Samuel Beckett's Short Prose: The Philosophy of Literary Language

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by

Samudranil Gupta

Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067, India.

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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation titled **"Samuel Beckett's Short Prose: The Philosophy of Literary Language "** submitted by **Mr. Samudranil Gupta**, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

(SAITYA BRATA DAS)

SUPERVISOR

Dr. Saitya Brata Das
Associate Professor
Centre For English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067

(UDAYA KUMAR)

CHAIRPERSON

CHAIRPERSON
Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literatures & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067

Date: 23 July 2018

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

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Samudranil Gupta

(Samudranil Gupta)
M.Phil student
CES/SLL&CS
JNU

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Introduction

John Calder's remark , "what future generations can expect to find in [Beckett's] work is above all an ethical and philosophical message" (1) seems more pertinent when fourteen years later, Alexander L. Gungov, in his foreword to the ambitious anthology *Beckett/Philosophy* (edited by Matthew Feldman and Karim Mamdani) assigns medicinal value to "Beckett's disposition to imagine the unimaginable" (20) that may still provide "a powerful consolation for the human predicament" (19) in a post consumerist globalized world. Gungov is almost Aristotelian in tracing therapeutic characteristics in the literary oeuvre of Samuel Beckett, however what he interestingly reveals in the process is the relevance of reading Beckett with reference to philosophy (Gungov's foreword is titled "Is This the Right Time to Ponder Beckett and Philosophy?") current since the early 1950s, "after the unexpected critical success of Molloy and then *Waiting For Godot*" (Feldman, "Beckett and Philosophy" 333) that inspired "the French *philosophes* … in taking a 'broadly philosophical approach' to Beckett's works" (Feldman, "Beckett and Philosophy" 333).

However, there is possibly no one way of approaching the question of Beckett and philosophy. This is the reason why the question has been taken up *ad infinitum* by thinkers and yet it remains unexhausted. Perhaps, this is because Beckett, who openly denied his association with philosophy, leaves open something in his work that calls for nothing but a philosophical reading –a possibility to begin thinking about the work (in case of Beckett, as we shall try to argue in our thesis, the language itself thinks about itself), or the imperative to 'imagine', as Gungov has suggested. In this connection, Anthony Uhlmann's opinion seems strikingly relevant:

> The works are philosophical in that they have had and continue to have profound effects on philosophical discourse: both engaging with and influencing philosophers, and influencing and changing how western culture in general has come to think about particular problems. Yet questions concerning how we might understand this process are only beginning to come into focus. How do these works make us think? How have they changed our understanding of what it means to think and be in this world? (93)

It can hence be pointed out at the very outset of our project that our thesis is an attempt at deliberating on what has Beckett's oeuvre, with particular emphasis on his use of language, made us 'think' again or re-imagine about what can be called the meaning of meaning (insinuated by the adjective clause in this rather Beckettian phrase "what is *what*?") in relation to the interface between literature and philosophy. We shall embark upon taking up the similar

challenge undertaken by preceding as well as many other contemporary thinkers on Beckett, to establish and re-explore the association between philosophy and Beckett, who apparently did not understand or read philosophy.

1. "I do not read philosophers" : Beckett's Relationship with Philosophy

Samuel Beckett was perhaps one of the most philosophical literary writers produced by the last century in the history of world literature. We must remember that Beckett was different from some of his contemporaries who worked with both literature and philosophy like Jean Paul Sartre, or Maurice Blanchot. While these writers might have written brilliant literary texts, they were fundamentally recognized as philosophers, and their literary works often became extension of their philosophy. Beckett on the other hand was a literary writer who wrote philosophically. Although his language was essentially philosophical, he had persistently refused to associate himself with philosophy. Thus, as late as in 1961, when Beckett was asked if contemporary philosophers had any influence on his thoughts, Beckett famously answered in negative –"I never read philosophers … I never understand anything they write" (Graver and Federman 217)

It is difficult for us to accept Beckett's claim given that Beckett's oeuvre has persistently revealed philosophical references and influences. However, as Matthew Feldman has estimated, it can be posited that Beckett's "essentially self-directed study" (Feldman, "BECKETT AND PHILOSOPHY" 164) of western philosophy lasted only for a decade –from 1928 to 1938, during the inter-war years. Beckett did not study philosophy at Trinity College, therefore he had no formal training in the discipline. It was only upon meeting Joyce in the late 20's when Beckett was appointed as the 'lecteur d'anglais' at Paris' Ecole Normale Supérieure that he had to eventually read philosophy[1]. When Joyce proposed Beckett to write an essay on his *Work in Progress* (later to become *Finnegans Wake*) to trace its "debt to the Italian trinity of Dante, Bruno, and Vico" (Cohn, "Foreword" 8), Beckett had to read Giambattista Vico's *Scienza Nuova*. According to Feldman, "Giambattista Vico seems to have acted as Beckett's introduction to philosophy" (Feldman, ""I am not a philosopher"" 43).

Following this introduction to philosophy, Beckett would undertake reading of various other philosophers until 1938, as revealed by his library containing books on philosophy ranging from the Presocratics to Sartre[2]. During 1938, while still assisting Joyce with *Finnegans Wake*,

[1] See Ruby Cohn's 'foreword' to *Disjecta*, pp. 8.
[2] See the section on philosophy in *Samuel Beckett's Library* edited by Dirk Van Hulle and Mark Nixon. Pp. 128.

Beckett read Fritz Mauthner's *Beitrage zu einer Kritik der Sparche* that would arguably determine his own "complex attitude toward language …and its possible impact on his writings" (Hulle 279). It was by the autumn of the same year, as Feldman suggests, Beckett "had come to view reason as inimical to his artistic process" and hence "engaging with philosophy was no longer a necessity for his artistic purposes". Hence, Feldman reads Beckett's continuous incorporation of philosophical themes after 1938, as "artistic reformulations" of the philosophical engagements he carried out during the interwar years. Thus, in 1961, when Beckett refuted his associations with philosophy he was not further from truth.

However, despite the non-rapport that defined Beckett's relationship with philosophy, and his eventual claim that neither he read philosophy, nor he was a philosopher, we cannot still overlook the fact that his language was deeply philosophical not so much because it was informed by his limited but sincere years of studying philosophy, but more importantly since it interrogated itself to unsettle its own structure, words, grammar and style, thereby offering an unprecedented concept of literature to come, which he called 'literature of the unword'[3]. Beckett's was a self-deconstructive language at its best that was inevitably linked to the very philosophical adjective clause "what is" in relation to literature and writing literary texts. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the intersection between literature and philosophy has been persistently explored in Beckett studies.

2. Samuel Beckett and Language

When we say that the language of Samuel Beckett was essentially philosophical –we mean Beckett's use of language in general. The philosophical is mainly insinuated by how he puts language to use and experiments with it. That is why, when Derrida eloquently makes his case in 1989 (the same year that Beckett passes away) for not having written at length on Beckett since he felt that Beckett wrote in *his* language (60), a kind of French that was a ""differently" foreign language" (60) for both of them, one wonders what does Derrida have on mind as 'his' language. Is it essentially a particular language, precisely French, that he is referring to, or is it the language of a philosopher that does "operation on … language" (60) itself?

It is well known that Beckett wrote in at least three languages –English, French, and German. He realized as early as in 1937 that he felt increasingly difficult to express himself in English[4],

[3] See Beckett's letter to Axel Kaun, dated 9 July, 1937, collected in *Disjecta* edited by Ruby Cohn, with a translation offered by Martin Esslin (Pp. 170-173). A recent translation is available in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940* Vol-I (Pp. 516-521). However, we shall only refer to Esslin's translation in our thesis.
[4] Ibid.

however his eventual decision to turn to writing in French after 1945 did not indeed resolve the anxiety of linguistic inadequacy.

Thus in a letter to the writer, when Hans Naumann asked if Beckett's choice of French over English was intended for reaching out to a wider audience beyond the borders of Ireland; and if Beckett felt that French culture was a more adequate base for his work[5], Beckett's response was strikingly vague and in keeping with his anxiety over language:

> Since 1945 I have written only in French. Why this change? It was not deliberate. It was in order to change, to see, nothing more complicated than that, in appearance at least. In any case nothing to do with the reasons you suggest. I do not consider English a foreign language, it is my language. If there is one that is really foreign to me, it is Gaelic. You may put me in the dismal category of those who, if they had to act in full awareness of what they were doing, would never act. Which does not preclude there being urgent reasons, for this change. I myself can half make out several, now that it is too late to go back. But I prefer to let them stay in the half-light. I will all the same give you one clue: the need to be ill equipped. (*Letters II* 464)

Why did Beckett want to be ill equipped at all in order to express himself in a given language? The answer perhaps lies in Beckett's letter to Axel Kaun in 1937 (and we shall occasionally refer to this letter in the course of our thesis, now popularly known as the German Letter)[6] where he first anticipated the concept of 'literature of the unword' through putting language into misuse, thereby jeopardizing its structure. Hence, it can be argued that in case of Beckett to be ill-equipped with language was to facilitate its 'misuse'[7].

Moreover, this was around the same time that Beckett would begin his "unprecedented series of self-translation" (Cohn, "Samuel Beckett" 613), from French to English and vice-versa, thus continuously re-writing one text into another language. Critics are of the opinion that Beckett was often creating parallel texts through his self-translations rather than simply offering inter-semiotic mimesis, since methodologically these self-translations involved multiple improvisations and omissions that together gave rise to what Ruby Cohn called "a distorted view of the whole" (Cohn, "Samuel Beckett" 615-616).

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[5] See the endnote 3 added at the end of Beckett's letter to Naumann, dated February, 17, 1954 in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1941-1956* Vol-II (P. 466).
[6] Refer to footnote 3
[7] Ibid

It can be argued that the idea behind self-translation was precisely to 'distort the view' so that as James McGuire, in his essay "Beckett, the Translator, and the Metapoem" has shown the "weakening effect" (259) of French on Beckett's style, doubled on being translated back to English, could be exploited as a further means to ensure linguistic estrangement and sterilization of style (259). Therefore, for Beckett shifting between languages was a methodological expedient to violate the very idea of language itself –a structure that makes expression possible. On thus violating the morphological foundation of language through language (thereby giving rise to the self-deconstructive language as pointed out in the earlier section) Beckett attempted at leaving this structure invalid.

3. Objectives and Chaptarization:

While on one hand some critics and scholars have critically analysed and commented on Beckett's extensive reading in philosophy and the influence of certain philosophers on his writings, many others have attempted to theorize what can be called a Beckettian philosophy through analysing Beckett's use of form and content and how he implemented the philosophical influences in his work. However, what has still remained largely unevaluated is the basic question why is Samuel Beckett's language essentially philosophical and what is the philosophy of this philosophical language?

It is not enough to say that Beckett's language is philosophical because it was influenced by Beckett's readings of philosophy (besides the fact that Beckett himself had influenced several philosophers) or because it was, as pointed out earlier, a self-deconstructive language. We must further ask what does this philosophically informed, and self-deconstructive language do in order to enter into the realm of the philosophical, and what does Beckett do with this language. Hence, the ultimate aim of our thesis is to raise these two questions in order to trace Beckett's philosophy as a philosophy of literary language that touches upon, as we shall see in our following chapters, the question of both aesthetics and ethics with regard to what constitutes literature and its relevance. Therefore, the broader objective of our thesis is to critically analyse the philosophical language of Samuel Beckett –its genealogy and consequence. We shall perhaps invariably fall back on John Calder's remark on Beckett in relation to ethics and philosophy, but we shall locate the whole question of philosophical within Beckett's use of language.

Our subsequent objective of narrowing down our focus on Beckett's shorter prose, a remarkable genre of writing in Beckett's oeuvre that has largely been neglected by any wide-

scale scholarly attention. In the introduction to the edition of *The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989*, editor S.E. Gontarski explains that since these prose texts were mostly incomplete fragments of longer projects later accomplished or never accomplished, they had to apparently meet with such scholarly negligence, despite "such neglect is difficult to account for, given that Beckett wrote short fiction for the entirety of his creative life and his literary achievement and innovation" (xi). Although it would be unfair to not mention *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett* by James Knowlson and John Pilling that offers a detailed study of some of the later short prose works. However, in comparison to the amount of scholarly works done on the novels and the plays, it only proves that critical explorations in the genre of Beckett's short prose works are scanty.

On the other hand, the very fragmented character of these prose works provides for a more suitable textual framework to examine the unsettling and shrinking language of Samuel Beckett. Thus, to quote Gontarski again, "as Beckett periodically confronted first the difficulties then the impossibility of sustaining and shaping longer works, as his aesthetic preoccupations grew more contractive than expansive, short prose became his principle narrative form –the distillate of longer fiction as well as the testing ground for occasional longer works –and the theme of "human loneliness" pervades it" ("introduction" xi-xii).

However, this project does not make any claim to offer an overall study of Beckett's short prose since that would demand accomplishment of a mammoth task within the limited scope of an M. Phil dissertation, and although it will mainly focus on some of the short prose texts discussed in the following chapters, our argumentative trajectory shall refer to texts from other literary genres that Beckett had engaged with. These texts that the project would look at were mostly written and published post 1937 after Beckett had formulated his concept of literature of the unword. This is not to suggest that texts belonging from before this period does not showcase some of the traits that we shall theorize, but since Beckett's formulation of the concept would be our point of departure to address the question of philosophy in relation to Beckett's language, for sake of logical cohesiveness and argumentative clarity, we shall stick to these texts primarily.

The first chapter, titled 'Literature of the Unword: The Philosophical Language of Samuel Beckett' throws open our central research question, why is Samuel Beckett's literary language essentially philosophical? In this chapter, we shall mainly attempt to brief the genealogical evolution of Beckettian language and how it anticipated the concept of a new literature that he

called ‘literature of the unword’. This chapter has largely sought recourse to Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the term ‘philosophy’ in their book *What is Philosophy?* for its theoretical point of departure, since their deliberation poses an interesting parallel with Beckett's own formulation of the so-called concept. The chapter shall ponder over the difference between the function of art and philosophy as stated by Deleuze and Guattari, and attempt to show how Beckett’s literary language which belongs to the realm of art eventually enters into the realm of philosophy through creating the concept.

The second chapter, ‘Disjunction and Failure: The Paradox of Writing’ shall explore the paradox of writing apropos the concept of literature of the unword. Drawing upon the idea of disjunction proposed by the Beckett theorist Paul Stewart[8], our hypothesis is that the paradox of the Beckettian writing reveals a disjunction between the concept and the text insofar as the intention to undo language is ultimately expressed through the performance of writing itself. Beckett’s attempt to ‘mock words through word’[9] possibilitates a remnant language to remain like a trace. The chapter shall also show how the disjunction leads into textual failure to conclude on the philosophical significance of the textual failure.

The third and the final chapter, ‘Language and Ethics’, shall argue that the Beckettian language cannot be understood ahistorically, and henceforth it is related to the question of ethics. Despite his reticence over the political issues of his days, Beckett was thoroughly concerned about the collapsing state of humanity during the inter-war years and after the outbreak of the war. The chapter shall attempt to trace Beckett’s own experiences during the war and the ethical obligation he felt as an artist to listen to the traumatised and amnesiac voices of others, and make his language become those voices. The chapter shall hypothesize that the language of Samuel Beckett is philosophical not only because it is a self-deconstructive language that offers a radical concept of literature of the unword; but also because it is an ethical language that reaches out and stands for what Beckett called ‘humanity in ruins’[10].

4. A Note on Methodology

In our thesis, we shall put Beckett’s texts in conjunction with other philosophers who have commented on Beckett (like Blanchot, Deleuze and Guattari etc), as well as Beckett theorists, recent and old. We shall also occasionally refer to Beckett’s letters and interviews and other

[8] See Paul Stewart’s *Zone of Evaporation: Samuel Beckett’s Disjunctions*.
[9] See *The German Letter*
[10] The expression was used by Beckett in his report ‘The Capital of Ruins’ on the Irish Hospital in St. Lô, collected in The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989 edited by S.E. Gontarski. Pp. 275-278.

possible empirical sources that have been published. Thus, our attempt is to methodologically re-introduce close-reading and comparative analysis of the literary texts and other commentaries into the emerging methodology of empirical cross-checking in Beckett studies. While either of these approaches has been at loggerheads with one another[11], their individual importance cannot be denied. While the traditional school of reading texts that includes the methods of close reading and comparative analysis of texts still facilitate possibilities of meaning-making, thus prioritizing the function of the reader over the author who ultimately determines the relevance of the text by re-interpreting, re-writing, and counter-signing the text; the empirical approach on the other hand, brings the author back into focus. Thus, the archival turn in Beckett studies (post 1996 with the publication of James Knowlson's Beckett biography *Damned To Fame*) allows the scholar to examine Beckett's texts against biographical evidences like his interviews, drafts, reading notes, books, marginalia and private papers like diaries and letters (some of which are being published now) to ensure a more accurate understanding of the texts in relation to its originary circumstances and authorial intent. However, notwithstanding the debate, it is not perhaps altogether impossible to draw a connection between the two approaches (which is something our thesis shall attempt to do), precisely because it should be remembered that the archive itself is subject to further interpretation and hence possibilities of meaning-making does not stop with the intervention of empirical references. Thus, the methodological intention of our thesis is to avoid rejection of one methodology at the cost of another, or to prioritize one over the other, but to bring either of them into conversation with one another.

[11] For a glimpse of the on-going debate within the field of Beckett studies, see and compare Matthew Feldman's "BECKETT AND POPPER, Or "WHAT STINK OF ARTIFICE" : Some Notes on Methodology, Falsifiability, and Criticism in Beckett Studies" and Garin Dowd's "PROLEGOMENA TO A CRITIQUE OF EXCAVATORY REASON: Reply to Matthew Feldman".

Chapter One

Literature of the Unword: The Philosophical Language of Samuel Beckett

Let us begin by opening up the hypothetical question that is central to our thesis – why is Samuel Beckett's literary language essentially philosophical? This question already presupposes two conditions a) Samuel Beckett's literary language is philosophical and b) not all literary language is essentially philosophical. Therefore, we shall have to further ask what does constitute our understanding of the term 'philosophical', and how does Beckett's language insinuate the philosophical.

For drawing our solution, we must look at the genesis of Beckett's literary language that anticipated the concept of a new literature to come. Our proposition is that the philosophical in the language is situated within its anticipation for the concept; and in order to substantiate our argument we shall seek recourse to how Deleuze and Guattari have defined art and philosophy in their last co-authored work *What is Philosophy?*[12] –according to which, while art is that which creates sensation through a combination of percept and affect; philosophy is "the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts" (3). According to them, while it is possible to conceive a concept of sensation in art, that determines the philosophy of the sensation itself – the concept, on the other hand, essentially belongs to philosophy. The concept, thereafter, is always philosophical.

Deleuze and Guattari have further speculated that the philosophical concept is a creation per excellence since it is neither discovery –a calculated proof of something that had always existed but not understood or found; nor is it a mere representation –a mimesis of an object or condition external or internal to the senses. Rather, the philosophical concept is something that has an 'autonomous existence' created solely by the philosopher. Although as Deleuze and Guattari would show, the preceding concepts belonging to the identical plane of thought may anticipate and inform the emerging concept, the latter must stand out as singularly different from the rest, offering idea and insights that belong entirely to itself.

[12] We shall refer to Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's works to examine Beckett's experiment with language since these philosophers have referred to Beckett at length in their own works, and therefore there is a striking parallel between Beckett and these philosophers. One shall not be further from truth to predict that Beckett had fascinated Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, and hence influenced their philosophy. There are many recent publications entirely devoted to Beckett, Deleuze and Guattari. See for instance, *Deleuze and Beckett*. Edited by S.E. Wilmer and Audronė Žukauskaitė. In this chapter we shall try to arrive at our conjecture through tracing the parallel between the philosophers and the writer.

When we pose our hypothetical question –why is Samuel Beckett's language essentially philosophical, Deleuze and Guattari's speculations become all the more pertinent since Beckett's literary experimentation anticipated a concept of what he called 'literature of the unword'[13] –a concept that was both arguably new, autonomous and undersigned. Thus, we shall attempt to argue in this chapter that Beckett not only created sensation through his literary language, given that literature belongs to the realm of art; but also invented and fabricated an unprecedented concept of literature through his language –thereby entering into the realm of philosophy.

It would not be fallacious to claim that Beckett was among the very few writers in the vast history of literature who had accomplished the task of creating a new and autonomous concept of literature through his language. Although Joyce for instance, had preceded Beckett in offering a literature that was marked by its unprecedented, outstanding, and autonomous use of language, he did not have any name for his concept. It was Beckett who had interestingly recognized Joyce's ouvre as 'apotheosis of word' –however, as Deleuze and Guattari clearly state that the concept has to be undersigned by the one who formulates it, for the concepts "are nothing without their creator's signature"(Deleuze and Guattari, *WP* 5).

Beckett indeed had conceived, formulated, and undersigned his concept that he named 'literature of the unword'. The phrase was Beckett's own coinage as no other writer before him had used this phrase to define their concept of a new literature. While Beckett's concept was thus unprecedented in its venture, it was undersigned on a more literal level too. The concept was co-incidentally first described in a letter that Beckett wrote to Axel Kaun, signed on his own name and dated 9 July 1937, now popularly known as the German Letter[14]. The co-incidence only literalised the pre-requisite for the concept to remain signed and original.

However, it should be pointed out here that Beckett's concept was not ahistorical. While on one hand, Beckett's experiment with language emerged from its own historical background – the Irish literary space that it simultaneously rejected; on the other hand, its philosophy was deeply rooted in its own time, and was informed by the deranged condition of humanity during

[13] See the German Letter of 1937 to Axel Kaun, translated by Martin Esslin, in *Disjecta*, edited by Ruby Cohn.

[14] We shall use the translation offered by Martin Esslin collected in *Disjecta*, edited by Ruby Cohn, instead of the latest translation published in the first volume of Samuel Beckett's letters under the editorial of Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck. This is because Esslin's translation of the phrase 'Literatur des Unworts' as 'literature of the unword' appears to be more appropriate in terms of Beckett's intention than the latest translation of the phrase as 'literature of the non-word'.

and after the war. (We shall take this up in the last chapter again to think about how Beckett's literary language was an ethical event –an event of becoming the voice of what he later called 'humanity in ruins'[15]). Hence, in this chapter, (with a particular focus on the short prose works) we shall first try to address Beckett's literary language –its genealogy, evolution and historical relevance; and then try to think about how this language created a new and autonomous concept of literature à la Deleuze and Guattari.

1. Beckett and the Irish Literary Space

In order to estimate Samuel Beckett's literary language, we must place him, as Pascale Casanova points out, in the larger context of the Irish literary space beginning with the Irish Revivalist movement that aimed at reclaiming its own literary resources, after being "under colonial control for more than eight centuries" (Casanova 304), to create, "[a] rupture with the literature of the center, providing a model of the aesthetic, formal, linguistic, and political possibilities" (304). It is interesting to observe that most writers belonging to the Irish literary space during this time, in solidarity with or opposition to the movement, began to think about a medium of expression that would essentially pose a political challenge to the norms of writing founded by and current in the so-called literature of the center. Language obviously became the most important machinery of this literary revolt with many writers either attempting to subvert the use of English in their writings or refusing English altogether in favour of the native Gaelic. The movement was thus anticipating the birth of a national literature foregrounding the hope and "demands for linguistic and national independence" (Casanova 308).

Both Joyce and Beckett, and before them, George Bernard Shaw, as indicated by Casanova, had shared their reservations about the politics of nationalism being espoused by the literary movement that was "provincializing literary production" (Casanova 314). It can be argued that Joyce, who left an indelible impression on Beckett, had therefore attempted to create an autonomous language of resistance. Joyce's "whole literary work", as Casanova has suggested, "can be seen as a very subtle Irish reappropriation of the English language" (314). Hence, Joyce's English, infested with Irish obscenity made "a laughingstock of English literary

[15] Beckett used this phrase in his 1946 reportage called "The Capital of the Ruins" on the state of the Irish hospital in St. Lô conducted by the Irish Red Cross after the entire town was devastated by the allied bombings of 1944, where Beckett worked as a storekeeper and an interpreter. The piece reveals an acutely humanitarian voice cultivated by Beckett in response to the atrocity of war. However, this sensibility had perhaps developed much before since Beckett's first-hand experience of the regime during his German trip in 1936-1937 and his eventual involvement with the French Resistance against the German occupation, at a time when Jews were being captured and exterminated. See *Beckett Remembering Remembering Beckett*, edited by James and Elizabeth Knowlson, ch 3.

tradition" (Casanova 315-16), in order to "disrupt the hierarchical relation between London and Dublin" (316).

However by no means, even then, Joyce had endorsed into any kind of suffocating nationalism that compelled writers to produce literature on par with the conditions provided by the proponents of the movement. Joyce's voluntary exile from Ireland (and later on, Beckett would follow his footsteps) furthered his dismissive attitude toward the very idea of homeland, and yet Dublin's persistent presence in his oeuvre was manoeuvred in a way through language so that "Ireland would be able to assume its rightful place in the literary world" (316).

Thus, as Casanova posits, Joyce's literary works were autonomous insofar as they distanced themselves from falling prey to the writing tradition contemporaneous with the politics of nationalism, while simultaneously working toward challenging the hegemonic norms of English that not only "[subverted] the language of oppression" (317) but also attempted to disrupt as a whole the various structures of language in literary writing.

Hence, for Samuel Beckett, who represented according to Casanova, "a sort of end point in the constitution of Irish literary space and its process of emancipation" (318), the ground was already prepared for unsettling and disrupting language. Despite Beckett's political and methodological disagreements, even with Joyce, the movement against language had already began within the Irish literary space and Beckett eventually contributed in carrying this movement forward in his own way, but also much like Joyce, beyond the limitations of nationalism.

2. Joyce and Beckett: Difference and Influence

It is impossible to think of Beckett's literary evolution without acknowledging Joyce's influence on his work. Joyce was perhaps the only writer with whom Beckett was closer in spirit than with any other writer from the Irish literary background. As we have already pointed out, both of them attempted to experiment with and unsettle language going beyond the limited scope of nationalism being propagated by the Irish Literary Revival. According to Seamus Deane, both of these writers "seemed to insist on exile from Ireland as a condition of artistic freedom" (57) and therefore represented a more dramatic form of exile "since it appeared to be based on a total repudiation of the homeland, and a correspondingly exacting inquiry into the possibilities of language for artists who felt that their work began in nullity, at degree zero" (57). Thus, it can be argued that despite the differences with Joyce that Beckett had mapped out, the former's influence can always be traced in Beckett's works and language.

One of the most crucial differences between Joyce and Beckett was that while the former moved toward omnipotence in writing, the latter shifted toward impotence. Beckett called Joyce's language an 'apotheosis of words' while opining that language was best used where it was mostly misused. Thus, in the famous letter that he wrote to Axel Kaun in 1937, Beckett said:

> Let us hope the time will come … when language is most efficiently used where it is being most efficiently misused. As we cannot eliminate language all at once, we should at least leave nothing undone that might contribute to its falling into disrepute. 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. ("German Letter" 172)

Beckett's goal to shatter the illusive screen of language eventually inspired him to develop a literary method of writing that would be void of "all the accidentals"(Knowlsons 47), unlike what is found in the works of Joyce –"a synthesizer, [who] wanted to put everything, the whole of human culture, into one or two books" (Knowlsons 47).

Beckett called himself an analyser, as opposed to Joyce, and hence, what he wrote became an analysis of writing itself. Therefore, it can be suggested, that his language became analytical too, possessing the self-referential property of analysing its own limits.

However, despite Beckett's repeated claim of moving away from Joyce, emphasizing on the fact that his "own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, subtracting other than adding" (Knowlsons 47), unlike Joyce "who was always *adding* to it" (Knowlsons 47) – he could not abandon the influence of what he recognized in the Joycean language as a "direct expression [in which] form and content are inseparable" (Beckett, "Dante…Bruno" 25).

In an interview given in 1961 to Tom Driver, Beckett famously spoke on writing and what he called the mess. According to Beckett, the mess made out of our world "invades our experience at every moment. It is there and it must be allowed in" (Graver and Federman 219). Beckett's solution was to anticipate a new form that "admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else" (Graver and Federman 219). The form and the mess could not be taken separately and therefore, the task of the artist was "to find a form that accommodates the mess" (Graver and Federman 219).

Thus, Beckett appropriated in his own writing the phenomenal inseparability of form and content that he had discovered in Joyce: “Here form is content and content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read –or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something; it is that something itself” (“Dante…Bruno” 27). The inseparability of form and content, where one became the other in either way, ensured a language of becoming instead of possibilities of mimetic representation. Thus the Beckettian language created, as Deleuze would say, sensation. His language too, like Joyce, “[was] not to be read –or it [was] not only to be read” (“Dante…Bruno” 27) but to be felt and sensed.

In this context, Enoch Brater has suggested that Beckett (and the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake* before him) came very close to the poet Mallarmé (Brater 7) –one of the major French poets Beckett had studied at length, but did not actually appreciate very much, who, much like Beckett himself, attempted at inventing a language of what he called a very new poetics that would not paint the object (representation) but the very effect that was produced by it (becoming).

3. The Sensation and the Disappearance of the Material Conditions of Art

Deleuze and Guattari, in *What is Philosophy?*, suggest that percept and affect are not mere perception and affection but go beyond these as they come together to create what they call sensation. Sensation is a compound of affects and percept. Earlier in his study of Francis Bacon's paintings, Deleuze had shown that sensation "is in the body ... and not in the air" (*FB* 35). The body that Deleuze refers to, however, does not necessarily mean body "represented as an object" (*FB* 35) -in fact, sensation is opposed to such figurative representation since such representation cannot liberate the figure from the narrative. Rather, the body is that which sustains the sensation. Therefore the body of an apple, in a painting, for instance should not represent the apple as an object but the appleyness of the apple –that is, the apple as the becoming of itself[16]. Thus the apple is not a figuration -which Deleuze described as form related to the object, an instance of illustration that cannot escape narrative; but it is the 'Figure' itself –something that can only be felt or sensed. Therefore, Beckett did not write about the mess, but his writings were the very mess that his language had eventually become. Hence, if blocs of sensation (compound of percept and affect) is what art creates through the body, then this

[16] See Deleuze’s chapter ‘Painting and Sensation’ in *Francis Bacon: the Logic of sensation*. Here, he is referring to D.H.Lawrence’s comment on Cézanne with regard to the “appleyness of the apple”.

cannot merely be the representation of the body as an object but becoming of the body (the Figure as opposed to figuration).

However, it should also be remembered here, as Deleuze and Guattari mention at the very outset of their chapter on 'Percept, Affect, and Concept' in *What is Philosophy?* that art cannot last without the support of their materials -"stone, canvas, chemical color, and so on" (163). All the material conditions transpire into creating the sensation, as indeed "it is the percept or affect of the material itself, the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay, the thrust of metal, the crouch of Romanesque stone, and the ascent of Gothic stone" (167). But, as Deleuze and Guattari further point out, despite being part of the sensation these material conditions of the art that come together to form the plane of composition –the ground upon which the composition is carried out, disappear behind the Figure since "[s]ensation is not realized in the material without the material passing completely into the sensation, into the percept or affect" (167). What is preserved in art is not its material condition after all, which, only satisfies the condition of sustaining the art materially, despite its transpiration or passing completely into sensation. But what is preserved is sensation (percept and affect) itself. That is why, when we see the portrait of a smiling woman we do not think about the mix of the colours, the strokes of the brushes, the material of the canvas that have disappeared behind the face, and its emotion or when we watch a film, we do not think about the light effects, the prosthetic settings, the camera that bring the scene into life but take that scene as a spatial reality in itself. In case of writing too, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, there can be specific materials used by the writer like words, syntax, and we can also add here paper, type-writer, pen etc., "that ascends irresistibly into his work and passes into sensation" (*WP* 167), unless of course an attempt is made to reveal these material conditions as we will find in case of Beckett –to which we shall return in a while.

4. The Voice of Humanity in Ruins: Historical Relevance of Beckett's Language

Now that we have discussed about the genealogy of Beckett's language, the direct expression of impotence through form and content, and the sensation it creates through an assemblage of percept and affect, let us come back to the language itself via its historical relevance. For that, we must turn to the 1937 letter that Beckett wrote to Kaun, shortly after his return from Nazi Germany where he experienced the most atrocious measures undertaken by the dictatorial regime to attack human freedom. During his trip, he also came across several art collectors,

historians, 'degenerate'[17] artists and intellectuals getting around the dictates of the regime through art from the underground[18]. These encounters evidently influenced Beckett's "artistic and aesthetic development" (Nixon 162) toward a new literature to come.

The letter of 1937 was a call for the new literature –a literature more suitable for its time. Beckett realized that literature could not "remain behind in the old lazy ways" ("German Letter" 172) and hence he wanted to imagine a new literary method that will shatter the dictates of grammar and style. It would be a literature that unsettled language, dissolved words, and disrupted grammar and style to become what Beckett called 'literature of the unword' –a concept of un-doing language in literature.

The *Oxford Paperback Dictionary and Thesaurus* states that the meaning of the verb 'undo' is "1. unfasten or loosen. 2. reverse the effects of something previously done. 3. *formal* cause the downfall or ruin of [something]" ("undo" 1008). Therefore, it can be argued that the word 'unword' which may have a direct association with the verb 'un-do' means to unfasten , untie, and ruin the structures of language, fastened/ interlinked/ closely held together by words. Thus, the letter of 1937 marks Beckett's declaration of war against structures of language, that are always already decided by various systems of power.

The struggle against language shall continue throughout Beckett's writing career, affecting and influencing the conceptual development of his literary work. As mentioned in the introductory passage to this chapter, Beckett was responding, in this way, to the humanity in ruins –a humanity that was robbed of its voice, space, and dignity during and after the war and thrown into the inescapable labyrinth of distress. Thus, at some point in the same interview with John Driver, Beckett had said: "I left the party as soon as possible and got into a taxi. On the glass partition between me and the driver were three signs: one asked for help for the blind, another help for orphans, and the third for relief for the war refugees. One does not have to look for distress. It is screaming at you even in the taxis of London" (Graver and Federman 244-245).

Beckett's literature was concerned about the tragic disintegration of humanity in the twentieth century. Therefore, it departed from the narrow contrives of nationalism to adopt a wider world view –in which the entire humanity was empathised with and put into question at the same time. Therefore, for Beckett, the figure of a certain 'people' and their language, as

[17] The term was used by the regime to describe modern art that disappointed the German nationalist sensibilities.

[18] See Beckett's letter to Thomas McGreevy, 28 November 1937. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940. Vol-I.* Also see Mark Nixon's *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries 1936-1937*, ch. 5, 8, and 9.

imagined by his predecessors from the Irish literary space became obsolete and what found priority was the voice –the collective voice of a humanity in ruins, collapsing and breaking down.

Beckett conceived this voice as a confused buzz, torn in between silence and murmurs, as though this voice had "nothing to express, nothing with which to express, together with the obligation to express" (Beckett, "Three Dialogues" 139). These words perhaps most accurately describe Beckett's own intention to write in an aporetic voice that can neither speak nor stay silent and hence the murmur or fumble. They are too traumatized to speak but on the other hand they also want to tell, to speak out, to communicate. In the last chapter, with textual illustration, we shall once again refer to these symptoms found in survivors of trauma attempting to 'act out and work through'[19] their condition that Beckett attempted to incorporate in his language in an attempt to share their crisis. However, as for now let us look at how Beckett is unsettling language.

In 'Waiting For Godot', there is a moment that best exemplifies the attempt as the tramps talk about the "dead-voices" (Beckett 58):

> Vladamir: What do they say?
>
> Estragon: They talk about their lives.
>
> Vladamir: To have lived is not enough for them.
>
> Estragon: They have to talk about it.
>
> Vladamir: To be dead is not enough for them.
>
> Estragon: It is not sufficient.
>
> Silence
>
> Vladamir: They make a noise like feathers.
>
> Estragon: Like leaves.
>
> Vladamir: Like ashes.
>
> Estragon: Like leaves. (Beckett 58)

[19] See Dominick LaCapra. *Writing History Writing Trauma*

It must be carefully noted that the moment of pause –a rupture in the body of the narrative, follows the line that ends with the words 'not sufficient' so that the text collapses into the silence (only to re-surface once more). The phrase 'not sufficient' spoken in terms of a language almost comment on the incapacity of the language itself so that it collapses momentarily. Thus, and this what we shall point out in our second chapter, the phrase 'not sufficient' becomes a meta-semiotic expression necessary to unsettle the body of the narrative composed of the language: mocking word through words.

The pause, therefore, is the necessary perforation on the surface of language –the gap through which "what lurks behind –be it something or nothing –begins to seep through"("German Letter" 172). What emerges out of this perforation is the murmuring noise made by the dead voices –a nothing that is something insofar as they cannot be deciphered through articulation but can possibly be 'sensed and felt' in terms of approximate comparison. Hence, we actually do not hear the murmurs of the dead voices, rather they are described to us figuratively. The murmurs in 'Waiting For Godot' very much resemble the paradoxical whispers shared among the three women in Beckett's 'Come and GO', paradoxical insofar as they are present and absent, heard and unheard at the same time.

5. Impotence and autonomy: Literature of the unword

Enoch Brater has suggested, as Sarah West summarily reminds us[20], that the language of Samuel Beckett is always looking for a voice to say it. According to Brater, "[t]he word wasn't a word until it was made flesh, that is, until a voice said "it" " (7) –whether it is the dead voices in 'Waiting for Godot' that speak like leaves, feathers and ashes ; or the dripping heart in Hamm's head in 'Endgame'; or the voice stuck in mud in *How It Is*; or the ill-seen, ill-said, 'missaid' voices heard in 'Company', 'Worstward Ho', 'Stirrings Still'. The voice in Beckett, is therefore, essentially performative[21] since it not only performs the narration (to say) but also performs its becoming (flesh).

Hence, the voice in Beckett –that may either exist in the body or outside the body, is in itself an embodiment of the fragmented, ruptured voice of the humanity in ruins. Therefore, it can be suggested that when Beckett's language attempts to speak in the traumatised, disoriented and disconcerted voice of humanity at a given moment in history – it is the very effect of

[20] See Sarah West's Say It: The Performative Voice in the Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett, Rodopi : Amsterdam, 2010.
[21] Ibid.

extreme delirium and rupture the voice produces that marks the genesis of his literary language. Through my reading of Beckett's 'Company' now I shall try to substantiate these points in order to show what Beckett does with his literary language.

Although Beckett's 'Company', one of his most well received later prose works, is not included in the Grove Press edition of *The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989* edited by S.E. Gontarski, two longer paragraphs from the text were published independently with minor alterations as 'Heard in the Dark 1' and 'Heard in the Dark 2' and they were included in the Grove Press edition. The text was initially composed in English (1977-79), and later translated into French by the writer himself as 'Compagnie'. The English version came out later in 1980 after the French text was published earlier the same year.

The text is woven around a man in confinement –a typically Beckettian figure, existing in what Jonathan Boulter calls "radically diminished physical state" (130), who hears a voice that "…tells of a past … [with] occasional allusion to a present and more rarely to a future…" (Beckett, "Company" 3). The voice is probably an anterior projection of the man's interior thought devising an episodic narrative of amnesiac memories to create what Enoch Brater has accurately phrased "impassioned biography" (106). The man is caught in that very Beckettian paradox we have already mentioned earlier –"there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, together with the obligation to express" (Beckett, "Three Dialogues" 139). That is why, the voice, despite his alienation from the man, cannot stop "to plague one in need of silence" (Beckett, "Company" 5) with its continuous reminiscence –"the voice alone is company but not enough" (Beckett, "Company" 5).

This trope is nothing unusual in Beckett, as we have seen how he uses possibilities of ruptured reminiscence in order to emphasize on what can be called the present-ness of loneliness in an earlier play like 'Krapp's Last Tape'. The so-called reminiscing voices in Beckett's texts have one thing in common –they attempt to provide company to these characters in order to alleviate their loneliness, only to fail inevitably. In this context, let us take for instance the last tape in 'Krapp's Last Tape' that abruptly stops playing the voice and runs on blank.

But how does the incorrigible loneliness anticipated by the voice –which is apparently the becoming-voice of the humanity in ruins, comes across through Beckett's language? In order to address this question, let us consider the hedgehog episode in ''Company. This episode deals with the man's involvement with a hedgehog as a young boy. The young boy wanted to give shelter to the hedgehog and hence he had put it inside an old hatbox. However, in the end the

boy discovered that the hedgehog had died inside the box –probably of suffocation. The horrifying impact of this incident on the boy was so penetrating that it left behind an indelible impression –something he could never forget.

Here, Beckett does not describe the carcass of the hedgehog nor does he detail the uneasy experience of the boy other than the brief information that he would never forget the discovery. Rather, Beckett chooses two words toward the end of his long paragraph –"You have never forgotten what you found then. You are on your back in the dark and have never forgotten what you found then. The mush. The stench" ("Company" 19). With these two words –"The mush. The stench" ("Company" 19), and nothing more, Beckett enters into creating what we had earlier in this chapter characterized as sensation instead of offering a representation of the event.

Much like how Beckett perceived Joyce's language –here, the words become the mush and stench, and its effect can immediately be felt or sensed when we read it. We do not read merely about the mush and the stench; but we feel and sense through our reading the very mush-ness of the mush and the stench-ness of the stench.

This is how all accidentals are taken away from the narrative, as Beckett would claim, and the language is brought down to its bare essentials. Had it merely been a descriptive representation of the event we might at the most have sympathized with the dead animal or felt sorry for the boy, for representation precedes and facilitates the evocation of affection or emotion triggered by our faculty of recognition and identification. But sensation created through combination of percept and affect, as Deleuze would remark, goes beyond affection and perception. Now that the very fleshly materiality of the mush and the stench is on us, we feel the horror of the animal itself –the suffering it must have gone through. We feel this suffering on us as we read into Beckett's language that have become this suffering too. On the other hand, the loneliness that engulfs the man further, on being reminded of the mush and the stench by the reminiscing voice also touches the senses of the reader since the very language of the text has become the loneliness. Thus, the language possibilitates the reader's entry into the text and the "unity of the sensing and the sensed" (Deleuze, *FB* 35).

In order to show how this phenomenon is taking place, let us consider the last two paragraphs of 'Company' to look at Beckett's method of structuring itself that ensures the experience of sensation on one hand, and determines the reciprocal equation between the form and content, on the other. Toward the end of the text, the voice finally narrates the present situation of the

man confined in the dark space expecting company but that expectation is not to be fulfilled. The end also turns cynical as the voice almost mockingly anticipates the end of writing itself (in this case the end of reminiscing the past) and therefore indicates no end to loneliness:

> Till finally you hear how words are coming to an end. With every inane word a little nearer to the last. And how the fable too. The fable of one with you in the dark. The fable of one fabling of one with you in the dark. And how better in the end labour lost and silence. And you as you always were.
>
> Alone. (Beckett, "Company" 42)

Let us draw our attention to the positioning of the word 'alone' which is also the last word of the text that has used the word 'company' for its title. Here, the end almost negates the beginning, thus showing us how one word can be used to mock another, thereby attempting to unsettle the signification. The word 'alone' does not immediately follow the preceding sentence, but has been positioned separately, after a paragraph break –to compose a single sentence with a single word. The singular word stands out alone in itself –thus, not only creating the sensation of alone-ness but also exemplifying how form and content, in Beckett's language following the manner of James Joyce, are inseparable: the word 'alone' stands alone in the end.[22]

Drawing upon the above hypothesis, we can argue that the language in 'Company', like in many other post-war texts written by Beckett, as pronounced by the voice, can be pertinently read as a register of extreme loneliness and sense of alienation born out of the sufferings peculiar to the late-modernist era recuperating from the traumas and memories of World War II and the post-war crises. Jonathan Boulter, in his essay 'Archives of the End: Embodied History in Samuel Beckett's Plays' shows how Beckettian figures are "haunted by the ghost of memory" (129). Drawing upon the Freudian notion of mourning and melancholia, Boulter locates the Beckettian figure as a melancholic subject in so far "[h]istory –loss, trauma – continually works its way into the present moment because the subject cannot or will not move past the traumatic moment" (130). If we think about it, there is hardly any direct reference to the war in Beckett's texts, if not very implicit and subtle clues left in between the lines (for instance the kitchen rat to be poisoned in 'Endgame', or the concentration camp like ambience of the cylindrical space in 'The Lost Ones'). It is as though Beckett, who was both witness and

[22] Shane Weller has also made this argument on a different note in "Orgy of False Being Life in Common": Beckett and the Politics of Death. See *Beckett and Death*.

survivor of war time atrocities[23], understood that it was impossible to articulate the trauma through language –hence he had to seek recourse to crafting a language that bore the symptoms of trauma (repetitive, ruptured, and full of amnesiac gaps) in order to speak through and become the voice of humanity in ruins. We shall return to the ethical implication inherent in this in our last chapter. As for now let us posit that due to whatever we have discussed so far, it can be argued that the voice in Beckett speaks at the limit of speech, narrates at the limit of narration, and remembers at the limit of remembrance –"where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" (Beckett, *The Unnamable* 414).

Thus, it can be argued that impotence became an imperative for Beckett's language to appropriately encapsulate and turn into the ruptured voice speaking at the limit of speech, narrative, and remembrance, that a) explained the lack of virility in his characters, the lack of fertility in his landscapes corresponding to the bare and minimalistic settings on the stage or in the narrative; and b) made Beckett's literary language radically autonomous.

Therefore, with radical autonomy the so-called Beckettian language "generated its own syntax and vocabulary, decreed its own grammar, even created words answering solely to the pure space of text" (Casanova 347) to draw away from any given structure of language –leading into the occurrence of an anomalous literary language that anticipated the concept of 'literature of the unword'.

6. From Sensation to Concept: Toward a Philosophical Literary Language

We pointed out at the very outset that the concept is always philosophical. If the purpose of philosophy, as Deleuze and Guattari claim, is to create concept, then that which anticipates the concept should be essentially philosophical. Therefore, we can argue that the literary language of Samuel Beckett is essentially philosophical because it anticipates the concept of a literature to come. We have already discussed at length the various circumstances under which the Beckettian language began to anticipate the concept and thus entered into the realm of philosophy. However, in order to further explore what is the philosophical essence of Beckett's literary language, we shall have to address the concept itself –its formulation and fabrication, as anticipated through the language. In this section, we shall attempt to show how Beckett's

[23] See Jackie Blackman's essay 'Beckett's Theatre "After Auschwitz"' in *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive* edited by Sean Kennedy and Katherine Weiss, pp. 71-87.

literary language traversed from sensation to concept, thereby offering us a striking example of interaction and crossing-over between art (sensation) and philosophy (concept).

We have suggested earlier that art creates sensation through affect and percept, where the material conditions of the art have to disappear behind the sensation. In that context, let us suggest then that Beckett whom Deleuze and Guattari in their chapter on art in *What is Philosophy?* have recognized as the "artist who invents unknown or unrecognized affects and brings them to light as the becoming of his characters... as affects that are all the more imposing as they are poor in affections" (174) does not merely stop at that, rather, as we will see, he attempts at reverting back to the material condition of the writing. This is evident from the fact that since Beckett's language, as mentioned earlier, is a self-referential language, his writing becomes a speculation on writing itself where the speaking "I" or the voice are conscious, despite being confused, of the fact that they are writing or 'telling' the text –"I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me" (Beckett, "The Unnamable" 291) or "The memory came faint and cold of the story I might have told, a story in the likeness of my life, I mean without the courage to end or the strength to go on" (Beckett, "The End" 99). Hence it can be argued that although the Figure of the voice in Beckett can extract sensation through affect and percept insofar as this voice is not, as we had suggested earlier, merely a representation of the voice of an individual but becoming of the voice of a humanity in ruins - it does not let those material conditions disappear under which this becoming is made possible. As opposed to what Deleuze and Guattari think that "the affect certainly does not undertake a return to origins" (*WP* 174), Beckett's concept of unword or unwording literature precisely aims at returning to the originary moment of literary language composed of the material conditions that possibilitate writing. In this connection we can posit that the narrating voice in 'Company' is not only writing the text from within but also being consciously written into the text from without. The material act of writing that passes into the narration of the imagined voice is concomitantly revealed through its continuous revision, repetition as well as erasure referring back to the laborious method of writing itself. For instance, as many critics have suggested, the sound ping in the eponymous short prose is the sound of the writer's type-writer that eventually passes into the space of the text as an integral word within that space.

What was it then that Beckett wrote? What was it that he attempted to speak through the voice? He wrote about writing itself in order to expose the impossibility to write or to speak. This is in alignment with what Blanchot speculated about Rilke whose "poetry is the lyrical theory of the poetic act" ("Disappearance" 198). According to Blanchot, poets like Rilke can express

through their work of poetry that profound experience that makes poetry possible –in other words, they write about the conditions under which poetry is originated. Similarly, in case of Beckett, the act of writing arguably engaged with what Blanchot might call various states of writing –tracing back to its originary moment or "what lies behind" ("German Letter" 172) the screen of language. It can be suggested here that in order to put language into what Beckett called disrepute, reverting back to the originary moment of writing, or the material conditions of writing, was important since that was one of the most crucial methods of undoing language in order to show that impotence had pervaded the very conditions of writing and that the originary moment of writing was simultaneously an abortive moment. Writing, for Beckett, could only reveal the various states of impossibility to write. In fact, as is evident from the 1937 letter and the three dialogues he had had with Duthuit, he found it obligatory to write at the limit of writing about its impossibility –a paradoxical claim in itself –that was reflected in the concept of literature of the unword.

The lingual barrenness, as already discussed earlier, obviously emerged of the writer's immediate historical situation as he heard, like many other artists and writers belonging from this war-torn time, the traumatized voice of a humanity in ruins, failing to articulate, failing to comprehend, failing to remember or failing to narrate their trauma, their stories, their lives through language –and ultimately, the experience (profoundly depressive in this case) of coming face to face with the limit of language and speech was expressed through what he wrote or conceptualized as literature of the unword.

7. The Concept and the Impossibility of Narration

The concept which "belongs to philosophy and only to philosophy"(*WP* 34), according to Deleuze and Guattari, is made of more than one component (for instance Descartes' cogito is made of three components: doubting. thinking and being), existing upon a plane of immanence laid out by the philosophy (that should not be understood as a concept in itself or a concept of concepts but a "formless unlimited absolute" that holds all concepts together), and is operated through conceptual personae (Descartes' I/Idiot, Plato's Socrates, Nietzsche's Zarathustra).

Every concept refers to a problem –"All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges" (Deleuze and Guattari, *WP* 16). Beckett's problem was to find out whether it was possible to tear apart or break down the structure of literary language governed by the rules and regulations of grammar and style in order to dissolve what he called the "terrible

materiality of the word surface"("German Letter" 172). Therefore, the concept of literature of the unword was connected to the problem of literary language, its grammatical and stylized structure, and the materiality of its word surface.

As we have discussed earlier, Beckett conceived of a language that was impotent, corresponded to the voice of humanity in ruins, through creating a ruptured narrative. Therefore these elements of the Beckettian language –impotence, voice of humanity in ruins, and the ruptured narrative are the three components of the concept of literature of the unword. These components are the intensive ordinates (Deleuze and Guattari, *WP* 25) of the concept and the problem of literary language has to pass through all the components so that they can coincide and are "arranged in zones of neighbourhood or indiscernibility that produce passages from one to the other and constitute their inseparability" (Deleuze and Guattari, *WP* 25).

We shall closely follow, Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the Cartesian cogito in maping out the formation of Beckett's concept of literature of the unword. In case of the Beckettian concept, very similar to the Cartesian concept, there are two zones: the first is between the voice of humanity in ruins and impotence and the second is between impotence and the ruptured narrative. The impotence is common to either of the zones –it is what Deleuze and Guattari would call the area *ab* (*WP* 20), or the zone of indiscernibility allowing passage of the language from one elemental point to the other. The impotence is constant in either of the zones since a) the impotence arises as a consequence of the failing state of humanity; and b) the ruptured narrative that becomes the voice of humanity in ruins, therefore, has to accommodate and become the impotence (in order to create the sensation through percept and affect as we have discussed before). Thus, these components, through "coincidence, condensation, or accumulation" (Deleuze and Guattari, *WP* 20) mark the "internal consistency" (Deleuze and Guattari, *WP* 20) of the concept, or the plane of immanence upon which the concept is grounded.

It can also be pointed out here that the figures in Beckett, trapped in a diminished physical state, are the conceptual personae of the Beckettian concept. The conceptual persona is the intermediary agent of enunciation who "carry out the movements that describe the author's plane of immanence, and they play a part in the very creation of the author's concepts"(Deleuze and Guattari, *WP* 63). In other words conceptual persona *speaks* the philosophy. However, they do not represent the philosopher, rather they are the real subjects of his philosophy, whereas the philosopher often and eventually merges into them, like Descartes and Nietzsche should

have signed themselves “the Idiot” and “the Antichrist” or “Dionysus crucified” respectively (Deleuze and Guattari, *WP* 64).

The figures in Beckett emanate the Beckettian concept. They are not mere aesthetic figures or dramatic personae narrating the story; but through their inability to narrate the story they epitomize the Beckettian concept of literature that anticipates to unsettle language and dissolve the materiality of words. This is evident from what the narrator in the short prose titled ‘The Expelled’ says in the end: “I don’t know why I told this story. I could just as well have told another. Perhaps some other time I’ll be able to tell another. Living souls, you will see how alike they are” (Beckett 60). It is as though the story, if there is one, is unimportant and even if stories are told, they are repetitive and are all alike –as the man in ‘Company’ heard of the “same bygone”. Rather, these conceptual personae tell us about the impossibility of telling the stories, something that Blanchot had long recognized in Beckett when he commented on Molloy –“indeed it is not a happy story, not only because of what it says, which is infinitely miserable, but because it does not succeed in saying it” (“Where now? Who now?” 211). Thus, they tell their stories at the limit of speech, articulation, and remembrance, thereby revealing the three components we have discussed already –impotence, the voice of humanity in ruins, and ruptured narrative that create the Beckettian concept of literature of the unword. Their own diminished condition –the rogue, the tramp, the disabled, the bedridden, the lost ones further reflect the same decrepitude indicated by their language –the language that is constituted of un-words rather than words.

Let us take for example, the speaking ‘I’ in ‘Fizzles 4’. It is difficult to assume who or what is this speaking ‘I’ in this text –apparently it is the consciousness of being that belongs to a now dead person whom this ‘I’ refers to in third person. We shall once again concentrate on what Beckett does with the language.

Let us take for example, the speaking ‘I’ in ‘Fizzles 4’. It is difficult to assume who or what is this speaking ‘I’ in this text –apparently it is the consciousness of being that belongs to a now dead person whom this ‘I’ refers to in third person. The first few lines of the text show how language is fractured –“I gave up before birth, it is not possible otherwise, but birth there had to be, it was he, I was inside, that’s how I see it, it was he who wailed, he who saw the light, I didn’t wail, I didn’t see the light …” (Beckett 234). It is with this continuous negation at the level of signification that the speaking ‘I’ –Beckett’s conceptual persona, speaks the philosophical language of Samuel Beckett: “it’s impossible I should have a voice, impossible

I should have thoughts, and I speak and think, I do the impossible, it is not possible otherwise…" (Beckett 234). Thus the story is said and unsaid, written and unwritten, asserted and negated at the same time because the word is both word and unword. Therefore in the name of narrating a story, no story is ultimately narrated –what is narrated instead, as mentioned earlier, is the impossibility of narration. The philosophical is implicated in the impossibility of narration itself insofar as this impossibility to narrate the story delineates the dissolution of language that the concept propagates and stands for. Hence, the impossibility of narration is crucial in determining that Samuel Beckett's literary language is philosophical since the concept of literature of the unword anticipated by the language is ultimately manifested through the impossibility of narration.

However, we must not overlook that the impossibility of the narration is also narrated in the text. The problem has already come out as we have been trying to analyse Beckett's attempt to write about the impossibility to write. The text cannot escape this paradox of writing which ultimately problematizes the concept. In our following chapter we shall address this problem in detail to see what does it further reveal about the philosophy of Beckettian language.

Chapter Two

Disjunction and Failure: The Paradox of Writing

Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari's hypothesis that philosophy is the art of inventing concepts[24] we tried to establish in our previous chapter that Samuel Beckett's literary language is essentially philosophical because it is the modality of the concept that Beckett had formulated and called literature of the unword. The concept is predicated upon the gradual dissolution of language as a means to unveil what is concealed by its structures. Therefore, the text which is the modality of the language (and therefore the modality of the concept too) should be ideally composed of a language that is structurally disrupted and dismantled. Hence, it can be assumed that the texts Beckett wrote since the formulation of the concept in 1937 are all examples of literature of the unword given that most of these texts contain disruptive as well as disrupted syntactic patterns suggesting the so-called dissolution of the language. However, despite these patterns of syntactic disruptions conveyed through the form and content of the texts, the persistence of the material body of language inscribed upon the material body of the text cannot be overcome so that the absolute dissolution of language does not take place. The antinomy almost recalls the last moment in *Molloy* in which Moran has returned to the house and begins to write: "I went back into the house and wrote, It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining" (Beckett 176). In this case too, we encounter a somewhat similar contradiction.

Beckett seems to have known from the very beginning that his concept is predicated upon its own impossibility. This is because no attempt at conceptualizing a concept can ever escape the priority of re-articulation. One of the pre-requisites of the concept is that the concept has to be formed and fabricated, which is impossible without the support of language. Hence, he writes, "As we cannot eliminate language all at once … we can represent this mocking attitude towards the word, through words" ("German Letter" 172). Here, Beckett's use of the word 'word' in singular is a synecdoche for language as a sign-system. The repetition of the word in its plural form at the end of the sentence, however, refers to the act of writing itself which is the medium through which the sign-system operates. The text is the protention of the medium. Therefore, as mentioned above, it is the modality of the concept's modality, that is language.

[24] See Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* Also refer to the first chapter of this thesis.

Hence, whatever is unsaid in the text is 'said' as unsaid and whatever is unwritten in the text is 'written' as unwritten. Thus, the paradox of Beckett's writing is that it must assert the words to eventually negate language (negation through assertion). Although the paradox of writing does not demobilise the concept, our hypothesis is that the paradox problematizes the concept by revealing the following consequences: a) a disjunction between the concept and the text; and b) due to the disjunction the text fails to become literature of the unword.

This chapter shall not attempt to provide an exhaustive study on the various modes of paradoxes that Beckett employs in his works. Rolf Breuer's essay 'Paradox in Beckett' has already attempted a thorough and detailed study of the different modes of paradoxes in Beckett's works. However, Breuer mostly limits his study to the analyses of variations in paradoxical structuring of the texts and thematic or incidental paradoxes within the text. He does not study the paradox that, in case of post 1937 Beckett, is inherent in the very act of writing itself as we have pointed out here. However, Breuer cannot be ignored because his analyses of the paradox 'in' the writing shall ultimately inform the paradox of the writing that we are trying to theorize.

Over the course of the chapter we shall at first look at Beckett's academic engagement with paradox as a philosophical problem. Following that we shall proceed to understand the Beckettian paradox of writing via Bataille's and Blanchot's readings of Beckett and then try to close read a short prose text called 'neither' to see how the paradox takes its course in the text. That will make way to address and analyse the disjunction and failure it creates as consequences. We shall discuss three texts from 'Texts for Nothing' in order to substantiate our argument. In the end we shall briefly comment on what this paradox ultimately reveals about the text and the philosophy of Beckettian language.

1. Beckett and the Paradox

Paradox is one of the central problems of philosophy. Doris Olin has observed, "Paradoxes are fascinating: they baffle and haunt. They are the most gripping of philosophical problems, for we struggle through the maze of argument and counter-argument, there is a sense that the solution, the crucial insight, lies just beyond the next turn of the path" (ix). However, the solution is not there; or to put it another way, the solution is that there is no solution. This is because paradoxes confuse our reasoning faculties. We mostly cannot arrive at any resolution through reasoning with regard to

paradoxes. Thus, to go back to Olin, paradoxes present "a conflict of reasons. There is, in each, an apparently impeccable use of reason to show that a certain statement is true; and yet reason also seems to tell us that the very same statement is utterly absurd" (5). Therefore, it is indubitable that Beckett would be interested in engaging with paradoxes since, as Colm Tóibín points out, Beckett would see "logic as a crime, its perpetrators to be punished by offering them infinite numbers of absurd logical conclusions" (xiii).

Rolf Breuer in his essay 'Paradox in Beckett' suggests that Beckett's earliest engagement with paradox takes place while studying Giovanni Battista Vico and Giordano Bruno (570), and also re-reading Dante as preparation for writing the essay on Joyce's *Work in Progress*. Vico's four stages of human institution –birth, maturity, corruption, and generation, offers the very idea of paradoxical circularity in which the end is always the beginning ("Dante … Bruno" 22). *Finnegans Wake* would indeed follow this circularity with regard to its form insofar as the last sentence of the novel "Given! A way a lone a last a loved a long the" (Joyce 628) is left apparently incomplete but in fact connected to the opening sentence of the novel that reads "riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodious vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs" (Joyce 3). Thus the end is the point from where the novel should begin all over again. However, at the time of writing the essay in 1929, ten years before the novel would actually be published, Beckett is probably not aware of this ending. Nonetheless, he rightly locates the Joycean purgatorial world in *Work in Progress*, which is after all inspired by Dante, in terms of the paradox since Purgatory is the conjunction of both Paradise and Hell ("Dante … Bruno" 33).

Thereafter, as Breuer suggests, "the principle of meeting opposites pervades all Beckett's art" (570). Thus, the short story called 'Assumption', incidentally published along with the essay on *Work* in the same issue of *Transition 16-17, June 1929*, opens with a paradoxical line that would, according to S.E. Gontarski, "eventually become Beckett's literary signature" ("Introduction" xix). The line is "He could have shouted and could not" ("Assumption" 3). Eighteen years since the publication of the story, while beginning to work on his own aesthetics, Beckett cannot escape the inevitable traps of paradoxes. He invents a paradoxical concept of 'literature of the unword' in which the very word 'unword' is a paradox in itself. However, if he had used any other word, or any other phrase like 'silence' or 'no word', this paradox would not have come across so vividly.

On the other hand, Beckett's famous aphorism in *The Three Dialogues* that "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express" (139) is perhaps one of the defining paradoxes upon which the Beckettian oeuvre is situated. Thus Beckett's interest in paradox begins at the very outset of his career as a writer and continues till the very end.

1. Batille, Blanchot and the Beckettian Paradox of Writing

Georges Battaile and Maurice Blanchot, in their respective reviews on Beckett's *Molloy* (1951) and *The Trilogy* (1953), have made certain important observations that point at the paradox sustained in the Beckettian writing. Bataille and Blanchot are among the earliest philosophical commentators on Beckett's novels (besides the fact that they were novelists too) and their individual assessments of these novels hold much relevance in addressing certain issues, like the paradox itself, that run through the entire Beckettian oeuvre. Although they do not particularly harp upon the notion of the paradox, it comes across through how they read and what they read in Beckett. Paul Shenan writes that "Beckett, their contemporary … provides immediate affirmation about their ideas about language, voice, silence, death and abjection. What is more, Beckett is doing this in the novel –a form with which both Bataille and Blanchot had some experience –and is finding ways to outwit the rigours and compromises of narrative logic that they had also struggled against" (114). Hence, it is obvious that Beckett would strike their imagination leading into such speculative commentaries.

On the other hand, it is merely probable that Beckett had had any direct or deep familiarity with the works of either Bataille or Blanchot. Although certain critical researches have suggested brief acquaintance and possible influences, these are merely based upon intelligent conjectures. For instance, Peter Fifield argues that Beckett had probably read Bataille's *L' histoire de l'oeil* (*Story of the Eye*) and that Bataille's text had possibly inspired some of the motifs in Endgame.[25] However, no reading note or proper evidence have been found to support this possibility. Similarly, in a letter dated 28 October 1948 to Georges Duthuit, Beckett mentioned of a Blanchot article that Duthuit had sent him.[26] But since the editorial note to the letter suggests the particular

[25] See Fifield, Peter. "'ACCURSED PROGENITOR!" 'Fin De Partie' and Georges Bataille." *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui*, vol. 22, 2010, pp. 107–121. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25781919.
[26] See The Letters Of Samuel Beckett (1941-1956). Vol. II. Pp. 107-108. See endnote 1.

article is unknown –we can never really know what Beckett read. Recently, Shane Waller has suggested a likely influence of Blanchot's *Faux Pas* on the Beckettian imagination but here as well, there is no evidential certainty.[27]

However, as Fifield rightly suggests that it is more important to explore the rich philosophical affinities shared by these contemporary writers and how they intellectually communicate with one another rather than pondering over influences and co-incidences (119). It is interesting to observe, how both Bataille and Blanchot are strikingly accurate in understanding and addressing the ethos of the Beckettian oeuvre through their readings of the novels.

According to Bataille, Beckett's *Molloy* is a "sordid wonder" (Graver and Federman 60) that reveals "reality in its pure state: the most meagre and inevitable of realities, that fundamental reality continually soliciting us but from which a certain terror always pulls us back" (Graver and Federman 60). Drawing upon Bataille's contention, it can be argued that the reality confronted by the Beckettian world is absurd to us because we do not want to confront this reality owing to certain terror. The terror is perchance caused by our anxiety to face this pure state of reality that is marked by an indifference to anything that otherwise "overwhelm(s) a man" (Graver and Federman 60) and therefore it submits itself to "the immense quicksand of the world and of things" (Graver and Federman 60) in order to reveal the banality of our various discourses with which we try to make sense of the world and other things.

These discourses are carried out through language, since "language is what determines this regulated world, whose significations provide the foundation for our cultures, our activities and our relations" (Graver and Federman 62). However, Bataille is quick to add that "it does so in so far as it is reduced to a means of these cultures, activities and relations; freed from these servitudes, it is nothing more than a deserted castle whose gaping cracks let in the wind and rain" (Graver and Federman 62-63). In that connection, it can be argued that the Beckettian language, that reveals the pure state of reality to Bataille, precisely resembles the empty castle with gaping cracks. It is interesting to note how Bataille's observation echoes Beckett's own intention with language, discussed in the 1937 German letter to Axel Kaun –"To bore one hole after another in it, until what lurks behind it –be it something or nothing –begins to seep through" (172).

[27] Cf. Fiefield, same as above.

Bataille, however, does not impose his hypothesis on Beckett, since he readily claims that he is unaware of the authorial intention (Graver and Federman 61). It must be remembered that Bataille is writing his comment on *Molloy* at a time when nothing much is known about Beckett except his friendship with Joyce and therefore "the obvious influence of Joyce on Beckett" reflected in the "free –nevertheless, controlled and composed, yet violent –play of language" (Graver and Federman 62). Therefore, since Bataille has not evidently seen the 1937 German letter that Beckett writes to Kaun on his return from Nazi Germany –his point of departure in premising the hypothesis might be at odds with what we have attempted to argue in the previous chapter. Now that there are evidences of certain authorial intentions that Beckett has shared himself and can be read in relation to history, it is not difficult for us to see how Beckettian language attempts to approach and become the traumatised and estranged voice of humanity in ruins in a war afflicted world, rather than what Bataille thinks as pure state of reality. Hence, although Bataille is accurate in realizing that the Beckettian language is freed from the purpose of cultural or relational significations, in case of Beckett, this is not a means of reaching the pure state of reality (in fact Beckett does not have any such philosophical intention), but this is a way of accommodating the mess caused by the ruinous state of humanity.

However, Bataille's comment is still relevant since it most accurately remarks on the paradox of writing triggered by Beckett's self-negating language. Bataille points out, even if "it is … possible that literature may have the same fundamental meaning as silence … it recoils before the final step that silence would be" (Graver and Federman 63) since "literature [might be] in the end silence in its negation of meaningful language, but remains what it is, literature" (Graver and Federman 63). We are immediately reminded of Beckett's 1937 German letter to Kaun and the paradox of representing the "mocking attitude towards the words, through word" (172).

In Bataille's reading, this is reflected in the very character of Molloy himself. Bataille associates literature's relentless turn toward and recoiling from silence with Molloy's death-obsessed life in which attaining the desired death is nonetheless impossible. This is because death can pose limit to the apathy of death that is apparent in Molloy, thus putting an end to the continuously dying condition he finds himself in, that simultaneously and paradoxically becomes the fundamental meaning of his life. Hence, he is a dying man who is not dead. Similarly, literature (and according to Bataille *Molloy* is an incarnation of literature itself) may anticipate silence through gradual disintegration of the text, but ultimately it cannot attain that moment of absolute silence for that will put an end to the anticipation itself that facilitates

literature's turning toward its fundamental meaning –that is silence. Hence Bataillie is mostly obsessed with the paralytic figure of Molloy, who despite not being able to walk, "continues his journey crawling like a slug" (Graver and Federman 66)–a paradoxical image of 'sordid wonder' to be revived in Beckett's *How It Is*. This paradoxical image is similar to the act of writing about not being able to write. As Bataille observes toward the end of his article: "Molloy or rather the author is writing: he is writing and what he writes is that the will to write is slipping away from him …" (Graver and Federman 67). Thus, as we posited at the beginning of this chapter, the writing negates the text through the assertion of the text.

The Beckettian paradox involving the assertive and negative in relation to the text is furthered by Blanchot's reading of *The Trilogy*, two years later in 1953. In his review, Blanchot observes that the persistent speaker in the books of Beckett (or the Beckettian texts themselves) has perhaps "entered a circle where he turns obscurely, led on by a wandering speech, one that is not deprived of meaning, but deprived of center, that does not end, yet is greedy, demanding, will never stop … when it does not speak, it is still speaking, when it ceases, it preserves, not silently, for in it silence speaks eternally" ("Where now? Who now?" 210).

It is evident from this quotation itself that Blanchot takes a major shift from Bataille. As Paul Sheehan has observed, "in contrast with Bataille's aggrandisement of the image, he takes up the vocalic Beckett, the insistent speaking entity, whose voice is impersonal, tireless, wayward and compulsive" (117). However, Blanchot too cannot escape the word 'silence' which we have already encountered in Bataille. But whereas in Bataille's reading of *Molloy*, silence is a deferred destination; in Blanchot's reading of *The Trilogy* the silence itself turns into an eloquent space as void becomes speech. While Bataille thinks that silence can be accomplished if the writing is terminated; Blanchot thinks, the silence is the originary moment of speech.

However, what is interesting to observe in either of these readings is that they hint toward something that paradoxically remains, in terms of language, as a possibility of expression or writing despite the impossibility to express through language or to write, as has been made evident in these texts –"the artistic problem of saying something by saying not-something" (Breuer 576) or something said by the not-something. Although, Bataille and Beckett have only concentrated on the novels, it can be argued, that the paradox of writing they have obliquely indicated in their respective critical reviews of Beckett's novels, can be traced, as mentioned earlier, in the entire Beckettian oeuvre. We shall try to address the short prose works in that context.

2. The Short Prose Works and The Paradox of Writing

The short prose works offer an interesting example of paradoxical structuring of the text. Although in this chapter we are mainly looking at the paradox of writing, let us briefly look at the generic paradox that is disclosed by the short prose texts. According to Gontarski, most of these short prose texts were meant to be part of longer works. Hence they are fragmented excerpts that were either abandoned or they were supposed to be incorporated later.[28] To provide here only two instances, 'Sedendo et Quiescendo' is actually a fragment of *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, and 'The Image' would be reworked into *Comment c'est* (later translated as *How It Is*).[29] On the other hand, 'From an Abandoned Work', initially published as a play is now placed in the anthology of the short prose works. However, according to Gontarski, it could "as well be anthologized with Beckett's theatre writings. It is no less "dramatic" after all, than "A piece of Monologue", with which it shares a titular admission of fragmentation" ("introduction" xii-xiii). The miniscule short prose text 'neither', and we shall discuss this text at length, is apparently written like a poem and yet Beckett insisted the text to be a prose work. Thus, we can argue that the generic paradox lies in that despite these texts are generically recognized as short prose now, they are either part of longer prose works, or they resemble textual structures pertaining to other genres.

The text 'neither', as mentioned above, involves line breaks so that the body of the text resembles a poem. However, when Beckett's British publisher, John Calder wanted to publish the work in Collected Poems, Beckett had to resist since "he considered it a piece of prose, a story" (Gontarski "Notes on the Texts" 284-285). Thus, while 'neither' actually resembles a poem, it has to be read as a short prose. The name itself resists possibility of genre categorization, almost implying that the text is not a poem, but neither it is a prose (at least structurally); and yet, paradoxically enough, it has been conceived as a prose work and is collected in the volume of *The Complete Short Prose,* so that it is not read as a poem. This is however, unlike Beckett's last work and posthumously published 'what is the word' –a text that has been anthologized as both prose and poem.

Let us now turn toward the paradox of writing. We shall see that the text of 'neither' is predicated upon the immobility and progression of writing. The text is woven around the back and forth movement from inner to outershadow, from impenetrable self to impenetrable

[28] Ibid

[29] See Gontarski. "Notes on the Texts". *The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989*. Pp. 279-286.

unself, that apparently repels progression. The entire text is written in a language marked by copious use of the negative prefix '-un' (unself, unheard, unfaded, unheeded, unspoken) that always denotes the 'not' at the level of signification and hence attempts to annul the textual mobility. However, we shall argue that the moments of frustrating the progression in the text also makes way for the text to proceed onward. Let us quote the entire text here, so that we can attempt to perform a close reading:

> To and fro in shadow from inner to outershadow
>
> from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself by way of neither
>
> as between two lit refuges whose doors once neared gently close, once turned away from gently part again
>
> beckoned back and forth and turned away
>
> heedless of the way, intent on the one gleam or the other
>
> unheard footfalls only sound
>
> till at last halt for good, absent for good from self and other
>
> then no sound
>
> then gently light unfading on that unheeded neither
>
> unspeakable home ("neither" 258)

The first two lines –"To and fro in shadow from inner to outershadow/ from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself by way of neither" (258) arguably point out to the act of writing. Writing is a performance. It is a re-articulation of thought or transcription of speech on a page. In both writing and speech, however, thought has to be re-articulated in terms of a communicative language. Hence, in either speech or writing there is always an outward progression of inner thought through its re-articulation. We shall deliberately use the word re-articulation since thought as a process is always already taking place by means of articulation. When we consciously think, we are thinking through articulating our thought. Even in case of thinking the unthinkable or that which lies beyond or supressed under our consciousness, we have to devise and detect some form of articulation or the other in order to comprehend that which cannot be thought –for example, the Freudian approach to dream. Therefore thought is always already articulated, and hence, speech and writing can only re-articulate the thought by

seeking recourse to communicative sign systems, that is language. However, the difference between speech and writing is that while in case of the former, the re-articulation leaves no trace on deliverance, the latter involves manual force to impress the re-articulation on a concrete surface.

Hence, in order to re-articulate the concept of literature of the unword, Beckettian writing has to strategize various methods and techniques to unsettle the structures of language. A conscious hesitancy in beginning to write can be one such strategies that can defer language through deferring the act. Therefore, an image of conscious hesitancy permeating the act of writing is created in the first two lines. It can be assumed that the conscious hesitancy described in the text is in fact taking place in the real time of the writing of the text, and therefore, the writer is translating the deliberate hesitation into an image within the text.

The hesitancy is indicated by the opening phrase 'to and fro' –a back and forth movement that resists progression. Hence, the supposed progression from 'innershadow' to 'outershadow' or from the 'impenetrable self' to the 'impenetrable unself' is thwarted. It can be suggested that while the 'innershadow' stands for thought that precedes re-articulation of thought into writing, the 'outershadow' is the re-articulation of the thought through language that constitutes the text as a written body. Thus, the thought that is thought by the self is transmitted outwards, referred to as the 'unself', through the written act of linguistic re-articulation.

Here, the word 'neither' has been used to denote an impossible condition. The 'neither' is more than mere 'not' –since it is a double impossibility (because in its adverbial sense, the word 'neither' is generally used along with 'nor' to invalidate at least two alternatives). The phrase 'by way of' in this case supposedly mean 'as a form of'. Hence, we can posit that the to and fro motion takes place as a form of impossibility ('neither') in relation to writing. Thus, the hesitancy evoked by toing and froing between point A to B (B to A) and C to D (D to C) eventually points out the impossibility of writing.

However, the paradox lies in that the impossibility of writing is after all expressed through writing itself. Therefore, the act of writing is not terminated as soon as the opening lines suggest the impossibility of writing and thereby anticipate textual immobility. Rather, there are eight more lines that constitute the body of the text. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth line with

visual or acoustic imageries, could be read as the analysis of the problem of paradox suggested by the use of the conjunction 'as' at the beginning of the third line.

The 'in-between' space mentioned in the third line can be interpreted as the spatial representation of a paradox –a condition that holds two contradictory conditions without being either. For instance, the phrase 'Fair is Foul' is paradoxical insofar as what is fair cannot logically be foul. One can also cite the example of one of Beckett's own paradoxes –"Birth was the death of him" ("Monologue" 425). If birth is the opposite of death, then in terms of logic, birth cannot be the death of somebody. Hence, in a given paradox it is possible to posit that A is B, while A is not B. This confuses our faculty of reasoning and therefore we cannot comprehend the paradox. Thus, the two lit refuges represent the two contradictory conditions which are both logically valid but when held together they negate each other. Therefore, even if they look simple and comprehensive, the more one goes near them and engages with them they become complicated. Hence, the doors seem to open up when one turns away from them but once they are approached, they close down. This is how, as the fourth line suggests, paradoxes invite us to resolve them and then turn us away, since we are 'heedless' (here the word might possibly mean 'incapable') to solve the problem. The sixth line is an example of such an unresolvable paradox, the unheard footfalls are the only sound –implying that silence (that which is not heard) is the only sound.

It is well understood that paradox offers us a loop of infinity. Let us think of the liar paradox or the Epimenides paradox. The poet Epimenides, a Cretan stated that all Cretans are liars. Or we can also think about the following couplet:

> The below statement is false
>
> The above statement is true.

In either of these instances, the two contradictory conditions held together by the paradox infinitely negate each other, through infinitely positing each other. Hence, the negation is never accomplished. What it creates is a loop of infinity where $A \neq B \neq A \neq B \neq A \neq B \neq A \neq B \ldots$. Similarly, as we have shown above, in case of Beckett, absolute negation of language is impossible since the unsettlement of language can only take place through writing, and the writing can only negate language through its assertion.

The only way to accomplish the Beckettian aim of unwording language, and put an end to this infinite loop of negation and assertion posed by the paradox of writing, is to not write at all. Hence, in the seventh line the text asks for the writing "to halt for good" (258) and be absent, so that, as the eighth line indicates, there is only silence left (then no sound) and invisibility of words (unfading light on unheeded neither –here the word 'neither' possibly means 'nothing' or 'void' and light cannot produce visibility in void) as language shall finally become unspeakable and hence, it shall be of no use.

The word 'home' used in the last sentence might be read as a metaphor of language in the sense that one belongs to language (as one belongs at home) and language creates belongingness through communication. In Beckett, however, the relationship with language is always marked by a sense of non-belonging. In the Beckettian world, therefore, the home that stands for language and belongingness, is either taken away or resembles an impermanent, un-liveable, and precarious space. Hence, we often find his characters (Beckett's dramatic and conceptual personae) homeless, evicted from their homes, (like Murphy, Molloy, the narrator in the *Three Novellas*, the tramps in 'Waiting for Godot') or confined in a dark, solitary, uncertain rooms (like Malone, the four characters in 'Endgame', the captivated figure in 'Company'). The lost home, or the aboding space reduced to uncertainty and confinement insinuate the absent or precarious relationship that the tramp on the road, or someone locked away in a solitary confinement, share with language.

However, it can be argued, that the last four lines, despite the attempt, cannot overcome the paradox either. The very fact that these lines are articulated in terms of language and are written down on the page, further shows that it is impossible to stop writing, notwithstanding the impossibility to write. This is the paradox upon which the post 1937 Beckettian oeuvre is predicated. We have already discussed at the beginning of this section via Bataille that despite literature (at least Beckettian literature) turns toward silence, it must recoil "before the final step that is silence". Hence, even though there is a continuous negation of signification in terms of language, a remnant language or a meta-language shall always persist on the level of writing to signify the negation of signification.

3. Disjunction between the Concept and the Text

The writing, due to the paradox we have discussed above, creates a disjunction between the concept and the text. The notion of 'disjunction' in relation to the Beckettian oeuvre is offered by Beckett theorist Paul Stewart, to delineate the "insuperable gaps opening up within and

being exploited by the works" (*ZE* 12) of Beckett. Stewart defines the disjunction as a method of dismantling the "chain-chant of cause and effect" (*ZE* 12) that provides meaningful structures through interconnecting events. Thus, through disjunction Beckett not only disrupts the narrative cohesion, sentence, individual phrases, but also infects "the larger meaning structures" (*ZE* 12) of his work, for instance, "the relations between characters are marred by a mutual unknowability; the individual character cannot apprehend the supposed "self"; the narrator and the narrated flounder in a gap of incomprehension" (*ZE* 12-13).

It would be fallacious to claim that there is no conjunction in Beckett. In our previous chapter we have mentioned the indiscernibility of form and content in Beckett's writing, something that he borrowed from Joyce. In that sense, at least on this issue, Beckett is not in disjunction with Joyce despite their well-known differences. Stewart also acknowledges that "Images of communion, verging on reconciliation, permeate many of the later works" (*ZE* 13). He cites passages from Beckett's *Company* to show how conjunction takes place between the character's present and the character's past through images and memories; and simultaneously, between the text's present and the author's past through autobiographical references (*ZE* 13).

The plays on the other hand, more importantly Beckett's earlier proscenium plays, according to Stewart, involve presence of more than one characters on stage and presence of audience in the auditorium. In Stewart's opinion, these factors lead into a possibility of communication, and therefore facilitates a form of conjunction between "those bodies (no matter how unsuccessful that communication may be) on the stage" (*The Zone* 14), and between "stage action and the consciousness of the individual theatre-goer" (*The Zone* 14).

However, despite these possibilities of conjunction, it can still be argued after Stewart, that various crucial modes of disjunction persists within the Beckettian oeuvre, for instance the disjunction between the concept and the text. (In fact, we shall shortly point out that the disjunction turns one of Beckett's possibilities of conjunction pointed out by Stewart into its deciding factor.) This particular mode of disjunction becomes more notably evident in those texts written after the 1937 German letter in which Beckett first articulates about the concept. Although Stewart's theory indeed largely draws on those texts that follow the German letter (*Watt*, *The Trilogy*, 'Texts for Nothing', *How it is*), he does not extensively discuss on the disjunction we are referring to over here.

We have already pointed out that the concept is both comprehended and contradicted by the very act of writing. This is because there is no alternative to represent the "radical

unrepresentability" of the disappearance of the narrative than "by means of narrative". Since the negation of the semiotic structures cannot be strategized without the aid of some form of meta-semiotic structure, there is always a paradoxical persistence of remnant or meta-language that marks, as Battaile would say, the recoiling of the text before turning finally into silence or nothing. However, the so-called meta-language that becomes the medium through which language is structurally disturbed and decomposed, carries the same structures like a trace within its own system. It is precisely this paradox of the Beckettian writing that makes way for the disjunction between the concept and the text since as long as there is a remainder of language, the concept of unwording literature would remain an impossibility or what can be called a deferred possibility.

4. 'Texts for Nothing' and the Disjunction

We shall now turn to the short prose series called 'Texts for Nothing' in order to textually illustrate the disjunction caused by the paradox of writing (negation through assertion). At first we shall try to find out the way in which the paradox of writing unfolds in text one, four, and six; and then try to explain the disjunction it creates. Although we have chosen three texts out of thirteen, it can be argued that the paradox runs through the other texts in the series too, so as to foreground the disjunction.

The paradox can be located in the title of the series itself. The phrase 'Texts for Nothing' is at once negative and assertive. The phrase might be interpreted as a) texts for no purpose –this is however a fallacious reading since Beckett's texts are not purposeless insofar as they have been assigned the purpose of undoing language ; b) texts for expressing nothing –this proposition echoes Beckett's maxim "that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express" ("Three Dialogues" 139); and c) texts in order to accomplish 'nothing' –this interpretation of course draws on the Beckettian presumption that the dissolution of the screen of language shall lead into exposure of what larks behind –"be it something or nothing" ("The German Letter" 172). What comes across through these interpretations is that despite being a negative noun, the word 'nothing' does not mean negation of the texts. Rather, the texts persist as the nothing or persistently turn toward the nothing.

This point can be pushed further by the fact that the phrase 'Texts for Nothing', as S.E. Gontarski reminds us, is derived from the musical idiom 'measure for nothing', a silent gesture made by the conductor "which sets the orchestra's tempo" ("introduction" xiii-xiv). This ghost

measure as Gontarski calls it implies a duration of animated silence (a paradox in itself) that is essential for the music to pick up its flow. Thus, the musical idiom enables Beckett to imagine in reverse a textual space that possibilitates the disclosure of silence (or nothing). Hence, throughout the series we shall encounter this continuous antinomy between silence (anticipated by the disappearance of the narrative) and words (retained by the persistence of the text) in which one antonymous condition paradoxically validates the other. Thus, in the sixth text the imprisoned narrator who no longer has the capacity of "stirring an inch" (Beckett, "Texts" 122-123) physically, talks about "this farrago of silence and words" (Beckett "Texts" 125) that fills the intervals. According to him, the silence is nothing but "barely murmured words" and words are "pell-mell babel of silence" (Beckett "Texts" 125) that shall one day enable him to hear or tell a story –"a little story, with living creatures coming and going on a habitable earth crammed with the dead, a brief story, with night and day coming and going above" (Beckett "Texts" 126).

The narrator realizes that stories could help him escape the confinement. He could recreate an elsewhere in his head: "the world would be there again, in my head, with me much as in the beginning. I would know that nothing had changed, that a little resolution is all that is needed to come and go under the changing sky, on the moving earth"(Beckett "Texts" 123). In this connection, the narrator echoes the bedridden Malone in *Malone Dies*, who, while he is waiting to die, intends to tell himself stories. Malone's stories are conceptually different from what the narrator imagines to accomplish insofar as they are "almost lifeless, like the teller" (Beckett 180) compared to the narrator's more lively plotline; however, in the end, these 'vain stories' as Blanchot calls them are meant to "people the emptiness of death into which Malone and the whole gallery of moribunds feel they are falling" ("Where now? Who now?" 212).

However, if these stories are composed of words that are silence and silence that becomes words, then the possibilities of their composition or possibilities of their being narrated or listened to are pushed to deference. That is why Blanchot calls them 'vain stories' –since they too resemble 'a ghost measure' in a musical composition. Therefore, these stories are either awaited or recalled. They are either to be composed or their composition is half-forgotten. They arguably do not exist or merely exist immaterially like a fragmented memory. Yet, the 'story' exists as a word in these texts. The word is uttered emphatically by the narrator to assert its signification despite the signification is negated by the fact that there is no story. However it is the emphatic assertion of the word that puts forward its negation –thus, once again, reflecting the Beckettian paradox of writing.

On the other hand, the image of the persistence of the narrators in these texts, despite their attempts to disappear, complements the material persistence of the texts, notwithstanding the attempts made to eliminate the text via elimination of its linguistic foundation. None of the narrators in these texts can actually get out of their respective spaces, or make their way out and disappear –"unfortunately it is not a question of elsewhere, but of here"(Beckett "Texts" 153). It is within the here and now of the text that these narrators attempt to tell or hear a story –"the only chance, [to] get out of here and go elsewhere" (Beckett "Texts" 153) –and in turn constitute the body of the texts. Although, as mentioned above, these stories are pushed to continuous deference, the characters remain in perpetual anticipation or in partial reminiscence of these stories, so that in spite of their failure to accomplish disappearance through these stories, they can continue to find their way out. Thus, they hold a striking resemblance with Bataille's interpretation of the miserable figure of Molloy in the eponymous novel for whom death is an obsession and impossibility at the same time. In case of the narrators, therefore, disappearance (which is not death but implicates a condition of absence and way out) becomes a similar anticipation and deferred possibility.

The narrator in the first text of the series may also remind us the image of Bataille's anonymous vagabond that he associates with the figure of Molloy. He is "an anonymous figure composed of the inevitable beauty of rags, a vacant and indifferent expression, and an ancient accumulation of filth" (Graver and Federman 60). Thus, the narrator is shown occupying an inhabitable place from where he continuously refuses to move –"The top, very flat, of a mountain, no, a hill, but so wild, so wild, enough. Quag, heath up to the knees, faint sheep-tracks, troughs scooped by the rains. It was far down in one of these I was lying, out of the wind" (Beckett "Texts" 100).

On being asked to evacuate the place, the narrator states "I couldn't stay there and I couldn't go on" (Beckett "Texts" 100). It is impossible for the narrator to rise and attempt a move since not only his physical mechanism is afflicted by age and rheumatism; but also, he is taken over by a spiritual unwillingness or an existential indifference that prevents him from bothering whether he should take his leave or stay where he is –"I should turn away from it all, away from the body, away from the head, let them work it out between them, let them cease, I can't, it's I would have to cease" (Beckett "Texts" 100). Thus, while he lies inside the trough, "flat on my face on the dark earth" (Beckett "Texts" 101), people might take him for dead. However, he is not dead. He is simply there –"I'm up there and I'm down here, under my gaze, foundered, eyes closed, ear cupped against the sucking peat" (Beckett "Texts" 102), lying helplessly but

without any need for help, since he knows "there's nothing we can do for one another" (Beckett "Texts" 102).

Hence, despite his final attempt to make a move once it is night and the mist is clear, the narrator ultimately refuses to leave –"for the moment I'm here, always have been, always shall be" (Beckett "Texts" 103). The situation of existential limbo shall make way for the necessity to recount old stories to escape his situation –"to lull me and keep me company" (Beckett "Texts" 103). However, the narrator suggests that he does not remember the entire story. Although the story has had an unhappy beginning but a happy ending –the narrator does not recall the happy end. Thus, once again, the story being only half remembered fails to provide the opportunity of a happy escapade, and therefore, in the end the narrator remains in the same solitary situation of an existential irresoluteness as before–"I'm in my arms, I'm holding myself in my arms, without much tenderness, but faithfully, faithfully" (Beckett "Texts" 104).

In the fourth text the condition of speechlessness is seen as an effect of the failure of words. The narrator, speaking in first person 'I' and referring to the writer in third person 'he' states "He thinks words fail him, he thinks because words fail him he's on his way to my speechlessness, to being speechless with my speechlessness" (Beckett "Texts" 114-115). Thus, the writer attempts to express his disability to speak through the narrator. However, the paradox lies in the fact that the narrator on his part –as he does, can only speak about the speechlessness, and not imbibe the speechlessness since doing so would lead into an absolute dissolution of the material body of the text, which is after all constituted by the narrator's speech. In that case there shall be no text at all, including the figure of the narrator. Although the concept, as pointed out earlier, anticipates the absolute dissolution of the text via absolute dissolution of the language, the text and the narrator (as the conceptual persona) have to persist in order to speak about the dissolution. Thus, the persistence of the text made possible by and conveyed through the persistence of the narrator once again foregrounds the Beckettian paradox of writing.

These reading suggests that the story is indispensable, although it is impossible to tell the stories, just as the writing is indispensable to dismantle words. Now let us think about how this paradox of writing brings about the disjunction between the concept and the text. In order to create the disjunction, the paradox of writing upsets the various components that constitute the concept: the voice of humanity in ruins, ruptured narrative, and impotence.

The negation of the text through its own assertion inevitably self-generates the text on negating itself, so that the infinite loop of the paradox is not closed. In 'Texts For Nothing' the text is

always dissolved from within whereas it is reconstituted from without. Therefore, the stories that are relentlessly deferred offer us an image of the impossibility of textual progress, and yet they are concomitantly re-introduced within the body of the text (as texts within the text) as a possibility anticipated by the narrators. This contradicts the very idea of impotence, which is one of the components of the Beckettian concept. Although it can be argued that the impotence still persists insofar as the re-generation ultimately leads into dissolution, the very fact that the paradox facilitates a possibility of re-generation problematizes the idea of impotence. Moreover, the continuous re-generation of the text that precedes and succeeds the dissolution also offers an impression of textual recursion or circularity[30] within the narrative that is inconsistent with its ruptured form. Although the narrative shall always remain ruptured, the impression of circularity produced within the form unsettles the form.

It can also be argued that due to the continuous re-introduction of the stories (in the form of re-collection) facilitated by the paradox in order to re-constitute the text from without every time it is dissolved from within, as Paul Stewart has suggested, the solitary figure crawling through or confined in misery is reconciled with snatches of a happier past. Although these moments and memories are ephemeral and fragmentary, their intervention alleviates the sufferings of Beckett's moribund figures, if not eradicate them completely. Even for a moment their voices which mark the ruinous state of humanity is touched by what can be called happiness.

Therefore, it can be posited that although the components remain intact in the end to sustain the concept, they are nonetheless problematized by the consequences of the paradoxical nature of the writing, thus giving rise to the disjunction between the concept and the text.

We have already mentioned that the disjunction between the concept and the text has to be primarily located in the post German letter texts. Although our hypothesis is mainly drawn from the reading of three particular texts in the series called 'Texts for Nothing', it can be argued that on implementing the approach we have taken here, this particular mode of disjunction can be traced in *The Trilogy*, the plays, and various other writings that came out since the formulation of the concept.

[30] Breuer talks about recursion and circularity in his essay.

5. Failure and Finitude: The Philosophy of Beckettian Language

The disjunction between the concept and the text caused by the paradoxical writing, ultimately reveals to us that the text fails to qualify as literature of the unword. Therefore the ultimate modality of the concept is not what the concept is. As we mentioned before, Beckett was not unaware of this consequence because he knew the impossibility upon which his concept was founded. However, the very fact that he still attempted to pursue it reveals that failure of the text to become the concept is not without its relevance. Beckett suggested on several occasions that the unavoidability of failure is intrinsic to his aesthetics. For Beckett, "anyone nowadays who pays slightest attention to his own experience finds it the experience of a non-knower and non-can-er [somebody who cannot]" (Graver and Federman 162) or what can be called experience of 'finitude'.

The concept of literature of the unword itself emerged from experiences of such failure or finitude peculiar to modernity due to the regressive conditions of humanity that leaves its negative impact on reason, language and speech. Thus, toward the end of 'The Three Dialogues', Beckett thinks that "to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail" ("Three Dialogues" 145). According to him, the artist's emerging "fidelity to failure" is "a new occasion, a new term of relation, and of the act which, unable to act, obliged to act, he makes, an expressive act, even if only of itself, of its impossibility, of its obligation" ("Three Dialogues" 145). Hence, drawing upon Beckett's conjecture, it can be concluded that production of an art of finitude (which in many ways refers to Beckett's own art in terms of content) is insufficient. The production of the art itself has to fail in order to accomplish the radical finitude. Therefore, the textual failure to become the literature of the unword has to be located within the larger premise of Beckett's call for a radical finitude.

Therefore, the philosophy of Beckettian language is a philosophy of failure or finitude. This is not only because Beckett felt a mere obligation to explore "that whole zone of being that has always been set aside by artists as some-thing unusable –as something by definition incompatible with art" (Graver and Federman 162), but also because, as mentioned above, the experience of finitude was the order of the day. Beckett was speaking these words in 1956, only eleven years since the war had ended that left indelible impression on the mind of Beckett and all over the world. The war reduced

humanity to ruins and everywhere there was nothing but chaos. Therefore for Beckett, it was not only an aesthetic obligation but an ethical obligation, which we shall discuss further in our last chapter. However in the same conversation that Beckett had had with Israel Shenker in 1956, Beckett's claim "The kind of work I do is one in which I am not master of my material" (Graver and Federman 162) should be associated with his anti-totalitarian attitude that he developed while on a trip to Nazi Germany from 1936-37, returning from which he shall formulate the concept of literature of the unword. Therefore, Beckett's aesthetic engagement with the unusable and the incompatible had already begun in response to the totalitarianism's rejection of anything that it considered 'degenerate'[31]. On the other hand, to fail and to occupy finitude is to continuously give up on one's power, one's control over things, a position that was at once political during the heady days of the war and which Beckett, at least philosophically,[32] attempted to maintain throughout his life, lies at the heart of his philosophy of finitude.

[31] See Mark Nixon's essay Between Gospel and Prohibition: Beckett in Nazi Germany 1936-1937.

[32] We say 'philosophically' because Beckett had himself on various occasions become the master of his own work. His fastidiousness over publication and stage production or adaptation of his works only showed that he could never be indifferent toward his works as much as he claimed. This another level of paradox in Beckett. However, we should also remember to separate Beckett the man from his art and philosophy. It is interesting to observe the disjunction between them; however that should not make any difference to either his art or his philosophy.

Chapter three

Language and Ethics

In our final chapter, we shall consider the question of ethics in relation to the Beckettian language. Since this language emerged at a particular historical moment, in response to certain conditions that defined that moment, it cannot escape the question of ethics. Any ahistorical reading of Beckett would deny him the relevance that he held and still holds as a major post-war European writer. The existing trajectory of Beckett scholarship shows that initially, due to Beckett's own reticence over political issues, his oeuvre had never been associated with either history or politics, until very recently, with the publication of James Knowlson's biography of Beckett in 1996 and an increased interest in the study of the Beckett archive, that scholars have been able to show Beckett's awareness of various political events occurring at the time he lived in.[33] He grew up through the politically tumultuous inter-war years that certainly shaped his intellectual and creative sensibilities. Moreover, his war-time experiences were first hand and inevitably left deep impact on his aesthetics and ethics that defined his politics.

Beckett went on a six month trip to Nazi Germany in 1936. As a matter of course, recorded by Mark Nixon, the diaries that Beckett maintained during his stay in Germany from 1936-1937, reveal his personal confrontation with the fascist ideology that had begun to control every aspect of German society, be it economic, cultural, intellectual, or personal. He was extremely uncomfortable living under Nazi regime that censored any form of radical expression of aesthetics resulting into closing down of museums and galleries devoted to modern art that was considered 'degenerate'.[34] It was on his return from Germany in 1937 that Beckett wrote his letter to Axel Kaun (in German) setting goal for 'today's writer'[35].

Moreover, Beckett was involved with the French Resistance during the World War II. He worked along with his old friend Alfred Péron at the Resistance Cell called 'Gloria SMH'.[36] "It was at the time when they were rounding up all the Jews, including all

[33] See Seàn Kennedy's 'Introduction' to *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive*.
[34] See Mark Nixon's essay Between Gospel and Prohibition: Beckett in Nazi Germany 1936-1937.
[35] See The German Letter of 1937. Translated by Martin Eslin. Disjecta. Edited by Rubi Cohn.
[36] See *Beckett Remembering Beckett*. Edited by James Knowlson and Elizabeth Knowlson. 'The Bad Years'. Also see James Knowlson's *Damned to Fame*.

their children, and gathering them in the Parc des Princes ready to send them off to extermination camps" (Knowlson 79)–Beckett recalled to James Knowlson. Following his involvement, he and Suzanne (Beckett's wife) had to go into hiding to escape arrest. After the war, Beckett started working for the construction of the Irish Red Cross hospital at Saint-Lô,[37] devastated by bombing, where he, according to Katherine Weiss, "witnessed the result of World War II's mass destruction" (158) and from where he wrote his Radio commentary 'The Capital of the Ruins' –that we shall discuss in this chapter.

This chapter shall attempt to relate and compare the development of Beckett's language with these experiences since they were crucial in shaping an ethics of writing that was taking its course. We shall try to explore this ethicality in Beckett's language and locate this ethicality within the philosophy of Beckettian language.

1. War: Where is the word?

Although suggestive of its malignant presence throughout his oeuvre, (as we pointed out briefly in our first chapter), the word 'war' hardly ever occurs in Beckett's texts. The mysterious presence of the word or the relevance of the war have never been lost on critical readers, given Hugh Kenner's excellent reading of 'Waiting For Godot' in which he points out that the bleak setting of the play, the inconspicuous nature of the tramps, and the suspicious Gestapo-like figure of Pozzo refer to the state of German occupied France (Kenner 30); and Adorno's famous essay 'Trying to Understand Endgame' that reads the play in the Holocaust context. However, it is perhaps owing to the missing word and any direct reference to war in his plot-less plots, that for a long time, many earlier critics have either overlooked its uncanny presence in between lines, or deliberately avoided to acknowledge it or talk about it. Marjorie Perloff writes:

> For the first wave of Beckett critics in postwar France –critics for whom war memories were not only painful but embarrassing, given the collaboration of the Vichy government –it was preferable to read Beckett as addressing man's alienation and the human condition rather than anything as specific as everyday life in the years of Resistance. (Perloff)

[37] Ibid.

The absence of the word or any discussion related to it can be explained by the Freudian interpretation of repression that causes involuntary or intentional amnesia. In *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud discusses the patterns of general forgetfulness with regard to proper names and words, which despite their banality, reveal possibilities of repression on analysis. We generally tend to forget those words or memories with which we associate experiences of pain, loss, or trauma. Thus, forgetting of words and memories are linked to interiorization of trauma through repression that may begin as coping mechanism.

Beckett's experience of Fascism in Germany in 1936 and his eventual association with the war left several acerbic impressions on the mind of the writer. It can be assumed that the word became unrepresentable for Beckett due to its magnanimity and banality. It is not that the word cannot be located anywhere at all in the Beckettian oeuvre. For instance, in the short prose text 'All Strange Away', Beckett uses the word in the very fourth line: " out of the door and down the road in the old hat and coat like after the war, no, not that again" (169). However, the sentence has to imperatively break off as soon as the word arises. There is a deliberate refusal to engage further. Although written around 1963, the almost phobic denial of the word despite what it seems to be an attempt to put it in a sentence, only shows as Katherine Weiss points out, "that even [eighteen] years after his work with Irish Red Cross, Beckett was still haunted by the experience of arriving in Saint-Lô where he witnesses the result of World War II's mass destruction" (153).

Therefore, close reading of various tropes and images can work out the presence of the word 'war' at the back of these texts despite its material invisibility. The word becomes the unconscious of the texts. Here, Perloff's reading of the three-story cycle that Beckett wrote immediately after the war in 1946 provides an important example. Perloff reads the trope of expulsion that runs through all the three texts as a metaphor of despair faced by Beckett under "the war-time conditions in Vichy France, especially the miseries and terror of the life of hiding and attempted escape" (Perloff). Similarly she uses various other tropes and incidents described in these texts to associate them with Beckett's actual difficulties that he faced while continuously escaping arrest: "The thoughts –of homelessness and hunger, of the absence of newspapers, of being wanted

by a nameless "them" and of verifying one's "identity" with the help of a lawyer – thoughts perfectly consistent with Beckett's actual escape from Paris" (Perloff).
Perloff's intention, however, is not to suggest that the narrators described in these texts are Beckett himself (although she calls them 'Sam' for clarity's sake) , for that would cause running into risk of what Beckett himself had long predicted in his 1929 essay on Joyce's *Work* –"The danger is in the neatness of identifications" ("Dante…Bruno" 19). Therefore, Perloff's project is to read the traces of the despair and crisis, fatigue and boredom involved in the very process of hiding and escaping that make their way into the text to conceal or repress a word that is missing: 'war'.

Similar traces of trauma can be found in the short prose text called 'From An Abandoned Work'.[38] Written and published in between 1954-55, ten years since the war ended, the text relates the memory of three days in the life of the now old narrator, interspersed with abrupt biographical details. Dominik LaCapra in his book *Writing History, Writing Trauma* shows that most Holocaust testimonials are recollection of days and events exaggerated by the survivors' imagination that distorts historical authenticity.[39] This is what Agamben called a "system of relations between the inside and outside of *langue,* between the sayable and the unsayable in every language" (145). Therefore, these testimonials are as much truth as much they are fiction. The narrator in Beckett's text, speaking in past tense, but often confusing the tense, seems to be providing us with one such testimonials, exaggerated and overlapping, looming in between the sayable and the unsayable. Let us consider the images and incidents the narrator associates with these three days: insects, birds, the mother, a horse, stoats, gaze of a roadman, and ferns. These are all superimposed over one another and fail to create, as is usual in Beckett, a coherent narrative. However each of these images may have associations with trauma.

The narrator points out that the insects and the birds always "[get] in my way" (Beckett, "Work" 155). After which he remarks, "Nor will I go out of my way to avoid such things, when avoidable, no, I simply will not go out of my way, though I have never

[38] See J.D. O'Hara's *Samuel Beckett's Hidden Drives: Structural Uses of Depth Psychology* for detailed Freudian analysis of Beckett's texts that also includes a reading of 'From an Abandoned Work'. We have tried to read the symbols in the text in a Freudian vein, however not to draw any psychoanalytic argument as such but to trace the mechanism of trauma in the narrator in relation to the writer's own experiences .
[39] See Chapter 3. Holocaust Testimonies: Attending the Victim's Voice. *Writing History Writing Trauma*.

in my life been on my way anywhere, but simply on my way" (Beckett, "Work" 155-156). Thus, we understand the image of insects and the birds getting in the narrator's way puts the word 'way' in a completely different context in relation to the narrator. This may imply the banality of his everyday life under the threat of being caught, or more literally, his continuous escaping from those who may catch him. The narration returns to the present at this point and the narrator says, "And that is perhaps how I shall die at last if they don't catch me" (Beckett, "Work" 156). The expression suggests that he is still on his way, trying to escape, or under the delusive impression that he is being chased by some forces, while a considerable period has lapsed between the time of the narrative and the time of the narration. This is what LaCapra conceptualizes as 'acting out' the trauma in which "one relives (or acts out) the past, distinctions tend to collapse, including the crucial distinction between then and now" (46). Although the captors are unrecognized as Perloff has noted in other texts too, since direct recognition may facilitate the missing word to resurface, their menacing presence, or absent presence at the back of the sentences reveals the work of trauma.

The image of the mother in the window waving at the narrator may probably be connected with the loss of home. While the figure of the mother herself may implicate a form of "helpless love" (Beckett "Work" 156) that the narrator is not attached to –a kind of love bordering on the idea of 'home' that has gone missing, the image of the regular departure suggested here is more compelling. It can be compared to the persistent image of expulsion described in the other texts, in particular the three-story cycle Perloff has analysed. Although in this case the expulsion is not violent, and the narrator seems to have come out on his own, and returns home at the end of the day, the iteration of the aimless peregrination is more or less similar, hinting toward the despair of escaping on foot as undertaken by the writer himself.

This is followed by the more disturbing image of the white horse: "This is the only completely white horse I remember, what I believe the Germans call a Schimmel, oh I was very quick as a boy and picked up a lot of hard knowledge, Schimmel, nice word, for an English speaker" (Beckett, "Work" 157). The image, the naming of the image, and the colour are all striking in this case indicating toward the missing word. While it is possible to think of the horse as a symbol of war –as indeed horse is an archetypal

symbol of power and battle, which even has its roots in the Bible[40], its further association with a German word 'Schimmel' makes this possibility seem more obvious. The colour white may stand for death. In *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud relates the case of a man studied by C.G. Jung in which a boy reciting a familiar poem is "hopelessly stuck" (33) on reaching the line that has the following phrase "with the white sheets" (33). On being asked to reproduce what comes on his mind when he considers the above phrase or words, he associates the white sheet in the text with a white sheet on a corpse –"a linen sheet with which one covers a dead body" (Freud, *Psychopathology* 33). Hence, the narrator's obsession with the colour white (in this connection Hamm's white-gone eyes in *Endgame* can also be recalled) is almost symptomatic: "White I must say has always affected me strongly, all white things, sheets, walls and so on, even flowers, and then just white, the thought of white, without more" (Beckett, "Work" 157). Thus, through one singular image, the white horse with a German name, the narrator almost reveals the word, but he quickly refers back to his boyhood years to locate the German word at a temporality that is probably not analogous with the war, thus, once again repressing the possibility of revealing the word.

The images are relatively more violent as the narrator proceeds to talk about the second day described in the text. On the second day, he ran into what he remembers as a tribe of stoats that attacked him but he barely escaped: "Indeed if I may say so I think I was fortunate to get off with my life, strange expression, it does not sound right somehow" (Beckett "Work" 161). Once again the emphasis must be given on the expression itself, and why he finds it strange. This is where the feeling of guilt comes in that the survivor often has to go through psychologically. Beckett himself was a survivor. The Resistance Cell he worked at in Paris was sabotaged by "an informer in the group" (Knowlsons 80). In words of Nathalie Sarraute, who offered refuge to Beckett and his wife when they went into hiding: "Most of the members of Péron's cell were soon arrested. But Beckett was warned in time and managed to escape before the Gestapo went round to his flat to arrest him" (Knowlsons 81). Thus, Beckett escaped luckily (compare this with the narrator's words about getting off with his life in the text). But why does it sound wrong? This is because, as the narrator continues, "Anyone

[40] See Revelation 19:11-21

else would have been bitten and bled to death, perhaps sucked white, like a rabbit, there is that word white again" (Beckett "Work" 161).

"What guilt?" (76) asks Primo Levi in his Auschwitz memoir *The Drowned and The Saved*. It is the guilt of being saved, through fate and manoeuvre, while others drowned: "you too could have, you certainly should have" (77). According to Levi, "When all was over, the awareness emerged that we had not done anything, or not enough, against the system into which we had been absorbed" (76). The camp experience took away from human life what Levinas calls 'decency'.[41] It reduced human life to animality , and hence, according to Levi, those who survived were the fittest and those who were gassed were the 'others'. The need to survive in the concentration camp could have only turned the concern for others secondary: "How was I able to survive in Auschwitz ? My Principle is: I come first, second, and third. Then nothing, then again I; and then all the others" (Levi 79). There was a basic failure to care for or to listen to the other, to smile at the other, as Levi relates, and extend human solidarity: "More realistic is self accusation, or having failed in terms of human solidarity" (78). Perhaps, the most dangerous impact of the Auschwitz was, besides depriving people of basic dignity, that it wiped out ethicality completely. That is why, after the liberation, with " "civilian" moral code surfacing again" (81), there was no way to escape shame for having "usurped [the] neighbour's place, and live in his stead" (82). There was a failure on either side: those who failed to survive were all dead and those who managed to survive would forever fail to overcome their guilt and shame. Therefore, the moment of liberation, in Levi's understanding, "almost always … coincided with a phase of anguish"(71).

Beckett's narrator undergoes a similar anguish (that perhaps reflects the writer's own and many others sharing his situation) and dreams of animals as mentioned in the text. The symptomatic rage that is often channelized through the narrator's affliction of self-injury might be read as an utturance of guilt and shame that Levi talks about in relation to surviving. These feelings permeate so deeply into the survivor's psychological system that he always reads scorn and judgement in the eyes of everyone he comes across. Thus, while relating about the third day, the narrator describes the terrifying gaze of an old roadman. Is this the same judgemental gaze that the survivor has to meet in "the

[41] See Levina's *God, Death, and Time*. Translated by: Bettina Bergo.

eyes of those … who listens to his stories and judge with facile hindsight, or who perhaps feel cruelly repelled" (Levi 77-78)? Although the narrator claims that the memory belongs from his childhood in which case our hypothesis is unlikely but it could be the gaze itself that should matter here and not the one who is described as gazing. It is the gaze that makes the survivor, according to Levi, feel "accused and judged, compelled to justify and defend himself" (78). Perhaps, it is the very gaze that compels the writer to not use the word 'war' – the word that always comes in between the self and the other. It is also the gaze that compels the narrator, at the end of the text, to hide in the uncomfortable ferns in order to "vanish from view" (Beckett, "Work" 164). This behaviour may be apparently read as an attempt to escape. However, it can also be placed within the compulsive behavioural pattern of the narrator attempting to act out his guilt and shame. Hence, the narrator, tormented by shame and guilt, on disappearing becomes, or at least attempts to become, those who could not survive – the ones who are lost.

2. Becoming the Other: The Lost Ones

Toward the end of his chapter called 'Shame' in *The Drowned and The Saved,* Levi takes up the issue of remembrance through writing as well as its problem. The end of the chapter reads like a comment and critique on the project of remembering the dead that Levi and many other survivors took up post war. When Levi's friend tries to ameliorate the difficulty of shame and guilt, by suggesting that Levi is the chosen one, and that he should write about those who died, Levi dismisses his consoling words since the chosen ones, in the rhetoric of the camp, were those that actually died:

> I must repeat: we, the survivors are not the true witnesses. This is an uncomfortable notion of which I have become conscious little by little, reading the memoirs of others and reading mine at a distance of years. We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch the bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they … are the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have a general significance. (83-84)

Hence, Levi in his third chapter of the book, somewhat like Beckett, alludes to the inescapable obligation to write since those who could have rightfully written these testimonials were all dead. For Levi, however, this obligation is an ethical obligation

to remember, and offer testimony with gratitude and shame. Therefore, Levi chooses the genre of the memoir to write self-reflexively about the others he had seen and met during the camp days.

Beckett, on the other hand, both witness and survivor of the war, like Levi (although he was more fortunate than the latter insofar as he escaped arrest), chose a different path. Although he was obliged to write too, his obligation was not merely to write about the others, or remember names but, as we mentioned in the first chapter, to become the Other in his writing. Hence, what he called the voice of humanity in ruins, took over his language. His language became the language of others, in its precariousness, in its abruption, and incoherence .He also took up writing in French to perhaps capture in his text what Derrida at some point called "suffering and distance … of a foreign accent" (*Mourning* 72) that was perhaps best suited for becoming the suffering and pain of others.. We discussed in the first chapter about the aesthetic implication and impact of this method; however, its ethical implication also lies in resisting the problem of representation through working out ways to efface the preposition 'about' in relation to others that always creates a divide between the self and the Other.

Drawing upon Agamben, David Houston Jones reminds us that "only those who died on camps could be valid witnesses" (54). However since it is impossible to record their testimony, the survivor has to represent them taking into account the problems of representation. Therefore, Beckett negotiated with this problem through his attempts to become the other in his writing, so that at least in textual terms, the other takes over the narrating voice. Beckett tried to work it out through providing a certain state of dis-identity to the narrators as well as to the text so that the narrative and the text did not become 'about' somebody specific. Hence, most of his characters or figures gradually became unnameable or nameless, either referred to in third person or speaking in first person. In his short prose texts from around this time, these figures mainly existed as bodies, fragmented and dispersed, or as a narrating voice. Due to their dis-identity, while on one hand they could not be identified; on the other hand they could be easily identified with. After all, this was the time innumerable people were trying to escape,

feigning their identities or trying not to be identified (like Beckett and his wife)[42], while on the other hand, thousands of people perished in concentration camps, and particularly those that perished, looked all alike in their misery and their physical disposition, shortly before or after death, and could hardly be identified, which is evident from the existing photographs.[43]

One of the finest treatments of this method is found in the notorious short prose text 'The Lost Ones', that takes place inside a closed cylindrical space probably recalling the claustrophobic architecture of a gas chamber, with temperature rising and falling, causing disfigurement and impotence to at least two hundred "lost bodies … each searching for its lost one" (Beckett, 202) in hope of finding a way out and failing. The original French title of the text *Le Dépeupleur*, as David Kleinberg-Levin observes should be translated as 'The Depopulator' (A224) meaning genocide, thus linking the text, but as mentioned earlier, not explicitly referring to the holocaust history.

There are enough references in the text to suggest that this is the inside of a gas chamber. As Kleinberg-Levin notes, the cylindrical space might in itself refer to the cylinders carrying the hydrogen cyanide chemical used in killing the captives (A226). Moreover, "the omnipresence of a dim yellow light" (Beckett "LO" 205) may refer to, according to Kleinberg-Levin, the yellow stars that the Jews were made to wear (A226). The text also meticulously points toward the effect of the climate inside the cylinder on the skin: "This desiccation of the envelope robs nudity of much of its charm as pink turns grey and transforms into a rustling of nettles the natural succulence of flesh against flesh" (Beckett, "LO" 220)–revealing an almost infectious dehumanised bareness.

But let us return to our initial intention. How does the text 'become' the lost ones instead of being a text 'about' the lost ones? Firstly it is one of Beckett's most formally minimalist text leaving it as bare as the creatures inside the cylinder. In words of Knowlson and Pilling, "The Lost Ones reads like an intriguing exercise in openly fleshing out the skeleton of a fiction" (Knowlson and Pilling 157). The de-skinned body of the text is at one with the skeletal bodies of the lost ones. This is followed by the

[42] See *Beckett Rembering Beckett*. The Bad Years. Edited by James and Elizabeth Knowlson. Also See James Knowlson's *Damned To Fame*.
[43] See https://www.thoughtco.com/large-collection-of-holocaust-pictures-1779703

fact, as Kleinberg-Levin notes, "What exactly is happening there is left unsaid; and this unsaid only intensifies the unease of the reader, trying to imagine the scene" (A226). Thus, although we are told about the effect of the climate on the skin, we are not given any detail on the pain, the pain is left unsaid, so that we can begin to imagine it. And over the course of our imagination, we enter the pain, the pain of others, and bear the pain in our skin –thus becoming the lost ones. Moreover, the narrating voice interestingly belongs to an "omniscient spectator, a witness unnamed and perhaps unnamable [sic], who is somehow present" (A226). Thus, we can assume, if the narrating voice is that of the writer's, then he has entered the very space the lost ones are trapped in. This revelation immediately associates the omniscient spectator with the narrator in 'From an Abandoned Work', who, in the end, disappears to become those who have disappeared. Similarly, the spectator, who could as well be the writer, on entering the cylinder has 'become' one of the lost ones.

It should be observed here that the narrative tones Beckett employs in 'The Lost Ones' and 'From an Abandoned Work' are very different from one another. While in the latter, there is no para break in the text. The narrative seems to resemble a continuous flow of words recalling Lucky's speech from 'Waiting For Godot' although not so distorted and is punctuated. However the narrator often confuses the past with the present (which is common, as mentioned before, in those suffering from trauma), and hence the language is very abstract and absurd:

> …. [H]ow violent and the kind of day, I stopped and turned. So back with bowed head on the lookout for a snail, slug or worm … Whereas a bird now, or a butterfly, fluttering about and getting in my way, all moving things, getting in my path, a slug now, getting under my feet, no, no mercy. (Beckett, 155)

Nonetheless, it displays an agitation in the speaker that probably points toward his traumatic condition –see the use of the word 'no' at the end of the sentence, twice with a pause in between suggesting both emphasis and anxiety. The image of the slug being crushed mercilessly under the feet has both helplessness and violence inherent in it. However, it is not understood whether the event is actually recollected, in that case it could be an instance of what Freud would call image-displacement where one image is substituted for the other; or if it is happening in present in which case it could probably be an 'acting out' of a past event of torture. Therefore, the narrative with its

utterly confused use of language makes it difficult to comprehend its coherence if not signification.

'The Lost Ones' on the other hand offers a very precise but comprehensive narrative resembling somebody taking copious notes on whatever is happening around. There is less anxiety and more habituation reflected by the language insofar as it captures the boredom and finitude of the space with a strange meticulousness and familiarity. In words of Knowlson and Pilling, "The Lost Ones is simplest of Beckett's post *How It Is* prose, the most easily approachable" (Knowlson and Pilling 157). It is possible that the text is actually an excerpt from a journal that the narrator maintains like the writer himself who maintained a diary while he was in Germany. However, unlike Beckett's German diaries, it is not a travel diary but rather, a diary of stagnation. There is nonetheless one similarity in terms of style. Nixon notes "The diaries Beckett kept during his six-month journey through Germany strive to 'mention everything'. Beckett records his daily activities minutely" (*Diaries* 27). Similarly the narrative of 'The Lost Ones' presents a minute detailing of 'eveything' ranging from the measurement of the cylindrical space to the variety of its inhabitants. Let us look at two instances here:

> Inside a cylinder fifty meters round and sixteen high for the sake of harmony or a total surface of roughly twelve hundred square meters of which eight hundred mural. Not counting the niches and tunnels. Omnipresence of a dim yellow light shaken by a vertiginous tremolo between contiguous extremes. (Beckett, 205)

Or,

> It is curious to note the presence within this belt a certain number of sedentary searchers sitting or standing against the wall. Dead to the ladders to all intents and purposes and a source of annoyance for both climbers and carriers they are nevertheless tolerated. The fact is that these sort of semi-sages among whom all ages are to be admired from old age to infancy inspire in those still fitfully fevering if not a cult at least a certain deference. (Beckett, 210)

The style is factual and didactic. It is as if the narrator is unwilling to give out anything more than information as precisely as possible but covering as much as possible. Phrases like 'to note' or 'the fact is that' suggest that the narrator is trying to record everything with utmost factual correctness and sincerity. This is probably because the narrator merely wants to record with as much indifference as possible, the

miserable conditions of their lives that can accommodate no lyricism but only prosaic reluctance.

The texts are not 'about' these two distinct voices –one displaying anxious imprecision and the other displaying factual didacticism, insofar as they do not give out anything more than the voices themselves embodied by the narrators. However, the texts speak in the voices of these narrators, thus once again showing us how Beckett, through his language, becomes the Other.

Thus, in Beckett's language we find an unfolding of what we shall call an ethics of solidarity and not necessarily an ethics of mourning. Mourning and solidarity are different. The act of mourning (used in the classic Freudian sense) does not rescue the dead from its otherness, because mourning as a process facilitates reconciliation of the self with the loss itself , that is, it psychologically assists the mourner to come in terms with the infinite otherness of the dead, so that in the end the dead remains the forever-Other. On the other hand, the gesture of solidarity compels a radical identification with the condition of the Other in which one always comes to share this condition, so that the Other is not left alone in their condition. Therefore, while the ethics of mourning is limited within the obligation to pay homage to the dead through remembrance and rituals (which is not without its selfish end); the ethics of solidarity lies in the radical becoming-Other of the self, which is implicated by the gesture of solidarity itself, meaning that the one who extends their solidarity to the Other, in the process must become the Other. In case of death, if the condition of the Other is infinite otherness that is death itself, then offering solidarity would mean to die and become the Other – which is what Beckett does through language. Hence, this does not in any way suggest bringing the Other back in life, (more so in Beckett since, as we shall point out later on, Beckettian thought harbours fidelity to death) but rescuing the Other from the isolation of infinite otherness by being with the Other, *as* the Other. The ethical becoming-Other also does not suggest stepping into the Other's individual identity but stepping into the very condition in which the Other is lost and found.

The genre of memoir that Levi takes up is founded on the very process of remembrance that is associated with mourning. Beckett does not obligatorily remember in order to come in terms with loss, shame and guilt. He is not against remembering since there

are moments of remembering in his oeuvre, given that we can find autobiographical references in his narratives, or sometimes his narrators attempt to reminisce the past – as we have just seen in our reading of 'From an Abandoned Work' or in the text 'Company' discussed in the first chapter. However, Beckett unfailingly shows the failure of these attempts since memory in Beckett is always-already precarious and seen as an illusion. ,

Beckett's responsibility toward the death of others, lies in extending solidarity to those others through his writing and hence 'becoming' them. There are conditions of guilt and shame in Beckett for having survived, but these conditions do not entail mourning. Rather, they are channelized through solidarity which compels an ego identification with the dead or the dying Other (in that way, Beckett is more of a melancholic in Freudian sense insofar as he does not overcome the loss, but identifies with the loss).

In the rest of the chapter, we shall try to elaborate further on these propositions we have arrived at. We shall discuss the conception of mourning offered by Derrida in his obituary speeches collected in *The Works of Mourning* and compare it with Beckett's ethics of solidarity. Both Derrida and Beckett challenge in their respective ways the Freudian analysis of mourning that clinically aims at liberating the ego from its attachment to the lost object, thereby implying infinite otherness to the lost object. However, in the paragraphs to follow, we shall show how Beckett by not choosing the path of mourning at all avoids the inevitable aporia of mourning that Derrida has to confront, despite the latter's attempts at refashioning the discourse of mourning.

3. Mourning and Solidarity: Derrida and Beckett

Before we go to Derrida, let us briefly revise Freud's classic definition of mourning in his essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' that is ultimately opposed by Derrida's re-arrangement of mourning. Both mourning and melancholia, according to Freud, are responses to the loss of a loved object or to the loss of abstraction but Freud mainly understands the loved object to be a person (243) . Nonetheless, while mourning is "overcome after a certain lapse of time" (244), and therefore it is generally let without any interference, melancholia's influence is long term and sometimes necessitates clinical supervision. Both mourning and melancholia cause similar negative symptoms with regard to everyday existence –like sleeplessness and loss of interest in common affairs (244).

However, according to Freud, while melancholia develops self-reproaching tendencies, in case of mourning, such breach of self-regard can seldom occur (244). This is because, unlike in cases of melancholia, in mourning we often know what it is we are mourning for (245). The loss of a loved object demands that "all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachment to the object" (244). But according to Freud, it is always difficult to give up on a libidinal position despite the availability of substitute (244). This is when mourning begins to take place as it systematically works through "each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object" so that when "the work of mourning" (245) is over "the ego becomes free and uninhibited again" (245).

Now let us come to Derrida's conception of mourning developed over the obituary speeches anthologized under the title a title *The Work of Mourning* –that is borrowed from Freud. In their long introduction to the anthology, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas underline Derrida's philosophy (or politics) of mourning in the very opening sentence: "One must always go before the other" (1). According to Brault and Naas, "this is [Derrida's] law of friendship –and thus of mourning" (1) . For Derrida, it is an imperative that one friend must die before the other, so that the other can begin to mourn.

Derrida's obituary speeches are both profound and paradoxical insofar as almost all the obituary notes begins with a subtle reproach for speech and reverence for silence:

> We are speaking today less in order to say something than to assure ourselves, with voice and with music, that we are together in the same thought. We know with what difficulty one finds right and decent words at such a moment when no recourse should be had to common usage since all convention will seem either intolerable or vain. (*Mourning* 72)

However, there is still an obligation to speak on the occasion of the loss, about the loss. This is perhaps the same obligation that both Levi and Beckett had had to face, albeit differently, that is always triggered by the responsibility we owe toward the dead. Derrida too, like Beckett, understands the limitations of mourning and its narrative. As Brault and Naas tell us: "Derrida is acutely aware of the dangers involved in speaking of the dead in the wake of their death, the dangers of using the dead, and perhaps despite one's own best intentions, for one's own ends or purposes" (6).These purposes

could be both public and personal, in the sense that to speak of the dead in public is to display 'our' sorrow for the passing of one whom 'we' loved. On the other hand, to mourn and to remember is to come in terms with the loss, with the guilt of being left alive, thereby ameliorating the loss. This is where the Derridean thought finds problem with the Freud's analysis of mourning that works toward overcoming the loss. Derrida probably finds this to be an unethical gesture on part of the living toward the dead. Therefore, Derrida attempts to refashion his method of mourning. His mourning is not only about remembering the Other, in this case, in a Freudian vein, necessarily a friend, but also to re-member the Other. It must be remembered that to re-member is to re-call. To call again. To call one by name. The name, that according to Derrida lives beyond the bearer's death. But to re-member is to re-constitute –given that the word 'member' means one who belongs to a family, a community, a group, a space, a time. Thus, to remember the dead is to offer them to live with us, and live in us. Therefore, to commemorate the dead is to re-member the dead within us. Hence, in his obituary remarks on Roland Barthes' death, Derrida says:

> These thoughts are for him, for Roland Barthes, meaning that I think of him and about him, not only of or about his work. "For him" also suggests that I would like to dedicate these thoughts to him, give them to him, and destine them for him. Yet they will no longer reach him, and this must be the starting point of my reflection; they can no longer reach him, reach all the way to him, assuming they ever could have while he was still living. So where do they go? To whom and for whom? Only for him in me? In you? In us? (*Mourning* 35)

The interiorization of the dead, as Brault and Naas suggest, is crucial for Derrida insofar as "not to realize the intractable reality that the dead are now only "in us" would be not only a form of denial, but a betrayal of the dead friend" (10). This is not to suggest one should dissolve all the disagreements and disputes one had had with the dead, for that is exactly the kind of commemoration, as Brault and Naas point out, Derrida does not favour (8). Rather, it is more pertinent to speak 'for' a friend despite the differences and despite that these differences did not lead to any difference in the relationship (8-9). "Derrida suggests that it is only "in us" that the dead may speak, that is only by speaking *of* or *as* the dead that we can keep them alive" (9).

Hence, Derrida begins, as Brault and Naas point out, to act like the dead, insofar as he reads like his deceased friend or behaves like the friend who is now dead. However

this mimetism, as Derrida seems to be aware, is simultaneously indecent and murderous. This is because Derrida also cannot escape that this interiorization to allow the dead to speak in us that is reflected through our identification and idealization of the dead (in imitating them) is also a way of devouring or consuming the dead. Hence, we must understand the limits of interiorization and that we cannot become the dead who lives "in us", for the dead is at once "in us" and beyond us: "in mourning, we must recognize that the friend is now both only "in us" and already beyond us, in us but totally other, so that nothing we say of or to them can touch them in their infinite alterity"(11). Despite our obligation to harbour the dead in us, as Derrida observes, they are greater than us and we are too limited to harbour this infinite otherness (11-12).

Thus, as Brault and Naas point out, this aporia leaves us with two alternatives: possible mourning and impossible mourning. However, either of these choices shall mark a breach of fidelity toward the dead. This is because on the occasion of possible mourning, when we interiorize the dead, we run the danger of devouring them, and not acknowledging our limitation to harbour them who is beyond us, and hence greater than us (12); on the other hand, with regard to impossible mourning, to refuse this interiorization in order to respect the infinite otherness may amount to a betrayal "of the dead friend, a failure to accede to the unique event the friend has undergone" (10).

We shall suggest that this aporia is caused since Derridian mourning –like any other form of mourning –essentially separates life from death. This is because a fidelity to life is inherent in mourning. Whether it is Freud, or it is Derrida, mourning always turns toward life. Therefore, in an attempt to accommodate the dead within himself Derrida invariably imagines his dead friends not only as alive in him but also lively. He remembers particularly those memories that re-insert the force of life. For instance in his obituary remarks on Paul de Man, Derrida recalls a conversation between 'Paul' and his son on music :

> The word that let me know this [that 'Paul' was an experienced musian] was ame [soul] when hearing Pierre, my son, and Paul speak with familiarity of the violin's or the bass's soul, I learned that the "soul" is the name one gives in French to the small and fragile piece of wood –always very exposed, very vulnerable –that is placed within the body of these instruments to support the

> bridge and assure the resonant communication of the two sounding boards. (*Mourning* 75)

The incredible lyricism invoked by these lines that would inevitably lead Derrida to think about immortality in relation to the word 'soul' (drawing his reference to *Phaedo*), only shows how mourning displays its fidelity to life that ultimately otherizes death in the name of interiorizing the dead. Even when we read a text like *The Drowned and The Saved*, despite its powerful commentaries on camp experiences and graphic details of camp atrocities, one cannot miss the repeated assertion of the force of life brought back through memories associated with names that the writer knew in person.

Therefore, Derrida's attempt to appropriate the act of mourning in terms of hospitality (the host housing the guest within himself) fails since mourning cannot favour unconditional hospitality[44] –in which the host must 'become' the guest. However under the Derridean law of mourning this is impossible since the law already conditions that one cannot become the other. It is only then that the mourning is possible. Thus, Derrida falls prey to his own law and cannot escape the aporia of mourning. There is no way we can preserve the otherness of death while we are alive or unless we end our fidelity to life.

Since Beckett refuses to mourn, he is not obliged to share its fidelity to life. Solidarity, on the other hand, is founded on its absolute fidelity to the Other. In case of Beckett, since the Other is also dead or the dying Other, it is only through solidarity, and not mourning, can Beckett become the Other. Thus, Beckett escapes the aporia because, unlike Derrida, he does not attempt to accommodate the dead as alive within him but instead, he himself becomes the dead in an act of solidarity. Hence the dead is no longer infinitely Other to him. This solidarity, as we have tried to argue through textual illustration, is mediated through Beckett's language and therefore, he becomes the Other in his writing. The language in Beckett is always the language of the Other.

[44] In Derrida's *On Hospitality*, he draws a difference between unconditional hospitality and conditional hospitality. While the former suggests an absolutely ethical form of hospitality where the guest, irrespective of his identity, receives an unlimited welcome and unlimited liberty; in case of the latter there are certain regulatory conditions that monitor the free-will of the guest. Therefore, in case of the former while it is possible the host becomes the guest of the guest; in case of the latter the guest is always at the mercy of the host.

We would like to show through one more textual reference, how this ethical becoming takes place in Beckett's texts. Let us consider his last work 'what is the word' that was published posthumously. This is another text that defies genre specification. Initially written in French as *Comment dire*, "The English version was included both in *As the Story Was Told: Late and Uncollected Prose* (Calder, and Riverrun Press, 1990) and in *Poems* 1930-1989 (Calder, 2002)" (Beckett, *Company et al.* xvi). The poem repeats the question, almost frantically 'what is the word' and breaks off at each line abruptly. Beckett called these abrupt breaks marked by long hyphens 'traits de désunion' or 'features of disunity' (Beckett, *Company et al.* xvi). This is perhaps one of the most violent of all Beckett's texts insofar as in no other text the screen of language has been distorted and shattered like this:

afar –
afar away over there –
afaint –
afaint afar away over there what –
what –
what is the word – (Beckett, *Company et al.* 134)

There is no way one can arrive at any specific interpretation for these lines that seem so randomly constructed and undone with words. The brief sentences, or one word lines indeed display the features of disunity. The only question that remains constant on the page is 'what is the word' . It seems as though all the lines in the text are attempting to arrive at the word but failing. The word is either missing or is not found. However, the last line of the sentence, which is also the same phrase 'what is the word' interestingly enough, is not followed by the hyphen. Neither it is followed by a period so that the text is left unclosed. However, it is the non-response itself that becomes the word, or what Beckett might call 'unword'. This state of non-response, as Levinas reminds us is death. Hence, the body of the text, at the end of the text (and also at the end of the oeuvre, although Beckett leaves it open by not using a period) ultimately becomes the body of the dead or the dying other: non-response.

4. Ethics of solidarity: What is the word?

The discourse of mourning is always-already woven around the personal. Thus, Derrida's work of mourning, at least what comes across through Brault and Naas's theorization of Derrida's politics of mourning, at the very outset assumes the figure of the friend.

Although he disagrees with Freud over the interpretation of the discourse, he cannot overcome the Freudian idiom: 'object of love' that is central to the discourse. This raises an important question in relation to the ethical problem of the Other: are we to mourn and remember only our friends? Can we not mourn and remember those who are not our friends: our enemies or absolute strangers (but can there possibly be an absolute stranger or a friend who is not at times stranger too)? It is difficult as Brault and Naas would say in response, "for we cannot mourn for those another has mourned –or at least not in the same way"(8). Even if we take this radical proposition for granted for once, can we continue to say that mourning is ethical? Can we call anything ethical that is exclusive at all?

On the other hand, Beckett's solidarity (and solidarity in general) is an undemanding relationship with the Other –without intimacy if not without closeness. The gesture of solidarity does not create a divide between the familiar and the stranger. Therefore, the Other in Beckett is mostly nameless but part of a humanity in question.

As we just mentioned above, there is no personalized intimacy in solidarity –a possibility which is not to be thwarted but neither to be prioritized. This is because intimacy defers the ethical. Intimacy already implicates the possibility of otherization –this is evident from Derrida's law of friendship: one must die before the other. There are evidences within the Beckettian oeuvre that support this claim. For instance, the young artist in 'Assumption', a story written long time back in the 20s, dies a violent death when intimacy in the shape of a woman intrudes his life; or the hedgehog episode in 'Company' that we have discussed at length in our first chapter. On the other hand, solidarity insinuates a gradual solidification with the other, where no question of otherization can take place. This however does not mean, as Alan Badiou, in context of Beckett, has suggested, a turning of "pre-existing Two into One" (28), but a "painstaking condition required for the Two to exist as Two" (28). Badiou strangely resonates Beckett himself, who on 29 December 1957, writes to Alan Schneider on the relationship between Hamm and Clov: "nec tecum nec sine te" (*Letters III* 82) which means "neither with you nor without you" (*Letters III* 83). Badiou interestingly recognizes this non-relational relationship or this gesture of solidarity as pure love that exceeds "sentimentality and sexuality" (28) in Beckett. (However, Badiou would take a different

course in his argument to prove that Beckettian oeuvre harbours the possibility of happiness of love.)

That is why the gesture of solidarity shares its traits with the Derridean concept of unconditional hospitality. It can be observed that much like the latter, solidarity is open to everyone irrespective of who they are, and whether they are related to us or not. Moreover, solidarity claims an undemanding attachment with the other (hence there is no intimacy but closeness), like the undemanding characteristic of unconditional hospitality. Thus, solidarity is extended not only toward friends, but also non-friends and strangers. Hence, Beckett's texts are peopled with figures that are themselves either solitary or pseudo-couples sharing a non-relationship. Neither of these figures can occupy the position of 'friends', in the very literal sense of the term, for they have reached a state that resists any possibilities of communication. In connection to this we can go back to what Bataille felt about the miserable figure of Molloy: "these complete vagabonds we occasionally encounter but immediately lose have something so essentially indistinct about them, that we cannot imagine anything more anonymous" (Graver and Federman 61). It is the anonymity or the impossibility to be named that resit these figures from becoming members of our family or our friends, notwithstanding the fact that we can still identify with them and 'become' them through this identification.

In this context, the 1946 non-fiction text meant for a radio broadcast titled 'The Capital of Ruins' on Beckett's experiences at the bombed-out French town called Saint-Lô, where he went as part of the Irish Red Cross to administer the establishment of a hospital is very relevant.[45] Collected in the volume of *The Complete Short Prose*, this text that was never broadcast on the radio could be viewed as Beckett's singular most explicit comment on the war and its after-effect, as well as can be seen as a profound deliberation on what could be called Beckettian ethics of solidarity: reaching out to and becoming the Other. Written in between the 1937 German Letter and 'The Three Dialogues' of the 1949, both reflecting on Beckettian aesthetics, this text provides into the Beckettian ethics that took shape during and after the war.

[45] See *Beckett Remembering Beckett*. The Bad Years. Edited by James and Elizabeth Knowlson.

The image of the hospital amidst ruins is an ethical image in itself since it bears the promise of nursing the wounded (the Other). It does not wipe out the possibility of death but re-institute the possibility of care and healing (solidarity). It is with such project of humility that the Irish Red Cross went on its mission to restore a war-torn town. The text is written with typical Beckettian precision (although with a hint of lyricism which is only rare in Beckett if not altogether absent, that comes back in shape of momentary nostalgia to interrupt the process of dissolution of language), detailing the scene as factually as possible without, however, making it sound too journalistic: "Accidents cases are frequent. Masonry falls when least expected, children play with detonators and demining continues" (Beckett, "The Capital" 276).

Among many other difficulties, the enterprise had to face, communicability was one of the most crucial problems initially since "their way of being we, was not our way and that our way of being they, was not their way" (Beckett, "The Ruins" 277). Thus Beckett brings in the problem of Otherness, which is however solved with an act of human solidarity:

> What was important was not our having penicillin when they had none, nor the unregarding munificience of the French Ministry of Reconstruction (as it was then called), but the occasional glimpse obtained, by us in them and, who knows, by them in us (for they are an imaginative people), of that smile at the human conditions as little to be extinguished by bombs as to be broadened by the elixirs of Burroughes and Welcome, –the smile deriding, among other things, the having and not having, the giving and the taking, the sickness and health. ("The Ruins" 277)

It is this recognition of the Other in the same where the differences gradually dissolve over a smile that lies at the heart of Beckettian ethics. Whether it is a smile at life or a smile at death, it is the modality of the ethics of solidarity. Most of his texts may not include the image of the smile Beckett is referring to here, but the very fact that they are written in solidarity with a generation "clear[ing] away the debris, literally by hand" ("The Capital" 277), tells us that the smile, as a missing image or a missing word by way of compassion, is there at the back of these texts, together with the other word that is missing: 'war'.

Moreover, in this text, Beckett also mentions the German prisoners of war assisting in the process of restoration of the city. As Katherine Weiss points out, "by including the German prisoners of Saint-Lô, Beckett reveals his own true generosity and forgiveness" (159). Beckett could have easily excluded the German prisoners of war; however, by not omitting them, by giving them a place in his language, and in the text that is the modality of the language, Beckett shows us that ethics of solidarity takes into account the non-friends too since they have also been part of the "conception of humanity in ruins" (Beckett, "The Ruins" 278), and shared its consequences.

In the end we shall briefly ponder on what compelled Beckett to seek recourse to the act of solidarity and not any other ethical gesture. Of course it could be that Beckett had no faith in the discourse of mourning, and he found greater ethical relevance in the possibility of becoming the Other (closeness without intimacy) that solidarity perpetuates. However, we would like to suggest that the Beckettian ethics of solidarity was inspired by a philosopher and a novelist that Beckett read.

In a letter written to his friend Thomas McGreevy on 16 January 1936, Beckett while commenting on his character from the eponymous novel Murphy, writes:

> I suddenly see that Murphy is break down between his ubi nihil vales ibi nihil velis…& Malraux's Il est difficile à celui qui vit hors du monde de ne pas rechercher les siens ... (*Letters I* 299)

These two sentences, one taken from Geulincx's *Ethics*, and the other from a novel by Malaraux called *La Condition humaine*,[46] can be seen as two deciding factors behind Beckett's inclination toward solidarity. The first sentence that Beckett adds at an epigraph to the ninth chapter of Murphy, which means "You should not try to do what you are incapable of doing" (Frost 174) is well known in Beckett criticism since it is one of the two quotations that Beckett had himself asked his critics, according Ruby Cohn, to consider as their point of departure (the other being: "Nothing is more real than nothing" by Democritus)[47]. The other sentence in the 1936 letter, as translated by Everett C. Frost means, " It is hard for one who lives isolated from the everyday world not to seek out others like himself" (175).

[46] See Shane Weller's "Orgy of False Being Life in Common": Beckett and the Politics of Death in *Beckett and Death*. Edited by Steven Barfield, Matthew Feldman, Philip Tew.
[47] See Ruby Cohn's *Back to Beckett*, P. 6.

If we consider these two sentences closely we can clearly draw a connection between their implication and the Beckettian ethics of solidarity. As though, Beckett is himself standing in between these two sentences like Murphy. While the first line asserts the impossibility of action, the second line suggests an obligation of action (thus anticipating Beckett's own statement in 'The Three Dialogues'). If we take these two sentences out of the context of the letter, they shall probably create an accurate framework to locate and understand the Beckettian ethics of solidarity.

While indeed on one hand Beckett could do nothing about his own survival and the war that killed so many; on the other hand there was an obligation to reach out to those like him or even worse, but equally lost and isolated. These others, as mentioned earlier, could be on either side of the scene. They could possibly be among those who were on the run to escape, hiding out and living a non-existent life; or those who were arrested, shoved off into dehumanizing conditions, only to perish without a tress. They could as well be those who were arresting, violating, and slaughtering. Hence, solidarity was the only way to go about. There was no way Beckett could have saved anyone from drowning, but at least he could, through solidarity, be with them and become them without anything in return (closeness without intimacy).

Beckett could be critiqued for this approach since, in the name of ethical solidarity, he did not take any side, or what could be called any firm ground (although we know that he had had extremely strong political opinions), however, it should not be forgotten that his ethics of solidarity tried to address an entire humanity in question reduced to ruins, of which he was himself a part. Thus, it can be suggested that the ethical becoming-other of the Beckettian language is not specific to any particular group of people or place. It is also not specific its own time. Perhaps, this is another reason why Beckett often avoids direct references to facts, in order to keep his language characteristically timeless and universal so that it continues to unite with and become the voice of humanity in ruins that can still be heard.

Conclusion

Keeping it Open

The relationship between literature and philosophy is always that of a non-rapport. While the one is always turned toward and turning toward the other, the persistence of one is only possible at the expense of the end or disappearance of the other. This is because, as Platonic Socrates has opined, philosophy cannot accommodate poetic imitation of a thing insofar as the poetic imitation of a thing is far removed from its truth or what is called 'essence'. The essence does not have a material existence. However, it can be described as the originary source of every given form of material existence (whether they are mechanically or naturally re-produced as either animate or inanimate entity) since their existence can only continue to be in the likeness of their respective essence.

Philosophy is the study of the essence of things. It produces knowledge about the essence or truth. That is why, Socrates comes back to the discussion of the soul which is synonymous to essence (and synonym of essence). Socrates speculates that the soul is immortal and immaterial. It is the originary source of the body and it is in turn concealed by the body. However, unlike the body that is mortal and therefore susceptible to destruction if it comes in contact with evil, the soul cannot be destroyed. Hence it can be posited that the soul that constitutes the body is also beyond the body, because the body may perish but the soul shall live on. And if it is the case that soul is synonymous to and a synonym of essence, then essence is also that which is concealed by the material body as well as that which is beyond the body.

However, Socrates thinks that a painter or the poet, despite their artistic finery, do not really produce or impart any such knowledge of things. They only know how to deceive through imitation. Therefore, according to Socrates, they offer us pleasure or the paradoxical enjoyment of pain but remains indifferent about accentuating philosophical possibilities to question and know about the socio-personal implications and relevance of what imitation offers in terms of pleasure and pain. Both tragedy and comedy that are products of poetic imitation, in Socrates' opinion, lacks in rational value insofar as they merely affect our instincts and leave unethical influences on our morality. Hence, he intends to banish every poet from the ideal state ruled by the philosopher-king.

Therefore, Socrates is ready to admit poetry in the ideal state ruled by philosophy, if it can produce a well argumentative defence for itself. He says, "Nonetheless, if the poetry

that aims at pleasure and imitation has any argument to bring forward that proves it ought to have a place in a well governed city, we at least would be glad to admit it" (1211). It is to be noted that the word 'argument' is very important for Socrates because argument belongs to the discourse of philosophy. Poetry does not have any obligation to argue for itself since it merely imitates to offer pain and pleasure. However, argument involves rational deliberation on a given subject that contribute in advancing knowledge about the subject. Philosophical argument not only forward knowledge about the subject's construct (how it is) but also about its essence (what it is). Thus, when poetry is expected to argue for itself, it is ought to impart knowledge about the essence of poetry. Socrates also expects poetry to justify its relevance in relation to a well governed city. This is yet another important demand on Socrates' part insofar as it involves the question of ethics. Where does poetry stand in relation to its responsibility toward the Other? What is the possible moral utility of poetry or how can poetry benefit those to whom it speaks?

However, Socrates declares that the defenders who would speak on behalf of poetry, are not supposed to be "poets themselves but lovers of poetry, to speak in prose"(1212). This is an important claim because those who will argue in defence of poetry, on behalf of poetry, through breaking it down to rationally analyse and deliberate upon its essence, cannot be poets but philosophers of poetry. On the other hand, if any poet himself intends to take the task of offering the deliberation, then he cannot remain a poet any longer (at least for the moment). Rather he shall have to turn into a rational and argumentative philosopher, speaking in didactic prose, having put aside, or metaphorically destroyed the garb of the poet.

Therefore, we can argue that poetry's quest for its essence marks the disappearance of poetry,[48] since in order to search for and know about its essence, that is, in order to realize what it is, poetry must negate itself to transform itself into philosophy of poetry. The philosophical transformation of the work is a way of going beyond itself (to understand what it is) where the work (as how it is) disappears. The work in its philosophical transformation, appears as the concept of the work. Thus, when Aristotle (indeed a philosopher and not a poet) has to bear upon himself the responsibility to defend poetry in response to the Platonic Socrates, what he actually does is to offer a

[48] See Saitya Brata Das' *Death, Time and the Other: Ethics at the Limit of Metaphysics*. 'Tarrying with the Negative?' P. 247.

concept of poetry through his reading of tragedy. Aristotle's Poetics is not only an investigation into poetic construction, but also about the social relevance of poetry. As a matter of course, Aristotle shows that one cannot be studied without the other. Thus he philosophically justifies poetry.

It can be argued that literature is not answerable to philosophy as such but it is answerable to time, to the people it speaks to. This is because literature, as this dissertation has also tried to track as one of the primary strains of its argument, is not a production independent of history and labour produced within that historical context. Besides the question of content and form (in case of content it may not necessarily be factually specific to its time, as we have seen in Beckett), the writer itself, the modes of writing, the modes of re-producing and distributing the text for consumption, and the consumer are all part of a moment in history and are defined by that moment. Thus, when literature begins to answer for itself, it automatically turns to philosophy (what it is). It is not only turning inward but also turning outward; to put in another way, it is turning out through turning in. It is opening itself up to justify itself which is also, due to the very de-constructive nature of act, the moment of its dissolution. However, the moment of its dissolution also marks the re-emergence of literature (as literature or philosophy?) since it has already answered for itself.

On re-emergence then, literature becomes, in Derrida's observation, what can neither be called literature nor philosophy but 'autobiography' (*Acts* 34). According to Derrida the "most enigmatic, the most open" (*Acts* 34) genre of autobiography allows one to speak everything about oneself –about what one is not but also about how one should be. It is this continuous mediation between anecdotal narrative and anticipatory speculations that Derrida finds in confessional texts by Rousseau, Gide and Nietzsche that compels him to assign these texts the status of neither philosophy nor literature (*Acts* 35).

Similarly, when literature comments about itself and its relevance it enters the mode of autobiography and thereafter emerges as neither literature nor philosophy, but as Derrida would say, a memory of both. Moreover, what is also important to remember here, that the autobiography is not only a narrative about the self but self always in relation to others, present or absent. Those others that the self is responsible to. Therefore, autobiography is not only writing about the self but also about others. The autobiography can also be critiqued on this very ground given that the narrating 'I' in the

autobiography, speaking about itself in relation to others, does not allow those others to occupy the first person. However, many recent attempts in autobiography has tried to solve this problem by omitting or obliterating the first person in the narrative. For instance, Paul Auster's autobiographical text *Winter Journal* uses the second person 'you' instead of the first person 'I', thus not only alienating himself from his own life to occupy the critical distance necessary to examine one's own life, but also directly involving the reader, the addressee of the text, to share its space within the narrative. Hence, writing the 'self' is simultaneously writing the 'Other'. As a genre, autobiography is open to the other to occupy its narrative. This is how autobiography turns out through turning in.

To return to our initial point then, that literature is answerable to those that it addresses, it can be argued that literature on answering for itself, not only justifies what it is but also what it is in relation to others (in Plato, the republic itself stands for the others; or in more cosmopolitan sense, it is the world or humanity).

Samuel Beckett, in that context is a philosophical writer/poet who, despite his denial, philosophically justified his literary corpus by keeping it open. The phrase 'keeping it open' in context of Beckett requires some attention. The hypotheses that we have arrived at over the course of this dissertation in one way or the other, inevitably point toward this openness. However, let us briefly address the various instances of openness we find in Beckett to ponder on their implication with which we shall conclude this conclusion (but how can conclusion be concluded?)

The openness in Beckett can be located on multiple levels. Sometimes the openness is too obvious, while at other times, the openness can be implicated through or inherent in structures and images of enclosure. The paradox of negation through affirmation in Beckettian writing that is discussed at length in the second chapter shows us how openness is insinuated by enclosure. While the infinite loop of the paradox offers an impression of enclosure insofar as the successive position is always connected and reverts to the preceding position , the very fact that the paradox resists any resolution defers the possibility of closure. On the other hand, there are more obvious instances of openness to be found in Beckett, like his unpunctuated narratives that display a disarray of words and sentences, or the obvious open-endedness of Beckett's plot-less plots.

The openness also lies in Beckett's characterization. This is not only because they gradually become nameless, un-identifiable, and un-categorizable, but also because they fail to arrive anywhere. They are lost in a realm of a certain endlessness despite living on the verge of death that never, however occurs. The condition of dying that each character is subjected to is therefore an openness in Beckett since they never reach the closure that is death.

And finally we can think about how Beckett displays openness with regard to setting since, as we have argued in the last chapter, Beckett consciously or unconsciously represses words, takes away explicit markers of geographical or historical specificities only leaving hints and clues to figure out. The locales or spaces are not necessarily open literally, for instance the inside of a cylinder or the confinement of a dark room but they remain open in the sense that they are un-locatable.

These instances of openness ultimately reflect and point toward a) Beckett's corpus is neither philosophical nor literary but open to interpretation; and b) that it is open to interpretation it is open to the world. We shall put some emphasis on the second point here. What does it mean to be open to the world?

Pheng Cheah describes the world as opposed to globe. While the latter is a product of economic transaction and is a geographical entity, the world is humanity in itself. It is what Cheah calls beyond "perceptual experience" (26) but can only be comprehended through imagination. Literature (particularly the concept of world literature), according to Cheah is "an important act of cosmopolitanism because it is a type of world-making activity that enables us to imagine a world" (26). Cheah's argument mainly revolves around literature's translatability that can cross "the limited ties of kinship and country to embrace the whole of humanity" (26). Drawing upon Goethe's idea of world literature, Cheah thinks about how translatability of literature can facilitate cultural and intellectual transaction (and not necessarily economic transaction) to increase understanding between nations of their similarities and differences (28). Drawing on Goethe, he imagines the world as an "ongoing dynamic process of becoming, something continually made and remade rather than spatial geographical entity" (30-31). Although Cheah critiques Goethe for being Eurocentric and hierarchical in his observations, and therefore he re-appropriates Goethe's observation (via Marx) in context of his reading of post-colonial literature to critique economic globalization, in the end, however, through his reading of

Nuruddin Farah's *Gifts* he recalls Goethe again with regard to the world or humanity: "It tells us that we can belong in many ways, and that quivering beneath the surface of the existing world are other worlds to come"(38).

Thus, literature is always open to the 'other worlds to come' or worlds of others' and this is where lies its philosophical relevance –philosophical insofar as it is always thinking of and referring to itself, in an autobiographical vein, in relation to the other and hence, it is eventually thinking the Other, or as Cheah calls imagining the world. Therefore, literature according to Cheah is always participating into a world-making activity.

In this dissertation we continuously attempted to bring out, through our analysis of Beckettian aesthetics and ethics, or what could be called philosophy of his language, that Beckett was invariably thinking about the worlds to come and worlds of others. We tried to convey how he attempted to become the Other in his writing, through his language, rather than writing about the Other. He was never a nationalist writer but wanted to stand with and stand for the "time honoured conception of humanity in ruins". Thus, as Marx Nixon and Matthew Feldman, in their co-edited book *The International Reception of Samuel Beckett* shows that during his life time and over the course of years, Beckett has been received world-wide. His works have been adapted, performed, and translated not only in various European countries but also in China, Japan and Bangladesh, which only shows, as Nixon and Feldman write "Beckett could speak for people in war-torn Sarajevo as much as for the underground theatrical scene in China" (Nixon and Feldman). This has only been possible because Beckett's corpus, as we mentioned at the end of our last chapter is not specific to its own time but becomes universal so that it can continue the ethical-becoming and world building beyond its own time and space.

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