming, confusing and indecipherable. Ellen Diamond attributes the fragmentation in Churchill's plays to the globalization of postmodern age, asserting that she has found "formal ways of grappling with the historical pain of fragmentation" (2005, 477).



## Chapter 8

### **Towards a delogocentric narrative**

Churchill's engagement with form began with her early works. The overlapping dialogues, the manipulation of time and space, the dialog between figures of different historical eras, the attribution of many roles to one actor, and the employment of passive actors without role playing were the anti-conventional experiments that helped Churchill deconstruct traditional notions of the plot. Her formal experiments, however, found a new dimension after *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986), in which dance is an inextricable element. By employing an episodic structure and Ian Spike's Choreography, Churchill succeeds to create an unconventional play. Each of the seven episodes in this play is dedicated to an ordinary person, who is obsessed by possession. These episodes are not structurally in the framework of a coherent narrative. The play fragmentary shape, contrary to Euripides' *The Bacchae*, which acquire "physical wholeness" (Kritzer 344) at the end, remains disjointed. As kritzer observes:

The play explores the irrational asserting that value of what cannot be known by means of intellect. The turning

point for each of the episodes is emotional rather than logical, and results in each of the characters temporarily abandoning conscious choice and self-control. The interludes, rather than prompting thought, undermine the attempt to construct a rational narrative of what is being presented (1988:337).

Churchill's deconstructing strategies led her to new experiments with form and resulted in the elimination of binary oppositions of natural/supernatural in *Striker* (1994), the disconnection of narrative's continuity in *Heart's Desire* (1998) the non-relation in *This is a Chair* (1997), and the evacuation of words from their established meaning and minimizing them in letters in *Blue Kettle* (1998). Jernigan believes that Churchill in her recent short plays uses "ontological disruptions to dramatize how epistemological repression disrupts the likelihood of emancipation" (2004:23). I believe that, Churchill has created emancipation in performance. By liberating her narratives from the sovereignty of standard language, one-voicedness, and theatrical conventions, she has succeeded in establishing an anti-discipline theater, which is free from patriarchal, logocentric tradition.

The chaotic narrative of *Mad Forest*, in which language proves to be just a superficial means of communication, appears again in *Striker*, an anti-mimetic play peopled with goblins and ghosts from the world of British legends and fairy tales. The deformed language of this play is manifested in the opening sentence: "Heard her boast beast a roast beef eater, daughter could spin span spick and spun the lowest form of wheat straw into gold, raw into roar, golden lion and lyoness under the sea, dungeonesse under the castle for bad mad sad adders and takers away." This incomprehensible monolog, which resembles Lucky's lecture in *Waiting for Godot*, is

at no means meant to be understood. Dialog in this play loses its conventional function as an essential means of presentation. Furthermore, noises, pantomime and choreography break the traditional authority of text, discarding the hope of finding meaning. The trauma-stricken women of this play are pictured in the moment of cognitive disruption, in the moment of entanglement in the confines of a long nightmare. Their language is a nightmarish one too, full of broken, irrelevant words, phrases, or sentences. As Janelle Reinelt states it:

Writing in dance sequences and giving the Striker a Joycean-like language, part fairy-like, part gibberish, this play transcends all Churchill's previous experiments, figuring the past as a haunting in present, and making theatricality viable the interior landscape of schizophrenic subjectivity, which has its own logic and representational syntax ( 2000: 188).

This chapter will discuss three of Churchill's later plays in which the deformation of conventional narrative culminates in the formation of an anti-narrative text. In *This is a Chair*, for instance, the disruption of linguistic structures happens on an epistemological level. After Wittgenstein's destabilization of the general suppositions about the representational power of language in *Tractatus*, some writers, following his presumptions, tried to move away from the noun-based syntax, experimenting new modes of expressions in decentralized sentences. In his view, language can perform its communicative function, if the two parties involved in a dialog move in the same referential system of signs. What Churchill in *This is a Chair* does is disturbing

the communicative function of language by devising a new sign system in which each sign must be interpreted anew. The first linguistic disruption happens in the naming of her play. The appearance of Magritte's drawing, "This is not a Pipe," on the cover stands in explicit contrast to the title, "This is a Chair." If Magritte negates the possibility of representation by explicitly stressing that his painting is not a real pipe, Churchill negates the object (pipe) by affirming that "this is a chair." Wittgenstein believes that after learning a language, the people practice it by calling out the words they have learned or by reacting to them. The referentiality between the signifier (word) and the signified (object) in these language games helps them communicate. By breaking the referentiality between the image and the written words, Magritte interferes in the primary perceptive process of the observers to disturb their cognitive integration. As Foucault in his book "This is not a pipe" observes:

The exteriority of written and figurative elements, so obvious in Magritte, is symbolized by non-relation- or in any case by the very complex and problematic relation-between the painting and its title. This gulf, which prevents us from being both the reader and the viewer at the same time, brings the image into abrupt relief above the horizontal line of words (1983: 36).

Churchill creates the same non-relational gulf in her play. In the vein of Magritte, she uses non-relation to stop the habitual perception and mental completion. All attempts of the reader/observer for fixing meaning, or closing cognitive gaps are frustrated by the playwright's artistic manipulation. The written words not only stand in contrast with the image, but also cancel out the transparency of presence; hence, the

straightforwardness of perception is challenged. While the title shows language's double negation of the real, Churchill's textual performance amounts to a destructive affirmation—or an affirmation of destruction; thus the referentiality between language and real is destroyed. Consequently each signifier floats in an unstable and multi functional relational system, creating several meanings and eliminating them immediately. If the reader/viewer, assuming the unreliability of his first impression, tries to go beyond the surface meaning and close the gap in cognition by analyzing the play itself, he will be frustrated again; the same non-relation exists between the title of each scene (it is emphasized in the stage direction that it must be clearly displayed or announced in the performance) and what the reader/spectator observes. The arbitrary, non-referential system that Churchill by naming or giving a title to these scenes creates proves to be the source of perpetual frustration or even a trap for the audience. Each title, as a signifier, proposes an expected content or a signified the access to which is denied to the audience. This open-endedness of signification involves the audience in a language game without rules and regulation; every one can set his own rules for playing this game. This fluidity of language liberates the imaginative or creative faculties in the audience and frees them from their bondage to language.

The first scene, for instance, is named "The War in Bosnia," but instead of seeing anything relevant to this topic the audience observes a couple having their date in a London street. The seven following scenes are labeled with important political and social issues like "Pornography and Censorship," "The Labor party's slide to the Right," "Animal Conservation and Third World Economics: the Ivory Trade," "Hong Kong," "The Northern Ireland Peace Process," "Genetic Engineering," and "The Impact of Capitalism on the Former Soviet Union," whereas they depict

banal scenes of ordinary life. The text lacks a center; and there is neither a central character nor a central narrative in it. The potential narrative of each scene is intentionally obliterated by the playwright. Elaine Aston believes that, "Each scene in effect suggests that characters are caught up in much bigger narratives than the audience has access to" (2001:111). Churchill intentionally avoids constructing any narratives around the non sequiturs of her play, and makes them a definite number of similar situations that can be repeated indefinitely. Because of the lack of center in her text, the reader can put the beginning or the end anywhere or even read it vice versa. This delogocentrized text has no power over the audience or the performance; it discards both the surveillance of language and that of traditional text over the stage. As Foucault in *This is not a Pipe* observes:

The similar develops in series that have neither beginning nor end, that can be followed in one direction or as easily as in another, that obey no hierarchy, but propagate themselves from small differences among small differences. Resemblance serves representation, which rules over it; similitude serves repetition, which ranges across it. Resemblance predicate itself upon a model it must return to and reveal; similitude circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to similar (44).

The similitude of the scenes of the play circulates their common sense of alienation and anxiety and renders them a reversible relation.

The engagement of ordinary people with the banalities of personal life, and their indifference to the current political or social problems are intensified by the labeling of

the scenes with existing legitimation or emancipation narratives. The confusion and chaos that prevail the life of these people discard the optimism that this indifference can liberate them from the anxiety of living in a chaotic world. I disagree with Jernigan who believes that, Churchill in this play “accomplishes very little ideological critique of the status quo” (2004: 38). Although she does not directly criticize the power-knowledge-language system, like in *Sofcops* or *Mad Forest*, she displays how the abjection and paranoia of power systems have destroyed the personal life of ordinary people. The metropolitan anxiety, which hinders the character from engaging themselves with other issues, is the result of tenseness of urban life in globalized cities. In these cities, which are dominated by a larger national and international capitalist economy, most people do not have the liberty to live contentedly. The speed of life and the complexity of deep spatial divisions within these cities affect the lives of individuals. Moreover, globalization has deepened urban spatial and social divisions and has increased the social disparity. Individuals feel isolated and overwhelmed by existential angst in these spatial divisions. Their life is so manipulated and normalized, in Foucauldian term, that they do not mind reacting to the problems outside their habitual engagements. They are perpetually under time pressure and are anxious that they may lose this normal state for something worse.

This anxiety is displayed in the deformed dialogues and the language that the characters use. In the first scene, for instance, Mary comes late to an appointment and declares that she has to leave immediately because she has another appointment:

Mary. No, it's really awful, what I have to do is jump in a cab and go whizzing off. Because I have to be there by half past seven(8).

The word “whizzing” in this dialog is suggestive both of the speed and the noise involved in living in globalized cities. The pressure that people in their routine life experience is manifested in Mary’s statement:

It was the arrangement I made first you see and somehow it slipped my mind and I thought we might have time for a drink anyway but then I was late finishing work and there was a holdup on the tube it stopped in the tunnel for about five minutes people were starting to get nervous you could see from the way they kept on reading or just staring into space but deliberately because they were getting nervous and anyway can we make it another time I’m really sorry (9).

There is no punctuation in this dialog; the speaker is compelled to utter the whole statement in a long breath to save time. Time pressure hinders individuals from an appropriate articulation. Furthermore, her speech demonstrates the agitation of living in metropolitan cities. Her depiction of the passengers of the speedy tubes is suggestive of individuals’ helpless efforts to overcome their restlessness. By keeping on “reading” or “just staring into space”, they try to repress the psychological pressure to the borders of unconscious and remain in the boundaries of “normal behavior.”

With the progression of the play, the destructive effect of this pressure on the characters’ language becomes more obvious. Distress builds its own language. In Hong Kong scene, for instance, the characters display their trauma-stricken state in their broken sentences:



Leo: no good coming in now and saying

Tom: but listen why don't we just

Leo: too late

Tom: impossible to talk to

Leo: should have thought of that

Tom: you are so

Leo: Piss off.

Or

Leo: long time

Tom: wet coat

Charlie: ah lovely

Tom: how you

Charlie: traffic

Tom: pretty busy

The speedy life hinders them from expressing themselves fully. There is no syntactically correct sentence in these dialogs; they are phrases or words that are cut from their original syntax. Each phrase stands aloof in the text and reveals no reference; the extraction of meaning is left to the reader/spectator. Moreover, the deformed syntax, which manifests itself in the absence of subject in each sentence, undermines the validity of the dialog. The foundational approach to language stresses the triumph of the subject over the world or the meaning over chaos by acknowledging that the negation of the real thing by a word brings an operational concept into being. Churchill's non-foundational approach, however, adopts a language that demolishes the concepts by ignoring them, creating a profusion of meaning in discourse. The omission of the "subject" in these dialogs, discards the possibility of overcoming the pandemonium of the world.

Her choice of words is also indicative of the breaking forces that these fragmented selves experience. Their alienation, their disconnection with an ordered language, their deep disappointment, and their fear of the unknown are all displayed in the words they utter. The phrases like “impossible to talk to,” “can’t trust,” “piggy eyes,” “terrible for you,” “supposed to be terrifying,” “putting poison in my body,” “traffic,” “busy,” “so tired,” or “exhausted,” dominate their conversations, turning them to non-communicative dialogs. The familiarity of these words, which are pregnant with the violence of the situation, disturbs the consciousness of the audience. Even the repeated scene of feeding a child by the parents -labeled once with “The Labour Party’s to the Right” and once with “The Northern Ireland Peace Process”- is prevailed with this implicit fretfulness. The parents threaten their child that her refusal of eating may bring bad consequences. Elin Diamond attributes this language to globalization, which she links to postmodern condition. In her view, “Globalization, a world-shaping discourse, needs its own dramatic vocabulary...” (2006:481) Aston interprets the disruption between individuals and political issues to “the failure of contemporary lives to connect nationally or internationally with the political” (2001:111).

This disconnection is effectively demonstrated in the last scene, which depicts a couple who hear a crash as they are going to bed. The whole scene portrays them searching for the source of the crash that sounds like a bomb. But instead of reacting actively to this external phenomenon, they try to overcome their fear by negating it. Although Eric finds the sound more like the sound of a bomb, her wife, Maddy, convinces him that it was something harmless like the collision of a building or a firecracker:

Maddy: What was that? Was that a bomb but far more likely.

Eric: no far more likely

Maddy more likely a building some kind of construction

Eric. Demolition

Maddy: some kind of building

Eric: some kind of building site or a road accident a crash but it's the wrong kind of sound for that was more (29).

Maddy, who tries to abate the tenseness of the situation by denying it, discards Eric's observation that the sound was more than that of a construction site. She finally convinces him to give up the idea of a bomb explosion:

Eric: So anyway I don't think it was a bomb anyway

By stressing the unreliability of their senses, they can relieve themselves from the strain of menace and feel secure again. After some minutes, they speak about the phenomenon as a past experience, trying to examine its authenticity by capturing it in time:

Eric: Yes you said that must be what we heard because we'd just sat down to the soup

Maddy: yes we said we must have heard it because it was ten past one.

Eric: Well, it's near enough half past eleven (30)

Using past tense in speaking about the unpleasant experience makes them feel secure in their "room"; the outside menace is sent to the past background. Nevertheless, they try to record the time of event precisely in order to check the reality of the event. The authenticity of their sense experience should be later confirmed by an authoritative source like media. Their distrust on personal

experience and their inability to react to a simple phenomenon renders their personality a comic touch. Furthermore it displays how the controlling systems have destroyed their sense of resistance. Without the dominant discourse, they cannot even be sure about the reality of an event; it should be interpreted by a reliable source. Eric even decides about a trivial matter like bathing with difficulty and let himself be manipulated by Maddy, who tries to persuade him to go to bed without a bath. Their dialogs, like all other ones in the play, lack any punctuation; the sentences are uttered without commas or full stops. Personal language has lost its power and vividness in the presence of oppressive forces. Aston suggests that, "As a culture of 'hyper-representation', the postmodern generate anxiety because it is no longer possible to know what is real" (2000: 88).

Immediately after this scene the last title of the play "The Impact of Capitalism on Former Soviet Union" appears without being followed by a scene. The title remains aloof in a vacant space, like the Mouth of Not I, stressing the non-relationality between the grand narratives of the age and private lives. The absence of political issues in private lives and their irrelevancy to the suffering of ordinary people is magnified by the emptiness of a bombastic title, belonging to Marxist metanarrative of modernism. Perhaps Churchill wants to show the superficiality of such issues, which are at large manipulated by the dominant discourse. The devastating effects of the repressive force of panoptic systems, the formation of which was portrayed in *Softcops*, are demonstrated in this play implicitly. The oppressive systems not only hinder the people from interfering in political concerns but also deprive them from personal happiness. All characters in this play are shown to be suffering from psychological distress, the source of which is the anxiety of the external world. A date that falls flat because of the disability of a character to catch

with time; a daughter who resists being supervised; a threatening addictive boy friend who should be thrust away; a fear-making medical system, which cannot be trusted because it cares more about money than the health of the patients; the violence of the outside world that makes people prefer to remain in the constraints of their private security; and a void that cannot be filled with any words are all familiar local narratives that are faded in the “whizzing” of “grandnarratives.” Churchill, however, does not directly encourage the audience to do something against the hegemonic systems that have devastated their lives; she makes them question this status quo by highlighting the despondency of their everyday life.

The staging of the play at the Royal Court Theater was so that the audience appeared on the stage and the titles and actors in the auditorium. This shift of position and the consequent space that is created not only disturb the customary expectations, but also discard the authority of the play. It seems that the actor/actresses are watching the spectators. In the end of the play, the written programs are thrown on the spectators by the performers in the auditorium. Aston attributes this “back to front staging” to Churchill’s intention to propose “a direct connection between the on-stage lives of the audience and the everyday struggle shown in the scenes- lives, in or out of the theater, that inhabit a different reality to the global conflict and struggle that surrounds us” (112). In my view, by shifting the space that conventionally belongs to performers, Churchill aims at showing the decentredness of performance as well. Although Derrida’s deconstructive aspirations, Foucault’s critique of discourse, and Magritte’s critical approach to mimetic art provide a background for this performance, Churchill escapes the dominancy of theory or the authoritative monophony of theater by placing audience in an unconventional space. She avoids being a convincing voice and situates her text and

actors in a speculative position. By breaking the conventions of theater and deleting the centrality of the constitute fragments, she creates a delogocentric performance. Jernigan thinks that Churchill's avoidance of a direct "reference to Foucault" or "Magritte" in this play "challenges and disrupts comfortable association and encourages private and local response rather than shared metadramatic agreement" (2003: 39). The aesthetic aspect of performance can also be another reason for this non-referentiality. Churchill neither discusses a political issue nor presents a philosophical theory; she depicts language in its critical points. As Kim observes:

Churchill's theater disrupts language from within to reveal the limits of its representational possibility. Her theater questions traditional theater's signifying process as it represents the "unknown realm." If Churchill's theater frequently approaches what she calls "the impossible object" in the introduction to *Traps*, it questions what we understand as fixed and real (247).

"The impossible object" is one that, like Churchill's play or her anti-narrative structure, creates an aporiac amalgam that resists analysis.

The structural undecideability in the title turns it to an impossible object as well. Since the dividing line between different possibilities is intentionally eliminated, an aporia of meaning happens. The poles of meaning are so displaced that the Hegelian dialectical movement of *Aufhebung* cannot function anymore. The title and the text in this play can be a lot of "simultaneously either or"s in Derridean term (Derrida 1971: 59); they resist being defined in a closed system. The semantic richness of undecideability renders Churchill's text and its title its multidimensionality and puts it

in opposition with the meta-texts of traditional theater. The title implicitly proposes that the work that the reader/spectator is going to observe “is not a play.” The unfamiliar “impossible object” they are observing can be a chair or an anti-play or whatever the audience may call it.

The same ontological impossibility of the title prevails the fragmentary form of the play and prevents the audience from fixing a meaning or putting the play in a closed system of reference. One cannot decide if Churchill is stressing the importance of political issues or their superficiality in comparison to human suffering. Does she approve the disruption between bourgeoisie’s privacy and political concerns, as some critics accuse her of, or she tries to shed light on the emasculation of personal life by panoptic systems? The inquiry remains open-ended.

The same open-endedness exists in *Blue Heart*. This play, which is consisted of two short plays, “Heart’s Desire” and “Blue Kettle,” concentrates on the deterioration of language and life in the globalized world. This deterioration is suggested in the name of the play “blue heart.” Since heart is usually associated with red, the color of blood and the symbol of love, passion, and life energy, the attribution of color blue to it detaches the title from falling in categorized perception or stereotypical interpretation. The stereotyped, automatized repetition, which leads to the straightforward recognition, is substituted by a novelty unseizable by stale reception. The word heart is put in a structure capable of more or different meanings and its immediate recognition is postponed by estrangement. Defamiliarisation perturbs the referentiality between real thing and its presentation in literature and comes close to Derridean rejection of semantic oneness. This defamiliarisation of heart, however, proves to be emptied from its modernist aspect of creating novelty in literature because the reader/spectator realizes later that the title is just a combination of the

two subtitles of the play and does not have any hidden transcendental meaning. The playful combination shows resistance to such interpretations.

The deconstruction of sentimentalism in the title is accompanied by demythologization and desacralization of sentimental concepts of home and family life in the component plays. The first play, *Heart's desire*, is built around the waiting of a family for homecoming of their daughter Susi from Australia. The play has only one scene, which is repeated several times. The repeated scene, which intentionally defers the conclusion or closure, introduces the members of this family as Brian (father), Alice (mother), Lewis (the drunkard son), and Maisie (the romantic aunt). Churchill's digression from traditional narrative structure and mimetic conventions of theater is manifested from the beginning of the first scene in the unfamiliar staging of the play. The repetition of the different versions of one scene, which are simultaneously the same and different, implicitly defies the traditional linearity of the plot. The characters enter and exit the stage several times, returning whether with a new costume, or a different approach to the subject, or a new piece of information, as if they had forgotten a part in their former rehearsal and they must perform it correctly now. These revisionary repetitions resembles to the revisions that an author in the course of the production of a text makes. The repetitive entrances and exits of the characters and the repetition of the same scene break the continuity of the narrative and create restlessness in the audience. In the style of ballad, the inferential repetitions of the play let the audience access a new piece of information each time, stressing the fragmentary nature of knowledge and subjectivity. The scene, with its multiple versions, deconstructs the concept of narrative and its expected linearity. Each version differs from others and resembles them. Furthermore, the structural fragments rather negate than supplement each other. The information added to the



story in each entrance does not help us close the gaps in narrative and complete it because the source of this information changes each time - once Maisie, once Alice, once Lewis and so on. Besides, the contradiction between different pieces of information stresses the unreliable, subjective nature of knowledge and suggests the co-existence of multiple truths. In a version of the scene, for instance, Alice leaves her husband and affirms that she cannot bear the situation any more, but the next version shows her still present in the scene. These quick changes cause the audience to mistrust the authenticity of the information they acquire. They cannot differentiate between real and unreal; reality proves to be as subjective and fragmentary as knowledge. Furthermore, the absence of the daughter, whose presence may bring about the closure of this fragmentary structure, is intentionally postponed. Her short presences are immediately denied by the resetting of the scene or the former contradictory information that she has abstained from coming. In Derrida's view, the dynamic vigor of repetition originates from negation, from the essential impossibility of supplementing an absence. In Churchill's play, even presence cannot cancel out absence. The daughter homecoming fails to complete the narration, and the play returns to its beginning in the end. Like in *Waiting for Godot*, the end of the play does not mean a *dénouement* of the plot; the characters continue outside the temporal structure to wait and the spiral form goes on winding and winding; homecoming remains open-ended and waiting becomes eternal.

Not only homecoming but also family, as a center for patriarchal society, is demythified in this play; home is shown to be a place of conflict, violence, dissatisfaction and betrayal. The daughter has fled from this canon to a "far away" Australia; the mother has been unfaithful to her husband for years; the son has taken refuge in alcohol to compensate for the family's misconduct and superficiality. The

privacy of home is also shown to be insecure because it is perpetually intruded by strangers: the children who storm in and out of the kitchen; the gunmen who come in and kill all family members; the official who burst in asking for their documents; and a huge bird from the surreal world, which takes their privacy for its nest. The personal life is portrayed as unhappy and manipulated as in *This is a Chair*. The menace of the unknown is present in every moment of their life. As Brian complains:

I happen to know that a great many people are wrongfully convicted and I don't live in a dream that suggests that terrible things only befall people in newspapers.

They are robbed of the modernist dream of progress. They know that they are living in a dangerous age in which nothing is certain or secure and it causes unhappiness and frustration in their hearts.

The characters, like those in Churchill's other play *Ice cream*, dream of finding happiness in a far promised land. The daughter has escaped from home to find happiness in a remote country; the aunt dreams of living in Australia to have the same beautiful experiences as her niece; Brian threatens his wife that he would join his daughter in Australia; Alice craves for leaving the unpleasant home for a better life. The nomadic desire, however, remains unfulfilled; they stay in the constraints of their banal life despite its increasing menace. Kim differentiate between Churchill's "nomadism" and that of Pinter for her stress on "her characters' cultural dilemma vis-a-via the status quo" (248). In his view, the desire of Churchill's characters exceeds the dominant signifying systems," whereas Pinter's characters suffer from "the impossibility of identifying ....with clearly defined familial subject positions" (ibid).

The characters' desire to escape from the dominant order manifests itself in their language as well. The arbitrary order of language seems to be a hindrance for the articulation of their chaotic situation. The emotional climaxes disrupt their language and make them talk in broken sentences or single words: A good example is the resumed scene after their being murdered by the intruding gunmen, which is performed in half-articulated sentences:

Brian. She's taking

Alice. Not

Brian. We should have

Alice. We should not

Brian. She'll be

Alice. She is a woman

Another example is the scene after the expulsion of their son out of their house because of his violation of the family's rule of not entering the sacred kitchen drunk. In this scene their language reaches its most critical point and is reduced to single words:

Brian. time

Alice. really.

Brian. the plane

Brian. exhausted

Alice. Thirtyfive

Brian. your daughter.

Alice. thirtyfive

Stress breaks the links of signification system and distorts their language. The repetition of the word "again" for three times before the word "waiting" and Alice's slip

of tongue to say “sleem peased” or “pleem seased” instead of “seem pleased” shows how they suffer from the tense situation and how words have lost their functions in their world. The characters give up the words because they are unable of communicating their stressful experiences.

However, instead of moving towards silence, like Beckett’s characters in his later plays, they invalidate language by talking it out, by unconscious parroting. Although the ringing of the doorbell or the resumption of the scene rescues them momentarily from tension, the same existential angst and confusion of Beckett characters can be felt in the characters of this play. Furthermore, Churchill provides us with a good example of the performative role of language. She employs different techniques like the increasing the speed of performance or word utterances, self referentiality, or repeated words with different meanings to show how language loses its communicative features. Being dissatisfied with the limitations of language, Churchill, like Beckett, searches for other tools for the articulation of the “unsayable.” She also aims at destroying or deconstructing the language-based subjectivity of the audience. As Rabascall observes:

The play with language will inevitably carry with it an awareness of the possibilities of disruption of the social order mentioned by Weedon, a social order that is characterised by following the main tenets of patriarchy. Therefore, a subversion of the rules of language as they exist in society will also bring about a questioning of the rules of the social order in which language exists, as well as a dismantling of the construction of the subject. In the light of a poststructuralist feminist reading this offers subversive possibilities of dissidence, since it opens the

way to a questioning of the Symbolic Order of things and shows the possibility of a return to the Imaginary through this dismantling of the logos (2000: 247).

Churchill's anti-narrative style results in a kind of emancipated narrative, the narrative that seeks to invalidate the legitimacy of the established grandnarratives like home and homecoming.

The second play, *Blue Kettle*, deconstructs the same myth of warmth and security of home. Derek's search for a home or a mother is revealed to be cheating naive old women by making them believe that he is their illegitimate son. It is indeed a hobby for him and a way for gaining some money. Mythical quest for identity turns to be a process of dissolution of self, accompanied by a gradual disintegration of language. The play ends up in the collapse of language into two letters of "b" and "k." Early humans started interaction by babbling and brought order to their communication by a structured language. In Churchill's play, however, language moves from its initial order toward a chaotic babbling. The gradual substitution of the words by "blue" and "kettle" ends in using broken syllables and single letters to present a word. The absolute unintelligibility of the last scene is indicative of the success of the playwright in omitting language from the structure of human interaction. The encoding of a language that transgresses the borders of normality is an attempt in the part of the playwright to invalidate the power/language structures outside the symbolic order of the play. Turning the grand narrative of quest into a treacherous, playful game and fragmenting its discourse into babbling help Churchill establish an anti-narrative which denies all the norms of conventional writing. Through the dislocation of social and linguistic signs, she succeeds to deconstruct language and the order it signifies.

This dislocation begins with the title of the play "Blue Kettle." The semantic disparity, created in the defamiliarized attribution of color blue to kettle, extends to the linguistic structure of the play as, by and by, many verbs, nouns, and adjectives are replaced by the words "blue" or "Kettle." In order to see how Churchill succeeds in deferring meaning in a Derridean sense, it is better to return to the text. In the third scene Derek and his girl friend Enid for the first time start expressing themselves in terms of blue and kettle. The frequency of these words is not so drastic at the beginning; therefore the spectators can easily substitute them by a word from their linguistic background or by referring to the text itself. In the following dialog, for instance, the word blue can be replaced by think:

Enid. And you think there's money in it.

Derek. Of course I blue there's money in it (46).

With the progression of the play, however, the referentiality becomes impossible because the broken words no longer refer to the objects or ideas in the real world or in the text. Furthermore, one word is used to refer to different irrelevant things. This chaos of signification resists the extraction of meaning and negates the constructive understanding. In Mrs. Vane's expression, "blue, I've forgotten blue than I ever blue," there is no possibility of inferring any meaning. The words dissolve into syllables of "bl" and "Ket" and finally into "b," "t," and "k" as the play proceeds. The last dialogs of the play are demonstrative of how deformed language happens to be. The schizophrenic babbling of the characters resembles the uncontrolled talking of mad people or drug consumers:

Mrs Plant. T t have a mother?

Derek. K

Mrs Plant. B happened b k?

Derek. Tle died ket I ket a child.

Mrs Plant. Bl bl ket b b b excuse?

Derek. Ket b like. Or not.

Mrs Plant. K k no relation. K name k john k k? K k k Tommy k k John. K k k believe a word. K k Derek.

Derek. B

Mrs Plant. Tle hate k later k, k bl bl bl bl shocked.

Derek. K, t see bl.

Mrs Plant. T b k k k j l?

Derek. B. K (68-69).

Rabascall believes that, "Churchill's play allows the reader/spectator to apply Derrida's theories to emphasise the temporality of the "fixing of the meaning" through the use of a constant deferral of the signifiers and an underlining of the impossibility of existence of the signifieds (277-78). Although Churchill's aesthetic strategies in deconstructing the dominancy of language and text in theater have brought her close to Derrida's theories, her style negates any presentation or teaching of theories in performance.

Churchill's aesthetic strategies also turn memory to an unstable signifier. It is shown to be a language-based, variable concept rather than a fixed one based on real events. By faking stories about the past, Derek can manipulate the subjectivity of his invented mothers and create new realities for them. His stories, which play the role of the lost pieces of a puzzle in the wholeness of their identity, help these mothers recreate their past with the help of new narratives. Mrs. Vane even sees memories indistinguishable from identity and asserts that, "My memories are definitely what I am." Even Derek thinks that, without memories "you wouldn't know who you were" (56). Enid, on the other hand, denies the usefulness of memories or

their connection to identity. By portraying the dependency of memory on language, Churchill discards the idea that subjectivity is based on reality. Since the authenticity of memories cannot be tested, everyone can manipulate them and invent a false identity. Realities, like the role of family in the construction of identity, prove to be arbitrary fictions in this play. As Rabascall suggests:

One of the fundamental aspects that appear in this rendering of the play is, once again, a sharp criticism on the institution of the family as the basis of modern societies, and how this parallels the construction of subjectivity. In fact, what the play shows is how arbitrary family life is, how artificial it can be from the outset. The construction of subjectivity is directly related to this notion of the family as an arbitrary construct. Thus, one of the aspects underlined by the play is how subjectivity is also arbitrarily constructed, and this is, indeed, a poststructuralist idea (278-79).

Derek's fictional manipulation of reality resembles that of a dramatic text; it can change our subjectivity and make us uncertain about our perceptions. Jernigan believes that, "In *Blue Heart*, Churchill does evaluate the ways in which plays are produced in such a way that she raises ontological-epistemological questions about the relation between theatre and the real world" (2004:26).

*Blue Kettle*, unlike *Heart's desire*, seems to end conventionally with a resolution of the conflict after Derek's revelation of truth. Nevertheless, the fake mothers' refusal of accepting the truth, which manifests itself in the collapse of their language,



emphasizes humans' tendency towards forgetting the unpleasant truths and living on pleasant fictional illusions. As Aston observes:

In brief, both *Heart Desire* and *Blue Kettle* deploy a number of dramaturgical strategies to alienate the "real; to challenge the tradition of mimesis, thereby inviting us to contemplate a dislocation of family and home; a world in which there is no real sense of belonging. Most significant perhaps is the daughter's absence, continued absence, or non-return in *Heart's Desire*. The daughter, the woman who travels in different countries does not return to the "place" of home, which is dis-placed, dis-located in the fantastic distortion of the "real" (2001:116).

The disappearance of real also suggests that we are living in a world where a massive amount of fictions are daily presented to us. Finding truth among all theaters in which we are involved by resorting to language ends in the same babbling of *Blue Kettle*. The proof of the authenticity of these narratives is not an easy task. Churchill's liberating strategies aim at breaking the hegemony of these narratives. She tries to create a new discourse (*l'écriture féminine*?) for liberating the dramatic text and performance from the tyranny of authors. Her workshop productions provide the opportunity for the actors to add their voices to the voice of author and change the performance from a single voice tyranny of the playwright to a polyphonous choir. They oppose the hegemonic dominant discourses and their controlling theater.

## Conclusion

With his contemplations on the role and capacity of philosophy, literature, and language in answering the ontological and epistemological questions, Samuel Beckett inaugurated a sort of delogocentric approach to dramatic text and performance, which resulted in what may be called a postmodern theater. His assertion that, "The key word in my plays is perhaps," comes very close to what Derrida defines as "undecideability". Nonetheless, Beckett, like his work, escapes any categorization. If modernist philosophy, as Lyotard observes, "Wants to stabilize the referent, to arrange it according to a recognizable point of view, which endows it with a recognizable meaning (Lyotard 1984:14), Beckett cannot be called modernist because he defies such "recognizable meaning." On the other hand, his art lacks the polyphony or carnivalesque desired by postmodernists. His high literary style, which is far from popular arts of postmodern, brings him close to modernists. Throughout his works his voice can be heard uttering his protest or contemplating on different ontological issues. His strict adherence to his texts and stage directions in performance also demonstrates this one-voicedness and his Apollonian control than Dionysian chaos of ritualistic theater, aimed by postmodernists like Artaud. Yet, his interest on "the shapes as opposed to the validity of ideas" (Dearlove 1982: 3) removes him from modernism. His literature has "the ambiguity and fluidity" characteristic of non-relational arts. His metadramatic texts refuse to fall in the order and strong sense of reality, which prevails most of modernist literature. As worton mentions:

What Beckett says in his plays is not totally new. However, what he does with his saying is radical and provocative; he uses his play-texts to remind (or tell) us that there can be no certainty, no definitive knowledge, and that we need to learn to read in a new way, in a way that gives us space to bring our contestations as well as our knowledge to our reception of the text” (1995, 81).

I leave the impasse of finding definitions for his art and appreciate his skeptical attitude towards all definitions and categorizations, which makes his art delogocentric. Beckett once asserted that, “I produce an object. What people make of it is not my concern” (qtd. in Worton 67).

Worton, however, believes that, “In the context of twentieth-century theatre, his first plays mark the transition from Modernism, with its preoccupation with self-reflection, to Postmodernism with its insistence on pastiche, parody and fragmentation”(69). Certainly some characteristics like self-reflectivity, repetition, anti-mimetic theatricality, undermining the author function, and decentralizing the narrative, remove him from the constraints of modernist literature and bring him very close to poststructuralist interpretations of language and art. Postponing meaning and origin, produced by the inherent “différance” of language, creates an inaccessible realm in language, which both Beckett and Derrida call “unnamable”. Deconstruction in Beckett is both admitting this “unnameability” and parodying all efforts, especially of his characters, for deciphering this realm. Murphy, Vladimir, Hamm, and the character of *The Unnamable* all fail in his logocentric efforts to overcome the différance of language and achieve meaning or origin.

They are also unable to name “I” or to reach the origin of self. The denial of “I” by Mouth in *Not I* is resulted from this inability; Beckett’s character/actors must move in an incoherent structure of the self. In Derrida’s view, accessing a “silent voice” that is “unbound by time and space” was “one of the fundamental projects of the traditional theory”(Kearney 359). The possibility of such project, however, as Kearney maintains, is “its very impossibility” (359). By depicting his characters’ defeat in their impossible undertakings, Beckett deconstructs the logos of this project. Not only his characters, but also Beckett himself, whose struggles for mastering language remain futile, are ridiculed in his work. As Kearny observes:

Beckett’s writing masterfully deconstruct itself by directing our attention to itself as writing, that is a system of sounding signifiers irretrievably at odds with the ideal of a corresponding silent signified. It is only by deconstructing the word’s pretention to achieve self-adequation by means of silence, that we can uncover its hidden self-alienation. The irony which Beckett makes such great play of is, of course, that one obliged to use language to deconstruct language (360).

This realization results in his tendency towards playful treatment of subjects. Taking his texts as literary games, Beckett seeks to develop this playfulness to everything in his literary work, even to most significant philosophical concepts. Beckett makes his audience revise his position towards theater and text by putting the concepts of God, truth, meaning and language in the inappropriate context of his language games, The game playing in Beckett’s drama happens in two levels: outside the text, or the game that Becket plays with the spectator/reader, and inside

the text, or the games played between characters or other elements of performance. His characters are also perpetually experimenting with narration as game: Vladimir and Estragon try to join the fragments of a lost past in a narrative; Hamm changes his tone from narrative to normal and constantly amends the text that this voice produces; Mouth reshapes her narration each time that she hears other voices; and Krapp seeks to entrap his past voice in a framed narration. They delight in constructing and deconstructing their narration; it is a game for them. The game, as Scwab suggests, “is a private use of language, which no longer requires one to mean what one say, but which gives one the freedom to play with the familiarity of old and empty rules” (90).

Beckett changes the concept of passive reception of audience to active interaction. During the process of their narration/games, the characters show awareness of their being observed. They speak to the audience and admit its presence. Even the wordless performances of *Breath*, *Quad*, and *Act without Words* have a silent narration, which demands the viewer’s attention. This feeling of being observed makes the actors of Beckett’s plays feel clumsy in their naked roles. They should perform among all disturbances and pressures that they feel on the body and mind. Their relationship to the text is also different. They should utter words whose precise spatial and temporal arrangements are not usual. Performing the roles of characters whose subjectivity can never be fully incarnated and their place in the actions and words of the play can never be grasped, causes a kind of fragmented performance. The actor/actresses should try to gather all these fragments in a loose performing strategy which is absolutely different from a conventional performance. Beckett himself asserts that, his characters unlike Kafka’s hero who “has a coherence purpose....seem to be falling to bits” (qtd. in Malkin 40) The vivid images

of these fragmented suffering characters remain in the memory of the audience even if the stories behind them are forgotten. As Gontarski suggests Beckett is most postmodern when he creates images (on stage and in language) that suggest the mutability and plurality of meaning (16).

Stoppard's performances add a new dimension to Beckettian game: the employment of the texts of other authors as the playground for his narration/games. The intertextuality between his texts and those of Shakespeare, Wilde, Beckett, Christie, and Pirandello, negates the originality desired by modernism and renders him the opportunity to deconstruct these texts as literary or ideological metanarratives. Intertextuality affirms *différance* because it is the same and differs simultaneously. In his intertextual plays, Stoppard assembles origin and its negation, text and counter-text, audience and actor, past and present, self and other, presence and absence under the single roof of his farcical performance. In his games the emancipation narratives of the age and other serious artistic or philosophical views turn to a postmodern pastiche. Besides, the parody and travesty in his works magnify the disjunction of ideas, the distortion of language, and the funny nature of acting. The extreme theatricality of his works stands in opposition to realistic presentation of world. The language and texts of other authors become the playing field of his humorous enterprise. Furthermore, the metadramatic nature of his works, which manifests itself in the self-reflectivity of his plays, and their explicit declaration of their non-relationality, is the point of departure of these works from mimetic theater. His metadramatic theater diverts conventional expectations of the audience and takes away their certainties. In his works, the Apollonian solid views are replaced with Dionysian joyous laughter.

Stoppard engages himself with postmodern issues like non-relationality of art (*after Magritte*), the nature of knowledge (*Arcadia*), postcolonialism (*Indian Ink*), Philosophy (*Jumper*), and arbitrariness of language (*Dogg's Hamlet* and *Cahoot's Mabeth*) in a comic manner. The disparity between his subjects and the context in which they are put leads to the creation of a sophisticated pastiche in his works. In Jameson's view, "Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter" (1991:17). Stoppard transforms the literary works or philosophical ideas that he employs to a pastiche by his delogocentric strategies. *Travesty*, *After Magritte*, *Arcadia*, and *The Real Inspector Hound* experience such transformation.

Although Stoppard's conservative attitudes make some critics not categorize him as a postmodern playwright, the features such as playfulness, open-endedness, discontinuity, self-conscious reflection on the genre of theater, and emphasis on the audience's participation in performance render his works their postmodern characteristics. Heuvel believes that, "Stoppard and his plays will frustrate any attempt to impose an either/or logic in terms of their relationships to postmodern ideas and aesthetic" (213). However, Stoppard's observation that, "None of us is classifiable," is suggestive of a postmodern stand.

Churchill's plays, though having many common characteristics with those of Beckett and Stoppard, as Aston observes, have an "experimental style" which demands "a different reading of the staged world: one where rules are broken and meaning is constantly being made and unmade through the language of performance rather than the word of the dramatic script" (2001:81). This language of performance,

as mentioned before, is the outcome of workshops with the artists whose voices were included in her texts and performances. Additionally, introducing choreography and music into the structures of her plays opened a new space for the imagination of other artists to modify or change her authority as playwright. She does not discuss “the death of author” or playwright in her plays; she practices it.

Her questioning of a knowing subject or a holistic plot of the mimetic theater made her think of a new narrative in which stereotyped roles and fragmented, episodic form take the place of a neatly organized narrative. Moreover she aims at omitting all authoritative voices, including her own from text and performance. Artaud’s desire that the stage should voice the inner turbulence of the human spirit, that spoken words should give their place to powerful scenery, that logic, reason and human language should be subverted in theatre, and that the experience of theatre should include the audience as part of the experience are to some extent fulfilled in Churchill’s theater. Churchill lives in the age of globalization in which the public spheres have changed a lot; hence, the modernist individualism has disappeared from the scenes of her plays. Moreover, the confusion of the later phases of capitalism has destroyed the feeling of identity in her characters. They are all moving with the streams of external forces rather than the push of internal desires. None of the characters in her later plays, like *A Mouthful of Bird*, *Hotel*, *Faraway*, *This is a Chair*, or *Blue Heart*, enjoys the full life of an individual. As Pankratz states it, “Instead of creating idealized heroes and heroines, Churchill presents characters that are entrapped”(271). Although they are not transformed to clones, as in *Number*, yet they have more counterproductive and stereotypical behaviors than individuality. The hegemonic forces have turned them to “useful bodies,” which do not even have a story worth relating. Their nomadic desire to escape from the distress of their lives to



new horizons is not individualistic either. It is the result of the deceptive large scale theater, which tries to sooth them by promising new opportunities in other countries. The dream of prosperous “faraway” is shown to be a delusion in Churchill’s plays like *Ice Cream* and *Heart’s Desire*. The chaos and fragmentation of an anti-narrative and the polyphony of a carnivalesque suit her characters better than a highly stylistic performance. A Kiebuszinska observes:

A characteristic of Churchill’s plays is that representation of events is valid only when it opens up a space for reflection on the difficulty or impossibility of representation, and hence interpretation. In addition, the events are not recounted as an unbroken narrative line, but as a collage of related fragments (233).

Churchill’s delogocentric strategies not only deconstruct the foundation of hegemonic thoughts, texts, and philosophies, but also disrupt the foundation of their own existences as texts, performances, and products of language. Their disrupted language and their festive form, which are in proportion with the anarchy of the age, show Churchill’s playful approach to serious social and political issues. Her characters sing and dance their distress out and make the audience think about their own positions in these Dionysian rituals of misery.

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## Abstract Deutsch

Der Zusammenhang der Realität mit der Sprache, die Unstabilität der Sprache als ein Signifikationssystem, die Repräsentationkrise, und die Grenze der Interpretation sind die Streitpunkte, die nicht nur die zeitgenössischen Philosophen sondern auch viele Autoren beschäftigt haben. Manche Philosophen wie Derrida unterstellen, dass das westliche Denken das Wort als Sinträger betrachtet. Seiner Meinung nach beruht der Logozentrismus des abendländischen Denkens auf binärer Opposition oder externer Referenz wie der Präsenz von Gott, Wahrheit, Ursprung, Ursache, Transzendenz oder einem Zentrum. Da alle diese Begriffe ohne eigentlichen Inhalt sind, und es kein transzendentes Signifikat gibt, auf das alle diese Signifikanten jeweils verweisen, wird die Sprache zu einem unstablen Signifikationssystem, deren Mittel keine fixierbare Bedeutung erschaffen wird. Aus dieser Problematik kommt eine Repräsentationkrise, die nicht nur die Philosophie sondern auch die Literatur betrifft. Ob und wie man gegen die Grenze der Sprache anrennen kann, ist nicht nur eine philosophische, sondern auch eine ästhetische Frage. Während die Antwort der Philosophen wie Derrida eine dekonstruktive Annäherung zur logozentrischen Interpretationen ist, schlägt die Literatur eine ästhetische Lösung vor: die Darstellung der Sprachkrise mittels der Sprache. Kann uns das experimentelle Kunstwerk der Autoren wie Samuel Beckett, Tom Stoppard und Caryl Churchill von der Illusion der Wirklichkeit befreien? Ist es möglich eine anti-erzählenden Erzählung zu schaffen, die die Dominanz des beherrschenden Diskurses abschaffen kann? Diese Fragen zu erforschen visiert diese Dissertation an.

Die ersten Versuche dieser Autoren gegen pure Repräsentation richten sich an neue Phantasiequellen außerhalb der Realität. Dramatiker wie Beckett, Stoppard

und Churchill nutzen die Eigendynamik der Sprache als eine Quelle um ihren Funktionsausfall darzustellen. Die Signifikate, die sich auf keine wirkliche Signifikante beziehen, die Charakteren, für die es kein Duplikat in der Realität gibt, die zerbrochene Subjektivität, die sich nicht mittels Sprache äußern kann, die Handlung, der es an Einheit oder auch Beschlussunfähigkeit mangelt, und schließlich die Sprache die nicht mehr eine ordentliche Sprache ist, stellen das Mittel, das diese Dramatiker für die Dekonstruktion der Sprache und des Textes brauchen. Diese Arbeit wird versuchen bei der Analyse ihrer Theaterstücke aufzuzeigen, wie die Methode, die diese Autoren genutzt haben, sich im Lauf der Zeit geändert hat. Becketts Besessenheit mit dem Unsprechbaren, der Sinnlosigkeit oder zerstörter Subjektivität steigert sich zu undeutlicher Sprache, Identitätsverlust und Antirepräsentation bei Stoppard und kulminiert in Destrukturierung des Narrativs und der Sprache bei Churchill. Die Einstimmigkeit von Becketts Werken ist durch die Polyphonie von Churchills Theaterstücke, die eine Mischung aus Theater, Tanz und Musik sind, ersetzt worden. Alle Theaterstücke, die in dieser Arbeit analysiert wurden haben jedoch eine gemeinsame Eigenschaft: Sie sind Sprachspiele, die keinen Anspruch auf Realitätstreue oder transzendente Wahrheit haben.

## Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich die von mir vorgelegte Dissertation:

„Towards Delogocentrism: A Study of the Dramatic Works Of Samuel Beckett, Tom Stoppard and Caryl Churchill“

selbstständig verfasst und die benutzten Quellen und Hilfsmittel vollständig angegeben habe.

Die Dissertation wurde von Prof. Dr. E. Lobsien betreut.

# Lebenslauf

Persönliche Daten		
	Nachname:	Vaziri Nasab Kermany
	Name:	Fereshteh
	Geburtsdatum:	02.11.1959
	Geburtsort / -land:	Kerman / Iran
	Staatsangehörigkeit:	Deutsch und Iranisch
	Familienstand:	Verheiratet
Berufserfahrung		
01.10. 2004 - 15.02. 2007	Sprachtreff Sprachlehrerin (freiberuflich)	Frankfurt a/M
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual und Gruppenunterricht in Englisch und Farsi (Persisch) für Kinder und Erwachsener</li> </ul>	
08.03.2006 - 11.07.2007	Dolmetscherbüro Keles Dolmetscherin	Frankfurt a/M
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gesprächs- und Konferenzdolmetscherin für Farsi und Dari bei Behörden im Rhein-Main Gebiet</li> </ul>	
01.04.2005 - 30.09.2005	Golam-Reza Rafilie EDV Beratung Bürokräft	Frankfurt a/M
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allgemeine Büro Administration und Übersetzung</li> </ul>	
01.04.2005 - 30.09.2005	ZENAF Bibliothek Goethe Universität Studentische Hilfskraft	Frankfurt a/M
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inventarisierung und systematische Einordnung von neuen Büchern</li> <li>Sacherschließung durch Schlagwortvergabe gemäß Systematik der Library of Congress</li> </ul>	
30.09.1997 - 15.07.2001	Azad Universität Rudhen Dozentin	Teheran / Iran
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>englische Literatur (drama, literary criticism, poetry, novel)</li> <li>englische Sprache (reading &amp;comprehension, writing, grammar)</li> </ul>	
02.02.1997 - 15.07.2000	Azad Universität Teheran Süd Dozentin	Teheran / Iran
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>englische Sprache (reading &amp;comprehension, writing, grammar )</li> </ul>	
15.11.1995 - 23.09.1997	Shokoh Sprachschule / ILI (Iran Language Institute) Sprachlehrerin	Kerman / Iran
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Englisch als Fremdsprach</li> </ul>	
30.09.1992 - 25.8.1995	Azad Universität Kerman Dozentin	Kerman /Iran
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>englische Literatur (introduction to literature, Simple and advanced prose)</li> <li>englische Sprache (grammar, reading, English lab, writing)</li> </ul>	
30.09.1993 - 20.08.1994	Azad Universität Meibod Dozentin	Meibod /Iran
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>englische Literatur (introduction to literature, Simple and advanced prose, Poetry)</li> </ul>	

Ausbildung	
22.03.2003 - 18.02.2009	Johann Wolfgang GoetheUniversität Frankfurt a/M <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promotion:</b> englische Philologie, Thema der Dissertation: "Towards Delogocentrism: A Study of the Dramatic works of Samuel Beckett, Tom Stoppard and Caryl Churchill"</li> <li>• Studium: Anglistik/Amerikanistik</li> </ul>
1989 - 1992	Azad Universität Teheran Zentrale Teheran / Iran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aufbaustudium englische Literatur</li> <li>• Erwerb des <b>Master degree</b>, Thema der Dissertation: "The Dichotomy between Ideal and Actual: A Study of the Dramatic Works of Henrik Ibsen".</li> </ul>
1989 - 1989	Azad Universität Khorasgan Isfahan / Iran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aufbaustudium englische Didaktik</li> </ul>
1985 - 1989	Azad Universität Kerman Kerman / Iran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studium Anglistik/Amerikanistik</li> <li>• Erwerb des <b>Bachelor degree</b></li> </ul>
1977 - 1980	Pahlavi Universität Shiraz / Iran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physikstudium</li> </ul>
- 1977	Parvin Etesami Gymnasium Kerman / Iran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Abitur</b></li> </ul>
Fortbildung	
09 / 2002	New Language School, Offenbach Heusenstamm/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-lingual Method of Teaching English as a Foreign Language</li> </ul>
10 / 1995	Iran Language Institute Kerman / Iran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-lingual Method of Teaching English as a Foreign Language</li> </ul>
08 / 1992	Shokoh Institute Kerman / Iran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive Method of Teaching English as a Foreign Language</li> </ul>
Seminare und Konferenzen	
4 - 7.06.2009	18te CDE Konferenz: „Staging Interculturality“ in Wien/Österreich
1 - 4.05.2008	17te CDE Konferenz: "Adaptations- Performing across Media and Genres" am Biggensee
24 – 25.07.2007	27te Annual WTP Women and Theatre Program Conference in New Orleans/USA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artikel: "Double Performance: Body, Language, and Space for Iranian Actresses"</li> </ul>
1 – 4.05.2006	15te CDE Konferenz „Drama and/after Postmodernism“ in Augsburg
10.05.1999	Theater Seminar von Fajr Festival /Vortrag :„Die Rolle der Sprache in Charakterdarstellung von Frauen im Theater“ in Teheran / Iran
Publikationen	
Veröffentlichen von Gedichten und Kurzgeschichten in diversen Zeitschriften im Iran, wie „Farhang va Adab“(Kultur und Literatur), „Kerman“ oder „Payaab“	

Übersetzung von Kurzgeschichten in Iranischen Zeitschriften wie „Kerman“

Artikel „Postmodernismus und Theater“ in Zeitschrift „Cinema Theater“ Ausgabe Oktober 1996 im Iran

Artikel „Ibsen und Idealismus“ in der Zeitschrift „Cinema Theater“ Ausgabe März 1996 im Iran

Übersetzung von drei Theaterstücken ins Persisch:

- *Great God Brown* von Eugene O’Neil. 1991. Teheran: Sepideh Sahar Publisher .
- *Awake and Sing* von Clifford Odets. 1991. Teheran: Sepide Sahar Publisher.
- *Educating Rita* von Willy Russel. 1992. Teheran: Sepide Sahar Publisher

#### Sprachkenntnisse

Farsi (Persisch):	Muttersprache
English:	fließend in Wort und Schrift
Deutsch:	sehr gut in Wort und Schrift
Französisch	Basiskenntnisse, aktuell Vertiefungskurse
Arabisch:	Basiskenntnisse