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Nothing More Real Than Nothing:

The Unnamable as Self-Annihilating Fiction

Shawn Rosenheim

Honors English Thesis

April 23, 1983

To Paul:

Yes, well, to tell the truth, let us be honest at least, it is some considerable time now since I last knew what I was talking about.

The great casuistical speech of the vagrant Lucky is staged like a Third Form Orals before three examiners --

POZZO: Think, pig!...

LUCKY: Given the existence as uttered forth in the published works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua...

- Hugh Kenner

Nothing More Real Than Nothing:

The Unnamable as Self-Annihilating Fiction

Instead of attempting to resolve difficulties so as to produce themes or statements by a persona about a particular problem, one may seek to preserve those difficulties by organizing the text as an illustration of certain problems. At the highest levels, these are the problems of language itself.

— Jonathan Culler

I. Introduction

Nature abhors nothing; it is the mind which cannot bear to live in a state of suspension, in absence, in a vacuum. The very existence of fiction testifies to man's need for intricate models through which he may fashion and explore his life. In the last eighty years, a great deal of research has been devoted to discovering the ways in which fictions are structured; the ways, that is, in which literature replaces chaos not with content, but with form; with elaborate verbal webs that hold in abeyance the hollow of life without language. Russian formalism, myth-criticism like Northrop Frye's, structuralism, poststructuralism and phenomenological analysis have clearly demonstrated the fact that literature is shaped by unconscious conventions on the levels of genre, plot and character, and in the deployment of multiple pairs of binary oppositions which create a kind of symbolic code within the work. Perhaps most significantly, theorists like Roland Barthes and Jonathan Culler have begun to make explicit the interpretive conventions which readers bring to a work and the ways in which these conventions influence their reading.¹

Unlike most fictions, however, The Unnamable radically subverts many of these conventions, consequently invalidating the implicit narrative contracts signed between reader and

author.² Since its publication in 1953, The Unnamable has provoked hundreds of pages of comment; yet few English-speaking critics have thought closely about the specific ways in which the novel undermines narrative and linguistic conventions. Instead, The Unnamable has traditionally been treated either as Beckett's bleak vision of the human condition, or as a reflection of his philosophic thought.³ But, as Wolfgang Iser has written, The Unnamable

can give rise to a wide range of reactions -- the simplest being to close the book because one considers the text to be nonsense. Such a decision, however, implies that the reader believes he has reliable criteria for judging the sense and nonsense of the work.⁴

Thus it is premature to focus criticism of The Unnamable on its perceived content until one has analyzed how it works. The text is an intricate artifact which may have serious, even profound, implications; but these implications will not emerge until the reader understands how the artifact is put together, and why it has taken whatever shape it has.

As commentators have often pointed out, The Unnamable is a painful book to read. Why? Not, I think, because it strikes a resonant existential chord within its audience, but because it is an almost unreadable text. It's subversions of convention suspend the reader's ordinary ability to organize texts, for The Unnamable neither degenerates into nonsense nor deigns to make sense. Frank Kermode argues that fictions are heuristic devices, little models designed to give readers the sense that life, whether good or bad, is closed and comprehensible.⁵ Yet the open texture of The Unnamable defies any easily-gained comprehension. Made anxious by the text's subversions, the reader struggles all the

more to structure the sprawling discourse, to ground the text in something other than the discomposing void in which the words originate. The reader's failure to do so forces him to consider his activities and expectations qua reader. But, as Iser observes, he

who enters into the movement of the text will find it difficult to get out again, for he will find himself increasingly drawn into the exposure of the conditions which underlie his own judgment.⁶

In reversing the closure which conventions effect, The Unnamable tears at the interconnecting linguistic structures, both literary and cultural, which delimit the boundaries of what man is and knows.

The Unnamable does this by means of a single structural principle: self-annihilation. Patterning itself across nearly every aspect of the work, this textual self-cancellation creates a novel which refuses to create itself. The protagonist/narrator of The Unnamable (hereafter The Unnamable) lures the reader into the text by constantly attempting to compose the discourse, to tell his story, to say the word which would reduce the text's indeterminacy and relegate it to the realm of the conventionally fictional. But in each attempt he fails, for the novel resists naturalization on the levels of genre, narrative, symbolic code and prosody. I shall demonstrate in the next section of my thesis the particular ways in which the text undermines itself; since these negative fictional techniques are so unusual, I quote the text often in order to demonstrate in detail how they function. In the shorter final section of the thesis, I shall discuss the relation of The Unnamable to Molloy and Malone Dies, the

first two novels in Beckett's trilogy. Closely examined, these three works force the reader to move beyond Molloy, Malone, and The Unnamable to postulate a single narrative consciousness who is responsible for the trilogy. Understood in this way, The Unnamable ultimately reveals itself not simply as meaningless language, but as an intentional artifice capable of communicating its maker's views on the nature of reading and writing fiction, and on the relation of language to the self.

II. Subversion

In Structuralist Poetics, Jonathan Culler writes:

The basic convention of the novel, and which, a fortiori, governs those novels which set out to violate it, is our expectation that it will produce a world. Words must be composed in such a way that through the activity of reading there will emerge a model of the social world, models of individual personality . . . and, perhaps most important, of the kind of significance these aspects of the world can bear.⁷

The Unnamable violates just these conventions; in fact, it takes their absence as its starting point. The Unnamable begins the novel by asking "Where now? Who now? When now?" (p. 291); like the reader, he seeks to establish world, personality, and significance. Details of time and place are difficult to determine, but The Unnamable notices that "man-shaped objects" (p. 296) orbit him at regular intervals, a promising fact. Yet just as a world begins to be shaped, he confesses that everything described was "inexistent, invented to explain I forget what. Ah yes, all lies" (p. 304); his own identity is suspect: "I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me" (p. 291).

Roland Barthes notes that "The 'he' is a novelistic convention....It signifies and carries through the creation of the novel; if the third person is absent, the novel is powerless to come into being."⁸ The "he" is a token of reality; it signifies something outside the experience of reading, with its implicit I and thou of author and reader. The narrator can comment on this third person, and thus indirectly assure the reader of a fictional world's existence. Esse est percipi is one of Beckett's favorite philosophical maxims: the narrator's perception of the fictional world creates that world. The Unnamable, robbed of this "he," is reduced to solipsism, a fact of which he is acutely aware. In consequence, he serves as his own Evil Genie, questioning all his experiences: "I like to think I occupy the center, but nothing is less certain" (p. 295). "When did all this stop? And did it stop? A few more questions. Is this merely a lull?" (p. 298).

The Unnamable must continue this pointless discourse, in order that he might find means to end it. Here a paradox arises; as Judith Dearlove puts it,

On the one hand, the narrator is the formless fluid speaker who rejects all that is alien to the nonverbal core of himself. On the other hand, he resides in the fixed shapes and external orders of his spoken words.⁹

The task of The Unnamable is an impossible one: to identify his aphonic essence by means of words; words, moreover, which have lost their referential nature because they lack objective correlatives in a sensual world. If The Unnamable's words have lost their ability to describe his state, they have lost their communicative

power for the reader, who can know The Unnamable only through these second-hand words. We have discovered our first textual self-destructions: The Unnamable must say the unspeakable, and the reader, given only solipsistic musings, must construct a stable world in which to place The Unnamable. For our narrator, and therefore for his readers, non percipi est non esse; hidden by alien words, The Unnamable is not.

His solipsism is increased by certain fictional devices, particularly the imitation of speech. Beckett's novel is in part an elaborate simulacrum of the spoken word; this construction serves a rhetorical function -- it draws the reader nearer to the text -- but it also possesses deconstructive purpose. In Writing Degree Zero, Roland Barthes rather murkily theorizes that

The whole of speech is epitomized in this expendability of words, in the froth ceaselessly swept onwards. Speech is found only where language self-evidently functions like a devouring process which swallows only the moving froth of the words. Writing, on the contrary, is always rooted in something beyond language, it develops like a seed, not like a line, it manifests an essence, yields the threat of a secret. ¹⁰

What I think Barthes means is that the spoken word is primarily instrumental in nature; once an illocution has been performed, its component words disappear. Only what is currently being said matters, since nothing exists to indicate whether or not previous utterances still accurately represent the speaker's mind. Consequently, speech takes place in unidirectional, linear time. Writing, however (Barthes means writing to be synonymous with literature), is not instrumental but experiential, existing to

be read as an end in itself. Writing is highly structured: its parts cohere. In reading, this elaborate fabric of interwoven words halts time's progress: a word or image may refer both backward and forward to its echoes in the text. It is not until a work is completed that the reader allows the solution of narrative elements to crystallize, and time to begin again. In Kant's definition of the artistic object, one experiences in the work "purposiveness without purpose;" words exist not only to convey a specific message, ^{but} instead, their formal properties become aesthetically and interpretively significant, and in their collective patterns words form objects of intrinsic interest and importance.¹¹

In The Unnamable the play between writing and speaking holds the reader in the text. As a piece of writing, Beckett's text should have significant structure, should suspend time, and should hold out the possibility of revealing essence; but as imitated speech, the novel dissolves in words "swept ceaselessly onward." Certain other novels (Heart of Darkness, for example) pretend to be transcriptions of speech, but these works usually mirror only an idiomatic diction and the rhythms of colloquial speech. Plot movement, detailed description of characters, symbolism, and imagery indelibly mark such works as literature.

The Unnamable presents itself ambivalently. "How, in such conditions, can I write?" (p. 301) The Unnamable asks; and his frequent apostrophes, use of metaphor and allusion, and complex embedded narratives indicate that he is indeed writing. Yet he

often describes his activity quite differently: "So it is I who speak, all alone....I know no more questions and they keep pouring out of my mouth" (p. 307). More important, The Unnamable employs common oral sentence constructions. He commits anacoluthon ("and we listen, a whole people, talking and listening all together, that would ex, no, I'm all alone" [p. 408]), and asyndeton ("In the jar did I ask myself questions? In the arena?" [p. 344]). He is forgetful ("Where was I? Ah yes..." [p. 294]), contradictory ("Here all is clear. No, all is not clear." [p. 294]), and often quite confused ("To tell the truth...it is some considerable time now since I last knew what I was talking about." [p. 323]). These gaps and hesitations are disturbing; the reader has no sure way of deciding what to believe. The more The Unnamable mimics speech, the more unreadable it becomes; and so The Unnamable's apparent lack of formal control undermines its status as a novel.

Beckett's use of tense, mood, and conditional constructions further discomfits the reader. Barthes writes:

The preterite, allowing as it does an ambiguity between temporality and causality, calls for a sequence of events, that is to say, for an intelligible narrative. This is why it is the ideal instrument for the construction of a world. It is the unreal time of cosmogonies, myths, histories, and novels...it signifies creation, it proclaims and imposes it.¹²

As one might expect from this, the preterite rarely appears in The Unnamable. In the first paragraph on page 304, selected at random, only four uses of the simple past occur, while the present, future, imperative, and present perfect appear a total of thirty

times. The Unnamable favors the present perfect ("gone now... those I have used, and those I have not used" p. 304); but Emile Benveniste has shown that "The perfect belongs to the linguistic system of discourse, since its temporal reference is to the moment of speech, whereas the reference of the aorist is to the moment of the event."¹³ Stories should not be told in the perfect, for the reader's attention is constantly diverted from the tale to the fact that something is being told. His choice of moods further weakens the narratives of The Unnamable. He rarely uses the indicative, *which* tends to efface a speaker by minimizing his subjectivity. Instead, the constant use of the subjunctive, subjunctive equivalents, and conditional constructions emphasizes the contingent and self-reflexive nature of The Unnamable's every utterance.

Perhaps I've missed the keyword to the whole business. I wouldn't have understood it, but I would have said it, that's all that is required, it would have spoken in my favor. (p. 368)

I know what I'd know, and where I'd turn, if I had a head that worked. (p. 293)

Tenses and moods cluster, further qualifying statements:

What am I to, what shall I do, in my situation, how proceed? (p. 291)

These things I say, and shall say, if I can, are no longer, or are not yet, or never were, or never will be, or if they were, if they are, if they will be, were not here, will not be here, but elsewhere. (p. 301)

The conditional force of the "if" here is gratuitous; The Unnamable has already fully disavowed the reality of the rest of the novel. In our empirical world, a conditional sentence exploits

the difference between what is and what might be; but in the perpetually mutable environs of The Unnamable, it serves only to blur whatever conception of world the reader has painstakingly contrived. The Unnamable has no world; his language describes nothing but the painful modulations of his consciousness:

For my face reflects nothing but the satisfaction of one savouring a well-earned rest. It is true, my mouth was hidden, most of the time, and my eyes closed. Ah yes, sometimes in the past, sometimes in the present. (p. 328)

The Unnamable challenges the basic conventions of the novel: the solipsism of the narrator, his indeterminate physical and temporal situation, and his modes of speech permit the reader only the most tenuous understanding of the text which confronts him. In an effort both to lose and to find himself, The Unnamable tries to overcome these limitations by telling stories. A number of critics (John Fletcher and Eugene Webb are two) concentrate their discussions of The Unnamable upon the stories embedded within the speaker's discourse, as if these vestigial remnants of plot, these narrative coccyges, were the essence of the book.¹⁴ But if fictions serve as heuristic devices, The Unnamable should discover only himself in his tales, and so it is. Unable to ascertain his own beginning or end, the general paralysis of The Unnamable is mirrored in stories which either join beginning and end in an endless present -- these are the successful ones -- or in ones which utterly dissipate. I shall detail both kinds.

In first attempting to determine his status, The Unnamable decides to think of himself as "fixed and at the center" (p. 295). He is not alone. Malone is there, "wheeling" like a "planet about its sun" (p. 295). Once before, ^{he notes,} "two shapes, oblong like man,

entered into collision before me" pursuing their "fixed curves" (p. 297). Still another regularly "advances a few steps, looks at me, and then backs away" in the "grey, dimly transparent air" (p. 298). God is mentioned, and The Unnamable's mother, and a taskmaster named Basil. This story proceeds in fits and starts, with each of the frequent new paragraphs marking the end of a pause in The Unnamable's composition. He suddenly breaks off, disgusted. "All these Murphys, Molloys and Malones do not fool me. They have made me waste my time....when, in order to stop speaking, I should have spoken of me and of me alone" (p. 303);

These creatures have never been, only I and this black void have ever been. And the sounds? No, all is silent. And the lights...? Yes, out with them. God and man, nature and the light of day, all invented, basely, by me alone...to put off the hour when I must speak of me. There will be no more about them. (p. 304)

This locative fiction, so carefully extended into the void, explodes, and The Unnamable is left alone. Yet the story would have gone nowhere, in any case. A voice surrounded by orbiting satellites is not fiction, but stasis. The Unnamable is immobile, the endless orbits of these ^{characters} ~~fictions~~ a mockery of free movement -- an image that will reappear throughout the book.

Having banished fictions, The Unnamable sets upon finding himself. No more paragraphs appear in the entire novel; what follows is a continuous aria of self-loss. Characters of a sort do introduce themselves: we meet Mahood and Worm, The Unnamable's "vice-existers" (p. 314). The ontology of the speaking voice, never very clear, grows more confused, for each vice-exister is sometimes an "I" and sometimes a "he." At least Mahood moves

in a familiar pattern. Proceeding on crutches, "in a sharp curve which seemed likely to restore me to my point of departure," Mahood is caught in an "inverted spiral" (p. 316). After years of travel, during which he has lost an arm and a leg, Mahood is "returning to the fold" (p. 317). He finds himself in a courtyard. At its center stands "a small rotunda, windowless" (p. 317), inside of which are "grandpa, grandma, little mother and the eight or nine brats" (p. 318). His return, though slow, is assured: "Provided I remained in motion, there could be no cause for anxiety. I was launched, there was no reason why I should suddenly begin to retreat, I just wasn't made that way" (p. 319); "Having set forth from this place, it was only natural I should return to it, given the accuracy of my navigation...my vaguely circular motion" (p. 320). But on his arrival Mahood finds all his relatives dead, expired from sausage poisoning. The Unnamable, trying to disabuse himself of Mahood's voice, remarks:

But the bouquet was this story of Mahood's in which I appear as upset at having been delivered so economically of a pack of blood relations, not to mention the two cunts into the bargain, the one for ever accursed that ejected me into this world and the other, infundibuliform, in which, pumping my likes, I tried to take my revenge. (p. 323)

The shape of this parable should be obvious: it is the stasis of orbit, humanized into the helix. Having been corkscrewed through his mother's Fallopian tubes and ejected from her vagina, Mahood's helicoidal perambulations carry him over the earth to the spot on the globe exactly opposite that of his birth. Here his travels reverse themselves, and he spins back to the rotunda, metaphorically returning to his mother's vagina and up through

her Fallopian tubes, in order to desecrate the spot where his miserable existence commenced:

I found myself, without surprise, within the building, circular in form, as already stated, its ground floor consisting of a single room flush with the arena, and there completed my rounds, stamping underfoot the unrecognizable remains of my family....I like to fancy, even if it is not true, that it was in my mother's entrails that I spent the last days of my long voyage and set out on the next.(p. 323-324)

Minus arm and leg, Mahood's shape is symbolically multivalent: as well as the wanderer returning home, he is the phallus entering the womb, the sperm travelling up the birth canal, the predecessor of Worm. Mahood's voyage ends where origin and terminus meet, inception and destruction present in his very seed. The only satisfaction Mahood can find is exacted upon the coming generation: "infundibuliform, in which, pumping my likes, I tried to take my revenge."

Mahood's adventures resume following several pages of discourse. Now on an island, and deprived of his remaining arm and leg, Mahood is stuck "like a sheaf of flowers in a deep jar, its neck flush with my mouth" (p. 327). Menu pasted on his jar, Mahood serves as a live advertisement for a restaraunt, located near some slaughterhouses. Here a woman takes care of him; in bad weather her "maternal instinct" (p. 328) is loosed, and she covers his head with a tarpaulin. At dawn, "the first look of her eyes, still moist with fornication, is for the jar" (p. 331). Mahood notes with some surprise that his penis is left: "What a pity I have no arms" (p. 332) he exclaims; otherwise, stimulated by the sight of a horse's anus, he might have masturbated. As it is, he merely

hopes for death, whether by apoplexy, asphyxiation, typhus or poleaxing. This grim scene compresses Mahood's previous odyssey into a single image: in a jar, on an island, bald-headed Mahood is an ancient infant, a "gangrenous fetus" stuck helpless in a womb in which he wants to die (p. 327).

After Mahood, The Unnamable tells no stories longer than a page; the closed fictions of stasis end here. Taken as an index of man's life, Mahood's tale is horrible, and gives rise to rather wild proclamations, like this one from Franco Fanniza:

Or, as he seems to say, in a caustic and chaotic symbolism, human existence is an enforced habitation in a jar. The being there enclosed, which can barely be recognized as a man, is aided, or better, closely watched by a woman (Nature?) who uses him for her own obscure ends.¹⁵

Obscure ends, indeed; there are, however, other approaches to the story. Culler argues that

The formal device on which the symbolic code is based is antithesis. If the text presents two items -- characters, situations, etc. -- in a way which suggests oppositions, then a whole space of substitution and variation is opened to the reader. In S/Z the narrator himself becomes the focal point of the antithesis.¹⁶

Continuing work begun by Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Levi-Strauss, structuralist literary theorists like the young Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov and Charles Segal have discerned in fictions ranging from Oedipus Rex to the stories of Henry James a common structural model in which sets of binary oppositions are mediated by a character or scenario.¹⁷ A brief analysis of Oedipus Rex will clarify what I mean.

In Sophocles' play, Oedipus becomes the site where linked sets of oppositions meet; he is scapegoat and savior, seer and

blind man, father and son, the solution to the riddle and its solver, a citizen of Thebes and orphan from the mountains. In striving to know his origins, Oedipus discovers and is ruined by this dual nature of his. As the point where irreconcilable opposites join, he is a threat to the city, whose continued existence depends upon the separation of man from beast and culture from nature. Oedipus is therefore deposed, and sent into exile, acts which preserve the city's monopolar symbolic nature. The plot of Oedipus Rex moves from a state of binary confusion to one in which complementary sets of oppositions -- city/country, father/son, king/criminal, and so on -- are not polluted by the presence of a mediating third term.¹⁸

Absurdly truncated as this analysis is, it clearly shows one way in which sets of oppositions can help structure a piece of literature. In contrast, The Unnamable neutralizes what Culler calls "the symbolic code" by consistently uniting all pairs of oppositions in Mahood, Worm, or The Unnamable himself. Oedipus Rex also subverted this code, but gave us a highly-organized world as a context in which to understand Oedipus and his story. A structuralist would point out that Mahood's life in a jar results from The Unnamable's failure (intentional or not), to set up paradigmatic oppositions. Mahood unites the normally opposed notions of birth and death; infancy and old age; food and death (the restaurant located near slaughterhouses; Mahood as an advertisement); beast and man, sexuality and anality (Mahood's excitement at the horse's anus); sexuality and death (Mahood's remaining penis, his maternal keeper's fornication, his location near

the slaughterhouses, his present existence in the jar which is womb and funerary urn). This destruction of functional oppositions occurs everywhere in the text. The Unnamable is speaking and writing, alone and with the many, either "words among the words" or "silence among the silence" (p. 388). "I am Matthew and I am the angel" (p. 301) The Unnamable declares, uniting the before and the after without the sanctifying presence of Christ, the active mediating figure in the myth.

The least common denominator in all these oppositions, the pole to which all things are drawn, is anality. "I shall transmit the words as received," The Unnamable assures us, "by the ear, or roared through a trumpet into the arsehole" (p. 349). His next vice-exister "will be a billy in the billy-bowl" (p. 315); "Someday," he predicts, "the thorns they'll have to come and stick into me, as into their unfortunate Jesus. No, I need nobody, they'll start sprouting under my arse, unaided" (p. 350). In a particularly vicious section, The Unnamable vows:

I'll let down my trousers and shit stories on them, stories, photographs, records, sites, lights, gods and fellow creatures, the daily round and the common task, observing the while, Be born, dear friends, be born, enter my arse, you'll just love my colic pains, it won't take long, I've the bloody flux.
(p. 380)

Head and mouth, birth, religion, the products of civilization, life itself: all are reduced to a completely excremental process.

The Unnamable describes himself as "Two holes, and me in the middle, slightly choked" (p. 378); he claims to be "the thing that divides the world in two...neither one side nor the other" (p. 385). Yet this is untrue; The Unnamable cannot split the world since

that world issues from his words. With no external context or point of reference, The Unnamable is all and nothing, alpha and omega, words and silence. Like a magnet with its poles neutralized, he can make nothing move, can neither attract nor repulse. He is a lump of iron, stuck fast in the jar on the island in the words. Fictions ordinarily subvert accepted symbolic oppositions (think of Gulliver's Travels), but either only a few oppositions are inverted at one time, or the reader can appeal to some known external order and treat the inversions as satiric. By destroying nearly every binary opposition in the work, and by forbidding the reader a naturalizing frame for the story, The Unnamable dissolves its own potential structure, leaving zero at the poles.

Now Worm is born, or attempts to be: "Please God nothing goes wrong. Mahood I couldn't die. Worm will I ever get born?" (p. 352). His way has been prepared: Mahood had hoped to die of tapeworms, and had seen himself entering his house "turning faster and faster...like a constipated dog, or one with worms" (p. 321). Worm is yet a further reduction of the human body, having neither the penis nor the head which Mahood preserved till the very end. As Mahood's death would have signified the bliss of nonexistence after life, so Worm represents that same bliss before birth. The identification of both birth and death as equally desirable states suggests that what they truly represent is the knowledge of a terminal point for The Unnamable, and consequent escape from his unending timeless existence. "And often all sleeps," he says, "as when I was really Worm, except this voice which has denatured me....And it seems to me that I would become Worm again, if I

were left in peace" (p. 351). Worm is sometimes surrounded by tormentors who hope to torture him into consciousness; at other times he is in a body: "I begin to be familiar with the premises. I wonder if I couldn't sneak out by the fundament one morning, with the French breakfast" (p. 352). But The Unnamable cannot long amuse himself by playing with unconscious Worm, who he can never be.

The story devolves. Worm is a failed heuristic fiction, teaching nothing, changing nothing: "one can spend one's life thus, unable to live, unable to bring to life, and die in vain, having done nothing, been nothing" (p. 358). A frantic search for a subject replaces Worm's story, which is left unresolved. Sentences grow long, and the language begins to fall apart: "Sometimes I say to myself, they say to me, Worm says to me, the subject matters little" (p. 351); "Worm being in the singular, as it turned out, they are in the plural, to avoid confusion, confusion is better avoided, pending the great confounding" (p. 360). The terrified Unnamable tries to invent himself.

perhaps I'm a drying sperm in the sheets of an innocent boy, no the testis has yet to descend that would want any truck with me, it's mutual, another gleam down the drain... (380)

I'm in words, made of words, other's words, what other, the place too, the air the walls, the floor, the ceiling, all words, the whole world is here with me, I'm the air, the walls, the walled-in one...I'm flakes, I'm all these flakes meeting mingling falling asunder...(p. 386)

Bereft of characters, The Unnamable desperately seeks, and fails, to define himself without benefit of fictional models. He attempts "to"end" (p. 302), to "discharge the pensum" (310), "say my lesson"^{to}

(p. 311). The Unnamable searches for

the story of the silence that he never left, that I should have never left, that I may never find again, that I may find again, then it will be he, it will be I, it will be the place, the silence, the end, the beginning...the door that opens on my story. (p. 413-414)

To speak, fall silent, end, begin, die and be born -- the multiplicity of ends sought by The Unnamable shows that these are mere figures of some desired state and not that state itself.

These words homologously signify a time (or place: both are *here* metaphoric terms) when "finality without end" will be replaced by meaning and structure, when The Unnamable will be released from the partiality and disruption of his existence to be admitted "to that peace where he neither is nor is not, and where the language that permits of such expressions dies" (p. 334).

Since The Unnamable's words are unconnected with a sensual world, any of the terms above can adequately stand for a change in his condition. His condition is that of a denatured voice; and though he must speak, he combats this logorrhea by unifying all elements of the symbolic code within himself so that he may defeat their ceaseless motion. "It seems impossible to speak and yet say nothing, you think you have succeeded, but you always overlook something, a little yes, a little no, enough to wipe out a whole platoon of dragoons" (p. 303). In language there can be no rest. Words shift one's mind about and around, uncreating the self, creating a new one in its stead:

For to go on means going from here, means finding me, losing me, vanishing and beginning again, a stranger first, then little by little the same as always, in another place... I am afraid of what my words will do to me, to my refuge, yet again. (pp. 302-303)

The paralysis and self-effacement that occur in The Unnamable on the level of genre, narrative and symbolic structure also occur in the text's diction, syntax, deixis and rhetorical postures. One may see this as an endeavour (parallel to the one just illustrated on the symbolic level), to move beyond the "this" and "that" of language, beyond the fragmentation of identity that the temporal extension and limited public vocabulary of language impose on the speaker. The result, however, is not the attainment of essence, but the subversion of the reading process, for impersonal speech can never capture whatever is the interior self. A stylistic analysis of The Unnamable's first paragraph accurately catalogues many of the self-negating stylistic and rhetorical procedures used in the novel as a whole.

"Where now? Who now? When now?" (p. 291). Six words, three sentences, three interrogations. These questions are enigmas which generate as an attempted answer the rest of the novel. The opening lines are of minimal length; a voice calls itself into being, and bit by bit assembles the parts necessary for its progress. First enigma, then subject: "I, say I. Unbelieving." Discourse proceeds by "Questions, hypotheses, call them that." The voice orders itself to "Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on." This sentence, like hundreds of others in the text, extends itself by redistributing parts of the main clause; "going" passes from clause to clause, simultaneously naming itself and acting to forestall the closure of the sentence. The text continues:

Can it be that one day, off it goes on, that one day I simply stayed in, in where, instead of going out, in the old way, out to spend day and night as far away as possible, it wasn't far. Perhaps that was how it began. You think you

are simply resting, the better to act when the time comes, or for no reason, and you find yourself powerless ever to do anything again.

In the first sentences two binary oppositions appear: off and on, in and out. But the curious juxtaposition of "off" and "on" robs the phrase of its sense; and although "in" and "out" are used correctly, the reader never knows exactly what "in" and "out" refer to. Pronominal use is ambiguous: what "it" stands for is never stated, and the shift from "I" to "you" blurs the distinctions between narrator and reader. The frequent use of the present tense, use of the second person pronoun, and lack of concrete environment accentuate the fact that this is a novel concerned with language, in which sentences are performative rather than descriptive; reader and narrator grow alike, moving through the mazed signs of the text, seeking closure to its puzzles. The voice, sounding alone against the void, divides itself: one half postulates "I simply stayed in" while the other counters "in where?" Alone, and possessed of words lacking objective correlatives, The Unnamable resorts to mock dialogue, which generates friction necessary to spur on the lagging discourse.

Next we encounter one of The Unnamable's more interesting rhetorical manoeuvres: "I seem^{*} to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me." The reader is faced with a sentence which invalidates itself as it is uttered, which cannot be trued.

"I" is a deictic, or shifting, pronoun, used to attach speaker and spoken; here the voice denies speaking, an impossible

utterance. This sentence denatures the pronoun by forcing the reader to treat the "I" not as the umbilical cord joining words to a body, but as the more or less arbitrary pronominal marker necessary to drive forward the sentence. Pronominal chaos is apparent throughout the book:

someone says you, it's the fault of the pronouns, there is no name for me, all the trouble comes from that, that, it's a kind of pronoun too, it isn't that either...(p. 406)

I turned sadly away. But not too fast, otherwise we'll never get there. It's no longer I in any case. He'll never reach us if he doesn't get a move on. (p. 320)

we were foolish to accuse one another, the master me, them, himself, they me, the master, themselves, I them, the master, myself, we are all innocent, enough. (p. 375)

This last example does parse, but clearly, like the previous examples, its intent is to run together subjects and objects. These confusions can be seen as a subset of the breakdown of binary oppositions. Singular and plural, I and you, I and he are equalized; the voice conspires to destroy all subjects, to dismiss as nothing but syntactic fiction the relationship of words to speaker, the reader's sense that writing has an original locus in someone's speech.

The speaker adopts the familiar rhetorical stance of the university lecturer. "These few remarks to begin with. What am I to do, what shall I do, in my situation, how proceed?" The irony of this sentence -- the deadpan, methodical voice posing the gravest sorts of questions -- is funny; but this incongruity further decenters the reader trying to make sense of the text. Complications ensue.

How shall I proceed? By aporia, pure and simple? Or by affirmations and negations, invalidated as uttered, or

sooner or later? Generally speaking. There must be other shifts. Otherwise it would be quite hopeless. But it is quite hopeless. I should mention before going any further, any further on, that I say aporia without knowing what it means. Can one be ephectic otherwise than unawares?

Aporia is the state of being unable to proceed, "without a way." It is also the literary and rhetorical technique of expressing doubt or difficulty; thus the sentence "How proceed? By aporia pure and simple?" is its own example of aporia. The alternative mode of progression, "affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered," also has a correspondent example of its use: "Otherwise it would be quite hopeless. But it is quite hopeless." This passage is made still funnier by the words "aporia" and "ephectic," which stand out against the relatively simple English of the paragraph: unless one has a monumental vocabulary, "aporia" will induce a kind of interpretive aporia in the reader, who will go forward unawares that "ephectic" means to go forward, ^{thus} giving a twist to The Unnamable's last question.

The text itself attempts to go forward, with only limited success:

The fact would seem to be, if in my situation one may speak of facts, not only that I shall have to speak of things of which I cannot speak, but also, which is even more interesting, but also that I, which is if possible even more interesting, that I shall have to, I forget, no matter. And at the same time be obliged to speak. I shall never be silent, Never.

This is deliciously transparent. The speaker, stalling for time, repeats a clause while searching for its apodosis; his repetitions heighten the reader's expectations of its importance; the sentence crests from its own rhetoric and collapses, anticlimactically.

The shuffling of words here is reminiscent of Molloy's manipulation of his sucking stones, or the switching of hats in Waiting for Godot; this is the comedy of predetermined motion and mathematical

permutation, and is not far from the comedy of paralysis which informs the entire trilogy. Like a pedantic Buster Keaton, nonplussed at the chaos of the last sentence, The Unnamable concludes: "And at the same time I am obliged to speak. I shall never be silent. Never."

In this way the first paragraph ends, and we may note that it represents the structure of the whole novel: interrogation and enigma, hypotheses set forward and explored, an unidentified speaker, aporia, contradiction, a dramatic climax remarkably empty of sense, and a conclusion to continue, followed immediately by silence. Yet what has the reader learned of this world? Remarkably little. The nouns are rather abstract: question, hypothesis, aporia, affirmation, negation, fact; characteristically, the most sensual detail is scatological: birdshit. A number of words related to place or condition appear (in, out, off, on, far), but the reader cannot determine precisely what these words modify. How different the sentences in this paragraph are from what Paul Valery called the prototypical first sentence of the novel: "The Duchess went out at five o'clock;" seven words which conjure up a world.¹⁹ In The Unnamable sentences simultaneously assert and retract themselves, cancelling communication even as they fill up page after page. We end as darkly as we began: Where? Who? When?

The self-annihilating sentences typical of the first paragraph fill the text. There are more logically impossible utterances. "What if we were one and the same after all, as he affirms and I deny?" (p. 315) The Unnamable enquires. Or again: "The problem of liberty too, as sure as fate, will come up for my consideration

at the pre-established moment" (p. 338). The problem of identifying the speaker becomes acute. "How do they speak to me thus? Is it possible certain things change on their passage through me, in a way they cannot prevent? Do they believe I believe it is I who am asking these questions? That's theirs too, a little distorted perhaps. (p. 346)

Opposites attract: "there it is, there is not a way" (p. 371); "the all of all, and the all of nothing, never in the happy golden, never, always, it's too much, too little, often, seldom, let me sum up" (p. 388). Rhetorical tones mix comically, and unsettlingly. "Carrish obscurity, to thy kennel, hell-hound! Grey. What else? Calm, calm, there must be something else" (p. 362). The Unnamable uses puns: "Innate knowledge of my mother, for example, is that conceivable?" (p. 297). The original meanings of "innate" and "conceivable" put pressure on their intended use in the sentence, and the surface question is deformed by the implicit answer given. There are those, says The Unnamable, "in search of a little cool, there are those whose sang-froid is such..." (p. 367); the doubling of "cool" and of "cold blood" adds irrelevant information, a kind of semantic static, to the sentence. These puns, juxtaposed opposites, and self-defeating utterances short-circuit the text by breaking down the necessary structural and semantic distinctions on which language depends. Deprived of these distinctions, the text may appear normal, even while it destroys communication.

The Unnamable resists conventions on multiple levels: it implodes sentences, aborts or circularizes narratives, neutralizes the symbolic code, and defies the generic conventions of point of view, plot, character, and world. As the novel spins in upon itself,

it dismisses all these structural supports until The Unnamable is left alone, with only his divided voice and his fear. These are not enough to sustain a piece of writing, and the minimal coherence of the text collapses. Condemned to speak, The Unnamable presses forward by any means at hand; principles of association replace laws of reason. He fixes on numbers:

the rough meaning of one expression in a thousand, in ten thousand, let us go on multiplying by ten, nothing more restful than arithmetic, in a hundred thousand, in a million...(p. 388)

or relies on form alone:

I resume, so long as, so long as, let me see, so long as one, so long as he, ah fuck all that, so long as this, then that, agree --, that's good enough, I nearly got stuck. (p. 399)

The Unnamable cannot even keep up with his own inventions, and tries to rationalize errors after the fact. "we're piled up in heaps, no, that won't work either, no matter, it's a deal, for him it's all over" (p. 380). But no phony divided voice can long assuage the permanent pain of disembodied consciousness which troubles The Unnamable. He treats the reader to a bitter parody of dramatic suspense:

with closed eyes I see the same as with them open, namely, wait, I'll say it, I'll try and say it, I'm curious to know what it can possibly be that I see, with closed eyes, with open eyes, nothing, "I see nothing, well that is a disappointment, I ~~was~~ hoping for something better than that, is that what it is to be unable to lose yourself, I'm asking myself a question...(p. 392)

The chaos and pain of the novel's last pages increase:

The Unnamable ends, appropriately, with contradiction and

confusion: "you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on."

III. Recuperation

Thus far, my analysis has placed me in a rather awkward position: on the one hand, I have spent twenty-seven pages analyzing the ways in which The Unnamable avoids meaning anything; on the other hand, I have made explicitly interpretive statements about the text. But what kind of methodological basis supports these critical evaluations? If The Unnamable is not merely senseless language (and if it were it would hardly be worth reading), we must establish what textual considerations allow us to create a context in which The Unnamable is meaningful. Two principal ^{CONSIDERATIONS} exist. First, the relation which The Unnamable bears to Molloy and Malone Dies sheds light on the way in which it should be read; second, both specific clues within the text and the overall rhetorical shape of The Unnamable give an emotional and thematic significance to the problems of language at hand. To demonstrate this, I must briefly recapitulate Molloy and Malone Dies.

Of the three novels, Molloy is most nearly traditional. It has a plot -- Molloy searches for his mother's home while the detective Moran unsuccessfully tracks him --, it has characters, and it takes place in a recognizable world: a few square miles of town and forest, strand and field. Yet if Molloy borrows its scenery from nature, it borrows little else. Hugh Kenner, for one, has detailed the debt that Molloy owes to works by James Joyce, John Bunyan, Dante, Homer, and the authors of The Bible; the text is a montage of citations, topical allusions, and structural reflections of earlier epic works.²⁰

Malone Dies has an overtly literary theme: the narrator is an ancient invalid writer who, while awaiting his death, composes fictions to while away the time and stave off self-reflection. Molloy, apparently, was one of his earlier creations; now Malone writes about a character named either Macmann or Saposcat. But this story falters and breaks, which anguishes Malone. His desire is to end story and life at the same moment; and in fact Malone's death and Macmann's release from a mental institution coincide temporally and thematically:

Lemuel is in charge, he raises his hatchet on which the blood will never dry, but not to hit anyone, he will not hit anyone, he will not hit anyone any more, he will not touch anyone any more, either with it or with it or with it or with or

or with it or with his hammer or with his stick or with his fist or in thought in dream I mean never he will never

or with his pencil or with his stick or

or light light I mean

never there he will never

never anything

there

anymore (p.288)

So Malone dies, and with him his fictions: no pencil or stick will ever trouble Macmann again. Malone Dies is a novel about its narrator's ambivalent relationship to words and stories; unable to keep silent, Malone can neither tell tales which are completely fictional nor truly about himself. As shown by the novel's end, quoted above, death is hypostasized as the breakdown of language; in fact, J.D. O'Hara believes that Malone's death is probably confirmed by the grammatical imperfection of the novel's last sentence.²¹ Like Molloy, Malone Dies makes frequent reference to

other fictions; Descartes, Defoe and ~~the~~ Bible figure prominently.

All three novels are narrated by increasingly immobile narrators, usually confined to a room. Each bewails his inability to tell stories, and heaps abuse upon language. "I don't know, that's all just words" (p. 414) The Unnamable cries; "There's no use indicting words," Malone says, "they're no shabbier than what they peddle."²² Even Molloy believes that "there could be no things but nameless things, no names but thingless names."²³ Malone, for obvious reasons, knows of Molloy and Moran; The Unnamable refers to Malone, Molloy, Murphy, and the rest of Beckett's earlier protagonists. Facts like these have led a number of critics to postulate a chronological and psychological progression from novel to novel; as Eugene Kaelin puts it, "The Unnamable [?] the condition of Molloy who subsequently became Malone in order to die and achieve the status of a completed essence."²⁴

Yet curiously, suspiciously, Molloy knows that two more stories will follow his own. "So you say that I'll manage this time, then perhaps once more, then perhaps a last time, then nothing more" (p. 2). Again, "this will be the last but one but one" (p. 75). Malone calls his dwelling "this second-last abode" (p. 214). And while The Unnamable supposedly speaks in extemporaneous invention, he remarks very early on that "this represents at least a thousand words I hadn't counted on" (p. 296), and hurries to finish his "preamble" and "exordia" (p. 302). The implication seems to be that this endless monologue ought to have some shape and internal progression. Comments like these, when considered along with the multiple similarities in narration and theme,

suggest that instead of positing a chronological progression between the narrators, we ought to postulate a thematic progression between novels. Molloy, with its continuous structural allusions to epic works -- The Odyssey, Ulysses, Pilgrim's Progress, The Divine Comedy -- is the last, ironic, epic in Western civilization. Malone Dies explores the ambivalent relationship between an author and his works. The Unnamable, finally, exposes the problematic nature of language itself, with all its inherent weaknesses set in relief. This reading would elucidate a curious passage in The Unnamable:

But may not this screen...in reality be the enclosure wall, as compact as lead? To elucidate this point I would need a stick or pole, and the means of plying it, the former being of little avail without the latter. I could also do, incidentally, with future and conditional participles. (p. 300)

The reference to a pole should remind us of the stick by which Malone retrieved and replaced objects in his room; The Unnamable's wish for a participle as if it were an object may strike us as strange until we realize that the participle works for The Unnamable as the stick did for Malone, as a means of exploring his surroundings; the world of The Unnamable is one compounded only of words and understood only ^{through} words.

By adopting the notion of a single narrative consciousness responsible for the entire trilogy, we can better account for the rhetorical shape of The Unnamable. Michael Robinson contends that The Unnamable does not really end, but merely breaks off; typographically; the monologue of The Unnamable continues beyond the page, perhaps to infinity.²⁵ Yet such a conclusion seems to be belied by the high degree of patterning found in the novel's

closing pages. The Unnamable thinks that "if I could put myself in a room, that would be the end of the wordy-gurdy" (p. 399), and we remember that Molloy, Moran and Malone had rooms. "You try the sea, you try the town, you look for yourself in the mountains, and the plains" (p. 400), he says, and in a sentence encapsulates Molloy's travels. He wishes he were "in a forest, caught in a thicket, or wandering around in circles" (p. 399). Molloy struggled long in the thickets of a forest, and consciously attempted to go in circles, in the typically Beckettian belief that this would ensure his linear progress. Now the silence which The Unnamable sought in his preamble again becomes important. "Speak of the silence, before going into it" (p. 407) he tells himself; this is "the end, the ending end, it's the silence...the real silence... I want to go silent, it wants to go silent" (p. 408). Terminal images from throughout the text recrudescence:

try again, with the words that remain...to have them carry me into my story...my old story...through the door, into the silence...it's the last words, the true last, or it's the murmurs, the murmurs are coming...the silence...it will be I, you must go on...you must say words...it will be the silence...where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence...(pp. 413-414)

There is a hypothesis -- "if the door opens, it will be I, it will be silence" (p. 414) -- and three lines later, the novel ends.

Contrary to Robinson's assertion, the narrative consciousness behind the trilogy knows that to end the novel (and the trilogy) by arbitrarily cutting off the discourse would be utterly unsatisfying to the reader. Chaotic as it may seem, the ending is a highly controlled performance, designed to bring everything to a proper climax and close. The prose rushes on in a flurry of short, breathy clauses, almost never stopping for a period. Central

images from Molloy and Malone Dies appear. Terminal themes and images -- those of end, beginning, story, self, and silence -- appear with great frequency, and for once are homologously linked: "perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door...if it opens it will be I, it will be the silence" (p. 414). The symbolic code now works; and the cumulative effect of these figures of the coming silence, coupled with the frantic prosody, induce in the reader a tremendous anxiety for closure, even as the inexhaustible sentences, the epidemic of commas and the multiplication of subjects stalls time, creating in the reader the exact sense of motionless, disjointed, endless time from which The Unnamable suffers. The Unnamable's last sentence is over 1500 words long; the reader, unbearably suspended, feels that the novel must end -- and with a rush is swept on into the silence.

The story ends; but is this the true, the lasting silence? Evidence from the text is ambivalent; Beckett, the great equivocator, is too great an artist to let the issue be decided either way. But note that the rhetorical climax and repetition of themes and symbols drawn from the trilogy as a whole ensure the reader's participation and emotional involvement with the text. Through the suspension afforded by the hypothesis of silence, the narrative consciousness achieves a satisfying formal closure while preserving the interpretive indeterminacy of the text; all themes coalesce into a final enigma, and that enigma opens onto the void.

IV. Conclusion

As Iser has noted, there are a number of fruitful approaches one may take to The Unnamable; his own essay on the self-cancelling nature of identity in the trilogy is brilliant.²⁶ So too, Allen Thither's article on Wittgenstein, Heidegger and The Unnamable shows that Beckett's text acutely poses questions of perception, self-perception and identity in ways also raised by the two philosophers.²⁷ Yet most criticism of The Unnamable has been thoroughly mediocre, because it fails to acknowledge how problematic the language of the text is. The concern of my thesis has not been to offer a full-scale interpretation of what the text means, but to clarify how the text means, the ways in which Beckett's language defaults, and the ways in which the reader may restructure it. In the process I have employed a rather eclectic methodology, touching on structuralism, poststructuralism, and phenomenological analysis whenever these methods seemed to shed light on the self-cancelling text.

In the process I have oversimplified The Unnamable for the necessary reason that it is not a completely recuperable work. There simply is no single way of treating the text that will not be forced to omit or ignore other parts of the work that are contradictory and recalcitrant. Midway through the book The Unnamable declares that he wishes "to be admitted to the peace where he neither is nor is not, and where the language dies that permits of such expressions" (p. 349). We may put aside the question of whether or not The Unnamable attains his silent peace; but from reading The Unnamable we know that there can be ^{no} language without forms, no words that are not partial and

public and unrepresentative of the self. The more The Unnamable approaches a language which does not admit of yes or no, the less we are able to read it; and the less we can read it, the more we are forced to rewrite it ourselves.

ENDNOTES

Epigraph: Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 160.

¹For an excellent critical summary of structuralist approaches to literature, see Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics (cited above). Culler consolidates and clarifies work being done by a great number of theorists, including Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Gerard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov, and Julia Kristeva, among others.

²Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable (in Three Novels Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable) (New York: Grove Press, 1958), pp. 291-414. All references are to this edition and are hereafter given in parentheses following the quotation.

³ For examples of this sort of criticism, see Eugene Kaelin, The Unhappy Consciousness (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 87-115; Eugene Webb, Samuel Beckett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), pp. 82-88, 113-127; Allen Thither, "Heidegger, Wittgenstein, The Unnamable and Some Thoughts on Voice in Recent Fiction," in Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives edited by Morris Beja, et al, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), pp. 72-89

⁴Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 176.

⁵Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Kermode puts forward this idea throughout the book; however, a particularly detailed can be found on pp. 54-67.

⁶Iser, p. 177.

⁷Culler, p. 189.

⁸Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), p. 35

⁹Judith Dearlove, "Syntax Upended in Opposite Corners" in Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives (cited above), pp. 122-129.

¹⁰Barthes, p. 19.

¹¹Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Judgment Trans. by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928)p. 117.

ENDNOTES (Continued)

¹²Barthes, p. 30.

¹³Emile Benveniste, Problems in General Linguistics (Miami: University of Miami, 1970); quoted by Culler, p. 197.

¹⁴John Fletcher, The Novels of Samuel Beckett (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), pp. 179-194; Webb, pp. 113-127.

¹⁵Franco Fanizza, "The Word and Silence in Samuel Beckett's The Unnamable" in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Molloy Malone Dies, The Unnamable, J.D. O'Hara, ed., (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Incorporated, 1970), p. 78.

¹⁶Culler, p. 225.

¹⁷This sounds reductive because of the necessary limitations of space; structural interpretations can be very supple and sensitive to the text, although structural critics have often been very heavy-handed in their treatment of an individual author's style. One critic who is not is Charles Segal; see below.

¹⁸This analysis is taken primarily from Charles Segal's chapter on Oedipus Rex in his book Tragedy and Civilization (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). His chapter on structural approaches to Greek myth and tragedy is a model of the way in which critical tools drawn from structuralism can work hand-in-hand with more traditional modes of interpretation, to their mutual benefit. Tragedy and Civilization grew out of the Martin Classical Lectures given here in 1974.

¹⁹Paul Valery, quoted by Culler, p. 214.

²¹Hugh Kenner, Samuel Beckett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 60-68.

²²Samuel Beckett, Malone Dies (New York: Grove Press, 1956). All references are to this edition and are hereafter given in parentheses following the quotation.

²³Samuel Beckett, Molloy (New York: Grove Press, 1955). All references are to this edition and are hereafter given in parentheses following the quotation.

²⁵Michael Robinson, The Long Sonata of the Dead (New York: Grove Press, 1969), p. 202.

²⁴Kaelin, p. 87).

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²⁶Iser, (cited above).

²⁷Thither, (cited above).

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