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SAMUEL BECKETT AND THE TEXTUAL DYNAMISM OF FAILURE

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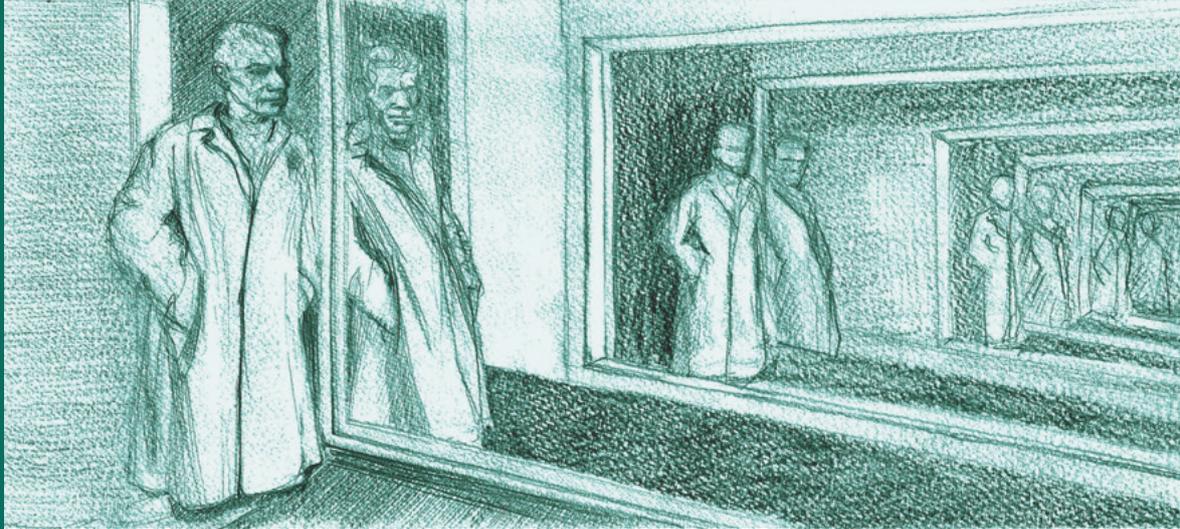
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Summary || This article claims that Samuel Beckett's *The Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies and The Unnamable* is paradoxically a successful art of failure, impotence and silence. Beckett's ambivalent writing is a literary style that bears the stamp of paradox: order and disorder, sense and meaninglessness. Beckett does not choose between these antitheses but maintains them in constant motion as part of its dialectical structure. The essential factor is the interplay between two contradictory poles. The core nature of the Beckettian ambivalent writing is its interchangeability and intertextuality.

Key Words || Omnipotence | Dynamism | Failure | Aporia | Artist.

This article claims that Samuel Beckett's *The Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies and The Unnamable* is paradoxically a successful art of failure, impotence and silence. The poetics of Beckett's literary failure allows the unrepresentable to become perceptible in a dynamic form of writing that oscillates between erasure and rewriting and between proposition and retraction, displaying an aesthetic autonomy. Simultaneity pervades *The Trilogy* through aporia: an obligation to write stories and yet a lack of motivation. This recursive oscillation is similar to "the cyclic dynamism of the intermediate" (Beckett, 1983: 29) that generates endless possibilities. *The Trilogy* pursues that which narration cannot capture, namely nothingness and emptiness. Beckett's artistic faith is that given the absence of meaning, writing continues and the voice carries on speaking. The core texture of *The Trilogy* presents what is absent: a negativity that is not nothing or emptiness. It is true that readers do not recognise clear ideas in the book, but ideas are recognisable by dramatising themselves in a recursive form behind nothingness. In *Waiting for Godot*, what interests the reader is what does not happen and what fails to happen. Beckett finds consolation in nothingness, directing his innovative literary writing to the act of waiting that transgresses the significance of dramatic action itself. What the characters actually do, even when they talk about waiting is not waiting but something else. Beckett portrays waiting not as a void action but as an abstract presence on the stage. Failure displays itself in the reduction of action and the renunciation of any dramatic conflict. Beckett's reductive drama contradicts Aristotle's theory of traditional drama that imitates a dramatic action. Beckett's drama imitates an inaction that paradoxically reveals the insignificance of dramatic action. It is for that reason that Beckett's characters form a model of an odd society and a set of insignificant interactions. Such a model no doubt fails to express any significant experience but it can express entirely the reality of these absurd individuals.

In a modernist world where everything is doomed to fail, Beckett finds consolation in incompetence. Beckett remarked to Israel Shenker: "I think anyone nowadays who pays the slightest attention to his own experience finds it the experience of a non-knower, a non-can-er" (Shenker in Kenner, 1973: 76). The motif of nothingness dominates Beckett's drama, notably in *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot* where the main characters are reduced to empty personae who occupy tiny places. Hugh Kenner describes Beckett as a stoic comedian of the impasse: "Beckett advances the notion of utter and uncalculating incapacity, producing an art which is "bereft of occasion in every shape and form, ideal as well as material" (Kenner, 1962: 76). Beckett accepts absurdity as 'nothingness' becomes the only meaning. Existential absurdity is Beckett's starting point for formal innovation. Beckett's aesthetic autonomy displays a positive negation of meaning that is dramatised by a dynamic form of writing: "form

overtakes what is expressed and changes it” (Beckett, 1965: 98). Commenting on Beckett’s *Endgame*, Theodor Adorno highlighted the ‘organised meaningfulness’ of Beckett’s drama, wherein the negation of meaning assumes a form. Adorno held that

Beckett’s oeuvre seems to presuppose this experience [i.e. of the negation of meaning] as if it were self-evident and yet it pushes further than the abstract negation of meaning. Beckett’s plays are absurd not because of the absence of meaning—then they would be irrelevant—but because they debate meaning [...] His work is governed by the obsession with a positive nothingness but also by an evolved and thereby equally deserved meaningfulness and that’s why this should not be allowed to be reclaimed as a positive meaning (Adorno, 1997: 220-21)

In *Molloy*, we see “a form fading among fading forms” (Beckett, 1979: 17). Form in modernist literature is a problematic dilemma, as it is unclear what counts as a work of art and how to judge these fragmented productions. *The Trilogy* with its kinetic characteristics cannot attain a well-defined form. Malone states “the forms are many in which the unchanging seeks relief from its formlessness” (Beckett, 1979: 121). Beckett alluded to the conjunction between syntax and meaning when he revealed to Lawrence Harvey that the perfect expression of being is an ejaculation. Beckett said, “What do you do when ‘I can’t’ meets ‘I must’? ...At that level you break up words to diminish shame” (Beckett in Harvey, 1970: 211). Attempting to convey an imitative style of the content is apparent in Beckett’s *Murphy*, which describes the rocking-chair trances: “the rock got faster and faster, shorter and shorter... Most things under the moon got slower and then stopped, a rock got faster and then stopped” (Beckett, 1957: 65). The conclusion of *The Trilogy* “I can’t go on, I’ll go on” (Beckett, 1979: 285) demonstrates that narrative and style will go on, though this continuity will not apply normal syntax and language. The reluctance to end reveals that silence cannot be attained. *The Trilogy* proves the impossibility of escaping language into silence. The Unnamable describes himself as a balloon filled with other voices that say decisive words. This is a determination not to give up. Silence is a paradoxical stage because the desire for silence is a desire that is maintained in speaking. *The Trilogy* grants a voice and a story to the speakless silence, contrary to the view of Maurice Nadeau who mistakenly claims that Beckett has nothing to say and that the void justifies the repetition of the same plot in *Molloy*, *Murphy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*: “the reality which Beckett has tried to apprehend and which is probably inexpressible, is the region of the perfect indifference and undifferentiatedness of all phenomena” (Nadeau in Esslin, 1986: 36).

Impotence and ignorance signal the destruction of the traditions and values of Western culture, which Beckett perceives in terms of a fundamental crisis in communication. *The Trilogy* proclaims an art

of non-representation in order to arrive at reality through an indirect representation. At first glance, the failure of art implies that art is irrelevant and impossible, as it fails to seize reality. But failure is not negative, as the impossibility of statement is an assertion of the creativity of the artist. Beckett is driven by the fact of being an artist to create in art that which cannot be and which is not because as soon as it is realised in literary and linguistic terms it ceases to be itself and consequently it must fail. *The Trilogy* is a fulfilment of Beckett's dream of an art that is "unresentful of its unsurpassable indigence... an impoverished painting, authentically fruitless, incapable of any image whatsoever" (Beckett, 1965: 97). Unresentful art is also "proud for the face of giving and receiving," proud for "the puny exploits of the classic text" (Beckett, 1965: 103 and 112). In *The Trilogy*, Beckett abandoned English and the realistic setting in favour of interwoven narratives and voices that move towards the solitude culminating in the unnamed narrator. It manipulates the names and identities of characters.

The names of Beckett's characters sparked off considerable speculation because they present the untranslatable as they move freely from one linguistic location to another. Beckett's Irish names that appear in a French context [Molloy, Moran and the Unnamable] illustrate this statement best. What is peculiar about Beckett's names is that they are empty of meaning but inexhaustible in their potential for interpretation as they move from one language to another. The name Molloy does not have the same status in French as in English and it is the impossibility of translating the effect of the name in English that renders the name untranslatable. Eventually, names acquire a paradoxical status. Though untranslatable, names pass from one language to another. They are part of language but can live independently. Moreover, names explicate the paradoxical relationship between literature and language because literature is based on both autonomy and servitude. No literary text can survive without the language in which it is presented but it is possible for the text to have been written in another language: French. This clash is related to the paradoxes of translation that occupy a dual life between English and French. Readers cannot say with confidence to what language the name belongs or to whom it refers. Many of Beckett's characters had either 'M or W' as the first initial: Murphy, Molloy, Malone, Macmann, Moran, Watt and Worm end up with no identity. These names are confused with each other to the point that characters melt together into one figure, the unnamable. The names of Molloy, Malone and the Unnamable function as names and titles and alert readers to the complexities behind these names and titles. Subsuming the three titles under '*The Trilogy*' has been adopted and welcomed by Beckett scholars. This adoption suggests the difficulty of assigning a homogeneous unity to the book. Although the titles share the same pattern of isomorphic order and they seem to be narrated

by separate narrators, they raise the view that a single narrator under the guise of various names narrates the three novels. Molloy might refer to the first person narrator or the third person character, and the same indeterminacy is applicable to *The Unnamable* where it is impossible to decide from the form of the title whether the referent is animate or inanimate, masculine or feminine. Eventually, readers are left with the flux of words in which naming becomes impossible.

The Trilogy aims to take literature away from “that stale path, to bore one hole after the other” in a language that Beckett describes as “a veil and a mask until that which is cowering behind it, whether it be something or nothing, begins to flicker through” (Beckett in Harvey, 1970: 434). Molloy’s and Moran’s failure results from the inadequacy of writing as a means of expression. Beckett openly declared that “Molloy and the others came to me the day I became aware of my own folly. Only then did I begin to write the things I feel” (Beckett in Mercier, 1962: 36). Nonsensical in themselves, incompetence and ineptitude assume possible narrative representation and communication. In Molloy’s terms, we are distracted by “a penury,” the opposite of that “profusion” (Beckett, 1979:34), where the novelist offers his/her readers less than what they expect. The incongruous stories reverse the conventional relation between narrator and reader. Beckett’s narrators refuse to assume the reader’s recognition. They no longer assume “a receiver desirous of information” (Beckett, 1976: 163). The narrator slows the narrative down, hampers the operations by which the reader attempts to grasp its logic and to follow what is being said. This is equally true of the structure of *The Trilogy*’s narrative itself. *The Unnamable* is aware of the incertitude but he must go on.

Failure introduces purpose into art. It does not suggest the non-existence of meaning but a peculiar inclination towards the deficiency of reason. Molloy is determined to persist in folly, as he believes that some wisdom lies within such fruitless endeavour. Molloy and Moran perceive their lives as a series of pursuits renounced in frustration. Impotency renders narrative as an incidental and simultaneous act. In Molloy’s and Moran’s writing, there is a constant concern with narrating and telling stories. Molloy writes pages for an anonymous authority and Moran is writing reports in response to Youdi’s instructions. Writing for Malone is a way of objectifying words in order “to know where I have got to” (Beckett, 1979: 208) and “I really know practically nothing about his family any more. But that does not worry me, there is a record of it somewhere. It is the only way to keep an eye on him” (Beckett, 1979: 218).

Beckett’s writing is a response to the obligation to write impotently about nothing. Characters obey the imperatives of mysterious prompters and voices: Molloy’s quest for his mother and Moran’s search for Molloy. Molloy states: “What I need now is stories, it took

me a long time to know that and I'm not certain of it" (Beckett, 1979: 14). Beckett already insisted that there was no other alternative to the artist:

The only fertile research is excavatory, immense, a contraction of the spirit, a descent. The artist is active but negatively shrinking from the nullity of extra-circumferential phenomena drawn in to the core of the eddy. He cannot practise friendship because friendship is the centrifugal force of self-fear, self-negation... We are alone. We cannot know and we cannot be known (Beckett, 1965: 65).

The characters of *The Trilogy* challenge the governing values and this challenge advocates ignorance. They replicate their author who disavowed rationality and embraced unknowing. Ignorance is necessary to discard the established frames and to introduce a comic relief. Molloy states that:

Not that I was hard of hearing, for I had quite a sensitive ear, What was it then? A defect of the understanding perhaps, which only began to vibrate on repeated solicitations, or which did vibrate if you like but at a lower frequency, or a higher, than that of ratiocination, if such a thing is conceivable, and such a thing is conceivable since I conceive it ... And without going so far as to say that I saw the world upside down (that would have been easy too easy) it is certain I saw it in a way inordinately formal, though I was far from being an aesthete or an artist (Beckett, 1979: 47).

Impotence slips out of scepticism into creativity and knowledge. Beckett was dissatisfied with the limitations of artistic power that is based on the harmony between subject and object. He uses words to "clinch the dissonance between the means and their use" (Beckett, 1972: 172). Beckett informed Lawrence Harvey that *The Trilogy* is "a demonstration of how work does not depend on experience—[it is] not a record of experience" (Beckett in Harvey, 1970:312). What emerges from this comment is that Beckett's writing is definitely Irish, weaving incongruous elements into a unified structure. Ireland is defined through its contraries and antitheses. Beckett informed Tom Driver that:

This form will be such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess is the task of the artist now (Beckett in Driver, 1979: 220).

The artist's task is to find a form that accommodates the chaos, a task that opposes classical art where all is settled. Art in general declined the expression of failure and chaos. It realised that to admit chaos and nothingness was to jeopardise its dignified status. *The Trilogy* maintains an ambivalent attitude that paradoxically admires and distrusts art. Beckett recognises the principle that modern man's

life is a mess and confusion and he has the obligation to express this chaos. Yet to admit chaos into art is to endanger the dignified nature of art since the mess is the opposite of form. *Watt* develops a negative form that accommodates chaos into art without reducing chaos to a form. To find a form that accommodates chaos entails reversing the whole set of narrative conventions. The appropriation of a form that accommodates the mess means obeying the modernist motto 'to make it new' that refuses the traditional narrative conventions. Beckett's failure is an artistic form that admits chaos. Beckett states: "the only chance of renovation is to open our eyes and see the mess ... there will be new form and this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else" (Beckett in Driver, 1979: 21-25).

Failure permits the writer to drop all distinctions and to develop a subjective technique for explaining things. Reality is attained through disharmony, which is a surrealist version of realism. Beckett's attempt to articulate by means of antitheses and contraries corresponds with André Breton's claim that opposites must not be perceived as contradictions. Beckett's autonomous narrative takes shape according to the psychic surrealism of Breton and Apollinaire in which reality is seized in disparity. Murphy's reactions to his new job in an insane asylum simulate a psychotic narrative:

The impression he received was of that self-immersed indifference to the contingencies of the contingent world which he has chosen for himself as the only felicity and achieved so seldom. The function of treatment was to bridge the gulf, translate the sufferer from his own pernicious little private dungheap to the glorious world of discrete particles where it would be his inestimable prerogative once again to wonder, love, hate, desire and howl in a reasonable balanced manner and comfort himself with the society of others in the same predicament. All this was duly revolting to Murphy whose experience as a physical and rational being obliged him to call sanctuary what the psychiatrists called exile (Beckett, 1957: 54).

A psychotic narrative is different from the chaotic hysterical narrative. Whereas Breton engages in disoriented activities, Beckett imitates irrational thought by counting games and arranging biscuits. Beckett calls attention to the surrealist aspect in his work through the special term 'dead imagination' that marks a trance state and a condition of hectic morbidity. Feelings of displacement and alienation immerse Beckett in a middle position between Irishness and Englishness. The indeterminacy of narratives and the refusal of a dominant narrative voice are related to a colonial erasure of Irish history and identity.

Beckett sought a new form of art in which failure and impotence enjoy an objective representation and subjective expression. It is not enough to perceive Beckett's rejection of forms of competence unless

we show that in Beckett's case incompetence and ineptitude manifest themselves as sources of artistic creation. Beckett's welcoming of impotence reveals the failure of art itself as *The Trilogy* resists the refined literary forms. Beckett explores areas that art fails to explore: areas of muteness, failure and incompetence. Failure assaults artistic representation by investigating the antitheses of success and failure. This dynamic antithesis renders Beckett's writing circular without finality and thus the text oscillates between erasure and rewriting. The language of *The Unnamable* is an endless series of antitheses, paradoxes and contradictions, "a frenzy of utterance" (Beckett, 1979: 275). Beckett begins the second part of *Molloy*: "It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows" and ends it with, "It was not midnight. It was not raining" (Beckett, 1979: 55 and 162).

Related to the failure of art is Beckett's endeavour to represent "the literature of the unword" (Beckett, 1983:173). The linguistic failure in *The Trilogy* failed to name or to describe. Beckett sought to avoid the linearity of language and to concentrate on the unnamable. The numerous references to painting and sculpture function as ironic evasions of linguistic limitation as the narrator in *More Pricks Than Kicks* admired "the integrity of the faint inscriptions of the outer world" that achieve "considerable satisfaction from his failure to do so in language" (Beckett, 1972: 38) renders the failure of language. *Watt* uses language as though there is no relation between the signifier and the signified, demonstrating the contradiction of which literature is capable. For Watt this is a puzzling and painful experience: "Watt's need of semantic succour was at times so great that he would set to trying names on things, almost as a woman hats" (Beckett, 1976: 90). This is a pattern of linguistic disintegration. Resorting to French that has no style is also a form of linguistic disintegration. Language is no longer trying to embrace reality, but in Watt's words is "language commenting language" (Beckett, 1976: 65). Beckett was not concerned with ideas but with the shape of ideas on paper. He declared: "I am interested in the shape of ideas even if I do not believe in them.... It is the shape that matters" (Beckett in Hobson, 1956: 153). *The Trilogy* infuses form and content. It seeks to devise an imitative form where form and content disintegrate into meaninglessness and formlessness. Beckett praised Joyce's *Work in Progress* for the identification of form and content: "Here form is content and content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read-or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked and listened to. His writing is not about something; it is that something itself" (Beckett in Dearlove, 1981: 98).

The Trilogy occupies a state of 'an existence by proxy' that eliminates the borders between subject and object and between form and content. This flux state minimises the narrative where the displaced

characters dispose the means for telling stories. The Unnamable occupies a spaceless place that disposes linguistic forms. However, such a closed field pays attention to specification and detail. The urge to identify things as they become apparent to the senses is part of Beckett's aesthetic endeavour. His characters list in detail the perception of various objects through vision or touch. Malone identifies things that seem inconsequential to the ordinary person although this identification acquires a strange sort of importance to him. The elusive stub of the pencil is a good illustration of this: "what a misfortune, the pencil must have slipped from my fingers, for I have only just succeeded in recovering it after forty-eight hours (see above) of intermittent efforts" (Beckett, 1979: 179). The characters illustrate that the act of seeing, feeling and touching familiar objects is as creative as the intuitive responses. Sensual elements generate unfamiliar texts and new forms. The sentences in *The Trilogy* are reduced to a minimal semantic range while the linear narrative is reduced to a recursive vibration that is close to music. In a letter to Axel Kaun, Beckett establishes a parallel between his endeavour of destroying "that terribly arbitrary materiality of the word-surface" and the music of Beethoven where "the sound surface, torn by enormous pauses of Beethoven's seventh Symphony so that through whole pages we can perceive nothing but a path of sounds suspended in giddy heights linking unfathomable abysses of silence" (Beckett, 1983: 172). The superiority of music indicates Beckett's divergence from the linguistic tradition. Music is not verbal and does not rely on the restraints of words and language. Paradoxically speaking, music is unintelligible and inexplicable, as it cannot be expressed otherwise. Beckett is in line with the modernist tradition practised by Mallarmé and Eliot that appropriates musical form and musical self-sufficiency. Beckett experiments with this musical ambition and exploits its comical potential. Initially, Beckett proposes a parallel between literary characters and musical notes to develop a melodic book, but he reveals later that some of his characters cannot be reduced to melodic units. This reveals the inadequate analogy between character and music. Rather Beckett claims that realism must be grounded in a variable subject confronting an unstable object. This iterative text emerges as a series of stops and starts and dribs and drabs. The result of this performative recursion is the innovative representation of the unrepresentable. This dynamic circularity suggests that things are in a constant state of motion without ending. In *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, Beckett wrote that the work "is a series of pure questions" (Beckett, 1983: 56). Beckett's "stylelessness..., the pure communication" (Beckett in Knowlson, 1996: 239) is free from the connotative scale of language and it remains the same whether it is published in English or French. Related to Beckett's French is the controversial issue of translation. In one sense, translation is a repetition and re-working of the same work that has already been done.

Every text has a double existence in two languages and two different places in Beckett's chronology, to the extent that it is difficult to assign an order of composition. Beckett's experience with French resulted from his translation exercises and writing that began in 1945. *Molloy* is a flux text that flows by the association of ideas. There is a wavering between 'Molloy' and other words present in the text, "malin, molys, amollir and of course Moran" (Beckett, 1979:132 and 146). Beckett did not abandon English entirely as he wrote certain texts in English, such as *Watt*, which he describes as "an unsatisfactory book. Written in dribs and drabs, first on the run, then of an evening after the clodhopping, during the occupation" (Beckett's letter to George Reavey in Lake, 1984:75). Beckett's fiction after the completion of *Watt* is written in French. Beckett was not content with the infinitude of English and the diversity of its idioms, so he turned to French. One explanation for the switch to French is that Beckett as a student of French was more conscious of the French language than a native speaker. Beckett's adoption of French in *The Trilogy* changed his writing style, which became uncomplicated and simple. When Beckett was asked why he switched from English to French, he replied that for him, being an Irishman, French represented a form of weakness by comparison with his mother tongue. Beckett criticised English as a language in which words "mirror themselves complacently, narcissus-like" (Beckett in Bair, 1978: 67). The use of French is an attempt to escape the restrictions encountered within one's native language. The subversion of traditional narrative form leads to the rise of a different type of linguistic utterance. By producing a silent narrative that lacks the conventional components of story-telling, the silent narrative demonstrates that original writing is no longer possible. Beckett began this process of decomposition when he turned to French as a literary medium of representation. English seemed to offer Beckett dead metaphors and ironic puns while French that revolts against rhetorical conventions exploited the shifts in register by repetition and parataxis. *Three Dialogues* makes it clear that he was deliberately "rejecting an art that pretends to be able" (Beckett, 1965, 139). Beckett's principal stance is that there is nothing to express and nothing with which to express.

Linguistic experimentation is concerned with the void as a precondition for textual dynamics. It fulfils a meaningful expression through manipulations rather than overt articulations. Language is a system of sounds devoid of content. This uncertainty prompts Beckett to devise an indirect style of writing because the word does not indicate the thing. The speaking 'I' does not realise what it has said or had wanted to say: "What was it I just wanted to say? No matter, I'll say something else, it is all one" (Beckett, 1979: 270). Molloy's comments about language show his preoccupation with its playful and interchangeable features. Words are never definite enough to convey the narrator's insight precisely. In other words,

the narrator does not create his language but borrows or mimics what has been said before. Beckett's appeal to failure is apparent in *Proust*, which rejects realism in fiction and in which he describes failure as "the nullity of extracircumferential phenomena" (Beckett, 1965: 65). *The Trilogy* pursues what the narration cannot capture; namely the unrepresentability of silence. It represents an oxymoronic collection of voices, names, characters, discourses and figures, "a gallery of moribunds" (Beckett, 1979: 126). Writing attempts to fill the void, which is a prominent theme in twentieth-century literature. Beckett announces: "I'm dealing with something other artists have rejected as being by definition outside the realm of art ... the zone of being" (Beckett's interview with Shenker, *New York Times*, 6 May 1956, section 2, pp.1 and 3). What Beckett intends to show is the significance of the void as a writerly text. Beckett conveys something which cannot be conveyed by linear narratives. In light of this, narrative representation must inevitably be a lie. Writing impotently restores silence. Molloy declares that: "to restore silence is the role of objects" (Beckett, 1979: 87). This suggests that literary creation takes place in solitude. Beckett's heroes do not live in a stable and unified situation. Beckett's basic concern in regard to existence was an inclination to doubt its existence and the awareness of not being born. Beckett attacks the inability of man to know himself. He perceives the artist's function as an exploration of the self, as he told John Gruen: "When man faces himself, he is looking into the abyss" (Beckett in Gruen, 1969: 108).

Related to silence is the obligation to express. The text that has nothing to express finds itself under the necessity to express. *The Unnamable* is suspended between the lack of expression and the obligation to express, the compulsion to continue writing although writing is an imaginary record. He speculates that it is better to keep saying "babababa" for the 'he' in the stories he tells: "preventing me from saying who I was, what I was" (Beckett, 1979: 303 and 309). The obligation to express is the only positive element within the surrounding negativity and this compulsion is accompanied by a refusal to accept an assured narrative voice. Obligation alludes to helplessness as the Unnamable declares: "having nothing to say, no words but the words of others, I have to speak. No one compels me to, there is no one, it's an accident, a fact. Nothing can ever exempt me from it" (Beckett, 1979:301). The Unnamable announces that Mahood's voice "will disappear one day, I hope, from mine, completely. But in order for this to happen I must speak, speak" (Beckett, 1979: 297). Narration becomes illogical, compulsive and repetitive but not to be declined. The Unnamable's last words confirm the necessity of carrying it out:

I don't know, that's all words, never wake, all words, there is nothing

else, you must go on, that's all I know, they're going to stop, I know that well, I can feel it, they're going to abandon me, it will be the silence, for a moment, a good few moments, or it will be mine, the lasting one, that didn't last, that still lasts, it will be I, you must go on, I can't go on, you must go on (Beckett, 1979: 285).

The instant obligation and the lack of narrative motivation offer Beckett's writing the dynamic duality of recalling a story backward and moving it forward. Moran says: "But I write them all the same and with a firm hand weaving inexorably back and forth and devouring my page with indifference of a shuttle" (Beckett, 1979: 122). Similarly, Beckett weaves back and forth and devours his page, not as Moran claims, with indifference, but with an innovative anguish, "devising figments to temper his nothingness...Devised deviser devising it all for the company. In the same figment dark as his figments" (Beckett, 1983: 64).

Beckett's dynamic prose conveys 'the literature of the unword' where both language and narrative are intentionally manipulated to overcome limitations of artistic representation. The zone of 'the unword' devises its own narrative and language that opens new vistas for the novel genre. Beckett revealed to Georges Duthu it that:

Art is weary of its puny exploits, weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along a dreary road... and preferring the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express (Beckett, 1965: 245).

The narrative of the unword is a comic narrative that reverses narrative conventions, the dignified status of the novel and the authority of the writer. Readers experience a text that fails as a novel. Indeed, an integral part of any response to the kaleidoscopic narratives must be a sense of their awkwardness, their incongruities and disarray. The persistent disintegration and metamorphosis in *The Trilogy* undermine the security of a linear narrative.

Beckett conveys his 'literature of the unword' by the extensive use of closed spaces: narrow attics, cages, prisons and the padded cells of a mental asylum that confine the characters' bodies. *The Trilogy* presents motionless characters lying in a single bedroom and creating stories to pass time: Molloy on crutches, Malone in bed and the Unnamable stuck in a pot. But Beckett refrains from presenting the final stages of insanity. When the Unnamable feels that he can no longer distinguish between reality and imagination, he becomes aware of the coexistence of the two possibilities. The Unnamable is intent on locating himself in space and time but he indicates his spatial failure at almost every turn: "if I could describe this place, portray it, I've tried, I feel no place, no place round me, there's no end to me, I don't know what it is, it isn't flesh, it doesn't end, it's like air,

now I have it, you say that, to say something, you won't say it long, like gas, balls, balls, the place, then we'll see, first the place, then I'll find me in it" (Beckett, 1979: 361). The Unnamable expresses the same insecurity about time: "I understand nothing about duration, I can't speak of it, oh I know I speak of it, I say never and ever, I speak of the four seasons and the different parts of the day and night, the night has no parts, that's because you are asleep, the season must be very similar" (Beckett, 1979: 369). In such confined spaces, vision fails and there is little light. The Unnamable reflects that "perhaps that's what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside, on the other the inside...I'm neither one side nor the other, I'm in the middle" (Beckett, 1979: 315).

Eventually, narration and the place of action cannot be measured or quantified. Beckett's characters occupy an ontological void that stages carnivalesque narratives and voices. Beckett associates immobility with the lack of genuine knowledge and reason. Malone admits: "I tried to live without knowing what I was trying. Perhaps I have lived after all, without knowing" (Beckett, 1979: 171). Ontological scepticism is apparent when Malone contrasts his own attitude towards life with that of other people: "Men wake and say, Come on, we'll soon be dead, let's make the most of it. But what matter whether I was born or not, have lived or not, am dead or merely dying, I shall go on doing what I have always done, not knowing what it is I do, nor who I am, nor if I am" (Beckett, 1979: 226). The motionless characters are denied locomotion but left with the interwoven acts of recollection and narration. Weaving memories into a narrative instantly composes and decomposes the text, as in Molloy's double narrativity. Though *The Trilogy* applies the techniques of stream of consciousness and interior monologue, 'such reminiscent narration' despite its surface illogicality is not related to the surrealist notion of automatic writing, as Beckett's reminiscent writing pursues a quest. Malone and the Unnamable associate writing with a quest and Moran and Molloy associate this quest with the past. Molloy recollects a vivid past on a bicycle crawling and rolling and Moran recalls a time when he was a walker and a runner. Beckett develops dynamic meanings out of static conditions. The static characters are capable of stirring readers' curiosity through the Unnamable's 'principle of parsimony' that reflects Beckett's literary method. Beckett reduces his characters until we are left with the nameless narrator with his quest for an identity. *The Unnamable* starts and continues in incoherence but such incoherence is controlled by Beckett. Towards the end of Malone's story and the beginning of the Unnamable's perspective, Beckett imposes personal authenticity upon existence. If Malone fails in his own fiction, there is a chance of survival in the Unnamable's writing that re-structures Malone's fictions: "I believe they are all here, at least from Murphy on, I believe we are all here" (Beckett, 1979: 136). Beckett and his successive 'I's' "fail to carry me into my story..."

into the silence” (Beckett, 1979: 265). To recover past experience is Beckett’s inspiration and this justifies the enduring memories of the narrative voices. The sound that might seem irrelevant to the text is essential to trigger memories. The consonance between writing and memory is crucial to link the narrative to human speech. The Unnamable’s concern with words leads him to discover a neutral voice

that speaks [...]. It issues from me, it fills me, it clamours against my walls, it is not mine... It is not mine, I have none, I have no voice and I must speak, that is all I know, it’s round that I must revolve, of what I must speak, with this voice that is not mine, but can only be mine, since there is no one but me, or if there are others ... they have never come near me. I won’t delay just now to make this clear (Beckett, 1979: 309).

Within that voice, “the same words recur and they are your memories” (Beckett, 1979: 293). The Unnamable seeks to discover a voice that accommodates his words to his intentions: “Ah if only I could find a voice of my own, in all this babble, it would be the end of their troubles, and of mine” (Beckett, 1979: 351). Eventually, language is “transformed, momentarily, perhaps because of the memories that motion revives” (Beckett, 1979: 70).

To conclude, Beckett’s dynamic fiction is a severe critique of language and literature, which does not entail the loss of all positive values and beliefs but on the contrary it suggests a transformative dimension that is not appreciated by critics. Beckett should not be considered a negative opponent of the literary tradition, for in his autonomous fiction, serious elements confront their meaninglessness and the result is a positive revitalisation of the novel by resituating it within a dynamic literary context. *The Trilogy* reveals that the break from the traditional alliance of literature and orders of knowledge produces a type of text which would be the expression that there is nothing to express. But through using trivial voices and narratives, Beckett invests them with serious overtones that oscillate between nothingness and purposefulness. The refusal of progression is a systematic structuring principle. Whereas the realist text strives to give the impression of coherence, Beckett’s failed narratives and discourses take the opposite course of perpetual anarchy that no narrative can ever bind.

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