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THE IDEA OF THE INEFFABLE IN SAMUEL BECKETT

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The Idea of the Ineffable in Samuel Beckett

Samuel Beckett'te İfade Edilemezlik

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ABSTRACT

THE IDEA OF THE INEFFABLE IN SAMUEL BECKETT

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Samuel Beckett's work involves a constant search and experiment for a new form of literature, which he refers to as "the literature of the unword." With Beckett, the classical forms of fictional narrative, that is telling a story which contains an introduction, middle, and conclusion, is utterly disregarded. He also radically alters the rules of playwriting dating back to the times of Aristotle. His unconventional literary form revealed that storytelling is not just about delivering messages or bringing memories alive, but rather persistently exploring the fundamental human quest for meaning. For Beckett, the literary artist should address the inability to know as well as the inability to express. Thus, his aesthetic stance turned to a state of failure, which says incessantly nothing to get to the nothingness by refusing the power of meaning behind the words. To Beckett, the other aim of "the literature of the unword" is to reveal silence through noise. This thesis examines how he apprehends silence with words even though words by default carry voice and meaning. In addition, this thesis analyses how Beckett finds a way toward a "nonrepresentative literature" and how he liberates it from the conventional requirements of language by dissolving grammar, style, and storytelling in a very radical way by "-eff'ing the ineffable."

Keywords: Samuel Beckett, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Literature of the Unword, Silence, Negation, Ineffable

ÖZET

SAMUEL BECKETT'TE İFADE EDİLEMEZLİK

Aydın, İrem

Kültürel İncelemeler Bölümü

Danışman: Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Zeynep Talay Turner

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Samuel Beckett'in eserleri, kendisinin "sözsüzlüğün edebiyatı" olarak adlandırdığı, yeni bir edebiyat formu için, sürekli bir arayış ve denemeler içerir. Beckett ile birlikte, kurmaca ve hikâye anlatımının klasik formu olan giriş, gelişme ve sonuç tamamen göz ardı edilmiştir. Beckett ayrıca, kökleri Aristoteles'e dayanan oyun yazımının kurallarını kökten değiştirmiştir. Onun bu alışılagelmedik edebi girişimi, hikâye anlatımının sadece belirli bir mesajı iletmekten ya da hatıralardan bahsetmekten ibaret olmadığını ortaya çıkardı. Aksine, hikâye anlatımı, ısrarcı bir şekilde, sürekli bir arayış içerisinde olan insanlığın temel yapısını araştırmalıdır. Beckett'e göre bir yazar bilmenin yetersizliğini n yanı sıra ifade etmenin de imkânsızlığını dile getirmelidir. Bu yüzden Becket'in estetik anlayışı kelimelerin arkasındaki gücü reddederek ve sürekli hiçlikten bahsederek hiçsizliğe ulaşan bir yenilgi durumuna evrilmiştir. Ona göre, "sözsüzlüğün edebiyatı"nın bir diğer amacı da gürültü ile sessizliği ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu tez ile birlikte, Beckett'in içerdikleri sese rağmen kelimelerle sessizliği nasıl yorumladığını, temsil yeteneği olmayan bir edebiyata nasıl ulaştığını, ifade edilemez olanın sınırlarını zorlayarak dilin gereklilikleri olan gramer, biçem ve anlatıyı nasıl bozduğunu inceleyeceğiz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Samuel Beckett, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Sözsüzlüğün Edebiyatı, Sessizlik, İnkâr, İfade edilemeyen.

Introduction

The idea of the ineffable is an important theme in the twentieth century avant-garde novel. This theme can be regarded as one response to the questions of what the limits of language along with the limits of philosophy are. It is a discussion that occupied some thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This discussion also goes hand in hand with the question of whether there are limits to philosophy and language, and what we have beyond these limits. For Wittgenstein, that cannot be said, needs to be met with silence (Wittgenstein, 2010, p. 90). But some philosophers, such as Nietzsche and Derrida, did not choose silence, and thought that beyond conceptuality there is not silence but metaphors, similes, parodies and other literary devices. Besides these philosophers, some writers also thought that what cannot be said needs to be said via literature. Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, Maurice Blanchot, and Jean Paul Sartre are some examples who attempted to say something in the face of the unsayable via the language of literature. It is known that both Sartre and Musil are philosophers who also chose to express themselves with novels instead of the language of philosophy. On the other hand, Kafka is known for his metaphors. Beckett goes even further as he managed to keep silent with the excess of words which he calls "the literature of the unword". For him, neither metaphors, nor similes, nor parodies can say the unsayable but there is a lot to say. His language is formed by excessive word usage as well as many repetitions. To express himself, he brought a new possibility to literature by reducing story-telling to its basic features, to its bare margin and by renouncing all the crucial characteristics of prose, poem and play writing. He tried to reach almost all his life to the ultimate deprivation and reduction of linguistic possibilities as he was aware of the inadequacy of words to express himself as he wished. Besides his mother tongue English, having an exceptional command of French, German, Italian, and Latin helped Beckett to

become familiar, or let us to say more than a familiarity, with a wide range of literary texts, specifically with the European canon. It is known that there are many references to many great writers of European literature especially to Shakespeare and Dante, in his books. His work has set the example of writing whose function is not just to express or communicate, but to force something beyond language, and in this case, Beckett's work can be read in Roland Barthes' 'the zero degree of writing' notion as he explains it: "(…) Literature, having tended for a hundred years now to transmute its surface into a form with no antecedents could no longer find purity anywhere but in the absence of all signs, finally proposing the realization of this Orphean dream: a writer without Literature." (Barthes, 1970, p. 5) Beckett not only changed our understanding of storytelling but also showed that literature may be the best tool to express human beings, even though what is there to express is inexpressible.

In order to understand Beckett's idea of 'the literature of the unword', we need to delve into his life in detail because Beckett's thinking can only be understood against the social, political and intellectual environment which he was involved in. Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) who was born in Dublin is an Irish avant-garde writer, dramatist and poet. Beckett lived in Paris for most of his life and has been regarded as one of most original writers of modern times. He wrote his books both in French and English and kept writing until his last days when he composed documents for radio and television as well.

As Esslin points out (1991), Beckett studied at Trinity College and graduated in 1927 with Bachelor of Arts degree, then through a traditional exchange of lecturers program, he became an instructor at Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. There he met James Joyce, the famous Irish poet-novelist, whose works had a considerable impact on him, most remarkably in his early writings. (p. 30) It is difficult to conceive a community in history like Paris in the 1920s, which brought together a mixture of

many new cultural movements, not to mention intellectuals, artists and political associations. Briefly, the exceptional human geniuses from all over the world, all committed to reestablishing every feature of life, in the name of modernity. Modernism is a term employed to refer to many avant-garde and experimental tendencies in literature and in different art forms in the beginning of twentieth century: Symbolism, Dadaism, Imagism, Expressionism, Futurism and many others to count. Most of the writers at that time likely to identify themselves as avant-garde, insulated from materialistic and conventional values, and they rather employ obscure and complex styles to confuse their reader's mind. For instance, Surrealism was a cultural movement and a stepping stone in experimentation, which demands from artists attracting attention to the importance of tearing down social as well as aesthetic conventions. The further purpose of Surrealism was more political since the adherents of this movement thought emancipating society from the current circumstances is their duty. Avant-garde, particularly in literature, was all about giving up with the existing, conventional rules in any kind of literary writing, forcing the boundaries and limits of language to express itself in an uncommon way. Avant-garde writers to do so because they thought that reality and human experience cannot easily be conceptualized and expressed in language and the more we attempt to do so, the more we lose it. Therefore the problem is not trying to talk about such matters but attempting to conceptualize the unconceptualizable.

At this point in time, Beckett was more interested in learning rather than telling his own opinions. However, it is possible to name two acquaintances who influenced Beckett, and, from an artistic point of view, identified his time in Paris remarkable. They were Alfred Peron, who later would involve Beckett in the Resistance, and Thomas McGreevy an Irish poet and art critic, who was to introduce him to James Joyce. When Beckett moved to Paris the notion of avant-garde was already politically charged. At least since 1926, Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon, Andre Breton and many others were the members of the Communist Party. The Surrealists had announced

their manifesto and *La Révolution surréaliste* began publication and posed the famous question, '*What hope do you place in love?*' It was succeeded by a new journal, as the Surrealists split into competing groups where they became more strictly political, with an important name change: *La Surrealisme au service de la revolution*. Esslin depicts the scene in Paris:

> As a powerhouse of the modern movement, Paris is an international rather than a merely French center: it acts as a magnet attracting artists of all nationalities who are in search of freedom to work and to live nonconformist lives unhampered by the need to look over their shoulder to see whether their neighbors are shocked. That is the secret of Paris as the capital of the world's individualists: here, in a world of cafés and small hotels, it is possible to live easily and unmolested. (Esslin, 1991, p. 26)

By 1940's, Salvador Dali, Piet Mondrian, T. S Elliot, Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Wassily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, Tristan Tzara, Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce and many other artists from different countries were in Paris to build the modern development both in arts and literature. Equally essential, Paris also had a very brilliant theater-going community, which was welcoming, caring and ambitious to follow new developments in the field.

Anthony Cronin, on the other hand, suggests that Beckett was more into improving his style by learning some tips from his masters, and writing critics on literature rather than contributing to create new forms and styles as he was very young at that time:

Of course, much of what was going on in Paris passed Beckett by, for three principal reasons. The first was his youth and relative lack of sophistication. The second was that he had a fruitful talent for allowing things to pass him by; and the third that in spite of his knowledge of the French language and his interest in French literature he was drawn almost immediately into the circle surrounding James Joyce and therefore into an expatriate and, on the whole, Anglophone rather than into a French or francophone scheme of things. (Cronin, 1999, p. 83)

Although things were rapidly happening in the name of art and modernity around Paris, where many other artists were trying to come up with new ideas, in the field of literature, the two novelists who most influenced Beckett were Marcel Proust and James Joyce.

James Joyce was one of the most important writers in the community which Beckett was living in, and he was, just like Beckett, an Irish man who chose to live in Paris. Before they met Beckett already knew about him and soon after they met, they became very close friends. In the meantime Beckett's admiration thrived notably since he found Joyce's style of expression absolutely ground breaking. Marcel Proust, on the other hand, was a French writer better known for the series *In Search of Lost Time* (1908), and Beckett had studied an article about his exceptional style. Although there are many more names to be acknowledged, taking into consideration the fact that Beckett was a life-long and avid reader, James Joyce and Marcel Proust are the most influential figures on Beckett. So, we will mostly refer to Joyce and Proust in the first chapter entitled Form and Content.

When you look through Beckett's works retrospectively, it seems that young Beckett was in a search of his artistic style which was constantly failing when trying to find

its ultimate form. While he was growing older his works in literary critics became noticeably consistent with his own writings. There is a reason why he was named as the 'master of failure', because Beckett could be able to employ 'failure' as an artistic tool of his.

As he radically tore down all the forms and styles in conventional play and prose writing, he became one of the most important and innovative writers in his time. All the works of Samuel Beckett, especially his later works are a constant search to find a new form of literature, which he calls the "literature of the unword." After Beckett, not only the classical forms of fictional narrative, of telling story either in a poem or in a play transformed, but also a generation's understanding of language was reshaped. His unconventional literary experiment to look for new methods and forms never stopped; nor his attempt to invent a new language with which creating meaning with words would be possible. Indeed, his main questions were: how can words construct meaning? And if there is no meaning, how can a literary artist survive this meaninglessness?

For Beckett, the literary artist should express the inability to know as well as the inability to express. Thus, his aesthetic attitude developed into a state of failure that says incessantly nothing to get to the nothingness and refuses the power of meaning behind the words. The other aim of his ambition regarding 'the literature of the unword' is to reveal silence through noise. In this dissertation I aim to show how Beckett interpreted silence through words even though they carry the voice in themselves; how he found a way toward a 'nonrepresentative literature'; and how he dissolved language's requirements by dissolving grammar, style and story making in a very radical way by -eff'ing the ineffable.

In the first chapter, entitled Form and Content, I will examine Beckett's interpretations of the established rules of conventional literature in prose, poem and

play writing. To understand his contributions to literature and his linguistic explorations, I will continue to look how he built his works' content in a very reformative way. This requires a dialogue with some philosophers and thinkers who wrote about the relationship between form and content. In the second chapter entitled The Idea of the Ineffable in Beckett, I will proceed by exploring his works, as well as his personal and social life by considering the time he was living in, and the people who inspired him. I will do this by focusing his approach to expression or the impossibility of it and the notion of the ineffable. In this chapter, Wittgenstein's, Nietzsche's and Schopenhauer's ideas on literature in general and the idea of the inexpressible in particular will shed light on our search. Here we will see that Beckett's idea of the ineffable is also a problematization of the quest for an integrated self, a notion of the self which requires a structured language. I will mostly focus on Beckett's later prose works and plays with the help of his early critics in literature. In this dissertation, my other aim is to highlight his contributions to literature, especially the idea of the inexpressible, the nonrepresentable and the ineffable. In order to have a more comprehensible understanding of Beckett, in the final section of this chapter, I will look at the reception of Beckett and some interpretations of his works.

Interpretation, as stated by Nietzsche, is a highly personal and creative practice because people tend to derive meanings from their own acts: "interpretation of a formula at least is personal, even if it does not create a formula; as an interpreter, the individual is still creative." (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 403) So as to make my interpretation creative, I will look at the very content of his writings that developed in accordance with his distinctive style. The main theme of this thesis, therefore, is Beckett's aestheticism, his reliance on a specific artistic attitude to explain the world from his point of view.

CHAPTER 1: FORM AND CONTENT

1.1. Form and Content in Samuel Beckett

James Joyce was one of the most influential writers and an acclaimed author with his narrative innovations in the early twentieth century. Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) is considered by many scholars to be a literary masterpiece and one of the hardest works to read in contemporary literature. It is also accepted as a distinguished example of stream of consciousness in modern literature, thanks to its intense experimentation, imaginary world and ambiguousness. *Finnegans Wake* (1939), which Beckett helped Joyce to write, was even more incomprehensible and obscure. It also has an indirect style of narration which was considered in its time as a literary innovation by many critics. As the assistant and friend of Joyce, the twenty-three-year old Beckett, published an essay titled 'Dante...Bruno.Vico...Joyce' (1929) to show his support for Joyce's extraordinary work. Beckett's essay is significant for our exploration as he appreciated Joyce's work's fusion of form and content, and criticized the ordinary readers who demanded to read fluent and easy texts. He claimed that,

> Here is direct expression – pages and pages of it. And if you don't understand it, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is because you are too decadent to receive it. You are not satisfied unless form is so strictly divorced from content that you can comprehend the one almost without bothering to read the other. This rapid skimming and absorption of the scant cream of sense is made possible by what I may call a continuous process of copious intellectual salivation. The form that is an arbitrary and independent phenomenon can fulfill no higher

function than that of stimulus for a tertiary or quartary conditioned reflex of dribbling comprehension. (Beckett, 2001, p. 26)

Even though Beckett had an unproved talent at that time, considering his age, he was certainly an exceptional critic, and an enthusiastic writer who was trying to find his artistic manner in literature. The role of Joyce's influence and guidance in his literary development cannot be ignored.

The other novelist whom Beckett admired and by whom he was inspired is the French writer Marcel Proust. Beckett wrote and published two important pieces of criticism on the novels of Proust and the paintings of Bram Van Velde. His criticism of Joyce and Proust illustrates his eagerness to find a new form of style. Beckett shares the same distaste with Proust for literature and explains it as: "for the realists and naturalists worshipping the offal of experience, prostrate before the epidermis and the swift epilepsy, and content to transcribe the surface, the façade, behind which the Idea is prisoner." (Beckett, 1987, p. 78-79) He would rather prefer the impressionistic method of Proust whereby the form contemplates the world independently of reason. *The Dialogue* (1987) is very significant in determining Beckett's view on art and language as it outlines his aesthetic position in literature. In the first part of the dialogue, he says: "The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." (Beckett & Duthuit, 1987, p. 103) Although he was very inexperienced when he was asserting all these, we can see that, even at that time he found words inefficient to express his thoughts fully. Yet this challenge was not dissuasive for him as he kept trying to express even though he failed to express many times. After a while the theme of failure became very important to him since he constantly employed failure as an artistic tool: "'I'm not interested in stories of success', Beckett snapped, 'only failure'." (Bair, 1990, p. 370) Beckett's noticeable interest in failing would soon make him known as "the master of failure".

Beckett seems to expect nothing but silence from an artist, but we know that he himself surely has never got silent. As he believes that there is no singular type of human being, expression of the self can never have the right words to define; thus that leads the artist to the very destination of failure. Thereby, like his desolated characters, Beckett's quest led him to revisit the regression, the origin, the nothing. In *The Unnamable* (1953) he tries to represent his idea of the self: "Yes, in my life, since we must call it so, there were three things, the inability to speak, the inability to be silent, and solitude, that's what I've had to make the best of." (Beckett, 2009a, p. 389) Here we can deduce that, as a writer, Beckett defines his understanding of art as a glorification of solitude.

His search for a new form of literature forced him to write even though there was nothing to write, nothing to speak of as they do not mean anything and this dilemma can be seen in every play and novel by him. In 'From Dread to Language', Maurice Blanchot suggests that: "The writer finds himself in this more and more comical position of having nothing to write, of having no means of writing it, and of being forced by an extreme necessity to keep writing it." (Blanchot, 1995, p. 47) Yet, the literature of the unword is not out of this world, but it is the world itself: it is a new form that appears, to be able to speak, when nothing exists. Considering Beckett's work, Theodor Adorno suggests in his essay 'Trying to Understand Endgame' that, "not meaning anything becomes the only meaning." (Adorno, 1982, p. 137) As for Beckett, "nothing is more real than nothing" (Beckett, 2009, p. 186), and to him nothing is of enormous importance which the artist is obliged to express in his/her work. He suggests that it is important "to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it [language]" by undoing and by refusing the power of the meaning behind words.

Rather than conventional rules (plot, characterization, unity), he searched for possible new ways by realizing that traditional literature is expressing its own impossibility of

expression and has many restrictive rules to come up with new ideas. In a sense, his quest can be called, among many other possibilities, *via negativa*, which is known as, rather than telling what is meant by describing it, trying to clarify it by explaining what it is not. His innovative intention reveals itself in a letter that he wrote to his friend Axel Kaun in 1937, in which he complains about his mother language and its outcomes: "And more and more my own language appears to me like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at things (or the Nothingness) behind it. Grammar and Style. To me they seem to have become as irrelevant as a Victorian bathing suit or the imperturbability of a true Gentleman. A mask." (Beckett, 2001, p. 171) This exposes his distrust of the materials of creative writing, language and form. His creative evolution showed us how his works gradually disintegrated from the traditional art form, as he found this disintegration fundamental in order to create a unique aesthetic style.

Beckett's works transmit their very meanings through their very forms, very styles. His style is therefore fundamental to our interpretations of his work, and they are, once again, in a strict sense identical with the content of his form. In the period of his life, mainly under the influence of the turmoil which covered most of Europe, Beckett seems to have thought that there are some things, that is to say, some undefinable truths, concerning the then situation of the human being. It seems that he denies that these facts could ever be accurately expressed through the reasonable language. After witnessing all the deaths and murders of millions of innocent human beings, people in Europe started to question the meaning of their existence and this led to a massive confusion. This questioning put people in an inconvenient position in the world where religion and reason remained incapable of responding to and making reasonable explanations for their questions and people became hopeless and disenchanted.

It is important to note that Beckett was very good at interpreting the human condition after the war by adopting an exceptional literary style. Beckett conducted such an important performance where he basically impaired the traditional understanding of storytelling. To recognize Beckett's revolutionary style in literature, we need to find out how he managed to detach himself from the essential standards of storytelling, especially of plays in their classical form. Yet, before exploring Beckett's style we must first look how the content and form considered an important subject in literature through time.

1.2 Form and Content in History

In *Poetics* Aristotle says, "Every tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality – namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Song." (Aristotle, 1997, p. 11) Among them, he claims that plot is the most essential aspect of tragedies as it builds the unity of action and must be completed coherently with the middle and the end. According to this, a good tragedy requires a rationally constructed plot. Aristotle continues: "Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents mainly with a view to the action." (Aristotle, 1997, p. 26) Thought, on the other hand, is also a very important component: "Thought is required wherever a statement proved or, it may be, a general truth enunciated." (Aristotle, 1997, p. 11) In fact, he determined his rules upon drama and tragedy, attributing a great importance of action. According to him, a tragedy should consist of actions and without an action, he asserts, there cannot be a tragedy. Finally, for him, the ideal tragedy should: "(…) be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan. It should, moreover, imitate actions, which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation." (Aristotle, 1997, p. 22) As we will see, Beckett's position is contrary to all these given rules that still have an impact on our modern understanding of literary writing.

Throughout his career, Beckett developed a remarkably distinctive understanding of tragedy, deviating systematically from the dramatic conventions outlined in *Poetics*, which glorified the notion of plot. Beckett's works, however, include gaps that cannot be accounted for in Aristotle's formation of tragedy, which confers value to logical story developing and precisely time-wise linear formation. Beckett hinders, and eventually destroys the cause-effect order that originates in the Aristotelian plot. The "organized meaninglessness" (Adorno, 1982, p. 120) of Beckett's works have paved the new way to the project of the dissolution of language. He challenged the so-called harmony between form and content, but only to replace it with another harmony: the fragmented and formless reality and self which requires a fragmented and formless language. From the first years of his life he stood against the conventional idea that separates form and content from each other. As an opponent of this ongoing regulation, Beckett rather suggested that it is not possible to detach the meaning of an art work from the artist's presentation of content and form. It is absolutely because the art work has its meaning in its totality. What is said in it is firmly linked to its particular structure and artistic statement, which cannot be said in any other way. His perspective on this particular point is related to his admiration of Joyce's work. He defended Joyce's literary experimentations since he believed something should be done in the name of literary innovation. His defense of Joyce's work ('Dante...Bruno.Vico...Joyce'), which consisted of Beckett's observation on Joyce's technique on writing, the justification that he made for a new literary style, outlines the particular stance he tried to reach throughout his career.

Beckett's dissolution of form and content is achieved through the repetition of his characters, as for him repetition produces dissonance: "In this dissonance between the means and their use it will perhaps become possible to feel a whisper of that final music or that underlies All" (Beckett, 2001 p. 172), in other words, a dissonance between the materiality and the ideality of words themselves. Accordingly, words only exist in their basic form and meaning loses its capacity to mean and eventually

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meaning surrenders to the process of its own exhaustion. Beckett's characters' incapacity to move beyond empty sentences and the exhaustion of the denotative function of language forces his readers to reside in a liminal area. As a result, characters, readers and spectators become a tympanum, as the voice in *The Unnamable* (2009) tells:

> … I'll have said it inside me, then in the same breath outside me, perhaps that's what I feel, an outside and an inside and me in the middle, 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, that can be as thin as foil, I'm neither one side nor the other, I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either. (Beckett, 2009a, p. 373)

In that in-between space, form and content, structure, integrity and meaning collapse on each other, and thus become identical. This shows us Beckett's highly clever idiosyncratic deviation from the expectations of tragedy writing. It may make no sense, at first, if a writer fashions his poetics with a style that is made of repetitions and self-contradictions. However it is not possible either to infer that Beckett's works present the same story only by repeating themselves. Beckett avoided meaning on purpose as he was aware that words are useless tools to create meaning, so that, he used meaningless words and repetition to fail in making meaning even though a literary artist is expected to create meanings. Yet, it is the very basis of his style, which is supposed to be understood, or not be understood and accepted as such, by its own repetitive patterns that attempt to say nothing and after all, finally say nothing. These unique components of his works are the very contributions of Beckett's literary aesthetic. Therefore, if a single component is removed from his works, as they are the

artistic figures of their author, that time it would make no sense as a whole. His aestheticism results from his effort to bring a style into the centre of his own works. He develops a particular style, which arises from the interaction of what he writes and how he writes it and which therefore deliberately blur the distinction between the form and the content of his work. His manner of writing, therefore, is not an invitation to interpret him in an unending number of ways, but an instant warning by him to convince us to accept it as it is.

Beckett can be compared to Nietzsche in his attempt to deform and reform the conventional rules in literary work. T.S. Elliot's distinctive analysis shows us that the 'literary' quality of Nietzsche's writing cannot be separated from the 'philosophical' background of his thought: "Nietzsche is one of those writers whose philosophy evaporates when detached from its literary qualities, and whose literature owes its charm not alone to the personality and wisdom of the man, but to a claim to scientific truth." (Elliot, 1915, p. 426) This also refers to Beckett's thought of form and content as he also argued that they are inseparable.

As a philosophical literary artist, Nietzsche was also on a quest for a new form to make meaning with words. Although he is known as a philosopher, we should not forget that he was also a philologist, who was aware of the word's potentiality on the one hand its impotency on the other to create meanings. Nietzsche thinks that tragedy can affirm the definite truth since the basic form of the world has no systematic structure and because for him the world is in a state of turmoil, with no rules to follow.

> 'What is the mark of every literary decadence?' Nietzsche writes. That life no longer resides in the whole. The word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence, the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page, and the page comes to life at that expense of the whole the whole is no longer a whole. This, however, is the simile of

every style of decadence: every time there is an anarchy of atoms (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 72).

The time when Beckett was living is parallel to Europe's most chaotic situation due to the Second World War. Because of this experience that Beckett and others went through, we should take into consideration his life conditions, in order to discover how he found an outlet for his traumatic experience which seems to have triggered his painful repetitions. It can be suggested that Beckett shared the sadness and pains of his contemporaries. Indeed, even in his childhood he was feeling the same way, as he stated himself "I had little talent for happiness." (Bair, 1990, p. 22) His fear of injustice revealed itself through his political attitude as well as his aesthetic style. By looking at Beckett's style in prose, play and poetry, we will continue to examine his understanding parallel to Nietzsche's.

Jacques Derrida in his book *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* (1978) emphasizes the importance of style and until him, style was widely thought as a kind of a supplementary feature of any philosophical presentation and considered to be an unstable form that can interfere our understanding of the things as well as the sense of philosophical conveyance. Derrida's enterprise constitutes an objection to the "logocentric" idea of philosophy, which was originated by Plato. This logocentric idea of Plato puts reason (logos) in a primary position and speaking is considered to be an original signifier of it where writing is thought to be a copy that hardly signifies the truth. For Plato, speaking is a more convenient way of conveying truth than writing and, as a result, he favors speaking over writing. Derrida, on the other hand, criticizes Plato's system because he finds this structure too hierarchical and changes the order by asserting that writing is more convenient than speaking.

Derrida claims that Nietzsche has many styles, not just one style as he claims "(…) if there is going to be style, there can only be more than one." (Derrida, 1979, p. 139)

Alexander Nehamas responds to Derrida's comment on style as: "This statement recalls the fact that in order to identify an author's style, we must distinguish it from the style of at least one other, and this may suggest that there is no such thing as style but only, so to speak, a difference between various texts." (Nehamas, 1999, p.17) Derrida, also refers to the notion of the fragment in order to understand Nietzsche's main idea. "The concept of fragment, however, since its fracturedness is itself an appeal to some totalizing complement, is no longer sufficient here." (Derrida, 1979, p. 125) According to Derrida, Nietzsche's sentences are undoubtedly inconsistent as a whole if we are to define a style from them. As style depends on consistency of language and as in this case it is not consistent, one still lacks the capacity to suggest an interpretation of it. Furthermore, there is one more similarity between Nietzsche and Beckett for us to trace their journey on words, as Nehamas points out, which is the importance of Schopenhauer in their life:

> At that time, mainly under the influence of Schopenhauer and of his reading of Kant, Nietzsche seems to have believed that there are some ultimate facts, some noninterpretive truths, concerning the real nature of the world. But he denied that these facts could ever be correctly stated through reason, language, and science. (Nehamas, 1999, p. 42)

Likewise, we learn from the biography of Knowlson that Beckett was influenced in many instances by Schopenhauer as well, which we will discuss that below.

Arthur Schopenhauer is a philosopher of the post Kantian tradition who is also very popular among artists as he influenced many of them including composers and writers. Among those artists there are Schönberg, Tolstoy, Proust, Wagner, Borges and Rilke, notwithstanding his impact on the young Wittgenstein (more in the following chapter). Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory and his general pessimistic perspective, gave support and self-justification to not only Beckett but also to the other artists and writers of several generations. For instance in Beckett's *Proust*, we

see that he took Schopenhauer's ideas very seriously, although he was very young when he was writing it. Schopenhauer's *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (1813), reveals that many philosophers have recognized the universe as an instinctive tendency by assuming that the universe is a completely understandable place. The book is also a critique of the idea that what is real is what is rational. Beckett seems to have found his aesthetic inspiration largely from Schopenhauer because while Schopenhauer considers art as a concept which is independent of the principle of sufficient reason, Beckett, explains his ideas in a very similar way "(…) when the object is perceived as particular and unique and not merely the member of a family, when it appears independent of any general notion and detached from the sanity of a cause, isolated and inexplicable in the light of ignorance, then and then only may it be a source of enchantment." (Beckett, 1987, p. 22) Schopenhauer thinks that aesthetic experience is about the freedom of will and defines the artistic genius as a person who is exceptionally capable of interpreting the world from a will-free position: "Genius, then, consists, according to our explanation, in the capacity for knowing, independently of the principle of sufficient reason." (Schopenhauer, 2011, p. 258) Beckett thinks that aesthetic experience is about the freedom of habit; and he regards habit and routine as the "time cancer" (Beckett, 1987, p. 18), as we have seen this in his research on Proust.

Finally, Beckett believes that the state of nothingness cannot be expressed in ordinary language while Schopenhauer thinks the same for abstract concepts of philosophy. In *Endgame* (1957), Hamm's remark "The end is beginning'" is followed by "'and yet you go on'." (Beckett, 1990, p. 126) This "and yet" is the key point in his writings as he tend to belabor to reach meaninglessness. In *Endgame*, Clov asks Hamm:

> CLOV: What is there to keep me here?

> HAMM: The dialogue. (Beckett, 1990, p. 120-121)

And if there is no one to talk, and you still need to say something "Then babble, babble words, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark." (Beckett, 1990, p. 126) As Beckett got older, especially after he wrote *Worstward Ho* (1983) and concluded it with an ending that says "said nohow on" (Beckett, 1996, p. 89), which is a beginning, he went on to write his last prose, *Stirrings Still* (1988). In a letter to his friends Avigdor and Anne Arikha, he gave his reason why he kept on going: "My old head nothing but sighs (of relief?) of expiring cells. A last chance at last, I'll try. 'From where he sat with his head in his hands he saw himself rise and disappear.' Ineffable departure. Nothing left but – eff it." (Knowlson, 1996, p. 697) Therefore, he found the essence of literary artistic statement precisely to express the inexpressible, to 'eff' the ineffable. Beckett knew that his quest for the right words was an unending effort, because whatever he writes was all doomed to fail since it is not possible to express the "worst" with words. This, for a writer, is the utmost challenge: to utter the unutterable. However, his literary ability was able to convert this failure into a system. His solution to this perennial problem was then, not simply to give up, but worse, to give up endlessly. Beckett's rhetorical system can be clearly seen in his famous sentence: "All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." (Beckett, 1996. p. 89) And despite his giving up, his endless longing to create the worst of the worsts, led him to write more.

His next and last work is a poem, *What is the Word* (1989), written over a year before his death. The title points to his lifelong search for a satisfactory verbal expression of thought, which is frustrated by the unreliable nature of language itself. This poem consists of unsteady words which are meant to give the feeling of abrupt interruptions that derive from their unusual punctuations, and the compulsiveness which comes from their constant repetitions. *What is the Word*, is Beckett's last utterance, which is made up by the muted phrases that stand in the threshold of silence:

(…)

where –

what is the word –

there –

over there –

away over there –

afar –

afar away over there –

afaint –

afaint afar away over there what – (Beckett, 2009b, p. 117)

Despite the inconclusivity, this poem persists in the process of expressing itself, while Beckett finally made sure of the profound inadequacy of language. Yet to him language is the only existing method to gratify his urge to express. For Beckett, this urge is to deny the implicit limitations of human capacity when telling the ineffable. He chose to end the way he started, in search of the missing word: "Said is missaid. Whenever said said said missaid." (Beckett, 1996, p. 109) While Beckett knew that the truth cannot even be missaid, he presumably thought that missaying would eventually bring him the failure that he always longed for.

The inadequacy to express oneself seems to result in an inability to have a name. Also, he might have thought that, as the true self is unknowable, this could be the reason why he entitled his novel as *The Unnamable*, because we cannot give a name that is strange to us. The narrator, whose personality switches many times, this nameless voice, In *The Unnamable*, tells us a love story which at the same time teaches us a lesson by ridiculing the rules of conventional story making:

They love each other, marry, in order to love each other better, more conveniently, he goes to the wars, he dies at the wars, she weeps, with emotion, at having loved him, at having lost him, yep, marries again, in order to love again, more conveniently again, they love each other, you love as many times as necessary, as necessary in order to be happy, he comes back, the other comes back, from the wars, he didn't die at the wars after all, she goes to the station, to meet him, he dies in the train, of emotion, at the thought of seeing her again, having her again, she weeps, weeps again, with emotion again, at having lost him again, yep, goes back to the house, he's dead, the other is dead, the mother-in-law takes him down, he hanged himself, with emotion, at the thought of losing her, she weeps, weeps louder, at having loved him, at having lost him, there's a story for you, that was to teach me the nature of emotion, that's called emotion, what emotion can do, given favourable conditions, what love can do, well well, so that's emotion, that's love (Beckett, 2009a. p. 399).

At the end of the breath-taking story, the narrator says that "there is a story for you", but there are actually more than one story in less than a page, maybe two, three stories. In terms of conventional story writing, it has everything for a very short story, including various characters and engaging action with a plot, as many years ago stipulated by Aristotle. And if the matter is making stories, Beckett achieved to make the best of and demolish all logical system at the same time. The rest of *The Unnamable*, mainly consists of missing references and, false conclusions, where the characters spontaneously reappear and disappear. What we have here is a revolutionary literary presentation which opposes to the narrative order. Martha Nussbaum explains Beckett's story telling in this way:

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> Indeed, they (the voices) themselves make increasingly radical attempts to put an end to the entire project of storytelling and to the forms of life that this practice supports. They ask us to see their forms of feeling as a pattern that can be unraveled, a writing that can be unwritten, a story that can be ended-not by bringing it to the usual happy or unhappy ending but by ending the storytelling life. If stories are learned, they can be unlearned. If emotions are constructs, they can be dismantled. (Nussbaum, 1992, p. 287)

Through his voices Beckett wants us to see the impossibility of creating meaning with words, in whatever form they are, since they are not adequate to depict any mode of feeling. Since he thinks that there is no life form that is expressible, then there is no set of forms to express it either way. So that, he depends on no style at all in order to suggest that there is no single, neutral language in which his views or any others can ever be represented.

1.3 The Beckett Man

To understand Beckett's stories and the characters he built we can make use of the frame work of the *Bildungsroman*. Mikhail Bakhtin details the forms of novel classifying the genres of the travel novel, the biographical novel, the novel of ordeal and the *Bildungsroman*. He translates this German term into English as the "novel of education" (Bakhtin, 2010, p. 46). He claims that the classification of the novel genre depends on how the image of main hero is constructed. The genre of *Bildungsroman* grows out of a traditional heroic narrative; its plot derived from the hero's quest for maturity, from the "idea of testing" as Bakhtin calls it. He gives an explanation of the main character:

The vast majority of novels know only the image of ready-made hero. All movement in the novel, all events and escapades depicted in it, shift the hero in space, up and down the rungs of the social ladder: from beggar to rich man, from homeless tramp to nobleman. The hero sometimes attains, sometimes only approaches his goal: the bride, the victory, wealth, and so on (Bakhtin, 2010, p. 48).

By acknowledging Bakhtin's interpretation of "the novel of education", Georg Lukács, in *The Theory of Novel*, calls this genre the "novel of disillusionment." (Lukács, 1977, p. 134) His explanations are mostly based on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1796): "it is achieved by personalities, previously lonely and confined within their own selves, adapting and accustoming themselves to one another, it is the fruit of a rich and enriching resignation, the crowning of a process of education, a maturity attained by struggle and effort." (Lukács, 1977, p. 133) Both Lukács and Bakhtin explain and exemplify the conventional character making by interpreting the *Bildungsroman* along almost the same lines .

As opposed to the *Bildungsroman*, Beckett's characters are often anti-adventurers and non-actioners. His main characters usually walk from the outside world into their inner world of consciousness and draw the readers into their identical story. Although Beckett's characters are meant to be different from each other, his success in integrating them into an authentic personality shows us that there is a 'Beckett man'. This kind of characterization is often called anti-hero, and in literature, there are several examples of these anti-heroes before Beckett, for instance Dostoyevsky's Underground Man explicitly emphasizes his situation and the meaning of anti-hero in the last words of the *Notes from Underground*:

A novel needs a hero but here I've *deliberately* gathered together all the features of an anti-hero, and the main thing is, all this will produce

a most unpleasant impression, since we have all lost touch with real life, we are all cripples, each one of us to a greater or lesser degree (Dostoyevsky, 2009, p. 117).

Yet, Beckett's characters differ with some significant changes from the those of previous novelists. As opposed to the traditional character making, there are no such characters in Beckett's works. There is no unified subject whose self is established around a precise goal, motivation or desire. The characters mostly do not use language to express themselves rationally or communicate to make meaning. The lack of an integrated character makes Beckett distinct both in terms of language usage and characterization. Anthony Cronin outlines Beckett's men by distinguishing them from the previous anti-heroes in literature, comparing the Beckett man with Leopold Bloom and Dostotevsky's Underground Man and for him the Beckett man "does not believe in the brotherhood of man; and questions of equality are disposed of by the eager admission that he is, in all respects, inferior. He lays no claim to any virtue, which can be named, except to a rather dubious humility and a too eagerly embraced resignation." (Cronin, 1999, p. 380) Beckett's characters usually do not belong to a definite society or a country nor do they have a certain memory. Their basic reaction and distinctive characteristic are panic when they encounter other human beings.

Beckett seems to have created his characters by manipulating and/or by drawing inspiration from his own life. Indeed *The Trilogy* (*Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*) is important for us to see the similarity between Beckett and his characters. *The Trilogy* begins with Molloy's clumsy sentences as he starts to tell his story in his mother's room, and after a while we see Molloy hit the road in search of his mother, and later on his mind is increasingly muddled as he forgets what he is doing and why: "My reasons? I had forgotten them. But I knew them, I must have known them, I had only to find them again (…)." (Beckett, 2009a. p. 23) Just like Molloy, after his term of employment in Ecolé Normale Supérieure ended, Beckett

went back to Ireland as a lecturer in French at Trinity College but he quickly came to the conclusion that he would be unlikely to continue that sort of life for more than four terms. At a first glance Molloy seems to be a pitiful character but his persistence to go on, just like Beckett's insistence to go on can be read in the same context. Beckett also gave up his routine, habit as he found it to be the "cancer of time", and relieve himself from all social duties with the resignation of his academic career, from the Trinity College. His relationship with his mother, May Beckett, had provoked him over the years into a considerable anxiety and it is obvious that almost all of his characters are particularly anxious ones, while they are at quest to reach the meaning. Obviously, Beckett owed his mother the favor of existence itself, but that was something which he did not give value very greatly. It is useful to emphasize that, throughout his journey Molloy is trying to deal with the memory of his mother, yet he is not able to make it. Even when he is in his mother's room, he is not able to reach her, as we infer from the text. Thus, the matter between them remained unresolved, just like the unresolved issue between Beckett and his mother.

After Beckett lost his father, Bill Beckett, the anxieties that he had been suffering from reached an irresistible stage. As he saddened for his father, his mental wellness happened to deteriorate very seriously. One can easily see this deterioration reflected in Molloy; as he is also physically falling apart and decaying throughout the novel. Upon the recommendation of a friend, Beckett went to London and started a course of intensive psychotherapy in Tavistock Clinic, where he was assigned to the therapist Wilfred Bion, who was going to be an acclaimed psychotherapist in the very near future. While the therapy continued, as Knowlson states, Bion and Beckett became close acquaintances "Their relationship was an unusually friendly one for therapist and patient" (Knowlson, 1996, p. 176), and at that time Beckett was mostly reading on psychology "In the course of his therapy, Beckett also read widely on the subject of psychology, and psychoanalysis." (Knowlson, 1996, p. 177) The treatment lasted nearly two years, starting in 1933. Therefore we can suggest that it is not a

coincidence that Beckett was fully aware of human psychology. During this time, he kept detailed diaries, which only can be seen in Knowlson's biography. They also reveal his comprehensive reading in literature and philosophy during this influential period and his persistent interest in music and the visual arts.

After his therapy came to an end, Beckett went to Germany for a year as Esslin explains: "He embarked on a period of *Wanderjahre*. (… and) it is surely no coincidence that so many of Beckett's later characters are tramps and wanderers, and that all are lonely." (Esslin, 1991, p. 33) This also reminds us that almost all the characters of Beckett are wanderers, and all are homeless and lonely. Here, we should point out that whoever his characters are the ultimate target for them to reach is actually themselves. Again in Molloy, when the police officer asks for his identity he says that he has not one. "I had no papers in the sense this word had a sense for him, nor any occupation, nor any domicile, that my surname escaped me for the moment and that I was on my way to my mother, whose charity kept me dying." (Beckett, 2009a, p.18) Here, it would be meaningful to question why he depicted his characters mostly as tramps and wanderers.

1.4 The Quest for an Integrated Self

His characters are generally homeless and always have little to eat. They are generally near the end of their lives as well as near the end of the world, the end of meaning. The fact that Molloy begins his journey in his mother's room can be inferred as a search for his home. Here the question of whether such a search for a home for oneself also means a search for a self or for an integrated self, arises. Beckett's characters are longing for an integrated self, yet, in the end, they face the impossibility of it. "In future, his work would focus on poverty, failure, impotence, exile and loss; as he put it on man as a 'non-knower' and as a 'non-canner' (i.e.

someone who cannot)." (Knowlson, 1996, p. 353) This is one of his literary styles which can be seen almost in every novel of him, through his characters.

Later, Beckett started to write novels where he presented the inner world of his characters who ignore the real world and its after effects. He eliminated the real world conditions with his creative vision, and he did so to come up with a more liberated form of literary expression. In *Waiting for Godot* (1952), for instance, there is no psychological development of characters, no precise event or interesting dialogues. His characters are practically examples of homeless, rootless, alienated human beings. It is also crucial to look at one of his last works; in *Ill Seen Ill Said* (1981) Beckett talks about the void through the mouth of an impotent character who is also in search for a home: "But black. Void. Nothing else. Contemplate that. Not another world. Home at last. Gently gently" (Beckett, 1995, p. 66). This takes us to the very conclusion that Beckett interpreted the modern people as they are at home, in the void, in their homelessness. This may well explain us why his characters keep having a homeless life. Similar to Molloy, Beckett had a life just like a tramp who traveled across cities and countries, as a homeless man, he was also at the end of meaning and obviously was in search of an integrated self. It seems that for Beckett, reaching an integrated self is an impossible project, so much so that, the longing itself, the search itself, becomes a continuous state which manifests itself as a constant noise in his works.

This noise might also be related to his witnessing the war, and here, his diaries are essential, again, since they tell us that Beckett was developing a political sensibility. While leaving Germany, he wrote down his feelings about there as, "… things were happening unavoidably, visiting Germany would shortly become impossible: 'They must fight soon (or burst)' he wrote in his diary after he had listened to the 'apoplexy' of Adolf Hitler's and Goebbels' broadcast speeches. And it was not to be long before Beckett had a chance to display his anti-Nazi credentials". (Knowlson, p. 261) He had

followed the rise of Nazism in the 1930s with strong interest, hatred and growing fear. And when the war came in 1939, he returned to Paris to join the Resistance group against Nazis and became a member of an underground movement for almost three years. He held many jobs during the war years as Knowlson states, ranging from ambulance driving to secretarial work. During this time he followed the rise of Nazism and recognized the racial hatred that laid at the roots of National Socialism. He also observed first-hand the impact of anti-Semitism. His Jewish friends were being stigmatized and abused, even assaulted. (See Knowlson, p. 300-305)

Molloy is the first French novel that Beckett began to write in Ireland, carried it back to Paris where his actual creative process was just about to start. In the winter of 1945, soon after the liberation of Paris the "siege in the room" began. Over the next few years he were to write his best works, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable* and the play that was going to make him famous, *Waiting for Godot*. He was captured by a constant and captivating creative motivation; he kept writing in the coming years the following plays: *Eleutheria (1947)* and *Endgame*; as well as proses *Mercier et Camier* (1946) and *Texts for Nothing* (1950-1952). All these works, which have become part of the canon of his generation, were written in French.

1.5 Beckett and His Shifting Language

After the war, Beckett changed his language in his writings. A few months after his return to Paris, he first started to write poetry in French. At least most of the time, writing poetry in French permitted him to leave the dense allusiveness of his English poems. He wrote to his acquaintance Thomas MacGreevy: "I wrote a short poem in French but otherwise nothing. I have the feeling that any poems there may happen to be in the future will be in French." (Knowlson, 1996, p. 294) This definitive language shift let him to produce highly condensed works which present the stark condition of

humanity after the war. Beckett tends to sabotage the main functions of language for the very sake of its alternative possibility and this demand appears to imply that language is an altogether useless tool as we will examine below.

There have been many famous writers who wrote in a foreign language rather than their mother tongue. However most of them were forced to do so because of some particular conditions. They were mostly forced to exile or for ideological reasons obliged to break connection with their homeland. For those writers, the ambition to reach a larger readership by writing in a more widely spoken language was also another reason. For instance, Franz Kafka was born and lived in Czechoslovakia, yet he preferred to write in German rather than in Czech or Yiddish for certain reasons. He was Jewish and living in a Jewish community and at that time almost all of them were speaking German. Beckett, on the other hand, was definitely not an exile in that manner and his native English was still the most common language. As Esslin revealed, when one of the American directors implied to Beckett that by using French he might be hiding some things about himself, "he said yes, there were some things about himself he didn't like, that French had the right weakening effect. It was a weakness he had chosen, as Melville's Bartleby 'preferred not to" live (…)'." (Esslin, 1991, p. 38) And Beckett also preferred to live and write in another language to get rid of this strong allusiveness that derives from his mother tongue.

Also, as Knowlson points out, Beckett claimed that his works in English throughout the 1930s were full of indirect references; he calls them "Anglo-Irish exuberance and automatisms." (Knowlson, 1996, p. 357) In this sense, to work in French could be helpful to liberate himself from the impact of his master James Joyce. Considering his publishing history, Beckett had been refused by some publishers for the reason of imitating Joyce. As Knowlson looks back to his works' review and critical acclaim, we see the comments as:

This 'modern voice' aroused a bewildering diversity of responses from Irish and English reviewers (…) One stressed that, although clearly influenced by James Joyce, he 'is no fashionable imitator' or in the *Times Literary Supplement* 'a definite fresh talent at working it, though it is a talent not yet quite sure of itself' (…) Especially his debt to James Joyce was often judged adversely: 'Mr. Beckett has imitated everything in James Joyce – except the verbal magic and the inspiration (…) or a reviewer commented harshly: 'The whole book is a frank pastiche of the lighter, more satirical passages in *Ulysses*, wrote another'.(Knowlson, 1996, p. 184)

We can easily come to the conclusion that it was very natural for Beckett to try to find a way out of his greatest literary inspiration, James Joyce. As Harold Bloom points out in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1997), a strong poet or a literary artist always has this anxiety of influence and develops strategies to overcome his or her master. Although the notion of influence which comes from poetic authority is not an unfamiliar concept, Harold Bloom determines the notion of influence in a more modern way. He says that poets are influenced by their excellently skillful masters and their effects are usually identifiable in their works. "Poetic history, in this book's argument, is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves." (Bloom, 1997, p. 5) Bloom also emphasized that his comments are only for great writers and as Beckett and Joyce were two of them, his arguments can be applied to them too. Here for Beckett the search for an original or authentic style merges into a search for an original self, an authentic self which cannot be separated from trying to find a new language, which is also an impossible search, as Beckett was quite aware of.

For Beckett, adopting a new language helped him keep the influence of Joyce in his works while at the same time find a new way to develop a style. For instance, he once a friend that writing in French was easier for him to write without a style (see Knowlson, 1996, p. 357). It is not because he did not want to be a stylist, or that his French had no style, but because he was be able to achieve greater simplicity and objectivity by using a new language. While writing in French enabled him to work more on the melody of the language, its rhythms and sounds by "cutting away the excess and stripping away the color" (Knowlson, 1996, p. 357), it also allowed him to focus on a more straightforward voice of the search to 'be' and on a pursuit of ignorance, weakness and impotence. Cronin, interprets this language shift as

> (…) but in fact the change of language did allow him to adopt a mock style, a sort of synthetically elaborate joke style, which is a totally successful ironic joke at the expense of all attempts at style and all styles whatsoever. This ongoing joke, which has its own elaborate beauties, provides one of the great pleasures of reading the later Beckett. (Cronin, 1999, p. 361)

Last but not least, it would be a total loss for this dissertation if we do not highlight his mock style. As a result of this meaninglessness he employed, even his characters mock themselves and consider their situation ridiculous. Along with Beckett's characters' astonishment, we, the readers, are impressed and even laugh at this ongoing mock style throughout the novels and plays.

With regard to Beckett's shifting to French, Esslin explains, "(…) the use of another language may force him to divert the ingenuity that might be expended on mere embellishments of style in his own idiom to the utmost clarity and economy of expression." (Esslin, 1991, p. 38) It is highly inevitable to carry the logic of a language with its accepted meanings and associations when one uses their native

language in a literary work. This might be the reason why Beckett needed to change his language from English to French because he wanted to stay away from logic even when it comes with his native language.

Just by changing his language in writing, Beckett might have wanted to attract the reader's mind to a prevalent and profound dependency upon language and to show that language does not always necessarily behave as expected. As a literary artist he struggled for years to create meaning by words and each time he failed in doing so. Beckett and other artists, especially in literature, have undergone the greatest experience about words, during and after the war. Beckett's contemporary Theodor Adorno expresses his idea on words in *Prisms*:

> Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation. (Adorno, 1995, 34)

People kept living, painting and writing in spite of Auschwitz, which was supposed to be the 'ultimate end', for Adorno and for many other people. For Adorno, a precise barbarism is implied in our very existence in the post war years. Any single word was a relentless acceptance that life can go on even after the 'ultimate end'. Apparently, for a literary artist there was an obligation to keep silent with words, as they were the only thing left and that was the thing that Beckett kept doing through his career.
Actually, it is both the listening to and speaking about silence that makes Beckett's work smart, frisky and constantly enigmatic. As an avant-garde writer, he was

particular from the first years of his carrier about the unavoidable signification that accompanies the words which he intended to use abstractly. He was conscious of the fact that words signify more than their own writer's control. And in this abstract world, which is and is meant to be dispossessed of meaning, he would go in a long journey to find out the answer for his particular question: how can a linguistic artist express this meaninglessness through words, which are meant to create meaning? In this chaos-like world, when everything was uncertain, people lost their target and purpose of living, and life was only repetition. *Waiting for Godot*, one Beckett's plays, opens with a statement by Estragon: "Nothing to be done" (Beckett, 1990, p. 7), and later on, as required by Beckett's play writing, Vladimir also repeats the same words. When the play was first staged, it was criticized for its lack of meaning and structure. It is, indeed, intentionally deprived from meaning and made up out of nothingness. Although the audience or the reader watched out for a sharp turn, a relief in the situation, it never comes and they had to keep looking to these two tramps (Vladimir and Estragon) who did nothing and said basically nothing. The characters did not think of the content nor the meaning of their dialogue, if we can call it a dialogue. The purpose for them was to utter words to assure themselves that they are alive. The keynote for this play can be found in the memorable words of Estragon, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (Beckett, 1990, p. 41) Also, Irish critic Vivian Mercier famously commented on this play in 1956 in The Irish Times: "A play in which nothing happens twice." (Mercier, 1956) Just like these words, the play starts with waiting and ends with also waiting, so that, the play ends where it starts.

With Beckett's highly perverse recognition of his own awakening, we are urged to a wake as well, as observers to a creation which continually develops into its own obscurity, writing as it is, without meaning or purpose to create meaning, doomed to fail in a never ending sets of failings, to signify and yet not to signify, to end and yet not to end, to go on while it cannot go on, to a writing suggestive of Nietzsche's own

indispensable, yet beyond the bounds of possibility, "thinking" the constant repetition of the same: to think naught without any conclusion of nothingness. The creation is doomed to fail because the writing itself is a communication style in the world of impossible representations of things and/or events. As there was nothing left for a literary artist to express with meaningful words, Beckett chose incessantly to express nothing with meaningless words. Yet again, how ever much he said, he could not be assured if he was successful enough. This may well explain all the repetitions he made and all the hesitations he had concluding without reaching the ultimate aim: to tell nothing. Begam clarifies this as, "Samuel Beckett is the master of the enduring resolutions, of inconclusive conclusions and interminable terminations. Every point of destination becomes a point of departure. Every epilogue becomes a prologue." (Begam, 1996, p. 184) In the beginning of *Endgame*, Clov tells us that the end is near: "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished." (Beckett, 1990, p. 93) After these words of Clov the play "finishes" one hour later. The last words of Clov "You… remain" (Beckett, 1990, p. 134) shows us the persistence to go on rather than finishing even at the end of the play.

After finishing *The Unnamable*, the last instalment of the trilogy, Becket started writing *Texts for Nothing*. He accepted that he wrote it because he failed to implement the last words of *The Unnamable*. He also explained this failure that he made as: "that book finished me or expressed my finishedness." (Cronin, 1999, p. 402) By concluding *Text for Nothing*, "the siege" in the room came to an end. It had lasted for four to five years and those years were totally worthwhile as these works would establish him as one of the greatest of living writers. In the years of his world fame, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969, yet he stood as elusive as determined to preserve his privacy. This attitude that he adopted has reflected in his works, since they convey the writer's manner of mystery.

CHAPTER 2: THE IDEA OF THE INEFFABLE IN BECKETT

2.1. The Idea of the Ineffable

The word "ineffable" is preferable to other more neutral terms such as "inexpressible" or "incommunicable" for our interpretation of Beckett's works because this word has an historical association with mysticism. In other words, this term can be used when one is unable to express in words what he/she has experienced, which brings them to face with the ineffable. This problem is not different from the one confronted by Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* (1921). In *Tractatus*, he asserts that in line with the theory of meaning, every sentence is meaningless. The problem we are talking about here is the same problem which leads Wittgenstein to distinguish between "saying" and "showing". He says: "We make to ourselves pictures of facts" (Wittgenstein, 2010, p. 28), and everything else belongs to the realm of the "mystical", where nothing can be stated directly but can be shown. The similarity between Beckett and Wittgenstein, especially on this particular point, is of high importance. Beckett can be deemed to be a mystic in the sense that he directs his concentration to the realm of the boundaries of direct meaning and referentiality.

Art is usually stated to have a deep relation to mystical experience and, in principle, the ineffable refers to a formal and structural limitation within language itself. While ordinary language constitutes its own formal limits to what can be said, the ineffable turns out to be something that can almost be expressed when it is associated with art. That is the very capacity of art which helps words transcend the limits and interact with them in a way, for instance, by indicating or referring. The word Ineffable, from Latin, is a compound of the prefix 'in' used to express negation, and 'effabilis': to speak out. From this point on, we can suggest that language could regain the quality that is without, and/or whatever it has had formerly, and it could then express itself if

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not exactly but almost sufficiently. As a literary artist, Beckett wanted to come close to this sufficiency with words, so to say, in the Wittgensteinian manner. In his early philosophy, Wittgenstein discusses the problems emerging from the inefficiency of language to be able to make meaningful communication, while he later moves on to discuss language as a form of life.

As Marjorie Perfloff suggests, Samuel Beckett "had nothing so say about Wittgenstein but writes the most Wittgensteinian of parables" (Perloff, 1996, p. 21) as both of them considered language in an identical way. It is obvious that they both looked for language's potentialities, limits, and the alluring and important yet neglected suggestions of ordinary words. Beckett was a language-conscious writer, who deliberately employed words to exceed the limits and the possibilities of language. Both Beckett and Wittgenstein wrote on language, and admitted the paradox of doing so since they expressed the contradictions, misunderstandings or meaninglessness of words. Yet, neither was able to avoid the requirement of language, as again Perloff suggests: "I argue in Beckett's case must be understood in terms of the 'language of Resistance'." (Perloff, 1996, p. 22) Beckett shows this requirement of words by saying that "you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me." (Beckett, 2009a, p. 407) Aforementioned resistance of Beckett's language can be read in the context of Second World War literature. One can say that his traumatic experience could have guided him to one kind of resistance that is keeping silent with words as a civil disobedience. Language is described by Wittgenstein not only as a limiting form of expression but also as a deceptive one. See for example the following quotes:

> That which mirrors itself in language, we cannot express by language.
> The propositions show the logical form of reality. They exhibit it.

What can be shown cannot be said. (Wittgenstein, 2010, p. 45)

Wittgenstein claimed that, by referring to the concepts of saying and showing, what is not factual is ineffable, but it can be shown or shows itself. Since art is part of the aesthetical, non-scientific world, what can be expressed through art can be done by showing.

Wittgenstein's way of using language, when he is writing on language, shows that literary and philosophy characteristics are not irrelevant because to him, form represents both the content and the context. His earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was written in the most possible systematic and concise way because to him, language shows its author's desire for simplicity and accuracy. In *Tractatus* he asserts the impossibility of expressing anything meaningfully other than propositions on the natural sciences. "The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science (…)." (Wittgenstein, 2010, p. 90) Years later, the author became conscious that he cannot avoid employing abstract words or creating metaphors so that his language in *Philosophical Investigations* shifted to a more comprehensive one. He suggests, after all, the problems are arising from our misunderstandings of language and he embraces these problems as an inherent component of our everyday lives. "Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language." (Wittgenstein, 1986, p. 43) As he came to the conclusion that human beings cannot escape the misunderstandings of everyday language, we can say that he started to analyze the language more epistemically.

Reading Beckett in a Wittgensteinian manner would prove that Beckett has pushed the limits of language and showed the difficulty of expression described by Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is especially interested in the potentiality of marking the limits to representation. The term "the unrepresentable" is an essential element to both Beckett's and Wittgenstein's understanding of representation. Wittgenstein's notion of the linguistically-bound visual world is negatively identified by an unrepresentable world, and this is quite similar to Beckett's style of writing, as he indicates in *Endgame*: "Outside of here it's death" (Beckett, 1990, p. 96). And, *Tractatus* ends by indicating how unspeakable this world is: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." (Wittgenstein, 2010, p. 90) Wittgenstein's theory of subjectivity, in terms of the representation of things, is significant for our reading of Beckett as he states that "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." (Wittgenstein, 2010, p. 74) For him, people stand at an essential point which restricts their view of the world as it exists and this point also determines the limits of their language.

Furthermore, by taking Wittgenstein's idea of the difficulty of expression and its impossibility one step further, Beckett deformed the words which at first seem meaningful and important by making them pointless and irrational:

> LUCKY: Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattman of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights divine apathia divine athabia divine aphasia (…) (Beckett, 1990, p. 42)

This speech of Lucky the slave lasts for two pages, and can be interpreted as satirizing the arrogant language of scholars, philosophers and scientists. Beckett ironically questions the potency of using language to express any sort of truth. This

passage also can be explored from the point of Wittgenstein's idea of language games as he describes it "We can also think of the whole process of using words in [...] as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games "language-games" and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game." (Wittgenstein, 1986, p. 5) Both Beckett and Wittgenstein used different language games to show the problems of creation of the meaning by language and its ever-changing meanings.

From *The Unnamabl*e onwards most of Beckett's work features a textual form that frames nothingness, by constructing patterns analytically which deliberately causes an exhaustion of all forms and styles to build his unique form. We are now sure about his idiosyncratic form thanks to his own critics where he has a requirement from artists and his interpretation of language: "To bore one hole after another in it, until what lurks behind it – be it something or nothing – begins to seep through; I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today." (Beckett, 2001, p. 172) This desire to expose something or nothing behind the insufficient essence of language firmly associates him with the modernist understanding of inexpressibility, rather than he theological or mystical thought of the inexpressible. His way of employing words and his innovative style builds up the aesthetic of his work, which at the same time reforms the aesthetics of inexpressibility in a distinct way.

2.2. The Idea of the Ineffable and Nothingness

Beckett hinted at the thought of nothingness already in a letter to a student who was studying Beckett at that time, writing "If I were in the unenviable position of having study my work my points of departure would be the 'Naught is more real…'" (Beckett, 2001, p. 113) The most significant feature of Beckett's enthusiasm to nothingness is where it differs from nihilism which is explained as a voiding of

meaning and value. That is rather this nothingness in Beckett's point of view which makes meaning available and creates the main obligation that controls and manipulates most of his works. Starting from this quote on, we can say that *The Trilogy* constitutes a climax in Beckett's oeuvre, it is because *The Unnamable* is a language experiment because of a nameless voice finding out who himself is. In this process of occurrence, subject and its representation disintegrate in the name of reaching the inexpressible source of the literature by never reaching it.

The Unnamable begins with an identity crisis and is premised on three questions: "Where now? Who now? When now?" (Beckett, 2009a, p. 285) Throughout the novel these questions remain unanswered and the I, the nameless speaker, utters his words with the help of either his memories or imaginations and produces a compulsion by continually rechecking his situation. The novel maintains the speaker's confusion through a lack of conviction in its selfhood and its integrity, as it continues "I, say I. Unbelieving." (Beckett, 2009a, p. 285) The narrator is in confusion of his selfhood, he is not able to place himself in a certain time or in a certain position, which is why he cannot find the correct words for himself. To Paul Foster, "Beckett suggests that the nature of "I" is ineffable." (Foster, 1989, p. 211) Beckett's vision of art as "expression" generates a common version of the notion of silence, which again, invokes the idea of the ineffable.

With Beckett the classical forms of fictional narrative, of telling a story with an introduction, middle and conclusion seem to be utterly disregarded. One might say that it is the end of story. There comes Wittgenstein again as he suggests: "If we think of the world's future, we always mean the place it will get to if it keeps going as we see it going now and it doesn't occur to us that it is not going in a straight line but in a curve & that its direction is constantly changing." (Wittgenstein, 1997, p. 5e) Beckett considerably corroborates to Wittgenstein as he does not employ a linear time when he constructs his stories. There is also nothing to be shown in the plot and characterization of traditional story telling. Therefore questions arise as to why he

kept writing and why the reader kept reading him while there were so many contradictions. The answer possibly lies in his unconventional, yet genius literary enterprise. His works, perhaps, revealed that storytelling is not just about delivering messages or bringing memories alive, rather, desperately exploring the fundamental quest-structure of human existence. His style is an incessant transcending toward meaning. Beckett's quest-structure leads toward nothing as there is not any more a transcendent meaning that could substantiate the story self with a stable identity. His human subjects have forsaken their own desires, marooned in an island of words without anything except themselves. And yet rather than withdrawing from life, correspondingly from language itself, they choose to talk constantly.

2.3. Silence through Noise

Beckett's work can be described as writing that requires time for meaning to appear which refuses to show up, a missing meaning that leaves traces even though it cannot be traced, signifies but cannot be signified. In *The Unnamable*, he achieved his aesthetic quest by failing to express anything, through the inability to express. Beckett's narrations' main subject is itself, the narrating sound constructing a world out of voice. This murmur of the words, gives a protracted silence to the form. How to reveal silence through noise? From the first years of his career he maintained this dilemma. Uniquely, the power of his writing comes from the lessening meaning of the words thanks to the new way of interpreting silence by words even though they carry the voice in themselves.

He craved for silence, for the most desired thing of all. The main failure of his previous works was to obtain a form and a tone of voice that would later permit him to build his precise style. Perhaps this repeated failure led him to understand more sharply that the basic utterance must be silence, an approval to be silent, whether

supported by one's creator or daemon. His self-criticism can be shown in *The Unnamable*:

> Bah, no need to worry, it can only have been one thing, the same as ever. I have my faults, but changing my tune is not one of them. I have only to go on, as if there was something to be done, something begun, somewhere to go. It all boils down to a question of words, I must not forget this, I have not forgotten it. But I must have said this before, since I say it now. (Beckett, 2009a, p. 329)

His main consideration to reach the literature of the unword seems to be accomplished since he found a method to gain a mocking attitude toward words, through words, where he assaulted words: "An assault against words in the name of beauty." (Beckett, 2001, p. 173) Beckett's last works take this assault to its end point, as it produces the aesthetic strength in the name of which he sustained his lifelong verbal war on words.

While for Beckett it is "a question of words", most remarkably, his characters seem to have been commanded by an unknown power to give the correct utterance for some sort of unreachable, ultimate truth which can also be connected with his search for an original self. And it is precisely because there is neither such thing as the 'ultimate truth' nor an "original self" to reach, his characters end up failing constantly. In most of Beckett's works, starting from *The Trilogy* on, there are people who seem to have been commanded by a voice that enjoins them to tell their story or perhaps just any story. "I have spoken of a voice telling me things. I was getting know it better now, to understand what it wanted" (Beckett, 2009a, p. 169). This voice orders them to be silent, or to acquire silence by shouting some sort of absolute truth and here again, as there is none, the imperatives from which the character endures, stand in an illogical position. Yet, all these voices show that there is no such thing as a consistent self. It

seems to be the aforementioned utterance, for whatever reason, had to be given since he wrote many other texts after *The Triology*.

2.4. The Quest for an Integrated Self: Compulsion and Repetition

Worstward Ho represents Beckett's most obsessive-compulsive assault, after *The Unnamable*, toward a 'nonrepresentative' literature. They both presume a subtext of the subject-less narrator, and in both words say nothing. *Worstward Ho* is stoically to the point and its formation like that of *The Unnamable*, is the "no man's land" as there is no "I" or specific subject and we do not know anything about the narrator. "His works, after a certain point get shorter and shorter, the fact that he was composing work whose crown and summation would be silence becoming ever more manifest." (Cronin, 1999, p. 377) Furthermore, the description negates itself more than ever before:

> Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none. That at least. A place. Where none (…) Now either. Now the other. Sick of the either try the other. Sick of it back sick of the either. (…) Say bones. No bones but say bones. Say ground. No ground but say ground (Beckett, 1996, p. 89-90).

Here we see again his groundless, rootless, characters, who are in search of their home which also can be interpreted as being in search of meaning and their integrated self and all these characters are all producing compulsions on their road to reach meaning. This compulsiveness of Beckett's characters can be clearly seen in his play *Endgame*. As the characters, Clov and Hamm, find themselves in a constant discomfort arising from their place in the stage, they start staging a compulsive ritual:

HAMM: I'm more or less in the center?

CLOV: I'd say so.

HAMM: You'd say so! Put me right in the center!

CLOV: I'll go and get the tape.

HAMM: Roughly! Roughly! (Clov moves chair slightly.) Bang in the center!

CLOV: There! (Pause.)

HAMM: I feel a little too far to the left. (Clov moves chair slightly.) Now I feel a little too far to the right. (Clov moves chair slightly.) I feel a little too far forward. (Clov moves chair slightly.) Now I feel a little too far back. (Clov moves chair slightly.) Don't stay there. (i.e. behind the chair) You give me the shivers. (Clov returns to his place beside the chair.) (Beckett, 1990, p. 105)

As well as the compulsive behaviors of the characters, there is an indefinite repetition while they are finding the former place of Hamm's chair. It can be inferred that, since we have seen in this dialogue, this repetition that they made, moving the chair slightly until finding the exact former place of Hamm, represents the impossibility of reaching the self "as such". Here, while mentioning Beckett's characters' repetitive compulsions, Molloy's sucking stones could be a valid example to support our claim. Molloy, who is also a tramp and is also in search of "something", has a number of stones which he occasionally sucks and after a while he became obsessive and compulsive at the same time as he sucks them, by reorganizing his sixteen sucking stones among his pockets:

> I took advantage of being at the seaside to lay in a store of sucking-
> stones. They were pebbles but I call them stones. Yes, on this occasion
> I laid in a considerable store. I distributed them equally between my

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four pockets, and sucked them turn and turn about. This raised a problem which I first solved in the following way. (Beckett, 2009a, p. 63-64).

And he kept trying to find an effective way to suck his stones for pages. It can be understood from the text that even though Molloy finds a way to suck his stones efficiently, he immediately changes his mind about the solution he found, and although many arguments can be deduced from this passage, we will remain within our topic of repetition. In his lectures, Wittgenstein suggests that: "The only way to do philosophy is to do everything twice." (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 23) And Beckett's characters took Wittgenstein's proposition one step further by doing many things, many times as we see Molloy coping with the complicated, frustrating, and confusing problem of the redistribution of sucking stones to achieve the most efficient system of sucking them. There is an apparent need for words for all of Beckett's characters and they mostly satisfy their needs either by repeating the same words or babbling. By these repetitions and babblings we also are given the possibility of the intrinsic meaninglessness of the words. Beckett might well be using these incessant, meaningless words, just like Molloy's sucking stones, as empty fillers for an inherent compulsion to express. "A little pebble in your mouth, round and smooth, appeases, soothes, makes you forget your hunger, forget your thirst." (Beckett, 2009a, p. 21, 22) As his characters and their words decay toward the worst, Alan Astro explains this decaying position of them as "one can only go 'worstward,' toward the worst, without hope of attaining it. For what is worse: the worst, or what is almost the worst? The almost-the-worst is less perfect, and therefore worse than the worst." (Astro, 1990, p. 204) Here, we can say that Beckett's goal shuttles between "fail better" and "better worse" that aims to create its own rhythm in its silence when moving toward the "fidelity to failure".

For Beckett, words must fail, but they must fail toward the 'worstward' through two ways: first, they must fail to make sense, to deviate from signification, and next, they

must fail in achieving the desired end, namely, the ultimate truth. Although *Worstward Ho* is not Beckett's final prose work, it is the most fully performed attempt to enunciate a language that refuses to reflect things and ideas; it is a language that hardly performs as a language. It is a text, therefore, that can be defined as the closest approximation of Beckett's aim of "the literature of the unword". *Worstward Ho* will do its finest to dissolve language's requirements by dissolving grammar, style, and story in a radical way. As *Worstward Ho* claims, a reading of the Beckettian text is always a misreading: "Of all so far missaid the worse missaid." (Beckett, 1996, p. 108) No matter how many words we use to interpret him, there will be something missing and unsaid so much so that they might, at the same time, be incorrect.

Quoting Beckett, Martin Esslin suggests that to read Beckett is not to look for any explanation, because when the director of *Waiting for Godot* asks the meaning of the play, Beckett said "'If I knew, I would have said so in the play.' This is a salutary warning to anyone who approaches Beckett's plays with the intention of discovering *the key* to their understanding, of demonstrating in exact and definite terms *what they mean.*" (Esslin, 1991, p. 44) Beckett is also known for his rejections of the interpretations of his work, and the more Beckett refused to provide a clue to figure out his works, the more the amount of studies on them have consistently enlarged. It can also be seen as, likewise, the more the reader or the audience seemed to praise his works, the more they have called for a definition of them. Yet, how ever convincing one's study might be, no critic can avoid the danger of fallibility, which Beckettian texts repeatedly emphasize: "In any case all these suppositions are probably erroneous." (Beckett, 2998, p. 339) Yet again, according to Beckett one must persevere to seek for a meaning where possibly there is none: "That is why one must not hasten to conclude, the risk of error is too great." (Beckett, 1967, p. 110) It is known that Beckett has been interpreted by many critics, who took the risk of being

"erroneous", and they are important for this dissertation for the reason that looking at them will help us to present a more comprehensive understanding of him.

2.5. Noise Brought Noise: The Reception of Beckett

As we have seen, Beckett's work is full of obsessions as well as pessimism and human anguish, not to mention its desperate sarcasm. Therefore, for many people, it is possible to ask whether his works are unrelated with the ongoing condition of the world where many political and cultural developments have happened and failed. Before we start to see the interpretations of his work, we should also keep in our minds that he has witnessed many things: the rise and fall of Nazism, the two world wars and the Cold War. At a first glance these may not be visible in his works, however, it can be deduced from them as many interpreters and commentators did.

The aforementioned demolition and despair of Europe generated many other pessimistic philosophical and artistic developments. For instance, Literature of the Absurd and Existentialism, which took place precisely in Europe the time between forties and fifties, are very significant for us to discuss. As we have seen, in most of Beckett's works, "nothing much" happens. And that word "nothing" is very significant for us to compare him with his contemporaries. He employed the word "nothing" not unlike his contemporaries, the two French philosophers widely known during and after World War Two; Jean Paul Sartre, who labelled himself an Existentialist, and Albert Camus, who rather preferred to define the world as "absurd". Sartre criticized the metaphysical thought of "essence precedes existence" and asserted that "existence precedes essence." (Sartre, 1985, p. 15) Meaning that we do not have an essence when we are born, rather we create and shape ourselves via our choices in life. Albert Camus, on the other hand, in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), explains the absurd as such: "(…) in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived

of a memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity." (Camus, 1975 p. 13) It is clear that post-war years were depicted highly pessimistic in all the forms of art and Camus was one of those thinkers who was able to reflect that trauma of all existent beings such an exceptional way. Yet, it is not enough for one to gather this pessimism under a single roof. It is obvious that this trauma made people to express themselves with many different ways.

Considering this pessimistic air, many critics regarded Beckett either an Existentialist or an Absurdist. Beckett, on the other hand, openly refused both. Knowlson says: "he found the actual limitations on man's freedom of action (his genes, his upbringing, his social circumstances) far more compelling than the theoretical freedom on which Sartre had laid so much stress." (Knowlson, & Haynes, 2003, p. 18) As Knowlson's authorized biography makes it clear in the following pages, Beckett was interested in many philosophical theories including existentialism back then. Although it is possible to think that it was inevitable for him to be influence by some of those theories, it is clear that Beckett was certainly not an existentialist.

Furthermore, he explicitly showed his disapproval to be associated with Existentialist theory in an interview: "One cannot speak anymore of being, one must speak only of the mess. When Heidegger and Sartre speak of a contrast between being and existence, they may be right. I don't know, but their language is too philosophical for me." (Feldman, 2014, p. 334) Indeed, this disapproval of him (regarding being philosophical) is quite unfair, and this statement brings him to an epistemologically humble condition. As we have seen through this dissertation, Beckett was an enthusiastic reader, and although he was not an established philosopher his earlier works such as *Proust*, "Dante, Bruno Vico, Joyce" contain many philosophical references, therefore, he was very familiar with philosophy. This of course may not make one philosophical, but he was also concerned with philosophical questions such as: "Is meaning possible?", "How can we express things in language?, "What is the

relationship between reality and expression, as well as between our experiences and the expression of them?" However, maybe the reason why he refused to be regarded as philosophical was that the language of philosophy tends to conceptualize things, and certainly Beckett did not want to do that. He might have wanted to raise philosophical questions without trying to solve them or preferred to show things rather than say them in a philosophical language.

Over the last sixty years, his unconventional vision and storytelling have inspired many speculative criticism; theological critics, for instance, concentrated on the argument of spirituality and the structure of his mystical language which they believed Beckett adopted. Psychoanalytic critics, on the other hand, noticed that his narrators usually recall their memories just like a patient does with a psychiatrist. Freudian, Lacanian and precisely Jungian approaches have pointed out many elements in his works as it is known that he read a lot in the field when he underwent a course of Jungian psychoanalysis. Phil Baker's *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis*, would guide us to in our pursuit of the coincidences between psychoanalysis and Beckett as they: "can be considered as aesthetic rather than merely thematic (…) because aesthetics and psychoanalysis are related areas, rooted in the body, and because Beckett's concerns are often so close to those of psychoanalysis, there are inseparably psychoanalytic and aesthetic ideas manifest in Becket." (Baker, 1997, p. 172) Richard Begam in *Samuel Beckett and the End of Modernity*, claims that Beckett's work is the completion of modernity because: "More than any other writer of the last half-century, Samuel Beckett has found and said the words that have carried our epoch toward the threshold of its dissolution, the threshold where modernity finally encounters its own equivocal but inevitable end." (Begam, 1996, p. 187) Whatever commentators or he himself say regarding his works, it is undeniable that his works would not have been written if he had not been affected by the atmosphere of the then world circumstances.

After all these critics we are persuaded that Beckett occupies an ambiguous place in literature and his art allows us to value his work as timeless and unique. Considering the ambivalent nature of his work, to describe Beckett as a modernist, postmodernist or any other "–ist" would be a gross simplification. Another reason why Beckett received so much critical interest is because his writings can be placed into any volume of forms or techniques. He has, indeed, annihilated the conventional settings and this turned his work into a mirror in which many critical methods and academics could see their own reflections. These diverse approaches would undoubtedly highlight the versatility of forms of Beckett's work. Here, we should admit that one must avoid any one-sided imposing interpretation of his sophisticated work. His work in one way or another certainly engages in the great arguments of philosophy. Among them there are, the meaning of life, human anguish, the description of desire and failure, disappointment, representation, being, living, death, time, the search for the meaning and so on. Contemporary philosophy, assuredly, such as Sartre and Camus's existentialism, Heidegger's notion of man as existence, *Dasein*, Derrida's critique of the failure of language, Nietzsche's philosophical style and Wittgenstein's opinion of keeping silent. Beckett's ideas on literature may have their reasoning in intellectual history but they are themselves the reasons behind his impossible art.

Conclusion

Throughout his works, Beckett, was completely consistent with himself: his basic themes, such as self, time, the inexpressibility and impotence of both the writer and the words. Although *The Trilogy* can be seen as his ultimate aim for his aim for "the literature of the unword", throughout his life he carried on his experiment on words. *The Unnamable* attempts tragically to show that Beckett's existence is based on words that concurrently tell us the limits of language. He must have known that the only thing he had, to be able to say the ineffable, is the language that lasts in mind only for a short while. He chose this way because words do not mean anything in a well-ordered form either. His novels aims to show the impossibility of expression. His language works like a machine that constantly shows the failure of attributing meaning to the words. This failure that he constantly employs, creates an immense obscurity, so much so that no definite meaning is left in the end. This meaninglessness becomes one of the key tools of his literary aesthetic and can be seen in a play of him in a very distinctive way:

> HAMM: We're not beginning to... to... mean something?
> CLOV: Mean something! You and I, mean something! (Brief laugh.)
> Ah that's a good one! (Beckett, 1990, p. 110)

As we have seen, nothingness, as well as meaninglessness are important themes in Beckett's oeuvre which can best be seen in *The Unnamable*. That unnamed narrator of the novel has a voice that creates the irreducible nothingness that repeats itself obsessively as he cannot find an ending for his ceaseless words while he has at the same time nothing to say: "Nothing can ever exempt me from it, there is nothing, nothing to discover, nothing to recover, nothing that can lessen what remains to say, I have the ocean to drink, so there is the ocean then." (Beckett, 2009a, p. 308.) After

these words of the narrator we face the ocean of words that last for about a hundred pages which basically say nothing. Molloy is also trapped in a constant nothingness and tries to find the meaning by turning his thoughts and words towards himself. Maybe this is the reason why he counts his daily farts or why he wastes his time while he is trying to find the best solution to be able to suck his sixteen stones. This never-ending nothingness drags him to a state of ignorance and he appreciates this ignorance by finding that position peaceful: "For to know nothing is nothing, not to want to know anything likewise but to be beyond knowing anything, to know you are beyond knowing anything, that is when peace enters in, to the soul of the incurious seeker." (Beckett, 2009a, p. 64) Molloy's desire for a state of ignorance takes him to a state of minimal being as he travels toward less and his ever-worsening and lessening condition brings him the peace.

For Beckett, writing is a play in the Wittgensteinian manner. Wittgenstein thinks that language is set of games. Beckett's parodies reveal a general tendency to an anti-literature along with his identical anti-heroes. His character, Molloy, plays an absurd game of permutations, sucking stones thereby reducing language to a pure ratio where language becomes void. In that language words can only demonstrate their emptiness. According to him, language is a dead habit and with his unique language employment, he goes one step further among his contemporaries as he invalidates the representative nature of language and the rational principles of thinking to reach the meaning. This is also apparent in *Molloy* when Molloy says: "Yes, even then, when already all was fading waves and particles, there could be no things but nameless things, no names but thingless names." (Beckett, 2009a, p. 27) We know that things are not nameless or not named, they are named but they do not represent things. The names are our dead language's habit that do not represent anything anymore.

In this dissertation we have traced Beckett's literary life mostly by following his authorized biography by James Knowlson. Other than that, Beckett's own comments

on literature and language shed light on our way to understanding his position in literature. In the first chapter entitled Form and Content, we saw that Beckett's style deviated from that of his predecessors. To understand this deviation we looked at mostly his major prose works and plays. His unconventional literary style brought a new possibility to literature as he dismantled the conventional rules of literature dating back to times of Aristotle.

In the second chapter entitled The Idea of the Ineffable in Samuel Beckett, we looked at his works more comprehensively to understand his style profoundly. There we found out how he created his unique style with some literary tools. His style is an ongoing experiment that constantly rejects the meaning behind the words to get to the nothingness and finally to silence. This experiment he employs confronted with failure many times and we learned that, for Beckett, this should be the utmost aim for today's writers. Beckett thinks that language is not adequate to convey our thoughts and emotions and as a result he played with words as advised by Wittgenstein. We found that there is a resemblance between Beckett's and Wittgenstein's thought on language and although they both find language a set of games, they significantly differ one from another: Wittgenstein thinks that one must be silent in front of the unsayable, where Beckett chose to employ words abundantly to reach silence. Nevertheless Beckett is not in the opposite position of Wittgenstein as Wittgenstein thinks that art is the only form to create meaning with language.

It was also significant for us to look at some interpretations of Beckett's work. They show us that Beckett's works are open to many readings because his work can fit into many models or systems. It is important to note that Beckett lived in Paris and during that time there were many critical and theoretical movements arising. They were all of course affected by the aftershocks of the Second World War. It was also essential for us to look at those interpretations of Beckett's work because it made us to understand his aesthetic stance at that time.

Beckett is an artist who was able to say the unsayable via the language of literature and he brought back the reputation of literature by enlivening it. His characters illustrate the tragic human condition and the post-war trauma where no one was able to talk about what happened and why as they faced such an ineffable condition. Beckett rejected the notion of an integrated self with his characters and replaced them with tramps who have dissolved and dispossessed of their selves.

Notwithstanding all these philosophical interpretations, nothing is really certain in Beckett's work, as he once remarked that: "The key word in my plays is 'perhaps'" (Lawrence & Federman, 1997, p. 220) and the essence of his works create countless possibilities to keep us contemplating. "Perhaps" is a philosophical statement, which coincides with his abstracted theme in his works. Beckett was an excellent experimenter and creator in whatever form he employed. This is why the only end that can be grasped in Beckett's writings is the understanding that life consists of a repetitive pattern without any meaning. Beckett provides no answers and leaves the audience in ambiguity with the same questions and the same answers at the end of each work, showing that the reality of life is "maybe"; therefore a search for the meaning of life or things remains a "question of words". Even though many years have passed after his death, Beckett still remains one of the biggest writers of the twentieth century with a reputation for obscurity.

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