

## A Deconstructive Reading of Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*: The Threshold of Language Limits

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### Abstract

This study examines one of Samuel Beckett's enigmatic fictions, *The Unnamable*, in the light of deconstructive reading. Based on the close study of deconstruction and Derrida's works, the main concern of the discussion concentrates on those paradoxical aspects of language and especially literary language that profoundly affect the act of literary reading. Deconstructive reading of a literary text is a matter of entering into the play of contradiction, multiple references, and the ceaseless questioning of conclusions and responses. This article asks how the literary text, through deconstructive study of its oppositions, can be against itself and stand at the threshold of coming new meanings and interpretations. Then, it is not so difficult to see how this approach might be related to Beckett's *The Unnamable*, which like Derrida's deconstruction is deeply concerned with the problem of "aporia", deeply interested in the play of language, the deferral of meaning and the rejection of any system of classification that is grounded in subject-object relations, and at the end a reading that is itself unnamable.

**Key words:** Transcendental signified; *Differance*; Aporia; Representation; Poststructuralism; Structuralism; Metaphysics of presence

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### INTRODUCTION

The first part of this paper deals with the play of sign and the process of signification in reading a literary text. It examines the fact that the words in a literary text are captured in the labyrinth of metaphysic system of language, yet they constantly reproduce the infinite possibilities of meanings and so postpone the final reference. The next part studies the relationship between the text's desire for singularity or originality and at the same time reading and interpretation. Repetition as one of the important paradoxical features of *The Unnamable*'s language makes the original text of the novel to function such as *differance* to exist and survive. The ending part is related to the notion of negation and impossibility in deconstructive reading of literary language. Since the language's negativity is always followed by the promise of other meanings, deconstructive reading is assumed as an affirmative movement. Through the reading of *The Unnamable* the impossibility and negativity of silence is endlessly promised in the affirmative process of continuity of speaking and writing the text.

### THE PLAY OF SIGN IN LITERARY LANGUAGE

To find the relation of representation with what is represented and of the signifier with what is signified, Derrida refers to the role of sign in the text and the question that what is the difference between the sign as signifying and the sign as signified concept? And really is it possible to separate them from each other? How do words act in the text? Do they represent an outside transcendental reference or act in a differential relationship between signs and always defer the ultimate

reference? Does the acceptance of the differential system for language mean the rejection of metaphysical system of thought?

On the one hand, Derrida affirms Saussure's command that language is a system based on differences and the meaning of signifiers is through their relationships and differences with others. Derrida (2004) sees Saussure's theory as "an absolutely decisive critical role" that acts against the metaphysical tradition by expressing that "the signified is inseparable from the signifier, that the signified and signifier are the two sides of one and the same production" (p.18). On the other hand, Derrida attacks Saussure's idea because if every sign is made up of a potentially infinite chain of differences, "what has become of Saussure's idea that language forms a closed, stable system?" (Eagleton, 1983, p.127). Derrida (2004) argues that one of the important failures of Saussure's theory is "the maintenance of the rigorous distinction" between the signifier and the signified that "inherently leaves open the possibility of thinking a *concept signified in and of itself*, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to language, that is of a relationship to a system of signifiers" (p.19). According to Derrida, every signified is really the product of a complex interaction of signifiers, which has no definite ending, but, rather it also can be in the position of a signified. Then, as Derrida believes, "the distinction between signified and signifier becomes problematical at its roots" (p.19).

In fact, Saussure's position in its relation to logocentrism is complicated, problematic and paradoxical. Even though Saussure's idea of the differential nature of the linguistic signs acts in a completely contradictory way from logocentrism, nevertheless his insistence on the distinction or opposition between the signifier and the signified leads him towards the logocentric thought. This result can contribute to the deconstructive study of the sign and what Derrida means by the paradox of sign and representation in reading a literary text.

Although deconstruction works within language, it cannot escape falling into oppositional structure; finally, its productions, in turn, come to further deconstruction. Derrida in "Structure, Sign, and Play" (1978) claims that there is no escape from metaphysical system: "there is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language ... which is foreign to this history ..." (p.154). Everywhere in the study of deconstruction; we face paradoxes and undecidabilities which cannot be separated from it. Derrida's discussion about the representation has two aspects. For Derrida the representation of a signifier in the shape of a signified is not possible, because there is no final or transcendental signified. Yet he believes that we cannot escape from the system of sign and representation because the language that we use is nothing except them. Derrida does not refer to the deconstruction of language

without taking into consideration the importance of the concept of the sign. Both metaphysics of presence and the concept of the sign are necessary for surviving and destructing each other. On the one hand, Derrida believes that every signified is a signifier in itself for another concept, and always we are faced with a chain of signification that defers our access to a definite signified. On the other hand, demonstrating this play of signification without any difference between the signifier and the signified or substitution of signifieds with signifiers has no meaning in itself except giving privilege to the signifier, because as Derrida (1978) says: "if one erases the radical difference between signifier and signified, it is the word 'signifier' itself which must be abandoned as a metaphysical concept" (p.355).

In addition, removing any limit for the play of signification and rejecting any final transcendental signified has another consequence and it is the rejection of "the concept and the word 'sign' itself", but Derrida (1978) adds that it is something that cannot be done. The concept of the sign cannot go beyond the oppositional system and in fact it has always been determined by it. In other words, the rejection of the difference between the signifier and the signified has no meaning in itself without the imagination of the opposition between them. Therefore, according to Derrida, the rejection of difference between the word and the concept holds within itself a confusing and elusive nature and it is the self-deconstructing role of the sign. By considering the self-deconstructing nature of the sign, the understanding of the perpetual working of deconstruction in a text is not something odd and out of imagination. Reading a text is tracing the function of signs and their role in the differential system of relationships.

What mentioned about the paradoxical role of the sign can be implemented in our concept of centre. Derrida (1978) puts it in his essay entitled "Ellipsis":

Why would one mourn for the centre? Is not the centre, the absence of play and difference, another name for death? The center is the threshold. But is not the desire for a centre, as a function of play itself, the indestructible itself? And in the repetition or return of play, how could the phantom of the centre not call to us? (p.374)

Also, Derrida's constant concern has been with what he calls, at the end of "Structure, Sign, and Play", an "affirmation [that] determines the noncentre otherwise than as loss of the centre" (1978, p.369). The centre acts in a functional way in which an infinite chain of sign substitutions work.

The paradoxical logic of Beckett's works and breaking the notion of binary oppositions reveal the applicability of deconstructive techniques. *The Unnamable* uses paradoxes to describe the paradoxical nature of any signification. David Pattie mentions Leslie Hill's emphasis, in his book, *Beckett's Fiction: In Different Words*, on the point that Beckett's fiction mirrors Derrida's model of a language that is "caught at a moment of crisis" and

constantly deconstructs itself: “[I]t is a theory committed to defending the autonomy of literary texts, and it defines fiction as an activity of language in which, paradoxically, the foundations of meaning are attacked by the uncontrollable, self-inverting character of meaning itself” (Pattie, 2004, p.238-9).

The connection between *differance* and the unnamable becomes necessary and it is in the work of Derrida that the idea of *differance* is most significantly joined with the idea of the unnamable. What makes possible the association of the unnamable with Derridean term *differance* is precisely the discovery of its own deconstructive potential, the discovery that threatens to unsettle the very foundations of metaphysics. Derrida (1982) writes in his title essay on the subject that “*differance* is literally neither a word nor a concept” (p.3). It indicates that deconstruction does not accept any single pure and original name for a single concept; instead deconstruction believes on the unceasingly displacement of the name in a chain of differing and deferring substitutions. It becomes more obvious when Derrida (1982) asserts:

*Differance* has no name in our language. But we “already know” that if it is unnameable, it is not provisionally so, not because our language has not yet found or received this name, or because we would have to seek it in another language . . . It is rather because there is no name for it at all. (p.26)

It seems that the unnamable functions as one of Derrida’s key terms, something on the order of supplement, tympan, trace, pharmakon, writing or, in other words, literature itself. Not only in his article “Difference” Derrida refers to the connection between the unnamable and *differance*, but also in his other works we can see the evidences of this reference that sometimes it is implicit, but in others it is quite explicit. One of the earliest and most dramatic uses of unnamable occurs at the end of “Structure, Sign, and Play” when Derrida (1978) finds himself in a position that can no longer work within the Western metaphysical tradition, but yet is unable to move beyond it and so there is no “question of choosing” (p.370). It is because of the fact that what remains, he tells us, is to examine both the “common ground” that joins these alternatives together and the “irreducible difference” that separates them (p.370). Derrida refers to this confusion and wandering between the two poles as *differance*, and he compares it with a monstrous and unnamable birth. The kind of gap that *differance* makes is constantly in the movement between the terms and is not fixed. Then, it is better to call this kind of gap as the unnamable because it is open to naming.

All of these examples point out how Derridean analysis of the term *differance* allows us to describe the unnamability of *The Unnamable*’s language, the ambiguous narrative structure, the uncertainty of the narrator, and repetition as one of the main deconstructive characteristics of the novel. Then, in short, Beckett is a

writer who “experiments with *differance*” (Howard, 1977, p.117) and, in effect, narrates *differance*. *The Unnamable*’s narration is no longer the tool that the narrators used to make their own world into a structure; rather the main attention is turned to the process of narration, the process of signification, the unusual inversions and repetitions. Andonian (1998) says: “Beckett’s novelistic labyrinth . . . appears as the result of the narrative process. The unnamable narrator, whether “I”, “he”, or Worm, leaving a silky trail, a spider’s web of narrative confusion” (p.63) where he tells us “I wind my endless ways” (Beckett, 1958, p.60). The novel is a confused web of signifiers that are supposed to lead the reader to the ultimate signified and an identified narrator or subject. Yet, the reader is caught in the labyrinth of signs and the sufferings of the narrative voice to find peace. The novel is “a labyrinthine torment that cannot be grasped, or limited, or felt, or suffered, no, not even suffered” (Beckett, 1958, p.120). The purpose is to show how the representation of meaning happens throughout the reading of the novel, in other words, how meaning happens while it is impossible to reveal and decode the signs.

The text is a structure of present signs together with the confused absence of meanings. Thus, the novel is no longer a narration with a beginning, middle and ending point “except the arbitrary start and finish lent it by print and paper and all the appurtenances of fiction have been abandoned” (Robinson, 1969, p.191). Any attempt to put a line between the voice’s narration and its reflection by another voice or the same voice is impossible; because there is no ending for one story and a beginning for another one and “the line of division [is] drawn back into the story” (Connor, 1988, p.80).

The novel is shown “to be structured according to a deconstructed, ‘dispossessed’ kind of subjectivity” (Trezise, 2000, p.134), because “the story of the dispossession of the first person necessarily entails the dispossession of the story itself” (p.149) through which such principles as origin, identity, and authority are subject to deferral and breach and “the phantom of the centre” (Derrida, 1978, p.369). Such as the labyrinthine structure of sign in deconstruction, the narrative structure acts in the same way. The narrator is surrounded in this reproductive system of signs that continually leads it to its centre to stop his wandering, but as the narrator’s search continues, the centre, which represents the subjectivity of narration, is constantly multiplying. It is very clear when the narrator says: “perhaps that’s what I feel, an outside and an inside” (Beckett, 1958, p.134). One of the clear confusions is when the voice says: “I’m Worm, no, if I were Worm I wouldn’t know it, I wouldn’t say it, I wouldn’t say anything, I’d be Worm. But I don’t say anything, I don’t know anything, these voices are not mine, nor these thoughts” (p.83).

It may be thought that the voice in *The Unnamable*

imagines itself as a fixed centre that occupying the core of the novel, while other characters turning round it. Of course, though the voice says somewhere in the novel that “the best is to think of myself as fixed and at the centre of this place”, it also accepts that “nothing is less certain than this fact” and “in a sense I would be better off at the circumference” (Beckett, 1958, p.8). Then, it concludes that being circled by other characters does not mean necessarily its own fixity, but could point out that not only other characters are in movement, but, rather it is itself in motion. The word centre contains in itself a contradictory meaning and acts in a paradoxical way. On the one hand, it seems that a centre represents the inner and originating part of the structure, but, on the other hand, the centre can be itself a new structure that needs another centre to define it. The centre is at the same time the inside and the outside the circle:

Thus it has always been thought that the centre, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say that the centre is, paradoxically, within the structure and outside it. The centre is at the centre of the totality, and yet, since the centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its centre elsewhere. The centre is not the centre. (Derrida, 1978, p.352)

In *The Unnamable* the voice is not able to recognize its position either as being in a centre or being in the boundary of a circle, “From centre to circumference in any case is a far cry and I may well be situated somewhere between the two...that I too am in perpetual motion” (Beckett, 1958, p.9). Although the labyrinthine structure of the novel does not allow escaping from the logocentric system of sign, each sign or passage promises an escape. For this reason, the voice prefers to be in the circle, but, at the same time that it constantly changes its place with other characters like Mahood, Basil, Worm, and the Unnamable and so gets a plural form, the voice seems to occupy a momentary and representative position of the centre that is fleeting as soon as other pronouns come to substitute it. Then, the voice is in the ceaselessly absence and presence of the actual place it possesses. For example, within the space of a few sentences, the narrative refers to Mahood in the first-person singular, the first person plural, and the third-person singular and they seem to have only “the most fragile control over the stories they tell” (Pattie, 2004, p.228). The centre/circle opposition is not a stable one and it shows a changeable and continuously renewed relationship rather than a fixed one. While words are caught in the metaphysical state of language and take the meaning towards the centre, they weaken it and move it towards the margin. Any metatextual meaning returns into textual meaning, in other words, there is nothing outside the text.

*The Unnamable* is surrounded with the narrative contradictions and inconsistencies. The fact that the

assertions and denials are the logical energy that drives the plot forward is the deconstructive movement of the novel that might be summarized by the novel's famous sentence: “I can't go on, I must go on” (Beckett, 1958, p.179). For the narrator all conventional narration becomes problematic and he succeeds in collapsing the narrator/narrated into “an undifferentiated third term” (Begam, 1996, p.156). Then, this relationship represents not narrator versus narrated, but narrator as narrated or “the teller and the told” (Beckett, 1958, p.50). Such a reading of the narrator/narrated recalls the aporetic play of *differance*. Doherty (1971) believes “we have a total dislocation of fictional telling, total abandonment of the necessary certainties; floundering becomes the fictional method of the opening of the work” (p.72).

With its very first words, the *Unnamable* questions the text's power to name and locate a prior, personal voice that speaks its words: “Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning. I, say I. Unbelieving” (Beckett, 1958, p.3). It may be said that these opening words of the novel “must remain idiomatic”, in other words, resistant to any reading, “precisely to the extent that already, before the starting, they will have dramatised the (fiction of the) unnameable...” (Royle, 1999, p.304). It seems that like Derrida, the narrator is wary of a “logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: an absolute proximity of voice and being ...” (Derrida, 1998, p.23). Elin Diamond (2004) asserts:

The referent for the “I” is not the speaker uttering it but, rather, the act of discourse in which it is enunciated. Language, and only language, is the ground for the “I”, but this ground is relational: The “I” of enunciation only exists in relation to a “you”, and both are positions, empty spaces, marked by pronominal shifters. Then “I” is simply the one who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance “I”. (p.46)

Near the end of the novel the voice seems increasingly to lose its control on what it is saying and allows the language to speak through it: “I'm in words, made of words, other's words ...” (Beckett, 1958, p.139). However, it becomes clear that even the identification of the voice with language cannot be done and the voice cannot identify itself with language so the voice's real position again appears to be in some space between being and language. In the novel's last section, the figure for that third term, that space in-between, is the “tympanum”, a separation that is related to both these conditions and belongs to neither: “I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either” (p.113).

Therefore, it seems that instead of narrator it is language's production and deconstruction that act as the only source of the voices produced by the text. The novel is a place where to “go on” is to write, to produce more

words, rather than the closed representation of a fictional reality and a narrative binding. The novel “is stripped off a plot, there can be no thematic progression, only the varied reiteration of ‘the madness of having to speak and not being able to’” (Coleman, 1988, p.37). Then, any attempt at discussion must necessarily remain incomplete, as incomplete as the book itself:

*The Unnamable* is the fiction must fail as “storytelling” if it is to have any hope of succeeding as “naming”. The narration of fiction, the weaving of a verbal tapestry, multiplies words and carries the narrator further away from the exit of his verbal labyrinth and from the silence he seeks. (Fitch, 1998, p.66)

## THE LABYRINTHINE AND SINGULAR EVENT OF THE NOVEL

This part deals with the paradox of singularity or the simultaneous readability and unreadability of the literary language. The discussion of the singularity of the literary text and its resistant to the repetition begins by asking what is the structure that accounts for the fact that “no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation” (Derrida, 1979, p.81)? Sometimes it can be called text, sometimes writing, trace, supplement, *differance*, and sometimes iterability. To read this phrase “*I have forgotten my umbrella*” that Derrida sees in Nietzsche’s diary, it must be structurally liberated from any living meaning or context and it must be placed between singularity and readability (Royle, 2000, p.85). In a word, it must be iterable, because as Derrida believes, without iterability nothing means and there is no history.

Beckett’s work, under this new feature, could not be a revelation of reality and a fixed system of thought, but as a game in its labyrinth structure that goes towards infinite numbers of interpretation. We can see in Beckett’s works that while characters try to escape the habitual acts of the early characters, they are constantly caught in it and go on to repeat them and of course it is for this reason that the acknowledgment of the real identity of characters is, to a large extent, impossible.

Gary Banham (2002) in his article “Cinders: Derrida with Beckett” makes many similarities between these texts by Derrida, *Cinders* and *Post-Scriptum*, and Beckett’s *The Unnamable* in the common point that all of them circle round themselves and “in being cast in a plurivocal form” (p.57). Hence, one reason of the necessity of the discussion about repetition is because of the circularity of the narrative structure of the novel, but another feature of the repetition is related to the delay and postponement of the narrator’s quest that is discussed through the *differance* play.

What is original does not contain a restricted realm of meaning that only must be understood with regard to its singularity, but it should have the capacity to be repeated continually in different contexts. Connor (1988) asserts it in this manner: “The question ‘How can you have a

repetition without an original?’ brings with it the less obvious question ‘How can you have an original which it would be impossible to represent or duplicate?’” (p.3) Based on deconstruction, the meaning of an utterance cannot be found in the moment of its production but in the subsequent possibilities of its repetition in other contexts. In fact, singularity arises from the work’s constitution as a set of active relations, put in play in reading, that never settle into a fixed form. These active relations can produce a sense of multiple voices addressed to multiple readers: “the ungeneralizable relation between this work and this reader” (Attridge, 2004, p.81). Derrida (1993) says in his book *Dissemination*: “What is is not what it is, identical and identical to itself, unique, unless it *adds to itself* the possibility of being *repeated* as such. And its identity is hollowed out by that addition, withdraws itself in the supplement that presents it” (p.168).

Despite the fact that repetition cannot interfere in the nature of its origin and it can reproduce only a particular part of references, but as Connor asserts “even this close, self-effacing servitude displaces the authority of the original. Like a circle which is traced twice, argues Derrida (1988), nothing changes with a repetition, but at the same time, an imperceptible difference emerges” (p.4). It means that each repetition or reading of a text becomes another origin or signifier for later repetitions and by this way each repetition makes a new meaning of the original. Then, repetitions save the text from dying by creating infinite meanings within the original text. Repetition is necessary to deconstruction and it is the possibility of infinite repeatability of any sign. The repeatability or “iterability”, is “the otherness of the finite idea, since it exists as what can become something other than itself in repetition” (Stocker, 2006, p.178). The singularity of a text can be protected only if there is a countersignature. The countersignature or the other through the invention of another signature that is a replacement for the origin will respect text’s originality. We should remember that all it is said do not mean that origin is secondary to its repetition or the claim that repetition is more important than its origin, but, rather by calling each other and by depending on each other, they delay or defer their death in spite of the compulsion of silence to stop it. For Derrida, the main reason for the literature’s strangeness is its paradoxical identity that demands both reading, translating, and yet trying to be singular. A work of literature such as Shakespeare’s is always an act of survival, of living on since every act of reading or writing provokes new senses within the original text. Leitch’s definition (1983) is in this way: “Without end. All the while, the old never disappears under the new reading and writing. Transformation suggests death, but signals rebirth” (p.183). Then, deconstruction refuses to see any simple presence/absence opposition between origin and its repetition so origin as presence being defined by the absent repetition and vice versa.

While repetition constitutes language's possibility, it threatens it. In *The Unnamable*, repetition is a force that pushes the characters to go on, to survive and continue speaking, but just as "it is impossible to say anything in a language in which there is no repetition, it is equally impossible to say anything if one merely repeats oneself" (Connor, 1988, p.16). It seems that the possibility of meaning is made clear in the play of contrast and in the conflict of affirmation and negation that can be caused by repetition and also in the capacity of language that makes differences out of sameness:

Beckett's work explores all the implications of life-in-death and death-in-life which are focused in repetition. So repetition is not only a form of survival in language, it is a way of negating it, for, if repetition is the sign of the endlessness of language, then repetition is a strategy for turning language against itself, using words to erase other words. (Connor, 1988, pp.16-17)

Achieving full identity or being by exact repeating of other character's words is not possible, because of the fact that "the voice is repeating an earlier voice means that there is a tiny but irreducible difference in the 'naked' repetition that it desires, a delay between the voice it quotes and its quotation of it" (p.75). The point of finality for meaning is always one step further on and always deferred to the future. The voice that is worry about this difficulty says:

I shall submit, more corpse-obliging than ever. I shall transmit the words as received, by the ear, or roared through a trumpet into the arsehole, in all their purity, and in the same order, as far as possible. This infinitesimal lag, between arrival and departure, this trifling delay in evacuation, is all I have to worry about. (Beckett, 1958, p.86)

Derrida (1978) in his article "Ellipsis" has commented on the small but important unsettling which this repetition makes: "Something invisible is missing in the grammar of this repetition. As this lack is invisible and undeterminable...yet all meaning is altered by his lack. Repeated, the same line is no longer exactly the same, the ring no longer has exactly the same centre, *the origin has played*" (p.373). The voice in the novel seems to arrive at the paradox of repetition when on the one hand separation from repetition and discovering the singularity is impossible because it discovers itself to be constituted of repetitions and its identity is imaginable in the repetitions of other. On the other hand the voice knows that to make itself only by the exact repetition is also impossible, because there are some differences that come from each copy. Then, the structure of the novel is based on "a differential repetition conditioned by the economy of telling ..." (Trezise, 2000, p.149), and as Trezise (2000) argues, it is never given to itself as something distinct and present; rather, it is displaced by the "'already' and the 'not yet'" of temporality and signification (p.138).

Not only the novel's narrators and their words are in repetition, rather the whole novel itself also is in the

repetition of the novels which come before it and adds to them as a supplement. Watson (2000) describes very beautiful the language's freedom to signify endlessly: "At the moment of death another sign of life appears...At its end the text forcefully restates its internal contrasts, and finds itself in the position of having to begin yet again, in order to end yet again" (p.181).

## OSCILLATING PERSPECTIVES AND THE CHALLENGE OF IMPOSSIBILITY

The silence as the impossible state of language becomes a necessary condition for the possibility of meaning. The reading of literary text is possible only when a reader confronts with the forces and impossibilities that prevent understanding and achieving the meaning. "It is the paradox of this impossible, of the impossible, that engages deconstruction, that gets its gears in motion, by means of which deconstruction can let the other come" (Derrida, 1997, p.76). The paradox of impossible, as a negative aspect of language, is a way towards the possibility or the affirmative aspect of language.

Everything in deconstruction is organized around the promise of an event to come. This promise in literature is engaged with the "experience of the impossible". Always Derrida proposes a kind of respect for the other, for what "'ghosts' or troubles our own zone of expectation and identification" (Deutscher, 2005, p.110). Derrida's claim might have been completed by demonstrating that promise is never definitively achieved, yet it is not a pure ideal. It is an impossible, but is also "barely possible" (Deutscher, 2005, p.111) and may happen; in other words, its impossibility does not refuse its necessity. The other is not as completely foreign, but it is always to some extent understood by one's perception, and so it is restricted to each interpretation of it. In this sense, the other may be described as impossible because one cannot achieve a pure other and always it is deferred. However, its coming is necessary and inevitable. Derrida's treatment of the impossibility of the other is in contrast with a self-enclosed meaning of the other. Based on the deconstructive reading:

Impossibility is an experience or an event. It is a relationship we have, which means that we could never be self-enclosed identities. Impossibility is not a possibility that I cannot access. Rather, I am differentiated by impossibility, and this is one of the many ways in which I am a being in relationship with otherness. (Deutscher, 2005, p.74)

In *The Unnamable* also the narrator hopes to be able to escape the suffering of talking infinitely by stating something which is required to be stated to end that suffering. The *Unnamable's* call for the ending of speech assumes the existence of speech and the desire for the absence of language and self culminates in the affirmation or more presence of language and self. The supposition

that appears most often is that the Unnamable is generally considered to express his own being in his own voice or language. However, at the end of the narrative he claims that he must go on and so “we are not able to assert with assurance either that his torment has stopped or that it will never stop, but we are certain that he has not succeeded in stating his self: He remains unnamable and we are not unable to think language as either finite or infinite” (Uhlmann, 1999, p.162).

The relationship between the self or the same and the other like all other oppositional systems in *The Unnamable* becomes ambiguous and problematic. Such as infinity that is “designed negatively in its current positivity: in-finite” (Derrida, 1978, p.141), the other also cannot be understood “infinitely other, except in finitude and mortality” and “it is such as soon as it comes into language, of course, and only then, and only if the word *other* has a meaning ...” (p.143). The word *other* has no natural link with its meaning and the world as it is presented to us, the world of other as other or what we know as the self, like language itself is always signified. In Uhlmann’s opinion (1999), the same and the other and in fact all the binary oppositions function paradoxically in this way:

The otherness of language is stressed in *The Unnamable*, and here Beckett seems very close to Derrida: language is the relation to/of originary non-presence and these non-presence moves symmetrically (to/of) between the same and the other. Language carries with it the trace of the other even where there is no phenomenon of the other. (p.167)

An evidence of the complicated form of self/other is towards the end of the novel where the self goes towards more and more multiplication and doubling. Eventually, there are various pronouns that confuse the reader and prevent to find the real being-present of the absent unnamable. From the one hand, there is a voice that speaks through the unnamable: “He speaks of me, as if I were not he, both, and as if I were others ... it’s he who speaks, he says it’s I, then he says it’s not ... perhaps it’s not he, perhaps it’s a multitude, one after another, what confusion” (Beckett, 1958, pp.163-4). From the other hand, it seems that there is no voice and no being to be present but only the silence: “he is made of silence ... he’s in the silence, he’s the one to be sought, the one to be, the one to be spoken of, the one to speak, but he can’t speak, then I could stop, I’d be he, I’d be the silence” (p.177). In this search, the self is caught in the play of language; he continues writing but his writing is contaminated with the impossible promise of silence. As Caramello (1983) believes the paradox is in a way that “The Unnamable cannot descend within himself because he is self as the verbal process of defining self, or, in this case, The Unnamable” (p.31).

The narrator is preoccupied from the beginning with the dilemma of how to express silence through sound,

but the kind of silence he desires may be the silence that cannot be found. Perhaps, the kind of silence that the Unnamable desires is as a critique of systems of thought that is used in a certain way and move to a fixed and determined end. To explain the paradoxical nature of silence and its place in the *The Unnamable*’s language, Uhlmann (1999) asks which kind of silence is the novel’s quest, the silence before the beginning, the silence after the ending or the silence between them. A kind of silence that the narrator desires can be the silence that is origin, but cannot be regained because it is the silence before speaking that is destroyed and loses its originality at the moment one to start to speak: “... silence once broken will never again be whole” (Beckett, 1958, p.110). The narrator believes that if he can achieve this kind of silence he can find his real self, but it is an impossible return to the silence before when speech appears. Another kind of silence that again is impossible is the inability to search a complete and self-presence of saying until it comes to an ending point, to a silence, because there is no transcendental meaning in the infinite differential chain of signification of language to get it. Therefore, the Unnamable has no way except to be caught in the undecidability between silence and language because silence is promised in the words; it exists in the language, yet it is not possible to get it by the time that there is language. In *The Unnamable*, paradoxically, language, without which silence cannot come into existence, provides the only possibility of achieving the impossible end. Silence cannot stop saying when there are no words so silence needs language to function, but at the same time without ceasing language silence cannot exist:

An utterance without proper beginning or end, yet greedy, exacting, a language that will never stop, that finds it intolerable to stop, for then would come the moment of the terrible discovery: when the talking stops, there is still talking; when the language pauses, it preserves; there is no silence, for within that voice the silence eternally speaks. (Blanchot, 2000, p.94)

It refers to the famous sentences by Derrida (1978) who says: “Death strolls between letters” or “Absence, finally as the breath of the letter, for the letter lives” (p.87). The narrator speaks of silence as the presence of transcendental signified but it remains always absent. It is in the movement between this kind of ceaselessly absence and presence that meaning is produced. As the novel says us silence is not somewhere outside language, there is no opposition between them and they are defined within one another, so “the search for silence (concealing) ends with the multiplication of language ...” (Nojournian, 2004, p.400). Gradually, the search to put an end to speech and to the self-presence voice, as the main motivations, forces the narrator, as a motionless wanderer within language, to go on to awaken more significations: “One starts speaking as if it were possible to stop at will. The search for the means to put an end to things, an end to speech, is

what enables the discourse to continue" (Beckett, 1958, p.15). Each time the narrator imagines it is the end of line and he can reach the silence, it has slid from his grasp. Nojournian (2004) argues, "Silence is an impossible state yet, throughout the discourse, its inevitability is constantly promised" (p.400). Hence, language, in oscillation between silence and language, is exposed to the coming of new meanings.

Beckett's narrator seeks to stop the words, but he has no alternative except to be in the aporia of to "speak and yet say nothing" (Beckett, 1958, p.20). "The aporia is that silence cannot be achieved through language" (Nojournian, 2004, p.401). The undecidability is not only the movement between two contradictory poles, but also it is a kind of necessity to decide to go on, to make the impossible decision while considering the obstacles, which are the resistance of silence and the inability to escape the Western metaphysical system of thought. Uhlmann (1999) argues, if it will not be possible to escape Western metaphysical rules, how and to what extent may Beckett consider to them and make the undecidable decision? Uhlmann answers it in this way: "Perhaps Beckett makes it, [in a world with opposite views] in choosing not to choose, in choosing the grey rather than the black or the white. But this does nothing ..., perhaps, but shows us the aporia and brings us to the threshold of calculation without calculating, of decision, without deciding" (p. 185). Elsewhere, Uhlmann has a beautiful description of such kind of aporetic world in Beckett language:

Where Derrida speaks of the experience of aporia, Beckett speaks simply of aporia... At his greater level of abstraction, Beckett can lead us through a maze of language and allude to a threshold, but it cannot be crossed because there is nothing with which to cross, nothing to cross. We may have been taken to the edge of the universe but there is no spear to throw, no hand to stretch through the surface of heaven which encloses the unnamable like a wall, no way of telling if we are facing a void or its opposite. Nor any way of confirming the Aristotelian suggestion, "that outside this world there is nothing: *nec plenum nec vacuum*" (pp.185-6).

And the narrator of *The Unnamable* confirms it in this way:

may not this screen which my eyes robe in vain, and see as denser air, in reality be the enclosure wall, as compact as lead? To elucidate this point I would need a stick or pole, and the means of plying it ... Then I would dart it, like a javelin, straight before me and know, by the sound made, whether that which hems me round, and blots out my world, is the old void, or a plenum. (Beckett, 1958, pp.16-17)

The challenge of reading *The Unnamable* is to continue reading, knowing that the text states the impossibility of identifying a narrative voice that speaks its words, the impossibility of saying or doing something, and finally that it states the impossibility of reading. However, all these impossibilities can just possibly happen in the promise of the other to come and maybe without one's knowledge, recognition, and expectation. Words only seem

to speak and act, while they cannot reveal themselves with their own real signification. Each step towards the beyond is going towards the other of language so the beyond of each meaning is another beyond or other experiences. Derrida (1995) in his interview with Richard Kearney says: "I never ceased to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language; it is in fact saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above else the search for the 'other' and the 'other of language'" (p.173). Then, *The Unnamable* cannot be read as a narrative, in which beyond language means death, but, rather beyond language involves life and the coming of more languages. It seems that always an inescapable signification follows the words in the novel so that the main paradoxical question can be "in a world deprived of meaning how [the voice] can express this meaninglessness with words that necessarily convey meaning? How can [it] produce what he called a 'literature of the unword?'" (Finney, 1994, p.843)

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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Deconstruction is simply a name Derrida gives to what happens in texts. Taking Derrida's assertion in "Structure, Sign and Play" that "language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique" (1978, p.358), makes it clear that deconstruction is what takes place within language, intervenes throughout the reading of a text and is not something that can be applied from the outside of the text. Between the two poles of the literary text, before the beginning and after the end or silence, it lives the text paradoxically as the infinite chain of language that cannot escape from the finite and restricted metaphysical system of thought. It has its infinity within the finite world and vice versa. What Derrida (2004) shows those who misunderstand him is the fact that one cannot go beyond metaphysics, and also there is no notion of being imprisoned in the language, but one can "try to stand at the limit of metaphysical discourse" (p.5). Derrida in the interview with Richard Kearney refers to Beckett's texts that "make the limits of our language tremble" (Attridge, 1992, p.162). A sense in which Beckett's writing is already self-deconstructive is, Derrida argues in this interview, "a certain nihilism both interior to metaphysics ... and then, already, beyond. With Beckett in particular, the two possibilities are in the greatest possible proximity and competition. He is nihilist and he is not nihilist ..." (p.61). While a text fights against the logocentric power and refuses the acceptance of any single interpretation, deconstruction also has resistance against the forces that try to push it to be self-referential, singular, and silence. As a result, "no text is an island to itself, standing in comforting proximity to its own signified" (Watson, 2000, p.169).

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