BECKETT'S MINIMALIST STYLE IN CINEMATIC PRODUCTIONS: *FILM*

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Abstract

The study analyses the role of minimalism in Samuel Beckett's play, *Film*, with regards to its text, its film version, and its cinematic techniques. In this way, the study will introduce minimalism as the basic factor for the birth of the features such as absurdity in Beckett's drama. The article argues that Beckett is basically a minimalist rather than an absurdist. Moreover, Beckett's minimalist style provides him the opportunity to establish an immediate relationship between audiences and the artwork. Such an achievement serves him in two ways. Firstly, it enlightens his expressions on such delicate subjects as the idea of self and human existence, which also is one of the main subjects in *Film*. Secondly, such an immediate relationship could increase the impact of the drama in comparison to those plays that do not apply minimalist techniques.

Keywords: Modern Literature, Minimalism, Absurdism, drama, cinema

Samuel Beckett's works, especially his plays, are basically known for evoking ideas of absurdity, hopelessness, nonsense or meaninglessness, creating a world we know as the Theater of the Absurd. But, is the notion of the absurd really what Beckett's works originally respond to? In this study, I will try to illustrate that Beckett's art originally responds to the principles of minimalism, especially when it comes to his cinematic productions, and it is his minimalist style that gives birth to features which we categorise as 'absurd'. Beckett, I argue, is originally a minimalist rather than an absurdist.

Minimalism

From the mid-1960s onwards, the term, "Minimalism", was mainly concerned with plastic arts, painting, American sculpture, and avant-garde symphonic music. Regarding the origin of minimalism, there is no authentic source. Warren Motte states that the movement was originated by artists from Manhattan who worked on different media especially sculpture (Motte 1999, p. 8). Adrian Wanner claims that the term, "Minimalism", originates from Russia. He says: "the Russian avant-garde in general, and Kazimir Malevich in particular, have been identified as precursors of the New York minimalism of the 1960s" (Wanner 2001, p. 453).

The word "Minimal", according to Kenneth Baker, "is used loosely these days in reference to any stylistic austerity in the arts" (Motte 1999, p. 3). Regarding the definition of the minimal art, there are many disputes. Many artists have stated different definitions of the term in different fields of art, according to Frances Colpitt: "the designation of minimal art cannot be credited to any certain individual" (Colpitt 1993, p. 3). In literature, especially in the field of poetics, Jan Baetens presents his definition: "minimalist poetry constitutes the pinnacle of an evolution toward ever greater purity and essence. With this evolution, it is a matter of pulling the art of writing closer to its irreducible essence, and stripping it of any other sort of distracting elements" (Baetens 2005, p. 67). In his account, minimalism originates from visual arts. It conveys the idea that art, in this case writing, has an "essence", a heart, a center, and it is the "function" of writing to search for this essence. In this way, he offers minimalism's fundamental justification: "It represents the attempt both to remove all that is foreign to the Essence of an art or practice and to establish this Essence in functional terms" (2005, p. 69).

Samuel Beckett's *Breath* is a perfect example for minimalism's justification. The play lasts for about twenty-five seconds and except for the single cry heard by the audience, the whole play is in silence. In this play, Beckett has nearly removed language. There are no characters and there are no words spoken. Baetens regards the myth of silence as "the supreme form of language" (Baetens 2005, p. 69). As if there are no other "authentic or essential" ways of speaking, except to remove the language (2005, p. 72). Therefore, the silence of Beckett's *Breath* does not imply that something is missing. It implies that there is something that language cannot convey, something unspeakable, a space of meaning, which should be discovered. This point justifies the paradox of minimalism; "less is more" (Barth 1986). Baetens explains this paradox as follows: "Minimalist poetry illustrates superbly the nature of maximalism, because no matter what anyone says and in spite of all the blank space with which it surrounds itself, this poetry does not lead to a subtraction, but to a way to keep meaning always open." Baetens's comment can be applied to writing in general as he believes "what emerges behind minimalism in poetry . . . very quickly becomes minimalism in 'writing' in general" (Baetens 2005, p. 72). The following paragraphs explain some of the general principles of minimalism.

One of the most important features is the idea of smallness. We use this notion to measure objects by comparing it to its surrounding. When we come across small objects, we try to concentrate even more than when we find big objects. In other words, our way of approaching small objects is closer and with more focus than the way of approaching big objects. The American sculptor, Robert Morris, regarding this matter mentions: "The quality of intimacy is attached to an object in a fairly direct proportion as its size diminishes in relation to oneself. The quality of publicness is attached in proportion as the size increases in relation to oneself" (qtd. in Motte 1999, p. 4). One pays more attention to small objects in order to fulfill his perception. In this manner, a close relationship is established between the observer and the object being observed. This close relationship is what Morris defines as 'the quality of intimacy'. However, when it comes to the big objects this relationship becomes wider, in other words, it becomes ordinary and normal and it no longer catches our

attention in the way it would do in case of small objects. This is what Morris means by the idea of 'publicness'.

Another important principle is the idea of simplicity. This principle indicates an absence of complexity, plainness, sincerity, guilelessness, and lack of sophistication. Simplicity means removing extras in order to reveal the essence. According to Motte, "The simpler an object is the more 'natural' it seems". In other words, in order to get to the nature of the object and find out its truth one must simplify that object. It also echoes this idea that a minimalist uses the simplification method in the search for truth. Therefore, this method adds to the spiritual and thoughtful quality of minimalism. However, this simplicity also bears this idea that it is "artless" and conveys the feature of "artistic vacuity". The important point is that this quality is the "surface effect of a deliberate process of eschewal and restriction intended to clear away conventional rhetoric in an attempt to approximate the essential" (Motte 1999, p. 4). This is exactly what applied arts means by the notion of simplicity. At this point, a minimalist shows that different objects have a center or a point that needs more attention and focus in the process of perception, while the excess of unnecessary elements around that object can obscure this end.

Carver articulates the minimalist creed as follows: "It's possible, in a poem or short story, to write about commonplace things and objects using commonplace but precise language, and to endow those things – a chair, a window curtain, a fork, a stone, a woman's earring – with immense, even startling power" (qtd. in Saltzman 1990, p. 432). It may imply from this articulation that the notion of simplicity can also refer to those commonplace things and objects that a minimalist uses as the subject of his or her writings.

So far, minimalism follows the idea of reduction or lessening to pave the way for our maximum degree of perception. John Barth believes that "artistic effect may be enhanced by a radical economy of artistic means, even where such parsimony compromises other values: completeness, for example, or richness or perception of statement". This reminds us of the basic paradox of minimalism, "less is more".

The two related ideas of directness and immediacy are important in the discussion of minimalism. A minimalist believes that one can perceive the reality of the thing when he experiences it directly, without any superfluity. The notion of immediacy means, in Colpitt's words, "an immediate aesthetic engagement, both in the process of production and in the process of reception" (Colpitt 1993, p. 47). Thus, minimalism, by removing any mediation or rhetorical figure that might cause distraction in both the process of producing the object and the process of perceiving it, provides an opportunity for the beholder to go directly to the heart of the matter. By doing so, minimalism claims that it brings interest to the ordinary and banal quality of our quotidian experience:

> By shifting emphasis so emphatically to direct experience Minimalist art makes a clear statement about the nature of reality. Its apparent simplicity is the result of rigorous focusing, the elimination of distraction. It is neither simple nor empty,

cold nor obscure. Minimalism reorders values. It locates profound experience in ordinary experience. (Serota and Francis, qtd. in Motte 1999, p. 6)

This notion of clarity, according to Gregory Battcock, is "a key characteristic of minimalist art" (qtd. in Motte 1999, p. 6). This is what minimalism tries to amplify by reduction of means. Therefore, minimalism, by providing a clear statement about the nature of the thing activates the observer's mind. In addition, the observer tries to identify the object that is free from any anecdote or incident and in this process, he starts to find the other possibilities by using his own imagination.

As long as minimalism provokes the observer's imagination, it drives us to unfold another important feature, its playful spirit. According to Walter Isle, "play is experiencing, putting things together in new ways in the hope the new invention will work, but even more it is pushing this creative impulse further into excess and anarchy in the hope that the outrageous will not only surprise but reveal something new" (qtd. in Motte 1999, p. 16). With regard to Isle's definition, the playful spirit of minimalism refers to the playful moment of encounter between the object and the observer. At this moment, as for the immediacy of the encounter and simplicity of the object, the observer faces an as if unfinished work. Consequently, he struggles to finish it 'in the hope the new invention will work'. In fact, the playful spirit of minimalism is the moment of encounter when the observer is playing with the object, in Isle's term, 'experiencing' it, 'in the hope [his] new invention will work'. Minimalism's significant concern for the moment of encounter actuates Michael Fried to speak of the "theatricality" of minimalist art. He mentions, "the minimalist artifact has a sort of stage presence because of its obtrusiveness, its aggressiveness, and especially the complicity that it demands from the viewer" (qtd. in Motte 1999, p. 17).

This feature is quite significant in minimalist plastic art and minimalist music. In minimalist plastic arts, they usually deal with those objects that "reveal everything about themselves, but little about the artist; objects whose subject is the viewer" (Serota and Francis, qtd. in Motte 1999, p. 18). When the observer finds himself in front of such a work discharged of any extra, he feels he has a role to play, the role of an artist who tries to create another work of art. In minimalist music, the listener is listening to an as though unfinished work, full of repetition, discharged of different motif, tone, and moods. It is the listener's part to finish the work and he is the one who actively participates in the process of construction.

Symmetry is another principle of minimalism. In general, it refers to any manner in which part of a pattern can be mapped on to another part or the whole pattern on itself. In the field of art, symmetry "may be interpreted as part of a more ample quest for artistic order" (Motte 1999, p. 15). In all kinds of minimal arts, symmetry plays its role prominently. In order to clarify its meaning in minimalist sculpture and painting, Colpitt has introduced the idea of grid. He argues that "no organizational format is as dominant in modern painting as the grid, which structures and unifies the picture plane by creating a network of identical and contiguous modules" (Colpitt 1993, p. 60). As the number of balanced challenges or the identical and contiguous

modules of the work increase, the amount of perceptual distractions decrease and the beholder can appreciate the work more easily.

To sum up, the main principles of minimalism are as follows: smallness, simplicity, directness and immediacy, clarity, playful spirit, and symmetry.

Granted all this, most of these principles that manifest themselves in minimalist plastic arts and minimalist music are applicable in minimalist literature. In the field of literature, the term, minimalism, could not find its standing ground until the late 1970s, when only a few critics and journalists began applying it in their writings. The movement with its own austerity identifies with the American short fiction from the 1960s to 1970s. Writers such as Raymond Carver, Ann Beattie, and Richard Ford employed it in their short stories. However, we cannot identify this school of new American short fiction with the invention of literary minimalism, because the style existed long before. According to John Barth, the idea is as old and as "enduringly attractive and as ubiquitous as its opposite". In his estimation, literary minimalism, since the time of the Greek philosopher Theophrastus (ca 372-ca 287 BC), was used to add austerity to those practices which were "rich in adornments, intricately decorative, and otherwise 'full' by comparison to the work of the minimalist. . . . The baroque inspires its opposite." Barth proposes a number of factors from different periods that support the current minimalist movement of American literature: "In the beginning was the Word: only later came the bible, not to mention the three-decker Victorian novel". He also refers to the brevity of the proverbs, maxims, aphorisms, epigrams, pensees, mottoes, slogans, and quips as the examples of minimalism that "are popular in every human century and culture".

Barth believes that against every "long-scale" verse or prose there are compressive or "supercompressive" forms. For example:

> Against the large-scale classical prose pleasures of Herodotus, Thucydides and Petronius, there are the miniature delights of Aesop's fables and Theophrastus' "Characters". Against such verse epics as the "Iliad," the "Odyssey" and the "Aeneid" are such venerable supercompressive poetic forms as the palindrome . . . or the single couplet . . . or the feudal Japanese haiku and its Western echoes in the early 20th century.

Barth's estimation implies that wherever literature springs up, a touch of minimalism accompanies its features. Fiction, whether old or new, all can be minimalist in different aspects.

The process of stripping away the excesses has been launched since the time of Theophrastus to the present time and perhaps Samuel Beckett is the most prominent author in this regard. In short, their fiction features, according to Kim Herzinger, the following elements:

a) Formally sparse, terse, trim
b) Tonally cool, detached, noncommittal, "flat", affectless, recalcitrant, deadpan, laconic

c)   Oblique and elliptical
d)   Relatively plotless
e)   Concerned with surface detail, particularly with recognizable brand names
f)   Depthless
g)   Comparatively oblique about personal, social, political, or cultural history
h)   Often written in present tense
i)   Often written in first person
j)   Sometimes in the second person. (qtd. in Motte 1999, P. 23)

My definition of minimalism in this study follows that of Baetens. It is mainly concerned with the paradox of minimalism, "less is more" (Barth 1986) that implies, according to Motte, "through reduction of means, minimalists hope to achieve an amplification of effect". By reduction of means, it means, "to strip away the superfluous in order to reveal the necessary, the essential (the essence)" (Motte 1999, p.4). I will use this notion along with several principles of minimalism such as, simplicity, directness and immediacy, its playful spirit, and symmetry (I would not use the idea of smallness because it mainly concerns sculpture and painting) plus the features that Herzinger has introduced and will apply them to Beckett's only screenplay, *Film*. By doing so, I hope to introduce a new way of approaching Beckett's dramas. The new way would be different from the common belief of many people who think that Beckett is an absurdist. In this study, I hope to demonstrate that he is more of a minimalist than an absurdist. Of course, the idea was once briefly pointed out by Professor Peter Saccio in one of his lectures regarding Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. I will explain this statement in detail by examining the notion of minimalism in *Film*. To see Beckett as a minimalist rather than an absurdist will help the reader to achieve a more profound understanding of his plays, more intuitive than the time we saw him as an absurdist. It will also add to our better understanding of the ideas such as the purpose of existence and the concept of self.

Film

The screenplay was written in April 1963. It was filmed in New York in 1965 and it was first shown publicly in 1965 at the New York Film Festival. The filmed version differs from the original script; however, it was approved by Beckett as long as he was present at the filming process in the United States. In the 1965 production of *Film*, Buster Keaton plays the protagonist role and Alan Schneider takes the directorial process. *Film* is divided into three parts: the street (about eight minutes), the stairs (about five minutes), and the room (about seventeen minutes). Throughout the first two parts we only see things through the eye of the camera (designated in the script as E); in the third part we have both the protagonist's perception and E's perception of protagonist (referred to as O). *Film* is a silent play except for the use of "sssh!", which according to Brater, reminds the actors as well as the audiences that "this is indeed a silent film" (Brater 1987, p. 80).

Keaton's character is a man who tries to escape other's perception of him and he destroys any eye that tries to perceive him. At the beginning of the script Beckett describes his protagonist as being "sundered into object (O) and eye (E), the former

in flight, the latter in pursuit", however, the audiences are not aware that the "pursuing perceiver is not extraneous, but self" until the end of the film (1990, p.323). Keaton's character (O) tries to keep his back to the camera and audiences and maintains his "angle of immunity" (1990, p.324). Only when this angle is exceeded O experiences what Beckett calls "anguish of perceivedness" (1990, p.323), and it becomes a tormenting condition. The idea of the 'anguish of perceivedness' will be discussed in detail later in this section. Therefore, whenever he confronts an eye he destroys it or covers it in order to escape the 'anguish of perceivedness'. That is why he removes his cat and dog, covers his fish in the fishbowl, his parrot and his mirror, and tears the picture of the face of God hung on the wall. He also tears up the photos that portray the period of his childhood to the present, including a photo of his mother holding him in her arms with "her severe eyes devouring him" (1990, p.333).

The third part of the film, which is in the room, we mainly confront O's perception. However, at the time when he falls asleep on the rocking chair; the camera (E) begins to explore the room and suddenly faces O. This is the first time the audiences see O's face. It is the same face in the picture that he tore, the old face with one black eye patch. O is quite shocked when he is faced with E. It is the same reaction that other observers showed when confronting E on the street and on the stairs. In fact, this is the time we find out that E is the same O, his self. E is standing under the nail that used to hold the picture of the face of God, which was torn up by O. Such a shot of E standing under the nail implies the idea that E, the self, could be an image of God, and O is shocked by its confrontation. According to Ruth Perlmutter:

> O is looking at his double, E, who stands under the nail that has impaled the archaic illustration of God. With this iconic reference to Christ's stigmata, Beckett links Christian belief with all divine perception. The substitution of E for God implies that the real source of belief resides in one's self-image and thus, in the meeting of subject and object, the self with itself. (1977, p. 84)

In consequence, one may infer that the confrontation of O and E is in fact the confrontation of man and God. In other words, this is the image of God which manifests in the self, and in *Film*, Beckett calls it E. E wishes to look at O and perceive it but O wishes to cloud this look and prevent the perception. Beckett, by showing a cloudy and blurred relationship of E and O tries to imply the clouded relationship of man and God or man and his self.

There is another important aspect regarding the man and God or man and self relationship. Why is O afraid of a transparent relationship? Why does he try to cover those eyes? What is this "agony of perceivedness?" (1990, p.325) And, why does he panic when he confronts the self, an image of God, and perceives it? Is it because it brings with it the image of death and that's why O checks his pulse twice during the play? Anthony Uhlmann believes, "Watching *Film,* we are made aware that the process of understanding, or being confronted by agony, is not an everyday process; rather, it seems to be a limit experience, linked with an intuition of an end to being" (2008, p.100). On that account, one implication of the idea of the 'agony of perceivedness' could refer to our fear of confronting death and the idea of losing the self. Another

implication is mentioned by Fox: "the condition of suffering, merging the physical and the psychological, . . . is what Beckett has called the 'anguish' and 'agony of perceivedness'" (2002, p.365). In fact, the idea of 'the condition of suffering, merging the physical and the psychological' is what is implied in Albert Camus' definition of nausea and the absurd.

Camus in his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, has referred to the concept of the absurd as a discomfort, "nausea", that exists in the midst of humanity and he or she has to deal with it:

> At certain moments of lucidity, the mechanical aspect of their [human] gestures, their meaningless pantomime makes silly everything that surrounds them. A man is talking on the telephone behind a glass partition; you cannot hear him, but you see his incomprehensible dumb show: you wonder why he is alive. This discomfort in the face of man's own inhumanity, this incalculable tumble before the image of what we are, this "nausea," . . . is . . . the absurd. (1955, p.15)

 In his definition, it is implied that "man" has such a difficult time merging his physical appearance, "his incomprehensible dumb show", with his mind or his psyche, ergo, he suffers for that reason. As a matter of fact, Camus' idea of "discomfort in the face of man's own inhumanity" is the same as Beckett's idea of 'agony of perceivedness'. Such an 'agony' or a 'discomfort' is what Camus refers to as absurd. Thus, the 'agony of perceivedness' refers to the tormenting and absurd moment of the confrontation of man and his self.

In fact, Beckett's *Film*, exposes the moment of confronting the 'man's own inhumanity'. The shocking image of the couple on the street and the collapse of the old woman with the flower on the stairs are instances of this moment. However, it remains to be discussed how Beckett manages to show such moments of life on the screen and the techniques that help him. In the following paragraphs I will offer a minimalist reading of Beckett's *Film* and illustrate how minimalist techniques helped him show such a delicate image of life to the audiences. In order to clarify the subject, the study will compare minimalist ideas of Patrick Roegiers regarding the notion of gaze and looking to those of Beckett.

Film opens with a close up of an eye, implying the idea of gaze, as if there is someone gazing at us. Then we have the camera (E), another notion of the eye, exploring the environment, as if searching for something. According to Brater, "the quest in this case is a visual metaphor for the character's ambivalence about recognizing his own authentic 'I'" (1987, p. 20). Beckett refers to this search as, "search of non-being in flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception" (1990, p.323). In other words, E is searching for a 'non-being' in order to perceive it while the 'non-being' is always in flight. That is why Beckett provides E with O as the former tries to perceive the latter, but O does not like to be perceived and tries to escape the situation. From now on E's main concern becomes pursuing O and getting close to it in order to perceive it and O's concern would be running away from E in order to escape from being perceived. The idea of looking at someone or something or gazing at it in order to perceive it is what Patrick Roegiers utilizes in *Beau Regard*

as his main subject. Patrick Roegiers's novel, *Beau Regard*, is the story of a man, Ange, who is invited to dinner by someone whom he barely knows. He also has no idea about the other people invited to the dinner. They all, along with the host, Ross, seem to be the kind of people that do not like to make conversation for the other people around to know them. Their names or the words they utter are not enough for them to find out about each other. Roegiers insists on this situation right at the beginning of his novel:

> From the outset, Ross had seemed to me to be a rather unattractive person. Yet I didn't know him, had never seen him, and everything that I knew about him could be said in a few words. . . . Just as I knew nothing of him, so he knew nothing of me. He didn't even know my name. He was unaware that my name was Ange, and no indication would allow him to guess it. (1990, p. 9)

In such a situation, Ange, in order to get to know about the people at the dinner, decides just to look at them and gaze through them. As Warren Motte puts it, "at Ross's dinner, he [Ange] will function as a largely disembodied gaze, observing and reporting the evening's events" (1999, p.125).
They all stared rigidly in front of themselves, casting furtive, oblique glances on each other, their gazes never crossing. When one of them asked a question, the others didn't answer or turned their heads away. . . . Any relation mediated by words seeming to me to be a manner of complicity, I had thus decided to affirm the irreducible strangeness of my silence. (Roegiers 1990, pp. 9-10)

Ange's decision on not speaking and just observing reflects Roegiers's minimalist style. In fact, Roegiers removes the element of speech from his narrative and lessens the narrative process only to observing. Such a minimalist feature of lessening and reduction that manifests in the narrative economy of *Beau Regard* gives birth to a more effective discourse. The reader of *Beau Regard* faces the silence of Ross and other characters and as Ange wonders about their silence the reader also wonders about their wordless world. Motte brings to light Roegiers's instructive manner in limiting his narrative just to looking, "as he [Ange] substitutes the gaze in place of spoken language his gesture (like Ross's immobility) encodes a set of reading instructions directed toward us [readers]: 'by the soul act of reading I [Ange] compensated thus for the desire I had to hear not only that which was not said but even more that which is never said'."

In other words, Roegiers's minimalist style that removes speech and substitutes looking as the new way of conversation between the characters, manages to epitomize things which are beyond description. Ange's gaze functions as a video camera that records things closely in order to play them back. This is the observer's job to interpret the play-backs. Motte mentions, "Ange is interested in the *what* of experience rather than the *why*" (1990, pp.128, 131). The minimalist style of *Beau Regard* never provides the missing answers. The reader who is exposed to only the 'whats' tries to find answers for the 'whys'. Moreover the process of answering the 'whys', which is in fact the instructing process, is gained through a minimalist technique. Ange's gaze provides him with a closer look at his object. In such a focus, the ordinary things that

usually escaped our observation turn to be the subject of our interest. Most of the time we miss the essence of the people around us because the usual extraneous information like their name, age, job etc. which we normally focus on, would obscure that essence. In other words, gaze turns the familiar into unfamiliar and in this manner, makes us interested in the subject. This is a minimalist technique which reminds us of the principle of immediacy of encounter. According to Motte such technique draws our attention to small things; "minimalism plays abundantly on our conventions of perception and interpretation, questions our categories of dimension and significance, and encourages us to 'see' our surroundings in different ways" (1990, p.131).

At this point it is necessary to indicate the similarity of Beckett's camera (E) in *Film* to Ange's gaze in *Beau Regard*. Both E and Ange's gazes tried to record their surroundings without asking any 'whys'. This means that the observer of *Film*, like that of *Beau Regard*, finds himself in the same position of the camera; the position where he can record in order to play back. The only difference is that the audiences are allowed to interpret the recordings whereas the camera (E) or Ange is not allowed to do so. Therefore, the audiences of *Film* can have the opportunity to have a closer look at objects that the camera (E) is recording, which is mainly O. In other words, according to the principles of minimalism, having a closer look turns O into something unfamiliar in the eyes of the audiences who in fact function like the eye of the camera (E). Like this, Beckett manages to give us the same role of the camera (E) but with a difference that we can interpret our recordings. It is necessary to remember that the camera (E) is O's self; Beckett has sundered the protagonist into E and O. So if the audiences can play the role of E they can also play the role of O because they are in fact the same. As a result, the audiences of *Film* are sundered into two parts: the self and the object. Beckett manages to separate his audiences' self and through his minimalist style give them the opportunity to have a closer look at themselves without self. Such a condition is definitely tormenting as it was for O. Moreover, the situation is shocking for the audiences when they confront their self at the same time O confronts his self at the end of the film. Such a play that provides the audience with such a rare confrontation may give them the great chance to know their self and existence.

To conclude, the audiences of *Film* who feel the separation of their self feel the same "agony of perceivedness" (1990, p.325) that O suffers from. Anthony Uhlmann comments on this unpleasant condition: "It is clear, however, that a consciousness of perceivedness and the consciousness of being it implies is such an uncommon and an uncommonly unpleasant sensation that it brings with it a threat of death or non-being. . . . The question as to whether it can ever be escaped remains, as is typical of Beckett, unanswerable" (2008, p.101). With regard to my earlier discussion of the relation of the 'agony of perceivedness' and absurd, such an insight could be the source of the absurd as long as the audience faces the unpleasant aspect of his existence, which is also an inescapable part of life. The observer of *Film* cannot escape the uneasiness of being perceived and this is tormenting as well as absurd. Moreover, as Uhlmann points out, the audiences cannot find any solution for such uneasiness in the text, which implies its minimalist style.

In *Film*, through Beckett's technological mind the place of a speaking narrator is substituted with a mechanical device, the camera, which exposes the audience to a show in which they experience the role of the protagonist. That is to say, they feel their self is separated from them. Such a technique resembles Roegiers's minimalism in limiting the conversation to only looking without uttering any words. This time Beckett's minimalist style manifests in his technological mind. He substitutes human narrative with a mechanical narrative, the camera. In this manner, he lessens the role of the narrative, which usually talks and observes, to only observing. In *Film*, the mechanical narrative, the camera (E), only observes the events without uttering a single word. This represents Beckett's minimalist style in the application of mechanical devices.

film-making industry. However, as the study will explain, we will see that Beckett has used this film-making technique in his screenplay in order to increase the influence of his play on the audiences. It will also illustrate its relation to minimalism followed by the discussion of the relationship between this technique and the idea of the absurd.

In the world of film-making there are different kinds of cuts and each one serves a particular purpose. For example, there is a kind of cut called 'jump cut'. The technique was first used by Jean-Luc Godard in his *Breathless*. This technique is often used loosely but its primary meaning is this: "when two shots of the same subject are cut together but are not sufficiently different in camera distance and angle, there will be a noticeable jump on the screen. . . . Far from flowing unnoticeably, such cuts are very visible, and they disorient the spectator" (Bordwell 2008, p. 254). The kind of cut that I am going to discuss is not necessarily jump cut, although, its effect on the audiences is the same as the effect of jump cut; it confuses the audience. Moreover, such confusion may compel the audience to stay alert and look for what he has missed during the jumps. For example, in Bill Bennett's road movie *Kiss or Kill*, the jump cuts played a prominent role in keeping the audience's interest in following the story. According to Andrew M. Butler, "Bill Bennett's road movie *Kiss or Kill* (1997), in which both of the protagonists think their partner is guilty of a string of brutal murders, is made more paranoiac by its use of jump cuts. Because we are aware we have not seen everything, we begin to imagine what we might have missed" (2005, p. 27). In other words, such a technique removes some parts of the story from the eyes of the beholder. He or she has to search for the missing parts and this helps to keep the observer interested in the story. So one may refer to the technique of cut as a minimalist technique in film-making which favors the principles of theatricality and playful spirit. It removes some parts of the process and compels the observer to search for it, ergo, keeps him or her intellectually engaged with the process. The following paragraphs explain how Beckett's play benefits from the technique of cut in its way of instructing the audiences.

In *Film*, Beckett utilizes the technique of cut for the same purpose: keeping the audiences interested in following the story. For example in Alan Schneider's 1965 production of *Film*, in the scenes where the couple and the old woman catch sight of E, the audiences never get the chance to see E. They only see the other characters'

faces and their state of shock. In fact, Beckett has cut the shot of E's face and keeps it obscure till the ending. In this fashion, Beckett creates a sense of longing in his audiences to see what the couple and the old woman have seen. However, at the ending where the audiences as well as O finally confront E, the moment would be very exciting especially to the audiences because of their thirst to fulfill that sense of longing created through the minimalist technique of cut. The final exposure is the moment we experience the 'agony of perceivedness' or face our "own inhumanity" (Camus 1955, p. 13) along with O and its implied absurd feeling. Therefore, the minimalist technique of cut helps elevate the impact of the final moment of the film on the audiences. Moreover, the final moment of *Film* is more exciting and more influential because we are less exposed to the details of E's face; Beckett has removed the required information that will feed our longing to find out about E's identity. This is what is called the paradox of minimalism; 'less is more.'

Samuel Beckett's minimalist application of media technology in *Film* manages to expose the most inexplicable moments of human life; the moment of confronting the self, the agony of the situation, and the absurdity about it. As the matter of fact in *Film*, Beckett seems to give some 'answers', but they are very difficult answers to accept and confront. Nevertheless, if we approach them with a minimalist point of view, as the above study has tried to do, we may achieve a more transparent vision of such plays: plays which give us room for interpretation and to predict what could happen next.

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Endnotes

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