

Representation of a Disrupted Mind and Anguished Self in Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*

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Abstract

This paper explores the main causes of character-narrator's linguistic as well as "existential anguish" (Esslin, 1968, p. 29) in Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*. The paper argues that the *Unnamable's* on-going and exhaustive quest for a real self leads in failure mainly because of his dissemination in the stories of the others as well as his only available medium or language. Although throughout the narrative the voice pretends to be able to deliver itself with either the thoughts of the others or their stories in order to obtain an independent self, the narrative is mainly a representation of the narrating voice's failure in coming to terms with the arbitrary nature of language and the other voices. It follows that, the *Unnamable*, being a purely linguistic self and subjugating to the non-referential power of language, relentlessly searches for a true self throughout the narrative. The present paper thus examines *The Unnamable* as a poststructural narrative, investigating the function of self, language and their troubled relationship in the novel as well as exploring, as Lance Olsen puts, Beckett's and Derrida's joint questions concerning "the deconstructive turn" and "the dissolution of self, world, and language" (1956, p. 4). Accordingly, applying a poststructuralist approach, the present paper examines the *Unnamable's* intramental (or private) perceptions regarding his existential and linguistic anguish within the narrative.

Keywords: *Self, the Other(s), Language, the Unnamable, Samuel Beckett*

1. Introduction

The identity crisis and the collapse of self in the twentieth century literature and philosophy as well as the importance of reference and representation in language have been acknowledged by many critics. Within the framework of poststructuralism, words, or signifiers, are seen as falsifying, "cogito" as an illusion and naming as an imposition and falsehood. The contemporary thought, as proposed by Olsen, "decomposes two of the great unifying notions of humanism: the power of language to reflect and shape the world and the power of consciousness to shape and recognize a self. But in spite of this decomposition, or perhaps because of it, a longing arises in the postmodern mind for what it has lost" (1956, p. 12).

Likewise, coming up with "a radical innovation" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 139) in the third novel of his so called Trilogy, Beckett's concern with the similar poststructural and postmodern questions in *The Unnamable* (1953) overrides any other concerns within the fictional world in which, to quote Northrop Frye, "we come as near to the core of the onion as it is possible to come, and discover of course that there is no core, no undividable unit of continuous personality" (2005, p. 134). Moreover, the narrative, as proposed by Andrew Kennedy, represents "an unstable self trapped among ceaselessly sounded but un-definable and inexpressible names." Therefore, *The Unnamable* primarily becomes a representation of "the confessional of a self that can find no self of any substance" (1989, p. 14 and 106) at last although he "is impossibly splitting himself in the search for some form of self" (Stewart, 2006, p. 142). That is so because the so-called narrator's central concern is to find a name, a reference or an ultimate signified through writing. Nevertheless, according to Paul Stewart, he finds himself entrapped in "the limitations of language." Consequently, throughout the narrative the *Unnamable* gets "involved in a search for his true name, or being, but this search only creates a series of never-ending substitutions" (2006, p. 65 and 163). This mainly results from the fact that he is, as pointed out by Maurice Blanchot, primarily "a being without being, who can neither live nor die, neither begin nor leave off" (2005, p.131). Therefore, "Preoccupation with the problem of being and the identity of the self" or "the deep existential anguish," according to Martin Esslin, can be considered as the "keynote of Beckett's work." Following that, his work can be taken as the explorations of "the deepest strata of the mind" examining "the darkest wells of anxiety" (1968, p. 29 and 35). Likewise, the character-narrator's anxiety in *The Unnamable* strongly refers to his existential concerns since, as Ronan McDonald suggests, he finds himself primarily "caught up in deterministic systems that squeeze out the possibility of human agency" (2006, p.

61).

2. The Unnamable and His Existential Anguish

The Unnamable is the story of an unnamed voice in limbo state, who desires to obtain a true voice in order to tell the story of his own true self: "I'll be myself at last" (Beckett, 1955, p. 325). His "obsessions in the search for the self" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 140) propel the Unnamable to devise some stories: stories of Basil, Mahood, Worm and a long unpunctuated monologue of a dismembered I towards the end of the narrative. Nevertheless, "The purpose of the stories", according to Stewart, "is to bait the Unnamable into taking upon himself an identity, to relate and to have a relation with the identity within the tales. The less identity there is to identify with, the more the Unnamable might be tempted to swallow the hook and be hauled into existence" (2006, p. 126). At the end of the novel, not only the main story—the story of the Unnamable himself—is not told but he is also entrapped in the others' stories which turn out to be "stunted and blurred at their inception," not knowing to which one he belongs and even more he is not sure of his own humanity since "in the fictional world of the narrator every new character/story about to be created turns into a NOT I, like all the past fictions" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 139 and 142). The main reason of his failure, according to Alan Astro, is the fact that "both the speaking subject (the I) and one's various ego identifications are alienations from oneself" (1990, p. 91). The narrator-character therefore strives along the narrative so that he might be certain about his existence before his death. However, unlike the Cartesian self, whose cogito ends at the assurance of his existence or "sum," the Unnamable's cogitation ends at more doubts. This is the reason for his situation at the of narrative when he is a dispelled self imprisoned by and in words or a "disembodied voice, indefinite and undefinable in terms of ordinary human identity, deprived of specific time, place, function and purpose" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 139). Therefore, the narrative "begins to teeter about the fulcrum of the Cartesian 'ergo'. I think, that is (alas) plain. Descartes went on smartly, 'therefore I am'. But am I, can I even come into existence?" (Kenner, 1973, p. 111). Furthermore, not only the narrative voice continuously struggles to attribute consciousness for itself but the implied author endeavors to find a center of consciousness for the narrative itself. In this case, as pointed out by Alan S. Loxterman:

"The Unnamable culminates Beckett's series of minimally narrated novels with an unidentified witness, a protean narrative voice which can be anything from a finite consciousness to an omnipresent metaphysical abstraction. Not only does Beckett's fiction lack the central consciousness of a narrator who knows more than particular characters; it lacks the presence of those characters themselves as multiple consciousnesses who remain sufficiently coherent to reveal discrete points of view on a common subject. For Beckett all conventional narration, from omniscient to first-person, becomes problematic" (2011, p. 32).

The concept of self as an individual independent from the others, concurrent with the rise of Humanism, was mainly established after the Renaissance in the West since before that time it was fundamentally associated with and controlled by a transcendental God. As Jacob Burckhardt differentiates, while people in the Middle Ages "were aware of themselves only as members of a group; in the Renaissance [...] man became a spiritual individual and recognized himself as such" (qtd. in Burke, 1997, p. 17). However, during the following centuries, the theoretical concept of self with a unified identity changed into a self constantly fashioned out of changing moods. A cluster of post-structuralist theories claim that an individual's self is a permanently self-fashioning or (re)constructing concept which, in the wake of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, assumed to be embedded in the linguistic, cultural or social matrices. The twentieth century's self, therefore, is a fragmented self devoid of any conventional characteristics of a unified individuality. Likewise, the narrator of *The Unnamable*, before all else, struggles to make sense of who he is, what he is supposed to be doing, when his situation might change and even whether he exists. Not being "rhetorical questions" and "despite the ultimate unanswerability" (Astro, 1990, p. 81), the Unnamable's, or the voice's, opening questions are in many ways a postmodern man's questions which, according to H. Porter Abbott, "initiate a stream of self-canceling attempts to fill a narrative gap" (2004, p. 21) throughout the entire narrative: "Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning. I, say I. Unbelieving. Questions, hypotheses, call them that. Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on" (Beckett, 1955, p. 291). In this way and creating for "himself an unthinkable never-ending beginning" (Stewart, 2006, p. 137), the narrating voice throughout *The Unnamable* struggles to "find an answer to the questions of its own being, on the edge of non-being, among shadowy presences in a kind of limbo" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 139). Consequently, he is represented as living in a kind of "aporia" which "refer[s] both to a style (a rhetorical figure) that shows that the speaker *doubts*, and to a method that discovers an impasse, or near-impossibility, in reaching a solution" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 140).

The invention and destruction of the sense of self, according to Michael Foucault, is a modern concept. Foucault's statement that "man is an invention of recent date soon to be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea"

(qtd. in Dollimore, 1997, p. 250), brought about something of a scandal to Western thought. Likewise, Beckettian self dissolves in and disseminates over the other selves. Being bereft of his own individuality, Beckettian self, like the poststructural self, changes into a subject in the same way the Unnamable is subjected to his past, to the others and to language: "What puzzles me is the thought of being indebted for this information to persons with whom I can never have been in contact" (Beckett, 1955, p. 297). Such a self, moreover, desperately finds it absurd to look for a completely independent thinking self since he needs the others in order to achieve that. Although they are mainly unknown and invisible to him, the Unnamable, still in his illusions, finds himself vouchsafed a unified self by the controlling forms of their voices. This is what distinguishes him, as a postmodern self, from the existential self. Differentiating the two, Jonathan Dollimore argues that:

"The individual of existentialism was always in crisis because without the metaphysical support of God, but at least the resulting angst seemed to offer the potential for authentic being. Not according to post-modernism, where the individual, anguished or confident, is as illusory a category as 'Man'; as a consequence, the very term 'individual' is replaced with the more technical term 'subject,' a subject now endlessly 'decentred'; that is, subjected to the historical, social and linguistic structures which precede, exceed and create it" (1997, p. 250).

However, the Unnamable, like an existential self, is fluctuating between the two states of "pour-soi" and "en-soi." As Michael Robinson says: "for Sartre individual consciousness is a pour-soi. The universe about this consciousness, all that is or the en-soi, is positive for its quality is its being there" (1969, p. 198). Seeing that it cannot perceive itself, a pour-soi should necessarily come out of itself and enter into the en-soi in order to be perceived or to be its own object. In other words, it should experience a change from subject to object. To be its own object, the Unnamable comes out his pour-soi (his own consciousness) incarnating himself in his surrounding world—in Mahood, Basil, Worm and voices. It follows that, the narrating voice defines itself in terms of what he is not. Accordingly, he desires the others in order to be recognized on their part so that he might be sure of his own self. The Unnamable's reasoning in this case, according to Samuel Enoch Stumpf, is closer to George Berkeley's argument that "'esse est percipi, or to be is to be perceived.' If something has to be perceived for it to be, what happens to that thing when you do not perceive it" (1993, p. 348).

The concept of self is, therefore, contradictory in the sense that the knowledge of one's own self and its construction inevitably include those of the others too. What makes such an existence more disastrous is the lack of any centre for this condition. An existential man accepts that he should suffer because it is his first and last choice as much as there is no other person responsible for his suffering. From the Unnamable's perspective, however, there should be a responsible, even though invisible, controlling centre in order to release him. Calling all his stories just "lies," the Unnamable says:

"It's all a bubble, we've been told a lot of lies, he's been told a lot of lies, who he, the master, by whom, no one knows, [...] the master's not to blame, neither are they, neither am I, least of all I, we are foolish to accuse one another, the master me, them, himself, they me, the master, themselves, I them, the master, myself, we are all innocent...it's nobody's fault" (Beckett, 1955, p. 375).

Nevertheless, to find the source for the resurrection of his now enfeebled self, the Unnamable imagines hearing the unuttered, "never spoken" voices:

"I have never spoken enough to me, never listened enough to me, never replied enough to me, never had pity enough on me. I have spoken for my master, listened for the words of my master never spoken: 'Well done, my child, well done, my son - you may stop, you may go, you are free, you are acquitted, you are pardoned.' Never spoken" (Beckett, 1955, p. 310).

Representing an inherent contrast between the narrating/experiencing voice and the other voices, the recurrences of such dreams, however, finally end at what Stewart calls "all-pervasive disjunction" by which "the Unnamable's search for a statement of his self is made impossible" (2006, p. 15).

Eventually regaining a humanistic centre to his decentred subject is what the Unnamable wishes for. His struggles resemble Beckett's artistic efforts in many ways. Beckett had already tried to discover a true sense of self for himself through his intentional alienation and language change. In an interview, he says: "I have always sensed that there was within me an assassinated being. Assassinated before my birth. I needed to find this assassinated person again. And try to give him new life" (qtd. in Ricks, 1990, p. 117). Likewise, to discover his assassinated self, the Unnamable re-examines the others who supposedly have been surrounding him intermittently: "Before him there were others, taking themselves for me. It must be a sinecure handed down from generation to generation, to judge by their family air. Mahood is no

worse than his predecessors" (Beckett, 1955, p. 317). The others who nearly replace the Unnamable are in fact his apparent selves. He is going to find his true self in them but the only achievable self for him is a simulated not a real one whose story he hardly succeeds in recounting: "I never spoke, I seem to speak, that's because he says I as if he were I, I nearly believed him, do you hear him, as if he were I, I who am far, who can't move, can't be found" (Beckett, 1955, p. 403).

The Unnamable's self is, therefore, a version of the other selves in the past and in the present. The central characters of two preceding novels in Beckett's Trilogy, *Molloy* and *Malone Dies*, together with the other characters of his earlier novels meet by chance in *The Unnamable*. Their names change when they move on to a new stage of self-discovery. When the Unnamable, in order to discover another layer of his self, changes his name from Mahood to Worm, he says: "But it's time I gave this solitary a name: nothing doing without proper names. I therefore baptize him Worm. It was high time. 'Worm.' I don't like it, but I haven't much choice. It will be my name too, when the time comes, when I needn't be called Mahood any more, if that happy time ever comes" (Beckett, 1955, p. 337). In this manner, the Unnamable is going to find his own authentic self, but as Robinson notes, it is like "the location of irrational numbers or the centre of a circle. The rational mind knows it is there, either through intimation or understanding, but is incapable of actually arriving at it" (1969, p. 24). The Unnamable is trying to come to his authentic being from his inauthentic one in which he is living. Authentic and inauthentic beings are the two aspects of being from Heidegger's perspective: "authentic existence requires that he recognizes and affirms his unique self with his responsibility for his every action. A person's drift into an inauthentic existence is subtle but in every case it involves a tendency to escape from one's self by finding refuge in a public self, in an impersonal identity" (Stumpf, 1993, p. 507). Since the Unnamable is not the sole controller of his own thoughts and actions, his being is to main extent an amalgam of some flawed assumptions ignited by the other names and voices. He tries to obtain his own authentic existence unaware of the fact that there is only a possible amalgam of authenticity and inauthenticity in human beings' lives.

The Unnamable, nevertheless, pursues his explorations throughout the narrative endlessly in order to be sure of his independent self. That is why, the word "I" is one of the most repeated words in *The Unnamable*. When it was published, the novel baffled so many critics. Beckett had written his three earlier novels—*Murphy*, *Watt* and *Mercier et Camier*—in third person narration intentionally invalidating the certainty of an authorial perspective. However, he chose first person narrator in the *Trilogy* in order to examine the potentials of the first person narration in excavating the self in depth. To find the fixed nature of the self, the Unnamable, like the other characters—among the others Molloy, Malone, Morane—tries to escape from both the time and the words, or language, into the timeless and changeless condition of selfhood believed to be lost at birth: "Yes I have a pensum to discharge, before I can be free. I was given a pensum, at birth perhaps, as a punishment for having been born perhaps [...]" (Beckett, 1955, p. 311). Meditation is, therefore, the main source of his self's existence. He thinks in order to be sure of his existence before death. However, his insatiable desire to find a name and silence in language leads in no more than a disturbed mind and anguished self.

The Unnamable as a thinking self primarily pretends to be acting like Descartes' thinking self, or cogito, but, as Olsen argues, with a very different consequence: "Beckett takes Descartes and what he stands for and turns him upside down [...] the comma between 'I think' (the mind) and 'therefore I am' (the body) stands for the pineal gland, a nexus, a hope of connection. But in Beckett's universe, that comma stands for a pause, for a gap, for the first stutter toward solipsism in Western culture" (49-50). It follows that, *The Unnamable*, as proposed by Richard Pearce, "demonstrates the fallacy of *cogito ergo sum*; Beckett denies his characters even the certainty of their existence. When we finish his trilogy, we come to understand that identity requires definition, requires that one discover the differentia between himself and the rest of the world" (1970, p. 132).

Descartes' I could dislodge himself from any doubts and relying totally on himself as a 'thinking thing' he solved all his problems. Descartes' all-knowing I, nevertheless, changes into a desperate, ignorant I in *The Unnamable*: "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, 1955, p. 414). Therefore, the poststructural Beckett questions the rationalism of Descartes by "demonstrating the way introspection discloses no contingent 'I' but only the self-questioning consciousness itself" (Loxterman, 1992, p. 70). Being aware of his thinking, the Unnamable primarily wants to be sure of his existence too although he fails.

His apprehension about being imprisoned in time, besides his confinement in words, is another obstacle in the Unnamable's way to find his true self. In order to fulfil his central desire, his struggles continue ceaselessly although he cannot overcome the omnipresent nature of time:

"the question may be asked, off the record, why time doesn't pass, doesn't pass from you, why it piles up all about you, instant on instant, on all sides, deeper and deeper, thicker and thicker, your time, other's time, the time of the ancient dead and the dead yet unborn, why it buries you grain by grain neither dead nor alive, with no memory of anything, no

hope of anything, no knowledge of anything, no history and no prospects, buried under the seconds, saying any old thing, your mouth full of sand, oh I know it's immaterial, time is one thing, I another, but the question may be asked, why time doesn't pass" (Beckett, 1955, p. 393).

To eliminate the effect of passing time on their consciousness, Beckett's characters choose storytelling in order to find their now-lost concrete self through re-examination of the past events, situations or memories. Molloy, for example, creates two stories—story of his journey to find his mother and story of one Moran to find him. In the very beginning he says: "what I need now is stories, it took me a long time to know that, and I'm not sure of it" (Beckett, 1955, p. 13). When Malone, in *Malone Dies*, is unable to fill the void between his death and his awaiting time for it, he chooses storytelling in order to do that: "I think I shall be able to tell myself four stories, each one on a different theme. One about a man, another about a woman, a third about a thing and finally one about an animal, a bird probably" (Beckett, 1955, p. 181). Likewise, the Unnamable amuses himself by telling himself the others' stories: Mahood's, Basil's and Worm's. The common point in all these stories is their incomplete nature. There is, nonetheless, no discovery in the act of storytelling for the characters as long as they do not help them find their true selves as well as forget the changing nature of time: "All these Murphys, Molloys and Malones do not fool me. They have made me waste my time, suffer for nothing, speak of them when, in order to stop speaking, I should have spoken of me and of me alone" (Beckett, 1955, p. 303). Moreover, their quests lead in an impassable state since, as Cohn said, "there may be neither mind nor body to undertake it, and language may mistake it" (qtd. in White, 2013, p. 42).

The Unnamable, however, does never stop questing for the totality of his own self. In the final pages, he is searching, even in vain, for an appropriate pronoun to speak about his true self. However, the other names—Moran, Malone, Mercier and Molloy—continually interfere in his affairs although he pretends that "their day is done" (Beckett, 1955, p. 403). When the Unnamable begins another new story, he replaces the other characters' names with the pronoun "he" just to insist that: "it is not he, it's I, or another, or others, what does it matter, the case is clear, it is not he, he who I know I am, that's all I know, who I cannot say I am, I can't say anything" (Beckett, 1955, p. 401). He, moreover, devises other names for the absent voices in order to find his name but finally, when he gets tired of doing so, he says: "It's the fault of the pronouns, there is no name for me, no pronoun for me, all the trouble comes from that" (Beckett, 1955, p. 404). The Unnamable's anguish at his jeopardised existence as well as his now missing independent self is so widespread that it does not know, or is not confident, whether the voice that it considers as the representation of its own self belongs to it or to another self which has already taken possession of him: "It issues from me, it fills me, it clamours against my walls, it is not mine, I can't prevent it, from tearing me, racking me, assailing me. It is not mine, I have none, I have no voice and must speak, that is all I know, its round that I must revolve" (Beckett, 1955, p. 307).

Furthermore, the main character's insistence on being sure of his existence before his impending death is another considerable point in *The Unnamable*. As for the Unnamable, death is considered just as the only certain ending point, or signified, in the poststructural and postmodern literature. Therefore, to be sure of his being before his eternal nothingness, the Unnamable primarily tries to define his self since, as Patricia O. White argues, "Beckett's man, while hoping for death, dreads it as a meaningless conclusion to his meaningless life. Like others who utilize existentialism, Beckett is never quite convincing that one must endure when he is gradually dying into a final nothingness" (2013, p. 41). Accordingly, the only available guarantee for the Unnamable's identity is his incessant inner talking.

3. The Unnamable and His Linguistic Anguish

As aforementioned, the self in *The Unnamable* is primarily a linguistic self and its decomposition is isomorphic with the inadequacy of language itself. At the time that the narration proceeds and its anthropomorphic features dwindle—Basil is a man ⇒ Mahood is a man without human abilities, for example he cannot speak or he has not a head as he is just a trunk without legs ⇒ and Worm is not a human being at all but a unicellular—its representational language changes too. Therefore, *The Unnamable*, in which the characters are "no longer recognisably human" (McDonald, 2006, p. 88), can be taken as a fictional journey undertaken in language since, towards the end of narrative, the Unnamable shrinks into language which performs an infeasible function for him. It follows that, the Unnamable's being, or "presence," is inherently embedded in language "or, rather, is a condition of [...] language" (Stewart, 2006, 138). Nevertheless, the non-referential aspect of language together with its worn-out conventions prevents the Unnamable both from coming into being and obtaining an independent self. This aspect of language had already been emphasized by Friedrich Nietzsche according to whom language, being merely a play of metaphors, does not reflect reality. In his *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* (1873) Nietzsche holds that:

"The various languages placed side by side show that with words it is never a question of truth, never a question of adequate expression; otherwise, there would not be so many languages. The 'thing in itself' (which is precisely what the pure truth, apart from any of its consequences, would be) is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language and something not in the least worth striving for" (qtd. in Begam, 1996, p. 17).

Similarly, Beckett considered language as the fundamental factor for the comprehension of the world and the others. Then as well, *The Unnamable* can be taken as a novel of "language, the kind of novel that Flaubert once said he wished he could write: the novel about nothing (le livre sur rien)" (Fowlie, 1968, p. 47). Moreover, in *The Unnamable* "Beckett's work brings the 'language of the self' to an inescapable impasse" (Hoffman, 1962, p. 37) repudiating the "traditional ideas of consciousness and language" (Begam, 1966, p. 8). The main reason that Beckett reiterates the failure of art in his works does mainly refer to the arbitrary nature of sign system in language: "Words are the foundation of Beckett's self-confessed art of failure for they form the impenetrable barrier that prevents us from knowing who we are and what we are" (Robinson, 1969, p. 23). Likewise, the Unnamable as a poststructural man finds himself within the discourse: "In order to speak, one starts speaking as if it were possible to stop at will. It is better so. The search for the means to put an end to things, an end to speech, is what enables the discourse to continue" (Beckett, 1955, p. 299). The nature of his discourse, however, enforces him to continue speaking without listening: "What reams of discourse I could elicit from this seemingly so legitimate preoccupation! I speak, speak? Because I must, but I do not listen" (Beckett, 1955, p. 306). He cannot manipulate language because he is within it or a part of it. In other words, words in *The Unnamable* are primarily used as self-contained, self-referential signs since the only source of linguistic significance is language itself without relying on any external or referential reality. Nevertheless, the Unnamable and the other names and voices, as presented from his perspective, pretend not to be thinking so. Instead, everybody and everything are included within the text where any sense of authority of the author is decentred since, as Hugh Kenner argues, "anyone in the book [*The Unnamable*] is made of words" (1973, p. 111).

Furthermore, writing in poststructural literature becomes its own subject as no longer does the text represent the outside reality. Maintaining the flimsy linguistic structure of the narrative, therefore, become the central attention of the text. In *The Unnamable*, the non-referential writing writes about itself. Highlighting this aspect, Richard Begam states that: "If *Malone Dies* carries us to the end of the book, *The Unnamable* offers us our first glimpse of what lies beyond: the beginning of writing. In moving toward a condition of pure textuality, toward a literature that seeks to free itself from representation and expression, Beckett takes up once again the problem of the narrator/ narrated" (1996, p. 155). Following that, the Unnamable, finally becomes a word among the other ones: "I'm in words, made of words, other's words," or "I am words among words" (Beckett, 1955, p. 386 and 388). Thus, as Robinson suggests, Beckett's main preoccupation is a "preoccupation with a self made from language" (1969, p. 227). Being extremely concerned by the questions such as whether this language-made self can separate the Unnamable's being from its presentation in language, and still more whether he is able to think and exist without words, *The Unnamable* narrative mainly represents the interpenetrated nature of self and language. This inevitably displays the restrictions of a speaking act in a shared code which, at the same time, excludes the possibility of talking about one's private self too. Following that, one of the main aspects of Beckett's work is showing the arbitrary nature of the words through examining their semantic and pragmatic aspects carefully. According to Phyllis Carey: "As a young writer, Beckett had formulated his desire to get beneath the surface materiality of words to the 'all or nothing' that underlies the spoken and the seen" (1997, p. 8). In this case, what Robinson says about *Watt*—"Language and identity have begun to diverge, each following its own path to a position where reconciliation becomes impossible" (1969, p. 125)—seems to be more applicable to *The Unnamable* too: "I'm in words, made of words [...] I'm all these words, [...] with no ground for their settling" (Beckett, 1955, p. 386).

Since words are the only medium for him to find his true self, the Unnamable entrusts with simulating some stories in order to be spoken about. He does so because he desires to obtain an independent concept of self for himself: "All this business of a labour to accomplish, before I can end, of words to say, a truth to recover, in order to say it, before I can end, of an imposed task, once known, long neglected, finally forgotten, to perform before I can be done with speaking, done with listening, I invented it all, in the hope it would console me" (Beckett, 1955, p. 314). The Unnamable, moreover, is trying to break off language in order to find his self through freeing himself from its bondage. Accordingly, he optimistically searches for his true self although he is at the same time entrapped in a kind of "supreme paradox" (Kennedy, 1989, p. 104) too: "You must go on. I can't go on. You must go on. I'll go on. You must say words, as long as there are any—until they find me, until they say me" (Beckett, 1955, p. 414). To "go on," according to Brian Finney, "means to go on voicing his mental search for an escape from his world of words." Besides that, as Frederick Hoffman says, it may refer to a "persist in being one's doubting self" (1969, p. 825) or in the Unnamable's words "to go on means going from here, means finding me, losing me, vanishing and beginning again, a stranger first, then little by little the same

as always, in another to place [...]” (Beckett, 1955, p. 302).

Towards the end of the novel, the inconsistency between the language and various imperceptible selves surrounding the narrator increases in a way that, on the one hand, nothing remains from the semantic elements of language itself. On the other hand, the Unnamable is finally unable to find a true sense of self for himself. The linguistic tense and syntax break off: “These things I say, and shall say, if I can, are no longer, or are not yet, or never were, or never will be, or if they were, if they are, if they will be, were not here, are not here, will not be here, but elsewhere” (Beckett, 1955, p. 301). In the last sentence, which extends beyond nine pages, every affirmation is followed by a negation on the hell: “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” (Beckett, 1955, p. 414). Thus, even though the Unnamable is unable to find a certain or independent self within the represented world, he never gives up his hope for arriving at one at any moment throughout his explorations. Following that, even after managing to “achieve silence in speech,” he still “speaks in the silence.” (Astro, 1990, p. 91). The difficulty of defining his own true self, moreover, does not necessarily imply the absurdity of a linguistic communication for the Unnamable. Despite that, he greatly desires for a place beyond the arbitrary signification of language, the presence of the others and the existential certainty. The growing rift, or imbalance, between the actual situation and the imaginary one within the central consciousness of narrative, however, leads largely in a disrupted mind and anguished self.

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