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Minimalism in Samuel Beckett's *Breath* (1969)

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Beckettian poetics of, less is more, finds meaning in a meaningless universe where minimalism, diminution, condensation and decline are explored reducing theatrical performance to its barest elements. In his contribution to Kenneth Tynan's *Oh! Calcutta!* (1969), *Breath* (1969) acts as the Prologue of the Off-Broadway play. Beckett presents a hauntingly simple and profoundly thought-provoking play, confirming his mastery of minimalist drama. Lasting less than a minute, the play *Breath* (1969) features no characters, dialogue or conventional narrative. Rather, Beckett presents an abstract meditation on existence via sound, light and a visual composition of debris. The aim of this presentation is to focus on performance of the play, to delve into Beckettian way of evoking a profound reflection of life and its transience. Epitomized in his minimalist aesthetic, theatre is distilled to an abstract essence to powerfully convey the meaninglessness of life, decay and the passage of time aligned with the playwright's existentialist and absurdist worldview. Since human existence is insignificant in an indifferent post-war world, characters can well be non-existent on stage. There is no dialogue and narrative, as in absurd existence, communication is meaningless. The only sound is vagitus, a birth cry to symbolize pain, agony and suffering at birth, life and death. The sequence of a cry, an inhalation and exhalation or expiration accompanied by subtle changes in lighting mirrors the stages of life-birth, a brief moment of existence and death. Born into a world of rubbish, breathing in and out through the lips can be a sigh of relief or through the throat could represent a helpless death rattle. While the surrounding rubbish symbolizes decay and the remnants of human activity, set amongst rubbish, *Breath* (1969) could be a joke on Tynan as he tries to fit the play into his erotic revue but without intercourse a birth cry is not possible so be it. It could also be a joke on the audience or critiques, seeking for a meaning in rubbish, the finale.

Keywords: Minimalism, meaning of existence, meaning of life, meaning of death, suffering

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