

Hearing , Seeing and Acting: A Peircean- Semiotic Perspective, on Samuel Beckett's Acts Without Words I

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Abstract

Samuel Beckett's, *Act Without Words* (henceforth, **AWWI**), is one of the few slighted works in the Beckett canon. Often ignored, the play generally did not fare well even with those critics who do treat it. Ruby Cohn(1962:247) dismisses the work as '**almost too explicit,**' and Ihab Hassan(1967:192) notes that the play seems '**a little too obvious and pat.**' John Fletcher and John Spurling (1972:118) concur: "**compared to *Godot*, '*Act Without Words I* is . . . over-explicit, over-emphasized and even, unless redeemed by its performer, so unparticularized as to verge on the banal."**

Then, **AWWI's** directness (signs , e.g. cubes, rope, scissors , carafe, man, hands, sun , desert, dazzling light, whistle etc.) is almost a source of embarrassment for critics and has prompted some forced interpretation. Martin Esslin(1964:38) argues that the protagonist is '**drawn to the pursuit of illusory objectives . . .**' Ruby Cohn (1962:247) echoes the view, suggesting that the '**sustenance and tools are man's own invention, and his frustration the result of the impossibility of ever being able to reach what may be a mirage.**' But the objects certainly seem substantial. The protagonist stands on the cubes and engages in a tug-of-war with a force outside himself, presumably the same force which threw him on stage . The scissors and rope may be man's own inventions, but they are nonetheless real; if they were not, the exterior force would have little reason to confiscate them.

1.Introduction

Human interaction in a communication process represents both a highly interesting topic for scientific study and a challenge to any researcher. Anyone who wants to explore the process as a whole or to study some aspects of it, from the very first, must realize that people engaged in conversation use as a rule not one but many sign systems simultaneously. Of course, spoken utterances are given a sort of a privileged status in the hierarchy of attention, and communication participants virtually always treat them as if deliberately meant. Nonetheless, various aspects of individual's speech manner, appearance and nonverbal behaviour, play also a crucial role in any interactive process.

Accordingly, semiotics is an interdisciplinary field of research and Beckett's theatre is one which engages a large spectrum of subjects and concerns that touch upon multiple aspects of human experience. Peirce's semiotics (cf.1955; 1958) is not a detached, independent element of his philosophy, but interpenetrates and is interpenetrated by his thoughts as a whole. Peirce(Ibid.) held that all thoughts, indeed, all experiences are by signs; his theory of signs, then, is a theory of experience; a theory of consciousness.

And, Beckett's dramatic texts are a fertile ground for a semiotic investigation that is orchestrated by the profound insights of Charles Sander Peirce. As it applies semiotics to Beckett's play, this research seeks to preserve, communicate and throw into relief those universal values in the playwright's **AWWI**. What this research will hopefully contribute, is its study of Beckett's dramatic text, **AWWI**, not as a model of the **absurd tradition**, but rather as a cultural product.

2. What is Semiotics ?

Semiotics is the study of signs and signifying practices. Although it is most usually referred to in the context of linguistics,

its scope is much wider and its techniques can be applied across any system in which an underlying symbolic structure is believed to exist . Linguistics is usually seen as the mother discipline with semiotics as one of its children, whereas, in fact, linguistics is just one branch of semiotics (Chandler, 2007: 18). Linguistics is the examination of the signifying structures that form the basis of language, (this should not be mistaken for semantics, the examination of meaning).

Although semiotics has been around in many different guises for hundreds of years (it was first observed in reference to medical diagnoses(Chandler, 2007: 15), it does not take shape in its current incarnation until the turn of the 20th century , when two theorists both developed theories in isolation. Ferdinand De Saussure(1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce(1839-1914) both developed influential theories concerning the analysis of sign systems but their subject- matter was different. Saussure, who is credited as the father of modern linguistics, was interested in linguistics and literature. Peirce didn't have as a narrow focus as that and instead was more interested in semiotics as a universal science that could be applied to all signifying systems. He did, however, have a particular interest in *iconicity*, the power to signify through resemblance, which makes his theory a better foundation from which to launch any investigation into modes of visual communication.

Therefore, signs do not exist alone, but belong to sign systems or function according to rules or conventions: something general and shared . It is necessary for signs to have functions. Semiotics studies the systematic aspects in sign functioning ("language ", grammar, structures, codes, conventions, etc.) .Texts (any text) use several semiotic modalities: language, visuality, voice and music .This means that , a sign is made up of a *signifier* and a *signified* . For example, a flag with green words on red, white and black

background = Iraq. It *denotes* (Iraqis) and *connotes* (freedom, homeland, motherland, fatherland, etc). A sign must have significance, but it needs to denote thing .

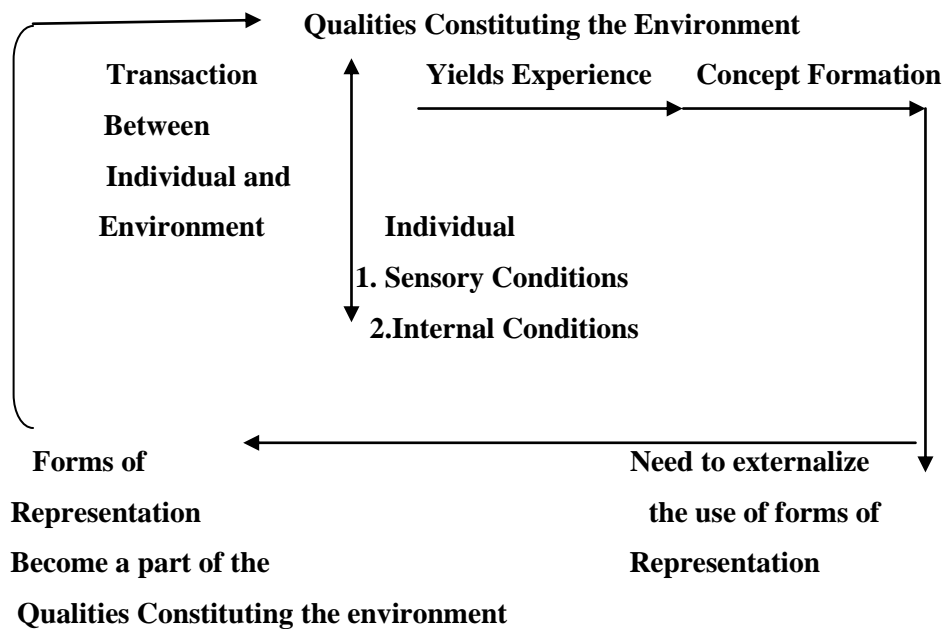
Semiotics, then, as the study of texts ; of their composition, functions and structures, study the use and effects of signs and sign systems. Signs and texts are entities that function; stand for, represent something, and are interpreted. Semiotics studies how signs, texts, and sign systems are used . And what effects they produce. Semiotics is the study of the production of meaning or of signification. So, signs and texts are used to convey thoughts, emotions, values, propositions on states of affairs and semiotics studies how signs and texts determine and shape this process.

3. Defining Semiotics: A Work in Process

If we take the above information into consideration and think of a metaphor that might be used to complete the sentence, "**An Iraqi person is . . .**," how would this answer vary if we are not Iraqi ? If we have never been to Iraq ? Then, our experience of the world and in the world shapes the signs we create:

Cunningham (1992:170) defines semiotics as "**the doctrine that our knowledge of the things in the world is mediated by signs, that we build up structures of signs through experience and these structures define what we take as reality.**" Eco (1984: 25) brings in a third key to understand semiotics. He maintains that culture plays a very important part in how signs are used? And, he says, semiotics is "**coextensive with the whole range of cultural phenomena, however pretentious that approach may seem.**" This third-order signification is a matter of the cultural meanings of signs. These cultural meanings derive not from the sign itself, but from the way that society uses and values the signifier and the signified. We draw meanings from the stock of images, notions, concepts and myths which are already available in the culture in a

particular context and at a particular time. Eisner (1994 : 46) describes the way humans use "forms of representation" in the following diagram :



In brief, Eisner (Ibid.) says that sensory conditions and internal conditions lead to experiences of our environment that create concepts we want to communicate to others. Depending on a variety of factors, we choose forms of representation that are both individually and culturally determined to facilitate that communication. In turn, a painting, book, an idea ,etc. become part of the environment and the cycle begins again.

4. Origins of Semiotics

Language, as a system, both correlates signs in sets and coordinates the rules which permit meaningful use and consumption of these signs. Such correlations can be broken down into three types that we are familiar with in our own language: *syntax*, the formal/structural relations between signs - we might call this the grammar of form, or how things are constituted; *semantics*, the

relation between that which represents and the object to be represented - the way things are conveyed or recognized in the act of interpreting (therefore pointing to the system that we know as sign); and *pragmatics*, or the functional relations of signs within the language to the user/consumer(Fisch,1986: 17). The semiotic model of sign allows us to put these three components in a logical perspective: the three are not actually separate but interdependent in a hierarchical fashion. When we realize their correct relation we achieve what we call in language 'appropriateness'. Thus, the *syntactic* level is the easiest to identify and control, whereas the *pragmatic* is the most difficult,(See **Figure No.1**):

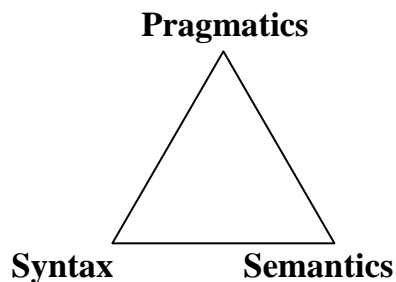


Figure No.(1) : The Three Areas of Semiotics

A **Text** is an assemblage of signs such as words(the descriptions of the actions, **AWWI**) ,images (scissors, cubes, rope, carafe etc., **AWWI**) , sounds (whistle), and gestures(**AWWI**), constructed (and interpreted) with reference to the conventions associated with a genre and in a particular medium of communication(Ibid.). Text usually refers to a message, which has been recorded in some way (e.g., writing, audio- and video-recording) so that it is physically independent of its sender or receiver.

Henceforth, semiotics is defined as the general study of symbolic systems, including language. Ferdinand de Saussure (1966 : 65) suggests that language is not a way of naming things but a system of signs. Signs are arbitrary, but meanings are not: society alone can create a linguistic system, and therefore "**the community is necessary if values that owe their existence solely**

to usage and general acceptance are to be set up." Saussure says that words have no inherent meanings but , only in their relation to others, through their **difference**. Semiotics is, therefore, about the *construction* of meaning.

One of the most expert and elegant practitioners of semiology is the French philosopher, Roland Barthes. He (1964: 41) extends Saussure to include *images* and *practices*.

By a "**sign**" Charles Sander Peirce (cf.1955;1958) means, broadly speaking, anything capable of standing to somebody for something in some respect. There is , thus , an irreducible triadic relation among the sign, its object, and the somebody to whom the sign stands for . To stand in this relation to somebody is to be subject to interpretation in this person's mind, and this process of interpretation, Peirce held, is the creation in the interpreter's mind of a new sign, which Peirce labels the "interpretant" of the original sign. In addition , Peirce (1955:100) finds semiotic features in all human thinking: "**every thought is a sign. Everything in which we take the least interest creates in us its own particular emotion, however slight this may be, this emotion is a sign and a predicate of the thing**" .

4.1. Two Schools for Semiotics

Accordingly , and as we mentioned earlier, we can infer that, there are two major traditions in modern semiotic theory. One branch is grounded in a European tradition and was led by the Swiss-French linguist **Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)**. The other branch emerged out of American pragmatic philosophy by its primary founder, **Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)**. Saussure sought to explain how all elements of a language are taken as components of a larger system of language in use. This led to a formal discipline which he called semiology. Peirce's interest in logical reasoning led him to investigate different categories of signs and the manner by which we extract meaning from them.

Independently, Saussure and Peirce worked to better understand the triadic relationship between physical signs, the objects to which they refer, and the human interpreter. Both schools believe that semiotics is divided into three areas (See **Figure No. 1**): **syntax**, or the abstract study of the signs and their interrelations; **semantics**, or the study of the relation between the signs and those objects to which they apply; and **pragmatics**, or the relationship between users and the system.

4.1.1. Ferdinand de Saussure's Vision of Semiology

It is he who laid the foundation stone of semiology. It is he in fact who coined the term (which he developed from a Greek word (Chandler,2007: 19). Saussure (1993:33) uses the word to describe a new science which he sees as "**a science which studies the life of signs at the heart of social life**". This new science, he says, would teach us "**what signs consist of, what laws govern them**". As he saw it, linguistics would be but a part of the overarching science of semiology, which would not limit itself to verbal signs only.

The smallest unit of analysis in Saussure's semiology is the *sign* made up of a *signifier* or sensory pattern, and a *signified*, the concept that is elicited in the mind by the signifier,(See**Figure No.2**) :

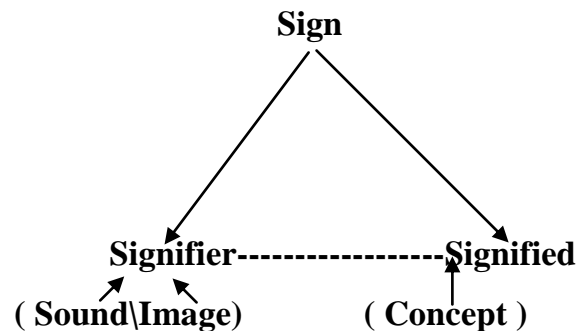


Figure No.(2): The Saussurean Sign

Saussure emphasizes that the signifier does not constitute a sign until it is interpreted. He recognizes the arbitrary association between a word and what it stands for. Word selection becomes a

matter, not of identity, but of difference. Differences carry signification. A sign is what all other signs are not (Saussure ,1993:33). He makes what is now a famous distinction between language and speech. **Language** refers to the system of rules and conventions which is independent of, and pre-exists, individual users; **Speech** refers to its use in particular instances. Applying the notion to semiotic systems in general rather than simply to language, the distinction is one between code and message, structure and event or system and usage (in specific texts or contexts). According to the Saussurean distinction, in a semiotic system such as theatre, any specific play is the speech of that underlying system of theatre language(Aston & Savano , 1991: 66).

To elaborate, Swiss linguist **Ferdinand de Saussure**(1993:8) postulates the existence of this general science of signs, or semiology, of which linguistics forms only one part. Semiology, therefore, aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification.

4.1.2. C. S. Peirce's Semiotics : Language of a Language

Charles Sanders Peirce shares the Saussurian observation that most signs are symbolic and arbitrary, but he calls attention to iconic signs that physically resemble their referent and indexical signs that possess a logical connection to their referent (Peirce,1955:98-104). To Peirce, the relationship of the sign to the object is made in the mind of the interpreter is a mental tool that Peirce calls the interpretant. As Peirce describes it, semiosis (the process of sign interpretation) is an iterative process involving multiple inferences. The signifier elicits in the mind an interpretant which is not the final signified object, but a mediating thought that promotes understanding, (See **Figure No. 3**):

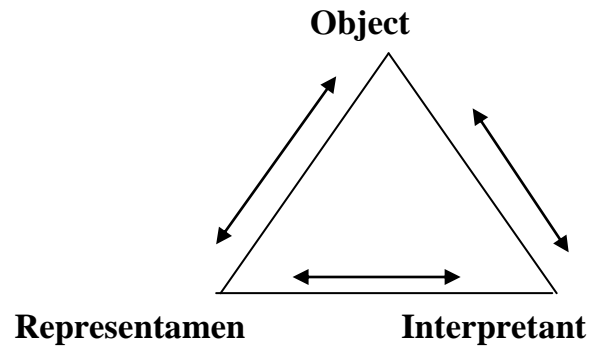


Figure (No. 3): The Peircean *Semiosis*

In other words, a thought is a sign requiring interpretation by a subsequent thought in order to achieve meaning. This mediating thought might be a schema, a mental model, or a recollection of prior experience that enables the subject to move forward toward understanding. That is to say that Peirce conceives the sign as an element in a signifying process. He (cf.1955; 1958) defines a sign as a relation among three entities, the sign itself, the referent of the sign, and the meaning that is derived from the sign. Peirce's concern is how meaning is derived from a sign and transformed into another sign. He operates with a three-sided, or a triadic concept of sign, which he Peirce (1955) postulates as:

A sign, or *representamen*, is something that stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea(P. 99).

He(Ibid.) distinguishes between the physical entity, for example words, the ideas that these words refer to, and the meaning one derives from the words. Peirce's concept of a sign is represented as

a triangle, as shown in **Figure No.(3)** . The representamen is that which represents the sign, often in the form of a physical entity or at least manifested in some form. The representamen represents an object. Peirce (1955) states about the object that:

The Objects –...– may each be a single known existing thing or thing believed formerly to have existed or expected to exist, or a collection of such things, or a known quality or relation or fact,..., or whole of parts, or it may have some mode of being, ... or something of a general nature desired, required, or invariably found under certain general circumstances(101).

The object is '**that with which ... [the sign] presupposes an acquaintance in order to convey some further information concerning it'** (Peirce, 1955: 100). The object should be understood as the background knowledge that one needs to understand the sign, or the range of possible meaningful statements that could be made about the sign. The representamen could be any item that represents or stands for something else – Peirce's notion of signs is not limited to words or language. The connection is between the representamen and its object that is made by the interpretant, which is the third entity in the sign relation. The person who interprets the sign makes a connection between what he or she sees(which is the **representamen**) and his or her background knowledge (which is the **object**) and thereby creates an understanding or meaning of the sign (which is the **interpretant**). This process is called semiosis, the act of interpreting signs. This is known as a process of semiosis which is emphasised in the Y-leg model of the sign in **Figure No. (4)**:

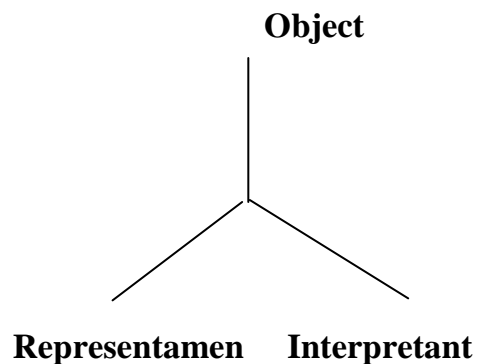


Figure No.(4): The Y-Leg Model (adopted from Larsen,1993:155)

4.1.2.1 Categories of signs

Peirce (1955: 101) divides signs into a number of categories to illustrate their different kinds. One set of sign categories commonly associated with his work consisted of icon, index and symbol. This approach of categorisation grouped signs is made on the basis of their relation to their referent and object. In this respect, an icon sign is based on resemblance (like the sign on a bathroom door), an index sign points to what the sign refers to (like smoke to a fire) and a symbol sign refers to a convention (like language). The categorisation into **icon**, **index**, and **symbol** is a simple representation of Peirce’s full categorisation of signs,(See **Figure No. 5**) :

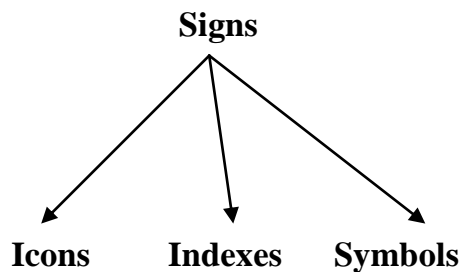


Figure No. (5) : Categories of signs

Icons are direct' representations based on likeness (such as images, maps). Because an iconic representation only gives one

view ; it is the weakest type. The interpreter does not have to be informed. But, perhaps for these reasons the iconic representation tends to be the most commonly used. Put in other words , Icons are signs whose signifier bears a close resemblance to the thing they refer to(Barthes,1994: 70). Thus, a photograph of me can be said to be highly iconic, because it looks like me. A road sign showing the silhouette of a car and a motorbike is highly iconic because the silhouettes look like a motorbike and a car. A very few words (so-called onomatopoeic words) are iconic, too, such as *whisper, cuckoo, splash, crash* ,i.e. **Icon : Having meaning based on similarity:**

e.g. A picture of a man (AWWI).

Indexes are 'indirect' representations. They point to or are the physical mark left by the object (such as smoke for fire, a finger print, colored leaves, the indent on a tool handle). Indexical signs, by the way, are the most interesting of all three ,because of the conceptual leap one's mind has to make, which makes one more actively involved in the sign. In a sense, indexes lie between icons and symbols. An index is a sign whose signifier we have learnt to associate with a particular signified(Danesi,2007:35). For example, if we see someone walking down the street with a rolling gait, we may associate the rolling gate with the concept of 'sailor'. We may see smoke as an index of 'fire'. A thermometer is an index of 'temperature', i.e, **Index: Having meaning based on cause-and-effect relationships:**

e.g. Hands of a man (AWWI).

Symbols are 'abstract' representations based on agreement or a convention(Seboek,1994: 54) . For example the color red for danger, the number one for first, the cross for Christianity, a flag for a country, words. Some are more easily accepted than others. In different environments with different conventions there is a need for different symbols. Thus, most words are symbolic signs. We have

agreed that they all mean what they mean and there is no natural relationship between them and their meanings; between the signifier and the signified, i.e. **Symbol: Given meaning by convention (completely arbitrary)**:

e.g. The word 'man' (AWWI)

5. The Semiotic Interpretation of AWWI: A Peircea Perspective

5.1.Theatre as a Sign System

Theatre communicates through a system of signs, a fact that all semiotic theorists agree upon (Elam 1980, Fischer-Lichte 1992). All of the actions and other elements included in the play can be divided into three components: an object, a representamen and the interpretant, (See **Figure No. 6**):

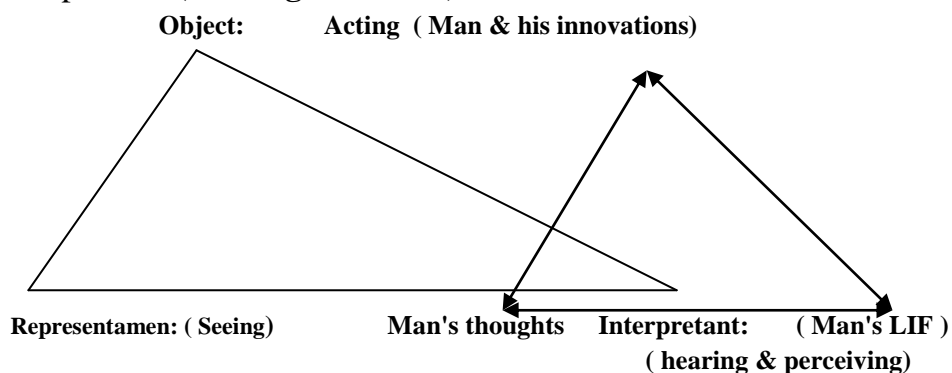


Figure (No. 6): AWWI as a Peircean Semioses

Therefore , the actions and elements have a semiotic nature and should be interpreted in this way. According to some semioticians; Alter(1990: 30) argues that" **an actor's or object's presence on a stage is enough to turn him/it into a sign**"; Carison(1990 : 47), another theorist, states that "**objects have other qualities when they appear on stage than they ordinarily possess**". So, the stage transforms the objects into signs, and the everyday function is repressed in favour of other significant functions in the play. The movement of waving away some irritating flies in ordinary life is transformed into a gestural, indexical sign, on the theatre stage, signifying the presence of flies in the room the stage represents.

Another interesting aspect of the theatrical system of signs is that an object or a movement can be transformed into a sign without being materially altered. A theatrical sign is also polyfunctional; a sign can signify another sign, so the semiotic function can be changed. A chair that one moment signifies a chair, the next moment can signify a mountain, a stair, a sword, and so on. Finally, there is the mobile aspect of the theatrical sign, which means that a word can be a substitute for decor, props can be replaced by gestures. In the theatrical system of signs, a sign can replace signs from any other system (Ibid.).

That is why it is assumed that theatre does not make use of the signs in their original function, i.e., does not put them to the purpose for which they are generated by the respective cultural systems. The theatrical system of signs is composed of representative actions executed in a situation with an emphasised function of objects to be observed (Helbo, et al, 1991:76). Then, the fictional creation of space and time is also central in theatre. Hence, the theatrical sign, which can be manifested as any one of Peirce's types, has the characteristics that, there can be a sign of sign relation; it is polyfunctional and mobile. Theatrical signs can in principle be materially identical with the signs they are meant to signify. Fischer-Lichte (1992: 131) states that "**The transformations of an object into a theatrical sign ... can occur without any alterations to its material nature**" (Ibid.:130). Furthermore, theatrical signs show "**mobility**", i.e. **they are mutually substitutable because of their polyfunctionality**" (Ibid.:131). Yet, theatrical sign must, at least at the level of the system they form, be classified exclusively as iconic signs (Ibid.:15), besides "**In theatre, ..., I can, in principle, use any one sign instead of another.**" (Fischer-Lichte 1992: 131).

5.2. Act Without Words I : A Peircean Semoitics

Consequently, **AWWI** is one of the many Beckett texts where a subject is being presented or haunted by signs that are supposed to be one of the author's own voices or linguistic consciousnesses, (See **Table No. 1**):

Table No. (1) : Sign Categories in AWWI

Icons		Indexes		Symboles		Total	
No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
23	39,655%	7	12,068%	28	48,275%	58,9	100%

The action takes place in "**Desert, AWWI**"(an icon + symbolic sign) illuminated by a "**dazzling light, AWWI**" (an indexical + symbolic sign). The cast consists of just one man," **He reflects, goes out right, and, Immediately flung back on stage he falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself off, turns aside, reflects, AWWI**",(an icon + indexical +symbolic sign) meaning : human-being as a whole ,who is thrown on stage(a symbolic sign for birth)at the start of the play and is thrown back(a symbolic sign for death) at each attempt he tries to make an exit (a symbolic sign for salvation). The main action(an iconic + indexical + symbolic sign) is of the man trying to reach a small carafe of water(**A tiny carafe, to which is attached a huge label inscribed WATER, descends from, flies to, some three yards from ground where it remains dangling , AWWI**, (an iconic + indexical + symbolic sign for life) which is always just out of reach(a symbolic sign for life's difficulties)suspended from the flies of the theatre. Cubes (**A big cube descends from flies, lands, A second smaller cube descends from flies, lands, A third still smaller cube descends from flies, lands. AWWI**, iconic signs) are lowered onto the stage, which he climbs upon (**He looks up, sees carafe, reflects, gets up, goes and stands under it, tries in vain to reach it, renounces, turns aside, reflects, AWWI**,(once again symbolic signs for life's difficulties) to reach the water, but the carafe ascends , so it remains slightly out of reach.

Later, a knotted rope(**He turns, sees rope, reflects, goes to it, climbs up it and is about to reach carafe when rope is let out and deposits him back on the ground ,AWWI** , (an iconic + indexical + symbolic signs for life's difficulties) descends, which the man tries to climb up(symbolic sign) but it is lets out(symbolic

sign for life) and he ends up back on the ground(indexical+ symbolic sign for death).

After much harassment(indexical + symbolic signs for living life) he attempts to slash his throat with a pair of scissors (**He looks at his hands, looks around for scissors, sees them, goes and picks them up, starts to trim his nails, stops, reflects, runs his finger along blade of scissors, goes and lays them on small cube, turns aside, opens his collar, frees his neck and fingers it, AWWI** , (an iconic + indexical + symbolic sign for living) that are lowered to him, only to find that they have just floated away with a cube. Eventually, he seems to give up, and sits on one of the cubes (**He goes and sits down on big cube. AWWI**, (a symbolic sign for despair). After a while, this is pulled up from beneath him, and he is left on the ground at the end of the play (**The big cube is pulled from under him. He falls. The big cube is pulled up and disappears in flies, He remains lying on his side, his face toward auditorium, staring before him, The carafe descends from flies and comes to rest a few feet from his body, He does not move, AWWI) , and (**He looks at his hands, AWWI**), (See **Table No. 2**):**

Table No. (2) :Icons , Indexes and Symbols in AWW I

Icons	Indexes	Symdols
1 Desert	1 Dazzling light	1 Desert
2 The Man	2 The Man	2 The Man
3 A little Tree	3 Whistle (14 times)	3 Dazzling light
4 A ingle bough (5 times)	4 Lands	4 Whistle(14 times)
5 A circle of Shadow	5 A circle of Shadow	5 Flies
6 Shadow (3 times	6 Shadow (3 times)	6 Shadow
7 Palms	7 His hands(3 times)	7 His hands
8 His hands(3 times)		8 Flung (3 times)
9 Tailor's scissors (9times)		9 Falls (7 times
10 His nails (3times)		10 Gets up (9 times)
11 Palms close like parasol		11 Turns aside (7 times)

12	Tiny carafe (13 times)			12	Dusts himself off (3 times)
13	WATER(with capital letters)			13	Reflects (27 times)
14	A big cube (3times)			14	Goes out (3 times)
15	A smaller cube (3 times)			15	Hesitates&thinks better (3 times)
16	Cubes (3 times)			16	Halts
17	A third smaller cubes(3 times)			17	Descends (7times)
18	Nots			18	Continues (7 Times)
19	Rope (9 times)			19	Turns (11times)
20	A lasso (5 times)			20	Trim
21	His face (3 times)			21	Dangling (3 times)
22	his collar			22	Disappears (7 times)
23	His neck			23	Climes
				24	Cutting
				25	Falls back
				26	Brushes himself (3times)
				27	He does not move (5 times)
				28	Looks at his hands

Apparently, the symbolic signs are the dominant ones in **AWWI**. This means that , the play is, symbolically obvious in many respects. It appears to be a behaviouristic psychological experiment within the framework of a classic myth. The protagonist (a sign that stand for : Adam, Tantalus, Everyman, Heidegger,1962:169) is thrown, forced , born into a hostile environment where he can neither have nor succeed.

What nature exists is apart from man and is alien; the curse of thistles and thorns. From the first the protagonist is a thinker, but inadequately made to deal with the hostile forces . **(He goes with lasso in his hand to tree, looks at bough, turns and looks at cubes, looks again at bough, drops lasso, goes to cubes, takes up small one, carries it over and sets it down under bough, goes back for big one, takes it up and carries it over under bough,**

makes to put it on small one, hesitates, thinks better of it, sets it down, takes up small one and puts it on big one, tests their stability, turns aside and stoops to pick up lasso, AWWI) . He is pathetic born, indeed created to fail (The rope is pulled up, lifts him off ground, he hangs on, succeeds in cutting rope, falls back on ground, drops scissors, falls, gets up again immediately, brushes himself off, reflects, AWWI , a caged rat frustrated by an inept or malicious handler .

He examines his hands (**He looks at his hands, AWWI) , his primary tool ; his prehensile thumb opposes the fingers. Armed with two natural tools, mind and hands, those tools which separate him from lower orders of animals, he tries to survive(looks around for scissors, sees them, goes and picks them up, starts to trim his nails, stops, reflects, runs his finger along blade of scissors, goes and lays them on small cube, turns aside, opens his collar, frees his neck and fingers it, AWWI) to secure some water in the desert(The carafe descends further, dangles and plays about his face, and , The carafe is pulled up and disappears in flies,AWWI). The mind works(..., thinks better of it ...), at least in part: he learns; he invents, or is given inventions—scissors, cubes, rope. But when he learns to use his tools effectively, they are confiscated (a symbolic sign : the uselessness of life) : he discovers that they might make a gallows (an iconic + indexical + symbolic sign : Death: End of life).**

So far, a rather obvious allegory: the man is punished and the offence is uncertain. G. C. Barnard(1970:67) argues that the prevalent interpretation of the ending; the protagonist does not move(**He does not move (5 times , AWWI)** because he is simply crushed: ‘. . . the man remains, defeated, having opted out of the struggle, lying on the empty desert”(**He remains lying on his side, his face toward auditorium, staring before him, AWWI**).

Besides, the play contains some anomalies that warrant investigation. This is the usual Beckett world. No words, for one.

More properly, one elemental word, **WATER**. While much has been made of the names of Beckett's characters, especially his Man, this protagonist is nameless. And he is, throughout most of the play, active and healthy. Although his progress is toward immobility, he suffers no visible physical deterioration. Here a force certainly exists outside man. Finally, the action of the man is linear and terminal. And ,at the end, the superior force defeats the inferior , rather predictable, pathetic stuff. With this climax, the play appears more traditional one. But within this obvious, traditional ending, Beckett works his consummate skill, for the real play begins with its terminus.

The climactic ending of the man may signify not a pathetic defeat, but a conscious rebellion, man's deliberate refusal to obey. Ironically then, the protagonist is most active when inert, and his life acquires meaning at its end. In this refusal , this cutting of the umbilical rope, a second birth occurs, the birth of man. The protagonist has finally acquired, earned, a name, Man. As he refuses the summons of the outside force, as he refuses to act predictably, in his own self-interest, as he refuses the struggle for the most elemental of man's needs , Man, in a frenzy of inactivity, is born. Thus man creates his own self. In his refusal to devote himself to physical existence, solely to survival and pleasure (shade, the off-stage womb), the protagonist has created a free man, a separate, individual self. Rebellion is, of course, dangerous business. The master may indeed physically destroy his rebellious slave. In the final dramatic image of **AWWI**, the moments of birth and death virtually coincide .They give birth astride of a grave(Ibid.).

In addition to such an ending , a series of brilliant visual allusions adds to the richness of the play. The protagonist's similarities to Adam & Tantalus(a symbolic sign) have already been

suggested(Heidegger,1962:170) . And this myth provides most of the dramatic framework for the play. Moreover, the playlet contains several other things. The image of man paring his nails suggests that he is an inventor and consequently an artist, a fabulous artificer. If the inventions fail, that failure is inevitable . The artistic associations of the protagonist are further reinforced the reference to tailor's scissors. The tailor is himself a craftsman, a maker, and the scissors call to mind the point , which is the imperfection of the world when compared to man's creations.

7. The Conclusion

1. In the light of the above discussion , it appears that **AWWI** is a Peircean Semiosis,i.e. it has an Object(Acting : man and his inventions), Representamen(Seeing : man's thoughts) , and Interpretant (Hearing & Perceiving : man's life).

2. The term **sign** is often used for all three of these: **icons, indexes** and **symbols**. All have a signal aspect, some physical pattern (eg, a sound or visible shape) and a meaning (some semantic content that is implied or `brought to mind') by the signal.

3. The scene is a desert in "dazzling" light. The dry, barren setting is a symbol of the emptiness and inhospitableness of the world man finds himself in, and the dazzling light corresponds to the consciousness man is forced to have of this condition, a consciousness that is both disconcerting and difficult to avoid. It is significant that the man is "flung" onto the stage .The man in **AWWI** is that of a person who finds himself thrust into a human condition that makes him thirsty and hot. He does not like the situation, but when a whistle(The whistle from above, **Whistle from right wing {14 times}**) comes to "one" who is standing, sitting, lying, or assuming some other position in the dazzling light.This whistle intends "you : Man). Already he is beginning to learn not only that he cannot escape from his existence, but also that the world he is compelled to live in is governed by forces that are beyond his control(Heidegger,1962:170).

4. **AWWI** is the text that appears to be a sort of semiotic version of its own speculations. A semiotic 'de-sign'. A designation that does not assume any essentiality or powerful thesis, but where – to use Beckett's own terms – "nothing" or "All" lies in the launching, in a rhetoric of impotence. It does this on the assumption that language is a powerful falsification, in part because it hides the conflict between concept and image in the sign. The lacking of the language is the better way to expose this oppression. According to this rational, the goal is to fail better, to be better at avoiding the pitfall of the illusion of representation, to be better at 'de-signing'. The text will fail to the extent that it is not representing, accomplishing, conveying, or sending a message in the conventional positive sense of creating meaning. Therefore, the act of continuing(**He continues to reflect (7) times**), **AWWI**) is rather than an obvious, unparticularize action about illusion or mirage, Beckett has created here one of his most compact and concrete images of the birth of man with all the ironies implicit in the coincidence of birth and death(Heidegger,1962:170).

5.In **AWWI** , Beckett presents in very simple, stylized form pictures of certain aspects of the human conditions. The first of these emphasizes the problem of man's relationship with an external world that is beyond his control and that frustrates all his efforts to make it habitable. The second concentrates on man's relationship with the internal forces that drive him and which, in spite of the fact that they are within him, are equally beyond his control . Furthermore, Samuel Beckett's acute mind pulls apart with courage the basic assumptions and beliefs by which most people live. His play can be biting and his wit devastating. He finds no escape from human tragedy in the comforts we build to shield ourselves from reality. He does develop a moral message - one which is in direct contradiction to the values of ambition, success, acquisition and security which is normally held up for admiration (Heidegger,1962:170).

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