

The Fragmentation of Identity A Psycho-analytical study of Samuel Beckett's Not I

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تفتت الهوية : دراسة تحليلية نفسية لرواية "لست أنا" لصامويل بيكيت

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وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي

Abstract

This paper investigates the dynamics of split identity in Not I by Samuel Beckett, with particular emphasis on the fragmentation of the speaking subject and the instability of selfhood in modern drama. The play's radical minimalism—embodied in the isolated figure of the "Mouth"—foregrounds a disembodied voice that produces an intense, rapid, and disjointed monologue. This voice persistently resists identification with the pronoun "I," thereby enacting a profound division between language and subjectivity. Applying a psychoanalytic and post-structuralism framework, the study looks at how Beckett uses language disruption, narrative discontinuity, and the breakdown of coherent memory to undermine the idea of a cohesive self. The unconscious is revealed as a realm of dispersion rather than unity through the monologue's temporal dislocations, repetition, and fractured grammar. In this context, identity is not presented as a fixed essence but rather as a dynamic construct mediated by language, silence, and absence. Additionally, by suggesting a silent witness that widens the gap between self-expression and self-perception, the Auditor figure's presence provides the broken self an external dimension. Keywords: Split Identity; Fragmented Self

ملخص

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية ديناميكيات الهوية المنقسمة في مسرحية "ليس أنا" لصامويل بيكيت، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على تفتت الذات المتحدثة وعدم استقرار مفهوم الذات في الدراما الحديثة. يبرز التبسيط الجذري للمسرحية -المتجسد في شخصية "الفم" المنعزلة- صوتاً مجرداً يُنتج مونولوجاً مكثفاً وسريعاً ومفككاً. يقاوم هذا الصوت باستمرار التماهي مع ضمير المتكلم "أنا"، مما يُجسد انقساماً عميقاً بين اللغة والذاتية. من خلال تطبيق إطار التحليل النفسي وما بعد البنيوية، تبحث الدراسة في كيفية استخدام بيكيت لاضطراب اللغة، وانقطاع السرد، وإنهيار الذاكرة المتماسكة لتقويض فكرة الذات المتماسكة. يتجلى اللاوعي كمجال للتشتت بدلاً من الوحدة من خلال الانقطاعات الزمنية والتكرار والقواعد النحوية المتصدعة في المونولوج. في هذا السياق، لا تُقدم الهوية كجوهر ثابت، بل كبنية ديناميكية تتوسطها اللغة والصمت والغياب. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، من خلال اقتراح شاهد صامت يوسع الفجوة بين التعبير عن الذات وإدراكها، فإن وجود شخصية المدقق يوفر للذات المكسورة بُعداً خارجياً.

Introduction

Not I (1972), by Samuel Beckett, is typical of post-war avant-garde drama as it takes theatre to its extreme limits. Instead of using the physical image, psychological continuity, or the stability of a story, Beckett simultaneously narrows the range of the stage image to one disembodied, violently moving "Mouth." This extreme theatrical economy is not simply an experimental way of generating images, but is instead a deliberate dramatic maneuver whereby Beckett is able to physicalize the loss of the subjectivity of the individual. In Beyond Minimalism (1987), Enoch Brater argues that Beckett's late dramatic minimalism is not a retreat from meaning but an intensified way of dramatizing. The separation of the Mouth from the darkness surrounding it

is a powerful dramatization of the separation of voice from body, mind from physical existence, and speech from stable identity, in *Not I*. The self is no longer presented as an organic and unified entity, but as a chaotic landscape of impulses, memories, sensations and linguistic snippets. The central theme of the play is the speaker's obsession and near-violence with the avoidance of her first-person perspective. The monologue tells of abandonment and deprivation, of the silence and psychological anguish of a life, but the voice won't let the "I" be heard directly. As if to come to a moment of self-recognition, the movement toward identity is interrupted each time by Mouth's emphatic no: "what?... who?... no!.. she?" This is an important shift from "she" to "I" that is repeated throughout the play, and is essential to the psychology of the play. S. E. Gontarski (2001) reads such a tactic as a delay or evasion of the self – a way of not recognizing oneself for the sake of avoiding the unbearable weight of personal experience. The use of the third person is not, in this context, just a grammatical point, but a form of psychic defence, an "objectification" and distancing of trauma. By denying the "I", the refusal shows an internal ontological rift, a division in the subject so deep that to say "I" is to say "no." Mouth's frenzied verbal expression (or "logorrhea") reveals the inadequacy of language to establish a stable sense of self. Andrew Kennedy (1977) suggests that Beckett's later monodramatic speeches become a way for language to communicate, but at the same time represent a 'longing' to fill an existential void. *Not I* is a case in which speech does not provide identity, but reveals its absence. Pauses, gasps, repetitions, and sudden syntactic changes interrupt the monologue and create a verbal fragmentation that is parallel to the fragmentation of consciousness itself. It is a dramatic technique which can be traced back to Martin Esslin's (1961) essay, "The Theatre of the Absurd", in which rational order, coherent meaning and communication are lost. As Mouth talks more, the person who is talking becomes more indistinct. Her words create no continuous autobiographical story, but rather fleeting glimpses and traces that defy the coherence of self. The Auditor adds to this identity crisis. The Auditor is unspoken, concealed, and hardly moving; a witness to unspeakable and irresolvable suffering. The helpless gestures of tenderness that he makes are not emblems of healing power for the disjointedness of the speaker, but they highlight the gap between expression and recognition. One can read the Auditor as an externalizing figure of witnessing or as a projection of an inner consciousness which can no longer cope with trauma, in relation to W. R. Bion's and Carl Jung's influence on Beckett (as in James Knowlson's biographical account of Beckett's engagement with psychological thought, 1996). He is in a similar position to that of the audience, which observes, receives, and registers the verbal eruption, but is unable to give it wholeness or meaning. The play therefore not only poses the problem of the disembodied speaking self, but also of the inability of witnessing to reunite the self. This study, then, proposes that *Not I* is a dramatic meditation on the deep suffering of a fractured life. All of Beckett's technical innovations, from the isolated Mouth to the speeded-up delivery, the darkness around the image of the stage, and the multiple denials of the pronoun 'I' contribute to this image of the postmodern subject as fractured, unsteady, and language-mediated. The study provides a psychoanalytic and existential interpretation of *Not I* and interrogates the typical notions of character, agency and selfhood. Finally, Beckett's play implies that identity is not a present state of being, but a state of becoming, a process that is troubled and marked by repression, memory, silence, and the limits of language. This vision is one in which the human subject is not one or whole but is constituted by the fragment(s) by which it tries to recognize itself and from which it is always estranged:

And that bare vowel "I" shall poison more .
Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice.
I a m not I, if there be such an "I" ,
Or those eyes shut that makes thee answer "Ay"
If he be slain, say "Ay", or if not, "No".
Brief sounds determine my weal or woe.
Shakespeare

Two of the most characteristic tactics of Beckett's late dramatic and prose works are reduction and mystification. Beckett gradually shifts away from regular forms of characterization, and turns from the all-rounded dramatic presence to partial, abstract or symbolically charged presences in these works. It may be as simple as a tree, as in *Waiting for Godot*, or as extreme as the abstracting of the self to one organ, as in the image of the isolated Mouth in *Not I*, but is central to Beckett's long-standing inquiry into identity, subjectivity, and the precarious integrity of the self. Beckett deconstructs his characters' consistent names, familiar bodies, and stable personal histories, leaving his characters without the means by which identity is usually formed and known. This approach has more meaning in its context when seen in relation to the word's semantic roots: "identity" comes from the

Latin word *idem*, which means “the same” or “sameness.” This idea of sameness is continually destabilized throughout Beckett's drama, as his characters remain in a constant state of confusion, uncertain about the certainty of their own existence, unsure of their relation to their own identity. His characters are frequently in a state of crisis—struggling to cope with the condition of being, and simultaneously to resist any kind of secure identification with the self to which they feel called. In this way, Beckett subtracts or renders obscure almost all the marks which could characterize a theatrical personality. In his later plays, proper names have no place or are shown to be merely symbolically unstable in the earlier plays. This is one of the clearest examples of this dramatic process as is found in the present study, *Not I*. In this play, Beckett's abolition of proper names develops into a more complex and disturbing mode of identity displacement. He does not name his dramatic characters; instead, he relies on pronouns, especially the unstable relation between “I” and “she” as provisional and uncertain substitutes for identity. But this change does not solve the issue of selfhood; it exacerbates it. The use of a pronoun, which typically should refer back to a definite antecedent or else stand for a pre-existing noun, is absent of the linguistic security in *Not I*, instead creating ambiguity, fragmentation, and ontological uncertainty. The play therefore subverts normal expectations of a grammatical structure, which is intended to represent a deeper crisis of being. In this pronominal instability, the language itself becomes a field of conflict, where the subject of speech does not seem to match with the identity that speech creates for it. It, therefore, enjoys the force of person-distinction (6). But the failure to correspond to this rule has primarily been touched upon at the beginning of the play. *Not I* starts with introducing one visible quasi-character, a mouth. Yet another character, though invisible (8), seems to be present too. Beckett conspicuously refers to this second character as an Auditor. While the Mouth is spotlighted, the Auditor is 'enveloped in black djellaba (9). In *Not I*, Beckett deliberately denies his audience a fixed visual and female/gender identity for the speaking figure. The "Mouth" is a part of the human being that is shown on the stage, presented as a neutral pronoun, "it", prohibiting any immediate recognition of it by the human being. As the monologue unfolds, however, the audience slowly discerns this disembodied organ is linked to a female body whose being is decreased to one speaking passage. While typically in the Beckettian theatrical extreme, this reduction does not, in itself, create clarity; it deepens the uncertainty of identity. The repetition and coincidence of *idem*—sameness—between the Mouth that is telling and the woman that is being told about is intentionally challenged. In other words, Beckett undermines the continuity between the neutral “it”, the compulsively speaking Mouth, and the third-person “she”, and instead makes identity itself unstable, displaced and non-cohesive, not able to recognize itself. Indeed, the possibility of confusion in the belonging of the pronoun is very high. It originally stems from the precarious relation between the character and its numerous identities. First and foremost, the neutral 'it' which is contextually attached to the Mouth departs widely from this attachment in the later pages of the play. In other words, it becomes clear that 'it' would turn into a problematic feature when it leaves its neutrality; it becomes a reference to more than one identity, 'the brain' as in (“... but the brain still ... still sufficiently ...' oh very much so.... at this stage... in control... under control to question even this ... for on that April morning... so it reasoned...”) (p. 9; italics mine); 'the voice' as in (“... no idea what she was saying!... till she began trying to ... delude herself —. it was not hers at all ... not her voice at all...”) (p. 10, italics mine); 'the existence' as in (“something she had) to tell ... could that be it?... something that would tell... how it was ... how she ... what?... had been? yes... something that would tell how it had been ... how she had lived”) (p. 14), italics mine); and 'the unknown solution' as in (“hit on it in the end !... then back.... God is love... tender mercies”) (p. 15), italics mine). These are not, J. Fletcher et al write, “the only four shifting identities which issue from the Mouth, there are others implicit in the contradictions of narrative, of time, of ability, and sensibility” (10). Yet throughout all this confusion the text aims at leading us again to the previous negation of the character to her identity or identities: “..what?.. who?.. no!..she!” The confusion aroused because of these intermingled relationships does not go without justification. The play is primarily taken to present “an aural mosaic of words” that should involve some kind of mysteriousness (11). And this is not thought to be a necessary and an inevitable factor to counterpoise the manifestation of the first hearing of the play. At least part of this state of mysteriousness is satisfied through the confusion created by the pronoun-game (12). More precisely, John Fletcher, in a rather brief essay**,** believes that the Mouth is “Beckett's most defenseless creature alone now, alone in the past, not attempting to justify herself, hardly even a story to tell. All the same one defense remains**:** she speaks in the third person throughout**,** crying suddenly at intervals in a little rush of desperation: “what?.. who?.. no!.. she!” fending off the final nakedness of being 'I' (13). Therefore**,** confusion created by pronouns is pre-planned as the only cautious prerequisite of self-protection against the “buzzing in the skull.” The play, as

mentioned, introduces a vague feminine character who, in a monologue-wise cadence, narrates a birth experience. It, afterwards, shifts its emphasis to denying any relation whatsoever between the newly-born she-child and the Mouth**, which by then comes to the verge of old age or the summary of her days on earth: "till coming up to sixty when what ? ... seventy ?... good God!" (p.6). This denial is simultaneously occasioned with the movement which is statistically given number one : ... all went out ... all that early April morning light ... and she found herself in the . what who?.. no! . she ! (pause and movement I) (p. 7). Besides**, there are three more movements which are proportionately distributed all over the play. These are likewise given numbers two, three and four respectively. In fact**, these movements are not only to break the monotonous rigidity of the play but also they become parts of a theatrical inevitability to add a colourful touch to the play and to save it from what Martin Esslin has labelled "the narrative form" (14). They also function in correspondence with stage directions given by Beckett himself at the very end of the play. These stage directions read as follows: "Movement: this consists in simple sideways raising of arms from sides and falling back, in a gesture of hopeless compassion. It lessens with the recurrence till scarcely perceptible at third. There is just enough pause to constitute it as Mouth recovers from vehement refusal to relinquish third person." (p.16)." As opposed to the "theatrical gestures" of the Auditor's recurrent movements in Not I, which are not incidental, but rather are part of the way in which Beckett works toward externalizing the split nature of the talking "self." The four movements signal moments of heightened resistance, especially when the monologue comes close to becoming a reference to "she" who is being narrated, as the speaking subject does the same. The physical action thus serves as an echo to the verbal rejection and strengthens the central conflict of the play between the identity and disavowal expressed by Mouth. The conflict goes beyond the tense relationship between "she" and "it" but is more psychologically charged because of the opposition between "she" and "I." In this struggle of the pronouns**, it is Beckett's most dramatic representation of the subject's inability or unwillingness to take ownership of her life. The use of the pronoun "she" is also very frequent in this play**, but its impact is intensified in its vicinity when the Auditor moves. In the opening movement, Mouth squashes a whole life story into a disjointed tale starting from conception, through birth, and ending with a woman's dazed bewilderment in old age. Though this narrative is brief and discontinuous, the audience is able to sense three key moments in the life of this discarded female figure: her beginnings, her birth, and her slow progression into old age. But Mouth's story is most powerful in the final movement of this life because it is in the moment of speech that she has been most intensely silenced for a long time, or in silence for a long time, or untalked-about for a long time. Unlike her mysterious and nearly inexplicable history in the preceding pages, where even a description of her parents is unclear, this is a belated verbal explosion of a "steady stream" of uncontrolled speech (p. 6). When speech comes late, then the self-recognition is not acquired, but instead a renewed act of rebellion against the self. But as Mouth nears the chance of being connected to the figure she tells, Mouth goes into a state of pronominal confusion, as the pronouns have the potential to reveal the very continuity between past and present, narrator and narrated, "she" and "I", which Mouth is trying to obscure. In this context, Beckett makes grammatical reference a locus of psychological tension; language is no longer a secure anchor for identity but a place of its disintegration. Furthermore, the sexual intercourse which resulted in the retarded mousy child, does not indicate any gesture of previous love relationship. It happens abruptly so that it leaves the audience with very little to ponder on. More concentration, instead was laid on the state of the newly-born infant which was described as 'speechless' and deprived of 'love of any kind... at any subsequent stage'. However, growth of the 'speechless infant goes on until she reaches the age of seventy which is thy crucial stage or juncture of all the dark past with the whole futile and hopeless present. Yet, the woman, oy the Mouth, objects, claiming that "she' does not necessarily correspond to, belong to or reflect 'I', in the closest sense of the word. With this assurance the Mouth catches breath only to resume the narration of the life-story of the third person. And this is the introduction of the second movement. The key to this movement is the word 'buzzing'. In this word lies the Mouth's psychodynamic problem which has probably influenced her later behaviours and was the reason of her later coming to consciousness. The Mouth, before being urged probably by the Auditor who is placed as the "other actor,.. writer, director or member of the audience" (15), concentrates on the concept of sin and punishment. Though aware of the sins the Mouth does not seem to have a feeling of suffering or punishment "unless of course she was ... meant to be suffering... ha!.... thought to be suffering" (p. 8); she feels she is considerably numbed It is not the physical punishment that she is afraid of now but "that notion of punishment... for some sin or another... or for the lot ... or no particular reason... for its own sake (p.8)" Yet the nature of either the sin or the punishment is not defined in this regard; what is of a particular interest to the Mouth now

is the obsession with the notion of punishment She, nevertheless, does not refer to a particular or real crime that she committed in the past in return for which she deserves punishment. All what she remembers now is her miserable childhood with 'other waifs'. Yet, the feeling of misery is only the outcome of a recent discovery: that she can recollect her past memories vividly and thread them together with her current and culminated misery of the present. Now, the nagging of 'buzzing sound' in the ears or in the skull worries her. Obsessed with the idea of punishment, she realizes that the buzzing sound, which may be the power of the brain to remember, has become ever throbbing. And it seems that she can not do without it because it is displayed as the only tool that remains alive and conscious in her. Yet, with the entire awareness of the possible 'agony' or 'torment' she had or she might have had, she tries again to negate any possible 'sameness' between the waif of the past and herself now. She has to declare this disconnection between the two different persons, i.e., pronouns, every then and while. Here it appears that the brain, pointed out by 'it', plays a n important role in indirectly juxtaposing the two pronouns of the naked being of 'I' and 'she' spoken about. This is because both " and 'she' are always mentioned concomitantly and are presumably taken to have witnessed and suffered from the same past experiences. This witnessed and suffered from the same past experiences. This naturally makes any convergence between the strongly possible. It however, becomes the reason, though not the only one, for the second revolting movement. The brain here works and arouses a sense of feeling and pain in the female speaker, something she is terrified to have now because it stands for a failing experience to her. Therefore, she reacts against the mere recollecting of it in a n attempt to obliterate it (16). So the past backed by the present powerful brain with all its intolerable obsessions becomes a vital factor that revoltingly spurs a painful refusal of self-identification. And this is because the monologue of the Mouth has gradually become or is becoming "a trial of some kind, when all that was required... of her was to say 'Guilty' or Not Guilty", and she stood there, her mouth half open, struck dumb." (17) Thus denial which culminates in establishing a basis of confusion in the reference of the pronouns has been naturally assumed as a means of self-defense. seems that the Mouth, despite the huge effort she exerts It in acknowledging none of the things or memories described could afford, probably unconsciously, to describe them vividly and elaborately (18). This is its fatal mistake in the game; she has created her self-trap. Yet it seems that the 'Cartesian split' between 'she' and 'I' raises severe problems to the Mouth whose present suffering under the investigating spotlight is to speak on and on, in a confessional style, with no control on the 'stream that comes'. And while the body has lost the feeling the mind is left capable of raving away on its own, Yet, the huge burden was laid on the Mouth because what is mostly incriminating for her is not only the possibility of 'sameness' or striking similarity between the child and herself but also the co-existence of both Hence, the thing that has agitated the Mouth before the second movement is, as aforementioned, the buzzing sound or the brain which on its parts is responsible for producing- words that are to be articulated compulsorily by the Mouth or other third person available (19). The Mouth, therefore, refuses and denies even though mechanically. In her tirade before the third movement, the Mouth similarly concentrates on the process of the growth to old age which is characterized by unconsciousness. That is why she wonders how she survive !". The speaker seems to be unwilling to give in to the remembering, although the recovered past evokes in her an uncanny feeling. Instead of using memory, she is caught up in the out-of-control verbal flow that bubbles away from her mouth, that she cannot control, even in her own mind. When she admits that she is "not catching the half ... not the quarter ... no idea what she was saying" (p. 10), there is a great disconnect between what she hears and what she feels. Such a lack of self-recognition might not be interpreted as confusion, but as a defensive maneuver the Mouth uses to maintain the separation between the voice of speech and the sufferer she addresses. Her refusal to understand her words means her refusal to take ownership of them, deny them to an "I." Such refusal as much as anything else stands in the way of the first-person voice becoming the person, of the speaking "I" becoming the person who is being spoken. The Mouth's confusion is therefore a part of Beckett's general drama of the breaking down of any sense of self: speech does not re-create the self, it reveals it. Again, 'the buzzing' keeps on, particularly at this stage of her age, nagging as if to remind her of a mystery she wants to hide altogether with her unseen body: "whole body loke gone just the mouth" . Here she seems to lose control over the 'stream' of the Mouth which is 'like maddened and can't stop ... no stopping it'. What breaks the monotony of the tempo of this movement is the Mouth's unusual effort to reach an epiphany. But this trend of disclosure eventually fails because the "buzzing" creeps into articulation and restates the speaker's absolute denial of self-identification. The Mouth knows there's something hidden deep in her past that needs to come out, but that same urge is obstructed by a strong and enigmatic feeling of guilt. This guilt is not defined, but it is a strong psychological force that makes her hide rather than speak what is struggling to come out of her. Thus the

outburst and uncontrollable use of language do not result in self-recognition; it further deepens her alienation from herself. This is when the monologue again returns to one of the themes at its heart: remembrance of a previous state of silence, a past silence which returns to affect and organise the present voice, now broken and fragmented. Yet she refers to the 'sudden flash' which seems to form the turning -point in her peculiar life. Probably, she becomes confused because of the sudden change being inflicted upon the Mouth whose articulateness is unusual at this particular era of her age. Perhaps this is the reason of her confusion and therefore mistaken identity. She was not ready, neither mentally nor psychologically, to accept her present situation. After the fourth movement, the Mouth presents nothing of a particular significance. The story then comes back to the same agonizing cry of the abandoned little girl, who is left to face life alone, and even more surprisingly, without the ability to speak. The "sudden flash" is made prominent in the third movement as the source of the Mouth's extraordinary verbal energy, whereas the fourth movement turns to the more ambiguous demonstrative "this." The reference is intentionally unstable, because "she" and the Mouth cannot know whether "this" refers to the outburst of speech or to the brain that seems to control and force the Mouth's constant voicing. As the play nears its final moment (this might be interpreted as the end of "she," the end of the Mouth's capacity, or the end of the dramatic action), the visible Mouth finally recognizes what the "buzzing" is: it is a dull roar, a roar inside the skull. But this recognition does not bring clarity, for she still cannot see what she is trying to express. But at this moment, she is no longer able to avoid the pressure of an unknown and unheard interrogating presence, whose question has been asked four times and each time denied with a firm "no." The recurring answer is a reiteration of the radical dichotomy between two identities: one, the disowned "I", and the other, the displaced "she." As such, Beckett aims to make this dramatic experience about the subject's divided identity, but he fails to fully eradicate the organic presence of sameness, or idem, that connects the split subject to itself. To answer questions like where these broken beings are and what kind of connection might still exist between them, Katharine Worth suggests that the theatrical setup itself puts the viewer in the position of experiencing dissociation. The audience is forced to gaze sideways across the stage at a disorienting perspective, between a mouth and no body and a body and no mouth. In this visual and spatial disorientation, the viewer plunges into the uncanny situation of this psychic disjunction that is the story of the Mouth: the point at which, at the age of seventy, while strolling in a strange way through cowslip fields gathering cowslips, she finds herself "in the dark" (20).

A Methodical Analysis of the Disjointed Identity and Self in Not I

The dramatic setting of Samuel Beckett's Not I is characterized by a radical break from conventional theatrical techniques in favor of a methodical dissection of the human subject. The central idea of this interpretation is the "Fragmented Self," which Beckett represents through the linguistic and physical seclusion of a disembodied "Mouth." This methodological choice dissociates the body, the mind, and the outside world. By restricting the audience's perception of a form that is physically present, socially attached, and historically defined to just one, pulsating organ in an eternal emptiness, Beckett pushes the viewer's mind into a phenomenological experience with a mind without history, body, or social connection. Linguistically, the play uses a technique known as "Pronominal Alienation," in which the main character rejects the first-person pronoun. The monologue itself is unyielding, rushing forward, while the speaker carefully avoids the word 'I', and always uses the third person 'she' when the story might refer to her own circumstances. The linguistic rejection is not only a stylistic quirk, but also a crucial psychological defense mechanism against the assimilation of trauma. The speaker attempts to detach herself from a history of neglect and silence by objectifying her life. The organized removal of the self reveals a fractured sense of self, one that experiences the self as a source of intolerable suffering and chooses to live in the safe distance of a third-person perspective. Furthermore, the drama can be methodologically analyzed from the perspectives of trauma theory and psychological dissociation. The "logorrhea" or verbal overflow revealed by the Mouth indicates a mind that becomes stuck in a "repetition compulsion" and causes the person to relive traumatic experiences through speech without reaching any emotional resolution. The disjointed nature of the speech (with pauses, breaths, abrupt changes in ideas) is indicative of the person's chaotic thinking pattern, a typical characteristic of those who have suffered trauma. From a Lacanian perspective, this suggests a subject in which an aspect has not been integrated into a whole. The Mouth remains in an "abjection" state in which the boundaries of self and other (or inside and outside) are blurred, and only a 'swirling stream of signifiers' remains that ceases to coalesce into a unified "ego". Lastly, the presence of the "Auditor" (who remains silent) raises a significant point in the play's discussion of identity. The Auditor remains silent but is an essential witness to the chaos and his inability to do anything effective or comforting underscores

the lonely powerlessness of the person. The engagement—or absence of it—between the agitated speaker and the powerless listener underscores the breakdown of communication as a means for self-rebuilding. For Beckett, identity is not something that can be verified by others, but rather a process that is constantly "becoming" and never attained, and indeed is always in question. The drama doesn't end with an identity, but rather with an unending battle, as if the split self is the permanent state of the postmodern subject, and the battle is for an identity that can never be achieved.

Conclusion

Not I by Samuel Beckett is one of the most extreme depictions of multiple personae in modern literature. The human figure is cut down to an abstract "Mouth," as Beckett challenges traditional ideas of character, coherence, and unified selfhood. This play is not simply about fragmentation; it performs fragmentation linguistically and structurally, and brings the reader or audience to an experience of fragmented identity. It is notable that the speaking voice does not embrace the pronoun "I". Such a denial is a deep psychological and ontological disjunction where the subject is estranged from its own story. The repetition of "not I" indicates a withdrawal strategy, which exposes the lack of total possession of one's experiences (Beckett, 1973). This linguistic approach is related to psychoanalytic theories of repression and dissociation, in which there is a division between the conscious and the unconscious. Furthermore, the play's disjointed syntax, rapid delivery, and time shifts play a role in its cognitive and existential disintegration. Identity is no longer described as continuous or unchanging, but as something that is constructed and reconstructed over the course of memory lapses, linguistic breakdown, and the inability to construct a coherent narrative. From a post-structuralist point of view, this is another way to confirm that subjectivity is formed in language, but at the same time undermined by language. The Auditor further adds to this complexity by functioning as an observer, a silent witness, and a voice in the darkness, whether external or internal. This duality has been accentuated by the split in the self, meaning that identity can never exist without the presence of an "other," whether psychological or social. Not I undermines the possibility of a unified and coherent self. Beckett's dramaturgy demonstrates that identity is always in flux, always "in the future," and always formed through a disjunctive discourse. In this way, the play is not only a reflection of the crisis of modern subjectivity, but also prefigures other philosophical questions about the boundaries of language and the disappearance of the centered self. It is, therefore, an important document for exploring the intricacies of identity in modern literary and theoretical discourse. Beckett, S. (1973). Not I. London: Faber and Faber.

NOTES

1. See Raili Elovaara, The Problem of Identity in Samuel Beckett's Prose.
2. Examples of Beckett's later plays in which definite personal names are absent include Not I (1973), That Time (1976), and Three Occasional Pieces (1982). In Not I, pronouns replace proper names; in That Time, the voices are identified by letters such as A, B, and C; and in Three Occasional Pieces, letters are likewise used as substitutes for conventional names.
3. In earlier plays such as Waiting for Godot, Endgame, Happy Days, and All That Fall, Beckett's use of names is also problematic. In Waiting for Godot (1952), for instance, the names Lucky, Pozzo, Vladimir, Estragon, and Godot do not function merely as realistic markers of identity; rather, they contribute to the universalized atmosphere of uncertainty and nothingness characteristic of Beckett's dramatic world.
4. See Elovaara, The Problem of Identity in Samuel Beckett's Prose.
5. See Randolph Quirk et al., A Grammar of Contemporary English; Jean Praninskas, Rapid Review of English Grammar; and C. T. Onions, Modern English Syntax, p. 132.
6. See Quirk et al., A Grammar of Contemporary English.
7. See Quirk et al., A Grammar of Contemporary English, p. 100.
8. The Auditor is described in Beckett's text as "a tall standing figure... enveloped from head to foot in loose black djellaba, with hood, fully faintly lit, standing on invisible podium about 4' high" (Not I, p. 6).
9. The djellaba is a hooded cloak commonly associated with North African dress. The reference is not accidental. Enoch Brater explains that Beckett, while in Tunisia in 1970, noticed a mysterious figure completely hidden in a djellaba and standing against a wall. Beckett later learned that the figure was a woman waiting for her child to return from school, but by that time the image had already entered the imaginative background of Not I. See Enoch Brater, "The 'I' in Beckett's Not I," Twentieth Century Literature, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1974, p. 196.
10. See Beryl S. Fletcher et al., A Student's Guide to the Plays of Samuel Beckett, p. 195.

11. See Edith Oliver, in Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, eds., Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage, p. 328.
12. Ibid., p. 328.
13. See John Fletcher and John Spurling, Beckett: A Study of His Plays, p. 123.
14. See Martin Esslin's discussion of narrative and dramatic form in relation to the Theatre of the Absurd.
15. Fletcher and Spurling, Beckett: A Study of His Plays, p. 124.
16. Edith Oliver, in Graver and Federman, eds., Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage, p. 329.
17. Ibid., p. 329.
18. See Beryl S. Fletcher et al., A Student's Guide to the Plays of Samuel Beckett, p. 194.
19. Ibid., p. 194.
20. See Katherine Worth, Beckett: The Shape Changer, p. 206.

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