BECKETT AND HIS BILINGUALISM: THE WORD AS MASK AND MIRROR

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a study of Samuel Beckett's language. To this end we analyzed Watt, a novel composed in English and translated by Ludovic and Agnès Janvier, and L'Innommable whose original is in French, self-translated by the author. It seemed imperative to take into account these variables in determining whether there were in fact essential differences between Beckett's English idiom and his adopted French idiom. Detailed analysis revealed that text and translation did not differ essentially and structurally, and that more significantly Beckett had fashioned an entirely new tongue. Like Joyce he found the contemporary mode of expression sterile and incapable of conveying the modern condition. Unlike Joyce he did not forge a synthetic language. Like Dante he drew upon the vernacular to enrich his writing, with the difference that the Commedia

was composed entirely in a variety of Italian spoken dialects while the other works were written in the standard medium of the day, Latin. Beckett, on the other hand, has used the standard tongue both in French and in English simultaneously with colloquial homonyms.

The extent to which Beckett approaches Joyce's hermetic quality in Finnegans Wake, for instance, is according to the degree of slang he uses. Some words are well-known and act as revealing masks, others are part of underworld jargon, or archaisms, and act as obfuscating masks. In either case Beckett's language mirrors the artist who has with virtuosity given added dimensions to the quotidian word.

That Beckett's vernacular should invariably be bawdy is a comic device to balance his saturnine vision. It also reveals many of Beckett's dualisms, his Manicheism, his verbal oscillation between "church and pub" (Watt), sacred and profane, tragedy and comedy.

Where word-play, or punning, appears lost in translation, it is invariably recaptured a few lines or a few pages below. The structure was rendered faithfully at the formal level of the novel, and more significantly at the linguistic level. Unlike Joyce's pattern which is circular, Beckett's is spiralling: his language and his novels progress in an interlacing manner, breaking out of the solipsistic circle. The word itself pursues its own cyclical odyssey questing for truth.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO BECKETT'S LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATIONS

In the beginning was the pun--Murphy

J'ai l'amour du mot, les mots ont été mes seuls amours
--Têtes-Mortes

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Samuel Beckett's language. It is our belief that a linguistic approach to Beckett may reveal much that is obscured by conventional criticism. On the rare occasions when he has himself taken to literary criticism, Beckett has been at paints to emphasize "the quality of language" of Proust, for instance (Samuel Beckett, Proust, N.Y.: Grove Press, 1931, p. 67). In Poetry Is Vertical, signed by Beckett among others (transition 21, March 1932), there is the statement that "the final disintegration of the 'I' in the creative act is made possible by the use of a language which is a mantic instrument, and does not hesitate to adopt a revolutionary attitude toward word and syntax, going so far as to invent a hermetic language if necessary."

This would seem to confirm that Beckett wished to fashion a literary language: this he achieved.

The word "mantic" relates us to the pre-lingual aspect of language, that is, gesture, and its sacred use as a

hieroglyph. We may think of Watt and Mr. Knott in those terms: the one involving a questioning raise of the head, the other a negative nodding. The use of gesture is so important in Beckett that much of his work could be mimed; his characters' gestures and postures are ontological. Let us recall Watt's first appearance in the novel, Watt. He is barely visible but dimly seen by the Nixons and Mr. Hackett leaning against a distant wall, his relaxed pose suggesting a good-natured persona. To Mr. Hackett he has the quality of a neutral object, to Mrs. Nixon he is a being of indeterminate sex, whereas his effect on Mr. Nixon is to galvanize him into remembering an equivocal debt of six and ninepence. When Watt first takes the road to Mr. Knott's house his spiralling gait is not only a symptom of his mental malaise but a metaphor for the convoluted style and structure of the novel. When Watt finally effects his entry into Knott's house, his puzzlement is eloquently matched by his sitting in the kitchen picking his nose and by the surprise arrival of Arsene.

Our thesis, however, is directed not so much towards the pre-lingual as the lingual, and towards Beckett's use of "hermetic language." We should note, nevertheless, that the word logic is derived from the Greek logos, whose first and primary meaning was fabula, fable, carried into the Latin as favella--parabola, speech. In Greek the fable was also known as mythos, myth, from which arose the Latin

mutus, mute. This is a link with a work we consider seminal to an understanding of Beckett: his first published essay, "Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . Joyce," which appeared in Our Exagmination Round the Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress (Paris: Shakespeare and Co., 1929). The collection is a series of critiques of Joyce's Work in Progress (Finnegans Wake): all are articulate but none so perceptive as Beckett's, nor so revealing of the pattern of Beckett's future writing. We shall discuss the essay in detail in our conclusion. Suffice it to say at this point that in his slender essay Beckett not only relates Joyce to Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . [Joyce], the ellipses indicating the centuries that separate each writer from one another but points to his own forging of a "hermetic language" which partook of the hyeroglyph.

The "hermetic" quality we find in Joyce differs from that found in Beckett. Joyce's lies in his forming synthetic words out of a myriad of foreign idioms in addition to his own. In many ways Beckett's is more original. He not only follows Dante's use of the vernacular in the Commedia, but with great ingenuity makes simultaneous use of the standard idiom and its colloquial homonyms. Thereby he enriches a language that, like Joyce, he finds too impoverished to express the modern human condition. Thereby he transforms the word into a revealing mask where it is a commonly known vulgarism, into a concealing mask where it

belongs to underworld jargon. In every case the word became the mirror of an artist who had created a new language, as our analysis of two of Beckett's novels will demonstrate. Our analysis of his two essays will show the part played in his artistic creation by Dante, Vico, Joyce and Proust and the unique way in which he spun their threads into his work with the touch of the alchemist.

Jean-Louis Barrault's comments on Beckett's French led us to the belief that we must analyze a novel composed in French, L'Innommable, later self-translated into English by Beckett, in addition to his English novel, Watt, translated relatively recently into French by Ludovic and Agnès Janvier. This led to a study of Beckett's bi-lingualism and indirectly to the process of translation in Beckett. This was to lay aside the myth that Beckett's French is weakening and anglicized, as alleged by Ruby Cohn in Back to Beckett (the section on the "weakening strength of the French"). John Fletcher, in "Beckett, écrivain bilingue," finds an absence of verbal play in Beckett's French (Cahiers de l'Herne #31, p. 216); his article lists a series of expressions qualified as either gallicisms or anglicisms. The first argument is erroneous as we shall see later in our analysis of L'Innommable in particular. The second is equally misleading: Fletcher cites one example, inter alia, the use of "facultative stop" in the English text of Watt (p. 19) for "arrêt facultatif."

Aside from the adjective's appearance in the O.E.D., is its use not a deliberate ploy on Beckett's part rather than a gallicism? Is it not a successful attempt to inject comedy into the Nixons' conversation with Mr. Hackett by inserting an erudite word in the midst of plain talk? What happens, for instance, if we introduce such a word into the sentence, "Give us this day our daily bread"? We might legitimately say, "Give us this day our quotidian bread" (as indeed the French say, "Donnez-nous aujourd'hui notre pain quotidien"). The net effect is to give an incongruous note to the English disrupting its dignified simplicity by making it funny. Beckett successfully uses this device in his early novels.

Barrault's perceptive analysis of Beckett's language appears in Colin Duckworth's critical edition of En attendant Godot (London, Harrap and Co., 1966, p. xxxii), "En examinant attentivement une oeuvre comme Oh les beaux jours de Samuel Beckett on y découvre le premier germe du verbe de l'humanité." Beckett's French, we submit, is no more Anglo-Irish than his English is gallicized: each idiom is pure in its own right.

We soon realized that we were studying four separate idioms within Beckett's bi-lingualism: standard French and standard English simultaneously with their respective vernaculars. We were also examining four separate facets of Beckett: the author who first composed in English, who

collaborated with his translators, who from 1940 onward composed mainly in French, who for the major part of his career has translated his own work.

We were faced with numerous questions, the major one being, what is the essence of Beckett's text, and has it been captured in translation? To this end, we had to study all of Beckett's oeuvre, to see whether that elusive phenomenon, Beckett's "being," had indeed remained intact from one language to the other. We had to ask ourselves how the stylistic-semantic-phonetic structure had been dealt with: were there, in fact, differences in connotation of such major proportion as to result in essential reduction? How had literary allusions been related to their contextual archetype? How had puns and slang been handled? Was there any difference, as between one language and the other, in the intensity of Beckett's prime comic device, scatology? Was there a difference in tone between original and translation?

To answer the above, we chose to compare passages which seemed particularly to exemplify Beckett, whether they were instances of the stylistic counterpoint, which is at the base of the structure of both Watt and L'Innommable, whether they illustrated the spiralling, interlacing ontological movement of the text, represented Beckett's various themes, his irresistible penchant for word-games; above all, whether they showed the mask of comedy.

One of Beckett's masks needs elaboration here: Harold Hobson, after an interview with Beckett, reported on the novelist's liking for a "wonderful sentence" in Saint Augustine, whose Latin he could not quite remember, but which went approximately as follows: "Do not despair, one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume, one of the thieves was damned." (The sentence recurs somewhat paraphrased in Godot.)[1] The sentence has all the appearances of a Beckett construct: thesis, anti-thesis, diction, contradiction, with a religious allusion. Does it not also reflect one of Beckett's central conceits, irony and a desire to lead down the garden path any critic who would attempt to corner him? Consider the slang meaning of the sentence:"thieves' Latin" is a synonym for cant, "save" is to protect oneself by hedging, "damned" is the British bloody. Was not Mr. Beckett in fact saying to Mr. Hobson, I am speaking in cant, and hedging, because I bloody well want to protect myself? This would seem much more in character than a candid revelation.[2] At the same time he was revealing to Hobson his preoccupation with form and his essential

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[1]Quoted in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable. A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. J. D. O'Hara (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 8.

[2]For the above slang expressions, we are indebted to Eric Partridge, A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (N.Y.: MacMillan, supplement revised and enlarged, 1970).

Manicheism.

The full irony of Beckett's art becomes visible in the paradox of his conception of fiction: with all his delight in language, he sees a necessity to restore silence in a world filled with compulsive utterance. Thus many of his protagonists are obsessed with the silence that is death: while they may not be enchanted with life, they do not, however, actively seek death; they endure, questing, and the questing against heroic odds raises them to mythic proportions, while their god (but not their creator) is reduced to a distant uncaring force. Their creator, the author, is a witness both compassionate and ironic. In the last analysis, it is only with humor that we, and his creatures, are enabled to face his desolate soulscapes. The tone of comedy-despair is central to Beckett's vision, whether he is writing in English or in French.

Bi-lingualism is no new phenomenon to literature: Renaissance writers were equally at ease in Latin and in their mother tongue. This, however, represents a simple dichotomy between learned and vernacular idioms. Consider for instance Dante's Vita Nuova, and the Commedia. For contemporary writers, the distance between polished and colloquial style would not seem as great as between medieval Latin and il dolce stil nuovo, so that when we speak of bi-lingualism, we refer to writing in a foreign language in addition to the mother tongue. Nabokov is the only

novelist to approach in this area the author of Watt and L'Innommable. He was, however, wary of translating himself, and this sets him apart from Beckett. From the artistic point of view, another difference lies in Nabokov's writing in seriatim fashion at different times of his life, in Russian, German, French, and English: this also sets him apart from Beckett, who has, sometimes simultaneously, composed in two different tongues. Perhaps the most unique quality of Beckett's language is its multi-levelled meanings. Just as Dante, and perhaps pushing it further, he has written in a polished style, in whatever language, but used the colloquial, slang or cant even, at the same time. This naturally poses an extra problem in translation, for Beckett rarely allows his reader-critic to take his word at face value, but forces him to take part in his creative process.[3] We are therefore faced with more than a simple bi-lingual construct: at the very least, when we deal with Beckett, whether in French or in English, there are times, and these are multitudinous, when we are faced with four languages.

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[3]Consider, for example, one of Beckett's earliest stories, Dante and the Lobster, later revised and incorporated into More Pricks Than Kicks. This presents us with a protagonist anguished over the demise of the crustacean in the cooking-pot. However compassionate Belacqua Shuah may have been, there is no denying that lobster is a vulgarism for penis, so that compassion is gently derided by scatology.

Beckett turned to French for the major part of his oeuvre, because French was for him a more suitable vehicle for his exacting artistic purpose: quite simply, French is precise. There is probably another reason, and it is that in French he could give full rein to his bawdy humor without encountering the censorship of the puritanical Anglo-Saxon. At least at first; nowadays the mood is more relaxed, and scatology may be used in print with far less risk of censure.[4]

Beckett has never abandoned his mother tongue, translating into it, composing in it. As recently as 1976, he published in English That Time, Footfalls (N.Y. Grove, 1976) Not I (London: Calder and Boyars, 1973), Fizzle 7, also entitled Still, 1972, but published in France as Foirade 7, in the collection Pour finir encore et autres foirades (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1976), all translated by the author. Beckett stands unique, not only as a writer who oscillates between two languages, but one who for the most part has translated his own work.

Occasionally, Beckett has had collaboration in translating; on one occasion the translation was done solely by a critic friend. All That Fall (Tous ceux qui tombent,

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[4]When the English version of En attendant Godot was first published (1954), two years after its French publication in Paris, Beckett was forced to delete such obvious terms as erection. We shall see how adroitly he avoided the issue in Watt.

Paris: ed. de Minuit, 1957), and Embers (Cendres, Paris, ed. de Minuit, 1959) were translated into French by Robert Pinget and the author. Krapp's Last Tape (La dernière bande, Paris: ed. de Minuit, 1959) appeared in French as a translation by Pierre Leyris and Beckett, although Jérôme Lindon has said that the author entirely re-worked the translation.[5] From An Abandoned Work (D'un ouvrage abandonné, Paris: ed. de Minuit, 1967), and Watt (Paris: ed. de Minuit, 1968) were both translated into French by Ludovic and Agnès Janvier, "en collaboration avec l'auteur."

With the French works Beckett has had the assistance of Richard Seaver in translating Fin (The End, 1954), of Patrick Bowles for Molloy (Paris, 1955). Two extracts from Mercier et Camier were translated by Hugh Kenner (the critic friend), assisted by Raymond Federman, "with the permission of the author" (N.Y.: Grove, 1960). Nouvelles et textes pour rien (Stories and Texts for Nothing III, N.Y.: Grove, 1960) had the assistance of Anthony Bonner, although Federman feels that the title, being too literal a translation, is erroneous and therefore not chosen by the author.[6]

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[5]Raymond Federman and John Fletcher, Samuel Beckett. His Works and His Critics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 42.

[6]Federman, p. 85.

The rest of his immense output Beckett has written and translated alone, and we feel justified in emphasizing the magnitude of the literary-linguistic achievement of one who has composed sometimes simultaneously in French and in English, and been almost wholly responsible for the translation.

Translation has been a way of life for Beckett, accomplished alongside his purely original artistic creation. Sometime after he hurriedly wrote Whoroscope he translated Delta by Montale, Landscape by Raffaello Franchi, The Homecoming by Giovanni Commisso (all in 1930). In 1932, Edward Titus commissioned Beckett to translate Rimbaud's Bateau ivre. Beckett was duly paid, the work seemed lost for a time but is now included in Beckett's Collected Poems. Beckett translated three poems by André Breton, eleven by Paul Eluard, three by Breton and Eluard, and one by René Crevel: these all appeared in This Quarter V, Surrealist Number, Guest editor, André Breton, September, 1932. At the same time Beckett contributed to Poetry Is Vertical, a manifesto which appeared in transition 21, March, 1932, and was signed by Hans Arp, Beckett, Carl Einstein, Eugène Jolas.

Like Joyce, Beckett started his literary career as a poet. In 1931, he wrote "Hell Crane to Starling," a poem whose title is based on Dante's Commedia (Inferno, Canto V). This is the first creative indication we have

of Beckett's admiration for Dante. This was followed by another poem, "Text," a meditation on Canto XX of the Inferno. It was at this time that Beckett started experimenting with Provençal poetic forms, the Alba, the Serena, the Enueg.[7] The first mention of Dante had come two years earlier, in 1929, when Beckett had written his critical essay, "Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . Joyce" on Joyce's Work in Progress.

Beckett's relationship with Joyce has often been misrepresented: it was more than a social one. Joyce entrusted him with collaborating on a translation into French of Finnegans Wake's "Anna Livia Plurabelle" (Paris: N.R.F. XIX, May 1931, 633-646), and would not have done so had he not felt sure of Beckett's linguistic talents and knowledge of Irish myth. In addition Beckett on occasion took dictation from Joyce and was sometimes consulted on the Greek-rooted puns Joyce used in Finnegans Wake.[8] It may be from his association with Joyce that Beckett acquired his delight in verbal play. There is, however, a vast difference between the humor of the two writers: Joyce's is exuberant and Homeric; Beckett's is

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[7]The poems, thirteen in all, were first published in Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates (Paris: Europa, 1935).

[8]Richard Ellman, James Joyce (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1952), passim.

Rabelaisian, but most often a "rire jaune." The latter phrase describes Watt's laughter (Watt, p. 55). There is a further difference between the multi-lingual, often well-nigh hermetic fireworks display of Finnegans Wake, and Beckett's punning: Joyce's punning is a linguistic feat mingled with Irish folklore, whereas Beckett's shows profound literary erudition and a mastery of both English and French slang and underworld cant. Their aims were close.

The early Beckett shows traces of Joyce's influence: in Dante and the Lobster, which first appeared in This Quarter, V (December, 1932), we find this passage, "Belacqua was stuck in the first of the canti of the moon. He was so bogged . . . ."[9] A few wives later, Belacqua marries Thelma bbogs, etc. As he matured, Beckett became somewhat more subtle in his literary allusions, although he still made ironic references to Descartes, Dante, Rabelais, Balzac, parodied the scriptures, Shakespeare, and Racine. At times the biting irony seems a legacy from Swift, his countryman.[10]

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[9]The story was republished with revisions as the first tale in More Pricks Than Kicks (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), p. 9. Let us note the pun in the title of the collection, an ironic twist of the words Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus, Acts 9.5, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." We have here an early example of Beckett's Manicheism.

[10]Cf. Lemuel [Gulliver] in Malone meurt.

It is Dante's presence, however, which is most pervasive, whether in the names of Belacqua, Sordello, in the emphasis on the colors black and grey, which suggest hell and purgatory; the ending of Malone meurt is itself a sardonic parody of the beginning of the Purgatorio, as a group of lunatics set off in a boat on the Saturday morning between Good Friday and Easter, guided by a sadistic attendant, who hacks to death most of his charges. Dante's influence is most significant, we maintain, in Beckett's constant use of the vulgar tongue. Where Dante wrote in a variety of Italian vernaculr dialects, so did Beckett turn stylistically to slang and underworld cant for semantic richness. Dante was of course serious and deeply religious, Beckett is comic and irreverent, as evidenced in his allusions to the Scriptures, which in every case have a double scatological meaning. Like Mr. Hackett's mother he is torn between pub and chapel or in both.

Punning is a problem in translating, and Beckett has had the virtuosity sometimes to resort to bi-lingual punning. This is the case with Murphy's Celia, which puts into question the reality of Murphy's companion (S'il y a), and foreshadows his rejection of her to escape into the world of a lunatic asylum. She is also kin to Swift's Celia, etymologically a scabrous reference to the bowels.

Sometimes the pun appears lost, as when Murphy's rocker, is translated as berceuse, the usual French expression being chaise à bascule so that the impact of Murphy's "going off his rocker" seems negated.[11] However, the word berceuse not only implies the rocking movement of a rocker (bercer), but the return to the berceau (cradle), which is precisely what Murphy is doing, strapped naked to his rocker. Here translation, far from being deficient, has actually illuminated the original text. Besides, berceuse is a French regionalism for rocker.

In Molloy, the protagonists' names signify. Molloy's name has an etymological relationship with the Greek, moly, the charm which protected Odysseus from the wiles of Circe. The word moly appears in Beckett's text, at the point where Molloy is temporarily captivated by the dubious charms of Lousse-Loose-Louse-Louche. The French suggests additionally mou-mol-molle, not only that which is soft, but figuratively that which lacks vivacity, and is easily led. In translation, a moll is either a harlot (cf. Defoe's Moll Flanders), a sodomite, or simply a soft effeminate

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[11] As Ruby Cohn points out, Murphy is most off his rocker when he is actually on it (Back to Beckett, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 263). However, the important semantic relationship between the protagonist and his place of rest is in his name, Murphy, derived from the Greek Morpheus, god of sleep (Ovid) and literally shaper of dreams. Nor should we forget that demonic invention, the Murphy bed.

man.[12] Beckett is playing on all of the various meanings, opposing to Molloy in every way the man who will search for him, Moran. There is yet another interpretation of these names. If one takes into consideration Anglo-Irish (or English) pronunciation, Moran is MOR'N, whereas he is actually LESS'N Molloy. This is an example of Beckett's delight in verbal play. And, as always, he would if possible avoid being cornered into one specific meaning.

The semantic possibilities of Godot are manifold: in French, godasses-godiche-Godeau (who could either be Balzac's protagonist in Les Faiseurs, or a veteran cyclist of the Tour de France, fulfilling Hugh Kenner's happy phrase of the "Cartesian centaur"). In English, the name could be an imploration, or an imprecation hurled at the deity, go-down, a synonym for kitchen, itself slang for the pudend.

The title of Le Dépeupleur has an active connotation, which may implausibly enough be derived from a poem by Lamartine, "L'Isolement,"[13] which reveals at one level the harrowing search for the one lost. The poem also raises metaphysical questions which parallel those that set in motion the compulsive utterances of the Unnamable. In

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[12]'Moll's hole' is a vulgarism for the female pudend.

[13]Line 28. "Un seul être vous manque et tout est depeuplé."

translation the above récit has a title which appears to change the tone: The Lost Ones relates the locus to hell rather than purgatory, but there are other meanings as well. Consider, for instance, Dante's famous line, "Per me si va trà la perduta gente" (Inferno, III). However, heaven is a vulgarism for the pudend, while Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory were also three taverns situated near Westminster Hall (Ben Jonson, The Alchemist, quoted in Partridge, p. 384).

The densest and perhaps most poetic of Beckett's texts, Comment c'est, would seem to lose in translation the full connotation of its title (Commencer), but in actuality How It Is well conveys the distancing, the ironic resignation of the protagonist to his life face down in the primeval slime. The slime is equally end-slime, as the Unnamable's Worm is both beginning- and end-life.

Never translated into French Beckett's early essay on Proust, a critical study of A la recherche . . . , is significant in its revelation of the threads he saw in Proust and was later to weave into his own work: the preoccupation with time, memory, habit, boredom, sexuality all place Beckett in the mainstream of twentieth-century writing.[14]

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[14]Samuel Beckett, Proust (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931, and N.Y.: Grove Press, 1937).

N.B. For most of the double meanings that occur we owe a debt to the O.E.D., Littré, Eric Partridge, A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (N.Y.: Macmillan

His comic mask in the face of an absurd universe, as he sees it, situates him in the forefront of the "new writing."

In the last analysis we shall question whether the linguistic differences in connotation between Beckett's original text and its translation are a stigma and could brand the translator as a traitor. Could it not be that whatever essential losses occur are in fact regained, if not at that precise point somewhere else in the text? At the outset we rather think so. Our conclusion will define the extent of Beckett's links with Dante, Proust and Joyce, and most significantly his fashioning of a new literary idiom.

1937, supplement revised and enlarged, 1970, French-English Dictionary of Slang and Colloquialisms (London: Harrap, 1970), Slang and Its Analogues, ed. Farmer and Henley (Reprint N.Y.: Kraus, 1965), Nouveau dictionnaire des difficultés en français, dir. F. Mitterand (Paris: Hachette, 1976). Both O.E.D. and Littré, monuments of erudition, were often too prudish to include bawdy connotations.

CHAPTER II

WATT AND HOW THE TRANSLATORS DEALT WITH ITS SEMANTICS

> Life . . . is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing--Macbeth, V, 5
>
> And all the sounds meaning nothing--Watt

Watt is essentially a novel of meaning; its translation hence acquires all the more importance. Beckett had established at the outset the contrapuntal pattern, which pits the questioning Watt against the negative Knott. The pun on their names (What-Not) signifies at one level the dilemma which the protagonist, his compulsive ratiocinations, fascination with series and permutations endured in the vague non-rational world of the antagonist. The conflict between rational and irrational, reality and illusion has no victor: Watt has become a lunatic, but Knott's elaborate conceits crumble; his vast protean domain has shrunk to the space of his room. The pun on the names Watt-Knott seems important, for it would appear to involve metaphysical questions of ontology, and would seem, at a deeper level, to be putting those very questions to the reader-critic.

Actually, it is man himself who, by his cogito is bound to ask these very questions, but receiving no answer,

feels his sum threatened. Beckett's vision sees no exit, and his protagonists are as Watt driven to madness, as Didi-Gogo wait interminably and resignedly for Godot, or again, as in Le Dépeupleur, mill around hopelessly, searching.

Beckett sweeps away serious metaphysical speculations in one grim torrent of laughter, for at yet another level of meaning, the doublet Watt-Knott is scatological, and it is this conceit which here subsumes all others.

The tragedy of Watt's lunacy is mitigated first by his friendship with Sam, who inhabits his mad world, and assumes the role of narrator, but in the last analysis, it is comedy, black and ironic, which like a wave over a sand-castle engulfs the serious quality of the construct and gives it an added dimension. Even in the early Beckett (Watt was composed in the 1940s), we have the essence of his later works: tragedy existing beside comedy, diction beside contradiction, question beside negation, the rational beside the irrational. Beckett structures to demolish, states to deny, approaches le néant of being to retreat at the brink. The awesomeness of reality, too stark to contemplate, is defused by the doubles-entendres of the scatology. In the end, however, this comic device turns on itself, and what could be a union in sexuality serves to enhance the essential loneliness of man. There is also the fear that in sexual union the partners are cannibalized, so to speak, so that scatology may serve as

a self-protective humorous device.

Beckett weaves the above threads elegantly into his text: the question is whether the translation grasps them and obtains the same results.

In addition to capturing the being of the novel, Watt, does the translation capture its basic structure?

The tone of the novel is set at the very beginning, when Hackett, conversing quotidianly with the Nixons, asks, "You remember Grehan?" (p. 10). The French equivalent is, "Vous vous souvenez de Green?" Innocuous enough a remark, or so it would seem on the surface, with a suitable Irish spelling in the English version. Hackett then offers a first reading-draft, or primeur (p. 11), of a poem. The innocent reader has been caught in the trap of believing that Beckett was here using a gallicism (after all, Watt was composed in the Vaucluse, while Beckett was busy perfecting his French, and working with the Resistance forces). It is in the translation of the poem, "To Nelly" (p. 11) that he tastes of the fruit of knowledge, so to speak, and returns to the English text for confirmation of his findings.

In the fourth line of the first stanza, the French version uses the word bande, a common slang term for erection.[1]

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[1]Cf. Beckett, Krapp's Last Tape, translated as La Dernière bande, and Bando, the remedy suggested for his impotence to Arthur, in Watt (p. 170).

The question arises whether the French then is more scatological than the English original. The answer is that it is not, but that Beckett, either to avoid offending the puritanical streak in an English reader or simply out of an impish desire to cover his tracks, has taken to using Elizabethan or underworld slang, whereas he has felt less compunction here when translating into French or composing in French.

The relationship between Grehan-Green-primeur, and the poem becomes evident: Green means coition,[2] prime, sexually excited, additionally suggesting a pump, not to mention that Hackett-Hack means bawd, and Nixon love (that of master-servant). One could accept these as Freudian slips, or at least malapropisms, were it not that the juxtaposition of such terms throughout the novel makes it evidence of Beckett's intentions: he is forcing the reader not to take any word or name at its face value, hence forcing him to take part in the creative process; he is also injecting bawdy laughter to alleviate tragedy; in the last analysis, he views sex as emphasizing man's alienation from his fellow-being, rather than as a loving union, and again as a threat, hence the mockery.

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[2]Herrick uses, "to get a green gown," which plainly means fuck, Hester, "Corinna's gone a Maying," 1648, O.E.D.

TO NELLY

To thee, sweet Nell, when shadows fall
Jug-Jug! Jug-Jug!
I here in thrall
My wanton thoughts do turn.
Walks she out yet with Byrne?
Moves Hyde his hand amid her skirts
As erst? I ask, and Echo answers: Certes.

Tis well! Tis well! Far, far be it
Pu-we! Pu-we!
From me, my tit,
Such innocent joys to chide.
Burn, burn with Byrne, from Hyde
Hide naught-hide naught save what
Is Greh'n's. IT hide from Hyde, with Byrne burn not.

IT! Peerless gage of maidenhead!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Would that I could
Be certain in my mind
Upon discharge to find
Neath Cpuid's flow'r, hey nonny O!
Diana's blushing bud <u>in statu quo</u>

Then darkly kindle durst my soul
Tu whit! Tu whoo!
As on it stole
The murmur to become
Epithalamium,
And Hymen o'er my senses shed
The dewy forejoys of the marriage-bed.

Enough --

(p. 11)

By its very title, the poem suggests a love lyric since Nelly is a form of Helen, the archetypal beloved. However the diminution in the name suggests that either the love or the beloved are reductions of the Homeric model.

The text of the original and its translation into French are both significant in their structure and literary allusions. The English is Elizabethan in tone and

language, and whereas the French is on the whole more modern it alludes to Villon and Rabelais, as we shall see. The English text is a parody of a well-known poem, "Spring," by Thomas Nash (1567-1601). The translation follows:

A NELLY

Vers toi, m'amour vienne la nuit
(Vienne la nuit)
Dans ma cellule
Je bande en soupirant.
Avecques Dunn sort-elle encore?
Denis va-t-il sous ses jupes fouillant
Encore? Lors Echo de répondre, Encore, encore.

C'est bon! C'est bon! Loin loin de moi
(Loin loin de moi)
De blâmer, ange,
D'aussi chastes ébats.
Donne à Dunn tout, à Denis ne dénie
Que ce qui appartient à Green. Mais ÇA,
Le dénie à Denis, à Dunn ne donne mie.

ÇA! Gage exquis d'intactitude!
(D'intactitude!)
Ah te pouvoir
Me porter garant, bitte,
Qu'au sortir de ton long cachot
Tu vas revoir sous la fleur d'Aphrodite
Le bouton d'Artémis fidèle au statu quo.

Alors pourrait s'embraser l'âme
(S'embraser l'âme)
Comme au lointain
S'annoncent les accents
D'épithalames éperdus
Et Hymen épancher sur tous mes sens
Du lit des voluptés les joyeux avant-jus.

Assez --

(p. 12)

The presence of Villon and his Testament are very much alive in the mention of "cellule-cachot," the usage

of "m'amour," "avecques," "mie," all archaic terms, and in the irreverent scurrilous tone. Later in the novel the translators use the expression "d'antan" (p. 97), a clear allusion to Villon's "Balade des dames du temps jadis."[3] Yet another of Villon's key-adjectives in the Testament occurs later: both will be discussed at the proper time in the text. La Fontaine uses "ébats" for the act of love, a word the translators employed with a similar suggestiveness in Watt-French (p. 9). The word-play Burn-Byrne - Hyde-hide reappears in Donne-Dunn - Denis-dénie.[4] Furthermore donne à-ne dénie que echoes the slang meaning of burn-Byrne, which is cheating, an augury of things to come if one thinks ahead to the twins Con-Art[ist] and to Louit's academic con act in Section III. The spiralling structure of the novel is already apparent, as words link together the various episodes of Watt. Donne à is moreover the equivalent of the vulgarism, "What Harry gave Doll," echoed in bitte, a euphemism for the male member. IT is the famous monosyllable, perfectly translated as ÇA, too universal to be given a reference except to the Wife of

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[3]François Villon, Oeuvres (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967, t.1), "Balade des dames du temps jadis," in Testament, lines 336, 344, 352, 356.

[4]Dunn has several other slang meanings, among which is the expression, "Dunn's three and ninepenny," which is a cheap bowler hat, a frequently recurring image in Beckett, here relating the passage to Watt's debt to Mr. Nixon. A further connotation of hat (or old hat) will be discussed at the appropriate place in the text.

Bath's bele chose.[5] The exclamations, "Jug! jug!" "Pu-we!" "Cuckoo!" "Tu-whit!" "Tu-whoo!" are on one level onomatopoetic, mimicking the sounds of birds.[6] They are also a parody of a well-known poem, "Spring," by Thomas Nash (1567-1601).[7] The third stanza of that poem makes abundantly clear that these are also terms of venery. Jug-jug! has the connotation of prison (echoed in cellule-cachot),[8] mistress or beloved (m'amour) and the act of love, sometimes written as jig-jig. Pu-we-pu-we! is to cry in a plaintive manner which relates to soupirant and loin loin de moi. Tit is slang for girl, hence m'amour, ange but also denotes breasts (and is a link to Tetty Nixon) and is related to tetin, Rabelais' word for penis.[9] Tit is additionally a euphemism for the pudend. Cuckoo may mean cuckold, a reference to Byrne-burn, and is also a slang equivalent of the male member, which in turn relates to bande. Tu-whit-tu-whoo! imitates the cry of the owl,

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[5]Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, W. of B. Prologue.

[6]O.E.D. quotes Sidney's Arcadia, III, 398, "The birds likewise with chirp and puing.

[7]Thomas Nash, "Spring," whose penultimate and ultimate lines are: "Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing, Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to whitta woo!"

[8]Rabelais uses cellulées, referring to imprisonment in the womb. In Oeuvres. Le Tiers Livre . . . (Paris: Champion, 1931), p. 28.

[9]Tiers Livre, p. 145 (teste-testin).

suggesting the shadows-imprisonment--nuit-cachot, the darkness of incarceration-womb, and the time at which love-making often occurs, and at which the author is most pained. Further, whit is archaic cant for prison. The owl, whose cry is imitated, has several other connotations: it may mean prostitute (relating it to Hackett, the bawd), screwed, in the sense of one imprisoned, within a cell or a vagina.[10]

Thrall may be either misery or captivity, but as the O.E.D. points out, has been associated with wanton pleasures,[11] echoed in Beckett's fourth line, "wanton thoughts." Hey nonny O is a widely used euphemism for either the act of love or the female pudendum,[12] to which we may add flower-fleur d'Aphrodite-bud-bouton, which are traditional topoi associated with love, and here virginity. The wistful hope of "become Epithalamium" reveals itself in "s'annoncent les accents d'Epithalames," and the poem ends on a triumphant note of consummation flawed by the fear of deceit.

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[10] Love's Labour's Lost, V, 2. "Tu whit-tu-who While greasy Joan doth keel the pot." The last two substantives are Elizabethan slang for bottom and cunt, respectively.

[11] O.E.D. quotes G. Herbert (1633), Temple, Church-porch, xx. "When wanton pleasures beckon us to thrall."

[12] O.E.D. describes it as a refrain used to cover indelicate allusions. But As You Like It, V, iii, is very specific, "It was a lover and his lass . . ." The same is true of Hamlet, IV, v, "Hey non, nony, hey, nony."

The extraordinary translation of the text has captured the essence of Beckett's original. It has furthermore related the translation contextually to an equivalent period in French literature. The poem itself, in the two languages, is both a celebration and a bitter parody of an epithalamium. It seems clear that in this passage, Beckett worked closely with his translators, giving them the full range of his connotations. It seems clear too that Beckett's literary allusions show not only erudition but a love of the word for itself: the scatology is lost in the joy of the logos and its infinite varieties, expressed in the standard idiom and its vernacular homonyms.

Structurally, the translation has also captured Beckett's spiral interlacing of the themes of love-sex-hope, and their antitheses, as well as the relationship the poem bears to the beginning of the novel, and to later sections in which the same themes are interwoven (a same key-word repeated, or an allusion, as here to Villon, in translation). Above all, the translation has captured the stylistic irony of the doubles-entendres, the self-mockery of the lover, who discovers the loneliness of tasting the bitter fruit.

Beckett's comedy pursues its course, as Mrs. Nixon tells Hackett of the "dollar-dolour" of her going into labor at a dinner party. In translation, labour is

"labours" (p. 14), which would at first seem to be an anglicism. However, the word has an alternative meaning,[13] which does not negate the primary connotation, tillage, which may be seen as a euphemism for the act which results in child-bearing. The French reproduces well Beckett's humor, in which dinner-party-birth-game of billiards occur in swift succession. The incongruity of the new-born walking down the staircase, led by his mother, gains in comedy since downstairs (p. 15) is yet another colloquialism for the pudend.

Hackett then answers the Nixons' questioning about his childhood fall from a ladder. The latter word is deliberately ambiguous: it has been linked to Wittgenstein's ladder of meaning, but it is also another slang word for the pudendum mulieris: Beckett may have been examining philosophical questions, but simultaneously he has kept an eye on comic possibilities (or connotations). Thus, the fall from a ladder may well simply mean birth, and Hackett la Bosse could have been born "Hunchy Hackett," added to which, hump-hunchy is slang for copulation.

There ensue a series of puns worth examining. If we bear in mind, on a surface level, that Hackett's name

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[12]Littré quotes Chateaubriand, Génie, I, III, 2. "Adam, témoin des labeurs de son épouse, et recevant dans ses bras Caïn . . . ."

means bawd, that his mother had left him for a bistro, we hear that his father "was out breaking stones on Prince William's Seat" (p. 16). The humor of breaking stones on a prince's seat seems lost in translation (the seat in question being a mountain near Foxrock, Beckett's birthplace), but "pierre à casser" is another colloquialism for the male member, and although the translation reads, "tailler le granit dans la montagne," (p. 17) Beckett's pun is captured a few lines below in le "cliquetis lointain" (p. 17)--for distant clink: cliquetis being the equivalent of hamecon-radis-soulier, etc.,[14] and having the added advantage of relating the entire passage to the questioning level of Beckett's contrapuntal sound pattern, which, in French, is largely characterized by the phoneme, k. Additionally the words stone-rock-pierre recur throughout Watt as a religious-scatological motif, mingling sacred and profane, as one aspect of his dualism.

The appearance on the scene of the protagonist, Watt, merits close attention. His name, aside from the questioning What, signifies either a hare, or a wily cautious man.[15]

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[14] In English, lobster-milkman-radish, etc., i.e., penis.

[15] O.E.D. quotes the word from the Coventry Mysteries, 294 (1400) . . . "hym a straunge Watt." From the text, it is fairly obvious that Beckett also derived the name from Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis, 697, "Poor Watt, far off upon a hill Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear," where the connotation hare-rabbit-cunny is self-explanatory.

The translation, as we shall see, reflects all connotations, in addition to the ironic "wattman," (p. 22) which relates Watt to the Scots engineer (where the text refers to an engine-driver).[16] The juxtaposition of Watt with his antagonist Knott gives rise to several other word-plays, which we shall discuss when the protagonist enters Knott's domain. Beckett's Watt makes his entry on-stage in this manner:

> On the far side of the street, opposite where they sat, a tram stopped. It remained stationary for some little time, and they heard the voice of the conductor, raised in anger. Then it moved on, disclosing on the pavement, motionless, a solitary figure, lit less and less by the receding lights, until it was scarcely to be distinguished from the dim wall behind it. Tetty was not sure whether it was a man or a woman. Mr. Hackett was not sure that it was not a parcel, a carpet, for example, or a roll of tarpaulin, wrapped up in dark paper and tied about the middle with a cord. Goff rose, without a word, and rapidly crossed the street. Tetty and Mr. Hackett could see his eager gestures, for his coat was light in colour, and hear his voice, raised in remonstrance. But Watt moved no more, as far as they could see than if he had been of stone, and if he spoke he spoke so low that they did not hear him.
>
> Mr. Hackett did not know-when he had been more intrigued, nay, he did not know when he had been so intrigued. He did not know either what it was that so intrigued him. What is it that so intrigues me, he said . . . yet I burn with curiosity and wonder. (pp. 17-18)

The translation reads as follows:

> De l'autre côté de la rue, en face d'où ils étaient assis, un tram s'arrêta. Il resta en place un bon

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[16] Beckett employs wattmen for railroad workers (Proust, p. 52). It has that significance in French.

> moment et ils entendirent, grossie par la colère, la voix du controleur. Puis il repartit, découvrant sur le trottoir, immobile, une forme solitaire qu'éclairaient de moins en moins, à mesure qu'elles s'éloignaient, les lumières du véhicule, et qui bientôt se détacha à peine du mur sombre derrière elle. Tetty se demanda si c'était un homme ou une femme. Monsieur Hackett se demanda si ce n'était pas un colis, un tapis, par exemple ou un rouleau de toile goudronnée enveloppé de papier brun et ficelé au milieu. Goff se leva sans un mot, et traversa rapidement la rue. Tetty et Monsieur Nixon pouvaient voir ses gestes impétueux, car sa veste était de couleur claire, et entendre sa voix vibrante de reproche. Mais Watt ne bougeait pas plus, pour autant qu'ils puissent voir, que s'il avait été de pierre, et s'il parlait il parlait si bas qu'aucun son ne leur parvenait.
>
> Monsieur Hackett n'aurait pas su dire quand il avait été aussi fortement intrigué. Il n'aurait pas su dire non plus ce que c'était qui l'intriguait si fortement. Quest ce que c'est, dit-il. qui m'intrigue si fortement . . . et cependant je brûle de curiosité et d'émerveillement.
>
> (pp. 17-18)

The significance of the passages lies in their description of the essential Watt, soft-spoken, languid. Above all, he seems endowed with an ambiguous quality, which invites questioning, and sets him apart from his fellow: the translation has caught the being of Beckett's Watt, lanky, inert, placid, a solitary stranger whose sex is indeterminate to Mrs. Nixon, of whose human quality Hackett is in doubt. At one point, the translation seems to have the advantage over Beckett's text: in one word, "ficelé," it conveys the image Hackett has of a parcel tied about with a cord. Aside from introducing Watt onstage as an equivocal stranger, the passage is significant in its time-space relationship to other incidents in the

novel: that is, it is an integral part of its structure. The attribute, of stone ("de pierre") conferred upon Watt's stance refers the reader back to Hackett's accident (or birth), while his father was hacking stones on Prince William's Seat. On the other hand, the receding lights are a link forward to the fleeing lights (p. 29), which Watt observes on his train journey with Mr. Spiro. The translation accomplished the same by using the adjective, "impétueux" of Nixon's eager gestures, an adjective applied to these lights, in the later passage in translation: "lumière impétueuse" (p. 34). The impression made by Watt on Hackett, I burn with curiosity and wonder, refers back to the Byrne-burn of the poem, "To Nelly," but is also echoed in Watt's incident with the porter and his milk-cans, "there were connoisseurs on whom the exceptional quality of Watt was not lost" (p. 25)--"Mais il y avait là des connaisseurs à qui ne pouvait échapper l'exceptionnelle qualité de Watt" (p. 29). Watt then invites question and wonderment, "did not know when-did not know when-did not know . . . what-What is . . .--"n'aurait pas su dire quand-n'aurait pas su dire ce que-Qu'est ce que c'est."[17]

Not only has the translation captured here the essence

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[17]One should also add that the stones are a euphemism for testicles, and that Nixon's anger is provoked by Watt's debt of "six and ninepence" (six shillings et neuf pence), the English being derived from the French scatological expression, six-neuf.

of Watt's protagonist, the spectators' view of him, but it has also kept intact the ontological interlacing structure, which relates in time and space the various sections of the novel, by the deliberate usage of specific words within the context. It has, furthermore, preserved the integrity of Beckett's textual contrapuntal pattern of question-negation and the comedy of the doubles-entendres.

The interlacing continues in English, with Watt's being characterized as "not a native of the rocks" (p. 21) an obvious reference to the granite surroundings of Beckett's native Foxrock. In translation, the geographical allusion becomes a literary one (to Virgil), as a sentence is added, "Monsieur Hackett n'avait pas lu ses Eglogues pour rien." (p. 24)

Arsene's speech is in many ways the most important passage of the first section of Beckett's Watt. Arsene's name itself is a self-evident pun, which meaningless in translation, finds its French equivalent later in the twins, Con-Art, who are in charge of disposing of Knott's left-over food. The speech is important, because it contains the three main conceits on which Beckett has structured his novel: meaning, sound, le néant, each one streaked with the comic vein, which characterizes Beckett. Irony, then, never to be underestimated, at the outset defines Arsene's monologue as a short statement (p. 39), when it is in fact twenty-five pages long, delivered in two

paragraphs, as it were in one breath; it is a parody of Shakespeare; it is compulsive utterance and action, found in Mary's eating habits, which relate this passage to the manic activities of Erskine up and down the staircase, in Section II, where the reader is also faced with Watt's sempiternal elaboration of the Lynch family's geneology.[18] The passage is poetic, filled with repetition, alliteration, rhyming: an excerpt illustrates most of the above characteristics, and the manner in which the translators approached them:

> Haw! how it all comes back to me, to be sure. That look! That weary watchful vacancy! The man arrives! The dark ways all behind, all within, the long dark ways, in his head, in his side, in his hands and feet, and he sits in the red gloom, picking his nose, waiting for the dawn to break. The dawn! The sun! The light! Haw! The long blue days, for his head, for his side, and the little paths for his feet, and all the brightness to touch and gather. Through the grass the little moss-paths, bony with old roots, and the trees sticking up, and the flowers sticking up, and the fruit hanging down, and the white exhausted butterflies, and the birds never the same darting all day into hiding. And all the sounds meaning nothing. Then at night rest in the quiet house, there are no roads, no streets any more, you lie down by a window opening on refuge, the little sounds come that demand nothing, ordain nothing, explain nothing, propound nothing, and the short necessary night is soon ended, and the sky blue again over all the secret places where nobody comes, the

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[18] We have already discussed the double-entendre on downstairs; the pun, non-existent in French, is recaptured in the preoccupation with Erskine's key-clé, slang for penis, as serrure and lock are for the feminine equivalent. Lynch, on the other hand, is a strip of land left uncultivated between two fields: the Lynch family's diseased but ample procreation is an ironic twist of that meaning.

> secret places never the same, but always simple and indifferent, always mere places, sites of a stirring beyond coming and going, of a being so light and free, that it is as the being of nothing.
> (p. 39)

"le bref exposé" similarly is composed of one paragraph thirty-two pages long in translation. The sister passage of the above follows:

> Ha! comme tout me revient, bon Dieu! Cet oeil! Ce vide! Cette vigilance! Cette lassitude! L'homme arrive. Les chemins obscurs tous derrière lui, tous en lui, les longs chemins obscurs, dans sa tête, ses flancs, ses mains, ses pieds, et lui assis dans l'ombre vermeille, se curant le nez, attendant l'aube. L'aube! Le soleil! la lumière! Ha! Les lents jours d'azur pour sa tête, ses flancs, et les petits sentiers pour ses pieds, toute cette clarté à tâter et à prendre. Par l'herbe les petits sentiers de mousse, aux racines osseuses, et les arbres fichés en terre, et les fleurs fichées en terre, et les fruits pendant à terre, et les papillons blancs exténués, et les oiseaux jamais les mêmes filant se cacher de l'aube au soir. Et tous les bruits ne signifiant rien. Puis repos la nuit dans la maison tranquille, plus de routes, plus de rues, on se couche près d'une fenêtre s'ouvrant sur le refuge, les petits bruits arrivent qui ne réclament rien, n'ordonnent rien, ne proposent rien, n'expliquent rien, et la brève nuit nécessaire est tôt finie, et le ciel bleu de nouveau sur tous les endroits secrets jamais les mêmes, mais toujours simples et indifférents, purs endroits toujours, où se mouvoir n'est ni aller ni venir, ou être se fait présence si légère que c'est comme la présence de rien.
> (p. 44)

The crux of Beckett's passage is the parody of a line of Shakespeare's Macbeth, which in Watt appears as "and all the sounds, meaning nothing"; the lines in Macbeth are "[Life] is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing."[19] Watt is indeed a tale told by an

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[19] Macbeth, V, v.

idiot, Watt, filtered through the scarcely saner consciousness of his friend Sam, filled with meaning, sound, and facing the horror of the nothingness that is Knott's domain. The semantic-phonetic-ontological pattern of Beckett's novel remains intact in translation, the bewildering aspects of the world revealed in French by one phrase, "Ce vide!" Watt, by his humanity doomed to ponder, question, rationalize, is driven to lunacy by the irrationality of Knott's environs, which are a metaphor for the universe: Beckett's message, accurately rendered in translation, is that man cannot impose a rational pattern on irrational surroundings; he is doomed to feel alienated. Watt's "punishment" is insanity, for he cannot grasp, or accept nought, le vide, as a mathematical function of existence. Still less can he grasp the possibility that Knott might be less than zero: absolutes are comforting, and Knott's less than not-ness has precipitated his breakdown.

In the first sentence of the above passage, the exclamation, "to be sure," has an ambiguity resolved in translation. It is an Irish expression, but also a grasping at a straw: man wants to be sure, and in his attempts has fashioned him a god in his own image. The French, "Bon Dieu!," is both an equivalent colloquialism, and an apt appeal to the deity. This thread is followed in the

unmistakably religious, "L'homme arive" (The man arrives).[20] This is continued in the echoed "tête-flancs-mains-pieds" (head-side-hands-feet), in "tâter," which translates Beckett's touch.[21] These words are a link back to the beginning of the novel, Hackett's accident, Watt's appearance (pierre-rock-stone), and a link forward to the ending of Arsene's speech, "before the cock crows," and to Section III of Watt, where Sam describes Watt's injured head, side, feet, and anoints his head in a symbolic gesture. (p. 163)

Lest the reader be led astray into thinking of Beckett as religious, let us remember that all the terms used have a slang or scatological meaning in both French and English. Saint-Peter-pierre-cock, in particular, are jargon for penis. The lyrical mood of the passage is also broken by the intrusion of "se curant le nez" (picking his nose). Thus a few icons that seemed to imply faith on the part of Beckett reveal his essential self-mocking iconoclasm, or rather his vision of the universe as dual in nature.

Arsene's own impressions are related in translation by repeated use of the demonstrative, "Cet oeil! Ce vide! Cette vigilance! Cette lassitude! . . . cette clarté." In the last phrase, Beckett had merely used the article,

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[20]Cf. MacMann-Son of Man, (in Malone Meurt), Luke 9.56, etc., but also the Ecce Homo of John 19.5, etc.

[21]Cf. the rebuke to Thomas, John 20.27, and the warning to Mary Magdalene, "Noli me tangere," John 20.17.

the [brightness]: the translation gives the text a greater precision. The middle three phrases (Ce vide! Cette vigilance! Cette lassitude!), in addition to reproducing Beckett's echo, have the merit of achieving the rhythm of the English, by placing three exlamation marks in succession, and syncopating the French, equalling "that weary watchful vacancy." The translation also achieves by repetition of the demonstratives the assonance of Beckett's "weary watchful . . . ways." Of the alternative translations for ways, "Chemin" is more specific (a narrow path), but "voies," which might have been more accurate carries with it the connotation, voix, troublesome in view of the various voices Watt has to contend with. Another example of precision in translation is the qualifying of ways behind, all within: the translators are justified in adding the pronomial, "derrière lui," "en lui," in order to relate the ways to the man. Again, side might have become "côtés," but quite rightly in "flancs" preserves the Biblical language. "Vermeille" would seem to subsume Beckett's red, but "ombre rouge" would have been unpleasant phonetically, whereas the translation seizes well the antithetical resplendence of red gloom. Waiting for the dawn to break is a phrase whose imagery reappears in "attendant l'aube." "D'azur" is a felicitous choice for blue [days] in that it reflects the symbolism of Beckett's adjective, itself a probable allusion to Mallarmé's "azur," and its many

connotations. Like the latter, Beckett is also obsessed with the color white, especially in Têtes-Mortes, as a symbol of the blank page which must be written on. Both authors suffered from difficulty in writing, from increasing spareness in composition and preoccupation with symbolism. The final line of Watt's Addenda, "no symbols where none intended" (p. 254), is both accurate and ironic: it culminates pages fraught with symbols, from the drawsheet, the chord in C Major to Watt's dread of sphinxes. The later use of blue is more clearly associated with the sky, so that "bleu" suffices. "Sentiers" for paths is better than "chemin" would have been, not only because the latter would have been repetitious, but because Beckett clearly intended the first way to be spiritual, whereas "sentiers" has the physical connotation of sentir, which leads naturally to the feet treading on moss and on hard old roots. Both substantives have in each language the additional euphemistic meaning of male and female genitalia.

There is an apparent difference between Beckett's trees [and flowers] sticking up, and the translations "les arbres fichés en terre" (and similarly les fleurs . . .). The directional movement has been changed from upward to downward. However, the French has seized the colloquial tone of sticking in "fiché," and indeed the image has preserved its integrity. Furthermore, both expressions are

slang for coition. The spatial movement is similar in Beckett's fruit hanging down, and "fruits pendant à terre." Additionally, both verbs have a sexual connotation in each language.

The birds hiding all day might have been given as "tout le jour durant," but "de l'aube au soir" relates the phrase to Watt's waiting in the kitchen for dawn to break: another dexterous interweaving, this in translation. Kitchen is, of course, yet another low term for the pudend.

One of Beckett's key words, or conceits, sounds, is perhaps inadequately rendered as "bruits," for bruits are noises: son might have been a better choice, especially if we consider the allusion to Macbeth, but the translators are perhaps looking ahead to the fluttering of butterflies, the flight of birds, so that the ontological reduction is valid. As darkness falls, Beckett does reduce his noises to little sounds ("petits bruits"), which are overwhelmed by the series of nothing-nothing-nothing-nothing--"rien-rien-rien-rien." Here again, intactitude in translation.

The distancing of indifferent mere places over which the sun pours its blueness acquires an interesting quality in French. "Endroits purs" has the original quality of only and simple, but adds to it the purity of intactitude, and relates it to "azur,"[22] and to Nelly's statu quo.

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[22]Again, it would seem, a literary allusion to Mallarme, in which we may see the fine hand of Beckett collaborating with his translators.

Another example of textual interlacing,[23] and fidelity to the original structure of the novel.

Sites of a stirring has an assonance, which carries the phrase into the rhyming coming and going. Here the translation, "où se mouvoir," seems heavy in comparison: "se remuer" might have better approximated the delicacy of the original, particularly in view of the "being so light and free" that follows. "Mouvoir," endowed with the attributes of a moving van, can also be related to "beyond coming and going," and thus may be seen as maintaining the integrity of the text.

The freedom of Beckett's being so light and free has been interestingly omitted in "être se fait présence." However, to avoid the ambiguity in French of être (state of being)-être (human being), the translation had to resort to qualifying "être" by "presence." Beckett removed the ambiguity of a being by use of the definite article, the [being of nothing]. The translators could have plagiarized Sartre, and used the expression, "l'être du néant," but this would have been too fixed and facile, so that in the last analysis, "être-présence-rien" are more faithful to the spirit of Beckett.

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[23]Or, as Beckett would put it, spiralling (cf. L'Innommable, p. 59). As we shall see this type of structure was related by Beckett to Vico and Joyce, in his essay on Joyce. Beckett uses it to give a taut shape to his writing.

This analysis of the foregoing passage from Beckett's Watt, and its translation, brings us to several conclusions. First of all, and perhaps too obviously, the essence of a text resides in its being, and this the translation has captured: the self-mockery which, as a clown's mask and costume, turns the eye from tragedy, or metaphysical profundity, whenever their presence becomes threatening meanwhile adding another dimension to impending tragedy; the counterpoint, then, between tragedy and comedy, delicately balanced; the structural entrelacement of words and incidents, which relate one to the other various sections of Beckett's text. Then, whenever there are differences in connotation between Beckett and the French version (purs vs. mere, bruits vs. sounds, se mouvoir vs. stirring, chemins vs. ways, sentiers vs. paths), each is found to be validated, either because it preserves the initial image, relates the word to another literary allusion (thus illuminating the text), or to later phrases in the text, maintaining the structural integrity of the original. The translation also eliminates possible textual ambiguities (chemins-être-présence), and captures, at the tip of Beckett's pen, the irresistible pun, comic in its scurrilous irreverence, but beyond that exploring the meaning of meaning.

The time-space of Beckett's narrative is not linear but spiralling. The numerological sequence of Sections I,

II, III and IV does not correspond to the sequence of events in Watt's history as it occurs. Beckett was here experimenting with a device more commonly used in film, the flash-back. He was at the same time pointing out that time-space itself is not linear. The actual course of the story progresses from Sections II to I, IV to III. It therefore begins with Watt's stay with Mr. Knott, where first appear symptoms of Watt's mental deterioration; this is followed by Watt's train journeys first witnessed by the Nixons, later by Lady McCann. The end comes in the insane asylum, where Watt relates his tale to Sam, another inmate, the putative narrator. That he should be a lunatic, and therefore unreliable, is yet another comic device used by Beckett to con the reader. It has its tragic dimensions in the searing insight given of the descent into madness. Gérard de Nerval did no less in Aurélia, nor did Virginia Woolf in Mrs. Dalloway, and in more recent times Sylvia Plath in her poetry.

Here we might well examine the semantics of the doublet Watt-Knott. At one level, it is, of course, the pattern of question-negation which, like baroque music, weaves its own counterpoint within the structure of Beckett's tragi-comedy. Watt questions compulsively, constantly. Knott's being, by its vague uncaring absence, negates the questioning by answering not. This particular leitmotiv, "But what was this pursuit of meaning? And to what did it

tend?" (p. 75)--"Mais quelle était cette quête d'une signification? Et que signifiait-elle?" (p. 86), is countered by, "Not that many things remain to be said . . . for they do not . . . . What distressed Watt . . . was not so much that he did not know . . . . for he did not care what had happened, as that nothing had happened, that a thing that was nothing had happened." (p. 76)--"Non qu'il reste beaucoup de choses à dire . . . loin de là . . . Ce qui affligeait Watt . . . ce n'était pas seulement de ne pas savoir . . . car il se moquait de ce qui s'était passé, que le fait que rien ne s'était passé, que la chose appelée rien s'était passée." (pp. 87-88)

The above questions are set in motion by the epiphany of the piano-tuners' arrival, Gall père et fils.[24] As will be readily seen, Beckett's particular "what-not" pattern is kept intact in translation: it is, in fact, a metaphor for the dilemma of man, ever questioning his origins and his future, and receiving silence, that is, non-answer from his inexplicable universe. The use of the word, "quête," as a translation for Beckett's "pursuit," is significant, for Beckett's protagonists are on perpetual

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[24]The name, Gall, may be seen either as an allusion to Macbeth, I, v. "And take my milk for gall," or to the more familiar Biblical, "wormwood and the gall." Jer. 9.15. Piano is slang for chamber pot, and thus additionally relates the passage, quoted later, where Watt muses on the nature of Knotts' pots. A piano also has keys, a euphemism for penis.

quests, whether for a mother (Molloy), for a fellow creature (Moran, in Molloy), for a family (L'Innommable), for the lost one (Le Dépeupleur), for they know-not-what (Mercier et Camier). The word quête thus relates Beckett's Watt to most, if not all, of his oeuvre. It will be noted that a [thing] becomes la [chose]: greater specificity in French.

The above-discussed pattern, Watt-what--Knott-not, is expanded to explore the various connotations of Knott (we have already discussed the meanings of Watt). Knott not-knot, which in translation implies not only ne-non-rien, but noeud. The first French terms are negatives, the last may, as in English, mean the knot or "intrigue" of a literary plot. More importantly, knott is Elizabethan slang for coition,[25] while knot-noeud is, in both languages, a euphemism for the glans penis. Once again, Beckett has lured his reader in a metaphysical direction, only to don the comic mask, and mock himself, and rational philosophers, from Descartes and Geulincx onward.[26] The word itself, What-not, is yet another euphemism for the male member.

The ambiguous word, being, present in Arsene's speech, is echoed in Section II, as Watt, still ratiocinating,

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[25]Othello, IV, 2. "Keep it as a cistern for foul toads To knott and gender in."

[26]Geulincx, 1624-1669, was one of the principal propagators of Cartesianism in Holland. Descartes, 1596-1650, needs no introduction.

ponders on the essence of things,

> and in a general way [to] the conditions of being in which he found himself. For Watt now found himself in the midst of things which, if they consented to be named, did so as it were with reluctance . . . . Looking at a pot, for example, or thinking of a pot, at one of Mr. Knott's pots, of one of Mr. Knott's pots, it was in vain that Watt said, Pot, pot. Well, perhaps not quite in vain, but very nearly so. For it was not a pot, the more he looked, the more he reflected, the more he felt sure of that, that it was not a pot at all. It resembled a pot, it was almost a pot, but it was not a pot of which one could say, Pot, pot, and be comforted. . . . And it was just this hairbreadth departure from the nature of a true pot that so excruciated Watt. . . . For he could always hope of a thing of which he had kever known the name, that he would learn the name some day, and so be tranquillized. But he could not look forward to this in the case of a thing of which the true name had ceased suddenly or gradually to be the true name for Watt. . For the pot remained a pot, Watt felt sure of that, for everyone but Watt. . . . Then, when he turned for reassurance to himself . . . he made the distressing discovery that of himself too he could no longer affirm anything that did not seem as false as if he had affirmed it of a stone. . . . And Watt's need of semantic succour was at times so great that he would set to trying names on things, and on himself, almost as a woman hats. . . . As for himself, though he could no longer call it a man . . . yet he could not imagine what else to call it if not a man. . . . So he continued to think of himself as a man, as his mother had taught him, when she said . . . There's a clever little man. But for all the relief this afforded him, he might just as well have thought of himself as a box, or an urn.
>
> It was principally for these reasons that Watt would have been glad to hear Erskine's voice, wrapping up safe in words the kitchen-space, the extraordinary newel-lamp, the stairs that were never the same and of which even the number of steps seemed to vary from night to morning. . . . [But] it would perhaps have lent a little colour to the hope that . . . [things] would appear, and himself appear, in their ancient guise. . . . But in the first week Watt's words had not yet begun to fail him, or Watt's world to become unspeakable.
>
> (pp. 83-85)

The translation is as follows:

bref à toutes les conditions d'être où il se trouvait. Car Watt se trouvait maintenant entouré de choses qui, si elles consentaient à être nommées, ne le faisaient qu'à leur corps défendant. . . . A la vue d'un pot, par exemple, ou en pensant à un pot, à un des pots de Monsieur Knott, c'était en vain que Watt disait, Pot, pot. Oh peut être pas tout à fait en vain, mais presque. Car ce n'était pas un pot, plus il le voyait, plus il y pensait, plus il était sûr que ce n'était pas un pot, mais alors pas du tout. Ça ressemblait à un pot, c'était presque un pot, mais ce n'était pas un pot à en pouvoir dire, Pot, pot et en être réconforté. . . . Et c'est précisément cette infime déviation de la nature du vrai pot qui torturait Watt à ce point. . . . Car il pouvait toujours espérer d'une chose dont il n'avait jamais su le nom, pouvoir l'apprendre, un jour, et ainsi s'apaiser. Mais s'agissant d'une chose dont le vrai nom avait cessé soudain, ou peu à peu, d'être le vrai nom pour lui, un tel espor lui était interdit. . . . Car le pot était toujours un pot, Watt en était persuadé, pour tout le monde sauf pour Watt. . . . Ensuite quand pour se rassurer il se tourna vers lui-même . . . il fit l'affligeante découverte qu'à ce sujet non plus il ne pouvait rien affirmer qui ne parût aussi faux que s'il l'avait affirmé d'une pierre. . . . Et pour Watt le besoin de soulas sémantique était parfois si grand qu'il se mettait à essayer des noms aux choses, et à lui-même, un peu comme une élégante des bibis. . . . Quant à lui-même, s'il ne pouvait plus s'appeler un homme . . . il ne pouvait imaginer quel autre nom se donner, sinon celui d'un homme. . . . Si bien que, dans son idée, il demeurait un homme, comme sa maman le lui avait appris en lui disant, . . . Voilà un rusé petit bonhomme. Mais pour tout le soulagement que cela lui procurait, il aurait tout aussi bien pu être une boite ou une urne.

C'est pour ces raisons surtout que Watt aurait été heureux d'entendre la voix d'Erskine enserrer dans des mots l'espace de la cuisine, l'extraordinaire lampe d'escalier, l'escalier toujours changeant et dont le nombre de marches semblait varier d'un jour à l'autre, et du soir au matin. . . . Mais ç'aurait été comme un encouragement à l'espoir caressé par Watt . . . [de . . . voir] les choses réapparaître, et lui-même réapparaître sous les dehors d'antan. . . . Mais la première semaine Watt ne sentait pas encore ses mots défaillir, ni son monde se faire indicible.

(pp. 93-98)

From this passage, and its translation, several points emerge: the first is that here the word being is translated as "être," because, juxtaposed with "conditions," no semantic doubt can arise as did where being could signify either "être" or "présence." The repetition of the demonstratives, this, that [of the pot, of something], echoed in the relative pronoun, that, gains in the French, which, by its lack of a neuter pronoun [it], must use "ce-ça c'-ce-c'est," in addition to the demonstrative "cette, ce," thus adding to the verbal echo. The most significant shift from Beckett's text to translation is in Watt's equating himself with an object, and hence referring to himself as it ("As for himself, though he could no longer call it a man . . . he could not imagine what else to call it, if not a man . . ."). The French re-endows Watt with human qualities, using the reflexives, s', se (Quant à lui-meme, s'il ne pouvait plus s'appeler un homme. . . . il ne pouvait imaginer quel autre nom se donner"). Beckett's Watt had reduced himself to a neuter pot, or stone, but the translation restores to him a human essence that a pot, or a stone could not have: one could have a sentence, "cela s'appelle un pot," but where the subject of the sentence is the masculine, il, the reflexive will refer to the pronomial subject, and suggest the human. This is even truer of, "il ne savait pas quel nom se donner," for in the process of naming there is thought, and if we are to follow Descartes, existence; but

Cartesian logic is beginning to fail Watt, although his "words" are still what distinguish him from Knott's pot, and tie him to fragile reality. Thus he likes to hear Erskine "wrapping up safe in words" the space of the kitchen. The translation, "enserrer dans des mots," is somewhat stronger, but gives the reader a sense of Watt's desperate attempts to cling to sanity, as all about him, from the pot to the staircase assumes a disturbing protean quality.

The passage conveys movingly the beginning of Watt's mental breakdown, which is itself symbolic of the alienation which Beckett sees between man and his universe. The use of "indicible" reinforces the lack of communication between Watt and his environs, which will in time become total, as indeed Beckett views it as existing between man and his fellow.

Lest the reader be swept solely into the tragedy of a descent into madness, let him examine the language and see the comedy which exists at the heart of the situation. We have explored the connotations of the doublet Watt-Knott. The pot Watt is looking at is yet another euphemism for the female pudend,[27] reinforced by the coupling, Knott's pots, aurally comic, and emphasized by the other connotations of the word, pots [and pans], pots [de chambre] in both English

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[27]Cf. Love's Labour Lost, V, 2.

and French. Furthermore, the text has pot-pot, and as pronounced in French suggests the German der Popo, i.e., bottom. The word stone-pierre reappears here, both as a structural link back to Hackett, to Watt's lapidary appearance on the scene, and to Arsene's monologue, and in its religious connotation, to the later sections of the novel. Both words are additionally terms of venery, the first being testicles, the second used by Rabelais to denote the male member. Once again, not only tragedy but any trace of religious connotation is engulfed by laughter. An interesting juxtaposition occurs here if we consider the translation of clever[little man] by "rusé": the latter is an adjective proverbially associated with fox, so that the rock-"granit" of Hackett's accident-birth becomes actually a word-play on Beckett's birthplace, Foxrock, which the translation has helped create.

"Qu'à leur corps défendant," reinforces Watt's illusion that things have assumed human quality, while he sees himself reduced to a neuter object. There is also incongruity, and therefore comedy, in the phrase being used to qualify utensils: Watt's anthropomorphism is both a syndrome of his mental malaise and a comic device. Trying names on things is exactly translated by "essayer," since the verb is here associated with clothing: hat-"bibi" is also literally correct, but additionally both words pursue the bawdy connotations of the ça-ce-it-pierre-stone in the passage:

"hat," or "old hat," is as "bi[ri]bi" among other things a low vulgarism for the pudend.[28] The words box-urn-kitchen are recaptured in the French "soulas," "cuisine," which belong to the same category of terms of venery, as does "enserre" (from "serrure" which again is the pudend).

"Dehors d'antan" for Beckett's "ancient guise" is a literary allusion to Villon who made the last substantive in the phrase most famous, as we noted before. This would validate our statement that the poem "To Nelly" is in part a parody of Villon. The adjective "rusé" also occurs in Villon's "Les regrets de la belle Heaulmière," octet 3, line 3, which laments the aging of a beautiful courtesan.[29] The allusion to Villon would repeat Beckett's pattern of interlacing by words and allusions the various sections of Watt.

The "newel lamp" has a precise French equivalent in "noveau d'escalier," but the translators were adroit enough to use the expression, "lampe d'escalier," hence reproducing

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[28]Hence the recurrent image through much of Beckett's writing of a piece of ancient headgear. It is also a heritage from the days of vaudeville and Charlie Chaplin. Partridge notes that the word was used first in the bawdy sense by Fielding in 1754, because as remarked by Grose (Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue, London, 1785, annotated reprinted by Partridge) "it was frequently felt": a double pun. The French "chapeau" has the same double meaning. In the last pages of the novel as Watt departs he dons a hat, a feutre (p. 262).

[29]François Villon, Testament, line 471, "Pour l'amour d'ung garson rusé."

the slang lamp [of life, of love]-lampe, euphemisms for the male-female sex organs.

The nine-fold repetition of the word, name, coupled with "not know-not-know-known-not the-never known," associates name with the negative essence of Knott. Felicitously, the translation, "nom," obtains the same result by playing on the pun, nom-non. In both Beckett's text and its translation, Watt is engulfed in the notness of Knott's domain, whose pseudo-pots are the pseudo-world of illusion.

Here again, the translation has fully captured the dimensions of Beckett's text, the interlacing of the structural pattern, the tragic mask exchanged for the comic mask in the bawdy doubles entendres.

Watt's attempts to communicate with his surroundings fail and result in the ultimate impotence of language itself, not only for Watt but for man, to express what is in fact "indicible," the essence of reality.

Watt's dilemma is illustrated as early as his train journey, in Section I, when he "préférait déjà tourner le dos à sa destination." (p. 30) His titubating gait at that stage is a metaphor for the spiralling linguistic structure of the novel. The walk-become-retrograde is equally a metaphor for the time-space retrogression within the novel; it is also reflected in the manner of Watt's speech in Section III.

Section III finds Watt in an insane asylum, where, on

walks outside their respective mansions (pp. 152, 153), translated as "pavillon," (p. 179) although Beckett uses pavilion later (p. 156), Watt meets Sam.[30] The irony of the religious connotations of mansions[31] seems lost three times in translation, but the thread is pursued with the juxtaposition of thorns-Christ-ointment-anointed (pp. 159, 1963), translated as épines-Christ-onguent-oignis (pp. 189, 194), where the tragic figure of a bleeding Christ-like Watt is engulfed by the double meanings of thorn-épine, penis, and anointed, which, in Anglo-Irish, means worthless, and would be a link to the significance of Watt's name (one of the alternatives given by the O.E.D.) as a "worthless fellow." Anointed may equally mean beaten, bribed or tipsy. Comedy subsumes once more the tragedy, this the tragedy of Watt's insanity, and the tone is further softened by the compassion of Sam's gesture of healing.

Sam, himself a lunatic, now appears overtly as the narrator, and it is through his eyes that we see Watt's retrograde walk, his back-to-front clothing, the inversion of his speech, which leads Sam to conclude that "the thought

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[30]One of the meanings of the English pavilion is "one of several . . . buildings into which a hospital is sometimes divided." (O.E.D.) The French pavillon may also mean a cartilaginous portion of the inner ear, thus relating the word to Sam's auditory problems.

[31]"In my father's house [there] are many mansions." John, 14.2.

was perhaps inverted." (p. 164) Watt next inverts not only the order of words in the sentence, but of letters in the word, of sentences in the period, of words in the sentence together with letters in the word, words in the sentence together with sentences in the period. Watt's complete breakdown is signalled by the syntactic breakdown in his speech, and Sam decides:

> there were sounds that at first, though we walked glued together, were so much Irish to me. Nor did Watt follow me, Beg nodrap, he said, nodrap, pardon geb. . . .
> But soon I grew used to these sounds, and then I understood as well as ever, that is to say fully one-half of what won its way past my tympan.
> For my own hearing began to fail, though my myopia remained stationary. My purely mental faculties on the other hand, the faculties so called of ? ? ? ? ? ?
> were if possible more vigorous than ever
> (p. 169)

The French is as follows:

> C'était là des sons qui d'abord, malgré notre marche agglutinante, étaient du gaélique pour moi.
> Watt ne me suivait pas non plus. P-ponrad, p-p-ndrap. P-p-p-rapnod. . . .
> Mais je finis par me faire à ces sons et par comprendre tout autant qu'avant, c'est-à-dire une moitié de tout ce qui forçait mon cérumen.
> Hé oui, mon ouïe, à moi aussi commençait à baisser, si ma myopie n'évoluait pas. Mes facultés purement mentales en revanche, Celles-ci à si juste titre dites de ? ? ? ?
> étaient si possible plus vigoureuses que jamais.
> (p. 202)

Beckett's text has been given faithfully in translation. A few details merit attention. "We walked glued together"

is a common English expression, whereas "notre marche agglutinante" somehow suggests a paste-pot, although it has the greater merit of reproducing the English sounds, and furthermore reproduces the slang connotation of seminal emission. The sounds which, to Sam, are "so much Irish" to him parody deliberately the proverbial, "so much Greek." The distortion has a triple effect: first it sets the locus of the action in Ireland, then by the twist injects a note of humor, and lastly conveys the total lack of communication which at this point exists between Sam and Watt. However, the colloquial, "You're Irish," means to talk gibberish, and the slang "Irish root," and "Irish tooth-ache" are respectively the penis and a priapism. All these connotations have to be borne in mind, as it would seem Beckett intended them to be. The French, "gaélique," captures the locus, although to convey gibberish the adjective, "chinois," would have been more colloquial. The humor of the scabrous meanings is recaptured a few lines below, in "Hé oui, mon ouïe," where the verbal echo is in itself comic, but further in the derivation of the word, "oui": it is of course the Old French, "oil" (as opposed to its southern counterpart, "oc"), but its component parts were O, which meant cela, and il, the pronoun. We have examined above the scatological connotations of O-cela-ça, and now il. The pun amounts to a conjunction of male-female genitalia, and is not only a happy translation, but most

certainly part of the translators' intellectual baggage, and probably Beckett's.

"Tympan" would seem to be a gallicism for eardrum, particularly as it is translated by "cérumen," which is ear-wax. But in fact the first substantive is an ancient Irish instrument played with a bow, suggesting a fiddle, which is a vulgarism for the female pudend. However, the reader must not lose sight of the primary meaning, which is indeed that of the ear-membrane, which could affect Sam's hearing. A further connotation is that of brothel, yet another note of comedy injected into the tragedy of Watt's and Sam's disintegration, all of which the translation has been acute enough to capture, as well as the interlacing with earlier sections of the novel.

The text also expresses Beckett's conceit that language fails to deal with "l'indicible, the unspeakable," that is, being a rational activity, it is inadequate at facing or expressing the irrational. This the translation has superbly conveyed. In addition, the French well shows Beckett's concern that language itself will not penetrate the wall that separates man from man. Thus, automatic speech, tautology, dislocated speech will serve as eloquently.

Let us note that sounds is translated here by "son," as opposed to the "bruits" in Arsene's speech in Section I. And furthermore there is the comic repetitious-tautological "si-ci-si-si" of Sam in translation, which does not exist in

English, and could be interpreted as replacing the extra typographical-semantic question-mark of Beckett's text.

As the tragedy nears its end, towards the culmination of Section III, the novel assumes a new tone of almost total comedy. This is in the story, half-lost because of failing faculties, that Sam hears from Watt. It concerns the tale told by Arthur to the gardener, Graves, who was last seen in Section II and who is complaining of his lack of potency. Arthur highly recommends the remedy, Bando,[32] and launches into the adventures of his friend Louit. (p. 174) In both original and translation (p. 224), the passage is a delightful parody of the academic process: Louit has been given a grant for his dissertation on the "Visicelts," and is called to account for his expenses and for lack of a visible manuscript. It is not so much the loss of his notes and his dog or his starved appearance that are comic, as the interaction of the five members of his committee, who, bored, deaf, disenchanted with each other, finally accept after much argumentation the presentation of the ancient Mr. Nackybal (first encountered p. 131)[33]

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[32]The portée of that word, which does not signify in English, was discussed in the analysis of the poem, "To Nelly," in Section I. The translation has here achieved once more the interlacing structure of Beckett's original, reminiscent as we shall see later, of Vico's cycles.

[33]In Section II.

in lieu of a thesis. They are quite literally conned. Louit is the legitimate descendant of the twins who feed Mr. Knott's dog: he is a con-art[ist] par excellence and represents yet another loop in the structural spiral of the novel. The subject's apparent virility and his ability to compute square roots plunge the committee into admiration and lead to a truly professorial polemic (p. 182).

The original text juggles with hilarity the semantics of the names of the committee, the defender of the thesis and his live exhibit: Louit is derived from the colloquialism for toilet, loo; Nackybal is the result of combining nacky, slang for a child's bottom, and bal[l], self-explanatory; O'Meldon combines the man's profession, don, with the word meld, which may either be to speak, declare, or again in view of Beckett's humor, suggests Meldrop, "The least offensive species of mucus from the nose" (O.E.D.); Magershorn is most probably an alternative for maggot's horn, both terms being euphemisms for the male member; Fitzwein is quite simply, "son of a pig"; de Baker refers us back to the bun in the threne heard by Watt on his way to Knott's house (p. 35): this is omitted in translation, but bun is yet another slang term for the female pudend; alternatively, de Baker may imply, "Bakespeare" (Bacon-Shakespeare), slang for an expression to settle a tedious argument; finally MacStern means "son of butt[ocks]." Even the unfortunate dog's name, O'Connor, is slang for a

particularly potent Irish brew, and ironic in view of his watery grave.

The translation captures the sense of the original text by the usage, in rapid succession, of the words, cube-racine-élévation-cul-musique-pot-fossé, each one of which has a bawdy connotation.

The tragedy is now textually over but ontologically beginning, and Watt departs from the Knott domain. Having donned his green hat, yellow coat, and two bags, he takes his leave of Micks, his replacement. We have heretofore discussed the doubles-entendres involved in the underlined substantives. Micks is Anglo-Irish low slang for penis, so that, semantically the Watt-Knott doublet will continue, as indeed Watt himself continued it by following in the footsteps of Vincent, Walter, Arsene, and Erskine.[34]

The final glimpse we have of Watt is sound asleep on the floor of the station waiting-room, drenched to the skin by the pail of slops poured over him by the station attendants to rouse him. His supine position, soaked state, and resulting stench evoke the derisive comment on him even as

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[34]We have discussed the semantics of Arsene's name; Vincent is either a cheat, thus ontologically related to Louit and to the beloved in "To Nelly," or a dupe in a betting game of bowls (cf. the boulingrin in Watt-French); Walter has Watt, or Wat, as a diminuitive, and is both to go with a rolling gait, and to revolve in the mind, attributes of Watt; Erskine is rather obviously foreskin, but also a person, and one, who questions. So goes the spiralling.

he has risen and departed, as "the long wet dream with the hat and bags" (p. 246). The translation is superbly equal to this, Beckett's aphorism, "cette rigole de foutre à la manque avec les sacs et le chapeau." (p. 297)

Now that the comedy is over, we must examine to what extent the translation has grasped intact the sense of Beckett's text. The key images reappear unblemished: bun-cabbage-garden-cradle-ditch-key-lock-nail exist in the French in the fullness of their original connotations, ça-chou-con-cul-histoire-fossé-clé-serrure-clou. One particularly interesting image occurs in the passage where Watt is told when to dispose of Mr. Knott's slops: Beckett's "tomato-time" (p. 68) becomes visually resplendent in l'aurore des tomates (p. 78), illuminating the original image, and additionally linking it to dawn, one of the archetypal poetic topoi, and to the dawn of Watt's waiting, in Section I.

From the above passages, it would appear that semantically the translation of Beckett's Watt into French has been remarkable. It has captured the various slang and colloquial connotations in addition to the face-value of the expressions. This would indicate that either the translators, Ludovic and Agnès Janvier, possess an extensive knowledge of the English tongue at its various levels, or that, as indicated in the sub-title, Beckett did indeed effect a close collaboration with the Janviers. This task,

additional to the original creative process, may well be why Beckett has increasingly taken to self-translation. In doing the latter, he would eliminate the step of self-explanation to translators, leaving to the reader-critic the task of apprehending Beckett's meanings.

The structural interlacing, or spiralling, which by key-words relates the various sections of Watt one to the other, has been adroitly seized and given in translation. In addition, the translation has related Beckett's literary allusions, whether to Shakespeare, Thomas Nash, to an equivalent period in French literature, markedly represented by Villon (1431-1463?) or the somewhat later Rabelais (1494-1553); the uninhibited bawdiness of much of Elizabethan literature is in full flower in the above French writers. Beckett's own scabrous comedy is thus unscathed in translation. Above all, the mask, the mask of comedy donned by Beckett to turn the eye away from the tragedy that he sees in existence is felicitously assumed by the translators. In the last analysis, however, it is Beckett's essential joy in language that the translation has seized flawlessly.

Beckett's verbal resonances were yet another obstacle the translators had to face. Beckett had very ingeniously used sound to convey the struggle between protagonist and antagonist. Watt versus Knott becomes at the phonetic level a counterpoint of question and negation (What-Not),

their corresponding phonemes skillfully interwoven to give the novel its extraordinarily rich texture: one may think of it aurally in terms of Palestrina's polyphony, or again of Bach's late baroque counterpoint: Becket is both.

In English, the questioning pattern involves the phoneme w, which incorporates the name of Watt, the protagonist. In French, it is generally characterized by the phoneme k, from which Watt is alienated, as opposed to the English sound, which incorporates him. Arsene's monologue, in Section I, shows a preponderance of w phonemes:

> But in what did the change consist? What was changed, and how? What was changed . . . was the sentiment. . . . What was changed was existence off the ladder. Do-not come down the ladder. . . . The old thing where it always was, back again. . . . As when a man, having found at last what he sought, a woman . . . loses it, or realises what it is. And yet it is useless not to seek, not to want, for when you cease to seek you start to find, and when you cease to want. . . . And to what if to any reality did it correspond? And to what forces . . . ? For do not imagine me to suggest that what is happening to me, will ever happen to you. . . . For in truth the same things happen to us al . . . whatever that is, if only we chose to know it.
>
> (pp. 44-45)

What occurs in translation is significant:

> Mais en quoi consistait (ital. in text) le changement? Qu'est-ce qui était changé, et comment? Ce qui était changé, si je suis bien renseigné était le sentiment qu'un changement eut lieu. . . . Ce qui était changé était l'existence hors l'échelle. Ne descends pas par l'échelle. . . . La vieille chose de toujours là de nouveau où elle n'avait cessé d'être. . . . Comme lorsqu'un homme, ayant enfin trouvé ce qu'il cherchait, une femme . . . s'en voit dépossédé, ou se rend compte de ce que c'est. Et rien ne sert pourtant de ne pas chercher, de ne pas vouloir, car lorsqu'on cesse de chercher, alors on commence à trouver, et lorsqu'on cesse de vouloir. . . . Et à quelle problématique

> réalité correspondait-il? Et à quelles forces . . . ? Car ne vous faites pas d'illusions . . . que ce qui m'est arrivé à moi doive forcément vous arriver à vous. . . . Car à vrai dire les mêmes choses nous arrivent à tous . . . dans notre situation, on se demande laquelle, si seulement nous daignions le savoir.
>
> (pp. 50-51)

Beckett's counterpoint of w-n phonemes, which includes what-was-where-when-woman-want-will-whatever-we--not-know is an alliterative pattern, characteristic of the novel. In French, the pattern must needs be different, and consists of the k phoneme alternated with n and p (both phonemes which may be associated with negation): quoi-consistait-qu'-qui-comment-commence-compte-quelle-que-correspondait-car--ne-nouveau-n'- nous -notre--pas-par-ne pas-ne pas.

Beckett's alliteration is significant insofar as it reflects Watt's dilemma with Knott. It is an ancient poetic device, but it is also the first step toward automatic, or tautological utterance. Roman Jakobson has said this before: "La construction littéraire en paliers se trouvait être dans la même série que les répétitions des sons, la tautologie, le parallélisme tautologique, les répétitions."[35]

Beckett would seem to relate the sound what, and its echoes, to the character Watt, while the not-know are reminders of the antagonist Knott.

Beckett also uses the contrapuntal phonetic pattern, echoes, internal rhyme, and repetition as a comic device,

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[35]Quoted in Tvzetan Todorov, Poétique de la prose (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 34.

comic because of the manic tautology of speech or action, whether in the description of Mary's eating, in Section I, Erskine's journeys up and down the staircase, in Section II, or Watt's own constant ratiocinations throughout the novel. Beckett's w-n counterpoint is captured with remarkable felicity by the translators' k-n pattern of phonemes. Few passages attain to the humor of Watt's reflections on the reasons for Knott's not owning a dog. The passage is comic mainly because of the incongruity of subject and rationale, but also because of the verbal echoes, which have the passage spiral upon itself phonetically, but leave the reader wondering what wild stretches of Watt's ample imagination can result in his relating the bi-pedal canon, missionary and ostrich to Knott's dog. Beckett's text runs as follows:

> Watt reflecting on this, heard a little voice say, Mr. Knott, having once known a man who was bitten by a dog, in the leg, and having once known another man who was scratched by a cat, in the nose, and having once known a fine healthy woman who was butted by a goat, in the loins, and having once known another man who was disembowelled by a bull, in the bowels, and having once frequented a canon who was kicked by a horse, in the crotch, is shy of dogs, and other four-footed friends, about the place, and of his inarticulate bipedal brothers and sisters in God hardly less so, for he once knew a missionary who was trampled to death by an ostrich, in the stomach, and he once knew a priest who, on leaving with a sigh of relief the chapel where he had served mass, with his own hands, to more than an hundred persons, was shat on, from above, by a dove, in the eye.
>
> (p. 91)

Here is how the translators reproduced this passage:

> Watt, réfléchissant à cela, entendait une petite voix qui disait, Monsieur Knott, ayant connu jadis un homme qu'avait mordu un chien, à la jambe, et ayant connu jadis un autre homme qu'avait griffé un chat, au nez, et ayant connu jadis une belle et forte femme qu'avait chargé un bouc, dans les fesses, et ayant connu jadis un autre homme qu'avait éventré un taureau, au ventre, et ayant fréquenté jadis un chanoine qu'avait saboté un cheval, à l'entrejambes, redoute à domicile les chiens et autres amis quadrupèdes de l'homme, et à peine moins ses autres frères et soeurs bipèdes à plumes devant Dieu, ayant connu jadis un missionaire qu'avait piétiné jadis une autruche, à l'estomac, et ayant connu jadis un prêtre qu'une columbe, comme avec un soupir d'aise il quittait la chapelle où de ses propres mains il venait de servir la messe à plus de cent fidèles, avait conchié, d'en haut, à l'oeil.
>
> (p. 105)

Apart from the semantics of the passage, most of whose substantives have a double, scatological meaning, let us examine how Beckett and his translators inject humor into the paragraph by sound alone.

Beckett uses the counterpoint of the phonemes, w-n, Knott-[w]once-known-man-was-bitten-in-and-[w]once-known-another-man-was-nose-and-[w]once-known-another-another-man-was-disembowelled-bowels-[w]once-freq[w]ented-canon-was-and-friends-inarticulate-[w]once-knew-missionary-was and-[w]once-knew-on-with-where-with-hands-hundred-persons-on-in- . . . . The use of rhyme, internal rhyme, alliteration leads to tautology, once-once-once-once-once-once-once-once; known-know-know-know-knew-knew; known-known-knew-knew-frequented; man-man-woman-man; canon-missionary-priest; dog-cat-dogs-goat-bull-horse-ostrich-dove; bitten-

scratched-butted-disembowelled-kicked-trampled-shat on. The tautology is not absolute, but sometimes resides in a repetition of species, and actions. It would seem, however, to have been set in motion by verbal echo, much as is the nursery rhyme, "This Is the House That Jack Built." Thus, also the alliterative or internal rhyming butted-disembowelled-bull-bowels; bipedal-brothers; frequented-canon-kicked-crotch; shy-missionary-ostrich-shat; above-dove. The dove spirals the text back phonetically to the beginning, dog, which leads into leg-goat-loins-disembowelled-bull-bowels, etc. which unfolds as a series of interlacing sounds.

This is a typical Beckettian stylistic device, but here it makes use of sound as well as meaning to reinforce the comic tone: in his attempts to rationalize Knott's not having a dog, Watt's reasoning becomes increasingly unreasonable, or irrational, and as one sound unfolds into another so does he grasp at it, as a drowning man at a straw, simply to explain what is to him inexplicable. The comedy is streaked by the tragedy of Watt's increasing dementia, evident in the geometric progression of dog-bull-ostrich, and the sudden but phonetically logical descent to dove.

The translation is adroit in reproducing Beckett's phonetic counterpoint, as it is in its alliterative, rhyming, tautological pattern: une-qui-Knott-connu-un [homme]-qu'-nez-frequenté-chanoine-qu'-quadrupèdes--peine--connu-

missionaire-qu'-piétiné-une-connu-qu'-colombe-comme-avec quittait-venait-conchié. As in Beckett's text, the translation proceeds from counterpoint to repetition: jadis-jadis-jadis-jadis-jadis-jadis-jadis-jadis; connu-connu-connu-connu-connu-connu-frequenté; homme-homme-homme-homme; chanoine-missionaire-prêtre; chien-chat-chiens-bouc-taureau-cheval-autruche-columbe; mordu-griffé-chargé-éventré-saboté-piétiné-conchié. As in Beckett's text, conchié relates the end of the paragraph to its beginnings, chien, in a phonetic spiral, which leads into chat-charge-chanoine-cheval-chiens-autruche-autre eventré-ventre, etc.

Thus is Arsene's "all the sounds, meaning" (p. 39) validated in the text and its translation (p. 44).

Beckett's frequent use of monosyllables is no doubt due to the greater preponderance of such words in his native tongue. There is perhaps also a desire to give greater intensity to his text. This the translation captures whenever it can, as in the following passage:

> Pas un mot, pas une joie, pas un . . . , pas une voix, . . . pas un pleur, pas un doute, pas une peur, pas un oui, pas un non, pas un cul, pas un con, pas une soif, pas une peine, pas un rire, . . . pas un nom, pas une face. . . .
>
> (p. 52)

Beckett's original had run thus:

> Not a word, not a deed, not a thought, not a need, not a grief, not a joy, not a girl, not a boy, not a doubt, not a trust, not a scorn, not a lust, not a hope, not a fear, not a smile, not a tear, not a

name, not a face. . . .
(p. 46)

The passages also contain repetition, rhyme, alliteration, and antithesis, which is but reverse tautology, and use of the monosyllable has a semantic connotation.[36] Might there not be yet another reason for Beckett's use of such words? One of the most famous lines of Racine is monosyllabic, "Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur."[37] Much has been made by critics, too many to mention, of Beckett's affinity to Racine's style: Beckett's persistent use of the monosyllable might perhaps be an instance of this, particularly as it seems to be stressed in the French version. In that case, what had appeared to be an allusion to Mallarmé in Arsene's monologue would be one to Racine (the juxtaposition in the translation of the words, jour-pur-toujours, p. 44).

Upon analysis, it would seem that Ludovic and Agnès Janvier, whether or not they were in close collaboration from the author, have in Watt-French recaptured Beckett's spirit and tone, his meaning, his sound, his style, his tragi-comic vision. The existence of Beckett's handwritten notebooks of his own translation of Watt would seem to validate the thesis that Beckett had more than a passing

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[36] In both languages, the word is slang for pudendum.

[37] Phèdre, IV, 2.

interest in the French version of his English novel. An examination of these notebooks is not within the scope of this dissertation but it opens new avenues of research on Beckett and his bi-lingual writing.

CHAPTER III

L'INNOMMABLE AND HIS BECOMING UNNAMABLE

> Footfalls echo in the memory--T. S. Eliot (Four Quartets)
>
> C'est qu'au fond la peinture ne les intéresse pas. Ce qui les intéresse c'est la condition humaine--Beckett (La peinture des van Velde)

In many ways L'Innommable marks the apogee of Beckett as a novelist and as a proponent of the "new novel" as defined by Robbe-Grillet in Pour un nouveau roman (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1963): it breaks with the traditional structure of fiction-writing of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European novels in that there is no "story," no action, properly speaking. From beginning to end the protagonist is immobile, seated, he thinks. If there is anything but complete stasis it resides in the compulsive utterance of the protagonist, and at the level of secondary fiction within the tales he imagines to avoid speaking of himself. Movement occurs in linguistic echoes, in linguistic progression directed toward the silence which is sought despairingly-exultantly by the creature who thinks to find being in quietude but discovers in the end that it is the word that triumphs and regenerates:

> ça va etre moi, ça va être le silence, là ou je suis, je ne sais pas, je ne saurai jamais, dans le silence on ne sait pas, il faut continuer, je vais continuer.
>
> (p. 262)

The same phenomenon occurs in Beckett's Pour en finir/ encore where the ending gives birth to yet another word, to a linguistic continuum. Beckett would here seem to be equating silence with non-knowledge. His protagonist must continue speaking in order to know. This is a parody of Descartes' "cogito ergo sum," which becomes "Je parle donc je sais," instead of "Je pense donc je suis."

In translation Beckett has achieved the same result by interweaving in the final pages, word-know-speak-know-talk with the exultant, it will be I-it will be I-recognize-recognize-think (pp. 174-179). The verbal parody may be absent but the semantic parody is not, and is a link back to the "spirit of geometry," (p. 100) "l'esprit de géometrie." (p. 147)

The above is an example of textual linkage which exists here, as it did in Watt, and the spiralling movement of language appears here again as does the simultaneous usage of learned and vernacular idioms. The latter we would submit is a conscious heritage from Dante, just as the spiralling progression of language and its semantic reverberations may have been suggested by Vico's cyclical theories as we shall hope to prove in detail later.

Beckett's punning, that is his verbal play, is uniquely his own. His main thematic conceits, most fully developed in L'Innommable, are the logical culmination of those found in the most significant writers of the century from Proust to Joyce, the preoccupation with time-space, memory, habit, boredom, sexuality: Beckett's originality in this century's fiction lies in the creation of the word as a mask which may at once conceal and reveal the comedy, giving any incipient tragedy an added dimension, and of the word as a mirror of the artist who coined fresh idioms from both his native and his adopted tongues.

The doubles-entendres, the themes, the masks were all problems Beckett faced in translation, and they will constitute the trellis of our analysis of Beckett's language in his self-translation of L'Innommable.

We saw how by the use of a key-word or phrase Beckett linked the various sections of Watt, various episodes one to the other, and we have given an example of this in L'Innommable. What is more extraordinary is the manner in which he weaves together the earlier novel to the later, and not from original to original but from translated version to original text. It is in the French translation of Watt that the word "innommable" first appears:

> Mais le pot avait aussi peu de succès comme targe, ou comme choucas, ou sous tout autre nom soumis à son innommable réité. . . . (Watt, tr. Ludovic and Agnès Janvier, p. 96)

In his English novel Beckett had used the phrase, "or any other of the things that Watt called it." (Watt, p. 83) In this instance it is the translation which relates the English Watt to the French L'Innommable, fusing both works into an organic whole. Since the translation of Watt appeared in 1968, long after the composing of L'Innommable (published in Paris in 1953), it is safe to suppose that the linking word was deliberately chosen, most probably because Beckett himself collaborated closely with his translators.

In Watt, the phrase was a symptom of Watt's disintegrating powers of expression. In L'Innommable the word acquires another dimension, a liturgical one, for in the Hebraic faith God is in fact unnamable and must be referred to by the euphemistic Adonai (Lord).[1] As in Watt, Beckett reveals his duality by using a word which has a comic connotation: unnamable-unmentionable-unspeakable are slang words for trousers or underwear. The French original had this meaning also, for "l'os innommable" is a euphemism

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[1] Deut. 5.11, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"; Exodus 3.13-14, "And Moses said . . . when I come unto the children of Israel . . . and they shall say to me, What is his name? . . . And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM"; Exodus 15.3, "The Lord is his name."

for the pubic bone. Beckett is as always, and like Mr. Hackett's mother, torn between pub and chapel or in both.

The religious connotation of innommable furthermore links the novel's title to later passages in the work, such as "l'enfer lui-même, quoique éternel, date de la révolte de Lucifer," (pp. 16-17) rendered as, "Hell itself, although eternal, dates from the revolt of Lucifer." (p. 10). Both sentences, usually appearing as "put the devil into hell," are a literary colloquialism for coition (for example, in Boccaccio). In addition, Beckett shows in that brief sentence his preoccupation with time and space, how time past is irremediably part of the continuum of time future and part of the space which separates innocent man spiritually from man in his post-lapsarian state.

We have thus far deliberately avoided identifying the Unnamable with the protagonist. Is he the fashioner of the tales of the "galerie de crevés," is he the creator of the Je, whose being has been "assurée par des tiers," (p. 12), is he the Almighty? He may be all three, as well as the trousers-underwear, and Beckett allows the ambiguity to remain in his translation into English. It is resolved in the final pages of the novel, as we shall see later.

The Biblical tone continues throughout, in the moving passage, for instance, "Je suis Mathieu et je suis l'ange, moi venu avant la croix, avant la faute, venu au monde, venu ici . . . ." (p. 28) This is quite literally translated

by Beckett as, "I am Matthew and I am the angel, I, who came before the cross, before the sinning, came into the world, came here." (p. 18)

In addition to the majesty of the rhythm of the language, there is the introduction of the concepts of time and space within the framework of human existence. There is additionally the comedy of verbal play. Angel is a vulgarism for prostitute, come for orgasm, cross for coition. The French text had anticipated this on the previous page by its juxtaposition of bâton-javelot-bâtons-Basile-cacatois (pp. 26-27), each of which is a low colloquialism for the male member, the last being used by Rabelais in the form of perroquet,[2] to which Beckett adds il-ils-plumage (p. 27), and enceinte (p. 26), all terms of venery in varying degrees of slang. The sister passage of the above is equally scatological in translation with its enumerative I-it-stick-pole-plenum (p. 27), all but the last visually and semantically euphemisms for the penis. Why, one may well ask, does Beckett constantly resort to the profane?

One must answer that it is of the essence of Beckett's nature to scoff at the sacred: the iconoclast must shatter his icons lest revering them lead to a hazardous commitment.

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[2]Rabelais, Tiers Livre, p. 142. Rabelais also uses baston in the same sense.

Profanity is quite naturally a comic device and a self-protective one for to scoff at both sex and religion is to build a fortress against that which man himself is most vulnerable. Let us recall the love affair between Moll and Macmann in Malone meurt. It is gentle and affectionate in Moll's tender gestures towards her decrepit charge. But then an unexpected event occurs within Malone, the creator of these fictions: he feels within him the stirrings of long-forgotten love at the thought of his creatures' affection. Panic-stricken when faced with his own humanity, he has only one option, to kill Moll.

In the same manner the narrator in L'Innommable "kills" the religious instinct by using words which have a bawdy connotation. In the French text, ange and croix also signify harlot and copulation, so that Beckett in his self-translation was quite faithful both at the level of Biblical allusion and of low vernacular, and reproduces in English the scabrous comedy of the original.

The liturgical strain continues with the eightfold repetition of maître (pp. 49-50), seemingly a reference to the Scriptural Master, and indeed translated as such.[3] (pp. 32-33). On the surface this appears to be a questing, almost a prayer, particularly as it is interwoven with

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[3]Cf. John, 13.13. "Ye call me Master, and ye say well." Matthew. 26.25. "Master, is it I?"

my child-my son-his will is done (pp. 30-31, 33), translated from mon enfant-mon fils-sa volonté est faite (pp. 47, 51). Beckett is however once more playing on the low vernacular meaning of those words, for master [piece] is a low colloquialism for the pudend, master[vein, to be hit on] is a vulgar euphemism for being impregnated, while will is a childish term for the penis, which would be a link with child-son, and Will is an alternative for John Thomas, that is the male member. Son-sun is jargon for either having too many children or being infected with the clap. The original French had similarly been semantically enriched by equivalent slang expressions, such as filon, penis; bouche, the pudendum; danser la carmagnole, a euphemism for coition; histoire and diable, both low slang for the male member (pp. 47, 48, 50).[4] What may seem tedious to the non-Beckettian reader has, however, a very real purpose. The listing of slang or scatological words serves to emphasize how very accurately he has captured in translation the essence of his French text. Furthermore it points up Beckett's duality in the face of religion and sex and the self-protective comic mask he then assumes. Finally it shows a writer bent on the task of creating new and richer idioms.

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[4] Unique à mon image (p. 51)--solitary in my image (p. 33) is of course an ironic reversal of the Biblical, "So God created man in his own image." Gen. 1.26.

Beckett's artistic aim has yet another dimension, that of protecting the reader: just as the latter was on the verge of sympathy for the plight of the protagonist, he is drawn towards the comic. It is not always bawdiness that achieves this, but as in the foregoing passage a touch of subtle irony in the transition from the subjunctive mood to the indicative, from "volonté soit faite" to "volonté est faite," which marks the sentence as a parody. Beckett is here using syntax as a comic device, and renders it in his translation, "Will _is_ done" instead of "will _be_ done." The transition to the indicative may equally show resignation to the _status quo_ on the part of the protagonist.

Beckett pursues his Biblical allusions in the protagonist's tale of Mahood-Ma[n]hood and his attempts to return home. Use of the word _bercail_ suggests the Scriptural sheep and their shepherd, and was used in the translation into French of _Watt_ for the word _home_, providing another linguistic link with the earlier novel. _Bercail_ is an intimation of berceau, _cradle_, yet another vulgarism for the pudend. As Mahood reaches his family, they cry out in compassion for his desperate struggles:

> Si on lui jetait une _éponge_? Non, non, il ne faut pas le déranger. Le soir, après le souper, pendant que ma femme me guettait, les vieux racontaient ma vie. . . . La _tranche_ terminée, tous chantaient un hymne, Sauf et sain dans les bras de Jésus, par exemple, ou bien, Jésus, _amant_ de mon âme, laisse-moi me réfugier dans ton _sein_, par exemple.
> (p. 64)

Beckett translates his own text as follows:

> What about throwing him a sponge? No, no, it might confuse him. In the evening, after supper, while my wife kept her eye on me, gaffer and gammer related my life. . . . The instalment over, all joined in a hymn, Safe in the arms of Jesus, for example, or, Jesus lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly, for example.
>
> (pp. 42-43)

The context of the above passage is significant in that it narrates Mahood's heroic odyssey towards kith and kin. He has lost all but one leg, is proceeding on crutches, incapable of moving except in spiral fashion. This is a situation well designed to enlist sympathy for Mahood's plight. On one level it certainly does. On another the passage is filled with scabrous double meanings, adding a comic dimension to the incipient tragedy. On yet another Mahood's gyrations are a metaphor for the spiralling movement of the language within the novel. The French unijambiste and béquille[s] are low vernacular for the male member.

Beckett's mention in the French of éponge brings to mind, as does the English sponge, the evangelists' account of the crucifixion.[5] In French, however, the word, éponge, has another meaning, "Extrémité de chacune des branches

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[5]Cf. Matth. 27.48, Mark 15.36, and John 19.29, "and they filled a spunge with vinegar . . . and put it into his mouth."

du fer à cheval."[6] Both in English and in French the word horseshoe has the vulgar connotation of the female pudend, while cheval-horse is an expected euphemism for coition. As we proceed through the quoted passage, we find the word tranche to be yet another colloquialism for the pudend. The title of the hymns sung by the watching family can only have an ironic portee in French, with the juxtaposition of Jésus-amant-sein, comic in their irreverence.

In his translation Beckett has made full use of his knowledge of the vernacular of the streets, eye is as hell and cabbage low colloquial for the pudend; gaffer is to copulate, as is join.[7] Let . . . fly is to enjoy the favors of a harlot; Safe is a contraceptive, while relate is a euphemism for menstruation, an allusion no doubt to Ptomaine's menopausal problems. Hymn is, of course, part of the self-explanatory him and hers.

Beckett's self-translation of the brief passage above shows how meticulously he captured his original text and its Biblical references while keeping in mind any bawdy connotations his words might have. Beckett is quite obviously not religious but equally obviously very well versed in the language of the Bible. We have felt that

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[6]Larousse, Nouveau dictionnaire de la langue francaise (Paris: Larousse, 1973).

[7]Cf. Snug, the Joiner, Bottom's friend in Midsummer Night's Dream.

mockery, parody, irony were all self-protective devices, but then the question arises as to why Beckett should parody Descartes and others. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that Beckett is essentially irreverent. The one serious construct for him would seem to be the word, and even this appears to be directed towards silence, that is, non-word, non-language. Is he then moving along the path to Descartes' vide, or for that matter Sartre's néant? The answer is Beckettian: yes and no: silence is the aim but in the end the word is the regenerating factor and is triumphant.

In every religious reference throughout the novel, and these are the most frequent allusions, Beckett has in spirit followed the word of his original text while also relating it to other possible vernacular connotations.

For instance, the references to Madeleine-lombrics-ressusciter-tombeau ouvert-pierre-pauvre Madeleine si bonne pour moi (pp. 110-114) are given as Madeleine-pregnant-resurrecting-stone-unhappy Madeleine and her great goodness. (pp. 75-77) The relationship between the French text, Beckett's translation and the scriptural words is intact. Madeleine-Mary Magdalene was the reformed harlot who was the first to see the risen Christ.[8]

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[8]Cf. Mark 16.9. "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene

The theme continues with the protagonist's self-questioning, "répandrait-elle du sel sur ma tête malade . . .?" (p. 115), translated as "Would she rub salt into my scalp . . . ?" (p. 78)[9] The reference to Mary Magdalene and rubbing the protagonist's injured head are both spirals back to the incident in Watt where Sam rubs unguent into Watt's wounded head. This cross-referencing by Beckett is both frequent and deliberate throughout his work. It is in no way an indication of paucity of imagination on the author's part. It is on the contrary a creative device designed to give the entire oeuvre greater unity and tighter texture.

The substitution of the name Marguerite for Madeleine (p. 109 in French, p. 74 in translation) is no accident, and adds a further connotation to the bawd of Madeleine-Magdalen, if one considers the British pronunciation of the last name (maudlin). As the O.E.D. points out, the maudlin may be a type of pear, quoting Mortimer (Husb. II, 294), "The Margaret, the Maudlin and the Cluster Pear." Beckett may well have known of this pairing of Margaret and Maudlin.

. . . ." Also John 20.16. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto him . . . Master." The last word is also a link with the repetition of maître-master some forty pages earlier in the novel.

[9] A parody of Psalm 23, "Thou anointest my head with oil." Also of John 12.3, "Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair."

In addition pear-pair [of top ballocks] is slang for the female breasts, while margaret-daisy [pick a] is a vulgar colloquialism for urinating in the open air, the latter being Mahood's locus vivendi in his jar, against which the "chiens viennent pisser." (p. 111) The last few lines are a vivid example of the manner in which Beckett ingeniously has a word reverberate semantically, always relating it back to the original context and thereby enriching the full meaning of his language.

Mahood links himself to the lombrics which are in fact earth-worms: in this manner he affiliates himself with his fictional and ontological successor, Worm. The tombeau ouvert is low vernacular for the pudendum, which is followed by pierre-stone, not only a reference to Peter, slang for penis while stone is a vulgarism for testicle. This also is a link backward to the novel Watt and forward to a few later pages of L'Innommable. The textual relationship is made explicit by Beckett in both text and translation, "Worm, ou, comme je suis tenté de l'appeler, Watt." (p. 106). The translation renders this as, "Worm, I nearly said Watt." (p. 72). The link forward appears in the sentence, "Le jour est proche ou elle devra me nier, mon unique fidèle." (p. 117) This and the reference to Peter's denial are captured meticulously in the translation, "The moment is at hand when my only believer must deny me." (p. 79)

The spiralling movement in Beckett's language also relates Madeleine-tombeau to the English tomb, slang for brothel, and in turn refers back to Mary Magdalene's supposed profession. Beckett's feat at this point is to accentuate the extraordinary linguistic nexus which exists between text and translation and between Watt, the early English novel, and L'Innommable, the final part of the French trilogy. The protagonist also refers to Malone and to Molloy, both eponymous heroes of the first two parts of the trilogy, who have among others returned to figure in The Unnamable.

Of the many Scriptural references in L'Innommable, few are more striking than the protagonist's cry of despair coupled with resignation, "Ensuite ils mettront l'accent sur les épines . . . il va falloir qu'on vienne me les enfoncer, comme à ce pauvre Jésus." (p. 128)

Beckett's translation reads as follows, "then they'll put the accent on the thorns. . . . The thorns they'll have to come and stick into me, as into their unfortunate Jesus." (p. 87)

What is most vividly suggested by the above sentences is the enormous passage of psychological time spanned from "avant la faute" (p. 28) and the aforementioned crucifixion. The protagonist was there in his world before sin and now he speaks quite clearly of a post-lapsarian existence. The sentences have another dimension, however, in that the

sacred also possesses profane connotations. The reverent or tragic tone is negated or mitigated by comic scatology. Once again protective both of himself and of his reader, Beckett shields all from their frail humanity by resorting to bawdiness. At the same time Beckett through comedy enables us all to face the human condition, and to be touched by it.

Madeleine's gesture of rubbing salt into Mahood's scalp (tête) is not only a cruel parody but scurrilous: the French tête, as we saw in Watt, is a euphemism for the male member, while both rub and salt are underworld slang for coition. Epines-thorns-stick are vulgarisms for the penis, just as enfoncer-stick are for copulation. Thus has Beckett once more related his translation to the original text, to its liturgical context, and additionally preserved the bawdy and humorous connotations of its key-words. Irony has deepened for the reader the miserable plight of the protagonist's fiction: Mahood in his jar is quite technically a cul-de-jatte. Limbless, he is stuck in a jar at the mercy of the elements, but jar-jolt have the added significance of copulation. Even the majestic pronouncement of Genesis 1.3, "Que donc la lumière soit," uttered not so much triumphantly as in resignation by a protagonist who really prefers the subtle grey of purgatorial light (p. 153) is literally translated as, "Let there be light." (p. 104) The statement in English is itself a pun

on light [the lamp], a literary euphemism for sexual intercourse, and on light [up], slang for reaching an orgasm.

The point of these verbal enumerations is to show Beckett's achievement in enriching both French and English by use of words with multiple connotations, and to stress how very accurately he captured his original text in translation.

Mahood and his manhood are fast deteriorating into his logical ontological successor in fiction, Worm.

We have dealt at length with Beckett's Scriptural allusions. There are others worth mentioning, apart from those to Descartes, already discussed. One is the phrase, "langage de leur tribu," (p. 76) which may be a reference to Mallarmé's "Tombeau D'Edgar Poe" (stanza 2, line 2, "Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu"), and which Beckett in his translation may be associating with T. S. Eliot's "To purify the dialect of the tribe" (in Four Quartets, Little Gidding," London: Faber and Faber, 1942). However, it is in all likelihood Eliot who was himself remembering Mallarmé. Beckett's use of the word pur is a link back to Arsene's monologue in Watt. Beckett's translation would seem to indicate instead a verbal relationship with Racine's Athalie, I, i. "Que sur toute tribu . . . tribus . . . parole," since the English Unnamable reads, "words belonging to their breed," (p. 51) which may relate the latter to Shakespeare's Richard II, II, 1, "This breed of men." The

allusion to Racine and Shakespeare seems validated by both dramatists' belonging to a period of extraordinary flowering in each literature. It is further validated by Beckett's linking Thomas Nash's rakish poem, or rather its parody, in Watt to the equally bawedy writings of Villon and Rabelais. In all probability, Beckett was thinking of all the authors mentioned, in addition to which he may have been punning on Stendhal's essays, Racine et Shakespeare (1823, 1825).

Another literary allusion is the adjective "tapi," (p. 142) a key word-image in Dante applied to Sordello, and of which Beckett has seized the Sinclair translation of "crouch[ing]" (p. 83) in the Commedia, Purg. VI, 1, 66, "a guisa di leon quando si posa," translated "like a crouching lion."

The importance of literary allusions and how they are handled in translation cannot be over-estimated: the translator must not only apprehend the being of the original but link it in some fashion to a similar literary context, thus giving the text-translation symbiosis its full linguistic richness.

The very beginning of L'Innommable sets into motion a series of metaphysical questions which have been seen by many critics as a Proustian influence. Are these not, however,questions that every man puts to himself? They appear almost unchanged, for instance, in Lamartine's poem,

"L'Isolement," the probable source for the title of Beckett's récit, Le Dépeupleur, as heretofore noted. The Proustian presence exists in far more significant ways in some of the themes, threading through the novel, the preoccupation with memory, for example, which the protagonist finds essential:

> Le mémoire notamment, dont je pensais devoir m'interdire l'usage, va avoir son mot à dire, le cas échéant. C'est au bas mot mille mots sur lesquels je ne comptais pas. J'en aurai peut-être besoin. Donc après une période de silence immaculé, un faible cri se fit entendre. . . . Après un si long silence un petit cri, aussitôt étouffé.[10]
> (p. 17)

Beckett's self-translation reads as follows:

> Memory notably, which I did not think myself entitled to draw upon, will have its word to say, if necessary. This represents at least a thousand words I was not counting on. I may well be glad of them. So after a long period of immaculate silence a feeble cry was heard, by me. . . . After so long a silence a little cry, stifled outright.
> (p. 10)

The translation has one slight variation from Beckett's original: The feeble cry is heard "by me," and this seems stressed by the protagonist, whereas the French text simply states that a cry was heard. The reason for this might be to accentuate the importance of the personal pronoun. There is also a pun on the word cry, which has the added significance of a libidinous good wish at nightfall. The essence

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[10]Cf. Samuel Beckett, Breath (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1969).

of the passage, captured in translation, lies in the conceit that it is from memory that art will be fashioned, engendered by "sweet silent thought." The obstacle faced by the Unnamable's protagonist, and one which Proust resolved at the outset, is that it is involuntary memory, not voluntary remembrance, that forms the matrix of artistic creation. The protagonist's inability to perceive this distinction will hinder him throughout the novel, and so he continues in pursuit of his recollections:

> Mais maintenant je m'en vais la dire, ma leçon, si je peux me la rappeler. Sous les cieux, sur les routes, dans les villes, dans les bois, dans les chambres, dans les montagnes, dans les plaines, au bord des mers, sur les flots, derrière mes homoncules, je n'ai pas toujours été triste, j'ai perdu mon temps, renié mes droits, raté ma peine, oublié ma leçon. . . . Je cherche ma leçon, ma vie que je savais autrefois et n'ai pas voulu avouer, d'où peut-être par moments un léger manque de limpidité. Peut-être que cette fois-ci encore je ne ferai que chercher ma leçon, sans pouvoir la dire, tout en m'accompagnant dans une langue qui n'est pas la mienne.
>
> (pp. 38-39)

Beckett translates his text thus:

> But now, I shall say my old lesson, if I can remember it. Under the skies, on the roads, in the plains, by the shores, on the seas, behind my mannikins I was not always sad, I wasted my time, abjured my rights, suffered for nothing, forgot my lesson. . . . I seek my lesson, my life I used to know and would not confess, hence possibly an occasional lack of limpidity. And perhaps now again I shall do no more than seek my lesson, to the self-accompaniment of a tongue that is not mine.
>
> (pp. 25-26)

Let us first examine the French text: it contains very deliberate endeavors at reminiscing. The emphasis on memory as such is not unquely Proustian but rather places Beckett in the mainstream of modern European literature. As we shall analyze later, we feel that Beckett transcends his predecessors in the depth of his vision, his binary view of the human condition, and most of all in the quality of his language which in his hand becomes a rich and vital mode of expression.

Let us note, however, the juxtaposition of perdu-temps; cherche-vie-autrefois. Let us further note the equation of leçon with vie, and finally manque de limpidité, which might, despite its suppleness, describe Proust's style. The final phrase in the passage, en m'accompagnant d'une langue qui n'est pas la mienne, is doubtless a reference to Beckett's own bi-lingual writing and to his self-translations. As he writes, or translates, in English, the sounds and meanings of the French tongue are there in his ear and act as a descant. In addition, being an Irishman, he may well feel that English is not his own idiom, although his never writing in Gaelic would invalidate that thesis. Nevertheless, Anglo-Irish does have sounds, intonations and expressions which differ markedly from British English, so that even as he composes in French this might be with the echo of British English resounding in his mind.

The first five substantives of the above paragraph are quite overtly concerned with time past and with the search for what his life of yesteryear might have to teach the protagonist. One may be fairly sure that cherche-perdu-temps are an allusion to Proust's great novel. What happens in the translated passage is significant in that temps perdu are rendered quite literally as "wasted time." Not only is this one of the meanings of Proust's expression in French, for the times gone by were wasted until the narrator clearly saw his direction in life and made of his memories the stuff of his future, but it displays Beckett's impatience, openly expressed in the preface to his essay on Proust, with Scott-Moncrieff's translation into English of Remembrance of Things Past, which is poetic in its usage of a famous line in Shakespeare but fails to capture among other things the fullness of meaning of Proust's title. Beckett redresses the balance with his use of seek-seek and his correspondence of life with lesson. He is equally aware of his own writing being done to the self-accompaniment of a tongue other than his, to the semantic and phonetic reverberations of a foreign idiom.

Beckett has all the while been writing on several levels, as is his wont. The silence of the penultimate passage quoted (p. 99) leads into the punning of the last passage: s[il-lance] incorporates two euphemisms for the male member, while its English equivalent, silent [beard]

is a low colloquialism for the female pubic hair, as silent [flute] is for the penis; leçon-montagne-route are vulgarisms for the pudend; old lesson is slang for an occasion for coition (let us note that the French has leçon, not vieille leçon, so that Beckett is here again enriching the old idiom by playing on double meanings of the vernacular tongue. He continues his verbal play with road, a vulgarism for the pudend and for harlot, towns [and cities] for a woman's breasts, sky[scraper], woods, tongue for the penis. In a final risolino directed at his audience, Beckett uses the word hill [and dale] which is rhyming slang for a tale as practised by a con-man: another spiralling of the text to the twins Con-Art, that con-artist Louit and his unfortunate dog O'Connor, all in Watt. Even here, or perhaps especially here, Beckett hurls his irreverence in the august presence of Proust from text to translation, both as a comedian and as an alchemist of the word.

A more subtle allusion to Proust occurs a little later as the protagonist struggles with stylistic problems in an attempt to reach something approximating le style indirect libre, a term coined by Proust himself in reference to Flaubert, in whom he recognized the frequent lack of a connective phrase in narrating indirect speech or thought. In actuality the device is very ancient since one can find it, for example, in Boccaccio or Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain. But Beckett in a respectful nod to Proust has his protagonist

declare, "J'ai même pu recueillir, sans m'arrêter un seul instant de débiter mes dit-il, et se dit-il, et répondit-il, certaines formules des plus prometteuses et qu'en effet je me suis promis de mettre à contribution à la première occasion. . . ." (p. 42) The translation is unerring, "I even succeeded in catching, without ceasing for an instant to emit my he said, and he said to himself, and he asked, and he answered, a certain number of highly promising formulae and which indeed I promised myself to turn to good account at the first opportunity. . . ." (p. 27, all italics ours) What is interesting in the above is not so much the accuracy of the translation at this particular point, the inclusion of the various connectives used in narrating indirect speech, as Beckett's use of the word discourse (p. 26), for the French discours (p. 41) on the preceding page, where speech might have been equally valid. The appearance of that particular word in English is a link to the literary expression, indirect free discourse, the usual translation of "style indirect libre."

The memory theme, in which one may again see the presence of Marcel Proust, spirals forward relating structurally previously quoted passages to "vouloir se rappeler," (p. 101) translated as remember-remember (p. 68), and to the far later moment in the novel when the progatonist, compelled to continue, remarks, "J'ai été ailleurs, fait autre chose . . . si je me rappelais. . . . Pourtant j'ai

des souvenirs, je me rappelle Worm" (pp. 222-223) His vague supposition that he has been elsewhere and his anguished wish that he could recapture his memories are mitigated by the certainty, "I've been away, done something . . ." self-erased by the plaintive, "if I could remember . . . ," but reasserted by the victorious, "And yet I have memories, I remember Worm." (p. 152)

The triumphant note continues, "maintenant je me rappelle . . . il s'appelait Mahood . . . les mêmes mots reviennent et ce sont mes souvenirs. C'est moi qui l'ai inventé. . . ." (p. 223) The spiral backward in time from Worm to Mahood, his fictional predecessor, has shown what memory, involuntary memory, can accomplish: it is the alchemist that transforms the word into the fable, into the work of art. Beckett translates himself as follows, "now I remember . . . he was called Mahood . . . the same words recur and they are your memories. It is I invented him. . . ." (p. 152). There are two curious differences in the translation: mes [souvenirs] becomes your [memories], and there is in the English the double urgency, "I remember-I remember," as if to stress the personal quality of the remembering and negate the ambiguous quality of the adjectival your.

Here Beckett uses another device besides scatology to transform apparent adulation of Proust into a parody. He employs this syntactic tool frequently and with deadly

efficacy: quite simply it is antithesis following affirmation. The artistic value of memory is thus shattered by, "j'ai inventé mes souvenirs, sans savoir ce que je faisais, pas un seul n'est sur moi." (p. 224) The irony comes through in the translation, whose debunking tone captures intact the iconoclasm of the original, "I invented my memories, not knowing what I was doing, not one is of me." (p. 152) The shattered icon is of course not art itself but the role of voluntary memory in the creative process. The protagonist invented his memories; he did not allow remembrances to flow freely from the past into the present, and the specter of his lying fictions haunts him.

The text continues its structural spirals, with the protagonist's attempts to describe his surroundings, echoing the initial passage on the search for memories. (pp. 38-39)

> qu'est-ce que j'ai pu imaginer comme fenêtres depuis le temps, il y en avait qui s'ouvraient sur la mer, on ne voyait que la mer et le ciel, si je pouvais me mettre dans une chambre, c'en serait fini de la chasse aux mots . . . je m'en souviendrais, . . . je dirais comment c'est, chez moi, cet endroit, si je pouvais décrire cet endroit, le dépeindre, j'ai essayé . . . je vais essayer . . . je savais bien que j'avais des souvenirs.
>
> (pp. 230-231)

The essence of this passage would seem to lie in the protagonist's belief that if he could only retreat into a bedroom, memory would flow recapturing words with which to depict the place he inhabits; in short, how it is. This

would once more seem to be an allusion to Proust, whose great work was entirely composed within the cork-lined walls of his room. The words, mer-ciel-chambre-temps-souvenirs are also a link back to the earlier passage, as they are an allusion to Proust's narrator's description of the sea and sky at Balbec and his childhood memories of his bedroom. Another thread runs through this passage, and it is Beckett's own description of Joyce's Finnegans Wake as an "entrance upon the sea-shore," in Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . Joyce (p. 22). The semantic dimensions of the word sea, and its French equivalent, mer-mère, are of mythical proportions, since it is from the sea that all life arose: the waters of the Liffey are quite properly the mother of us all. Beckett makes a final literary allusion here, to himself, in comment c'est, the title of his later prose work, also a pun on commencer, as if telling how it is will begin the creative process (Comment c'est, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1961).

The translation seizes the original's insistence that self-incarceration would induce memory to fashion and recover the self in art:

> What haven't I imagined in the ways of windows in the course of my career, some opened on the sea, all you could see was sea and sky, if I could put myself in a room, that would be the end of the wordy-gurdy . . . I'd get to remember it, I'd be home, I'd say what it's like, in my home, instead of any old thing, this place, if I could describe this place, portray it, I've tried . . . I'll try

again . . . I knew I had memories . . .
(pp. 157-158)

The word window which in Beckett's French is juxtaposed with dépeindre (portray in his translation) may well put one in mind of the beginning of Proust's Le Temps retrouvé where the narrator on a visit to Gilberte observes the steeple of Combray and its surrounding trees through his bedroom window. What he sees, however,is a painting rather than a view of nature. This epiphany leads him to remember his childhood love for Gilberte, his adult relationship with Albertine and in the awareness of his distaste for the aging and over-madeup Gilberte he comes to the self-discovery that he no longer loves either one of them.

Self-discovery is precisely the aim of Beckett's protagonist but his attempts to recapture the past are too deliberate to serve any useful purpose and he resorts to wishful thinking.

Thematically the allusion to Proust is valid. Linguistically it becomes a parody through the use of antithesis and double meanings. Both are meticulously recreated in Beckett's self-translation. The antitheses-negations weave in and out of the above-quoted passage on memory, so that endroit is followed by pas d'endroit-pas d'endroit (p. 230) and ça n'a jamais été le mien (p. 231). Similarly souvenirs are negated by dommage qu'ils ne soient pas sur moi, and the desperate realization, Mais ce n'est pas moi,

ce n'est pas moi (p. 231): the search for the self has been vitiated.

The protagonist perseveres tenaciously, Je remarque une chose: he notices that his fictional companions have disappeared and concludes ironically, D'ailleurs je ne remarque rien (p. 232). In translation the negations similarly give the passage the ironic twist of parody. Place is countered by no place, no place (p. 157), none was ever mine (p. 158). Pity they are not of me characterizes the sought memories which were to recapture the essence of existence for a being who has to concede, But it's not I, it's not I. As in the original French the self attempts to assert itself, I notice one thing. only to be derided, Notice, I notice nothing (p. 158). The protagonist then feels bound to create a fictional being to be transmuted into a self which, having been found, will allow him to remain quiescent. Once more, however, his search for memories, for himself has gone awry, for c'est le mensonge qu'ils ne veulent pas arrêter (p. 233). It is the lie, the fabulation he is unable to arrest. He must continue fictionalizing, uttering the fabrications which have kept him uttering since the beginning and end in the manic repetition of meaningless words whose meaninglessness does not matter since it is within the word itself that he discovers the essence of his being:

> Je suis tous ces mots, tous ces étrangers, cette poussière de verbe . . . se rencontrant pour dire, se fuyant pour dire, que je les suis tous . . . et que j'écoute, et que j'entends, et que je cherche, comme une bête née en cage de bêtes nées en cage de bêtes nées en cage de bêtes nées en cage de bêtes nées en cage de bêtes nées en cage mortes en cage nées et mortes nées et mortes en cage en cage nées et puis mortes nées et puis mortes, comme une bête dis-je. . . .
> (p. 204)

This passage has revealed certain significant facets of Beckett's text. The protagonist has found being in the word which progresses mechanically in a spiral only to end as it began with the pronomial je. What appears to be a syntactically closed circle is in fact more than that for by his declaration, dis-je, the protagonist has effected a break from his cage: he has erupted from the linguistic vortex in which he was caught, utterance as compulsive, manic and repetitive as any found in Watt. We shall examine the reason behind this verbal structure in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that it is as deliberate and conscious an artistic device on Beckett's part as Arsene's "and my father's and my mother's and my father's father's and my mother's mother's and my father's mother's and my mother's father's and my father's mother's father's and my mother's father's mother's . . . ." (Watt, p. 46) Indeed there is a distinct affinity between Watt's thoughts after encountering the Galls and that of L'Innommable's protagonist in the interweaving of diction-contradiction, se rencontrant-se fuyant, mortes-nées.

There is another quality to Arsene's and the Unnamable's speech and it is that within the "wordy-gurdy" of verbal echoes there exists a progressive movement of language. Beckett's translation is significant in that it differs somewhat from his text:

> I'm all these words, all those strangers, this dust of words . . . coming together to say, fleeing one another to say, that I am they, all of them . . . and that I listen, and that I seek, like a caged beast born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born in a cage and dead in a cage, born and then dead, born in a cage and then dead in a cage, in a word like a beast. . . .
> (pp. 139-140)

Beckett has obviously seized the essence of his original text: that here for a moment the 'I' of the protagonist feels himself to be the words, experiences the suffering of being. Curiously, however, where the French uses the Biblical verbe, the English merely repeats words. Then again while there is a spiralling movement in the translation it does not as in the original turn back upon itself to end as it began with I. Perhaps this was to stress the protagonist's escape from his imprisoning verbal maelstrom. Beckett has also reduced in translation the number of linguistic gyrations, quite possibly because he felt that his English version had sufficiently rendered the echoes of the original. He placed the logos-verbe-word at the end as if to further identify the protagonist's self with the word. The word also appears at the beginning of the passage, for after all, "In the beginning . . ." and "I am the Alpha and the Omega . . ."

As in the text the translation self-erases these conceits immediately: they are therefore mocked, as the protagonist discovers that he is a wordless thing in a mute world. In a moment of despair he sees the word wherein he had thought to find his being to be evanescent as a snowflake. As in Watt he suffers ontological reduction from a being to an object, as does the word become dust instead of the valorizer of existence. This is parody of language, of the word, and self-mockery since Beckett is after all a craftsman of language. The irony injects a note of humor into the protagonist's tragic plight as he finds himself bereft of the illusion of existing through his fictional creations.

Furthermore if the above-quoted passages are indeed a reflection of Proust they are also symptoms of the twentieth-century malaise which we find equally in Woolf's To the Lighthouse, in Joyce's Ulysses, in Eliot's Four Quartets with their emphasis on time-space and the evocative power of memory. Woolf's novel is an elegy to her deceased parents in which the first part anticipates the second in the abortive sea-voyage to the lighthouse, and the second, permeated with the memory of the deceased mother, fulfils the human relationships delineated in the first and consummates the visit to the lighthouse. Joyce's novel is an explosion of chronological time and a paean to psychological time in the twenty-four hour odyssey of

Bloom-Ulysses in Dublin, his encounter with Stephen-Telemachus, their joint return to Molly-Penelope and home-Ithaca. Molly is not the faithful Penelope nor Stephen the beloved son any more than Bloom is the heroic Odysseus. Hence the ironic comedy of Joyce's novel that is quite foreign to Woolf's. Eliot's Four Quartets are filled with allusions to time, memory, sea, sky. "Burnt Norton I" has these lines, "Time present and time past Are both perhaps present in time future, And time future contained in time past." Several lines below occur the words, "Footfalls echo in the memory . . . over dead leaves." (p. 3) What is especially significant about the last quotation is that Footfalls is the title of a fairly recent work of Beckett's (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1976) and that in his Foirade 5, written in French about 1960 (in Pour en finir encore et autres foirades, Paris: Les Editions de minuit, 1976, self-translated as Fizzles, N.Y.: Grove Press, 1976) "dead leaves" appear as "a reminder." (p. 38) This is not to suggest plagiarism or even influence, but simply that Beckett was keenly aware of trends in modern writing and is himself part of an unbroken tradition in European literature.

If we consider again Eliot's poetic patterns, we find "the sea is all about us," "Out at sea . . . I am here . . . In my beginning." ("The Dry Salvages," pp. 21, 12). In "Burnt Norton I," there is preoccupation with "the cloud,"

"the sunlight," (pp. 4, 5) in II, "the stars." (p. 5). This is to suggest that the presence of Marcel Proust is not the only one in Beckett, beside Dante and Joyce. Perhaps he saw Proust through the eyes of Eliot, or again perhaps the patterns are universal ones, with the definite exception of Eliot's "footfalls" and "dead leaves."

In the fashioning of a new idiom, Beckett's vision more nearly approximates Dante's and Joyce's. To the standard semantics of a word he adds new extensions from the jargon of the streets. We have noted this before but it cannot be sufficiently stressed as a linguistic achievement along with the injection of a comic tone at a time of ultimate despair for his protagonist. The key-words, or conceits, imagined as memories by the protagonist have invariably bawdy connotations: See-sea is prostitute's slang for coition, room is bawd (a pun needless to say on board), sky[scraper] is a vulgarism for the penis, window (wind-O) a juxtaposition of the fundament and its foirade, and the pudend; remember (re-member) is too obvious to comment on, while thing[ummy] may be either male member or pudend. Old thing signifies the language of Irish tinkers, tinkers in turn being Scots colloquial for disreputable vagabonds (Beckett's galerie de crevés). Wordy-gurdy is rhyming slang for hurdy-gurdy, a brothel, with the additional connotation of playing the organ, which is to copulate; a hurdy-gurdy is also an ancient Irish stringed instrument

rather like the fiddle, a low colloquialism for the pudend, for the intimate caress of a woman, finally for a cheat.

We can easily perceive the verbal-semantic echoes within the reticulum of words uttered by the wistful protagonist, and it is precisely these echoes which enrich the entire text and give an added dimension to his tragi-comic search for self-hood.

The semantic reverberations captured in translation were present in the original text: the scurrilous double-meanings gave it the same comic tone. Mer-mère is colloquial for brothel and in turn relates to mots. The vernacular expression, "pas un mot a la reine mère" signifies "mum's the word," a double play on mère-mother, mot-word. Ciel is associated with the guillotine in "approcher du ciel à reculons," a euphemism for being beheaded in that efficient and barbaric manner. Chambre is a vulgarism for the pudend, chasse suggests sexual pursuit. Chasse aux mots is additionally rhyming slang for chasse d'eau, the peculiarly French W.C. system. Souvenirs-mémoire [de lièvre] is a vernacular expression for the head's not being screwed on properly (with all the connotations of that word), a linguistic spiral back to the physical effects of the guillotine.

As we proceed to the protagonist's outburst of manic utterance we find a similar play on words, a similar usage

of terms which may be bawdy or humorous or both. The homonyms reach into the vernacular idiom to extend the semantics of the text and have its echoes resonate in the reader's mind. Rencontrant is a pun on con; dire-écoute have the slang connotation of "sez you," in the expression, "à qui tu le dis, j't'écoute." Chercher is to pick a quarrel with someone, while its English counterpart, seek-hunt is a low colloquialism for whore which is a link with cage [à poules], a brothel. Additionally the French cage is, as the English, a euphemism for the pudend. Bête is a literal translation of Shakespeare's "make the beast with two backs," (Othello, I, i) a euphemism for coition. The compulsive repetition of nées-nées is also a pun on the low colloquialism, nénés, the female breasts. The slang connotation of morte is well conveyed by the English dead. The first is used to announce that another's day's work is done, "elle est morte," while the latter is a euphemism for an empty bottle of liquor. It is interesting to note that the first usage in this sense was made by Swift in 1738, Polite Conversations, Dial. 2, according to the O.E.D. All aspects of these words both at the colloquial and literal levels convey the sense of an ending, whether it be of life, of a day's toil, of a night's carousing.

A Proustian obsession which appears in Beckett is that of the mother, the longing for the mother, the love-hatred of the mother. In Proust it begins with the child

Marcel's deep attachment to his grandmother, the piercing need for the mother's ritual goodnight kiss, and after the grandmother's stroke as he comes face to face with his non-being for her, the transference of all that was his grandmother to his mother. In Beckett there exists the preponderance ofthe initial letter M in the protagonist's fictions, Murphy-Molloy-Moran-Mercier-Malone-MacMann-Mahood. Molloy actually seeks and finds his mother; Malone in his dying reflects that his "mother is done for" (p. 225 in the 17th printing of the trilogy. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1977); Mahood, the second fiction in L'Innommable, watches pitilessly the extermination of his entire family:

> Mais le bouquet, ça a été cette histoire de Mahood où je suis représenté comme saisi par le fait d'être débarassé à si bon compte d'un tas de consanguins, sans parler des deux cons tout court, celui maudit qui m'avait lâché dans le siècle et l'autre, infundibuliforme, où j'avais essayé de me venger en me perpétuant.
>
> (pp. 72-73)

There is a mounting hatred there that reaches its climax in seeing the fact of procreation as a retaliation against the being who gave him life. In translation the outburst appears more vehement, probably because the French con is so frequently used as to lose its original significance:

> But the bouquet was this story of Mahood's in which I appear as upset at having been delivered so economically of a pack of blood-relations, not to mention the two cunts into the bargain, the one for ever accursed that ejected me into this world and the other, infundibuliform, in which, pumping my likes, I tried to take my revenge.
>
> (pp. 48-49)

Con is quite literally the pudend or fundament, and despite its current vulgar and multiple usage may be seen as regaining its original meaning in the context of the passage. The English equivalent usually possesses anatomical precision, although it may be used colloquially by one man to another in the exclamation, "you silly ----." The progenitor, maudit in the text is extended to "for ever accursed" in translation, just as siècle is expanded to world. The portee of the English pumping, absent in the French, exists perhaps in an attempt to replace the pun on con and consanguins. The significance of infundibuliform-infundibuliforme is anatomically most appropriate if one considers the O.E.D.'s observation that it means funnel-shaped, quoting Home, Phil. Trans. LXXXV. 227 (1795), "The uterus itself is . . . infundibular in shape." The length of the word, its archaic and erudite derivation stand in comic opposition to the colloquialism of the rest of the passage. One final remark might be made concerning the above language: is the hatred indeed directed at mother-wife-children rather than at the times which have been merciless to the near-limbless Mahood? Might it not be a cry of outrage at the human condition? In the context of the passage it would seem a valid conclusion, although one cannot dismiss the attitudes towards women of Beckett's other protagonists. This may, however, be equally seen as a weapon against, or a refuge from, creatures who

can only be considered threatening from the viewpoint of Beckett's vulnerable and decrepit men. The use of scatology and mockery of sex may be seen in a similar light. Beckett's women, when they appear at all, come on the scene as equally grotesque and decrepit but they lack the vulnerability of their male counterparts; witness Molloy's overbearing Lousse and Watt's rock-heaving Lady McCann.

The theme of the mother is resumed as an echo towards the end of the novel as the protagonist exclaims, "je cherche ma mère pour la tuer," reiterating the sound of la mer of the previous page (pp. 214, 215). The translation, "I'm looking for my mother to kill her," (p. 146) is quite literal but appears to lack the reverberation of the text. This is, however, ingeniously recaptured by Beckett on the same page in matter-maws-mother (p. 146) for the text's pis-gueule-mer-mère. Not only has Beckett rendered in his translation the resonances of his text but also the spirit of the passage. In the last analysis, the theme of the mother-love-hate-search goes beyond Proust to express a feeling inherent in man, and as ancient as man himself. Odysseus's quest was for Ithaca but equally for Penelope, the wife-mother.

A contemporary preoccupation is to be found in the protagonist's musings on habit and its resultant boredom. The pattern appears, of course, in Proust but is also one of Eliot's early conceits. Let us recall the tedium in

the life of J. Alfred Prufrock, his efforts to break away from it in an imaginary love affair and his final resignation to his fate as a dull being who will never climb the steps of his beloved's house and who will continue measuring time by quotidian coffee spoons. The relationship between time, habit, boredom and its dulling effects is examined at length in L'Innommable:

> Le problème est délicat. Les effets de l'accoutumance, Qu'en font-ils? Ils peuvent les combattre, en élevant la voix, en forçant la clarté. Mais si, au lieu de souffrir moins, à mesure que le temps passe, il souffre toujours autant, précisément que le premier jour? ça doit être possible. Et mais si, au lieu de souffrir moins, ou autant, que le premier jour, il souffre plus, à mesure que le temps passe, de plus en plus, à mesure que le transfert s'effectue, de l'avenir interchangeant à l'inchangeable passé? Autre chose, mais dans le même ordre d'idées. L'affaire est épineuse. Une souffrance étale n'est-elle pas préférable à celle dont les fluctuations donnent par instants à croire qu'après tout elle ne durera peut-être pas toujours? . . . n'importe quoi, pour rompre la monotonie.
>
> (pp. 164-165)

Let us first take cognizance of the verbal echoes in the text, the repetition of mais-si-mais si-mais; souffrir-souffre-souffrir-souffre-souffrance; temps-autant-autant-temps. The protagonist is pondering the question whether fighting habit will in any way affect the suffering of being, whether wrestling with the sameness of the passage of time may not increase this suffering. In the end he opts for anything to break with monotony, as Prufrock does not.

The translation presents us with a few textual differences which are worth examining, although the integrity of the original is essentially intact:

> The problem is delicate. The dulling effect of habit, how do they deal with that? They can combat it of course, raising the voice, increasing the light. But suppose, instead of suffering less, as time flies, he continues to suffer as much, precisely, as the first day. That must be possible. And but suppose, instead of suffering less than the first day, or no less, he suffers more and more as time flies, and the metamorphosis is accomplished, of unchanging future into unchangeable past. Eh? Another thing, but of a different order. The affair is thorny. Is not a uniform suffering preferable to one which, by its ups and downs, is liable at certain moments to encourage the view that perhaps after all it is not eternal? . . . anything at all, to relieve the monotony. . . .
> (pp. 111-112)

The numbing effects of the customary, not unlike that of opiates, drive the protagonist to risk greater suffering in order to feel alive, a contrast with his fiction Mahood who constantly needs laudanum to relieve his pains. The dulling caused by repetitious habit is insisted upon in a way it is not in the original text. Another difference between the two versions lies in the coupling interchangeant-inchangeable, and unchanging-unchangeable. Each set of adjectives is both antithetical and a verbal echo, as avenir-passé, future-past are opposites. Is there not, however, a difference in meaning between interchangeant and unchanging? The French adjective contains an inherent probability of change, indicates permutation, whereas its translation negates all such. Thus we are left here with

the premise that Beckett is, as we have seen before, more interested at this juncture in verbal resonances and semantic echoes than in precise meaning. The English adjective's quality of eternity has its own semantic rhyme in eternal found two sentences after unchanging future.

As usual, Beckett uses contradiction to self-erase the protagonist's pronouncement and ends the page with the paradoxical, "Va donc pour la monotonie, c'est plus stimulant." (p. 165) This he translates quite literally giving the speculations a tone of despair whose span is broadened by Beckett's use of comic vernacular homonyms. Dull, for instance is slang for tipsy, habit for drink, while most of the remaining key-words unfold in increasing degrees of scatology: raise [a gallop] is to have an erection, [a short] time is a single act of coition (as well as serving out a sentence in the slammer). Thing and thorn[y] are vulgarisms for the male member; affair may refer to either the male or female genitalia, and ups and downs either suggest the coital movement or stands for the 69th Foot Regiment, Second Battalion of the Welsh Regiment: the nickname seems to have originated from the regiment's having started as a mixed battalion of raw recruits and old crocks, but beyond that the number has a bawdy sexual portee: it is a link to Watt's debt to Goff Nixon of six and ninepence at the beginning of Watt, and is another example of the manner in which Beckett uses structural

interlacing from text to text.

Beckett's French text had been equal in its scurrilous tone to that of the translation, giving a broader envergure to the sharp edge of the protagonist's suffering. Accoutumance-habitude-habitant is a low colloquialism for lice, and growing accustomed to them. Here is yet another example of Beckett's textual cross-referencing if we recall Molloy's last love, Lousse-louse and the parasitic side of her persona, and the bond with Molloy's moly is established in the English dull (which we have already established to be slang for drunk). The latter is a structural spiral back to the dead [man]-mortes of the repetitive passage quoted above. Elevant-raising are obvious terms of venery, as are clarté-light. Affaire is a French vulgar euphemism for the pudend, while épine is Rabelaisian slang for the male member. Temps, as its English counterpart, is colloquial for a term in jail. The sexual connotations are pursued in fluctuations, while monotonie-monotony is an attribute of linear function in mathematics, and may be seen as an allusion to Descartes as well as a characteristic of habit. Withal this analysis exemplifies once more the manner in which Beckett endows inherent tragedy with greater depth by having the reader perceive its comic possibilities; it points furthermore to the textual spirallings which give greater structural tautness. Most importantly it is witness to Beckett's linguistic

achievement in using vernacular homonyms to extend the semantics of his texts, and thus actually coining a fresh mode of expression richer in its echoes and allusions than any modern idiom since Joyce's.

Beckett's thematic linkage continues with the reiteration of the protagonist's preoccupation with habit-boredom, which leads him in frustration to conclude that:

> dans sa soif de quelquechose à faire, pour ne plus avoir à le faire, pour avoir ça en moins à faire, qu'il n'y a rien à faire, rien de spécial à faire, rien de spécial à faire . . . inutile de se raconter des histoires pour passer le temps, les histoires ne font pas passer le temps, rien ne fait passer le temps, rien ne le fait passer, ça ne fait rien, c'est comme ça, on se raconte des histoires, puis on se raconte n'importe quoi, en disant, Ce ne sont plus des histoires, alors que ce sont toujours des histoires, ou plutôt il n'y a jamais eu d'histoires, ça a toujours été n'importe quoi . . . toujours la même chose pour passer le temps, puis le temps ne passant pas, pour rien . . . pourquoi ce besoin de parler, ce besoin de s'arrêter, cette impossibilité de s'arrêter. . . .
>
> (pp. 211-212)

The above passage contains many of Beckett's conceits, the urge to act, the realization that action is in itself unimportant, that even fictionalizing does not alleviate boredom nor make time pass. Here too we are faced with the Beckettian paradox of the compulsion to utter and the desire to be silent.

Beckett's translation into English retains the compulsion to act, to speak if only to while away the boredom of existence. The intense questioning of the need to speak existing beside its antithetical need to be silent and the

final incapacity to cease utterance seem absent or at least attenuated, in translation:

> in your thirst for something to do, in order to be done with it, and have that much less to do, that there is nothing to be done, nothing special to be done, nothing doable to be done. . . . no point in telling yourself stories, to pass the time, stories don't pass the time, nothing passes the time, that doesn't matter, that's how it is, you tell yourself stories, then any old thing, saying, No more stories from this day forth, and the stories go on, its stories still, or it was never stories, always any old thing . . . the same old thing, to pass the time, then as time didn't pass, for no reason at all . . . . seeking the cause, the cause of talking and never ceasing. . . .
>
> (p. 137)

The key-phrase, "impossibilité de s'arrêter," the characteristic of compulsive utterance, is not present in Beckett's self-translation. Yet it would seem to be of the protagonist's essence that he speak, that he weave tales not only to relieve the tedium of existence but to prove that he exists. The phrase does occur later, as it does repetitively in the original, "impossible de s'arrêter," (p. 204) or in the English, "impossible to stop." (p. 204). Here Beckett's translation would once again seem to be attempting greater conciseness by eliminating reiterations yet the verbal echoes are present in the fullness of their poetic resonances as reverberations inside the writer's skull. Another possibility is that Beckett, viewing translation as a creative act translated here without direct reference to his original text, as he may have in the "bêtes nées" passage. This hypothesis would be proved

conclusively by an examination of his handwritten notebooks, especially those of his own translation of Watt, now in this country, and prompted it seems by his experience with other translators which may have forced him to recognize that he alone was after all aware of his artistic intentions. Having to "explain himself" is difficult enough for any artist and well-nigh impossible for someone of Beckett's temperament. The recent biography of this author goes far to show how awry a well-intentioned student of the man may go and how infuriating to Beckett any second-guessing about him will be.

In his self-translation of L'Innommable, Beckett rarely translates literally so that a particular key-word or phrase or pun often occurs at some other place in the text but he unfailingly captures the essence of the original: the most significant element of the protagonist's persona is to live vicariously through the creatures he fashions.

The fictions he invented in the past haunt and plague him, especially Malone: it is the new ones who seem to give him existence through their being, by momentarily taking his mind off his own particular plight. They are three in number, Basil, Mahood and Worm. Their names are significant in that they represent three major stages in the life of man, from its beginnings to its putrefaction,

as expressed in "vagir-ricaner-râler," (p. 99) translated as "mewl-gasp-rattle." (p. 67) The words themselves are a link to Vico's theories of the three-fold continuum of birth, maturity, death-regeneration which we shall discuss fully in the following chapter. They also represent a spiral back to Watt and his "Davus complex (morbid dread of sphinxes)" in Watt (p. 251) if we recall the mythical riddle of the sphinx to Oedipus. The first of the protagonist's creatures, Basil, is on one level a lizard-fetus-wriggling infant; the second, Ma[n]hood, having procreated represents the adult human; the final one, Worm, inhabits man at death. The significance of these names in French may be taken for granted, particularly as the stages in human evolution are repeated later in the text, "génération après génération . . . Il a vagi, il va râler," (p. 197) translated as "generation after generation . . . He's mewled, he'll rattle." (p. 135) The importance of these fictions of the protagonist's lies primarily in that they are metaphors for Beckett's cyclical, or spiralling, structures, as we shall analyze in depth later.

As the reader may by now expect, the three names also have vernacular meanings, which extend the dimensions of the personae. Basil refers to fetters on one leg only, one leg (or middle leg) being another euphemism for the male member, just as jambe is its Rabelaisian equivalent.

Mahood in his terminal odyssey to his family becomes a unijambiste with the same bawdy connotation. Ma[n]hood signifies coition, hood cuckoldry or cheating in general. Worm is a low colloquialism for the penis. In examining these three fictions we have to bear in mind all the above connotations in their diverse varieties for Beckett's eye is not only on comic possibilities but on multi-levelled meaning.

The protagonist embarks on his new fabulation by remarking, "Il serait sans doute temps que je donne un compagnon à Malone." Let us recall that Malone was the protagonist in the novel immediately preceding L'Innommable and that his death ushers in the final part of Beckett's trilogy. The Unnamable's narrator continues:

> L'un d'eux en particulier, de nom Basile je crois, m'inspirait une forte répugnance. Sans ouvrir la bouche, rien qu'en me fixant avec ses yeux éteints d'avoir tant vu, il me rendait chaque fois un peu plus tel qu'il me voulait. Tapi dans les ténèbres, me regarde-t-il encore? Usurpe-t-il encore mon nom, celui qu'ils m'ont collé, dans leur siècle, patient, de saison en saison? . . . Et Basile et consorts? inexistants pour expliquer je ne sais plus quoi. Ah oui. Mensonges que tout ça. . . . Et voilà en effet que je glisse déjà, avant d'être à la dernière extrémité, vers les secours de la fable. . . . Années, c'est une idée à Basile. . . . Décidément Basile prend de l'importance.
>
> (pp. 18, 22, 34, 44)

The protagonist has discovered that all his creations once given being hold the power over him of manipulating him, threatening him; the creator becomes a puppet, their

creature even though they are fictions, or as he qualifies them lies.

The translation is equally Dantesque in tone, although there are a few minor differences:

> It is no doubt time I gave a companion to Malone. . . . One in particular, Basil I think he was called, filled me with hatred. Without opening his mouth, fastening on me eyes like cinders with all their seeing, he changed me a little more each time into what he wanted me to be. Is he still glaring at me from the shadows? Is he still usurping my name, the one they foisted on me, up there in their world, patiently, from season to season? . . . And Basil and his gang? Inexistent, invented to explain I forget what. Ah yes, all lies. . . . And I see myself slipping, though not yet at the last extremity, towards the resorts of fable. . . . Years is one of Basil's ideas. . . . Decidedly Basil is becoming important.
> (pp. 11, 13, 21-22, 28, 29)

The scene could be from the Inferno, in the staring, the hatred, the unseeing eyes, the shadows. It is interesting to note that Beckett translates yeux éteints by eyes like cinders, for the latter surely suggest a red glow whereas the French is extinguished and therefore lacking in light. Beckett may have been contrasting cinders with embers, incidentally the title of another work of his, translated by Pinget as Cendres, so perhaps again Beckett was translating without reference to his text. Another image differs more widely in translating: the crouching position of tapi is given as glaring. The image recurs later in the novel where tapi (p. 143) is translated by crouch (p. 83). The repetition of the French

word is another example of the verbal echo; which contributes to a poetic prose and is one of Beckett's most striking structural patterns. The first two adjectives are not, however, so distant in meaning as might at first be supposed: there exists in both an implied threat. The French adjective is associated with a being hiding or waiting to pounce upon his victim. The English has traditional links with Satan and thus places the text well within the confines of the Inferno: The O.E.D. quotes D. Pell (1659), Impr. Sta., 110 note, "The Hebrews call anger Aph, because therein . . . the whole man swell like a Toad, and glares like the Devil."

Here again the scene, an infernal one, is extended by the bawdy connotations of vernacular homonyms. Mouth-bouche are both vulgar euphemisms for the pudend, as is cinder which is rhyming slang for winder-window and may be the reason why Beckett chose to translate éteints as he did. Foist is to break wind silently, in contrast to Fizzle, the title of a recent work. Up is a low colloquialism for the erect penis.

Beckett's self-translation has retained the comedy of the sexual doubles-entendres, the infernal locus, perhaps most significantly the conceit that fiction-fable are "all lies," and therefore not mimetic. This is, of course, a Platonic concept but should not be taken too seriously as

a Beckettian viewpoint for it proves to be yet another example of narrative self-contradiction or self-erasure for ironic purposes: Swift does the same as perceived by Martin Price in his introduction to A Tale of a Tub (The Oxford Anthology of English Literature, ed. Frank Kermode and John Hollander, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 194.)

Basil's successor in the protagonist's fictional world is Mahood. The transition from the first to the second is swift and effortless. As Basil assumes too much importance he is cannibalized much as Moll was in Malone meurt and the protagonist declares:

> Je vais donc l'appeler Mahood . . . Tiens je vais raconter une histoire de Mahood, pour me reposer. . . . Puis retapé, je m'attaquerai de nouveau à la vérité . . . Mahood n'est pas pire que ses devanciers. Mais avant d'en brosser le portrait, sur pied, il n'en a plus qu'un, mon prochain représentant en existence sera un cul-de-jatte, c'est décidé, la jatte sur la tête et le cul dans la poussière. . . . Si après tout nous ne faisions qu'un . . . ? Cette fois-ci je n'ai plus qu'une jambe, tout en ayant rajeuni, paraît-il. . . . Une seule jambe et puis d'autres signes distinctifs, humains certes, mais pas exagérément. . . . Essayons cette fois-ci avec un crâne de poisson. . . . Avec l'unique jambe presque au milieu. . . . J'ai été lui [Mahood] un instant, clopinant sur ses béquilles. . . . Bref, je rentrais au bercail.
>
> (pp. 44-45, 56-59, 62)

To rest, to avoid speaking of himself, in the last analysis, to shun facing himself, the protagonist embarks unpon another fictional odyssey, this one the longest in

the novel as indeed befits the longest human cycle of all, that of maturing and senescence. As he sketches out his new hero, the protagonist finds himself identifying with him, being progressively devoured once more by the creature he has fashioned. In a somewhat similar process Moran assumed Molloy's persona, unbounded by space and time, until the return to his desk slipped him once again into the rigid shell of the report-writer. (Molloy)

The translation captures intact the portrait of the new fiction: the one-legged cripple starts a journey with so many handicaps that his efforts are raised to heroic proportions. Most significantly, the protagonist is subsumed by the essence of his creation, the he-him-his becoming I-my, echoing the transition from ses-il-lui to je. Both transitions are effected by way of nous-we, that is by a process of dédoublement whereby the secret sharer becomes the double self and finally the lone self. The episode is translated as follows:

> I'll call him Mahood instead. . . That's an idea, now I'll tell one of Mahood's stories, I need a rest. . . . Then refreshed, set about the truth again. . . Mahood is no worse than his predecessors. But before executing his portrait, full length on his surviving leg, let me note that my vice-exister will be a billy in the bowl, that's final, with his bowl on his head and his arse in the dust. . . . What if we were one and the same after all . . . ? This time I am short of a leg. And yet it appears I have rejuvenated. . . . A single leg and other stigmata to go with it, human to be sure, but not exaggeratedly. . . . Let's try him this time with a hairless wedgehead. . . . With

> the solitary leg in the middle. . . . I've been he an instant, hobbling. . . . After each thrust of my crutches. . . . In a word I was returning to the fold.
>
> (pp. 29, 37-39, 41)

The scabrous double meanings of Beckett's text reappear in the English version: one might note that Beckett's ironic vision, expressed through his ambiguous language and self-detachment, is precisely what forces us as readers to feel the tragi-comedy of the human condition. The two streams that conjoin in his work, the serious and the humorous, are exemplified in the use of the polished and vernacular idioms. Within the comic there is the canker of the tragic but his aloof acceptance of the latter deepened by the former compels us to become sentient to his despair.

In the original text the various connotations of the name Mahood are absent but are recaptured in mon prochain-humains and in the sexual double meanings that follow: histoire is a vulgarism for either the male or female organs of generation. Leg, middle leg echo the low colloquial French jambe, béquilles which are euphemisms for the male member. Crâne de poisson is interestingly translated as wedgehead where fish might have served the same purpose since it has the same vernacular meaning of pudend. One can only speculate that here Beckett was using greater ingenuity in resorting to a less common underworld slang substantive with an equivalent meaning.

Two expressions merit special attention in Beckett's self-translation since they are examples of Beckett's linguistic erudition: Cul-de-jatte is rendered as billy in the bowl, signes distinctifs as stigmata. The first is literally a person bereft of legs and thighs who generally propels himself on a flattened surface. The first substantive, translated as billy is etymologically derived from the French billard, which originally referred to the cue or stick with which the game of billiards is played. The image is faithful to the original text especially in view of the obvious bawdy connotation of stick. Stigmata is derived from the Greek στίγμα which is the mark made by a pointed instrument whose root stig appears in στίζειν , to prick. All these words are allied to stick with the same rakish vernacular implications. If we seem to belabor Greek-rooted puns in Beckett it is because he is enough of a specialist in them to have been consulted by Joyce on their subject in the composition of Finnegans Wake, according to Richard Ellman (James Joyce, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1959).

The French signes has a Latin derivation but Beckett relates it to the pun on stigmata by adding a final s to the word, for sigmatic refers to the adding of an s to the root (O.E.D.). Additionally signes is related semantically if not etymologically to stigmata which in turn is a link

to the liturgical maître-épines-Madeleine. Thus does Beckett by a single word spiralling between text and translation cement the union of both. What appears to be a loss on the vernacular level between crutches and béquilles is recaptured by Beckett's use of the word thrust, the visual and semantic equivalent of the French colloquial béquilles. The final phrase of the passage, returning to the fold renders in their entirety the various connotations of the text's "rentrais au bercail." There is the Biblical strain as it pertains to the sheep of the flock. The word is also a spiralling link to Watt where the word is used for the English home.

The interest lies in the intertextual relationship between the two novels, indeed between all of Beckett's oeuvre. There is no paucity of creative impulse as word after word, image after image, character after character recur to haunt their creator, as it were. It is rather a deliberate authorial statement on the singularity within the diversity of human existence: it is the essence of Beckett's translations as it is of his texts, of his texts as of his fictions. The cross-references or echoes are also metaphors for the verbal and semantic resonances within the texts.

In L'Innommable the protagonist's final fiction is Worm. On one level he is end-life. On another he may be

seen as Ur-life. At yet another he has a bawdy connotation. We might stress here that the analysis of the novel's three fictions are of great significance, not only because of the range of their essential meaning which reveals Beckett's efforts in creating a richer idiom but because they exemplify the three-fold structuring of his early novels, the spiralling progression of his language and the capture in translation of his verbal links.

Exasperated with Mahood, his second fiction, the protagonist eliminates him, exclaiming:

> Vite, une maman, que je la suce à blanc, en me pinçant les tétins. Mais il va falloir que je lui donne un nom à ce solitaire. . . Je l'appellerai Worm. . . . Ce sera mon nom aussi, au moment voulu, quand je n'aurai plus à m'appeler Mahood, si jamais j'y arrive. Avant Mahood il y eut d'autres comme lui, de la même race et croyance, armés du meme trident. Mais Worm est le premier de son espèce. . . . A eux tous il a survécu, à Mahood aussi, si Mahood n'est plus. Je l'entends encore, fidèle, me suppliant d'apaiser cette langue morte des vivants. . . . Si je pouvais me taire je comprendrais mieux, ce qu'il veut de moi, veut que je sois, veut que je dise. . . si Mahood se taisait, Worm se tairait aussi. . . . Mais l'absurde! A moi qu'ils ont réduit a la raison. . . . Mais achevons notre pensée avant de chier dessus. Car si je suis Mahood, je suis Worm aussi. Plof. Ou si je ne suis pas encore Worm, je le serai, en n'étant plus Mahood. Plof. . . . L'essentiel est que je n'arrive jamais nulle part, que je ne sois jamais nulle part, ni chez Mahood, ni chez Worm. . . . L'essential est de gigoter jusqu'au bout de son catgut. . . . Moi j'ai avalé trois hameçons à la fois et j'ai encore faim.
>
> (pp. 103-105)

This is not only the introduction of another secondary fiction. It interweaves the mother theme and the protagonist's identification with her ("en me pincant . . ."), the concept of the lifelessness of a living language, of the failure of reason to solve the problems of an irrational world, of the subsuming of the creator by his fabulations, of the necessity of enduring the struggle. At the end of the passage the protagonist has quite clearly become Worm at the end of the fishing line dangling from his fishhooks. Above all, there is the comedy of the double meanings which extend the boundaries of a sterile tongue and enrich it.

The above-mentioned themes are skilfully interwoven in Beckett's self-translation: the mother is merged with the son, as she was in Molloy. The new fiction, Worm, may appear to have lost some of his persona in the original text. Let us note, however, how ingeniously Beckett has inserted the adjective solitaire into his text: it suggests in French ver solitaire, or tapeworm, and coupled with the familiar expression avoir le ver solitaire, to be hungry, links the beginning of the quoted passage with the final substantive, faim. The protagonist's Worm is ontologically present in the French original.

The text contains an apparent anglicism, catgut, but Larousse quotes it as being suturing material, and by

extension a fine thread which could be used as a fishing line. Beckett's use of the word is valid since it is associated with hameçon, or fish hook. The self-translation renders the text thus:

> Quick, give me a mother and let me suck her white, pinching my tits. But it's time I gave this solitary a name . . . I therefore baptise him Worm. . . . It will be my name too, when the time comes, when I nnedn't be called Mahood any more, if that happy time ever comes. Before Mahood there others like him, of the same breed and creed, armed with the same prong. But Worm is the first of his kind. . . . He has survived them all, Mahood too, if Mahood is dead. I can hear him yet, faithful, begging me to still this dead tongue of the living. . . . If I could be silent I would better understand what he wants of me, wants me to be, wants me to say . . . if Mahood were silent, Worm would be silent too. . . . But the absurd! Of me whom they have reduced to reason. . . . But let me complete my views, before I shit on them. For if I am Mahood, I am Worm too, plop. Or if I am not yet Worm, I shall be when I cease to be Mahood, plop. . . . The essential is never to arrive anywhere, neither where Mahood is, nor where Worm is. . . . The essential is to go on squirming forever at the end of the line. . . . I've swallowed three hooks and am still hungry.
>
> (pp. 69-71)

As we analyze the translation further, we find similar double meanings. Tétin and tit, both links back to Watt and its poem, "To Nelly," are respectively a Rabelaisian euphemism for the male member, while tit is in the standard idiom the literal equivalent of the first substantive but again at the level of slang has the differing connotation of harlot-pudend. It is in the name Worm that tétin finds its bawdy equivalent. Pinch is indeed pincer but associated

with prick, pudend, etc. assumes the low colloquial significance of whoremonger. Baptise is to give a name, usually accompanied by sprinkling of water or immersion therein. The root of the word is the Greek βαπτίζειν < βάπτειν to dip, which equally explains the English vulgar connotation of sousing with a chamber pot. Beckett's translation of race-croyance by breed-creed is by its verbal echo almost an improvement on the text. Let us recall that he used the word breed for tribu earlier in the novel so that we are here in the presence of another example of the linguistic spiralling we had already noted, except that it occurs this time in the translation. Additionally, race-croyance--breed-creed have a special literary relationship: race [de vipères] is the Biblical generation [of vipers], which links the first word to creed in its liturgical sense and to the religious theme that weaves in and out of the novel. Littré cites croyance in Corneille, Cid, I, 2, "Doit-on quelque croyance a des âmes si noires?" This is a link to Shakespeare's breed in Richard II, II, 1. Thus are the four words meshed in a nexus that binds together text and translation.

Trident suggests fork which equates prong visually and semantically. At the level of the low vernacular it signifies coition. Hamecon is yet another vulgar euphemism for the male member which is on all levels perfectly

translated by hook[s]. Finally swallow[ed] colloquially refers to appetite and serves in the translation to underline the protagonist's hunger to endure even as he squirms as a worm. Here the French gigoter denotes a writhing movement of the legs which is more humanly sexual than worm-like. Given the slang significance of worm Beckett is still spiralling within his sex imagery.

The analyses of all the foregoing passages in L'Innommable illustrate the meticulous care with which Beckett has approached the translation of his text: on all levels he has captured the sense and shape of his French construct, its essential themes, its verbal play wherein the word is both mask and mirror, tragic and comic and beyond that serves to enrich an impoverished idiom by adding to it the semantics of the colloquial tongue.

There is yet another linguistic dimension to this novel: we found that there was a certain baroque phonetic counterpoint in the English text of Watt, well rendered in the translation into French. This reverberation exists in L'Innommable at the syntactic level. Given the structure of this novel which is an internal monologue or more properly speaking a dialogue intérieur, Beckett opposed, interwove, balanced one against the other the various pronouns of the French language. It is significant to note at this point that in Beckett's early notebooks on

Watt Arsene's lengthy speech was first drafted as a dialogue between Watt and Arsene; only later was the speech transformed into a monologue with Watt's presence serving as a silent respondent. In L'Innommable what is a monologue in essence becomes a dialogue by virtue of the presence of the secondary fictions, by our own readers' presence, by the discourse between the protagonist and his disjunctive being, between the I and the antithetical me. The he, they, the others communicate only as filtered through the consciousness of the I-eye. It is this narcissistic mirroring which the translation must seize, the auto-ontological circle of the structure:

> Je ne me tairai jamais. Jamais. (p. 9) Il faut continuer, je vais continuer. (p. 262)
>
> I shall never be silent. Never. (p. 4) You must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on. (p. 179)

As can be seen the circularity is present in text and translation: it begins as it ends on a note of persevering endurance. Let us point out, however, that the English protagonist has a moment of faltering, "I can't go on," swiftly negated by the four words that follow.

The insistence on the pronomial I is stressed on the first page of the text by the protagonist's overwhelming desire to "dire je." (p. 7) The preoccupation with the self continues with his declarations:

> Je ne me poserai plus de questions. . . . Mais je n'ai rien fait. J'ai l'air de parler, ce n'est pas moi. . . . Comment vais-je faire, que dois-je faire, dans la situation où je suis. . . . Le fait semble être, si dans la situation où je suis on peut parler de faits, non seulement que je vais avoir à parler de choses dont je ne peux parler, mais encore, ce qui est encore plus intéressant, que je, ce qui est encore plus intéressant, que je, ce que est encore plus intéressant, que je, je ne sais plus, ça ne fait rien.
>
> (pp. 7-8)

One can readily see how in the French text the protagonist having begun his dialogue with his secret sharer me-moi returns to his nominative je and is quite incapable of proceeding beyond the I: he is engulfed by his pronomial ego which at this point prevents him totally from progressing to other external topics. In Beckett's self-translation the dialogue with the self seems at first absent: there is no self-questioning, merely regret that

> I did nothing. I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me. . . . What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation . . . ? The fact would seem to be, if in my situation one may speak of facts, not only that I shall have to speak of things of which I cannot speak, but also, which is even more interesting, but also that I, which is if possible even more interesting, that I shall have to, I forget, no matter.
>
> (pp. 3-4)

The translation does eventually introduce the self-questioning, and also captures the protagonist's momentary stasis in the face of breaking out of his narcissistic carapace: the 'I' is too fascinating a subject here. He then escapes through fiction, the "quelques pantins"

he will invent. Those he has already created now enter the scene, simultaneously introducing new pronouns. To the I-me are added he and the all-important we. All-important because it suggests a relationship beyond the self, a union with the other:

> Malone est là . . . Il passe devant moi . . . Il passe, immobile. . . . C'est en le voyant, lui, que je me suis demandé si nous jetons une ombre. (p. 10)

Since the protagonist is able to utter nous, there must exist a kinship between himself and the creature he has fashioned and whose entrance sets the stage for the arrival of other fictions, other pronouns:

> Ne serait-ce pas plutôt Molloy? C'est peut-être Molloy, portant le chapeau de Malone . . . A vrai dire, je les crois tous ici, à partir de Murphy tout au moins, je nous crois tous ici. (pp. 10-11)

The protagonist has made a gigantic stride in time and space: from clutching at his lone self he has progressed to including in his speech most of the beings he created in years past. The translation renders well the transition from the solitary I-me to the he-they-we. These fictions of the past have moved from their remoteness to the spatial closeness of the double I, we:

> Malone is there . . . He passes before me . . . He passes, motionless. . . . It was while watching him pass that I wondered if we cast a shadow . . . Sometimes I wonder if it is not Molloy. Perhaps it is Molloy, wearing Malone's hat. . . . To tell the

> truth I believe they are all here, at least from Murphy on, I believe we are all here.
> (pp. 5-6)

The progression is not only that of the protagonist towards his puppets but of two of them, Malone and Molloy at least, one towards the other. His escape from the self, his fusion with the others does not seem threatening until the arrival of the new fictions: the old ones, Murphy, Mercier-Camier, Molloy, Malone are familiar but the coming of Basil arouses a paranoia in the protagonist who feels watched by a creature "tapi dans les ténèbres." (p. 22). The il-ils of old have assumed a new guise, the mysterious unnamed-unnamable they who have given him "the low-down on God," (p. 13) and have informed on "que c'est de lui que je relève en dernière analyse." (p. 21) This last lui-him dons a liturgical connotation as it relates to the maître later in the text.

His creation of Basil puts the protagonist into a schizoid fury which leads him to put distance between himself and his fictions, but most importantly between the I and its me. Curiously enough this is most evident in the English translation:

> Me, utter me, in the same foul breath as my creatures? Say of me that I see this, feel that. . . . Malone revolves . . . one who is not as I can never not be . . . I alone am man and all the rest divine.
> (p. 16)

Let us contrast the emphasis on me with the first page of the novel, "I, say I." (p. 3)--"Dire je." (p. 7)

The text is equally forceful in its disjunction:

> Me faire charrier, moi, dans le même tombereau que mes créatures? Dire de moi que je vois ceci, que je sens cela . . . Malone tourne . . . En voilà un qui n'est pas comme moi je ne saurai jamais ne pas être . . . Moi seul suis homme et tout le reste divin.
>
> (p. 26)

"les secours de la fable" (p. 43) give being to one whose tribulations once again reconcile the protagonist and his fictions: Mahood becomes both the I and the me, subsuming his creator. This not true, however, of the third fiction, Worm, who remains a distant il, despite the protagonist's protestations that "Je suis Worm," swiftly negated by "C'est-à-dire que je ne le suis plus," (p. 127) and followed by a futile decision to avoid the self:

> Je ne dirai plus moi . . . Je mettrai à la place, chaque fois que je l'entendrai, la troisième personne, si j'y pense.
>
> (p. 139)

Here the translation recaptures the tone of the beginning of the novel: the "dire je," or lack of disjunction,

> I shall not say I again . . . I shall put in its place, whenever I hear it, the third person, if I think of it.
>
> (p. 94)

The I nevertheless continues to assert itself as the protagonist unfolds his narrative. The word-play on I-eye appears in translation, "I shall never obtain other than a confused glimpse, out of the corner of the eye, and what an eye," (p. 11) but seems at first not to have existed in the text with its juxtaposition of je-oeil-oeil (p. 19). Beckett had, however, very adroitly anticipated the pun, and on the following page of the French original he has "mais je ne baisse plus les [y]eux," which leads to the introduction of the distancing ils-they (pp. 20, 13).

Towards the end of L'Innommable, Beckett through his protagonist emphasizes the significance of the pronouns as a semantic-syntactic device:

> Mercier n'a jamais parlé, Moran n'a jamais parlé, moi je n'ai jamais parlé, j'ai l'air de parler, c'est parce qu'il dit je comme si c'était moi . . . C'est la faute des pronons, il n'ya pas de nom pour moi, pas de pronom pour moi, tout vient de là. (p. 240)

In the last analysis, the text makes quite clear as does its faultless translation that the pronoun is by its nature incapable of naming: the protagonist has become unnamable.

CHAPTER IV

DANTE, VICO, JOYCE, PROUST: THE MAKING OF THE MATURE ARTIST

> Tu duca, tu segnore e tu maestro--Dante (Inf. II, 140)
>
> Joyce taught me what it meant to be a real artist --Beckett to Richard Seaver (I can't go on, I'll go on, p. xxiii)
>
> For Proust the quality of language is more important than any system of ethics or aesthetics--Beckett (Proust, p. 67)

Beckett's bi-lingual writing is in itself a symptom of essential duality, of the Manicheism that forces upon him the simultaneous monsters of salvation and damnation, of sacred and profane, of sanity and lunacy, of tragedy and comedy.

Watt, for instance feels "nearest to God" when in the company of Sam he plays with rats but kills (p. 156). Leaving aside the reality that both men are exterminating rodents feeding the young to their progenitors, that rats has humorous slang connotations in English, an obscene one in French, that Watt and Sam are lunatics, theologically speaking they are sinning. In English rat is colloquial for an eccentirc, a drunkard or a madman: Sam's

and Watt's association with these animals is quite appropriate within the framework of their asylum. In French the word is yet another euphemism for penis. This particular incident may have its antecedents in Swift's Modest Proposal For Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland From Being a Burden to Their Parents or the Country, by Fattening and Eating Them (1729). Whether or not Beckett knew Swift's tract is immaterial. The point is that both writers exhibit a polarity between satirical humor and sadism. A similar duality occurs in L'Innommable where Madeleine is portrayed as compassionate to the truncated Mahood in his jar and lustful. An almost limbless Mahood had performed his heroic homeward odyssey on crutches, using a tranquillizer to aid him reach kith and kin. Once there he mercilessly tramples their decaying bodies. In both Watt and L'Innommable an affectionate gesture has its cruel side, what might have been sacred is also profane, what appeared sane becomes an act of lunacy, what seemed tragic has its grotesquely comic face. This is most evident in his language, whether in French or in English. L'Innommable, especially, reverberates to the echoes of liturgical and scatological language, its repetition of maître-Jésus-Madeleine-tombeau mocked by the lewd connotations of such words as épines-javelots-béquilles. The word discloses its meaning where

Beckett is openly scatological, wearing the grinning mask of classical comedy. A list of his bawdy terms would be tedious. Suffice it to say that an increasingly liberal public enabled Beckett to be as frank in England as D. H. Lawrence could not be (in Lady Chatterley's Lover), but as were our Elizabethan forebears, Chaucer and their Greek and Latin predecessors. Resorting to euphemisms for bodily functions or parts of the body is at its best Victorian, at its worst puritanical and restrictive, depriving a language of a wealth of honest words. This was the conclusion both Joyce and Beckett reached early in their artistic careers. Each fashioned a rich new idiom according to his artistic aims, and it is this phenomenon above all which validates and valorizes a linguistic approach to Beckett. This approach is further justified by the questions it answers about Beckett's structures and about the progressive pattern of his language.

The humor is at times concealed by the quality of the language, and then the word may be said to act as a veil. At all times, however, Beckett's language mirrors the meticulous artistry of a writer who takes joy in his native tongue and the one he adopted, and enriched both by unconventional homonyms.

Unlike many writers, Brecht and Ionesco for example, Beckett has not clearly divulged his own artistic aims.

Two of his very early works are seminal to the understanding of the literary pattern of the mature artist. Taken together they represent Beckett at the summit of his career in fiction, and it is extraordinary how clearly and how early Beckett envisaged the nature of the constructs he was to create. Even the spareness of his latest writings is presaged in the title of his collection of poems, Bare Bones (1935).

A brief essay, too long unnoticed by critics, illuminates both the structure of his fiction and of his language. Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . Joyce (Paris: Shakespeare and Co., 1929) first appeared in a collection of critiques of Joyce's Work in Progress. Entitled Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination of Work in Progress, the essays are for the most part hagiographic: this is probably the reason behind critical silence, although since 1929 the collection has had one reprint and a second edition in 1962. Another reason for Beckett's essay's being ignored is that his relationship with Joyce has been largely misconstrued, notably by Richard Ellman, and viewed as a social one tied in with Lucia Joyce's infatuation with Beckett. In fact both writers had very similar artistic visions but differ in the passage from vision to creation. Beckett's essay show a fine grasp of the work that was to be Finnegans

Wake, but more to our purpose is a portrait of Beckett the artist, as a mature man in even more significant ways than his essay, Proust (1931), which we shall discuss later.

In his study of Joyce, Beckett shows how he had fully developed the satiric vigor of the style of his fiction, "The conception of Philosophy ahd Philology as a pair of nigger minstrels out of the Teatro dei Piccoli is soothing, like the contemplation of a carefully folded ham-sandwich (p. 3) . . . ." Here is the trenchant mind of the writer who will parody mercilessly that most cherished of human institutions, romantic love and its consummation in sexuality. Watt's affair with Mrs. Gorman is an example of Beckett's mocking attitude towards sexual relationships, which is reflected also in the use of bawdiness throughout the trilogy, indeed throughout his entire oeuvre. Love divine fares no better, again with the usage of liturgical language which has a rakish double meaning, especially apparent in L'Innommable. Reason itself, that activity usually deemed the exclusive preserve of the human species, is mocked without quarter if one thinks of Watt's ratiocinations on Knott's not owning a dog or his acceptance of the complex mixture that goes into Knott's unvarying meals, or again the Unnamable's sempiternal questions, answers, and the self-erasures of his contradictions. What is Beckett aiming his barbs at, or whom? Not man

himself surely, but the human condition which he views so despairingly that he must don a clown's hat to make us laugh at ourselves: to take life seriously would assuredly drive us to Watt's state of lunacy or to the Unnamable's questioning why he was born. Beckett's soulscapes are, however, not always stark, man is not always alienated from his brother. And in those rare instances Beckett overtly shows deep compassion for his fellow. A moving instance of this is the relationship between Sam and Watt in their gardens. As Watt's dementia has progressed, Sam discovers him one day, with bleeding face scratched by the wire that symbolically separates them. Sam's gentle gesture that soothes the wounds with unguent and straightens the unkempt appearance of his friend bridges the gulf created by Watt's inability to communicate verbally. Watt is no longer alone and alienated, and his ramblings become half-comprehensible to Sam. To be sure Sam's actions have a double colloquial meaning, but even in that meaning there is camaraderie, that of two buddies carousing the night away. The same phenomenon occurs in Mercier et Camier when the latter offers to feed his companion. As a matter of fact Beckett is ever compassionate under his satiric cloak, presenting us with a post-lapsarian being whose fall is not of his making any more than is his creation in an absurd uncomprehending universe, Dantesque

in tone, light and the scarifying penetration into the human soul.

In his essay on Dante, Beckett begins by examining the socio-linguistic theory of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), which was unique in its exposition of the circular progression of society, although its germ was present in the conclusions on identified contraries of Giordano Bruno (1568-1600), and although he derived his three-fold classification of language from the Egyptians via Herodotus. Bruno saw no difference between the infinite circle and the straight line, maxima and minima and decided that corruption was in fact generation. Bruno theorized that history was not the result of fate or chance but the result of a necessity to which we must trace the institutions of Church, Marriage and Burial. Vico's theories on the origins of poetry and language, and the significance of myth led to societal interdestruction from whose ashes arose the phoenix of a new society.

Beckett perceived rather acutely that Joyce accepted both Bruno's and Vico's social and historical classification as a structural convenience, or as he ingenuously admits, "inconvenience." But as he continues he admits that Joyce's position was in no way a philosophical one but rather the detached attitude of Stephen Daedalus.

Beckett further explains his own use of the word

structural as meaning the endless substantial variations on Vico's three beats and an interior intertwining of the three themes of birth, maturity, death-re-generation into a decoration of arabesques. Vico's three beats are the linguistic evolution from gesture to animism that is Homer's language of the gods, to poetry, rich in abstract and technical terms, and comes to the most significant conclusion that words have their progressions (italics ours). The example given is eloquent:

> Latin. 1. Lex = crop of acorns
> 2. Ilex = tree that produces acorns
> 3. Legere = to gather
> 4. Aquilex = he that gathers the waters
> 5. Lex = gathering together of peoples
> 6. Lex = law
> 7. Legere = to gather together letters in a word, to read.
> (p. 11)

Thus can the root of any word be traced to some pre-lingual symbol, but with alphabetism comes the negation of the distinction between writing and direct expression, that is, in Beckett's words "form and content are inseparable."

One can readily see how Beckett relates all the above to Finnegans Wake, the circular structure, the use of myth, the cyclical interweaving of the themes which characterize human life. It is significant for us to note that Beckett himself uses similar conceits, no doubt quite consciously, and in turn exhibits similarities to Bruno, Vico and Joyce.

There is no denying that Beckett strives towards the condition of music where form and content are indistinguishable. The counterpoint of the leitmotifs of Watt and Knott goes beyond the world of semantics to that of pure sound, while the resonances of L'Innommable's questions, hypotheses and opposition of pronouns echo as so many rhymes in a poem and provide a musical tension within the novels. This is equally true of the translation into French of Watt, of Beckett's English version of L'Innommable and of the original texts of both novels. Hence comes part of the intactitude of those works in translation. It is interesting to note, however, that the threne heard by Watt in the ditch on his way from the station to Mr. Knott's house appears with full musical notation in the key of D Major at the end of the novel (p. 254). The key may also be that of C Minor, that is, astronomically Canis Minor, or the opposite of Canis Major, Sirius, whose ascendency ushers in the bright light and heat of the dog days Watt dislikes at this point. The French translators omitted this, because of the impossibility of rendering into French the perpetuum mobile salutations of four generations of Magrew ladies. However this is recaptured in "the voices whispering their canon" to Watt (p. 232) which is characterized as a descant in English but a "choeur mixte" in translation, indicating the value

Beckett attaches to the rhythm and musical quality of words themselves, and in the final analysis of language. The full essence of the English text is given in translation, emphasizing the author's sensitivity to verbal harmonics. Let us examine the word calm. It reverberates with all the musical intensity of its various sounds and meanings throughout most of Beckett's works. His short story, Le Calmant, is only one example. In the Unnamable, the word itself resonates from beginning to end as in an empty skull and with increasing dynamism as the novel unfolds: at first the protagonist utters the noun singly of himself (p. 7); then he attributes it to "god formenter of [calm]." The tempo increases with a nervous and sonorous energy (p. 82), until the word is doubled, "calm, calm," (p. 104) and trebled in its final appearance, "calm, calm, I'm calm," towards the end of the novel (p. 165). Interwoven in this pattern, and echoing through the space of other words are numerous synonyms, "dulled, soothed, solaced" (pp. 23, 118), "peace, in peace, serenity, tranquillity" (pp. 31, 81, 79, 157), "quiet, at rest, rest" (pp. 62, 55, 66), "lull, truces, silences" (pp. 110, 115), "dulled, palliative, painless" (pp. 23, 112, 126), "anodynes, narcotic, laudanum" (pp. 46, 39, 45). Not only is the word used in various senses but it progresses from

one signifying a state of inner quiescence to one suggesting placidity induced by external means. It proceeds from a macrocosm to a microcosm, from the general to the particular, from the inner to the outer. The same phenomenon occurs in Watt, but less markedly, and one should note that the French translation and the French text follow the same route.

Calm has an interesting etymology, and one may be sure that Beckett played on it as well. Originally, it is Greek, καῦμα, meaning heat, derived from καύειν to burn. By association with the Latin calere, to be hot, it progressed to the Late Latin cauma, rest, the French chômer, rest from work, which is allied to the Provençal chaume, the time when the flocks rest. We may recall that Watt and Sam "liked a high wind and a bright sun mixed." (p. 153). In a footnote on the same page the author adds, "Watt liked the sun at this time. . . . Nothing is known about this volte-face," (that is, from his preference for the shadows and a high wind, with which the novel begins, "For if there were two things that Watt disliked, one was the moon, and the other was the sun." (p. 33) L'Innommable is a counterpoint of light and darkness, purgatory and hell, cold and heat. The protagonist's repetition of lumières, lumières (pp. 11, 13, 17, 20, 20) transform him into a sun about whom Malone

travels in planetary orbit. Mahood ends his days in his jar festooned in lights which brighten the night (p. 109). Later, the Unnamable proclaims the scriptural, "Que donc la lumière soit," (p. 153) adding that it might not after all be such a catastrophe, although he prefers the purgatorial grey of his environs. Towards the end of the novel, he expresses the wish, soon self-erased, for a body, for eyes to light the way, for a door that will open onto the path "en couleurs" (p. 257). But the door that opens opens onto his story which he must utter despite a desperate wish to be silent (p. 262).

The knowledge that the Unnamable must speak, must continue returns us to the beginning of the novel, from "ça va être moi" (p. 262) to "Dire je" (p. 7). We are in the presence of the structural circularity theorized by Bruno and Vico, felicitously practised by Joyce as we recall that Finnegans Wake ends on the sentence that it began. Of Beckett's Watt one might equally say that in its ending is its beginning, for Watt takes his leave of the reader, as he first appeared, at a station armed with hat and bags and a ticket "to the end of the line."

Beckett has, however, added a unique quality to his structure. Within the circle he has defined a number of spirals, described as "girations" by L'Innommable (p. 61), physical movements in the case of his fiction Mahood, which

are but metaphors for the linguistic coiling and uncoiling of the text, for the interlacing which relates one event to the other in Watt, relates one work to the other throughout Beckett's entire opus, and brings into L'Innommable all the previous fictions, "à commencer par Murphy, qui n'était pas le premier," (p. 213) to circle about the protagonist as so many subsidiary bodies. L'Innommable also adumbrates a future composition, Comment C'est with his phrase, "the long kiss of dead water and mud." (Unnamable, p. 148)

The parody of Thomas Nash's poem, "Spring," at the beginning of Watt, and its mockery of love and sex, is the moment of tension from which will unfold the non-helicoidal succession of "irregular loops" (Unnamable, p. 40) which are the structure of that novel. The interlacing may exist either in the language or in the imagery. Watt's appearance, "of stone" (p. 17) links him to Mr. Hackett's father, forward to the ending of Arsene's speech where "before the cock crows" alludes to Peter-rock, to Lady Mc Cann's most unlady-like hefting a stone at him (p. 32), to the "cromlech" (p. 49) mentioned by Arsene, to the time when Watt remembers "a distant summer night . . . lying stone sober in [a] ditch" to the sound of three frogs' croaking (p. 136), to his putting out Graves' key "under a stone" overnight (p. 145), to the "stones" Sam and Watt throw

at birds in their gardens (p. 155). The word occurs again in the description of Mr. Nackybal's avocation, of cultivating the "rock potato" (p. 174), in the weight of Watt's overcoat, a "stone" (i.e., fourteen British pounds avoirdupois) (p. 217), the "free stone," or gravel which Watt encounters on the road upon his leaving Knott (p. 224), and the "stone floor" of the station waiting room on which Watt takes his rest before being drenched by a bucket of slops (p. 233). These repetitions may seem like mere verbal echoes, and that is undeniably one of their attributes, but from the structural point of view, they relate to one another various episodes within the novel, Watt's arrival to Watt's departure, those events to Watt's journey to Knott's house, to the various stages of his sojourn there, to his friendship with Sam, to the academic trials of Mr. Nackybal as well as to Watt's perplexing and unsettling experience with Knott's pots (p. 82) when he discovers he no longer can make affirmations that are not as untrue as if he had stated them "of a stone." The net effect of this interlacing is to tighten the structure of the novel, which is expertly wrought, especially considering that we have examined the recurrence of one word only.

Imagery may also be used for the same purpose, and we have the vision of Watt's spiralling gait as he makes his way to Knott's domain finding its mate in the strange walk

of the creature he encounters on the road to the station (p. 226). Watt qualifies it as "kind of shackled smartness." Both images can be related visually to the smoke issuing from Sam's and Watt's respective pavilions and blown by the wind, "now far apart, but now together." (p. 213)

Textual spirallings exist within the novel itself, such as the paragraph which gives Watt Knott's reasons for not possessing a dog. We have examined the passage already. Suffice it to say that, beginning with "dog," it ends with "dove," following the path of cat, goat, bull, horse, back to dog and thence to ostrich and dove. Threaded through these animals are the words man, woman, man, canon, missionary, priest.

A similar progression-regression of language occurs in the description of the Galls' momentous visit to Watt to tune Knott's piano. After it was past, the event unfolds in Watt's mind, from beginning to end, "the complex connexions of its lights and shadows, the passing from silence to sound and sound to silence, the stillness before the movement and the stillness after, the quickenings and retardings, the approaches and the separations, all the shifting detail of its march and ordinance . . ." (p. 72)

In L'Innommable, the protagonist becomes similarly caught in a verbal spiral in "bête née en cage de bêtes nées en cage de bêtes nées en cage . . ." (p. 204) from which he breaks out by saying, "dis-je, disent ils." (p. 205) We should remind the reader at this point that the translation of both texts has faithfully captured the above structural spirals and interlacings. Besides the latter another literary effect which binds text and translation is to be found in literary allusions which are usually related to an equivalent period in the literature of the translation. That is to say, a parody of Nash becomes in French a parody of Villon and Rabelais, a reference to Shakespeare becomes one to Racine. Proustian themes are sufficiently modern not to be tied to any specific twentieth-century writer: one can say with fair surety that most of this century's authors have been beset with the artistic preoccupation with time, space, memory, habit and boredom.

Beckett uses yet other devices to bind together his various works. The French translation of Watt contains, as we have shown, the word "innommable" for the English "unspeakable," thus relating the earlier English novel to the last part of the trilogy. He weaves together text and translation of Watt by a pun on his native Foxrock. Another pun signs his name to the work, much as a painter might:

Watt-French ends on a parody of the motto of the order of the Garter, "Honni soit qui mal y pense," rendered as "honni soit qui symboles y voit." The image of the garter, the author's name and those of Watt and Knott were present in the name Knott: a becket-knot is a knot (Knott) with a loop (the garter) and a hook (or question-mark--Watt-What?). That is rather amusing and ingenious, but the pun becomes atrocious when one considers that the knot in question is nautical and that the origin of the Garter motto is by tradition naughty[cal]. However, it lies well within the purlieu of Beckett's satiric frame of reference, especially if we recall Swift's "in sickly Pay Day," for Encyclopédie (in Polite Conversations, London: Deutsch, 1963, p. 39.).

The cyclical structure or recurrence of words and images in Beckett is no doubt analogous to Vico's "law of cycles," in his Diritto Universale, in which the three-fold succession of phases, divine, heroic and human, exemplified in government, language, and civilization endlessly repeat themselves in a spiral, which as L'Innommable points out closes in upon itself. A further recurrent image of which Beckett makes constant use throughout his work is that of the fetus, knees drawn up in chien de fusil position, arms clasped to the curled body, head bent. At times, the figure is given the name of Belacqua, or again that of Sordello, both inhabitants of Dante's Purgatorio, both

crouching beings existing in a grey uncertain light. At times the Unnamable is uncertain whether he is sitting or lying on his back, as if in a womb in liquid surroundings.

Vico's cyclical theory saw life as a continuum of birth, maturity, death-rebirth, and if we can easily trace this theme in Joyce, it is more to our purpose to see whether Beckett allied himself with this pattern. The novel Watt starts with an account of the birth of Larry Nixon, the Nixons' sole offspring, proceeds to deal with adults, if one excepts the narrative of the Lynch family's forebears and progeny which is in itself a Gargantuan birth-procreation-death-re-creation cycle. Watt once catches sight of Knott in deep meditation over the appearance of a "little blue flower and a fat worm burrowing into the earth." (p. 146) In that image we find an analogous life continuum between the earthworm who has fertilized the soil, and its resultant plant and flower. Knott, his head bowed, seems caught in the magic of that epiphany and his servant, Watt, notices that his master has fallen asleep as a child. The authorial comment is that the flower would disappear while the worm remained but on that particular day the natural order of events was reversed, and it was the flower that stayed while the worm vanished underground. During the examination of Louit by his academic committee, Mr. Magershorn who is more than slightly

deaf thinks he hears mention of "Darwin's caterpillar." (p. 146) The significance of that misheard non sequitur is that Darwin actually wrote a monograph entitled, The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms (1881), definitely placing the annelids among the species that are conducive to the generation or re-generation of life. In the addenda which act as a postscript to Watt, we hear this echoed in the thought once entertained that "Mr. Knott too was serial, in a vermicular series." (p. 253) Thus does the novel evolve through Vico's three stages of generation, maturity, corruption, ending on his axiom (borrowed from Bruno) that corruption is generation.

L'Innommable's three fictions represent the same progression from the fetus-like Basil-basilisk (a lizard-creeping creature) to Ma[n]hood to Worm. Mahood has a family, and therefore is Vico's stage of maturity-procreation. Worm is the natural extension of the limbless Mahood in his jar. Worm, however, develops a sense of hearing, a sense of sight, awaits love even, and "du moment qu'il souffre il y a de l'espoir," (p. 163) so that the Worm's awakening vermicular consciousness constitutes ontological regeneration.

In Beckett's essay, he reserved his big guns for last. To justify his title he must needs move north, "Sovra'l bel fiume d'Arno all gran villa . . ." (p. 17) the quotation

is from Dante's Inferno, xxiii, 95, and he relates Joyce to Dánte by pointing out how worn out and threadbare both discovered the conventional language to be.

Beckett continues his essay with the assertion that Dante did not adopt the vulgar idiom out of local jingoism in order to impose his own Tuscan dialect over its rivals. On the contrary, his De Vulgari Eloquentia suggests freedom from parochialism, and Beckett concludes that he who would write in the vernacular must gather the purest elements from each dialect and construct a synthetic language that could have been the spoken tongue of an ideal Italian who had at his command the best of all the dialects in his country. Thus Beckett disposes of the principal objection that could be raised against this attractive parallel he makes between Dante and Joyce in the question of language, namely that Dante was writing in the speech of his native streets.

Dante's literary public was Latin, and his Commedia was to be judged by rigid canons intolerant of such substitutions as "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita" for the more elegant, "Ultima regna canam, fluido conter mino mundo." Similarly, Beckett was sure that English eyes and ears would find more euphonius "Smoking his favourite pipe in the sacred presence of ladies" than "Ranking his flavorite turfco in the smukking precincts of lydias."

Beckett then aims a few shafted barbs at the "collective noodle of the monodialectical arcadians whose fury is precipitated by a failure to discover 'innocefree' in the Concise Oxford Dictionary," (p. 19) while he applauds Joyce's ability to inject new life into the modern idiom: such a word as "doubt" has become quite inadequate to express extreme uncertainty and is felicitoulsy replaced by Joyce's "twosome twiminds." (p. 15) It is important to note that Beckett (and no doubt Joyce) is only disenchanted by English as a modern idiom for he praises Shakespeare's "fat and greasy words to express corruption," quoting the ghost's words to Hamlet, "Duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed that rots itself in death on Lethe warf." (Hamlet, I, v--except that Beckett misquotes the italicized phrase which reads in ease in Shakespeare's text). The sonorous rhythm of the Elizabethan pentameter which charms readers of English literature does not fail to captivate Beckett who later shows by literary allusions in his own work equal sensitivity to the musical quality of the classical French alexandrine. Beckett moves on to Dickens' style which brings to him the sounds of the "ooze squelching" from the Thames (p. 15), in Great Expectations. What strikes him especially is the vitality of the words, the way in which they force themselves onto the page in an endless continuum, paralleling the cyclical germination-maturation-

putrefaction of living species.

Dante felt this quickening spark was lost to the written language of his time, that is Latin. Two centuries later, Poliziano wrote "the dullest of dull elegies" in Latin (on the death of his friend and patron Lorenzo de' Medici) to justify his composition in Tuscan of Orfeo and the Stanze (p. 20). The climate then was much opposed, even two centuries after Dante, to writing in the vernacular. Beckett feels that the storm of ecclesiastical abuse raised by Joyce's work probably fell on the Commedia from the same sources, for "His Contemporary Holiness might have swallowed the crucifix of 'lo sommo Giove,' and all it stood for, but he could scarcely have looked with favor on the spectacle of three of his immediate predecessors plunged head-foremost in the fiery stone of Malebolge, nor yet the identification of the Papacy in the mystical procession of Terrestrial Paradise with a 'putana sciolta.'"

Beckett ends his study of Joyce with an analysis, or rather a comparison between the structures of the Dantesque and Joycean Purgatorios. The first being conical suggests a peak from whence the soul may proceed to higher summits. Joyce's on the other hand, being spherical, implies flux-progression or regression and initiates multi-directional movement. Joyce's work is purgatorial, according to Beckett, in the sense of circumscribing the circle of humanity.

In this sense so is Beckett's: let us furthermore recall the cylindrical structure of Le Dépeupleur.

In one final superb set of aphorisms, Beckett concondues his comparison of Dante and Joyce. "Dante's Terrestrial Paradise is the carriage entrance to a Paradise that is not terrestrial: Mr. Joyce's Terrestrial Paradise is the tradesmen's entrance on to the sea-shore." (p. 22) How could one better express Dante's preoccupation with the divine, Joyce's with the human, and here, one might surmise, Beckett is equating his own position with Joyce's all the while admitting his and Joyce's allegiance to Dante in the matter of language.

It seems both logical and plausible to conclude that Beckett saw in Dante and in Joyce a pattern for the language of his literary creations. This is not to deny him his essential uniqueness: he differs widely from both and precisely in his approach to language. Like his predecessors he was keenly aware of the poverty-stricken quality of the written tongue of his day to express the historical present, and like them he fashioned a new idiom in his own manner.

Unlike Joyce he did not forge a synthetic vocabulary. Unlike Dante, he did not deliberately choose from the best of the vernacular dialects of his day. He enriched the standard nomenclature by playing simultaneously on the

colloquial, vulgar or slang meanings of the same word. His writing, that is his language, may be taken at face-value but that is hazardous to a true understanding of Beckett for behind the word itself lie its multi-levelled connotations. "In the beginning was the pun," he declares in Murphy (p. 65), and this is a clear warning to the reader that he will have to collaborate in the creative process if he is to grasp Beckett's semantics, pierce through the word's obfuscating being to reach the bawdy comedy lurking beneath. Beckett's linguistic feat is all the more remarkable in that he has accomplished it bilingually. Both in his self-translations into French/ English and in the original French/English text (not to mention the translations in which he has actively collaborated) there exist the reverberations from meaning to meaning to meaning which give a unique richness to text and translation.

Thus we saw in Watt all that the word "stone" may signify. It may quite literally be a small rock, slang for testicle, or an allusion to Peter, the first apostle. The last two meanings have echoes of their own: stone-hack (bawd) balls-baloney-Bally (Molloy's habitat and that of the agents of the Unnamable's god (p. 13); Peter-bundle-loaded dice-petard-cheat-con-punishment-cell-patridge-penis. Each one of these resonates semantically either at

lower colloquial levels or in French: bundle-fight-do a job (coit or defecate); cheat-burn (sexually); partridge-harlot; dice-Fr. dé (pudend); con-Fr. con (stupid fellow, pudend); pétard-Fr. pet-foirade; cell-cellule (womb--Rabelais); penis-cock-cuckoo-Fr. queue. The French "pierre" reverberates in phrases, such as jeter la pierre (accuse); pierre levées-menhirs-cromlechs (phallic image); pierre à casser (coit).

While it may seem tedious and fruitless to draw up lists of semantic equivalents, it is a necessary process in analyzing exactly what Beckett does with language and with its individual unit, the word. Some of the doubles-entendres are obvious and commonly used but others belong to the vocabulary of the street and need elucidation to convey the full richness and complexity of his constructs.

We analyzed significant passages of both Watt and L'Innommable first to show that in neither case did text and translation differ one from the other from the point of view of language and structure. We felt that it was particularly necessary to emphasize that Beckett's multi-levelled idiom was also rendered in translation for that is surely his greatest triumph as an artist.

An example of the above occurs in Krapp's Last Tape, one of Beckett's brief moving plays composed in English. The aged Krapp in an attempt to preserve intact youth,

memories, time past has tape-recorded annually an epiphany of each by-gone year. He finds the tape containing a love-scene with a girl on a sunny afternoon in a boat. Fragments of the scene recur as leitmotifs throughout the play and portray a unique moment of tenderness in Beckett's work. Is it, however, only that? The youth, the girl, their intertwined bodies convey a langorous spell suspending disbelief. Linguistic analysis vitiates the enchantment, for the text contains a reticulum of words that make a mockery of the love and the lovers. Consider the English text and the linguistic network which frames the idyll: Krapp-punt-goose-berries-Fanny-whore, all captured in Pierre Leyris' and Beckett's translation into French with bande-merde-maquereau-putain-fente. All the italicized substantives have lewd sexual connotations or are vulgar colloquialisms. Had we any doubt in the matter the title in French would resolve them: La dernière bande is accurately enough a last tape, but bande is also French slang for erection. The girl's thigh being scratched by gooseberries has an equivocal significance, for that substantive is a vulgarism for testicles, while the scratching itself suggests piercing with a pointed object. The French equivalent, groseille à maquereau is equally suggestive, since a maquereau is a pimp. The other key substantives within the grid are self-explanatory, even punt,

which in addition to being a river craft is rhyming slang.

The point is that the tape may be read as a peaceful evocation of youthful eroticism. The tranquil Eden was, however, flawed by a demon who was there all the while: language. It is the word itself which through its multiple semantics has made a parody of love and lovers. Beckett's linguistic magic has enabled the reader to view the passage innocently until the word gooseberries uttered offhandedly by the girl as the reason for the state of her thighs rends the veil and forces upon the reader Beckett's true meaning. The final shaft is aimed at Krapp himself, the protagonist, whom the incident moves even in old age. The memory he has so carefully preserved on the visible tape is the memory of a failed and blemished love. The memory is faithful, how could it be otherwise chronicled as it is experienced? What then is Beckett mocking? First of all romantic love and the sexual act, both of which appear as grotesqueries throughout Beckett's work. Let us reflect, for example, on Belacqua's adventures in Dante and The Lobster, on Watt's affair with Mrs. Gorman, on Molloy's encounter with Lousse, on Macmann's with Moll in Malone Meurt. It is echoed in the almost incessant stream of scatological expressions which form the substratum of his vernacular idiom. Why the bawdiness one may well ask? It would seem that it springs from an

irresistible desire to astound; it is a shock tactic designed for comic effect; finally it is self-protection from the being man cherishes most and finds most threatening: woman.

Still hesitant to be openly scatological in his early English writing, Beckett uses slang to cover his true meaning: such is the case in Belacqua's lobster, which is a crustacean true enough, but on another level is a euphemism for the male member, so that his aunt's boiling it is an act of archetypal castration from whence arise all his subsequent amorous misfortunes. In Watt, Beckett does nevertheless use the words turd and fart (p. 143), but only as mispronunciations of third and fourth emanating from the mouth of Graves, the gardener. The narrator adds, however, that the distortions pleased Watt, "for he liked these venerable saxon words." (Watt, p. 143) So does Beckett, and it is precisely with these words become vulgar in today's idiom that he enriches the present French and English tongues, following in the footsteps of Dante and Joyce. There are two processes at work here, the use of well-known low colloquialisms and the use of lesser-known slang which has an equivalent homonym in the standard language. Both make the word function as a mask, in the first instance one that is open and revealing, in the latter one that obnubilates by its hermetic double meaning.

Both aspects of the word as mask mirror the artist who has painstakingly forged a new writing tool.

Beckett's overt use of bawdy terms became more prevalent as he composed in French, where such usage is more accepted and where in any case the presence of English scatology or vulgarisms might be undetected by the reader. Thus his place-names are usually lewd in conntation, or vulgar (Shit, Condom, Hole, Bally (Molloy)), but comic. In the French text of Molloy, Beckett felt the freedom to print merde, couillons, etc. Interestingly enough, in the belated translation into English of Mercier et Camier (1974), appear such words as bugger, fuck, suck off. The names of the "pseudo-couple" might have been felicitously translated as Shit-Shat, for that is what Mer[de]-cier--Ca[ca]-mier are, among other things. Meaning the same thing it is no wonder that they are ontologically inseparable on their journey.

In Watt, Beckett delights in inserting into his text the botanically correct but seldom used pissabed (p. 154) for dandelion. Because of its rare usage the word arrests the reader's eye in a manner its French equivalent, pissenlit, cannot: the latter is a common weed, a common word, and its vulgarity passes unnoticed. If anything the image it conjures in the French reader's eye is that of the cover of a Larousse dictionary, although etymologists tell us the

weed derived its name from its diuretic properties. In Molloy, Beckett plays on the vulgar sound of such as name as Ruth (p. 85), which in French is pronounced as rut. The name had already appeared in Mercier et Camier, where it is canonized to Square St Ruth. He refers without a snicker to the homosexual relationship between Louit and his college bursar (Watt, p. 171).

The point is that Beckett makes no moral judgments about human behavior. He exploits it for its comic possibilities, but his characters are innocent of their sexuality.

So he has Molloy, remember his first love, state casually, "elle avait un trou entre les jambes . . . peut-être qu'après tout elle me mettait dans son rectum." (p. 85) It is a factual declaration coupled with a hypothesis, both designed to be farcical particularly as Molloy pursues his musing with, "Mais est-ce le vrai amour dans le rectum?" (p. 85) and finally concludes that after all onanism is perhaps simpler and more easily relished, "Entre pouce et index on est autrement mieux." (p. 87) Molloy's ruminations are as devoid of lubricity as the anther's position towards the pistil, but put into human context they can scarcely fail to be comic.

The above interpretation is corroborated by Beckett's own critique of Proust in his essay by that name. He

compares Proust's indifference to human values and justices and his characters' amoral attitudes to the shameless sexuality of flowers. Beckett has of course added a comic tone to Proust's grotesqueries.

Hunchy Hackett's hump in Watt, for instance, is grotesque and funny and produces laughter in us not because we are relieved not to be so afflicted but because of Hackett's and the Nixons' outlook: Hackett feels Mrs. Nixon may "pat him on the head, or at least stroke his hunch." (Watt, p. 10) He is placed immediately in the tragi-comic position of a household pet, but being devoid of self-pity he transmutes the scene that follows into high comedy. Like some automaton he "call[s] in his arms," whereupon the Nixons instal themselves on either side of him, their hands meeting over his hump as "his head reaches their armpits." (p. 10) There he sits, an amusing Punch bridged into the normal world by the Nixons' joined hands. Proust's Charlus is grotesque but really not comic because Proust in his splendid portraiture is saying, This is a type I am familiar with in the Parisian salons: behold him and judge not because I do not judge.

Beckett's reading of Proust suggests another dimension to the above-mentioned episode in Krapp's Last Tape: the only memories of value are involuntary, caused by some trifling incident which summons up in all their fullness

the remembrance of things past. By recording his memories voluntarily on a mechanical contrivance Krapp has committed a cardinal sin. Is this also not the Unnamable's foible? That he deliberately and consciously attempted to remember: his repeated witting efforts to conjure up time past are doomed to failure, doomed to be, as he calls them, "le monde fabuleux," (p. 246) and "Mensonges que tout ça." (p. 34). Do not the repetitive utterances throughout Watt, in Arsene's speech, in Watt's spiralling speculations on Knott's dog and his trials with Knott's pot, again suggest a voluntary device to jog the memory? In Watt's case it is a desperate attempt to bridge the time-space of a sane past to the time-space of s sane future to guard against the abyss of a rapidly interposing insane present.

Where Watt's effort fails and he plunges into temporary lunacy, the Unnamable succeeds. He succeeds by forcing us to take part in his interior dialogue and thrusting upon us, as readers, the incarnation of a living essence who was Beckett's fiction on paper. As L'Innommable speaks, questions, repeats, contradicts himself his words both self-erase and create. In the last analysis it is the word that endures and is made flesh however unnamable, unknowable, hermetic L'Innommable has become, encapsulated in his own loquacity, out of space and time.

Both Watt and the Unnamable, experiencing time out of joint are aware of the multiplicity of selves within the self. Through the lucidity of his lunacy Watt has a prismatic vision of Knott, his protean dimensions, ever-changing accoutrement. L'Innommable knows that "ils sont tous ici," all those "crevés" (Molloy, p. 212) he has fashioned in his own image, in the image of the successive beings he has been and will be, "for the pattern is new in every moment/And every moment is a new and shocking/Valuation of all we have been" (T. S. Eliot, "East Coker, II," in Four Quartets, N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, 1943, p. 13).

As Beckett himself says, "life is a succession of habits since the individual is a succession of individuals" (Proust, N.Y.: Grove Press, 1931, p. 8). Beckett is here speaking of Proust's protagonists but it is equally true of his own view of humanity as we experience it in Watt, whose hero's descent into insanity affords us an insight into the multiple facets of Watt's personality: astonishment at how he entered Knott's house, desperate wish to name things, curiosity about the locale of Erskine's key, elaborate structuring of the Lynch family, wild compassion which has him wrap up the back-door key on a cold night in a piece of his blanket, gentle affection for Sam, their mutual cruelty towards birds and rats.

Beckett continues, "the periods of transition [are] the perilous zones in the life of an individual . . . when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being, that is the free play of every faculty" (Proust, p. 9). In Watt, it is Arsene who makes this point when he speaks of the sliding of a grain of sand which changes his universe. So it is with Watt himself for whom each separate epiphany plunges him more deeply into madness until the arrival of Micks, his chronological successor, propels him back to the railroad station. Watt suffers at his own inability to verbalize an answer to his various questions but these moments of rational stasis are precisely those when he is most truly alive and sentient. Krapp is pained at the realization of his life's successsive failures but hearing the words he spoke, raging at them makes him come to life with agonizing intensity as we watch the wreckage of a promising past.

The Unnamable is a mass of suffering. He seems arrested in frozen immobility, but as his words give being to his various selves and fictions, Basil, Mahood and Worm, the latter two exhibiting "the suffering of being" he emerges triumphantly vital. Mahood especially depicts the suffering of being as he loses his limbs on his cyclical quest and ends planted in a jar pestered by flies, a victim to the inclemencies of the weather. Worm assumes

being as he acquires the potential to suffer.

As Watt did, so does the Unnamable achieve essence by constant self-assertion. The progression is seen, "Je dirais que c'est moi" (p. 233), where the I disjoins to become the other self, me, "il y a moi" (p. 207). He prevails over the "voix qui ne s'arrête jamais," (p. 168) over the temptation to use the third person for himself, to please them (p. 139) by a simple utterance. "Je." (p. 101) The French would normally use the emphatic but disjunctive, moi as a vocative. Having had the suffering courage to assert its selfhood, to be I, to effect the passage from the narcissistic reflection, moi or il, to the vision of the 'I' as an entity through the word the Unnamable can exclaim on a victorious note, "je suis . . . je vais continuer." (p. 262) And thus L'Innommable breaks out of his autochtonous chrysalis assuming an existence he knows not where whose essence will however be to continue speaking. In the end the word has shattered both the mask and the mirror, distancing reflections of a being now made flesh.

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Assumption. Short Story. transition. Paris, June 1929, #16-17, 242-253.

Che sciagura. Satire. Refers to words spoken by the eunuch in Voltaire's Candide (Chapter 11) "Che sciagura d'essere senza coglinio." Title recurs in short story, "What a Misfortune," and in Malone's lament upon losing his stick, "quel malheur . . ." (Malone meurt, p. 88.). Trinity College undergraduate weekly TCD: A College Miscellany), XXXVI, November 14, 1929, 42.

1930

For Future Reference. Poem. transition. Paris, June 1930, #19-20, 342-343.

Whoroscope. Poem. Paris: The Hours Press, 1930.

From the Only Poet to a Shining Whore (For Henry Crowder to Sing). Poem. Musical score by Henry Crowder. Paris: Hours Press, 1930.

1931

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1932

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Text. Prose Fragment. New Review II, April 1932, 57.

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1934

Dante and the Lobster. Short story. This Quarter V, December 1932, pp. 222-236. Revised and incorporated as first story in More Pricks Than Kicks. 10 short stories. London: Chatto and Windus, 1934.

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1935

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1936

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Cascando. Poem in three sections. Dublin Magazine, XI, October-December, 1936, 3-4.

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1945

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1946

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1949

Three Dialogues. Conversations with Georges Duthuit on Tal Coat, André Masson, Bram van Velde. In transition Forty-Nine, December, 1945, #5, 97-103.

1953

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1956

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1957

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1958

Beckett's letters on Endgame. Fourteen letters between Beckett and director Alan Schneider. Village Voice, March 19, 1958, pp. 8, 15.

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1959

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1961

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1962

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1964

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1965

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1967

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Film. A screenplay.

Come and Go. A "dramaticule." London: Calder and Boyars, 1967.

1969

Breath. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1969.

1972

The North. London: Enitharmow, 1972.

1973

Not I. London: Faber and Faber, 1973.

1976

That Time. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1976.

Footfalls. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1976.

Ghost Trio. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1976.

Fizzle 7 (also entitled Still). N.Y.: Grove Press, 1976.

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1938

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1947

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1957

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1959

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1963

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1964

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1966

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1967

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1968

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1945

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1946

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1948

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1951

Molloy. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1951.

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1952

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1953

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1954

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1955

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1955

Henri Hayden, homme-peintre. Cahiers-d'art--Documents 22, November, 1955.

1957

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1959

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1961

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1963

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1965

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1966

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Bing. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1966.

1967

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1968

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1969

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1970

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1975

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1976

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4. Translations into English of the French Works

1945

Dieppe 193? Poem. Beckett confirms that this poem was first written in French.

1950

Two fragments. transition Fifty, 6, October 1950, 103-105, 105-106.

1. Extract from Molloy, tr. Beckett.
2. Extract from Malone meurt, tr. Beckett.

NOTE: The translations show variants from the definitive texts; curiously 1. is closer to the definitive text tr. in collaboration with Patrick Bowles than is 2. to the final version tr. by Beckett alone.

1954

The End. Short story. Tr. by Richard Seaver in collaboration with the author. Merlin, ed. Alexander Trocchi, II, Summer-Autumn 1954, 144-159.

Waiting for Godot. Tr. by the author. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1954. Expurgated edition, London: Faber and Faber, 1956. (Expurgations concern hanging and erection, but "depuis la mort de Voltaire" becomes "since the death of Samuel Johnson." In 2d UK edition, unexpurgated, London: Faber and Faber, 1965, the phrase becomes "since the death of Bishop Berkeley," thus conforming to the U.S. version.)

1955

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1956

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1958

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Act Without Words I. Tr. by the author. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1958.

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1959

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Act Without Words II. Tr. by the author. New Departures, I, Summer 1959, 89-90.

1960

Mercier et Camier. Two extracts, "Madden," "The Umbrella," tr. Hugh Kenner, assisted by Raymond Federman, with the permission of the author. Spectrum IV, Winter 1960. ["Madden" is taken from the beginning of Chapter IV, "The Umbrella," from the middle of Chapter VII]. This translation was not seen by the author before publication (Federman and Fletcher, p. 85.)

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1962

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1963

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1964

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1965

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1967

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The Expelled
The Calmative
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1970

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1972

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1973

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Not I. Tr. by the author. London: Calder and Boyars, 1973.

1974

Enough. Tr. by the author. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1974.

Ping. Tr. by the author. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1974.

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1975

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1976

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5. Other Translations by Samuel Beckett

1930

Delta. Poem by Eugenio Montale.

Landscape. Text by Raffaello Franchi.

The Home-Coming. Text by Giovanni Comisso.

All the above in This Quarter II, April-May-June, 1930, 630-672, 675-683.

1931

Anna Livia Plurabelle, by James Joyce. "Traduit de l'anglais par Samuel Beckett, Alfred Péron, Ivan Goll, Eugène Jolas, Paul Léon, Adrienne Monnier et Philippe Soupault en collaboration avec l'auteur." N.R.F., XIX, May, 1931, 633-646.

1932

"The Free Union," "Lethal Relief," "Factory," Extract from "Soluble Fish," by André Breton.

"Lady Love," "Out of Sight in the Direction of my Body," "Scarcely Disfigured," "The Invention," "Definition," "A Life Uncovered or the Human Pyramid," "The Queen of Diamonds," "Do Thou Sleep," "Second Nature," "Scene," "All-Proof: Universe-Solitude," "Confections," by Paul Eluard.

"Everyone Thinks Himself Phoenix," by René Crevel.

"The Possessions," "Simulation of Mental Debility Essayed," "Simulation of General Paralysis Essayed," by André Breton and Paul Eluard.

The above in This Quarter V, Surrealist Number, guest ed. André Breton, Sept. 1932.

Poetry is Vertical. Manifesto signed by Hans Arp, Samuel Beckett, Carl Einstein, Eugène Jolas. transition 21, March 1932, 148-149. Proclaims "autonomy of poetic vision, the hegemony of the inner life over the outer life . . ."

1934

"Murderous Humanitarianism," by the Surrealist Group in Paris: André Breton, Roger Caillois, René Char, René Crevel, Paul Eluard, J.-M. Monnerot, Benjamin Péret, Yves Tanguy, André Thirion. Negro Anthology, ed. Nancy Cunard. London: Cunard and Wishart, 1934, 574-575.

1948

A poem 4, by Henri Pichette, tr. S.B. transition 48, 2, June 1948, 24-43 [French text on left, English on right].

1949

F_____, by Suzanne Dumesnil, tr. Beckett, Unsigned. Transition 49, 4, Jan. 1949, 19-21.

1960

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1962

End of Day.

6. Unpublished Works of Samuel Beckett

1931

Le Kid. A parody of Corneille's Le Cid. Written in French. Probably lost.

ca. 1932

Dream of Fair to Middling Women. Novel in English.

ca. 1945

Les Bosquets de Bondy. One of the first writings in French. "Jettisoned," according to Beckett (Federman and Fletcher, p. 108).

ca. 1959

Undated MSS notebooks in Beckett's own hand of his translation into French of Watt. Now in the archives of a university library in the United States. Its existence is significant insofar as it is witness to Beckett's interest in language and in self-translation.

ca. 1966

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