THE MIND BEHIND THE TRILOGY - REVEALING THE VOICE OF THE VOID

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With time, if we are granted it, we shall come to understand the phenomenon of Samuel Beckett, how his work denotes a turning-point, a limit of classical consciousness. Within that work, the watershed is *Watt.* The empirical orientation, in that novel, is applied to problems which it cannot rightly resolve. Reason, syntax, and the concept of identity are all compelled to an inevitable climax of collapse. After this painstaking exposé of the limits of rationality, Beckett could not continue his questioning in English. He had to escape from what had become, for him, the language of empirical bondage. His transition to French is intimately connected with a peculiar, and paradoxical, transcendence of the classical intelligence.

Beckett's position, at this point, corresponds with that of his contemporaries among the abstract painters: here was a brilliant and creative intellect in direct confrontation with an all-pervasive sense of spiritual poverty. The problem was how to convert this dilemma into a significant artistic form. His first attempt was *Mercier et Camier,* a noticeably inferior novel which Beckett suppressed until 1970. He finally did find a solution in the three novels he wrote between 1947 and 1950, *Molloy, Malone Meurt*, and *L'Innommable.*[1]

In these three narratives, recognized now as a unified trilogy, the typical Beckett character suffers a graduated process of physical disintegration. Each of the three books presents a different stage of this decline. With every successive avatar the character's mobility —his body itself— is slowly taken away until there is, at last, nothing else left but a mind without a home. But through it all, that mind, or proto-mind, is driven to question the conditions of its existence, to try to make some sense of the world into which it is thrown. Its painful recognition is that t thinking must somehow continue —it cannot be avoided— without the solace of any inherited certainties.

What happens in the Beckett trilogy, on that collective historical stratum that underlies every intellectual and aesthetic act, is that thinking comes loose from the flesh. It gradually frees itself from a traditional and inadequate *image* of man. We might hark back to *The Waste Land,* and point out that the trilogy posits a different, but equally valid, strategy for the depersonalization of thought. The

mind, and the structure of the mind, appear to become the issue here. As a consequence, Beckett's post-*Watt* development could well be read as a chronicle of the painful divestiture of consciousness from the classical orientation.

It was not an easy accomplishment, and Beckett himself was fully aware of the dimensions of the task that he had chosen. He examines those dimensions in a strange triad of dialogues, published with George Duthuit in *Transition forty-nine*, in 1949. Aptly entitled "Three Dialogues,"[2] this piece discusses the painters Pierre Tal Coat, André Masson, and Bram van Velde. Now these are all painters whose evolution, in one form or another, was approaching that fruition which came to be known as Abstract Expressionism. Since Beckett's comments refer as much to his own literary groping as they do to the painters in question, this document serves to connect his work to the Abstract and Abstract Expressionist modes, a fact that suggests an interesting theme for further investigation. But as for the writing of the trilogy, the dating of the article is important. The first two books had been completed. The final resolution, *The Unnamable*, remained as yet unwritten. "Three Dialogues" composes, therefore, an explicit body of commentary on the new fictional aesthetic he was struggling at this moment to bring into the light.

At the very beginning, Beckett makes it clear that what is at stake is the end of an historical era. The question for him though, would seem to be *how* we should decide to end it. Describing Tal Coat in the first dialogue, he gives us a concise, telegraphic explication which might just as well be applied to the Abstract Expressionist vision:

> Total object, complete with missing parts, instead of partial object. Question of degree... In any case a thrusting toward a more adequate expression of natural experience... Whether achieved through submission or mastery, the result is a gain in nature... By nature I mean here, like the naivest realist, a composite of perceiver and perceived, not a datum, an experience.[3]

These difficult lines condense a realm of exposition, which corresponds, in essence, to much which has preceded in these essays. He recognizes in Tal Coat's abstractions "a gain in nature" because they do not merely represent a set of objectivized external data. Instead, they take into account the subjective character of perception. This sort of painting, "a composite of perceiver and perceived," thus enlarges our view of nature by including the subjective human response within that view. But even this distinction between submission and mastery (the gap between Kafka and Cubism) is not sufficient for Beckett. The problem for him is that this kind of painting can still be explained, can still be justified, still takes its impetus from the field of possibility. It is not so much the end of a tradition— what interests Beckett now is finding an escape from the strictures of the Western intellect. He calls for an artist who will turn his back on possibility itself, and reject any conceivable "order on the plane of the feasible."

This is not a very simple demand. Duthuit can only ask him what alternatives there are to feasibility. And Beckett, of course, must answer that there are "Logically none." But this is precisely the point. Logic is what he wants none of. The totality of human experience and cognition supercedes the boundaries of logical thought. Beckett has brought himself beyond the world of *Watt*. So here we find him tentatively probing the forms of the irrational. And as we already know, the irrational leads us into paradox. For what else is there when thinking turns away from possibility, when art seeks a dimension beyond the plane of the feasible? The artist is left with a terrible contradiction: "The expression 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."[4]

Even in Masson, who is concerned with " 'inner emptiness, the prime condition, according to Chinese esthetics, of the act of painting' ", even in Masson, Beckett cannot find his own ideal. For Masson's work still exhibits elements of competence. And these traces of competence anchor him into feasibility. Masson, like Beckett himself after *Molloy* and *Malone Dies*, is "literally skewered on the ferocious dilemma of expression." His mistake, according to Beckett, is that he "continues to wriggle."

Obviously, Beckett is thinking himself into a corner here. What possible exits does he have? One alternative might be an art of pure silence, which does not try to express in any way. And indeed, this is how he ends this second dialogue; without a word, he exits weeping. But this resort is too extreme. For in this case he ceases to be an artist, and he does not deal with the problem at all. Such a resolution is tantamount to suicide. The other alternative is a resort to the purest paradox, to an art that exists in some impossible world, an art so inexplicable that it cannot even explain itself. And this is the resolution that he finally achieves in *The Unnamable*.

Like so many great twentieth-century artists and thinkers, Beckett has, in his own peculiar way, identified the problem of the post-classical orientation. But he does not choose to surmount the subject-object dilemma through mastery, through the Nietzschean Will to Power. More akin to Kafka, he opts for the aspect of failure. But of course, the failure of art is often a paradox. And therein lies the validity of the painting of Bram van Velde. "The history of painting", Beckett declares

> is the history of its attempts to escape from this sense of failure, by means of more authentic, more ample, less exclusive relations between representer and representee, in a kind of tropism towards a light as to the nature of which the best opinions continue to vary, and with a kind of Pythagorean terror, as though the irrationality of pi were an offense against the deity, not to mention his creature... van Velde is the first... to submit wholly to the incoercible absence of relation, in the absence of terms or... in the presence of unavailable terms, the first to admit that to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail, that failure is his world and the shrink from it desertion, art and craft, good housekeeping, living.[5]

With this statement Beckett moves, quite effectively, beyond the contours of traditional Western art, and rationality. At the same time, he associates the old orientation with traditional bourgeois values.

At this moment in history, art and representation are antithetical because the relations upon which representation was based have now become invalid. To continue to represent is an evasion of the artist's duty to express human experience in an irrational and discontinuous universe. Unfortunately for the artist, the whole structure of society depends upon the older orientation. Art, and the authentic failure of art, are clarified here as the profoundest forms of subversion. At this extreme, though, these opposites somehow unite; failure and success merge into the same idea. The artist, to be successful in his art, must fail. If not, his work is co-opted by society. He becomes an adjunct of the bourgeois world, who makes his living like any other merchant who sells his produce in a shop. His art is literally converted into merchandise. Beckett's ideal then, must assume the form of paradox.

It is this subversive duty, this de-stabilizing failure, which Kafka's characters ultimately refused to accept. Gregor Samsa wants nothing more than to be restored to the bosom of his family, the land-surveyor, to become an integral part of the castle's society. Neither could imagine upsetting the basis upon which society rests. But Beckett, unlike Kafka, cannot remain within the prision of identity that forms a part of that basis. And, as opposed to Eliot, he does not transcend the empirical self to the plane of some supra-personal consciousness. Instead, he discovers a different metaphor, a new resolution of artistic means. He discovers a form for the impossible. To understand this form, and to appreciate the paradox, we must look closer at the trilogy itself. With some degree of patience, and the gift of perseverance, we may be able to follow this sophisticated trespass through the bourn of the irrational

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As Hugh Kenner has correctly perceived, *Molloy* and *Malone Dies* exhibit close thematic and structural similarities.[6] This is not to say that they should be read independently, apart from *The Unnamable.* It does, though, for our purposes, serve to point out their quality as statement and investigation. The first two novels, which Beckett had always planned to go together, prepare and introduce the third. They can be taken as a finely orchestrated overture to Beckett's ultimate transcendence of an empirical claustrophobia.

Most obviously, both of these novels are divided into two "parts". In *Molloy,* the division is already made. One section is narrated by Molloy and is a first-person account of his "quest" to find his mother. The other is told by Moran, and is a first-person tale of his own "quest" for Molloy. In *Malone Dies,* the two narratives are interspersed: Malone's narrative of his personal experience in a bed in a mysterious room (apparently told as it occurs), and the "fictional" narrative he invents in his copybook to while away the time. Each one is a further refinement of Beckett's technique of the "narrator/narrated".

To return to *Molloy,* Kenner has also provided a most instructive explication of the mathematical metaphor at work within that book. According to this interpretation, Molloy is the personification of an irrational number, and the "Molloy country" is the irrational domain. Moran, on the other hand, represents an integer, which is succinctly defined within the crisp exactitude of the rational:

> ... imagine this domain shadowed and interpenetrated by the domain of the irrational numbers, infinitely more numerous, each maintaining its station in the unexpected gaps between adjacent rationals, which normally ignore its existence as the bourgeois ignores the *clochard.* These anomalies one can more or less locate, but not exactly; the best we can do is narrow down the limits between which they lurk.[7]

This is another uniquely brilliant metaphor for the dilemma at the boundary of the classical orientation: the rational integers, extending themselves through a lock-step series in a constantly closer approximation of any irrational sum, for instance pi, are like Kafka's empirical language, or Watt's, approaching the infinite but always falling short.

Such are precisely the terms of Moran's disturbing searches for Molloy, Pi, or any irrational number, can never be exactly expressed in integers. Art, for Beckett, must express the inexpressible. So many of Beckett's characters are castaways and tramps because his vision, like his role as artist, is essentially anti-social. It cannot be accomodated within the structures of traditional bourgeois society, or the traditional patterns of thought. Rationality itself is finally inadequate before the all-encompassing irrationality of experience. The incorrigibly bohemian Molloy understands this fact, and describes his nature in appropriate terms:

> ... to know nothing is nothing, not to want to know anything likewise, but to be beyond knowing anything, to know you are beyond knowing anything, that is when peace enters in, to the soul of the incurious seeker. It is then the true division begins, of twenty-two by seven, for example, and the pages fill with the true ciphers at last.[8]

Moran, the rational integer, is the very opposite of Molloy. But he is, in addition, a later incarnation of Watt. Indeed, his narrative is practically a repitition of the breakdown suffered by Watt —with one important difference. Moran adheres fastidiously to middle-class ideals. His rational nature is, to some degree, a function of his social position. Viewed in this light, the novel as a whole reveals itself as a further refinement of the problem confronted in *Watt.* Molloy and Moran embody those conflicting elements that make up Watt's personality. By isolating those elements as individual characters, Beckett can better investigate how they interact.

For this is the complex design of *Molloy:* to express that interaction, to capture the paradox deep in the soul of man.

Just like Watt, Moran would prefer to have his mysteries explained. He prides

himself on his methodical mind, and cannot countenance vagueness. He knows from the beginning that the order to find Molloy is inexplicable: "I could not understand what was happening to me. I found it painful at that time not to understand" (TBT, p. 94). Moran can intuit the existence of confusion, but he cannot let himself accede. His responsability is order. His task, as an investigator, is to rescue meaning out of chaos. He plucks his objects, or his men, from the "incoercible absence of relation" just as the reflecting mind detaches figure from ground, or concept out of flux.

Before he embarks on any job, he indulges in a ritual. He likes to lie down and "pierce the outer turmoil's veil", visualize the chaos where his quarry must reside:

> Far from the world, its clamors, frenzies, bitterness and dingy light, I pass judgement on it and on those, like me, who are plunged in it beyond recall, and on him who has need of me to be delivered... His life has been nothing but a waiting for this, to see himself preferred... the noise of things bursting, merging, avoiding one another, assaults me on all sides... each pinpoint of skin screams a different message, I drown in the spray of phenomena. It is at the mercy of these sensations, which happily I know to be illusory, that I have to live and work. It is thanks to them I find myself a meaning. (TBT, pp. 101-2)

So it would seem that at least the image of his quarry, if not the quarry itself, exists somewhere deep in the skein of ideation that composes his awareness, somewhere in the mind. The sad irony, though, is his happy confidence that all of this disorder is illusion.

Molloy, however, is real. And the "figure" of Molloy cannot be defined. It cannot be detached from the treacherous expanse of the Molloy country. It is this recognition that signals the destruction of Moran's ideals. By the end of the book, his previously concrete world has collapsed, a process comparable to Watt's "falling to bits". And since his identity was based on those ideals, his self disintegrates, as well. He says, on his return from the unsuccessful search, "I was now becoming rapidly unrecognizable ... the face my hands felt was not my face anymore, and the hands my face felt were my hands no longer" (TBT, p. 156).

One of the problems of *Watt* is that we only see that "other realm" from the outside, as it were, in Watt's perception of Knott, and the symptoms that perception brings about. The same thing is true of Moran. But here, through his new mathematical analogy, Beckett can also wield his words on the other side of sense. Molloy's half of the book is the realm of the irrational experienced from within, and not regarded from without. This is what Kafka found practically impossible to achieve, a conception of the inconceivable. It is what Eliot managed to do, for his own part, by transcending the individual personality to the level of an historical consciousness. For Beckett, the escape lay not in transcendence, but submergence.

He locates the irrational, which was presumed to reside (if at all) in the indiscriminate, external phenomena of the universe, in some unknown area of the mind itself. In other words, he discovers, for literary use, the region of the unconscious. We have learned from Dierdre Bair's biography of Beckett that he

was well aware of Jungian psychology. One of his early poems was published, in 1930, in the same issue of *transition* as Jung's essay, "Psychology and Poetry". In 1934, he underwent a somewhat Jungian course of therapy with Wilfred Ruprecht Brion. He even attended a lecture by Jung, in 1935, in which the psychologist spoke of the various spheres of the mind and the possible kinds of interaction between the conscious and unconscious areas.[9]

There is, then, sufficient basis to suggest that the novel as a whole is meant to depict the structure of the mind. If the dual narratives of Moran and Molloy can be read as the mutually dependet realms of the rational and irrational numbers, they can also be read as the coterminous spheres of the conscious and unconscious minds. Jung associates the collective unconscious with our instinctual heritage, our animal background. The emergence of consciousness, on the other hand, is what has raised humanity above the animal state. One of its primary functions is what Jung refers to as "definiteness" and "directedness". Like Moran's investigation, it serves to screen out all incompatible material and allow the specific concentration which makes for understanding, accomplishment, progress:

> Consciousness, because of its directed functions, exercises an inhibition... on all incompatible material, with the result that it sinks into the unconscious.
>
> Consciousness constitutes the momentary process of adaptation whereas the unconscious contains not only all the forgotten material of the individual's own past, but all the inherited behaviour traces constituting the structure of the mind.[10]

Just as a Kafkan character like the land-surveyor is motivated in all that he does by a castle whose existence he can never really validate, the conscious mind is continually influenced and driven by the contents of the unconsciousness. The same is true of Moran, whose "investigation" seems to be the essence of the direct function. He says at one point, "Molloy, or Mollose, was no stranger to me... Perhaps I had invented him, I mean found him ready made in my head... For who could have spoken to me of Molloy if not myself and to whom if not myself could I have spoken of him?" (TBT, p. 103).

The danger of completely suppressing the unconscious mind, living a totally rational existence, is the kind of neurotic maladjustment Moran exhibits in all of his relationships. When such an imbalance occurs, the unconscious can force itself to the surface through dreams, in imagery that should serve to bring the individual back "down to earth", i.e. animal, plant, or even telluric imagery. The unconscious might romantically be called the animal within the man. Moran says, "I knew then about Molloy, without however knowing much about him," and then goes on to describe this knowledge in dreamlike, primitive images:

> He had very little room. His time, too, was limited. Now, a prisoner, he hurled himself at I know not what narrow confines, and now, hunted, he

> sought refuge near the centre. He panted. He had only to rise up within me for me to be filled with panting.
>
> Even in open country he seemed to be crashing through jungle. He did not so much walk as charge. In spite of this he advanced but slowly. He swayed to and fro, like a bear. He rolled his head, uttering incomprehensible words... This is how he came to me at long intervals... Just the opposite of myself, in fact. It was a change. (TBT, p. 104).

One of the most common symbols for the uncounscious is water. Twice while in the forest Moran bends over a body of water to see a strange face. His or Molloy's? Or is Molloy's his own face reflected in the depths of the unconscious mind? Ultimately, the halves of the book assume this mirror-like aspect. Both narratives proceed along a parallel course over similar territory and can only touch at the impossible point of infinity: "For where Molloy could not be, nor Moran either, for that matter, there Moran could bend over Molloy" (TBT, p. 102). Moran's search for Molloy is a psychodrama in the most literal sense of the word: the conscious mind turned inward on its familiar, but unknowable, *Döppelganger.*

Interestingly, Beckett's earliest concepts of the creative process already seemed to prepare him for this sort of psychological fictionalization. In his study of Proust, published in 1931, he describes "the work of art as neither created nor chosen, but discovered, uncovered, excavated, pre-existing within the artist, a law of his nature."[11] Whether knowingly or not, he even then was expressing an essentially Jungian conception. Jung himself had written, in 1922, that

> We would do well to think of the creative process as a living thing implanted in the human psyche. In the language of analytical psychology this living thing is an *autonomous complex.* It is a split-off portion of the psyche, which leads a life of its own outside the hierarchy of consciousness... the poet who identifies with the creative process would be one who acquiesces from the start when the unconscious imperative begins to function.[12]

Is Beckett one of these poets? All three books of the trilogy may well be read as a calculated journey down into the artist's mind, to finally uncover that autonomous and pre-existing *Urstoff* of the artwork.

At this point, then, it is time to fit Malone into the scheme of this self-reflecting fiction. Remember that Beckett's own problems, as well as his method of composition, become the substance and the subject of his composition. If he searches his own unconscious for the irrational domain he needs to express, then he makes Moran's pursuit of Molloy represent that probing. But if these two characters form the opposite spheres of a single mind, why not have the whole thinker —the author of the book— represented as well? This is the figure of Malone. He stands behind Molloy and Moran in the same way Beckett stands behind him. It is his voice we hear at the beginning of *Molloy,* writing from his mother's room, which introduces the story. He is, in fact, their fictional narrator.

Both Molloy and Moran hear, near the end of their sections, a voice that mysteriously prompts them on. This voice, of course, can be taken as the murmur of consciousness, which is always at work in every human mind. But we can also understand it as the writer of their story, as Malone's voice, keeping his creation on the move. Indeed, Moran is practically given a knowledge by his creator that he is nothing more than a character in a fiction, a puppet, whose action is necessary for someone else's ends:

> For what I was doing I was doing neither for Molloy, who mattered nothing to me, nor for myself, of whom I despaired, but on behalf of a cause which, while having need of us to be accomplished, was in its essence anonymous, and would subsist, haunting the minds of men, when its miserable artisans should be no more. (TBT, p. 105).

Moran transcends, for a moment, his own immediate condition, and is granted some insight into his essence as a work of fiction. Thus, the whole mechanism of *Molloy* becomes a fictionalization of the process of fiction. Gaber's messages from Youdi, the voice in Moran's head, are the lines of control from author to character made verbal flesh. But because the book concerns the relationship between the parts of the mind, then consciousness as well gets somehow intertwined in the act of creating fiction.

That Molloy and Moran are the fictionalized portions of Malone's brain is easy enough to believe. There is ample evidence that the two sections of *Molloy* are different aspects (from above and below the level of consciousness) of the same story. Molloy is off to visit his mother, Moran to find Molloy. They both hear those mysterious voices already noted above. They both wear hats that they take the greatest pains to secure. And they both depend upon dilapidated bicycles during a portion of their travels. In fact, the correspondences are crowed onto almost every page. Is the double structure of *Molloy* a dual reflection of Malone's journey and arrival at that final place where he is tracking down his own death? Isn't Malone himself that point of infinity where these two parallel lines come together?

If *Molloy* served to probe the irrational realm inherent in the human mind, then *Malone Dies* takes the last possible step of the rational. Malone's ambition is to capture the exact limit of existence, to observe and record the moment of his own death. In this sense, he represents the essense of consciousness, of pure self-reflection. And, for the purposes of literature, consciousness must be equated with the written word. Whatever he writes *is* what is conscious. The rest is forever unknown. But what he writes is a story, as well, and thus partakes of fiction. Malone *becomes* his stories, and his stories are himself. What was hinted in *Molloy comes to full expression here. Consciousness, in Malone Dies,* is revealed as the ultimate, or the fundamental, fiction. And if Malone is a fictionalized version of Samuel Beckett, author, then all of his previous characters come into focus as various images of their creator, or levels of his own consciousness. It is this tedious "fiction" of existence that he hopes to escape through death:

> I have only to open my mouth for it to testify to the old story, my old story, and to the long silence that silenced me, so that all is silent... But let us leave these morbid matters and get on with that of my demise, in two or three days if I remember rightly. Then it will be all over with the Murphys, Merciers, Molloys, Morans, and Malones, unless it goes on beyond the grave. (TBT, pp. 216-7)

Of course, he also recognizes that he, Malone, is his own creation, just one in the long progression, that he only exists in the fabric of his words. Whenever the words are read or repeated, the fiction of his life resumes. But if this fiction is to be an adequate reflection of Beckett's consciousness, then it must also reflect him reflecting himself. And this is the purpose of the narrative of Saposcat, who is changed, midstream, into Macmann. This narrative is a kind of autobiographical projection. Just as Murphy becomes Watt, and Watt changes into Moran and Molloy, Saposcat shades into Macmann. And Macmann, in his turn, is drawn in the mold of Malone. The further the story progresses, the more it comes to resemble Malone's present condition, until finally his character's death corresponds with his own.

The physical processes, the conscious mind, and the act of fiction are all caught up into a swirling vortex and drawing ever closer to a perfect union at the center and the bottom, when they disappear together through the nadir into death. Malone, though, visualizes that point in somewhat different terms. Soon before the end, in a neat reversal of ideas —or a union of polarities— he says, "I am being given, if I may venture the expression, birth into death, such is my impression. The feet are clear already, of the great cunt of existence... My head will be the last to die" (TBT, p. 260). And so, by the end, Macmann's condition has come to mirror Malone's. He suddenly grows old and Malone introduces him into a derelicts' asylum, where the story catches up with Malone's present state. From this point on, they can both decay at the very same speed, until Macmann and his creator really merge into one, when both of their stories are shattered into silence with the insane destruction of Lemuel's hammer.

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In these first two books of the trilogy, Beckett has accomplished several things. He has transcended the dilemma of *Watt* by the inclusion of the unconscious and the irrational into his characters' mental structure and into language. Also, he has perfected his own technique of narrative consciousness. And last, he has mapped out the boundaries of consciousness and fiction. But Malone makes a connection between the end of life and birth. The final decease of Malone does not bring about and end. In fact, that decease is the birth of the Unnamable, that which is, by definition, or by exclusion, what lies beyond the empirical domain, beyond the ends of physical existence and below the threshold of consciousness.

The Unnamable epitomizes that problem that Beckett had identified in "Three Dialogues"; it is, quite literally, an artwork that escapes from the plane of the feasible. Taking thought beyond the traditional limit of consciousness, it is a naked presentation of the unconscious mind. This is why the Unnamable cannot identify itself: "I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it's not about me" (TBT, p. 267). George H. Szanto has described Beckett's narrative fabric as "a prevocal nonlogicality, a perception of sights and a groping with mental pictures as they begin to turn into concepts."[13] This description is particularly appropiate for *The Unnamable.* If it is that which precedes the logical conception of words, then it cannot really be put into words. To do so must change it to something else again. Similarly, the contents of the unconscious mind are no longer that as soon as they rise into consciousness. The Unnamable is something that hovers behind those words, just before they appear on the page, or in the mind. Beckett has arrived at a zone of perpetual propagation where the unending tones of consciousness rise into existence.

The Unnamable needs to know what it is —to name, or define itself. But it is the very life-force which lies on the other side of language. As soon as some word or phrase is uttered, it becomes an insulating layer: in psychological terms, the beginning of a mask or a persona —in literary terms, a fiction. "I have to speak, whatever that means. Having nothing to say, no words but the words of others, I have to speak" (TBT, p. 288).

So, as it says, it is always obliged to make stories. It will suddenly get carried away with its words, or should we say transposed, and find that it has given itself a name —Basil, Mahood, or Worm— and that it has wrapped itself in a fiction, an identity, again. But like Malone's, these fictions are always somehow associated with its own ground situation. In this respect, the narrative of Mahood is of central importance. Mahood is one of those sudden manifestations of the Unnamable's inextricable confusion with word and mask, who finds himself walking one day with the absence of a leg. His course is necessarily curvilinear:

> ... a sharp curve which, if I continued to follow it, seemed likely to restore me to my point of departure, or to one adjacent. I must have got embroiled in a kind of inverted spiral, I mean one of the coils of which, instead of widening more and more, grew narrower and narrower and finally, given the kind of space in which I was supposed to evolve, would come to an end... (TBT, p. 290)

What is more, at the center of the spiral, we learn, is Mahood's home, where he will be returned to his wife and parents after coming to the end of a world tour.

Now this fantastic little narrative, which forms the structural center of *The Unnamable,* is actually a symbol of the whole structure of Beckett's trilogy. Mahood's course and destination represent the form and purpose of all three books. To clarify this point, we must resort again to Jung. The inverted spiral that

Mahood describes, as well as the various courses of Mollogy and Moran, and the circling of Malone about his passage into death, is really a *circumambulatio,* which symbolizes an indirect approach to the lifegiving center. It is closely related to the mandala, the heart of Jungian psychology. As Jung says in the analysis of a dream which includes a *circumambulatio* about a center which is the uterus, "The centre of the mandala corresponds to the calyx of the Indian lotus, seat and birthplace of the gods. This is called the *Padma,* and has a feminine significance."[14] According to Jung, the center of the mandala is associated with the womb and the pure unconscious.

The first two novels of the trilogy compose, in themselves, a spiraling course toward a center which is the Unnamable. If the whole apparatus constitutes a dual parody of the creative continuum of life and literature, then the heroic quest of all the Becket characters is the circuitous journey back into the primal force which lies behind them all: the collective unconscious in reference to the scheme of the real world. By the same token, the structure of the trilogy consolidates his whole novelistic canon into a parody or an all-encompassing summary of the archetypal cycle of adventure which Joseph Campbell describes in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* Murphy is drawn to the womb-like peace of his rocker; Molloy is driven to find his mother; and Malone pursues the moment of his own demise. All of them are bent upon the ultimate discovery, the destruction and rebirth of self that the adventure motif implies. On this collective level, Malone's climatic death becomes a mythic passage over the threshold to the kingdom of the dark.

Every succesive character, then, falls into perspective as another avatar of the archetypal Beckett form, thrown into individuality and riddled with conscious questioning, before he falls back into the silence to be molded once again into a subtly different guise. Thus the Unnamable says at the beginning of its flow of words, "Can it be that one day, off it goes on, that one day I simply stayed in, in where, instead of going out, in the old way, out to spend day and night as far away as possible, it wasn't far" (TBT, p. 267).

The unnamable is the primal material of thought, at some timeless, spaceless, point where it resides immobile and is orbited most closely by Malone, its last major persona. The implication is that it is the still point at the center of a number of personae, going all the way back to Murphy or Belaqua Shuah. It is that undifferentiated "something" —or "nothing"— which is the common ground out of which existence emerges: "... the best is to think of myself as fixed and at the centre of this place, whatever its shape and extent may be... no change apparently since I have been here... all change to be feared, incomprehensible uneasiness" (TBT, p. 271). But, since every expression is the creation of a fiction, even these words comprise a torment to that consciousness and rest. When his representative Mahood reaches the center of his spiral, he discovers that his whole family has been ravaged by ptomaine poisoning. But far from being disheartened, he revels in their decay. The Unnamable prefers an end to all artifice, the tranquil unknowing of death.

If the realm of *The Unnamable* symbolizes the kingdom of the dark, then this point of Mahood's story is the nadir of the mythical round. The little stories the Unnamable recites serve to bring it to the very center of itself and then prepare it for the next major return to the upper world. Its ultimate self-recognition is that it is nothing —that which goes beyond the dualities that bring the world into being, the substanceless plane dividing mind and world:

> ... perhaps that's what I feel, an outside an inside and me in the middle, perhaps that's what I am, the thing that divides the world in two... I'm neither one side nor the other, I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickeness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating. I'm the tympanum, on the one hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either... (TBT, p. 352).

But in its third narrative, that of Worm, it moves beyond this still center at the heart of all creation. The new character gradually develops the outline of a fetus. This is all a preparation for the womb imagery at the end of the book which matches, in a sense, Malone's conception of birth into death. We know from Jungian psychology that the underworld, the womb, and the collective unconscious are all associated as symbols of transformation. And so, after this archetypal journey through the underworld to the metaphysical center of existence, Worm's incipient persona is the beginning of a new form of life again. Near the end of the book, as it is almost prepared to assume a separate "I" once more, the Unnamable wonders if perhaps somewhere in this flood of imperfect and imprecise language it or one of its other voices has said that something which is the key to its identity, which would end its quest and put it to rest at last. But the key to its identity is its very identity —the whole cumbersome, treacherous, shifting, and beautiful construction of the book. It is the unending murmur that flows at the bottom of the mind, and precedes all of our identities and names. So at the very end, it nears the threshold of the upper world again and hovers before the border of rationality. We leave it on the doorway of rebirth:

> ... perhaps it's done already, perhaps they have said me already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, 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. (TBT, pp. 381-2)

The novel ends on that note of paradox that signals Beckett's fulfillment. Malone is born into death; Unnamable dies into life. It dies into the life that all of us share. The end of the book is another return to identity. The voice will emerge, with a different name, for the murmur can never stop. That subtle voice will go on, in the mind, even when the covers of the book are closed.

* * * *

"All very well and good," you will say, with your finger beside your nose, "but haven't you forgotten one important point? Here you have construed this impressive continuum from Watt to Moran, from Moran to Molloy, from Molloy to Malone, and from Malone to the paradox of the Unnamable. And it all seems very convincing. But somewhere in midstream, you've changed the horses on our cart. Your grandiose justifying cultural metaphor for *Watt* was the Heideggerian concept of *das Nichts*. And now you say that the trilogy grows directly out of *Watt,* but you identify *its* justifying metaphor in a Jungian concept of the unconscious. Are you really quite sure you know what you're doing? Doesn't this whole scheme of interpretation, in some suggestive way, relate, or at least juxtapose, the existential concept of Nothingness and the unconscious mind? Now come on, spill the beans. Isn't that really what you've been up to all along?"

Perhaps. Perhaps.

The truth of the matter is that I hadn't really considered it up till now. Perhaps there *is* some subtle connection.

But in any case, we must keep in mind that the nexus here is the awesome genius of Samuel Beckett. By making his inner self the substance of his art, he has given a voice to the void, to the mystery of Nothingness that salvages existence into time. Remember that for Heidegger, Nothingness is a process, a process that makes the world be. And as such, it is, ineluctably, an element of Being: "Nothing not merely provides the conceptual opposite of what-is but also is an original part of essence. It is in the Being of what-is that the nihilation of Nothing occurs."[15] Nihilation itself induces the patterns of existence.

If the concern of our artists turns inward, it is because they are seeking the juncture between humanity and the world. According to Jung, this juncture *is* the collective unconscious. The deeper we go into the mind, the closer we come to the patterns and instincts of nature. At the end of the mind *is* the world. "The deeper layers of the psyche," says Jung,

> lose their individual uniqueness as they retreat farther and farther into the darkness. "Lower down," that is to say, as they approach the autonomous functional systems, they become increasingly collective until they are universalized and extinguished in the body's materiality, i.e. in chemical substances. The body's carbon is simply carbon. Hence "at bottom" the psyche is simply "world."[16]

And world propagates through Nothingness. The voice that comes from the void is, finally, the universal voice of the self.

Notes

1. Beckett translated *Molloy* into English with Patrick Bowles, in 1953. He translated *Malone Meurt* in 1956, and *L'Innommable* in 1957. In this discussion we shall deal with the texts in English.
2. Samuel Beckett and Georges Duthuit, "Three Dialogues", reprinted in *Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), pp. 16-22.
3. *Ibid,* p. 16.
4. *Ibid.* p. 17.
5. *Ibid.* p. 21.
6. Hugh Kenner, *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p. 101.
7. Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (Berkeley and Los Angeles:University of California Press, 1968), p. 107.
8. Samuel Beckett, *The Beckett Trilogy* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1979), pp. 59-60 (All further citations from *Molloy, Malone Dies,* or *The Unnamable* will be identified by TBT and the page number included in parentheses in the text.).
9. Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1980), pp. 33, 177ff, and 208-9.
10. C.G. Jung, *The Portable Jung,* ed. Joseph Campbell, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 274.
11. Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), p. 64.
12. Jung, *op. cit.* p. 313.
13. George H. Szanto, *Narrative Consciousness: Structure and Perception in the Fiction of Kafka, Beckett and Robbe-Grillet* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1972), p. 106.
14. Jung, *op. cit.* p. 423, note 175.
15. Martin Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?" trans. R.F.C. Hull and Alan Çrick, in *Existence and Being* ed. Werner Brock (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, Gateway Edition, 1960), p. 340.
16. C.G. Jung, *et al., Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Laurel Edition, 1973), p. 310.