

REVISITING RHIZOMATIC IDENTITIES IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S THE TRILOGY: A DELEUZEAN READING

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ABSTRACT

This study was an endeavor to examine the working of the Deleuzian concept of rhizomatic to analyze Samuel Beckett's Trilogy. By considering the self as a rhizomatic story, the author engendered a story structure that not only offered an utilizable view on how individuals narratively construct their selfhood but additionally stimulated an experiment with alternative, nontraditional presentation forms. Events are themselves differences in that, like the present which reiterates itself but is always a different present, the events which occur in our world are always different from one another. They are the things which transpire in the world, the things which have transpired and which are transpiring now, and it is this series of happenings which define who we are. Deleuze further considered that, like an animal habituating to a given environment, events transpire around quandaries and it is the quandaries which define the shape of a given society. The present study addressed how the conception of the rhizomatic conditions the constructed identities in Molloy, Malone Dies and The Unnamable as rhizomatic texts which itself challenged the very conception of the meaning.

Keywords: Rhizome, Rhizomatic Conditions, Samuel Beckett's Trilogy, Deleuze.

INTRODUCTION

As a model for culture, the rhizome resists the organizational structure of the root-tree system which charts causality along chronological lines and looks for the source of "things", and looks towards the pinnacle or conclusion of those "things". The rhizome does not have a beginning, an end, or an exact center. The rhizome is reducible neither to the one nor the multiple...it is comprised not of units but dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It can be entered from many different points, all of which connect. The rhizome can be 'novel.' It can create 'strange new uses' for the trees that it infiltrates. Rhizomatic studying is a way of thinking about learning based on ideas described by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in a thousand plateaus. A rhizome, sometimes called a creeping rootstalk, is a stem of a plant that sends out roots and shoots as it spreads. It is an image used by Deleuze and Guattari to describe the way that ideas are multiple, interconnected and self-replicating. The rhizome is both heterogeneous and multiplicities. In this context, the posture of Deleuze and Guattari on the literary figures, as they are the allies in constructing their theory, is an appropriate move. Samuel Beckett's *The Trilogy* can be regarded as an examination of the self-identification and its various modes of expression. In each novel, a central role is given to the quest for knowledge of the self, the "I" or ego that speaks or writes. Throughout *The Trilogy*, Beckett obsessively returns to the catigo and its triple suppositions concerning the ability to produce thoughts (Katz, 1999). The concept of rhizomatic identity is perhaps one of the most fundamental concepts in Western

thought, especially since the Enlightenment and the inception of the individuality. *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable* are all anti-quest novels or novels in which the main characters evolve towards their self-annihilation. The four parts of *the Trilogy* include various manners of focusing on the influential relationship between the conditions in which the characters live and their identities. Postmodernists seem to have shed more light on the vast area of identity as they proved more interested in researching the depths of the identity and its flaws, like Beckett that involution of the main character is very differently presented in his novels.

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How does the rhizomatic condition of the constructed identities in Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* as a rhizomatic text, challenges the very idea of the meaning?
2. How does the rhizomatic condition of the constructed identities in Samuel Beckett's *Malone Dies* as a rhizomatic text, challenges the very idea of the meaning?
3. How does the rhizomatic condition of the constructed identities in Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* as a rhizomatic text, challenges the very idea of the meaning?

1. Rhizomatic Identity, Rhizomatic Text: The Case of Beckett's *Molloy*

Molloy the first novel of Samuel Beckett's *Trilogy* has two parts; the first part includes Molloy's search for his mother, and the second part is about Moran's search for Molloy. In the first part, Molloy is trapped in his mother's room. One day, as he was looking out of the window he saw two persons A and C on a road who were going toward each other, unconscious of what they were doing. Later after seeing them, Molloy decided to go after his mother whom he did not know where she was. At the beginning of his journey, Molloy suffered from one of his stiffening legs. He used his bicycle and set off his journey. On his journey, first, he went to a city where he did not know where it was. The second part of the novel is about Moran, a detective who is obliged to find Molloy. At the end like Molloy, he had to report everything to his organization. Further, Beckett's *Molloy* can be read as monologues of a fragmented self with multiple voices. All characters seem to be all but entombed within a skull; Molloy is divided into two first-person narratives the first of Molloy's, the second of Jacques Moran's, the agent. Molloy, an elderly cripple, is writing his story in a room, but Molloy and Moran are not two separate entities; once a week, a man brings Molloy money and takes away what he has written. Most of his narratives are rambling interior monologues, and so are the writings of Moran. Thus, in *Molloy*, Molloy and Moran seem to be two opposing but complementary sides of the same self. Moran can be Molloy's other self who first seems to be the opposite of him but comes out to be the same as him. That's why Moran says that Molloy is not a stranger to him. Molloy's fragmented self is reflected in his fragmented words. Schizoid language is replete with fragments of absurdly vague phrases, contradictions, irrationality, and incoherence. In *Molloy*, anima appears with Molloy's mother, Lousse, and Ruth. Molloy cannot remember his mother's name. It shows his bad memory of the past or his ignorance and reluctance toward his mother. He called her 'Mag', which resembles the word 'Ma'.

Deleuze's "schizo" is a way of thinking of a life not governed by any fixed norm or image of the self a self in flux and becoming. The "schizo" is an image of the self a self-changing and becoming rather than a self that has submitted to the law of being. In Deleuze's work, fixed self



or identity is perhaps the most heavily criticized concept from the philosophical tradition; there is no integrated self, but rather unidentifiable processes of becoming; becoming as the opposite of the fixed identity. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish the minoritarian and the majoritarian. The Minoritarian and majoritarian are ways of drawing distinctions. They regard majoritarian to be a Western disease that traces all becomings back to some origin. Becoming minority shows that becoming is a transformation with no external end rather than an original fixed identity. So, 'man' is a majoritarian term. We imagine that there are some general being and fixed identity, the human. The opposition between man and woman and man and animal is majoritarian. One of the first things that strike us about Molloy is the peculiar juxtaposition of movement and stasis. Molloy describes a quest, ostensibly to find his mother, but he does so from a stationary position in his mother's room.

A psychopathological model is adopted in which the process of schizophrenia comes close to resembling the clinical reality of schizophrenia. Deleuze and Guattari make the Laingian distinction between schizophrenic illness as a breakdown and the schizophrenic process "which is not an illness, not a 'breakdown' but a 'breakthrough', however distressing and adventurous. If *The Trilogy* as a whole involves some kind of divestiture of self, then it still retains, especially in the first volume, the egoic postulates it progressively works to undo. The difference between schizoid selfhood and a schizophrenic process helps to describe the differing egoic investments at different points in *The Trilogy*. It is perhaps only after *The Trilogy* that the dissolution of the ego, which Deleuze and Guattari seem so anxious to accomplish, is fully realized within Beckett's work. Molloy initiates the quest to forget about the first-person, but it only intermittently inhabits a desubjectivised realm. The quest to abandon the 'I' is faltering and hesitant, and it is Molloy's egoic and characterological inconsistencies which exemplify this process at work in the novel (Carney, O'Sullivan and White, 2011).

Beckett characters remain lost in the fragments of thought, language, despair and useless repetition of broken, meaningless and distorted and reshaped sentences and words. Pauses, silences and dotted lines abound in Beckett's texts. The mystical and artistic genius of Beckett lies in exposing the insufficiency and incomprehensibility of language in so far as the realization and communication of reality are concerned. Beckett finds similar realms of nonculture, rendering an art of underdevelopment in which inhuman inhabitants dream uninterpretable dreams. By "inhuman" then, Deleuze and Guattari mean anti-subject, anti-man, anti-state, an anti-western myth. For the French theorists, all great writers depict characters in states of becoming-inhuman, becoming-other. One of their most famous examples is Kafka's Gregor Samsa, a young man who "becomes-insect" and thus something other than the image of western man. The figure who manages to 'become-animal' or 'become-insect' is, as Colebrook (2001) explained, in pursuit of anti-subjectivity: "We do not begin as subjects who then have to know a world; there is experience, and from this experience, we form an image of ourselves as distinct subjects. Before 'the' subject of the mind, then, there are what Deleuze refers to as 'larval subjects': a multiplicity of perceptions and contemplations not yet organized into a self" (Shields, 2005).

Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other and must be. The rhizome is constantly changing, making new connections and breaking old ones, always in the process of becoming. What is rhizomatic is the process, not the static fixed state. For Deleuze and



Guattari, the rhizome is a more a model of becoming than the being. The ruptures and connections that are the part of the rhizomatic process have no signifying in functions. In Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*, the characters were not able to integrate their animas to their consciousness. Moreover, the wise old man was not able to help them. Apart from all, Moran wore a mask, too. The characters did not reach their selves, the characters did not achieve their meanings and deteriorate through the ending of the story. As one can see, *Molloy* at the beginning of his journey was able to walk, while at the end of the story he could not walk, and crawled on the ground.

II. Rhizomatic Identity, Rhizomatic Text: The Case of Beckett's *Malone Dies*

Malone Dies opens with a typically morbid mood-lifter "I shall soon be quite dead at last in spite of it all" and then makes endless comedic hay out of Malone's failure to keel over. While dying, he tells himself a few stories; the names change, the figures blur, they may be different persons or the same person, or figments of Malone's personality. In Beckett's *Malone Dies*, the creative gesture of writing stories serves as how Malone asserts his identity in the world, his stories presenting an uncompromising portrait of the limited, bleak mortal existence but affirming an active, creating, and questioning human consciousness in the face of that existence.

In Deleuze's work, fixed self or identity is perhaps the most heavily criticized concept from the philosophical tradition; there is no integrated self, but rather unidentifiable processes of becoming; becoming as the opposite of the fixed identity. Deleuze and Guattari have distinguished the minoritarian and the majoritarian. The minoritarian and majoritarian are ways of drawing distinctions. They regard majoritarian to be a Western disease that traces all becomings back to some origin. Becoming a minority shows that becoming is a transformation with no external end rather than an original fixed identity. So, 'man' is a majoritarian term. It imagined that there are some general being and a fixed identity, the human. The opposition between man and woman, and man and animal is majoritarian. We think of "woman" other than or different from man. Deleuze describes "woman" or "becoming-woman" and "animal" and "becoming animal" as examples of minoritarian (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 279).

Malone Dies foregrounds an interactive narrative play. The text begins by setting the scene of the narrative situation; the situation in which the act of creation takes place, where the writer writes. There are two main levels of discourse: the level of the story of the narrative situation, where Malone 'plays,' and the embedded level of the stories: the result of Malone's 'play.' He is waiting for death, and this also gives him the *raison d'être* for his narrative play: "While waiting I shall tell myself stories, if I can" (*MD*, p.174) he writes about these stories as 'play'. He is 'going to play,' going to create stories in order to pass the time while waiting for death, a situation that is similar to that found in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, where play is seen as a diversion, a way of escaping the boredom of *waiting for Godot* or waiting for an ending. Beckett says that man is expiating for an unknown crime or sin.

Beyond the content of the stories, Malone's writing embodies this self-destructiveness as well, repeatedly introducing elements of incoherency and disintegration even as he tries to sustain a coherent narrative. He links the futility of the content of the stories to his flawed means of recording those stories, writing "It is no use indicting words they are no shoddier than what they peddle." (*MD*, p.189)



It could be concluded, that nobody can extend rhizomatic thinking to thinking about presentation. One thing is painfully brought to the light in Beckett's works. The goal is hardly ever reached by his people, though they continue to hover around the threshold. Though reason may know that the goal exists, that there is the light at the other shore but what constitutes human predicament is that the other shore is not reached. Malone, by a complex process of multiplying his various verbal personalities, contrives to detach his 'I' from the pseudo-self he knows as Macmann, and then watches Macmann die, but this extraordinary feat still leaves the problem basically unresolved, for the death of Macmann is as powerless as the death of Malone to obliterate the apparently immortal "Pour-Soi" or negative principle. We are automatically confronted with limitations of which we must be aware and which we must necessarily accept. One can never know the rhizomatic identity or rhizomatic text meaning. To use the words of Deleuze and Guattari once again: You can enter a rhizome wherever you like, no single entryway has the privilege. The only thing that changes depending on your choice of the entryway is the map of the rhizome. Although the researcher and participant will only travel a few parts, a few landscapes of the map, these landscapes can contain much valuable information.

III. Rhizomatic Identity, Rhizomatic Text: The Case of Beckett's *The Unnamable*

The Unnamable character, in the hell of deep memory, keeps himself going by creating personae through whom he enacts his death, a paradoxical killing of the self by the self to keep the self-alive. The *Unnamable's* narrator speaks from the absolute passiveness of total abjection. Between life and death, that is where he is, crushed, a destroyed man. It seems possible that Beckett's narrator merges in his mind with the idea of the Jew survivor of the Holocaust, giving him a powerful analogy for exploring the plight of the artist and a powerful image of ethical striving post-Holocaust. The idea of the Jew behind the *Unnamable* is sustained by the narrator's anonymity, loss of self, loss of all sovereignty, utter uprootedness, and radical alienation. In *the Unnameable*, phantoms and visions encircle a consciousness stuck in an ornamental jar at the entrance to a restaurant. Words circle on the page too, stumbling on without even the relief of punctuation Malone creates a character called MacMann, who seems to become Malone himself, and in the *Unnamable*, it is impossible to draw a line between the speaking voice, and the stories he tells of Worm and Mahood.

The *Unnamable* has traditionally been read as a narrative from beyond death. This novel, insofar as Beckett's three novels *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnameable* comprise a 'Trilogy', follows, of course, *Malone Dies*. But it is important to note that the beyond death here is not beyond, it involves language, consciousness, it is tied to being and lived experience. The narrative of the unnameable is a narrative of the threshold, the undecidable threshold, but it is clearly situated (and could only be situated) before that threshold (that is, before any 'befores' or 'afters' cease to have meaning). Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* is a monologue, a prolonged speech that constitutes every element of the novel, and as a result, every element of the protagonist's existence. After all the previously identified characters of *Molloy* and *Malone Dies*, not to mention the horde of *pre-Trilogy* characters, the persona of *The Unnamable* is unable to establish the credibility of his name. Perhaps due to some austere set of requirements, this new persona feels the necessity of orienting his words to some starting point, some origin for reference. "A few general remarks to begin with, "(UN, p. 285) as we are told. But the



orientate on provided by the Unnamable at the outset involves very little in the way of action, and we share in his confusion. Like Malone at the beginning of the second novel, The Unnamable tries to lay out his situation. He is required to speak. He is alone, although he plans on the company. In the beginning, a few puppets. Then I'll scatter them to the winds if I can." (UN, p. 286)

The Unnamable is also closely linked to the main themes of negative theology. The structure and the logic of the argument in The Unnamable is built upon an unorthodox relation between oppositions, i.e. paradoxes and aporias. From the very first page, the narrator warns us that the negations and affirmations here are not kept separate or confirmed in their place. He tells us that he is unable to answer 'yes' or 'no' to questions easily. He asks a few fundamental questions, to begin with, and leaves them unanswered until the end: "What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation, how proceed? By aporia pure and simple? Or by affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered, or sooner or later? [...] With the yesses and noes it is difficult, they will come back to me as I go along and how, like a bird, to shit on them all without exception" (UN, p. 285).

As Shira Wolosky (1995) contends, this logic not only demonstrates the logic of the narrator but it also challenges the readings of the novel as it defies any kind of closure for these readings: "This unrelenting process of retraction grips not only the narrators but also the reader, who must ceaselessly undo his readings. Every construction for interpreting the text must be constantly reviewed and revised" (Wolosky, 1995, p.67). The Unnamable is between the object and the subject. Through this, he shatters or deconstructs this duality as well. This paradox is blatantly against the Cartesian epistemology. Therefore, the following reading is based on the assumption that the novel unfolds while the language and the self both situate themselves in the middle of oppositions.

The Unnamable illustrates that language and self are counterparts in impossible search for beyond. This is the same paradox one can see in apophatic discourse. The negation of language, despite its pervasiveness in The Unnamable, is not the end. Beckett reminds us constantly that the self is part of the play of language and there is no alternative to this aporia. He must go on writing but this writing is deeply inscribed in the promise of silence. The Unnamable does not speak of the transcendental self nor does it show us the way to a 'beyond' of language as if silence is a close counterpart to language, and is not its opposite. It deconstructs the opposition of language and silence telling us that they are inscribed within one another. Silence is not only what the self is looking for, but it is also what he wants to be united with. It resembles immanence, the ineffable state of existence where the only words that exist are the unspoken ones.

Beckett's *Trilogy* becomes dominated by the imagining of situations where the immunity of the first person pronoun to error comes into question. Shoemaker (1968) argues that: "the rules governing the use of this word determine once and for all what its reference is to be on any given occasion of its use, namely, that its reference is to the speaker, and leave no latitude to the speaker's intentions in the determination of its reference." (Shoemaker, 1968, p. 559); Beckett's narrator, however, relegates it to the status of any avatar, any passing character in his narrative. A written 'I' is, of course, a different entity to a spoken 'I' and can be just as conventional, fictional or unreliable as any other pronoun or subject. Or almost Even in an avowed work of fiction, there is a frisson of intimacy and an assumption of a certain privilege



on the part of the reader in being addressed as 'you' and in being a party to the directness that a first-person pronoun betokens. The relentless present tense of much of Beckett's *Trilogy* appears at first to strengthen the proposed connection between the 'I' and some entity who was, at least, present when it was being written and able to determine its reference.

It could be concluded that working in rhizomatic research cultures need to be in a state of constant learning, of being open to new knowledge, and capable of approaching unknown material. They are networked and connected to others, attuned to working in collaborative, collegial ways. Their knowledge claims remain tentative in full awareness of the vast array of what might seep into their field of focus from surrounding research. This, in turn, encourages modesty and humility in what can be said; listening actively is valued, as is the capacity for flexibility and occupation of the space in between. Thus, the researcher inclines towards heterogeneity and multiplicity in the search for both/and answers. The novel reveals the difficulty of escaping the unconscious structures and limitations of society, which remain so pervasive in human thought that even most attempts to subvert these limitations only serve to reinforce them via the destruction of the individual subject. Deleuze and Guattari compared the rhizome with a map (the principle of cartography) and not with a blueprint or a tracing. Just like a map, a rhizome is open, receptive to include changes constantly. Here, we encounter the characteristic of multiple entryways: A map always has multiple entryways, all of which are equally good or equally important. With a map, one can start where one wants; no single entryway is privileged. The only thing that changes as one chooses a different entryway is the map of the rhizome itself.



CONCLUSION

This study discussed how the Deleuzian rhizomatic conditions the constructed identities in Samuel Beckett *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable* as *Trilogy*.

The success of the *Trilogy*, despite its alienating effect, strikes a chord with the reader because it seeks to expose the difference between what we are conventionally supposed to feel, what literature tells us we are supposed to feel and what we do feel. The feelings of inadequacy roused in us because of this disparity is the experience of *Molloy*, *Malone* and *The Unnamable* who cannot reconcile their disappointments with reality. The successive incarnations of the *Trilogy* have already realized that what they seek, that something real for them, is the incomplete capacity of words and language to express effectually their experience. They discover that without reliable meaning, their bleak outlook is without value in a hollow existence. Their musings become increasingly disconnected to anything that the reader can identify. In their attempt to determine a reality beyond the use of words, Beckett's narrators lose themselves in a frightening world of nonsense where even their own identity ceases to have a grounding.

The exploration of the *Trilogy* results in an appreciation, if not an understanding of how the conscious being, ignorant and impotent, can be drowned in an increasingly vague semiosis. Meaninglessness is easy enough to accept, after a while, it's everywhere, we all secretly know it, to be confronted with some vast and distant and transcendent truth is what really scares us, I face it, I cringe from its glare, it is out of reach, the novel is over, I go on. The Unnamable here attempts to connect his voice and his subject but finds that the 'I' is not stable and that his

subject is ungraspable. The Unnamable also passes comment on the dislocation of other voices: “I think Murphy spoke now and then, the others too perhaps. I don't remember, but it was clumsily done, you could see the ventriloquist.” The Unnamable's experience of dislocation works in parallel with Beckett's own creative experience. The experience of the writer and protagonist, in turn, work to raise questions regarding the stability of language. Beckett's use of silence also contributes to the sensory language of the novel, as it gives importance to the spaces between words.

The Unnameable fails to transcend the mind to reach essences which are in no-mind, where words are not. He can't escape the final barrier between himself and his essence - the ever-present thought process, the endless string of words. Beckett fails to connect to the world and nothing can reconcile Beckett to life because he has quite a negative view of transcendence. Fragility, vulnerability, pain, and disgust of life are there to stay – there is no cure for being in the world. Beckett's stage is the world of decay, disease, and decadence. Beckett's characters die without reproducing themselves. The Unnameable has been described as a “zero-book” – that is, a book about Nothing- and as “really about the obsessive-compulsive need for words.” It ends in an impasse. “I can't go on, I'll go on” are its last words. Several years later, Beckett remarked: “At the end of my work there is nothing but dust – the namable. In the last book, *Innomable*, there is complete disintegration. No “I,” no ‘have,’ no ‘being,’ no nominative, no accusative, no verb. There is no way to go on.” “Having arrived at this dead-end he found it difficult for many years to write fiction and wrote plays. It could be concluded, Beckett is a writer who does not limit himself to plot, time, place or language. Rather, Beckett's project becomes one of critiquing that life can be a novel, can be a text as his *Trilogy* a rhizomatic text. While at the beginning of this study, Beckett's works were used to reveal Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic theory, as the study progresses, it was observed that this theory also offered a new interpretation to Beckett's works. One of the reasons for this interaction was that the social and historical conditions witnessed by Beckett were also confronted by Deleuze and Guattari. Beckett wrote in the aftermath of the Second World War which consequences felt in his works thoroughly. In those years Deleuze and Guattari were also affected by the social turbulences of May '68 and came together in such a time that the theories on subjectivity were pop up. Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization to reformulate the subject as a process in the name of “rhizome” is analogous to Beckettian characters

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