

BECKETT: A CRITICAL PROBLEM

The article explores the polarisation within the body of twentieth century criticism surrounding Samuel Beckett's work: A polarisation between strict formalist approaches which tend to see Beckett as very much part of a modernist tradition and poststructuralist theorists who seek to categorise his work in terms of postmodernism. As an unfortunate result of extreme critical standpoints, the philosophical thinking of Schopenhauer, which had such a profound and lasting influence on both Beckett's approach to writing as well as to the theatre, has been largely ignored or simply pushed to one side.

Keywords: Formalism, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism, Schopenhauer, Knowing, Known

Introduction

The reason that the heroic and uncompromising enterprise undertaken by Beckett in creating his extreme aesthetic has not been satisfactorily explored is mainly due to the nature of the criticism he has historically attracted. Though much of this critical work is both excellent and interesting, nevertheless, it seems to be more preoccupied with setting its own agenda in either too rigidly narrowing its scope, or being concerned to both validate itself and Beckett's work in terms of modernity, without fully responding to the true nature and intentions of his aesthetic. In respect to this I will take an historical retrospective in order to discuss some of the major critical works on Beckett and outline two broad categories which are the most representative of the critical approaches to Beckett's work. In terms of this polarisation of critical approaches it is also both curious and unfortunate that Schopenhauer is either ignored or pushed to one side. And this, despite the fact that it was on Schopenhauer's gloomy philosophy that Beckett largely formulated his approach both to writing and to the theatre.

Even a casual glance at the body of critical work surrounding Samuel Beckett's writings reveals that there are two broad approaches to his oeuvre. The first and largest body has tended to see Beckett's work in the formalist sense as a largely self-referential linguistic circuit, whose language like the mind of Murphy, is hermetically sealed. The second and generally more recent approach has been

to locate Beckett as the perfect site for applying poststructuralist textual theory, as if his work intentionally exemplified and represented Postmodernism per se^{1 2}.

The Formalist Approach

Of the first or formalist approach arguably the most representative and most quoted is Brian Fitch's *Beckett and Babel*³, even though the work was published as early as 1988. Fitch, perhaps a little unfairly considering the stated aim of his work, is frequently criticised for the extreme position he adopts⁴. For example, in setting up the theoretical framework for his study he argues that:

... the second versions of Beckett's texts (those written in translation) have, in my opinion, to be considered part of an intra-textuality of his work and to be seen as participating in a dynamic interaction between different texts. For if the concept of 'the complete works' of a writer has largely been discredited in the context of what the French have termed 'La modernité', it has its contemporary equivalent in that intra-textuality, a variant of textuality. On the level of texts as texts in the strict sense of the term there exists a whole range of interplay through which the texts of a writer comment on one another without any intervention on the part of the author...⁵

Fitch's attempt to outline this process of 'intra-textuality' is difficult to follow. However, he seems to have applied this rather awkward concept in order

¹ Anna Smith notes this problem when she claims that outwardly at least Beckett's fictions bear a striking resemblance to deconstruction's conception of identity as a mesh of difference (A. Smith, *Proceeding by Aporia: Perception and Poetic language in Samuel Beckett's "Worstward Ho"*, "Journal of Beckett Studies", Vol. 1.3, Florida State University, No. I. Autumn 1993, p.23).

² Smith is applying this statement from her understanding of Jakobson's theory of 'poetic language'; i.e., poetic language reflects the instability of representation by an overt hostility both to closure of meaning and to fixed, substantial identities (*Ibidem*). Smith in a footnote of her own goes on to explain that "according to Jakobson, poetic language occurs when the referential content of a speech is overridden by an emphasis on the message as form" (p. 35. Also see R. Jakobson, *Linguistics and Poetics, in Selected Writing III*, Mouton 1981).

³ For early discussion and debate on the positioning of Beckett's work within Postmodernism, see Breon Mitchell's *Samuel Beckett and the Postmodernism Controversy*; Sel. Papers Presented at Workshop on Postmodernism at the XIth International. Compar. Lit. Cong, Paris, 20-24 Aug. 1985. Publ. in *Exploring Postmodernism viii*, Eds. Calinescu Matei & Fokkema Douwe, Benjamins. Amsterdam 1987, pp. 109-121.

B.T. Fitch, *Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Bilingual Status of the Work*, University of Toronto Press 1988.

⁴ B.T. Fitch, *Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Bilingual Status of the Work*, University of Toronto Press 1988. Christopher Ricks, for example, in criticism of Fitch adopts a tone of near disdain when he writes 'In such discourse' Fitch's *Beckett and Babel*, as it calls itself, we are in another world than that of Beckett's greatness, his being an art which never is so complacent as to deny the existence of the without 'pregnable' as it fertily is'. C. Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Word*, Clarendon Press. Oxford 1990, p.151.

⁵ B.T. Fitch, *Beckett and Babel*, p. 29-30, notes that "intra-textuality" is a modification of the term "inter-textuality".

to express the extra dimension exhibited between the original French or English versions of Beckett's fiction and those retranslated by the author into either language. Not only is Fitch considering the way that original and translation refer to each other but in 'taking them on the level of text as texts in the strict sense of the term' and their tendency to 'comment on one another' to the exclusion of any 'intervention' suggests a rather limited concern in looking at these 'works' primarily as part of an enclosed linguistic field.

However, the reason for such a clear cut hermeneutic response is suggested by the full title which Fitch gives to his study, *Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Status of the Bilingual work*. It is in part the very fact that Beckett has just such a bilingual 'status' that he attracts the kind of criticism which tends, in its most extreme form, to look at the works primarily in terms of a linguistic and intertextual process, marginalising or excluding most other areas of exploration. This tendency to look at Beckett's work in such a narrow way was set as early as 1964 in John Fletcher's highly influential *The Novels of Samuel Beckett* in which he refers to the 'hermetically sealed perfection of *Texts for Nothing*'⁶ and later in the study makes the following revealing observation on *Comment C'est (How It Is)*: 'We are spectators at a ballet, formal and untroubled by any reality but its own, by any principle but that, inevitable and serene, of its growth and rapid decline'⁷.

Such an unlikely reading as this in which the fiction (or any fiction for that matter) could be conceived of as 'untroubled by any reality but its own' is, however, undoubtedly helped by Beckett's own artistic approach (an approach which has been largely misunderstood) not only in terms of his bilingualism but also in his evolving minimalistic method; a method which increasingly closes off references to an external world until we are apparently left with only the complete inner realm of the text and to which all previous examples of his work seem merely fossils on the road to simplification. We can further add to the reasons for this failure to appreciate fully the development of Beckett's fictions when we consider the way he employs a visible intertextual weave, though not exclusively, with other elements of his own work. Connor, on considering this problem, writes:

Our belief in the self-containment of literary texts is liable to encounter difficulties with Beckett's work, anyway. For, in a real sense, his books are items in a series, rather than single, self-enclosed elements, so that the metonymic relationship of part to whole which is that of the title to the text is duplicated by

⁶ *Text for Nothing* was originally written in French (*Textes pour rien*) during 1950-52 following the completion of *L'Innommable* (1949-50). Fletcher points out that these, rather aptly titled pieces, were produced at a time when Beckett could write very little following the enormous effort of *The Trilogy*. In fact, it is not until *Comment C'est* (1958-60) that Beckett will produce such a sustained period of creativity (*The Novels of Samuel Beckett*, p. 194).

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

the metonymic relationships of the novels to each other in the series which runs from *More Pricks than Kicks* through to the *Trilogy* and beyond⁸.

For example, *Texts for Nothing* consciously refers to the two previous books of *The Trilogy* as well as to earlier works such as *Waiting for Godot*. We find that *The Trilogy* similarly sets out to develop this approach, creating at times the sense if not of a single text or body of work undergoing constant transformation, than that of a single if imaginary consciousness breathing them into life. I use the word imaginary in the sense that the conscious self is located as part of the narrative structure and not vice versa.

We can see then how this on the surface might suggest the notion that language is everything and the place in which character and identity reside. Professor Ricks in his highly entertaining *Beckett's Dying Words*⁹, attempts to dispel such an idea when considering Beckett's fiction. However, Ricks' approach is not always appropriate to the general thrust of his argument which we sometimes lose sight of through his exuberant and self-conscious love for the medium, taking great delight in the art of parody and the rich employment of the literary pun (along with an attempt to show that Beckett is essentially a better writer in English than in French). Though Ricks often employs this technique in order to explore Beckett's own approach to language, it, nevertheless, tends ironically to undercut the overall thrust of his argument by continually reasserting, even if unintentionally, the primacy of language over all else.

However, there is a very serious side to Ricks' work which is worth mentioning here because of its relevance to our general argument. This comes across in his concern to point out a curious 'tropism' in Beckett's fiction, that is the positioning or 'alignment' of words towards death, moving language towards what it evokes:

... it is not simply the 'syntax of weakness' but the incarnation of the human reality of it all, of the piteous bodily weakness, and of the strength to contemplate it and realize it, which is so moving¹⁰.

Ricks touches on this incidentally, for what he is principally interested in here is the 'syntax of weakness'¹¹ and the way in which Beckett not only employs 'words aligned towards death' but how death itself is incorporated into the

⁸ S. Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text*, Basil Blackwell 1988, pp 39-40.

⁹ C. Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Words*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 148.

¹¹ Ricks notes that this term was attributed to Beckett himself by Lawrence Harvey, *Samuel Beckett Poet and Critic*. p. 249 (*Beckett's Dying Words*. p. 82[ft.711] Ricks goes on to claim that "Beckett's syntax of weakness, in the vicinity of clichés and other forms of life in death, asks a larger sequence than a single sentence however singular. It is not that such syntax is weak; rather, that it is a 'syntax of weakness', pressing on, unable to relinquish its perseverance and at severance" (*Ibidem*, pp. 82-83).

winding sheet of language¹². Ricks goes on to describe this 'syntax of weakness' as 'pressing on, unable to relinquish its perseverance and arrive at severance'¹³, paradoxically denying, even in its conscious declaration, a drive towards death. Yet this is not the key form behind Beckett's 'syntax' as I shall go on to discuss. Though it is an important aspect of his writing, it is only a partial understanding of the set of processes he attempts to accommodate.

A Poststructuralist Approach

Steve Connor was to take a very different approach though similarly rejecting the general premise that language is the be all and end all of textual exploration and understanding¹⁴. Connor's fits neatly into our second category of Beckett criticism in that he attempts to impose a number of poststructuralist readings on Beckett's work.

Connor's interest principally centres on Beckett's use of repetition and in doing so leans heavily on Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze¹⁵. Though Connor's application of their theories produces an effective reading of Beckett's work, nevertheless much of it has the feeling of something imposed as if the fictions were being used to support the theoretical framework and method and not as one might expect vice versa. We can see this in an earlier forerunner of this approach and one which seems to have influenced Connor's study¹⁶, that is Butler's *Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being*¹⁷. Only in this case Butler is concerned with a direct and crude application of Heidegger's philosophy and, as he sees it, its natural extension in the form of Sartre's Being and Nothingness. Butler goes as far as to claim that: 'Beckett's work could almost be seen as a literary exploration of Heideggerian metaphysics'¹⁸. Butler in the same chapter also suggests that >

¹² Ricks' argument bears some similarity to an earlier essay by Georges Bataille who speaks of 'language' as that which determines this regulated world, whose simplifications provide the foundations of our cultures, our activities and our relations, but it does so in so far as it is reduced to a means of these cultures, activities and relations; freed from these servitudes, it is nothing more than a deserted castle whose cracks let in the wind and rain: it is no longer the signifying word, but the defenceless expression death wears as a disguise. (G. Bataille, *Molloy's Silence*, in: *Modern Critical Interpretations: Samuel Beckett's Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, Edited by H. Bloom 1988. p. 16).

¹³ Ch. Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Words*, p. 83.

¹⁴ See: S. Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text*.

¹⁵ Connor in particular refers to Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass, Routledge and K. Paul 1978 & G. Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1968.

¹⁶ Indeed Connor in his notes points to Lance St John Butler 'for a discussion of Heideggerian parallels in Beckett's works'. S. Connor, *Samuel Beckett, Repetition, Theory and Text*. p. 204.

¹⁷ L.S. Butler, *Samuel Beckett and The Meaning of Being*, Macmillan Press, London 1984.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

If his (Beckett's) work is taken as a whole we can see that the heavily ironic treatment of philosophy in the early novels gives way to desperation in the later work that seems rather beyond being helped by metaphysics or even logic¹⁹.

Hence a need for a Heideggerian understanding of being. However, Butler misses the point; it is not 'desperation' which drives Beckett or the narrators of his work to abandon metaphysics or logical thought, but rather a sense of desperation is derived, at least partially, from being forced to think in such terms. The difference is a subtle one but crucial to an understanding of Beckett's work for even Heidegger's concept of 'Dasein' is enough to drive one of Beckett's characters to desperation. For example, Butler interprets the concept of 'Dasein' as follows:

So the analysis of Dasein (which I shall treat henceforth as an English word) will lead to any possible answers about the meaning of being in general and Dasein is man, but man with a special emphasis, man as the entity that is there'. Not only that, man is also the entity that 'comports itself towards the question of Being: Dasein is the questioner as well as the questioned... Thus in fact three categories emerge from Heidegger's opening remarks [to *Being and Time*]: Being, Being-there (Dasein) and the 'understanding' with which Dasein already comports itself towards Being. The 'understanding' is here apparent as an 'inquiry'²⁰.

In refutation of Butler it is possible to argue in this context that Dasein as representing both 'Being-there' and the ability to 'enquire' on our individual state of Being in relation to the circumambient universe is precisely what the Beckettian hero attempts to escape from. These are all elements of the world of representation to which both subject and object can be ultimately reduced and thus discarded. We can conclude then that Butler approaches Beckett's work purely as a philosopher and cannot understand that it ultimately attempts to shed all philosophies²¹.

Connor's study, though equally linguistic as theoretical, interestingly falls into the same trap as Butler in attempting to situate Beckett securely in contemporary theory. For example, it is significant and rather predictable that Connor in his attempt to demonstrate how Beckett goes beyond the normal representational world, also marginalises Schopenhauer whose extreme and gloomy philosophy without doubt most strongly influenced Beckett's own thought and uncompromi-

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²¹ We can compare this apparent simplification to Ruby Cohen's location in Beckett's work of the universal 'everyman' or Dearlove's assertion that Beckett is moving towards the presentation of 'archetypes'.

sing aesthetic²². Connor's mentions him only once in the course of his entire book and that in a brief and rather incidental fashion, and like Butler directly substitutes him for Heidegger²³.

In not considering Schopenhauer Connor fails to understand what Beckett is attempting to get across in his early essay on *Proust* (11-93). Connor asks (supposing it to be a key problem in Beckett's argument) "but how can the self be an 'essence' and the seat of 'decantation' at the same time"²⁴. Yet Connor so conspicuously ignores Schopenhauer where the answer to this paradox so clearly lies. For this divide presented in the *Proust* essay is crucial to any attempt to understand the intentions lying within Beckett's artistry.

Beckett and Schopenhauer

On looking at Schopenhauer's seminal work, *World as Will and Representation*, we find he employs Kant's division of mind into known and knowing. For example, in Volume Two of his great work Schopenhauer sums up the knowing' which corresponds to the world of representation and includes both the individual subject as well as paradoxically the so-called objective world of things.

²² For example, Harold Bloom in his *Introduction to Modern Critical Interpretations: Samuel Beckett's Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* writes that 'his (Beckett's) Cartesian dualism seems to me less fundamental than his profoundly Schopenhauerian vision' (*Modern Critical Interpretations*, p. I [see also pp. I – 121]). Bloom interestingly mentions here the clear Cartesian influence that is apparent especially in Beckett's earlier work; however, in suggesting the preeminent influence of Schopenhauer we have a hint here of Beckett's eventual abandonment of Descartes in order to shape his work on more Schopenhauerian lines. I am not saying that Beckett's fictions are an expression of Schopenhauer's philosophy, but only that it is fundamental to the development of his art.

²³ It is interesting to note in this context that Butler fails to mention Schopenhauer even once in the entire course of his study. David H. Helsa, in his major study of Beckett's fictions, also leans heavily on Heidegger for theoretical support (D.H. Helsa, *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett*, The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1971. See also: R.L. Klawitter, *Being and Time in Samuel Beckett's Novels, Dissertation Abstracts International*, Ann Arbor, MI. 1966, 26, 7320; Livio Dobrez, *Beckett and Heidegger* in the *Southern Review: Literary and Interdisciplinary Essays* 7, South Australia 1974, pp. 140-53; A. Thither, *Wittgenstein, Heidegger, the Unnameable, and Some Thoughts on the Status of Voice in Fiction in Samuel Beckett*, in: *Humanistic Perspectives*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus 1983, pp. 80-90).

²⁴ S. Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text*, p. 48. Connor is referring to the following passages from the *Proust* essay: "The individual is the seat of a constant decantation from the vessel containing the fluid of future time, sluggish pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multicoloured by the phenomena of its hours." (Beckett, *Proust and the Three Dialogues*, p. 15). "But here, in that 'gouffe interdit à nos sondes', is stored the essence of ourselves, the best of our many selves and their concretions that the simplest call the world, the best because accumulated slyly and painfully and patiently under the nose of our vulgarity, the fine essence of a smothered divinity whose whispered 'disfazione' is drowned in the healthy bawling of an all embracing appetite, the pearl that may give the lie to our carapace of paste and pewter (*Ibidem*, p. 31).

The fundamental mistake of all systems is the failure to recognize the truth, namely that the intellect and matter are correlatives, in other words, the one exists only for the other; both stand and fall together; the one is only the other's reflex. They are in fact one and the same thing, considered from two opposite points of view; and this one thing - here I am anticipating - is the phenomenon of the will or of the thing-in-itself (W&R.Vol.ii. 15-16)²⁵.

After reducing the 'knowing' or understandable universe to merely representative aspects or 'phenomenon of the will' Schopenhauer later goes on to clarify this distinction between the phenomenal world of the knowing subject and that of the 'known' (will or thing-in-itself). He further suggests how the thing-in-itself becomes the true known' of the individual.

In consequence of all this, on the path of objective knowledge, thus starting from the representation, we shall never get beyond the representation, i.e., the phenomenon. We shall therefore remain at the outside of things; we shall never be able to penetrate into their inner nature, and investigate what they are in themselves. So far I agree with Kant. But now, as the counterpoise to this truth, I have stressed the other truth that we are not merely the knowing subject, but we ourselves are also among those realities or entities we require to know, that we ourselves are the thing-in-itself. Consequently, a way from within stands open to us to that real inner nature of things to which we cannot penetrate from without. It is, so to speak, a subterranean passage, a secret alliance, which, as if by treachery, places us all at once in the fortress that could be taken by attack from without. Precisely as such, the thing-in-itself can come into consciousness only quite directly, namely by itself being conscious of itself; to try to know it objectively is to desire something contradictory. Everything objective is representation, consequently appearance is in fact mere phenomenon of the brain²⁶.

The known for Schopenhauer is the Will, which is effectively the seat of primal desire and of those elements that essentially constitute our innate characteristics, not only connecting us with our species, but also predetermining an essentially fixed individual personality. The 'intelligible character' as Schopenhauer called it, which we come to understand (if ever) only over time²⁷. We can

²⁵ Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*, Volume II, Translated by E.F.J. Payne, Dover Publications. New York 1966, p. 15-16.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 195.

²⁷ The character of each individual man, in so far as it is individual and not entirely included in that of the species, can be as a special idea, corresponding to a particular act of objectification of the will. This act itself would then be his intelligible character, and his empirical would be the phenomenon. The empirical character is entirely determined by the intelligible character that is groundless, that is to say, will as thing-in-itself... The empirical character must in the course of a lifetime furnish a copy of the intelligible character, and cannot turn out differently from what is demanded by the latter's inner nature (*Ibidem*, p. 158).

justifiably then make the direct connection between what Beckett terms the 'essence' (a term Schopenhauer himself used interchangeably with the Will)²⁸ with this idea of a predetermined or innate character. As for 'decantation of self' this can be taken synonymously with the knowing or rational parts of consciousness. This is largely created through experience and abstract understanding and therefore unlike the known or Will it is unstable in its identity, and relies in its consistency on social positioning and language, and liable to change and fragmentation depending on context and externalities. The knowing part of consciousness cannot effect the known, though the known itself certainly has a large say in how we respond and deal with the world.

Connor's failure to see this is a serious one, for though he does not take language as the be all and end all of his analysis, he ultimately leans in that direction. In his effective discussion on repetition Connor concentrates on the double tension it creates:

Repetition can involve both the promotion of the materiality of a sign and the erasure of that materiality. Repetition can often be read as an attempt to close the gap between word and thing, even though it is repetition which instantly opens the gap²⁹.

What he is effectively expressing here is an awareness that repetition can act through its very consistency to stabilise the connection between word and object, while at the same time reinforces to us that the whole process is a linguistic device, and so the separation between them is made all the more clear. Yet Connor in effect gets no further than this and so does not go on to look at the accommodation of the creative process or drive itself. However, it seems to me that Beckett seeks a language subordinate to desire and not vice versa: what language contains beyond meaning and to which the repetitiveness of linguistic expression is only a shadow. For repetition is a way of both inclusion and conforming to the Will.

Conclusion

This connection with Schopenhauer is crucial to our understanding of Beckett's work and though itself is equally open to misreading, nevertheless,

²⁸ For example, Schopenhauer considers that: "It is only this application of reflection which no longer lets us stop at the phenomenon, but leads us onto the thing-in-itself. Phenomenon is representation and nothing more. All representation, be it of whatever kind it may, all object is phenomenon. But only the will is thing-in-itself, as such it is not representation at all, but in toto genere different therefrom. It is that of which all representation, all object is the phenomenon, the visibility, the objectivity. It is the innermost *essence* [My italics], the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole" (*Ibidem*, p. 110).

²⁹ S. Conner, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text*, p. 33.

is too easily discarded in attempts to fit Beckett securely with more contemporary textual reading and theory.³⁰ This has been the principle fault of the second criteria of criticism I have broadly drawn attention to here. It reads more like an imposing of theoretical perspectives than a true opening of the text. However, as I suggested we can see from this that both critical approaches, for the most part, are only concerned with the knowing, the world of experience and understanding, of representation. Ricks, despite his criticism of the formalist approach stopped at the edge of the dying word, only able to suggest what lies beyond in that vast uncontainable space, lying at the very edge of linguistic possibility; while to appreciate Beckett's work fully we must go that little bit further and attempt to understand something of his search for the known.

This distinction is critical to an understanding of Beckett's work and what we need to grasp is that here we have an art form, which ironically recognises the failure of artistic expression, and yet paradoxically fully accepts, and indeed incorporates, the definite need for such an expression. Commentators on Beckett's work have generally stood only on the side of the knowing in which are located problems of language, identity and tradition, but have not attempted to understand the nature of the known, the force or set of characteristics that leads the individual to make an expression of these things in the first place.

In relation to the above research, I propose that in attempting to explore the nature and terms of Beckett's developing aesthetic it is important firstly to look at the way he challenges the *knowing* (in Schopenhauerian terms) in order to point us beyond the limitations and falsehoods of representation. Secondly, it becomes necessary to demonstrate how Beckett, in achieving this, seeks to incorporate or find the *known*: that which essentially lies beyond representation³¹.

³⁰ Deidre Bair, for example, writing on Beckett's life during 1928-9, emphasises in particular the growing influence of Schopenhauer: "*Schopenhauer's ideas would become in later years the philosophical foundation of much of Beckett's thought and the system with which he felt most at ease* [My italics], but at this time, his thoughts were still far-reaching and chaotic. He worried about the impossibility of language and the repeated failure to communicate on any meaningful level. He was coming to the Schopenhauerian conclusion that, since the only function of intellect is to assist man in achieving his will, the best role for himself would be the total avoidance of any participation in a world governed by will. The doctrine suited him but at the time made him uneasy. He coped by returning to Descartes and mindlessly filling the pages of his notebooks with Descartes' thoughts and sayings" (D. Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography*, Vintage, London 1990, pp. 83-4).

³¹ Interestingly Li-Ling Tseng in an article published in 1992 suggests that a tension exists within Beckett's later prose fictions which is generated a conflict between a 'syntax of energy' and a 'syntax of weakness'. We have already touched on the characteristics of Beckett's syntax of weakness in relation to Christopher Ricks, however Tseng isolates another form of syntax within Beckett's work, one which 'still maintains a control of human will in (the) process creative (p.103). However, in spite of similarities, this division between different forms of syntax does not conform to the Schopenhauerian split we have defined here (Li-Ling Tseng, *Samuel Beckett's For to End Yet Again: A Conflict Between 'Syntax of Energy' and 'Syntax of Weakness'*, in: *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal* 38:1, 1992 Spring. pp. 101-23.

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